



## GERMANY'S IMMIGRATION POLICY: UNDERSTANDING ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN SKILLED IMMIGRANTS

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### RESEARCH ARTICLE



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#### DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.260401041>

#### Abstract

The contemporary global politics has become more inter-dependable than ever before. Only the economic resource is not enough for a country to sustain in this complex world order. Europe is a developed region in the world, is also dependent to retain their labour market. Reports show that this region has lack of young efficient labours and the number of old age dependents are increasing tremendously. To control this phenomenon countries like Germany took alternative initiatives. From the 20th century onwards Germany's labour market depends upon 'guest workers' particularly from the Global South because of cheap and efficient labours. This study aims to understand the policies that the country adopted since 2005 to facilitate the skilled workers. Provided a complete idea of the evolving nature of immigrant policies and their impacts on Indian skilled migrants. The content analysis method helped to collect relevant data from primary and secondary sources like policy documents, journal and newspaper articles in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of policy impact.

**Keywords:** *Europe, Germany, Migration, Immigration Policies, Indian Skilled Immigrants*

#### Introduction

Migration is an ancient method of human movement. But due to globalization and free trade the number of migrations, especially inter-state migration, have increased. It is difficult to define migration by a single definition because of its dynamic nature. But it can be defined as a process where people leave their habitual place of residence because of various reasons and move to another region or country (M. McAuliffe and L.A. Ouchou, 2024). It can be voluntary or involuntary. In the 21st century, migration is shaped by structural inequalities and geographical churn (Ambi, 2025). Structural inequality in migration refers to enduring patterns of disadvantage that emerge from institutionalized systems of discrimination and exclusion (Miller, 1998), impacting the opportunities and outcomes of migrant groups on the basis of race, gender, caste, religion, nationality, and language. Migration is categorized into various types, but this study has emphasized Indian high-skilled migrants, this is also known as "economic migrants" (Srichandan, 2011). According to the German Residence Act (AufenthG) (Section 18, para 3), a skilled worker must have: qualifying vocational training for a minimum of two years from abroad, which has been recognized as a German qualification, and an academic, or rather a university degree, which must be comparable to the German degree. The same sections of the Residence Act also mentioned highly qualified professions, including scientists with special knowledge and university teachers or assistants with executive functions.

The process of migration can be defined by various theoretical dimensions, for example Everett Lee's in his 'A Theory of Migration' (1966) mentioned push and pull factors. The push factors are those which persuade people from the source country to move to the destination; unemployment, low wages, the lack of standardized education system, poor healthcare facilities, and political expulsion can be the reason for it. The pull factors are those which motivate people to move to other regions or countries for job opportunities, higher wages, political and economic stability, better education, healthcare facilities, and a standard of living. He also talked about intervening obstacles like geographical location, legal restrictions, and cultural barriers that hinder the process of migration (Lee, 1966). As a developed industrialized region, Europe always attracts non-European people, and specifically, Germany which is the fourth largest economy in the world and the third largest exporter after China and the USA (European Blue Card Network) attracts more people. Germany, as a democratic nation, creates high-paid employment for natives and non-natives. For these reasons, people prefer this country to migrate and settle permanently.

But to protect the national interest and demands from its citizens, Germany has imposed restrictions on its borders. It is because if someone from outside wants to cross another sovereign boundary, they should follow some rules that have been made by that

country. But what is observed is that some people who do not meet the legal and economic criteria or have any other intention apply illegal methods to enter a country, and Germany has been facing these problems for quite some time. In this situation, it prioritizes the interests and security of its citizens, following the majoritarian principle. To some extent, it gives value to human rights as mentioned in the UN Human Rights Declarations,<sup>i</sup> and complies with the EU's 'Schengen Visa', simultaneously, for their own sake, they welcome skilled workers from global south countries like India. Germany has become a hub for Indian high-skilled workers, particularly in the field of engineering, healthcare, Information Technology (IT), and academics. According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) report 2023, over 34,000 Indians were Blue Card holders in Germany. Another prominent theory in migration is Zelinsky's 'Mobility Transition Model' (1971), where he discussed the dynamic and changing nature of migration. According to him, the drivers of migration are economic modernization, industrialization, and urbanization (Manfred Kohlmeier, 2006). These traditional theories could not explain migration as a people's choice. The factors defined by Lee and Zelinsky were the structural factors, which shape the migrant actions, but in the neoliberal world order, people can also modify the structure. This argument is elaborately discussed by Anthony Giddens in his 'structuration' theory. 'Migration is an agency' denotes human agency that deliberately motivate people to migrate for their betterment (Datta, 2025). In this backdrop, this study aims to critically bring light to the evolving nature of the Immigration Acts and initiatives taken by German government and its effects on Indian immigrants holistically.

### **Immigration Policies From 2005 to 2025**

The following acts or initiatives are important to understand the evolving nature of immigration policies in Germany.

1. Immigration Act, 2005
2. National Integration Plan, 2007
3. National Action Plan on Integration, 2012
4. Adoption of Blue card, 2012
5. Integration Plan, 2016
6. Skilled Workers Strategy, 2018
7. Skilled Immigration Act, 2020
8. Skilled Workers Reform, 2023
9. Naturalization Reform, 2024-2025

### **Immigration Act of 2005**

The Immigration Act 2005 was a crucial step to modernize and unify immigration laws in Germany. By the implementation of this act, Germany has been recognized as an 'immigrant country' (Manfred Kohlmeier, 2006). It was implemented on 1 January 2005, replacing the Foreigners Law of 1990 and introduced two different permits: residential and settlement permit. Gerhard Schroder was a chancellor at that time from the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and, after that, Angela Merkel from Christian Democratic Union (CDU) emphasized on integration and orientation courses to integrate the immigrants into German society. Approximately, 600 hours of German language instruction and orientation courses were offered more than 30 hours to teach them German history, culture, and constitutional values (Manfred Kohlmeier, 2006). The main aim of the language course is to acquire "sufficient proficiency". The World Bank and European Commission recognized 2006 as the 'International Year of Migration' and 'European year of Mobility'.

To extend this integration process, CDU launched the National Integration Plan in 2007 and in 2012 it launched the National Action Plan on Integration. It aligned with the Geneva Convention which made a legal standard to provide humanitarian assistance. This act introduced the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration and the Refugees and Integration Commission. Also, another important institution was formed; the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), responsibilities of this institution are asylum processing, integration course coordination, and conducting research and collecting statistics on migration. This act laid the groundwork for the future reform of immigration policies. But this act was not flexible with the immigration rules, as it remained had complex visa process and low levels of skilled workers were excluded.

### **The EU Blue Card Initiative**

In 2009 European Union, by its directives (2009/50/EC), introduced 'Blue Card' as a residential permit for qualified skilled workers with having university degree (or equivalent) and a job offer. After the Second World War the Allied power took control over the areas of Germany. At the Potsdam Conference in 1945 the divisions were formalized and created two separate Germany. Unlike Western part, Eastern Germany did not have any employment crisis, but after unification, this part of economy was mostly privatized and which led to layoffs.<sup>ii</sup> On the other side 2008 financial crisis impacted the German economy, and for these reasons, Germany adopted the Blue Card Initiative in 2012 to minimize its labour market shortages. After the adaptation, it has created millions of jobs in Germany (European Blue Card Network).

According to the Federal Government data, the requirements to get the EU Blue card are: a German academic qualification or a foreign academic qualification which is comparable to a German academic qualification or a tertiary level qualification that takes at least three years to complete. In Germany, this qualification must accord with at least level six of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) or level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework, and Short-term occupation. If any skilled workers get a job offer from a company, the following conditions must be met: the period of employment must be at least six months, the job must complement the academic degree qualification. If a licence is required to practise,<sup>iii</sup> at the time of

visa application, this must be in place or prospect, and someone have to earn at least € 48,300 (In rupees 4946016.60 as of 2025) as a gross annual salary. If someone does not meet the above requirements, they can apply for a work visa under Section 18b of the Residence Act.

The maximum validity of the EU Blue Card is four years, including the duration of the employment contract plus an additional three months. It can be extended by fulfilling certain criteria, like if someone knows the German language at A1 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), after 27 months of holding the EU Blue Card, they can get a settlement permit. If someone knows the language at the B1 level, the permit can be issued only after 21 months. After securing a job as a Blue Card holder, anyone can change their existing job to another by informing the foreign authority (Government, Working in Germany: the official websites for qualified professionals, n.d.). This change was made in March 2024 by the Skilled Workers Reform Act of 2023.

### **Migration Crisis, Angela Merkel's 'Open Door Policy' and Reformulation of Integration Plan**

The 2015 migration or refugee crisis was one of the incidents in Europe after World War II, which completely destabilized Europe politically, socially, and economically. Main reasons of this crisis were: Syrian civil war, which started in 2011. Over one million refugees migrated by crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe (UNHCR, 2015; Das, 2025). This situation drained the EU's 'Dublin Regulation'<sup>iv</sup> because it says asylum request must proceed in the first arrival country and by the geographical location the frontier countries like Greece and Italy got affected and they could not handle this flow of people substantially (A humanitarian role model: Germany's initial open-door policy and restrictive turn toward Syrian refugees, 2024). To control this wave of asylum seekers, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees temporarily suspended the application request (Das, 2025), which was against the asylum rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 14 of UDHR says "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution". Also 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol mentioned the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. This crisis has become a security threat to Europe. This was an unresolved issue in the EU and for the host countries, which impacted the democratic issues like elections. Scholars assumed it affected the 2016 referendum of the UK's exit (BREXIT) from the EU.<sup>v</sup> Instead of blocking the borders, Angela Merkel opened the border and welcomed refugees via Hungary. In 2015, Germany received 441,000 applicants, and in 2016, 722,000 applicants (Eurostat, Asylum and first-time asylum applicants—annual aggregate, 2023), which created dissatisfaction among natives.

In the promotion of Merkel's 'open door policy', the CDU government launched the 'Integration Plan' in 2016. This act was stronger than the previous Integration measures of 2007 and 2012. It was a systematic inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees into Germany. The previous initiatives that emphasized assimilation, had not structurally bound (Williams, 2014). It was officially known as 'Integrationsgesetz'. This plan aimed to expand the integration and orientation courses to foster social cohesion and civic participation in German society. If non-natives fail to comply with this legally binding law, they cannot become the beneficiary to the social welfare benefits, also there is a chance of facing sanctions (Etzel, 2021). The other important features of this law were: providing training courses, affordable housing facilities (Etzel, 2021), and monitoring and evaluating the integration process to understand the future requirements for reforming the existing law. It was a symbol of Germany's good governance.

### **Initiatives of welcoming only the Skilled Workers 2018 to 2024**

Germany's 'Skilled Workers Strategy' bill 2018, officially known as 'Fachkräftestrategie', was a fundamental step taken by the CDU government after the 2015 migration crisis. It aims to modernize and liberalize migration laws and to protect their country from demographic deficit. This was the first decisive step for attracting skilled immigrants to their country. It was drafted by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) in December 2018 (ReferNet, 2025). This law was passed by the Bundestag<sup>vi</sup> on 15 August 2019 and came into force on 1 March 2020. According to the population projection report by the German Federal Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt), Germany's population is going to increase by 82.6 million in 2070, with approximately 45.9 million people aged 20 to 66, and 21.2 million people aged more than 67. By 2055, 6.8 million people will need long-term care. These data highlighted that Germany is going through a crisis of an ageing population and dependent people. These are the main reasons for labour market shortages. Recruitment of skilled workers became necessary in the IT sectors, healthcare and engineering, especially to meet their economic demands as the largest economy of the EU. This strategy simplifies the earlier rigid bureaucratic process for foreign nationals to go to their country. By this initiative, the waiting period to get employment opportunities for foreigners has been reduced. It also reduces the federal priority check, which prioritizes natives for the job market, and the German government introduced an extended residential permit if someone completed their vocational training. The permanent residential permit for a skilled worker with a German qualification can be issued after two years, and for foreign nationals, it is issued after four years (ReferNet, 2025).

To easily understand the permit access and recognition process, the Central Service Agency for Professional Recognition (ZSBA) was established in 2020, which makes the entire process transparent without bureaucratic hurdles (ReferNet, 2025). This is affiliated with the Federal Employment Agency and Centre for International Migration and Development, located in Bonn. The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) is responsible for examining the data on recognition. The other bodies are: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI),<sup>vii</sup> Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBWF), Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), and Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI).

According to the 'Skilled Labour Immigration Act', an analysis published on the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training during the pandemic, German diplomatic missions abroad issued almost 30,000 visas to qualified specialists from third-country nationals from 1 March 2020 to 31 December 2020. In the first half of 2021, 25,980 visas and in 2022, 97,292 visas were issued. Around 4,99,200 people applied for them (ReferNet, 2025).

The new 'Skilled Immigration Act' was passed in July 2023 and came into force in three phases; on 18 November 2023, and in the months of March and June 2024. The new requirement for a skilled worker is that they must have completed a Vocational Education and Training (VET) or higher education qualification with practical knowledge (ReferNet, 2025). The target groups are the young people between 15 to 29 years. The skilled migrants do not always work as permanent workers in a country; rather, they prefer to stay for a short time.

This new law has added a list of new occupations in the category of short-term occupations,<sup>viii</sup> and workers who fall into this category can get the EU Blue Card if he/she would meet the other eligibility criteria.<sup>ix</sup> If the Federal Employment Agency (BA) approves a worker's employment, they have to earn € 43,759.80 annually. The salary threshold is updated annually by the Federal Minister of the Interior and Community. Earlier, science, IT, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), were in the list, and the added professions (Government, Working in Germany: the official website for qualified professionals, 2023) are: manufacturing, mining, construction, or distribution managers, information and communication technology service managers, professional services managers, such as child care or health services managers, veterinarians, dentists, pharmacists, nursing or midwifery professionals, and school and out-of-school teachers and educators.

Some changes have been made since November 2023. The Federal Employment Agency has simplified the entry procedures for third-country nationals. German language skills are not necessary, and the priority check was abolished, and work experience can also be considered as a skill to get a job (Government, Working in Germany: the official website for qualified professionals, 2023). The new employment and recognition rules of 2024 (March) have made several changes, e.g. the duration of 18 months for the residence permit to complete adaptation measures (bridging courses and qualification programs) has been increased to 24 months. It can be further extended for 12 months, up to a maximum of three years. There is no need for a recognition procedure before going to Germany; it can be initiated after coming to the country with the help of a recognition partnership.

Requirements for this are: A foreign academic or non-academic vocational qualification requires at least two years of full-time training and must be recognized by the government of the country from which the training was obtained. For a visa application, authentic information regarding a non-academic vocational qualification or a digital statement of comparability has to be submitted to the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB). The non-regulated professional<sup>x</sup> has to have a concrete job offer to probe as a qualified employer. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) employer requires German language skills at level A2; it depends on the level of the job. In the last stage, the recognition partnership will check the suitability of the employer during the visa application, whether the company provides vocational training or post-qualification skills development or not. The skilled workers do not have any role to play at this stage.

Earlier German law had defined the academic and vocational training criteria for becoming a skilled worker. This new law included practical knowledge or experience. The skilled professional must have two years of experience and a minimum salary threshold of € 43,470 per year as of 2025. If the employer of a company is obliged by the collective agreement,<sup>xi</sup> then the salary has to be given according to the agreement. For the IT specialist, two years of experience (earlier it was three years) is required, and the minimum salary threshold per year is € 43,470. Language is no longer needed for a visa application. The healthcare sector in Germany requires a large number of healthcare professionals. These professions are mainly recognized as regulated professions where a licence to practice is required. Earlier, the parameter had set that the nursing staff must have three years of vocational training either in Germany or elsewhere but the certificate must be comparable to Germany's Anabin database. But since March 2024, less than three years of regulated nursing trained professionals can also contribute to Germany's labour market. Nursing and care assistants can also get a residential permit for 12 months, and it can be extended up to six months.

If the spouses and minor child of a skilled worker want to join as a skilled worker in Germany, they do not need to prove that to have enough living space. If the spouse is a permanent resident and got a residential permit for the first time on or before 1 March 2024, their parents-in-law can stay with them. Skilled migrants who want to start a business in Germany and have received a grant from the German Research organization or from any public body, can get a residential permit for up to 18 months. Not only for workers, this law has created new opportunities for foreign students. They can do secondary employment 20 hours per week while studying. Annually, it will be 140 full days or 280 half days (earlier it used to be 120 full days and 240 half days). Also, secondary employment can be applicable for prospective students in preparatory measures for university. People from the third country, seeking vocational training in Germany, can also come. The age limit has increased from 25 to 35, and those who want to get a residential permit can do secondary employment, 20 hours per week and up to two weeks. For them German language requirement is also lowered to the B1 level.

The most relevant change that has taken place since June 2024 was the introduction of the 'Opportunity Card' for skilled workers. It can be issued in two cases, those are: if someone is a skilled worker defined by Section 18, para 3 of the Residence Act, and for all other applicants, they must produce a foreign academic degree or a vocational training qualification for at least two years, recognized by the state in the country of training or the German Chamber of Commerce Abroad. They must have German language skills at the A1 level or English at the B2 level. It is issued for one year, who can financially support themselves for that period, though secondary employment is allowed for them (20 hours per week), but after that period, if someone cannot

secure any job for his/her, the validity of that card can be extended for two years. All these requirements count as a point, and to get this card, one must get a minimum of six points.

It is important to understand the procedure to get citizenship in Germany. It is because citizenship is a civil right for the people. It can be obtained in five ways: citizenship by birth, marriage, descent, adaptation, and by naturalization. The new skilled workers get citizenship through naturalization process, and the criteria for that are; legally lived in Germany for at least five years. If a person has exceptionally integrated into the German society, for them it is three years (earlier it used to be eight years). Other criteria are; permanent right of residence, capable of financially supporting themselves, know the German language at least B1 level, respect the democratic principles of Germany, no criminal record, and acknowledge Germany's responsibility for the crimes against Jews by the National Socialist regime.

Those who meet these criteria can appear for the naturalization test in the local national authority office, by paying the application cost of € 255 for adults and € 55 for children. Applicants must be between 16 to 67 years old. After getting citizenship, they are eligible for full political rights, e.g. right to vote, to be nominated as a candidate, etc. The new Naturalization Law of 2024 introduced 'dual citizenship', but it cannot be enjoyed by Indian immigrants because India does not accept it.

### **Analysis**

**India-Germany Bilateral Relations:** India and Germany are both democratic countries and have had strong diplomatic relations since the Second World War. India was one of the first countries which built diplomatic relations with Germany after 1945. This study has delved deeply into both countries' relations with the skilled migrant workers, but before that, it is important to note their relations in other sectors like trade, education, health care, security, etc. In the case of trade relations, Germany is the eighth largest trading partner of India since 2024 and the ninth largest foreign direct investor (FDI) (Embassy of India, 2025). More than 20,8000 NRIs stay in Germany, and most of them are skilled workers. The External Ministry of the Indian government released a long document with relevant data which helps to understand both countries' bilateral relations. They have had a strategic partnership since 2000, and in 2011, by mutual consent, they built an Intergovernmental Consultation (IGC) at the head of the government (Ministry of External Affairs, 2024). The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a remarkable period for these two multicultural nations because the heads of the countries have met at different times. From the Indian side, 2000 onwards, Prime Ministers visited total 11 times, and the External Affairs ministers visited seven times (Affairs, 2025). Recently, at the G7 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chancellor Olaf Scholz met on 14 June 2024.

Before that, on 10 September 2023, they met on the sidelines of the G20 meeting, where they discussed about skilled migrants and higher education opportunities for students (Ministry of External Affairs, 2024). In 2022 'Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership' agreement was signed to create a favourable regulatory and visa regime for Indians. Both countries jointly took initiatives which facilitate Indian students to go to Germany for their higher studies, and after completing their studies, they can contribute to Germany's labour market. Germany wants to balance their unstable labour market by recruiting labour from the global south countries. The reasons behind it are: skilled workers with low investment compared to the natives, capable of social mobility, developing competitive working environment which increases the productivity of native workers, and collect high income taxes from them.

Indian students and high-skilled workers are also enthusiastic to migrate to a country like Germany, and the rationale behind taking such a decision can be: high paid employment opportunities, willingness to assimilate with the Western culture, easily get a visa or the EU Blue Card and residential permit, high standard of living, free health and child care facilities, welfare policies such as insurance ensure safety and security by the state, fewer bureaucratic hurdles to get citizenship, unemployment benefits, sick leaves, start-up opportunities; and a comparatively good environment.

Indian students are the largest group in Germany. According to the Foreign Ministry's data, approximately 49,483 (2024) Indian students are studying there. To encourage Indian students, the German government has taken various initiatives, like the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), to promote research and training. The Indo-German Partnership in Higher Education was signed between the Ministry of Education and Germany's Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF). Other initiatives from the Indian side are 'Global Initiative of Academic Network' (GIAN), Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC), Indo-German Max Planck Centre on Computer Science (IMPECS), Indo-German Max Planck-NCBS Centre for Research on Lipid, Department of Biotechnology is an Associate member of the European Molecular Biology Conference (EMBC) provides postdoctoral fellowship, etc (Ministry of External Affairs, 2024). The Indo-German Science and Technology Centre (IGSTC), a jointly funded centre, was set up in Gurgaon, Haryana. It has launched a program which facilitates women's involvement in science and engineering research, Paired Early Career Fellowship in Applied Research (PECFAR), whose main motto is a two-way exchange of young researchers in pairs. Another important one is the Industrial Fellowship programme to encourage Indian industrialists towards Germany (Ministry of External Affairs, 2024).

**Socio-Economic and Political Impacts of Immigration Policies on Indian Immigrants:** Besides positive insights, Indian high-skilled migrants in Germany are also facing hurdles to survive there. This is not only applicable to Indian migrants but to each and every migrant who arrives in another country. The focus of this study is to provide a detail analysis of the positive and negative impacts of Immigration Policies on Indian skilled migrant and immigrant workers in Germany.

**Social Impacts on Skilled Immigrants:** There is no doubt that Indian skilled workers are moving to Germany because of economic reasons, but it was found from the secondary sources that immigrants were saying that they decided to live there for a

better environment, health care facilities, social security, quality of education, and a qualified peer group. But to get these benefits, foreigners have to pay a higher tax, which creates a burden on them. Germany has been rapidly making changes in their immigration policies to attract skilled workers, and in recent reform laws, it has softened some provisions so that immigrants' spouses and other members of their family can easily come to Germany. The 'DW News' channel took an interview of an Indian married woman who came to live with her husband. Her name is Megha. She said that "I was facing a lot of difficulties in finding a job in Germany. In India, I did a good job, but I just come here to stay with my husband. I can go anywhere in Germany for a job. It does not matter to me if the pay is very good, it is making sense or not. I just need to have it". Her dependency on her husband makes her inferior and depressed, and she also said that she felt "more boxed in a way" (Megha, 2025).

The Indian diaspora in Germany makes both countries' relations strong enough. Germany's integration policy helps Indians assimilate into its culture. But Germany applies a mixing pot approach to assimilate skilled migrants into their culture, in the long run, which isolates them from their own culture. This isolation affects the future generation of immigrants; they will detach from Indian values, culture, language and extended families. For example, in 2021 a seven months old child name Ariha was taken by the German government to a foster care due to alleged abuse but her parent denied the allegation by telling it was an accidental injury. But the government did not hear their argument. India government also asked for repatriation many times (Suneja et al., 2026). This is not a new immigrant incident often faced this problem due to cultural differences.

On the other side Indian film, music, sports, etc also play a great role in influencing other countries to Indian culture. Indian civilization is known for the origin of yogic culture. Indian Ayurveda is famous worldwide. The Indian film festival is celebrated each year in Berlin and Stuttgart to admire Indian traditions (Ministry of External Affairs, 2024). According to the Foreign Ministry report in 2023, Germany's State Minister for Culture and Media, Claudia Roth, visited India in the G20 Cultural Ministers meeting, also in the 'Namaste Berlin' event.<sup>xii</sup> A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in 2024 to establish the ICCR Chair of Indian Music at the Hannover University of Music, Drama, and Media. The Max Mueller Bhavan in India transmits the German language across Indian cities. After going there, the majority of immigrants first experienced cultural shock because of Germany's highly modernized Western culture.

Religious diversity makes Germany a pluralist country. Islam is the second-largest religion in Germany. From the total population, about 6.6 per cent of the total population is Muslim<sup>xiii</sup> who live there (Conference, 2023). The Christian population is the majority in Germany, and most of them are anti-Muslims. In 2023, after the escalation between Israel and Palestine and the clashes that occurred in Syria, triggered Islamophobic sentiments among non-Muslims in Germany. Human Rights Watch report has shown that since 2023, anti-Muslims violence and racism have been escalating, documenting 1,926 cases, which was a 114 per cent increase from the previous year. They are not only facing physical violence but also verbal, mental harassment that is devastating their daily life. This institutionally motivated violence creates a trust deficit among marginalized groups (Müssig, 2025).

Germany has been giving immense opportunities to the Indian skilled workers so that they can apply their valuable skills to the German labour market in exchange for greater benefits. But this process of brain drains in the long-term affects the Indian labour market negatively. As an emerging economy, India also needs a skilled workforce to develop their internal market, but in the neo-colonial era, because of economic and other benefits, people prefer to migrate to a developed country. Western countries continuously colonized non-Western skilled workers' brains for economic motivation. In Western countries like Germany, because of their internal labour market crisis, they allow third-country nationals, but their domestic politics do not always welcome immigrants. Sometimes immigrants feel isolated, and they face an identity crisis because of this internal dynamic, which is visible in their party politics. Knowingly or unknowingly, they detach from their family and sometimes cannot take responsibility for the older one. It is because Western culture shapes their life as individuals. As a result, care gap is rising day by day. Old age homes have been growing like a second home in India.

**Economic Impacts on Skilled Immigrants:** As an industrialized country, Germany has created new job opportunities in various sectors for skilled workers. In Germany the federal states where the workers get more job opportunities are: North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Hesse, Lower Saxony, and Saxony-Anhalt. Indian immigrants prefer to go to Germany because they get more economic benefits, e.g. higher wages, sick leave, health insurance, maternity benefits, pension, and unemployment allowance. The students who go there for higher study are economically sound; government and private fellowships also help them. The Skilled Immigration Reform Act of 2023 provides flexible rules for students and skilled professionals. For example, now students are allowed to have secondary employment for 20 hours per week. The EU Blue Card and Opportunity Card expand the scope for skilled workers.

While getting a higher salary, the workers have to invest a specific amount to ensure their retirement, unemployment, health, and social care insurance. As they are highly paid professionals, they have to pay income tax. Therefore, their net earnings are deducted a lot from their gross amount of salary. The German state does not take too much care of foreign nationals; it just provides social security and free child care benefits. But immigrants have a greater role to play to boost up Germany's economy by paying higher taxes and contributing their skills to the labour market. By using their taxes, the German government provides welfare benefits to their natives, and natives pay less taxes than skilled workers. Skilled workers spend a lot of time at work. The companies do not provide holidays for any Indian festivals; in a way, they are detached from their own culture. The workload also creates frustration and anxiety. They do not always get a healthy work environment because of rising anti-immigrant

sentiment in Germany, they feel isolated, sometimes tolerate racist comments, language barrier, cultural difference, etc, creating their life monotonous.

### **Political Impacts on Skilled Immigrants**

Germany has a multiparty system. Major political parties are: Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which is in power with the coalition of CSU, the current chancellor from CDU is Friedrich Merz. Since 2005, the political parties that have been in power are:

1. Chancellor Gerhard Schroder from the Social Democratic Party, 27 October 1998 to 22 November 2005
2. Angela Merkel from CDU, 22 November 2005 to 8 December 2021
3. Olaf Scholz from SPD, 8 December 2021 to 6 May 2025
4. Currently, Friedrich Merz from CDU, from 2025 to till now.

Instead of the AfD and Free Liberals, all other parties are left-oriented and take a positive approach towards flexible immigration policies. This approach is also visible in the immigration policies since 2005 because left-wing parties have been in power. But the rising popularity of the right-wing extremist party AfD unites German natives towards their agenda to throw out non-skilled immigrants from their country. The published article on The Times of India (9 July 2025) highlighted that the AfD's leader, Alice Weidel, raised concerns about the increasing number of immigrants through family reunification. The party talks about the closure of welfare benefits, such as the pension of immigrants, and after completing their employment contract, the government should deport them to their source country. Also, the Free Liberals in their manifesto said that "Germany is in need of 'realpolitik' when it comes to migration". The party also talks about centralized immigration policies that operate independently from the federal government.

This binary in German politics creates difficulties for Indian immigrants to live their lives peacefully. An anti-immigrant sentiment is culminating towards anti-racist movements, not only that, several reports have been mentioning the Islamophobic temperament among the natives. Islam is the second largest religion in Germany, and most of the immigrant population came from Turkey, Morocco, Lebanon, Syria and other regions, and came before a decade as 'guest worker'. The emerging influence of right-wing extremism is also a reason the Indian Muslims prefer to migrate to other countries like Germany, but there is no doubt that the Muslim immigrants are also facing oppression in the foreign land (Datta, 2025). Former Interior Minister Horst Seehofer launched a 12-expert commission in 2020 when a far-right Germany killed ten Muslims by shooting in Hanau city (German Muslims face racism, discrimination every day: Report, 2023). One of the experts, Saba-Nur Cheema, said Muslims in Germany are "anonymous and subtle". Another former Interior Minister and current member from SPD in Bundestag, Nancy Faeser, said "Muslim life belongs to Germany as a matter of course...many of the 5.5 million Muslims in Germany experience exclusion and discrimination in everyday life".<sup>xiv</sup> This is a structural problem, and it is going from generation to generation. Immigrants' children who have citizenship in Germany are also facing a hateful comment on them. According to the World Report 2025 rising influence of right-wing politics by the Alternative for Germany (AfD), marginalisation of minority groups like Muslims has also been rising. Muslims in Germany do not have the freedom of expression, assembly, and association (Watch, 2025).

### **Conclusion**

The emergence of the right-wing extremist party AfD and its anti-immigrant propaganda generates a trust deficit between German natives and Indian immigrants. Meanwhile, the party supports only the skilled immigrants because they are important for Germany's labour market. But the anti-immigrant sentiments, racial discrimination and xenophobia create an atmosphere which is not suitable for the Indian immigrants at all. The rising popularity of this party in future may also force the Indian immigrants to return to their original destination.

But, not only in Germany, changing politics in the international sphere and anti-immigrant sentiments can create hurdles for not only the skilled workers worldwide but for every foreign national. Comparatively, Germany can be a good destination for the Indian skilled immigrants. Recently, Chancellor Friedrich Merz visited India on 12-13 January 2026. Besides the discussion on trade development Merz specifically highlighted the importance of Indian skilled migrants on Germany labour market. He also assured better facilities for the Indian students in higher studies. Recently signed 'Free Trade Agreement' between India and EU also facilitated Indian Skilled Immigrants by creating job opportunity (The New Indian Express,2026). Overall, in this global turmoil Europe and India proved they are reliable partners and to counter the hegemonic powers like the USA and China, India and Germany can connect Global North and South with establishing cordial relations.

**Acknowledgment:** No

**Author's Contribution:** *Dipika Nath:* Data Collection, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing

**Funding:** No

**Declaration:** Not Applicable

**Competing Interest:** No

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup>Adopted on 10 December 1948.

<sup>ii</sup>East Germany which was also called ‘German Democratic Republic’ (GDR), and West Germany which was known as ‘Federal Republic of Germany’ (FRG). Both sides were controlled by Cold War rivalries. The western side was controlled by the USA, and Eastern Germany was dominated by the Soviet Union because of their ideological clashes and power politics. The Berlin blockade was built in 1948 (Shlaim, 1983–1984).

<sup>iii</sup>This ‘licence to practice’ in Germany is also called ‘regulated professions’. This requires recognition of Germany’s foreign qualification or a professional licence. It applies to non-Germans as well as Germans who have specific qualifications, for example nurses, doctors, teachers, lawyers, craftsmen and women (data gathered from the Federal Government website regarding the EU Blue Card holders).

<sup>iv</sup>Dublin Regulation: This regulation makes the asylum application process much easier for both parties involving the non-EU country who apply for asylum and the examining country that examines the application.

<sup>v</sup>Officially took place on 31 January 2020.

<sup>vi</sup>Lower house of Germany’s Parliament.

<sup>vii</sup>Functioned until December 2021.

<sup>viii</sup>Short-term occupation also called ‘bottleneck profession’, where demand for skilled workforce is very high, but because of various reasons like an increasing ageing population, lower birth rate, standard educational qualification and technological development, workers cannot fit some jobs. This situation creates a labour shortage, and the market fails to meet the demands of the people, which creates a bottleneck or constraint in the market or the overall economy.

<sup>ix</sup>Broadly discussed in the point titled ‘The EU Blue Card Initiative’ (page no. 5, last point).

<sup>x</sup>Regulated professions are doctor and nurse. For them it is necessary to have a licence to practise.

<sup>xi</sup>The collective agreement is an agreement between an employer of a company and a trade union. By signing this agreement, the company has some responsibility to fulfil the rights of the workers.

<sup>xii</sup>The event was organized on 5 August 2023.

<sup>xiii</sup>Approximately 45 million.

<sup>xiv</sup>The report was published by Al Jazeera on 30 January 2023.

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*The Social Science Review A Multidisciplinary Journal* remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published data, map and institutional affiliations.

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