

Closing borders

During the crisis so far the EU has battled to keep its belief in open borders as law around the EU. The member states have taken a different attitude.

The EU says "A crisis without borders cannot be resolved by putting barriers between us". It has despite this allowed or encouraged tougher border controls around the EU as a whole whilst wanting to avoid all controls at borders between member states.

Instead Germany has imposed border checks against Austria, France, Luxembourg and Denmark for the movement of people. France has imposed checks on Germany, Belgium and Spain.

In the UK there have been criticisms that the government did not impose stricter controls on people entering through our airports and ports. I currently get complaints that there are still lots of planes flying into Heathrow. I have to explain that some are planes bringing UK nationals home from holidays and stays abroad, and many are freight planes. Some are passenger planes that have been adapted to carry more freight. Passenger services have traditionally also carried some freight in holds as part of our complex supply system.

The EU, realising that countries do wish to impose checks on people at their national borders, is now trying to protect the idea of a barrier free single market for goods. They state "All internal borders should stay open for freight". Regardless of this some member states are diverting export goods for home consumption and inserting their own rules. France and Germany for example are keeping various medical supplies for home use.

This crisis is putting the world trading system under new pressures. In a world of lock down there is more attention to the local and national. Countries are seeking to increase their own productive potential in shortage areas like tests, protective clothing and other medical supplies.