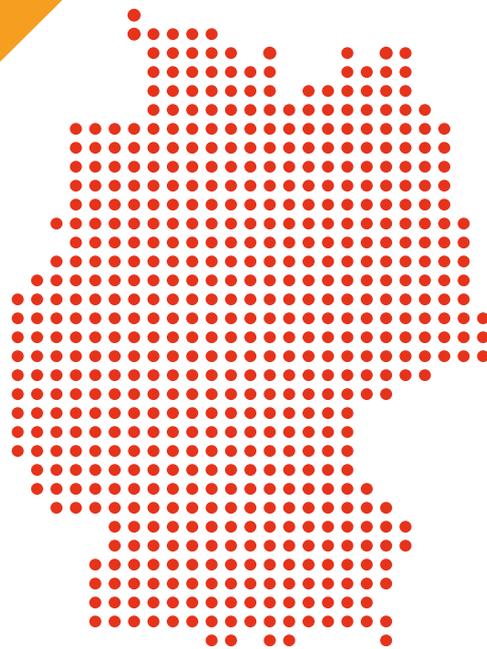


Social Rights Monitor

2021

Country Monitor:
Germany



solidar



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The National Strategy Group in Germany identifies inequalities as the major social issue that needs to be addressed. In particular, it sees the current education system as responsible for spreading inequalities and discriminating against people from a very young age. The pandemic exacerbated these issues in all aspects of daily life and highlighted the need to increase civil and social dialogue at all levels, with the objective of providing expertise and input aimed at education reform.

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | EU-27 2020 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| GINI index¹ | 31.1 | 29.7 | 34.4 | 30.1 |
| Unemployment² | 3.4% | 3.1% | 3.8% | 6.3% |
| Gender Equality Index³ | 66.9 (2019) | 67.5 (2020) | 68.6 (2021) | 67.9 (2020) |
| In-work poverty⁴ | 9% | 7.9% | 10.6% | 9.2% |
| Housing Overcrowding⁵ | 7.4% | 7.8% | 10.3% | 15.6% |
| CIVICUS Civic Space Monitor⁶ | OPEN | OPEN | OPEN | N/A |

Selected indicators on the state of social rights in Europe

Missing data for 2020 are not available at the time of publication of the Social Rights Monitor 2021.

Equal opportunities and access to the labour market

Germany's state welfare system significantly mitigated employees' loss of income due to the Covid-19 crisis. However, the pandemic cut gross income by about 3% on average and 4.3% among the poorest 10% of the population.⁷ **The Kurzarbeitergeld (short-time allowance),⁸ in particular, acted as an important income stabilizer.** The unemployment rate is slowly declining, to 3.3% in August 2021 compared to 4% in September 2020.⁹ However, young workers and those in precarious situations have not been adequately

protected, and the unemployment rate among people up to 24 years old increased, reaching 6.7% in August 2021.¹⁰

Social partners played an important role in negotiating policies and measures to deal with the Covid-19 emergency in the country, whilst collective wage bargaining was postponed in favour of a rapid response to the pandemic and the definition of the Kurzarbeit schemes. In 2020, a major public sector agreement was concluded, providing public workers with a

1 Eurostat (2021). Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?lang=en&-dataset=ilc_di12

2 Eurostat (2021). Unemployment by sex and age: annual data: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en

3 European Institute for Gender Equality (2020). Gender Equality Index: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/DE>

4 Eurostat (2021). In-work at-risk-of-poverty-rate : <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tespm070/default/table?lang=en>

5 Eurostat (2021). Overcrowding rate by age, sex and poverty status – total population: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_lvho05a/default/table?lang=en

6 CIVICUS (2021). Civic space monitor - Germany: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/germany/>

7 IAB, ifo (2020) Welfare State Eases the Blow of Income Lost to Coronavirus in Germany: <https://www.ifo.de/en/node/60456>

8 Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (2020) Fragen und Antworten zu Kurzarbeit und Qualifizierung: https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/DE/Downloads/2020-03-18-kurzarbeitergeldfaq.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1

9 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2021) Arbeitslosigkeit: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Labour/Labour-Market/Unemployment/Tables/press-month2.html;jsessionid=7274A4686306AE3F19B96AB1733655E2.live732>

10 Ibid.

one-off payment of between €300 and €600 as compensation for their increased workload during the pandemic and for sometimes having to telework. **Telework increased pressure especially on working single parents, notably women and parents of children with disabilities who no longer received the learning support they needed.**¹¹

INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS

According to the National Strategy Group, Germany has various policies in place aimed at the inclusion of newcomers to the country. The most popular are German language courses and cultural and social inclusion courses. However, the National Strategy Group reports that the courses offered by the state are often of low quality and privilege frontal learning, which discourages newcomers and often leads them to leave a course before reaching an adequate level of German. This is why, according to the NSG, courses and exchange spaces offered by local civil society organisations are vital to foster the inclusion and wellbeing of migrants and refugees throughout the country.

The National Action Plan for Integration (NAP-I) was developed in 2018 through joint efforts and proposals by the federal government, the federal states, local authorities, and civil society, including more than 75 migrant organizations.¹² It was revisited in March 2021¹³ during an integration summit. It foresees five integration phases, starting from “before immigration” and progressing to inclusion, growth, and cohesion. Germany has not fundamentally changed

its approach to the inclusion of migrants, and the country’s policies do not provide long-term support.¹⁴ For example, migrants face difficulties with family reunification, and cannot keep dual citizenship: instead, they have to renounce their previous nationality when they obtain German nationality. Anti-discrimination policies should also be improved, as victims often do not get justice.¹⁵ Therefore, the National Strategy Group recommends that the programmes funded by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) go hand in hand with the work of civil society organisations. It recommends that such programmes be developed in concertation and constant cooperation with organisations that work with migrants and refugee seekers on a daily basis.

GOOD PRACTICE LAGFA Bayern

LAGFA Bayern¹⁶ is the amalgamation of around 120 volunteer agencies, volunteer centres, and coordination centres for civic engagement in Bavaria. It is committed at the state level to improving the framework for civic engagement and provides funding to the programme “Language Creates Opportunities”,¹⁷ which supports initiatives and projects for people with a refugee and migration background to learn German. In addition, LAGFA Bayern particularly encourages job-related language training, to ease newly arrived people’s entry to the labour market.

11 Eurofound (2021) Living and working conditions in Germany: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/country/germany#highlights-working-life-in-2020>

12 Bundesregierung (2021) NAP-I: federal government, the federal states, local authorities and civil society, including more than 75 migrant organizations

13 Euractiv (2021) Germany revisits integration policy as critics demand ‘paradigm shift’: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/non-discrimination/news/german-integration-policy-needs-a-paradigm-shift-opposition-migrant-organisations-say/>

14 MIPEX (2020) Germany country report: <https://www.mipex.eu/germany>

15 Ibid.

16 LAGFA Bayern: <https://lagfa-bayern.de/>

17 Language Creates Opportunities: <https://lagfa-bayern.de/projekte/sprache-schafft-chancen/>

EDUCATION AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Germany's public expenditure on all levels of education is above the OECD average.¹⁸ The teaching profession is considered very attractive, as the country's teachers have the highest average salaries among OECD countries.¹⁹ However, this is apparently not enough to ensure educational fairness and equal opportunities for students and learners, the National Strategy Group reports. In 2020, the share of early leavers in Germany was 10%, higher than the European average.²⁰ This is a worrying statistic, considering that the risks of poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion are higher among the people who left school at a young age or that have no educational qualifications.²¹ **The National Strategy Group says that Germany's education system in its current form is not suited to giving equal opportunities** to all children and young people. The socio-economic status of young students significantly affects their participation in education from a very early age, producing an effect that is intensified from one educational level to the next.

Although tuition fees in Germany are among the lowest among European countries,²² this does not translate into an open and inclusive education system. Compulsory education in the country starts at the age of six, when pupils enter primary school, or Grundschule, but inequalities start at a very early stage. After primary school, education splits into different paths that lead to different outcomes and

preclude choice later on. Only pupils who have attended a Gymnasium can enter higher education.²³ Once students complete compulsory education at around the age of 15, the next move has already been determined by the path taken after primary school. According to the National Strategy Group, children's socio-economic situation is a major determinant of educational opportunities. This is confirmed by a 2021 OECD study,²⁴ which says that **in Germany, economic status influences learning outcomes more on average than in other OECD countries**. This results in greater disadvantages for students from an immigrant background and those with special educational needs.

The pandemic exacerbated these inequalities. Students from higher-income families are more likely to attend a Gymnasium, so they also had a better chance than other students of being provided with a digital device, a safe learning environment, and parental support. The pandemic also raised concerns over the career prospects of young people. The unemployment level for the people aged 25 to 34 with secondary education stood at 12.1% in 2020, an increase of 0.2 percentage point from the previous year.²⁵ The Covid-19 crisis also lowered the employment levels of young people,²⁶ with particular lows in the final quarters of both 2020 and 2021.²⁷ Moreover, the German Research Institute for the Economics of Education and Social Affairs, FiBS, expects youth unemployment to dramatically increase in the coming years, particularly among people with a migration background.²⁸

18 OECD (2021) Education at a glance 2021: Germany: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/e4292276-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/e4292276-en>

19 Ibid.

20 Eurostat (2021) Early leavers from education and training: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

21 Eurostat (2021) Key figures on Europe 2021: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/13394938/KS-EI-21-001-EN-N.pdf/ad9053c2-debd-68c0-2167-f2646efeaec1?t=1632300620367>

22 OECD (2021) Education at a glance 2021: Germany: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/e4292276-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/e4292276-en>

23 Eurydice (2021) Germany overview: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/germany_en

24 OECD (2021) Education at a glance 2021: Germany: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/e4292276-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/e4292276-en>

25 Ibid.

26 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2021) Arbeitslose in Deutschland insgesamt: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Wirtschaft/Konjunkturindikatoren/Arbeitsmarkt/arb110.html>

27 Ibid.

28 FiBS (2020) Jugendarbeitslosigkeit in Deutschland in Krisenzeiten: https://jugendsozialarbeit.news/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FiBS_Forum_075_Jugendarbeitslosigkeit_in_Deutschland_final_erg.pdf

GOOD PRACTICE

Street College

The Street College project,²⁹ organised by the organisation Gangway in Berlin, provides a free space for individual and self-determined learning. It pursues a radically needs-based, strength-oriented, and self-reliant approach to learning. The students determine the course programme and can design the content according to their interests. It is particularly aimed at students who experienced discrimination and exclusion, feel confronted with psychological problems, live in difficult social circumstances, or are dealing with traumatic experiences. Therefore, in addition to the acquisition of professional competences, importance is attached to reflection on personal strengths.

GENDER EQUALITY

Despite some improvements from last year in the representation of women in politics and economic decision-making, women face particular disadvantages in the labour market and at home. **In Germany, the jobs in which women are over-represented – i.e. low-qualified, fixed-term, and domestic work – were the first jobs to be cut in March 2020 due to the outbreak of the pandemic.**³⁰ When measures to limit the spread of the virus were

enacted, the cultural, education, and personal care sectors were deeply affected – areas where women make up the majority of the workforce. As an example, 32% of women in Germany are employed in education and social work activities, compared to only 9% of men.³¹ An important measure adopted by the government to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis has been the Kurzarbeitergeld (short-time allowance),³² but women benefited the least from it. As the allowance was calculated based on hours worked, people with part-time jobs received lower allowances. **In Germany, 24% of women are part-time workers, compared to 4% of men, so women are six times more likely to be in part-time work than men.**³³ The higher rate of part-time work among women is connected with their roles as caregivers and housekeepers. While 72% of women living in Germany say they are the person responsible for daily cooking and household activities, only 29% of men say this. Women in Germany are also more likely to be in charge of care activities for the elderly, disabled, and children.³⁴ As a result, 23% of women in Germany earn a gross salary of €1,999 or less, 10 percentage points more than the 13% figure for men.³⁵

Parental leave in Germany is regulated through the Elterngeldgesetz³⁶ (act on parental allowance). The amount corresponds to 65% or 100% of the monthly salary of the parent taking leave based on the length of the leave, which can be up to 12 months. If both parents take at least two months' paid leave, one can receive a two-month leave bonus, potentially allowing one parent up to 14 months' leave.³⁷ The German National Strategy Group welcomes

29 Street College project: <https://streetcollege.de/>

30 European Parliament (2020) Precarious work from a gender and intersectionality perspective: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/662491/IPOL_STU\(2020\)662491_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/662491/IPOL_STU(2020)662491_EN.pdf)

31 EIGE (2021) Segregation and quality of work – Germany: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/domain/work/DE>

32 Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (2020) Fragen und Antworten zu Kurzarbeit und Qualifizierung: https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/DE/Downloads/2020-03-18-kurzarbeitergeldfaq.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1.

33 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2020) Kernerwerbstätige in unterschiedlichen Erwerbsformen nach soziodemografischen Merkmalen und Wirtschaftsabschnitten: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbstaetigkeit/Tabellen/atyp-ische-beschaefigung.html>

34 EIGE (2021) Care activities – Germany: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/domain/time/DE>

35 D. Hobler, S. Pfahl, A. Zucco (2020) 30 Jahre Deutsche Einheit, Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern auf den Arbeitsmärkten in West- und Ostdeutschland? - WSI Report Nr. 60: <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/225423>

36 Gesetz zum Elterngeld und zur Elternzeit: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/gesetze/gesetz-zum-elterngeld-und-zur-elternzeit-73806>

37 EIGE (2021) Who is eligible for parental leave in Germany: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/who-eligible-parental-leave-germany>

this measure, which should encourage fathers to take parental leave. However, the NSG denounces workplaces that discourage men from taking parental leave, something that happens often. The main problem, as identified by the National Strategy Group, is the scarcity of early

childhood nurseries. Finding a day-care spot is getting harder, the German Economic Institute (IW) reports in a study,³⁸ which says that one in seven children will not find a place in public day care.

Social protection and inclusion

HOUSING

Housing prices and rents are reported to be one of the main causes of the increasing inequalities in living conditions, according to the National Strategy Group. The average rent increased steadily over the past seven years. One square metre of a newly constructed dwelling cost around €8 to rent in 2013, but this increased to more than €10 in 2021.³⁹ Low- and middle-income households often cannot afford decent housing, as demonstrated by the inability of around 2 million people to keep their homes warm during the 2020 winter⁴⁰ and the increasing number of Germans living in overcrowded houses, particularly in the largest cities.⁴¹

To address these issues, the Berlin region adopted a rent-cap measure called Mietendeckel,⁴² which essentially consists of three sets of rules for the apartments covered by its scope: a rent freeze that prohibits rent exceeding the rent effectively agreed in June 2019, an upper limit on rents, and a legal prohibition of excessive rents. The measure had already been tested in 2015 in Berlin, when it proved effective: in just one month, rents declined on average by 3%.⁴³

However, the Mietendeckel has triggered much debate, and in March 2021, the Second Senate of the Federal Constitutional Court ruled against it,⁴⁴ saying it was incompatible with the German constitution, the Grundgesetz. Tenants therefore had to repay the difference

38 DW (2021) Germany with massive shortage in day care spots, study finds: <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-with-massive-shortage-in-day-care-spots-study-finds/a-55232526>

39 Statista (2021) Average rent price of residential property in Germany: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/801537/average-rent-price-of-residential-property-in-germany/>

40 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2021) 2 million people in Germany did not have a sufficiently heated home in 2019 due to a lack of money: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2021/02/PE21_066_639.html;jsessionid=D4289104E24C8346CCBA7CAF316B93D7.live731

41 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2020) Presse release #N 079 from 26 November 2020: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2020/11/PE20_N079_634.html;jsessionid=D4289104E24C8346CCBA7CAF316B93D7.live731

42 Berliner Mieterverein (2021) So funktionierte das Mietendeckelgesetz: <https://www.berliner-mieterverein.de/mietendeckel/die-regeln-des-mietendeckel-gesetzes-und-tipps-zur-anwendung.htm> Mietendeckel: <https://www.berlin.de/sen/justiz/service/gesetze-und-verordnungen/2020/ausgabe-nr-6-vom-22-2-2020-s-49-56.pdf>

43 BBC (2015) Will Berlin's brake on rents be good for Germany? : <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34066100>

44 Bundesverfassungsgericht (2021) Beschluss vom 25. März 2021: <https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2021/bvg21-028.html>

between the upper limit defined by the Mietendeckel and the contractually agreed rent.⁴⁵

which led to adverse psychosocial effects. This was especially true for self-employed, lone parents – notably women – and people from a migration background.⁵¹

POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Poverty has been worsening at a steady pace in Germany in recent years. In addition, there is a registered **increase in the wealth gap**, and the pandemic hit the poorest people harder than others. **In 2021, 15% of the German population live at risk of poverty, while 17% face social exclusion.**⁴⁶ These figures are particularly negative, as the number of people living at risk of poverty had been increasing for a decade already, and then the pandemic made it grow further.⁴⁷ Most worryingly, people who have fallen below the poverty line in Germany are now more likely to remain poor for a longer time, according to the German Federal Statistics Office. Indeed, 44% of the poor are considered to be at risk of permanent poverty, double the number of 1998.⁴⁸

The pandemic had disproportionate effects on low-income people all around the world, but this was particularly the case in Germany. Together with France, **it is the European country where billionaires have increased their wealth the most.**⁴⁹ At the same time, in-work poverty is becoming increasingly common. In 2021, 10.6% of workers in Germany were at risk of living in poverty despite having a job,⁵⁰

HEALTHCARE

Comprehensive data on the impact of Covid-19 on the public expenditure in 2021 is not yet available, but German public spending on healthcare increased by around 3% in 2020 compared to the previous year.⁵² **In the years before the pandemic, Germany continuously increased its proportion of GDP allocated to healthcare.**⁵³ **This reduced patients' out-of-pocket expenditure⁵⁴ and meant the healthcare system was better prepared to deal with the pandemic.** During the most critical period of patients' hospitalisation, some federal states of Germany – including Bavaria – adopted measures to oblige hospitals to cooperate in the management of the emergency.⁵⁵ Hospitals not treating Covid-19 were requested to provide personnel and to relieve the pressure on other hospitals by receiving in-patients who were not infected with the virus. In addition, all non-essential treatments and operations were postponed.

Aside from the Covid-19 pandemic, the National Strategy Group reports that the access to healthcare is normally granted to everyone,

45 Berlin Stadtportal (2021) Berliner Mietendeckel – questions and answers: <https://mietendeckel.berlin.de/>

46 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2021) Living conditions: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Income-Consumption-Living-Conditions/Living-Conditions-Risk-Poverty/_node.html

47 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2020) At-risk-of-poverty threshold and risk of poverty: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Income-Consumption-Living-Conditions/Living-Conditions-Risk-Poverty/Tables/eu-poverty-threshold-risk-silc.html?sessionId=D4289104E24C8346CCBA7CAF316B93D7.live731>

48 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2021) Presse release #113 from 10 March 2021: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2021/03/PE21_113_p001.html

49 Forbes (2021) 2021 List of the World Billionaires: <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/>

50 Eurostat (2021). In-work at-risk-of-poverty-rate: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tespm070/default/table?lang=en>

51 Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2021) Presse release #113 from 10 March 2021: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2021/03/PE21_113_p001.html

52 WHO (2020) Global spending on health 2020: weathering the storm (p.56) : <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/337859/9789240017788-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

53 World Bank (2018) Current health expenditure (% of GDP): <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS?locations=DE>

54 WHO (2018) Global Expenditure Database – Germany: https://apps.who.int/nha/database/country_profile/Index/en

55 European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2021) Policy responses for Germany: <https://www.covid19healthsystem.org/countries/germany/livinghit.aspx?Section=3.1%20Planning%20services&Type=Section>

with the health insurance rate close to 100%. However, inequalities still persist between people who are insured through the public system (GKV) and those with private insurance (PKV). The duality allows privately-insured patients – around 11% of the population⁵⁶ – to skip lines by bearing limited direct costs. Moreover, there are differences between the German Länder, such as the density of doctors: in Hamburg, for

example, the density is almost double that in Brandenburg.⁵⁷

Discrimination still affects the healthcare of migrants and refugees. Residence status is essential for having access to healthcare, and language barriers often prevent people from receiving adequate treatment without the assistance of other people.⁵⁸

Civic space

The pandemic has posed many challenges to freedom of association across Europe, but the National Strategy Group reports that in Germany it has generally been protected and sufficiently respected during 2021. However, many organisations have dramatically lost members and volunteers, who are often difficult to reach and involve again, which has in turn reduced the organisations' presence. In addition, different CSOs are still scared to carry out actions and planned activities due to sanitary restrictions or data protection rules connected to the EU Digital COVID Certificate. The National Strategy Group fears that if parts of civil society no longer provide their usual services and opportunities to meet, the cement holding society together will begin to crumble, making solidarity more difficult to achieve.

The CIVICUS indicator, which monitors civic space across Europe, indicates that

Germany's civic space is open.⁵⁹ However, **press freedom has come under increasing pressure, and attacks on journalists have become more frequent.**⁶⁰ The latest report on Germany by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) confirms that violent attacks on journalists spiked in 2020, with 69 verified attacks.⁶¹ In comparison, 14 cases were registered in 2019.

The National Strategy Group reports that the Infektionsschutzgesetz⁶² (Infection Protection Act), which aims to reduce the spread of the virus, put some pressure on freedom of assembly as mentioned in the Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland⁶³ (the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany – the country's constitution). Limiting freedom of assembly is perceived by German people as very controversial, but the NSG says that peaceful assemblies remained possible.

56 OECD (2020) Das Deutsche Gesundheitssystem im internationalen Vergleich: <https://blog.oecd-berlin.de/das-deutsche-gesundheitssystem-im-internationalen-vergleich>

57 Ibid.

58 NaDiRa (2021) Geflüchtete im Gesundheitssystem: <https://www.rassismusmonitor.de/netzwerk-rassismusforschung/kurzstudien/solidaritaet-in-der-pandemie/gefluechtete-im-gesundheitssystem/>

59 CIVICUS (2021) Germany Monitor: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/germany/>

60 CIVICUS (2021) Decline in rsf world press freedom index amid increasing attacks on journalists: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/06/17/decline-rsf-world-press-freedom-index-amid-increasing-attacks-journalists/>

61 ECPMF (2021) Fact finding mission - Germany: <https://www.ecpmf.eu/monitor/fact-finding-mission/>

62 RKI (2021) Infektionsschutzgesetz: https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/Infekt/IfSG/ifsg_node.html

63 Deutscher Bundestag, Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland: <https://www.bundestag.de/gg>

National recovery and resilience plans

The German National Strategy Group reports that civil society organisations are normally involved in government consultations, and this happened in 2020 and 2021 as well. Nevertheless, the main consultations are with umbrella organisations, so the government rarely has contact with smaller CSOs, which do a lot of groundwork and have very close, direct relations with people. **The NSG calls for the vast variety of small NGOs and volunteer-led initiatives to be heard better and given more space and platforms for engagement, so that civil and social dialogue is not only carried out with big welfare organisations.** In Germany, as in many other countries analysed, even though volunteer activities were very important in times of lockdown, the government did not really focus on these organisations and activities, the NSG

reports. Many activities could not be carried out because of the Covid-19 rules and lockdowns. Nevertheless, local volunteers organised direct neighbourly support for vulnerable people in many regions. This means that volunteering was system-relevant, as were public services. Unfortunately, however, volunteering did not get the same public attention and recognition.

Smaller organisations did not hear of any possibility of involvement in the debates over the preparation of the national Recovery and Resilience Plan, according to the National Strategy Group. However, other organisations reported the same. In February 2021, the German Trade Union Organisation (DGB – Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes)⁶⁴ denounced a complete lack of consultation with the government.⁶⁵

64 Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes: <https://www.dgb.de/>

65 Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes (2021):Stellungnahme: <https://www.dgb.de/++co++e7c8b2bc-714f-11eb-a1a2-001a4a160123/DGB-Stellungnahme-zum-Entwurf-des-Deutschen-Aufbau-und-Resilienzplans.pdf>

SOLIDAR's Social Rights Monitor 2021 has been developed in the framework of the Together for Social Europe programme co-funded by the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). It provides an insight into the state of social rights in 16 European countries. The Monitor assesses the state of social Europe in terms of equality of opportunities, fair working conditions, social protection, inclusion and civic space based on the observations of Civil Society Organisations working on the ground in combination with statistical data and scientific findings. This information is provided by National Strategy Groups that are set up in each of the 16 countries by a SOLIDAR member or partner. The 2021 Monitor also analyses to which extent civil society and social partners have been involved in the design of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans, integrated in the 2021 European Semester cycle.

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