

# Germany, a Country of Immigration (May 2016)

## Abstract

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In order to calm xenophobic fears, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees published a brochure in which it emphasized that Germany had always been an immigration destination and that migrants were helping to boost the country's demography and workforce.

## Source

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### Migration to Germany: Germany is a Country of Immigration

More and more people are coming to Germany. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Federal Republic is now the second most popular destination for immigration in the world, after the US. This development is independent of the current refugee situation, in the wake of which net immigration has grown to more than 1 million people. To be sure, the images of refugees arriving in Germany, Greece, Hungary and Austria in 2015 and 2016 shape current public perceptions. **But migration to Germany, including on a large scale, is nothing new.** It was influenced above all by the European right to freedom of movement. In the preceding years, the proportion of EU citizens among immigrants was always well over 50 percent and reached a level comparable to the current refugee numbers. And we must not forget: Every year, foreigners as well as Germans leave the country. Migration is an everyday phenomenon in a globalized world.

### Skilled personnel: Immigration helps to ensure prosperity

Like most industrial countries, Germany depends on immigration to ensure and increase growth and prosperity for future generations as well. People from other countries help to meet the **demand for skilled personnel** and to **safeguard social security systems for the future**. While EU citizens have a basic right to free movement within the EU, non-EU citizens have a more difficult time emigrating to Germany. **Those wishing to work and live here must fulfill a number of criteria.** They include, for example, the promise of a concrete job, an income sufficient to support them and a good knowledge of German. Despite improved legal conditions, the number of those emigrating as skilled personnel from states outside the EU is still far too small. The current migration of refugees who receive humanitarian protection here must be viewed separately. They cannot replace all the skilled professionals that Germany needs.

### Family Reunification: Bringing family members to Germany is subject to strict requirements

Marriage and the family have a special value in our society, one that enjoys constitutional protection. This protection also applies to immigrants. Those without EU citizenship, however, can bring their family members to Germany only under specific conditions: The right to family reunification generally applies only to the **nuclear family**, that is, to spouses, minor children and the parents of minor children. Anyone wishing to bring his or her family to Germany must have a **secure visa status** and be able to **support him or herself and his or her family members**. Spouses moving to Germany are usually also required to speak German. The process can take months or in some cases even years.

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Source: Commissioner of the Federal Government for Migration, Refugees and Integration, *Einwanderungsland Deutschland: Die Fakten im Überblick* [brochure]. Status: May 2016, pp. 6-10.

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Recommended Citation: Germany, a Country of Immigration (May 2016), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/a-new-germany-1990-2023/ghdi:document-5287>> [April 20, 2026].