

ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENTS, ACTIONS, AND POLICIES IN EUROPE. THE CASE OF THREE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES: DENMARK, SWEDEN, AND FINLAND

Monika Banas*

The European Union (EU) of today is a scene of clashing options: those advocating liberalizing migration policy on the one hand and those calling for stricter immigration regulations by individual member states on the other. This clash frequently happens indirectly and obliquely, substantiated by the otherwise understandable argumentation of the need to protect a given state's domestic interests. This article examines the case of three Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, and Finland) and the shape of the current discourse on the need to reform today's immigration policy. The applied qualitative research method includes analysis of official statements made by politicians and analysis of media content (TV, newspapers) in the years 2005-2010. The discourse reveals the direction of changes that might be expected in the form of new immigration policy in the Nordic countries.

The French policy reform, Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and the Right to Exile (CESEDA), opens the door to educated immigrants, but requires the newcomers to undertake every effort to assimilate into mainstream society. Moreover, the code restricts the family reunification law considerably, tightens the law on mixed marriages and naturalization, and —most controversially— excludes automatic legalization of the status of illegal immigrants' children (Bolzman and Baucher 2006).¹

This kind of change in immigration law, proposed in 2006 by Nicolas Sarkozy, is no novelty, not only in France, but in most of the highly developed European countries. Migration policy reform has become one of the major subjects deliberated in the first decade of the present century. Following the French example, other European Union member states also embarked on modifying their migration policies. It appears that current migration policy spans two aspects: *immigration policy* (legal regulation of immigration streams) and *immigrant policy* (policy determining the management of ethnic and cultural diversity, directly linked to immigrant groups, and their right to participate in the social, political, and economic life of the receiving country).

Legal regulation of immigration streams, from the point of view of the receiving country's interests, necessarily has to aspire to relatively conservative solutions. It exercises control over the number of immigrants and their market usefulness. As

* Assistant professor, Institute of Regional Studies, Faculty of Political and International Studies, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland. monika.banas@uj.edu.pl.

¹ The law makes it very difficult to obtain legal residency and prolongs procedures and multiplies the number of documents immigrants must submit.

the experience of modern Europe reveals, in some countries (e.g., France, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, or Austria) restrictions to free access to the domestic market have been introduced particularly for uneducated people or those with insufficient vocational qualifications. Instruments servicing that selection are, among others, the “reception and integration contracts.”² Failure to comply with these contracts may result in unpleasant consequences for the immigrant, including an “invitation to leave the country of residence.”

European countries unanimously agree on tightened border control along the frontier between the EU and the rest of the world, but different approaches to integrating foreigners have left every member state to develop its own strategy for immigrants’ integration.³ For some countries, effective integration policy consists of granting foreigners applying for permanent residence civil rights in all areas; for others, it boils down to selective access to social privileges, such as the right to vote, to fully enter the economic sphere (e.g., the real estate market), or to obtain citizenship.⁴ Thus, while some countries endorse immigrants’ fuller participation in society, others limit their efforts to institutionalizing immigrants’ temporary residence (Bolzman 2006).

The general perception of migration in a given country affects people’s attitudes toward immigrants as well as toward those natives who choose to emigrate. Immigrants may inspire in society both positive and negative emotions, which are in turn modified by economic, political, and cultural circumstances. An additional element that shapes *pro* or *contra* immigration attitudes is the concept of state and nation as a mono- or multi-ethnic entity. The concept is understood in many different ways within European culture and politics.

French sociologist Dominique Schnapper presented a socio-linguistic look at the phenomenon of immigration (1999, 18). To explore the true attitudes of European societies toward immigrant populations, she examined the terms used to describe them in the languages of different receiving countries. And so, according to Schnapper, the Germans speak of foreigners (*Ausländer*); the British speak of racial and ethnic minorities;⁵ the Dutch use the term cultural minorities (*culturele minderheden*); the French talk of immigrants (*immigrants*), who, with the passage of time, come to be called members of the nation and eventually citizens. This terminology points to the various ways people from a different cultural area are perceived by the indigenous population. The perception then affects the way social integration

² These “contracts” may include obligations like the ability to speak the language of the receiving country, to know its history, culture, and sometimes even its Constitution.

³ One example of a joint institution set up by the EU is FRONTEX, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, based in Warsaw.

⁴ Switzerland, which remains outside the EU structures, but is a member of EFTA and is located in the very center of Europe, exemplifies restrictive treatment of immigrants and their children. People who are born there, spend their entire lives there, study, and work there are still refused Swiss citizenship.

⁵ The term “immigration” appears increasingly frequently in British discourse, pointing to the region of origin of the incoming population, for example, “Eastern Europeans.”

models are constructed, which adopt different paradigms in each of the European countries.

Society's attitude to foreigners sometimes changes with the passage of time, as it is conditioned by economic, political, and social factors. In France, for instance, the fellow countryman/foreigner relationship is based primarily on the utilitarian assumption that could be translated into the following simple, though painful words: the only desirable immigrants are those who can respond to the current needs of the labor market.

In Great Britain, the presence of immigrants is a manifestation of the legacy of an extensive imperial past, and the culturally diverse society is a consequence of the country's opening to people from the former British colonies. This way of compensating for the previous exploitation of subject economies has always had both its advocates as well as violent opponents, auguring the "end of Britain."⁶ When comparing Great Britain to other colonial empires, we can easily notice that the flow of immigrants from former dominions has been greatest here. This can be accounted for by the adoption of the multiculturalism policy as a natural consequence of those migration processes.

A different integration model is characteristic of the Federal Republic of Germany, which uses the notion of the "German people" (*Deutsches Volk*), understood as ethnic, cultural, and linguistic unity (Schnapper 1999, 18). This concept of national community leads to the acknowledgement that immigrants, who form culturally and ethnically different communities, do not constitute an organic part of the nation and, in some cases, may even debilitate it. According to Rita Süßmuth, a German sociologist and chair of the Independent Council of Experts on Migration and Integration, "Since the beginning of the 1990s, it is generally believed in Germany that the presence of foreigners leads to the loss of German identity" (Center for International Relations in Warsaw 2004, 7). This is a popular opinion that can be heard on the street, especially in the eastern *Länder* of the country.

The government's 2007 Integration Plan provides for the implementation by 2013 of a series of essential actions to enhance social cohesion through education, generally accessible German language courses, sports—a very effective platform for integration—and the media, which raise awareness of cultural and ethnic diversity and through stimulation of "civic involvement" attitudes in German society (Die Bundesregierung 2007).

The Netherlands presents an entirely different model. The dissimilarity stems from historical and social differences. As a former colonial superpower, the Netherlands initially elaborated a type of an "asymmetrical consensus" of a multicultural

⁶ Enoch Powell was an ardent advocate of the removal of immigrants from Great Britain in the 1960s. See D. Childs (2001, 149-150) and Hollowell (2003, 81-82). Presently this policy is supported by Nick Griffin, the leader of the British National Party, which has two representatives in the European Parliament. Griffin officially claims that the presence of immigrants is undesirable. (BBC Television 2009).

country, in which immigrants were, above all, offered work. According to Andre Krouwel, a political scientist from the Free University of Amsterdam, in the years of massive importation of labor (1960-1980), not only the authorities, but foreign workers themselves, believed they would go back to their home countries once their employment was terminated. This belief was reflected by a policy of “many cultures,” which meant that immigrants were not included in the social mainstream and foreigners were not stimulated to learn Dutch, explore the history, culture, traditions, or anything else conducive to acculturation (Radio Free Europe 2004a). More recently, Meindert Fennema, one of the leading experts on migration processes and a professor at the same university, has concluded that the multicultural policy was abandoned too late, only in the early 1980s, when it was observed that it led to “ethnicization” of social life, understood as the establishment of closed cultural enclaves (Radio Free Europe 2004b). In order to stop the creation of ghettos detached from one another and from mainstream society, it was necessary to introduce actions based on a different way of thinking.

Thus, integration took the form of joint efforts, actively involving both parties: the minority and the so-called “mainstream” one. This paradigm shift in the perception of the integration process was also reflected by the fact that the Ministry of Integration became part of the Ministry of Education instead of, as it had been until 2008, the Ministry of Justice (Słojewska 2008). Currently, the idea that integration should be based on education and understanding prevails in the Dutch model of a cohesive society.

Switzerland, which is not part of the European Union, has worked out an immigration policy of accepting the newcomers without guaranteeing them full participation in social, economic, or political life. Immigrants are perceived as part of the work force and, as such, do not have the right to citizenship, even after a stay of many years. They are employees, tax-payers, consumers, producers, and little more (Bolzman et al. 2004, 411-429; Mahnig and Wimmer 2003). It is difficult for them to obtain a Swiss passport, even if they were born in the country and studied and worked there. Referenda on the simplification of the naturalization procedure for foreigners were rejected. Therefore, descendants of immigrants, even if they were born in Switzerland and have never lived in any other country, continue to be foreigners.⁷ The broad autonomy of the Switzerland’s cantons, with its long history, produces divergent attitudes on integration, education, or religious denomination in the respective administrative districts. However, in one area, all cantons share the same stance. In the referendum held on November 29, 2009, 57 percent of those who voted supported the ban on the construction of minarets, thus expressing their

⁷ Articles 1 and 15 of the Law of September 29, 1952, stipulate that naturalization can be applied for by an individual who has spent at least 12 years in Switzerland, including 3 years of the 5-year period preceding the submission of application. Swiss legislation does not provide for the possibility of obtaining citizenship on the basis of the *jus soli* principle. One kind of rights directly associated with nationality is political rights; some cantons allow foreigners to vote in local elections, but political rights are still perceived as inseparably connected to Swiss citizenship.

attitude toward the so-called “Islamization” of the country, a specter often raised by the Swiss People’s Party (*Rzeczpospolita* 2009; BBC News 2009).

Until recently, Spain had a liberal immigration policy, but with no concrete integration mechanisms. This resulted from the country’s haste to import the much-needed work force (especially low-skilled and under-qualified workers) on the one hand, and from traditionally being a country of emigration. Later, during the time of economic boom and the resulting inflow of foreign workers, periodic regulation of immigrant streams proved insufficient as a temporary remedy for the new problems. Therefore, following the example of the United States, the Spanish authorities decided to legalize the stay of illegal immigrants who had lived in Spain for many years. The 2005 amnesty revealed the real scale of “illegal” immigration and also put a stop to new waves by creating an efficient administrative and control apparatus (Arango and Jachimowicz 2005). In consequence, a set of only partially cohesive regulations was developed, which has three weaknesses: ineffectiveness in counteracting growing spatial segregation; uneven territorial distribution of immigrants, resulting in a dense population of foreigners only in certain regions of the country; and the resultant additional burden on the provinces and communes.

The Italian case turned out to be slightly different from the Iberian one. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Italy oscillated between two poles: the liberal one, manifested in the 2002 adoption of an amnesty for illegal immigrants, and the extremely restrictive one, legalized in the Act of July 2009. While the amnesty for illegal immigrants did not raise doubts or objections throughout Europe, the introduction of the restrictive law has. European public opinion was shaken by the fact that Italian legislators and politicians decided to pass an amendment according to which illegal stay in Italy is recognized as a *criminal act* and not, as it used to be, an administrative offence. Additionally, a foreigner in detention who has no residence permit is fined €10 000, and a person who intentionally shelters an illegal immigrant runs the risk of up to three years imprisonment (Morris 2009). Such a drastic law has raised objections from institutions dealing with human rights protection, as well as other entities concerned with the nature of the newly introduced regulations, which —like it or not— resemble those from the times of the Mussolini dictatorship. Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Thomas Hammarberg believes that the case of Italy directly points to an urgent need for developing a joint migration policy —particularly one on immigration— in Europe to eliminate the potential for creating legislation and regulations violating human dignity in the future (Hammarberg 2009; Lewis 2009).

In the era of increasingly intensive globalization and fast, cheap communication, leading to relatively easy movement and travel, the flow of immigrants entails growth in cultural diversity. The phenomenon is sometimes interpreted as a threat, all the more so because the terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid, or London contribute to the catastrophic vision of the effects of such an encounter of different cultures and the alleged “clash of civilizations.” Fear of terrorism, associated with cultural and religious otherness, is intensified even more by the competition of groups and individuals for the access to real and symbolic capital.

To sum up, one is bound to recognize that the strong critique of the current “working models of integration” is fully justified. Criticism itself does not solve the problem, though, which is taking on more and more advanced forms, requiring urgent and efficient solutions.

Immigrants in the Nordic Countries: The Cases of Denmark, Sweden and Finland

Integration policy models cannot be constructed without reference to the structure of the immigrant community. Apart from the demographics, profession, and competencies categories, their legal status needs to be taken into account (legality or illegality of stay), as well as the equally important way a given country defines citizenship. What should be mentioned here are two chief principles of including an individual in a civic community, i.e., two principles used to determine the conditions for an individual becoming a citizen of a given country. These are the so-called right of blood (*ius sanguinis*) and right of soil (*ius soli*).

Taking all this into account, let us take a look at the modern integration models in the three Nordic countries: Denmark, Sweden, and Finland.

DENMARK

Due to its geographic location between Scandinavia and continental Europe, Denmark has been a natural place of transit, first for the trade of goods, and later for migration. In the second half of the nineteenth century, due to the dynamically developing agriculture and food-processing industry, the country became a very attractive destination for the foreign work force in search of employment. The Danish market also continued to be highly receptive at the beginning of the following century (Olszewski 2008, 17). Thus, the phenomena of emigration and immigration were by no means alien to Denmark, which led to the development of a certain migratory tradition. Initially, it involved the neighboring countries (Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain), whose societies were culturally similar and whose economies were comparably developed. Emigrant and immigrant movement balanced out, and for a long time the number of Danish inhabitants remained virtually unchanged.

Different changes in the origin of immigration and the number of immigrants occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. The size of the new immigrant groups, consisting mainly of Turks, Pakistanis, and citizens of the former Yugoslavia, upset the former balance of emigration and immigration, in favor of the latter.

In 2007, immigrants constituted 8.7 percent of the Danish population, slightly over 454 000, far more than two decades earlier, when in 1984 they made up only 2 percent of Danish society.⁸

⁸ According to the Ministry for Integration website, there is no precise data on the size of the immigrant group following Islam in Danish population statistics. Statistics Denmark estimated that the

By adopting the 1999 Integration Act, Denmark became the first state in Europe to approach the key issue of immigration and the resultant consequences in a regulated and comprehensive manner. Danish legislators intended to create optimum conditions for the newcomers so they could be swiftly and effectively included in the social mainstream and at the same time guarantee their rights to education and professional and personal development.

Since then, the law has stipulated that the first step in the integration process is to facilitate the immigrant's contact with the Danish language, tradition, history, and reality. Immigrants enjoy the right to a three-year, free-of-charge course in Danish. Apart from that, they can take courses on Danish culture, politics, and economy. Regional and local government authorities, on the other hand, are responsible for the appropriate verification of the immigrants' professional competencies, to be able to offer them proper on-the-job or vocational courses. These activities are supervised by the Ministry for Integration.

In 2005, the government submitted an integration plan called "A New Chance for Everyone" to the parliament. The plan passed by majority vote and was approved for implementation. Key elements of the program include increasing immigrant employment, raising qualifications through education and training, and enhancing the involvement of authorities and local units in the integration process. These premises are translated into concrete actions targeting different segments of the immigrant community: women, children, youth, the elderly, etc.

Elements of integration policy were included in the 2007 government plan, determining the social development objectives for the years to come. The plan is entitled "Society of Opportunities. New Goals" and provides for the construction of an integrated society on the basis of far-reaching cooperation on all levels (local, regional, and national) involving numerous entities, both state and private (Statsministeriet 2007). The main emphasis was placed on the activation of immigrant circles, especially in the field of the so-called ethnic businesses, and on the participation of women in society.

An important element in integrating all members of society is informal education, which consists of different parallel processes such as passing on knowledge and cultivating tolerance and understanding of different cultures. At the same time, even the slightest manifestations of discrimination or hostility toward people of different ethnic, racial, or national origin as well as different sexual orientation or religion must be eliminated.

As mentioned above, integration actions involve not only state, but also private entities. The idea is to distribute the integration effort among many participants, both on the side of the receiving country as well as the incoming individuals/groups. An example of such an approach is the "All Young People Needed"

size of the Muslim population was 120 000 in 1999. Curiously enough, no detailed calculations have been performed so far to determine the number of immigrants in this category. Researchers estimate that in 2006, the Danish Muslim community totalled around 210 000 (Ministry of Refugee, Immigration, and Integration Affairs 2006).

campaign, proposing to the youth of non-Danish descent that they co-found local cultural and educational centers in their neighborhoods. Five years after the adoption of the Integration Act, the following facts speak to the effectiveness of integration actions:

- increased number of employed immigrants,
- higher employment rate of immigrants by private employers,
- greater satisfaction of Danish entrepreneurs with the work done by immigrants (76 percent of private employers and 79 percent of state employers), and
- increased percentage of young people of non-Danish descent who continue their studies in secondary schools (Statistics Denmark n. d.).

A survey carried out by Catinét Research provided additional information confirming positive changes on the path toward greater social integration: in 2001, 39 percent of immigrants had Danish friends and acquaintances, while four years later this rose to more than 50 percent with native Danes in the circle of their closest friends.

SWEDEN

Sweden, experiencing intensive migratory movements since the second half of the twentieth century, and consequently a more and more conspicuous presence of culturally, ethnically, religiously, or racially different minority groups in its territory, tried to develop a model of social, political, and economic relations that would guarantee every person full participation in the country's communal life. This did not happen right away, and as the analysis of the current situation reveals, the objective of full inclusion of immigrants in the social mainstream has not yet been achieved, even though Sweden is perceived as a role model for good integration practices.⁹ Modern Swedish society, as a result of past and current migratory flows, has become a multicultural, multiethnic society, where one-fifth of its nearly 10 million inhabitants is made up of immigrants and their children.

In the Swedish discourse on migrations and their effects, threads drawing on the native Swedish experience of immigration in the second half of the twentieth century are intertwined with the ones going back to a much earlier experience in the final three decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. That period witnessed Swedish emigration to the United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, or New Zealand. "Migratory experience," made up of several generations' individual and collective experiences, is an important factor that determines the modern outlook on the phenomenon.

An ideological change in the way the relationship between the majority society and the minorities was shaped in Sweden occurred in the late 1960s. At that time, a new concept emerged, consisting of the construction of social relations on

⁹ According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) ranking (2010).

the basis of three fundamental principles: respect for difference/otherness (racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural), equal treatment of every individual on the labor market, and immigrants' right to a free-of-charge course in Swedish. The emerging foundations of "immigrant policy" (*invandrarpolitiken*), inspired by the Canadian policy of multiculturalism, provided for:

- 1) equality: first and foremost, equal treatment of every individual in the labor market;
- 2) freedom: the possibility of choosing between practicing native customs and adapting to Swedish culture;
- 3) cooperation: state endorsement of immigrant initiatives, especially activities by ethnic organizations acting as parties in the dialogue between the majority society and the minorities.

A further element within the framework of immigrant policy is refugee policy (*flyktingspolitiken*), in place since the 1970s. With time, it has taken on a separate, more independent status.

The early 1990s brought turbulence in Swedish social, political, and economic life. The country was struck by the economic crisis involving most of the developed countries in the world, as well as mass emigration from the Balkans. Growing unemployment, reaching 8.2 percent in 1993, affected immigrants first, and they became the direct victims of the crisis.¹⁰ In the new situation, Sweden was forced to tighten immigration regulations, all the more so because parties that built their potential draw on social bitterness and resentment toward the social and economic policy then in place gained popularity and came to the fore. The crowning argument of the extremely conservative parties, including the thriving right-wing New Democracy, was the need to protect the Swedish market, the Swedish economy, and, first and foremost, to protect Sweden against the inflow of individuals and groups representing different, and consequently, incongruent cultural patterns. It was a popular belief that immigrants were a group of people who ignored the Swedish social and cultural reality, were unwilling to study the Swedish language, and took advantage of the extensive social benefits offered by the welfare state.

What happened in Sweden, a prosperous country at the time, was neither unusual nor strange. Any crisis, particularly one involving the economy, generates resentment and a tendency to search for a simple justification of an unacceptable situation. In such cases, one usually finds explanations in arguments that are not rational, but appeal to human emotions. This is exactly what happened when the attitude of Swedish authorities about the exodus from the Balkans and the continued admittance of refugees was highly criticized by the opposition, supported by an ever-growing portion of Swedish society. That was when discriminatory or racist speeches and acts were being witnessed more frequently than ever. Preju-

¹⁰ Interestingly enough, in 2009, unemployment reached a similar level: 8.3 percent. See *Dagens Nyheter* (2010).

dice against foreign minority groups was no longer hidden, but more and more boldly demonstrated in the form of aggressive speeches or incidents. The tense domestic situation called for a swift reaction, which consisted of a change in previous premises for immigrant and refugee policies. It was understood that previous practice led to the development of “closed,” passive attitudes among immigrants, who were allowed to choose between their native culture and the Swedish one. Paradoxically, the freedom of choice led to the creation of ethnic enclaves, cultural islands of sorts, existing next to each other, but never together. The slow, gradual separation of immigrants from the rest of the society did not help shape mutual relations, but made social dialogue, already weakened by the unfavorable economic situation, even more difficult.

Toward the end of the 1990s, a new concept of the organization and management of the Swedish multicultural society appeared. It received the “promising” name of integration policy (*integrationspolitiken*). According to its principles, the parties were granted the same rights, opportunities, and, first and foremost, obligations; this had never been as firmly emphasized before. Thus, integration, and not coexistence, became the determinant factor and the goal of Swedish domestic policy. The principle is still followed today, even though it is continually modified based on the dictates of everyday practice and necessity.

FINLAND

After World War II, Finland remained an emigrant country for a long time. Waves of Finnish emigrants poured into neighboring Sweden, but also into Norway and Denmark. A considerable percentage of emigrants chose the United States as their destination. It was only in the final two decades of the twentieth century that the emigrant flow subsided. The 1980s were characterized by an accelerated growth of the Finnish economy, which switched to the production of high technologies and filled the Finnish Diaspora with new hope for a return home. The country’s improved financial conditions soon turned out to be good enough to start building prosperity. This is indeed what happened. What was significant for the efforts undertaken at the time was Finnish cooperation within the framework of the Nordic agreement, involving the economic, political, and cultural spheres.

Starting from the early 1990s, repatriation of the people of Finnish descent from the territories of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) began. This group did not integrate easily, as its members spoke no Finnish and did not feel a particularly strong bond with the country of their ancestors (Tanner 2004). At the same time groups of people seeking refugee status started flowing into Finland, as well as individuals in search of a new homeland, often for purely economic reasons. In early 2009, Finland’s population included nearly 156 000 foreigners, a little over 3 percent of the total (Statistikcentralen 2009).

In 1997, Eduskunda, the Finnish parliament, passed a law about the principles of immigration and integration policy. According to its guidelines, integration

consists of active participation of immigrants in social, economic, and political life. The principle of equal status is characteristic of this participation. What is also significant is that the state ensures that immigrant groups can cultivate their traditions and customs as long as they do not contradict the Finnish Constitution.

According to the Finnish integration concept, foreigners are perceived as partners actively involved in the process of the construction of Finnish reality. Finland does not follow the *ius soli* principle when granting citizenship. Newcomers are allowed to apply for Finnish citizenship after a five-year legal stay in the country. Applicants need to meet several requirements: they have to speak fluent Finnish (an additional asset is good command of Swedish), have no criminal record, and have a regular, steady income (Kyntäjä 2003, 187).

Since Finland is undoubtedly a prosperous country, foreigners with permanent residency can enjoy extensive welfare benefits. Unemployed immigrants are invited to participate in special, individual integration programs from which they receive a government integration allowance whose use is monitored by an employment office worker. The solution is aimed at the best possible and most effective use of financial resources, coupled simultaneously with the development of the interested party's professional potential.

The Ombudsman for Foreigners, established in 1998, supports the implementation of integration policy. The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO) is an advisory body to the government institutions dealing with migration and integration that dates from the same year. The 14 board members were directly appointed by both the native and the ethnic minority groups, a practical manifestation of immigrants' real involvement in the decision-making process about integration (Kyntäjä 2003, 205).¹¹

Like Sweden, Finland has become a typical immigration country over the last 10 years. Facing the issue of the growing inflow of foreigners, the Finnish government determined (with the approval of the parliament) annual quotas of between 500 and 1 000 for the number of immigrants allowed into the country as refugees (Kyntäjä 2003, 193). These people are entitled to language courses and vocational training. Additionally, in order to facilitate quick integration, they are sent to different parts of the country to prevent the creation of ethnic clusters (Kyntäjä 2003, 198). Thanks to agreements signed with different state institutions, local district and municipal authorities can offer accommodation to immigrants and reimburse the maintenance cost from public coffers.

As far as educational programs for immigrant children and teenagers are concerned, day care and education centers, where children can learn Finnish as well as their native language free of charge, are highly popular. According to integration policy principles, children can study their native language three to four hours a week free of charge. Adults can also participate in similar courses, tailor-made for their needs. Apart from the aforementioned forms of assistance, the Finnish state

¹¹ See also the Finnish Ministry of the Interior's website about ETNO (n.d.).

offers financial support to institutions founded by immigrants, sponsors television and radio programs broadcast in native languages, and earmarks funds for ethnic press publications.

Problems with adaptation and integration occur in different spheres of communal and private life. However, in Finland the greatest problem for immigrants is their continued high unemployment rate, which is much higher than that of the native population, coming to nearly 30 percent, compared to 7 percent for the rest of society. Lack of work and frequent use of welfare benefits constitutes a direct cause of foreigners' marginalization and partial exclusion. For those very reasons, general opinion about immigrants is not particularly positive. This negative attitude is additionally strengthened by the events in neighboring Sweden and Denmark, as well as by the general tendencies to radicalize attitudes about immigrants in continental Europe.

Rhetoric Predicting Changes: Denmark

Widely discussed in Europe, the need to change migration policy is also subject to debate in the Scandinavian countries. In Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, we can see a dramatic change of rhetoric in the discourse on migration and its consequences. The last decade has seen the rise of great social resentment not only in terms of the general economic condition caused by the global financial crisis since 2007, but also disappointment in previous integration policies for immigrants, policies that apparently have not achieved the intended results.

In European countries with a large proportion of immigrants like France, the United Kingdom, Italy, or Spain, integration policies seem to be relatively ineffective compared to their financial and social costs. This naturally undermines citizens' confidence in political parties, politicians, and intellectuals who opt for immigration as a means to rescue aging societies.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's statement in the German parliament in October 2010 about the failure of the German policy of multiculturalism received wide media coverage in Europe. For some in the audience, the statement was shocking, but for others it was not and merely reflected the true state of affairs. Merkel's conclusion, adopted by the media and extended later to European migration policy in general, has modified the public discourse, giving it a much more critical tone. Since then it has become much easier to question the policy of multiculturalism, and to challenge the presence of immigrants, especially those from outside the EU.

Anti-immigrant rhetoric typical of extreme right-wing circles also began to appear gradually in the statements of politicians from liberal circles. The case of Denmark constitutes such an example.

The recovery plan for the Danish economy after the 2007 financial upheaval, presented on May 25, 2010, by Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, contains several major changes. One concerns toughening the procedures for legalizing the stay on Danish soil for non-EU citizens. Another significant change boils down to

modifying —by restricting more— access to the system of social services for immigrants already residing in the country.

According to the authors of the recovery plan and the prime minister himself, the proposed changes are dictated by the need to repair state finances, as well as by the obligation (as an EU member-state) of reducing the budget deficit from five percent to three percent of GDP.

The planned savings are to be ensured by the following cuts in public expenditures:

- shortening the period for receiving unemployment benefits from four to two years;
- reducing child allowances to 30 000 crowns (This is supposed to save 1 billion crowns in 2013.);
- keeping financial support for developing countries at the same level as in previous years (This will save nearly 1.4 billion crowns.); and
- reducing subsidies for translators in hospitals (This will create a savings of 15 million crowns). (Lehmann 2010)

Critics of the plan and the reform say the government is going after simple solutions using populist arguments and applying methods that might affect the most vulnerable, including immigrants.

Some experts, observers of the Danish domestic political scene, believe that before being put into practice, the government initiatives must first gain the “silent” support of the populist party Dansk Folkeparti (DF). The party has been growing in power since the late 1990s and now constitutes a significant political force in the Danish parliament. The proposed toughening up of migration policy and reduction of social benefits are changes very welcomed by the DF.

Michael Bach Henriksen, a journalist at the *Kristeligt Dagblad* newspaper, stated that the savings proposed in the reform program could be called into question and are very small taking into account all the country’s finances. According to Henriksen, this indicates three tendencies: first, ruling politicians do not have the courage to look for savings in areas where they really should (e.g., by limiting the possibility of early retirement); second, the DF’s impact on the government is disturbingly hefty; third, the government is looking for temporary solutions, undertaking rather symbolic and irrelevant actions (2010).

In addition to all of the above, the reduction of allowances for families with more than three children strikes directly at immigrant families, which are traditionally large. This is an open warning signal to immigrants that family policy in Denmark is being toughened.

Helle Ib expressed similar comments in the *Berlingske Tidende* newspaper. The journalist stated that the government bowed to DF influence, deciding to repair the state budget at the expense of immigrants and their descendants (2010).

A contrary point of view is presented by DF leaders Pia Kjærsgaard, Kristian Dahl Thulesen, and Peter Skaarup. They believe that the reform does nothing more

than divide the cost of the Danish welfare state among all its residents, including immigrants and their descendants. The immigrants should not be treated more favorably than native Danes (Lehmann 2010).

A controversy arose after Peter Skaarup's statement that if non-European immigrants worked as much as native Danes, the state would be able to save nearly 24 billion crowns (Skaarup 2010). This is one of the examples and at the same time an indicator of the direction the public discourse on immigration may develop.

Suggestions that immigrants are prone to misuse the Danish welfare system and that they avoid work fall on fertile ground. Populist arguments about the reluctance of immigrants to integrate into Danish society, immigrants' inclination to lock themselves in ethnic ghettos, and their tendency to crime constitute very dangerous and powerful rhetoric creating a metaphoric picture of immigrants as a group of people unwilling to integrate and willing to separate and live on the expense of the rest of society.

The recovery program for the Danish economy has become a convenient moment for the DF to push through the modification of Danish (im)migration policy. Thus, in the new concept of the policy the immigrants are obliged to be ready to accept work quickly after arrival in the host country, undertake professional training courses, and learn the Danish language. Failure to fulfill these requirements would constitute grounds for expelling an immigrant from the country.

Denmark's political landscape has significantly changed during the past two decades. So has the public discourse on immigration. The contemporary discourse around the policy applied to immigrants in Denmark contains much more severe criticism than several years ago. It is powered by such events as the Islamist's reaction to the Muhammad cartoons published by *Jyllands Posten* in 2005 and the fortunately unsuccessful attempt to murder cartoonist Kurt Westergaard, their author.

The present alignment of forces in the government coalition and the parliament reflects the mood of the Danish voters, who do not deny the need to reduce the influx of immigrants to their country and to tighten the rules governing their stay.

For some political commentators, what is happening in Denmark is rather an unnecessary and embarrassing episode in the country's modern history; others understand it as an indispensable element in the process of governing a country like Denmark, with a tradition of democracy, freedom of speech, and a secular state.

The End of Political Correctness? Sweden

For several years, the Swedish discourse on the financial and social condition of the country has included increasing calls for an open, constructive, public debate about (im)migration policy. A need for such a discussion based on solid arguments has been evident for several reasons. These include the lack of transparent procedures for the admission of immigrants (including refugees); incomplete data about the financial costs involved in this process; and imprecisely stated amounts of the tax revenues paid by immigrants into state coffers.

An analysis of the discourse in the Swedish media over the past few years indicates that public opinion demands the revision of current immigration policy. There appears to be a great deal of concern about the safety of public finances. Questions are raised, among others, about the allocation methods for budgetary resources dedicated to social services. The generosity of the social system practiced for many decades had few opponents, who argued the grave consequences of such a policy. The voices of these skeptics, however, were not loud, and they remained outside the mainstream rhetoric, which accepted the current practice.

For almost four decades, generously supported disadvantaged groups had developed an attitude, a tendency to excessive use of allowances and benefits. This appealed to immigrants, but also to native Swedes.

The information policy of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, seen from today's perspective, contributed to creating the image of immigrants as individuals who needed protection and special state aid, because they came mostly from developing countries. Opinion leaders set an example by showing commitment to the immigrants' issues. This commendable attitude has become the norm, but, to some extent, it has also "disabled" the immigrant population, by indicating that it was more profitable to be dependent than to be independent and resourceful.

The question arises about the origin or source of such a generous social policy. One of the answers may be that, while becoming a welfare state in the 1950s and 1960s, Sweden wanted to change its own image, which had accompanied the country before and during World War II. Declaring itself neutral in the conflict, Sweden could afford economic agreements with each of the warring parties, thus sparking severe controversies worldwide.

Returning to the present, the criticism of current migration policy raised by some media is due to the fact that, according to the United Nations definition, 8 out of 10 asylum seekers are in fact not refugees (Sandelin 2008).

The variety of terms and a multiplicity of denominations present in the Swedish language contribute to clerical errors in the proper recognition of immigrants' status. The multiplicity and variety of terms similar in meaning seems to be a factor contributing to deficiencies in the management of migration flows.

The costs of the current migration policy are not exactly known; they remain estimates. This provides another reason to speculate about the actual amount. The daily press publishes different numbers ranging from 40 billion to 300 billion crowns a year. The large spread between the quoted sums is caused by the changing intensity of immigration flows in a particular year and in the preceding years.

This is all aggravated by the fact that the results of research conducted for the state institutions responsible for integration show that, after five years' residence in Sweden, half the men who came as refugees in 2003 continued without a job! When it comes to women, it was even worse: 60 to 70 percent, depending on the ethnic group (Sandelin 2008).

The lack of an open critical review of (im)migration policy resulted from several factors: 1) a belief in this policy's efficacy; 2) a deep-rooted conviction about the righteousness of helping disadvantaged individuals by granting asylum; and

3) political correctness. The last of these factors meant that migration issues were not a subject of public debate, but rather stayed behind ministry doors. No one taking part in the public discourse on immigration wanted to be accused of “hidden hostility toward immigrants” or “hidden racism.”

Ideologically tinged rhetoric used hitherto in public debate distorted the discourse about immigration, making it artificial, unreal, distanced from reality, in the name of solidarity and empathy for the less privileged. As it turns out, one of the major challenges for today’s migration policy in Sweden is to modify the socio-political discourse on immigration both in its form as well as its content.

A New Balance of Power in the Parliament: Finland

A need for change in immigration policy is also evident in Finland. Until the 2007 crisis, debate over immigration and immigrants was not a central theme in Finnish public discourse. It was carried out almost on the margins, using rather mild rhetoric. However, today the situation has changed. The economic downturn reduced the sense of financial stability among ordinary citizens, who began to launch negative comments about the issue of open borders. Slogans demanding tighter immigration laws are not exceptional or unusual today. They can be heard on the streets, read on Internet portals, or even seen in some media.

A dramatic increase of these negative emotions can be observed since 2008, when the elections for municipal councils took place. The pre-election struggle was fierce, full of sharp arguments, sometimes even aggressive. Astrid Thors, Finnish Minister of Migration for European Affairs, experienced the resentments personally. One of the members of the populist party *Sannfinländarna* (“True Finns”) published on Facebook a statement expressing his readiness to accept the penalty and consequences for killing the minister. These threats were immediately spotted by police and prosecutors, who began an investigation. The swift response of law enforcement agencies, however, did not discourage other party supporters from uploading further aggressive statements onto the Internet (Kaarto 2010).

The Internet has turned out to be an effective communication platform for disseminating contents impossible to publish elsewhere. Some groups, associations, or other politically oriented formations, reluctant about or opposed to immigrants, take advantage of this. The anti-immigration groups and associations that are active on the Internet are also rather well organized. They have their own forums, stay in regular contact with each other, and jointly take actions directed against their opponents. Examples can be found among harassment cases in which journalists and politicians who support liberal immigration policy have received anonymous letters, often containing threats (*Helsingin Sanomat* 2010a).

The anti-immigrant movement still remains on the margins of social movements; however, it is growing stronger and expanding its influence. One of the symptoms of this trend is the result of a Gallup survey conducted for Finland’s largest daily

Helsingin Sanomat in March 2010. According to the survey, 60 percent of those interviewed were against continuing the current immigration policy, and supported proposals for its tightening (*Helsingin Sanomat* 2010b).

Public opinion in Finland exerts a strong and clear influence on the shape of the country's domestic policy. The voice of Finnish society contributed to the modification of the asylum law in 2010, making it more restrictive in cases of family reunification when individuals granted Finnish asylum want to bring family members from abroad.

Finland's Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Stubb openly supports immigration. In an interview given to the daily *Helsingin Sanomat* in March 2010, he stated that the ongoing anti-immigrant debate was not acceptable and that it contradicted the overall interests of the state. His opinion is shared by Minister of Migration for European Affairs Astrid Thors, who, at a parliamentary meeting in May 2010, presented statistical evidence of *de facto* decreasing inflow of immigrants to Finland.

In light of this fact, the public's increasingly critical attitude toward foreigners may be problematic and confusing, especially when immigrants constitute only about 2.5 percent of Finnish society, much less than in the case of neighboring Sweden and Norway.

Historically, anti-immigration attitudes seem to have a long tradition, dating back to the mid-twentieth century. At that time, anti-immigration slogans were often expressed by the Finnish Rural Party (Finlands Landsbygds Parti), which hit its peak in the 1960s and 1970s. The party's prominent leader, Veikko Vennamo, was a charismatic, talented orator and strategist who created a significant audience of listeners and supporters.

Although Vennamo's party dissolved in 1995, his ideas survived and found followers. One of them is Timo Soini, the leader of today's populist party, the True Finns (Sannfinländarna), which won seats in parliament in 2003.

The party's increasing popularity is due to several factors. Among them are its leader's oratorical skills. Soini is an outspoken critic of the EU and its financial institutions, which makes him popular among EU skeptics. The crisis of the Greek economy, which seriously disturbed the euro zone, has provided Soini with additional arguments against the EU, and also indirectly against the immigration policy pursued by Finland as an EU member.

The growing strength of the populist party should be viewed particularly in the wider context of the upcoming parliamentary elections in April 2011.¹² Today's government coalition made up of four parties, including the strongest one, the Center Party, with 51 seats in parliament, is challenged by a similar number of opposition parties. The biggest of these, the Social Democrats, has 45 parliamentary mandates. It seems that subtle internal frictions within the Center Party may become an important factor in the possible shift of power after the elections. These fric-

¹² A majority of voters cast their ballots for the conservative/liberal National Coalition Party in those elections.

tions indicate absence of a commonly shared and united vision of the future of Finland. Consequently, the balance of power in the Finnish parliament can and probably will significantly change after the elections in April.

One may hope that the victorious party, in a position to build a government coalition after the elections, will not do so by turning to the True Finns as a possible partner.

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