
GAPS IN GERMAN FOREIGNER REGISTRY RISK GRAVE ASYLUM, DEPORTATION MISTAKES

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Erroneous categorizations and sloppy mistakes fill the Central Register of Foreign Nationals (AZR), the former head of Germany's Office for Migration and Refugees, Frank-Jürgen Weise, said in a report seen by German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung.

In an interview with the same paper, Weise warned that the inconsistencies could lead "to some gravely mistaken decisions" in cases dealing with asylum and deportations proceedings.

The AZR is a German government database that contains personal information of around 10 million foreign individuals residing in Germany, 5.7 million of whom come from outside the European Union (EU).

Weise was tasked by the German Interior Ministry to compile the report in order to improve bureaucratic efficiency behind asylum, deportation, and voluntary return processes. His analysis, entitled "Guidelines for the Improvement of Data Quality in the Central Register of Foreign Nationals," highlighted that the AZR data contained some significant errors.

No longer alive, but on the list

For instance, Weise told the Süddeutsche Zeitung that in certain cases, obsolete data from as far back as 1921 had been found - "belonging to people that are long dead." In other instances, individuals appeared on the list as foreign nationals when, in fact, they had already become German citizens.

Address errors in the AZR database mean that individuals may not receive appointment notifications

"The data quality was in part not good because the data has not been adequately maintained," Weise said.

The data is administered by around 600 government officials throughout Germany that work on matters pertaining to foreign nationals.

Another mistake in the AZR database was incorrectly entered addresses. Such an error could have all kinds of repercussions, Weise said, highlighting delays in bureaucratic appointments that waste the time and resources of administrators, translators, and, of course, the invited individual.

In certain cases, "the wrong person may even come into focus" through such entry mistakes, Weise said.

According to Weise, EU nationals also popped up in the database - but on lists of individuals who were legally required to leave the country. EU nationals are generally allowed to live and work wherever they please within the bloc.

The commissioner pointed out in his analysis that such mis-categorizations could distort the debate about who is legally required to leave Germany.

Read more: [The German Dream - and immigration nightmares of the bureaucratic experience](#)

Bad for the German reputation

Frank Jürgen-Weise previously headed up the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

For Weise, the elementary mistakes in the AZR can cause long-term damage to Germany's reputation. The published report includes tips on how to improve the quality of data management, which had previously lacked clearly defined standards and unified processes, he said.

Echoing a frequently heard debate between the role of the federal government and the regional governments in Germany's 16 states, Weise said, "It is now primarily the state's concern to remove all implausibilities from the database."

However, he admitted that for German officials facing lines of people out their office doors, prioritizing database clean-up might prove tricky.

cmb/gsw (AFP, SZ)

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