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Migration and Integration in Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia, and in the Netherlands, South Limburg

by *Barbara Krause* and *Karel Toussaint*

I.1 Introduction

Whilst until the late 1980s most migration issues developed in a parallel manner but with national specifics (for example, Dutch Indies and *Spätaussiedler*), important differences showed up during the 1990s and at the beginning of this decade. Since the middle of the 1990s, there has been an obvious change in policy towards migrants and foreigners in the Netherlands, and those changes have been more or less “exported” to our neighbouring countries and even to the level of the EU. Integration into society with the maintenance of the immigrant’s own culture has been replaced by integration into the Dutch society after passing an integration examination. The focus of this article is to investigate those changes and to compare the implementation of those policies in the Netherlands/Limburg and Germany/NRW, where the official understanding of not being an immigration country was dominant until the end of the 1990s, and where integration has only recently become an important political issue. Both countries are now facing similar challenges for better integration into the society, especially into the educational system.

Firstly, we describe migration definitions, types, the numbers of migrants and the backgrounds of migrant policies in Germany and the Netherlands up until the middle of the 1990s.

Secondly we discuss the integration policies thereafter: the pathway to a new policy and the Action Plan Integration in Germany, and the central ideas of the Civic Integration of Newcomers Act (WIN) in the Netherlands. Integration policy in the Netherlands is highly centralised with little differentiation on the local governmental level when compared to South Limburg.

Thirdly, we investigate the cross-border cooperation between professional organisations and educational institutions in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, and the involvement of social work institutions and social workers in their process of integration into the local society and the exchange of each others’ experiences (the ECSW and RECES projects).

I.2 Migrants in Germany and the Netherlands

1.2.1. Speaking about Migration

Migration is a process in which people move beyond a socially important distance; this results in an experience of strangeness – in one’s own perception as well as in the reac-

tions of local populations. Social work has to keep in mind that such strangeness brings the experience of losing abilities and resources, but also includes new information and possibilities.

The term “migrant” is often used interchangeably with “foreigner” = a citizen of another state; statistics also focus mostly on this criterion. This category is of little help to social work, particularly in an area like the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR), where many people live in one country and work in another.

In Germany, there are also large groups of people who have received German citizenship after living in the country for many years. Others are of ethnic German origin, but still face all the problems of strangeness, as they came from very different societies. So, for some years, the phrase “people with a migration background” has been used when focusing on the difficulties that migrants are struggling with and to identify the basic needs for integration.

In the daily language and literature of the Netherlands, several concepts are used to describe and define the migrants. Some are general (like migrants, aliens and foreigners), some are specific (like guest workers and refugees) and others are highly political (like ethnic minorities and asylum seekers). Migrants are people who came to the Netherlands and are of a non-Dutch origin, as in the concept of *allochtonen* (immigrants) versus *autochtonen* (natives), but these concepts also became political. Recently, the Minister of Justice, Hirsch Ballin, plead for the word *allochtoon* not to be used due to fears of creating a split in society (Stokmans, 2008). Another distinction is made between Western and non-Western migrants.

1.2.2. Backgrounds in Germany

Work migration to Germany already existed in the 19th century, especially in the coal mining regions – that also means in the EMR.

After World War II, a considerable number of the roughly 14 million refugees and displaced people who had lived in former Eastern Germany – now part of Poland and Russia – or in Eastern Central European countries as minority groups settled in the Regio Aachen.

Since 1955 (BMFSFJ, 2000), treaties for migrant workers were put into place with South European countries, Turkey and the North African States. Until the late 1960s, the largest ethnic groups came from Italy, Spain and Greece, and 10 years later from Turkey. An important reason for this change was the political answer to an economic crisis in the early 1970s, when no more new migrant workers were accepted, and those who had lost work and left the country had no chance to come back, unless they were citizens of a EU Member State. Many workers, especially from Turkey, who had travelled backwards and forwards between work and family decided to bring their families to Germany in order to stabilise their situation. Later the number increased because of the immigration of family members (weddings etc.). So today the population of Turkish origin is by far the largest migration group – in 2006, 25.8% of all foreigners had Turkish nationality (1.74 million) and, including the German citizens of Turkish origin, they were more than two million (BAMF, 2007). Also in the German part of the EMR, 28% of all foreigners are Turkish (Kriele, 2008, p. 19).

By the end of 2005, 31.8% of all foreigners in Germany were citizens of EU Member States, and more than half of them came from Italy, Poland and Greece (BAMF, 2006).

A special migrant group in Germany is the so-called *Spätaussiedler* (late migrants). These are ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe, who came to Germany “late”, i.e. decades after the huge waves of post-World War II refugees. With the end of the Soviet Union, many of the descendants of German migrants to Russia from the 18th century and later who had been deported after Hitler’s attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, mostly to Siberia and Kazakhstan, looked for a new beginning in Germany. From 1991 until 2007, more than two million “Russia-Germans” – most of them spoke little or no German – were accepted in Germany; about 35,000 in the German part of the EMR (BAMF, 2007; Krause, 2004).

Asylum seekers today come mainly from the Middle East, the Balkans, Russia and the Caucasus area; in the Aachen region – near the Belgian border – the amount of African refugees is higher than in other German areas.

NRW statistics show that about one in four inhabitants in NRW (4.1 million people) has a migration background (Kriele, 2008, p. 17).

1.2.3. Backgrounds in the Netherlands

The first migrants in the late 1940s and early 1950s were essentially not foreigners, but people with a Dutch passport, so-called Repatriates or Indies Dutch (290,000) from a newly independent Indonesia, and soldiers from the Royal Dutch Indies Army (KNIL) and their families (35,000). Later, as a part of the history of decolonisation, 130,000 people came from the Dutch Antilles and 330,000 from Surinam when Surinam became independent in 1975 (Van Duin *et al.*, 2006).

Between the end of World War II and 1980, more than 200,000 people fled to the Netherlands, firstly from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Vietnam, and then, in the 1980s, from former Yugoslavia (76,000). The number of refugees rose sharply in the 1990s. In 1996, there were 22,857 applications for asylum. Two years later those figures had more than doubled according to the Integration Monitor 2002.

After 2000, the number of refugees dropped dramatically due to a restraining policy (in 2001: 32,579; IND, 2003).

TABLE 1.1
Applications for asylum

1996	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
22,857	45,729	43,898	32,579	18,700	13,400	9,780	12,350	14,456	9,731

Sources: CBS, 2003; IND, 2000, 2003, 2004b, 2005, 2006, 2007b.

Between 1995 and 2001, a quarter of a million people asked for asylum in the Netherlands, from the former Soviet Union (Snel, Scholten, 2005), and from Africa and the Middle East, particularly from Ghana, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iran (29,000), Iraq (44,000), Afghanistan (37,000) and Somalia (22,000). According to the 2003 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook (UNHCR, 2006), the number of refugees and asylum seekers was estimated at 207,000 in 2002, 186,000 in 2003 and 155,257 in 2004.

Migrant workers (or guest workers, as they were named) strengthened the Dutch industry in the 1950s and 1960s at times when there was a shortage of labour. In 2007, 367,000 people of Turkish origin and 329,000 people of Moroccan origin (first, second and third generation) were living in the Netherlands, mostly in the big Dutch cities (CBS Statline). There they form 25% to 33.3% of the population; the average percentage of non-Western migrants in the Netherlands is 10% (CBS, 2003; Garsen, Zorlu, 2005).

Nowadays, most new guest workers are Polish. In 2005, there were approximately 70,000 Polish workers in the Netherlands. In 2005, one in three of them had several temporary jobs. The total number of jobs held by the Polish workforce in the Netherlands was 100,000, three times as many as in 2000. The number of Polish temporary workers in 2005 was four times as large as it was in 2000 (CBS, 2003). Also, 44,000 Chinese live and work here.

In 2007, there were 1.4 million Western *allochtones* and 1.7 million non-Western *allochtones* in the Netherlands. Limburg has comparatively the highest number of Western *allochtones* (14%), although it has one of the lowest percentages of non-Western migrants (5%). In Limburg, Western migrants (Belgians and Germans) mostly live in border communities such as Maastricht, Vaals, Kerkrade and Landgraaf, whereas non-Western migrants (Moroccans and Turks) live in the towns, such as Heerlen, Roermond and Venlo.

1.2.4. Migration Policies in the Netherlands

1950s and 1960s

In the early post-war period, the policy was emigration-oriented rather than being focused on immigration. The Dutch emigrated to Canada and Australia, hoping to find a better life in the “new world”, and the Dutch citizens from the Dutch Indies returned home. The soldiers from the Royal Dutch Indian Army (KNIL) and their families were kept together as a group in camps. The Dutch government considered their stay as temporary. At the same time, the first migrant workers from Southern Europe came to the Netherlands.

Ethnic Minority Policy in the 1970s and 1980s

In the 1970s, the policy was aimed at integrating the immigrants, but return migration was a policy objective at the same time as well. The idea that the immigrants’ stay in the Netherlands was only temporary played a key role.

The first policy document on migrant workers, *Memorandum on Foreign Workers (Nota Buitenlandse Werknemers)*, was issued in 1970: «The Netherlands are no immigration country for sure [...] the number of foreigners into the Netherlands has to be in balance with the demands of the labour market taking into account the possibilities of housing, intake and guidance» (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 1970, p. 13).

In 1975, the Dutch government officially stopped the contracting of migrant workers. Immigrants became a part of the ethnic minority policy in the 1980s according to the application for Advice for Government Policy (WRR), as stated in the report *Ethnic Minorities* (WRR, 1979). «The Netherlands is a multi-ethnic society, the guest workers will stay here, and there are social, economic and cultural problems which have to be solved»

(ivi, pp. 39-40). In 1985, in order to increase the political participation of the migrants, they were granted voting rights after they had stayed in local municipalities for five years. Although the contracting had been stopped, family reunification and family formation had increased the numbers of ethnic minorities to 380,000 by 1980.

Meanwhile, about a quarter of the immigrants left the country. On balance, between 1972 and 2001, 145,000 Moroccans came to the Netherlands (CBS, 2003).

1.2.5. Migration Policies in Germany

Asylum Seekers

As a result of the experience of political oppression during the rule of Hitler, Germany's constitution included a very open right of asylum. This was used in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly by Europeans like people from Hungary and Poland in 1956 or Czechoslovakia after 1968. As long as the refugees corresponded to the Cold War ideas about the superiority of the Western system, the right of asylum was not questioned. When, from the late 1970s onwards, more refugees came from developing countries because of crises in the South, these rights became restricted step by step (Bade, Oltmer, 2004). During the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, when unemployment grew as well as immigration, xenophobia in Germany became much stronger, including violent racist acts towards migrants. "Asylum misuse" became a topic for public discussion. Finally, in 1993, several amendments were passed on Art. 16a GG (Right of Asylum), which made it extremely difficult to successfully seek asylum in Germany. The Schengen Agreement, which opened the borders between the Member States but strengthened the fence of the European Union towards the outside, played an important role in this "keep-out-politics".

As a consequence of the new laws and the European cooperation that resulted in more effective border controls, the number of asylum seekers decreased heavily. In 2006, there were 21,029 applications, only 5% of the number of applications in 1992 (438,191) (BAMF, 2006; BMI, 2007). At this peak of applications, 72.1% of the refugees came from Europe, particularly from the former Yugoslavia.

Civil War Refugees

In 1994, as a result of the wars in the Balkans, around 350,000 refugees came to Germany – more than double the amount than went to the rest of Europe. This showed a "pull effect" – many migrant workers in Germany, who came from these areas, were seen to be providing a place of safety for the victims of the wars. The new arrivals were not accepted as asylum seekers, but got temporary protection and had to leave again in the late 1990s. Less than 10,000 were allowed stay (Bade, Oltmer, 2004; BAMF 2006).

Spätaussiedler

In 1993, the acceptance of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe (now practically all from the former Soviet Union) was restricted to 200,000 a year and additional conditions – such as having some knowledge of the German language – were imposed. Since then, the number has decreased to 7,747 people in 2006 (BAMF, 2007).

Jews from the Former Soviet Union

The German history with the Shoah led to the decision that a certain contingent of Jewish people, who want to escape the discrimination in the states of the former USSR, would be accepted into Germany each year. So between 1990 and 2005, more than 200,000 Russian Jews arrived, which led to an enormous challenge for the formerly small Jewish communities here. In 2006, their number decreased to 1,079 persons (BAMF, 2007).

Migrant Workers

The official line of Germany not being an immigration country and the idea that the migrant workers would return to their original countries (although many of them had already lived here for three generations) still prevented a systematic approach to the challenges of integration in the 1990s. In 2000, more than 40% of the foreigners had lived in Germany for longer than 15 years and about 65% of their children had been born there. Most of them lived in big towns in Western Germany due to the economic changes – the decrease of simple production work – and unemployment amongst foreigners became double that of the German average (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration, 2005). Education surveys clearly showed that the largest migration groups were not adequately included in the system of school and professional education. At the same time, the stability of social security and the consequences of the demographic developments became topics for public discussion, both showing the tremendous need for a good education as the base for a solid future for society.

On the Way to a New Policy

So the need for integration became very clear; the Dutch measures of systematic courses were seen as a particularly good example here. In 2000, the government installed a Commission for Immigration Issues (Zuwanderungskommission), which finally became a platform for an actual and realistic analysis of the situation. Many questions and positions, which up until this time had been raised by churches and organisations of civil society, became part of the commission's report in 2001.

In 2005 – after four years of debate – a new immigration law was installed, which incorporated just part of the results of the immigration commission. It lowers the barriers for EU citizens; toward others, it shows a triple intention:

- to bring forward integration for those migrants who will stay in Germany on the basis of a legal status;
- to attract a number of highly qualified people needed by certain professions from anywhere in the world;
- to keep out or send back as many other immigrants as possible, including people living in Germany without legal papers.

In 2007, a new law provided a certain amount of refugees who did not have asylum status, but who have lived in Germany for many years and earn their own money, with a firm legal status.

1.3 Integration Policies in the Netherlands

1.3.1. Central Ideas in the 1990s

In the 1990s, the Netherlands saw a shift from an ethnic minority policy to an integration policy that was focused on increasing the participation of immigrants in education and the labour market. Due to the general economic crisis, the unemployment figures amongst migrants were very high and the results of the ethnic minority policy were disappointing (Snel, Scholten, 2005). Whereas the ethnic minority policy was aimed at groups of people, the new integration policy focused on individuals in a disadvantaged position. The implementation of the policy was decentralised. Again, a WRR report, *Immigrant Policy (Allochtonenbeleid)*, published in 1989, was at the heart of what would become the policy for the years to come (Commissie Blok, 2004). Instead of taking care of jobless *allochtones* and making them dependent on the government, joblessness has to be diminished by providing education, work experience and jobs, and by giving government benefits to employers who recruit *allochtones*. The WRR went on to advocate positive action to improve the position of ethnic minorities in the labour market.

There was a shift from a right to receive care to an obligation to assume responsibility for one's self. The idea of active citizenship was conceived in this period and soon became the policy's guiding principle. The concept of active citizenship focused on the individual citizen with his individual responsibilities, rights and obligations, a process in which employment and education are crucial. Social integration was perceived as a mutual process of acceptance. By 1996, all municipalities had to organise themselves in such a way that each newcomer could effectively participate in an integration programme.

1.3.2. Civic Integration of Newcomers (WIN – Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers)

Since 1996, the Netherlands has had an integration policy, initially on voluntary basis, but which was made compulsory two years later for newcomers who had arrived after the introduction of the Civic Integration Newcomers Act in 1998 (WIN). The civic integration course starts after registration at the local community and an enquiry as to the level of necessity for integration. The programme lasts for one year, and consists of education and orientation. It includes 600 hours of education in Dutch language, with an examination after 12 months, and orientation on the Dutch society on two levels (need to know and nice to know), which ends with a profile examination. Social guidance and job orientation are also part of the integration programme.

1.3.3. Active Citizenship

In 1998, Mr Van Boxtel was installed as the Minister for Urban Policy and the Integration of Ethnic Minorities. The outlines of his policy were formulated in a policy document entitled *Getting Opportunities, Using Opportunities (Nota Kansen krijgen, kansen pakken; Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 1998)*. The primary aim of the integration policy was to achieve active citizenship or, in other words, to ensure that

everyone is responsible for his or her own position in society. According to the policy document, progress was particularly needed in the economic infrastructure (with an emphasis on employment, command of the Dutch language, gearing education to the needs of the labour market, unemployed young people and ethnic entrepreneurship), physical infrastructure (renewal of old neighbourhoods, fighting segregation and criminality) and social infrastructure (preschool activities, improving educational performance, counteracting absenteeism from school and ensuring compliance with the Compulsory Education Act – *Leerplichtwet*) (Commissie Blok, 2004).

1.3.4. The Period Between 2000 and 2007 in the Netherlands

Evaluation of WIN

The evaluation of the WIN led to the formation of the Taskforce for Civic Integration (*Inburgering*) in June 2000, with Ella Vogelaar as project leader, which was to diminish the waiting lists for the integration programmes, to improve the process of integration and to streamline the provision of information (*Inburgernet*).

Restrictive Policy

The 2002 elections were marked by the political rise of Pim Fortuyn. For this reason, amongst others, integration became one of the key issues. In its coalition agreement (a coalition of Christian Democrats, Liberals and Pim Fortuyn List, led by Mr Balkenende), the new cabinet stated its belief that integration – meaning integration whilst retaining cultural identities – requires mutual adaptation.

The Ministry for Alien's Affairs and Integration was introduced. Rita Verdonck became the Second Minister of that department. Newcomers were offered mandatory integration courses. For existing immigrants dependent on benefits, the proposed introduction of such courses was announced, along with more stringent requirements as to the minimum age and income of immigrants coming to the Netherlands for the purposes of family formation.

Integration was henceforth subject to stringent requirements and candidates were required to pass an integration exam. Integration had to start abroad. These resulted in a new WIN (2007) and the Civic Integration Abroad Act (*WIB*) in 2006.

Civic Integration Abroad Act 2006 (WIB – Wet Inburgering Buitenland)

Since 15 March 2006, migrants between the ages of 16 and 65, who need an authorisation for temporary residence (*MVV*) in order to come to the Netherlands, have been obliged to complete the civic integration examination in their countries of residence first. This applies, amongst others, to people who wish to form a family with someone in the Netherlands, through marriage or by forming a relationship, and to religious leaders, such as imams or preachers, coming to the Netherlands for employment. In many cases, passing the integration examination becomes an additional condition that needs to be met before an *MVV* can be issued.

This examination tests a person's basic knowledge of the Dutch language and of Dutch society. The examination is taken orally in Dutch at the Dutch Embassy or the

Dutch Consulate General abroad. The cost for taking the examination is 350 euros. The examination consists of two parts. Part 1 tests the person's knowledge of Dutch society. Whilst looking at an illustrated booklet, the person being tested is asked a number of questions by telephone. The questions are about such topics as the history of the Netherlands and its form of government. Part 2 tests the person's knowledge of the Dutch language (Toets Gesproken Nederlands). This part includes the oral repetition of sentences and the answering of brief questions.

The applications for MVV for family reunification and family formation have dropped by 20%, but most candidates (90%) pass the exam first time. Most of them are well educated and have a Turkish (20%), Moroccan (19%) or Chinese nationality (10%) (Ministerie van Justitie, 2007).

On 15 March 2008, the minimum passing score for the verbal proficiency section (Toets Gesproken Nederlands) of the civic integration examination was raised for both the tests given in the Netherlands and abroad. The new minimum passing score is slightly higher than the previous one. For the rest of the test, the pass level remained unchanged – level A1 is used abroad and level A2 is used in the Netherlands.

New Civic Integration Act 2007 (Wet Inburgering)

Since 1 January 2007, there has been a new Integration Act. The act states that people who come to the Netherlands and live in the Netherlands must learn the Dutch language and know how Dutch society functions. There are three groups of people who must undergo integration: current immigrants, newcomers and religious functionaries.

To become considered integrated, participants of the integration programme have to take the integration exam. Once they pass the exam, they are considered integrated and receive a diploma. In order to pay for the course and the exam, they can apply for a loan from the Information Management Group (IB-group).

In some cases, the municipalities will issue a so-called integration grant. This means that the municipality pays for the course and one exam. The municipality decides if it will offer an integration grant. The municipality often gives an integration grant for voluntary integration to someone who is on social benefits, has no income or is a religious functionary. The municipality also issues exemptions from the integration obligation in two cases: for psychological or physical reasons, or a mental handicap, if the municipality considers that it is not possible to pass the integration exam despite the applicant making demonstrable efforts.

The period in which the integration exam has to be passed is three and a half years if one has already passed the basic exam abroad, or five years in other cases.

If a candidate fails the integration exam, they must take it again as many times as they need to in order to pass. If a person fails to cooperate sufficiently and fails the exam, the municipality will impose a penalty and will refuse to grant them a residence permit for an indefinite period of time.

1.3.5. New Start: General Amnesty

When the new government (a coalition of Social and Christian Democrats with the Christian Union, again led by Mr Balkenende) came to power, one of the first things

that had to be settled were the applications for asylum for people who had lived in the Netherlands for many years since 2001.

In February 2008, the government stated that the number of foreign nationals who would be granted a residence permit in accordance with the inheritance scheme under the former Aliens Act (General Amnesty) would be around 27,500. Around 5,000 foreign nationals whose files were assessed were not eligible for a residence permit.

The new Minister for Housing, Communities and Integration (WV1), Mrs E. Vogelaar, at an informal conference in Potsdam (10 and 11 May 2007), stated the need for her European colleagues «to build bridges, to reconcile and to start a balanced intercultural dialogue».

In November 2007, Minister E. Vogelaar published the *2007-2011 Integration Memorandum: Make sure you fit in! (Zorg dat je erbij hoort)* (Ministerie van VROM, 2008). People from native Dutch and ethnic backgrounds lead much too separate lives, thus fuelling increasing feelings of uneasiness. The government wants to underscore the urgency of dispelling this growing polarisation and states the basic premise of its position: Make sure you fit in! This is the government's way of reminding citizens of both their responsibilities and duties to society. In the coming years, the policy will be aimed at safety, holding citizens accountable for collective interests, rights and duties (reciprocity) and active citizenship.

In May 2007, the Dutch Cabinet and the Parliament agreed the proposal by the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Justice, Nebahat Albayrak, concerning the settlement of the old Aliens Act (General Amnesty) legacy.

The General Amnesty states that, under certain conditions, a residence permit can be granted to immigrants who applied for asylum under the old Aliens Act (before 1 April 2001) and who still reside in the Netherlands. The residence permit will last for one year, starting on the date that the General Amnesty came into effect. Barring contraindications, the permit will be converted into a permit for continued residence after one year.

1.4

Integration Becomes a Political Topic in Germany

1.4.1. On the National Level

According to the 2005 law (Gesetz zur Steuerung und Begrenzung der Zuwanderung), new immigrants have the duty to take part in integration courses – 600 hours of language training and 30 hours of orientation about Germany's social and political system and history. When there are enough places available, immigrants who have already lived in Germany for years may participate – this opportunity was taken up quite often (more than 60% of the participants) in the first year. A first evaluation showed that 600 hours of learning the language are often – especially for people with little or no schooling – not enough and only a minority are able to achieve the certificate, so there is need for adjustments to be made.

In the summer of 2006, the government inaugurated a National Integration Summit, which was made up of 10 working groups. The results led to a National Plan of Integration in the summer of 2007.

On the whole, it is very obvious there is little focus on the structural obstacles to integration into this society. There is also a lot of mistrust on the part of the establishment towards the willingness of migrants to take their part in integration; critical reflection on the framework of conditions for the integration process happens mainly from the side of groups in the civil society, including migrant organisations.

1.4.2. On the State Level

In 2001, the NRW parliament decided to start an action for integration. In 2005, the new government, as the first state in Germany, named a minister who had the responsibility for integration issues and defined NRW (the German state with the highest amount of migrants) as the state of the new integration opportunities.

In 2006, an Action Plan Integration (MGFFI, 2006) was formulated, which mainly aims to better integrate children and young people with a migration background into the educational system and professional training and, in line with this, develop counselling for families and cooperation with migrant organisations. The government emphasises its view that equality in social, economic and legal issues should go together with the acceptance of cultural and religious differences. It encourages the towns and counties to take a leading role, something that up until now has only happened in a few of the larger towns.

Therefore, in the last few years at least, integration has become a political issue.

1.5 Cooperation and Influences in the EMR

1.5.1. Cross-Border Cooperation of Social Workers and Social Work Educators in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR): ECSW and RECES

Limburg shares 212 kilometres of common border with Germany. 139 kilometres of the province's western border and part of its southern border flank Belgian Flanders, and the remaining southern border is shared with the Walloon region. South Limburg, together with the Belgian provinces of Limburg and Liège, and the Aachen region, Heinsberg and Düren, constitute the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR).

The EMR is a colourful and multilingual community in the heart of Europe. Within this forum, cross-border cooperation is developing in various policy, public administration and social fields. Projects in the social field and social workers education, for example, are the RECES project and the cooperation of professional education institutes in the Euregional Certificate of Social Work (ECSW) programme¹. The ECSW programme is developed as a Euregional minor at the participating educational partners. The objective of the programme is to incorporate the Euregional aspects of the social professions into the curricula of the various universities. More concretely, this will be effectuated in a common course-programme (Euregional Differentiation) as part of the existing degree programmes.

The Differentiation programme will focus on professional competences with a Euregional dimension:

- ability to place border-crossing social problems in the context of social and political systems in Europe in general, and in the EMR in particular;

- proficiency in EMR languages (French, German, Dutch);
- intercultural communication skills in the interaction with Euregional clients and colleagues;
- ability to manage new professional concepts in divergent organisational settings.

The ECSW programme starts with an intensive seminar, *Social Work in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine*, where students from the six professional universities meet each other. The intensive seminar is not a part of the Erasmus programme. Students from each region present themselves and their region, and discuss how they view each other: who are they?

The didactic concepts, curricula and organisation of the participating educational institutions are compared, and future perspectives of the profession are discussed. Case studies are considered from the specific professional approaches of social workers and, at the end of the week, students visit practice organisations in the local surroundings. The content of the seminar is part of fourteen modules, such as “Euregional Orientation”, “Introduction to the EMR”, “Intercultural Competences for Social Work in the EMR”, “Language Training”, “Comparative Social Legal Systems”, “Youth and Addiction”, “Safety”, “Client Consultation”, “Aggression”, “Inclusion”, “Social Economy” and “Social Networking”. There is also a module about migration politics in the EMR. Each of them has been developed with cooperation between the participating institutions and, in order to experience cross-border social work, the students have to do practice in another part of the EMR for at least six months.

RECES means Réseau Eurégional Contre l’Exclusion Social² (translated as the Euregional Network against Social Exclusion). The RECES project started in January 2005, after a long period of political and organisational debates, and ended in December 2007 with some additional work till March 2008.

The RECES project set up a network of Euregional institutions dealing with problems of social and cultural integration, realised an interactive website (RECES programme description) and will publish a Euregional social report by the research partners (Jamin *et al.*, 2008).

In the RECES programme, the project partners of all parts of the EMR get acquainted with each other by organising open days, exchanging information and strengthening their cooperation, and by social workers sharing their methods of working with target groups. The project partners organised twelve projects with themes like: “Family”, “Participation”, “Women”, “Euregional Exchange of Methods on Interaction and Communication”, “The Village is Still Alive”, “Health and Vulnerable People”, “Exchange of Information of Refugee Organisations”, “The Role of Migrants Organisations in the Process of Integration”, “Meeting of Youth Workers”, “Pleasure at School” and “I’m the City”.

On several occasions (in 2004 in Liège and Eupen, in 2006 in Liège and in 2007 in Aachen and Liège) the integration and participation of migrants and migrants organisations were paramount. The content of the Euregional social report (Kriele, 2008) defines a Euregional area, exclusion, and Europe and social work. There will be a general context, with demographic figures from the five parts of the Euregio on employment, health, education and housing, and an analysis of those figures, and the report will end with several case studies on topics like poverty with youth and migrants, higher education and social cohesion, and the liberalisation of the social sector in the Netherlands (case studies not yet published on RECES site).

1.5.2. Neighbours: Mutual Influence?

Until the late 1980s most migration issues in the two countries developed in a parallel manner, albeit with national specifics (for example, Dutch Indies and *Spätaussiedler*). Professional social work in the German part of the EMR then tried to learn from the Dutch ways of systematic integration efforts towards refugees.

In the early 1990s, with the fast increase of numbers of immigrants, a rise in xenophobia and a building up of obstacles for newcomers took place in Germany. In the Netherlands, the handling of these questions changed severely in the late 1990s. Social work education in both countries was surprised by the rise of xenophobia in the Netherlands at the beginning of the new decade.

With lower numbers of new migrants and an increasing knowledge about the demographic developments and their consequence at the beginning of this decade, the focus shifted slowly to the integration issue. The concept for an integration course in Germany was strongly influenced by the Dutch example.

At the same time, the public discussions and political decisions seem again to be rather parallel. They also fit clearly into the European framework: to keep new immigration as low as possible (except for highly qualified professionals), to accept some of the existing immigrants by improving their legal status, and to focus on integration, especially on proficiency in the national language and the acceptance of the political and social system. Special services for migrants were cut back and intercultural competences were demanded in the regular services. The need for better integration into the school and professional educational systems has been stressed, but not yet realised, in both countries – thus, in the meantime, the integration issues cut across most fields of social work. We are facing rather similar challenges on both sides of a national border.

Notes

1. In the ECSW programme the partners are: XIOS Hogeschool Limburg, Hasselt (BE); Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg, Hasselt (BE); Haute Ecole HEMES/ESAS, Liège (BE); Haute Ecole Charlemagne, Liège (BE); Katholische Fachhochschule Nordrhein Westfalen, Aachen (D); Hogeschool Zuyd, Sittard (NL).

2. The RECES project partners are: CRIPEL – Centre Régional pour l'Intégration des Personnes Etrangères ou d'Origine Etrangère de Liège, Liège (BE); RIMO – Regionaal Instituut voor Maatschappelijk Opbouwwerk, Limburg (BE); Hogeschool Zuyd, Sittard (NL); Belgisches Rotes Kreuz, Eupen (BE DG); Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Kreisverband, Aachen (D). The research partners within RECES are: Université de Liège, CEDEM – Centre d'Etudes de l'Ethnicité et de Migrations (BE); Katholische Fachhochschule Nordrhein Westfalen, Aachen (D); XIOS Hogeschool Limburg, Hasselt (BE); UL DG/Belgisches Rotes Kreuz, Eupen (BE DG) and Hogeschool Zuyd, Sittard (NL).

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