



Bundesamt
für Migration
und Flüchtlinge



Political repercussions of recent debates on migration and integration in Germany

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Workshop "From perceptions to policy: Using public perceptions of migration to inform policy development", 13 September 2011

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Structure

1. General trends in perceptions of migration and integration
2. Recent debates on migration and integration
3. Policy responses to recent debates
4. „Remote policies“ (policies or policy measures that are not accompanied by any wider public debate)
5. Diagnosis / Conclusions: The evolution of the perceptions-policy nexus

1 General trends in perceptions of migration and integration (I)

- **Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR): “Migration Barometer” 2011***
 - The majority of the population in Germany have a pragmatic and straightforward view of migration and migration policy
 - “The immigration society is far better informed about the actual migration situation in Germany (...) than is assumed by policymakers”
 - 60% of respondents favor a higher immigration rate of **highly skilled** professionals
 - Both the majority and the immigrant population reject the immigration of additional **low skilled** workers: Approximately 70% of respondents want “far fewer” or “somewhat fewer” low skilled immigrants
 - Half of the respondents without a migrant background support an increased admission of refugees.

1 General trends in perceptions of migration and integration (II)

- Fetzter 2011: Comparative Evolution of public attitudes toward immigration*

- Support in Germany for “*barring all immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe*” decreasing from approx. 17% (2004) to 10% (2008)
- Support for “**limiting immigration**” down from more than 60% (1999) to less than 50% (2007); Support for “**totally stopping immigration**” stable over time at 25% approx.
- Share of the population stating that the situation concerning foreigners in Germany was “*not okay*” has been oscillating between just under 40% up to more than 50%



1 General trends in perceptions of migration and integration (III)

- Study “Die Mitte in der Krise” (Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2010)*

- Substantial rejection of Islam and immigrants from Arab countries
- **58 %** agree with the statement that “*the freedom of Muslims to practice their religion in Germany should be restricted considerably*”
- **55 %** agree with the statement “*I understand people who find Arabs unpleasant*”



2 Recent perceptions and debates on migration and integration

- **Full implementation of free movement for workers from “new” EU Member States (May 2011)**
 - Will the German labour market be “overstrained” or will it benefit from additional inflows?
- **“Sarrazin debate” (2010)**
 - Do German culture, traditions and virtues disappear due to immigration?
 - Focus on Muslims and Islam
 - Do integration policies work?

2 Recent perceptions and debates on migration and integration

- **Satisfying labour demand through migration? (2010 / 2011)**
 - Expert / elite discourse with broad media coverage
 - Rising demand for immigrant labour (highly skilled migrants, skilled migrants, seasonal workers, care workers)
- **Recognition of foreign qualifications (2010 / 2011)**
 - Expert discourse
 - “Brain waste”
 - Need to improve labour market integration of immigrants



3 Policy responses to recent debates (I)

- **Full implementation of free movement of workers from “new” EU Member States:**
 - Monitoring
 - Policy development related to economic migration put on hold until impact of free movement is thoroughly analyzed
- **“Sarrazin debate”:**
 - Declaratory political commitments to improve integration
 - Appeal to take the heat out of the debate
 - No new policies, but continuation of three pre-existing large-scale integration policy measures: National Integration Plan, National Integration Program, dialogue in the framework of the German Islam Conference
 - Symbolic high-level events (“integration summit”)
 - Do integration policies work? Are integration courses sufficient?

3 Policy responses to recent debates (II)

- **Satisfying labour demand through migration?**
 - Reform of the Residence Act and the Employment Ordinance forthcoming
 - Yet unclear whether the current system (based on income thresholds, formal qualifications and demand) will be continued or a new points-based or more market-oriented system be introduced to *replace* or *complement* the existing legal bases
 - Overlap with implementation of EU “Blue Card” Directive
- **Recognition of foreign qualifications (2010 / 2011)**
 - Comprehensive process to establish a right for every immigrant to have his / her qualifications recognized fully or in part (Federal Ministries, *Länder*, Chambers of Commerce and other actors involved)

4 „Remote Policies“ - examples

- **Resettlement measures**
 - Admission from Malta, Jordan and Syria (Iraqi refugees) and Turkey (Iranian refugees): Not met by public debate or mass media coverage
- **Regularisation of “tolerated persons”**
 - Continuous discussion only in expert circles, little media coverage
- **EU asylum system: Suspension of “Dublin” transfers**
 - Administrative courts have stopped transfers of asylum seekers to Greece (and Italy)
 - Seemingly not an issue for the wider public

4 Diagnosis / Conclusions

- **Gaps between public perceptions, expert discourses and policy?**
 - Public perceptions: no clear trend visible
 - Politicians seem to assume that the public is largely opposed to immigration (However: SVR “Barometer” challenges this assumption)
 - Options for policy reform appear as narrow
 - Expert discourses are sometimes poorly reflected in mass media but can have policy impact nevertheless
 - Blatant criticism has high, but often ephemeral visibility and does not necessarily generate lasting solutions
 - “Whole government approach” needed to strengthen credibility and reliability
- **Bridges between experts, research, policy-makers and the wider public are necessary**



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Thank you for your attention!

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