



## Successful integration? The lifeworlds and social participation of ethnic *Aussiedler*

### Summary

Ethnic *Aussiedler*, or repatriated ethnic Germans, and their dependants make up one of the largest groups of migrants in Germany. The Federal Office of Administration (BVA) registered the arrival of a total of around 4.6 million *Aussiedler* between 1950 and 2020 – approx. 2.8 million in the period up to the end of 1992 and approx. 1.7 million after the start of 1993. In the period since 2006 only a few thousand *Aussiedler* have arrived in Germany each year. Up until the late 1980s ethnic *Aussiedler* primarily came from Poland and Romania, but since the fall of the Iron Curtain the most important countries of origin have been the states of the former Soviet Union.

As ethnic *Aussiedler* are regarded as ethnic Germans and are immediately granted German citizenship under the admissions procedure, they represent a special group of migrants. Nevertheless, they often face the same challenges when it comes to integration and participation as other new arrivals. The scientific staff at the Expert Council on Integration and Migration (SVR) and the Research Centre at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) conducted a joint project to analyse the participation and attitudes relevant to integration of ethnic *Aussiedler* in relation to key social areas. The study at hand compares first-generation *Aussiedler* with the population without a migration background and with other first-generation migrants. It also looks at differences within the ethnic *Aussiedler* population, namely between those from the states of the former Soviet Union and those from other countries of origin.

**Most *Aussiedler* have an intermediate school leaving certificate or a vocational qualification. They are less likely to be qualified to enter higher education or to have an academic degree than those without a migration background and other first-generation migrants. *Aussiedler* aged between 25 and 65 are highly integrated into the labour market. However, at more than a third, more people in this group (especially men) are blue-collar workers than is the case in the other two comparison groups.**

The average per capita household income of ethnic *Aussiedler* is higher than that of other first-generation migrants, but still notably lower than that of people without a migration background. At the same time, *Aussiedler* over the age of 65 are much more likely to be reliant on basic income support than their peers without a migration background. Their poverty risk is also comparatively high.

There are considerable differences when it comes to key structural aspects of integration depending on country of origin: **Post-Soviet *Aussiedler* are more likely to have no vocational qualifications and to be blue-collar workers. Their per capita income is also slightly lower than that of other first-generation migrants. Older post-Soviet *Aussiedler* in particular are more likely to be affected by poverty than the comparison groups.**

Almost 90 per cent of *Aussiedler* live in Germany's six big western non-city states. Around 70 per cent live in towns and cities with a population of between 10,000 and 500,000.

Around 90 per cent of *Aussiedler* rate their own German language skills as good and have German friends without a migration background. **Compared to other first-generation migrants, ethnic *Aussiedler* hardly report any experience of discrimination. Those who do, though, often also**



**report a lack of a feeling of belonging in Germany.** Despite this, more than 90 per cent of *Aussiedler* identify with Germany; especially those from the states of the former Soviet Union much less frequently report feeling a close connection to their country of origin.

*Aussiedler* call the independence of German media into question more frequently than other migrants do. At the same time, though, they tend to trust German media more than they do the media in their countries of origin.

**The majority of ethnic *Aussiedler* are happy with the political situation in Germany but tend to be unhappy with the political situation in their country of origin.** However, considerably more post-Soviet *Aussiedler* are happy with the political situation in their country of origin and are also less politically interested than *Aussiedler* from other countries.

Although *Aussiedler* from post-Soviet Union states in particular continue to support the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) parties in Germany to an above-average degree, around 12 per cent express a preference for the Alternative for Germany (AfD), more than other migrant groups. At the same time, a considerably larger percentage support The Left Party (Die Linke) than other population groups do.

The data prove that *Aussiedler* more frequently have negative attitudes to refugees than comparable comparison groups.

**The study shows yet again that participation increases over time. The longer ethnic *Aussiedler* have been living in Germany, the better integrated they are in many areas. This goes some way to explaining the lower participation of post-Soviet Union *Aussiedler* in some areas.**