



THE FEBRUARY 2025 GERMAN FEDERAL ELECTIONS

February 2025

FOCUS: IMMIGRATION

As Germans head to the polls on 23 February 2025, immigration is one of the key issues on the ballot. This overview breaks down how the main parties running for the Bundestag address labour migration in their manifestos - offering insight into the evolving debate and potential policy shifts that could impact businesses, workers and the broader economy.

SETTING THE STAGE

The Bundestag serves as the federal legislative body and is elected every four years. Voters elect members of the Bundestag, who are then responsible for selecting the Bundeskanzler, Germany's Chancellor. It is common for no single political party to achieve an absolute majority.

After the federal election, political parties negotiate to form a coalition, which serves as the foundation for the next federal government. These negotiations typically take several weeks, meaning it may be months before the new Chancellor is elected.

The current parties represented in the Bundestag include the Conservatives (CDU/CSU), the Social Democrats (SPD), the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Free Democrats (FDP), the Left Party (Die Linke) and the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen).

The Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) is not currently represented in the Bundestag but could gain seats following the February elections.

Since 2021, Germany's federal government has been led by a coalition of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and the Free Democrats (FDP), with Olaf Scholz (SPD) serving as Chancellor.

For the 2025 federal election, the CDU/CSU has nominated Friedrich Merz, the CDU's federal chairman, as its candidate for Chancellor. The SPD is once again backing Olaf Scholz, while the Greens have put forward Robert Habeck, the current Vice-Chancellor. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) has nominated Alice Weidel as its candidate for Chancellor.

PARTIES' POLICY SUGGESTIONS

The Conservatives - CDU/CSU

1. Immigration

- Attract highly qualified foreign professionals permanently.
- Faster and digital processes for foreign nationals seeking employment: The proposal is to set up a digital Federal Agency for Immigration, called “Work and Stay Agency” to enforce the principle of a “One-Stop Government” for labour migration.
- Focus on cross-border and mobile working for employers and employees in Europe.
- Introduce a wide range of German language and integration courses. Implementing compulsory integration courses to ensure the foundation for integration and participation in Germany.

2. Citizenship

- Reverse Naturalisation after three years under the current government's newly implemented regulations.

3. Recognition of Qualifications

- Simplify and accelerate recognition of foreign professional qualifications.

4. Border Management and Schengen

- Implement controls at German borders and consistently enforce rejections of illegal immigrants.
- Align strongly against illegal migration through a national asylum system with swift procedures, secure identification and consistent implementation of asylum decisions.

5. Asylum and Humanitarian Stays

- Accelerate asylum procedures and returns.
- Stop family reunification for individuals with subsidiary protection status and end all voluntary admission programs.
- Shorten social benefits for individuals obliged to leave the country.
- Externalise asylum procedures by transfer to a safe third country after the asylum application for the duration of the asylum procedure.

The Social Democrats - SPD

1. Immigration

- Develop the Skilled Immigration Act further.
- Centralise, digitalise and reduce bureaucracy in immigration processes.
- Adopt a “Participation Act” to ensure equal access to education, employment and political participation for foreign nationals.
- Expand and adequately fund integration courses.
- Implement the One-Stop Government principle.
- Accelerate and enforce deportation of offenders.

2. Recognition of Qualifications

- Speed up recognition of qualifications and diplomas.

3. Citizenship

- No changes / updates to the previous regulations are mentioned in the election program.

4. Border Management and Schengen

- No pushbacks and limit internal border closures to exceptional cases.
- Prevent the criminalisation of sea rescue missions.
- Strengthen and improve oversight of FRONTEX to prevent pushbacks.

5. Asylum and Humanitarian Stays

- Limit irregular migration while prioritising skilled labour migration.
- Accelerate asylum procedures through digitalisation.
- Reject the externalisation of asylum procedures outside the EU.
- Establish comprehensive migration agreements to open immigration routes for education and employment.
- Ensure fair distribution of asylum seekers across all EU Member States.

The Green Party - Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen

1. Immigration

- Establish a pragmatic immigration policy that balances humanity and order.
- Distinguish clearly between humanitarian and labour migration.
- Digitalise visa applications to reduce waiting times.
- Increase financial support for municipalities through an integration initiative.
- Offer tailored and digitalised language courses from day one.
- Incorporate scientific expertise into policymaking through an expert advisory body.

2. Recognition of Qualifications

- Simplify and accelerate the recognition of professional and educational qualifications.
- Reduce bureaucracy in recognising professional experience.

3. Citizenship

- No changes / updates to the previous regulations are mentioned in the election program.

4. Asylum and Humanitarian Stays

- Defending the fundamental right to asylum and fulfilling obligations under international law such as the Geneva Refugee Convention, subsidiary protection and the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Establish a fair and binding European migration policy for distributing asylum seekers.
- Reject the externalisation of asylum procedures outside the EU.
- Support civil sea rescue missions.
- Maintain family reunification and lift existing restrictions.
- Reduce labour market access restrictions.
- Streamline and expedite immigration procedures with clear deadlines.
- Accelerate returns of individuals whose asylum applications are rejected.

5. Border Management and Schengen

- Oppose internal border controls within the Schengen Area.
- Enforce effective external border controls with reliable registration of incoming foreign nationals.

The Liberal Democrats - FDP

1. New Processes and Authorities

- Reorganise official structures and procedures in labour migration.
- Implement the principle of One-Stop Government for labour migration.

2. Immigration

- Establish a single immigration code bundling all legal bases for immigration and asylum.
- Facilitate labour migration further.
- Expand the EU Blue Card to non-academic professions and remove minimum salary requirements.
- Create additional immigration pathways for individuals from the Western Balkans.
- Introduce a one-year orientation visa for graduates of the world's top 200 universities.
- Improve the effectiveness of integration courses.

3. Citizenship

- Require individuals to earn their own living before naturalisation.
- Exclude individuals with anti-Semitic, racist or xenophobic actions or motives from naturalisation.

4. Border Management and Schengen

- Strengthen FRONTEX's role in protecting external borders and combating irregular migration and smuggling.
- Conduct pilot tests of refoulement at Germany's external borders to explore all legal options for limiting irregular migration.

5. Asylum and Humanitarian Stays

- Accelerate labour market access for asylum seekers.
- Emphasise the transition from irregular migration to skilled labour migration.
- Establish a new social security status for individuals seeking protection, with lower social benefits.
- Speed up the return of individuals whose asylum applications were rejected.
- Centralise deportation responsibilities at the federal level.
- Halt family reunification for individuals with subsidiary protection status and end all voluntary admission programs.
- Externalize asylum procedures.

The Left Party - Die Linke

1. Immigration

- Grant residence and work permits without time limits and without employer restrictions.
- Adopt a federal "Participation Act" with a civil service quota reflecting the population's migration history.
- Introduce active and passive voting rights for foreigners.
- Establish an independent Federal Ministry for Migration and Participation.

2. Recognition of Qualifications

- Accelerate recognition of qualifications and degrees.

3. Citizenship

- Strengthen the "ius soli" principle by granting German citizenship at birth in Germany.
- Remove the requirement to secure a livelihood for **naturalisation after five years of residence**.

4. Border Management and Schengen

- Abolish the EU border protection agency FRONTEX.
- Eliminate fast-track procedures and detention of asylum seekers.

5. Asylum and Humanitarian Stay

- Ensure legal and safe entry into the EU.
- Reject the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).
- Guarantee unrestricted work rights from the first day of arrival in Germany.
- Expand and improve legalisation options for people without residence status.
- Recognise climate and environmental damage, as well as poverty, as legal grounds for humanitarian visa issuance.

The Alternative for Germany - AfD

1. Immigration

- Withdraw migration policy regulations that are not in Germany's interests such as international regulations on the control of national borders.
- Implement a German language requirement for all immigrants, at least at the B 2 level, within a reasonable period.
- Reform immigration law for skilled workers and first exhaust domestic potential before any further immigration of skilled workers from outside Europe.
- Introduce a points system with clear selection criteria (e.g., professional experience, existing employment relationships or contracts, sufficient language skills, etc.) and needs-based definition of corresponding sectors and quotas.
- Further development of EU Blue Card and focus on experts in STEM professions (mathematics, IT, natural sciences and technology) and skilled workers.

2. Citizenship

- Exclusion of multiple nationalities, apart from justified exceptions, in particular common EU-law.

3. Border Management and Schengen

- Implement controls at German borders and consistently enforce rejections of illegal immigrants.
- Establish detention centers at the border to ensure measures to end residence restrictions.

4. Asylum and Humanitarian Stays

- Rejection of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), thereby ending participation in the EU's common policy on asylum, subsidiary and temporary protections.
- Withdraw from the UN migration and refugee pacts.
- Externalisation of asylum procedures and filing and processing of asylum procedures and applications for subsidiary protection outside Germany in future.
- Institute a "no right to work" policy for asylum-seekers.
- Accelerate returns of individuals obliged to leave the country.

Bündnis Sarah Wagenknecht - BSW

1. Immigration

- No changes / updates to the previous regulations are mentioned in the election program.

2. Citizenship

- No changes / updates to the previous regulations are mentioned in the election program.

3. Border Management and Schengen

- Termination of the Global Compact on Migration, which commits Germany to facilitating international migration movements.
- Reduce the causes of flight and migration at their places of origin and thereby ensure that the cause of flight is effectively tackled.
- Reorient EU foreign and trade policy aimed at improving living conditions in the countries of origin.

4. Asylum and Humanitarian Stays

- Enforce the principle of safe third country and thereby enforce the legal deportation of persons without a right of residence in Germany.
- Detain and deport individuals obliged to leave the country.

GENERAL TRENDS - WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

Increased regulation of humanitarian and illegal immigration.

Limited changes of regulations relevant for labour migration.

Accelerated processes for labour migration.

Improvement of professional/academic degree recognition process.

Further digitalisation of immigration processes.

CONTACT US

For questions regarding Germany's upcoming federal elections, please contact:



Adela Schmidt

Manager - Rechtsanwältin

T +49 69 506029404

E adela.schmidt@fragomen.com



Ruben Fiedler

Senior Associate - Rechtsanwalt

T +49 69 509545304

E rfiedler@fragomen.com