

Germany Federal Republic

Ethnicity in Germany Federal Republic

Overview

The contemporary social structure of Germany does not only pay testament to decisive geopolitical developments that have taken place throughout the past century, such as the Two Great Wars, and finally, the end of the Cold War, that has initiated the German Reunification in 1990, but also the sheer fact, that Germany has been an appealing destination for immigrants from all over the world since the end of WWII. As a result, in discussing the demographic situation of the country, problems of classification, distinguishing between guest workers, foreigners, migrants, immigrants and lastly national minorities emerged at a very early stage. This distinction has been further complicated by the fact that an increasing part of members of these groups have been nationalized, and thereby almost dissolved in the statistics.

In 1960, only 700.000 foreigners were living in Germany. In the course of an intense recruitment of guest workers, this number has almost quadrupled within a decade, counting three millions in 1970. Their proportion of the whole population had risen from 1.2% to 4.9%. Until the end of the 1990s, this number has again doubled. By the beginning of 2005, 6.7 million foreigners were living in Germany, representing 8.1% of the overall population. A crucial proportion of this multiethnic segment that does not appear in these figures consists of the 1.6 million immigrants that have been nationalized throughout the years (¹²⁶⁶, 231).

¹²⁶⁶ [Geissler, 2006]

Group selection

While in Fearon's List only Germans (91.5%) and Turks (2.4%) are enumerated (¹²⁶⁷), the CIA World Factbook adds yet a few other groups that altogether constitute 6.1% of the overall population, namely immigrants originating from Greece, Italy, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Croatia and Spain (¹²⁶⁸).

¹²⁶⁷ [Fearon Laitin, 2003]

¹²⁶⁸ [Central Intelligence Agency, 2014]

Neither the Turks nor the other aforementioned immigrant groups are represented in the political arena by any sort of organization, or by an elected figure on the national level. Nevertheless, as the Turks constitute a quite remarkable and increasing number of people in Germany, this group shall undergo further scrutiny here: since foreigners do not appear in the coding, we need to disentangle the number of Turks that have been nationalized. Relying on the figures

of the World Bank, Germany has an overall population of 81.8 million people. This means, that 1.95 million Turks (2.4%; see above) live in Germany. According to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2008, 700.000 German nationals of Turkish origin were registered, which would mean that 0.85% of the whole population are nationalized Turks.

Another fact that is worthwhile mentioning in this context is the existence of what is referred to as “national minorities” in the German Constitution (Grundgesetz). Members of national minorities, per definition, hold a German citizenship, and differ from the majority population in that they have their own language, culture and history. Four such groups are officially recognized: Sorbs (60.000), Danish (50.000), Sinti and Roma (30.000) and Frisians (12.000). These groups are granted special political rights, which crystallize in a distinct electoral law: on the federal level, the groups are, for example, exempt from the five-percent hurdle to enter the parliament (Bundestag). On the lower levels of government, these rights are more extensive, ranging from preset quotations of the parliamentary seats to the facilitation of voting entrances. However, these special rights of the national minorities remain mainly symbolic. Until today, the existence of these special rights has only impacted on the political reality in a very sporadic manner.

Power relations

In a country like Germany, where decades of migration have affected the social and demographic structure substantively, from both a sociological and a socio-psychological point of view, it would be very questionable to frame certain groups as ethnically distinct with regard to their self understanding, and hence their actions in the political arena. A nationalized Turk with a political office in Germany will primarily understand himself as a representative of the whole German people, and secondly as a member of his party, rather than as a representative of the Turkish community in Germany. For the time being, ethnicity does not play a role in national German politics.

Bibliography

- [Central Intelligence Agency, 2014] Central Intelligence Agency. (2014). CIA World Fact Book: Germany. Retrieved on 18.12.2014 from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gm.html>
- [Fearon Laitin, 2003] Fearon, J. D., Laitin, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *American political science review*, 97(01), 75-90.
- [Geissler, 2006] Geissler, Rainer. (2006). *Die Sozialstruktur Deutschlands. Zur gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung mit einer Bilanz zur Vereinigung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Political status of ethnic groups in Germany Federal Republic

From 1955 until 2013

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Germans	1.0	IRRELEVANT



Figure 291: Political status of ethnic groups in Germany Federal Republic during 1955-2013.