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«Freier Personenverkehr – Ausdruck der Freiheit?»**

**Zusammenfassung des Vortrags von Dr. Madeleine Sumption,  
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**Why is migration policy so difficult?**

Almost two years ago, the UK voted to leave the European Union – a decision with enormous consequences for the country. Why? In the view of many political scientists, the biggest single reason was immigration.

The UK is not alone in finding immigration a difficult policy area. Immigration has been a major issue for rising populist parties across Europe and in the United States, among many others. Why is immigration such a difficult policy area?

First, as with any area of public policy, governments face technical challenges developing policies that achieve the desired results. Modern societies have high expectations about the capacity of their governments to solve complex economic and social problems, and government is often unable to meet them. Complex problems are not always amenable to the blunt tools that governments have at their disposal and the data, evidence or conceptual frameworks needed to understand the impacts of different policy options are often insufficient.

A key technical challenge in the case of immigration is to translate the broad 'vision' of what policy should do into clear eligibility criteria. For example, the vision might be 'admitting the best and the brightest' – people considered most likely to bring significant economic benefits. But this aspiration needs to be translated into simplistic, 'yes or no' criteria that enable an immigration officer with limited knowledge of the applicant's actual area of work to make a transparent decision. This can be difficult.

A niche but interesting example is policy towards foreign investors. Policies to admit high net worth individuals in return for an investment have become widespread in recent years. However, it has been rather difficult for governments to define exactly what an 'investor' is, for the purposes of immigration policy. Political rhetoric typically describes migrant investors as shrewd financial minds, people who will be actively involved in the country's business life. Programme criteria, however, tend to define an investor as someone who makes an investment – in an approved scheme such as real estate, private business or a dedicated government fund. If someone makes an investment, does this mean that they fit the 'vision' policymakers have in mind?