

The Guardian

Boris Johnson
insults the 3.6m
EU citizens who
have made the
UK their home

EU immigrants are the latest scapegoats in an election that demonises others to gloss over the Tory party's own failure to create a prosperous and more equal society, writes **Maïke Bohn**, co-founder of the3million

Letters

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Boris Johnson thinks I have been able to treat the UK as if it is part of my own country for too long. My own country - that would be Germany which I left 26 years ago. I came as what he now calls an “unskilled migrant”, attracted by a love for British literature, culture and its university system.

We are part of the 3.6 million EU citizens and the 1.2 million UK citizens who freely moved around the UK and Europe.

If Mr Johnson suggests EU migrants in the UK are overstaying their welcome, then he must also apply that to the 1.2 million British citizens living in the EU. Both groups moved around the UK and Europe, curious to discover other countries, meeting and marrying people from a different nation, settling with their loved ones in a new home.

We did not invade our new home countries, we had to fulfil certain criteria upon arrival to make sure we did not become a burden. Freedom of movement rules are not carte blanche for immigration but allow all EU citizens, including the British, to move to another country and get work within three months of their stay.

Freedom of movement rights do not mean uncontrolled immigration, do not mean putting pressure on healthcare and housing by people who haven't paid in. This is a lie now peddled by the Tory party, desperate to win an election and not caring whether this means wrecking the country I call my home.

The UK chose not to invest in a system to register newcomers, it chose to create a nasty bureaucracy instead, the hostile environment that has such a devastating effect on any immigrant who can't prove their right to be in the UK. The new settled status application system is based on a platform of anti-immigration rhetoric, no matter how many times the Home Office protests otherwise. It could have been made a simple registration, giving the automatic rights that were promised and truly protecting EU citizens.

Just a few weeks ago, EU migrants were Mr Johnson's "friends, family and neighbours", praised for their contribution. Now the tone has changed to an anti-immigration dog whistle from a prime minister blaming migrants for homegrown problems. He should know better - the government's own report on the positive impact of immigrants contradicts his statements.

But truth doesn't matter any more in British politics. And this is something we should all be very afraid of. EU immigrants are the latest scapegoats in an election that demonises others to gloss over the Tory party's own failure to create a prosperous and more equal society.

For most migrants working, studying and raising families in the UK, home is here and we are here to stay.

Maike Bohn

Co-founder, the3million

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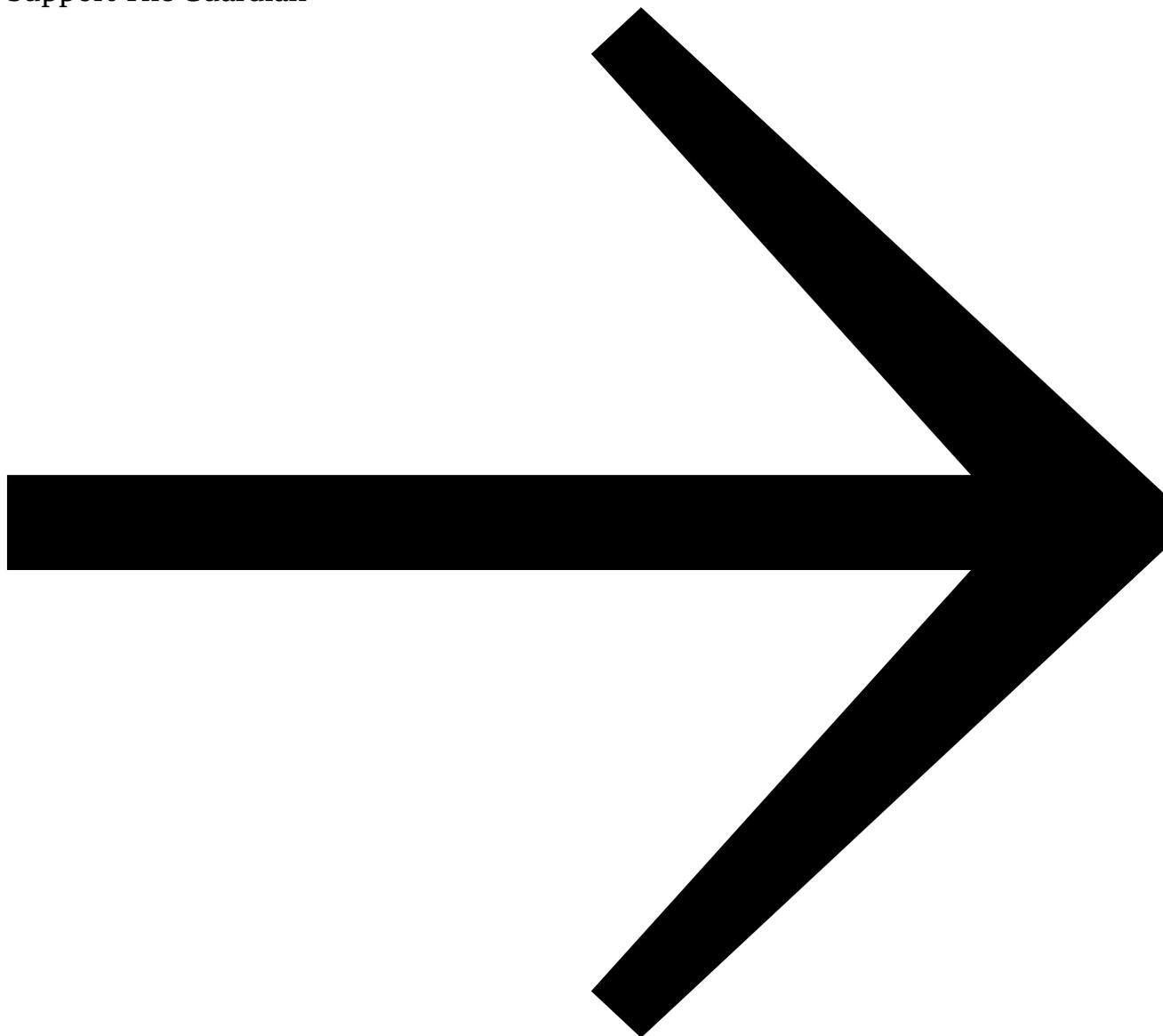
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