

HALL OF DEBATES

Historical debates at a glance

What should integration costs be?

Equalization of Burdens Act (1940s & 1950s)

More than seven million refugees and displaced persons who arrived in the territory of the still young Federal Republic had to be accommodated and provided for. Despite having the same language and citizenship, they encountered problems similar to those faced by other migrants: Rejection by the natives, loss of social status, job and land. How should the resulting social and economic burden be distributed? In addition, there were conflicts over the denazification process. One controversial state solution was 1952, the Burden Equalization Act.

Should all who work have equal rights?

Labor Struggles of Foreign Workers (1960s & 1970s)

With the recruitment agreement of 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany changed: Millions of so-called "guest workers" came to work in companies that hoped for cheap labor and could be expected to perform unpopular tasks under poor working conditions. Many of the recruited workers stayed, despite this, and did not return to their home countries. Especially during the strike wave of 1973, which peaked at the Ford plants in Cologne, they tried to fight for equal pay and working conditions in the company and to draw attention to their living conditions. Nevertheless, they often remained isolated both internally and socially.

Who can seek protection in a country?

Asylum Law Reform (1980s & 1990s)

The "asylum compromise" of 1992/93 reformed the Federal Republic's initially intended generous asylum law, Article 16 of the Basic Law. While the interpretation of the paragraph was for a long time a topic for experts, it increasingly came to the attention of the general public at the end of the 1980s. The election and media campaigns about "asylum abuse" and "bogus asylum seekers" escalated partly in program-like riots, the scenes of which became symbols: "Mölln," Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Solingen. Those affected often went unheard and had to fear verbal and physical violence on a daily basis, as did people who showed solidarity with them.

Who can belong to a state?

Nationality Law Reform (1990s & 2000s)

In the spring of 1999, the Reich and Nationality Law of 1913 still applied in large parts of the Federal Republic: a "ius sanguinis", a "right of blood". The restriction of political and social participation and important other rights also affected people who had lived in Germany for a long time or were born there. The new red-green federal government, which took office in 1998, aimed at reform: German citizenship was to be acquired by birth, and multiple citizenship was to be accepted on an expanded basis. The signature campaign by the CDU and CSU against this not only fueled the Hessian election campaign, but also public debates on national identity, belonging and integration.

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