Integration: A centuries-old issue

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When can a person be regarded as a full and equal citizen of a country? Is a double nationality possible and what advantages does it offer a newcomer? These questions were already contemplated in ancient Rome. The Italian allies of Rome were keen on obtaining the Roman citizenship. Dutch researcher Roel van Dooren investigated why.

At first sight, the Social War appears to be an old problem that is only interesting for historians. However, this war provides surprising insights into current societal issues. Even the ancient state of Rome struggled with integration and immigration problems and an understanding of this provides interesting options for current public debates.

Research into how the allies of Rome benefited from the state has led to insights about scalability, public tenders, outsourcing and rendering employment potential more flexible. These are all issues that currently attract a lot of attention. Moreover, equality and legal security for the individual play a role in both periods. According to Van Dooren, the Social War reveals that these issues had a considerable effect on the functionality of society.

During the Italian Social War (91 - 88 BC) a large proportion of the allies, who had been acquired by the city state of Rome, rebelled against the Roman rulers. The war was a result of the Romans refusing to grant their allies, the Italians, Roman citizenship. The conflict was brief, fierce and bloody. Tens of thousands of people lost their lives. The Social War not only led to Roman citizenship for the Italians, but also formed the boundary between two historic developments.

The war meant the end of the political system that had enabled Rome to rule over Italy for centuries. It also signalled the start of a new development where the Italians became full Roman citizens. Rome could no longer be seen as a city state. A new social, political and psychological dynamic arose that also required new administrative solutions.

Source: NWO

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