Chapter 1

Migration to Europe and Five EU Member States: Historical and Political Overview

The discussion of migration and integration policies in the European Union must be placed within its historical context. In order to engage in a comprehensive analysis of migration law and policies in Europe in the 21st Century, an understanding of the development and composition of migration flows since the Second World War, and their political and societal implications, is indispensable. Therefore, the following section provides a historical overview of European migration patterns since the Second World War, with a particular emphasis on Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom. This is followed by a description of the transformation of policies towards immigrants in these five countries over the last few decades.

1.1. Migration to Europe since 1945

Since the end of the Second World War, the territory of the Member States of the European Union has become increasingly important as a destination for international migrants.1 Between 1950 and 1990, the foreign population in the then 15 EU Member States, plus Switzerland and Liechtenstein, quadrupled from 3.7 million (1.3 % of the population) in 1950 to 16 million (4.5 % of the population) in 1990.2 Migration to Europe since 1945 can broadly be divided into four periods: firstly, post-colonial migration and labour migration between 1945 and 1975; secondly, the halt to labour migration and an inflow of family migrants from the mid-1970s onwards; thirdly, an increase in the number of asylum applicants since the late 1980s; and fourthly, a rise in the

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1 Until the 1950s, Europe was the most important area of emigration, with around 70 million Europeans emigrating between 1750 and 1960, see Münz, R./Reiterer, A., Overcrowded World? Global Population and International Migration (2009), p. 159.

influx of employment-related migration, especially in the high skilled sector, since the end of the 1990s.³

During the 1950s and 1960s, Western Europe experienced a post-war reconstruction boom. In order to meet the increasing labour demand, European countries recruited labour from developing countries, in particular from their former colonies and Southern Europe. The five countries included in this study can be divided into two groups on the basis of their legal frameworks on immigration after the Second World War. The first group, comprising the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, received a considerable numbers of colonial and post-colonial migrants. The second group, consisting of Germany, Sweden, Denmark and also the Netherlands, adopted guest-worker policies, recruiting migrant workers from southern Europe, Turkey and North Africa.⁴ Labour recruitment Treaties and Association Agreements were concluded with various countries of origin during these years, at the national as well as the Community level.⁵ The guest-worker model was based on the idea of temporary migration, accepting migrants on the basis that they would return to their countries of origin after a couple of years. In 1970, the European countries with the largest immigrant population in absolute terms were Germany (about 3 million), France (approximately 2.6 million), the United Kingdom (approximately 2 million), Switzerland (approximately 1.1 million), Belgium (approximately 700,000), Sweden (approximately 410,000) and the Netherlands (approximately 260,000).⁶ This means that four of the five countries included in this study were amongst the seven most important countries in terms of immigration in Europe in the post-war period.⁷

The recruitment of foreign labour and the liberal issuing of residence and working permits came to an end with the economic recession of 1967–68, and the first oil shock of 1973. During this period, the countries of Western Europe enacted legislation to restrict the inflow of foreign labour. The major reason behind the enactment of more restrictive immigration laws was the rise in unemployment rates in Western Europe at the beginning of the 1970s. In some

⁵ The most far-reaching Association Agreement concluded in the early 1960s was the EEC-Turkey Association Agreement discussed below.
⁷ Even in Denmark the number of immigrants was high in relative terms.