

## Press Release

### Germans are concerned about migration

#### GfK Verein – Challenges of Nations 2015 survey findings

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**Nuremberg, 17 July 2015 – A change occurred at the top of the ranking of concerns in Germany this year. For the first time in 22 years, unemployment was no longer the main worry. More than a third of Germans indicated that migration was the most pressing issue in their view. A growing number of Germans believe that it is necessary to promote better integration and combat xenophobia. These were the findings of the Challenges of Nations 2015 survey conducted by the GfK Verein. More than 25,000 people in 22 countries were interviewed for the survey. At international level, respondents were primarily concerned about the trend in prices and purchasing power.**

Unemployment has been replaced by migration and integration as the most frequently mentioned challenges. With a rise from 13 percent to 35 percent, concerns related to these issues almost tripled in Germany within twelve months. The cause of this sharp increase is likely to be the rising number of asylum seekers in Germany. In 2012, around 78,000 asylum seekers were recorded but by 2014 the number was up to 203,000. Reports about the high number of deaths when crossing the Mediterranean are likely to be another key factor. Commenting on the findings, Prof. Dr. Raimund Wildner, Managing Director of the GfK Verein, explained: "There is a lot of concern and compassion. A more in-depth analysis of the responses to the open-ended question made it evident that the concern expressed in this respect is not to be mistaken for hostility towards strangers." The share of those who called for combating xenophobia and promoting better integration has risen sharply in the period since 2014 and now accounts for 10 percent. Conversely, there has been a downward trend for many years in the number of responses that call for denying entry to and/or deporting asylum seekers. In 1992, this figure was 17 percent whereas today it is as low as 9 percent. The international comparison highlights that Germans are not alone in their immigration concerns. This was also the No. 1 topic in Switzerland (29 percent) and Sweden (25 percent). Germany's neighbors in Austria also indicated that migration is a problem which urgently needs to be solved (26 percent).

#### Unemployment concerns diminish further

At 5 percent, the rate of unemployment in Germany was at a low in 2014 in terms of the 25-year long-term trend, according to the OECD. As a result, at 22 percent, unemployment moved down into second place of the concerns ranking. This is eleven percentage points lower than in the previous year. Although unemployment

came in second place in both eastern and western Germany, concern remained higher in eastern Germany at 27 percent than in western Germany (21 percent).

*Mütterrente*, a pension benefit for the mothers of children born before 1992, and pension payments from 63 were controversial topics under discussion last year. Prof. Dr. Wildner stated that "nevertheless, the debate about financial security in old age currently seems to have lost some of its urgency for Germans." At 16 percent, benefits and pensions were in third place. Compared with the previous year, this figure was eight percentage points lower. A similar percentage of respondents (16 percent) were concerned about the trend in prices and purchasing power. This represents a decrease of ten percentage points over a period of one year, with the lowest level of concern about these measured since 2009. The probable reason for this being that prices only rose very modestly by 0.9 percent in 2014.

Challenges in Germany from 2002 to 2015						
Percentage of respondents who believe that the following issues urgently need to be resolved in Germany: (free responses; rounded; multiple responses possible)						
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2015
Immigration and integration	13	9	8	7	13	35
Unemployment	80	53	66	34	33	22
Pensions/old age provision	18	23	19	13	24	16
Price and purchasing power	11	37	24	26	26	16
Economic stability	8	7	26	24	10	15
Poverty	2	10	5	12	14	15
Education policy	9	17	14	12	12	15
Peace policy	1	2	5	3	5	11
Crime	6	13	15	7	11	10
Social security	10	13	17	11	11	9

Source: GfK Verein, Challenges of Nations 2015 survey

### Concerns about stability despite strong economy

This year economic stability has been a greater concern for Germans. In 2014, the topic was in 12<sup>th</sup> place at 10 percent but at 15 percent, it has currently moved up into fifth place. Increased concerns are closely linked to the situation in Greece, which was expressly mentioned by 7 percent of respondents. Uncertainty about the consequences of a potential Grexit is the main cause, despite positive forecasts. At 15 percent, poverty is a problem that the same number of people believed needs to be solved urgently. The slow but steady increase in the level of concern about this topic therefore continued. Peace-keeping was also a topic of far greater concern to Germans than before. The share of those who see this as a problem which the country needs to solve urgently more than doubled (2014: 5 percent, 2015: 11 percent), putting this challenge among the top 10 concerns for the first time in 15 years. In view of the Ukraine crisis and Russia's policy, the higher level of concern among citizens is understandable.

### International inflation fears

The trend in prices and purchasing power was in the top spot internationally at 32 percent. Indians (56 percent) and Iranians (52 percent) in particular, as well as Russians (37 percent) and Indonesians (33 percent) were very worried about the price trend. At 27 percent, unemployment only came in second place across all

countries after being in the top spot for many years. However, unemployment remained the main concern in countries such as Spain (74 percent) and France (64 percent) as well as Italy (55 percent), Poland (51 percent) and Turkey (30 percent). Corruption was another of the top 3 concerns. It was mentioned by one fifth of all respondents worldwide. The highest number of mentions was recorded among India's (36 percent), Spain's (34 percent) and Indonesia's (31 percent) population.

### **Carefree Sweden**

In the 22 countries in which respondents were asked about the challenges they believe need to be solved most urgently, respondents indicated an average of 2.2 problems. Nigerians expressed the highest number of concerns (3.6), followed by Iranians (2.9) and Germans (2.7). At the lower end of the list of concerns were Turkey and Japan, with respondents in both countries indicating 1.1 concerns. Sweden was the country with the least worries. This particular role has become something of a tradition for Sweden. The number of responses in the country actually decreased from 1.2 to the mention of only one concern within a year.

### **The survey**

These findings are an extract from the GfK "Challenges of the Nations 2015" study and are based on 25,454 interviews which were carried out in 22 countries on behalf of the GfK Verein in spring 2015: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom and the USA. In addition, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan and South Korea were included in the survey for the first time in the 2015 study. The basis of the survey is the following open question, which is asked, unchanged, every year: "In your opinion, what are the most important issues that need to be resolved in [relevant country] today?" Respondents are not limited in their answers, multiple answers are permitted.

### **The GfK Verein**

The GfK Verein was established in 1934 as a non-profit organization for the promotion of market research. Its membership consists of approximately 550 companies and individuals. The purpose of the Verein is to develop innovative research methods in close cooperation with academic institutions, to promote the training and further education of market researchers, to observe the structures and developments in society, the economy and politics that play a key role in private consumption, and to research their effects on consumers. Survey results are made available to the membership free of charge. The GfK Verein is a shareholder in GfK SE. Further information: [www.gfk-verein.org](http://www.gfk-verein.org).  
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