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INFORMATION & RESEARCH

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Flight, refugee protection and integration

Developments and policy decisions
in Germany

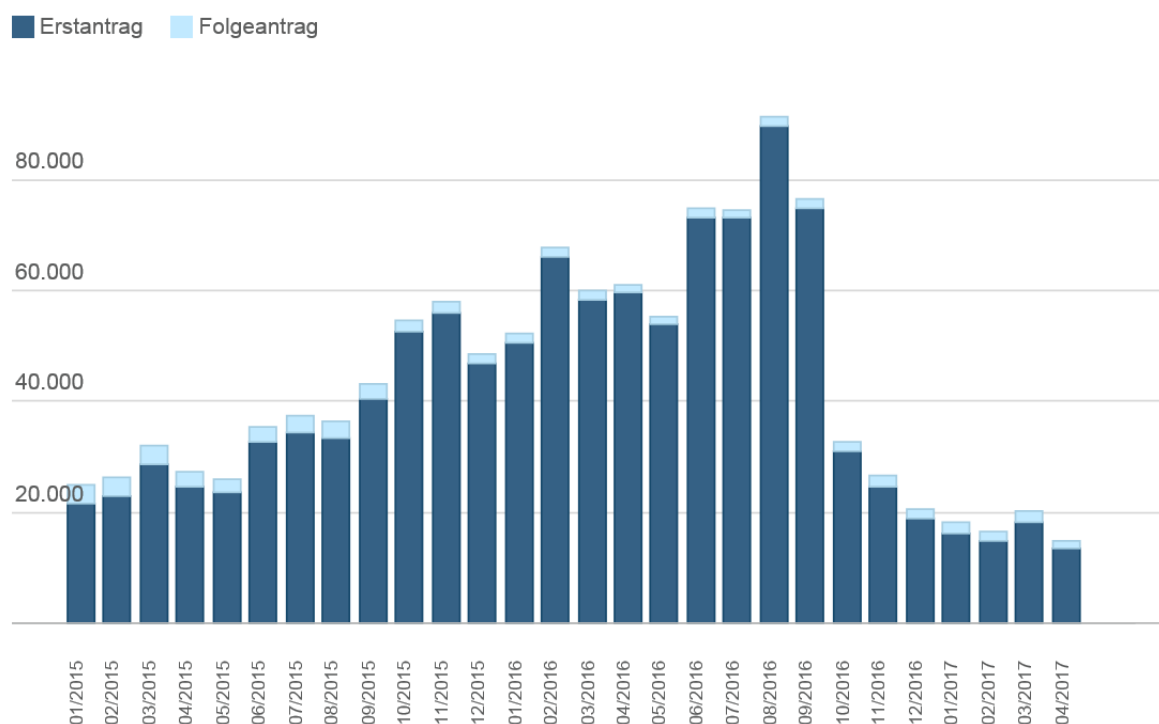
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1. Asylum fact check: Significantly fewer asylum applicants

The number of asylum applications submitted in Germany has drastically decreased since the summer of 2016. The asylum application figure peaked in **August 2016** with a total of **91,331 asylum applications**, falling to 32,640 asylum applications in October 2016. Since then, the figure has dropped continually and at the most recent count in April 2017, there were **14,848 asylum applications**. As a result, the current number of asylum applications stands below levels prior to the 2015 refugee crisis.

Chart: Asylum applications in Germany from 2015 to 2017



Source: Figures from the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), compiled by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (BPB)¹

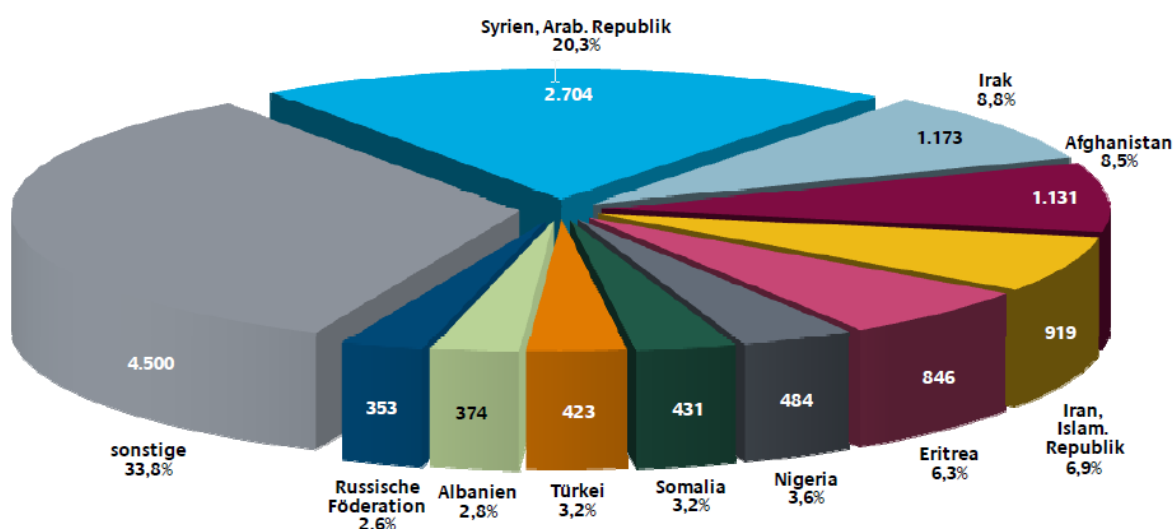
Between **January and December 2016**, the Federal Agency of Migration and Refugees (BAMF) received **745,545 initial and follow-up applications** for asylum. The number dwarfed the number of applicants

¹ http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl-april-2017.pdf?__blob=publicationFile (10/05/2017), <https://www.bpb.de/politik/innenpolitik/flucht/218788/zahlen-zu-asyl-in-deutschland#Registrierungen> (10/05/2017). Legend from left to right: Initial application, Follow-up application.

from 2015, in which 476,649 people had applied for asylum in Germany. Between January and April 2017, the Federal Ministry accepted a total of 76,930 asylum applications.

The BAMF and the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) have used the so-called EASY-system (IT application for initial distribution of asylum seekers) to estimate the monthly arrivals of asylum seekers to Germany. The number of asylum seekers registered in the EASY system fell from a total of **890,000 in 2015** to **321,371 in 2016**. Nevertheless, the EASY figures included incorrect and duplicate entries, due to incomplete data of personal records. Valid asylum application statistics based on personal records have been available to the BAMF since January 2017. Although a direct comparison with the EASY figures from previous months is only possible to a limited degree, the figures for asylum application statistics confirm the decreasing trend with only **60,872** registered asylum seekers **from January to April 2017**.

Chart: Main nationalities of asylum seekers, April 2017



Source: Federal Agency of Migration and Refugees (BAMF), latest figures on asylum, April 2017².

In April 2017, Syrians continued to make up the majority of asylum applicants, with a share of **20.3 percent**. **Iraqis** took second place as **8.8 percent of total applicants**, followed by **Afghans who made up 8.5 percent**. The three nationalities accounted for more than a third (37.6

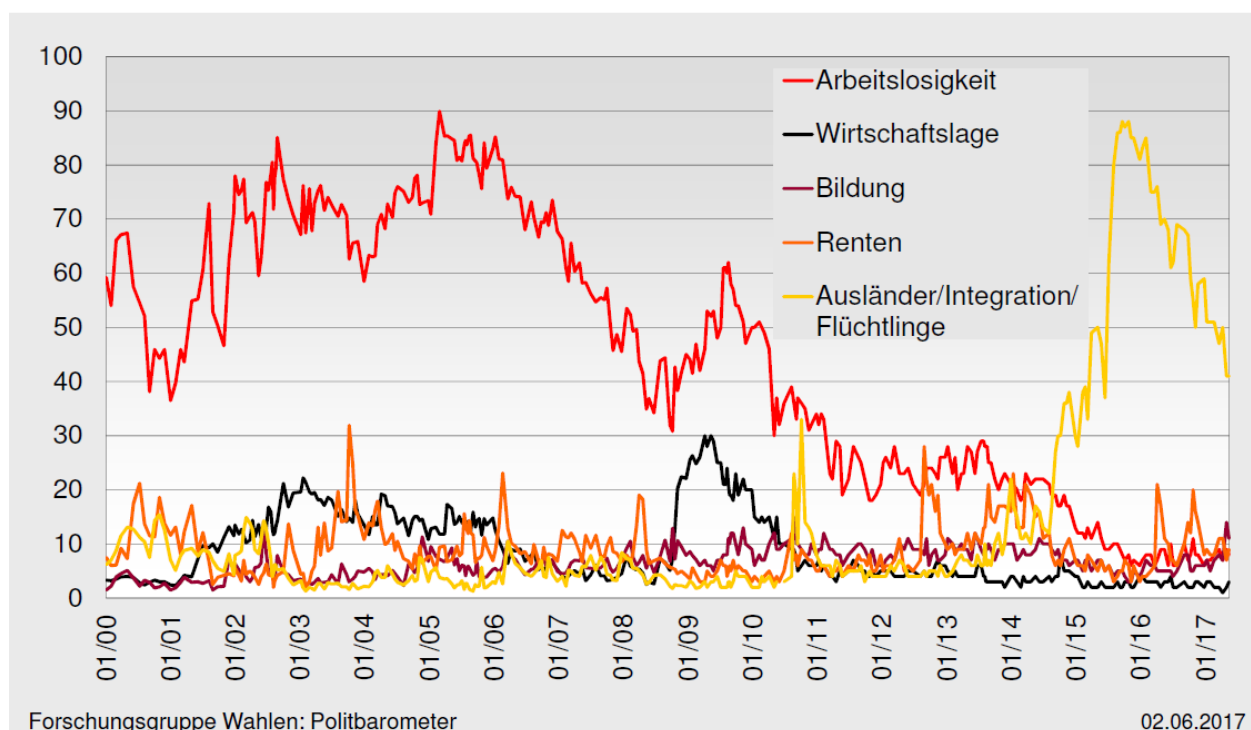
² Legend clockwise from top: Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Eritrea, Nigeria, Somalia, Turkey, Albania, Russian Federation, other.

percent) of initial applications. The proportion of Syrians amongst the asylum applicants had dropped significantly compared to last year. In April 2016, the proportion of Syrians amongst asylum applicants had been twice as high, with a share of 43.2 percent.

2. Mood in the country: Germans less and less concerned about immigration and integration

The issue of foreign nationals/refugees/integration is seen as the most important problem by the German population. While the aforementioned figures demonstrate a continuous downward trend, the issue remains central in the German public. At the same time, public opinion reflects the decreasing numbers with a continual downward trend in concern about the issue.

Chart: Most pressing problems in Germany (max. two citations)³



In the last survey of the political climate by Forschungsgruppe Wahlen dated 2 June 2017, **41 percent** of Germans named the issue of foreigners/integration and refugees as the most important problem in Germany. This figure reflects a significant drop compared to results at the peak of the refugee crisis in the autumn of 2015 (88 percent).

³ http://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Umfragen/Politbarometer/Langzeitentwicklung_-_Themen_im_Ueberblick/Politik_II/#Probl1 (02/06/2017). Legend from top to bottom: Unemployment, Economic situation, Education, Pensions, Foreign, nationals/integration/refugees. Forschungsgruppe Wahlen (polling company): Political barometer.

3. Policy decisions: policymakers take action

Politicians in Germany enacted targeted legislation to address the issue of refugees and integration.

a. Tightening of laws

The law governing the right to asylum has been amended significantly in light of increased challenges since the start of 2014. These reforms mark the most extensive reforms of laws governing asylum in Germany in the last 25 years. Wrong incentives have been removed and stricter regulations for deporting rejected asylum seekers have been introduced.

- **November 2014:** Increase in the number of **safe countries of origin**⁴
 - o The Balkan states of Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are declared safe countries of origin.
- **November 2014:** Reform of the **Asylum Seekers Benefits Act**
 - o This facilitates the faster integration of asylum seekers into the job market. Asylum seekers can now look for employment in Germany after three months instead of the previous requirement of nine months.
- **August 2015:** Entering into force of the "**Act on the Redefinition of the Right of Residence and the Termination of Residence.**"⁵
 - o On the one hand, this significantly improves the **prospects of remaining in the country** for well-integrated young people and adolescent foreigners who do not have secure residence status.
 - o On the other hand, the bill enforces **obligations to leave the country**. This includes the legal provision to access mobile data of the foreigner to clarify her identity and nationality and the introduction of the detention centre.

⁴ Safe countries of origin are countries in which given general political conditions, there is a legal assumption that neither political persecution nor inhumane or degrading punishment or treatment occurs (Section 29a of Asylum Procedure Act (AsylVfG)).

⁵ Gesetz zu Neubestimmung des Bleiberechts und der Aufenthaltsbeendigung.

- **October 2015: Asylum package I (Asylpaket I)**

- The Federal Government **eases the burden** on the federal states considerably and assumes the costs for asylum seekers with a €670 monthly allowance.
- Wrong incentives for applicants with no prospects of being granted permission to stay are curbed. Previous monetary assistance (pocket money) to cover personal care is replaced as much as possible with **in-kind benefits**.
- **Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro** are defined as **safe countries of origin** to further accelerate the asylum processes for citizens of these countries.
- Individuals with good prospects of being granted permission to stay should be integrated into the job market at an early stage. Therefore, the Federal Government launches **integration courses** for asylum seekers as well as foreign nationals with good prospects of being allowed to stay on the territory. The government makes additional funding available to this end.
- Accommodation for refugees should be built quicker thanks to **changes made to the construction-planning law**.
- A longer **stay in temporary reception facilities** is decided: this has been increased from three months in the past to six months.

- **March 2016: Asylum package II (Asylpaket II)**

- Applications from people from safe countries of origin, follow-up applicants and asylum seekers, who are not cooperating with authorities during the asylum process, shall be able to be processed more quickly thanks to **accelerated processes**. This also applies to people who conceal their identity or refuse to have their fingerprints taken.
- The monthly **cash allowances** for personal care are reduced in accordance with the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act.

- **Obstacles to expulsion are removed.** Only life-threatening or serious diseases that would worsen because of the expulsion will now be taken into account. In the future, a qualified physician will have to issue a certificate laying out credible medical grounds in order to prevent expulsion. The simplified **passport replacement procurement** is expected to make deportation processes more effective.
- **Family reunion** for applicants with subsidiary protection⁶ is **suspended** for two years.
- **March 2016: Tightening of the Deportation Act**
 - The bill is a response to the attacks in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015/2016.
 - Prison, juvenile or suspended sentences of at least one-year may lead to the **expulsion of asylum seekers**.
- **February 2017: More support for voluntary returnees**
 - In conjunction with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the new **returnee support programme StarthilfePlus** provides additional financial incentives for voluntary departures. It supplements the existing Federal State programme REAG/GARP⁷.
 - The Federal Government also assigns **€40 million** to finance StarthilfePlus for 2017.
- **March 2017: The joint Centre for the Support of Return⁸ opens:**
 - Officials from the Federal Government and Federal States henceforth required to **coordinate collective expulsions** and to improve processes.
 - The responsibility of facilitating repatriations remains with the Federal States; however **contacts of the Federal**

⁶ Subsidiary protection comes into question in cases in which there is no political persecution in the sense of Art. 16a of the German Basic Law and the requirements of refugee protection pursuant to Section 3 of Asylum Procedure Act are not present, yet the foreign national is still threatened by serious harm if they return to their homeland.

⁷ Acronym in English: Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany (REAG) / Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP).

⁸ Zentrum zur Unterstützung der Rückkehr (ZUR).

Government in the countries of origin can help, in difficult cases, to procure the required documents for individuals who are obligated to leave the country.

- In **May 2017**, the Bundestag approved the **Act to Better Enforce Compulsory Departure⁹ (Expulsion Act)**:
 - o Individuals who pose considerable danger to the lives and physical safety of others or domestic security should hereafter be taken into **detention** more easily and better monitored before deportation.
 - o The Federal Agency of Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is given additional powers to **determine the identity and nationality of asylum seekers**: In order to determine the identity and nationality of an asylum seeker mobile phones, tablets and laptops may be required even without the consent of the asylum seeker concerned.
 - o At the end of January 2017, according to the Central Register of Foreign Nationals, there were **213,439 foreign nationals subject to deportations** in Germany.

b. Funding of integration measures

Even though many of the people now arriving in Germany will end up returning to their home countries, integration efforts are required. Education and vocational training measures promote integration and represent an investment in rebuilding and stabilising the countries that refugees have fled. The motto here is that **temporary integration is better than no integration at all**, which is also the approach pursued by the new Integration Act.

- **August 2016: Integration Act**
 - o Asylum seekers can be obligated to participate in **integration courses**.

⁹ Gesetz zur besseren Durchsetzung der Ausreisepflicht.

- **Priority checks** on the labour market, examining whether national applicants are eligible for a position, have been suspended to speed up job placements for refugees.
 - To ensure better integration and to prevent the formation of “parallel societies”, asylum seekers with recognized refugee status can be **assigned a residence** in their first three-years in the country.
 - **Vocational training is funded**: Refugees with tolerated residence status in Germany are granted an extension to remain in the country for the entire duration of their training and search for work afterwards.
 - **Settlement permits will be issued** after five-years, taking integration efforts into consideration.
 - By creating **100,000 work opportunities** (so-called one-euro jobs), refugees are to be integrated into the low-level German labour market even before their asylum procedures have been completed.
- **Additional integrative measures:**
- Integration courses are extended: the deadlines for participating in an integration course are shortened. Refugees are expected to attend an **integration course sooner**. In 2016, the number of integration course participants could be increased by 20 percent compared to the previous year. In **2016**, the BAMF registered approximately **340,000 new participants for the integration courses**. The number was only 180,000 in 2015.
 - Particular focus is placed on **the education of values** in the orientation course. In addition, the curriculum for the orientation courses has been extended and the number of teaching units increased from 60 to 100 units.
 - As part of the “**overall language programme**”, a flexible, open and modular career-related language requirement was put in place. The Federal Government provided **€179 million** for this initiative in 2016. An additional €113 million will come from resources from the European Social Fund.

- To more quickly introduce the refugees to the job market, the **KompAS¹⁰ measure** was introduced in August 2016. It combines the integration course from the BAMF with skill assessment programmes of the Federal Employment Agency.
- Access to language and integration skills has been simplified by **new mobile apps**. The “**Deutschtrainer-App**” from the Goethe Institute helps to learn German and the “**Ankommen-App**” from the Federal Ministry of Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is used as a wayfinder for the initial weeks in Germany.

“**Support and demand**” (**Fördern und Fordern**) is the motto of Germanys integration policy. The State can support integration, but it cannot make it happen. Integration only succeeds in a joint effort and requires the willingness of the local society and new arrivals to open up to each another. The interactive **project map of the Federal Government¹¹**, which lists more than 1,400 integration initiatives in Germany, demonstrates this willingness exists.

¹⁰ KompAS stands for: Skill assessment, early activation and language acquisition (KompAS)

¹¹ www.deutschland-kann-das.de (10/05/2017).