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EMVI

**Empowering Migrants
Voices on Inclusion Policies**

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EMVI EMPOWERING
MIGRANT VOICES

EMVI - Empowering Migrant Voices on Integration and Inclusion Policies

WP2: National Report Germany* July 2022

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I. Participation and Integration Structures in Germany

1. Facts and Figures: Migrants in Germany

Germany is considered to be an “Einwanderungsland”(a migration country), which means that it is perceived as a country to which a high number of people immigrate and thus is a country which has a high proportion of people with a migration background (Statistisches Bundesamt, Pressemitteilung Nr. 162 vom 12. April 2022). In 2021, 22.3 million people (27.2% of the population in Germany) had a migration background. Which equates to every 4th person in the country. 53% of these people (almost 11.8 million people) held German citizenship in 2021 while 47% had non-German citizenship (almost 10.6 million people) (ibid.). As of 31st December 2021, around 1.4 million people living in Germany with a permanent residence status had been granted protection in Germany (Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage, Drucksache 20/584, March 2022: 3). 43,684 of them were entitled to asylum according to Article 16a of the Grundgesetz (the German Constitution), 760,918 were refugees according to the Geneva Refugee Convention and 255,671 persons were entitled to subsidiary protection, and 136,156 people were subject to a deportation ban. Another 239,000 people had been granted protection due to various circumstances. For example, because they were pursuing a profession or because they could not be deported for humanitarian reasons (Mediendienst Integration).

Almost two-thirds (62 %) of all persons with a migration background are immigrants from another European country or their descendants. This corresponds to 13.9 million people, of whom 7.5 million have roots in other Member States of the European Union. The second biggest region of origin is Asia. The 5.1 million immigrants from Asia and their descendants make up 23% of persons with a migration background, of which 3.5 million have a connection to the Middle East. Less than 1.1 million people (5 %) are people of African descent. The most common countries of origin are Turkey (12 %), Poland (10 %), the Russian Federation (6 %), Kazakhstan (6 %) and Syria (5 %). 1 % or 308 000 of the people with a migration background living in Germany in 2021 came from Ukraine. Due to the current influx of refugees, the number of people with a Ukrainian migration background could increase significantly in the future, according to the Federal Statistical Office (Federal Statistical Office, press release no. 162 of 12 April 2022). As of June 19, 2022, about 867.214 people from Ukraine were registered in the German Central Register of Foreigners (Ausländerzentralregister AZR) since February 2022 (Mediendienst Integration, Flüchtlinge aus der Ukraine, June 2022).

In Berlin, 811.334 people live without a German passport and have roots in other countries. 569.972 Berliners have a migration background (Statistical Office Berlin-Brandenburg, December 2021). This equates to 36.6 percent of the population of Berlin, according to the Office of Statistics Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB24, February 2022). Of these almost 1.4 million people who have a migration background or non-German origin, about 400,000 come from EU countries, most of them from Poland (112,000). 183.000 people have Turkish roots, about 150,000 have origins in Arab countries and about 145.000 people have roots in countries of the former Soviet Union (RBB24, February 2022). As of 31 December 2021, there were 2.552 living people who were entitled to asylum (Antwort Bundesregierung auf Kleine Anfrage, Drucksache 20/584, March 2022: 4).

2. The Main Official Institutions & Stakeholders Responsible for Migrant Integration

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), which is a division of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs (BMI), is responsible for immigration issues, asylum and refugee protection,

as well as the coordination and management of migration and integration policies ([Bundesbehörden BMI](#)). As of 2022, it has a budget of 882.385.000 Euros and has 8.141 employees in 63 locations (ibid.).

The BMI is also responsible for organising and setting the topics of the [Deutsche Islam Konferenz](#) (German Islam Conference) (DIK), which, as a forum for dialogue with Muslim citizens, also addresses topics of participation and integration. The DIK has been held regularly since 2006. Since 2012, the Federal Government has also organised the so-called Integration Summit, at which central points of the German integration politics are discussed across all stakeholders. Together with the National Action Plan on Integration, the summit constitutes an important instrument for the orientation and design of integration policies in the Federal Republic of Germany.

3. Legal Framework for the Regulation of Integration

For a long time, Germany refused to acknowledge that it is a migration country, with the result that integration policy only became a political issue with the Immigration Act, which came into force on 1 January 2005 together with the Residence Act (Hanewinkel and Oltmer 2017). After the Bundestag elections in 2005, the office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration was upgraded to the rank of Minister of State directly in the Chancellery. Since 1 December 2021, [Reem Alabali-Radovan](#) has held the office of Minister of State for Migration, Refugees and Integration. She is also simultaneously the Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism (Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, press release of 23 February 2022). The office of the anti-racism commissioner was first introduced by the current government. After the refugee movement in 2015 and the accompanying debates about the long-term integration of asylum seekers in addition to an overload of the administration services, the Integration Act came into force at the federal level on 6 August 2016. Contrary to what the name suggests, it does not regulate comprehensive aspects of integration in Germany but contains regulations on the right of residence, labour market promotion and language as well as integration courses (An "Integration Partial Act" Interview with Professor Dr Daniel Thym, 2016). With this law, the German government pursues an integration strategy of "promoting and demanding". This means that migrants should be supported in learning the German language and receive professional qualifications, with the consequences of sanctions if they do not take advantage of these offers. This concept of integration as well as the law were controversially discussed. The law was criticised by different civil society and charity organisations above all because of its intensive restrictions, especially the decrease of financial support below the minimum standard of living in case of a non-compliance with the measures as well as its restrictions on the right of residence for recognised refugees (ProAsyl, June 2016).

In addition, there are integration laws in the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and Berlin (Sachverständigenrat Integration und Migration, press release of 05.10.2017). Although integration and migration policy in Germany is a federal responsibility, the implementation of national policies remains the responsibility of the federal states as many areas relevant to integration, such as education are by the constitution the competence of the federal states. Next to the integration laws Germany also has a very complex catalogue of regulations and laws for different fields of life that concern asylum seekers and refugees as well as a [Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz](#), an Immigration Act for specialists to cope with skills shortages.

After different crimes related to racism and xenophobia in the last years, the Federal Government sees itself as responsible for protecting the free democratic basic order more strongly (Discussion Paper on the Democracy Promotion Act by the BMI and BFSJF 2022: 1). Thus, the government aims to pass a Democracy Promotion Act which is still in the drafting phase. This law will form a legal basis for the long-term promotion of anti-racism, democracy education and extremism prevention (ibid: 2-3). The Federal

Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs (BMI) and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BFSFJ) are responsible for drafting the Act. The government also plans to pass a law on participation in this electoral term.

4. The Main Policies in the Country dealing with Integration

On the positive side, migration and integration in Germany have increasingly been understood as a cross-cutting task in recent years. [The "National Action Plan on Integration for the 2020s" \(NAP-I\)](#), for example, is a guideline for shaping German integration policy, on which 11 federal ministries and commissioners as well as representatives from the federal states and municipalities, from civil society, migrant organisations, international organisations, academia, business, the media, sports and cultural organisations, trade unions and social associations have worked together (Integration Commissioner: National Action Plan on Integration). The newly revised action plan is divided into five phases, each with 24 projects dealing with different aspects of integration, from immigration to social cohesion. Women of migrant descent are given special consideration in the integration plan in the area of the labour market (Integration Commissioner: Women in the Labour Market). Here, the Federal Government focuses on counselling for women who are nationals of a third country. Since May 2020, for example, there has been the model project [Fem.OS](#) in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency and the BAMF. The Company Minor - Projektkontor für Bildung und Forschung has been commissioned with its implementation. In the form of "digital street work", the employees advise them on 741 social media platforms in eight languages and test interface management for labour market access in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency (Interim Report Fem.OS, May 2021:1).

Civil society organisations have criticised the Action Plan mainly because the guidelines are exclusively aimed at immigrants and people with a migration background, while the majority of society is not named as a target group ([FAQ NAP-I No.4](#)). This is seen as a deficit, as the inclusion of migrants is also the responsibility of the majority society. Furthermore, the Federal Association of Networks of Migrant Organisations—"Bundesverband Netzwerke von Migrant*innenorganisationen (BV NeMO e.V.)" criticised that the current action plan does not focus enough on measures to improve the participation of migrants and that there are no concrete and practice-oriented proposals for more participation in legislative projects that affect migrants (Florian Rudolph, SWR2, 31.1.2022, 15:25).

5. Inclusion of Migrants in the Implementation of Integration Policies

5.1. No Voting Rights for Third Country Nationals in Germany

Elections in Germany take place at local, state and federal level. Only German citizens and EU citizens can vote in local elections. Third-country nationals (TCNs) are therefore excluded from conventional political participation, including holding political office. Most political parties in Germany also allow foreigners to become party members, but they cannot stand for election (Annual Report SVR 2021: 34). Citizens who have lived in Germany for decades but have a foreign passport are not eligible to vote. However, the ruling coalition government has undertaken to reform the citizenship law and thus facilitate naturalisation. The coalition agreement states that multiple citizenships are to be possible again. In addition, naturalisation will be possible after five years instead of the current eight years, and even after three years in the case of special integration achievements (Coalition Agreement 2021 - 2025: 188). The extension of the right to vote in municipal elections to third-country nationals has so far been rejected on constitutional grounds. The Federal Constitutional Court has interpreted Article 20 (2) of the Grundgesetz (the German constitutional law) in such a way that only nationals can participate in national elections, allowing only EU citizens to participate in local elections. Therefore it would require

a constitutional amendment if the lawmaker also wanted to grant third-country nationals the right to vote in municipal elections in Germany (Annual Report SVR 2021: 37). Attempts to extend the right to vote in municipal elections have therefore been unsuccessful so far (ibid.).

5.2. Non-Electoral Participation

Thus, non-EU citizens in Germany only have the possibility of "non-electoral participation" (Stephanie Müssig 2020:33). Since the 1970s, there have been so-called "foreigners' advisory councils" and "integration advisory councils" at the municipal level in Germany. These are bodies of co-determination for people with a migration background and/or without German citizenship (Annual Report SVR 2021:34). Migrant organisations (MO), new German organisations¹, self-organised refugee associations² and trade unions also play an important role in communicating and representing the interests of the migration society. Third-country nationals living in the Federal Republic of Germany, migrants and people of migration descent also participate in petitions, go to demonstrations or do voluntary work (Annual Report SVR 2021: 64-67).

5.2.1. The National Level

Since 1998, there has been the Bundeszuwanderungs- und Integrationsrat (BZI)(Federal Immigration and Integration Council) at the federal level, with its headquarters in Berlin. It is a nationwide association of the state organisations of municipal integration, migration and foreigners' advisory councils, which acts as a point of contact for the federal government, the Bundestag and Bundesrat, as well as the national centres and organisations at the federal level. The BZI is represented in various bodies, including being involved in the shaping of the National Action Plan on Integration from 2019-2021 and participating in thematic forums for the individual phases of the Action Plan (BZI participation bodies). Apart from its function as an advisory board, it is also responsible for various projects that deal with empowering of citizens with a migration history. For example, from May 2021 to June 2022, the BZI has launched the project "KommPAktiv – Kommunale Integrationsbeiräte qualifizieren, Demokratie stärken." The project aims to train voluntary migration and integration advisory boards and to provide them with tools with which they can actively participate in local politics. It is important to mention here, however, that the BZI is not a permanent body but an association dependent on funding. But the new federal government has signalled in the context of the coalition agreement that a participation law at the federal level will be initiated, which will also include the establishment of a participation council as a permanent body (Coalition Agreement 2021-2025: 118).

Apart from the Federal Immigration and Integration Council, Migrant Organisations represent the interests of people with a migration background. They are experts and partners at the federal, state and municipal level and advice on issues of migration, integration and participation. MOs are also channels of communication for municipalities to reach citizens with a migration origin and, in particular, a voice for the concerns of migrant communities. At the national level, for example, there is the Bundesverband Netzwerke von Migranten Organisationen e.V. (Federal Association of Networks of Migrant Organisations) (BV NeMO e.V.). It aims to increase MOs' ability to operate and advocate on a professional level and to have an impact on policies regarding migration and integration as well as participation. The German government provides [structural funding](#) to some nationally operating

¹ The [new German organizations \(ndo\)](#) are a post-migrant network of associations, organisations and projects from all over Germany. They advocate for all kinds of people (migrants and Germans) with migrant descent.

² Self-organised refugee organisations and initiatives are those created by people who are refugees or asylum seekers. They are campaigning for the concerns and rights of refugees.

migrant organisations, which is different to project funding granted for a longer period and aims at strengthening the organisational structures.

5.2.2. The Federal State Level

The federal states also have integration and migration commissioners who are part of the state administration. North Rhine-Westphalia has established so-called [municipal integration centres](#) dealing with integration on the municipal level. Most federal states also have migration and integration advisory councils. These are advisory bodies often introduced by municipal laws that represent the population with a migration background in political decisions. How they are formed varies depending on the federal state regulations. In some federal states, the representatives are elected, in others only appointed, while in others there is a mixed form. The advisory boards have no decision-making powers and, in many municipalities, there is no legal obligation to establish an advisory board. In some federal states, however, both the establishment of an advisory board and its tasks and powers are regulated by the participation and integration laws of the federal states. In other cases, there is a lack of specific provisions on the establishment of migration councils or when councils must be consulted, and there are often no provisions on the right to make motions and to speak (Kersting, Norbert 2020: 190). An exception are federal states that have stipulated the establishment of a migration council in their municipal code (ibid.191). However, many migrants who are entitled to vote for the advisory boards hardly seem to perceive or accept the actions of the advisory boards, as the Sachverständigenrat Integration und Migration (Expert Council of German Foundations for Integration and Migration) (SVR) states in its annual report from 2021 (Annual Report SVR 2021: 59). This could be mainly because the influence of these bodies on political decisions is considered low and many migrants do not feel sufficiently represented by the advisory boards (ibid.).

5.2.3. The Local Level (Berlin)

In Berlin, Katarina Niewiedzial has been the Commissioner for Integration and Migration since May 2019. Her task is to shape migration and integration policy within all Senate administrations and policy areas. In addition, the Commissioner is responsible for steering Berlin's overall integration policy. She is also the contact person for migrant organisations and head of the counselling centre "[Welcome Centre](#)" for new arrivals, immigrants, and people of migration descent without a German passport. On the federal state level, Berlin has a Law on the Regulation of Participation and Integration in Berlin that was amended in 2021 and renamed the [Berliner Gesetz zur Förderung der Partizipation in der Migrationsgesellschaft](#) (PartMigG) (Law on the Promotion of Participation in the Migration Society of the State of Berlin). The PartMigG was passed on 17 June 2021 and is also referred to as the "Open Door Act". It regulates binding measures to promote diversity in the administration and the economy as well as the political participation of people with a migration background and history. The law was developed with significant participation of the State Advisory Council for Participation³ (brochure "Shaping Participation" Elena Brandalise 2021:1), since the amendment must first be implemented, the Advisory Council will only be constituted in its reformed way End of 2022 or beginning of 2023.

Established by Senate resolution on 29 April 2003, Berlin's State Advisory Council for Participation will be composed of 13 members, (representing migrant communities) who are entitled to vote, out of which

³ With the amendment of the Law for the regulation of Participation and Integration in Berlin (now PartMigG) the State Advisory Council on Questions of Integration and Migration was renamed to the State Advisory Council for Participation.

1 has to represent ethnic German migrants, 1 refugees and one the LGBTQI* community with a migration background. One member will represent the Council of the Roma and Sinti communities within the Advisory Council. (§17 I PartMigG). The PartMigG also lists other different stakeholders and representatives of the administration who need to attend the meetings of the council. A central reform of the law is the obligation to establish integration and migration advisory boards also at the district level, the smallest municipal level in Berlin. It is only with the amended PartMigG that the districts are required to establish advisory councils and provide funds for the administration of the advisory councils. Only in some districts, non-organised migrants are members of the council, representing their communities. All the other members are representatives of migrant organisations, conventional civil society organisations as well as charity organisations which have to apply for the seats in the council and will be selected by the integration office of the district. Due to the PartMigG, there is also now the possibility for TCNs to work in the committees for participation and integration of the district assemblies as knowledgeable citizen deputies with voting rights within the working committees of the assemblies. Next to the PartMigG, the Berlin State passed the Berliner [Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz \(LADG\)](#) Anti-Discrimination Act on 21.06.2020 which is the first of its kind in Germany and closes a legal gap that still exists, particularly in the area of discrimination caused by state action. A long-term project funded by the Berlin Senate was [Berlin Entwickelt Neue Nachbarschaften \(BENN\)](#), which means „Berlin Develops New Neighbourhoods.“ It has been established in the neighbourhoods of refugee accommodations since 2017 as part of a Berlin-wide integration management program. Since then, 16 BENN locations were created within the city. The goal was to support the participation of refugees in social life activities in the neighbourhood but also to promote active citizen participation and also engagement between the newcomers and people living for a longer time in the neighbourhood. Another crucial instrument for strengthening the participation of migrant organisations and organisations of refugees is the [Participation and Integration Programme](#) of the Berlin Senate. Organisations funded by the programme receive project funding for three years. This allows migrant organisations to create a more stable and sustainable situation.

6. Migrant Organisations

There is no information on how many MOs are operating in Germany. In 2020, the Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration (SVR), Expert Council on Integration and Migration, published a study ([SVR Research Report MO 2020](#)), in which a statistical estimate was made. The statistical survey took place in four federal states. The SVR estimates that in 2020 there were about 12,400-14,300 MOs in Germany (SVR Research Report 2020:13-14). MOs often work at the municipal level, in the immediate neighbourhood and are anchored in the structures of the municipality. Across municipalities, MOs often join together to form umbrella organisations in order to communicate their concerns in a bundled way (ibid. 18). Most organisations are registered as associations, in rare cases, they can also be limited liability companies (GmbH). Apart from registered associations, there are also initiatives that are formed for a specific purpose and dissolve after a certain period of time (SVR Research Report MO 2020:12). To provide an idea of the variety of MOs in Germany, this report lists only a small selection of 10 different migrant organisations operating on the national level but also specifically in Berlin, where the project is implemented.

At the national level, for example, there is the [Bundesverband Netzwerke von Migrantenorganisationen e.V. \(BV NeMO\)](#), the Federal Association of Networks of Migrant Organisations, which aims to strengthen the participation of migrant organisations at the level of federal politics, responsible ministries and institutions and to advocate for a beneficial framework and conditions for the operation of migrant local alliances. The nationally operating umbrella association [DaMigra e.V.](#) focuses on the

empowerment and the equal political, social, professional and cultural participation of migrant women in Germany, including the combating of all forms of discrimination. There is also the [DaMOst—Dachverband der Migrant*innenorganisationen in Ostdeutschland e.V.](#), which is an umbrella organisation specifically for MOs which are rooted and operating in the Eastern part of Germany in the states which used to be part of the German Democratic Republic. On the local level in Berlin, the [Türkischer Bund in Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.\(TBB\)](#) (the Turkish Union in Berlin-Brandenburg) must be mentioned, which is an umbrella organisation of different Turkish-diaspora organisations, as well as individuals. Their goal is to advocate for (minority) rights on a legal, social and economic level as well as participation and equality. The TBB also has expertise in anti-discrimination counselling. The [Migrationsrat Berlin e. V.](#) is an umbrella organisation which is a council representing the cross-sectional interests of all kinds of migrant organisations. The [Afrika-Rat Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.](#) aims to strengthen and connect the African diaspora and to advocate for the minority rights of people of African descent and against any form of racism and discrimination and to empower small migrant organisations and its representatives. [Club Dialog e.V.](#) stimulates and promotes cultural and political dialogue between Russian-speaking and native Berliners and promotes the integration of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. At the moment they conduct projects for the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees. [GePGeMi e.V.](#) is the Society for Psychosocial Health Promotion among Migrant Groups, especially from Asian Countries. They advocate for health promotion in the psychosocial field especially among migrant families and elderly migrants from East Asian cultural areas. [Zaki e.V.](#), especially focuses on the support of Afghan and Arabic communities, providing political education, support and consulting as well as empowerment, advocating for equal participation for people on the move. [Women in Exile and Friends](#) is an initiative of refugee women who came together in Brandenburg in 2002 to fight for their rights and advocate for the concerns of refugee women facing intersectional discrimination.

II. Evaluation of the One-To-One Interviews

10 one-to-one interviews in-person and online were conducted in Berlin, the main region where the project is being implemented. The people with a migration background selected for this interviews were individuals who are politically engaged and have a history of migration themselves. Despite the limits of qualitative research to have a very broad variety of cases, it was tried to choose a broad selection of 10 individuals in regard to their gender, age, and origin as well as residency status. Additionally, all of them are active in different political fields being either representatives of migrant organisations, members of migrant advisory councils, Citizen Deputies⁴, or activists as well as volunteers.

1. Migrant Needs

1.1 Stable residence status as a pre-condition for participation

Despite the structural accesses for migrants to participate in politics which were described in the previous chapter, all participants in the interviews had the opinion that even if structural participation exists in theory, migrants need to have a stable residence status to put them into practice. It was presumed that people who are in the process of asylum seeking are very afraid to jeopardize their chances to obtain asylum. Many also fear the confrontational atmosphere when going to their appointments in the foreigners' registration office, making them afraid of speaking out. One of the interviewees also pointed out that as long as people are not sure if they will be allowed to reside for a longer time in one place, they do not have the motivation to participate in political actions, especially if they have to move from one accommodation to the next and sometimes from one federal state to another. Many interviewees found that political involvement on the municipality level under such

⁴ Citizen Deputies are citizens who take part in the work of the committees of a Berlin district assembly. They have voting rights in the committees of the district assembly.

conditions is very difficult to expect. Moreover, some conversation partners also mentioned that their communities or groups of migrants they work with sometimes have very little interest in political engagement because they are too occupied with existential difficulties such as looking for employment, paying bills and finding housing. It was also pointed out that if establishing that a stable residency is a pre-condition for participation, then for migrant women this is especially often difficult to achieve because they (as presumed) have less access to information about counselling centres or because of their personal situation.

One interviewee in Berlin described her personal situation as follows:

“In my case, there was no possibility to just go out on the street and ask and google counselling centres and projects. I wasn’t on social media much and I was just at home because of my ex-husband. I didn’t have any opportunities at all. Only after I separated from my husband, I made a Facebook account and talked to many women on social media and found out that there are so many counselling centres in my neighbourhood. Then, I found a counselling centre on the subject of residence, which advised me on my residence status. That’s how I got my residence permit. Only then did I start to work on my career and became politically active.”

1.2. Fighting Discrimination and Racism

Most of the interviewed people mentioned that it is difficult to be politically active in groups or structures which are dominated by members of the majority society. One interviewee said that many migrants made the experience that they are being patronised because they do not speak the language fluently. Another participant felt being used as a token for diversity campaigns. Some stated that they think that as long as they are viewed as migrants because of their look or skin colour, they will not be seen as equal in such structures. Furthermore, there is a general demand for more critical post-colonial perspectives when talking about participation or creating and funding projects that deal with integration and migrant issues. Many people interviewed for the project said that they reject the word “integration.” They associate it with a one-way approach, feeling that they are forced to assimilate to the majority society rather than being seriously included and tolerated. One interviewee also mentioned discrimination associated to this word when it comes to the question of who is demanded to integrate. She felt that this expectation “to integrate” is only expressed towards migrants coming from the Global South. Especially women migrant representatives pointed out that they face a lot of racism in everyday life which hinders their participation. One of the interviewees said that racism needs to be dealt with more in the school system and on the job market to make access easier for women. When it comes to women with a hijab, discrimination was often mentioned. Nevertheless, one participant found that due to global movements like “Black Lives Matter” there is a greater social awareness of racism and a broader understanding in her circles that many people are affected by discrimination.

1.3. Accommodation and Living Conditions

Another requirement for the possibility to focus on political activities that was very often verbalised is permanent accommodation and stable living conditions. Finding apartments or proper housing was mentioned many times as a major problem which hinders a focus on political activities when having spare time. One participant, who works together with migrant women in the countryside, said that despite having an apartment, the living conditions are sometimes very difficult because the women often feel excluded from neighbourhood activities or contact to Germans in their environment. They also face discrimination where they are based and have difficulties to find help from outside. When living in shelters one female interviewee also mentioned that women sometimes face sexual

harassment and she even heard of a case of rape. She also pointed out that the women who have children are worried when others in the shelters consume alcohol or drugs. Another participant also mentioned that rumours and wrong information can easily spread when living in refugee shelters which also hinders participation and makes it difficult to motivate people to become politically active. In his own words he described it like this:

“When living and having contact with people only in the refugee shelter, there is a high risk that people do not get proper information about their documents or possibilities to participate. In the shelters often rumours accrue such as ‘do not say anything negative about your situation or living conditions because otherwise, you will have problems with your asylum procedure.’ That’s why when you only go there and say ‘get organised’, you’ve already lost.”

1.4. Relevant Policy Fields which should be developed (better) for migrants

a) Better Funding for Migrant Organisations

When planning to get organised one participant pointed out that as a refugee or a migrant who did not live in Germany for a long time it is very difficult to receive funding for projects. She pointed out that more projects need to be created and funded which specifically target this problem. She held the opinion that the empowerment of migrants to become actors of inclusion policies requires a focus on access to knowledge on how to write a project application and where to access funding, as administration processes to acquire such funding are very complex. A common agreement was that more self-empowerment opportunities through information and training is needed. In general, one crucial demand was investing more in self-organised migrant and refugee organisations and to develop structures in which they can directly be involved in policy-making where they do not exist. Many participants saw a solution in creating a better sustainability of projects by structural funding rather than project funding. This was also seen as a way to give migrant organisations more opportunities to advocate for inclusive policies.

One of the interviewed participants explained the major problems like this:

“In my association, I have two months to deal with the content of the project and 80 percent of my work is the administration of the project. It’s all about the formalities and not the content. Everyone working in projects is caught in this bureaucracy trap. And very little of content work can actually be done. And our existence as a migrant organisation is always at risk. You don’t know how long and when the project will be funded and whether you will even have a job next year.”

b) The Right to Vote for Third Country Nationals (TNCs)

Another verbalised demand was the right to vote for TCNs. One participant, who is now in retirement and migrated to Germany many years ago, said that the right to vote would give him a sense of belonging and that when the right to vote on the municipality level was introduced for citizens of the European Union, he felt very excluded living and working in Germany for many years. Other interviewees think that the ability to vote would empower them more to speak up as right now they feel that this is not appreciated. One person said that despite living in Germany for 13 years, having studied here and paying taxes she is afraid that if she is politically too open, she will face difficulties when renewing her visa. In her view, having the right to vote as a TCN would be a solution to this self-silencing. Another participant had the impression that the right to vote would be a very important step

to allow TNCs to legally influence politics on a higher level and also make politicians care more about the concerns of migrants when becoming potential voters.

One participant explained the importance of having a right to vote like this:

“When it comes to topics and decisions that relate to these people, they should have their own voice in it, they should have their own vote in it. We live here, we are building our lives here but there is a good portion of the line that's missing and that's definitely because of the restrictions put by the general law passed by people who have no clue about the suffering of migrant groups.”

2. Migrants’ readiness to politically participate/engage

2.1. Advisory Councils

Migrant advisory councils were presumed as the predominant structural participation opportunity for the representation of perspectives and views of TCNs. However, almost all participants had the impression that the topics discussed are of little concern to the actual needs of non-organised individuals. Instead, many interviewees rather understood migrant advisory councils as a networking opportunity for migrant organisations or as a committee by the municipality to defend itself of accusations of making policies without the consultation of migrants. Others saw the appointment by the municipality as problematic because this allows the administration to invite only those migrant organisations to the table with which they have already worked together for many years. Nevertheless, some of the participants saw advisory councils as very important until migrants do not have voting rights at the municipality level. But this interviewee also had the impression that many councils are not as active as they should be. One participant thinks that the problem lies in missing skills to deal with administrative and legal procedures. In general, there was discouragement in the influence of migrant advisory councils as many felt that they do not have the power to actually influence policies as they are limited by the counselling role. Moreover, the interviewees also had the impression that advisory councils are not widely known by the migrant population. Migrant representatives actively involved in an advisory council saw a possible solution in making visible actions such as events or brochures on relevant topics that can also be accessed by the general migrant population of the municipality. Some also expressed the view that the councils should reach out more to the migrant population in the municipality and introduce themselves. One participant also found that the members should not be appointed but elected to make this procedure as democratic as possible and to allow TCNs to participate in the decision of who should represent them in the council. He had the view that this is not appreciated by the municipalities because this would cost more financial and administrative resources. Although more individual representatives were also perceived as a good solution by others, there were doubts if many individuals would like to become members of the council. Even though some councils in Berlin also allow individuals to be appointed as representatives to the council, there was a commonly shared opinion that newcomers who do not speak the German language will have difficulties to present their demands and participate actively in the discussions with politicians and other council members. In general, everyone felt that the activities of the councils such as regular meetings and working groups are very time consuming and because they are not paid or only compensated with an allowance, it is especially difficult to motivate individuals to participate.

One female migrant representative put it like this:

“I think the problem here is also that old structures exist, i.e. organisations are always re-elected that have always been there. On the other hand, who has the time to do this on a voluntary basis? Most of us foreigners have to work a lot so that we can stay here.”

2.2 Founding of Associations

Another widely used opportunity for participation is founding associations. All participants in the interviews view this as the most effective and widely used way to do projects that have an impact on migrants and as a way to influence certain policies. Only some of the interviewees were active in initiatives or grass-root activism. Migrant organisations are seen as the bridge between politicians and the non-organised migrant population. Many interviewees described a substantial problem to fund their work and doing sustainable work such as empowerment or advocacy. Others have the opinion that although there are many active migrant organisations in Germany there are also those mostly focused on community work and do not really participate in advocacy activities or are members of political committees or bodies such as migrant advisory councils. One reason for that was seen in the lack of supervision and training on how to write applications for projects or to network. One participant also pointed out that many people he knows were first activists before getting organised and did their work voluntarily because they were not able to acquire funding for their work. In his view, there need to be more informal structural ways to give activists the opportunity to get qualifications in order to become political players.

2.3. View opportunities to talk for themselves

Many of the participants in the interviews described the notion that there is no structural opportunity to speak up as an individual migrant for your needs. It was presumed that you need to be organised in an organisation or other political structures to directly have the opportunity to bring your demands to the administrations or political leaders. One interviewee had the impression that because migrant women have cultural or language barriers, they are denied having the intellectual capacity to speak for themselves. Especially, she had the impression that it is more talked about them (as migrant women) than with them. And often, the interviewees felt that the topics discussed are not the ones that concern the women. Another often mentioned problem was the lack of access of politicians to the migrant circles and communities, often not being migrants themselves which was found as a problem to make policies that really are central to migrant needs. It was viewed that this bridge between real life necessities of migrants and policies currently only exists through migrant organisations who have access to these structures. One participant said that round table discussions or more threshold meetings with the local government would be a format which can be joined more easily by individuals who are not organised. The suggestion was also made to have regular public events with politicians or representatives of the municipality to discuss issues that concern the migrant population face-to-face. The need for more involvement of individual migrants in political decision making was often emphasised. Almost all participants saw a voting right for TCNs on the municipality level as a possible solution to this discrepancy.

One interviewee summed it up like this:

“In a democracy, there should be a space that includes the voices of people who lost their voices in the places that they came from and who came here to gain their voice not to have their voices taken away from them again.”

2.4. Informal Participation

When talking about informal ways of participation and grass-root activism, most of the interviewees stated that they regularly participated in petitions and demonstrations and some found it a more faster and independent way to have an impact on policies concerning integration and migration. One interviewee had the opinion that initiatives entail less administrative work and give more independency regarding political demands and the framework you operate in. However, she also mentioned that it is hard to receive donations and they usually cover only costs of materials or rent for an event location.

Another participant who is an activist and regularly organises demonstrations stated that very good knowledge of the law is required. This is especially difficult for people who are new in Berlin and want to participate because not having a stable residency status or when in the asylum-seeking procedure puts them at risk to participate also in informal structures. The information about civil rights and freedoms but also limits for activists should also be distributed among the group of activists who are organising demonstrations to make sure that nobody will have problems with the police or other authorities. His opinion was also that especially as a migrant there is a great chance that you will face the risk that certain activities or your behaviour can be ranged as violating the law, even if operating in line with the law. Thus, he felt that migrants need to be especially cautious about their behaviour when taking to the street.

In his own words he said:

“I think one of the main issues for activists is to know how the law impacts them. So knowing how the law deals also with activism and activities on the ground is very important. Especially to know the consequences and all the rights and duties is very important. “

2.5. Relevant Fields of Life to become politically active

The interviewees saw a major problem in the communication at the foreigners’ registration office. It was mentioned that the staff is often not trained to take the perspective of migrants and they feel often discriminated against or treated and advised not according to their needs. One participant mentioned that more employees with a migration background are needed in such administration structures to understand the perspective of migrants better. This sensitivity was missed in the labour market. They felt that discrimination in the labour market hinders them to get proper jobs even if they have the demanded degrees for the positions. Concretely, the job interview was often perceived as a difficult situation in which you have to present yourself in a language which is not your mother tongue. Another very crucial field where more reform was asked for is the recognition of professional and academic qualifications. A problem which was especially formulated by migrant women representatives mentioning that since they are not able to continue working in their profession, many women are forced to take low-paid employment in the care work sector. Another political field of interest was education and especially the discrimination of children. Interviewees working together with migrant women often described a situation in which women felt helpless because their children were mocked or faced racial attacks. The women often have language barriers and cannot join parental meetings or defend their children against discriminative teachers. These early experiences of children with discrimination was also formulated as a direct barrier to become politically active later on as an adult. One participant also observed that many migrants stay passive or silent about those issues because they often do not see a direct benefit for them to become politically active in these fields.

2.6. E-Participation

Almost all saw e-participation as an opportunity which would facilitate participation. However, most of the interviewees clarified that it would probably be used by them as politically active people and maybe by individuals who have disabilities or no access to public spaces. On the other hand, they saw it as a barrier especially to those who do not have access to the internet or who are not familiar with technology. Many agreed that it would be something used by the younger generation. It was also seen by women migrant representatives as a way to reach women, especially those with children. Many said they would also like such a tool to be clearly explained and provided in different languages. Some of the participants think that the common language should be German as they perceive that people who would know about such a tool and actually use it would be people with a certain knowledge of German and that it would allow for discussions of topics among different communities. Almost all were sceptical if such an online participation tool should be presented by the municipality administration. They felt that

there might be a lack of trust that their suggestions would not be properly taken into consideration when it comes to policy-making. Others suggested to have it introduced by a migrant group or organisation to enable easier participation. One participant said when introduced by the administration during registration in the municipality this could be an opportunity to make it publicly known and give the notion that the municipality is interested in your voice.

3. Obstacles to Participation

3.1. Language

One major barrier for participation which was mentioned by all interviewees was language, especially when it comes to the communication with the administration directly or in official letters, which is often very complex and not comprehensible. This makes it difficult to deal with documents on your own. Many participants feel that the municipality administrations often require them to immediately fluently speak and understand German without having in mind that people are not yet able to understand the documents. When it comes to structural forms of participation like in the migrant advisory council, many participants saw a difficulty for individuals to become a member of such a council because of the language. This was seen as easier for representatives of migrant organisations as they usually live in Germany for many years and have experiences in talking to the administration and politicians and also handling official documents.

3.2. Lack of qualifications for volunteer work

Another obstacle mentioned by most of the interviewees was that migrants often do their political work voluntarily and do not receive compensation for their sharing of knowledge, empowerment work or counselling. Many saw it as hindering to work in public employment or any other high ranked political position because they cannot receive qualifications for their volunteer work, which is not being recognised as professional work experience. A major problem pointed out by one participant was that as long as people are in the asylum seeking procedure, they often do not receive crucial information about their political rights and opportunities for action. In his view, people should gain this knowledge and certificates for workshops even if they need to return back to their home countries in the case of a failed asylum application. He stated:

“It is frustrating when talking about participation that this problem is discussed only superficially. The people who come need political education, everyone wants to have empowered citizens, but nothing is being done about it.”

3.3 Recognition of Foreign Degrees and Work Permit

Furthermore, a very central problem to political presentation and taking up leading roles in society are difficulties many face with the recognition of degrees. This problem was especially brought forward by migrant women representatives who stated that this forces women in more physically challenging and low-paid jobs such as cleaning or care work, instead of political work. Another obstacle which was mentioned by participants working with migrant women was that a work permit is very important, allowing women to build a financially stable situation in which they have the opportunity to participate in political activities. When describing an empowerment workshop one participant was doing with a group of women, she described a situation like this:

“I found it important that the women do this self-reflection and talk about themselves without being forced to say where they come from or what their profession is. I was not allowed to work back then due to my tolerance status. Most of the women in this workshop were from m Syria and they already worked there but were not allowed to work in Germany. “

3.4. Problems of trust in the administration and politics

Almost all interviewees described a scepticism towards political and administrative bodies which they described as a barrier for structural participation. Some substantiated it with experiences of personal disappointment either by having contact only to those administrations they feel very discriminated by or not understood such as the foreigner's authority or employment office. Others saw the cause of this distrust in the experiences they made with authorities in their countries of origin. One participant said that it is common for people from his original country to rely on information from friends rather than going to the administration or taking advice from professional counselling centres because of their experiences with corruption. It was also mentioned that migrants often come from countries not only where corruption is commonplace but also without any experiences of living in a democracy. One participant formulated it like this:

“I have scepticism about politics because where I come from politics does not really work and the politicians and the administration are very corrupt. I imported the bad image I had of politics in my home country to Germany, although I know rationally that the structures are not the same.”

3.5. Low-threshold access to information on participatory structures

Despite different opportunities for structural participation many of the participants in the interviews felt that they had to rely on themselves when wanting to be active in structural participation like the migrant advisory council, as a member of a party working group or as citizen deputy to the district assembly. Although these possibilities exist for TCNs, the interviewees felt that there is little information offered about these participatory tools. Low-threshold information was seen as needed in places where migrants are based or go regularly to. Many suggested that this information should be accessible in refugee shelters and in different languages, also offering space for consultation and support. Some said also that this information needs to be shared on social media platforms and in integration and language courses. One participant also pointed out that when not translated into different languages the information should be at least very simply explained.

3.6. Lack of Financial Stability

Many saw the lack of spare time as an obstacle to political participation. In general, there was scepticism to expecting from people who just arrived in Germany to be politically active. Some felt that being occupied with everyday existential challenges is already much to cope with. Many said that migrants often not only have to work for themselves and their families in the country but also for those who live back in their home countries. This makes it difficult to participate in political activities especially when most of the opportunities offered are on voluntary basis. And even those who took the opportunity to become active in initiatives or migrant organisations were sometimes forced to stop these activities due to financial reasons. One participant felt that the work that migrants do on voluntary basis is often not appreciated enough by authorities and politicians. Another person pointed out (based on her own experiences) that although she appreciates that many migrant organisations are actively involved in migrant advisory councils, she feels that they cannot engage enough in their advocacy work and concealing of the municipality on policies because migrant organisations are too occupied with their everyday procedures and pressure to deliver their projects. This opinion was also shared by other interviewees seeing structural rather than project funding as a long-run solution which creates sustainable and strong participatory opportunities for migrant organisations.

4. Conclusions Interviews

Structural participation opportunities (migrant advisory councils, participation in working groups of parties or being a Deputy Citizen to the district assemblies in Berlin which exist for TCNs) are well-known by all participants in interviews conducted for this research. However, they were interviewed as representatives of migrants and are already politically organised or professionals in the local or national

politics. They all stated that these structures are not commonly and widely known by the broader migrant population in Berlin.

As a solution to motivate and empower migrants to be politically involved they saw the right to vote as an important feature and direct opportunity to have impact on policy making. In order to have very strong migrant political representatives, public employers and professionals who are able to influence and reform decision-making on integration and migration, there are certain changes demanded:

- Allowing for a stable residence status with a permit to work
- Fighting Racism and other forms of discrimination
- Having a safe and stable environment and access to proper housing
- Advancement of language courses towards the needs of migrants (e.g. further training for political participation)
- The ability to get qualifications and certificates for voluntary work to be able to get employment in an organisation or the public administration
- Improvement of the recognition of foreign degrees

Strengthening of the migrant advisory councils' impact on inclusion and integration policies:

- Increase of structural funding for migrant organisations on the regional state level to make them able to advocate stronger for inclusive policies and professional counselling of the administration and local government.
- Training and workshops for members of the council to become more familiar with administrative procedures and networking (especially for individual migrant representatives)

For the improvement of knowledge among the migrant population about the migrant advisory councils and other participation opportunities:

- Organising of more public events for the migrant population and development of concrete material such as brochures which give an idea about the work of the migrant advisory councils but also other opportunities to be politically active.
- Development of measures to overcome the distrust for administrations
- Use of e-participation as a tool to get organised and inform people about participatory decision-making also in different languages
- Creating more threshold meetings with the migrant population of the municipality like roundtable discussions or regular meetings in public spaces

III. Evaluation of the Focus Group Discussions

Three Focus Groups were organised with beneficiaries and providers of existing participatory structures. In each group, five different stakeholders discussed access opportunities and barriers to the participation of people with migration backgrounds with a specific focus on the group of TCNs. In each group, next to representatives of migrant organisations, there were also migrants active in migrant advisory councils or as citizen deputies to a district assembly in Berlin. Representatives of the municipality of the district Berlin Mitte (being a Partner of this project) participated in two groups and a representative of the Berlin Senate (regional state administration) took part in another group. Each Group had a focus on migrant advisory councils as well as other formal and informal participatory opportunities. In one of the groups' women migrant representatives were invited to specifically discuss the needs of migrant women in participatory structures of the region. The individual representatives were selected with sensitivity to gender, age, and diversity in the representation of different migrant groups and/or communities.

1. Motivation and Issue Raising

1.1 “Pre-political” Work

One very central topic discussed in all of the focus groups was the question of how people with a migration background become politically active. Offering motivation and raising awareness about the fact that personal concerns can be transferred into political demands were seen as a major challenge and important step. A participant in one group described this “pre-political work” as raising political issues without starting an actual political discourse. The discussants had the opinion that this work not only includes writing flyers, e-mails, and invitations to events but mutual exchange that is rooted in trust. This was perceived as a good strategy to reach communities which are not very active politically. For instance, a participant mentioned this in the context of the post-soviet community not being used to political participation, but corruption. Others agreed that if not growing up in a democracy and being used to corruption, especially in the administration, it is very difficult to create trust and raise motivation for structural participation. One suggested to organise very informal meetings and events as well as small exchange groups with role models for empowerment workshops. Another suggestion raised by one participant was to organise regular but very informal meetings in the neighbourhood where people can discuss important issues concerning their districts combined with cooking or any other activity, where the municipality should only provide the space and framework for the assembly. However, it was also pointed out that this work cannot be only done by migrant organisations as they usually have limited financial possibilities and timely opportunities within projects to focus intensively on this awareness and trust building. One participant also pointed out that this is not done with temporary projects but needs constant structures which intensively allow for political education and alternative training methods. From his experiences, there is a need for word of mouth recommendations for people to know about such offers. He also emphasised the importance of offering such courses in different languages. Nevertheless, it was also mentioned that the group of TCNs is very heterogenic and that with a single offer it is difficult to reach all members of this group. One participant made this statement on the topic:

"There are many offers, maybe too many offers. And we always address the same groups of migrants that already know quite a lot. We don't reach people who need exactly that. We need to talk to people where they are: In refugee shelters and less at expert panels."

1.2 The Basis for Participation: Residence Status and Stable Living Conditions

During the discussion different examples of projects were mentioned that are meant to motivate especially asylum seekers who live in refugee shelters to organise. Most of the participants believed that these projects were not very successful and people living in refugee shelters often did not manage to create councils or other organised ways to channel their demands for accommodation. The reason (as perceived) was that most of the people, especially with a discretionary leave to remain or in the procedure of asylum seeking (as described by participants in the groups), seldom feel wanted in their country of residence and are uncertain if they can build a future in the place where they are based. Some participants also pointed out that the first experiences made with authorities are often not positive, especially when going to the State Office for Immigration (Berlin's foreigners' registration office). Regarding TCNs, the point was raised that this group is excluded the most from many formal participatory opportunities but has at the same time the highest potential to become politically active while being confronted with different existential challenges. A representative of the administration pointed out that “being affected” is something important to hold on to when becoming politically active. She also indicated that offering low-threshold opportunities which are compatible with the time and other resources of this targeted group is a concern of the administration. Additionally, the groups agreed that the representatives of migrants rarely discuss topics that concern non-organised migrants, and that the priorities of the organised faction are often too far away from the questions of actual

political participation. One representative of migrant women stated that discrimination in connection with wearing a hijab should be a topic of discussion with policy makers because this kind of discrimination often involves employment opportunities. Also, fighting racism, in general, was found to be a very important topic, it was suggested that the different stories of women who experienced discrimination should be collected, and a meeting organised for these women to talk directly about their concerns. The participants also agreed that motivation or concern can only be created if people feel a direct benefit from political action. One participant described it like this:

"I think political participation needs a political basis. Basis of 'I have a flat, school and kindergarten for my children and I have health insurance.' Only then I can put my energy into political participation."

1.3 Access to Independent Anti-Discrimination Advisory Services and Legal Enforcement of Antidiscrimination Laws

Despite the presence of various consultation services in Berlin, especially regarding discrimination in the housing market and other areas of life, the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and the compensation on legal grounds were what participants found most essential. It was a common agreement that the protection against discrimination and racism is one of the most important pillars of democratic participation and therefore always needs to be addressed. However, particularly discussants representing migrant women felt that legally challenging a discriminatory act or practice is usually laborious for many migrants because of the difficulty of not only finding legal consultation but accompaniment throughout the process. When it comes to complaints about agents working in the labour agency or other fields that are very substantial, it was pointed out that people are too afraid of filing complaints due to a fear of negative consequences. A female migrant representative pointed out that the people are confronted with discrimination all the time and it is difficult to file complaints constantly while being occupied with everyday challenges. Thus, empowerment work and issue raising were also seen as important when it comes to issue raising for political action.

1.4 E-Tools to Reach People Where They Are

Focus group participants saw issues in the distribution of information about participation opportunities and the regularity of training. One female participant pointed out that offers need to be better adapted to the people who need to be reached. Migrant women can be reached when their children are in school or kindergarten and it was suggested not to have very strict formats instead of workshops and long seminars. One suggestion was to allow communication through social media or smartphones with organisers of meetings. Regarding e-participation, it was suggested to make participation possible without the obligation of registering with an e-mail address. However, participants pointed out that in their experience much time needs to be calculated for the monitoring and updating of the content.

Before using such a tool, they found evaluations important on what kind of opportunities already exist in Berlin, as there is already the <https://mein.berlin.de> website and some other platforms for citizen participation. Nonetheless, they also found that these websites could be developed further and tailored to the needs of migrants. Other participants found e-learning modules in different languages a useful tool but found that they should go further into detail on different aspects of democratic participation. Especially short videos in different languages were valued as a method to motivate for political engagement.

2. Inclusion of Migrant Voices in Policymaking

2.1 The Berliner Gesetz zur Förderung der Partizipation in der Migrationsgesellschaft (PartMigG) –Law for the promotion of Participation in the Migration Society

One participant pointed out that all authorities are different and open towards the demands of migrants to varying degrees. She judges it very important that migrant representatives have access to every administration on the federal state and district levels, especially to those bodies which are in charge of policies affecting migrants. Representatives of the administration stated that the Berlin municipalities and the Senate are bound to the PartMigG which is now a very important base for the demands of the migrant population. When it comes to inclusion and participatory approaches, this legal ground facilitates the exchange with different offices. The law (as interpreted by the participant in one of the focus groups) should offer access to the administration as a whole. For that reason, the integration offices in every district are now obligated to enforce this law in the municipalities. This makes it easier for migrant organisations to approach the administration. Every single group mentioned the PartMigG as a very positive signal of the Berlin Senate, among other reasons for the fact that many migrant organisations and the State Advisory Council for Participation were included in the development of the proposal. A participant also said that it is important that with the PartMigG the participation and integration advisory councils in the districts have a legal foundation and financial resources for administration. There was a general wish to have this kind of process for any law that concerns migrants. On the other hand, one participant raised the point that it is difficult for migrant organisations to cope with the number of processes happening in the administration and that resources are so limited that inclusion in policy and law drafting cannot only remain the personal responsibility of migrants. Instead, there is a need for the active distribution of information by the administration in due time. In her own words she said:

“There are different laws that we need to discuss. I can make a list of laws where this participation is very necessary. But this needs to be done properly with very good preparation and with enough time, not with a three-week deadline for an input on this and that like it is often the case.”

2.2 Advisory Councils for Participation and Integration

One participant stated that when designing the PartMigG many migrants wanted the advisory councils to be included in the law as a participatory instrument. However, others felt that relying on the councils and making them stronger as committees makes it more difficult to push for the right to vote for TCNs. Some participants criticised councils as too dependent on the political will of the district majors or integration offices of the municipality, which sometimes hinders the inclusion of critical voices of migrants. And one participant also pointed out that even if the councils operate very democratically with different representatives, they still remain consultation bodies with limited leverage on policymaking. Differing opinions were shared on the question if councils are currently created in a democratic or fair manner, as members are not directly elected to the councils. One discussant felt that enabling TNCs to vote for the representatives would be no more democratic as eventually, the elected representatives would remain in a consulting position. Others held the view that having elections would increase the knowledge about the councils and would force the representatives to have a closer exchange with the migrant population in the municipality about the topics they would like to be discussed in the council. It was agreed that it is also important that individual migrants are members of the councils. In general, there was agreement that the councils have a favourable structural and legal ground to operate. Nevertheless, most of the focus group participants shared the view that the councils are not realising their full potential. The reasons and possible solutions were as follows:

a) In-transparent Consultation Structures

One mentioned problem was that at times members of the council have the feeling that their proposals and demands which they developed over a long and time-consuming process are not taken into consideration within the municipality. They felt that because their work is completely voluntary, with financial compensation limited to 10-20 Euros and only for official meetings of the advisory council-but

not for the working group meetings- proposals should be valued and taken into account to a much higher degree. Otherwise, the members of the council feel discouraged when always seeing their suggestions rejected. Migrant organisations felt that they are providing a free service for the municipality that is not actually part of their regular job, making it voluntarily. One participant pointed out:

“There is a lot of work on the part of the migrants in the advisory councils and in the end you don't even know what happens with what you have proposed.”

b) Presence of Politicians as a Barrier to Communication

Many focus group participants felt that politicians often dominate the communication in the meetings of the council, making it especially difficult for people who do not speak the language fluently to participate in the discussions. They face a twofold difficulty when it comes to communication: communicating in a language they do not speak fluently and coping with the rhetorical strength of politicians. For that reason, the district administration representatives stated that the council in their district also holds formal meetings without the presence of municipal representation, letting it operate as independent as possible from the integration office.

One female member of an advisory council on the district level described it like this:

"I started working in the council when I didn't know the language at all and had to represent a very large community within the district. When you work with politicians who are very experienced in political work and rhetorical language, it's very difficult to collaborate with that imbalance democratically."

c) Better Exchange between the Different Advisory Councils in Berlin

Another suggestion offered by participants was to create a stronger exchange between the members of the different district councils, as well as with the State Advisory Council for Participation, effectively getting to know the work done by others and also to push for collaborative actions. As observed by one participant there is no link between the councils, which creates a problem for strategic work. Additionally, the councils have a different constellation in every district, making it difficult to know the members of every council.

d) Topics that concern many migrant communities

One participant had the opinion that sometimes very clear and common topics concerning every migrant can be a good basis for making proposals of interest to the broader migrant society. A participant had the view that in her advisory council a very well received topic was multilingualism, seen as something concerning every migrant community. She pointed out that multilingualism was not only discussed within the working group of the council but also in public events with different migrant groups. The focus group members had also the view that residency status, communication with authorities, the housing situation and topics concerning children such as discrimination in schools or the labour market are topics crucial also for politically non-active migrants. The participants in every group had the opinion that if people would feel that the council actually has an impact on policies concerning these issues, interest in its work might increase.

e) Increasing the Visibility

Many discussants felt that the councils are not commonly known by non-organised migrants and that the topics and proposals of the council often are only internally discussed and not within the broader migrant society of the districts. Increasing the visibility of the councils through communication and PR measures was viewed as important. It was suggested to invite more external experts with migration backgrounds to the meetings of the councils or its working groups and also to have public events with different migrant groups. A commonly shared opinion was also that advisory councils should have the

possibility to publish press releases and use a website where they can present the different members. Word of mouth recommendations between representatives of the communities about the council were also seen as a method to transfer knowledge about the advisory councils. One discussant said, to increase the visibility of the district's advisory council, they organised a school competition for the design of a logo for the council's working group for multilingualism. Others suggested to form a working group for communication within the council.

f) Training for members of the councils

The participants discussed different possibilities of training, especially for members of advisory councils who are not familiar with the structures and work of the administration. It was suggested to have workshops with representatives of the municipality and informal events with the migrant population motivating more individuals to participate in advisory councils. It was also seen as important that the integration offices in the districts offer support since the members of the council will not have the capacity to implement all the suggested measures with the political work aside.

2.3 Inclusion in Policy-Making

A common demand was to create more micro-focused discussion groups and roundtables which consolidate for a certain period of time to work on specific topics. Also cooperating with members of the Berlin deputy house as a strategic method to build up pressure for certain policies was seen as a way to have more influence on the decisions of the administration. Other discussants representing the administration suggested to approach responsible people directly who are working on certain policies. Being an identifiable expert known to the authorities also helps to be directly included in the policy-making process, as described by a participant. Also being self-confident even as a small organisation was something pointed out as a way to be invited to round tables and for structural inclusion in policy making. One representative of migrant women saw a solution to the language barrier by organising meetings with translators present, enabling also women to participate who have difficulties to explain their concerns in German language. Increasing exchange of experiences and knowledge in between migrant organisations was also viewed as indispensable. In general, the discussants demanded a structured framework in which such consultation processes can be facilitated. A representative of the Senate pointed out that in Berlin, the integration offices (on district and federal state level) have the responsibility to bring different authorities together on issues concerning integration and thus, can facilitate communication. In the case of non-compliance with migrant organisations on policies concerning migration or inclusion, a representative of the district municipality Mitte stated that integration offices also function as ombudsman offices for complaints of the migrant civil society, enabling them to deal with complaints and to approach other authorities in the case of complaints. One participant described the current approach taken by the committee for integration, work and social of the deputy house of Berlin in regard to the arrival structure for Ukrainian refugees as a good practice for a holistic approach to include migrant organisations in policy making because different migrant organisations were invited to discuss measures for the integration of refugees from Ukraine. A representative of the senate put it like this:

“In the conceptualisation of policies, civil society should be involved. It should not be the case that decisions are already taken and organisations have only the possibility to make view suggestions on the policies created by the administration. Ideally, the administration should try to find solutions to problems together with them.”

A representative of the administration said, sometimes it is very important to have the right conversation partners within the administration to have an impact on policy making. Inputs in compliance with deadlines are very important when it comes to influencing of policies. However, she admitted, that also individual people in some positions sometimes hinder inclusive policy-making. A way

to bypass this problem is to use the complaint management in every authority in Berlin, as pointed out. According to the administration representatives these complaints need to be evaluated and reported. One representative working for a migrant organisation said that she plans to use this mechanism more as a way to reach certain authorities which are not well-disposed towards consultation from migrant representatives.

2.4 Public Citizen Participation

One participant saw a good way to motivate for participation to offer different low-threshold ways of citizen participation on the district level which are not tied to citizenship. Working closely together with a municipality and also migrant organisations makes such offers more accessible and also inclusive, as one discussant told from her own experience. She said that this is a way to exchange ideas for the neighbourhood. A problem observed by one migrant women representative was that when it comes to cooperation with authorities, migrant women have a very strong barrier which cannot be easily overcome. She often feels that it is not really in the interest of the authorities to give these women an opportunity to participate politically and she had the opinion that participation on the very local level in the neighbourhood cannot be the solution to non-participation. In her opinion, a stronger push for inclusion in law and policy making is needed. A general opinion was that offering information in different languages needs to be improved in order to allow more TNCs to have an impact on decision making.

3. Obstacles for Structural Participation

3.1 Structural Participation Not for Everyone Accessible

A commonly shared view was that many initiatives or collectives which often prefer informal ways of participation to deliver their political demands, still would like to be included in structural consultation processes. For instance-as broad forward by one discussant-it is not possible for initiatives to vote for the State Advisory Council for Participation. Only associations are allowed to be listed as voters for the members of the council which was perceived as a limitation of the PartMigG. A member of a working group which co-created the PartMigG stated that the reason for this limitation lies within the German association law and no solution was found yet which was judicially and politically sufficient to expand the voting rights to initiatives within the PartMigG. In general, some participants had the view that the ways to be included in structural ways of participation are often very static. Some felt that the most common way to have access to structures is to found an association. Hindering initiatives or other politically organised groups to participate. A group with difficulties to be included in policy making is those of “illegalised” people. A member of a focus group pointed out that some of them are organised but have difficulties representing their group in public or to deliver their demands because they fear to be deported or to face legal consequences being not allowed officially to stay in the country. One representative of the administration mentioned that the state of Berlin plans to develop a sort of city ID to allow them to have better access to social services, facilitating the access to basic needs.

3.2. Financial (In-) stability for Strategic Advocacy on Policies

A shared view was that the framework for consultation and inclusion of migrant organisations needs to be reformed. Many migrant representatives are concerned that institutions and administrations expect them to share their knowledge and expertise with little or no financial compensation or even to consult them voluntarily. It was also seen by many as problematic to depend mostly on the volunteer work of migrants when it comes to law and policy making which concerns them. In the opinion of migrant organisation representatives, being not able to do advocacy work as part of their work but only as volunteers, puts migrant representatives in a weaker position in comparison to decision makers, hampering advocacy for structural change. One concrete demand was to establish structural funding for migrant organisations on the federal state level similar to the model which already exists on the national level. Another participant observed that not only funding for projects themselves hinders often

impactful advocacy but also the constant fluctuation of colleagues as many are forced to change jobs because of 6 Months to 1 year fixed-term contracts. This creates in her opinion a non-sustainable situation for the organisations where knowledge and expertise always fluctuate, causing also a very insecure situation for many organisations. In her opinion, this structural barrier makes it difficult to develop in-depth expertise. It was also suggested that a solution would be long-term funding which is not tied to a certain migrant community or group, allowing to advocate for more inclusive work on migration. One of the discussants put it like this:

„We need first to influence how laws are drafted and then change the existing legislation unless we get proper structural funding, I think we will never address structural issues.“

3.3 More People with a Migration Background in the Administration

Having more people with migration background employed in the administration was also perceived as an important aim. One discussant felt that when working in politics, people with migration background have fewer chances in comparison to native Germans to get prestigious positions. Therefore, many very qualified migrants have to work in migrant organisations or other fields with precarious work conditions. In his view, multilingualism, especially when it comes to non-European languages should be valued more when applying for positions in the administration. The PartMigG regulates not only the participation and inclusion of migrants in the decision making but also measures to increase the diversity of employees in the administration. One representative of the district administration of Bezirksamt Mitte stated that in her municipality diversity training with the human resources department already started. Bezirksamt Mitt also conducted an internal survey on the questions of racism and discrimination as a way to analyse the needs of employees. When the results were accessible, employees with a migration background established a working group which deals now with these issues. Despite the very positive measures which were facilitated with the PartMigG, one participant found that more needs to be done when it comes to bringing diversity into practice within authorities. She pointed out that although now more and more people are being recruited who speak different languages, in practice they are not allowed to provide administrative services in different languages. In her opinion, this discrepancy makes it difficult for migrants to benefit from diversity in the administration. A representative of the district administration responded that although they try to establish service offers in different languages, they first need to make sure that people are legally well consulted and employees are able to use the proper legal terms also in other languages. One solution taken into consideration by the municipality was to employ phone interpreters or language assistants. Nevertheless, there is no solution found yet. Another obstacle to more employees with migrant decent in the administration are the high entering requirements such as very good degrees and education, as implied by one discussant. Thus, in the long-term strategy of these measures (as stated during the discussion), more sensitivity should be given to the fact that many children with a migration background have difficulties in school, discrimination being a very common reason for children to quit school. Some discussants had the view that this structural problem makes it difficult even to apply for jobs in the administration.

3.4 Inclusive Access to Civil Services

It was argued that since the new influx of refugees from Ukraine, this community received a more favourable treatment in authorities than others. Many had the opinion that at different levels much more has been made possible for this group of refugees as for previous ones such as the direct receipt of a work permit or the recognition of official documents. Their impression was that services were offered faster and less bureaucratic than previously. In Berlin, the administration now offers services and forms also in the Ukrainian language. Almost all participants in the three focus groups felt that the treatment of Ukrainian refugees has shown that the administration can work in a solution-oriented and flexible manner. Therefore, they shared the common opinion that this openness and flexibility should be extended to other refugees. Especially it was stated that having the possibility to fill in forms in

common migrant languages would facilitate procedures which are very time consuming. In general, an easier and inclusive access to civil services was viewed as a possible measure to overcome sentiments and scepticism towards political authorities, making it more desirable to become politically active.

4. Conclusions Focus Groups

The discussions in the groups revealed obstacles but also concrete demands and solutions on how to make participation on the municipality level better for migrants and how their views and expertise can be included in policy-making which concerns them. The three groups shared the common view that barriers to participation are life substantial problems, like the residence status or the housing situation. The struggle for basic needs and stable conditions was seen as a basis which is needed to become politically active, observing that these problems seldom are canalised into political activism. Representatives of migrant women saw the legal enforcement of anti-discrimination and racism laws in everyday life context as an obstacle to becoming politically active. Having negative experiences with authorities and being used to corruption and illiberal political systems in home countries makes it at the same time difficult for politically active migrant representatives to empower and motivate non-organised individuals for structural participation. Generally, a distinction was made between structural inclusion of associations (migrant organisations) and initiatives, collectives and individuals. It was viewed that opportunities for structural participation often are limited to migrant organisations while there are fewer structures for inclusion in policy making for groups which operate in informal structures and for non-organised individuals.

Most of the discussants felt that more opportunities for exchange with decision makers should be given to non-organised migrants. The focus group participants saw different methods as useful to raise motivation for political participation:

- Organising of informal issue-raising meetings in the neighbourhood, cooking events, meetings with policy makers who have a migration background
- Advocating for a stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination laws but also empowering and supporting to speak up against discrimination and racism
- Facilitating civil services and acquisition of documents by offering also information, forms, and services in different languages
- Using different digital platforms, social media or communication services such as What's App to reach people better
- Flexible and not time-bound political education, offering training for political language and rhetoric.
- Especially participation opportunities for women should be offered during times when they are not occupied with childcare

For the inclusion of migrants in policy-making a legal basis was considered to be important. As a good practice, the participants saw the Berliner Gesetz zur Förderung der Partizipation in der Migrationsgesellschaft (PartMigG) (Law for the promotion of Participation in the Migration Society) which was developed in collaboration with different migrant organisations and the State Advisory Council for Participation.

Many migrant representatives wished to have similar approaches to policy making as for the development of the PartMigG in other political fields which concern them. Also less informal and small meetings or roundtable discussions to develop concrete solutions to urgent problems seemed to be found as good ways to allow for mutual exchange and development of inclusive policies. Ideas for the creation of such meetings were as follows:

- Allow for inclusive participatory processes for the development of laws and policies which concern migrants, seeing integration as a cross-sectional task, involving migrant representatives also to consult on topics such as housing, education, labour and so on.
- Contact migrant organisations for inputs on policies with enough time for them to prepare
- Create more small meetings and group discussions with different representatives of authorities on different topics
- The integration offices should make their ombudsman’s function more widely known among the migrant population and for the demands of migrants but also motivate migrants more to approach them when feeling excluded from participation in policy development.
- Making possible that people who cannot speak the German language fluently can participate in public meetings by offering translation in different languages

In all focus groups, the discussants shared the opinion that advisory councils despite being the most established structural way of migrant participation in Berlin have almost no viability in the greater migrant society. This also leads to the observation that most of the migrants do not know which topics are discussed in the migrant advisory councils and in which way they actually represent the demands of especially TCNs.

A gap in communication between the councils and the migrant population in the districts was also described by most of the focus group members. In order to make the councils widely known but also to motivate more individual and non-organised migrant representatives to be active in migrant advisory councils different measures were suggested:

- Advisory Councils should be able to do their own press and communication work (e.g. press releases, website and social media sites)
- Councils should have the possibility to hold meetings without politicians present, facilitating the exchange between council members for those with language barriers
- In order to increase visibility and to build trust, migrant advisory councils should organise public events with different migrant communities and groups in the municipality
- The different councils on district and state level should have a regular exchange and communication being able to work strategically for common concerns of migrants across districts.
- The municipalities or external experts should offer rhetorical and other training (e.g. advocacy, networking, or on administrative work and procedures more general) for the members of advisory councils making them able to cope with the rhetorical skills of policy-makers and for professional consultation on policies.

Regarding the structural inclusion of migrant organisations in the development of policies on integration and migration it was viewed that limited funding opportunities are available for committee and advocacy work, complicating strong political work and impact on policy making. A commonly shared presumption was also that the consultation of migrant organisations needs to be more valued and viewed as an integral part of decision making.

When it comes to the cooperation between administration and migrant organisation the discussants felt that this work should be reimbursed with appropriate project funds or specific for consultation services. The suggestions made were:

- Finding new ways of structural and long-term funding for migrant organisations
- Creating more employment opportunities within the administration for people with a migration background

- Compensate consulting of migrant organisations and individual migrant representatives with professional fees

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Annex

Interviews

Personal Interview (9 May 2022, Berlin) with a women of Arabic origin (deputy citizen to the assembly of a Berlin district)

Personal Interview (11 May 2022, online) with a man from Eastern Europe (representative of the migrants advisory council in a city in the east of Germany and of the Bundeszuwanderungs- und Integrationsrat (BZI) (Federal Immigration and Integration Council)

Personal Interview (18 May 2022, Berlin) with a women of Asian/Middle Eastern origin

Personal Interview (18 May 2022, Berlin) with a man of African descent (member of a migrant advisory council in a federal state in the East of Germany)

Personal Interview (19 May 2022, Berlin) with a man of African descent

Personal Interview (19 May 2022, online) with a women of African descent

Personal Interview (23 May 2022, Berlin) with a women from Eastern Europe (member of the participation and integration council of a district in Berlin)

Personal Interview (23 May 2022, online) with a women of African descent

Personal Interview (23 May 2022, Berlin) with a man of Middle Eastern background

Personal Interview (27 May 2022, Berlin) with a women from South America

Focus Groups

Focus Group 1 (9 June 2022): 1 female representative of a migrant organisation for Peru who is also deputy citizen to a district assembly in Berlin, 1 male representative of a migrant organisation for the civil rights and participation of the Turkish community, 1 male representative of a migrant organisation who represents the Russian speaking communities (former Soviet Union countries), 1 male representative of a migrant organisation representing the African community, 1 representative of the municipality Mitte of Berlin (the Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin is a partner to the EMVI project)

Focus Group 2 (16 June 2022): 1 female representative of the broader migrant community, 1 female representative from a civil society organisation which works in the field of citizen participation, 1 male representative of a migrant organisation of the Afghan community, 1 female representative of the Berlin Senate Administration in the field of integration and participation

Focus Group 3 (21 June 2022): 1 female representative working in empowerment and health education for migrant women, 1 female representative of a German wide operating umbrella association of migrant organisations working in the field of women's participation and rights, 1 female representative with a Turkish migration background who works in a counselling centre for Turkish women in a welfare association, 1 female activist with a Somali background who works in the field of women's rights, 1 female representative of the municipality Mitte of Berlin (The Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin is a partner to the EMVI project)