

# Germany Federal Republic

## *Ethnicity in Germany Federal Republic*

### *Group Selection*

We do not code any politically relevant ethnic groups in Germany. 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 initiated the German Reunification in 1990, but also 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 (<sup>1300</sup>, 231).

While in Fearon's List only Germans (91.5%) and Turks (2.4%) are enumerated (<sup>1301</sup>), the CIA World Factbook adds 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 (<sup>1302</sup>). 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, and many are not 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 live in Germany given their percentage of the population. 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.

<sup>1300</sup> [Geissler, 2006]

<sup>1301</sup> [Fearon Laitin, 2003]

<sup>1302</sup> [Central Intelligence Agency, 2014]

The German Constitution (Grundgesetz) explicitly refers to “national minorities”. Members of national minorities, per definition, hold 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 not impacted the political landscape in any significant way, so that these groups are not considered politically relevant ethnic groups.

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*

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## *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.