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## Thinning blood

On immigration, Germany is torn between its past and its future

ASK Heribert Bruchhagen about the ethnic composition of his football team, and he has to consult his secretary. It is not that the boss of Eintracht Frankfurt, once one of the more successful German clubs, does not care. But when he recruits players, passports and origins are not much on his mind. More important is their price tag. And even more critical, all must speak German, and at least a third must hail from the Frankfurt area. "In times of crisis, the coach needs to be able to talk directly to the players," Mr Bruchhagen explains in his office overlooking Frankfurt's stadium. "And the team must be rooted in the region."

The resulting Eintracht squad includes quite a few names that suggest origins further afield: Du-Ri Cha, Jermaine Jones, Mounir Chaftar. Nearly half of them are foreign-born or have at least one non-Ger-

man parent, but most of the second group grew up around Frankfurt. The recruitment policy seems to be working: after a bad start to the season, the club worked its way up to tenth place in Germany's premier league.

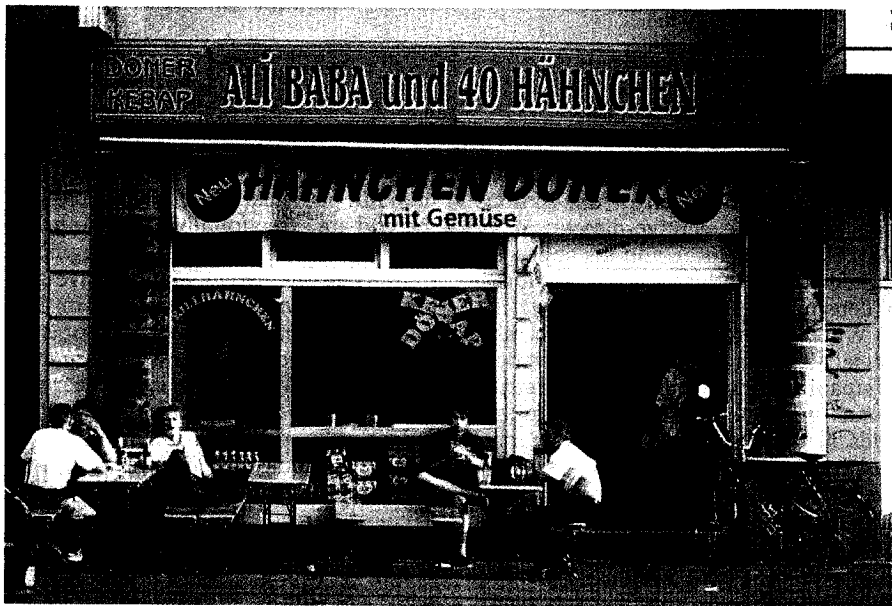
Every city, goes the joke, gets the football club it deserves. Thanks to its huge airport, its financial district and at one time the presence of many American companies' German headquarters, Frankfurt has become the country's most diverse city: some 40% of its population of 655,000 hold a foreign passport or come from an immigrant background. This has made Frankfurt unusually tolerant. "We have always welcomed immigrants", explains Albrecht Magen, head of the city's integration department, "because we live and die by our internationalism."

The politicians in Berlin, alas, are being less positive. After a brief period in 1999 when Germany at last seemed to have accepted that it was an immigration country—and even began to see foreigners as an asset—things have again changed for the worse. "In Germany, immigration is still seen as hurting society," says Klaus Bade, a professor at Osnabrück University.

### Blood or soil?

Germany is not the only country that has problems with immigration, but it faces a special dilemma. In a way, it is torn between its past and its future: it still yearns for cultural homogeneity, but will in fact need more immigrants, particularly highly skilled ones, to make up for its low birth rate and to keep its economy competitive.

It is the "legacy of romanticism", in the ►►



Almost like home

▶ words of Dieter Oberndörfer, a political scientist at Freiburg University, that holds Germany back. Thinkers such as Friedrich Julius Stahl, a 19th-century lawyer, developed the idea that Germans are a people based on descent. "The older and purer the tribe," he wrote, "the more it will be a nation." This became mainstream thinking, at least among the ruling classes, and helps to explain why, some time after Germany had become a nation at last in the late 19th century, it decided to base citizenship on blood rather than soil.

The emphasis on ethnic origin also explains why Germany has seen a huge influx of foreigners with German roots since the second world war, mostly from eastern Europe. Individuals who could prove German ancestry were invariably welcomed. Immigrants without German roots were also admitted in large numbers, but on different terms: under Germany's "guest-worker model", they were expected to go home when they were no longer needed.

### Here to stay

Predictably, though, many of the 14m guest workers whom Germany allowed in between 1955 and 1973 stayed on, particularly the Turks. They also brought their families over, which resulted in many German-born foreigners. Add other immigrants, refugees and EU citizens (who can come and go as they please), and it is easy to see why the number of foreigners grew rapidly, from 500,000 after the second world war to 6.7m (8% of the population) today. Another 7m or so Germans are naturalised immigrants. In record time, all this has turned Germany into nearly as much of a nation of immigrants as America.

Yet it took German politics until the late 1990s to accept this reality. Both big parties often felt they had to pander to anti-immi-

grant, if not xenophobic views. There were fears that immigrants would take unfair advantage of Germany's still-generous welfare state. And integration often did not go smoothly. Many Turks, in particular, found it hard to settle in, not least because a large contingent came from rural Anatolia and had to get used to living in an industrial society as well as a Christian one.

It was only when the coalition of Social Democrats and Greens came to power in 1998 that things began to change. The first government of Gerhard Schröder passed a law making naturalisation much easier (although some *Länder* have now put up various new barriers). Yet faced with the threat of terrorism and a deteriorating economic situation, the federal government abandoned plans to liberalise immigration rules and instead concentrated on tightening security and improving integration. For example, a new immigration law passed in 2004 requires new immigrants to take German lessons.

Learning German is doubtless important, notes Ismail Ersan, chairman of the Türkisches Volkshaus, a cultural organisation for Turkish immigrants in Frankfurt. But those who push hardest for it, he thinks, really want assimilation, not integration. Turning immigrants into Germans should not be the objective, he argues: "We need to find ways to live together, giving everybody equal opportunities."

As yet, that is a distant dream. The third generation of Turkish immigrants, in particular, is increasingly marginalised—and not just because of the school system and the labour market. The exclusion starts when they become teenagers, explains Mr Ersan: they often switch to a Turkish football club at that point because their old German club makes it clear to them that they do not really belong there. When they

have finished school, they are rarely offered even an unpaid internship, let alone an apprenticeship.

That is if they manage to finish school at all. According to a 2001 study by Bamberg University, 15.6% of young foreigners in Frankfurt failed to do so, compared with 6.5% of Germans. Far too many left school at 14. For Germany as a whole, the numbers are even worse. "The situation is certainly not as bad as in France," says Mr Ersan, "but if things don't improve, cars may also be burning here one day."

The Turkish community is also to blame. Many have retreated into ethnic ghettos: the availability of a complete Turkish infrastructure makes it possible for them to live in Germany without having much contact with Germans. The fact that Turkish men in Germany increasingly look for wives in Turkey does not help: their children are often raised the traditional way and do not learn enough German to integrate properly.

Immigration is not just about Turks, however, insists Helga Nagel, head of Frankfurt's office for multicultural affairs. Indeed, although they are certainly the most visible, they make up only about 20% of the city's foreign population (which more or less mirrors the national mix, see chart 6, next page). Another 22% come from former Yugoslavia and 9% from Italy. And most, says Ms Nagel, are better integrated than you might expect.

If so, then her department deserves some of the credit. Frankfurt was the first German city to create such an office, back in 1989, after the Greens formed a coalition with the Social Democrats to run the city. When the Christian Democrats and Free Democrats took over in 1995, they did not abolish the office, as some had feared, and even kept its name.

Today, the office co-ordinates an impressive array of programmes. Apart from the obvious language classes and translation service, the staff also helps immigrants to find their way through the complicated German education system, get health care and sort out problems. The office also tries to monitor the state of integration—not an easy task because, perhaps unsurprisingly, Germany does not collect much information about its immigrants.

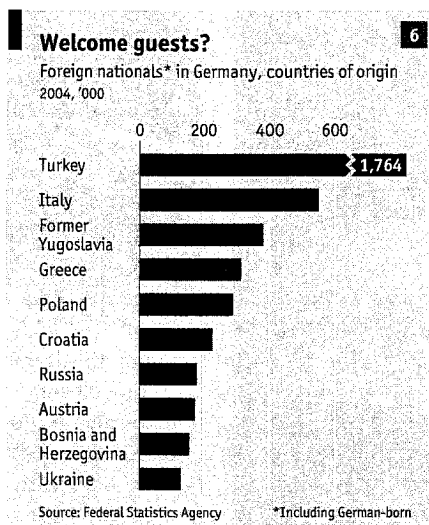
Other German cities have since copied Frankfurt's approach. But is that enough to integrate immigrants, particularly youths from a Turkish background? Unlike other countries, including France, Germany has never seriously discussed affirmative action for immigrants. Nor has it grasped that ▶▶

immigration policy today is no longer about keeping foreigners out or turning them into good Germans, but about competing actively in the global war for talent, says Thomas Straubhaar, president of the Hamburg Institute of International Economics, a think-tank. In a globalised knowledge economy, he argues, the wealth of a country will increasingly depend on highly skilled individuals. Yet such people are mobile and can choose where they want to live.

### Tempt me

If Richard Florida, an economist at George Mason University, Virginia, has his numbers right, Germany still has more work to do to become a top choice for what he calls "high potentials". In his 2005 book, "The Flight of the Creative Class", he produces an index measuring the competitiveness of nations in terms of the "3 Ts" of economic growth: technology, talent and tolerance. Germany does not come out too badly on tolerance, but it lags in developing talent and implementing technology. Overall, it ranks only tenth in the "global creativity index".

Germany's 2004 immigration law will do nothing to improve that ranking. Foreigners who have graduated from German universities can still be sent packing even if they have found a job. And highly qualified workers still do not get permanent residence permits. As a result, the numbers of these "high potentials" moving to Ger-



many is declining: in the 11 months to November 2005, only 900 arrived, compared with 2,300 in 2004.

Mr Bade of Osnabrück University thinks this is all the more serious because many highly qualified Germans are leaving. The numbers are hard to pin down, but between 1991 and 2003 an average of 115,500 people emigrated, many of them young and holding a university degree, according to the 2004 report of the Expert Council on Immigration and Integration, of which Mr Bade was deputy chairman (and which has since been disbanded).

A couple of hours' drive south from

Frankfurt lies Stuttgart, Germany's second most international city, which has produced a raft of ideas for retaining and attracting highly skilled people. In 2001, the city launched an action plan to prepare itself for becoming even more international. To foster integration, Stuttgart offers much the same activities as Frankfurt. But in addition, it tries to make itself as attractive as possible to the global creative crowd. Foreign students, for instance, are offered help with things like finding their way through the thickets of German bureaucracy.

More recently, Stuttgart has started to combine its efforts to attract skilled individuals with policies to boost the low birth rate: it wants to become Germany's most family-friendly city. Over the next few years, it plans to introduce a range of measures to make life easier for parents and children, for instance by providing more day care, playgrounds and bicycle routes. This is not ideology or public relations but sheer pragmatism, says Wolfgang Schuster, Stuttgart's (Christian Democrat) mayor. To prosper, the city needs both more immigrants and more children.

What is good for Stuttgart, the home of DaimlerChrysler, might well be worth considering for Germany as a whole. Yet immigration does not seem to rank high on Germany's political agenda. The grand-coalition agreement mentions it only in passing, under the heading "security". If that foreshadows neglect of the issue, it could turn out to be a serious mistake. ■