

RESEARCH

**REPORTS**

RECOMMENDATIONS

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# NATURALISATION IN GERMANY. REQUIREMENTS, POLICY CHANGES, TRENDS AND SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS

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## Naturalisation in Germany. Requirements, Policy Changes, Trends and Scientific Findings.

### 1. Introduction

German citizenship law<sup>2</sup> underwent several changes in the period 2000 – 2008. The introduction of significant changes in German Citizenship law made the acquisition of German nationality easier. The most important changes in this law were the reduction of the necessary period of residency and the implementation of elements of the place-of-birth principle or jus soli. Although naturalisation has become easier due to these changes, naturalisation rates have not permanently increased. On the contrary, a steady decline after 2000 can be observed and naturalisation rates after 2003 are even lower than before 2000. This development has led to a discussion about possible reasons for this decline in political and social science arenas. In the 2009 coalition agreement between the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Christian Social Union (CSU) and the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) – the current government – it was emphasised that naturalisation is the strongest sign of belonging; it has to be advertised that as many foreigners as possible who fulfil the requirements for naturalisation should naturalise and that inappropriate constraints will be removed (Coalition Agreement 2009: 77f.). The governing parties did not translate their ambitious words into action before their term ended. Further changes in the citizenship law are not to be expected and constraints have not yet been removed. Nevertheless, a study which the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI)<sup>3</sup> assigned to the research unit of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)<sup>4</sup> in 2011, shows which potential constraints naturalisation candidates face.<sup>5</sup> This being the situation, this paper aims to give an overview of naturalisation and naturalisation research in Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is mainly based on a presentation the author gave on 30th October 2012 during the seminar “Integration or exclusion? Access to citizenship in Poland and the EU” in Warsaw hosted by Instytut Spraw Publicznych (ISP). The author works as a Senior Researcher for The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR = Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration). Until July 2012 he worked as a Research Associate for the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and was responsible for the “2011 BAMF Naturalisation Study”. Interpretations presented in this paper are the author’s opinions.

<sup>2</sup> Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz (StAG) = German Nationality Act.

<sup>3</sup> Bundesministerium des Innern (BMI) = Federal Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>4</sup> Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) = Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

<sup>5</sup> Some results of this study, the “2011 BAMF Naturalisation Study”, are presented in this paper.

## 2. Naturalisation requirements in Germany

Even though elements of the place-of-birth principle (*jus soli*) were implemented in 2000, German citizenship law is still mainly based on descent (*jus sanguinis*).<sup>6</sup> Children of parents with German nationality born in Germany or abroad acquire German nationality by birth (German descent). But since 2000, a child of parents without German nationality born in Germany whose mother or father has lived in Germany legally for at least eight years and has an unlimited right of residence on the day of the child's birth also acquires German nationality (Germany as a place of birth). Such children also acquire the foreign nationality of their parents. However, these children have to decide in favour of one of their nationalities between their 18<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday.<sup>7</sup> In Germany, it is called the "option scheme" (Optionsregelung) because the child has an option for German or foreign nationality. Consequently, for these children, multiple nationality is just temporarily permitted, while for children who have a German and a foreign parent and acquire both nationalities by descent, multiple nationality is permanently permitted. This inequality due to the "option scheme" is very controversial (Honohan 2010: 3). Because this arrangement is as difficult and specific as it is interesting, it cannot be explored in greater detail at this point. For foreigners living in Germany, the only way to acquire German nationality is through naturalisation. Most naturalisations in Germany are based on § 10 StAG (German Nationality Act)<sup>8</sup> because it defines an entitlement to naturalisation. According to § 10 StAG, foreigners have an entitlement to naturalisation if they (1) have eight years' legal and permanent residence in Germany, (2) have an unlimited right of residence, (3) avow themselves to the "free democratic basic order"<sup>9</sup> of the German constitution (Grundgesetz), (4) are able to make a living for themselves and their family without claiming social benefits, (5) give up their foreign nationality, (6) have adequate German language skills (B1), (7) have knowledge of the German legal and social order proved in a citizenship test and (8) have not been sentenced for committing an unlawful act.<sup>10</sup> These requirements show people who want to naturalise have to be well integrated in terms of language

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview on citizenship law before and after 2000, see Hailbronner (2012: 1-15).

<sup>7</sup> For a description of the procedure, see Hailbronner (2012: 7).

<sup>8</sup> In 2011 nearly 75 % of all naturalisations were based on § 10 StAG (Statistisches Bundesamt 2012b: 121).

<sup>9</sup> Freiheitlich demokratische Grundordnung (FDGO) = Free democratic basic order.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed description concerning political and judicial questions, see, amongst others, Dornis (2001: 119ff.), von Münch (2007).

skills and employment, because they have to be able to make a living for themselves.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Important policy changes between 1999 and 2008

German citizenship law underwent several changes in this period. The requirements presented have been in force since September 2008. Some of the most important developments between 1999 and 2008 are shown in Table 1.<sup>12</sup>

Table 1: Important changes of requirements for Naturalisation 1999-2008

	Before 2000	January 2000	August 2007	September 2008
Discretion/Entitlement	DIS > ENT <	DIS < ENT >		
Duration of residence	15 years	8 years		
Multiple nationality	< 2000	> 1999	EU Citizens (+CH)	
Language skills		“adequate“	Level B1	
Knowledge of legal and social order				Standardized Citizenship Test

Source: Author’s illustration.

In the reform of the citizenship law in 1999/2000, the entitlement to naturalisation was enlarged. Before the reform there was just an entitlement for young foreigners (16 to 23 years) and foreigners with a long period of residency (§§ 85, 86 Abs. 1 AuslG a. F.),<sup>13</sup> while for other foreigners naturalisation depended on the discretion of the public authorities who were authorized to decide about naturalisation (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration 2000: 19).<sup>14</sup> In 2000, the necessary period of residency was reduced from fifteen to eight years and the requirements for an acceptance of multiple nationality were reduced. Since August 2007, multiple nationality is generally

<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that people who apply for German citizenship must not be unemployed, but that they must not be “long term” unemployed (in Germany also called “Hartz IV”) or rather claim social welfare benefit.

<sup>12</sup> For a description of the development of the citizenship law, see also Hailbronner (2012), Göbel-Zimmermann/Eichhorn (2010a, 2010b) and Worbs (2008).

<sup>13</sup> AuslG a. F. = Ausländergesetz alte Fassung (Aliens Act former version).

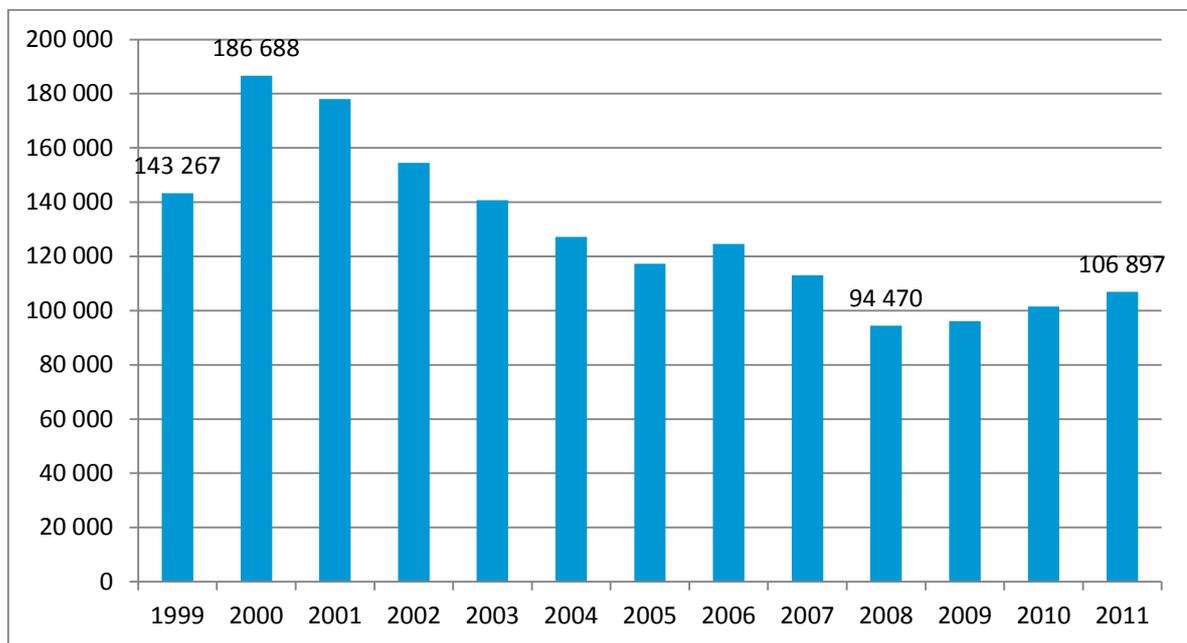
<sup>14</sup> In 1997 to 1999, 44 % to 47 % of all naturalisations were naturalisations at the discretion of the relevant public authorities (§ 86 Abs. 2 AuslG a. F. and § 8 RuStAG, see Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration 2007: 220, see also Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration 2000: 18). RuStAG = Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz (Reichs- and Nationality Act = former nationality act).

accepted for EU citizens and citizens of Switzerland (CH) who undergo naturalisation. Another requirement introduced in 2000 was “adequate” language skills. In 2007 “adequate” was defined to mean level B1 on the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Another important change was the implementation of a standardised citizenship test in September 2008. Most critics interpreted this implementation as a tightening of the naturalisation requirements.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. Statistical trends between 2000 and 2011

A look at a chart of the naturalisation rates in Germany between 1999 and 2011 shows that after the introduction of new requirements in 2000, naturalisation increased slightly. All in all a decline from 2000 to 2008 with a short-term increase in 2006 can be seen (Figure 1). Even if naturalisation was increasing over the last years (2009–2011), naturalisation in Germany was still low compared to the first years after and the last years before 2000.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 1: Naturalisation in Germany 1999–2011



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2012b, author’s illustration.

<sup>15</sup> Even if more than 98 % of participants pass this test (Bundesministerium des Innern/Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011: 225), some of the applicants for naturalisation perceive the citizenship test as offending (Institut für Soziale Innovation 2011: 7, Schührer 2011: 111) and nearly one-third of non-naturalised people perceive it as a constraint (Weinmann et al. 2012: 248).

<sup>16</sup> Between 2000 and 2011, the ratio of naturalisations to potential naturalisations (“exhausted naturalisation potential” = Ausgeschöpftes Einbürgerungspotenzial) fell from 4.9 % to 2.1 % in 2008 and was 2.3 % in 2011 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2012b: 15).

The trends in naturalisation rates were affected by a number of factors: in 2000 and 2001 short-term effects led to an excessive increase. A temporary regulation was responsible for 11 % and 13 %, respectively, of the naturalisations in these years (Bundesministerium des Innern/Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011: 230; Göbel- Zimmermann 2003: 66).<sup>17</sup> Another reason is that the new exception regulations for the acceptance of multiple nationality led to catch-up effects among Iranian people (Worbs 2008: 17f.). Since Iranian citizenship law prohibits giving up nationality, the new exception regulations in German citizenship law made it possible for Iranian people to naturalise without giving up Iranian nationality.<sup>18</sup> The slight increase in 2006 might be a result of the introduction of the B1 level for German language skills in 2007 and the citizenship test in 2008, meaning people who were thinking about naturalisation might have applied before these new requirements came into force. Hence the lower rates in 2007 and 2008 might be referable to these new requirements. The rise after 2008 can be predominantly explained by the high naturalisation rates of people from Afghanistan and Iraq: people who came to Germany because of armed conflicts in their countries of origin and who progressively attained the necessary period of residency.

Altogether between 2000 – the year of the reduction of the necessary period of residency – and 2011, 1.5 million people naturalised in Germany. In 2011, a total of nearly 82 million people lived in Germany: 8.8 % were foreigners, 19.5 % had a so-called “Migration Background”<sup>19</sup> and more than 2.2 million were naturalised people (Statistisches Bundesamt 2012a: 56ff.).

A more detailed look at naturalisations in 2011 shows that 26 % of the people who acquired German nationality by naturalisation in 2011 previously had Turkish nationality (Figure 2). Other important countries of origin are the Ex-Yugoslavian

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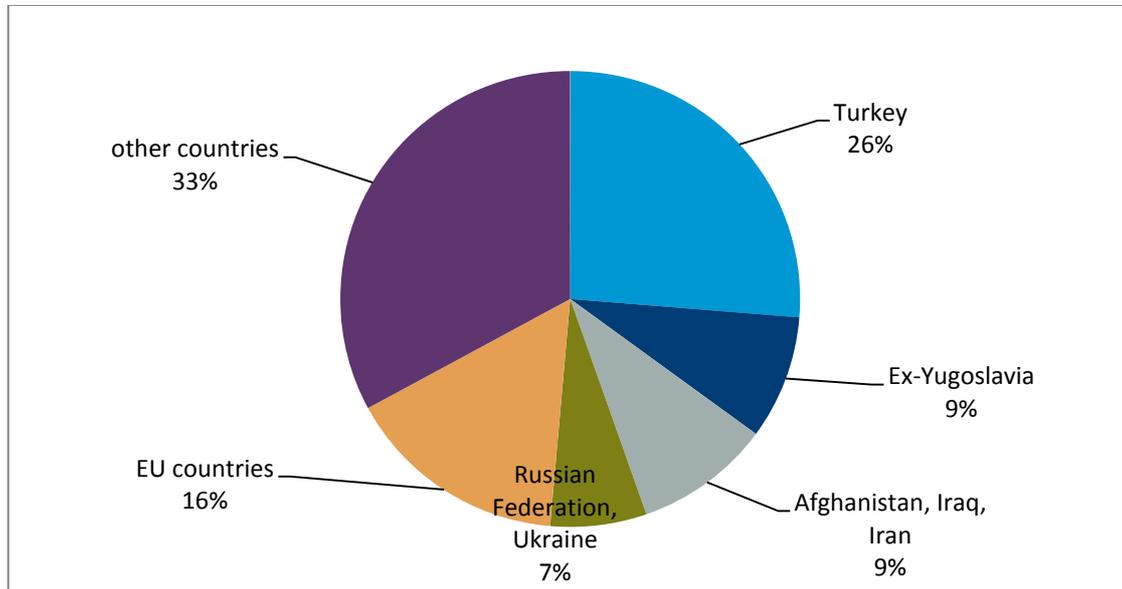
<sup>17</sup> In 2000, a temporary regulation in the context of the implementation of jus soli elements (“option scheme“) for children of parents with foreign nationality born in Germany permitted children born between 1990 and 1999 to naturalise under the conditions of the “option scheme“, if the parents applied for German nationality for their children in 2000 (for more details, see Worbs et al. 2012: 18ff.).

<sup>18</sup> Multiple nationality is accepted if the foreign law does not allow the possibility of giving up nationality or if the foreign state denies the renouncement of nationality generally (see Bundesministerium des Innern 2009: 33).

<sup>19</sup> “Migration Background“ (Migrationshintergrund) is a statistical construct encompassing the migration history of a person. The “population group with a migration background consists of all persons who have immigrated into the territory of today’s Federal Republic of Germany after 1949, all foreigners born in Germany and all persons born in Germany who have at least one parent who immigrated into the country or was born as a foreigner in Germany” (Statistisches Bundesamt 2012c, see also Statistisches Bundesamt 2012a: 6).

countries, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran as well as the Russian Federation and Ukraine. People from the 26 EU countries account for only 16 % of the naturalisations in 2011.

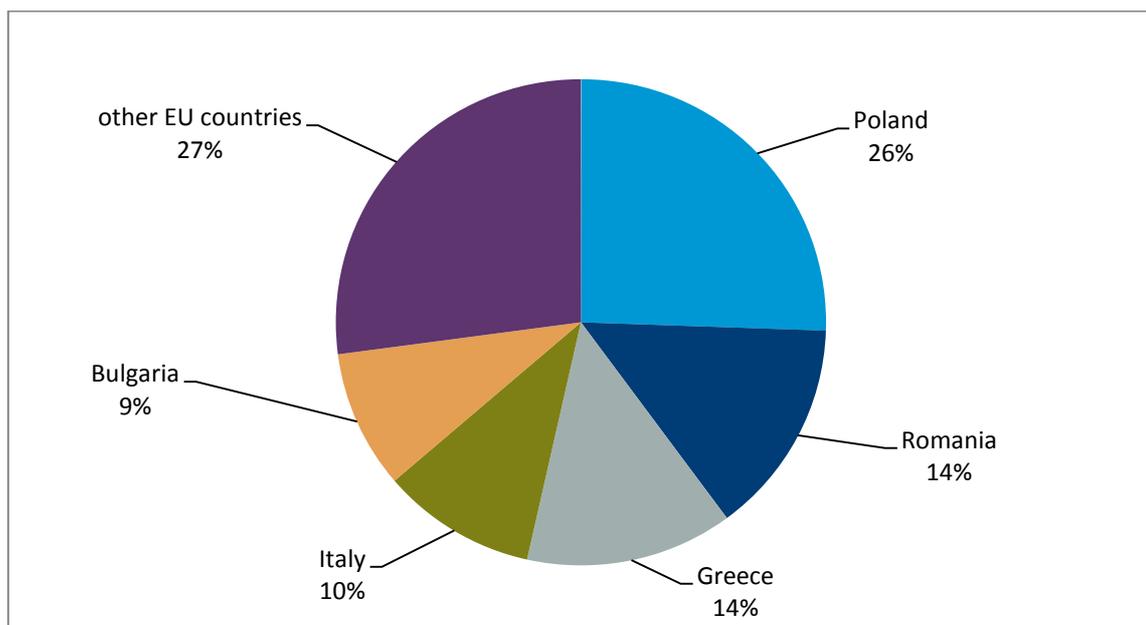
Figure 2: Naturalised people in Germany in 2011 by previous nationality



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2012b, author's illustration.

Mainly “new member states” of the EU – especially Poland (26 %) – are relevant as countries of origin of people who naturalised in Germany in 2011 (Figure 3).

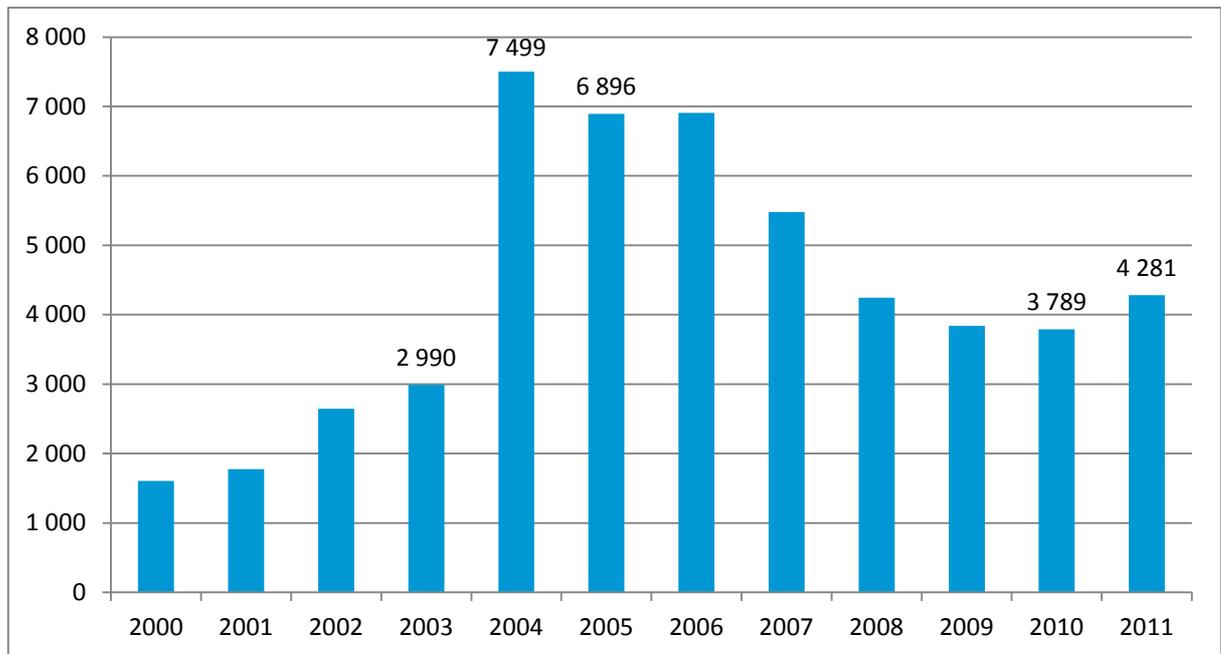
Figure 3: Naturalised people in Germany in 2011 by previous EU nationality



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2012b, author's illustration.

The chart below of naturalisations of Polish citizens in Germany between 2000 and 2011 shows that the rates obviously increased in the years following EU membership compared to the years before EU membership (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Naturalisation of Polish citizens in Germany 2000–2011



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2012b, author's illustration.

This increase is due to the fact that after EU membership, Poland and Germany both accepted multiple nationality. This meant that German citizens did not have to give up German nationality in order to become Polish citizens and vice versa. Naturalisation rates for Polish citizens did not rise in 2007 when multiple nationality generally was accepted for EU citizens, since multiple nationality between Poland and Germany had already been instated. From 2007/08 on, the years of the introduction of language skills at level B1 and the citizenship test, the same trend as described before can be perceived (see Figure 1).

In 2011, multiple nationality was accepted in 50.2 % of all naturalisations in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt 2012b: 141ff.). For naturalisations of EU citizens, the percentage of naturalisations involving acceptance of multiple nationality was 97.1 % (Polish citizens: 99.7 %), 98.7 % for citizens from Switzerland, 100 % of the naturalisations of citizens from Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco and Syria, and approximately all naturalisations of citizens from Algeria (99.5 %), Argentina

(98.6 %), Brasilia (98.9 %) and Tunisia (99.4 %).<sup>20</sup> The legal background for the acceptance of multiple nationality for citizens from these non-European-countries is either that the foreign law does not allow the possibility of giving up nationality or the foreign state generally denies the renouncement of nationality.

## 5. Scientific findings of current studies

### 5.1 Data for scientific research

In Germany, there are several data sources for quantitative research on naturalisation. There is, for example, the “Mikrozensus“, an annual representative survey of 1% of German households conducted by the Federal Statistical Office Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt), and the “Socio-Economic“ Panel (SOEP), a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households carried out by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW). Alongside these data sets, the “BiB-Integrationsurvey“ conducted by the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB) from 2001 and the “Representative survey ‘Selected groups of migrants in Germany’” (RAM) conducted by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in 2006/2007 provide a good data basis for naturalisation research. In addition, the “2011 BAMF Naturalisation Study“ and the “Immigrant Citizens Survey“ (ICS) provide information on naturalisation and interest in naturalisation. Whilst the data for both studies were collected in 2011, the findings were published in July 2012. The scientific findings on naturalisation in Germany presented in this paper are based upon these two recently published studies.

The “2011 BAMF Naturalisation Study“ conducted by the Integration and Migration Research Unit at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is the first study carried out within Germany which is taking a comparative look at four target groups that are of relevance to the naturalisation process in Germany. These groups are: (1) persons who naturalised after 2005, (2) persons who are currently undergoing the naturalisation process, (3) non-naturalised persons who

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<sup>20</sup> The statistics do not show if multiple nationality is enduring, because in some states people lose their current citizenship after they naturalise in another state. Hence just because Germany accepted multiple nationality in 50 % of cases, it does not mean that all relevant countries of origin accept multiple nationality. This fact should be kept in mind when interpreting the differing naturalisation rates of people from different EU member states. The Netherlands, for example, does not generally accept multiple nationality: so the Dutch lose Dutch nationality after they naturalise in Germany, if they are not married to a German or born in Germany (Government of the Netherlands 2012).

have been living in Germany for at least eight years and whose residence status is secure,<sup>21</sup> and (4) persons subject to the obligation arising from the “option scheme”.<sup>22</sup> Due to the fact that the fourth group is a very special group in German citizenship law that has to be focused on separately, it will not be considered at this point. The Naturalisation Study focused on immigrants from five regions: (1) Turkey, (2) Italy and Greece, (3) Ex-Yugoslavia, and (4) the Russian Federation, Belarus and the Ukraine, as well as (5) Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. The study gives answers to questions concerning the “behaviour” of naturalisation: for example, why people do or don’t naturalise and which factors influence their decision. It also provides information on the naturalisation process, for example, about (obtaining) information and advice, length, costs and evaluation of the process of naturalisation, and emotions during the process. Other questions of the study focus on the aftermath of naturalisation, such as identification or participation, and on indicators related to integration (for a detailed methodological description, see Weinmann et al. 2012: 51-92).<sup>23</sup>

The “Immigrant Citizens Survey“ (ICS) Germany is the German part of a cross-national survey on non-EU-born immigrants in 15 cities in seven EU Member States (Huddleston/Tjaden 2012: 9-17).<sup>24</sup> In Germany, it was conducted by the Research Unit of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) and encompassed the cities of Stuttgart and Berlin (Will 2012: 6-12). The survey focused on the question of the extent to which the integration policies of Member States match the hopes and needs of immigrants. It also provided information on the interest of non-EU-born immigrants in naturalisation.<sup>25</sup>

These two recently published studies worked with different samples: while one was focused on special groups of people with a “Migration Background“ from five

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<sup>21</sup> So these are people who most probably could naturalise.

<sup>22</sup> The sample size is n = 1,534 (naturalised persons n = 319, persons undergoing the process n = 403, non-naturalised persons n = 411, persons subject to the obligation arising from the option scheme n = 401).

<sup>23</sup> The results were published in a research report (see Weinmann et al. 2012) that can be downloaded from the BAMF-Homepage:

<http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Projekte/DE/DasBAMF/Forschung/Integration/einbuengerung.html>

(26.11.2012). The methodological report and the questionnaire can also be downloaded from this Homepage. Furthermore, an abstract in English is also available:

<http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Projekte/EN/DasBAMF/Forschung/Integration/einbuengerung.html>

(26.11.2012).

<sup>24</sup> The countries are Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Spain (German sample n = 1,220).

<sup>25</sup> The results for Germany were published in a research report (see Will 2012) that is available at:

[http://www.svr-migration.de/content/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/studie-ics\\_svr-fb\\_deutschland.pdf](http://www.svr-migration.de/content/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/studie-ics_svr-fb_deutschland.pdf)

(26.11.2012). The cross-national report (see Huddleston/Tjaden 2012) is available in English at:

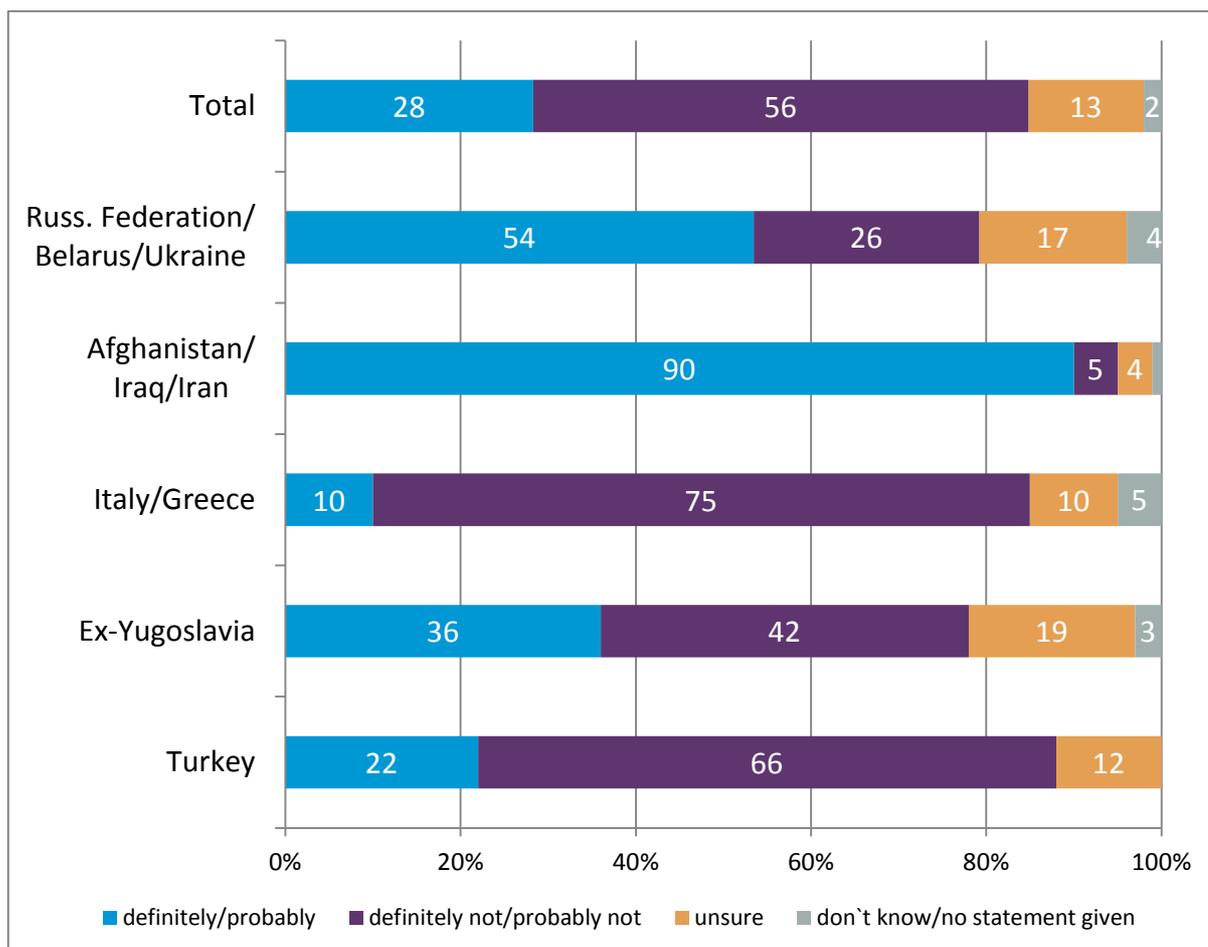
[http://www.immigrantsurvey.org/downloads/ICS\\_ENG\\_Full.pdf](http://www.immigrantsurvey.org/downloads/ICS_ENG_Full.pdf) (26.11.2012). More information on the survey (e. g. methodology) is provided at: <http://www.immigrantsurvey.org> (26.11.2012).

regions of origin (EU and non-EU) living throughout Germany, the other one only encompassed non-EU-born immigrants living in Stuttgart and Berlin.

## 5.2 Interest in German citizenship

In the “2011 BAMF Naturalisation Study“, non-naturalised persons were asked if they plan to apply for German nationality (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Interest in German citizenship (non-naturalised persons)



Source: Weinmann et al. 2012, author's illustration.

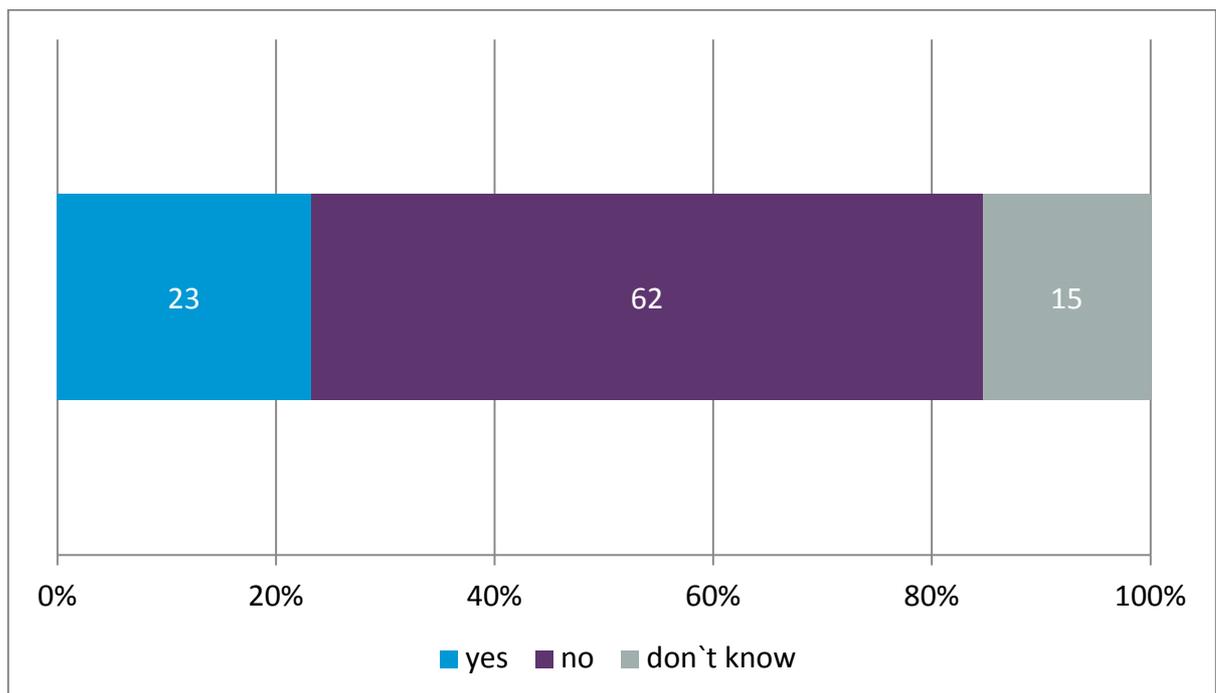
Question: Do you plan to apply for German nationality?

In total, more than 50 % answered that they (definitely/probably) do not plan to apply and 13 % answered that they are unsure whether they want to apply or not. Taking into account that in 2011 the ratio of naturalisations to the potential of naturalisations (“exhausted naturalisation potential“) was very low (2.3 %), this finding is not surprising. Yet 28 % of non-naturalised people who most probably

could naturalise because they have been living in Germany for eight years or longer and have an unlimited right of residence, plan to apply to naturalise (some time in the future).<sup>26</sup> However, there are differences when it comes to country of origin: 66 % of people with Turkish descent do not plan to apply for German nationality, although this group had by far the highest amount of all naturalisations in recent years. In contrast, foreigners from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran who also showed pretty high naturalisation rates in recent years, predominantly plan to apply (90 %), whereas people from Italy and Greece have the lowest interest in German nationality (10 %).

Also in the Immigrant Citizens Survey, non-naturalised people were asked whether they want to become a German citizen or not (Figure 6). Although this is a different sample, we can see the same trend: most people do not plan to naturalise (62 %).

Figure 6: Interest in German citizenship (non-EU-born immigrants without German nationality)



Source: Will 2012, author's illustration.

Question: Do you want to become a German citizen?

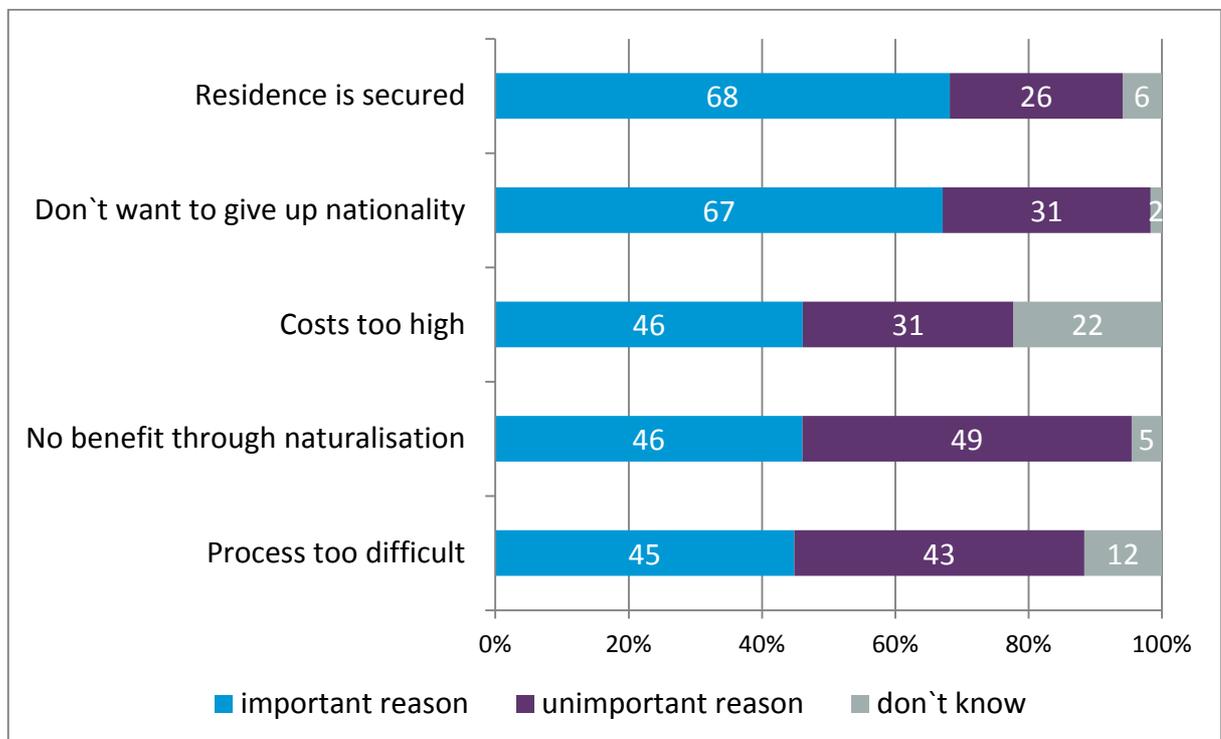
<sup>26</sup> 33 % of the non-naturalised persons who answered that they plan to apply said they would apply within the next three months after the interview, and 6 % within the next 6 months. The others plan to apply later or do not yet know when they want to apply; 4 %, no statement given (Weinmann et al. 2012: 194).

These findings on non-naturalised people who theoretically could become German citizens, and non-EU-born immigrants living in Stuttgart and Berlin demonstrate that immigrants' interest in German citizenship is not very high. This result raises the question of why interest is low.

### 5.3 Reasons for and against naturalisation and predictors explaining the decision

Non-naturalised people who do not plan to naturalise were asked in the BAMF Naturalisation Study about their reasons against naturalisation (Figure 7). Mostly, they answered that their residence was secured anyway (68 %). This is plausible since only non-naturalised people with an unlimited right of residence were interviewed. Similarly, they often answered that they do not want to give up their current nationality (67 %). Other important reasons are: the costs of naturalisation (including the costs of naturalisation in Germany and the costs of giving up nationality in the country of origin), not expecting benefits from naturalisation and that the procedure of naturalisation would be too difficult.

Figure 7: Most important reasons against naturalisation (non-naturalised persons who do not plan to apply)

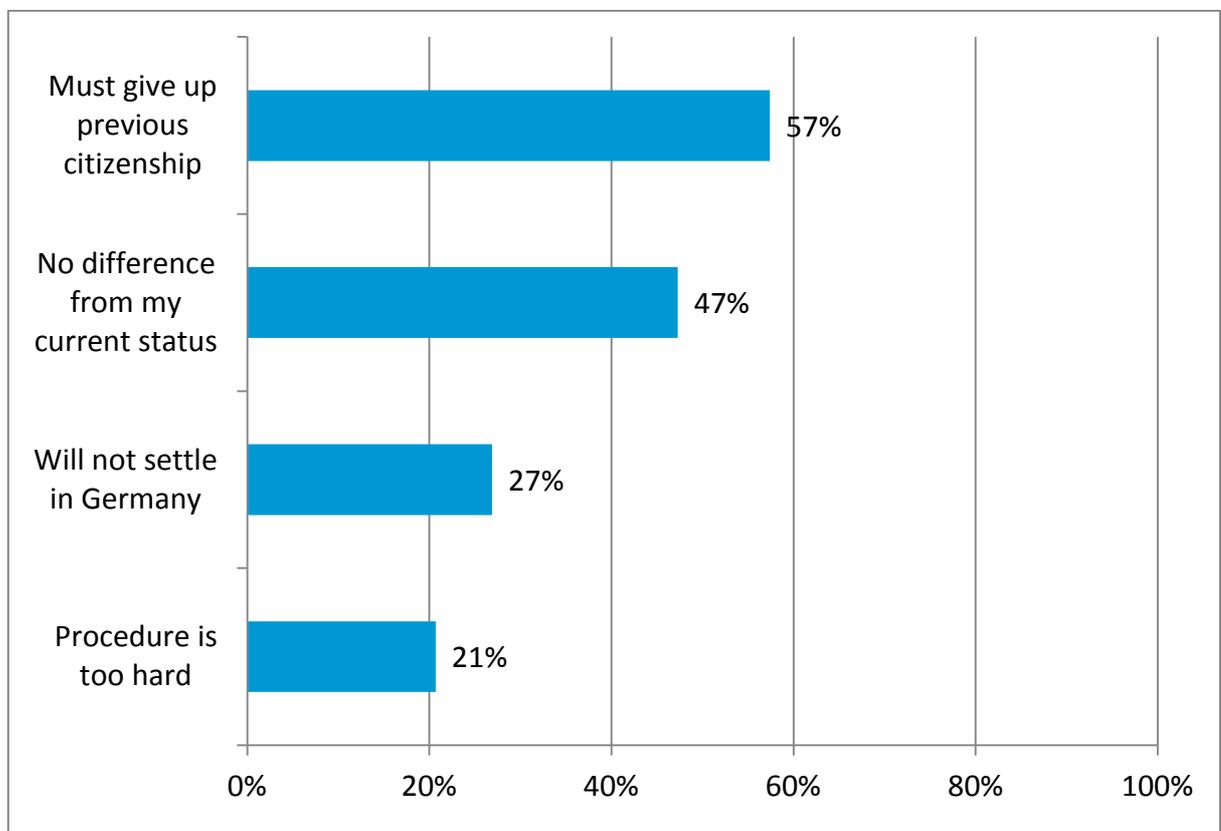


Source: Weinmann et al. 2012, author's illustration.

Question: Which of these reasons against naturalisation play a decisive role for you?

Once again, a look at the ICS sample shows a similar trend for non-EU-born immigrants (Figure 8). In the multiple responses questioning, non-naturalised persons mostly answered that giving up the current nationality is a reason not to become a German citizen (57%). The fact that naturalisation would bring no difference from the current status is important (47%), and for 27% it is also important that they do not plan to settle in Germany. The answer that the procedure of naturalisation would be too difficult was also given by 21% of the non-EU-born immigrants in this sample.

Figure 8: Reasons against naturalisation (non-EU-born immigrants without German nationality)



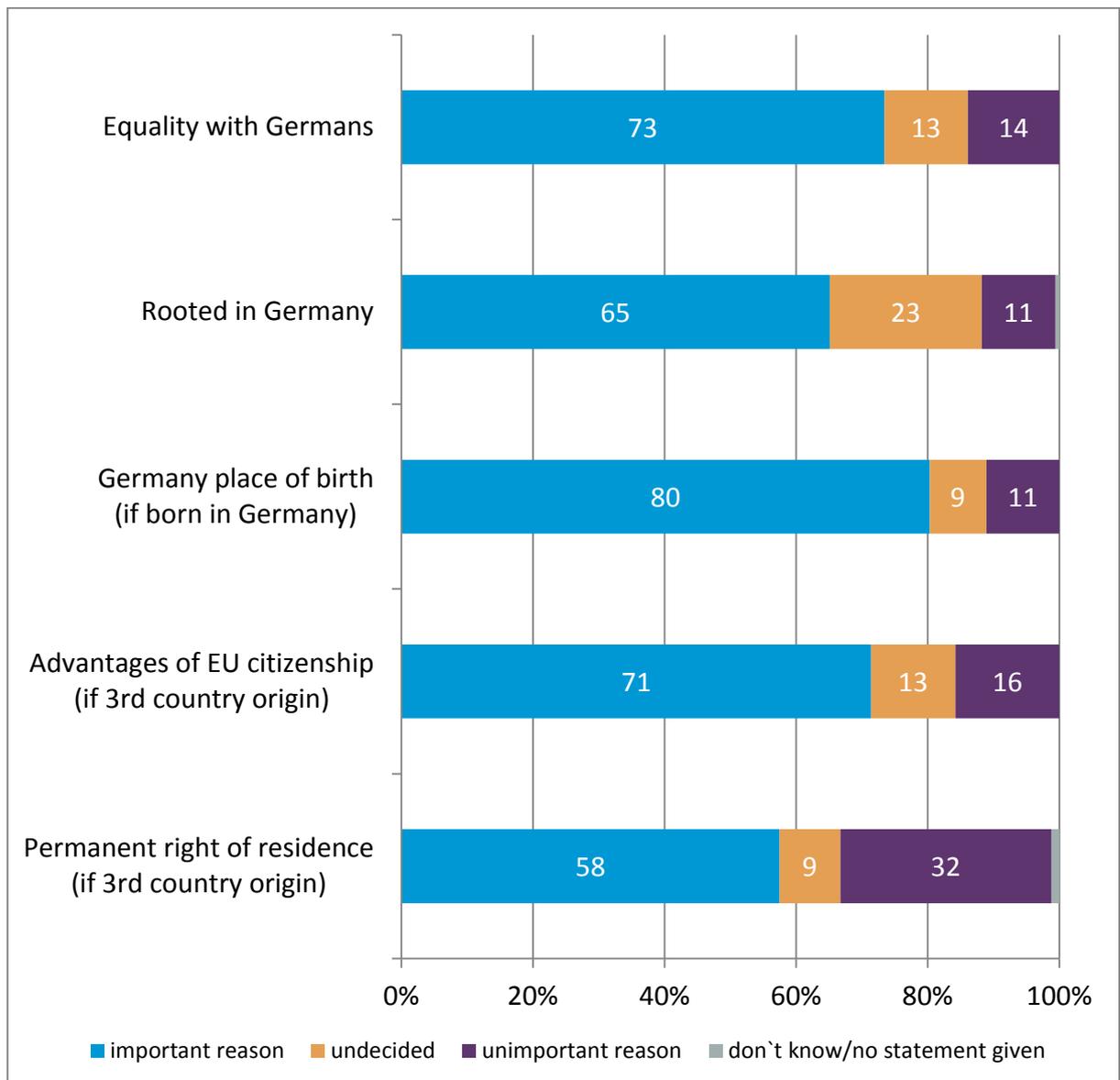
Source: Will 2012, author's illustration.

Question: Why do you not want to become a German citizen (multiple response)?

Apart from reasons against naturalisation, it is also important to know why people naturalise or plan to naturalise. Figure 9 exemplarily depicts the most important reasons for naturalisation of the naturalised respondents in the BAMF Naturalisation Study. The main reason for naturalisation is that people want to be

on an equal footing with Germans legally (73 %). Another important reason is that they feel themselves rooted in Germany (65 %). For foreigners born in Germany, the most important reason is that Germany is their place of birth (80 %). Third country nationals also say that they want to have the advantages of EU citizenship (71 %) and to have a permanent right of residence in Germany (58 %). Similar trends can be seen with other target groups (persons undergoing the process/non-naturalised persons; see Weinmann et al. 2012: 242ff.). These results show that essentially not only pragmatic reasons (equal footing/advantages/right of residence) but also emotional reasons (rooted/place of birth) play a decisive role for naturalisation (Weinmann et al. 2012: 237ff.).

Figure 9: Most important reasons for naturalisation (naturalised persons)



Source: Weinmann et al. 2012, author's illustration.

Question: Which of these reasons in favour of naturalisation were important for your decision?

A decision to naturalise is not monocausal: different parameters have to be considered. To explain why some people decide to naturalise, while others do not, multiple parameters were controlled in a multinomial logistic regression model in the BAMF Naturalisation Study (Weinmann et al. 2012: 273ff.).<sup>27</sup> The analysis shows that birth in Germany, good German language skills and identification with Germany are the most important predictors and have the greatest influence on the decision to naturalise. An explanation could be that emotional reasons like feeling rooted in Germany because of birth in the country and identification affect the decision to naturalise positively. This interpretation is supported by the finding of a longitudinal study that showed that identification tends to lead to naturalisation rather than to be a result of it (Maehler 2012: 253ff.). The influence of good German language skills could, for example, be explained by the fact that naturalisation premises language skills on level B1 and that people who do not have (or do not think they have) good language skills do not apply for citizenship. Contrarily, a long time of residence marginally reduces the likelihood of deciding on naturalisation. This finding could be explained by the fact that for the non-naturalised persons interviewed in the study, naturalisation would bring no additional benefits because they already have the right of permanent residence. Other factors like voting rights do not seem to be a stimulus for naturalisation for these people, because they have already lived in Germany for a long time and found that they got along well without these rights.

#### 5.4 Findings on integration and identification

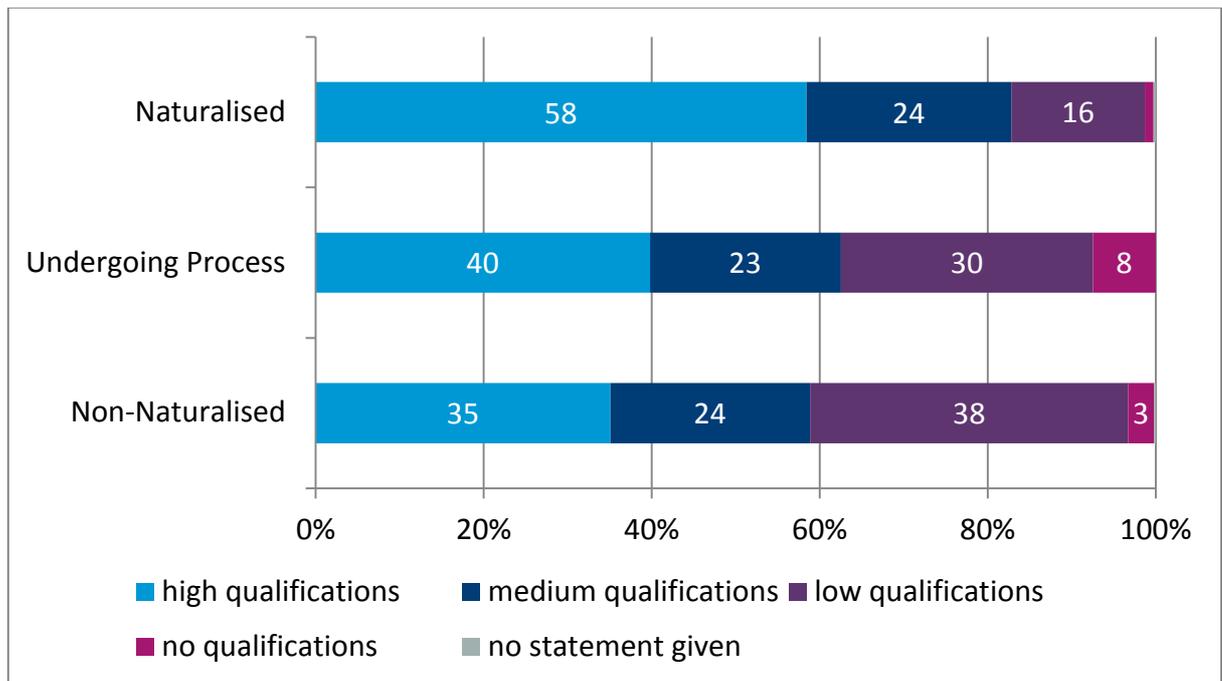
Generally speaking, persons who have been naturalised are much better integrated than persons who have not. Indicators related to integration illustrate, for example, that they have higher educational and vocational qualifications, higher employment rates, job positions and income (Weinmann et al. 2012: 113-166; among others, see also Diehl 2005; Diehl/Blohm 2011; Ersanilli/Koopmans 2010; Salentin/Wilkening 2003; Sauer 2001; Seibert 2011; Steinhardt 2012).

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<sup>27</sup> People who decided to naturalise (naturalised persons, on the one hand, and people actually undergoing the naturalisation process, on the other hand) and people who did not (non-naturalised persons) were contrasted in the multinomial regression. The full model, methodological explanations and the procedure are described in Weinmann et al. 2012 (273-281).

Figure 10 presents results on educational qualifications from the “2011 BAMF Naturalisation Study”. Evidently high educational qualifications are more frequent in the naturalised group, while low qualifications are more frequent in the non-naturalised group. Persons undergoing the process are positioned in-between.

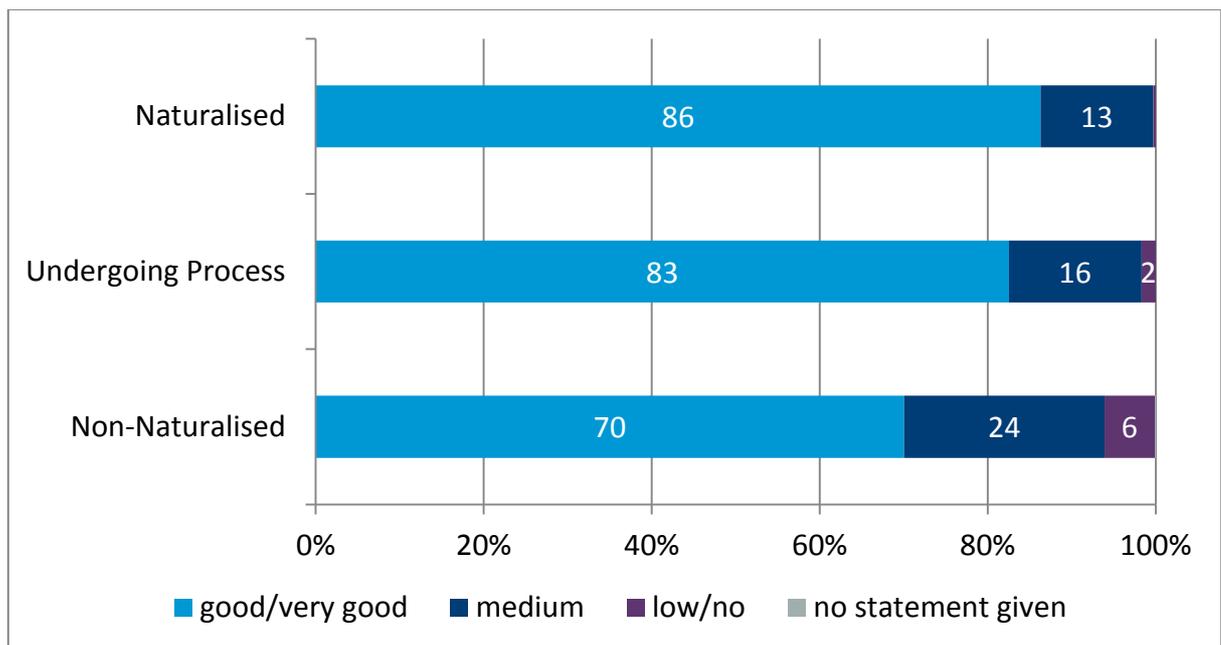
Figure 10: Educational qualifications



Source: Weinmann et al. 2012, author’s illustration.

A similar trend can be found for language skills. Figure 11 presents results for speaking German: naturalised people appraise their own language skills little higher than people actually undergoing the naturalisation process, while the latter appraise their skills far higher than non-naturalised persons. The results for reading and writing skills also show this trend (Weinmann et al. 2012: 138ff.). Even if all three groups are well integrated into Germany in terms of language skills, it is apparent that persons who have been naturalised have a marginally better knowledge of German than the other two groups. When interpreting these results, it has to be kept in mind that good language skills (level B1) are required for naturalisation.

Figure 11: German language skills (speaking)



Source: Weinmann et al. 2012, author's illustration.

In terms of identification, there is evidence that naturalisation increases identification with the naturalising country without eliminating identification with the country of origin: naturalised persons predominantly say that naturalisation has increased their identification with Germany (65%), but they also say that it has not decreased their identification with their country of origin (71%). This shows that multiple identification is possible.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has given a short introduction on naturalisation and naturalisation research in Germany. First, it gave an overview of naturalisation requirements in Germany and the most important changes that German citizenship law has undergone since the year 2000. While some of the changes were interpreted as facilitating naturalisation (e.g. reduction of the period of residence/implementation of jus soli elements), others were interpreted as making it more difficult (e.g. level B1 for language skills/citizenship test). Although some of the changes led to higher naturalisation rates in the beginning, the rates significantly declined in the following years and research shows that interest in German citizenship is not very high today. On the basis of results of new studies, it was shown that for non-naturalised people the most important reasons against

naturalisation are the fact that they have to give up their current nationality and that they often do not see additional benefits compared to their current status. Contrarily, the most important arguments for naturalisation are that foreigners want to be on an equal footing with Germans legally and to feel connected with Germany. In terms of integration, it has to be summarized that naturalised persons are better integrated than non-naturalised persons. Another important finding is that naturalisation increases identification with Germany without eliminating identification with the country of origin.

But what conclusion(s) can be drawn from these results? And to what extent are they relevant for integration and naturalisation policy? As the example of the coalition agreement of the current German government shows, naturalisation is seen as a sign of belonging. It is a political goal to induce foreigners who fulfil the requirements to naturalise. But naturalisation is not only important out of affinity reasons. It also has to be emphasized that an increasing amount of foreigners living in a country for a long period leads to a condition where the population and electorate progressively drift apart and a growing amount of the population is politically excluded. For participative and democratic reasons, the political parties should try to counteract this development. Therefore naturalisation is not the only tool, but it is an effective one. However, decreasing naturalisation rates and a low interest in German citizenship show that the possibility of naturalising and (increased) entitlement are not sufficient. Indeed, research shows that there are constraints. One of the most important constraints for non-naturalised people is the fact that they have to give up their current nationality. Increasing rates of naturalisations with acceptance of multiple nationality show that multiple nationality is an increasingly common fact that has to be discussed. Some politicians will possibly have to rethink the position of absolute avoidance of multiple nationality, because one day it might no longer be appropriate in a more and more globalised and transnationalised world. Research also suggests that argumentation on the basis of loyalty is just a case of keeping up appearances: even if they often identify with their country of origin, most immigrants living in Germany also identify with the country they live in. The fact that non-naturalised people also very often argue that feeling rooted in Germany would be one of the most important reasons to naturalise supports this argument. Furthermore, research shows that even for naturalised people, multiple identification is possible and does not seem to be a problem. Other constraints that can be

identified in the process of naturalisation are, for example, costs and procedure. Even if the naturalisation fee in Germany might not be high compared to the costs of giving up nationality in some countries of origin (Weinmann et al. 2012: 202ff.), the total costs can add up considerably, especially if people want to apply for citizenship with other family members (Weinmann et al. 2012: 196ff.). Bearing this in mind, a reduction of costs, especially in the context of family naturalisations, should be discussed. In addition, the result that foreigners often do not see additional benefits in naturalisation shows that non-naturalised people have to be informed about benefits like voting rights, the chance to have a determining influence on politics and the importance of political participation for the community they are part of. This is important because one of the main arguments for naturalisation is the wish to be equal with Germans legally – and equality also includes the right to vote.

In terms of integration, it was shown that naturalised persons are better integrated than non-naturalised persons. This cannot be a result of naturalisation, because naturalisation already requires a good integration status in particular areas (see also Niesten-Dietrich 2012). Whether or not the requirement of B1 level language skills is too high is debatable, but there is broadly a consensus that a certain status of integration, especially in terms of language skills, is necessary for naturalisation, because it is the most important precondition for participation in several social and societal fields. On the one hand, identification leads to naturalisation (Maehler 2012), but on the other hand, naturalisation further increases identification (Weinmann et al. 2012). Identification could have a positive impact on societal participation and thus could influence societal integration positively. Thus it is important that the political stakeholders make clear that the entitlement to naturalisation is an invitation and a sign of inclusion and not a tool of exclusion.

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