



Mapping of social orientation: the case of Germany

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January 2018

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Introduction

In Germany, social orientation courses are held within the scope of integration courses. The courses are the responsibility of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Integration courses consist of a language course representing 600-1,000 teaching units and an orientation course representing 100 teaching units. The orientation course is the seventh and final module of the integration course. It covers essential subjects such as the German legal system, history, culture, and important values in Germany, e.g. freedom of religion, tolerance and equal opportunities.

Integration courses can be obligatory or there can be a legal entitlement to attend such courses, according to the persons' residence status. Furthermore, there are a number of persons who can attend integration courses on a voluntary basis. There are special course offers for specific target groups such as young adults, women or parents.

I. Legal and institutional framework

1. Legal framework of social orientation

1.1. Are courses obligatory by law

The entitlement or obligation to attend integration courses is regulated by Chapter 3 "Integration" of the Act on the Residence, Economic Activity and Integration of Foreigners in the Federal Territory (Residence Act).¹

The entitlement to attend an integration course is regulated by Section 44 of the Residence Act. In order to obtain entitlement to attend an integration course on one occasion, foreigners need to be residents in the German federal territory on a permanent basis.² In addition, they need to have received their first residence permit for employment purposes, for the purpose of subsequent immigration by dependants, on humanitarian grounds or as long-term residents in other EU member states.

The entitlement to attend an integration course does not apply to children, juveniles and young adults who take up school education or continue their previous school education in the Federal Republic of Germany. Neither does it apply to persons with discernibly minimal need for integration or foreigners who already possess a sufficient command of the German language, the latter still being entitled to attend orientation courses.

Persons possessing an attendance entitlement for integration courses need to register for the course in due time, as the entitlement expires after one year.

Foreigners who do not or no longer possess an attendance entitlement may be allowed to attend, according to the available number of places in the course. This applies in particular to persons who possess a residence permit and who are expected to remain lawfully and permanently. Foreigners who received a temporary residence permit on humanitarian grounds or whose deportation has been suspended temporarily may as well participate in the courses.

¹ Federal Republic of Germany, Act on the Residence, Economic Activity and Integration of Foreigners in the Federal Territory (Residence Act); https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_aufenthg/englisch_aufenthg.html

² Section 44, Residence Act: „Permanent residence is generally to be assumed if the foreigner receives a temporary residence permit of at least one year's duration or has held a temporary residence permit for more than 18 months, unless the stay is of a temporary nature.”

However, this does not apply to asylum seekers originating from a safe country of origin as they are not expected to remain lawfully and permanently. German nationals may be allowed to attend integration courses, according to the available number of places in the course, if they do not possess a sufficient command of the German language and have special integration needs³.

The obligation to attend an integration course is regulated by Section 44a of the Residence Act. Foreigners who are entitled to attend an integration course may as well be obliged to do so. This applies to persons who are unable to communicate at least at a basic level in the German language and equally to persons who receive benefits in accordance with Book Two of the Social Code⁴ or under the Act on Benefits for Asylum Applicants and who have special integration needs. In the latter cases, the obligation is imposed by the foreigners' authority upon issuing the residence title. The obligation may also be imposed by the paying body in cases where foreigners receive benefits that are linked to the obligation to attend an integration course. The obligation does not apply to foreigners, who are undergoing vocational training or any other form of training or education in Germany, who furnish evidence of attendance of comparable education measures in Germany or other EU Member States or for whom attendance on a sustained basis is unfeasible or unreasonable, e.g. in cases where it is unreasonable to expect a foreigner to attend a part-time course in addition to pursuing an economic activity or for foreigners caring for family members in need of care.

Foreigners with attendance obligation who are allocated to a course provider by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees have to comply with this request and thus immediately register for an integration course, regularly attend the course and sit the final examination.⁵

The entitlement or obligation to attend an integration course is also regulated by the ordinance on integration courses for foreigners and ethnic German immigrants (Integration ordinance).⁶ The ordinance furthermore contains detailed information on institutions that are authorised to conduct the courses, on the qualification of the teaching staff as well as on the mandatory final examination.

Ethnic German resettlers are a particular group with legal entitlement to participate in an integration course in Germany. Ethnic German resettlers are ethnic Germans from the successor states of the former Soviet Union and from other Eastern European states, who are entitled to live in Germany by means of a special acceptance process. Being recognised as ethnic German resettlers means that immigrants automatically receive German nationality.⁷ The entitlement to attend an integration course is regulated in Section 9 of the Federal Law on Refugees and Exiles (Federal Expellees Act).⁸ Attending an integration course shall serve as a means to obtain sufficient command of the German language and shall furthermore convey knowledge of the German legal system, culture and history. The attendance entitlement equally applies to spouses and children of ethnic German resettlers. However, children, juveniles and young adults who take up school education or continue their previous school education in the Federal Republic of Germany are not entitled to attend an integration course.

³ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Glossary, keyword Particular need for integration:

"Foreigners who are required by the local foreign affairs office to attend an integration course are regarded as having a particular need for integration if, for example, they have custody of a child living in Germany and cannot make themselves understood in simple German and therefore have not yet been able to integrate into life in Germany.:"

<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Service/Left/Glossary/function/glossar.html?nn=1449076&lv2=5832448&lv3=1504338>

⁴ i.e. Basic Security for Jobseekers, cf. <http://www.sozialgesetzbuch-sgb.de/sgbi/1.html>

⁵ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, Rights and responsibilities,

<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/RechtePflichten/rechtepflichten-node.html>

⁶ Federal Republic of Germany, Ordinance on integration courses for foreigners and ethnic German immigrants (Integration ordinance),

<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/intv/BJNR337000004.html>

⁷ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Ethnic German resettlers, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Migration/Spaetaussiedler/spaetaussiedler-node.html>

⁸ Federal Republic of Germany, Federal Law on Refugees and Exiles (Federal Expellee Law), <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bvfg/BJNR002010953.html>

1.2. Impact on legal situation/status

In case of non-compliance with the obligation to attend, foreigners may face legal consequences, e.g. in relation to the extension of their residence permit (Section 8, Residence Act). The residence permit is a temporary residence title (Section 7, Residence Act). Before extending the residence permit, the foreigners' authority ascertains whether the person in question has fulfilled his or her obligation to duly attend an integration course. In case of repeated breach of the obligation, the extension of the temporary residence permit can be refused or limited to at most one year. In the latter case, the person in question needs to furnish evidence of having attended an integration course within this period.

Successful attendance of an integration course is also related to the issuing of a permanent settlement permit (Section 9, Residence Act). The permanent settlement permit is a residence title which is not limited in time. It entitles the holder to pursue an economic activity. In order to be granted a permanent settlement permit, foreigners must meet the following criteria: they must have held a temporary residence permit for five years, their subsistence and sufficient living space must be secure, they must have paid compulsory or voluntary contributions into the statutory pension scheme for at least 60 months, and they must furnish evidence of a sufficient command of the German language as well as basic knowledge of the legal and social system and the way of life in Germany. As successful attendance of integration courses is a means of meeting the latter criteria, foreigners who did not attend an integration course might face disadvantages in obtaining a permanent settlement permit. The attendance of an integration course as a requirement for issuing a permanent settlement permit can only be waived if a person is unable to fulfil the requirement on account of a physical, mental or psychological illness or handicap. It may also be waived in order to avoid hardship.

Moreover, the successful attendance of an integration course is related to issuing an EU long-term residence permit (Section 9a, Residence Act). This residence title allows for unlimited permanent residence in any EU Member State. The requirements are equivalent to those for a permanent settlement permit.

In case of non-compliance with the obligation to attend an integration course, foreigners are informed about possible consequences by the foreigners' authority. The foreigners' authority may take administrative enforcement measures in order to enjoin persons to meet their obligation to attend. Foreigners who do not meet their attendance obligation are charged with the prospective costs in advance in a single sum by means of an official notice of fees. This equally applies to persons who were originally exempt from course fees (Section 44a (3), Residence Act).

2. Course/module providers

Integration courses are coordinated and carried out by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) through private or public organisations. Persons who are entitled or obliged to attend an integration course can be assigned to a specific organisation by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Obligated persons have to comply with this request. The BAMF ensures that the courses are easily reachable and start at an early stage. Persons who attend an integration course on a voluntary basis have the right to choose a course provider. The information system WebGIS⁹ enables interested persons to search for suitable integration courses.

⁹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, WebGIS, <http://webgis.bamf.de/BAMF/control;jsessionid=196955B32767A94DC56CAE8CF5315BFF>

The BAMF is currently testing a new procedure at 23 project locations to promptly assign entitled or obliged persons to an integration course (keyword “Integrative management of integration courses”¹⁰).¹¹

The Federal Office may approve private or public organisations as providers of integration courses upon request if they 1) are reliable and law-abiding, 2) are capable of operating integration courses properly, and 3) apply procedures relating to quality assurance and quality development. The admission of course providers for particular target groups, intensive courses (Section 13, Ordinance on integration courses) or online courses (Section 14) requires separate application. The admission procedure serves as a means for the Federal Office to provide an extensive and demand-oriented range of integration courses throughout Germany.

For assessment of the capability of the applying organisation, the application needs to furnish specifications on (Sections 18, 19, Ordinance on integration courses):

1. the practical experience (at least two years) of the applying organisation in the field of the organisation and operation of language courses for adults as well as indications on whether the applying organisation is already approved as an operator of comparable training measures by government or other certified bodies;
2. teaching organization;
3. equipment and design of the classrooms as well as technical equipment;
4. the use of new media for conveying content;
5. staff resources, including information on designated staff for the conduct of placement tests. For teaching staff, specifications on their teaching experience in language and integration courses and on their additional qualifications which are relevant to their work in integration courses are required;
6. the amount of remuneration for teachers working on a fee basis;
7. reaching specific target groups;
8. coping strategies for specific regional demands;
9. the cooperation with other integration bodies on a local level; in particular specifications on the ability of jointly operating integration courses in cooperation with those bodies.

Following these criteria, integration courses can be provided by authorities and other administrative bodies at national level, by authorities at the Federal state/municipal level, by NGOs as well as by private sector providers.

- Requirements towards the professional qualification of providers' experts.

Requirements towards the professional qualifications of teaching staff for integration courses are regulated in Section 15 of the Ordinance on integration courses. Teaching staff for German as a second language are required to have completed a university degree either in “German as a foreign language” or “German as a second language”. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees offers qualification programmes for teachers who have not completed a relevant university degree. In any case, teachers must provide evidence of the necessary qualification and their suitability in regard to the aims of the course. The methodological and didactic skills of the teachers are promoted through specific training, provided by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Examiners, who conduct the examinations at the end of the course, are required to have knowledge in assessing language skills and teaching experience with the target group.

¹⁰ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integrative management of integration courses, <http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Meldungen/DE/2017/20170801-am-neue-intkv.html>

¹¹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, integration courses, rights and responsibilities, <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/RechtePflichten/rechtepflichten-node.html>; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, integration courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/IntegrationskurseAsylbewerber/integrationskurseasylbewerber-node.html>

II. Audience

1. Coverage of social orientation courses, by category of non-nationals

1.1. Statistical data

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees keeps statistics on annual attendance in integration courses according to the status groups of the attending persons. In 2016 (latest available statistic), 534,648 people were made eligible to attend. 225,093 of them were new arrivals, including 200,808 persons who were obliged to attend. 3,891 of those eligible were ethnic German resettlers; 225,010 were earlier arrivals/EU-citizens/German nationals¹²; 78,004 entitlements were issued for recipients of unemployment benefit II,¹³ who are obliged to attend the courses; 2,650 entitlements were issued for earlier arrivals.¹⁴

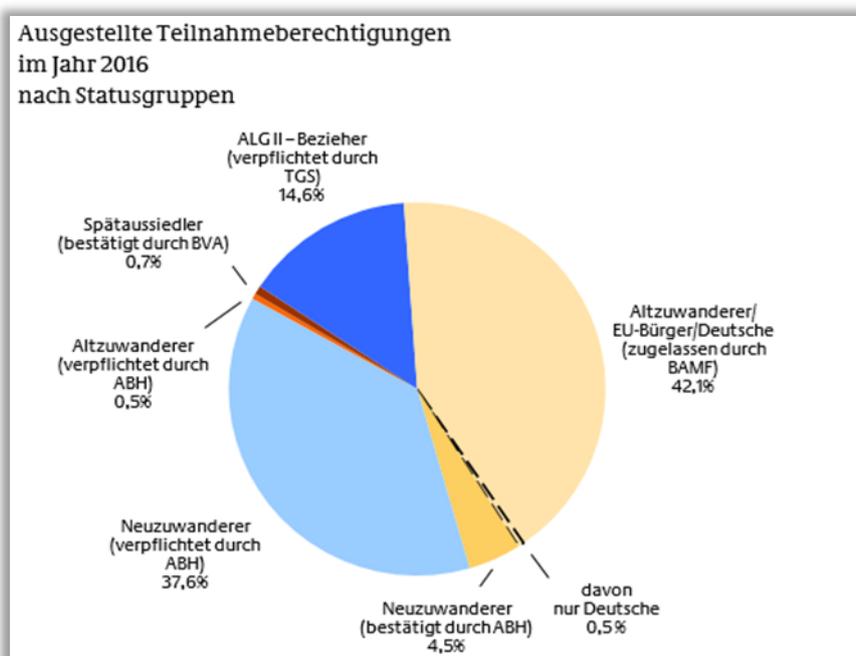


Figure 1

2. Categories of non-nationals having access to/the obligation to attend social orientation courses/modules

Asylum applicants

Persons applying for international protection have access to integration courses according to the number of available course places and provided that they have good prospects of staying in Germany (currently these are people from the

¹² German nationals or ethnic German resettlers may participate in an integration course under certain circumstances. See above for legal basis. See below for detailed course offers for German nationals and ethnic German resettlers.

¹³ These are persons who receive benefits according to the Second Book of the Social Code, i.e. basic provision for jobseekers.

¹⁴ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Business statistics on the integration course for 2016, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Integration/2016/2016-integrationskursgeschaeftsstatistik-gesamt_bund.html?nn=1694502

conflict areas Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Syria or Somalia). Members of the groups mentioned can place a request for admission to integration courses at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.¹⁵

Asylum seekers with uncertainties regarding their prospects of stay, i.e. persons who originate neither from a country with high recognition quota (good prospects of stay) nor from a safe country of origin, have the possibility to attend an initial orientation course. Interested persons may address a course provider that offers courses in the respective Federal states. The BAMF provides a list of course providers on its website. The list is continuously updated.¹⁶

Asylum applicants who have good prospects of staying in Germany may as well attend initial orientation courses, provided that there are sufficient places available and that the attendance of an integration course is not (yet) possible. However, school-aged children are not eligible for initial orientation courses.¹⁷

Protection status holders

Applicants for international protection in Germany who received a temporary residence permit on humanitarian grounds or whose deportation has been suspended temporarily (Sections 25, 60, Residence Act), are eligible to attend an integration course. Interested persons can submit an application for authorisation to attend an integration course to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.¹⁸

Third-country nationals holding a residence title

Foreigners who obtained a residence title before 2005 can be approved for integration courses by the BAMF, provided that there are sufficient available course places. They are obliged to attend an integration course if they receive unemployment benefit II and if the paying agent imposes the obligation, if they have special integration needs and if they are requested to attend by foreigners' authority. Foreigners cannot be obliged to attend if they undergo/have undergone vocational training or comparable educational/training programmes or if permanent attendance is impossible/unreasonable, e.g. if they are caring for a family member in need of care.¹⁹

Foreigners who obtained a residence title as of 2005 are legally entitled to attend an integration course if they meet certain criteria. This includes persons who live in Germany on a permanent basis, who are employed in Germany, who are in Germany for the purpose of family reunification, for humanitarian reasons or by means of a long-term residence permit according to Section 38a of the Residence Act. Furthermore, it includes persons who reside in Germany on a permanent basis and received a residence permit according to Section 23 (2) of the Residence Act for the first time. Residence in Germany is considered permanent if a person received a residence permit for more than one year or if a person has been holding a residence permit for more than 18 months.

Children, juveniles and young adults who take up school education in Germany and persons with a noticeably low integration need are not entitled to attend an integration course. Persons with a sufficient command of the German language are not entitled to attend an integration course either; however, they may attend an orientation course.

Foreigners who obtained a residence title as of 2005 are obliged to attend an integration course, if they cannot communicate in German sufficiently or in a simple manner. The foreigners' authority imposes the obligation upon issuing

¹⁵ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/IntegrationskurseAsylbewerber/integrationskurseasylbewerber-node.html>

¹⁶ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Initial orientation courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Erstorientierung/Erstorientierungskurse/erstorientierungskurse.html>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/IntegrationskurseAsylbewerber/integrationskurseasylbewerber-node.html>

¹⁹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, Foreigners who obtained a residence title before 2005, http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/TeilnahmeKosten/Aufenthaltstitel_vor/aufenthaltstitel_vor-node.html

the residence title. Recipients of unemployment benefit II are also obliged to attend an integration course if the paying body imposes the obligation. Foreigners cannot be obliged to attend if they undergo/have undergone vocational training or comparable educational/training programmes or if permanent attendance is impossible/unreasonable, e.g. if they are caring for a family member in need of care. Foreigners who work in Germany and who cannot be expected to attend part-time courses in addition to their economic activity are not obliged to attend.²⁰

EU-citizens neither have any legal entitlement to attend an integration course, nor are they obliged to do so.²¹ However, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees may approve these persons, according to available course places, if they do not have a sufficient command of the German language or if they have special integration needs. The persons in questions need to fill in an application for admission.²²

Newcomers/settled migrants

See above (initial orientation courses for asylum seekers who are likely/unlikely to stay in Germany)

Other non-nationals

Not applicable

3. Courses for German nationals

German nationals might be interested in attending an integration course in special cases, e.g. if they grew up in a non-German-speaking country and have been living in Germany for a short period only.

German nationals do not have any legal entitlement to attend an integration course. However, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees may approve these persons, according to available course places, if they do not have a sufficient command of the German language or if they have special integration needs. The persons in question must submit an application for admission.²³

Ethnic German resettlers²⁴ who were admitted into Germany on or after 1 January 2005 are legally entitled to a free integration course. The costs are covered by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The confirmation of entitlement to attend a course will be issued by the Federal Office of Administration in Friedland when the persons first arrive in Germany. The entitlement also applies to spouses and children of the concerned persons.

Ethnic German resettlers who were admitted into Germany before 1 January 2005 can attend an integration course free of charge if they have not yet attended a language course organised by the Federal Agency for Employment. If they have already attended a language course organised by the Federal Agency for Employment and would like to attend an integration course as well, they must submit an application for admission to an integration course to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. They will then be admitted to the integration course as German nationals.²⁵

²⁰ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, Foreign nationals with residence titles issued from 2005 onwards, http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/TeilnahmeKosten/Aufenthaltsitel_nach/aufenthaltsitel_nach-node.html

²¹ Make it in Germany, Integration course, <http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/de/fuer-fachkraefte/leben/integrationskurse>

²² Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, EU-citizens, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/TeilnahmeKosten/EUBuerger/eubuerger-node.html>

²³ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses for German nationals, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/TeilnahmeKosten/Deutsche/deutsche-node.html>

²⁴ Definition: see above.

²⁵ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, Ethnic German resettlers, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/TeilnahmeKosten/Spaetaussiedler/spaetaussiedler-node.html>

Children, juveniles and young adults who attend school in Germany or undergo vocational training do not have a legal entitlement to attend an integration course.²⁶

In addition to the integration course, there is a special integration programme for ethnic German resettlers: the “Identity and Integration PLUS” course. This course builds on the integration course, taking into account the special situation and needs of the target group. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees funds this programme under the provisions of the Federal Expellees Act (Section 9 (1)). The programme is implemented by various course providers throughout Germany. Relatives of ethnic German resettlers are also able to attend the course if they immigrated with the ethnic German resettler in accordance with the conditions stipulated in the Residence Act (Section 8 subs. 2 of the Federal Expellees Act). The course is not available to other groups of people.²⁷

4. Initiatives targeted at specific non-national groups

There are special integration courses²⁸ for young adults. Like on the general integration course, participants learn German up to language level B1. In addition, they learn important information about school and training, work and career, family and living together harmoniously, health and healthcare provision, culture and leisure. Furthermore, the integration course for young adults offers the following advantages: learning with people of a similar age, up to 1,000 teaching units (900 teaching units for learning German, 100 teaching units for the orientation course), working in small groups of 10 to 15 people, looking at current topics and subjects that are interesting for the target group, sometimes two teachers. During a practical stage, participants come into direct contact with education institutions and workplaces and learn about advisory services which help them plan their next steps.²⁹

Furthermore, there is a special integration course for women. This course offers up to 1,000 teaching units as well. In addition, it offers the following benefits: participants get to know their children's kindergarten or schools during the course; the course is taught by a woman; participants meet other women with similar interests and have the opportunity to discuss subjects which are particularly interesting to them, e.g. bringing up and educating their children and special advisory programmes in their area; participants discuss the differences and similarities between women's lives in Germany and in their respective country of origin.³⁰

Special integration courses are also offered for parents. This course offers up to 1,000 teaching units as well. In addition, it offers the following benefits: participants get to know their children's kindergarten or schools during the course; participants are introduced to their children's nursery teachers and school teachers by the course leader; participants learn together with other parents who have the same or similar interests; participants are introduced to kindergarten and school life, and will be included so that they are fully equipped to make decisions about their children's futures;

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Programmes for ethnic German resettlers,

<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Integrationsprojekte/Spaetaussiedlerangebote/spaetaussiedlerangebote-node.html>

²⁸ Section 13 of the Ordinance on integration courses gives an overview of the various offers for specific target groups.

²⁹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course for young adults,

<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/SpezielleKursarten/JugendlicheKurse/jugendlichekurse-node.html>;

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Concept for a Nationwide Youth Integration Course, Revised new edition – April 2015,

http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-jugendik.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

³⁰ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course for women,

<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/SpezielleKursarten/Frauenkurse/frauenkurse-node.html>; Federal

Office for Migration and Refugees, Concept for a Nationwide Integration Course for women and parents, Revised new edition – April 2015,

http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-frauen-eltern-ik.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

participants learn about the structure of the German education system and about the opportunities available to them and their children in Germany.³¹

Another type of special integration course is offered for persons without literacy skills or persons who only learned a non-Latin alphabet. As the focus of this course is on learning the Latin alphabet, the course will not be described in detail. Participants are obliged to attend orientation courses which are organised within the literacy courses. The contents of those courses do not differ from contents for other target groups.³²

III. Courses/modules' characteristics

A.Length

According to Chapter 3 Integration, Section 43 (3) of the Residence Act, the integration course comprises a basic and advanced language course of identical duration (300 teaching units each) to provide sufficient command of the language and an orientation course to impart knowledge of the legal system, culture and history in Germany.

In general, the integration course comprises 600 teaching units for language learning as well as 100 teaching units for an orientation course (60 teaching units until end 2015), thus 700 teaching units for the integration course in total.³³

Courses for specific target groups may as well comprise 1,000 teaching units. Moreover, persons with favourable learning conditions have the opportunity to complete the integration course within 430 teaching units. This intensive integration course consists of 400 teaching units for language learning and 30 teaching units for the orientation course.³⁴

Initial orientation courses for asylum applicants with uncertain prospects of staying in Germany consist of six modules, each comprising 50 teaching units, adding up to a total of 300 teaching units.³⁵

The special course for ethnic German resettlers, "Identity and Integration PLUS", comprises 200 teaching units. The exact course times (full-time or part-time) can be discussed with the relevant course provider directly.³⁶

B.Format

In principle, the integration course is a full-time course. Part-time courses can be offered in exceptional cases, e.g. if the participants are in employment. Afternoon or evening courses are possible. In theory, online-courses are possible according to the Ordinance on integration courses (Section 14 (3)). However, all integration courses currently take place in the presence of the participants.³⁷

³¹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course for parents, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/SpezielleKursarten/Elternkurse/elternkurse-node.html>

³² Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course including literacy skills, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/SpezielleKursarten/Alphabetisierung/alphabetisierung-node.html>; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Concept for a Nationwide Literacy Course, Revised new edition – May 2015, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-ik-mit-alphabet.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

³³ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course, Content and scheduling, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/InhaltAblauf/inhaltablauf-node.html>

³⁴ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course, Intensive course, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/SpezielleKursarten/Intensivkurse/intensivkurse-node.html>

³⁵ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Initial orientation courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Erstorientierung/Erstorientierungskurse/erstorientierungskurse.html>

³⁶ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Programmes for ethnic German resettlers, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Integrationsprojekte/Spaetaussiedlerangebote/spaetaussiedlerangebote-node.html>

³⁷ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course, Content and scheduling, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/InhaltAblauf/inhaltablauf-node.html>

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees provides an online test centre for interested persons in order to prepare for the final examinations.³⁸

C. Language

All integration courses are held in German (Section 10, Ordinance on integration courses). All teachers hold a university degree in “German as a foreign language” or “German as a second language”, therefore no translation or interpretation is offered for the course.

D. Content

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees specifies the contents and objectives of the individual language course modules and of the orientation course, taking into account the methodological and didactical findings and experiences for teaching German as a second language (Section 10 (2), Ordinance on integration courses).

E. Payment

Participants have to pay a contribution to costs for the integration course. If an institution pays for subsistence of participants, this contribution must be covered by the respective institution (Section 9 (1), Ordinance on integration courses). The contribution is 1.95 Euro per teaching unit. Participants do not have to pay the total amount at once, but can pay per course section of 100 teaching units.³⁹ If participants stop attending the integration course, they are still obliged to pay the total amount of the contribution for the relevant course section (Section 9 (4), Ordinance on integration courses).

All persons who successfully attended an integration course within two years after receiving the entitlement can claim a 50 % refund of the course contribution (Section 9 (6), Ordinance on integration courses).

All persons who receive unemployment benefit II or social security benefits can claim exemption from the total course contribution. Participants can as well be exempted from paying the course contribution if they have difficulties to do so due to their economic or personal situation (Section 9 (2), Ordinance on integration courses). In this case, participants also have the possibility to claim a refund of their travel costs, if necessary.⁴⁰ If participants want to claim exemption from paying course contribution, they have to submit the relevant form before the start of the course.⁴¹

Persons who are obliged to attend an integration course and do not receive unemployment benefit II may claim a refund of their travel costs.⁴²

For asylum applicants with good prospects of stay or whose deportation has been suspended temporarily, attendance of the integration course is free of charge.⁴³ For asylum applicants with uncertainties regarding their prospects of stay, attendance of an initial orientation course is free of charge.⁴⁴

³⁸ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Naturalisation, Online Test Centre, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Einbuergierung/OnlineTestcenter/online-testcenter-node.html>

³⁹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, Attendance and costs, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/TeilnahmeKosten/teilnahmekosten-node.html>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, Rights and responsibilities, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/RechtePflichten/rechtepflichten-node.html>

⁴² Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, EU-citizens, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/TeilnahmeKosten/EUBuerger/eubuerger-node.html>

⁴³ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Erstorientierung/Erstorientierungskurse/erstorientierungskurse.html>

⁴⁴ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Initial orientation courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Erstorientierung/Erstorientierungskurse/erstorientierungskurse.html>

Ethnic German resettlers, their spouses and their children may attend an integration course free of charge, once only.⁴⁵

F. Exam

The integration course is concluded with two exams: “German language test for immigrants” (language examination), and “Life in Germany” (test for the orientation course). To pass the “Life in Germany” test, candidates must reach the necessary number of points (Section 17, Ordinance on integration courses). Candidates have to answer 33 out of 310 possible multiple-choice questions in relation to the contents of the orientation course. There are four possible answers and one correct answer for each question. Candidates have 60 minutes to answer the 33 questions. Online preparation for the test is available to the candidates.⁴⁶

The test is free of charge for all course participants. Repeating the test once is free of charge as well (Section 17 (3), Ordinance on integration courses).

In addition, all participants who regularly attended the integration course have the right to obtain a certificate of attendance.⁴⁷

G. Means to certify non-nationals’ participation in the courses

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees certifies the successful attendance of the integration course with the “Integration course certificate” and keeps a copy of the certificate in its files. The certificate contains surname, first name, date of birth and passport or identity card number of the recipient (Section 17 (4), Ordinance on integration courses). Persons who have successfully completed the integration course may apply for German citizenship after seven years of lawful residence in Germany (the usual requirement is eight years).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, Ethnic German resettlers, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/TeilnahmeKosten/Spaetaussiedler/spaetaussiedler-node.html>

⁴⁶ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, The “Life in Germany” test, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/Abschlusspruefung/LebenInDeutschland/lebenindeutschland.html>

⁴⁷ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration courses, Rights and responsibilities, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/RechtePflichten/rechtepflichten-node.html>

⁴⁸ Make it in Germany, Integration courses, <http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/de/fuer-fachkraefte/leben/integrationskurse>

IV. Content of courses

1. Aims of the courses

H. Course objectives

The aim of the integration course is to impart the German language, legal system, culture and history to foreigners. It is intended to acquaint foreigners with the way of life in Germany to such an extent as to enable them to act independently in all aspects of daily life, without the assistance or mediation of third parties (Section 43, Residence Act, Chapter 3 Integration).

The following specific objectives are mentioned:⁴⁹

- Promoting the understanding of the German state and political system: immigrants often bring with them certain experiences with the state and political system of their countries of origin. Imparting the characteristics of the German political system (federalism, welfare state, the party system) is a major aim of the orientation course. Furthermore, the course tries to impart an understanding of the relevant institutional environment of immigrants (foreigners' authorities, municipalities) and to develop understanding for the political processes in the receiving country.
- Developing a positive assessment of the German state: imparting knowledge on fundamental values of German society, the political and legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany should promote a positive assessment of the German state by immigrants and create points of identification.
- Imparting knowledge on the rights and obligations of German residents and citizens: being aware of the rights on which they can rely is an important precondition for the integration of immigrants. At the same time, the obligations of the individual resident or citizen towards the general public must be clearly communicated.
- Evolving further orientation ability: the orientation course conveys basic knowledge in the subject areas mentioned above. However, the ability to acquire knowledge independently is crucial. The orientation course reveals opportunities to independently acquire knowledge after completion of the course.
- Enabling participation in social life: successful social participation requires immigrants to know German habits and their backgrounds as well as fundamental values and beliefs, to reflect on them and to be able to deal with them. The course shall point out opportunities for participation.

- Acquiring intercultural competence: this is an important skill for all residents. Intercultural competence facilitates life in new cultural contexts. At the same time, it helps to reflect on one's own culture and to preserve cultural identity.

⁴⁹Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Concept for a Nationwide Integration Course, Revised new edition, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-integrationskurs.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

2. Themes covered

The orientation course teaches everyday knowledge as well as about the legal system, history and culture in Germany. Special emphasis is placed on knowing about the values of the democratic political system of the Federal Republic of Germany and the principles of the rule of law, equality, tolerance and freedom of religion (Section 3, Ordinance on integration courses). This shall promote orientation within society and a positive approach to the new reality of life.⁵⁰

The topics are covered in three course modules:⁵¹

- Module I: Politics in a democracy
This module comprises the following topics: structural principles of the German state, fundamental rights and civic obligations, constitutional bodies, parties and state symbols, the social state and political participation.
- Module II: History and responsibility
This module deals with National Socialism and its consequences, important milestones in the history of Germany since 1945 and life in a reunified Germany and in Europe.
- Module III: People and society
This module comprises the following topics: living together in a family and in other communities, upbringing and education in Germany, intercultural interactions and religious diversity.

Depending on the interests of the participants, the topics can be explored in more depth and other topics can be addressed.

The following topic areas may be addressed in initial orientation courses for asylum applicants with uncertainties regarding their prospects to stay: everyday life in Germany, work, shopping, health/medical care, kindergarten/school system, use of media in Germany, finding your way around/transport/mobility, habits and customs in Germany/local characteristics, talking about oneself and about other people/social contacts, housing, values and social co-existence. For teaching purposes, the course provider chooses five topics from the overall concept which suit the needs of the participants. The module "Values and social co-existence" is mandatory for everyone attending the course.⁵²

The following topics are addressed in the special course "Identity and integration PLUS" for ethnic German resettlers: questions on their specific identity, e.g. their idea of and experience with German culture and living conditions; challenges and opportunities in coping with everyday life in their new living environment, e.g. experiences with and reflections on different everyday life situations such as visits to authorities or to a doctor, conversations with teachers; possibilities and opportunities on the German labour market, e.g. offers by the labour agency; questions on the German educational system, e.g. how and where to go to school/undergo vocational training or have the respective diplomas recognised; everyday life and family, e.g. "How does the German health care system work?", "How can I apply for a spot in a nursery school?"; practical exercises, such as job interview trainings, are an important part of the courses⁵³

Teaching methods

The following teaching methods are used for integration courses:⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Concept for a Nationwide Integration Course, Revised new edition – April 2015, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-integrationskurs.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Initial orientation courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Erstorientierung/Erstorientierungskurse/erstorientierungskurse-node.html>

⁵³ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Local integration projects, Programmes for ethnic German resettlers, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Integrationsprojekte/Spaetaussiedlerangebote/spaetaussiedlerangebote-node.html>

⁵⁴ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Concept for a Nationwide Integration Course, Revised new edition, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/konz-f-bundesw-integrationskurs.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

The principle of participant orientation is of great importance in order to introduce participants to topics and facts that touch on their own personal convictions, norms and values. When introducing these topics, participants' experiences are taken into account and used as a starting point.

Although a large part of topics dealt with are highly abstract, the lessons are designed in a practical way using real-life examples (principle of practical relevance). By using various kinds of media (e.g. visual, audio, computer-assisted media), the lessons should be as lively and descriptive as possible, thus leaving a lasting impression.

Many different working methods and social methods ensure that participants are partners in the learning process and are able to actively shape the learning process.

As all integration courses aim at developing the participants' ability of independently finding their way around in their living environment, practical exercises, such as job interview trainings, are an important part of the course.⁵⁵

3. Participation of host society in the courses

Within the integration courses, the participants mainly get in touch with the receiving society during excursions to certain institutions or authorities. The excursions should help the participants to find their way around in their environment and to put the things they learned into practice.⁵⁶

Within the special integration courses for young adults, participants can get in touch with education institutions and workplaces. They get to know advisory services which can help them plan their next steps.⁵⁷ Within the special integration courses for women or parents, participants get in touch with their children's kindergarten or school.⁵⁸

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⁵⁶ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Initial orientation courses for asylum applicants, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/Erstorientierung/Erstorientierungskurse/erstorientierungskurse-node.html>

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⁵⁸ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course for women, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/SpezielleKursarten/Frauenkurse/frauenkurse-node.html>; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Integration course for parents, <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/SpezielleKursarten/Elternkurse/elternkurse-node.html>

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