

Inside the German Experience of Cultural Pluralism

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Policies for cultural pluralism are relatively recent in Germany, despite the fact that the waves of migrants are long-standing. Caroline Robertson-Von Trotha explains how the attitude of citizens to cultural diversity varies between the different regions of the country due to the different levels of exposure to groups with migrant backgrounds. While the Anna Lindh/Gallup polling shows respondents' scepticism towards diversity in relation to social instability, there is a definite support for the equality of rights to all minorities in the country.

Perceptions of the Mediterranean region in Germany should be discussed taking the changing attitudes and roles of the state and society towards cultural pluralism into account. Further framework conditions include the engagement of civil society within the so-called *Partizipative Wende* (participatory turn), economic development and lifestyle in an aging society, media reportage and general attitudes towards cultural diversity. Perceptions also differ according to local neighbourhoods, multicultural encounters, involvement in local projects, the federal structure and in particular remaining divergences between east and west.

Major challenges of cultural pluralism in perspective

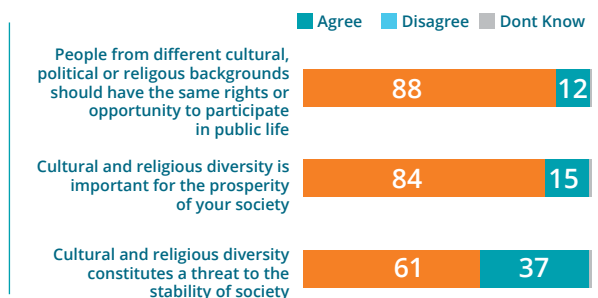
In Germany, major changes in the migration strategy are fairly recent as a short historical reflection shows. In the 1982 coalition contract between CDU / CSU and the liberal FDP, 27 years after Germany signed the first labour agreement with Italy, it was stated by the governing parties that 'the Federal Republic of Germany is not an immigration country. For that reason, all humanitarily acceptable measures are to be taken to prevent the immigration of foreigners' (Depesche, 1982). Immigration of families with German descent from eastern European countries and from the former Soviet Union was at its highest at the end of the eighties. This highlighted severe differences in inclusionary measures since migrants with German descent, the so-called *Aussiedler* were given immediate full political rights of citizenship and comprehensive support from the communal authorities including free language courses, while second generation migrants from non-EU countries still had to apply for the right of residence when they became sixteen, a law which was changed in 1990 when Wolfgang Schäuble as Minister of Home Affairs, introduced first reforms with further changes following over past years. The present status of immigration and citizenship law however remains restrictive.

Studies (Kalb, 2010) show that half of the largest group of migrants in Germany – the Turkish community – migrated as a consequence of the family reunification laws and as a reaction to the 'migration-stop' of 1973. This illustrates the unintended and discriminatory effects of political practice (Robertson-von Trotha, 2011). The lack of a 'politics of recognition' (Taylor, 1994), in particular with reference to the contribution of migrants of the first generation to the economic recovery of Germany in the postwar phase and of a clear formulation of active integration policies contributed to the development of emotionalized extremist views both within the host country and, at a later stage, within migrant groups. More importantly, within a broader and general societal context, a discourse on cultural pluralism on the basis of human rights was marginal.

Levels of awareness and active efforts to develop and support inclusionary politics of cultural pluralism have however increased substantially over the past years. In many regions, especially in the South and the South-West of Germany, in the Ruhr and in the large metropolitan areas, social contacts with persons with migrational backgrounds or experience has increasingly become the norm and it would therefore appear that the contact-thesis reinforces positive effects on attitudes over time (Robertson-von Trotha, 2010). A recent comparative study verifies the gap between Western and Eastern Germany with regard to prejudices and Islamophobia (Yendell, 2013). It concludes that Germany as a whole is more skeptical towards Islam than France or the UK. Language, cultural barriers and lack of social contacts are identified as negative promoters. This also reflects the fact that only 2% of the Muslim population lives in the five East German states (Haug, Müssig, Stichs, 2009) and supports the need for continued efforts to organize informal and formal spaces of social contact both at the institutional and civil societal levels. Substantial and important shifts of opinion can be identified over the past 15 years. In 1999 the German Bundestag formally recognised the Status of *Einwanderungsland*

Chart 12.1

Views about political, cultural and religious diversity in Germany



Survey Question: Could you please tell me, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Base:** % of a all respondents, where 'Agree': sum of 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree somewhat' answers, and 'Disagree': sum of 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree somewhat' answers (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

(Robertson-Wensauer, 2000); at the communal level, many cities have developed integration strategies, integration issues are amongst the most important topics on the agenda of the Deutsche Städtetag, ministries at the state level have developed policies (The National Integration Plan, 2007) and also ministries for integration have been initiated in several states; sport associations support active concepts of inclusion and central events such as the Football World Cup held in Germany 2006 encouraged the visibility of international hospitality and intercultural tolerance (Merx, 2006). Important new institutions to further support integration at all levels were introduced and at the end of 2008 renowned foundations launched the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration to give research-based practical recommendations. (Chart 12.1)

Simultaneously the development of small extremist groups and the potential of populist sentiment in the midst of society cannot be overseen (Robertson-von Trotha, 2012). The relationships between intolerant extremist views and politically motivated right-wing crime and violence are complex and led to the underestimation of the rising threat. The failure of police and state institutions which first uncovered the neo-Nazi terror group National Socialist Underground (NSU) in 2011, genuinely shocked the public: its origins and activities go back to the 1990s in East Germany and culminated in the trio responsible for a series of murders mostly of Turkish migrants between 2000 and 2006. The effects on the population with a Turkish migrant background show a loss of trust in the German state although a majority of 78% does not attribute the murder series to a more general German societal context. Only 7% hold this to be the case (Koordinationsrat der Muslime, 2012).

The growing Salafi movement in Germany causes imminent problems as its rules and demands are in many cases contradictory to human rights

and the law of constitutional democracy. With its action distributing free copies of the Quran in a German translation, it came into the public eye. In a representative study of Turkish migrants almost two thirds of the group of over 50 years old – many belonging to the first migration generation - clearly do not support the Salafist action. In contrast 20% of the 15 – 29 year olds find it 'very good' and 43% find it 'rather good' and many are also willing to financially support it (Umfrageinstituts Info GmbH, 2012).

Further underestimated challenges to cultural diversity and the constitutional state include the development of organized crime and mafia. Both the uncovered realities of this problem and undifferentiated public attributions to migrant circles have a strong potential for the exploitation of negative populist impacts on attitudes towards migrants (Spiegel Online, 2012).

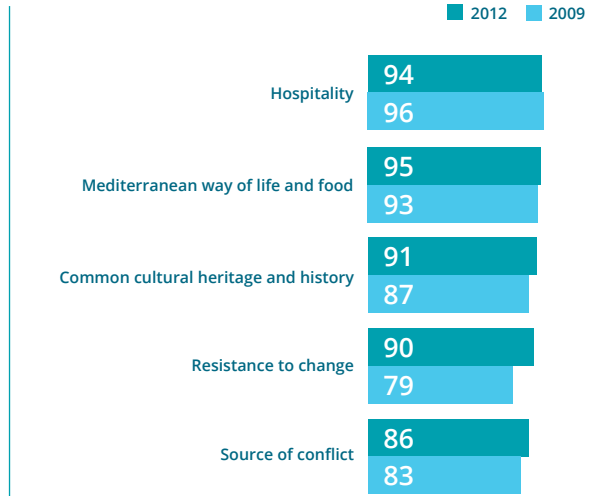
Perception of diversity in the Anna Lindh Survey

It is within this complex and dynamic background that the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012 must be analyzed. The response to some questions show noticeable or even significant changes in comparison to the survey in 2009.

Present perceptions of diversity in the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll are similarly ambivalent as in the already mentioned sociological surveys on cultural pluralism. On the one hand a majority of respondents are skeptical with regard to diversity: 61% agree with the statement 'cultural and religious diversity constitutes a threat to the stability of society' and can be positively interpreted as recognition of the challenges involved. Negatively however the effects of polarization processes have to be taken seriously. On the other hand there is a very high consensus on the issue of equal rights. 88% of respondents agree that equality before the law applies to everyone independently of their cultural, political or religious affiliations (Chart 12.1). This commitment is also obvious in the placement of the statement, that 'respect for other cultures' is the second most important value (35 %) to be taken account of in the upbringing of children. In comparison to 2009 (54%) the percentage has however diminished and this cannot easily be accounted for.

Asked which set of ideas and images characterize different people in the Mediterranean region, the categories common cultural heritage and history (91% in 2012 and 87% in 2009), resistance to change (90% in 2009 and 79% in 2012) and source of conflict (86% in 2012 and 83% in 2009) all show an increase in the percentage of respondents agreeing strongly or somewhat with these categories. (Chart 12.2) Whereas resistance to change is ambivalent and can reflect a positive relationship to a common cultural heritage

Chart 12.2
Characteristics of the Mediterranean region
for Germans



Survey Question: I will read out a set of ideas/images that may come to the minds of different people, and please tell me, if you think these characterize the Mediterranean region strongly, somewhat or not at all? **Base:** % of all respondents, % of the sum of 'Strongly characterize' and 'Somewhat characterize' answers are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

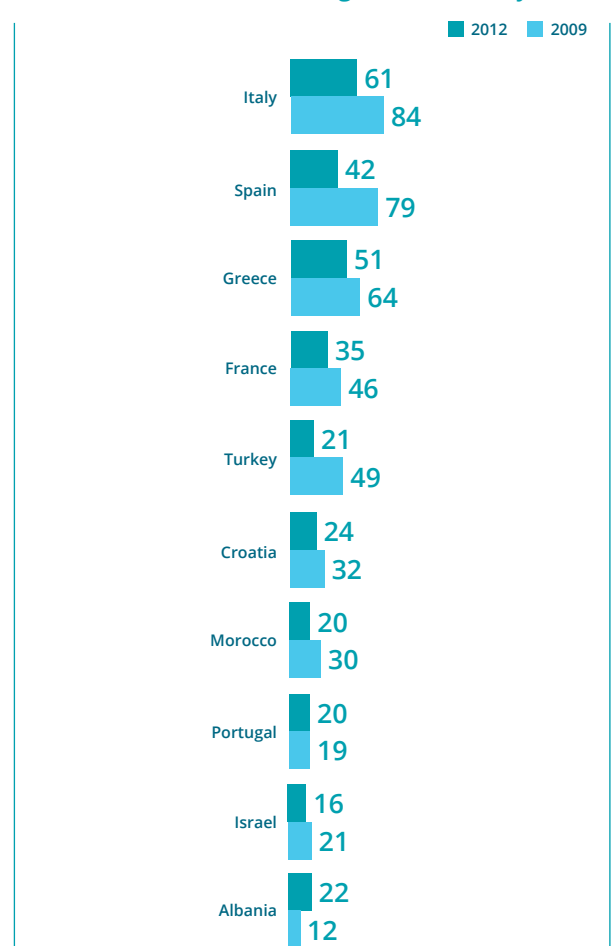
it can also be interpreted as the perception of more deep-rooted opposition to cultural change and political institutional transformation.

Supplementary questions included in the 2012 Anna Lindh Survey support this interpretation: with 92% civic participation in democratic transition was widely seen to be an important characteristic of current processes of change in the Mediterranean region. Simultaneously, 88% of respondents agreed that turmoil and insecurity characterise present conditions of instability and this applies to the European countries. The most often named countries which, according to the survey come to mind when asked about the Mediterranean region, are Italy (61%), Greece (51%) and Spain (42%), (Chart 12.3).

Within this regional context there has been considerable media coverage on economic instability, high unemployment, most especially with youth unemployment reaching up to over 50% in Spain, and political protest due to the financial crises in the Euro Zone. France (35%) is named in fourth place and this can be explained by the German/French friendship and mutual responsibility for the future development of the European Union due both to their geopolitical centrality and particularly in the German case – their role as economic motor. A further cultural aspect in German/French relations is their historical role in the aftermath of two World Wars and the ensuing political importance of European integration.

In this respect, the SVR migration barometer 2013 in which 2.200 respondents were questioned

Chart 12.3
Countries that come to mind when hearing
about the Mediterranean region in Germany

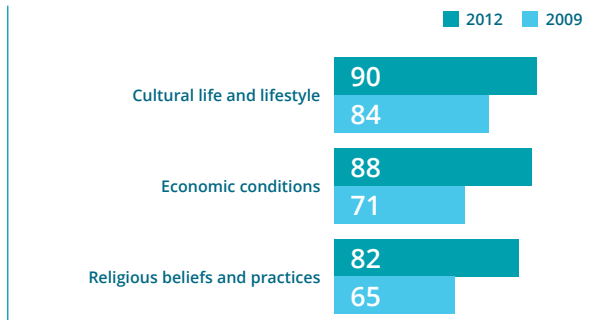


Survey Question: Could you please name all the countries which come to your mind when you hear about the Mediterranean region? **Base:** % of all respondents, % of the 10 most frequently mentioned countries are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

on their attitudes to Europe and on mobility within the EU Freizügigkeit, a robust identification with Europe was prevalent. An interesting aspect of the results is that there is almost no difference in attitude according to migration background: 54,2% with and 54,7% without migration experience defined themselves as 'strong' Europeans. The higher the educational level, the higher the European identification is. The strong economic position and low unemployment levels in many German regions may also be a reflection of more than 70% agreement that unemployed persons from within the EU area should be accorded social benefits if they are unemployed. This also applies to the non-EU Turkish population, with 1.575.717 (2012) the largest migrant group in Germany. A further conditioning aspect is the increasing recognition that demographic development in Germany is clearly leading to an aging society. From this angle, younger and larger migrant families are welcomed as a guarantee for future development and well-being and German industry has initiated campaigning

Chart 12.4

Interest in news and information from SEM countries in Germany



Survey Question: Thinking about the countries bordering the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, how much interest would you say you personally have in news and information about their... ?
Base: % of all respondents, % of the sum of 'Very interested' and 'Somewhat interested' answers are shown (© Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll 2012).

and training programmes to actively encourage new migration with particular emphasis on the southern EU countries. This puts questions of migration and integration at a functional-pragmatic level back onto the political agenda but also leads to new challenges and further debate. It is important to ensure that the mistakes of the earlier guest-worker era are not repeated.

The Anna Lindh/Gallup Polls show an increased personal interest in cultural life and lifestyle (90% in 2012 and 84% in 2009), economic conditions (88% in 2012 and 71% in 2009) and in religious beliefs and practices in the countries bordering the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea (Chart 12.4). This can be seen as a positive indicator of the - albeit slow - normalisation of cultural pluralism within German civil society.

While diversity mainstreaming is still in many areas not a recognised goal of action, important steps in this direction have been taken. Mediterranean lifestyle is popular and will support the general trend toward the recognition of the beneficial effects of cultural diversity. A further conditioning aspect is the positive role of younger and larger migrant families, now welcomed as a guarantee for future development and well-being of German industry in an increasingly aging society. With the simultaneous effects of 'old' and 'new' migration, Germany remains a country reflecting the ongoing impacts of multiculturalism and interculturalism. Within a changing society with its complex dynamics of inter- and transcultural contexts, adequate models of inclusionary politics within an overall strategy of human-rights rooted cultural pluralism require to be further developed.

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