

History of the integration policy of the last 60 years

After the war there was a lack of work force in certain industries, which should be replaced by foreign workers with temporary residence. These were mainly jobs which required little skill. Accordingly, the level of qualification of these workers was relatively low. The workers were specifically recruited: In 1955, the recruitment agreement was signed with Italy; in 1960 with Spain and Greece; in 1961 with Turkey; 1963 with Morocco; in 1964 with Portugal; in 1965 with Tunisia and finally 1968 with Yugoslavia.

There were mostly male, young workers who came without their families to Germany and lived in barracks or shared worker houses. They worked mostly in industrial mass production, heavy industry and mining on sites that were less and less busy because many native workers didn't want to work in those fields.

In theory there was a "rotation principle": every two to three years new guest workers should come, while those who have been there longer should return to their home countries. The employment of foreign people was linked to the needs of the economy and the labor market. But the business owner didn't want to teach new workers how to do the job all the time, so the principle of rotation was not working; the workers stayed longer in Germany. Thus, the number of foreign population in Germany was about four times higher in 1970 as it has been in 1960 (4.9%).

The Mid-60s put an economic recession. The number of employed foreigners fell by about a third, but the German population still feared that foreign people would take away jobs from the locals. So in 1973 the recruitment of skilled workers from abroad was stopped. At the time of the recruitment ban in 1973 about 2.6 million foreign people worked in Germany. After some time, the family reunification began. While this is a clear sign of a settlement, the immigration was largely ignored by the policy.

So between 1973 and 1979 mainly the wives and children of workers came to Germany. The West German Foreign policy aimed at a temporary integration of families. Based on the Aliens Act of 1965, they were granted a residence permit. Despite some integration efforts - especially of foreign children and young people in German schools - the policy on foreigners altogether remained restrictive. So it was for example difficult to achieve a secure residence. The freedom of movement within Germany was limited: In some areas – for example in Baden-Württemberg from 1975-1977 – no family members were allowed to follow the workers.

Although the federal government aimed to bring the foreign workers back to their home countries, most have remained in Germany. Before the recruitment stopped, many

unemployed workers returned home. But as people now knew they could no longer come back to Germany when they once left it, they stayed, got their families, started to have children and to build a life in Germany. Also for the foreign workers themselves it was not clear at all that they would remain in Germany. The government did not know how to deal with the situation, so it just declared repeatedly that Germany was not an immigration country.

Only in 1979 Heinz Kühn, the first foreigner officer of the government, demanded in a memorandum the recognition of de facto immigration situation and the introduction of an integration policy. According to Kühn, foreign children who were born in Germany should receive an equal access to education, work and housing as well as an option on the German citizenship. He also suggested the voting rights on a community level for foreigners living here.

But the former government (SPD/FDP) questioned the capability and willingness of foreigners to integrate. Their political decisions concerning migrants were still catered to a time-limited social integration; broader concepts to promote integration did not exist.

In addition to the immigration of family members, many asylum seekers came to Germany the early 1980s. They mainly came from Yugoslavia and the Kurdish regions of Turkey but also more and more from the Global South. Due to growing unemployment, increasing immigration of foreigners and an often emotional debate in politics and the media, the public unease/discomfort grew; esp. because there was still no clear plan regarding integration or immigration policies. The issues of labor migration and asylum were increasingly mixed, the “foreigners issue” politicized. Politically was mainly discussed how the family reunification could be decreased and how the return of migrant workers to their countries of origin could be promoted.

So foreigner’s policy became an election issue. After the change of government in 1982, Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) made sure that a higher priority was given to the immigration and integration policy. But although integration deals were announced, the central political guidelines remained to keep up the ban on recruitment, the restriction of family reunification and to promote the willingness to return.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of the border of the former Eastern Bloc countries, the immigration of resettlers (“Aussiedler”) increased rapidly. They came mostly from the territory of the former Soviet Union and received the citizenship by the entry because of their German ethnicity. The arrival numbers of refugees increased strongly during this period. The majority first came from Asia and Africa to seek asylum in Germany. Later, civil war refugees were added from the former Yugoslavia.

The residence status even of those immigrants who lived in Germany for many years remained uncertain. Since citizenship was still based on the principle of descent (*ius sanguinis*), naturalizations (= getting a German passport) were only possible with great barriers. This meant that the number of the non-German population remained steady at a high level. The immigration was seen as a problem unsolved; many people were afraid to be “flooded” by thousands of foreigners. Therefore particularly in 1991-92 right-wing extremist acts of violence against migrants occurred nationwide.

Also due to this massive pressure from the population, the main parties in Germany (CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD) made the so-called asylum compromise in 1992. It strongly restricted the fundamental right to political asylum.

Only in 1999, Federal Interior Minister Otto Schily (SPD) made a reform of the citizenship law which was ratified in 2000. It broke with the guideline, one could be German, but not become German. The previously valid principle of inheritance of nationality (*ius sanguinis*) was extended by the territorial principle of the acquisition of citizenship by birth in the country (*ius soli*). Since 1 January 2000, children born in Germany of foreign parents will receive German citizenship if one parent was permanently living in Germany for at least eight years. This resulted in a huge increase in the number of naturalizations in 2000 result.

Around the year 2000 the discussion about integration policy was finally moving forward. In February 2000, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) suggested to give highly qualified foreign computer specialists a temporary work permit for Germany.

In addition to that, the Interior Minister Otto Schily (SPD) founded the Independent Commission "Immigration" (also named "Süssmuth Commission" after its chairman Rita Süssmuth), which presented its recommendations for future immigration and integration policy on 4 July 2001 and demanded a fundamental change of policy.

Since controlled immigration for economic and demographic reasons had become necessary, the Commission recommended, among others, a scoring system. According to that system candidates for immigration should be selected according to various criteria such as age, language skills and training. The Commission also pleaded for integration assistance that should be provided in the form of language and orientation courses.

Many citizens took the results of the Süssmuth Commission only cautiously optimistic, as they had hoped for a stronger limitation of immigration. Politically, however, it clearly marked a shift that turned immigration into a positive and necessary issue. Thus Germany was first officially designated as an immigration country in 2001, which requires far-reaching policies in this area of policy.

So in 2001 the first Immigration Act was designed. The full name is: "Act to Control and Restrict Immigration and to Regulate the Residence and Integration of Citizens and Foreigners" („Gesetz zur Steuerung und Begrenzung der Zuwanderung und zur Regelung des Aufenthalts und der Integration von Unionsbürgern und Ausländern“), referred to as "Immigration Act" (Zuwanderungsgesetz). The bill opened the strict rules in the field of labor migration and immigration, but also created even stricter rules in regard to the admission of refugees and asylum seekers.

Due to its openness in some areas, the draft of the Immigration Act was heavily criticized by the conservative parties (CDU/SCU). After extremely difficult negotiations the new Immigration Act was finally announced in 2004 and became operative on January 01, 2005.

The Immigration Act did not really renew the German migration policy, because much of it has been taken over by the old Aliens Act (Ausländergesetz) from 1991. But there was a significant step forward in the area of integration. For the first time, migrants had the legal right to attend integration courses which includes mainly a German language course.

To create a dialogue with migrants on integration issues, the federal government has initiated an integration conference (Integrationsgipfel) in June 2006. In addition, the dialogue with Muslim people increasingly came to the fore. Federal Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble founded a conference on Islam (Islamgipfel) in the summer of 2006, where the federal government comes into contact with Islamic organizations and Muslim individuals.

As a result of the first integration conference together with migrant organizations and other actors of the society, a National Integration Plan was developed. This integration plan is based on an activating and sustainable integration policy that recognizes and strengthens the potentials of migrants and does not only focus on deficits.

Up to now, there were nine Integration Conferences (the last one in September 2016) in which the progress of integration is discussed and further actions are initiated. The integration of migrants is still controversial discussed; especially – since 2015 – the integration of refugees and Muslim people grew more and more important. Integration in Germany has become one of the major issues in politics. An end of the integration efforts is not yet in sight, on the contrary, in the face of decades of deficit in terms of an integration policy, Germany is almost still in its infancy and will still take some time to make up for the deficits.