

'Accept more refugees' — Germany's left places new demands on the government

For the first time since 2011, the number of people living in a country with refugee status decreased.



In Germany, for the first time since 2011, the number of people living in a country with refugee status decreased year-on-year. Some politicians welcome this trend, while the parliamentary left (Die Linke) is criticizing it.

According to the left-wing party, it is proof that Germany could accept more refugees.

According to the newly published statistics of the Ministry of the Interior, 62,000 fewer refugees lived in Germany in the middle of this year than at the end of 2019. This means that after many years, the number of people with refugee status has decreased.

At the request of the left-wing party Die Linke, the Ministry of the Interior stated that in August 2020, 1.77 million refugees with various residence permits lived in Germany. This represents a year-on-year decrease of about 3.5 percent.

Although it may seem like a little decrease to some, given the development of the so-called refugee crisis so far, this is a real turning point. Since 2011, the number of registered refugees in Germany has grown relatively sharply, and not a single year was an exception.



Bodo Ramelow, top candidate of German party 'Die Linke' (The Left) for the parliament elections in Thuringia state delivers a speech behind a red Karl Marx bust during an election campaign in Erfurt, Germany, Friday, Sept.12, 2014. AP Photo/Jens Meyer

The ministry's statistics, published by the Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung (NOZ), show that at the end of 2011, 400,000 people lived in Germany with refugee status, but last year it was 1.83 million.

Between 2018 and 2019 alone, the number of such people rose by 70,000. The current year-on-year decline is therefore a truly significant event.

A spokeswoman for the Ministry of the Interior explained the current statistics by saying that for some people the refugee protection status had "expired or was revoked", and a significant number of refugees had left Germany or had been deported.

In Germany, the number of people in all legal categories of refugees has fallen. Today, 1.21 million refugees have the status of "safe residence", which is about 50,000 less than last year. Another 400,000 live in a country with the status of asylum seeker or so-called tolerated person. Even in this category, Germany has seen a year-on-year decrease of 15,000 people.

The extreme left calls for more migrants to be accepted

However, not all view the reduction in the number of refugees after nine years as a positive trend. Germany's Die Linke, which is the fifth strongest party in the German parliament with 69 members considered a radical leftist party, used the decline of refugees to criticize the German government's allegedly inhumane refugee policy.

"The numbers show that we have space. Tens of thousands of people seeking protection are waiting in completely unsatisfactory conditions in refugee camps and reception centers," Ulla Jelpke, a member of Die Linke, told NOZ.

According to Jelpke, the newly published data on the decline in the number of refugees in Germany is clear evidence that the country has enough space and money to receive more refugees. He argues that such a move would help ease crowded refugee camps, especially in Southern Europe.

“Germany can and must use its humanitarian capacity to effectively ease pressure on countries such as Greece and Italy,” she said.

Die Linke is not the only party, with both members of the Green Party and Germany’s conservative Christian Democratic Union calling for the country to take in more migrants earlier this year under the motto: “We have space”.

At the same time, the supportive attitude of the parliamentary Die Linke to help refugees is nothing new in Germany. The views of the German extreme left on refugees, presented by other parties with a radically left-wing program, are in stark contrast to the attitude of their “sister parties” in post-communist countries, including the Czech Republic. For example, Czech communists have long rejected so-called refugee quotas and, instead of receiving refugees, are pushing for more effective protection of the EU’s external borders and assistance to refugees abroad.

Recently, the German federal government said it would pay out €64.5 billion over the next four years to deal with the consequences of the influx of migrants since 2015, with the money focused on integrating migrants and stopping the sources of flight. For the year 2021 alone, the German Ministry of Finance is planning to spend €20.1 billion.

Title image: A group of migrant children with health issues board a plane to Germany, at Athens International Airport, Friday, July 24, 2020. German Foreign Heiko Maas, on a visit to Athens this week, said his country would follow through in its pledge to assist Greece with the relocation of unaccompanied minors and other children at refugee camps in Greece. (AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris)

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