

Barometer of public opinion about refugees in Germany



REPORT by Jannes Jacobsen, Philipp Eisnecker, and Jürgen Schupp

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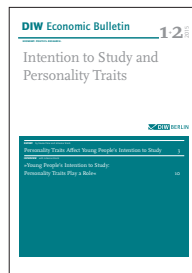
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NEXT ISSUE OF DIW ECONOMIC BULLETIN

Efficiency of exchange market interventions

In 2016, around one-third of people in Germany donated for refugees and ten percent helped out on site—yet concerns are mounting

By Jannes Jacobsen, Philipp Eisnecker, and Jürgen Schupp

The presence of refugees in Germany and the challenges their integration poses have preoccupied the public for the past two years. According to the latest data of the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), many more people in Germany were concerned about migration and xenophobia last year than in 2013. The additional representative results of the Barometer of Public Opinion on Refugees in Germany in 2016 and the current SOEP wave also indicated that respondents see more risks than opportunities in the refugee migration to Germany. At the same time, around one-third of the population said they had actively supported refugees in the form of monetary or material donations; around ten percent had helped out on site, for example by accompanying refugees to appointments at authorities or language instruction. People with a higher level of formal education and a history of volunteering were more likely to assist actively on site in the integration of refugees. In the course of the year, however, the number of respondents who expressed their intention to become active in the future decreased.

The issues associated with accommodating and sustainably integrating refugees into German society are being hotly debated here, along with the economic and social consequences of the 2015 and 2016 migration waves.¹ Due in no small part to this year's state and federal elections, they have taken center stage.²

This *Economic Bulletin* examines views on the consequences of refugee migration and the extent to which society is willing to support refugees. These issues are essential for fully depicting public opinion on the refugee migration question.

The year examined for this report, 2016, began with a mass sexual assault in Cologne.³ In the course of the year Germany was the target of several acts of terrorist violence, some of which were of Islamist motivation.⁴ These events, the drop in registered refugees in the course of 2016, and the kick-off of integration measures probably have had a substantial influence on public opinion on refugees in Germany.

¹ In 2015, around 890,000 asylum seekers migrated to Germany. A year later, the number dropped to around 280,000 (without double counting, excluding persons in transit). See Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), press release dated November 11, 2017 (in German only, available online; retrieved April 6, 2017. This applies to all other online sources cited in this report unless otherwise noted)

² For example, as part of the ARD-Deutschland-Trend survey in January 2017 Infratest Dimap found that all eligible voters viewed refugee policy as the most important political topic by far, and 40 percent of eligible voters considered it a priority (in German only, available online). Also see Marco Giesselmann et al., "Fluchtzwanderung ganz oben auf der Liste der dringenden politischen Prioritäten," *Wirtschaftsdienst*, 97th year no. 3 (2017): 192-200 (in German only, available online).

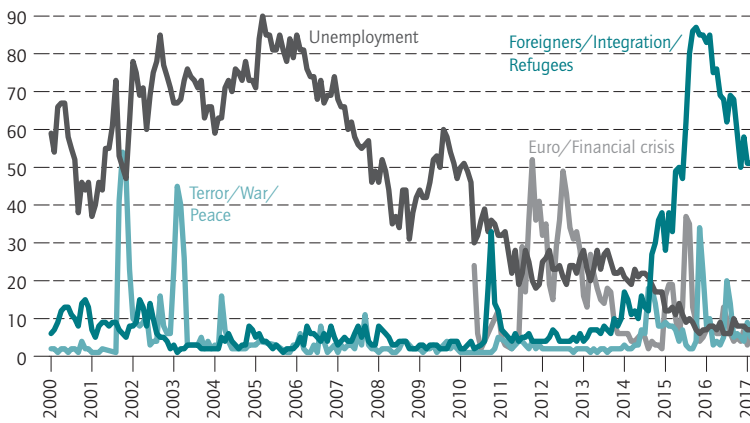
³ Many of the suspects were young men from Northern-Africa, and some of them seeking asylum in Germany.

⁴ See Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, See the overview of selected radical Islamist terrorist attacks (in German only, available online).

Figure 1

Mentioned problematic issues in Germany (selection)

Relative proportion of the respondents that mentioned at least one issue



Note: If more than one poll was available, the last of the month was picked.

Source: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen: Politbarometer 01/2000 bis 02/2017 (available online).

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Since 2015, eligible voters name issues regarding "Foreigners, integration and refugees" as especially problematic.

Migration to Germany and xenophobia cause worries

According to the results of *Forschungsgruppe Wahlen*, a research group that provides public TV station ZDF with background information for its election broadcasts, "foreigners, integration, and refugees" has been one of the two top sets of issues mentioned by a majority of eligible voters in Germany since summer 2015. In some months, the majority took on overwhelming proportions (Figure 1). In the population's perception, this issue has replaced the issue of "unemployment" and, at times, that of "euro and financial crisis" as the most urgent policy challenge.

In the SOEP⁵ household survey, the concerns that respondents have regarding various sets of issues are recorded every year.⁶

Concerns about migration grew considerably in 2015 and 2016: in Germany in 2016, 49 percent of respondents said the issue was a matter "of great concern." Looking only at eastern Germany, the level was around 56 percent, an all-time high for the SOEP survey (Figure 2). This particularly high concern is out of line with the actual proportion of migrants in the "new German states,"⁷ which is considerably lower in comparison to that of western Germany.

Concern with regard to xenophobia also rose substantially during the period examined. In 2016 in Germany, around 50 percent of respondents answered that xenophobia was a matter of "great concern" (Figure 3).

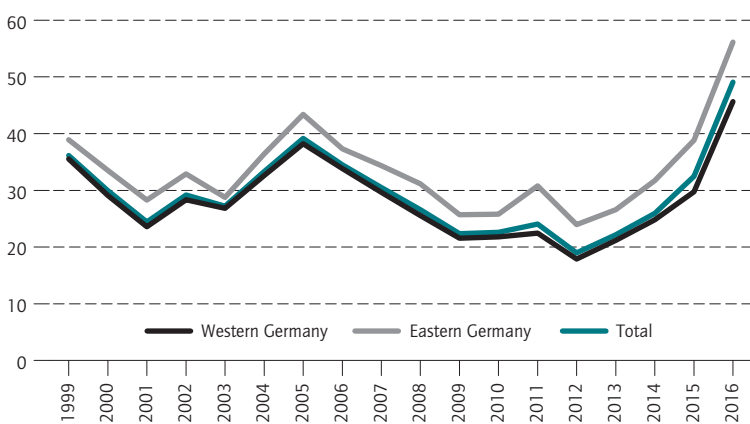
Around 28 percent of respondents answered both questions with "great concern." Those who expressed great concerns therefore hardly differ between the two sets of problems.

Against the backdrop of numerous assaults on refugees and refugee shelters,⁸ the values are as high as they were at the beginning of the 1990s in western Germany. Back then, there were also many assaults on migrants: in Ros-

Figure 2

"Great concerns" because of immigration to Germany

Relative proportion



Sources: SOEP v.33 (weighted), waves 1999–2016; authors' own calculations.

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An increasing amount of people express concerns over immigration.

⁵ SOEP is an annually recurring representative survey of private households. It began in West Germany in 1984 and expanded in scope to include the new federal states in 1990, see Gert G. Wagner et al., "Das Sozio-oekonomische Panel (SOEP): Multidisziplinäres Haushaltspanel und Kohortenstudie für Deutschland – Eine Einführung (für neue Datennutzer) mit einem Ausblick (für erfahrene Anwender)," *ASTA Wirtschafts- und Sozialstatistisches Archiv* 2 no. 4 (2008): 301-28.

⁶ The respondents were asked if each topic area was a "great concern," "somewhat of a concern," or "no concern at all."

⁷ See the analysis of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, bpb) based on the microcensus (in German only, available online).

⁸ See the Amadeu Antonio Foundation chronicle of assaults on refugees (in German only, available online).

tock-Lichtenhagen in the eastern part of the country, for example.⁹

In order to depict public opinion on the current wave of refugee migration fully, above and beyond levels of general concern, the SOEP conducted a monthly “Barometer of Public Opinion on Refugees in Germany” in 2016 in addition to its panel survey. Data on the population’s active support of the refugee cause was also collected. To create the Barometer, Kantar Public personally surveyed around 2,000 participants (always different people) each month (Boxes 1 and 2). Following prior partial analyses¹⁰, the subsequent section presents assessments of all monthly survey waves over the year and additional findings of the SOEP panel study on the issues.

Intention to support refugees decreased in the course of 2016

According to the Barometer, around one-third of all respondents provided assistance for refugees in the form of monetary or material donations in the course of 2016 (Figure 4).¹¹ Almost ten percent of the population actively helped on site by accompanying refugees to appointments at authorities or German language instruction. The respondents indicated they participated in demonstrations and petitions concerning the refugee issue relatively rarely: the proportion was between three and eight percent. However, the data do not reveal whether the demonstrations and campaigns were held in support of refugees or to express criticism or outright rejection of refugee migration. The average proportion of total Barometer respondents who were active concerning the refugee issue in one or more ways in 2016 was over 35 percent. During the year, each of the above percentages remained virtually stable. However, it should be noted that each month the sets of questions referred to activities in the past 12 months. For this reason, decreasing activities toward the end of the year cannot be adequately captured.

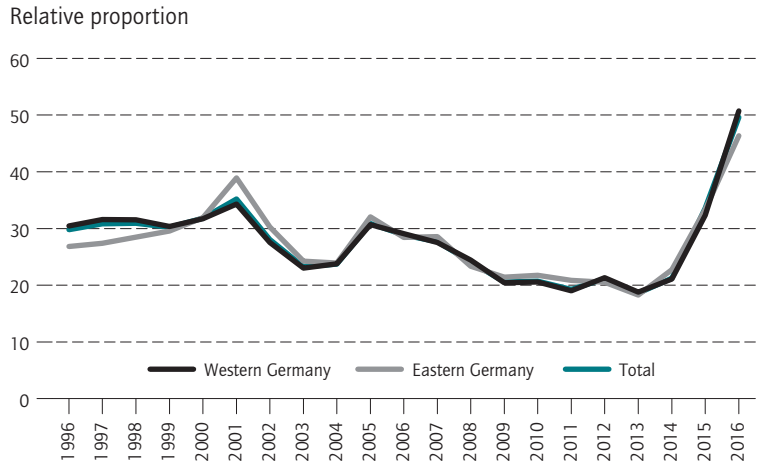
⁹ For an analysis of the events, see Dietrich Thränhardt, “Die Ursprünge von Rassismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit in der Konkurrenzdemokratie: Ein Vergleich der Entwicklungen in England, Frankreich und Deutschland,” *Leviathan* 21/3 (1993): 336–57.

¹⁰ Philipp Eisnecker and Jürgen Schupp, “Flüchtlingszuwanderung: Mehrheit der Deutschen befürchtet negative Auswirkungen auf Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft,” *DIW Wochenbericht* no. 8 (2016): 158–64 (available online); Philipp Eisnecker and Jürgen Schupp, “Stimmungsbarometer zu Geflüchteten in Deutschland,” *SOEPpapers* 833 (2016) (available online); Jürgen Gerhards, Silke Hans, and Jürgen Schupp, “German Public Opinion on Admitting Refugees,” *DIW Economic Bulletin* no. 21 (2016): 243–49 (available online).

¹¹ Whether or not findings based on samples can be generalized to reflect the overall population is always subject to a degree of uncertainty. This is why in this *Economic Bulletin*, we often indicate confidence intervals as either value ranges in the text or as supplementary graphics and tables. The larger the confidence interval, the more uncertain the estimate. For example, based on the present confidence interval, at least 28 percent and at most 37 percent of the population supported refugees via donations in 2016.

Figure 3

“Great Concerns” because of xenophobia and hatred of foreigners



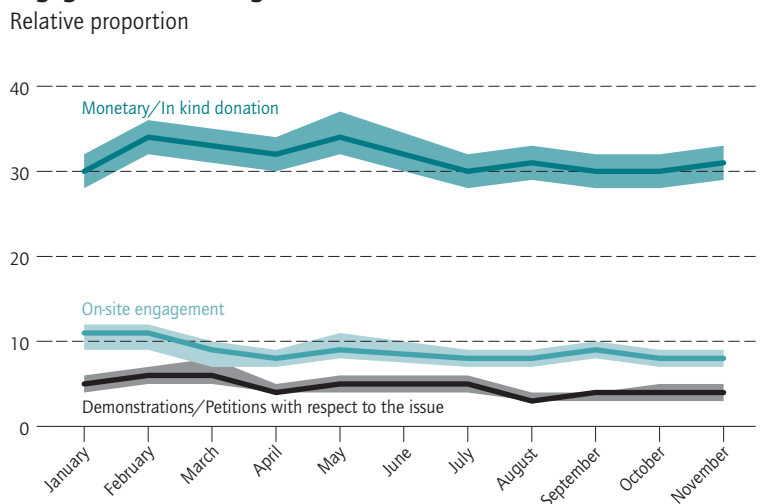
Sources: SOEP v.33 (weighted), Wave 1996–2016; authors’ own calculations.

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Both in eastern and western Germany, half of the population expresses concerns over xenophobia and hatred of foreigners.

Figure 4

Engagement with refugees¹



¹ At the time of the interview, it was referred to the engagement during the last 12 months.

Note: While “monetary donations/donations in kind” and “on-site engagement” are identified as an engagement for refugees, “Demonstrations and petitions regarding the topic” is identified as including engagement against refugees. Therefore due to the data, a strict separation regarding this item is not possible. The highlighted areas represent the 95-percent confidence intervals.

Sources: “Barometer of public opinion about Refugees in Germany” (weighted); poll from January to November 2016; author’s own calculations.

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By far, most of the engagement is done by monetary donations and donations in kind for refugees.

Box 1

On the database of the Socio-Economic Panel and the Barometer of Public Opinion on Refugees in Germany

The respondents of the monthly Barometer of Public Opinion on Refugees in Germany (Barometer) and the 2016 survey wave of the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) were both asked the same questions analyzed in the present report. Kantar Public¹ has conducted the SOEP longitudinal survey based at DIW Berlin annually since 1984, interviewing approximately 11,000 German households and containing around 30,000 respondents. The survey institute conducted the Barometer surveys in conjunction with the SOEP. The Barometer is based on a repeatedly stratified random sample each representative of the overall population. Interviewers collected information on multiple issues in around 2,000 personal interviews every month. They surveyed a different group of respondents in each monthly wave from January to November 2016, with the exception of June. The survey target group was people age 14 and over living in private households in Germany.

The monthly survey of the Barometer allowed us to record changes within the course of the year. Drawing on the SOEP, more extensive information, which often spans decades, could be used for analysis. In addition, the Barometer could also be used as external validation of comparable indicators collected in the SOEP.

¹ Formerly TNS Infratest Sozialforschung München.

The respondents were first asked to give personal subjective assessments of five areas based on a scale with ratings from one to 11. One was the most negative value and 11 the most positive one. The introductory questions were:

"The issue of refugees is controversial in Germany. What would you personally say to the following questions?"

1. In general, is it *bad* or *good* for the **German economy** that refugees are coming here?
 - Bad for the economy (1)
 - Good for the economy (11)
2. Will refugees *undermine* or *enrich* **cultural life** in Germany in general?
 - Undermine (1)
 - Enrich (11)
3. Will refugees make **Germany** a *worse* or *better* place to live?
 - A worse place (1)
 - A better place (11)

However, intention to provide active assistance to refugees for the first time or again in 2016 was subject to more obvious fluctuation (Figure 5): The year's highest value came in March, when around 40 percent of respondents indicated their intention to donate to the refugee cause. At around 20 percent, the intention to provide active support on site reached its highest value in February. The proportional values dropped until the summer, plateauing at a significantly lower value of approximately one-third for donations and ten percent for active on site support. Participation in demonstrations and petitions showed a similar trend, albeit at a considerably lower level.

Negative assessments of the effects of refugee migration predominated in 2016

For five areas, the respondents were asked to rate the effects of the current wave of refugee migration on a scale

of one to 11 and thereby to differentiate between positive and negative ratings (see Box 1). Overall, the negative ratings were clearly in the majority. With one exception, throughout the year the averages of the ratings for all five sets of questions remained significantly below the ambivalent and indifferent assessments indicated by the middle value on the scale. The skeptical responses with regard to the short-term effects of refugee migration were particularly striking; whereas the long-term effects were assessed less pessimistically (Figure 6). Of the three other individual areas, effects on the economy tended to be rated the most optimistically (Figure 7). Effects on cultural life were a close second. Of the three areas, the effect on Germany as a place to live received the most negative ratings.

The responses to all five sets of questions showed similar trends in the course of 2016. The respondents' assessments were still relatively skeptical in January, but they

4. Does a high influx of refugees mean *more risks* or *more opportunities in the short term*?

- More risks short-term (1)
- More opportunities short-term (11)

5. Does a high influx of refugees mean *more risks* or *more opportunities in the long term*?

- More risks long-term (1)
- More opportunities long-term (11)

For the Barometer, interviewers were instructed to read the introductory question aloud from the laptop and then turn it around to allow respondents to enter their own answer. The interviewers were not able to see the actual answers.

The following questions targeted the respondents' activities concerning the refugee issue. The respondents were asked if they had engaged or intended to engage (again) in three types of activities. Unlike the first block of questions, the respondents in both the SOEP and the Barometer gave their answers verbally to the interviewer. The questions were:

"Which of the following activities have you done in connection with refugee issue since last year and which do you intend to do (again) in the future?"

1a. Support refugees with monetary or material donations

- Done since last year (Yes/No)

1b. Support refugees with monetary or material donations

- Intend to do so (again) in the future (Yes/No)

2a. Work locally with refugees (e.g., appointments at authorities or language instruction)

- Done since last year (Yes/No)

2b. Work locally with refugees (e.g., appointments at authorities or language instruction)

- Intend to do so (again) in the future (Yes/No)

3a. Participate in demonstrations or petitions related to the refugee cause

- Done since last year (Yes/No)

3b. Participate in demonstrations or petitions related to the refugee issue

- Intend to do so (again) in the future (Yes/No)

While the questions about monetary and material donations target relatively concrete behavior, the ones on working on site could be broadly interpreted, despite the examples listed. For example, in this way, active support within the respondents' working environments could also be included. This was done to create a balance between very concrete questions that exclude other specific relevant behavior and broader questions that allow more room for interpretation. The first two of the three questions target aspects that deal with helping refugees: donations and providing on-site support. The question about active political participation was more broadly formulated in order to include political activity pro and contra refugees.

rallied in the first three months of the year and reached peak values in July. In that month, for example, the rating for effects on the economy was between 5.7 and 6.0, corresponding to the neutral middle of the scale. With an average value between 3.8 and 4.1, the rating for short-term effects remained the most skeptical. In August, all five average ratings plunged¹² and would recover gradually by November. The majority of the values from the last month of the survey were somewhat higher than they were in January 2016.

¹² Several terrorist attacks occurred directly before the survey was taken—in Nice (France), Ansbach, and near Würzburg (Germany), for example. The latter two involved men who had entered Germany as refugees. We can presume that this contributed to the plunge in public opinion in August. And the comparably low values in January 2016 can probably be explained by the assaults in front of Cologne Cathedral during the New Years' celebration there.

Resolute skeptics shape public opinion strongly

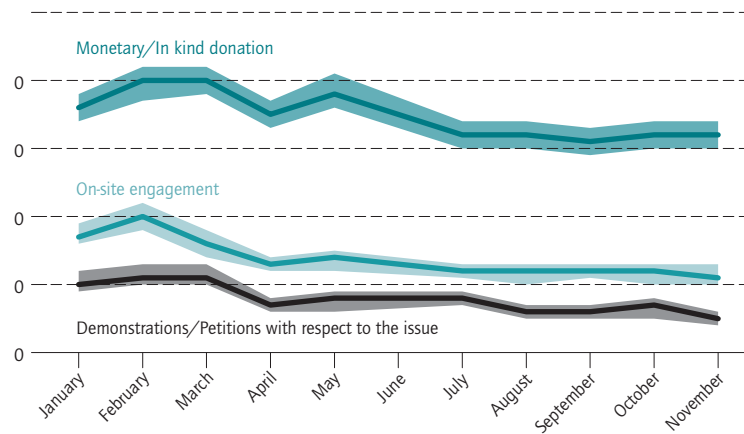
Did respondents who gave decisively skeptical or optimistic answers have the greatest impact on the results, or do these reflect a majority of indecisive or ambivalent answers? Between 14 and 21 percent of respondents on average gave clearly optimistic answers with a mean value per question of over seven on a scale of 11 (Figure 8). This puts them consistently in the minority. On the other hand, the proportion of resolute skeptics—persons with low mean values below five—hovered between 40 and 57 percent in the course of the year. The proportion of indifferent or ambivalent respondents with mean values between five and seven was also relatively high: they accounted for 28 to over 40 percent of respondents.

Is there a relationship between active support of refugees and assessing the consequences of migration? Based on

Figure 5

Planned engagement with refugees

Relative Proportion



Note: While "monetary donations/donations in kind" and "on-site engagement" are identified as an engagement for refugees, "demonstrations and petitions regarding the topic" is identified as including engagement against refugees as well. Therefore due to the data, a strict separation regarding this item is not possible. The highlighted areas represent the 95-percent confidence intervals.

Sources: "Barometer of public opinion about Refugees in Germany" (weighted); poll from January to November 2016; author's own calculations.

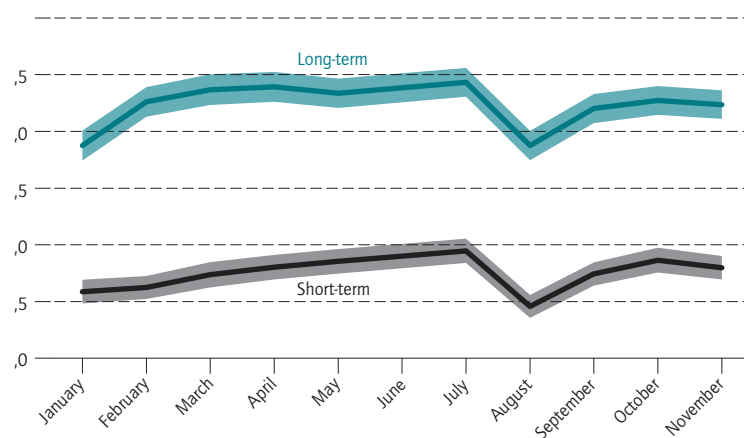
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In the course of the year, the intention to get involved decreased.

Figure 6

Assessment of the short- and long-term consequences of the immigration of refugees

Scale 1 (extremely negative) to 11 (extremely positive)



Sources: "Barometer of public opinion about Refugees in Germany" (weighted); poll from January to November 2016; author's own calculations.

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The long-term consequences of immigration are assessed to be more positive than the short-term consequences.

Table 1

On-site engagement¹ over assessment of consequences of the immigration of refugees

Relative proportions

Einschätzung	On-site engagement	95-percent confidence interval
Explicitly negative (1 beneath 5)	3.3	2.9-3.7
Ambivalent (5 through 7)	9.5	8.8-10.2
Explicitly positive (over 7 through 11)	23.0	21.6-24.4
	Cramers V	0.24
	Pearson Chi2(2)	1,100.00 (p = 0.00)

¹ At the time of the interview, the engagement of the past 12 months was polled.

The estimations are based on an unweighted N of 19,695.

Source: "Barometer of public opinion about Refugees in Germany" (weighted); poll from January to November 2016; authors' own calculations.

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the example of active on site support, the results showed: The more optimistic the respondent, the higher the likelihood of personal contribution (Table 1). However, the group of active supporters also contained lower proportions of ambivalent and, to a certain extent, clearly skeptical persons.

The higher the education level, the higher the likelihood of active support for refugees

What characteristics do people skeptical of the effects of refugee migration share? And which do the optimistic respondents share? Do specific population segments actively support refugees most often?

To answer these questions, we ran multivariate regression models based on all the monthly Barometer of Public Opinion surveys¹³ (Table 2). They allowed us to analyze the relationships among various factors separately, such as education and income. We looked at an index of all five assessment questions¹⁴ plus active on-site support for refugees in the past 12 months.

¹³ Since attitudes and active support were surveyed in the same way in the SOEP, we were to a great extent also able to base our calculation of the following multivariate models on these data. The results were very similar to those for the data of the Barometer, indicating the overall reliability of the results.

¹⁴ From a methodological viewpoint, it is only useful to create this type of index if it is possible to ensure that the sets of questions contained in the index are closely correlated. Cronbach's alpha in this case is 0.9, which clearly indicates that they are.

According to the analysis, women were slightly more optimistic about the effects of refugee migration in Germany than men, and single people were slightly less optimistic than married couples. Age, however, did not play a significant role. Job was a key differentiating factor. On the scale used for the survey, the blue-collar group was almost half a point more pessimistic than the reference group of salaried employees and civil servants; while respondents who were still in school or vocational training programs were half a point more optimistic. The most pronounced relationship involves level of education: the higher the level of education, the more optimistic the respondent. For example, respondents with university degrees have mean values that are an entire point higher than those who graduated from high school upon completion of ten years of schooling (*mittlere Reife*). Those with lower secondary education (*Hauptschulabschluss*) or high school dropouts were half a point more skeptical than those who graduated from high school after the tenth grade.

With regard to household characteristics and place of residence, respondents living with children and those with higher household incomes also gave the consequences of refugee migration more optimistic ratings. The same applies to residents of large cities. The residents of small towns or villages tended to be more pessimistic. With reference to place of residence, the difference between old and new federal states was the most significant. Respondents in eastern Germany were more skeptical than those in western Germany by more than half a point.¹⁵

Looking at active on-site support for refugees, women were active with a significantly greater frequency than men, even if the difference in levels is slight. Respondents with children in the household tended to be more actively supportive than respondents without children, and residents of large cities were more likely to be active than others. Eastern Germans were less frequently active than western Germans.

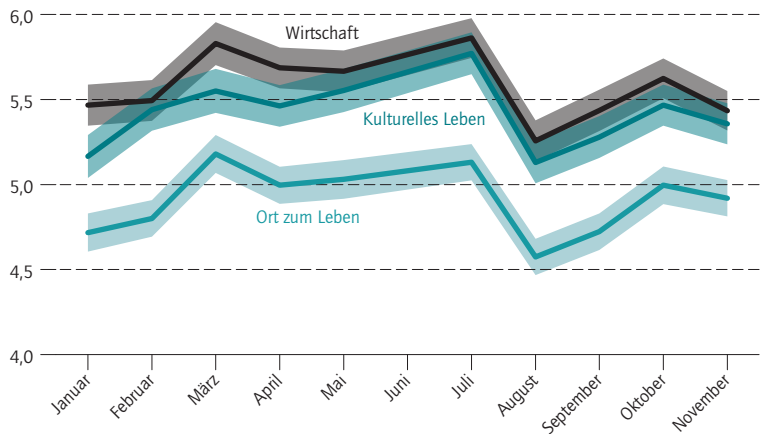
The differences reported above are statistically significant, but the effect sizes indicating whether active support is more or less likely are in a very low range of only two to three percentage points. In contrast, and as the ratings on the issue of refugees also showed, greater differences were observed by level of education. The likelihood of actively supporting refugees on site is around ten percentage points higher for persons with a university degree than respondents without a degree or with lower secondary education or high school after the tenth grade.

¹⁵ A comparison of the coefficients for the relevant survey month in 2016 in the multivariate regression model revealed no major or systematic differences between the patterns previously reported.

Figure 7

Assessment of the consequences of the immigration of refugees in different areas

Scale 1 (extremely negative) to 11 (extremely positive)



Sources: "Barometer of public opinion about Refugees in Germany" (weighted); poll from January to November 2016; authors' own calculations.

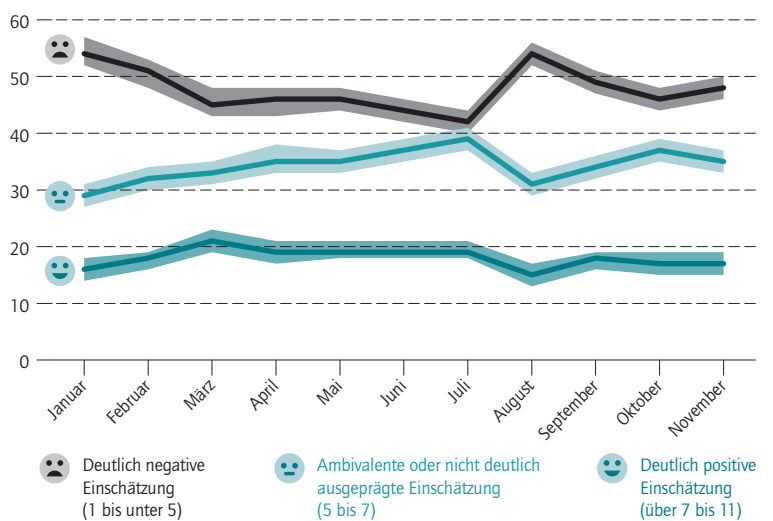
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The impact on the economy is assessed the least skeptically.

Figure 8

General Assessment of the consequences of the immigration of refugees

Relative proportion



The highlighted areas represent the 95-percent confidence intervals.

Sources: "Barometer of public opinion about Refugees in Germany" (weighted); poll from January to November 2016; authors' own calculations.

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According to the "Barometer of public opinion about refugees in Germany", the negative opinions predominated.

Tabelle 2

Multivariate regression models for an „index of assessment“ and “on-site engagement”

	M1 Assessment of the consequences of the immigration of refugees		M2 On-site engagement	
	Unstandardized regression coefficient	Level of significance	Marginal effect	Level of significance
Female	0.11	*	0.02	**
Age (in categories)				
<i>Reference category: 30-44</i>				
under 30	-0.14		0.02	
45-59	0.11		0.01	
60-74	0.11		0.00	
over 74	0.20	+	-0.02	
Higher educational level				
<i>Reference category: Mittlere Reife</i>				
No educational level	-0.49	**	-0.02	*
(Fach)Abitur	0.71	**	0.04	**
(Fach)Hochschulabschluss	1.01	**	0.10	**
Other qualification	0.03		0.00	
Family status				
<i>Reference category: Married</i>				
Single	0.20	**	0.01	
Widowed	-0.17	*	-0.01	
Divorced	-0.06		0.02	
Residential Property	0.01		0.01	
Job position				
<i>Reference category: civil servants/regular employment</i>				
Unemployed	-0.16		-0.01	
In education	0.50	**	0.01	
Worker	-0.44	**	-0.01	
Self-employed	-0.07		-0.01	
Retirement	-0.04		0.00	
Not employed/other	0.11		-0.01	
Net household equivalent income				
<i>Reference category: 1200-1500 euro</i>				
under 1200 euro	-0.19	**	0.00	
1500-3000 euro	0.13	*	-0.01	
over 3000 euro	0.01		0.00	
Children in the household	0.18	**	0.02	*
Size of the residential estate				
<i>Reference category: 20 000-100 000</i>				
under 5 000	-0.28	**	-0.01	
5 000-20 000	-0.19	**	0.00	
100 000-500 000	0.10		-0.01	
over 500 000	0.11		0.03	**
Eastern Germany	-0.64	**	-0.03	**
Month of the interview				
<i>Reference category: April</i>				
January	-0.26	**	0.03	*
February	-0.12		0.03	*
March	0.07		0.01	
May	0.04		0.02	
[June]				
July	0.18	+	0.00	
August	-0.35	**	0.00	
September	-0.20	*	0.01	
October	-0.04		0.00	
November	-0.09		0.01	
Constant (M1)	4.82	**		
(pseudo) R2	0.116		0.060	
N (unweighted)	19.455		19.455	

M1: Linear regression with dependent variable “index assessed consequences of the influx of refugees”, built by summation of the five assessment items and standardizing to 1-11 (maximum negative-positive). Example of interpretation: A interviewee with (Fach)Abitur reaches, holding constant all other factors, a 0,7 higher value on the Index than a interviewee with no educational degree or an Hauptschulabschluss.

M2: Logistic Regression with dependent variable “on-site engagement for refugees” (0/1), mean marginal effects. Example of interpretation marginal effect: The average probability for an engagement on-site would be 3 percent lower if a person from western Germany would live in eastern Germany instead, all other factors hold constant on their actual value.

** $p \leq 1$ percent, * $p \leq 5$ percent, + $p \leq 10$ percent.

Sources: “Barometer of public opinion about Refugees in Germany” (weighted); poll from January to November 2016; authors' own calculations.

Box 2

Comparison of the Barometer and the SOEP

Surveys on sensitive subjects such as the acceptance of refugees are always subject to social desirability and can thus yield slightly distorted findings. However, we can assume that the level of trust between respondents and interviewers in panel surveys is considerably higher than in one-time surveys such as the Barometer. This means that the SOEP data can be considered more robust.¹ For this reason, it would be useful to compare the data of the SOEP with those of the Barometer (see table).² We excluded respondents who are not citizens of Germany from the SOEP data for purposes of comparison because their frequency of representation in the Barometer is disproportionately low.

In the SOEP, between five and six percent of respondents indicated that they actively supported refugees on site. In the Barometer, the proportion was between nine and ten percent. The other areas measuring social engagement also recorded higher proportions in the population samples that were taken on a monthly basis.

As expected, the comparison showed that the respondents in the Barometer systematically indicated a higher level of social engagement in the refugee issue than the respondents in the SOEP. Nevertheless, the analyses of the sample population have been able to provide initial indications while tracing changes on a monthly level.

¹ See Jörg P. Schräpler, "Respondent Behavior in Panel Studies: A Case Study of the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP)," *DIW Discussion Papers* 244 (2001).

² For the sake of comparability, we included only February through May, the months in which the majority of SOEP interviews were carried out in 2016.

Table

Engagement and assessment (Barometer versus SOEP)

	SOEP 2016, only persons with German citizenship	Barometer of public opinion (February until May)		SOEP 2016, only persons without foreign citizenship	
		Between...	...and	Between...	...and
Engagement (Percent)	Monetary Donation/ in kind	32.4	34.4	26.9	28.4
	On-site engagement	8.5	9.8	4.7	5.5
	Demonstrations/ Petitions	5.1	6.2	4.6	5.4
	At least one	35.6	36.9	30.2	31.7
Assessments (Mean)	Economy	5.6	5.7	5.7	5.8
	Cultural Life	5.4	5.6	5.5	5.6
	Place to live	4.9	5.1	5.0	5.1
	Short-term	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.8
	Short-term	5.3	5.4	5.3	5.4
	Index	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.1

Sources: "Barometer of public opinion about Refugees in Germany" (weighted); poll from January to November 2016; SOEP v.33 (weighted), wave 2016; authors' own calculations.

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With regard to attitudes toward refugee migration, there were matching mean values in both the SOEP and Barometer. The summarizing index is equivalent to a value of five on the scale in each case.

Green Party followers show highest active support by far

In addition to the classical socio-demographic characteristics, both the general debate on migration and specifically the issue of refugees reveal another line of conflict: party affiliation.¹⁶ In particular, the national conserva-

tive Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD) and the conflict between the conservative Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union*, CDU) and Christian Social Union (*Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern*, CSU) have shaped the debate on the federal level. Further, a welcoming culture was especially palpable in autumn 2015, when the population of Germany showed a strong willingness to help migrants. For this reason, exist-

¹⁶ Alexander Yendell, Oliver Decker, and Elmar Brähler, "Wer unterstützt PEGIDA und was erklärt die Zustimmung zu den Zielen der Bewegung?" in: Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess and Elmar Brähler, eds., *Die enthemmte Mitte*.

Autoritäre und rechtsextreme Einstellung in Deutschland. (Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2016), 137-52.

Table 3

On-site engagement over party affiliation
Relative Proportion

Party	On-site engagement	95-percent confidence interval
SPD (Social democrats)	7.8	6.6–9.1
CDU (Conservative)	6	5.0–7.0
CSU (Conservative only in Bavaria)	3.5	1.9–5.1
FDP (Liberal)	6	2.7–9.2
Die Grünen (Green)	10.7	8.7–12.7
Die Linke (far Left)	6.8	4.3–8.9
<i>NPD/REP etc. (far right)</i>	4.2	–1.9–10.3
AfD (National Conservative)	2.9	1.2–4.6
<i>Other</i>	7.8	2.3–13.2
No Party	4	3.6–4.4
	Cramers V	0.09
	Pearson Chi ² (9)	125.41 (p = 0.00)

Cursive values are based on an n<100. Those are not considered in the interpretation. The estimation is based on an unweighted N of 15315.

Sources: SOEP v.33 (weighted), Wave 2016; authors' own calculations

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ing volunteer work was also assumed to be an explanatory factor in the respondents' attitudes and level of active on-site support for refugees in addition to party affiliation. Since these variables were not surveyed for the Barometer of Public Opinion,¹⁷ we relied on the 2016 wave of the SOEP¹⁸ (see Box 2).

In the SOEP sample, there was a significant relationship between party preference and active support of refugees on site. Some of the differences between the parties are extremely clear. In 2016, around nine to 13 percent of Green Party (*Bündnis90/Die Grünen*) followers indicated that they had actively provided on-site support to refugees in the past (Table 3). Among party followers, this is by far the highest proportion. With values from one to five percent, AfD followers had the lowest proportion.¹⁹ There is also a difference between the Union parties: CDU followers tended to provide active support

¹⁷ The "Sunday question" (Which party would you vote for if federal elections were held this Sunday?) was included in the March survey. For this indicator, similar relationships such as the ones reported here were shown on the basis of the SOEP V. 33 2016.

¹⁸ Because there is no cross-sectional weighting for the SOEP wave surveyed in 2016 yet, we used personal weighting based on the SOEP 2015 (v. 32).

¹⁹ The values for the National Democratic Party (*Nationaldemokratische Partei*, NPD), The Republicans (*Die Republikaner*, REP) and The Right (*Die Rechte*) cannot be adequately evaluated due to low number of cases.

Table 4

Assessment of the consequences of the immigration of refugees over party affiliation

Scale: 1 (extremely negative) to 11 (extremely positive)

Party	Mean value	95-percent confidence interval
SPD (Social democrats)	5.8	5.8–5.9
CDU (Conservative)	5.4	5.4–5.5
CSU (Conservative only in Bavaria)	4.5	4.4–4.7
FDP (Liberal)	5.7	5.3–6.0
Die Grünen (Green)	7	6.9–7.1
Die Linke (far Left)	5.9	5.7–6.1
<i>NPD/REP Etc. (Far right)</i>	2.1	1.7–2.4
AfD (National Conservative)	2.9	2.7–3.1
<i>Other</i>	5.8	5.4–6.2
No Party	4.7	4.7–4.7

Cursive values are based on an n<100. Those are not considered in the interpretation. The estimation is based on an unweighted N of 15083.

Sources: SOEP v.33 (weighted), Wave 2016; authors' own calculations.

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more frequently than those of the CSU. The remaining parties' levels of support are all very similar.

Looking at attitudes toward refugees by party showed that on average, followers of the Green Party have a significantly more positive attitude than the followers of other parties, followed by the Left Party (*Die Linke*), the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei*, SPD), and the Free Democratic Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, FDP) (Table 4). Here, there are significant differences between the Union parties: the mean value of CSU followers' attitude toward refugees is significantly lower than that of CDU followers. As expected, the attitude of AfD followers was clearly the most negative. The mean value for people who are not followers of any political party was around 4.7. This puts their attitude in line with that of CSU followers, clearly higher than that of AfD followers, and below the value of CDU followers.

Habitual volunteers are more open to refugees

The SOEP surveys volunteer activity every two years.²⁰ For the present study, the optional answers were sum-

²⁰ See: Mareike Alscher and Eckhard Priller, "Zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement," in: German Federal Statistical Office and Berlin Social Science Center

marized in two categories: “Did volunteer work” and “Did not do any volunteer work.” The findings showed the respondents who indicated they had volunteered in earlier waves²¹ to be significantly more positive about the consequences of refugee migration than other respondents. The group of habitual volunteers had a mean value between 5.6 and 5.8, while those who did not volunteer in the past had a mean value of 4.9 (see Table 5). The differentiation is stable over time. This means that even respondents who had not volunteered for several years had more positive attitudes toward refugees. Volunteering in the past is also a predictor of volunteer work in the future. There is a significant positive relationship between general social engagement in the past and active support of refugees since 2015 (see Table 6). And people who actively supported refugees in the past indicated with significantly higher frequency that they also intend to do so in the future (see Table 7). The results showed that organized civil society figures as a key resource in offsetting bottlenecks in state care and integrating refugees into German society.

Conclusion

With a view to the immigration of refugees, the residents of Germany were much more concerned last year than they were three years ago. The same applies to their concern about xenophobia. Given this context of the mainly in the year 2015 high refugee immigration, the present report studied respondents’ assessments of the consequences of forced migration and their level of willingness to support refugees actively.

According to the results, the majority of German residents indicated that they saw more risks than opportunities connected to the increase in refugee migration since the middle of 2015.

In comparison to other options of being active, respondents showed the highest level of willingness to donate money for refugees. Their willingness to participate in demonstrations or petitions was the lowest—whether for or against refugees could not be determined based on the data.

Comparing regions within Germany, it becomes apparent that there is an east-west disparity in rating the consequences of refugee migration. People in western Germany are clearly more optimistic in their assessment of the consequences than those in eastern Germany. For both the assessments and active on-site support for ref-

Table 5

Assessment of the consequences of the immigration of refugees over civil engagement in the past

Scale: 1 (extremely negative) to 11 (extremely positive)

Civil engagement (past)	Mean value	95-percent confidence interval
Yes	5.7	5.6-5.8
No	4.9	4.9-5.0
F Adj. Wald-Test (H0: diff=0)		157.17 (p = 0.00)

The estimation is based on an unweighted N of 15,440.

Sources: SOEP v.33 (weighted), Wave 2011 2013 2015 2016; authors’ own calculations.

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ugees, formal education proved to be important: The higher the respondent’s level of education, the more positive the rating for the consequences of refugee migration and the greater the likelihood that they actively support refugees.

Additional analyses of the SOEP data showed that traditional conflict lines such as political party affiliation also played a key role in rating the consequences of forced migration. It also became clear that a history of doing volunteer work was closely tied to a clearly more positive attitude toward refugees and a higher level of willingness to help.

The population’s increased concern is a reminder to political representatives to address the refugee issue with a sustainable, convincing master plan for migration to and integration into Germany, so that refugees can find their niches in German society and institutions, and public structures are adequately prepared to accommodate forced migration in the future.

Success will come more easily if, alongside providing adequate financial means,²² public administration and civil society join forces effectively. As the analyses have shown, regardless of the skepticism of one part of German society, a not insignificant proportion is willing to help refugees who have arrived in Germany and make it easier for them to integrate. Germany’s political representatives must tap this potential and support volunteer engagement. This would greatly reinforce social solidarity. However, this does not mean that society’s willingness to be active for refugees should replace the long-term tasks of the state. These processes must go hand in hand in order to leverage coordinated action in the best possible manner.

(WZB), eds., *Datenreport 2016: Sozialbericht für Deutschland*, (2016) (in German only, available online). In 2013, the proportion of volunteers was approximately 30 percent.

21 We are referring to 2011, 2013, and 2015.

22 For an overview of the expenses incurred in the federal budget for asylum and refugee policies in 2015 and 2016, see the January 2017 Monthly Report of the Federal Ministry of Finance.

Table 6

Engagement for refugees on-site over civil engagement in the past
Relative Proportion

Civil Engagement (past)	On-site engagement	95-percent confidence interval
Yes	11.3	10.2-12.3
No	3.7	3.4-4.0
	Cramers V	0.15
	Pearson Chi2(1)	275.52 (p = 0.00)

The estimation is based on an unweighted N of 15675.

Sources: SOEP v.33 (weighted), Wave 2011 2013 2015 2016; authors' own calculations.

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In the future, overcoming the challenges of refugee migration while avoiding societal and political upheaval must be the goal. Status recognition, accommodation, and sustainable integration into social spheres such as education, the job market, and social networks must remain a policy priority in election year 2017. Alongside states and municipalities, the federal government is being summoned to the task at hand.

Table 7

On-site engagement for refugees¹ over planned on-site engagement
Relative Proportion

Engagement planned	Engaged in the past 12 months	95-percent confidence interval
Yes	90.5	88.6-92.5
No	7	6.6-7.4
	Cramers V	0.59
	Pearson Chi2(1)	5401.92 (p = 0.00)

The estimation is based on an unweighted N of 15860.

¹ At the time of the interview it was referred to engagement in the last 12 months.

Sources: SOEP v.33 (weighted), wave 2016; authors' own calculations.

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EIGHT QUESTIONS FOR PHILIPP EISNECKER

»The higher educated, the more optimistic about the consequences of refugee immigration«

1. Mr. Eisnecker, have the population's concerns about refugee migration grown or declined? We can conclusively say that in 2015 and 2016, the population was markedly more concerned about migration – and xenophobia as well. This statement is based on data from the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), a longitudinal survey, which has collected data on the population's concerns on a range of topics for years.
2. Which aspects of refugee migration concern the population the most and which the least? We collected data from the respondents regarding their attitudes toward refugee migration in five areas. Overall, I must say that in 2016, the respondents were very skeptical in all five areas. They were still the least skeptical with regard to the economy; whereas we saw the most skeptical responses on general short-term effects. The other areas, "Germany as a place to live," cultural life in Germany, and long-term effects, were in the middle range.
3. Does skepticism outweigh perceived opportunities? We saw that unequivocal optimists were clearly in the minority. The majority of the population was composed of either unequivocal skeptics or ambivalent and undecided persons. This order remained the same throughout 2016.
4. Which groups of persons tended to be skeptical of refugee migration and which were more optimistic? The higher people's education level, the more optimistic they are. We also saw relatively unambiguous east-west differences. People who live in eastern Germany are more likely to be skeptical than those in western Germany. And it was also relatively clear that people who consider themselves "working class" are more skeptical than salaried employees or civil servants.
5. Is there any differentiation based on political party affiliation? Followers of the Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) much more frequently active for refugees and were also more optimistic about the effects of refugee immigration. At the opposite pole are followers of the Alternative for Germany party (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD), who seldom volunteer to help refugees and view the effects of refugee immigration with great pessimism. The remaining party followers are in the middle range with regard to both their social support for refugees and their assessment of the effects of refugee migration.
6. Has the population's level of social support for refugees increased or decreased? Because we asked about the past 12 months, we cannot currently determine any conclusive trends. However, we did ask respondents if they planned to volunteer to help refugees in the future. From January to November 2016, we saw a decrease in the intention to support refugees actively in the future.
7. How large is the gap between those in favor and the skeptics? Is the issue of refugee migration dividing German society? Interestingly, we found that both skeptics and more optimistic persons volunteered to help refugees or at least indicated that they intend to in the future. Overall, we saw that active volunteers or those prepared to actively support refugees view the effects of refugee migration more optimistically. At the same time, there was no evidence of a great divide separating the attitudes of engaged and inactive persons.
8. The Bundestag election is this year. What political priority did the respondents assign to the issue of refugee migration? Based on the SOEP data, we saw that concerns about both migration and xenophobia have increased sharply. And from other surveys we also know that migration and refugees have become the most important issue. In view of this, we can expect this issue to play a role in the outcome of the election.

Interview by Erich Wittenberg