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KING

Knowledge for INtegration Governance

Elderly Migrants in Hessen, Germany: New Challenges for Public Administration

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KING - Knowledge for INtegration Governance

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The KING project's objective is to elaborate a report on the **state of play** of migrant integration in Europe through an interdisciplinary approach and to provide decision- and policy-makers with **evidence-based recommendations** on the design of migrant integration-related policies and on the way they should be articulated between different policy-making levels of governance.

Migrant integration is a truly multi-faceted process. The contribution of the insights offered by different disciplines is thus essential in order better to grasp the various aspects of the presence of migrants in European societies. This is why **multidisciplinarity** is at the core of the KING research project, whose Advisory Board comprises experts of seven different disciplines:

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The present paper belongs to the series of contributions produced by the researchers of the “Public Administration” team directed by Walter Kindermann.

The project is coordinated by the **ISMU Foundation**.

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Elderly Migrants in Hessen, Germany: New Challenges for Public Administration

Author Max Frisch once said: "We asked for labour, but people came." When the first so-called 'Gastarbeiter' (guest workers) migrated to Germany and Hessen in the 1950's neither the politicians nor the population thought about the fact that these people would not only work but build up a life there. Only later they were allowed to bring their families. Germany very slowly accepted being a state of immigration (Federal State Government of Hessen 2000: 3).

Now, this first generation of migrants is getting older and more and more of them are approaching the age of retirement. But the former 'Gastarbeiter' are not the only immigrant group in Germany. In the 1980s, the number of asylum seekers strongly increased. The late 1980s were characterised by an immigration of so-called "Spätaussiedler" (expatriates). Many expatriates were descendants of previous German emigrants to Eastern Europe and were privileged to receive German citizenship on the basis of the "ius sanguinis" principle¹ (Shimany et al. 2012: 6; Schimany/Baykara-Krumme 2012: 71).

Today, many immigrants feel at home in Hessen² and want to spend their retirement in Hessen as well (see Schimany et al. 2012: 331). This paper is focusing on the challenges for public administration connected with this topic.

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

Hessen is one of the federal states in Germany with the highest share of "people with a immigration background", roughly defined as persons not born in Germany and their children³. Nearly 6.1 million people live there. 20% of the Hessen population are 65 years and older. Out of this group, 11% were not born in Germany. Over half of them have the German citizenship. Elderly migrants in Hessen mostly came originally from Poland, Turkey, the Russian Federation, Kazachstan and Italy (see figure below and Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung 2012). The numbers show: they are an extremely heterogeneous group that differs in their culture, native language, religious beliefs, etc.

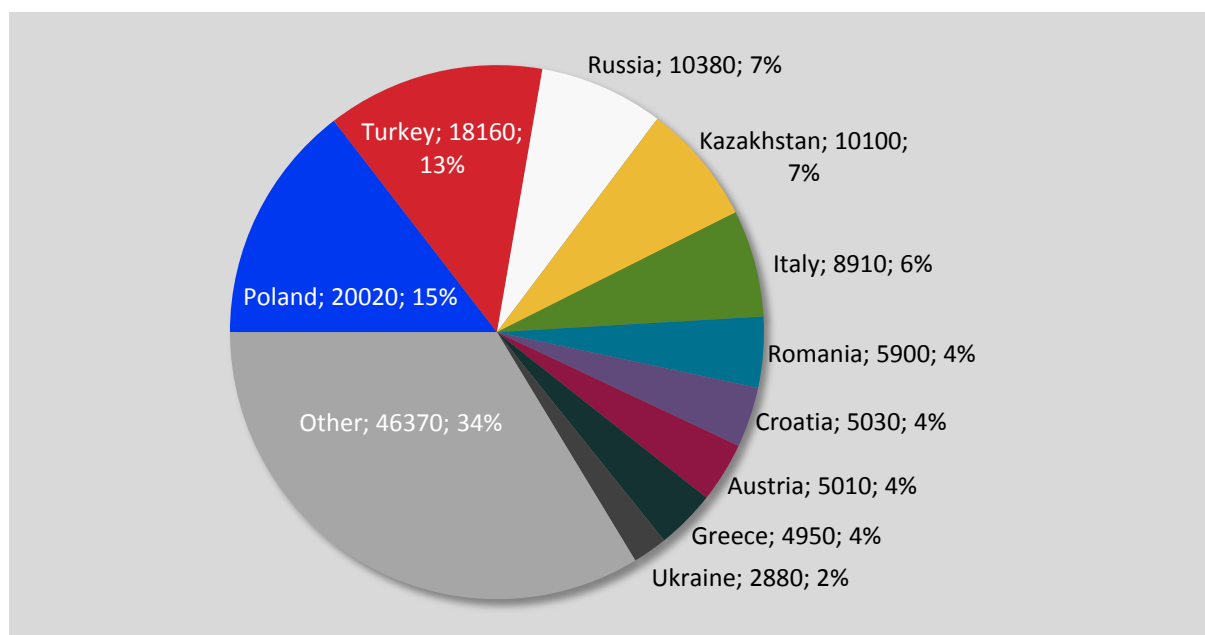
The population statistics also reveal, that the number of elderly migrants constantly will increase in the upcoming years (Ministry of Justice, for Integration and Europe of the State of Hessen 2013a: 26). Therefore it is important to think today of suitable strategies to meet their future needs.

¹ Nowadays, this principle is partially still valid in Germany.

² The question "How content do you feel in Hessen?" was used to measure how well people felt in Hessen in the 2013 Integration Report of Hessen. The report found that 96% of people with and 95% of people without an immigration background in Hessen feel "very good" or "somewhat good" (Hessen Ministry of Justice, for Integration and Europe 2013: 33). The values remain constant through the different age brackets.

³ As defined by the German Federal Statistical Office, a person with an immigration background includes "every person who immigrated into the present territory of the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949, every foreigner born in Germany, and every person born as a German in Germany but who has at least one parent who is an immigrant or was born as a foreigner in Germany."

Figure 1 - Immigrants above 64 years in Hessen by country of origin 2011



Source: Census 2011 provided by Federal Statistical Office and the Statistical Offices of the Länder, 2014

SPECIFIC NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF ELDERLY MIGRANTS

Obviously it is not possible to deal with “the elderly migrants” as one homogeneous group that is or will be confronted with the same problems. Nevertheless studies show that there are specific issues that may have an impact on the services of public administration.

1. Financial situation

A lot of elderly migrants worked hard for years. However, they are more often confronted with the risk of poverty than older people without an immigration background.⁴ Reasons are lower job qualifications, low-skilled jobs, therefore lower incomes, less often full time jobs and more often times of unemployment since the beginning of the 1980s. As a consequence they receive lower pensions and fewer assets. The differences can be largely explained by the socio-economic status of many people with an immigration background (Fuhr 2012, Fuhr 2013).

2. Health situation

The health situation of people with an immigration background differs from the rest of the population (Wilkens/Fuhr-Becker/Waldmüller 2013). Even though there is a healthy-migrant-effect due to the fact that especially fit and strong people came to work in Germany, the health situation of the elderly is often worse than of those without an immigration background (Razum/Spallek 2012: 167). To explain the differences a model with multicausal correlations was developed (ibid.: 174). It takes account of the situation in the country of origin (environment, health system and social class), the process of migration, the situation in Germany (social class, acculturation, legal position, environment and entry barriers to health systems etc.)

⁴ E.g. the at-risk-of-poverty-rate of former guest workers of the age of 65+ is 41.8%, the rate of Germans is 12.5% (Höhne et al. 2014).

as well as individual differences like genetic factors. With the help of this model it is possible to estimate health risks and benefits of different migrant groups, which may help to prevent diseases (ibid.: 177f.).

Additionally, former guest workers often had jobs characterized by extreme physical strain. Due to the extended life expectancy and increasing survival chances the number of disabled people will probably rise. Summing up, like for non-migrants, the need for care for elderly migrants will certainly increase in the following years (Schimany et al. 2012: 330).

3. Intergenerational relations

Social change, mobility and an increasing number of working women reduce family cohesion also in families with an immigration background. Although family ties are still stronger than in most of the families without an immigration background it has to be expected that the differences will become smaller in the future, due to processes of adaptation. That means that support of families so far will become more difficult what bears the risk of conflict, because a lot of the elderly are still hoping for this support (Schimany et al. 2012: 8). Due to the new conditions, more people with an immigration background will be in need for care offered by public services or welfare associations.

4. Returning and staying

Elderly migrants often commute between Germany and their country of birth as long as they are in a good health condition (Schimany et al. 2012: 331). But studies show that only few migrants return to their country of origin completely when retired although they may have planned this in the beginning. Explanations could be that most of the family members also live in Germany and that the health system is better there than in the country of origin.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The Initiative for Senior-related Policy (Seniorenpolitische Initiative) of the Federal State Government of Hessen discussed recommendations for elderly migrants. It claims that the special situation of these people has to be considered and access to medical care has to be provided. Social isolation, loneliness and exclusion must be prevented. In addition, more people with an immigration background should work as medical and care professionals. All people working in this sector should be taught in cultural sensitiveness (Hessen Ministry of Social Affairs 2012: 85).

It is also stressed that health-care professionals need intercultural and transcultural competence (e.g. Polat 2013: 358). Whereas intercultural competence concentrates on knowledge about the historical, political, sociocultural, economic and religious background of other cultures, transcultural competence focusses on interaction between the person in need of care and the care professional to prevent stereotypes and prejudices (ibid.). The requirements for care of people with an immigration background cannot be generalized and it is more a question of awareness than of "one perfect solution". The focus should be on the principle of equal treatment while acknowledging different starting points.

Quite often the socio-economic situation of former immigrant workers is difficult. That is why the Initiative for Senior-related Policy advises low-threshold services for health, prevention and care (Hessen Ministry for Social Affairs 2012: 87). Due to possible language barriers information about the health and care system in Hessen and about specific retirement homes and care centers should be provided in different languages to prevent information asymmetries (Ministry of Justice, for Integration and Europe of the State of Hessen 2013b: 148).

Elderly migrants are less involved in voluntary activities than non-migrants. To activate the potentials and to enable their participation in society there should be special concepts to provide opportunities for those people to volunteer (Hessen Ministry for Social Affairs 2012: 87).

In the long run the aim should be a cultural sensitive society, which would make specific offers for special cultural groups redundant (see *ibid.* 88, Zeman 2012: 462).

In Frankfurt, the largest city of Hessen, Barg et al. (2013) analyzed the supply structure for elderly migrants in institutions and discussed recommendations. The authors stressed the importance of networking between the different local actors that deal with elderly migrants (*ibid.*: 88). The exchange of information and experiences is seen as a key factor for intercultural openness.

PROJECTS IN HESSEN

The Hessen State Government is aware of elderly migrants and has been promoting services and projects for ten years. The curricula for health and care training include cultural sensitiveness (Hessen Ministry for Social Affairs 2012: 88; Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth 2005). The promotion of intercultural awareness in care institutions is part of the Project 'Model Region Integration' (Ministry of Justice, for Integration and Europe of the State of Hessen 2013b: 146-149). Promising approaches in retirement homes can be found in other regions of Hessen (Hessen Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration 2014). So called "Integrationslotsen" (volunteers, mostly with immigration background, who e.g. explain the German health and educational system to people with an immigration background) play an important role for older migrants. In Frankfurt there are even special guides for retired people not born in Germany.

The project "AjuMA - Ausbildung junger Männer in der Altenpflege" (2010-2013) promoted health and care professions for young men with an immigration background. In October 2014, three universities in Wiesbaden, Frankfurt and Mainz started the research project OPEN – intercultural opening of consultation about care. A case management aims to improve the planning of home care of elderly migrants, prevent social isolation and support family members and volunteering. Furthermore, the Hessian Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration offers the brochure "In need of care – what can be done" in German, English, Russian and Turkish.

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