Introduction

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Integration programmes and tests have emerged and proliferated in Europe in the new millennium. These are not merely citizenship tests, in other words tests required for acquisition of the citizenship of the host state (Bauböck, Groenendijk, Ersbøll & Waldrauch 2006, Bauböck, Perchinig & Sievers 2007). Migrants are also required to attend language tuition and civic orientation or education courses, intended to provide information about the history of a country, its legal system, culture, values and way of life, and to sit integration examinations in order to enter European countries, obtain temporary or permanent residence and to gain access to social benefits. Furthermore, integration programmes and tests have migrated abroad; they are part of a pre-departure phase that commences in the states of origin for spouses seeking reunification with their loved ones in the Netherlands, Germany, France and, soon, in the UK. Whereas, in the past, integration policy was aligned with (a liberal) citizenship policy and non-discrimination and governments insisted on the distinction between integration and migration, in the new millennium we have so far witnessed a deliberate alignment of migration and integration in official discourses and policies and the revaluation of national norms and values. Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition have been superseded by a model of integration that shifts the attention away from issues such as equal treatment, non-discrimination and social inclusion towards conditional socio-political membership, the preservation of core national norms and values and towards social cohesion. In the eyes of governmental elites, social cohesion, national unity and belonging can be bolstered by requiring migrants to learn to speak the language of the host state and by re-educating them so that they can embrace a country’s history and institutions, its values and the national way of life.

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In official discourses at the national and, increasingly, at European levels, civic integration is presented as the required antidote to the alleged failures of multiculturalism and the alleged creation of ‘parallel worlds’ within societies owing to increasing ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. Critics, mainly on the right of the political spectrum, have accused multiculturalism of essentialising culture, undermining social trust and creating ‘multiple enclaves’ that have little mutual interaction (Barry 2001, Levy 2000). The risk of political fragmentation is counteracted by an emphasis on social cohesion and the acceptance of national values by newcomers. In Sweden, a partial retreat from multiculturalism occurred in 1986 with Proposition 1986, but this was short-lived (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006: 222). In 1997 the Government pursued a policy of mainstreaming integration by focusing on the provision of equal rights and opportunities for everybody in all sectors of society. Proposition 1997 thus affirmed diversity and called for the development of an integrated multi-ethnic society. In the Netherlands, integration displaced the multiculturalist paradigm in the late 1990s. Following the entry into force of the 1998 Newcomer Integration Act, migrants were obliged to attend integration courses, that is, language and ‘social orientation’ courses, and non-completion resulted in administrative fines or reductions in social benefits. In the UK, integration tests were first introduced in the domain of naturalisation. The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 sought to end the ‘mail order’ approach to the acquisition of citizenship by requiring applicants to demonstrate ‘sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom’, in addition to language proficiency. A modernised oath of allegiance and a citizenship pledge, to be taken during citizenship ceremonies, were deemed to enhance both the symbolic significance of citizenship and the integration of migrants. Influenced by Sir Bernard Crick and Robert Putnam, the former Home Secretary, David Blunkett, sought to revalue national citizenship and to foster a strong sense of ‘British identity’. The linguistic and civic education integration requirements have now become mandatory for those seeking to settle in the UK and for newcomers. However, government officials also wish to revisit the citizenship framework and to require migrants to demonstrate good behaviour and a willingness to integrate.¹ Citizenship reform is clearly linked to strengthened border protection and a reformed

¹ Compare Tony Blair’s speech on ‘the duty to integrate’; The Duty to Integrate: Shared British Values, Speech on Multiculturalism and Integration delivered at 10 Downing Street, London, on 8 December 2006, for the ‘Our Nation’s future’, available at http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10563.asp.