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Factsheet on the Participation of Migrant Women in Political and Democratic Life in Germany

GABRIELA
GERMANY



WE-EMPOWER project is a transnational collaboration of seven migrant women-led and women-led organisations in Europe. The project aims to encourage and empower migrant women to participate in political and democratic life, with the overarching goal of protecting migrant women's rights. The conducted research aims to shed light on the state of migrant women's participation in political and democratic life in Germany.

NUMBER OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN GERMANY

- 27.2% of people (22.4 million) in Germany have a migrant background, and 49.2% of this figure, or **11 million, are women.**
- Out of the 11 million women with a migration background, **3.2 million women are non-EU nationals.**
- Majority of migrant women are from EU countries (33%) led by Poland, Romania, Italy, Croatia and Greece. A significant number also come from non-EU countries such as Turkey, Russia, Syria, Afghanistan and Kazakhstan.

(Data from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, or DESTASIS)

MIGRANT WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC LIFE

Women are still under-represented in decision-making bodies from municipal to national levels. People with migrant backgrounds who engage in politics are still relatively few.

The representation of women with migration backgrounds was marginal in the last two federal elections in 2017 and 2021. For example, in 2021, there were **37 members of parliament (MP) who are women with migration background**, out of 735 MPs.

DaMigra (Dachverband der Migrantinnen Organisationen) is an umbrella organization for all migrant women organisations in Germany. Its central goal is empowerment of migrant women, which includes the equal political, social, professional and cultural participation of migrant women.

International Women Space is a feminist, anti-racist political group in Berlin led by migrant and refugee women fighting patriarchy, gender-based violence, racism and all types of discrimination.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR MIGRANT WOMEN

- **Difficulty in acquiring residence permit:** This poses limitations on people with a migration background in exercising their political rights and participating in democratic life.
- **Discrimination against women from non-EU countries:** This stems from power dynamics rooted from colonial history. Migrant women are often asked about their 'migration background', and experience racialisation, even if they have lived in the country for many years.
- **Lack of inclusion and sense of belonging:** Language barrier contributes to the sense of exclusion and prevents migrant women from entering political and local spaces.
- **Less likely to be featured in the media:** There is still a prevalent portrayal of migrant women as objects of desire, as 'exotic' or 'oriental'.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE AND IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- Implement participatory mechanisms like **migrant advisory councils** (for example in Leipzig) as it promotes involvement in institutionalised round tables, consultation, and participation in civil society rather than just voting and standing for elections.
- Remove migration-specific barriers, for example by **providing appropriate language skills and basic knowledge of the political system** of the host country, as well as access to political parties and other associations to achieve fair political representation of migrants' interests.
- **Develop an open and welcoming atmosphere to migrant women** and a broader understanding of what it means to live in contemporary German society, one that is constituted by people holding a range of intersectional identities.
- **Reducing bureaucracy or paperwork to apply for funding** for migrant women organisations to support their initiatives.

