

# CEE National identity in CEE countries



# Case study Germany

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# Introduction

If you are looking on the discourse of national identity in Germany, you will find different approaches of definitions and understanding. For the following analysis I would like to concentrate on cation of Bettina Westle on the topic national identity of young Germans.<sup>1</sup> In the publication Westle analysed the objects of national pride of young East and West Germans as following: the national identity is mainly based on economy (mainly on economic output and furthermore enthusiasm of work and diligence), political community and democracy (in particular freedom or the social state.) A less significant role plays the social community as same as culture. Almost completely irrelevant are politicians, policy and German history for young Germans. Furthermore there is still a difference of perception of national identity between East and West Germany. The national pride is equally based on political and non-political objects in West Germany whereas in East Germany it's more based on non-political than on political objects.

In summary that means, that it is important to find issues regarding national identity in Germany, which are connected with the following three aspects: economy, political/social community and democracy. Based on this research results and the analyses of election programs of the main German political parties following three issues are the most significant for the creation and reproduction of national identity in Germany:

1. Strengthening European integration and European integration process (is strong connected with the economic output and advantages of Germany as a strong member of the European Union)
2. Integration of immigrants to the German society (is connected with the social and political community in Germany) and
3. Fight against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia (is connected with democracy).

In a next step the positions of the main political parties (CDU, CSU, SPD, FDP, DIE LINKE, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) in Germany will be analysed regarding the three previously set issues. The investigation period for the analyses comprises 2010 till January 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> Westle Bettina (2001): National Identität und Demokratieverständnis junger Deutscher; [www.fes.de/fulltext/asfo/==&\(%==§.htm E9E4](http://www.fes.de/fulltext/asfo/==&(%==§.htm E9E4))

# Analysis of issues

The analysis showed for the selected issues several significant features:

The analyses of issue one showed, that most of the German parties prefer and support a stronger integration into the European Union. (CDU, SPD, Die Grünen, FDP) They perceive the deepening of the integration process as important reaction on the economic crisis, like as Sigmar Gabriel has written in an article for the weekly German newspaper Die Zeit *“The birth defects of the euro, the complete lack of a common financial, stability and economic policy can only be resolved by a deepening of European cooperation.”*<sup>2</sup> On the fifth “Economic Forum” (Wirtschaftsgipfel) the former Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle (FDP) demanded *“The deeper integration of the European Union is the only right answer to react on the worldwide renationalization.”*<sup>3</sup> DIE LINKE is also supporting the idea, but it turns out, that European policy splits the party. For example there are large discrepancies in terms of international military operations.<sup>4</sup> For the CSU the process of deeper integration should be considered more critically and the party turned itself strongly against further competence relocation to Brussels. Furthermore in 2013 a debate on the possibility of referendum on European issues was launched by the Party. That’s also why the General Secretary of the CSU, Alexander Dobrindt, published a “Five Points Memorandum concerning actual questions of the EU”.<sup>5</sup> According to Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble and SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel also FDP and CSU are supporting the idea of letting the people decide on European issues.

In order to analyse main positions of the parties to the issue two, it is helpful to construct three indicators for this issue:

1. the attitude to dual citizenship,
2. dealing with refugees and
3. integration of immigrants.

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<sup>2</sup> „Der Geburtsfehler des Euro, das völlige Fehlen einer gemeinsamen Finanz-, Stabilitäts- und Wirtschaftspolitik, kann nur durch eine Vertiefung der europäischen Zusammenarbeit behoben werden.“ (Gabriel Sigmar 2013: [www.sigmagabriel.de/interviews/namensbeitrag-in-der-zeit-europa-braucht-tiefere-integration](http://www.sigmagabriel.de/interviews/namensbeitrag-in-der-zeit-europa-braucht-tiefere-integration))

<sup>3</sup> Westerwelle Gudio (2013): Online: <http://www.liberales.de/content/europaeische-integration-vorantreiben>

<sup>4</sup> Berliner Zeitung (2013): Online: <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik/die-linke--problemfall-europa,10808018,25138976.html>

<sup>5</sup> CSU (2011): Fünf-Punkte-Memorandum zu aktuellen Fragen in der EU, Online: [http://www.csuportal.de/dateien/partei/dokumente/110603\\_dobrindt\\_memorandum.pdf](http://www.csuportal.de/dateien/partei/dokumente/110603_dobrindt_memorandum.pdf)

Summary of indicator one: SPD, Die Grünen, FDP and DIE LINKE want to abolish the option of obligation and generally allow the multiple nationalities, as well as a timely unlimited right of residence for tolerated. CDU/CSU rejects the regular acceptance of multiple nationalities, because they want to support and underline the unifying aspect of a common nationality.

Summary of the second indicator: The main opinion of German parties is to show more solidarity with refugees. In the case of Syria SPD, Die Grünen, FDP and DIE LINKE are promoting a more open policy for refugees and a higher admission of refugees. Just the CDU und CSU denied refugees broader and safer access to Europe. Furthermore there is a strong difference between the different German Federal States (Bundesländer) and political parties in Germany concerning the dealing with refugees. So for example the speaker of the German Minister of the Interior of Mecklenburg Vorpommern, Lorenz Caffier, is in 2013 against further reception of refugees in Mecklenburg Vorpommern, if there are still free capacities in the contingent.<sup>6</sup>

Summary of the third indicator: All parties promote a deeper integration of immigrants into the German society. For CDU the integration into the labor market and the initiative of one's own is the most important. So the former Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maizière, called 2010 for more openness and support of the German society concerning immigrants.<sup>7</sup> That's why the Bavarian Minister of Social Affairs expect more proactive immigrants especially in terms of language and culture. The SPD, Die Grünen and DIE LINKE support furthermore real equality of opportunities in education, employment and cultural self-identification of immigrants. SPD and FDP also want to expand the opportunities for integration and higher tolerance of asylum seekers.

In addition started at the end of the year 2013 a discussion on the European Freedom of Labour Movement for Romanian and Bulgarian labour workers and the misuse of social services of the new labour workers in Germany. The initiator of the discussion was the political party CSU. Furthermore they called on their New Years meeting in Wildbad Kreuth for stricter rules: *"We stand for freedom of movement within the EU. An immigration into our social security systems, we reject. The continued abuse of European freedom of movement by poverty immigration endangers not only the acceptance of free movement among the citizens, but also brings communities to the limits of their financial capacity."*<sup>8</sup> The rejection of other political parties was closed against the CSU. The deputy head of the CDU parliamentary group in the German Bundestag, Andreas Schockhoff, argued, that the new labor workers from Romania and Bulgaria are an enrichment for the German labour market. The Integration Commissioner of the Federal Government, Aydan Özoguz (SPD)

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<sup>6</sup> Focus Online (2013): Online: [http://www.focus.de/regional/rostock/fluechtlinge-cdu-innenministeregegen-aufnahmeprogramme-fuer-syrische-fluechtlinge\\_aid\\_1076487.html](http://www.focus.de/regional/rostock/fluechtlinge-cdu-innenministeregegen-aufnahmeprogramme-fuer-syrische-fluechtlinge_aid_1076487.html)

<sup>7</sup> Spiegel Online (2010): Online: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/integration-de-maizierefordert-mehr-offenheit-gegenueber-migranten-a-718347.html>

<sup>8</sup> „Wir stehen zur Freizügigkeit in der EU. Eine Zuwanderung in unsere sozialen Sicherungssysteme lehnen wir jedoch ab. Der fortgesetzte Missbrauch der europäischen Freizügigkeit durch Armutszuwanderung gefährdet nicht nur die Akzeptanz der Freizügigkeit bei den Bürgern, sondern bringt auch Kommunen an die Grenzen ihrer finanziellen Leistungsfähigkeit." (ARD Nachrichten (2013): Online: <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/migration114.html>)

required effective help instead of populism. Also the Green Party leader Simone Peter (Die Grünen) and the leader of DIE LINKE, Bern Rixinger, cautioned against to strengthen the stirring up fears of immigration right-wing parties.

For the third issue following two indicators help to analyse the position against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia:

1. engagement against racism and
2. attitude to the prohibition of the NPD.

Both indicators have been discussed intensively in the public debate last years.

Summary of the first indicator: All parties are active in the fight against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia and demonstrate their position by various forms of public actions like demonstrations, discussions and petitions. Especially the SPD, DIE LINKE and Die Grünen are promoting quite actively these topics and actions. In August 2013 the SPD published the „Master action plan against racism and extremism“<sup>9</sup> in order to suggest further steps for an open and tolerant society. DIE LINKE would like to increase the solidarity in the German society to promote open, democratic and socially just society. “DIE LINKE stands for consistent fight against neo-Nazism. We look closely! We are present to make it clear that we stand for democracy, human rights and tolerance!”<sup>10</sup> Die Grünen bring their own campaign by which individuals can become a “Naziblogger”. So citizens can monitor the right-wing scene in their city and share this information with other anti-racism and extremism activists.<sup>11</sup>

Summary of the second indicator: The second indicator observes the attitudes of the selected parties to the prohibition of the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD – Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands) which represents interests of many extreme right electors. There has been an intensive discussion on the topic and three years ago some parties started an initiative for prohibition of the NPD. Especially the anti-fascist movement, DIE LINKE, the SPD and some of the representatives of Die Grünen supported this idea.<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of 2013 the SPD initiated a request in the German Bundestag for prohibition of the NPD, but its effort was not successful.<sup>13</sup> The CDU and CSU voted against it and Die Grünen abstained. “*What does the NPD, is quite clear. Therefore, our political group is unanimous: If a process for banning the NPD*

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<sup>9</sup> SPD (2013):, Online:

[www.spd.de/presse/Pressemitteilungen/105782/20130802\\_karakasoglu\\_oppermann\\_masterplan.html](http://www.spd.de/presse/Pressemitteilungen/105782/20130802_karakasoglu_oppermann_masterplan.html)

<sup>10</sup> „DIE LINKE steht für die konsequente Bekämpfung des Neonazismus. Wir schauen hin! Wir sind präsent, um zu verdeutlichen, dass wir für Demokratie, Menschenrechte und Toleranz stehen!“ (DIE LINKE (2013): [http://www.die-linke-](http://www.die-linke-herzogtumlaueburg.de/kommunalwahl_2013/wahlprogramm/solidaritaet_statt_rassismus_antisemitismus_fremdenfeindlichkeit/)

[herzogtumlaueburg.de/kommunalwahl\\_2013/wahlprogramm/solidaritaet\\_statt\\_rassismus\\_antisemitismus\\_fremdenfeindlichkeit/](http://www.die-linke-herzogtumlaueburg.de/kommunalwahl_2013/wahlprogramm/solidaritaet_statt_rassismus_antisemitismus_fremdenfeindlichkeit/) )

<sup>11</sup> Die Grünen (2012): Online: <http://www.gruene.de/partei/projekt-fifty-fifty/werde-naziblockiererin.html>

<sup>12</sup> DIE LINKE (2013): Online: <http://www.linksfraktion.de/themen/npd-verbot/>)

<sup>13</sup> (SPD Bundestagsfraktion, 25.4.2013, Online: <http://www.spdfraktion.de/themen/spd-scheitert-im-bundestag-mit-mpd-verbotsantrag> )

*would have a major opportunity, we would say with flying colors immediately all together "Yes".*<sup>14</sup>  
as Volker Beck from Die Grünen explained the party position.

## Short Summary

The following points gave an overview on three different issues concerning national identity in Germany. The different nuances between the different parties concerning each issue are quite small. Mostly all parties are for a stronger integration into the European Union a stronger integration of immigrants into the German society and against racism, anti-Semitism and Xenophobia. The only party, which is with its political statements and programs a little bit more differentiated, is the CSU. Here is a stronger expression or form of national identity visible. Apart from that, all parties are discussing the different issues in between their parties, their programs or in media.

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<sup>14</sup> Beck Volker (2013): Online  
[http://www.gruenebundestag.de/parlament/bundestagsreden/2013/april/npd-verbotsverfahren\\_ID\\_4388205.html](http://www.gruenebundestag.de/parlament/bundestagsreden/2013/april/npd-verbotsverfahren_ID_4388205.html)