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Welfare State Integration of Immigrants: the Case of Germany

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Managing Migration and Integration: Europe and the US

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1 Introduction

When Phil Martin recently spoke in Germany about integration in America he had some problems convincing his audience that there is no integration policy in the US. Seeing the US as a classical immigration country the audience believed that an immigration country almost **naturally would have an integration policy**. When I speak to an American audience today about integration policy in Germany, my report of a national integration plan or local integration concepts may evoke connotations of “socialist Europe.” I will allow readers to judge the policies I describe.

I will primarily speak about policies to integrate low-skilled foreigners, who, with their descendants, are the large majority of migrants in Germany and the focus of most integration policies. Another major concern that I will not cover are measures and ways how to deal with the new ethnic and religious diversity.

Why does Germany – in contrast to the US – have a system of integration policies? I begin with the hypothesis that societies have certain basic ways of securing general macro – social, societal integration and of tackling social problems and tensions. These **modes of dealing with tensions and social problems** derive from fundamental principles and values of the social order. In the tradition of the German welfare state philosophy starting with Bismarck, the contemporary Soziale Marktwirtschaft is a system of economic, social and political relations that is a basic element of the social order in Germany: an interventionist welfare state to reduce tensions and to help provide social security, social justice and improve opportunities for disadvantaged groups and in general to prevent social exclusion.

When a new social problem arose – immigrant integration – the approach was that used to deal with other social problems, i. e. by means of the welfare state. As a result, migrants have always been included in the major welfare system institutions (health insurance, unemployment insurance and pensions), with systematic special integration policies added after Germany accepted its status as an immigration country.

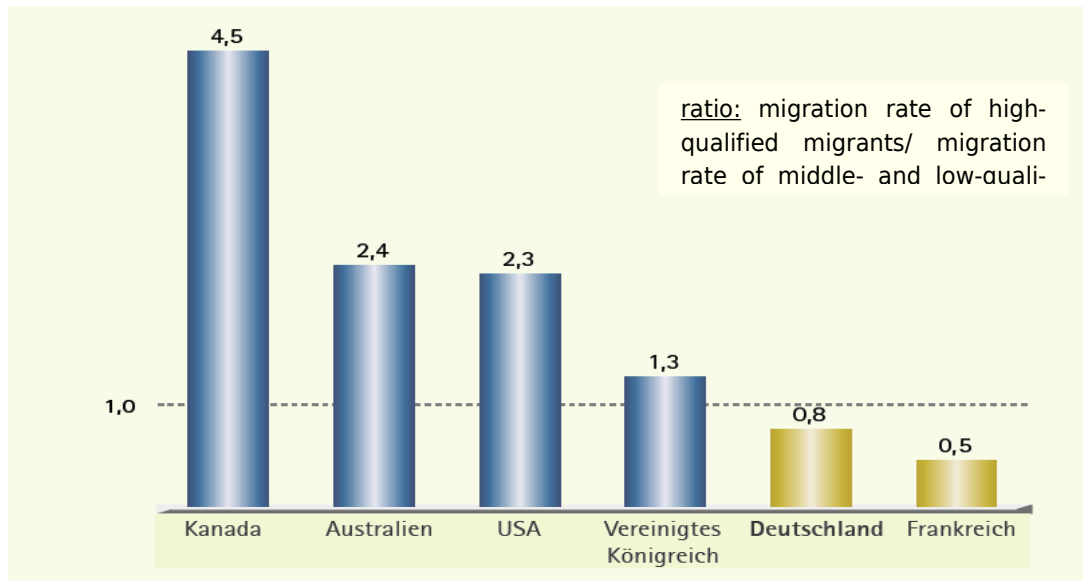
In my presentation I will firstly outline contemporary integration policies in Germany at **different levels of government**, and then describe integration policies in **different areas** that are relevant for raising the qualification level of migrants and their descendants.

Let me start, however, with a few remarks about the consequences of the recruitment policies in the 1960s and 1970s, consequences that are directly linked to our topic.

2 The consequences of guest worker recruitment policies

The present position of a majority of migrants and their descendants is connected to the causes and motives for recruiting workers from abroad: low-skilled migrants were recruited for jobs in factories that demanded little training and could not be filled by the native workforce. Chart 1 indicates the educational level of migrants to Germany from 1975 – 2000 in comparison to other countries of immigration.

Chart 1: Indicator for education selection of migrants, 1975-2000



IAB Kurzbericht 01/2008, <http://doku.iab.de/kurzber/2008/kb0108.pdf>, p.4, 20.02.2012

As a consequence of low educational levels, of a lack of social and cultural capital of the first migrant generation, their **descendants mostly reproduced the same low status** of their migrated parents and grandparents, which was augmented by high rates of marriage migration from the country of origin. All of this may be seen as a case of **path dependency** of the basic recruitment decisions that led to the establishment of a system of ethnic stratification. "A path-dependent effect occurs when a previous decision, norm or rule reinforces itself, when it determines in part the subsequent development of events. Decisions taken by national states... over time limit the range of available options at subsequent points" (Faist, Gerdes and Rieple 2004, 919). A systematic integration policy to change the path and to counteract the status reproduction process started only after 2000.

The structure of integration policies includes **four levels of government** and administration, differing in authority and resources:

- European level
- nation state level
- federal state level
- city level.

One might even add another level of policies existing within the cities, the neighbourhood level, since integration policies in cities are not targeted at the city as a whole, but often at certain groups and neighbourhoods. But I will not go into neighbourhood policies in my discussion.

Before starting to talk about the different levels of policy a few remarks about migration in Germany, which has a population of 82 Mio including 20% or 16 Mio. with a migration background; migration background refers to persons having migrated themselves or are the descendant of one or two migrant parents, including all naturalized persons.

3 The EU



Since the conference of Tampere in 1999, the EU is taking a stronger role in integration policies that affect the member states. The **directive 2003/109 EG** established a right for third country nationals for a safe residence status, a prerequisite for integration. In 2004 the EU council of ministers of justice and the interior in The Hague proclaimed **11 basic principles** for the integration of immigrants into the European Union and adopted other policies¹, including the **EU Integration Fund** for the fiscal period 2007-2013 to support measures and projects in EU countries, many of which have high relevance for the integration of low skilled migrants. Part of the money is distributed by the EU directly and another part by the national agencies for migration and integration. In addition and for a long time before establishing the integration fund, the **EU Social Fund** has supported projects for disadvantaged groups, including migrants.

On the whole, however, despite the stronger role of the EU, integration policy is still the domain of the nation states in the Community.

4 The national level

In 2001 the Federal Government in Germany set up a commission to review the state of migration and integration. The so called *Zuwanderungskommission* (Commission for Migration) was made up of representatives of the most important groups in German society and declared in its final document: "There has been progress in the integration of immigrants... but there has been **no systematic overall strategy, and this** has hindered the integration of immigrants. Today's realities require an integration policy that has an **overall national concept** for integration that serves the needs of the receiving society as much as the needs of the migrants" (*Unabhängige Kommission Zuwanderung* 2001, 199).

Much of what the Commission recommended was included in the immigration law of 2005, which regulates migration and includes regulations on integration as well. In fact, a **national integration plan** was devised and so called integration summits have been held in Berlin. Many of the integration policies aim to **improve the level of education and qualification** of the migrant population. The national integration plan, however, is not a plan in the old socialist sense. The Federal Commissioner for Integration² declared repeatedly that integration cannot be ordered, and her office thus brought together representatives of the national state, the federal states, of cities' organisations with representatives of civil society, including migrant organisations, the large welfare organisations, the national sports' associations, of the federation of German employers' associations and of the unions. The integration plan stipulates that the different stakeholders should declare their goals, coordinate their policies and commit themselves to certain actions.

The founding document of the national integration plan thus consists of an analysis of the **state of integration** in different sectors of society, a **declaration of goals** of integration policies and of **commitments** by the participating governmental representatives and by the representatives of civil society to devise and execute new integration policy measures. In the meantime four more summits have taken place and an evaluation report on the realisation of the commitments has been published. A **national monitoring system** has been installed.

The federal Ministry of the Interior has the lead on integration; the Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth, the Ministry for Education and Research and the Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration are the other branches of the Federal Government that initiate and execute integration policies (*Bundesministerium des Inneren* 2011, 66-70).

¹ For example the directives against racism of 2000 which had to be transformed into national law.



The following policies are among the most relevant programmes for **improving the skill level of migrants and their descendants**:

- **Language courses** are of two types: one is called *integration course*, the other is an *admission related pre – entry language course for spouses*. Since 2005 the Federal Government has spent about one billion Euros on obligatory integration courses for newcomers, mainly language courses with 900 hours of teaching and an exam, but including some civic education as well. In 2007 the Federal Government introduced a rule requiring non-EU marriage partners to have taken a language course in German in their home country to obtain a visa, with an exam given in Goethe Institutes or in institutes that have been certified by German authorities. The government hopes that passing a German test before arrival will ease the integration process of the new family migrant and enable her or him to communicate with people outside the ethnic community. Critics argue that this pre – entry measure aims to control unwanted migrants. On the whole one could say that admission and admission related integration policies in Germany are designed to influence the general qualification level, to increase labour market participation and to reduce unemployment and dependency on social benefits of the migrant population by improving their language skills.
- A large and complex system of **migration counselling** system with thousands of counsellors in cities and to some degree in rural areas has been set up to serve adults and youth. Adults are entitled to this service for three years after entering the country, after which they should obtain regular services available to the general population. Young people may use the services of the Jugendmigrationsdienst for personal counselling, for development of an individual integration plan, computer courses and other activities supporting their socialization.
- Several programs of the Ministry of Education and Research indirectly support the **education of immigrant children** (such as funds for training kindergarten educators to work with migrant children and parents; educational support measures of different kind).
- The same ministry has developed programs to help migrant youth **enter the dual system of training**, even when they have poor grades or have not finished basic education.

5 The role of the federal states (Länder)

Germany has a federal system of government with a strong role for the federal states, which receive substantial taxes and have their own police forces, a reminder of their former sovereignty before the foundation of the modern German nation state in 1871. Another major trace of that former sovereignty of the Länder is their almost exclusive competence in matters of education, both pre-school and schooling through university. Since education is the major area to improve the qualification level of the migrants' descendants, the Länder have a major responsibility in the integration process. There have been certain measures to help immigrant children in school, like transition classes for newly arriving children to learn the language, but on the whole the Länder have not developed systematic educational support policies. Only in the last decade – partly because of the Pisa shock – are the Länder beginning to accept their responsibility in this area.

A major part of the Länder policy is the fostering of **language learning in Kindergarten**, language testing one year before beginning school and pre-school language classes for tens of thousands of children with insufficient knowledge of German. After starting school, special efforts to learn German are continued for those who need it. Many projects address the **parents of migrant children** to increase their knowledge about the school system and to link them with the schools



and teachers of their children. The means for **social work in school** have been increased and the state support projects that recruit volunteers that are ready to help immigrant children with their homework. As to other areas of activities the Länder cooperate with the Federal Agency for Work in projects to **re-qualify unemployed and to help people open up a (small) business**.

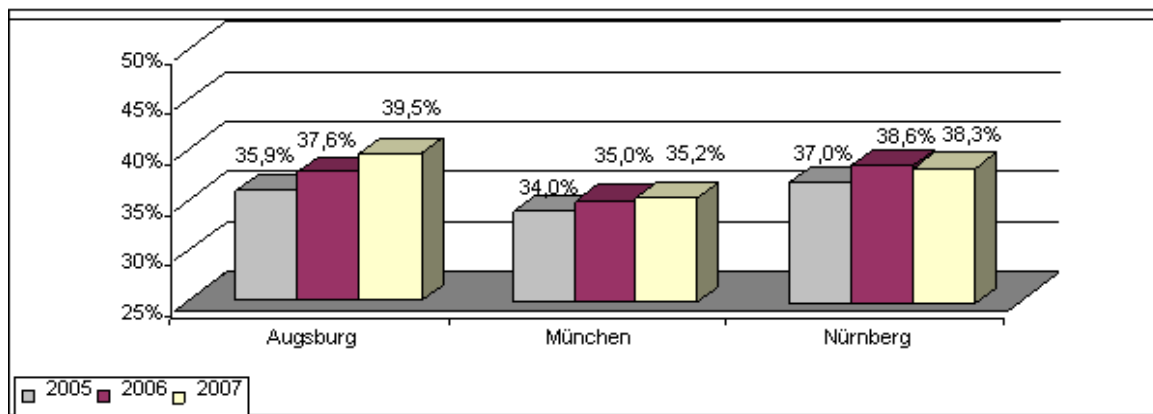
Some of the Länder presently are actively developing and expanding their activities, not the least by creating **ministries for integration** (such as North Rhine Westfalia, Rheinland- Pflalz, Baden- Württemberg, Berlin) and thus demonstrating the increased relevance given to integration policies.

6 The role of cities

“Integration happens at the local level” is a frequent assertion, since many larger cities and some of medium or smaller size have a population with a migration background of 35-40%. Look at the three largest cities in the state of Bavaria (Chart 2), and it is apparent that, the younger the cohort, the larger the share of those with a migration background.

Local policies have responded to the new challenges by making integration policies a top priority. Very often the mayor takes a leading role in advancing integration policies. Many cities have developed or are in the process of developing **local integration programs** and a Leitbild.

Chart 2: Persons with a migration background in the three largest cities in Bavaria



Source: Lutz and Heckmann 2010

Administrative changes or innovations include the creation or strengthening of a **department for integration** and the installation of a commissioner for integration. Changes further include what is called “intercultural opening” of the administration to better serve the needs of migrants and to recruit more personnel with a migration background, that is diversity-in-employment policies. Redefining or creating **consultative bodies of migrants** to give them a stronger role in the local political process and to ensure their participation is another aspect of the ongoing changes. Many cities have organised campaigns for increasing naturalization.

I helped, Dietzenbach, a city of 40,000 near Frankfurt, to develop an integration concept. More than 40% of Dietzenbach residents have a migration background reflecting the city’s proximity to the Opel - GM auto factory in Rüsselsheim. For a long time integration problems have been high



on the agenda of council of Dietzenbach and there was and still is considerable conflict between different parties over integration policies. At the same time, a great number of integration projects by the city and civil society organizations have been developed or are under way. A multi partisan committee on integration that wanted to end the political conflict over integration invited us to develop an integration concept for the city and to reach a political consensus on the topic.

The **integration concept** be developed in a **participatory manner**, meaning that interested citizens, migrants and non-migrants, civil society organizations (including migrant organizations and representatives of the city) should participate in devising the concept. After making the project known in the city public - including in a large meeting in a citizens' centre - working groups for different topics were formed and the groups met up to 8 times to develop a set of goals and measures in a particular area. Our institutes supported each of the working groups and summarized and edited the results in a 35 page concept. Some of the concept has to do with how to deal with cultural and religious diversity and how to reduce prejudice, but I will focus on policies to integrate low-qualified migrants.

I mentioned earlier that there are already quite a few integration projects in the city, but they are not systematized and to a great extent not well known by the target groups. Thus the integration concept has to be publicized, existing measures evaluated, and new measures developed to reach the goals laid out in the concept.

Let me illustrate the process in the area of education. The working group defined the following goals for measures in the realm of education, moving from the general to the particular.

Goals and measures are often formulated in a general way, but children with a migration background - the majority of children in most schools - are the main target group. The overarching goal and more concrete goals are:

"2. The prime goal of the integration concept concerning education is to improve the educational opportunities of children and youth with a migration background in Dietzenbach.

2.1 Existing educational opportunities and institutions should be systematically recorded, coordinated, connected and enlarged. The (newly erected) House of Education should play a central role in the process.

2.2 Children should start attending kindergarten not later than the age of three. Kindergarten should prepare the children for school.

2.3 Schools and social work should provide individualised support for homework and the general development of children and youth.

2.4 More persons with a migration background should be employed in kindergarten and schools.

2.5 Kindergarten and school should respect the cultural heritage of children and their parents.

Examples for existing measures and programs

| Program | Content of program | Organiser |
|--------------|---|---------------------|
| City Library | Improving reading skills; mentoring for children and parents; | City of Dietzenbach |



| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| | books and media in different languages of migrants' country of origin | |
| Homework support | Helping children and youth after school with their homework by social workers | City of Dietzenbach, Schools in Dietzenbach |
| Social work in schools | Both individual and group work | City of Dietzenbach |

Recommendations for new measures:

- The city administration should have a commission for education responsible for coordinating special education programs, creating a round table for education and organising city wide monitoring of the educational progress of children. The monitoring system should particularly look for the educational progress of migrant children.
- A round table for education should consist of representatives of kindergartens, schools, institutions for adult education and voluntary associations including religious communities of migrants for coordinating and connecting activities. It should meet at least three times a year and be chaired by the mayor.
- Common projects between kindergartens and primary schools should be developed to better prepare children for entering primary school.
- Increasingly, all-days schools should be installed (European forum for migration studies 2011)."

These are just a few items of the new integration concept. It should mention that a systematic program for **working with parents** in educational institutions is part of the program as well, as is **supporting the transition from school to vocational and professional education**, particularly into the dual system. Another section of the integration concept concerns **integration into the labour market, founding a business** measures to fight prejudice and discrimination, youth work, and caring for elderly migrants.

I should add that the majority of cities in Germany have such integration concepts and strive to realise their goals.

7 How successful is the German mode of welfare state integration?

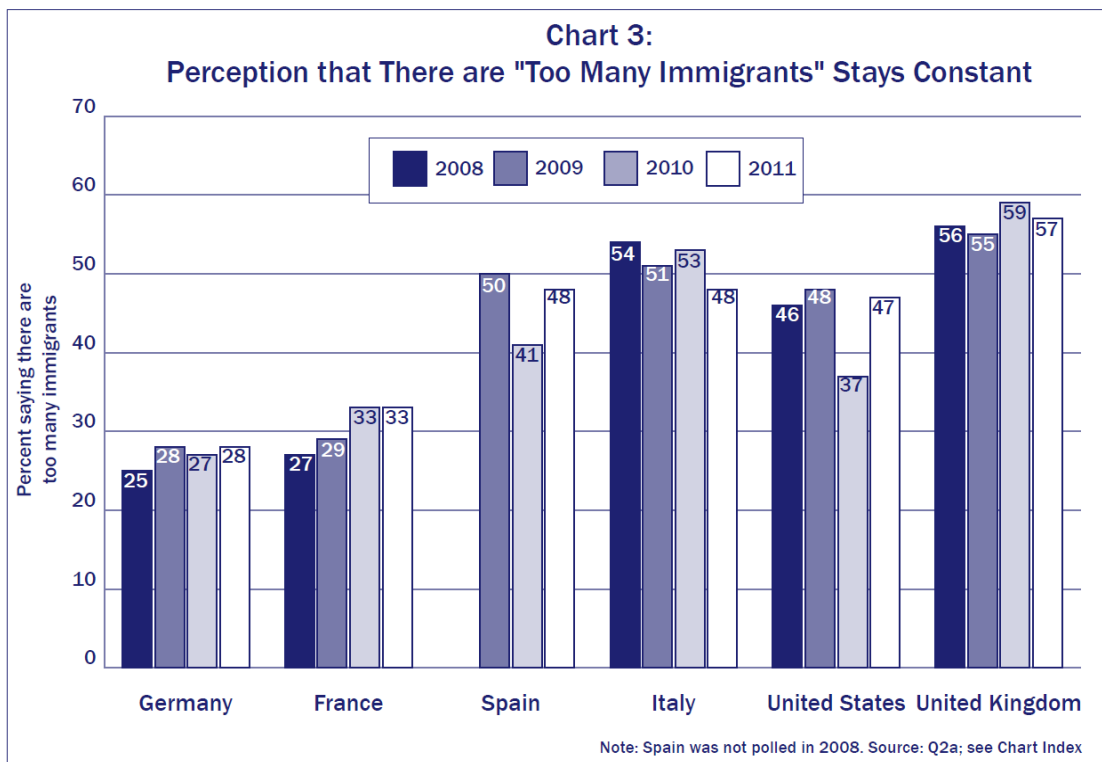
Despite a oftentimes pessimistic public discourse about a claimed failure of integration and incidents of neo-Nazi crimes, think that in a comparative perspective the welfare state mode of integration in Germany is rather successful. As three recent studies attest:

- The first is a large, methodologically sound empirical study on the state of integration commissioned and financed by a coalition of large German foundations. The study developed a so called "**integration barometer**". The Leitmotiv of the study is that integration has developed in a satisfactory manner and in some areas is very successful (Sachverständigenrat Deutsche Stiftung 2010/15).
- The second study is the recent report of results of the national monitor-



ing system set up through efforts of the national commissioner for integration (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration 2011). It uses the German microcensus, which since 2005 allows the identification of migration background. Time series data between 2005 and 2010 show a slow but steady **improvement of indicator values** for instance in the rate of students leaving school without any diploma. Integration is defined as the narrowing of differences between persons without and with migration background.

- Another set of indicators provides an indirect measure of success. This indicator does not look at the migrants and their descendants, but rather at **frustration over immigration** and integration of the native population. The Transatlantic Trends in immigration by the German Marshall Fund that polls populations in the US, UK, Italy, Spain, France and Germany.



Transatlantic Trends - Immigration, Key findings, p. 7
http://www.gmfus.org/publications_/TT/TT2011_final_web.pdf

It is certainly very difficult to untangle the many factors explaining the relative positive state of immigrant integration in Germany; the good performance of the German economy certainly is an important factor, but welfare state integration policies may also constitute a significant influence.



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