

“Guest Workers” in their Living Quarters in Frankfurt am Main (1959)

Abstract

The “guest worker” [*Gastarbeiter*] recruitment agreement that West Germany signed with Italy on December 22, 1955, was the precursor to and model for additional West German treaties with Spain and Greece (March 1960), Turkey (October 1961), Portugal (March 1964), and Yugoslavia (October 1968). In 1959, a total of 166,800 foreign nationals, 48,800 of whom were Italians, were employed in the Federal Republic of Germany. These guest workers were hired to ensure that certain sectors of the German economy would have the necessary manpower to maintain their high growth rates. The guest workers were seen as a flexible, cyclically-dependent pool of laborers who could be recruited as needed and then sent back to their home countries. As a result, the first recruitment efforts focused on young single men, who were put up in makeshift dormitories of varying degrees of comfort. Germany could theoretically have met its labor needs by bringing more women into the workforce, but this went against family policy at the time.

Source



Source: Construction workers. Photo: Abisag Tüllmann.

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