# Immigration Law in the European Community

Elspeth Guild

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by

## **ELSPETH GUILD**



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#### IMMIGRATION LAW IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

#### IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM LAW AND POLICY IN EUROPE

Volume 2

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The series is a venue for books on European immigration and asylum law and policies where academics, policy makers, law practitioners and others look to find detailed analysis of this dynamic field. Works in the series will start from a European perspective. The increased co-operation within the European Union and the Council of Europe on matters related to immigration and asylum requires the publication of theoretical and empirical research. The series will contribute to well-informed policy debates by analysing and interpreting the evolving European legislation and its effects on national law and policies. The series brings together the various stakeholders in these policy debates: the legal profession, researchers, employers, trade unions, human rights and other civil society organisations.

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### **PREFACE**

"The aim is an open and secure European Union fully committed to the obligations of the Geneva Refugee Convention and other relevant human rights instruments, and must be able to respond to humanitarian needs on the basis of solidarity. A common approach must also be developed to ensure the integration into our societies of these third country nationals who are lawfully resident in the Union."

With these fine words the European Council set out its strategy towards the development of an European immigration and asylum law at its Summit in Tampere, Finland, October 1999. The Tampere Summit is not the subject of this book, rather the story which begins in 1957 with the signature of the Treaty of Rome and finds a new impetus in the declarations of the European Council at Tampere.

The new powers which the Amsterdam Treaty's entry into force on 1 May 1999 had transferred to the Community in the field of immigration and asylum now need to be exercised. The powers themselves are very wide and permit many different and conflicting approaches. The purpose of this study is to look at the history of immigration law in the European Community, from the Community's conception in 1957. Can we discern the framework and principles from this history which will be needed for the next step of the Community's development in this field? With this underlying concern I began work on this dissertation in June 1997 as the Member States finalised and signed the Amsterdam Treaty. My greatest thanks in this endeavour for their help, insight, generosity and patience must be to Professors Kees Groenendijk and Roel Fernhout who guided me throughout. Without their great kindness this work would never have been completed.

To others too, however, I am indebted for their assistance and encouragement: first to my jury, Professor Deirdre Curtin and Professor Pieter Boeles; secondly to all the participants of the Centre for Migration Law at the University of Nijmegen (including Hannie van de Put); to those experts who were so generous with their expertise, Denis Martin, Steve Peers and Aleidus Woltjer, and to Helen Staples without whose practical assistance I could not have finished. For his constant support and affection it is a special pleasure to thank Didier Bigo. Finally, I owe gratitude to everyone in the immigration department at my office at Kingsley Napley in London for their help and patience.

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# INTRODUCTION

"As the Court has observed in the past, Contracting States have the right, as a matter of well-established international law and subject to their treaty obligations including the European Convention on Human Rights, to control the entry, residence and expulsion of aliens."

International law contains only limited obligations on states to respect the choices of individuals as to the country in which they live. The three major exceptions in international law to national sovereignty are primarily based on characteristics of the individual's personal status or relationship of the individual to his or her state over which the individual generally has limited control. First, the principle of admission to the state of which one is a national is well established and contained, *inter alia* in Protocol 4 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Secondly, the enjoyment of family life can found a claim to remain, at least, on the territory of a state of which an individual is not a national contained, *inter alia*, in Article 8 ECHR.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, persons are entitled to remain on the territory of a state of which they are not nationals if the only alternative is to return them to a place where they fear inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment<sup>3</sup> or persecution on defined grounds.<sup>4</sup> Within these parameters the crossing of external borders is generally considered, in international law, a reserve of national sovereignty.

Further in the application of the limiting principles, a wide margin of appreciation is permitted to the state to decide whether the claims of, for instance, family relationships or inhuman or degrading treatment are sufficiently strong to warrant entry into or residence on the territory of the state. In the concept

1 Chahal European Court of Human Rights Reports 1996-V.

See for example Vilvarajah [1991] Ser A 215.

<sup>2</sup> Other sources include Article 26 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Article 3 ECHR and Article 3 UN Convention against Torture.
 UN Convention on the status of refugees 1951 and Protocol 1967.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Gül European Court of Human Rights Reports 1996 - I.

Within the system of the European Convention on Human Rights the judgments of the Court of Human Rights are of course final but those judgments generally leave a wide margin of appreciation to the state. This wide discretion which the Court has inferred has, in some cases been criticized by observers, for instance, P. van Dijk and G.J.H. van Hoof, Theory and Practice of the European Convention on Human Rights, 2nd Edition, Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers, Deventer, 1990 pp. 585-606. The argument is that this concept permits a differentiation in the application of the Convention. The uniformity and clarity which the Convention promises to the individual (and the state as regards its

of state sovereignty is inherent the right to exercise discretion in immigration policies. In so far as the state reserves its discretion over entry, residence and expulsion of individuals, those individuals have little power in determining as a matter of choice what country they live in. They can choose the country they would like to live in but then it is the state which selects. This is the guiding principle of immigration policies primarily of developed countries.

The immigration law of the European Union is characterised by a different relationship between the state and the individual as regards movement across national borders. The contours of this relationship will be examined in this study through a consideration of the scope of discretion available to a Member State and degree of choice available to the individual.

Through amendment of EC Treaty, subsidiary legislation and agreements with third countries the Community has assumed an expanding competence in respect of all aspects of migration. The most dramatic change has occurred with the amendments of the Treaty which took effect on 1 May 1999 when the Amsterdam Treaty came into force. The premise to be examined here is whether in the exercise of that competence certain principles can be discerned which inform the division of power and choice between the state and the individual.

First, as regards Community nationals who are migrant workers in a host Member State, it is now an uncontroversial statement that the discretion and choice whether to move or not is given to the individual with only minor interference permitted by the State. However it is important to see how this state of affairs came into being. Was it self evident when the EC Treaty came into force in 1958 or was there an incremental development to this state of affairs? How important in this context is the right to non-discrimination and the assimilation of a very wide concept of worker, benefits for workers and obstacles to movement? Secondly, when the Community began to incorporate into agreements with third countries provisions relating to workers and subsequently persons, can the principles applicable to Community national migration as regards the extent and limitations on state discretion be discerned? Thirdly, what principles applied when the Member States began to coordinate their national policies on admission of third country nationals in general? Finally, what lessons does the history of the Community and migration provide for the implementation of the Community's new powers over third country national immigration?

obligations) is diluted through the concept of a margin of appreciation if allowed to extend too far.