

Germany briefing: May - June 2024

Reporting period: 1st May – 30th May 2024

Far-right AfD make breakthrough in European elections, defeating parties of government

- In the European elections, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) secured 15.9% of the vote (+4.9% compared to the last European elections), making it the second-largest force behind the conservative CDU/CSU.
- However, the AfD will no longer be able to form coalitions in the Council of Europe with Marine Le Pen's right-wing populist Rassemblement National (RN) of France due to Le Pen's decision to end cooperation with the AfD.

This follows the AfD's failure to adequately distance itself from a controversial, secret Potsdam meeting on the repatriation of immigrants, in which AfD politicians were involved.

- For years, the AfD has been advocating for significant restrictions on immigration, especially from predominantly Muslim countries, arguing that Islam poses a threat to Europe and is incompatible with European principles of law, freedom, and democracy. Parts of the AfD are under observation by the German domestic intelligence agency due to unconstitutional, xenophobic, right-wing extremist, and anti-democratic tendencies and statements.

Following government reversal on arms exports ban, Saudi Arabia among top customer for German arms

- For the first time since 2018, Saudi Arabia has re-emerged as one of the top five recipients of German arms exports. This marks a reversal of the ban imposed on arms exports to the Saudi Kingdom due to its involvement in the Yemen war and the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

In 2022, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz lifted the self-imposed ban on arms exports to current parties involved in conflicts.

- In the first half of 2024, export permits worth €132.48 million were issued for Saudi Arabia, while Qatar received €100 million in arms exports. At the same time, the export volume to Israel in 2023 increased tenfold to €326 million, with a significant portion approved after October 7th.

Details on the types of weapons have not been disclosed by the German government to

protect the involved companies, but it is known that German taxpayer-funded corvettes, submarines, and anti-tank missile ammunition were exported to Israel.

New citizenship law comes into effect, anti-Muslim undertones in naturalisation test

- On June 27, 2024, the new citizenship law came into effect in Germany.

Alongside several changes such as a shorter residence period requirement and the possibility of retaining previous citizenship upon naturalisation, the law introduces an expanded questionnaire for the naturalisation test.

These questions focus on Judaism in Germany and Germany's historical 'responsibility' towards the state of Israel. The exact questions have not been officially published yet, but they aim to prevent individuals with supposedly antisemitic beliefs from becoming citizens. Media and political discussions have predominantly revolved around Muslims in this context.

- There have been reports circulating that Germany will require future applicants for citizenship to explicitly acknowledge Israel's "right to exist". However, even after the law change, such a declaration is only required in the German state of Saxony-Anhalt and not nationwide.

Instead, as it currently stands, applicants are required to pledge allegiance to the Federal Republic of Germany and its Basic Law. Furthermore, according to the Nationality Act §10 Abs. 1a, new naturalisation applicants must also "acknowledge Germany's particular historical responsibility for the [Nazi] tyranny and its consequences, especially for the protection of Jewish life, as well as for peaceful coexistence among peoples and the prohibition of waging aggressive war."

Documented antisemitic, racist, or otherwise inhumane actions have historically led to the denial of citizenship.

Increase in Islamophobic attacks in 2023

- The organisation CLAIM has documented 1,926 anti-Muslim incidents in Germany for the year 2023, representing a 114% increase compared to the previous year. This trend continues into the first months of 2024.

These incidents include attacks on mosques, discrimination, and physical as well as verbal assaults, with Muslim women and children being disproportionately affected. It is believed that the actual number of incidents is significantly higher.