The Leader in Both Directions: 
Retracing the History of Immigration and Integration Policies in the Netherlands

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Abstract
This paper will be divided into two parts, with the second part appearing in the next issue of this publication. The first part will provide a brief historical overview of immigration flows into the Netherlands following World War Two. An examination of the first major integration policy which was characterized by the support of minorities’ cultural and religious identities will be presented. This narrative will take us to the first turning point in the Dutch integration approach. The second part will look at the emergence of the climate in which the issues of minorities became a political priority, and the policy debates about how best to address the challenges of managing diversity became not only more inclusive but, above all, much more confrontational. This part of the article will analyze policies articulated in the context of events which shaped Dutch public consciousness in the 1990s and more importantly in the early 2000s: high profile assassinations in the Netherlands and the terrorist attacks in the United States. The analysis presented throughout this paper will seek to answer two questions: a. which elements of the Dutch integration policies proved to be more successful, and b. to what degree the Dutch government has substantively curtailed aspects of its multicultural policy for which it had been applauded. In other words, has the rhetorically harsh critique of policies of multiculturalism and of the ideological tenets which underpin it really translated into a complete demise of this policy within the Dutch context?
Introduction

The onset of the second millennium has been marked by increasingly emotional, often violent, and above all, partisan public debates on how to manage the flows of migrants within a state’s jurisdiction. These discussions involving major social actors – the media, the civic society, unions, social and religious organizations, academic experts, and obviously policymakers of various stripes – can be observed in virtually all economically developed nations, and in a considerable number of developing ones. The creation and subsequent expansion of the European Union have rendered the questions of immigrant integration pivotal to all decision-making in the EU member states, most notably in those countries which have been viewed as desirable immigration destinations. The policies that governments choose to pursue cover the spectrum from those based on the ideology of multiculturalism, ideology characterized by the tolerance for socio-cultural and religious differences, to the assimilation approach which places more emphasis on the responsibility of the newcomers to adjust to the norms and values of the host society. The former perspective supports social and religious differences and views them as factors contributing to the overall wellbeing of the country while the latter puts premium on the fusion with the dominant culture.

What makes the Dutch case so fascinating is that this nation has been the leader in the pursuit of both sides of this dichotomy. It was one of the first countries to formulate and implement coherent immigration policies which, over the next decade, evolved to be among the most liberal in Europe. More recently, however, the Dutch government has undertaken steps to move away from a multicultural policy and adopt, at least rhetorically, the assimilation approach. In the process of this shift, the Netherlands again became one of the ‘first’ – this time the first to require all prospective migrants, including those seeking family reunification, to pass a basic integration examination prior to arrival in the country. How did such a paradigmatic
policy shift occur over a relatively short time?

1.0 The development of the Netherlands as an immigration nation

At the turn of this century, or even through the 1990s, most of the authorities on immigration would have generally agreed that the Netherlands was among the three countries best known for pursing policies of multiculturalism, with the other two being Canada and Australia. (Entzinger, 2003). While both Canada and Australia are traditional immigration nations, i.e. their dominant population groups originating elsewhere, the Dutch had not really perceived their state as an immigration country until the late 1970s. This perception did not represent a denial of the existence of non-Dutch nationals in their midst. Migrant laborers who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s to fill blue color jobs, mainly in construction, were acknowledged with the understanding that their presence in the country was temporary and that they would eventually return to their homeland. Such position obviously removed the need to consider any comprehensive policies to integrate the newcomers. As a result, there was no public debate on the virtues and drawbacks of large-scale inbound migration, no discussion of possible integration strategies, and no government policy at all related to the management of the flows of migrants.

Today, the population of the Netherlands is extraordinarily diverse, representing a multitude of ethnic and religious groups. Out of the total population of over 16 million, approximately 11% (1.8 million) have non-Western roots, with the two largest minorities being Turks, and Moroccans. About 6% of the Dutch population are Muslims. (Veldhuis & van der Maas, 2011) Issues related to immigrants’ integration into Dutch society dominate public and political discourse. Quite clearly, whether the Dutch citizens like it or not, the Netherlands has been transformed into an immigration nation. These demographic changes have had very significant socio-economic implications for the entire society. The sections which follow will consider the pivotal ele-
ments in the evolution of the immigration patterns in the country and how
the authorities in The Hague acted in response to, or in anticipation of,
migrant movements.

1.1 Pillarization

The basic social principle governing Dutch society from the middle of
the 19th century until the onset of World War Two, was pillarization. It is this
unique arrangement which earned the Netherlands its reputation as a plural-
istic, tolerant state. The institutional tradition of pillarization strongly
impacted the public perception of migrants and influenced the actions of the
policymakers in response to the post-war demographic changes.

Beginning in the latter half of the 19th century, Dutch society was largely
structured around ‘pillars’ – social or religious groups, such as Protestants,
Catholics, Liberals and Socialists (many other less easily identifiable groups
existed, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to go into a detailed descrip-
tion). Each group operated within its designated sphere and functioned quite
independently from other ‘pillars’. Each group enjoyed ideological autonomy,
advanced its organizational structure through political mechanisms, and bene-
fited from state funding. This state support allowed all the pillars to prosper
by providing financial resources to set up hospitals; schools, to organize rec-
reational activities, and to promote youth involvement (Andeweg & Irwin,
2002)

The main legacy of pillarization is represented by the diffusion of ten-
sions inherent in this structural segmentation. As mentioned above, the
pillars, or social groups with very distinct political philosophies and religious
orientations, had relatively little contact with each other in their everyday
functions. Any conflicts that arouse were typically settled in a compromise
by the elites of the pillars involved (Entzinger, 2003). The harmonious societal
relationships contributed to the overall prosperity of the state and promoted
a “live and let live” mentality which defined the place of migrants in the minds of the Dutch populace.

Firstly, the legacy of societal ‘pillars’ had a lasting effect on the very tone of the immigration discourse. Whereas in other European immigrant states, notably, France, the United Kingdom and Germany, immigrants were differentiated based on ethnicity, nationality or religion, in the Netherlands the newcomers were collectively grouped as a ‘minority.’ Consequently, the ensuing polemics focused on the evolution of ‘minority policies’. (I will address this in more detail later.) In other words, immigrants were perceived as another ‘pillar’ to be introduced into the fabric of Dutch society, a process not historically known to be antagonistic to other, already existing, groups (Hoppe, 1993). The legacy of governing by inter-pillar compromise and consensus and avoidance of politicization of potentially disruptive issues were significant factors behind a long period of de-politicized debates of immigration issues, the time when policy discussions related to migrants were typically limited to the working level bureaucrats (Rath, 2001).

Perhaps even at a more important level, the pillarization framework allowed for the parallel establishment of social and religious institutions which were not viewed as mutually threatening. Thus, the emergence of Islam as a new religion within Dutch society in the 1960s and 1970s was first seen as an additional pillar which could be accommodated following past examples. While the process of secularization was accelerating in the Netherlands in the after-war period, arriving Muslim migrants could benefit from the legacy of pillarization to establish their religious institutions without facing strong local opposition and taking advantage of the government support (Rath, 2001).

Arguably, one of the reasons why immigration policies became such a politically controversial subject in the country is the gradual realization that immigrants who chose to remain in the Netherlands permanently could not
be readily molded into just another ‘pillar’ making up the mosaic of society. For all of their religious and political distinctiveness, traditional pillars were remarkably similar in other important ways. Their members shared the same language and values and belonged to very comparable socio-economic strata. Newcomers, by and large, occupied a low social position relative to the established pillars, often differed radically in daily norms from the mainstream population, and had no leaders capable of engaging in dialogues with the elites of the other groups.

1.2 Immigrants to the Netherlands after WWII

While the legacy of pillarization did influence the official attitude towards migrants in the 1970s and 1980s, it was largely a non-issue in the context of the first post-war waves of labor migration. The presence of foreigners was considered temporary, and thus not requiring any long-term accommodation on the part of the state. We will focus on two groups who first exposed the country to the phenomenon of immigration, though it was certainly not acknowledged as such by the dominant groups until much later.

1.2.1 Influx from former colonies

The independence of Dutch colonies brought the first sizeable steams of migrants into the Netherlands. In the early 1950s, over 4 000 soldiers who served in the Dutch army in the South Moluccan Islands, arrived in the Netherlands accompanied by their families. Their arrival was not at all the result of an immigration policy – again, none existed nor was it contemplated. The Dutch government accepted them as a humanitarian gesture to acknowledge their service to the state during the time of political unrest and economic instability in the Moluccas. It was expected that they would not remain permanently in the Netherlands and would return home as soon as an independent state Moluccan state could be created. No special provisions were made to integrate them into Dutch society. In fact, the circumstances of their stay rendered any meaningful contact with the mainstream population
difficult. They were housed in isolated facilities, including two concentration camps remaining from WWII, apart from the main population. Overwhelmingly, these migrants were unemployed, as the government considered their sojourn too temporary to warrant the issuance of work permits.

As the political reality in the Moluccas did not evolve as expected, their repatriation did not materialize. The Moluccan communities continued to reside in the Netherlands, but remained very much outside the mainstream of society. With limited skills and few employment opportunities they remained economically very marginalized even after the authorities acknowledged that Moluccans were in the Netherlands for good. Due to the belief that the Moluccans were ‘guests,’ rather than political exiles, absence of any integration measures during the time when this community could benefit from them the most had profound consequences. It led to a sense of alienation from the Dutch society which manifested itself in the radicalization of second- or third-generation of Dutch Moluccans.

The independence of another Dutch colony, Suriname, in 1975 also produced a significant surge in migration as many feared a decline in the standard of living once the connection with the mother country was severed. However, in the case of migrants from Suriname, and subsequently of those choosing to come to the Netherlands following the independence of the Dutch Antilles, the government attitude was quite different: they were treated as expatriates and expected to adapt quickly to the norms and values of the indigenous population (Dalstra, 1983).

1.2.2 Labor migrants

‘Guest workers’ represented the second wave of migrants to settle within Dutch borders. This influx continued in various forms over several decades and a significant majority of the non-indigenous population in the Netherlands today can trace their roots to these labor migrants recruited to
assist with the economic reconstruction following the devastation of the war.

The Netherlands began to recruit foreign laborers in the mid-1950s hoping to meet the demand for unskilled and low-skilled workers. Bilateral agreements were signed with a number of European countries including Spain, Italy and Turkey, and also with Morocco. Parallel to the treatment of exiles from the Moluccas, guest workers were perceived as temporary residents of the country. While no formal restriction on their stay in the Netherlands existed, it was widely assumed that they would return to their respective homelands, especially in the light of significant economic advances in Italy and Spain.

The Dutch government actively recruited foreign workers through a number of bilateral agreements. These arrangements were concluded without any public political discussion by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in consultation with the employers’ groups and trade unions. During rapid economic growth in the 1960s migrants were not perceived as a threat to domestic labor interests but as a necessary component to help the Netherlands achieve its full industrial potential (Bruquetas-Callejo et al, 2007). Alas, the hope of a continuing economic boom came to an end with the first oil crisis of 1973 and the ensuing recession. A much less elastic labor market, however, did not lessen the desirability of the Netherlands as an immigration destination: in 1975, at the height of the economic downturn, over 70,000 migrants entered the country. Most of them were foreign laborers and family members (Vink, 2007). While in response to the severity of the economic climate, France and Germany took measures to force guest workers to return home, no such policies were enacted in the Netherlands.

In 1973 the Dutch government proclaimed that labor migration was officially over. (De Lange 2004). This was more of a political statement than a concrete policy decision. Various legislative measures enacted from the late
1970s onwards allowed for a more strategic labor migration policy, one that responded more effectively to the changing demands of the domestic labor market. As the number of vacancies for low-skilled laborers declined in the 1980s and 1990s, the emphasis was placed on securing high-skilled workers for the burgeoning knowledge-intensive industries. Foreign workers recruited for employment in these sectors, however, came primarily from the neighboring EU countries including Germany and Belgium, and their presence in the country did not provoke as much controversy as the long-term residence of Muslim workers from Morocco and Turkey.

Repatriation to Morocco and Turkey was much less common than to other countries of origin as the perceived economic opportunities in both of these nations were much more limited than in the Netherlands. As a result, an overwhelming majority of foreign workers of Moroccan and Turkish descent chose to stay in the Netherlands following the official termination of the recruitment agreement in 1974. The decision was also dictated by the fact that admission to the Netherlands and other industrialized nations of Europe was becoming increasingly more difficult for non-E.U. citizens (Focus Migration, 2007). Some men married Dutch women, while many more were joined by their spouses and families, accelerating the process of family reunification.

Beginning in the 1970s, family members joining a person already in the Netherlands became the largest group of arrivals, peaking in 1980. There was initially some resistance from the indigenous population largely on practical grounds – the country was experiencing a housing shortage (Focus Migration, 2007). However, the government did not impose any legal restrictions, and family members could enter the country with minimal difficulty. As a result, the Turkish and Moroccan communities expanded rapidly: 77,000 people were already residing in the Netherlands in 1977. The trend has continued until today. According to the 2007 census, combined first- and sec-
second-generation Turkish and Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands were among the largest Allochtonen groups (for statistical purposes Allochtonen are officially defined by the Dutch government as persons who were born outside the Netherlands or who have at least one parent born outside the country). These two ethnic groups represented approximately 20% of the whole foreign population, and 35% of non-Western foreign nationals (Focus Migration, 2007).

Large Turkish and Moroccan communities presented undeniable evidence to the indigenous Dutch that their country had become an immigration destination, and since this phenomenon was clearly not temporary, it required government and community involvement to formulate appropriate integration mechanisms. Before we move to the discussion of these policies, however, the context of labor migration needs to be completed by an overview of the segment which remains considerably less well-documented – that of illegal migrants.

As admission formalities for non-E.U. citizens were progressively tightened throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the number of people entering and residing in the Netherlands illegally has increased. Estimates vary greatly but it is generally believed that there are over 20,000 illegal Moroccans, 10,000 Turks, and 10,000 Chinese, citizens, those from former Soviet republics, and African nationals (Focus Migration, 2007). Under Dutch law staying in the country without proper authorization is not a crime. Forced deportations are rare; however, over the past 15 years successive governments have taken measures to discourage illegal migration. The most important legislative mechanism to this end was the Linkage Act (1998) which made legal residence status a precondition for receiving most social services, including a social security number, health coverage and access to subsidized housing. Databases of all government agencies, municipalities, and immigration offices became inter-connected (thus the name of the law) to deny access to regular
employment to those residing without a permit. The law was heavily criticized as ineffectual and unenforceable. Several exceptions were subsequently made to facilitate emergency medical treatment and schooling for children under 18 (Pluymen, 2004). While this law probably had little real impact on curbing the influx of illegal migrants, it had other unintended effects, the most important of which were raising visibility of migrant problems among the general population and giving more power to municipalities for migration management.

1.2.3 Asylum seekers

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the concurrent collapse of communist regimes in East European countries precipitated a large increase in the number of asylum seekers to the Netherlands (Muus, 1997). Over a five-year period between 1990 and 1994, that number rose from approximately 8,000 to over 50,000. While about 40% of the claimants were recognized as legitimate refugees, as many as 100,000 asylum migrants settled in the Netherlands in the early 1990s (Nicolas, 1999). Since then the number of applicants varied greatly from 20,000 in 1997 peaking at 45,000 in 2000 before dropping significantly to under 10,000 in 2004. These sudden oscillations can be attributed to the introduction of government policies seeking to make the Netherlands a less attractive destination, and even more importantly, changes in the national economic conditions. The acceptance rate of asylum applicants, however, varied to a lesser extent: an average of 13,000 individuals per year were admitted to or allowed to remain in the Netherlands over the past two decades (Statistics Netherlands).

Asylum migration management by the Dutch government over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s was very much piecemeal. Policies were formulated not as a matter of long-term national strategy, but in response to practical domestic concerns (Bruquetas-Callejo, 2007). A case in point is the introduction in 1987 of the Regulation on the Reception of Asylum Seekers
(ROA). The creation of this document was driven by the marked increase in the number of asylum applications, substantially higher costs incurred by the hosting municipalities (a disproportionate segment of refugees establish residence in the two largest metropolitan areas of the country: Amsterdam and Rotterdam), and a worsening housing shortage. Subsequently, the 1990s witnessed the introduction of a series of measures designed to reduce the number of asylum applicants. While these measures were criticized by the media and the civil society, compared to other West European states the Netherlands had pursued a liberal and humane policy vis-à-vis asylum migrants. This is evidenced by successive amnesties granted to unsuccessful claimants who remained in the Netherlands for a long time without a residence permit (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007).

1.3 Integration policies

The oil crisis of 1973 was an important wake-up call for the Dutch people and the government. The decision by an overwhelming majority of migrants to remain in the Netherlands despite a rapid deterioration of the labor market made it perfectly clear that guest workers would not return to their home countries. They were in the Netherlands permanently, and their number was further augmented by the continuing influx of family members. This realization required a paradigm shift in the approach of the Dutch government. The awareness of the need to formulate substantive measures addressing the challenges of integration of foreign population grew among all society actors. This process was gaining momentum during the 1970s and culminated with the implementation of the Ethnic Minorities policy.

1.3.1 Ethnic Minorities policy

This policy, which was the central governing principle of migrant integration in the 1980s, was elaborated in response to an influential report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy. The 1979 report in a sense stated the obvious – the fact that migrant populations in the Netherlands
were settled there permanently, with no intention of going back. The report called on the government to acknowledge this phenomenon by establishing a comprehensive integration policy. Essentially, all recommendations contained in the report were accepted and the resultant policy came into effect in 1980. The government also created a new administrative infrastructure to oversee the policy implementation.

The cornerstone of the Ethnic Minorities policy was the belief that successful integration in society was contingent on the preservation of immigrants’ cultural, linguistic, and religious identities. This credo was much in line with the philosophy of pillarization which previously had accorded equal rights and freedoms to various social groups in the Netherlands. The government devoted considerable resources to facilitate the retention of the immigrants’ home language, the creation of religious and educational institutions, and the preservation of cultural practices (Vasta, 2007). While in the 1970s some of these elements were implemented on ad-hoc basis to prepare migrants for their eventual repatriation, now the very same initiatives were adopted on a more systematic and nationwide level as a means of emancipation of immigrant minorities.

The Ethnic Minorities policy came to be known as the heyday of multiculturalism in the Netherlands. The term “multiculturalism” was applied largely retroactively. When the policy was in effect, it was not perceived as such, though the essential tenets of this policy (described below) fit into the multiculturalist framework, i.e. respect and state support for the culturally heterogeneous nature of society.

The three main principles underlying Ethnic Minorities (EM) policy were as follows:

1) EM policy aimed to achieve equality of the ethnic minorities in the socio-economic domain, inclusion and participation in the political domain, and
equity in the domain of culture and religion within constitutional parameters.

2) EM policy was targeted at specific groups that were considered to be in danger of becoming marginalized minorities due to a combination of their low socio-economic status and perceived cultural differences from the indigenous population. This implied that this integration policy targeted immigrant groups deemed underprivileged, namely guest workers, former colonial inhabitants, refugees, and Roma communities.

3) EM policy was government-wide and applied to all facets of social services. A comprehensive bureaucratic architecture was set up with the Ministry of Home Affairs responsible for coordinating various dimensions of this policy. Substantial resources were made available, and compliance structures were put in place.

(Penninx, 2005)

During the 1980s, a series of substantive, practical measures was introduced in line with the philosophy of assisting migrants to maintain their socio-cultural identities, which were viewed as crucial for their integration into Dutch society. These measures can be broadly divided into three areas: steps to promote migrants’ participation in the political life of the nation, policies to enhance immigrants’ economic status and educational attainment, and initiatives to nurture the immigrants’ cultural and linguistic heritage. I will review the salient policies of each of these areas.

To minimize potential institutional bias against migrants, especially the visible minorities, the entire body of the legislation of the Netherlands was thoroughly checked to remove any element which may be construed as discriminatory on the basis of race, nationality or religion. Additionally, anti-discrimination provisions were strengthened (Penninx, 2005).

Opportunities for migrants’ political participation were further enhanced by the introduction of voting rights in 1985. The results of this development
have been strongly felt at both local (municipal) and national levels. The number of city council members of immigrant background increased significantly. Over time, political parties, led by the Labor Party, actively began to recruit candidates from the ranks of immigrants in an effort to appeal to migrant vote. At the turn of the century 8% of the MPs in Dutch parliament were of migrant descent and that ratio has continued to rise.

The revision of the Dutch Nationality Law in 1986 greatly facilitated the process of naturalization. Double nationality was permitted. Immigrants in large numbers chose to acquire Dutch citizenship and in 2007 only 4% of residents in the Netherlands were non-Dutch citizens. This figure is quite impressive especially considering the rates of naturalization in neighboring countries.

The government also considered it vital to promote a variety of consultative mechanisms in order to reinforce the linkages between migrant communities and the society at large, and to better reflect the interests and needs of immigrants at the policy-making level. To this end, local and national immigrant organizations, funded by the state, were established. The policy encouraging these entities later became the target of criticism, and was singled out as of one of the factors behind the failure of EM integration strategy.

To advance migrants’ socio-economic position, steps were undertaken in the areas of employment, education and housing, with the latter two being by far the most significant.

Government efforts to increase the rate of participation in the labor market among migrants and to create a more fair ‘playing field’ when it came to employment were arguably the least successful aspects of the EM policies. In the 1980s the Dutch economy was diversifying and evolving quickly from one based on manufacturing to a more sophisticated pattern of service- and
knowledge-based industries. As the demand for low-skilled labor weakened, migrants with limited education and language skills found themselves increasingly unemployed, and even unemployable. To remedy the situation, the government passed several symbolic laws, which predictably had no real impact on the economic landscape of the country. The only measure which did produce results was in the area where the government did have control: the public service. An affirmative action plan instituted in the mid-1980s affected recruitment of civil servants at local and national levels. The number of public servants of immigrant background rose considerably as a result of this policy. Overall, however, except for the periods of intense economic activity, unemployment among adult migrants remained at levels several times those of the native Dutch. The failure of the EM framework to integrate migrants into the economic life of the country proved to be the feature which put the entire ideology in doubt and ultimately led to the demise of this philosophy in the Dutch context.

The question of education of minority children was central to the government integration policies of the 1980s. Reports produced in 1982 and 1983 state that successful integration is a joint effort of minority and majority group members. With regard to schooling, these reports stress the dual need to ensure that immigrant children acquire sufficient knowledge of the Dutch language to function in society, and at the same that the linguistic environment of their home is preserved and enhanced. Schools in the Netherlands were tasked with implementing a curriculum reflecting these objectives. In response, the two initiatives adopted: intercultural education and the Dutch as a Second Language program. While the intentions were progressive, the quality of implementation at the classroom level was very uneven (Spotti, 2007).

Additional resources were allocated to schools with significant enrolments of minority children, mainly to enable institutions to provide additional
language instruction. The allocations were calculated on a point system. Native Dutch children with parents educated above lower secondary level were given a weight of 1.0; children of low socio-economic background were assigned a rating of 1.25, and children of migrants were rated at 1.9 (Spotti, 2007).

Resources were also made available for the activities dedicated to the promotion of children’s native language and culture. At the beginning these plans took the form of structured classes integrated into the regular curriculum at the primary school level; subsequently they were relegated to extracurricular activities. The emphasis placed on the maintenance of the home culture also became the subject of criticism and was later regarded as not only ineffective, but incongruent with the objectives of integration.

One of the most disputed features of the EM educational agenda was the provision of funds for the establishment of ethnic schools, mostly Islamic and Hindu. These schools were allowed to function with only minimal supervision by the authorities adhering to the long-standing tradition of the separation of church and state. However, they came under increasingly intense scrutiny following accusations that the quality of education in many schools was not good enough to enable pupils to function in society (Veldhuis & Maas, 2011).

Overall, the educational policies contained in the EM directives did not produce the desired results. Gaps in the academic abilities, educational attainment levels and school drop-out rates between the native Dutch and the migrant children did not diminish significantly. It was only in the late 1990s that this gap was beginning to close (Statistics Netherlands).

Housing was the area which the EM supporters could claim as the most successful. The passage of a housing law in 1981 essentially made all social housing (a large part of all housing in Dutch metropolitan areas) accessible to
legal aliens. In addition to lessening the financial burden on economically-disadvantaged minorities, it had the effect of fostering interactions between the immigrants and the native Dutch, albeit those of the low socio-economic status as well (Penninx, 2007). In many cases, while equally accessible subsidized housing had a positive effect on bringing migrants into contacts with the mainstream society, it produced de facto ghettos for mixed groups who remained marginalized for extended periods of time.

The record of the Ethnic Minorities policy was mixed. First of all, at the very fundamental level, it changed the Dutch people’s perception of their country by establishing a comprehensive institutional framework of a heterogeneous nation. It also was one of the pioneer policies in the world to endow migrants with a wide range of political rights. This was accomplished in the atmosphere characterized by a high level of tolerance of migrants’ cultures and religions, acceptance and promotion of their institutions, and the absence of a political debate. However, the failure to reduce the education performance gap between the Dutch and migrant pupils, and integrate minorities more successfully into the labor market was seen as a critical shortcoming. The criticism of the EM policies was becoming increasingly vocal towards the late 1980s as the evidence clearly demonstrated that very little progress to integrate minorities had been made in these two pivotal areas. The sentiment that too much emphasis had been placed on the cultural and religious rights of immigrants and not enough on their obligation to adapt to the norms and values of the host society, began to dominate the debates. Moreover, the debate, contained for a long time to a narrow circle of relevant bureaucrats, was becoming a political priority with more and more social actors openly taking sides.

The disillusionment gradually led to a major shift in the approach to migrant integration. The beginning of this process can be traced to the 1989 publication of another report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy.
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References


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