



The Filipino Women Migrants in Germany

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON MIGRATION

Between 1955 and 1990, there were about 20 million people who came and settled in Germany (SZ, 04.05.04). The country has had to cope with a number of immigrants like Soviet Jews, ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe (Aussiedler) and asylum seekers, who have been coming in since the last fifty years. The influx of people intensified when East and West Germany reunited. Most of these people were granted German citizenships and were fundamentally differentiated from the "Gastarbeiter" (guest worker) category.

The so-called *Gastarbeiter* started to arrive in 1955, with the signing of the first bilateral agreement with the Italian government for the import of workers for German industries. Until the ban on recruitment in 1973, there were about 11 million Gastarbeiters staying in Germany (SZ, 04.05.04).

Of some 82 million people who live in Germany, 7.3 million are foreign nationals. This is about 9% of the whole population. Foreign population ratio of Germany is one of the highest in Europe (German Embassy London).

"Some 1,856,000 of the approximately 7.34 m foreigners in Germany (key date: 31 December 1999) come from EU countries (25.3 percent), the majority of them are nationals from Turkey (28 percent), from the former Yugoslavia (16.2 percent), of which 737,204 come from the former Yugoslavia. 167,690 come from Bosnia-Herzegovina, 213,954 from Croatia, 18,648 from Slovenia, and 49,420 from Macedonia, from Italy (8.4 percent), from Greece (5 percent), and from Poland (4 percent)." (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 03.06.2004)



Heavy concentration of foreign population is found in federal states like Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Hesse and North-Rhine/Westphalia.

“Of the approximately 7.3 foreigners registered in the Central Aliens Register as of 31 December 1999, some 52 percent had been living here for at least 10 years, approximately 32 percent had been living here for 20 years or more...” (Federal Ministry of Interior).

The topic of migration or issues concerning foreigners remain one of the classical controversial issues debated in all walks of German life from *Kneipe* (bar) clients to the Bundestag parliamentarians. “Strong resistance exists in postwar Germany, the biggest nation of global immigration after the USA, to its multicultural reality, an attitude rooted in the country’s complex historical and political circumstances. The ‘jus sanguinis,’ key principle of the country’s citizenship law has inevitably excluded permanent or long term nonethnic German foreign migrants from being ‘German’ (A.C.Attardo, Legislation Online).”

HISTORICAL FLOW OF FILIPINO WOMEN MIGRATION

Let me share with you this personal story written by a Filipina.

“When Gerd told his parents that he met and fell in love with a Filipina during the World Jamboree in Mt. Makiling in 1960, his parents got hold of an atlas to look where the Philippines lies geographically. To their astonishment, they could not locate the 7,000 islands in the book. Nora (fondly called Mommynor by some PWF women) came to Germany in 1964.”

The early arrival of Filipino migrants comprised medical personnel i.e., doctors, nurses and medical technologists dating back to the late 1960s, in response to the need of German hospitals for health workers. Most of the Filipino women migrants started arriving in Germany from 1965 until 1975. With the oil crisis in 1973, recruitment of foreign workers was stopped.

The crisis, however, did not dampen the enterprising spirit of Filipinas who were experiencing also crisis of unemployment during the years of martial law in the Philippines. Recruitment agencies for job placements in the Middle East and Europe ironically started to thrive during this time when outbound travel was being banned, but overseas employment encouraged by the government as one measure to get the much needed foreign currency for its debts.





The so-called marriage migration began to flourish in the early 1980s. (Many German men were healthy but lonely!) A great number of Filipinas started to come to Germany attracted by marriage offers either through penpal or marriage bureaus, or through personal contacts. Based on the 1990 Report from the PIC (Philippine Information Center) in the later years, about 1,000 Filipinas yearly were applying for Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage at the Philippine Embassy in Bonn. In the year 1990 for example, there were 1,267 couples who applied for this legal certification to marry.

- As of 31 December 2003, the total number of Filipinos in Germany was 22,440; where 17,760 were women and the rest, 4,680 were men (Statistisches Bundesamt 2004). This figure does not include Filipinas and Filipinos who have become German citizens. It is interesting to note the differences in numbers as reported by the same Federal Bureau of Statistics: a slightly higher number of foreigners according to citizenship as of 31 December 2003 in Germany: where the totals were reported at 23,171, with females at 18,019, males: 5,152.
- About 3,000 Filipinas live in each of these federal states of Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Hessen while the biggest concentration of 3,657 migrant Filipinas comes from North-Rhein/Westphalia.
- The number of registered Filipinas/os with mandatory social insurance employment is 8,933; 5,730 of whom are women employees. (Federal Bureau of Statistics December 2003)

A. Filipinos Residing in the Six North German States (as of 31 December 2003)

STATE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Hamburg	1,381	987	2,368
Niedersachsen	444	1,743	2,187
Schleswig-Holstein	386	738	1,124
Bremen	179	294	473
Sachsen-Anhalt	4	41	45
Mecklenburg Vorpommern	9	32	41
Grand Total	2,403	3,835	6,238

- B. Number of Filipinos : 6,238
 Percentage of Male : 38.52%
 Percentage of Female : 61.48%



C. Age Group

Percentage below 18 years	:	20%
Percentage 18-45 years	:	54%
Percentage 46-65 years	:	25%
Percentage above 65 years	:	1%

D. Occupation

Skilled	:	
Professional	:	209
Techno-Industrial	:	296
Sea-based	:	680
Unskilled	:	
Labourer	:	1,238
Part-time & Menial	:	1,218
Housewives	:	1,464
Students	:	1,133


Source: Philippine Consulate General, Hamburg (May 2004)

Detailed data on employment, social benefits, family reunion are not available. Statistical sources categorize Filipinas/os under East Asia, together with China, Hongkong, Indonesien, Japan, Korea, Macao or others. Detailed data could be researched but this requires especial fees for selection according to the Federal Bureau of Statistics. Furthermore, the Bureau reasoned out that if the figure would be less than 5,000, then it is not considered essential for publication.

Surprisingly, there are no data available on migration of Filipinas/os. This was the answer per email from the Ministry of Interior to my request for some data regarding migration and situation of Filipinos in Germany. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the formulation of legislation on immigration and integration of foreigners.

Today, Filipinas are found in the different sectors of German society: as medical personnel i.e., nurses and medical technologists, housewives, students, au pairs, caregivers for aged people, regular employees like saleswomen and office clerks, security check personnel for airline companies, nannies, domestic workers in private homes and companies as well as in the different diplomatic corps communities, entertainers and entrepreneurs.

The estimated number of Filipinas who are not documented is still a matter of speculation in many research work and writings. About



40,000 Filipinos in Germany are estimated to be without valid papers for work and stay.

PRESENT LEGISLATION

Depending on the nationality, there are sets of legislations which regulate movements or situation of foreigners in Germany. By the word “foreigner” or “alien,” is meant, anyone who does not have German citizenship (Handbuch-Deutschland). Two offices are responsible for the practical affairs of foreigners like healthcare and housing: the “Ausländerbehörde (Office for Foreigners), which is connected to the local authorities, and the Bundesamt für die Anerkennung ausländischer Fluchthlinge (State Department for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees).

The Office of the Federal Commissioner for Foreigners’ Affairs deals with basic issues involved in governing aliens and takes on the responsibility of integrating foreigners.

1. Aliens Act (Ausländergesetz) 1990 which took effect on 1 January 1991 provides for different types of residence status according to the purpose of the stay.

Kinds of Residence Permits (Aufenthaltserlaubnis):

- A residence title for specific purposes (Aufenthaltsbewilligung) makes a person’s stay conditional upon the reason for which it is issued. Holder must always leave Germany when the reason for his or her stay expires. For example: foreign students allowed to study in Germany under development aid schemes can apply for a residence title for their studies and if granted one, may not remain in Germany for any other purpose.
- A limited residence permit establishes a basis for permanent residence. The holder’s residence status becomes more secure the longer he or she stays.
- An unlimited residence permit (unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis) is the first step towards secure residence status. Holders of a limited residence permit can apply for an unlimited one after five years provided that they satisfy certain other criteria.
- A right of unlimited residence (Aufenthaltsberechtigung) is the best and most secure residence status under the Aliens Act. Holders of a residence permit can apply for a right of unlimited residence after eight years provided they satisfy certain other criteria.
- A residence title for exceptional purposes is usually granted on humanitarian grounds (Aufenthaltsbefugnis). It is also on a temporary basis and mostly granted to civil war refugees.



- A temporary suspension of deportation (Duldung or exceptional leave to remain) is not a residence permit but a temporary suspension of the deportation process.
- Permission to reside is separate from the various types of residence status in the Alien's Act. It is the status accorded to an asylum seeker whose application is being processed. Asylum seekers who are granted asylum under the Basic Law receive an unlimited residence permit; those granted asylum under the Geneva Convention on Refugees receive a residence title for exceptional purposes.

(Source: The Federal Government Commissioner for Foreigner's Issues 19th Edition and A Manual for Germany: Residency Rights 2004)

2. Citizenship and Nationality Law 1 January 2000

The new law from 2000 changes the principle of descent (jus sanguinis) as the only basis for granting citizenship. It is now possible to acquire German citizenship as the result of being born in Germany (jus soli) as in the case in most other European countries.

- Children of foreign parents who are born in Germany will receive German nationality if one parent was born here or entered Germany before the age of 14 and possesses a residence permit.
- On condition that they can support themselves financially and have no criminal record, the following persons will be granted a right to nationality:
 - Foreigner with eight year's legal residence in Germany
 - Foreign minors where at least one parent hold an unlimited residence permit and who have lived with this parent as member of his or her family in Germany for five years.
 - Foreign spouse of Germans after three year's legal residence in Germany, if the marriage has existed for at least two years

(Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior)

3. Immigration Law

The new Immigration Law which was to take effect on 1 January 2003 and formulated by the present Minister of Interior Otto Schilly is still a bone of contention among the political parties in Germany. It was passed by the Parliament but was declared void by the Federal Constitutional Court on 18 December 2002 as a result of procedural error in voting. Pending acceptable compromise and further debates, the new Immigration Law includes the following changes:

- Reduction of sojourn visa types from seven to two categories
- Simplification of administrative process for all visa application
- Foundation of a new Federal Ministry for migration and asylum-seeking
- Acceptance of qualified foreign labour (“brain-gain”). This involves a more selective approach to recruitment and the introduction of a North American-like “point system” to control the “quality” of immigrants
- Developing a nationwide “integration program” to which foreigners were to compulsory participate as well as the setting up of a centralised Alien Register Bureau
- Permission of job application and employment to foreign graduates
- Restriction of entry number of ethnic migrants (up to “100,000” only per year)
- Children up to age 18 of highly qualified migrants are allowed to join their family in Germany
- Age reduction of non-immigrants’ dependents for family re-union from 16 to 12 years old
- Freer movement within the EU of persons with the elimination of stay permission of EU citizens
- Measures aiming at promotion of voluntary return
(Source: A.C. Attardo, Legislation Online and the Federal Ministry of the Interior)

ASSOCIATIVE EXPERIENCES/RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS AND LOCAL/NATIONAL POPULATION AND INSTITUTIONS

Without claiming comprehensiveness, we provide a general picture of the Filipinas in their social relationship and encounter with other people or ethnic groups in Germany. These are personal observations and as such are not supported by any statistical data nor studies on these particular associative experiences.

Coming from a country rich in culture of fiesta celebrations, gatherings and merrymaking, the Filipinas in Germany appear to have less difficulty in adjusting to some German ways of life especially when these social encounters take place in the exclusivity of their own families and hosts of closed friends and acquaintances.

Gatherings often take place in Catholic parishes. Catholic Mass is celebrated mostly in English or in Pilipino in growing Filipino Catholic



communities and the so-called charismatic and bible-sharing groups in many German cities.

There are at least more than a hundred Filipino social/civic organisations or Filipino-German associations spread throughout the country celebrating Philippine Independence Day every 12th of June, Halloween, Christmas, Karaoke Contests or selling Gala tickets for visiting Filipino singers and actors for fundraising for charity projects in the Philippines or for pure entrepreneurial purposes.

As widely observed in many communities in the home country, religious ceremonies or church-related activities easily solicit voluntary work and engagement from Filipino women migrants.

Aside from these social functions and gatherings where the majority of the participants are Filipino women, the participation of Filipinas in German politics is limited to a very few individuals who are members of local government councils or city council for foreigners. However, there are active Filipinas who are involved in work for the social and political concerns of migrant women. It could be the intrinsic Filipino *bayanihan* (spirit of volunteerism) and *damayan* (solidarity and help) which inspire these women to get involved in this kind of socio-political work.



ASSOCIATIVE EXPERIENCES AND GOOD PRACTICES:

Philippine Womens' Forum e.V.

It all started when Filipinas working in various German women institutions and Filipino organisations in Germany met and shared their experiences about work, problems, achievements and visions for the Filipinas in Germany.

There are several organisations of migrant Filipinos, women organisations and Filipino-German organisations who have played and continue to play an important role in providing support for Filipinas in Germany.

In November 1989, in order to coordinate these scattered efforts and initiatives, a group of Filipinas initiated a Filipino-German Women Solidarity Conference to establish contacts with other Filipino and German women's groups and individuals, and develop further relations with them. This conference underlined the need for a Germanywide network of Filipinas.





In September 1990, with more Filipinas joining the organising committee, the launching congress of the Philippine Women's Forum was held with 50 Filipinas present coming from various parts of Germany.

What is Philippine Women's Forum?

The Philippine Women's Forum is a response to the need for a concerted effort to address the problems and issues of Filipinas in Germany. It is a network of Filipinas who are members of various Philippine organisations and/or German women's institutions in various cities of Germany.

Aim and Role of PWF e.V.

- To provide a forum for discussion of various women's issues affecting Filipinas in Germany
- To provide a venue to share our understanding of our identity in a foreign land and culture; and in the process, to strengthen our identity as Filipinas in Germany
- To coordinate and support each other's efforts and activities in various women's issues and initiatives
- Sponsors or cosponsors seminars, fora and discussions on important issues affecting Filipinas and other women migrants in Germany
- Launches campaigns and other activities against traffickers and recruiters found to be exploiting Filipinas and other women from developing countries
- Makes representation to the German and the Philippine governments for the protection of the rights of Filipinas
(Source: Philippine Women's Forum Background Information Leaflet)

Activities

- Conference for Filipinas – "The Challenges of Filipinas in Germany" 1990 in Bonn:
Topic: Filipina Identity and Counteracting Stereotyping, Coping Up with a Multicultural Society; Support for Women's Group in the Philippines
Result: Foundation of Philippine Women's Forum and the campaign committee on trafficking in women
- Participation of PWF to WSAP Women's International Solidarity Affair in the Philippines in 1991 with the theme "Foreign



Domination and the Condition of Women in the Colonised Countries” organised by GABRIELA.

- Participation in the Europe-wide conference of migrant Filipinos in Kerkade, The Netherlands on 1-3 November 1991 organised by the Commission for Filipino Migrants Workers, Amsterdam. PWF facilitated workshop on trafficking in women.
- Seminar on Feminism, Patriarchy and Reproduction in May, 1992 in Hamburg sponsored by FrauenAnstiftung.
- June 1992 – PWF demonstrated in the European Parliament in Strasbourg together with some 800 participants from other parts of the world to oppose the marginalisation of underprivileged sectors and the effects of the Europe 1992. Part of the KAIROS EUROPA “Act Now” activity.
- July 1992 – Philippine Women’s Forum committee on Violence and Discrimination met with other women from Asia, Africa and Latin America in Berlin.
Result: Initiation of the Campaign “Sudströmungen”
- November 1992- PWF launched a one year activity: Campaign Against Violence and Discrimination of Migrant Women (until November 1993).
- September, 1992 – PWF, being the only existing countrywide Filipina organisation in Europe helped in the preparation of the content and organisation of conference in Barcelona “Empowering Filipinas in Europe.”
Result: Formation of Babaylan, The Philippines Women’s Network in Europe.
- Philippine Women’s Forum cultural group celebrated with Agisra its 10th Anniversary with its musical “The Changing Role of the Filipina in our History” in Frankfurt in March 1993.
- PWF in cooperation with *FrauenAnstiftung* held dialogue with other women’s groups in this Theoretical Seminar on Feminism in June 1993 in Fischerhude.
Topic: History of the New Women’s Movement in Germany and the Development of Feminism in Europe and the Role of the 3rd World Women’s Movement.
- PWF participation to the Facilitators’ Training in Rome on 2-10 May 1993 organised by Babaylan, the Philippine Women’s Network in Europe.
Topic: Empowerment of Women by Means of an Education Program called Basic Women’s Orientation Course.
- Germanywide Congress and Conference of PWF in Stuttgart in September 1993 with the Theme: Everyday Racism in Germany



- Seminar: Feminisation of Migration in Bonn, 22-24 October 1993. PWF traced the Herstory of Migration in cooperation with Ökostiftung NRW
Topic: Migration — Alternatives and Implications
- PWF with Babaylan Europe held an evening information on the situation of Filipinas in Germany and information about Babaylan Campaign sponsored by Soldue, a multiethnic women's organisation in Copenhagen, Denmark on 8 March 1994.
- Launching of Campaign "Get Up! Women Against Racism and Sexism" organised by PWF with other migrants groups in Köln: Agisra, Iranian and Turkish Women Initiative, Soz.Wiss.Forschung and Praxis für Frauen in Köln on 16 April 1994.
- 10-12 June 1994 – Seminar organised by PWF: Sexuality and Power Relations in Hamburg
- "Feminisation of Migration in European Context and Social Impact of Migration" Congress of PWF in September 1994 in Nürnberg
Result: concrete networking with other women migrants' groups
- Participation to Babaylan Europewide Conference in Zurich, Switzerland on 6-7 September 1994.
Theme: Organising Migrant Women against Violence and Discrimination
- NGO Vienna Forum on 13-15 October 1994 - participation of PWF with Babaylan network in this first nongovernment organisation forum for the European region. Babaylan's ongoing Campaign: "Violence No More."
- Networking and formation of BuntesFrauennetzwerk (Colorful Network of Women), PWF cofounded this network of women migrants in Köln on 5 November 1994.
- Participation of PWF with Babaylan Europe to the NGO Forum on Women at the UN 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in September, 1995. Babaylan held series of workshops on the situation of Filipino women migrants in Europe and on Violence Against Migrant Women.
- Annual Seminar of PWF "A Multicultural Society" – A Challenge to Migrant Women on 29 September 1995 in Bremen.
Topic: Integration or Assimilation to German Society and Report from Babaylan's Participation to the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing.
- PWF hosted the 3rd Babaylan Annual Conference and Congress with the theme: EU Policies on Migrant Women on 3-5 September 1996 in Köln.



- Athens, 27-30 November 1997. Europewide conference of Filipino migrants in Europe.
Theme: Migrant's Rights for Equality in Europe and Participative Development in the Philippines. PWF and Babaylan Europe were members of steering committee and coordinating organisations together with Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers and Kasapi.
- Philippine Women's Forum became a nonprofit, nonstock registered organisation in August, 1998.
- In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of UN Declaration of Human Rights, PWF held its annual working conference and congress in Gießen on 16-18 October 1998 with the theme: Basic Laws for Migrants sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Youth and Women, Commission for Women for the City of Gießen and Hessen Ministry for Environment and Energy.
- October 2001, Rome PWF's participation to Babaylan Conference in Rome "Rising Above Poverty."
- 10th Anniversary of Babaylan; Celebratory Conference in November 2002 in Barcelona "Celebrating a Decade of Women's Empowerment."
- 26 November 2003 – in commemoration of the International Day against Violence Against Women, a gathering of Filipinas in Köln organised by PWF to discuss domestic violence against migrant women.
- 13 March 2004 – Forum on Social Work and Participation in celebration of the International Women's Day with the head of Caritas International for Migration Köln.

Activities of PWF are mostly supported by the voluntary financial help of its members. The organisation has no paid staff. Presently, the organisation is striving to expand its membership as most of the old members have either retreated from active membership or are involved in the activities of their respective institutions and counselling offices.

Since 1998, the organisation has been supporting its activities and projects through membership fees and donation. The present lack of financial support from Funding Institutions poses a big problem in carrying out activities like the regular Fora and Seminars with migrant women. Despite of this proverbial financial burden among self-help groups and organisations, PWF hopes and strives to keep its vision that the organisation stays not only as a Forum for the discussion of issues concerning migrant women but also as a true, effective network which aspires for the support and empowerment of Filipinas in Europe.