



## German Integration Measures from the Perspective of Non-EU Citizens.

### The Results of the Immigrant Citizen Survey for Germany.

#### Executive Summary<sup>1</sup>

Because the European Union is, among other things, a common migration zone, it is important to compare different national integration policies. In most European surveys, however, the way that immigrants themselves view integration measures in the EU countries is still largely ignored.<sup>2</sup> The study entitled "Immigrant Citizens Survey" aims to partially close this gap: it is based on a survey designed to assess the immigration and integration policies in seven European countries by targeting third country nationals<sup>3</sup>: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Hungary. The study was coordinated by the Brussels-based Migration Policy Group (MPG)<sup>4</sup>. Publication of the German findings was made possible through funding provided by the Stiftung Mercator for the Expert Council's Research Unit.

The EU member states still largely independently manage the residence of third country nationals in several areas. As a result, different national immigration and integration policies affect how successful integration is and which obstacles exist. This study shows that integration requirements stipulated by immigration law represent much smaller hurdles than previously assumed from the perspective of the third country nationals who participated in the survey.

For instance, mandatory integration measures such as integration courses or German language tests for family members who subsequently immigrate are viewed positively by the interviewees themselves. More than 90 per cent of respondents from third countries think that mandatory integration courses are very or at least somewhat helpful in successful integration. The same holds true for the German test required for spouse reunification. Immigrants from third countries thus appear to take a much less problematic view of the required language tests than it often seems in the public debate. Still, we have to keep in mind that

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<sup>2</sup> In the European Social Survey, the European Value Survey and the Eurobarometers, immigrants from the EU and third countries are, for example, either underrepresented or not represented at all and integration is not a central issue.

<sup>3</sup> Citizens of third countries are individuals who are not nationals of the 27 EU countries or Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland or Norway. Nationals of the last four countries have equal status as EU nationals as a result of numerous treaties.

<sup>4</sup> The Migration Policy Group is a think-tank in Brussels dedicated primarily to achieving equal participation for all citizens in Europe.



only a small percentage has even had experience with spouse reunification since the law was changed in 2007 and that people have real problems with language acquisition in their country of origin because the Goethe Institutes that administer the tests are often far away and costs are high.

Although the possibilities for obtaining a right to permanent residence and family reunification were found to be only moderately favourable for integration in an international comparison by the MIPEX<sup>5</sup> (Huddleston et al. 2011: 86), fewer than half of respondents report problems applying for permanent residence. The procedures for obtaining permanent resident status or reunifying families do not therefore represent insurmountable hurdles for those affected. The greatest obstacle to naturalisation is seen as relinquishing previous citizenship. In addition, 47.3 per cent of those surveyed do not feel that they stand to gain anything by acquiring German citizenship compared to their current residence permit.

Only slightly more than half (54.7%) of respondents – provided they were eligible to vote – would actually exercise their right to vote. The willingness of third country nationals to vote is thus far below that of the native population. The reason specified by half (49.2%) of respondents is a general low level of interest in politics overall while almost one-third (29.3%) expressed a lack of interest in German politics in particular. Participation in political organisations is also limited. Only one per cent of those interviewed are active in parties or political groups but 20.3 per cent are members of clubs and associations. 67.9 per cent would welcome an increase in the number of parliamentary representatives with a migration background because this would be symbolically important and they are expected to understand the concerns of immigrants better. However, a migration background alone is not the decisive factor in who most people vote for: only just under one-third (32.0 %) would vote for a candidate whose primary distinguishing feature is his migration background.

The labour market also plays an important role in integration once immigrants have entered it. But, according to the survey, entry to it is the essential prerequisite for integration: the jobs held by those respondents who are employed reflect their qualifications or skills by 85 per cent. This finding, however, has to be seen in the context of an unemployment rate that is twice as high among foreigners and people with a migration background as in the native population. Only 45.8 per cent of respondents did not have a problem finding work. Frequent problems are discrimination and short-term as well as temporary employment contracts. There continues to be a need to take action in this area.

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<sup>5</sup> MIPEX stands for "Migrant Integration Policy Index". The Migration Policy Group has used this tool to evaluate integration policy in 31 countries every three years since 2004. In its evaluation, it assumes that integration is more successful given liberal overall conditions (see SVR 2011: 110f.).