

Policy of the European Union towards Integration and Xenophobia

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Abstract

The advent of efforts to create a common strategy with regard to the admission and long-term settlement of third country nationals in the Member States of the European Union dates back to the first oil crisis of 1973/74. The onset of economic recession entailed not only a halt to the recruitment of migrant workers by several Member States, but in 1974 it also prompted at Community level the first action programme “in favour of migrant workers and their families”. The Action Programme stated that the presence of a large “unassimilated group of foreign workers”, who lack the rights enjoyed by Community workers, is in the long term intolerable as well as dangerous. While the “integration” of long-term immigrants and of their descendents has since then been on the agenda of Community institutions, this aim has become accentuated through the 1980s and 1990s due to rising levels of negative public and political attitudes with regard to immigration and asylum issues. In this presentation, I will give an overview of the main policy objectives and policy instruments of the EU with regard to long-term immigrants from non-Member States and their descendents as they have evolved since the launch of the first action programme on the integration of third country nationals in the mid-1970s. The presentation will (1) identify the extent of progress made over the last decades, (2) describe the context leading to the emergence of new goals and concepts such as anti-discrimination and “civic citizenship”, and (3) discuss their potential to achieve the combined goal of promoting integration and preventing discrimination on grounds of ethnicity and religion.