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including summary



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Country report

Non-discrimination

Transposition and implementation at national level of
Council Directives 2000/43 and 2000/78

Germany

Matthias Mahlmann

Reporting period 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	15
1 GENERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK	18
2 THE DEFINITION OF DISCRIMINATION	19
2.1 Grounds of unlawful discrimination explicitly covered	19
2.1.1 Definition of the grounds of unlawful discrimination within the directives	21
2.1.2 Multiple discrimination	26
2.1.3 Assumed and associated discrimination	26
2.2 Direct discrimination (Article 2(2)(a))	27
2.3 Indirect discrimination (Article 2(2)(b))	30
2.3.1 Statistical evidence	33
2.4 Harassment (Article 2(3))	37
2.5 Instructions to discriminate (Article 2(4))	38
2.6 Reasonable accommodation duties (Article 2(2)(b)(ii) and Article 5 Directive 2000/78)	39
3 PERSONAL AND MATERIAL SCOPE	45
3.1 Personal scope	45
3.1.1 EU and non-EU nationals (Recital 13 and Article 3(2), Directive 2000/43 and Recital 12 and Article 3(2), Directive 2000/78)	45
3.1.2 Natural and legal persons (Recital 16, Directive 2000/43)	45
3.1.3 Private and public sector including public bodies (Article 3(1))	46
3.2 Material scope	47
3.2.1 Conditions for access to employment, to self-employment or to occupation, including selection criteria, recruitment conditions and promotion, whatever the branch of activity and at all levels of the professional hierarchy (Article 3(1)(a))	47
3.2.2 Employment and working conditions, including pay and dismissals (Article 3(1)(c))	48
3.2.3 Access to all types and all levels of vocational guidance, vocational training, advanced vocational training and retraining, including practical work experience (Article 3(1)(b))	48
3.2.4 Membership of, and involvement in, an organisation of workers or employers, or any organisation whose members carry on a particular profession, including the benefits provided for by such organisations (Article 3(1)(d))	49
3.2.5 Social protection, including social security and healthcare (Article 3(1)(e) Directive 2000/43)	49
3.2.6 Social advantages (Article 3(1)(f) Directive 2000/43)	50
3.2.7 Education (Article 3(1)(g) Directive 2000/43)	51
3.2.8 Access to and supply of goods and services that are available to the public (Article 3(1)(h) Directive 2000/43)	53
3.2.9 Housing (Article 3(1)(h) Directive 2000/43)	56
4 EXCEPTIONS	58
4.1 Genuine and determining occupational requirements (Article 4)	58
4.2 Employers with an ethos based on religion or belief (Article 4(2) Directive 2000/78)	58
4.3 Armed forces and other specific occupations (Article 3(4) and Recitals 18 and 19 Directive 2000/78)	64
4.4 Nationality discrimination (Article 3(2))	65
4.5 Health and safety (Article 7(2) Directive 2000/78)	66
4.6 Exceptions related to discrimination on the ground of age (Article 6 Directive 2000/78)	66
4.6.1 Direct discrimination	66
4.6.2 Special conditions for younger or older workers	68

4.6.3	Minimum and maximum age requirements.....	68
4.6.4	Retirement.....	69
4.6.5	Redundancy	71
4.7	Public security, public order, criminal offences, protection of health, protection of the rights and freedoms of others (Article 2(5), Directive 2000/78)	72
4.8	Any other exceptions.....	72
5	POSITIVE ACTION (Article 5 Directive 2000/43, Article 7 Directive 2000/78)	73
6	REMEDIES AND ENFORCEMENT.....	76
6.1	Judicial and/or administrative procedures (Article 7 Directive 2000/43, Article 9 Directive 2000/78)	76
6.2	Legal standing and associations (Article 7(2) Directive 2000/43, Article 9(2) Directive 2000/78).....	77
6.3	Burden of proof (Article 8 Directive 2000/43, Article 10 Directive 2000/78)..	79
6.4	Victimisation (Article 9 Directive 2000/43, Article 11 Directive 2000/78).....	80
6.5	Sanctions and remedies (Article 15 Directive 2000/43, Article 17 Directive 2000/78).....	81
7	BODIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUAL TREATMENT (Article 13 Directive 2000/43).....	83
8	IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES.....	90
8.1	Dissemination of information, dialogue with NGOs and between social partners	90
8.2	Measures to ensure compliance with the principle of equal treatment (Article 14 Directive 2000/43, Article 16 Directive 2000/78).....	91
9	COORDINATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL.....	92
10	CURRENT BEST PRACTICES.....	93
11	SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES	97
11.1	Potential breaches of the directives at the national level	97
11.2	Other issues of concern	98
12	LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN 2020.....	100
12.1	Legislative amendments	100
12.2	Case law.....	100
ANNEX 1: MAIN TRANSPOSITION AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION		112
ANNEX 2: INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS.....		114

List of abbreviations

ADS	German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (<i>Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes</i>)
AGG	General Act on Equal Treatment (<i>Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz</i>)
AufenthG	Residence Act (<i>Aufenthaltsgesetz</i>)
BAG	Federal Labour Court (<i>Bundesarbeitsgericht</i>)
BAGE	Decisions of the Federal Labour Court (<i>Entscheidungen des Bundesarbeitsgerichts</i>)
BBG	Federal Civil Service Act (<i>Bundesbeamten-gesetz</i>)
BDSG	Federal Data Protection Act (<i>Bundesdatenschutzgesetz</i>)
BetrVG	Works Constitution Act (<i>Betriebsverfassungsgesetz</i>)
BGB	Civil Code (<i>Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch</i>)
BGBI	Federal Law Gazette (<i>Bundesgesetzblatt</i>)
BGG	Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act (<i>Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz</i>)
BPersVG	Federal Personnel Representation Act (<i>Bundespersönalvertretungsgesetz</i>)
BTHG	Federal Participation Act (<i>Bundesteilhabegesetz</i>)
BVerfG	Federal Constitutional Court (<i>Bundesverfassungsgericht</i>)
BVerfGE	Decisions of the Federal Constitutional Court (<i>Entscheidungen des Bundesverfassungsgerichts</i>)
BVerwG	Federal Administrative Court (<i>Bundesverwaltungsgericht</i>)
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
GG	Basic Law (<i>Grundgesetz</i>)
KSchG	Protection against Dismissal Act (<i>Kündigungsschutzgesetz</i>)
LADG	Berlin State Anti-Discrimination Act (<i>Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz</i>)
LAG	Higher Labour Court (<i>Landesarbeitsgericht</i>)
LG	Regional Court (<i>Landgericht</i>)
OVG	Higher Administrative Court (<i>Oberverwaltungsgericht</i>)
SGB I	Social Code I (<i>Sozialgesetzbuch I</i>)
SGB III	Social Code III (<i>Sozialgesetzbuch III</i>)
SGB VI	Social Code VI (<i>Sozialgesetzbuch VI</i>)
SGB IX	Social Code IX (<i>Sozialgesetzbuch IX</i>)
SGB XII	Social Code XII (<i>Sozialgesetzbuch XII</i>)
SoldGG	Equal Treatment of Soldiers Act (<i>Gesetz über die Gleichbehandlung von Soldatinnen und Soldaten</i>)
StGB	Penal Code (<i>Strafgesetzbuch</i>)
SVG	Military Pensions Act (<i>Soldatenversorgungsgesetz</i>)
VG	Administrative Court (<i>Verwaltungsgericht</i>)
VGH	High Administrative Court (<i>Verwaltungsgerichtshof</i>)
ZPO	Civil Procedure Code (<i>Zivilprozessordnung</i>)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

Like many other countries, Germany enjoys a plural society. It has autochthonous minorities, the Danish and the Sorbs, neither of which are very significant in number. The Friesians of German nationality and the Sinti and Roma of German nationality are also officially recognised as minorities. However, the most significant ethnic minority groups are immigrants, including the so-called guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*) and their descendants. In recent decades, specifically because of an increase in asylum seekers and refugees, a heterogeneous ethnic community has formed in Germany. Due to Germany's efforts in the refugee crisis, the number of foreigners in Germany has risen by 1.9 million since 2015; as of 31 December 2019, there were about 11 228 300 foreigners in Germany, out of a total population of around 83 million.¹ In the first half of 2020, the number of people who immigrated to Germany exceeded the number of those who emigrated by 74 000 people.² There are now about 789 465 people from Syria, 263 420 people from Afghanistan and 255 050 people from Iraq living in Germany.³ The overall number of refugees in Germany as of 31 December 2019 was about 1 839 115.⁴ Statistical data shows that one in four people in Germany had an immigration background in 2018.⁵ The percentage of people with a migrant background in 2019 shows a 2.1 % increase compared with 2018, while the number of foreigners rose by approximately 204 000 or 1.8% in 2020. This has been the lowest percentage increase recorded by the Central Register of Foreigners (*Ausländerzentralregister*, AZR) in the last 10 years.⁶

The largest religious groups in Germany are the Catholic Church with about 23 million members and the Protestant churches with about 21 million members.⁷ About 28 % of the population belongs to the Catholic Church and 25 % to the Protestant churches, meaning that about 53 % of the total population belongs to the two main Christian denominations. In 2015, around 1.7 million German citizens identified as Muslims, which is approximately 2 % of the population. The total number of Muslims (with or without citizenship) is about 4.7 million, which is approximately 5.4 % of the population.⁸ About 95 000 people or 0.11 % of the population are Jewish.⁹

Germany's past is of particular relevance for the principle of equal treatment and anti-discrimination, especially as far as race and ethnic origin are concerned, but also in respect of religion and belief, sexual orientation and disability. There is a high degree of awareness today among all sectors of society of the horrors of the Nazi period and the multifaceted

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- ¹ See Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt, Destatis*) at: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/foreign-population-laender.html>. All data in this report are the most recent relevant data available.
 - ² See https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2020/10/PE20_384_12411.html. The rise of the population of foreigners between 2014 and 2016 was caused mainly by migrants from Syria (519 700), Afghanistan (178 100) and Iraq (138 500).
 - ³ See the relevant data of the Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt, Destatis*) at: www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/foreigner-place-of-birth.html.
 - ⁴ See Federal Statistical Office (2020), press release 23 July 2020, available at: www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Tabellen/schutzsuchende-zeitreihe-schutzstatus.html (23 July 2020).
 - ⁵ See Federal Statistical Office (2019), (2019), press release 21 August 2019, available at: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2019/08/PE19_314_12511.html.
 - ⁶ See Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt, Destatis*) (2021), press release (#151), 29 March 20201, available in English at: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2021/03/PE21_151_125.html;jsessionid=7A4D39CD66046E01D9145E7D1DB2B929.live721.
 - ⁷ See www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungsstand/Tabellen/bevoelkerung-religion.html.
 - ⁸ See <https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/heimat-integration/staat-und-religion/islam-in-deutschland/islam-in-deutschland-node.html>.
 - ⁹ See <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungsstand/Tabellen/bevoelkerung-religion.html>.

crimes against people of a particular religion, belief, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or disability, among other characteristics. For many citizens and public bodies in Germany, this past creates a sense of responsibility for a strongly protected human rights culture.

Nevertheless, Germany must deal with serious issues of discrimination. Racism and xenophobia continue to be manifest in many forms, including violence, which has claimed several dozens of human lives since 1990. The uncovering of a neo-Nazi terrorist cell in 2011 responsible for at least nine killings with racist motives was a shocking reminder of what racism can lead to. The racist terrorist attack on a synagogue in Halle on 9 October 2019, claiming two lives, and the killing of a local politician by a right-wing extremist profoundly deepened the concerns about such developments. On 19 February 2020, nine people were killed in Hanau in a racist attack, which fuelled criticism of the Government in the context of its effectiveness in combating far-right extremism. In recent years, right-wing extremists and parties with xenophobic agendas have had some political success, albeit often short-lived. The year 2020 – as in previous years and despite the pandemic restrictions – saw local demonstrations with considerable numbers of people mobilised to express what are generally regarded as xenophobic attitudes. A xenophobic party achieved strong election results in 2017 and is now represented in the German Parliament. The refugee crisis has spurred many violent acts, including numerous attacks on shelters for refugees, including arson. The Federal Criminal Police (*Bundeskriminalamt*) counted about 1 000 such attacks on refugee shelters in 2016, more than 300 in 2017,¹⁰ 161 in 2018¹¹ and 126 in 2019¹² which is considerably less, but still a significant number. In 2020, by 30 September, there had been 56 such attacks.¹³

Right-wing extremism within police forces¹⁴ and the German Army¹⁵ became the focus of systematic investigations that resulted in the suspensions of police officers and the dissolution of a company of an elite unit, the Commando Special Forces. In 2020, the Federal Government responded by reinforcing its efforts to address right-wing extremism and racism and committing more than EUR 1 billion to this cause for the period 2021-2024. The aims of the measures to be funded include: protection of and support for victims of racist discrimination; sustainable structures for the fight against racism; improved cooperation between the police, the judicial system and civil society; prevention; political education; and more empirical research on racism in society.¹⁶

¹⁰ Federal Criminal Police (*Bundeskriminalamt*) (BKA) (2017), *Kriminalität im Kontext von Zuwanderung*, Bundeslagebild 2017, Wiesbaden, p. 56, available at: www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung_2017.html.

¹¹ Federal Criminal Police (2019), *Kriminalität im Kontext von Zuwanderung*, Bundeslagebild 2018, Wiesbaden, p. 56, available at: https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung_2018.html?jsessionid=94CBF3DD2351293F82941FE41768DFA8.live0612?nn=62336.

¹² Federal Criminal Police (2020), *Kriminalität im Kontext von Zuwanderung*, Bundeslagebild 2019, Wiesbaden, p. 57, available at: https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung_2019.html?nn=62336.

¹³ Federal Criminal Police (2020), *Kriminalität im Kontext von Zuwanderung, Betrachtungszeitraum: 01.01-30.09.2020*, Wiesbaden, p. 5, available at: <https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung/kernaussagenZuKriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung.html?nn=62336>.

¹⁴ See the relevant report of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (2020), *Rechtsextremisten in Sicherheitsbehörden*, Köln, available in German at: https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/download-manager/_broschuere-2020-09-lagebericht-rechtsextremisten-in-sicherheitsbehoerden.pdf.

¹⁵ In 2019, the Federal Ministry of Defence (*Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*, BMVg) established a central coordinating agency to inform the German Parliament and the public about the efforts and outcomes of the fight against extremism in the German Army. Further information and the first relevant report for 2019 are available in German at: <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/null-toleranz-extremisten-bundeswehr-2019>.

¹⁶ See the relevant announcement with the detailed list of suggested measures to combat right-wing extremism, racism, antisemitism, antiziganism, Islamophobia, anti-Black racism and all other forms of group-focused enmity, available in German at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/997532/1819984/4f1f9683cf3faddf90e27f09c692abed/202>

Although there are only a few sound empirical studies on the matter, the available data suggests that human characteristics, such as religion and belief, disability, sexual orientation and age,¹⁷ also continue to be areas of on-going discrimination.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the year 2020 in terms of discrimination, too. The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency¹⁸ has reported a significant number of cases of discrimination linked to the coronavirus pandemic.¹⁹ In 2020, following the outbreak of the pandemic, the agency received reports of hate speech at work and racial profiling of persons of Asian appearance. Protective measures such as the requirement to wear facial masks and supermarket policies requiring the use of shopping trolleys were perceived as being inconsiderate to disadvantaged groups, for example persons with disabilities.²⁰

The most important developments in 2020 in the field of anti-discrimination law have been, first, the Berlin State Anti-Discrimination Act (*Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz*) (LADG),²¹ implementing the European requirements in the area of anti-discrimination law in the *Land* law of Berlin, with some additional innovative elements. The LADG offers protection against discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin, antisemitic and racist attributions, language, religion and beliefs, disability, chronic illness, age, sexual and gender identity, and social status. The LADG provides protection against discrimination in relation to public law actions by the administration and public bodies of the Berlin *Land*. The LADG provides for a right to file an *actio popularis* and for the creation of a (*Land*) Ombuds Office. Secondly, the Act to Protect against Conversion Treatments (*Gesetz zum Schutz vor Konversionsbehandlungen*) (KonvBehSchG),²² according to which medical interventions aimed at deliberately changing or suppressing the sexual orientation or self-perceived gender identity of a person (so-called conversion therapies) are banned, has passed into law.²³

2. Main legislation

On 18 August 2006, an anti-discrimination law was enacted: the Act implementing European directives putting into effect the principle of equal treatment.²⁴ This act encompasses the General Act on Equal Treatment,²⁵ the Equal Treatment of Soldiers Act²⁶ and amendments to various legal regulations.

The act reshaped anti-discrimination law in Germany considerably. The general aim of the law is to combat discrimination based on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, sex, religion or philosophical belief (*Weltanschauung*), disability, age or sexual identity (covering sexual orientation, controversially transgender). The formulation 'on grounds of race' (*aus Gründen der Rasse*) is supposed to indicate that the German legislature does not assume

[0-11-25-massnahmen-rechtsextremi-data.pdf](#).

¹⁷ It is noteworthy that according to the relevant and most recent (31 December 2017) data of the Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt, Destatis*), every fifth person in Germany is 65 years or older. See https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2018/09/PD18_370_12411.html.

¹⁸ Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (*Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, ADS*), https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/Home/home_node.html.

¹⁹ As of April 20, 2020, the ADS had received 100 inquiries linked to the coronavirus.

²⁰ See: Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (2020), *Diskriminierungserfahrungen im Zusammenhang mit der Corona-Krise*, Berlin, available in German at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Dokumente_ohne_anzeige_in_Publikationen/20200504_Infopapier_zu_Coronakrise.html?nn=6580778.

²¹ Berlin State Anti-Discrimination Act (*Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz*) (LADG), 11 June 2020.

²² Act to Protect against Conversion Therapies (*Gesetz zum Schutz vor Konversionsbehandlungen*) (KonvBehSchG), 12 June 2020.

²³ For more details, see 12.1 below.

²⁴ Act implementing European Directives Putting into Effect the Principle of Equal Treatment (*Gesetz zur Umsetzung Europäischer Richtlinien zur Verwirklichung des Grundsatzes der Gleichbehandlung*), 14 August 2006.

²⁵ General Act on Equal Treatment (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*) (AGG), 14 August 2006.

²⁶ Equal Treatment of Soldiers Act (*Soldatinnen- und Soldaten- Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*) (SoldGG), 14 August 2006.

the existence of different human races. It includes labour, civil and parts of public law. With regard to general civil law, philosophical belief is not part of the prohibited grounds. In principle, the act therefore goes beyond what is demanded by European law. However, there are, in the view of the author of this report, various parts of the act that might be found to be in breach of European law. Problems of discrimination in the context of migration can be covered by these grounds, in particular race, ethnic origin or religion and belief.

The law is embedded in a legal framework that in practical terms, has greater relevance than the AGG in some areas.

The Constitution, or Basic Law,²⁷ is of central importance for understanding the German legal framework on discrimination. Unlike some other constitutions, the German Constitution is directly binding on all public authorities.

There are several constitutional provisions that protect human equality. Most important is the guarantee of human dignity. The core of this guarantee is respect for any human being as a person, simply by virtue of his or her humanity, irrespective of other characteristics. Case law of the German Federal Constitutional Court consistently states that each individual should be treated not only as an object of state action, but as an end in itself. Furthermore, individuals are protected against degrading or humiliating treatment. The guarantee of human dignity is the central value of German law and its most important and supreme norm. In consequence, it is an important reference point for anti-discrimination law in Germany, especially as it guides interpretation of the constitutional guarantee of equality and provides normative yardsticks for other areas of law. It is important to note that, through the guarantee of human dignity, German law authoritatively states that no distinctions are to be made as to the worth of a human being, irrespective of any characteristic. The only question that arises is therefore how and by what concrete technical means, the overarching value of human dignity can be adequately protected through legal channels in various spheres of life.

Germany is a democratic and social federal state under the rule of law. As it is a social state, the state has a duty to promote the welfare of its citizens. In the field of anti-discrimination, the principle of the social state leads to a wide range of programmes aiming to promote the inclusion of groups that face discrimination. The federal character of Germany leads to different regulations in different *Länder* in some areas where the *Länder* have legislative powers, most notably in relation to education and cultural matters or certain aspects of the law regulating civil servants employed by them.

Nevertheless, the most important matters in public law (with the exceptions mentioned above) and private law remain within the competence of the Federation, either as exclusive legislative power or concurrent legislative power.

Germany has specific anti-discrimination legislation. There are various legal provisions that reiterate the fundamental guarantee of equality for areas of public law, including the law pertaining to the civil service and other public employees. In labour law, there is a general anti-discrimination clause in the Works Constitution Act²⁸ and the fundamental principle of the equal treatment of employees has been consistently established by case law.

In addition, various legal instruments have been passed aiming to provide protection against discrimination and increase the social inclusion of disabled people. In respect of sexual orientation, some legal regulations have been created which either directly aim to establish protection against discrimination or do so indirectly by providing options which were not previously open to people of certain sexual orientations, for example, by

²⁷ Basic Law (*Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) (GG), 23 May 1949.

²⁸ Works Constitution Act (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*) (BetrVG), 25 September 2001.

introducing a legally regulated form of partnership, opening marriage to same-sex couples²⁹ and the possibility of adoption.

Special legal regulations and case law, in addition to the non-discrimination clauses in public law and labour law, deal with the reasonable accommodation of various religious beliefs, including exceptions from general laws. There is a widely held opinion in legal doctrine (which has resulted in some case law) that the general clauses of civil law provide remedies in private contract law and tort law against discrimination on any ground that infringes basic personality rights. These general clauses must be interpreted in the light of the constitutional order (especially in the light of fundamental rights and, most importantly, of human dignity), which prohibits discrimination.

3. Main principles and definitions

The anti-discrimination law defines direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and instruction to discriminate, following closely the definitions in the directives. Discrimination by association is not explicitly covered. One provision deals with multiple discrimination on various grounds. It states that any unequal treatment must be justified with regard to each ground independently. Positive action is declared to be admissible if the unequal treatment serves to overcome existing disadvantages based on any of the grounds covered by anti-discrimination law. There is an exception from the application of anti-discrimination law in the case of dismissal, but this has been rendered without effect through case law.

a) Labour law

Justification of unequal treatment is possible if the treatment forms a genuine and determining occupational requirement. There are further grounds of justification because of the ethos and duty of loyalty as defined by a religious or philosophical belief. Traditionally, the case law has underlined the wide discretion that religious communities enjoy as to the duties of loyalty that can justify unequal treatment.³⁰ This case law concerns a highly contested area with significant social impact given the importance of the Christian churches and their organisations as employers. The recent case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)³¹ has led to significant changes in this area, curtailing the ability of religious organisations to justify unequal treatment on the ground of religion.³² In addition, further justifications of unequal treatment exist for the ground of age, if there are objective reasons and the unequal treatment is appropriate and necessary. Examples are given for this in the law, following the rules in Directive 2000/78/EC.

²⁹ The legislation amended paragraph 1 of Section 1353 German Civil Code: 'A marriage is entered into by two people of a different or the same sex for life.' Germany Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) (BGB), 2 January 2002.

³⁰ Federal Labour Court (*Bundesarbeitsgericht*) (BAG), 5 AZR 611/12, 24 September 2014 and related Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) (BVerfG), 2 BvR 661/12, 22 October 2014, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2014:rs20141022.2bvr066112.

³¹ To avoid confusion, this report refers also to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) as the 'Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)' for decisions made prior to 1 December 2009.

³² Judgment of 17 April 2018, *Egenberger v. Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung*, C-414/16, EU:C:2018:257, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C_.2018.200.01.0006.01.ENG. The case concerns an employer (the defendant) who is affiliated with the Protestant Church in Germany and bound by the internal regulations of the Protestant Church in Germany on employment. The defendant had specified a Protestant confession as a hiring criterion for a job vacancy for a limited-term contract. An applicant without religious affiliation, who had not been invited for a job interview regarding the advertised vacancy, consequently claimed financial compensation based on a violation of the principle of non-discrimination. The principles of this decision were confirmed by Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), judgment of 11 September 2018, *IR v. JQ*, C-68/17, EU:C:2018:696, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=205521&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3853280>. The courts have started to implement this case law of the CJEU, see: Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 501/14, 25 October 2018, ECLI:DE:BAG:2018:251018.U8AZR501.14.0. (For details, see section 4.2 below.)

Employers have a duty to protect employees against discrimination and prevent its occurrence through organisational arrangements and the content of vocational training. They must take appropriate action against such conduct and inform employees about the legal regulations.

b) Civil law

In civil law, discrimination is prohibited for all grounds listed, not only for those prescribed by the directives (race, ethnic origin and sex) with the exception of philosophical belief (*Weltanschauung*).

In the case of housing, unequal treatment is permissible for all grounds, if it serves to maintain stable social relations between inhabitants and balanced patterns of settlement and economic, social and cultural relations.

Unequal treatment is justified for religion, disability, age, sexual identity or sex if there is an objective reason for the treatment. As examples of such objective reasons, the AGG lists the prevention of danger and damage, the protection of privacy and of personal security, the provision of special advantages when there is no specific interest in enforcing equal treatment, and the ethos of a religion. In the context of insurance, difference in treatment – with the exception of sex – is only permissible if it is based on objective, actuarial calculations.

c) Public law

The provisions of the anti-discrimination law are applicable to civil servants, judges and conscientious objectors, giving due consideration to the special legal status of these persons. The Equal Treatment of Soldiers Act contains regulations similar to those described above in conjunction with further legal provisions in public law in relation to discrimination.

Other parts of the law supplement these norms of labour, civil and public law. There are some special rules on reasonable accommodation, especially for severely disabled people and others of equal status.

The jurisprudence of the courts has confirmed some important interpretations of legal provisions relevant for discrimination in 2020. Age discrimination continues to be of substantial practical impact (see section 12.2 below on case law).

4. Material scope

a) General

The constitutional guarantees apply to all state action and, through indirect horizontal effect, to the relations of private individuals. The specialised guarantees apply to their respective field of regulation – public law, labour law, social law, etc.

b) The General Act on Equal Treatment (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*) (AGG)

The scope of application of the anti-discrimination law encompasses labour law, social security, social benefits, education and general civil law, including insurance contracts, closely following (in part verbatim) the provisions of the directives in this respect. For unfair dismissal, the regulations of the laws against unfair dismissal (especially the Protection Against Dismissal Act)³³ are supposed to take precedence over the anti-

³³ Protection against Dismissal Act (*Kündigungsschutzgesetz*) (KSchG), 25 August 1969.

discrimination law. However, case law has interpreted the relevant provision in a way that the prohibition of discrimination applies fully to dismissal.

In civil law, the prohibition of discrimination on the ground of race and ethnic origin extends to all legal transactions, i.e. the provision of goods and services, available to the public.

The prohibition of discrimination on the other grounds, with the exception of belief, extends to all legal transactions that are typically concluded in a multitude of cases under comparable conditions without regard to the person - bulk business (*Massengeschäfte*) - or to such legal transactions where the characteristics of the person have only secondary importance. Furthermore, the prohibition of discrimination extends to private insurance.

The prohibition of discrimination does not apply to legal relations of a personal nature or if there is a special relationship of trust between the parties concerned or their relatives. In the case of housing this is supposed to be the case if the parties or their relatives live at the same premises. The prohibition of discrimination is not supposed to apply in principle (although exceptions are deemed possible) if the landlord does not let out more than 50 dwellings.

5. Enforcing the law

The means of enforcement of the anti-discrimination law are the same as for other areas of law, apart from certain special mechanisms, that is, through the courts. There is a growing body of case law on various aspects of discrimination. Some aspects have not been settled and some of the case law is contradictory. Over the years, however, a body of discrimination law has been developed that is in line with the directives and the case law of the CJEU.

In the event of discrimination, the victim is entitled in labour law to damages for material loss if the employer is liable for wilful or negligent wrongdoing. There is a strict liability for damages for non-material loss. The amount of compensation must be appropriate. If the discrimination did not form the reason for non-employment, the compensation for non-material damage is limited to three months' salary.

There is a time limit of two months for any such claim, beginning with the receipt of the rejection of a job application or promotion and, in other cases, knowledge of the disadvantageous behaviour. The law does not establish a duty to establish a contractual relationship, unless such a duty is derived from other parts of the law, e.g. tort law. Victimisation is prohibited. The law contains an appeal to the social responsibility of the social partners to realise the aim of non-discrimination. The rules of non-discrimination also apply to professional associations. Where such discrimination occurs in this sphere, there is a duty to admit the person to the association.

In civil law, in the event of a violation of the prohibition of discrimination, the victim has a claim of forbearance and removal of the disadvantage and can sue for an injunction. The discriminator is liable to pay damages for material loss caused by wilful or negligent wrongdoing. There is a strict liability for damages for non-material loss, the compensation for which must be appropriate. There is a time limit of two months for making any such claims, as in labour law. The burden of proof is shifted for both labour law and general civil law.

Statistical evidence has been allowed in the past and can be used, according to the AGG. The former regulation on the burden of proof, now amended by the AGG, has been interpreted along the lines of CJEU jurisprudence. There is no explicit regulation or meaningful legal practice yet as to the use of situational testing.

According to anti-discrimination law, a victim of discrimination is entitled to be supported in legal proceedings by associations dealing with matters of discrimination. They must have at least 75 members or be an association of at least seven other associations concerned with anti-discrimination. The main examples of positive actions stem from disability law. There are various forms of cooperation, partly institutionalised, between governmental agencies and civil society. An *actio popularis* exists only in certain fields of anti-discrimination law, in particular in disability law.³⁴ A new form of limited class action has been introduced for consumer protection.³⁵ It is an open question whether it will have any significance for matters of discrimination.

6. Equality bodies

The anti-discrimination law established the Federal Anti-discrimination Agency (*Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*, ADS) from the moment it entered into force in August 2006, although the body only started to operate in 2007. Its mandate covers all the grounds listed in the law, notwithstanding the powers of specialised governmental agencies dealing with related subject matters. The body is organisationally associated with the Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The head of the agency is appointed by the Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, following a proposal by the Government; this first took place in spring 2007. In 2009, a new head was appointed and confirmed in 2014. Following the retirement of the former head in 2018, the agency is now being led by a temporary head, without there being any clear indication that this has impaired the work of the agency. The head of the agency is independent and subject only to the law. The tenure of the head of the agency is the same as the legislative period of the Bundestag.

The role of the agency is to support people to protect their rights against discrimination, and in particular to inform them about legal recourse against discrimination, to arrange legal advice by other agencies, to mediate between the parties, to provide information to the public in general, to take action for the prevention of discrimination, to produce scientific studies and, together with the commissioners dealing with related matters, to issue a report on the issue of discrimination every four years. These agencies can give recommendations and can jointly commission scientific studies. The agency can demand a position statement from an alleged discriminator if the alleged victim of discrimination agrees.

Other public agencies are obliged to support the agency in its work. The agency must cooperate with NGOs and other associations. An advisory body has been created and the agency has a budget of around EUR 4.4 million. The agency has a public presence, through conferences, publications and commissioned surveys and studies on particular issues, such as empirical findings on discrimination, discrimination on religious grounds, multiple discrimination and positive action or the situation of Sinti and Roma in Germany.

In addition, other bodies in Germany deal with issues of discrimination, most importantly the Federal Government Commissioners for Migration, Refugees and Integration, for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers (*Aussiedler*) and National Minorities and for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities.

³⁴ Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BGG), 27 April 2002.

³⁵ Act to introduce civil model declaratory proceedings (*Gesetz zur Einführung einer zivilprozessualen Musterfeststellungsklage*), 12 July 2018, with effect from 1 November 2018.

7. Key issues

Germany has established in principle a comprehensive legal framework to combat acts of discrimination, which is constantly evolving.³⁶ In the view of the author of this report, there are some shortcomings:

- a) the exception of dismissal from the application of the prohibition of discrimination, Section 2(4) AGG, though mitigated by case law;
- b) the possible non-application of the AGG to occupational pension schemes, Section 2(2), (second sentence) AGG, depending, however, on the judicial interpretation of the respective norm;
- c) the exception from the material scope of the provision of goods and services of all transactions concerning a special relationship of trust and proximity between the parties or their family, including the letting of flats on the premises of the landlord for all grounds including race and ethnic origin, Section 19(5) AGG, which raises problems under the Racial Equality Directive, albeit depending on its contentious interpretation in this respect;
- d) the exception in relation to housing, including unequal treatment on the ground of race and ethnic origin, to provide for socially and culturally balanced settlements, Section 19(3) AGG, depending on judicial interpretation;
- e) the formulation of the justification of unequal treatment for religion and belief, depending on judicial interpretation, Section 9(1) AGG which has not been abrogated despite CJEU jurisprudence in this respect;
- f) there is no special prohibition of victimisation in civil law, as set out in Article 9 of the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC);
- g) the dependence of compensation for material damage on fault (wilful or negligent wrongdoing) or gross negligence respectively, Sections 15(1), 15(3) and 21(2) AGG, is contrary to CJEU jurisprudence in this respect;
- h) in public law, there is no comprehensive implementation regarding race and ethnic origin in the areas of social protection and social advantages, education and the provision of goods and services as there is no special regulation with regard to harassment and the instruction to discriminate in these areas, though protection can be provided by judicial interpretation;
- i) there is no general regulation of reasonable accommodation for all fields covered by the directives for people with disabilities.

The challenge ahead is to interpret and apply the legal framework in a consistent way, realising the purposes of anti-discrimination law that are, as indicated above, part of fundamental values enshrined in the German constitutional order, foremost of which is human dignity.

The case law is still limited, both in absolute terms and compared to other areas of the law. There are indicators that this is due to informal barriers to access to justice and problems of proof. Another issue of concern is the prevalence of attitudes that give rise to discrimination. Recent events give reason to believe that persistent efforts to prevent such attitudes forming may be of great importance, not the least in the context of the refugee crisis and the xenophobic reactions that it sometimes provokes. In addition, one should be mindful of the threat of religiously motivated terror, such as the tragic attack that struck Germany in 2016, which may augment these problems.

³⁶ See Federal Participation Act (*Bundesteilhabegesetz*) (BTHG), 23 December 2016.

INTRODUCTION

The national legal system

The constitution of Germany, the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) (GG),³⁷ is, unlike some other constitutions, directly binding on all public authorities. Legislation is passed subject to the constitutional order, and the executive and the judiciary are bound by law and justice.³⁸ Fundamental rights are part of this directly effective constitutional order. They are binding on the legislature, executive, and judiciary as directly valid law.³⁹ The individual in Germany has comparatively wide access to judicial review on the ground of violations of his or her fundamental rights, especially through the constitutional complaint mechanism (*Verfassungsbeschwerde*).⁴⁰ Under the Basic Law, fundamental rights have become the material core of the legal order in general. They are therefore not only relevant in public law,⁴¹ but permeate other legal spheres as well, such as criminal and private law.

There are several constitutional provisions that protect human equality. Most important is the guarantee of human dignity.⁴² The core of this guarantee is the respect for any human being as an individual, simply by virtue of his or her humanity, irrespective of other characteristics. In accordance with this view, case law of the German Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) (BVerfG) consistently states that each individual should be treated not only as an object of state action, but be respected as a subject and thus as an end in itself.⁴³ He or she is, in addition, protected against degrading or humiliating treatment.⁴⁴ In consequence, it is an important reference point for anti-discrimination law in Germany, especially as it guides interpretation of the constitutional guarantee of equality and provides normative yardsticks for other areas of law. The only question that arises therefore, is by which concrete legal means the overarching value of human dignity can be adequately protected in various spheres of life.⁴⁵ Other important constitutional guarantees are the guarantee of equality⁴⁶ and special constitutional equality rights concerning children born outside of marriage,⁴⁷ equality of status and office⁴⁸ and equality of electoral rights.⁴⁹

Germany is a democratic and social federal state under the rule of law.⁵⁰ Given that it is a constitutional principle that Germany is a social state, Germany is obliged to promote the

³⁷ GG, 23 April 1949.

³⁸ Article 20(3) GG. Justice (*Recht*) refers according to a prevailing interpretation of general principles of legitimate law.

³⁹ Article 1(3) GG.

⁴⁰ Article 93(1)(4a) GG.

⁴¹ Here understood in the narrow sense, excluding criminal law.

⁴² Article 1(1) GG: 'Human dignity is inviolable. To respect and protect it is the duty of all state authority.'

⁴³ Settled case law, see e.g. Federal Constitutional Court, 1BvR 357/05, 15 February 2006, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2006:rs20060215.1bvr035705.

⁴⁴ Federal Constitutional Court, 1BvR 357/05, 15 February 2006, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2006:rs20060215.1bvr035705.

⁴⁵ For background see Mahlmann, M. (2008), *Elemente einer ethischen Grundrechtstheorie*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, p. 97ff, p. 412ff. On the relationship between equality and dignity, see Mahlmann, M. (2012), 'Human dignity and autonomy in modern constitutional orders', in: Rosenfeld, M. and Sajó, A. (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of comparative constitutional law*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 370-396.

⁴⁶ Article 3 GG.

⁴⁷ Article 6(5) GG: 'Children born outside of marriage shall be provided by legislation with the same opportunities for physical and mental development and for their position in society as are enjoyed by those born within marriage.'

⁴⁸ Article 33(1) GG: 'Every German shall have in every State (*Land*) the same political rights and duties.'

Article 33(2) GG: 'Every German shall be equally eligible for any public office according to his aptitude, qualifications and professional achievements.'

Article 33(3) GG: 'Neither the enjoyment of civil and political rights, nor eligibility for public office, nor rights acquired in the public service shall be independent on religious affiliation. No one may be disadvantaged by reason of adherence or non-adherence to a particular religious denomination or philosophical creed.'

Article 140 GG in conjunction with Articles 136(1) and 136(2) of the Weimar Constitution, reiterates the equality of status and office independent of religious denomination.

⁴⁹ Article 38(1) (first sentence), and Article 38(2) GG.

⁵⁰ Articles 20(1), 20(3) and 28(1) GG.

welfare of its citizens. In the field of anti-discrimination, the principle of the social state is relevant, too. It is the constitutional legal source justifying a set of programmes for the purpose of promoting the inclusion of groups that face discrimination.⁵¹

Germany is a federal state in which the *Länder* have substantial powers. Consequently, there are different regulations in different *Länder* in areas where they have legislative powers, such as education, cultural matters or certain aspects of the law regulating civil servants employed by the *Länder* and not the Federation.

The most important matters in public law (with the exceptions mentioned above) and private law are, however, still within the legislative power of the German Federation, either as exclusive legislative power, or concurrent legislative power.⁵²

List of main legislation transposing and implementing the directives

The directives were transposed on 18 August 2006, by the General Act on Equal Treatment (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*) (AGG) of 14 August 2006 (BGBl. I, 1897) which was last amended on 3 April 2013 (BGBl. I, 610).⁵³ This act covers labour law, general contract law and public law.

The AGG is part of a legal package that amended other existing legal regulations and also contains a law against discrimination in the army, the Equal Treatment of Soldiers Act (*Gesetz über die Gleichbehandlung von Soldatinnen und Soldaten*) (SoldGG).⁵⁴

In addition, there are various legal provisions that partly reiterate the fundamental guarantee of equality for areas of public law, including the law on the civil service and other public employees.⁵⁵

In addition, there are other legal regulations relevant for anti-discrimination law. In labour law, there is a general anti-discrimination clause in the Works Constitution Act (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*) (BetrVG)⁵⁶ and the fundamental principle of equal treatment of employees has been consistently established by case law.⁵⁷ In addition, as regards discrimination on the ground of sex (which is not covered by this report) and of disability, various legal instruments have been passed aiming to protect women and disabled people against discrimination and increase their social inclusion.⁵⁸

In the area of sexual orientation, some legal regulations have been created which either directly aim to establish protection against discrimination beyond the general constitutional equality guarantee or do so indirectly by providing options which were not previously open to people of certain sexual orientations, for example, by introducing a legally regulated

⁵¹ See below for examples.

⁵² Articles 70-74 GG.

⁵³ The German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (*Antiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*) (ADS), provides an English translation of the AGG on its website: www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/publikationen/general_act_on_equal_treatment_2018.html.

⁵⁴ Act Implementing European Directives Putting into Effect the Principle of Equal Treatment, 14 August 2006. The AGG and the SoldGG have been amended (2 December 2006). A second amendment was made to the AGG on 12 December 2007 and to the SoldGG on 31 July 2008. A third (though only technical) amendment to the AGG was made on 5 February 2009. The most recent amendment to the AGG is of 3 April 2013.

⁵⁵ See Section 9 Federal Civil Service Act (*Bundesbeamtengesetz*) (BBG), 5 February 2009.

⁵⁶ Section 75(1) BetrVG, 25 September 2001.

⁵⁷ Settled case law, see Federal Labour Court, 10 AZR 640/04, 12 October 2005.

⁵⁸ Most importantly, the AGG covers disability for all employment relations and other areas beyond the scope of Directive 2000/78/EC. Section 164(2) of the Social Code IX (*Sozialgesetzbuch IX*), (SGB IX), 23 December 2016, refers to the regulation of the AGG. The SGB IX of 19 June 2001 was last amended and thoroughly reformed on 17 July 2017. The changes restructuring the SGB IX entered into force on 1 January 2018. The German Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act, 27 April 2002, creates special duties for public authorities and some for private parties. The codification was last amended on 10 July 2018. See below for more and for details on disability.

form of same-sex partnership. With regard to religion, special legal regulations and case law, in addition to the non-discrimination clauses in public law and labour law, deal with the reasonable accommodation of various religious beliefs derived from the fundamental freedom of religion and conscience, including exceptions from general laws.⁵⁹

There is a widely held opinion in legal doctrine (which has resulted in some case law) that the general clauses of civil law provide remedies in private contract law and tort law against discrimination on any ground that infringes basic personality rights. These general clauses must be interpreted in the light of the constitutional order (especially in the light of fundamental rights and, most importantly, of human dignity), which prohibits discrimination.⁶⁰ With the enactment of the AGG, in practice those general clauses play an even more limited role in this respect.

⁵⁹ See section 2.6 below.

⁶⁰ In particular, in relation to race and ethnic origin, see Bezenberger, T. (1996), 'Ethnische Diskriminierung, Gleichheit und Sittenordnung im bürgerlichen Recht', in *Archiv für die civilistische Praxis* 196, p. 395ff.

1 GENERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Constitutional provisions on protection against discrimination and the promotion of equality

The constitution of Germany, the Basic Law (GG), includes the following articles dealing with non-discrimination: Article 3 GG, guarantee of equality; Article 33(3) GG, equal access to office, being the most important in practice.⁶¹

The guarantee of equality⁶² provides, first, for equality before the law,⁶³ which has been interpreted by the German Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) (BVerfG) as going beyond the equal application of law and as giving the right to the creation of law that respects the principle of equality in treating essentially equal things equally and essentially unequal things unequally.⁶⁴ This open-ended equality guarantee may cover other grounds as well. The Federal Constitutional Court regards sexual orientation and identity as part of the human personality as protected by the guarantee of human dignity and the general right to personality.⁶⁵ The guarantee of equality contains, secondly, special protection against discrimination on the grounds of sex,⁶⁶ parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, or religious or political opinions.⁶⁷ There is a prohibition against disadvantaging somebody because of their disability, which implies the admissibility of positive action.⁶⁸ The same applies to sex. It is explicitly stated that the state should support the effective realisation of the principle of equality for women and men and work towards abolishing current inequalities.⁶⁹ Article 33(3) GG guarantees equal access to office irrespective of religion or belief.

These provisions apply to all areas covered by the directives. Their material scope is broader than those of the directives.

The provisions are directly applicable.

These provisions cannot be enforced against private individuals (although they can be enforced against the state).

However, fundamental rights have an indirect horizontal effect (*mittelbare Drittwirkung*) through the interpretation of open-textured provisions in private law, most importantly the general provisions on bona fide and equity.⁷⁰ In addition, the doctrine of positive duties can give rise to the obligation of state authorities to protect against discrimination.

⁶¹ There are other provisions relevant for non-discrimination, e.g. Article 6(5) GG (children born out of marriage) or Article 38 GG (voting rights) that are not discussed here.

⁶² Article 3 GG.

⁶³ Article 3(1) GG: 'All humans are equal before the law.'

⁶⁴ Settled case law, Decisions of the Federal Constitutional Court (*Entscheidungen des Bundesverfassungsgerichts*) (BVerfGE) 49, 148 (165); 98, 365 (385).

⁶⁵ Settled case law, see BVerfGE 49, 286; 96, 56; 115, 1. The right includes finding and cognition of the identity, BVerfGE 49, 286; 96, 56; 115, 1. The right to a name according to sexual identity is encompassed by this right, including for homosexual transsexuals, that is, transsexuals who are attracted to their own gender, BVerfGE 49, 286; 96, 56; 115, 1.

⁶⁶ Article 3(3) and Article 3(2) GG: men and women are equal.

⁶⁷ Article 3(3) (first sentence) GG. The prohibition of discrimination on the ground of parentage prohibits any discrimination based on characteristics of the parents. Whether this includes for instance the sexual orientation of parents has not been clarified by case law.

⁶⁸ Article 3(3) (second sentence) GG.

⁶⁹ Article 3(2) (second sentence) GG.

⁷⁰ Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 400/51, 15 January 1958, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:1951:rs19580115.1bvr040051: BVerfGE 7, 198, settled case law. A possible exception to this rule is Article 1 GG.

2 THE DEFINITION OF DISCRIMINATION

2.1 Grounds of unlawful discrimination explicitly covered

The grounds of discrimination explicitly prohibited in the main legislation transposing the two EU anti-discrimination directives (as listed in the Introduction) are: sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, religion, political opinion and disability are explicitly covered by the constitutional guarantee of equality as formulated in Article 3 GG, which is a major element of the transposition of the directives. As the guarantee includes, as just mentioned, an open-textured general principle, other grounds are potentially included as well. The Federal Constitutional Court regards sexual orientation and identity (including gender aspects) as part of the human personality as protected by the guarantee of human dignity and the general right to personality.⁷¹ The guarantees in the *Länder* constitutions differ in their details from this list⁷² although this is of no great significance in practice.⁷³

The AGG covers all grounds from the directives covered by this report (race, ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability, age or sexual orientation). Sexual orientation is substituted by the term sexual identity, without this having any discernible legal relevance in practice.

The Equal Treatment of Soldiers Act (*Gesetz über die Gleichbehandlung der Soldatinnen und Soldaten*) (SoldGG)⁷⁴ covers all grounds with the exception of age and disability in Article 1, taking advantage of the exception for military service in Article 3(4) Directive

⁷¹ Settled case law, see BVerfGE 49, 286; 96, 56; 115, 1. The right includes finding and cognition of the identity, BVerfGE 49, 286; 96, 56; 115, 1. The right to a name according to sexual orientation is encompassed by this right, including for homosexual transsexuals, BVerfGE 49, 286; 96, 56; 115, 1.

⁷² State/Provision/Ground/Content concerning differences from the federal guarantee of equality: Bavaria: Constitution of the Free State of Bavaria (*Verfassung des Freistaates Bayern*) (BayVerf), 15 December 1998, Article 118a; Disability; promotion of equalisation; Berlin: Constitution of Berlin (*Verfassung von Berlin*) (VvB), 23 November 1995, Article 10 Section 2; Sexual identity; prohibition of discrimination; Ibid., Article 11; Disability; promotion of equality; Brandenburg: Constitution of the Land of Brandenburg (*Verfassung des Landes Brandenburg*) (BbgVerf), 20 August 1992, Article 12 Section 2; Sexual identity, nationality, social background; prohibition of discrimination; Ibid., Article 12 Section 4; Disability; promotion of equality; Ibid., Article 25; Ethnic minority of the Sorbs; Right to own national identity, language, culture, schools, participation in legislation regarding Sorbian affairs; Bremen: Constitution of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen (*Landesverfassung der Freien Hansestadt Bremen*) (BremVerf), 21 October 1947, Article 2 Section 2; Social background; prohibition of discrimination; Ibid., Article 2 Section 3; Disability; promotion of equality; Mecklenburg-West Pomerania: Constitution of the Land of Mecklenburg - West Pomerania (*Verfassung des Landes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*) (VerfMV), 23 May 1993, Article 17a; Old age, disability; Ibid., Article 18; Ethnic and national minorities and groups; special protection when minority or group consists of German citizens; North Rhine-Westphalia: Constitution for the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia (*Verfassung für das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen*) (VerfNRW), 28 June 1950, Article 13; Religion; prohibition on denying schooling for religious reasons in state schools in absence of confessional schools; Rhineland-Palatinate: Constitution for Rhineland-Palatinate (*Verfassung für Rheinland-Pfalz*) (VerfRP), 18 May 1947, Article 17 Section 2; Diverse grounds (groups of persons (*Personengruppen*)); Prohibition of discrimination; Ibid., Article 17 Section 4; Ethnic and linguistic minorities; Respect (*Achtung*); Ibid., Article 64; Disability; protection, promotion of equality and integration; Saxony: Constitution of the Free State of Saxony (*Verfassung des Freistaates Sachsen*) (SächsVerf), 27 May 1992, Article 6; Ethnic minority of the Sorbs; Right to own national identity, language, culture, tradition, schools; Saxony-Anhalt: Constitution of the Land of Saxony-Anhalt (*Verfassung des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt*) (VerfST), 16 July 1992, Article 37; Ethnic minorities; Protection of cultural independence and political participation; Ibid., Article 38; Old age, disability; protection of disabled and elderly people, promotion of equality; Schleswig-Holstein: Constitution of the Land of Schleswig-Holstein (*Verfassung des Landes Schleswig-Holstein*) (VerfSH), 2 December 2014, Article 6 Section 1, 2; Ethnic minorities, especially Danes and Frisians and Sinti and Roma; Protection of cultural independence and political participation, protection of Danes and Frisians and promotion of their affairs; Ibid., Article 8; protection of rights and interests of people in need of care; promotion of accommodation; Thuringia: Constitution of the Free State of Thuringia (*Verfassung des Freistaats Thüringen*) (ThürVerf), 25 October 1993, Article 2 Section 3; Ethnicity, social background, sexual orientation; Prohibition of discrimination; Ibid., Article 2 Section 4; special protection of people with disabilities, promotion of equal participation in social life.

⁷³ See Article 31 GG: 'Federal law shall take precedence over Land law.' However, Article 142 GG states that, notwithstanding the provision of Article 31, provisions of *Land* constitutions guaranteeing basic rights in conformity with Articles 1 to 18 of the Federal Constitution remain in force. This provision gives *Länder* some space for independent guarantees of fundamental rights.

⁷⁴ SoldGG, 14 August 2006.

2000/78. However, there are regulations on severely disabled soldiers⁷⁵ based on the provisions of the Sections 1(2) and 18 SoldGG.

Other specialised legislation contains slightly modified lists. The main examples are as follows.

Section 9 of the Federal Civil Service Act (*Bundesbeamtengesetz*) (BBG)⁷⁶ repeats the principle of access to the civil service according to aptitude, qualifications and professional achievements and prohibits discrimination in access to the civil service on the grounds of sex, parentage, race or ethnic origin, disability, religion and belief, political opinions, background, relationships or sexual identity.⁷⁷ Age (*Alter*) is not explicitly included, although it is implicitly covered by other legislation, such as Section 24 AGG.

Section 67 of the Federal Personnel Representation Act (*Bundespersönalvertretungsgesetz*) (BPersVG)⁷⁸ obliges employers and employees in the public sector to ensure that all employees are treated in conformity with the principles of law and fairness, and in particular that nobody is discriminated against because of race or ethnic origin, parentage or other origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age, political or union activities or attitude, sex or sexual identity.

At *Land* level, the legal regulations for civil servants and other public employees were amended because of a change in the legal regulation of civil servants.⁷⁹

According to Section 75(1) of the Works Constitution Act (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*) (BetrVG),⁸⁰ employers and work councils are under an obligation to ensure that all employees are treated in conformity with the principles of law and fairness, and in particular that nobody is discriminated against because of race or ethnic origin, parentage or other origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age, political or union activities or attitudes, sex or sexual identity. Section 27(1) of the Executive Committees Act (*Sprecherausschussgesetz*) (SprAuG)⁸¹ contains an equivalent provision for executives.

As the latter regulations list characteristics only as examples, other comparable types of discrimination are prohibited as well.

The general principle of equal treatment of employees protects employees generally against unequal treatment without objective reason. It is generally held that discrimination on the ground of characteristics listed in Section 67(1) BPersVG or Section 75(1) BetrVG lacks objective reason and can be regarded as unlawful arbitrary treatment. The AGG confirms this view.

Legislation regulating public and private employment includes several measures at federal and *Land* level prohibiting discrimination on the ground of disability.⁸² There is some *Land*

⁷⁵ See the decision by the Federal Administrative Court (*Bundesverwaltungsgericht*) (BVerwG), 1 WB 8/08, 11 March 2008, ECLI: DE:BVerwG:2008:110308B1WB8.08.0, which clarifies that there is no analogous application of the AGG in these cases.

⁷⁶ BBG, 5 February 2009.

⁷⁷ Section 9 of the Federal Civil Service Act reads as follows: 'Geschlecht, Abstammung, Rasse oder ethnische Herkunft, Behinderung, Religion oder Weltanschauung, politische Anschauungen, Herkunft, Beziehungen oder sexuelle Identität.'

⁷⁸ Germany, Federal Personnel Representation Act, (*Bundespersönalvertretungsgesetz*) (BPersVG) 15 March 1974.

⁷⁹ See Annex 1 of this report.

⁸⁰ BetrVG, 25 September 2001.

⁸¹ Executive Committees Act, (*Sprecherausschussgesetz*) (SprAuG), 20 December 1988.

⁸² Cf. Section 164(2) SGB IX referring to the AGG. The prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability binds the partners to a collective wage agreement (unions and management), Decisions of the Federal Labour Court (*Entscheidungen des Bundesarbeitsgerichts*) (BAGE) 108, 333. *Land* anti-discrimination laws exist in all German *Länder*: Baden-Württemberg: Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Landes-Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz Baden Württemberg*) (L-BGG Baden-Württemberg), 17 December 2014; Bavaria: Bavaria Act on Equal Opportunities, Integration and Participation for Persons with Disabilities

law on the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation⁸³ and other *Land* laws against discrimination.⁸⁴

2.1.1 Definition of the grounds of unlawful discrimination within the directives

The AGG contains no legal definitions of the protected characteristics. However, the explanatory report to the AGG provides some, albeit non-binding, indications, referred to in the relevant section below.⁸⁵

- a) Racial or ethnic origin
- Race

The guarantee of equality in the Basic Law lists 'race' (*Rasse*) among the characteristics on the ground of which discrimination is prohibited. It is commonly held that this term does not refer to any real difference between human beings as, from an anthropological point of view, different human races do not exist. The persistent use of 'race' in English terminology and its counterpart in the Basic Law leads therefore to discussion and criticism,⁸⁶ which has an impact on the legal terminology used in (draft) legislation dealing with the matter.⁸⁷ The persistent calls to remove the term 'race' from the German

(*Bayerisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BayBGG), 9 July 2003; Berlin: Berlin Act on Promoting Equality for Persons with and without Disabilities (*Berliner Landesgleichberechtigungsgesetz*) (LGBG Berlin), 28 September 2006; Brandenburg: Brandenburg Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Brandenburgisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BbgBGG), 11 February 2013; Bremen: Bremen Act on Equal Opportunities (*Bremisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BremBGG), 18 December 2018; Hamburg: Hamburg Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Hamburgisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (HmbGGbM), 19 December 2019; Hessen: Hessen Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Hessisches Behinderten-Gleichstellungsgesetz*) (HessBGG), 20 December 2004; Lower Saxony: Lower Saxony Act on Equal Opportunities (*Niedersächsisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (NBGG), 25 November 2007; Mecklenburg-Vorpommern: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Act on Equal Opportunities, Equal Participation and Integration for Persons with Disabilities (*Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Landesbehindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (LBGG M-V), 10 July 2006; Rhineland-Palatinate Act on Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Participation of Persons with Disabilities (*Rheinland-Pfalz Landesinklusionsgesetz*), 17 December 2020; Saarland: Saarland Act Nr. 1541 on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Saarländisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (SBGG), 26 November 2003; Saxony: Saxony Act on Strengthening Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Saxony (*Sächsisches Inklusionsgesetz*) (SächsInklusG), 2 July 2019; Saxony-Anhalt: Saxony-Anhalt Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz Sachsen-Anhalt*) (BGG LSA), 6 May 2019; Schleswig-Holstein: Schleswig-Holstein Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Schleswig - Holstein Landesbehindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (LBGG S-H), 18 November 2008; Thuringia: Thuringia Act on Equal Opportunities and Integration Improvement of Persons with Disabilities (*Thüringer Gesetz zur Gleichstellung und Verbesserung der Integration von Menschen mit Behinderungen*) (ThürGiG), 30 July 2019.

⁸³ See Berlin: Law on Article 10(2) of the Constitution of Berlin (*Gesetz zu Artikel 10 Abs. 2 der Verfassung von Berlin*), 24 June 2004; Sec. 2 Berlin State Anti-Discrimination Act (*Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz*) (LADG), 11 June 2020; Saxony-Anhalt: Law on Eliminating the Disadvantages faced by Lesbians and Homosexuals (*Gesetz zum Abbau von Benachteiligungen von Lesben und Schwulen*), 22 December 1997 (all using the term sexual identity). In other *Land* law the other mentioned prohibitions of discrimination are applicable.

⁸⁴ Section 15(2) (third sentence) of the Saarland Media Law (*Saarländisches Mediengesetz*) (SMG), 27 February 2002, provides for non-discriminatory radio programmes which enhance (among other things) respect for people's sexual identity; Section 6(3) Law on Public Security and Order of the Saxony-Anhalt *Land* (*Gesetz über die öffentliche Sicherheit und Ordnung des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt*) (SOG LSA), 20 May 2014, provides that the discretion of the police must be non-discriminatory, listing as grounds sex, parentage, race, disability, sexual identity, language, home and origin, belief, religious or political opinions.

⁸⁵ See Bundestag, *Bundestagsdrucksache* 16/1780, 31.

⁸⁶ The German Institute for Human Rights (*Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte*) has taken a stand against the use of the term 'race' in legal texts. See Cremer, H. (2010), "...und welcher Rasse gehören Sie an?" *Zur Problematik des Begriffs 'Rasse' in der Gesetzgebung*, Policy Paper, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte; Cremer, H. (2010) *Ein Grundgesetz ohne 'Rasse' - Vorschlag für eine Änderung von Artikel 3 Grundgesetz*, Policy Paper No. 16, Berlin, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, available in German at: https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Policy_Paper/policy_paper_16_ein_grundgesetz_ohne_rasse.pdf.

⁸⁷ The Federal German Constitutional Court uses the term 'racial' (*rassisch*) only in quotation marks, cf.

Constitution – revived by the climate of international protests against racism in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd in the USA and the existing right-wing extremist and racist encounters in Germany – were effectively met in 2020, when the Federal Government took action and publicly announced various measures to combat right-wing extremism and racism, including the reformulation of the Basic Law.⁸⁸

In the explanatory report to the AGG it is explained that the term ‘race’ does not imply the acceptance of racist theories.

Race is defined in legal doctrine as actual or alleged characteristics that are biologically inherited.⁸⁹ It is noteworthy that antisemitism is regarded as discrimination on the ground of race, not of religion, because of the historic background of Nazi ideology.⁹⁰ Ethnic origin is covered by the term ‘race’.

Apart from constitutional law, there are various special laws that refer to race, for example the law on residence,⁹¹ or the law on restitution for victims of persecution during the period of the Nazi Government.⁹² In criminal law, there are provisions penalising incitement to racial hatred.⁹³ In these contexts race is defined along the lines of constitutional law.

- Ethnic origin

It is stated in the explanatory report that ‘ethnic origin’ is to be understood according to the definitions of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), including race, colour, parentage, national origin or ethnicity, without clarifying the exact delineation of these terms. The scope of ethnic origin is thus wider than race but overlaps in part.⁹⁴

Membership of indigenous minorities (i.e. the Danish minority, the Sorbian people, the Frisians in Germany and the German Sinti and Roma)⁹⁵ is determined in *Land* law with reference to subjective standards such as self-definition and other indicators, such as language.⁹⁶

BVerfGE 23, 98, 105 et seq.

⁸⁸ The detailed list of the measures was published on November 25, 2020, and is available in German at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/997532/1819984/4f1f9683cf3faddf90e27f09c692abed/2020-11-25-massnahmen-rechtsextremi-data.pdf>. No concrete formulation of a possible amendment to the Basic Law has been determined as of yet. The latest relevant publication of the German Institute for Human Rights was published in September 2020: Cremer, H. (2020), *Das Verbot rassistischer Diskriminierung: Vorschlag für eine Änderung von Artikel 3 Absatz 3 Grundgesetz*, Analyse, Berlin, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, available in German at: <https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/publikationen/detail/das-verbot-rassistischer-diskriminierung>. The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, which favours the relevant amendment of the Basic Law, held a panel discussion on the topic on September 29, 2020, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCvchUq9A3c>.

⁸⁹ Nußberger, A. (2018), in: Sachs, M. (ed.), *Grundgesetz: Kommentar* (8th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, Art. 3, para. 293.

⁹⁰ See BVerfGE 23, 98; Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 1056/95, 6 September 2000, DE:BVerfG:2000:rk20000906.1bvr105695.

⁹¹ E.g. Residence Act (*Aufenthaltsgesetz*) (AufenthG), 25 February 2008, Section 60(1): residence rights in the case of persecution on the grounds of race in a person’s country of origin.

⁹² E.g. Property Law (*Vermögensgesetz*) (VermG), 9 February 2005, Section 1(6).

⁹³ Criminal Code (*Strafgesetzbuch*) (StGB), 13 November 1998, Section 130.

⁹⁴ See Federal Labour Court (*Bundesarbeitsgericht*) (BAG), 8 AZR 364/11, 21 June 2012.

⁹⁵ These groups come under the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities: Council of Europe, Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities, ETS No. 157, 1995, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168007cdac>. See the German Declaration, which states: ‘National Minorities in the Federal Republic of Germany are the Danes of German citizenship and the members of the Sorbian people with German citizenship. The Framework Convention will also be applied to members of the ethnic groups traditionally resident in Germany, the Frisians of German citizenship and the Sinti and Roma of German citizenship’. Available in English at: www.coe.int/de/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/157/declarations?p_auth=Vch12seG&coeconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_enViqueur=false&coeconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_searchBy=state&coeconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_codePays=GER&coeconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_codeNature=10.

⁹⁶ See section 3.2.8 below and references.

b) Religion and belief

The interpretation of the guarantee of freedom of religion⁹⁷ by the Federal Constitutional Court provides the most important basis for understanding the meaning of religion and belief. Under the constitution, the freedom of faith, conscience and of religious and philosophical (*weltanschaulichen*) belief is protected. The terms 'religion' and 'belief' are not defined at constitutional level. However, through the rulings of the Federal Constitutional Court and legal science (*Rechtswissenschaft*, encompassing any scholarly study of the law) these terms have gained a more or less uncontested meaning.

'Faith' in this context is interpreted as a subjective conviction relating to religion or a philosophical belief (*Weltanschauung*) independently of the content of the religion or belief. Religion and belief encompass a wide range of systems of convictions not limited to those that are well-established.⁹⁸ Often, religion and belief are taken to be any specific views in relation to the world as a whole and the origin and purpose of humankind, which give sense to human life and the world.⁹⁹ To distinguish between religion and philosophical belief, reference is made to the concepts of transcendence and immanence. Religion transcends the world whereas philosophical belief is not a metaphysical, but an immanent system of convictions.¹⁰⁰ This distinction is contested in detail in legal science, but these questions have little practical relevance.

For example, the Federal Constitutional Court accepted as self-evident that Bahá'í is a religion.¹⁰¹ It relied in this context on current trends in society, cultural tradition and the understanding of religion in general and in religious studies.¹⁰² Beyond that, a teleological interpretation of the fundamental freedom of religion is regarded as being decisive.¹⁰³ Freedom of religion encompasses both the freedom of belief (*forum internum*) and its exercise (*forum externum*).

c) Disability

Section 2, Social Code IX (*Sozialgesetzbuch IX*) (SGB IX)¹⁰⁴ and Section 3 of the Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BGG)¹⁰⁵ provide the most important legal definition of disability. The Act on strengthening the participation and self-determination of persons with disabilities, referred to as the Federal Participation Act (*Bundesteilhabegesetz*) (BTHG),¹⁰⁶ entered into force on 1 January 2018 and amended Social Code IX. According to the revised version of Section 2(1) SGB IX and Section 3 BGG, persons with disabilities are people who have physical, mental or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, whether attitudinal or environmental, may hinder their equal participation in society with a high probability for more than six months. An impairment presupposes that the physical state and health differs from the state typical of the relevant age.¹⁰⁷ According to the explanatory report to

⁹⁷ Article 4(1) GG.

⁹⁸ The Federal German Constitutional Court held in an early decision (BVerfGE 12, 1 (4)) that religion refers only to the traditional religions established among civilised people. This jurisprudence has since been superseded.

⁹⁹ BVerfGE 90, 112 (115).

¹⁰⁰ BVerfGE 90, 112 (115).

¹⁰¹ BVerfGE 83, 341 (353).

¹⁰² BVerfGE 83, 341 (353).

¹⁰³ BVerfGE 83, 341 (353).

¹⁰⁴ SGB IX, 23 December 2016.

¹⁰⁵ BGG, 27 April 2002, last amended on 10 July 2018.

¹⁰⁶ BTHG, 23 December 2016, with effect from 1 January 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Before the amendment of the relevant provisions, persons with disabilities were defined as such if their physical functions, intellectual abilities or mental health had a high probability of differing from the state typical for their age for longer than six months and if, in consequence, their participation in society was impaired. This definition was close to the findings of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in C-13/05 (*Navas*) and the jurisprudence further developed in C-335/11 and C-337/11 (*Ring and Skouboe Werge*). See Judgment of 11 April 2013, *Ring*, C-335/11 and *Werge*, C-337/11, EU:C:2013:222 para. 41, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=136161&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mo>

the AGG, disability is to be understood as in Section 2 SGB IX¹⁰⁸ and Section 3 BGG.¹⁰⁹ This reference was upheld by the Federal Labour Court (BAG).¹¹⁰

The wording of the revised definition¹¹¹ is modelled on the (non-exhaustive, guidance providing) definition of persons with disability in Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,¹¹² incorporated into EU law as interpreted by the CJEU and ratified by Germany. The reference to six months may be less strict than the phrase 'long-term', used by the UN Convention and the CJEU.¹¹³

The Federal Labour Court has considered some issues deriving from the earlier definition of disability in the old version of Section 2(1) SGB IX that may be relevant for the interpretation of the current definition. It decided that, for the interpretation of disability in the light of EU anti-discrimination law, a wide concept of disability must be adopted which combines the elements in EU anti-discrimination law and national law that are advantageous for a person with disabilities. Disability in the sense of anti-discrimination law exists thus not only in cases that fall under the definition of Section 2 Social Code IX (SGB IX). In addition, states typical at a particular age and that may impair a person are not excluded from the outset as a possible disability factor. These formulations of the court mean that such physical states can form the ground for assuming a disability, depending, however, on the circumstances of the case. The Federal Labour Court explicitly states in considering discrimination on the ground of disability – in the context of HIV infection without symptoms – that a disability can be created by social reactions to a long-term illness, thereby impairing a person's participation in society.¹¹⁴ This interpretation of the concept of disability fully incorporated the jurisprudence of the CJEU. It goes beyond this jurisprudence, at least through the reference to inclusion in society (not only working life) and the (arguably) more lenient criteria of a six-month period of differing physical functions in comparison to the (as yet unspecified) 'long-term' criterion of the CJEU.¹¹⁵ How this interpretation will be adapted to the new definition is an open question only future case law will clarify. Of particular interest in this context is the role states that are typical at a particular age, which are included in the new definition, will play in the future interpretation of Section 2(1) SGB IX, as this may enlarge the scope of the definition of disability to the benefit of people who suffer from certain, at least partly age-dependent impairments.

People are 'severely disabled' (*schwerbehindert*) if their disability reduces their ability to participate in working life by at least 50 %, Section 2(2) SGB IX. Severe disability is the precondition of the application of special disability legislation.

[de=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3960308](http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=56459&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3960308). Judgment of 11 July 2006, *Navas*, C-13/05, EU:C:2006:456, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=56459&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3960462>.

¹⁰⁸ SGB IX, 23 December 2016 and BTHG, 23 December 2016.

¹⁰⁹ BGG, 27 April 2002.

¹¹⁰ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 642/08, 22 October 2009.

¹¹¹ The old version of Section 2(1) SGB IX referred to an actual impairment of participation in society rather than a potential one.

¹¹² United Nations (UN), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 13 December 2006, www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html.

¹¹³ Judgment of 11 April 2013, *Ring*, C-335/11 and *Werge*, C-337/11, EU:C:2013:222, para. 41, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=136161&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3961423>. Judgment of 11 September 2019, *DW*, C-397/18, EU:C:2019:703, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?language=en&num=C-397/18> para 44, 45. In CJEU, C-13/05 (*Navas*) an illness lasting eight months was not regarded as sufficient: Judgment of 11 July 2006, *Navas*, C-13/05, EU:C:2006:456, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=56459&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3961675>.

¹¹⁴ Federal Labour Court, 6 AZR 190/12, 19 December 2013, para. 43ff.

¹¹⁵ The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) dealt with the meaning of 'long-term' but did not specify any absolute time period that may be regarded as 'long-term', taking therefore a rather circumstantial approach: Judgment of 1 December 2016, *Daoudi*, C-395/15, ECLI:EU:C:2016:917, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=185743&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3961908>.

People with a degree of disability of less than 50 % but more than 30 % are treated as severely disabled if they cannot find or maintain employment due to their disability.¹¹⁶ The degree of disability is established by the relevant administrative authorities,¹¹⁷ applying standards defined by experts and the authorities, the details of which are contentious. A minimum impairment of 20 % is necessary for a formal declaration of the degree of disability in this procedure by the authorities.¹¹⁸ If the above-mentioned threshold of a 30 % reduction in the ability to participate in working life is not reached, the individual cannot under any circumstances be classed as severely disabled.

Some *Land* laws regulating various aspects of disability follow the revised definition of disability contained in Section 2 SGB IX.¹¹⁹

d) Age

Age is generally understood as biological age.¹²⁰

e) Sexual orientation

Like the AGG, other laws refer to sexual identity (*sexuelle Identität*) rather than sexual orientation.¹²¹ According to the explanatory report, sexual identity includes homosexual, bisexual, transsexual and intersexual people. In legal commentary, transsexuality is regarded as a matter of gender, not sexual identity.¹²² The Federal Constitutional Court refers to both as (distinct) and equally protected aspects of the individual's autonomous

¹¹⁶ Section 2(3) SGB IX.

¹¹⁷ Section 69(1) SGB IX.

¹¹⁸ Section 69(1) (sixth sentence) SGB IX. This has consequences for some benefits related to disability, e.g. in tax law: Section 33b Income Tax Law (*Einkommenssteuergesetz*) (EStG), 8 October 2009, latest relevant amendment on 9 December 2020, with effect for the calendar year 2021.

¹¹⁹ For reference to attitudinal and environmental barriers, see Section 2 Saxony-Anhalt Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz Sachsen-Anhalt*) (BGG LSA), 6 May 2019; Section 4 Bremen Act on Equal Opportunities (*Bremisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BremBGG), 18 December 2018; Section 3.1 Brandenburg Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Brandenburgisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BbgBGG), 11 February 2013; Section 3.1 Baden-Württemberg Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Landes-Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz Baden-Württemberg*) (L-BGG Baden-Württemberg), 17 December 2014; Section 2 Saxony Act on Strengthening Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Saxony (*Sächsisches Inklusionsgesetz*) (SächsInklusG), 2 July 2019; Section 3 Thuringia Act on Equal Opportunities and Integration Improvement of Persons with Disabilities (*Thüringer Gesetz zur Gleichstellung und Verbesserung der Integration von Menschen mit Behinderungen*) (ThürGiG), 30 July 2019; Section 3 Hamburg Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Hamburgisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (HmbGGbM), 19 December 2019; Section 3 Saarland Act Nr. 1541 on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Saarländisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (SBGG), 26 November 2003; Section 3.1 Rhineland-Palatinate Act on Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Participation of Persons with Disabilities (*Rheinland-Pfalz Landesinklusionsgesetz*), 17 December 2020. For a general reference to interaction with various barriers, see Section 2 (in the new version since 1 August 2020) Bavaria Act on Equal Opportunities, Integration and Participation for Persons with Disabilities (*Bayerisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BayBGG), 9 July 2003. The former definition of the old version of 2.1 SGB IX is still to be found in: Section 4 on Promoting Equality for Persons with and without Disabilities (*Berliner Landesgleichberechtigungsgesetz*) (LGBG Berlin), 28 September 2006; Section 2 Hessen Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Hessisches Behinderten-Gleichstellungsgesetz*) (HessBGG), 20 December 2004; Section 2.2 Low Saxony Act on Equal Opportunities (*Niedersächsisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (NBGG), 25 November 2007; Section 3 Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Act on Equal Opportunities, Equal Participation and Integration for Persons with Disabilities (*Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Landesbehindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (LBGG M-V), 10 July 2006; Section 2.1 Schleswig-Holstein Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Schleswig - Holstein Landesbehindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (LBGG S-H), 18 November 2008.

¹²⁰ Hamm Higher Regional Court (*Oberlandesgericht*) (OLG), Hamm/20 U 102/10, 12 January 2011, I-20. There are no minimum or maximum age limits set in law for the application of the prohibition of age discrimination.

¹²¹ See Article 10(2) Constitution of Berlin (*Verfassung von Berlin*) (VerfBE), 23 November 1995.

¹²² See Mahlmann, M. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 3 para. 63 with further references to corresponding jurisprudence from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

personality.¹²³ This provides authoritative guidance for the courts. This encompasses homosexuality and transsexuality, without excluding any other imaginable orientation or identity.¹²⁴

2.1.2 Multiple discrimination

In Germany, multiple discrimination is prohibited by law.

Section 4 AGG provides that any unequal treatment on the basis of multiple prohibited grounds must be justified for each of these grounds. It has not been clarified how the norm applies to cases of intersectionality. Section 27(5) AGG states that, in cases of multiple discrimination, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (*Antidiskriminierungs-stelle des Bundes*) (ADS) and the competent agents of the Federal Government and the German Bundestag are obliged to cooperate. The rules in place (within their general limits) would allow such cases to be dealt with.

In Germany, multiple discrimination¹²⁵ is recognised by law. Although a number of cases have concerned several grounds,¹²⁶ the courts usually do not categorise (in legal terms) these as cases of 'multiple discrimination' but instead focus on one ground. Thus, there is no recent case law clarifying the legal concept. In addition, there is as yet no case law on amounts of damages in cases of multiple discrimination.

2.1.3 Assumed and associated discrimination

a) Discrimination by assumption

In Germany, discrimination based on a perception or assumption of a person's characteristics, is prohibited in national law. This is explicitly regulated only in the field of employment.

¹²³ See Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvL 3/03, 6 December 2005, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2005:1s20051206.1bvl000303, para. 48; Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 2019/16, 10 October 2017, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2017:rs20171010.1bvr201916, para. 38ff (geschlechtliche Identität). 'Geschlechtlich' refers as 'sexuelle Identität' both to aspects of sex and gender.

¹²⁴ Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvL 3/03, 6 December 2005, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2005:1s20051206.1bvl000303, para. 48 ff. On transsexuals, see BVerfGE 49, 286; 96, 56; 115, 1.

¹²⁵ Two expert reports, commissioned by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, were published on the agency website in early 2011. They concern the conceptual framing and legal handling of 'multidimensional discrimination', as well as an empirical study on this phenomenon. Due to the method applied by the latter (a focus on qualitative analysis), a generalisation of the results would appear to be difficult. However, it was found that a very high percentage of the individuals selected by the researchers due to their experience of social injustice based on one ground also suffered from a similar experience on another ground (181 out of 290). This was particularly true of the ground of sex (as the second ground), cf.: Baer, S., Bittner, M., Götsche, A. L. (2010), *Mehrdimensionale Diskriminierung – Begriffe, Theorien und juristische Analyse*, Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/expertise_mehrdimensionale_diskriminierung_jur_analyse.html as well as Dern, S., Inowlocki, L. and Oberlies, D. (2010), *Mehrdimensionale Diskriminierung – Eine empirische Untersuchung anhand von autobiographischen narrativen Interviews*, Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/expertise_mehrdimensionale_diskriminierung_empirische_untersuchung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile. An online survey also produced the result that in most cases reported by victims, discrimination was experienced as 'multidimensional' rather than 'one-dimensional', cf. above, Rottleuthner, H. and Mahlmann, M. (2011), *Diskriminierung in Deutschland: Vermutungen und Fakten*, Baden - Baden, Nomos Verlag. As to the question of discrimination on the ground of religion and gender, see section 4.2 below.

¹²⁶ For example, Cologne Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht Köln*) (ArbG Köln), Köln/19 Ca 7222/07, 6 March 2008; Düsseldorf Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgericht Düsseldorf*) (VG Düsseldorf), Düsseldorf/2 K 26225/06, 5 June 2007; Frankfurt Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgericht Frankfurt*) (VG Frankfurt), Frankfurt/9 L 3454/09, 9 December 2009; Hamm Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Hamm*) (LAG Hamm), Hamm/7 Sa 1026/13, 4 February 2014. For an overview Baer, S., Bittner, M., Götsche, A. L. (2010), *Mehrdimensionale Diskriminierung – Begriffe, Theorien und juristische Analyse*, Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/expertise_mehrdimensionale_diskriminierung_jur_analyse.html, p. 53 ff.

There is no explicit general regulation of this matter in the AGG. The definition of discrimination in Section 3 AGG (see section 2.2 below) is, however, generally understood in legal doctrine to cover assumed characteristics. This is necessarily the case for race, as different human races in the scientific sense do not exist. So far, courts have had no occasion to clarify the matter. As for discrimination in employment, Section 7.1 AGG contains an explicit provision stating that the prohibition of discrimination extends to assumed characteristics.

b) Discrimination by association

In Germany, discrimination based on association with persons with particular characteristics is not prohibited in national law.

The regulations of the AGG are interpreted in legal doctrine as potentially covering such cases, although there is no reported case law in this respect.¹²⁷

2.2 Direct discrimination (Article 2(2)(a))

a) Prohibition and definition of direct discrimination

In Germany, direct discrimination is prohibited in national law. It is defined.

The AGG contains the following definition of direct discrimination, following the German version of the directives: 'Direct discrimination shall be taken to occur where a person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on the basis of any of the [prohibited grounds]'.¹²⁸ Hidden direct discrimination is taken to occur if unequal treatment is based on apparently objective criteria, which are, however, necessarily linked to a forbidden ground of discrimination.¹²⁹

The guarantee of equality establishes the principle of equal treatment as a fundamental right at the constitutional level.¹³⁰ However, this provision contains no explicit legal definition of direct discrimination. The definitions in use have been developed by the Federal Constitutional Court.

At the constitutional level, most doctrinal developments have been initiated by cases involving discrimination on the ground of sex.¹³¹ This case law forms the blueprint for the concept of discrimination as used in other areas of the law as well.

According to settled case law, unequal treatment presupposes the unequal treatment of essentially equal matters. For something to be considered to be direct discrimination (although this term is not necessarily used), the unequal treatment must be based on a particular characteristic.

In some early decisions, the German Federal Constitutional Court emphasised the need for intent on the part of the discriminator.¹³² This precondition has been weakened in a more recent decision. Discrimination is held to have taken place even if the act concerned was

¹²⁷ Däubler, W. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 1 para. 109; on the background in European law, Mahlmann, M. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 3 para 83, 104.

¹²⁸ Section 3(1) (first sentence) AGG. Within the meaning of the provision a 'person' is a natural person.

¹²⁹ Federal Labour Court, 9 AZR 141/17, 21 November 2017, ECLI:DE:BAG:2017:211117.U.9AZR141.17.0, para. 21: '*untrennbar*', literally 'inseparably'. The court referred to CJEU, judgment of 12 October 2010, *Andersen*, C-499/08, EU:C:2010:600,) para. 23, which concerns a case where a regulation referring to the entitlement to a pension was regarded as directly linked to age because of a mandatory minimum age for being entitled to the pension.

¹³⁰ Article 3 GG.

¹³¹ Article 3(2) and 3(3) GG.

¹³² BVerfGE 75, 40 (70).

not deliberately discriminatory but had other aims or if discrimination is only one factor in a 'bundle of motives' (*Motivbündel*).¹³³ Consequently, no decisive causal link between the characteristic and the discrimination is needed. It suffices that the characteristic is part of the (negative) criteria that lead to the discriminatory behaviour.¹³⁴

The Federal Labour Court regarded the objective qualification of a job candidate as a condition for possible discrimination,¹³⁵ but has abandoned this jurisprudence: currently, any applicant, irrespective of objective suitability, can be the victim of discrimination, according to this interpretation of the prohibition of discrimination.¹³⁶ The Federal Labour Court underlined that filing suit for discrimination may form abuse of rights, ruling out a violation of the prohibition of discrimination.¹³⁷

Section 164(2) SGB IX prohibits discrimination on the ground of disability in work relations for severely disabled people and people of equivalent status,¹³⁸ referring to the AGG, including its regime of justifications.¹³⁹

Section 7(2) (second sentence) of the BGG defines discrimination as follows: 'Discrimination shall be deemed to occur if disabled and able-bodied persons are treated differently without a compulsory reason and the equal participation of people with disabilities in society is in consequence directly or indirectly impaired'.¹⁴⁰

Further prohibitions of direct discrimination are found in various special laws, with minor variations on the definitions listed above.

Section 11 AGG states that discriminatory job vacancy announcements are prohibited. Such an advertisement, e.g. expressing a preference for applicants of a certain age,¹⁴¹ may constitute direct discrimination.¹⁴² With regard to other discriminatory statements, there is no explicit regulation beyond the norms of harassment. The prohibition of discrimination in the AGG is, however, open to interpretation in relation to such cases.

b) Justification for direct discrimination

There are justifications for direct discrimination in general civil law. According to Section 20(1) AGG, differences in treatment on the grounds of religion, disability, age, sexual

¹³³ BVerfGE 89, 276 (289).

¹³⁴ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 470/14, 19 May 2016, ECLI:DE:BAG:2016:190516.U.8AZR470.14.0, para. 53.

¹³⁵ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 370/09, 19 August 2010.

¹³⁶ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 470/14, 19 May 2016, ECLI:DE:BAG:2016:190516.U.8AZR470.14.0, para. 24ff.

¹³⁷ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 470/14, 19 May 2016, ECLI:DE:BAG:2016:190516.U.8AZR470.14.0. This is in line with Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU): Judgment of 28 July 2016 *Kratzer*, C-423/15, EU:C:2016:604, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=182298&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4038683>.

¹³⁸ The Federal Labour Court ruled that prior to the AGG and the amendment of Section 81(2) SGB IX (now Section 164(2) SGB IX) coming into force, the personal scope of the non-discrimination rule in the old version of Section 81(2) Social Code IX was already to be interpreted as covering all types of disability as understood in EU Law (direct/indirect discrimination), cf. Federal Labour Court, 9 AZR 823/06, 4 April 2007.

¹³⁹ The Federal Labour Court interpreted this provision before the enactment of the AGG with explicit reference to the definitions of Directive 2000/78/EC. According to the court, direct discrimination will be deemed to occur where a person is treated less favourably than another has been or would be treated in a comparable situation, see Federal Labour Court, *Neue Zeitschrift für Arbeitsrecht* 2005, pp. 870, 872.

¹⁴⁰ This definition therefore only covers discrimination against people with disabilities. The provision applies in specific areas, in particular barrier-free access facilities provided by public authorities. It has therefore a different material scope than Article 3 AGG. There is no definition of what constitutes compulsory reasons in the law. It is argued that such reasons may include the case that a person with disabilities lacks the mental or physical abilities to act in certain ways, cf. Dau, in: Dau/Düwell/Joussen (eds.) SGB IX, § 7 BGG para 4. Considerations of reasonable accommodation would need to be taken into account, however.

¹⁴¹ See for example: Schleswig/Holstein Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Schleswig/Holstein*) (LAG Schleswig/Holstein), Schleswig/Holstein/5 Sa 286/08, 9 December 2008.

¹⁴² See Däubler, W. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 3 para. 20.

identity or sex (the latter is not covered in this report) are not prohibited if there is an objective reason for the treatment. The following are listed as examples:

- the avoidance of dangers, the prevention of damage or other comparable aims (Section 20(1)(1));
- the protection of privacy or personal security (Section 20(1)(2));
- the granting of special advantages when there is no specific interest in enforcing equal treatment (Section 20(1)(3));¹⁴³
- in case of differences in treatment on the ground of religion, if the treatment is justified in the light of freedom of religion or the right to self-determination of religious communities or their institutions, irrespective of their legal form, or of organisations, the aim of which is to practise a religion together, in accordance with their respective ethos (Section 20(1)(4)).

The regulations in this area are not within the scope of application of the directives and raise thus no questions about transposition.

Section 20(2) (second sentence) of the AGG provides that a difference in treatment on the grounds of religion, disability, age or sexual identity is only admissible for private insurance if it is based on acknowledged principles of calculations adequate to the risks, especially on actuarial evaluations based on statistical data.

Section 19(3) AGG contains a special justification for unequal treatment in the case of housing. Differences in treatment in the context of letting housing are permissible for the purpose of creating and maintaining socially stable structures of residents, balanced settlement structures and balanced economic, social and cultural relations.¹⁴⁴ Given that there is no explicit exception or possibility of justification of such unequal treatment under the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC), the reconcilability of the clause with the European law depends on the question whether the interpretation of the clause is limited to very specific cases, e.g. of preventing ghettoization.¹⁴⁵

Section 24 AGG provides for the extension of the regulations of the AGG to civil servants, including justifications.

Other areas of the law contain no explicit provision for justifications.

With regard to the constitutional guarantee and the justification of unequal treatment, the Federal Constitutional Court holds that any unequal treatment on the ground of sex (which, as mentioned above, is the standard-setting characteristic in the framework of Article 3 GG) is unconstitutional unless it is a necessary consequence of attempts to resolve problems which by their very nature affect men or women only.¹⁴⁶ Whether any direct

¹⁴³ This case is intended to cover cases of special advantages to one group, e.g. bonuses for students that would not be extended to everybody.

¹⁴⁴ According to a legal opinion published by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, due to the requirements of the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC), Section 19(3) AGG should be amended so that it is explicitly stated that the relevant permissibility of unequal treatment will not apply in cases on the grounds of race and ethnic origin. Thüsing, G. and Vianden (2019), *Rechtsfreie Räume? Die Umsetzung der EU-Antirassismusrichtlinie im Wohnungsbereich: Zum verbleibenden Umsetzungsbedarf der Richtlinie 2000/43/EG im Allgemeinen Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*, Anti-Diskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, Berlin, p. 38, available in German at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Rechtsgutachten/rechtsgutachten_rechtsfreie_raeume_umsetzg_eu_rl_im_wohnungsbereich.html?nn=6580778.

¹⁴⁵ Arguing for permissibility on the ground of a teleological reduction of the regulation of the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) as the prevention of ghettoisation is not against the telos of the directive, Armbrüster in B. Rudolph, M. Mahlmann (2007), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 7 para. 109 et seq.; for the impermissibility of exclusive quotas but the permissibility of supporting quotas implying maximum representation of certain minorities, Klose, A. and Braunroth, A. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (4th ed.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handkommentar*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 19 para. 54ff.

¹⁴⁶ BVerfGE 57, 335 (342); 85, 191 (207).

discrimination on the grounds listed in Article 3(3) GG can be justified or not is the subject of debate. Some argue for this interpretation, while others regard Article 3(3) GG as a strict prohibition of any discrimination.¹⁴⁷

The general doctrine of justification of unequal treatment is of relevance in this context as well, given the open-textured nature of Article 3 GG, which extends its scope of application to such characteristics as age or sexual identity. Article 3(1) GG has been interpreted in the older case law of the Federal Constitutional Court as the prohibition of arbitrary treatment within the limits of material justice.¹⁴⁸ More recent decisions have increased the demands for unequal treatment to be justified beyond this position. The Federal Constitutional Court has ruled that, as the principle of equality before the law is intended to prevent unjustified unequal treatment, the legislature is usually subject to strict constraints in cases of unequal treatment. These legal constraints become stricter, depending on the extent to which the personal characteristics that constitute the ground for unequal treatment resemble the characteristics listed in Article 3(3) GG and there is therefore a greater likelihood that unequal treatment based on them will lead to discrimination against a minority. The strict constraint is, however, not limited to discrimination against individuals. It also exists where unequal treatment of subject matters of the law leads to the unequal treatment of groups of people.

The strictness of the constraint depends on the degree to which the people affected are able to change through their behaviour the characteristics that are the grounds for unequal treatment. In addition, the limits on the legislature are more narrowly circumscribed, depending on the extent to which the unequal treatment of people or subject matters can disadvantageously affect the enjoyment of basic liberties.¹⁴⁹ As a result, direct discrimination under the guarantee of equality is possible, but only within the limit of differentiated standards of justification. These standards range from a test of arbitrariness to strict scrutiny of proportionality.

2.3 Indirect discrimination (Article 2(2)(b))

a) Prohibition and definition of indirect discrimination

In Germany, indirect discrimination is prohibited in national law. It is defined.

Section 3(2) AGG provides that indirect discrimination will be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put people with one of the characteristics within the scope of the AGG at a particular disadvantage compared with other people unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.¹⁵⁰ The criterion must affect a group of people protected by the AGG significantly more than others.¹⁵¹ This can be determined by statistical comparison,¹⁵² although recourse to statistics is not mandatory.¹⁵³ Instead it is sufficient if the criterion is typically likely to have such consequences.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ See Nußberger, A. (2018), in: Sachs, M. (ed.), *Grundgesetz: Kommentar* (8th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, Art. 3 para 239ff, 254 (justification possible).

¹⁴⁸ BVerfGE 1, 14 (52); 25, 101 (105).

¹⁴⁹ BVerfGE 88, 87 (96).

¹⁵⁰ Section 3(2) AGG: 'Indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons on any of the grounds referred to under Section 1, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.'

¹⁵¹ Federal Labour Court, 1 ABR 47/08, 18 August 2009; Higher Labour Court of Saarland (*Landesarbeitsgericht des Saarlandes*) (LAG Saarland), Saarland/1 TaBV 73/08, 11 February 2009.

¹⁵² Federal Labour Court, 10 AZR 639/07, 24 September 2008.

¹⁵³ Federal Labour Court, 1 ABR 47/08, 18 August 2009.

¹⁵⁴ Federal Labour Court, 1 ABR 47/08, 18 August 2009. Thus, a job announcement limiting the list of applicants to those 'in their first year in post' constitutes an indirect discrimination on the ground of age.

The case law on predecessors of this norm gives some further indications of its possible interpretation.¹⁵⁵ Courts have ruled that discrimination on the ground of sex is not only assumed to have taken place if one sex is always disadvantaged with respect to working conditions but also if there are significant differences (*wesentliche Unterschiede*) between the number of men and women among privileged and disadvantaged employees.¹⁵⁶ According to this ruling, discrimination may be based on a regulation, a contract or the actual behaviour of the employer. The latter clarifies that indirect discrimination can result from factors other than just regulations, as now explicitly stated in Section 3(2) AGG.

The question of what difference in number establishes a 'significant difference' (potentially relevant for the interpretation of 'particular disadvantage') has not been clarified by the courts and is the subject of debate. A ratio of 1 woman to 10 men enjoying better working conditions has been regarded as a significant difference.¹⁵⁷ In another decision, a ratio of about 80 % women to 20 % men was deemed sufficient to establish a significant difference.¹⁵⁸

Indirect discrimination does not presuppose the intention to discriminate. It is regarded as sufficient to establish a significantly greater (*wesentlich stärker*) negative impact of the regulation, contract or actual behaviour of the employer on one sex.¹⁵⁹ This case law is based on CJEU case law.¹⁶⁰

The former prohibition of discrimination based on disability, Section 81(2) Social Code IX (SGB IX), which in its current form refers to the AGG, has previously been interpreted by the Federal Labour Court in this manner, explicitly referring to Article 2(2)(b) of Directive 2000/78/EC.¹⁶¹ There are no indications that this case law has become irrelevant.

Other federal courts also apply this interpretation of indirect discrimination along the lines of CJEU case law and the directives, although important details, such as references to hypothetical comparators, are not explicitly mentioned.¹⁶²

Section 7(2) (second sentence) of the Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act defines discrimination as follows: discrimination will be deemed to occur if disabled and able-bodied people are treated differently without a compulsory reason and the equal participation of disabled people in society is in consequence directly or indirectly impaired.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ Below the constitutional level, the concept of indirect discrimination has been elaborated in particular by the labour courts and legal science in the context of the application of sex discrimination legislation, cf. former Sections 611a and 612(3) BGB, repealed by the Law transposing European anti-discrimination directives. This formed the basis for solving problems connected with discrimination in other areas, e.g. on the grounds of disability. Although indirect discrimination was not defined in Section 611a BGB on sex discrimination, it has been assumed that it was nevertheless covered by this regulation as only this interpretation brings it in line with Directive 76/207/EC, where this concept was explicitly stated in Article 2(1). As is shown in other examples from the case law referred to in the text, indirect discrimination is not a new concept in German law.

¹⁵⁶ See Federal Labour Court, *Neue Juristische Wochenschrift* 1992, 1125; Federal Labour Court, *Neue Juristische Wochenschrift* 1993, 3091, 3093.

¹⁵⁷ Federal Labour Court, *Neue Juristische Wochenschrift* 1993, 3091, 3094.

¹⁵⁸ Federal Labour Court, *Neue Juristische Wochenschrift* 1992, 1125, 1126f.

¹⁵⁹ Federal Labour Court, *Neue Juristische Wochenschrift* 1993, 3091, 3094.

¹⁶⁰ Judgment of 13 May 1986, *Bilka*, C-170/84, , EU:C:1986:204, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=93347&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4349913>.

¹⁶¹ Federal Labour Court, *Neue Zeitschrift für Arbeitsrecht* 2005, 870, 873. Previously, indirect discrimination was regarded as being justified if it was objectively justified by a legal aim and if the means to achieve this aim were necessary and proportionate, see BAG, *Der Betrieb* 2004, 1106, thus extending the standard conception to discrimination on the ground of disability.

¹⁶² Federal Administrative Court, 2 C 21/04, 23 June 2005, ECLI:DE:BVerwG:2005:23060502C21.04.0.

¹⁶³ As already mentioned, there is no definition of what constitutes compulsory reasons in the law. It is argued that such reasons may include the case that a person with disabilities lacks the mental or physical abilities to act in certain ways, cf. Dau, in: Dau/Düwell/Joussen (eds.) SGB IX, § 7 BGG para 4.

The meaning of an indirect impairment is not further specified. Most *Land* disability laws follow this definition closely.¹⁶⁴

When interpreting the guarantee of equality, the Federal Constitutional Court regarded a law's discriminatory effects as sufficient to establish unequal treatment.

In the same decision, the Federal Constitutional Court explicitly recognised neutral provisions with discriminatory effects as being indirectly discriminatory. According to this ruling, confirmed by later decisions, indirect discrimination is established if neutrally formulated regulations apply disproportionately to women (or men) and if this is caused by natural or social reasons.¹⁶⁵ The Court referred in this context to the respective case law of the CJEU. Again, although this ruling directly referred to discrimination based on sex, it applies equally to other grounds. This case law has been upheld in more recent decisions.¹⁶⁶

b) Justification test for indirect discrimination

In legal science it is widely held that CJEU case law forms a suitable model to answer the question of justification for indirect discrimination in constitutional law.¹⁶⁷

This position has been adopted by the Federal Constitutional Court. It ruled that indirect discrimination is justified if objective reasons of considerable importance can be given for the indirect discrimination.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ See Baden-Württemberg Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Landes-Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz Baden-Württemberg*), (L-BGG Baden-Württemberg), 17 December 2014: Section 3.3; Bavaria Act On Equal Opportunities, Integration and Participation for Persons with Disabilities (*Bayerisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BayBGG), 9 July 2003: Section 5; Brandenburg Law on the Equal Opportunities for Disabled People (*Brandenburgisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (Bbg BGG), 11 February 2013: Section 3.2; Bremen Law on the Equal Opportunities for Disabled People (*Bremisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (BremBGG), 18 December 2013: Section 4; Hamburg Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Hamburgisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (HmbGGbM), 19 December 2019: Section 6.1; Hessen Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Hessisches Behinderten-Gleichstellungsgesetz*) (HessBGG), 20 December 2004: Section 4; Mecklenburg - West Pomerania Act on Equal Opportunities, Equal Participation and Integration for Persons with Disabilities (*Landesbehindertengleichstellungsgesetz Mecklenburg Vorpommern*) (LBGG M-V), 10 July 2006: Section 5; Lower Saxony Law on the Equal Opportunities for Disabled People (*Niedersächsisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (NBGG), 25 November 2007: Section 4.2; North Rhine-Westphalia Law on the Equal Opportunities for the Disabled People (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz Nordrhein-Westfalen*) (BGG NRW), 16 December 2003, Section 3.2; Rhineland-Palatinate Act on Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Participation of Persons with Disabilities (*Rheinland-Pfalz Landesinklusionsgesetz*), 17 December 2020: Section 3.2; Saarland Act Nr. 1541 on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Saarländisches Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (SBGG), 26 November 2003: Section 3; Saxony Act on Strengthening Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Saxony (*Sächsisches Inklusionsgesetz*) (SächsInklusG), 2 July 2019: Section 4.2; Schleswig-Holstein Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Schleswig - Holstein Landesbehindertengleichstellungsgesetz*) (LBGG S-H). Section 3 of the Berlin Act on Promoting Equality for Persons with and without Disabilities (*Berliner Landesgleichberechtigungsgesetz*) (LGBG Berlin), 28 September 2006, states that any unjustified case of unequal treatment is considered to be discrimination. Unequal treatment is not justified if it is based solely or decisively on circumstances that are in indirect or direct connection with the disability. Unequal treatment shall not be deemed to occur if the consideration of disability is necessary or serves the interest of the disabled person. The similar Section 4 of the Saxony-Anhalt Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz Sachsen-Anhalt*) (BGG LSA), 6 May 2019, includes cases where the development of people with disabilities is limited due to a lack of positive accommodation of their needs. When defining indirect discrimination in Section 4.3, the Thuringia Act on Equal Opportunities and Integration Improvement of Persons with Disabilities (*Thüringer Gesetz zur Gleichstellung und Verbesserung der Integration von Menschen mit Behinderungen*) (ThürGiG), 30 July 2019, states that it exists when apparently neutral regulations, criteria or procedures can disadvantage a person in a particular way due to her disability.

¹⁶⁵ Decisions of the Federal Constitutional Court (BVerfGE) 97, 35 (43).

¹⁶⁶ BVerfGE 121, 241 (254ff).

¹⁶⁷ Nußberger, A. (2018), in: Sachs, M. (ed.), *Grundgesetz: Kommentar* (8th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, Article 3 para. 255f.

¹⁶⁸ Federal Constitutional Court, 2 BvR 1476/01, 19 November 2003, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2003:rk20031119.2bvr147601.

In 2004, the Court stated that the strict test of proportionality developed for cases of direct discrimination also applies to cases where the unequal treatment of facts indirectly leads to disadvantage for certain people. The Federal Constitutional Court determines in each case whether there are reasons of sufficient weight to justify the unequal treatment.¹⁶⁹

In its case law, the Federal Labour Court, affirmed that indirect discrimination by a 'neutral criterion' may be justified by any legitimate aim as long as the principle of proportionality is not violated.¹⁷⁰ The objective reason for the discrimination must be weighed against the consequences of the unequal treatment to establish whether or not the unequal treatment is justified. Any rule established by the employer must be suitable for its purpose and necessary to achieve it. The reason must not be disproportionate as to the principle of equal treatment, for example non-discriminatory requirements set out in employment policies.¹⁷¹

Beyond these clarifications, there are no clear contours of the reasons accepted to justify indirect discrimination.

The AGG definition is compatible with the directives. In addition, the concept of indirect discrimination has in most cases been defined in line with the definition and interpretations of the relevant European law and the case law of the CJEU in particular. The definition in Section 3(2) AGG continues to inform the understanding of indirect discrimination for all courts.

As far as objective reasons and justifications excluding indirect and direct discrimination are concerned, there is a great deal of variety in the case law (see section 12.2 below and previous country reports for the European network of legal experts in the non-discrimination field). Detailed argument would be needed for the various spheres concerned that are regulated by the law, in order to assess convincingly whether or not they are in conformity with European standards.¹⁷²

2.3.1 Statistical evidence

a) Legal framework

In Germany, there is legislation regulating the collection of personal data.

¹⁶⁹ Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 1748/99, 20 April 2004, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2004:rs20040420.1bvr174899.

¹⁷⁰ Federal Labour Court, 1 ABR 47/08, 18 August 2009, referring to Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), C-388/07, *Age Concern England v. Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform*, 5 March 2009, EU:C:2009:128, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=77505&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4038809>.

¹⁷¹ Schlachter, M. (2019), in: Müller-Glöße, R., Preis, U. and Schmidt, I. (eds.), *Erfurter Kommentar zum Arbeitsrecht* (19th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, § 3 AGG, para. 9ff for an overview, para. 13 for the balance of interests reasoning.

¹⁷² To take one example, where case law from the CJEU exists: one Chamber of the Federal German Constitutional Court, Federal Constitutional Court, 2 BvR 1830/06, 6 May 2008, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2008:rk20080506.2bvr147601 held that the unequal treatment of same-sex couples in relation to certain (social) benefits is justified despite CJEU, C-267/06 (*Tadao Maruko*), 1 April 2008, because in heterosexual couples one partner is assumed to be in a greater need of financial support due to the requirements of child rearing than the partner in a same-sex partnership, where these requirements and the assumed positive effects of such unequal treatment on the rate of procreation of a society typically do not exist. See judgment of 1 April 2008, *Maruko*, C-267/06, EU:C:2008:179, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=70854&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4038889>. For critical comments on the German case law, see Mahlmann, M. *EuZW* 2008, 218f. A (more influential senate) decision by the Federal Constitutional Court did not follow this line of argument but affirmed the right of same-sex couples living in registered partnerships to the same benefits as married spouses, Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 1164/07, 7 July 2009, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2009:rs20090707.1bvr116407. For the important matter of the justification of unequal treatment on the ground of religion or belief, see section 4.2 below.

Germany has a differentiated set of statutory regulations on data protection. A great deal of case law exists on these matters. The regulations have their constitutional basis in the interpretation of the fundamental right to the protection of the personality, Article 2(1) in conjunction with Article 1 GG. The Federal Constitutional Court ruled that everybody enjoys the right to informational self-determination (*informationelle Selbstbestimmung*).¹⁷³ This right is not restricted to sensitive data. Everyone has the right to determine generally which data can be used and which cannot. The limits of this right are fundamentally those of the principle of proportionality. If the person concerned consents to the use of data, their use is, of course according to this jurisprudence, permissible. Given the doctrine of the requirement for a specific statutory regulation (*Gesetzesvorbehalt*) for matters that touch upon fundamental rights, detailed legal regulations on data protection have been established in many areas of life.

These laws encompass the relations between the state and citizens and private relations. In 2017, Germany passed the new Federal Data Protection Act (*Bundesdatenschutzgesetz*) (BDSG)¹⁷⁴ which implemented both the GDPR (Regulation (EU) 2016/679)¹⁷⁵ and Directive (EU) 2016/680.¹⁷⁶ For public bodies¹⁷⁷ the Federal Data Protection Act stipulates as a general principle that a public authority is allowed to process personal data if it is necessary for performing its tasks and exercising its official authority.¹⁷⁸ Section 22 BDSG sets out further restrictive conditions as a precondition for the processing of special categories of personal data. The law groups cases according to a strict test of proportionality for data collection that serves the public good, in order to protect the fundamental right to informational self-determination. These general rules are specified in legislation dealing with certain areas of public law.

The Federal Data Protection Act provides further that the processing of personal data by public bodies for a purpose other than the one for which the data were collected is permissible if: a) it is obviously in the interest of the data subject and there is no reason to assume refusal of consent; b) it is necessary to check the information provided by the data subject on the assumption that this might not be correct; c) the processing is necessary to prevent substantial harm to the common good or a threat to public security, defence or national security and to safeguard substantial concerns of the common good or to ensure tax and customs revenues; d) the processing is necessary for the prosecution of criminal and administrative offences and the enforcement of punishment, measures and fines provided by the Criminal Code and the Juvenile Court Act; e) the processing is necessary for the prevention of serious harm to the rights of another person; and f) the processing is necessary for exercising powers of supervision and monitoring.¹⁷⁹

In addition, according to the Federal Data Protection Act, the processing of personal data by private bodies for a purpose other than the one for which the data were collected is

¹⁷³ BVerfGE 65, 1 (154ff).

¹⁷⁴ Federal Data Protection Act (*Bundesdatenschutzgesetz*) (BDSG), 30 June 2017, with effect from 25 May 2018, which abrogated the old BDSG (last amended on 20 November 2019).

¹⁷⁵ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), OJ L 119, pp. 1-88, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2016%3A119%3ATOC>.

¹⁷⁶ Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA, OJ L 119, pp. 89-131, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2016%3A119%3ATOC>.

¹⁷⁷ The Federal Data Protection Act applies to public bodies of the Federation (*Bund*) and of the states (*Länder*) where data protection is not governed by state (*Land*) law. Section 1(1) Nrs. 1 and 2 BDSG. For the public bodies of the *Länder* see the relevant *Land* law implementing the Regulation (EU) 2016/679: e.g. Hessian Data Protection and Freedom of Information Act (*Hessisches Datenschutz - und Informationsfreiheitsgesetz*) (HDSiG), 3 May 2018, with effect from 25 May 2018.

¹⁷⁸ Section 3 BDSG.

¹⁷⁹ Section 23 BDSG.

permissible first, if it is necessary for the prevention of threats to state or public security or the prosecution of criminal offences and secondly, if it is necessary for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims.¹⁸⁰ In the case of an overriding interest of the data subject for not having the data processed, the processing becomes impermissible.¹⁸¹

As defined in the Federal Data Protection Act, data on racial and ethnic origin, political opinion, religious or philosophical beliefs, membership of unions, health, sexual life and sexual orientation form 'special categories of personal data'.¹⁸² The processing of such special categories of personal data is only permissible when it is strictly necessary for the performance of the controller's tasks.¹⁸³ The act sets appropriate safeguards for the legally protected interests of the data subject when processing these special categories of personal data.¹⁸⁴

The collection of data for purposes relating to non-discrimination policies must respect these principles and their expression in legislation at federal and *Land* level, and, more precisely, the constitutional right to informational self-determination and the limits this imposes on the collection of data by public authorities and private actors.

Germany gathers data using occasional nationwide censuses and more frequently by micro-censuses on a smaller scale, plus recurring specialised statistical surveys on a representative basis to update the given data. Population data include nationality, religion, age and disability.

Section 214 Social Code IX (SGB IX) stipulates the collection of federal statistics on severely disabled persons, including number, personal characteristics such as age, sex, nationality and place of residence, and type, cause and grade of disability.

The Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, the Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities and the Land Commissioners for Foreigners publish periodical reports on the situation of foreigners in Germany, including statistical data.

It should be noted that, given historic experience, German authorities are explicitly reluctant to gather data for any purpose on certain characteristics that formed the basis of discrimination in the Nazi period. There is no substantial debate on the issue.

In Germany, statistical evidence may be admitted under national law in order to establish indirect discrimination.

In the AGG, the admissibility of statistical evidence is not explicitly regulated but is presupposed for indirect discrimination.¹⁸⁵ For example, Article 286 of the Civil Procedure Code¹⁸⁶ provides for such a possibility.

The statistical data collected on the basis of Section 214 SGB IX about severely disabled people provides background information on the situation of this group of persons and the law, including for the purposes of positive action. In other areas, there is no relevant use of such data for positive action.

¹⁸⁰ Section 24 BDSG.

¹⁸¹ Section 24.1 BDSG.

¹⁸² Section 46(14) BDSG. There is no difference in meaning of sexual orientation in this context and sexual identity in the AGG.

¹⁸³ Section 48(1) BDSG.

¹⁸⁴ See Section 48(2) BDSG.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. the explanatory report, Bundestag, *Bundestagsdrucksache* 16/1780, p. 47.

¹⁸⁶ ZPO, 5 December 2005.

b) Practice

In Germany, statistical evidence is used in practice in order to establish indirect discrimination but is not used to establish other forms of discrimination.

Courts routinely use statistical evidence to establish indirect discrimination. The Federal Constitutional Court has used statistical evidence to establish whether or not indirect discrimination exists.¹⁸⁷ The data in the specific case (concerning sex) were derived from statistics provided by the defendant, the City of Hamburg.

The groups compared are formed according to the general doctrine of equality law on a case-by-case basis. It has been consistently held in case law that essentially equal groups must be treated equally. The criteria that are used to establish whether groups are essentially equal depend on the specific context. There is no settled case law on a specific quantitative measure for establishing the disproportionate application of a regulation to one group in comparison to another group.

As the examples discussed above indicate,¹⁸⁸ statistical evidence establishes a prima facie case of indirect discrimination. The statistics used are social statistics, if available. In other cases, the ratio is determined for the individual case.

In legal science there are voices that regard any difference that persists for a period of time as sufficient to establish indirect discrimination. If the ratio is small, the justification of this discrimination becomes easier for the employers. Others propose a threshold of about 75 %.¹⁸⁹

The groups to be compared are determined by the personal scope of the regulation challenged. For example, for a collective agreement, all people bound by the agreement form the relevant group. The group of applicants is relevant for a guideline on the selection of applicants for employment, although it is disputed whether all applicants should be considered or only sufficiently qualified applicants. The case law of the Federal Constitutional Court supports the former interpretation, as it ruled that Section 611a of the Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) (BGB)¹⁹⁰ (repealed by the AGG) not only forbids a refusal to employ someone on the ground of a particular characteristic (in this case sex), but that it suffices if the characteristic is one of a 'bundle of motives' for not choosing this applicant.¹⁹¹ It is not far-fetched to assume that these other considerations include the applicant's other qualifications, which precludes the possibility that only qualified applicants are considered. The Federal Labour Court regarded the objective qualification of a job candidate as a condition for possible discrimination,¹⁹² but has abandoned this jurisprudence – according to this interpretation of the prohibition of discrimination, any applicant, irrespective of objective suitability can be the victim of discrimination.¹⁹³

Section 154(1) Social Code IX establishes the duty of any employer employing more than 20 employees to employ at least 5 % severely disabled persons. This rule is interpreted as not directly prejudicial for individual claims, as it establishes only a general duty for the employer. If the employer does not fulfil this duty, it does not mean that discrimination has occurred in an individual case.

However, there are voices in the literature that argue that where the employer does not

¹⁸⁷ See BVerfGE 97, 35 (44).

¹⁸⁸ See section 2.3.a of this report.

¹⁸⁹ On the debate, see Schlachter, M. (2019), in: Müller-Glöge, R., Preis, U. and Schmidt, I. (eds.), *Erfurter Kommentar zum Arbeitsrecht* (19th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, § 3 AGG, para. 9, on the discussion about the significance and relevance of quotas see para. 10.

¹⁹⁰ BGB, 2 January 2002.

¹⁹¹ BVerfGE 89, 276 (189), see above.

¹⁹² Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 370/09, 19 August 2010.

¹⁹³ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 470/14, 19 May 2016, para. 24ff.

employ 50 % of the quota prescribed by law (2.5 %) this should lead to a presumption of discrimination, which can shift the burden of proof.¹⁹⁴ There is not yet any settled case law on these matters.

There are no discernible reasons why these principles should not be applied to grounds other than the ones mentioned. There is, however, no authoritative case law on the matter.

2.4 Harassment (Article 2(3))

a) Prohibition and definition of harassment

In Germany, harassment is prohibited in national law. It is defined.

Section 3(3) AGG defines harassment as discrimination when unwanted conduct related to any of the grounds covered by the AGG intend or cause the dignity of a person to be violated and an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment to be created.¹⁹⁵ According to German jurisprudence on Section 3(3) AGG, such an 'environment' is generally not created by one-off incidents but only by continuous behaviour,¹⁹⁶ of certain severity, beyond mere onerousness.¹⁹⁷ The personal and material scope of the prohibition of harassment is no different to other forms of discrimination under the AGG (explained below in section 3).

General legal provisions can cover cases of harassment as well. For example, in private law a case of harassment on the basis of ethnic origin can be regarded as a violation of the right to personality, which is protected by tort law.¹⁹⁸ Such an action can give rise to compensation for material and non-material damage. In criminal law the provisions against criminal insult and defamation can also cover cases of harassment, with the relevant sanctions.¹⁹⁹

In Germany, harassment explicitly constitutes a form of discrimination (Article 3(3) AGG).

b) Scope of liability for harassment

Where harassment is perpetrated by an employee, in Germany the employer and the employee are both liable, as detailed below.

The violation of the prohibition of discrimination of employees by employers or other employees is a violation of contractual duty (Section 7(3) AGG) giving rise to contractual liability.

The AGG establishes organisational duties for the employer. According to Section 12(1) AGG, the employer is under a duty to provide for appropriate measures of protection against and prevention of discrimination. Section 12(2) AGG provides that the employer

¹⁹⁴ See Neumann, D. (2018), in: Neumann, D., Pahlen, R., Winkler, J. and Jabben, J. (eds.), *Sozialgesetzbuch IX: Kommentar* (13th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, § 154, para. 1ff.

¹⁹⁵ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 74/18, 18 May 2017, ECLI:DE:BAG:2017:180517.U.8AZR74.16.0: conduct and environment cumulative conditions.

¹⁹⁶ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 347/07, 24 April 2008: unjustified dismissal as such not creating a hostile environment; Düsseldorf Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Düsseldorf*) (LAG), Düsseldorf/7 Sa 383/08, 18 June 2008: graffiti in restroom not enough by itself to create a hostile environment. Berlin-Brandenburg Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Berlin-Brandenburg*) (LAG), Berlin-Brandenburg/6 Sa 271/10, 18 June 2010: no harassment if considerable time period and no inherent connection between different incidents.

¹⁹⁷ Schleswig-Holstein Higher Labour Court, (*Landesarbeitsgericht Schleswig-Holstein*) (LAG Schleswig-Holstein), Schleswig-Holstein/6 Sa 158/09, 23 December 2009: no ethnically discriminating harassment by an employer's repeated demands to take a German language course.

¹⁹⁸ Section 823(1) BGB. In legal doctrine, it has been argued that protection against harassment through tort law is much wider than protection would be through a specific prohibition.

¹⁹⁹ Sections 185, 186 and 187 StGB.

must educate employees on the principles of non-discrimination. Section 12(3) AGG establishes the duty of the employer to act against discrimination by his or her employees through appropriate measures, including dismissal. Section 12(4) AGG provides that employers have a duty to take appropriate measures to protect employees against discrimination by third parties. A wider liability of employers – although discussed – does not form part of the AGG. The employer is under a duty to make the AGG known in the organisation (Section 12(5) AGG).

According to Section 15(1) AGG, employers are liable for material damages caused by violations of the prohibition of discrimination in case of fault. For non-material damages there is strict liability.²⁰⁰ If the discrimination occurs while applying collective agreements, intent or gross negligence is necessary (Section 15(3) AGG). Equivalent claims in the case of provision of services covered by the AGG can be based on Section 21(2) AGG (see section 6.5 below).

The general rules of responsibility of agents acting on behalf of others apply to the extension of liability.²⁰¹ There are no special rules for discrimination.²⁰² For example, a service provider can be liable for the action of their representative. Beyond the listed specific duties, there is no general responsibility for discrimination by third parties.²⁰³

An individual harasser or discriminator is liable if there is contractual or tortious liability, as outlined. The rules for responsibility for agents apply to unions and professional associations as well.

The AGG does not contain any particular provision regarding the liability of legal persons. Instead, the general rule of Section 31 Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) (BGB) is applicable, according to which legal persons are liable for damage caused by executive employees.²⁰⁴

2.5 Instructions to discriminate (Article 2(4))

a) Prohibition of instructions to discriminate

In Germany, instructions to discriminate are prohibited in national law. Instructions are defined: 'An instruction to discriminate against people on any of the grounds covered by the AGG shall be deemed to be discrimination' (Section 3(5) AGG). This is especially the case if someone instigates someone else to engage in a behaviour that disadvantages an employee due to one of the covered grounds (Section 3(5) (second sentence) AGG). According to prevalent opinion, an instruction presupposes the competence of the instructor to direct the action of the person instructed.²⁰⁵ Courts have had no occasion yet to clarify the matter.

In addition, such cases may be covered by general legal provisions.²⁰⁶ Responsibility for

²⁰⁰ Federal Labour Court, 8 AzR 906/07, 22 January 2009.

²⁰¹ Most importantly, Sections 31, 278 and 831 BGB, see section 2.5 of this report.

²⁰² In cases of sex discrimination, employers have been held liable for the actions of others, e.g. an employer for a discriminatory job advertisement by an employment agency, see BAG, Az. 8 AZR 112/03, 5 February 2004.

²⁰³ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 118/13, 23 January 2014. In terms of the relationship to candidates, the court ruled that third parties subcontracted by the potential employer to recruit employees, cannot be held liable given that the AGG only provides for compensation obligations on the part of the potential employer. As it was not necessary to rule on this issue in the present case, the court left open the question of whether a third party's duty of compensation may arise from any other legal source.

²⁰⁴ Leuschner, A. (2018), in: Säcker, F. J., Rixecker, R., Oetker, H. and Limpeg, B. (eds.), *Münchener Kommentar zum Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuch* (7th ed.) (2018), München, Beck Verlag, § 31, para. 20.

²⁰⁵ Deinert, O. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden - Baden, Nomos Verlag, AGG, § 3 Rn 106.

²⁰⁶ Prior to the enactment of the AGG, a first instance labour court regarded a dismissal as justified by an employee's behaviour in the following case. The employee in charge of recruitment was instructed by the

agents in contractual relations and in tort law is relevant in this respect.²⁰⁷ Another example from criminal law is incitement to discrimination that amounts to a criminal offence, e.g. criminal insult.²⁰⁸

In Germany, instructions explicitly constitute a form of discrimination.

b) Scope of liability for instructions to discriminate

In Germany, the instructor and the discriminator are liable. This is the case when there is no justification of the discrimination.

The general rules on responsibility of agents apply to the extension of liability.²⁰⁹ There are no special rules or case law for discrimination.²¹⁰

2.6 Reasonable accommodation duties (Article 2(2)(b)(ii) and Article 5 Directive 2000/78)

a) Implementation of the duty to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities in the area of employment

In Germany, the duty on employers to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities is included in the law and is defined. There is no general definition covering all fields of law, although it is defined in particular provisions, which are referred to below.

The AGG contains no additional regulation on reasonable accommodation of a general scope, as prescribed in Article 5 Directive 2000/78/EC for employment. It is argued by courts, including the Federal Labour Court, that a duty of reasonable accommodation is to be understood as a contractual duty stemming from Section 241(2) BGB.²¹¹ From this point of view, it is a contractual duty of the employer to take proper care of the legitimate needs of their employees. For people with disabilities, this means that the duty exists to reasonably accommodate their needs.

Nevertheless, the legislation on disability, constitutionally buttressed by the disability clause of the Basic Law²¹² and the obligations created by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed and ratified by Germany (see annex II of this report) and *Land* constitutions, provides for reasonable accommodation in various contexts, including those set out below.

The social security system has the general aim of integrating disabled people into society through individual assistance and accommodation of their needs²¹³ and establishes entitlements to material means of integration.²¹⁴ The German welfare agencies provide

employer not to hire more 'Turks'. The employee did not accept this order, arguing that everybody irrespective of origin should have the same chance. The court argued that the employer's right to give instructions covered this order, which did not violate any equality provision of German law (Article 3, principle of equal treatment of employees, European law including Directive 2000/43), and that the employee consequently had to follow these instructions. The parties settled at the next instance, see Wuppertal Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht, ArbG*) Wuppertal/3 Ca 4927/03, 10 December 2003.

²⁰⁷ Sections 31, 278, 831 BGB.

²⁰⁸ Sections 26, 185 StGB.

²⁰⁹ Most importantly, Sections 31, 278 and 831 BGB, see section 2.5 of this report.

²¹⁰ In cases of sex discrimination, employers have been held liable for the actions of others, e.g. an employer for a discriminatory job advertisement by an employment agency, see BAG, Az 8 AZR 112/03, 5 February 2004.

²¹¹ Federal Labour Court, 6 AZR 190/12, 19 December 2013, para. 53. Similar reasoning could be extended to job applicants.

²¹² Article 3.3 (second sentence) GG.

²¹³ Social Code I (*Sozialgesetzbuch I*) (SGB I), 11 December 1975, Section 10.

²¹⁴ SGB IX, 23 December 2016, Section 4ff; Social Code XII (*Sozialgesetzbuch XII*) (SGB XII), 27 December 2003, Section 53ff. Special regulations for blind people: Germany, SGB XII, Section 72.

support for participation in working life.²¹⁵ This encompasses the support of people with disabilities for obtaining employment, including vocational training, special medical and psychological support for participation in working life, housing near the place of work, transport or the creation of housing adequate for the disabled people, to name some examples.²¹⁶

Section 164(4) Social Code IX (SGB IX) imposes various duties on public and private employers in providing reasonable accommodation for severely disabled people.²¹⁷

For example, severely disabled people have a right to:

- employment in which they can develop and use their capabilities and knowledge to the highest possible degree;
- preferential consideration for in-house training for professional advancement;
- reasonable help to participate in outside vocational training;
- a workplace suitable for people with disabilities, including the necessary equipment and machines, and a suitable working environment and working hours, giving special consideration to the danger of accidents;
- equipment of the workplace with the necessary accommodation for work.

Due consideration is to be paid to the disability and its effects on employment. The Federal Labour Agency and the integration agencies support the employer in introducing accommodation measures. The severely disabled person has no claim if these measures would be unreasonable (*unzumutbar*) for the employer or cause a disproportionate burden even factoring in possible state support or are contrary to other legal regulations.²¹⁸ The employers are under a duty to promote part-time work.²¹⁹ Under certain circumstances, the severely disabled person is entitled to work part time.²²⁰ They are also entitled to additional paid holidays.²²¹

According to Section 106 (third sentence) of the Industrial Code (*Gewerbeordnung*) (GewO),²²² an employer must pay due regard to disability in their directives guiding the enterprise.

Public and private employers should conclude integration agreements with the representatives of disabled employees for enterprises and authorities with regard to working conditions and other issues of integration of severely disabled people.²²³ There are special regulations in pension law, including a lower minimum age for severely disabled people to collect a state pension.²²⁴

Given that there is no general regulation of reasonable accommodation that covers all areas within the material scope of the Employment Equality Directive, including, among others, job applicants, the law as it stands does not seem to conform to EU law.

b) Case law

A measure of accommodation is regarded as unreasonable for the employer in disability legislation if the financial burden is disproportionate, despite support from the Federal

²¹⁵ Social Code III (*Sozialgesetzbuch III*) (SGB III), 24 March 1997, Section 112ff; SGB IX, Section 187.

²¹⁶ See e.g. Section 49 SGB IX.

²¹⁷ On the definition of this, see section 2.1.1 above.

²¹⁸ Section 164.4 SGB IX.

²¹⁹ Section 164.5 SGB IX.

²²⁰ Section 164.5 sentence 3 SGB IX.

²²¹ Section 208 SGB IX.

²²² Industrial Code (*Gewerbeordnung*) (GewO), 22 February 1999.

²²³ Section 166 SGB IX.

²²⁴ Section 37 SGB VI.

Labour Agency and the integration agencies, using funds from the equalisation levy.²²⁵ There is only limited case law clarifying precise standards.²²⁶

c) Definition of disability and non-discrimination protection

There is no difference between the definition of disability as such for the purposes of claiming a reasonable accommodation and for claiming protection from discrimination in general in the areas of the law covered. The degree of disability is relevant for the application of the special rules for severely disabled persons (including reasonable accommodation) whereas the definition of disability is the same for both spheres of law—reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities or severe disabilities on the one hand and protection from discrimination on the other.

d) Failure to meet the duty of reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities

In Germany, failure to meet the duty of reasonable accommodation in employment for people with disabilities is recognised as a form of direct discrimination.

The Federal Constitutional Court found that disabled people are not only discriminated against if there is unequal treatment, but also when a disadvantage results from the lack of appropriate measures to accommodate the needs of the disabled person.²²⁷ This principle was developed in the context of integrated schooling but also applies as a constitutional principle to other spheres of life. The Federal Labour Court has clarified that a justification of direct discrimination on the ground of disability (Section 8 AGG, concerning genuine occupational requirements) is only possible if an employer meets their duty of reasonable accommodation derived from Section 241(2) BGB.²²⁸ Meeting the duties to reasonable accommodation is a precondition for the possibility of the justification of discrimination. A failure to make reasonable accommodation for the needs of persons with disabilities can thus lead to discrimination. The failure to meet the duty of reasonable accommodation duties could give rise to a right to compensation, e.g. under Section 15 AGG.

There is no special provision for the shift of the burden of proof in reasonable accommodation cases, apart from the general regulations providing for the shift of the burden of proof and case law on the matter.²²⁹

²²⁵ Sections 160.5, 185.3.2 SGB IX.

²²⁶ Baden-Württemberg Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Baden-Württemberg*) (LAG Baden-Württemberg), Baden-Württemberg/Az: 2 Sa 11/05, 22 June 2005, with further references. The duty of accommodation in the workplace includes organisational matters such as a new distribution of work if the disabled person cannot work as much as before. It has been held that an accommodation is not reasonable if it poses a disproportionate burden on the employer despite state financial help. The burden is deemed to be disproportionate if the measure demands significant financial investment even though the work relationship will end soon because of a fixed-term contract or age limits. If the measure jeopardises employment or places an undue burden on other employees, the same holds true. It has been regarded as unreasonable to demand that an employer introduce a measure directed purely at the rehabilitation of an employee without a real possibility that this measure will lead in the foreseeable future to the reintegration of the person concerned, see Rhineland-Palatinate Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Rhineland-Palatinate*) (LAG Rhineland-Palatinate), Rhineland-Palatinate/Az: 12 Sa 566/04. On the duty to create a procedural precondition for measures of accommodation in dealing with the works council, see Federal Labour Court, 9 AZR 481/01, 3 December 2002.

²²⁷ BVerfGE 96, 288. This judgment is not limited to severely disabled people.

²²⁸ Federal Labour Court, 6 AZR 190/12, 19 December 2013, para. 50ff.

²²⁹ There is specific case law easing the burden to provide evidence for a possible breach of the duty to provide reasonable accommodation of a disabled person, see Hessen Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Hessen/Az. 5 Sa 842/11, 21 March 2013, para 49; BAG, 9 AZR 230/04, 10 May 2005, para 42.

- e) Duties to provide reasonable accommodation in areas other than employment for people with disabilities

In Germany, there is a legal duty to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities outside the area of employment.

There are various areas where such rules exist. There are several dimensions to the question of integrated education. The general aim is not to separate disabled children from their social background and to educate them with children without disabilities through integrated schooling.²³⁰

In the leading case concerning integrated schooling, the German Federal Constitutional Court held that the decision to place a child in a special school for people with disabilities against the will of the parents constituted a breach of Article 3(3)(2) GG, if it was possible for the child to attend an ordinary school without special pedagogical help, if his or her special needs could be fulfilled using existing means and other interests worthy of protection, especially of third parties, did not weigh against integrated schooling. A general ban on integrated schooling was regarded to be unconstitutional.²³¹ Higher education in universities should take account of the needs of people with disabilities.²³²

There are various provisions stipulating that reasonable accommodation should be made to allow disabled people to communicate with public authorities and in court. Severely disabled people experiencing a severe lack of mobility or orientation are granted free local and regional transport, including free transport for an escort on long-distance journeys (train),²³³ and other aspects of mobility, to name just a few examples.²³⁴

There are particular regulations for disabled people in civil law relating to their special needs.²³⁵

A special regulation of general contract law allows for valid contracts with people with intellectual disabilities.²³⁶

There is no reference to the concept of 'disproportionate burden' in these provisions. In its decision on integrated schooling mentioned above, the Federal Constitutional Court implied materially such a consideration, within the framework of its weighing of interests.

According to the Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act, organisations and social partners should conclude agreements (*Zielvereinbarungen*) that specify what kind of measures for reasonable accommodation are to be provided in certain areas of life, e.g. for accessibility to financial institutions. These agreements determine the relevant measures in general terms. This regulation is not limited to severely disabled people.²³⁷

²³⁰ Section 4.3 SGB IX. The school laws of the *Länder* contain detailed regulations on the matter.

²³¹ See BVerfGE 96, 288.

²³² Framework Act for Higher Education (*Hochschulrahmengesetz*) (HRG), 19 January 1999: Section 2(4) (second sentence). The act is expected to be abrogated in the near future as are the corresponding regulations at the *Land* level (subject to reform).

²³³ Sections 228-230 SGB IX.

²³⁴ See Sections 7-11 BGG and the corresponding regulations in *Land* laws on disability, on a special regulation on mobility, e.g. Section 9 of the Berlin Act on Promoting Equality for Persons with and without Disabilities (*Berliner Landesgleichberechtigungsgesetz*) (LGBG Berlin), 28 September 2006; on communication with public authorities and in court see also e.g. Section 17(2) SGB I; Section 165 SGB IX; Section 19(1) (second sentence) SGB X; Sections 186, 191a Courts Constitution Act (*Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz*) (GVG), 9 May 1975; Section 483 ZPO; Section 66, 259(2) Code of Criminal Procedure (*Strafprozessordnung*) (StPO), 7 April 1987; Section 22ff Law on Authorisation (*Beurkundungsgesetz*) (BeurkG), 18 August 1969, on notarial instruments; Section 2233(2) BGB.

²³⁵ Section 305(2)(2) BGB establishes, for example, the duty to pay due regard to the needs of disabled people when general terms and conditions are included in a contract; on other matters see Section 138(6) SGB IX.

²³⁶ See Section 105a BGB, applying automatically to all persons having such disabilities.

²³⁷ Section 5 BGG. This may concern a variety of accessibility issues – from buses to buildings.

f) Duties to provide reasonable accommodation in respect of other grounds

In Germany, there is a legal duty to provide reasonable accommodation in respect of other grounds in the public and the private sector.

The duty to provide reasonable accommodation in respect of other grounds covers the grounds of religion and age, given the judicial interpretation of relevant norms in current case law.

Specifically, public authorities are under a duty to take the special needs of religious communities and the individuals who form these communities into account because of the fundamental right to freedom of religion. If, for instance, a butcher who is a practicing Muslim wants to slaughter animals without stunning them (ritual slaughter) in order to provide his customers, in accordance with their religious belief, the opportunity to consume the meat of animals that have been ritually slaughtered, the constitutionality of this activity must be examined in accordance with Article 2(1) in conjunction with Articles 4(1) and 4(2) GG, providing for freedom of religion, including its exercise. Section 4a(1) in conjunction with Section 4a(2) of the Animal Protection Act (*Tierschutzgesetz*) (TierSchG) provides for the possibility that an exceptional permission for ritual slaughter may be granted.²³⁸

Employers must pay due consideration to the fundamental right to freedom of religion.²³⁹ In previous case law, internationally much discussed, it has been held constitutional to

²³⁸ Animal Protection Act (*Tierschutzgesetz*) (TierSchG) of 18 May 2006 (BGBl. I, 1206, 1313), last amended on 29 March 2017 (BGBl. I, 626). See e.g. Federal Constitutional Court 1 BvR 1783/99, 15 January 2002, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2002:rs20020115.1bvr178399. See also Federal Labour Court, 2 AZR 636/09, 24 February 2011, where the court ruled that, even in cases of dismissals due to breach of the legitimate loyalty expectations of a church institution (employer), the continuity of employment could in individual cases be proved reasonable and therefore the dismissals would be ineffective, after balancing the competing interests of the self-perception of the Church on one hand and the employee's right to respect for their private and family life on the other. Section 241(2) BGB can play a role in this respect, without there being any clear patterns of application of this norm. A complaint by a schoolgirl requested dispensation from swimming lessons in a public school because of prohibitions stemming from her Muslim faith against showing her body's form to men. Although the school allows for the use of so-called burkinis, this option was not regarded as sufficient by the complainant. The complaint was struck down by the Federal German Constitutional Court. The Court argued that the complainant did not substantiate the claim that the use of the burkini was not sufficient to abide by religious rules in this respect.

²³⁹ Cases include religious dress codes, e.g. Mala (Düsseldorf Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), 22.03.1984, Düsseldorf/14 Sa 1905/83, 22 March 1984), Sikh turban (Hamburg Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht*) (AG), 3 January 1996, Hamburg/19 Ca 141/95) or the head scarf (BAG, 2 AZR 472/01, 10 October 2002; Dortmund Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht*) (ArbG), Dortmund/6 Ca 5736/02, 16 October 2003). The Berlin-Brandenburg Higher Labour Court regarded a rejection of an application in connection with the Muslim headscarf as discrimination, (Berlin-Brandenburg/Az.: 14 Sa 1038/16, 09.02.2017); also see: Osnabrück Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgericht*) (VG), Osnabrück/Az.: 3 A 24/16, 18 January 2017, on the withdrawal of a recruitment offer. The Federal Constitutional Court decided on a case where a trainee lawyer wanted to wear a headscarf during her training, BVerfG, 2 BvR 1333/17, 27 June 2017, and did not grant a temporary injunction on her behalf (for details see case law section below). On the legitimate ban of a headscarf for a nurse working in a hospital run by the Protestant Church, see: Federal Labour Court, 5 AZR 611/12, 24 September 2014 and the reconsideration of the Hamm LAG, Sa 1724/14, 8 May 2015 (see for further examples the case law section 12.2 below). Other cases concern breaks for prayers (Hamm Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Hamm/5 Sa 1782/01, 18 January 2002: balancing of interests in the case of break for prayers, no obligation if disruption of process of production. The impact of Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), C-157/15, *Achbita and Centrum voor gelijkheid van Kansen en voor racismebestrijding v. G4S Secure Solutions NV*, 14 March 2017, EU:C:2017:203, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=188852&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4039248> and Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), C-188/15, *Boungaoui and Association de défense des droits de l'homme (ADDH) v. Micropole SA*, 14 March 2017, EU:C:2017:204, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=188853&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4039425>, is not entirely clear and the courts are seeking further guidance by the CJEU, cf. for example the preliminary reference of Hamburg Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht*) (ArbG), Hamburg/8 Ca 123/18, 21 November 2018. For an example of a reference to this recent case law of the CJEU see Nürnberg Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Nürnberg*), 27 March 2018.

prohibit a teacher in a state school from wearing a headscarf.²⁴⁰ The German Federal Constitutional Court has abandoned this jurisprudence and has held that a general ban on headscarves for teachers at state schools is not compatible with the Constitution.²⁴¹ The same principle holds for belief.

Under German law on social security, there are stipulations providing for special means to accommodate the needs of older people. These include help in the household, adaptation of housing to the needs of older people, and support for inclusion in social and cultural life, etc.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Federal Constitutional Court, 2 BvR 1436/02, 24 September 2003, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2003:rs20030924.2bvr143602; Federal Administrative Court, 2 C 45/03, 24 June 2004, ECLI:DE:BVerwG:2004:240604U2C45.03.0.

²⁴¹ Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 471/10 and 1 BvR 1181/10, 27 January 2015, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2015:rs20150127.1bvr047110.

²⁴² Section 70 SGB XII provides for help to maintain a household; for further social security benefits for older people see Section 71 SGB XII.

3 PERSONAL AND MATERIAL SCOPE

3.1 Personal scope

3.1.1 EU and non-EU nationals (Recital 13 and Article 3(2), Directive 2000/43 and Recital 12 and Article 3(2), Directive 2000/78)

In Germany, there are no residence or citizenship/nationality requirements for protection under the relevant national laws transposing the directives.

The AGG is not restricted to German nationals or residents. It applies to everyone within the German jurisdiction, including undocumented migrants.

The personal scope of the constitutional guarantee of equality is not limited to German citizens as it is a human right with universal application. Any person who is the target or is otherwise affected by an action of a public authority that is contrary to the guarantee of equality is protected. The main legal pillars of anti-discrimination law thus are applicable to migrants and refugees as well.

The regulations on the special protection of severely disabled people apply to people who are legally resident or employed in Germany.²⁴³ Other special legislation only applies to German citizens and those of other qualified countries, especially EU countries.²⁴⁴

3.1.2 Natural and legal persons (Recital 16, Directive 2000/43)

a) Protection against discrimination

In Germany, the personal scope of anti-discrimination law covers natural and (certain) legal persons for the purpose of protection against discrimination.

In terms of protection, Section 7, in conjunction with Sections 3 and 6(1) AGG, protect employees, thus natural persons. The prohibition of discrimination against disabled people in employment applies only to natural persons.²⁴⁵ In other areas of the law, depending on the circumstances, natural and legal persons can be protected: for example, Section 19(1) AGG applies to natural persons in contract law and Article 3 GG to legal persons, such as a religious community.

The constitutional guarantee of equality protects natural persons. Legal persons are within the scope of the norm to the extent allowed by the nature of that right, which is relevant for religious organisations.²⁴⁶ It prohibits discrimination against legal persons on the ground of the ethnicity of their members, too. It is directly applicable to actions by public authorities and indirectly to actions by private actors through the interpretation of private law. Other prohibitions in public law apply to natural persons only, due to the nature of the matter concerned.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Section 2(2) (second sentence) SGB IX.

²⁴⁴ For example, under the terms of Section 7 Federal Civil Service Act, German nationality (or citizenship of another EU-member or EEA-contracting state or a state with which Germany or the EU has concluded an agreement on the recognition of respective professional qualifications) is a prerequisite for employment as a civil servant.

²⁴⁵ For example, Section 164(2) SGB IX, referring to the AGG.

²⁴⁶ Article 3 in conjunction with Article 19(3) GG. It is a matter of case-by-case scrutiny which kinds of legal persons are protected. See, for example, BVerfGE 111, 366 (372). Political parties are included, but not all associations pursuing the rights of their members.

²⁴⁷ For example, the anti-discrimination clauses in the laws on the civil service or the Federal Personnel Representation Act: BPersVG, 15 March 1974.

b) Liability for discrimination

In Germany, the personal scope of anti-discrimination law covers natural and legal persons for the purpose of liability for discrimination.

Under the AGG, both natural and legal persons can be held liable for violations of the prohibition of discrimination, Articles 7 and 19 AGG, pursuant to Articles 3, 6(2) and 19(1) AGG. Natural and legal persons may be liable under the prohibition of discrimination against disabled persons in employment (with reference to the AGG).²⁴⁸ If law other than the AGG applies, for example contract or tort law, natural and legal persons can be liable depending on the circumstances. In public law, legal persons are also liable, for example, under Section 24 AGG.²⁴⁹

3.1.3 Private and public sector including public bodies (Article 3(1))

a) Protection against discrimination

In Germany, the personal scope of national anti-discrimination law covers the private and public sectors, including public bodies, for the purpose of protection against discrimination.

The differentiated system of rules of non-discrimination applies to both the private and the public sector, albeit depending on the particular kind of rules. For example, the equality guarantee in the constitution applies directly to actions of public bodies (e.g. any legislative or administrative act from the provision of social services to police action, the public education system etc.), protecting thus individuals in a legal relation governed by public law and through indirect horizontal effect to private parties.²⁵⁰ The AGG applies to private parties, Sections 2, 3, 6(1), 7(1), 19(1) AGG (including employment and general contract law on the provision of goods and services, including private education or housing) and, by extension, Section 24 AGG applies to public employment, including the judiciary and conscientious objectors.²⁵¹

b) Liability for discrimination

In Germany, the personal scope of anti-discrimination law covers private and public sector including public bodies for the purpose of liability for discrimination.

As for protection against discrimination, there is a differentiated set of rules for the liability in both the private and public sectors. For example, the equality guarantee in the constitution applies directly to actions of public bodies (e.g. any legislative or administrative act from the provision of social services to police action, the public education system etc.) and through indirect horizontal effect to private parties which can thus both be held liable under this provision.²⁵² The AGG applies to private parties, Sections 2, 3, 6(2), 7(1), 19(1) (including employment and general contract law on the provision of goods and services, including private education or housing) and, by extension, Section 24 AGG applies to public employment, including the judiciary and conscientious objectors, making public employers liable for breaches of the prohibition of discrimination.²⁵³

²⁴⁸ See Section 164(2) SGB IX.

²⁴⁹ See Mahlmann, M. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 24 para. 64ff; Federal Administrative Court, 2 C 3/13, 30 October 2014, ECLI:DE:BVerwG:2014:301014U2C3.13.0, Federal Administrative Court, 2 C 11/13, 30 October 2014, ECLI:DE:BVerwG:2014:301014U2C11.13.0 et al.

²⁵⁰ Consistent case law since BVerfG 7, 198.

²⁵¹ See Mahlmann, M. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 24 para 21f.

²⁵² Consistent case law since BVerfG 7, 198.

²⁵³ See Mahlmann, M. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 24 para 64ff.

3.2 Material scope

3.2.1 Conditions for access to employment, to self-employment or to occupation, including selection criteria, recruitment conditions and promotion, whatever the branch of activity and at all levels of the professional hierarchy (Article 3(1)(a))

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in relation to conditions for access to employment, self-employment or to occupation, including selection criteria, recruitment conditions and promotion, whatever the branch of activity and at all levels of the professional hierarchy, for the five grounds and in both private and public sectors, as described in the directives.

Section 2(1)(1) AGG closely follows the regulation of the directives in this respect, covering all these areas. Section 11 AGG prohibits discriminatory job advertisements.²⁵⁴ Section 24 AGG provides for an application of the regulations of the AGG that takes account of the specificities of the civil service. In addition, Section 9 of the Federal Civil Service Act (*Bundesbeamtengesetz*) (BBG) repeats the prohibition of discrimination in access to the civil service. This prohibition is relevant for other areas of civil service law as well (Section 22(1) (first sentence) BBG). This prohibition of discrimination does not cover discrimination on the ground of age. This ground, however, is covered for civil service law by Section 24 AGG.

In Germany, national legislation applies to all sectors of private and public employment, self-employment and occupation, including contract work, self-employment, military service, and holding statutory office,²⁵⁵ for all grounds (race, ethnic origin, sex, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual identity). Military service is covered by the SoldGG. The AGG applies to the civil service taking into consideration its specificities (Section 24 AGG).

In addition, public employment (civil service and other employees) is covered by the guarantee of equality,²⁵⁶ the guarantee of equal access,²⁵⁷ civil service laws (which exclusively concern civil servants),²⁵⁸ prohibitions of discrimination in the law on the representation of public employees²⁵⁹ and – with regard to disability – a special regulation prohibiting discrimination that applies to private employers, too.²⁶⁰ Equal access to any kind of (self-)employment is guaranteed by freedom of profession, Article 12 GG.²⁶¹ For the public sector, there are additional duties, such as the early registration of vacancies to facilitate the employment of disabled people.²⁶² The prohibition of discrimination in the Works Constitution Act (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*) (BetrVG) applies only to certain enterprises, in particular excluding under certain conditions enterprises based on a particular religious, philosophical or political ethos (*Tendenzbetriebe*).²⁶³ The general principle of equal treatment of employees demanding equal treatment of employees in equal circumstances (developed in the case law before and independently of the AGG)

²⁵⁴ See, for example, Hessen Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Hessen/7 Sa 851/7, 18 June 2018.

²⁵⁵ In 2019, the Federal Court of Justice ruled that the AGG also applies in the event of termination of the employment of an executive of a company with limited liability. Federal Court of Justice, II ZR 244/17, 26 March 2019, ECLI:DE:BGH:2019:260319UIZR244.17.0.

²⁵⁶ Article 3 GG.

²⁵⁷ Article 33(2) and 33(3) GG.

²⁵⁸ On additional sexual orientation law on the *Land* level, see e.g. Article 1: Law on Article 10(2) of the Constitution of Berlin (*Gesetz zu Artikel 10 Absatz 2 der Verfassung von Berlin*). For the changing legal basis in this area see Annex 1 of this report.

²⁵⁹ See Section 67(1) BPersVG and the respective *Land*-level regulations.

²⁶⁰ Section 164(2) SGB IX, now referring to the AGG.

²⁶¹ BVerfGE 7, 377: no differentiation between employed and self-employed.

²⁶² Section 165 SGB IX.

²⁶³ Works councils are formed in all enterprises with more than five employees, excluding enterprises based on an ethos, see Section 118 BetrVG.

applies in all matters of labour law, including collective agreements, although contentiously not to recruitment.²⁶⁴

As indicated above, controversially, the general principle of equal treatment of employees in equal circumstances does not apply to recruitment.

3.2.2 Employment and working conditions, including pay and dismissals (Article 3(1)(c))

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in working conditions including pay and dismissals, for all grounds and for both private and public employment.

The AGG covers employment and working conditions, including pay and dismissals, in Section 2(1)(2). The AGG contains a special regulation in Section 2(4), which provides that, for dismissals, only the existing general and particular regulations for dismissal are to be applied, most importantly the Protection against Dismissal Act.²⁶⁵ As there are no prohibitions of discrimination in these norms, it seems unlikely to be possible to interpret these norms, due to their wording, in conformity with the directives. Therefore, this exception is not in accordance with European law.²⁶⁶ However, the Federal Labour Court argued that a discriminatory dismissal may be contrary to social choice (*Sozialwidrigkeit*) and hence lead to the invalidity of the dismissal according to the Protection against Dismissal Act.²⁶⁷ It held that such an interpretation of German law on protection against dismissal is in conformity with the directives. This line of argument has been confirmed in a decision holding that the AGG applies only to those rules on dismissal that are not covered by Section 2(4) AGG because special rules of dismissal are not applicable, e.g. in a probation period.²⁶⁸

Since 1 January 2018, following amendments to Social Code IX, the representatives of disabled persons (*Schwerbehindertenvertretungen*) must be included in the process before the dismissal of a severely disabled person.²⁶⁹

3.2.3 Access to all types and all levels of vocational guidance, vocational training, advanced vocational training and retraining, including practical work experience (Article 3(1)(b))

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in vocational training outside the employment relationship, such as adult lifelong learning courses or vocational training provided by technical schools or universities.

Section 2(1)(3) AGG closely follows the provisions of the directives. There is no explicit reference to vocational training outside employment relationships. Section 19(a) Social Code IV (SGB IV)²⁷⁰ contains a prohibition on all grounds for benefits concerning access to all forms and levels of vocational guidance, vocational training, advanced vocational

²⁶⁴ See also the interpretation in Maschmann, F. (2018), in: Richardi, R. (ed.), *Betriebsverfassungsgesetz: Kommentar* (16th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, § 75 para. 8, arguing for the application of the principle to recruitment.

²⁶⁵ Protection against Dismissal Act (KSchG), 25 August 1969.

²⁶⁶ Accordingly, this regulation, which was created at the very end of the legislative process as part of political bargaining, has been widely criticised in jurisprudence, cf. Düwell, *jurisPR-ArbR* 28/2006 para. 7; Thüsing/Bauer/Schunder (Thüsing) NZA 2006, 777; Däubler, W. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 2, para. 288ff.

²⁶⁷ Federal Labour Court, 2 AZR 523/07, 6 November 2008; Federal Labour Court, 2 AZR 676/08, 5 November 2009. On the concept of social choice (*Sozialauswahl*) see Section 1(3) Protection against Dismissal Act, which refers to a selection for dismissal on social grounds, like age, employability etc. to prevent dismissal of the most vulnerable.

²⁶⁸ Federal Labour Court, 6 AZR 190/12, 19 December 2013, para. 22.

²⁶⁹ Section 178(2) (third sentence) SGB IX.

²⁷⁰ Social Code IV (*Sozialgesetzbuch IV*) (SGB IV), 12 November 2009.

training and vocational retraining including practical work experience. In addition, Section 36(2) Social Code III (SGB III)²⁷¹ provides that the employment agency (*Agentur für Arbeit*) may only consider limitations imposed by employers for job and training applicants on the grounds of age (among other grounds like health or nationality), if they are indispensable for the kind of work in question. A consideration of race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability or sexual identity is possible, according to this norm, if this is permitted on the basis of the AGG. In addition, the constitutional guarantee of equality is applicable in public law and thus extends to social law.

3.2.4 Membership of, and involvement in, an organisation of workers or employers, or any organisation whose members carry on a particular profession, including the benefits provided for by such organisations (Article 3(1)(d))

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in relation to membership of, and involvement in workers' or employers' organisations as formulated in the directives for all grounds and for both private and public employment.

Section 2(1)(4) AGG follows the provisions of the directives. Section 18 provides for the application of the regulation on labour law in the AGG in this area, including a right to membership of these organisations (Section 18(2) AGG). Section 24 AGG extends the provisions to public employment.

3.2.5 Social protection, including social security and healthcare (Article 3(1)(e) Directive 2000/43)

It is important to keep in mind for the following that the AGG applies in principle to all grounds. As far as general contract law is concerned, for the topics covered by sections 3.2.6 to 3.2.8 of this report, the AGG is fully applicable for discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin (Section 19(1) and 19(2) AGG). For other grounds, this is only the case for certain qualified contracts (Section 19(1) AGG).

There are no explicit rules on harassment and instruction to discriminate in public law in this area, as the rules of the AGG are not applicable in this area of the law. However, prohibition of harassment and instruction to discriminate may be derived from the existing norms by judicial interpretation.

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in social protection, including social security and healthcare, as formulated in the Racial Equality Directive.

According to Section 2(1)(5) AGG, these areas are - for all grounds covered - within the scope of application of the AGG. According to Section 2(2) (first sentence) of the AGG, Section 33c of Social Code I (SGB I)²⁷² and Section 19a of Social Code IV (SGB IV) are applicable. Given the scope of the Social Code, this provision is applicable to both social protection and social advantages. Section 33c of Social Code I prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin and disability in relation to claiming social rights.

This provision of Section 33c of Social Code I is applicable to the whole Social Code, including social insurance, educational benefits, social compensation, benefits for families, housing allowances, support for children and adolescents, social welfare benefits and or participation by disabled people. The norm intends to implement Directive 2000/43/EC and adds the ground of disability. Section 19a SGB IV concerns vocational training, including vocational training in the framework of social protection. It covers all grounds of the directives.

²⁷¹ Social Code III (*Sozialgesetzbuch III*) (SGB III), 24 March 1997.

²⁷² Social Code I (*Sozialgesetzbuch I*) (SGB I), 11 December 1975.

a) Article 3(3) exception (Directive 2000/78)

In Germany, national law does not rely on the exception in Article 3(3) of the Employment Equality Directive in relation to religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation.

3.2.6 Social advantages (Article 3(1)(f) Directive 2000/43)

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in social advantages as formulated in the Racial Equality Directive.

According to Section 2(1)(6) AGG, social advantages are within the scope of application of the AGG.²⁷³

In Germany, the lack of definition of social advantages does not raise problems.

Social advantages are understood in a wide sense. Social welfare benefits (*Sozialhilfe*) are taken to be social advantages as well.²⁷⁴ According to Section 2(2) (first sentence) of the AGG, Section 33c Social Code I (SGB I) and Section 19a Social Code IV (SGB IV) are applicable. Given the scope of the Social Code, this regulation is applicable to both social protection and social advantages. Section 33c SGB I prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin and disability in relation to claiming social rights.

The provision of Section 33c SGB I is applicable to the whole Social Code, including social insurance, educational benefits, social compensation, benefits for families, housing allowances, support for children and adolescents, social welfare benefits and or participation by disabled people. The norm intends to implement Directive 2000/43/EC and adds the ground of disability. Section 19a Social Code IV concerns vocational training and covers all grounds of the directives. The constitutional guarantee of equality is also applicable including for social housing issues.

The exception in Article 3(3) Directive 2000/78 does not lead to an absence of any protection against discrimination given that Germany does not rely on it.²⁷⁵ There are no explicit rules on harassment and instruction to discriminate in public law in this area, as the rules of the AGG are not applicable. However, depending on judicial interpretation, prohibition of harassment and instruction to discriminate may be derived from the existing norms.

As far as social advantages in the public service are concerned, the guarantee of equality with the scope already outlined applies. For example, it has been held,²⁷⁶ that it is lawful in relation to employment benefits to treat married civil servants better than those living

²⁷³ Cf. Eichenhofer, E. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 2 para. 66.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Eichenhofer, E. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 2 para. 83.

²⁷⁵ However, there is some case law on the question of what is covered by Article 3(3) of Directive 2000/78/EC, arising from the terms used in the English, French and German versions of the directive, especially regarding whether only payments (as in the English version) or other services as well are included. See Federal Social Security Court (*Bundessozialgericht*) (BSG), B 4 RA 29/03, 29 January 2004 (left open); for narrow interpretation (only monetary payments) Hesse Regional Social Security Court (*Landessozialgericht*) (LSG), Hesse/L 6/7 KA 58/04 ER, 10 June 2005: continuing position as contractual doctor of public health insurance no benefit (*Leistung*) of social security. Survivors' pensions are exempt from the application of Directive 2000/78 by Article 3(3): Federal Social Security Court (*Bundessozialgericht*) (BSG), B 4 RA 29/03 R, 29 January 2004; concurrent Hessen Social Security Court (*Sozialgericht*) (SG), Hessen/L 12 RJ 12/04, 29 July 2004, compared to Düsseldorf Social Security Court (*Sozialgericht*) (SG), Düsseldorf/S 27 RA 99/02, 23 October 2003; cf. Court of Justice (CJEU), C-267/06, *Maruko v. Versorgungsanstalt der deutschen Bühnen*, 1 April 2008, EU:C:2008:179, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=70854&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4039687>.

²⁷⁶ Federal Administrative Court 2 C 43.04, 26 January 2006, ECLI:DE:BVerwG:2006:260106U2C43.04.0, NJW 2006, 1828.

in a *Lebenspartnerschaft* (life partnership, registered partnership for homosexuals and lesbians) because of the special protection for marriage provided by the Basic Law.²⁷⁷ Such jurisdiction is contrary to the provision in the AGG.²⁷⁸ The CJEU has clarified that it is a violation of the principle of non-discrimination (Articles 1 and 2 of Directive 2000/78/EC), if a surviving life partner, in contrast to a surviving spouse, has no right to receive a survivor's pension, if life partners and spouses are in a comparable position according to national law.²⁷⁹

Accordingly, the Federal Constitutional Court has held that both same-sex couples living in a life partnership and married spouses must be treated equally with regard to social benefits, overruling the contradicting case law of lower courts on this matter.²⁸⁰ The German courts have followed this line of argument, as the decisions of the Federal Constitutional Court are binding.²⁸¹ Section 46(4) SGB VI extends the entitlement to state pensions to registered partners.

3.2.7 Education (Article 3(1)(g) Directive 2000/43)

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in education as formulated in the Racial Equality Directive.

According to Section 2(1)(7) AGG, education is within the scope of application of the AGG in relation to all grounds. It is clear that this norm applies to any form of education provided on the basis of a private contract (Section 19 AGG). There is no explicit extension by the AGG to education ruled by public law as there is in Section 24 AGG for civil servants. For state education (schools, universities, universities of applied sciences etc.), which forms the majority of education in Germany, the constitutional equality guarantee, which prohibits discrimination by its general equal treatment clause (Article 3(1) GG), and its specific prohibitions of discrimination (Article 3(3) GG), is thus central,²⁸² the former relevant for age and sexual orientation, the latter for race, ethnic origin, religion, belief and disability.

Education is mostly dealt with by the *Länder*. *Land* school laws on education contain special provisions against discrimination and set out the aims of the educational system with respect to values such as human dignity.²⁸³ Private schools, possibly with a religious or philosophical ethos, have a right to equal treatment as regards state support.²⁸⁴ There is an explicit prohibition in the Basic Law of discrimination based on income by private schools that function as a substitute for state schools.²⁸⁵ Beyond this prohibition, the organisation responsible for the school has the right to select pupils freely, e.g. by faith, as long as pupils in the area are able to attend an alternative state school.²⁸⁶ There are rules on

²⁷⁷ Article 6 GG.

²⁷⁸ Mahlmann, M. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 24 para. 50.

²⁷⁹ Judgment of 1 April 2008, *Maruko*, C-267/06, EU:C:2008:179, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=70854&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4039687>.

²⁸⁰ Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 1164/07, 7 July 2009, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2009:rs2009070.1bvr116407 and Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 3087/14, 11 December 2019, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2019:rk20191211.1bvr308714.

²⁸¹ See, for example, Saxony Higher Administrative Court (*Oberverwaltungsgericht*) (OVG), Saxony/2A665/10, 4 March 2011.

²⁸² Cf. Rudolf, B. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 6 para. 154.

²⁸³ See e.g. Article 7(1) North Rhine-Westphalia Constitution (*Landesverfassung Nordrhein-Westfalen*) (VerfNW), 28 June 1950 and Section 1(1) North Rhine-Westphalia School Law (*Schulgesetz Nordrhein-Westfalen*) (NRW – SchulG), 15 February 2005: no discrimination on basis of economic status, origin or sex.

²⁸⁴ BVerfGE 75, 40.

²⁸⁵ Article 7(4) (third sentence) GG.

²⁸⁶ Given that education in a private school is provided on the basis of a civil law contract, the possibility of justification of discrimination in the case of selection on the ground of religion is provided by Section 20(1)(4) AGG.

reasonable accommodation for disabled children. All these rules on equal treatment in schools apply irrespective of nationality and thus to non-nationals, including migrants and refugees. Nevertheless, the underrepresentation of migrants in higher schooling and universities persists, which raises questions about the reasons, including possible unequal treatment or language skills.²⁸⁷ Whether or not such patterns of underrepresentation are regarded as 'segregation' depends on the understanding of this concept. The definitions of this term vary. Racial segregation is (alongside Apartheid) prohibited in Article 3 CERD. State parties undertake to 'prevent, prohibit and eradicate all practices of this nature.' According to General Recommendation XIX on Article 3 of the Convention, partial segregation is also covered by the term.²⁸⁸ However, a narrower definition guides ECRI.²⁸⁹

Article 1(c) of the Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960,²⁹⁰ prohibits the establishing or maintaining of separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons, with the exception of schools established for coeducation, religious or linguistic reasons, and private schools (Article 2).

A legally or institutionally enshrined separation of the educational system according to race or ethnic origin does not exist in Germany. Any system of segregation in this sense establishing separate schools on the ground of race or ethnic origin in education would be prohibited under Article 3 GG as a form of direct or indirect discrimination in conformity with the case law of the ECtHR.²⁹¹

There are special regulations for indigenous minorities in Germany,²⁹² which provide special

²⁸⁷ Cf. Bildungsbericht (2020) *Bildung in Deutschland*, pp. 87-88, <https://www.bildungsbericht.de/de/bildungsberichte-seit-2006/bildungsbericht-2020/pdf-dateien-2020/bildungsbericht-2020-barrierefrei.pdf>, on the tendency towards segregation because schooling is based on the family's place of residence and the existence of areas with a high concentration of migrants, who sometimes do not have sufficient German language abilities. The German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency uses the term 'segregation' widely in the sense of separation into different social groups, cf. *Zweiter Gemeinsamer Bericht der Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes und der in ihrem Zuständigkeitsbereich betroffenen Beauftragten der Bundesregierung und des Deutschen Bundestages* (2013), p. 14 et passim. In this sense, it concludes that segregation exists in the educational system. Differing educational opportunities for people from a migrant background are in any case well documented, cf. Klose, A. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 10 for further details. For a differentiated assessment, including of continuing underrepresentation of migrants, among other social groups and the rising number of pupils with migrant background in the Gymnasium as the highest German school form (the number of Gymnasiums with more than 25 % of children with a migrant background has increased in 2018 to 36 %), Bildungsbericht 2018, p. 93, <https://www.bildungsbericht.de/de/bildungsberichte-seit-2006/bildungsbericht-2018/bildung-in-deutschland-2018> (most recent available data).

²⁸⁸ General recommendation XIX on Article 3 of the Convention, (HRI/GEN/1/Rev. 9, (Vol. II)), 'a condition of partial segregation may also arise as an unintended by-product of the actions of private persons. In many cities residential patterns are influenced by group differences in income, which are sometimes combined with differences of race, colour, descent and national or ethnic origin, so that inhabitants can be stigmatized and individuals suffer a form of discrimination in which racial grounds are mixed with other grounds.'

²⁸⁹ ECRI General Policy Recommendation No 7, On National Legislation to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, 2002/2017, Explanatory Memorandum, 16: 'Segregation is the act by which a (natural or legal) person separates other persons on the basis of one of the enumerated grounds without an objective and reasonable justification, in conformity with the proposed definition of discrimination. As a result, the voluntary act of separating oneself from other persons on the basis of one of the enumerated grounds does not constitute segregation.'

²⁹⁰ Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960, Paris, 14 December 1960.

²⁹¹ See European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), *D.H. and others v. the Czech Republic*, Application no. 57325/00, 13 November 2007, para. 175ff, 198.

²⁹² As already mentioned, these groups come under the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities: Council of Europe, Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities, ETS No. 157, 1995, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168007cdac>. See the German Declaration, which states: 'National Minorities in the Federal Republic of Germany are the Danes of German citizenship and the members of the Sorbian people with German citizenship. The Framework Convention will also be applied to members of the ethnic groups traditionally resident in Germany, the Frisians of German citizenship and the Sinti and Roma of German citizenship'. Available in English at: www.coe.int/de/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/157/declarations?p_auth=Vch12seG&coeconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_enVigueur=false&coeconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_searchBy=state&coeconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_codePays=GER&coeconventions_WAR_coeconventionsportlet_codeNature=10.

protection of cultural identity, including the use of language in schools.

In Germany, the general approach to education for pupils with disabilities does not give rise to problems.

This does not mean that there are not particular legal issues to be solved. As already mentioned, with regard to education, there are several dimensions to the question of integrated education for children with disabilities, which varies among the *Länder* because of the federal structure of Germany. The general aim is not to separate disabled children from their social background (e.g. friends and peers) and to educate them with children without disabilities through integrated schooling.²⁹³

In the leading case concerning integrated schooling, the German Federal Constitutional Court held that the decision to place a child in a special school for people with disabilities against the will of the parents constituted a breach of Article 3(3) (second sentence) GG, if it was possible for the child to attend an ordinary school without special pedagogical help, if his or her special needs could be fulfilled using existing means and if other interests worthy of protection, especially of third parties, did not weigh against integrated schooling. A general ban on integrated schooling was regarded as unconstitutional.²⁹⁴ Higher education in universities should take account of the needs of people with disabilities.²⁹⁵

a) Trends and patterns regarding Roma pupils

In Germany, there are no specific patterns existing in education regarding Roma pupils such as segregation.

This assessment depends, however, on the understanding of the term, which varies. Segregation in the sense of (often legally) enshrined patterns of exclusion of certain social groups – in contrast to individual and structural issues of discrimination – is not a feature of the German school system. Given the statements on the issue of segregation by the representatives of the Sinti and Roma community to this rapporteur, this seems to be the standpoint of the Sinti and Roma community as well.²⁹⁶

3.2.8 Access to and supply of goods and services that are available to the public (Article 3(1)(h) Directive 2000/43)

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in access to and the supply of goods and services as formulated in the Racial Equality Directive.

²⁹³ Section 4(3) SGB IX. The school laws of the *Länder* contain detailed regulations on the matter.

²⁹⁴ See BVerfGE 96, 288.

²⁹⁵ Framework Act of Higher Education, 19 January 1999: Section 2(4) (second sentence).

²⁹⁶ There are some independent investigations on this matter, reporting that a high percentage of Sinti and Roma children do not attend school and are over-represented in remedial schools, that is schools designed for children with special needs. However, in the absence of reliable statistical data, these reports have to draw on interviews and other less comprehensive data (cf. e.g. ERRC/EUMAP Joint EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program / European Roma Rights Centre (2004) *Shadow Report Provided to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Commenting on the fifth periodic report of the Federal Republic of Germany* Submitted under Article 18 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Budapest, 09.01.04). There is the widespread perception – again including voices from the German Sinti and Roma community – that these kinds of studies do not convincingly establish any patterns of segregation (in the narrower sense), though discrimination against Sinti and Roma continues to be a problem, given some surveys on the experience of discrimination by Sinti and Roma or structures of prejudice. Strau, S. D. (ed.) (2011) *Studie zur aktuellen Bildungssituation deutscher Sinti und Roma: Dokumentation und Forschungsbericht*; Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2014), *Zwischen Gleichgültigkeit und Ablehnung - Bevölkerungseinstellungen gegenüber Sinti und Roma* (Between indifference and rejection - Population attitudes towards Sinti and Roma), available at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/expertise_bevölkerungseinstellungen_gegenueber_sinti_und_roma_20140829.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4. There has been very little case law on the matter in recent years (see the previous reports by this rapporteur to the European network of legal experts in the non-discrimination field).

Section 19 AGG contains a prohibition of discrimination in contract law. The prohibition covers the grounds of race and ethnic origin, sex, religion, disability, age and sexual identity. Belief, although contained in the drafts, was removed from the provision because of last-minute political decisions arguing that the inclusion of belief might broaden the prohibition too much. Thus, in principle, the provision goes beyond what is demanded by Directive 2000/43/EC because it covers more grounds than just race and ethnic origin.

There are no special provisions in German law covering racial or ethnic discrimination in the provision of goods and services by public sector institutions. However, the constitutional guarantee of equality, with the scope outlined above, applies.

There are no explicit rules on harassment and instruction to discriminate in public law in this area, as the rules of the AGG are not made applicable. However, prohibition of harassment and instruction to discriminate may, depending on judicial interpretation, be derived from the existing norms. If supply is based on a private contract, the AGG is applicable. It should be noted that the constitutional guarantee of equality also applies where public authorities provide goods or services, such as water, electricity, gas or transport on the basis of private contracts concluded between the authority and a private party (*Verwaltungsprivatrecht*). Where sectors have been privatised and the goods and services are offered by private actors, the AGG is applicable.

There are laws that either allow public authorities to act against certain forms of discrimination in the private sector or require equal treatment of clients in specific market sectors where specific market conditions apply.

The Passenger Transport Act (*Personenbeförderungsgesetz*) (PBefG)²⁹⁷ requires that a company must be reliable in order to receive a licence and establishes the duty to provide services to anyone who abides by the transport regulations.²⁹⁸ Telecommunications and postal service regulations require companies with a dominant market position to offer their services to everyone on the same conditions.²⁹⁹ The Licensing Act (*Gaststättengesetz*) (GastG)³⁰⁰ makes authorisation for the establishment of a restaurant dependent on the provision of rooms that reasonably accommodate the needs of disabled people.³⁰¹ The licence itself can be denied in cases of discriminatory behaviour.³⁰² There is some case law in this area.³⁰³

In general, private law, a prohibition of discrimination can arise through the interpretation of the general provisions of private law in the light of the guarantee of equality and the guarantee of human dignity. However, despite some literature on the matter, the case law

²⁹⁷ Passenger Transport Act (*Personenbeförderungsgesetz*) (PBefG), 8 August 1990.

²⁹⁸ PBefG, 8 August 1990, Section 22. Disabled people are consequently included.

²⁹⁹ Section 2 Regulation on the Protection of Telecommunications Customers (*Telekommunikations-Kundenschutzverordnung*) (TKV), 11 December 1997; Section 2 Postal Service Regulation (*Postdienstleistungsverordnung*) (PDLV), 21 August 2001. Furthermore, Section 1(3)(4) Universal Postal Service Regulation (*Post-Universaldienstleistungsverordnung*) (PUDLV), 15 December 1999, excludes from delivery postal items with racist statements written on their envelopes.

³⁰⁰ Eating and Drinking Establishments Act (*Gaststättengesetz*) (GastG), 20 November 1998.

³⁰¹ Section 4(1)(2a) Eating and Drinking Establishments Act. This provision is applicable in some of the *Länder*, e.g. Nordrhein-Westfalen or Bayern. Others have enacted their own Eating and Drinking Establishments Acts. Bremen's act contains a regulation on barrier free access, Section 3.3 Bremen Eating and Drinking Establishments Act (*Bremisches Gaststättengesetz*) (BremGastG), 24 February 2009. Regional building laws contain such norms, too. Some *Länder* have in addition made denial of access to or discriminatory treatment in restaurants etc. a misdemeanour, cf. Section 12.1 Nr. 15 Bremen Eating and Drinking Establishments Act (BremGastG), (ethnic origin, disability, sexual identity, gender identity, religion, belief); similarly, Section 11.1 Nr. 14 Niedersachsen Eating and Drinking Establishments Act (*Niedersächsisches Gaststättengesetz*) (NGastG), 10 November 2011 (ethnic origin, religion for 'discotheques').

³⁰² Cf. Klose, A. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 6 para. 177ff.

³⁰³ Schleswig-Holstein Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgericht*) (VG), 27 September 2000, Schleswig/Holstein/12 B 81/00: no denial of licence for restaurant on basis of political belief (Neo-Nazi) if no crime committed; for further case law, see Klose, A. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 6 para. 177ff.

in this respect is limited.³⁰⁴

Insofar as financial services are provided on the basis of private contract, the general rules of the AGG apply. Section 19(1)(2) AGG extends the prohibition of discrimination to private insurance. The grounds covered are race and ethnic origin, sex, religion, disability, age and sexual identity.

Discrimination on the ground of race or ethnic origin cannot be justified. With regard to unequal treatment on the ground of religion, disability, age or sexual orientation, Section 20(2)(2) AGG provides that a difference in treatment on the ground of religion, disability, age or sexual identity is only admissible if it is based on acknowledged principles of calculations adequate to the risks, especially on actuarial evaluations of risks based on statistical surveys.

a) Distinction between goods and services available publicly or privately

In Germany, national law distinguishes between goods and services that are available to the public (e.g. in shops, restaurants and banks) and those that are only available privately (e.g. limited to members of a private association).

The prohibition of discrimination on the ground of race and ethnic origin extends to all legal transactions available to the public (Section 19(2) AGG). The interpretation of the term 'available to the public' is contentious in legal doctrine and not ultimately settled in case law.

The most convincing interpretation, which is in line with EU law on this matter,³⁰⁵ is one that regards any good or service that is offered (including an *invitatio ad offerendum*) to an unlimited group of people by any means as 'available to the public'.³⁰⁶

The prohibition on the other grounds extends to all legal transactions that are typically concluded in a multitude of cases under comparable conditions without regard to the person, bulk business (*Massengeschäfte*), or to legal transactions where the characteristics of the person have only subordinate importance (Section 19(1)(1) AGG).³⁰⁷ Furthermore, the prohibition of discrimination extends to private insurance (Section 19(1)(2) AGG).

The prohibition of discrimination does not apply to legal relations of a personal nature or if there is a special relationship of trust between the parties concerned or their relatives (Section 19(5) (first sentence) AGG) even if the goods and services are made available to the public. As recital 4 of Directive 2000/43/EC underlines, and as it follows from European fundamental rights, the protection of the private sphere is a (fundamental and important) aspect of European law. However, as Directive 2000/43/EC contains no explicit exception in this respect (unlike Article 3(1) of Directive 2004/113/EC), it is questionable whether the exception in the AGG is in accordance with the legal regime of EU law pertaining to

³⁰⁴ Examples from case law are rare and not of recent date: The practice by a taxi control centre of offering 'German taxi drivers' was regarded as a violation of the guarantee of equality which was held to apply indirectly to the legal relationship between the taxi driver and the taxi control centre, making joint decision in this respect null and void, see Düsseldorf Higher Regional Court (*Oberlandesgericht*) (OLG), Düsseldorf/14 U 238/98, 28 May 1999; Karlsruhe Regional Court (*Landgericht*) (LG), Karlsruhe/2 O 243/00, 11 August 2000: Violation of Section 826 BGB through the exclusion of a gay singing club by an association of such clubs; the termination of a contract with the executive because of ethnic origin is an offence against good morals and consequently null and void, Frankfurt Regional Court (*Landgericht*) (LG), Frankfurt/13 O 78/00, 7 March 2001. Extraordinary termination of contract, Section 626 BGB void if severe disability has not been duly considered, Brandenburg Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Brandenburg/7 Sa 385/02, 19 February 2003.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Mahlmann, M. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 3 para. 89.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Armbrüster, C. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 7 para. 75ff; explanatory report, *Bundestagsdrucksache* 16/1780 p. 32.

³⁰⁷ Cf. Federal Court of Justice, V ZR 115/11, 9 March 2012, doubting applicability to hotels, and Federal Court of Justice, I ZR 272/15, 25 April 2019, ECLI:DE:BGH:2019:250419UIZR272.15.0.

race and ethnic origin, bearing in mind that any intrusion into the private sphere can be avoided by the party concerned by not making the goods and services in question available to the public, and thus rendering the AGG inapplicable.³⁰⁸ The regulation of the AGG is thus, in the view of the author of this report, contrary to EU law.

3.2.9 Housing (Article 3(1)(h) Directive 2000/43)

In Germany, national legislation prohibits discrimination in the area of housing³⁰⁹ as formulated in the Racial Equality Directive.

As stated above these rules are applicable to non-nationals, including migrants and refugees.

Although the AGG applies to housing, unequal treatment is nevertheless permissible on all grounds if it serves to create and maintain stable social relations regarding inhabitants, and balanced patterns of settlement and economic, social and cultural relations (Section 19(3) AGG). According to the explanatory report, this clause should not be interpreted as justifying the under-representation of any racial or ethnic minority.³¹⁰ This question has practical importance for various groups of residents from migrant backgrounds, given the residential structures in some cities where people from such backgrounds find housing predominantly in some areas, but not others. It is of less relevance for Roma, as comparable housing patterns in their case do not exist. Some measures will be justifiable as positive action insofar as they increase the presence of some minorities. In other cases, possible indirect discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin because of the application of certain socio-economic parameters might be justified by the objective reason of creating a socially balanced structure of inhabitants, if these measures are proportionate. Given that there is no explicit exception or possibility of justification of such unequal treatment under Directive 2000/43/EC beyond that, the reconcilability of the clause with European law depends on the question of whether the interpretation of the clause is limited to this framework.³¹¹ A recent decision confirmed the interpretation that the clause permits positive action, intended to balance the social mix but not discrimination on the ground of race or ethnic origin.³¹²

As mentioned above, the prohibition of discrimination in contract law does not apply to legal relations of a personal nature or if there is a special relationship of trust between the

³⁰⁸ For the reconcilability of Sections 19.5.1 and 19.5.2 AGG with Directive 2000/43/EC, cf. e.g. Armbrüster, C. (2007), in Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 7 para. 84ff.

³⁰⁹ Cf. background information: Müller, A. (2015), *Expertise "Diskriminierung auf dem Wohnungsmarkt"*. Strategien zum Nachweis rassistischer Benachteiligungen, Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/expertise_diskriminierung_auf_dem_wohnungsmarkt.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5, on cases of discrimination based on race and ethnic origin in the area of housing and above, footnote 127.

³¹⁰ Bundestag, *Bundestagsdrucksache* 16/1780 p. 42.

³¹¹ Arguing for permissibility on the ground of a teleological reduction of the regulation of the Directive 2000/43/EC as the prevention of ghettoization is not against the purpose of the directive, see Armbrüster, C., in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 7 para. 109ff; for the impermissibility of exclusive quotas but the permissibility of supporting quotas implying maximum representation of certain minorities, see Klose, A. and Braunroth, A. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 19 para. 54ff. The recent legal opinion commissioned by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency recommends the amendment of Section 19(3) AGG so that in the future formulation it is explicitly stated that the relevant permissibility of unequal treatment will not apply in cases of the grounds of race and ethnic origin. Thüsing, G. and Vianden (2019), *Rechtsfreie Räume? Die Umsetzung der EU-Antirassismusrichtlinie im Wohnungsbereich: Zum verbleibenden Umsetzungsbedarf der Richtlinie 2000/43/EG im Allgemeinen Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*, (A legal vacuum? The transposition of the EU Anti-Racism Directive in the area of housing) Anti-Diskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, Berlin, p. 38, available in German at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Rechtsgutachten/rechtsgutachten_rechtsfreie_raeume_umsetzq_eu_rl_im_wohnungsbereich.html?nn=6580778.

³¹² Hamburg-Barmbek Labour Court (*Amtssgericht*) (AG), Hamburg-Barmbek/811b C 273/15, 3 February 2017: The landlord had disregarded applicants with 'foreign sounding' names.

parties concerned or their relatives (Section 19(5) (first sentence) AGG).

In the case of housing this is supposed to be the case if the parties or their relatives live at the same premises (Section 19(5) (second sentence) AGG). This raises the same issues as discussed under section 3.2.8 of this report, as there is no explicit exception to this extent in the directive. The reconcilability of this clause depends on the interpretation of Directive 2000/43/EC and the legal reach of considerations of privacy (see section 3.2.8 above).³¹³ There is no case law clarifying these issues.

The principle of non-discrimination is not supposed to apply in principle (although exceptions are supposed to be possible), if a landlord does not let more than 50 dwellings, as in this case a *Massengeschäft* is not assumed to exist (Section 19(5) (third sentence) AGG).

There is a special clause enabling registered partners (*Lebenspartner*) to succeed in rental contracts after their partner's death.³¹⁴

If a public body provides housing, it is bound by the guarantee of equality. Support for people with disabilities is granted for finding, modifying, equipping and preserving housing adequate for their special needs (Section 77(1) (second sentence) Social Code IX (SGB IX)).

Further provisions provide for special means to accommodate the needs of older people, including adaptation of housing to their needs (Sections 70 and 71(2)(2) Social Code XII (SGB XII)).

a) Trends and patterns regarding housing segregation for Roma

In Germany, there are no patterns of housing segregation and discrimination against the Roma.

Nevertheless, individual discrimination may occur. There is no case law on this matter.

³¹³ The authors of the legal opinion commissioned by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, *A legal vacuum? The transposition of the EU Anti-Racism Directive in the area of housing*, recommend the following amendment of Section 19 para. 5 AGG: The provisions of this Section shall not apply to civil-law obligations where the parties or their relatives are closely related or a relationship of trust exists of such significance that under consideration the protection of privacy must take precedence over the protection against discrimination. As regards tenancy, this may in particular be the case where the parties or the relatives use housing situated on the same plot of land. Thüsing, G. and Vianden (2019), *Rechtsfreie Räume? Die Umsetzung der EU-Antirassismusrichtlinie im Wohnungsbereich: Zum verbleibenden Umsetzungsbedarf der Richtlinie 2000/ 43/EG im Allgemeinen Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*, Anti-Diskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, Berlin, p. 39, available in German at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Rechtsgutachten/rechtsgutachten_rechtsfreie_raeume_umsetzq_eu_rl_im_wohnungsbereich.html?nn=6580778.

³¹⁴ Section 563(1)(2) BGB, mirroring the same right of married couples, Section 563(1) BGB.

4 EXCEPTIONS

4.1 Genuine and determining occupational requirements (Article 4)

In Germany, national legislation provides for an exception for genuine and determining occupational requirements.

Section 8(1) AGG provides that unequal treatment that is based on a characteristic shall not constitute discrimination where, by reason of the nature of the particular occupational activities concerned or of the context in which they are carried out, such a characteristic constitutes a genuine and determining occupational requirement, provided that the objective is legitimate, and the requirement is proportionate, following closely the wording of the directives.³¹⁵

4.2 Employers with an ethos based on religion or belief (Article 4(2) Directive 2000/78)

In Germany, national law provides for an exception for employers with an ethos based on religion or belief.

³¹⁵ The headscarf issue is at its core not conceptualised by the Federal Constitutional Court as a matter relating to unequal treatment of religions, but instead as relating to possible limits on the freedom of religion, see Federal Constitutional Court, 2 BvR 1436/02, 24 September 2003, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2003:rs20030924.2bvr143602, para. 32 et passim. Even the yardstick for the guarantee of equality of Article 33(3) GG is the compatibility of a regulation with freedom of religion, Federal Constitutional Court, 2 BvR 1436/02, 24 September 2003, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2003:rs20030924.2bvr143602, para. 39. However, the Court emphasises that any prohibition of religious symbols must respect the strictly interpreted equality of religions, Federal Constitutional Court, 2 BvR 1436/02, 24 September 2003, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2003:rs20030924.2bvr143602, para. 43, 71. The Federal Administrative Court confirmed this principle of equal treatment in its second headscarf decision, Federal Administrative Court, 2 C 45.03, 24 June 2004, ECLI:DE:BVerwG:2004:240604U2C45.03.0, para. 35. On the general legal framework cf. Kunig, P. and Mager, U. (2006), in: Mahlmann, M. and Rottleuthner, H. (eds.), *Ein neuer Kampf der Religionen?*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot Verlag, p. 161ff; p. 185ff. The neutrality of the state as a fundamental principle is also reinforced by the Hesse Civil Service Act (*Hessisches Beamtenengesetz*) (HBG), 27 May 2013, Section 45 (entry into force on 1 March 2014) prohibits the act of wearing symbols that violate the neutrality of the state. (In the earlier version of the Hesse Civil Service Act (11 January 1989), the neutrality of the state was discussed in Section 68.) In this context, the Hesse Land Government prohibited the wearing of the burqa in the public services. The case arose when a public employee announced they would return to work wearing a burqa after a period of leave. The decision was considered unsurprising given the established legal framework in Hesse. There is a broad consensus that the burqa does not constitute suitable dress in the public services, not least because of functional necessities, e.g. in the context of contact with those seeking the public services provided. The Federal German Constitutional Court ruled that a general ban on such a religious symbol like the headscarf was not reconcilable with the fundamental right to freedom of religion, Article 4, and the equality guarantee of the Basic Law, Article 3. See Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 471/10, 27 January 2015, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2015:rs20150127.1bvr047110. Cf. Mahlmann, M. (2015), 'Religious Symbolism and the Resilience of Liberal Constitutionalism: On the Federal German Constitutional Court's Second Headscarf Decision', 16 *German Law Journal*, p. 887ff. The Federal German Constitutional Court confirmed this jurisprudence in a decision on the permissibility of wearing an Islamic headscarf by a kindergarten teacher employed by a public authority, cf. Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 354/11, 18 October 2016, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2016:rk20161018.1bvr035411. A complaint by a schoolgirl requested dispensation from swimming lessons in a public school because of prescriptions stemming from her Muslim faith against showing her body's form to men. Although the school allows for the use of burkinis, this option was not regarded as sufficient by the complainant. The complaint was struck down by the Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvR 3237/13, 8 November 2016, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2016:rk20161108.1bvr323713. The Court argued that the complainant did not substantiate the claim that the use of the burkini was not sufficient to abide by religious rules in this respect. A lower court held that the prohibition on wearing a headscarf for a legal trainee in the public justice system is not legal in light of freedom of religion, Augsburg Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgericht*) (VG), Augsburg/Au 2 K 15.457, 30 June 2016. A higher court did not follow this reasoning, see High Administrative Court of Bavaria (*Bayerischer Verwaltungsgerichtshof*) (BayVGH), 7 March 2018, 3 BV 16.2040. Cf. Constitutional Court of Bavaria (*Bayerischer Verfassungsgerichtshof*) (BayVerfGH), Vf. 3-VII-18, 14 March 2019. On the question whether an employer can legitimately demand that an employee does not wear a headscarf at work due to the employer's neutrality policy, cf., after a preliminary reference by German courts, GA Rantos, 25 February 2021, C-804/18, *Wabe* and C-341/19 *Müller Handels GMBH*, ECLI:EU:C:2021:594.

General framework

In German law, an elaborate system of justifications exists for religious communities – an area of considerable social, cultural and political importance, as the Christian churches and their dependent organisations are among the biggest employers in Germany, employing about 1.2 million people.³¹⁶ The question of the conformity of the exception in discrimination law cannot be answered without a view on this legal framework. The legal basis for it is the constitutional provisions on the status of religious communities: the Constitution separates religion and state and establishes the principle of the neutrality of the state. This principle has been interpreted in an 'open' fashion. This concept of 'open' neutrality was formulated by the Federal Constitutional Court and means that, to a certain degree, religious faiths can play a role in public life, subject to strict equal treatment of all religions. Article 140 GG incorporates several articles of the Weimar Constitution,³¹⁷ namely Articles 136, 137, 138, 139 and 141. Articles 136 and 137 are relevant in this respect: Article 136(1) provides a regulation similar to Article 33(3) GG, establishing the same civic duties and rights irrespective of religion and is thus practically superseded by this provision and the equality guarantee.

Article 137 of the Weimar Constitution is of particular importance. Article 137(1) abolished any 'state church'. This entails the separation of the secular and religious spheres and creates a basis for the autonomy of churches and other religious communities.

Article 137(3) of the Weimar Constitution forms the legal basis for this autonomy from the state. A number of landmark decisions by the Federal Constitutional Court have elaborated the nature of this autonomy.³¹⁸ The religious community is autonomous in organisation and administration. This is not only limited to the internal organisation of churches but extends to all institutions related to the religious community, regardless of their legal form. The only precondition is a substantial relationship with the religious mission of the religious community. Whether such a relationship exists is not to be determined by state institutions, but most importantly by the courts. It is solely up to the religious community to determine the scope and limit of its religious mission. For example, for Christian churches it is accepted that, due to the principle of charity, all charitable activities (such as running kindergartens, hospitals, etc.) are encompassed by the religious mission of the Christian faith. Acts concerning the internal workings of a church are not acts by public authorities and thus not regulated by public law.

Given this autonomy, provisions of law do not apply to religious communities without qualification. For example, according to the Federal Constitutional Court, the Works Constitution Act (BetrVG) is not applicable to hospitals as employers if their operation is part of the religious mission of a religious community.³¹⁹ The Works Constitution Act contains a general provision in this respect, which exempts from its scope all organisations that are of a directly or predominantly religious nature, among others.³²⁰ Another provision in the law directly exempts religious communities.³²¹

³¹⁶ Religious communities are understood as associations of at least two people based on a consensus of faith aiming at least partly to manifest this faith.

³¹⁷ The Constitution of the German Reich (*Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reichs*), 11 August 1919, usually known as the Weimar Constitution (*Weimarer Verfassung*).

³¹⁸ BVerfGE 46, 73 (Application of the Works Constitution Act to a Catholic hospital); BVerfGE 57, 220 (Access of unions to religious institutions); 70, 138 (Dismissal on the basis of a breach of the duty of loyalty in religious institutions). Federal Constitutional Court, 2 BvR 661/12, 22 October 2014, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2014:rs20141022.2bvr066112.

³¹⁹ Federal Labour Court, 5 AZR 611/12, 24 September 2014. This special legal position is applicable to institutions (like hospitals) that yield financial profits. It is an open question whether the situation would change if the material gains become a central or even preponderant motive of a religious organisation in running such an institution.

³²⁰ Section 118(1) BetrVG, 25 September 2001. This provision applies if the character of the organisations justifies the exemption.

³²¹ Section 118(2) BetrVG, 25 September 2001.

According to Article 140 GG and Article 137(3) of the Weimar Constitution, the autonomy of a religious community is limited by the laws applicable to everyone. This provision has been narrowly interpreted by the Federal Constitutional Court. These laws are understood as laws that have the same meaning for a religious community as for everyone else. For example, given the special mission of churches, labour laws do not have the same meaning for churches as for everyone else. The Federal Constitutional Court argued that these laws cannot therefore limit the autonomy of churches, without paying due regard to their special status when interpreting them.

This special legal position is of considerable practical importance. For example, religious communities are not generally exempted from legislation on protection against dismissal. The Federal Constitutional Court held that churches are free to choose the legal form by which they regulate their affairs.³²² If, however, they exercise their private autonomy, they are in principle regulated by general labour law.³²³

The special position of the church has, however, to be considered in this application. For example, a church can expect employees to respect special duties of loyalty as determined by the church itself. As mentioned above, churches are free to determine the precise content of these duties of loyalty. It is dependent on the internal structure of the church which authority can make this type of decision.

However, the Federal Constitutional Court set important limits on this regulatory autonomy of the churches. It does not allow arbitrariness, the violation of bona fide principles and the *ordre public*, including the application of fundamental rights.³²⁴

It should be noted that this privilege is not limited to Christian churches, but open to any other religion.

According to Article 7(3) (second sentence) GG, religious instruction in state schools is, with the exception of non-denominational schools, organised in harmony with the principles of religious communities. This creates no directional authority for religious communities but implies various modes of influence, including agreement as to the appointment of teachers teaching the particular religion. The details are regulated in *Land* school laws or special agreements with the religious communities.

There are some equivalent rules regarding chairs in theology in state universities. Apart from this, on the basis of special contractual agreements (concordats) with the Holy See, the consent of the Catholic Church is needed in some *Länder* (mainly Bavaria) for the appointment of chairs of subjects other than theology (philosophy, history, pedagogy). In practice, these chairs are not necessarily limited to Catholic applicants, as a Protestant applicant has been appointed to one of these chairs with the consent of the Catholic Church.³²⁵ The Catholic Church enjoys a veto in relation to the appointment but not the exercise of the professorship (e.g. the actual teaching content), which has no *missio canonica*.

In 1980, the Constitutional Court of Bavaria decided that these regulations do not violate constitutional norms, including the neutrality of the state. The court argued that this form of cooperation with the church is necessary in order to achieve the educational goals (*Bildungsziele*) in state schools laid down in Sections 131 and 135 of the Bavarian Constitution (among others the reverence for God, respect for religious convictions and human dignity, as well as an education according to the principles of the Christian faith).

³²² BVerfGE 70, 138, 164.

³²³ BVerfGE 70, 138, 164.

³²⁴ BVerfGE 70, 138, 168.

³²⁵ Cf. Tagesspiegel, 15 May 2012.

The court held that, in order to be able to educate according to the principles of the Christian faith, it is necessary to provide corresponding course options at university level for future teachers.³²⁶

However, the question of the legitimacy of these chairs continues to be highly contentious. While proponents mainly follow the reasoning of the Bavarian Constitutional Court, arguing that as long as there is a need for teachers able to teach in accordance with the principles of the Christian faith these agreements are legitimate,³²⁷ opponents criticise breaches of the constitutional principles of neutrality and separation of church and state, the constitutional guarantee of equal access to public employment irrespective of religious faith and the constitutional freedom of sciences, as well as of Directive 2000/78/EC and of the AGG.³²⁸

In a relevant case, the actions of several applicants for an appointment to a professorship of philosophy for which the Catholic Church exercises a right of veto were dismissed on the basis of procedural issues. In addition, the High Administrative Court of Bavaria (*Bayerischer Verwaltungsgerichtshof*) (BayVGh) stated that given the non-discriminatory practice of the university not considering the religion of the applicants, no unequal treatment had been substantiated by the applicant.³²⁹ In 2012, Catholic bishops announced that they would waive their right to give their consent to the appointment of candidates.

The Protestant Church has concluded agreements with Bavaria that the *Land* must take into account the needs of theology students when appointing chairs of church law at two of its universities.³³⁰

The regulation by the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG)

Section 9 AGG contains an exception for religion mirroring this general legal framework. A difference in treatment on the grounds of the religion or belief of the employees of a religious community, facilities affiliated to it (regardless of their legal form) or organisations that have undertaken conjointly to practise a religion or belief, will not constitute discrimination where such grounds constitute a justified occupational requirement for a particular religion or belief, with regard to the ethos of the religious community or organisation in question and by reason of their right to self-determination (Section 9(1) (first alternative) AGG) or by the nature of the particular activity (Section 9(1) (second alternative) AGG). The prohibition of different treatment on the grounds of religion or belief must be without prejudice to the right of the religious community referred to under Section 1, the facilities assigned to it (regardless of their legal form) or organisations which have undertaken conjointly to practise a religion or belief, to require individuals working for them to act in good faith and with loyalty to the ethos of the organisation (Section 9(2) AGG).

This general legal regime is, in principle, in accordance with the regime of exceptions in

³²⁶ Constitutional Court of Bavaria (*Bayerischer Verfassungsgerichtshof*) (BayVerfGH), BayVerfGHE 33, p. 65 et seq.

³²⁷ E.g. Unruh, P. (2018), in: Huber, P. M. and Voßkuhle, A. (eds.) in: *Mangoldt/Klein/Starck, Kommentar zum Grundgesetz: GG III* (7th ed.), Franz Vahlen Verlag, München, Article 136 WRV, para. 25-28 for philosophy and pedagogy but not history; Ehlers, D. (2018), in: Sachs, M. (ed.), *Grundgesetz: Kommentar* (8th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, Art. 140; 136 WRV, para. 3, both with further references to the extensive discussion.

³²⁸ Jeand'Heur, B. and Koriath, S. (2000), *Grundzüge des Staatskirchenrechts*, Stuttgart, Boorberg Verlag, para. 338ff; Morlok, M. (2018), in: Dreier, H. (ed.), *Grundgesetz Kommentar: GG III* (3rd ed.), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck Verlag, Art. 136 WRV para. 17; Czermak, G. and Hilgendorf, E. (2018), *Religions- und Weltanschauungsrecht: Eine Einführung* (2nd ed.), Berlin/Heidelberg, Springer Verlag, para. 454, with further references.

³²⁹ Bavarian Higher Administrative Court (*Bayerischer Verwaltungsgerichtshof*) (BayVerwGH), Bavaria/7 CE 09.661 and Bavaria/7 CE 09.662, 30 April 2009.

³³⁰ Law on the concordat with the Holy See and the contracts with the Evangelical Churches (*Gesetz zu dem Konkordate mit dem Heiligen Stuhle und den Verträgen mit den Evangelischen Kirchen*), 15 January 1925, p. 53.

Article 4(2) and (also relevant) Article 4(1) of Directive 2000/78/EC.³³¹ However, there are problems with regard to the details of the regulations. The AGG regulation is problematic in this respect. Section 9(1) AGG refers to the self-understanding or ethos (*Selbstverständnis*) or the nature of the particular activity, whereas Directive 2000/78/EC combines both. The requirement must be justified through a test of proportionality implied in Article 4(2) Directive 2000/78/EC with regard to both the self-understanding and the kind of work concerned.³³²

A regulation such as Section 9(1) AGG, which does not appear necessarily to differentiate between kinds of work therefore does not seem to be in accordance with European law- an analysis confirmed by the CJEU, *Egenberger*.³³³ It should be noted, however, that the Federal Constitutional Court accepted as constitutional that it is up to religious communities to determine to which kind of work their specific requirements apply, including the possibility that all requirements apply fully to all kinds of work.³³⁴ Section 9(1) AGG refers only to justified (*gerechtfertigt*) not to legitimate and justified requirements, like the directive, although this might not lead to any difference in judicial interpretation.

After a preliminary reference of the Federal Labour Court to the CJEU, the CJEU circumscribed in *Egenberger* the possibilities of religious communities and affiliated organisations more narrowly than so far accepted in German constitutional law, demanding consideration of the kind of work concerned when the proportionality of the measure is assessed.³³⁵ The case concerns an employer (defendant) who is affiliated with the Protestant Church in Germany and bound by the internal regulations on employment of the Protestant Church in Germany. The defendant had specified a Protestant confession as

³³¹ On the complicated and unclear structure of the regime of exceptions on the grounds of religion and belief in Directive 2000/78/EC, cf. Mahlmann, M. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 3, para. 110ff. Differentiation based on religious motives, e.g. with regard to sexual orientation, must be justified according to Article 4(1) Directive 2000/78/EC, not 4(2), as they are not differentiation on the ground of religion, but on the ground of sexual orientation.

³³² Federal Labour Court, 2 AZR 579/12, 25 April 2013: para. 46 has left it open whether Article 9 AGG is in breach of EU law or not.

³³³ Judgment of 17 April 2018, *Egenberger*, C-414/16, EU:C:2018:257.

³³⁴ Cf. BVerfGE 70, 138, 162ff. It is a matter of controversial debate, whether this regime is in accordance with Directive 2000/78/EC and other regulations of EU law on the status of religious communities, including the (non-binding) 11th Declaration on the status of churches and non-confessional organisations annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam and the corresponding regulation in Article 17 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union as amended by the Treaty of Lisbon, cf. for further details Mahlmann, M. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 3 para. 110ff. One case, Hamburg Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht*) (ArbG), Hamburg/20 Ca 105/07, 4 December 2007, has modified this approach, differentiating as to the kind of work concerned, concluding that under EU law it is not a justified requirement that for work which does not belong to the core area of the activity of a religious community only members of that religious community are employed. This decision was overturned by Hamburg Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Hamburg/3 Sa 15/08, 29 October 2008. The reversal was confirmed by the BAG, 8 AZR 466/09, 19 August 2010.

³³⁵ See Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 501/14 (A), 17 March 2016, ECLI:DE:BAG:2016:170316.B.8AZR501.14A.0, on the preliminary reference. The opinion of Advocate General Tanchev, 9 November 2017, Case C-414/16 (*Egenberger*) on this matter took already a more restrictive interpretation of the autonomy of religious communities in this respect. The decision circumscribed the autonomy of religious communities more narrowly than before accepted in German law: Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), Judgment of 17 April 2018, *Egenberger*, C-414/16, EU:C:2018:257, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=201148&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4351529>, para 69: 'Article 4(2) of Directive 2000/78 must be interpreted as meaning that the genuine, legitimate and justified occupational requirement it refers to is a requirement that is necessary and objectively dictated, having regard to the ethos of the church or organisation concerned, by the nature of the occupational activity concerned or the circumstances in which it is carried out, and cannot cover considerations which have no connection with that ethos or with the right of autonomy of the church or organisation. That requirement must comply with the principle of proportionality.' These principles were confirmed by Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), Judgment of 11 September 2018, *IR*, C-68/17, EU:C:2018:696, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=205521&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4351760>. Cf. Federal Labour Court, 2 AZR 746/14, 20 February 2019, ECLI:DE:BAG:2019:200219.U.2AZR746.14.0.

a hiring criterion for a job vacancy for a fixed-term contract. An applicant without religious affiliation, who had not been invited for a job interview regarding the advertised vacancy, consequently claimed financial compensation based on a violation of the principle of non-discrimination.

The Federal Labour Court has implemented this decision of the CJEU holding that Section 9(1) (first alternative) AGG is inapplicable because of a violation of EU law and that Section 9(2) (second alternative) has to be interpreted according to EU Law. Consequently, unequal treatment on the ground of religion is only permissible if religion constitutes, according to the nature of the professional activity or the circumstances of its exercise, an objective, legitimate and justified professional requirement in the light of the ethos of the religious community or institution.³³⁶ The Protestant Church has filed a constitutional complaint against this decision of the Federal Labour Court, arguing that the CJEU acted *ultra vires* in handing down the *Egenberger* decision and that the *Egenberger* decision should therefore not be applied.

Another decision of the CJEU is relevant in this context, clarifying the normative parameters for dismissing an employee of an institution affiliated to the Catholic Church because of him remarrying contrary to Catholic religious prescriptions. The CJEU underlined that justified occupational requirements based on duties of loyalty depend on the specific professional duties of the employee, which have to be considered when answering the question whether such occupational requirements are proportional or not.³³⁷ This reduces the freedom of a religious organisation to determine the content of such duties of loyalty on the basis of their ethos alone.

These developments have the potential to lead to significant changes in the German legal system regulating the justification of unequal treatment of persons by religious organisations on the ground of religion, challenging deeply embedded constitutional principles that have been described above. Given the on-going constitutional litigation against the *Egenberger* decision in particular, the outcome is open.

There are various unresolved problems in this area. For example, courts have ruled that an employee leaving a Christian church is a reason for terminating an employment contract, because the special duties and obligations of loyalty have been violated.³³⁸

As in German labour law, people who hold a religious office (e.g. priests) are regularly not regarded as employees and so the AGG does not apply to them. Although professional requirements in this core area of the activities of the religious community will be justifiable under Articles 4(1) and 4(2) Directive 2000/78/EC, the directive does not contain an exception in this respect.

³³⁶ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 501/14, 25 October 2018. This decision overturned previous case law. It has to be seen how the Federal German Constitutional Court reacts to these developments.

³³⁷ Judgment of 11 September 2018, *IR*, CJEU C-68/17, EU:C:2018:696, para. 61, holding that 'that a difference of treatment, as regards a requirement to act in good faith and with loyalty to that ethos, between employees in managerial positions according to the faith or lack of faith of those employees is consistent with that directive only if, bearing in mind the nature of the occupational activities concerned or the context in which they are carried out, the religion or belief constitutes an occupational requirement that is genuine, legitimate and justified in the light of the ethos of the church or organisation concerned and is consistent with the principle of proportionality'. Judgment of 11 September 2018, *IR* C-68/17, EU:C:2018:696, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=205521&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4351760>.

³³⁸ Cf. e.g. Rhineland-Palatinate Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Rhineland-Palatinate/7 Sa 250/08, 2 July 2008: no discrimination if employee in a nursing home which is attached to a church is dismissed because the employee leaves the church, as this is justified by breach of duty of loyalty (parties settled at next instance, Federal Labour Court, 2 AZR 516/09, 21 December 2010); Federal Labour Court, 2 AZR 579/12, 25 April 2013, confirming that leaving a church forms a sufficient reason for the dismissal of an educational social worker, employed for social work without religious content with children in a state-financed institution run by a Catholic charity.

- Conflicts between rights of organisations with an ethos based on religion or belief and other rights to non-discrimination

In Germany, there is case law relating to conflicts between the rights of organisations with an ethos based on religion or belief and other rights to non-discrimination.

A pertinent issue is an employee's homosexuality, which, if openly manifested, is interpreted by some religious organisations as a breach of such duties of loyalty. There is contesting case law on this matter. There is no recent case law clarifying these questions, not least because the major Christian churches have liberalised their internal rules and practice in this respect.³³⁹ Given what has been said above, a practice that does not differentiate between spheres of work, raises issues of proper implementation.

4.3 Armed forces and other specific occupations (Article 3(4) and Recitals 18 and 19 Directive 2000/78)

In Germany, national legislation provides for an exception for the armed forces in relation to age and disability discrimination (Article 3(4), Directive 2000/78).

In Germany, the scope of the exception is limited to safeguarding the combat effectiveness of the armed forces.

In Germany, the scope of the exception does not extend to other non-combat staff, such as civilians employed in administrative positions in the army.³⁴⁰

The Equal Treatment of Soldiers Act (*SoldGG*) covers all grounds with the exception of age and disability, taking advantage of the exception for military service in Article 3(4) of Directive 2000/78.

However, Section 18(1) *SoldGG* provides for a prohibition of discrimination for severely disabled soldiers provided that physical function, intellectual ability or mental health is not a genuine and determining occupational requirement for the military service. Section 18(2) *SoldGG* provides for compensation for a violation of this prohibition. It is unclear whether drafted persons or volunteers are covered by this prohibition.³⁴¹ The constitutional equality guarantee applies to all soldiers, irrespective, for instance, of degree of disability.

In addition, in the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (*Soldatengesetz*) (SG),³⁴² there is a legal prohibition of discrimination against soldiers on the grounds of sexual identity, parentage, race, faith, belief, religious or political opinion or ethnic origin, amongst others.³⁴³ It should be noted, that the constitutional equality clause, Article 3(3) GG applies as well.

According to social law, the legal status of severely disabled soldiers is, with regard to

³³⁹ On this matter, with reference to some case law, see Wedde, P. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 9 para 58. Cf. Baden-Württemberg Regional Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Baden-Württemberg/11 Sa 39/93, 24 June 1993, NZA 1994, 416 (homosexuality not sufficient reason for refusal to admit applicant for education as carer for disabled persons); Stuttgart Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht*) (ArbG) Stuttgart/14 Ca 1585/09, 28 April 2010, NJOZ 2011, 1309 (registered partnership justified reason not to employ applicant as head of Catholic kindergarten).

³⁴⁰ The specific age restrictions for professional soldiers are to be found in Section 45(1) and (3) Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (*Soldatengesetz*) (SG), 30 May 2005, last amended on 19 June 2020.

³⁴¹ It should be noted that the compulsory military service was suspended in 2011.

³⁴² Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (*Soldatengesetz*) (SG), 30 May 2005, last amended on 19 June 2020.

³⁴³ Section 3(1) SG: 'The soldier shall be appointed and utilised based on his/her suitability, ability and performance regardless of sex, sexual identity, decent, race, faith, belief, religious or political beliefs, homeland, ethnic or other origin.' There is very limited case law on the matter. For some examples cf. Klose, A. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 24 para. 101ff.

certain legal provisions (e.g. on special advantages, such as additional holidays), the same as for other severely disabled people. The provisions for severely disabled people are applied insofar as they are compatible with the special requirements of military service.³⁴⁴

4.4 Nationality discrimination (Article 3(2))

a) Discrimination on the ground of nationality

In Germany, national law includes exceptions relating to difference of treatment based on nationality.

In German law, as in other legal systems, there is a differentiated system for the treatment of non-German nationals. On the most fundamental level, the status of non-nationals is protected by fundamental rights in the German constitution, which are human rights and therefore applicable to every human being in their relations with the German state authorities. The most important of such rights is the guarantee of human dignity.³⁴⁵ Only German nationals are entitled to a number of other fundamental rights, although special laws may grant the same rights to non-German citizens as well.³⁴⁶

Citizens of EU Member States are treated in the same way as Germans in most respects, due to EU law. Within this framework, German law differentiates between Germans and non-Germans in various legal spheres, such as residence rights, work permits and some social security rights.³⁴⁷

Some professions are open only to German nationals and specified groups of non-Germans, such as EU citizens and stateless people.³⁴⁸ Nationality discrimination, including the example cited, can however be judged unlawful, if it is not justifiable under the general guarantee of equality.

In Germany, nationality (as in citizenship) is not explicitly mentioned as a protected ground in national anti-discrimination law.³⁴⁹

There are prohibitions of discrimination that list nationality as a proscribed ground, e.g. Section 75(1) Works Constitution Act. In other spheres of law, unequal treatment on the basis of nationality can be considered a breach of the general provisions of private law.

b) Relationship between nationality and 'racial or ethnic origin'

Under the AGG, discrimination on the ground of nationality is generally regarded as possible indirect discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic origin and, as such, is prohibited.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁴ Section 211(3) SGB IX.

³⁴⁵ Article 1 GG.

³⁴⁶ As, for example, in the case of freedom of assembly, see Section 1 Assembly Act (*Versammlungsgesetz*, *VersammIG*), 15 November 1978.

³⁴⁷ Some examples: the federal scheme to support educational costs through grants is not only open to German nationals, but also to non-Germans of various legal statuses, as well as individuals entitled to asylum, refugees, long-term legal residents and people with exceptional leave to remain, see Section 8(1) Nr. 2 – Nr. 7; 8(2) Federal Law on Promotion of Education (*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*) (*BaföG*), 7 December 2010. See also Section 63(1) and 63(2) SGB III.

³⁴⁸ See Section 9 Nr. 1 German Judiciary Act: Germany, Judiciary Act (*Deutsches Richtergesetz*) (*DRiG*), 19 April 1972; Section 37.1 Nr. 1 SG, 30 May 2005. A similar regulation existed until recently for pharmacists: former Section 2.1 Nr. 1 Pharmacies Act (*Apothekengesetz*) (*ApoG*), 15 October 1980. Cf. also the former Section 3.1 Nr. 1 Federal Medical Regulation (*Bundesärzteordnung*) (*BÄO*), 16 April 1987, regarding medical professions: admission to medical practice only for German citizens, according to Article 116 GG, citizens of EU Member States, contractual parties to the Treaty on the European Economic Area, other contractual partners in this respect or stateless people.

³⁴⁹ For a recent decision, see: Frankfurt am Main Regional Court (*Landesgericht*) (LAG), Frankfurt am Main/2-24 O 37/17, 16 November 2017.

³⁵⁰ Cf. Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 364/11, 21 June 2012. The case concerned an employee born in Turkey

4.5 Health and safety (Article 7(2) Directive 2000/78)

In Germany, there are exceptions in relation to disability and health and safety as allowed under Article 7(2) of the Employment Equality Directive.

Section 20 AGG describes permissible differences in treatment on the ground of disability when they are based on objective grounds. Specifically, such differences in treatment in relation to disability and health and safety are considered permissible under the provision when they 'serve the avoidance of threats, the prevention of damage or another purpose of a comparable nature' (Section 20(1)(1)) or when they satisfy the requirement of protection of personal safety (Section 20(1)(2)).

Exceptions in employment would have to be in accordance with Section 8 AGG on genuine and determining occupational requirements.

For disability, the duty of reasonable accommodation must be considered in this respect, in contractual relations stemming from Section 241(2) BGB (see section 2.6 above).³⁵¹

4.6 Exceptions related to discrimination on the ground of age (Article 6 Directive 2000/78)

4.6.1 Direct discrimination

a) Exceptions to the prohibition of direct discrimination on grounds of age

In Germany, national law provides for a specific exception for direct discrimination on the ground of age.

Section 10 AGG contains a detailed provision to justify direct discrimination on the ground of age.

b) Justification of direct discrimination on the ground of age

In Germany, national law provides for justifications for direct discrimination on the ground of age.

Section 10 AGG provides that differences in treatment on the ground of age will not constitute discrimination if they are objectively and reasonably justified by a legitimate aim.

The means of achieving that aim must be appropriate and necessary. Such differences in treatment may include, among others:

- the setting of special conditions on access to employment and vocational training, including special employment and work conditions, including remuneration and dismissal conditions, for young people, older workers and people with caring responsibilities, in order to promote their vocational integration or ensure their protection (Section 10 No. 1);
- the setting of minimum conditions of age, professional experience or seniority of service for access to employment or to certain advantages linked to employment (Section 10 No. 2);

who claimed that she was not employed permanently because of her ethnic origin. The court held that an unequal treatment on the ground of nationality can be indirect discrimination on the ground of ethnic origin but saw no evidence that the decision of the employer was based on either of these grounds.

³⁵¹ Federal Labour Court, 6 AZR 190/12, 19 December 2013, para. 53.

- the setting of a maximum age for recruitment which is based on the training requirements of the post in question or the need for a reasonable period of employment before retirement (Section 10. No. 3);
- the setting for occupational social security schemes of ages for admission or entitlement to retirement or invalidity benefits, including the setting under such schemes of different ages for employees or groups of employees, and the use, in the context of such schemes, of age criteria in actuarial calculations (Section 10 No. 4);
- an agreement that provides for the termination of an employment relationship without dismissal at the time when the employee is entitled to apply for a pension on the ground of age, notwithstanding the regulations in Section 41 Social Code VI (*Sozialgesetzbuch VI*) (SGB VI)³⁵² (Section 10 No 5);
- differentiation of benefits in compensation plans in the sense of the Works Constitution Act (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*) (BetrVG),³⁵³ if the parties have created a settlement graduated according to age and staff membership in a firm, in which labour market opportunities, which are essentially dependent on age, are openly considered, or which exclude from the benefits of the compensation plan employees who are economically secure, as they are entitled to pensions, possibly following receipt of unemployment benefit (Section 10 No 6).

Section 10 AGG implies a test of proportionality, which is at the core of the *Mangold* jurisprudence.³⁵⁴

The provisions in Section 10 No. 1-4) AGG follow those of the directives. Section 10 Nos. 5 and 6 AGG cover additional (exemplary) grounds. Section 10 No. 6 seems to be justifiable in the light of Article 6 of the directive, as opportunities in the labour market and levels of social security appear to be acceptable grounds for justification. It follows existing legal practice.³⁵⁵ On Section 10 No. 5 on retirement ages, see section 4.6.4 below. Before the CJEU *Age Concern* decision,³⁵⁶ and later clarifications by the CJEU on aims of social policy as a precondition for the application of Article 6 of the directive,³⁵⁷ objective reasons were taken not to be limited to those contained in legislation or which are in the public interest. Entrepreneurial interests were regarded as being legitimate as well.³⁵⁸ It has to be seen how this jurisprudence is adapted given the CJEU case law just mentioned. The various questions raised by this jurisprudence have not yet been clarified by the courts.

According to the equality guarantee, any different treatment on the ground of age as a personal unchangeable characteristic through legislation or other acts of the public authorities falls in principle under a strict scrutiny of proportionality. This matches the *Mangold* test,³⁵⁹ which is a test of proportionality, like other existing case law.

³⁵² Social Code VI (*Sozialgesetzbuch VI*) (SGB VI), 19 February 2002.

³⁵³ BetrVG, 25 September 2001.

³⁵⁴ Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), Judgment of 22 November 2005, *Mangold*, C-144/04, EU:C:2005:709, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=56134&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4352257>.

³⁵⁵ The issue is contentious in legal theory, for discussion cf. Boors, C. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 10 para. 102ff; Voggenreiter, C. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 8 para. 46 (both: admissible).

³⁵⁶ Judgment of 5 March 2009, *Age Concern England v. Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform*, C-388/07, EU:C:2009:128, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=77505&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4352518>.

³⁵⁷ Cf. e.g. Judgment of 13 September 2011, *Prigge and Others*, C-447/09, EU:C:2011:573, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=109381&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4352850>.

³⁵⁸ Federal Labour Court, 8 AzR 906/07, 22 January 2009.

³⁵⁹ Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), Judgment of 22 November 2005, *Mangold*, C-144/04, EU:C:2005:709, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?docid=56134&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4353056>. Cf. Federal Labour Court, 7 AZR 237/17, 20 March 2019, ECLI:DE:BAG:2019:200319.U.7AZR237.17.0.

c) Permitted differences of treatment based on age

In Germany, national law permits differences of treatment based on age for any activities within the material scope of Directive 2000/78.

As explained, this possibility exists (Section 10 AGG), implementing the framework of Directive 2000/78/EC (Article 6) and its judicial interpretation.

d) Fixing of ages for admission to occupational pension schemes

In Germany, national law allows occupational pension schemes to fix ages for admission to the scheme taking up the possibility provided for by Article 6(2) of Directive 2000/78/EC.

The provision in Section 10(4) AGG provides for this possibility.

4.6.2 Special conditions for younger or older workers

In Germany, there are special conditions set by law for older and younger workers in order to promote their vocational integration.

There are various measures that aim to integrate older and younger workers.³⁶⁰

4.6.3 Minimum and maximum age requirements

In Germany, there are exceptions permitting minimum and maximum age requirements in relation to access to employment and training.

There is a plethora of minimum and maximum age requirements in German law.

Examples include: Federal President, minimum - 40 years, no maximum entry age;³⁶¹ judges, maximum - varying *Land* laws exist, e.g. in Bayern it is 45 years;³⁶² federal judges, minimum - 35;³⁶³ Federal constitutional judges, minimum - 40.^{364 365} Section 5 of the

³⁶⁰ The provisions under scrutiny in the *Mangold* case (Judgment of 22 November 2005, *Mangold*, C-144/04, EU:C:2005:709, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=56134&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4353345>), are an example of this. The legal provision at the centre of this case was introduced by the Part-Time and Fixed-Term Employment Act, (*Gesetz über Teilzeitarbeit und befristete Arbeitsverträge*) (*TzBfG*), 21 December 2000.

³⁶¹ Article 54(1) GG.

³⁶² Bavaria, Civil Service Act (*Beamtengesetz Bayern*) (*BayBG*), 29 July 2008, Section 23.

³⁶³ Courts Constitution Act (*Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz*) (*GVG*), 9 May 1975, Section 125(2).

³⁶⁴ Federal Constitutional Court Law (*Bundesverfassungsgerichtsgesetz*) (*BverfGG*), 11 August 1993, Section 3(1).

³⁶⁵ Federal civil servants: age requirement can be waived for official purposes, application for service training (*Vorbereitungsdienst*) in criminal investigation department, maximum: 33 years (Section 5(2) Regulation on service in the Federal Criminal Police (*Kriminal-Laufbahnverordnung*) (*KrimLV*), 18 September 2009). Promotion to a higher service level (*Aufstieg in eine höhere Laufbahn*) for public employees, maximum: 57 years (Section 36(2) Regulation on careers in public service (*Bundeslaufbahnverordnung*) (*BLV*)). Federal Criminal Police Officers: maximum 52 years (Section 10 Regulation on Service in the Federal Criminal Police (*KrimLV*)). Executive police service (*Polizeivollzug*), maximum: 62 years (Section 5(1) Federal Executive Police Service Act (*Bundespolizeibeamten-gesetz*) (*BpolBG*), 3 June 1976. Universal compulsory military service (*Wehrpflicht*), minimum: 17 (Section 3(2) Universal Compulsory Military Service Act (*Wehrpflichtgesetz*) (*WpflG*), 15 August 2011), maximum: between 22 and 31 years (Section 5(1) Universal Compulsory Military Service Act (*WpflG*)). Military Service, common maximum: 62 years, maximum corresponding to the military rank: 40 to 65 years (Section 45 Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (*Soldatengesetz*) (*SG*), 30 May 2005). Aircraft personnel, maximum: 60 years (Section 41(1) (sentence 2) Service Regulations on the Operation of Aircraft (*Betriebsordnung für Luftfahrtgerät*) (*LuftBO*), 4 March 1970. Midwives, maximum: 70 years (Section 29 Midwives Act (*Hebammengesetz*) (*HebG*), 4 June 1985). The minimum requirement of 17 years (former Section 7) was abrogated in 2008 (cf. amending law, 30.9.2008 BGBl I 2008, 1910). The former Section 9 Chimney Sweeps Act (*Schornsteinfeger-gesetz*) (*SchfG*), 10 August 1998 which set the maximum age for chimney sweeps to 65 years ceased to be in effect on 01.01.2013 and was replaced by the *Schornsteinfeger-Handwerksgesetz* (*SchfHWG*) 26 November 2008

Federal Police Career Structures Regulation³⁶⁶ contains specific provisions for enforcement officers. The specific physical demands of police officers require the establishment of separate conditions of access to the police force than those for civil servants in general. The minimum age for commencing training for the Federal police service is 16 and the maximum age is 28 (up to the candidate's 28th birthday). Individuals eligible for training for the intermediate or higher police service in the Federal police must be under the age of 34. This maximum age limit can be adjusted up to a maximum of three years per child or per person being cared for after considering factors such as statutory maternity leave, childcare and the care of close relatives. However, in such cases the applicants should be under the age of 36 (middle grade of civil service) or 42 (higher intermediate and higher civil service).³⁶⁷

Exempted from this regulation are holders of certificates of inclusion and acceptance, in accordance with Section 9 of the Military Pensions Act (*Soldatenversorgungsgesetz*) (SVG),³⁶⁸ as well as participants in inclusion measures under Section 7(2) of the Military Pensions Act. The Federal Police Board has the authority to make an exception in specific cases.

4.6.4 Retirement

a) State pension age

In Germany, there is no state pension age at which individuals must begin to collect their state pensions.

If an individual wishes to work beyond the state pension age, the pension can be deferred – in 2017, the 'flexi-pension' (*Flexi-Rente*) was implemented.³⁶⁹ The legal regulation in Section 41(3) Social Code VI (SGB VI) enables employers and employees to defer the

where in Section 12(1)(3) the maximum age is increased to 67 years. Educational funding (*Ausbildungsförderung*), maximum: 29 years (34 years for master's degree programmes) (Section 10(3) Federal Educational Support Act (*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*) (BaföG), 7 December 2010). Federal Ombudsman on Data Protection: minimum 35 years (Section 11(1) Federal Data Protection Act (*Bundesdatenschutzgesetz*) (BDSG), 30 June 2017). Notaries, maximum entry age: 60 (Section 6(1)), maximum age: 70 years (Section 48a Federal Notary Act (*Bundesnotarordnung*) (BNotO), 13 February 1937). Bailiffs, varying Land laws, e.g. North-Rhine Westphalia, maximum: 40 – entry age for 20-month training period, minimum: 23 (Section 2(1) Nr. 3 Ordinance on Bailiffs North-Rhine Westphalia (*Verordnung über die Ausbildung und Prüfung für die Laufbahn des Gerichtsvollzieherdienstes des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*) (NRWGerVollzDAPO), 14 March 2005), this provision was abrogated on 31.12.2017. Prosecutors, varying Land laws, e.g. in Bavaria maximum: 45 with the possibility of exceptions (Section 23 Bavaria Civil Service Act (*Beamtengesetz Bayern*) (BayBG), 29 July 2008). It is worth noting that maximum age limits regulate access to employment – from this age onwards employment is not possible anymore. Cf. Federal Court of Justice, NotZ (Brfg) 7/18, 27 May 2019, ECLI:DE:BGH:2019:270519UNOTZ.BRFG.7.18.0, High Administrative Court of the Land Baden-Württemberg (*Verwaltungsgerichtshof Baden-Württemberg*) (VGH Baden-Württemberg), 9 S 2567/17, 26 February 2019, ECLI:DE:VGHBW:2019:0226.9S2567.17.00 and Higher Administrative Court of the Land North Rhine-Westphalia (*Oberverwaltungsgericht für das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen*) (OVG Nordrhein-Westfalen), 13 B 1352/19, 13 November 2019, ECLI:DE:OVGNRW:2019:1119.13B1352.19.00.

³⁶⁶ Federal Police Career Structures Regulation (*Bundespolizei-Laufbahnverordnung*, (BpolLV), 2 December 2011.

³⁶⁷ Such a provision seems to be in line with the case law of the CJEU on this matter, cf. e.g. Judgment of 12 January 2010, *Wolf*, C-229/08, EU:C:2010:3, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=72660&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4353587>; Judgment of 13 November 2014, *Vital Pérez*, C-416/13, EU:C:2014:2371, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=160977&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4353850>; Judgment of 15 November 2016, *Salaberria Sorondo*, C-258/15, EU:C:2016:873, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=185361&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4354110>.

³⁶⁸ Military Pensions Act (*Soldatenversorgungsgesetz*, SVG), 16 September 2009.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Act on improving pension benefits (*RV-Leistungsverbesserungsgesetz*), 23 June 2014, with effect from 1 January 2017 and the Flexible Pension Act (*Flexirentengesetz*) (FlexiRG), 8 December 2016, with effect from 1 July 2017.

termination date of employment and the beginning of state pension by mutual agreement. During such an employment relationship it is possible to defer the state pension for several times. If a state pension is deferred after reaching state pension age, the subsequent pension increases per deferred month.³⁷⁰

After a reform in 2008, the normal state pension age for both women and men is 67 (instead of 65).³⁷¹ However, the new threshold applies fully only to those who were born in 1964 or later. The state pension age for age cohorts from 1947 to 1963 are being raised gradually. Employees are entitled to a (reduced) pension from the age of 63 if they decide to stop working after they have worked for 35 years or more.

There is no restriction on individuals working while receiving a normal state pension after the age of 67. However, there is a limit on how much money may be earned if an individual is receiving a pension before this age.³⁷²

b) Occupational pension schemes

In Germany, there is a standard age when people can begin to receive payments from occupational pension schemes and other employer-funded pension arrangements.³⁷³

If an individual wishes to work longer, payments from such occupational pension schemes can be deferred.

An individual can collect a pension and still work.

Usually, such payments start at the same time as state pensions.³⁷⁴ It was ruled to be constitutional to regulate occupational pension schemes according to the state pension regulation. Furthermore, the Federal Labour Court ruled that if an employer promises an employee a total pension provision (*Gesamtversorgung*) it is usually to be assumed that the employee can only claim the occupational pension if he receives, at the same time, a pension from the state pension system.³⁷⁵

c) State imposed mandatory retirement ages

There is no general state-imposed mandatory retirement age, but there are various special regulations for particular professions.³⁷⁶ The regulation on retirement in the civil service law mirrors the general pension age of 67 (Section 51, BBG).

d) Retirement ages imposed by employers

In Germany, national law permits employers to set retirement ages (or ages at which the termination of an employment contract is possible) by contract and collective bargaining.

German law allows for employment contracts to be ended at a certain age by individual agreement and by collective bargaining. In both cases, an objective reason must exist for

³⁷⁰ SGB VI, Section 77(3) (third sentence) (subparagraph 3).

³⁷¹ SGB VI, Section 35(2).

³⁷² SGB VI, Section 34(2).

³⁷³ The legal entitlement of employees to an occupational pension by converting an amount of their salary is compatible with the Constitution, Federal Labour Court, 3 AZR 14/06, 13 June 2007.

³⁷⁴ See Sections 2 and 6 of the German Occupation Pension Act (*Betriebsrentengesetz*) (BetrAVG), 19 December 1974, and on the correlation between state pension and occupational pension the decision of the Federal Labour Court, 3 AZR 11/10, 15 May 2012.

³⁷⁵ Federal Labour Court, 3 AZR 894/12, 13 January 2015, ECLI:DE:BAG:2015:130115.U.3AZR894.12.0. See for the prohibition of discriminatory age limits for entering a company's occupational pension scheme, Federal Labour Court, 3 AZR 69/12, 18 March 2014. Cf. also Federal Labour Court, 3 AZR 215/18, 19 February 2019, ECLI:DE:BAG:2019:190219.U.3AZR215.18.0 and Federal Labour Court, 1 ABR 54/17, 7 May 2019, ECLI:DE:BAG:2019:070519.B.1ABR54.17.0.

³⁷⁶ See section 4.6.3 of this report.

the respective agreements to be valid, with exceptions for fixed term contracts for employees above the age of 52.³⁷⁷

Such objective reasons are widely held to exist for ending an employment contract at the age of 65, subject to reconsideration, given the later pension age.³⁷⁸

e) Employment rights applicable to all workers irrespective of age

The law on protection against dismissal and other laws protecting employment rights apply to all workers irrespective of age, even if they remain in employment after attaining pensionable age or any other age.

f) Compliance of national law with CJEU case law

In Germany, national legislation is in line with the CJEU case law on age regarding mandatory retirement.

As mentioned above, there is a plethora of regulations on age limits. In recent years there have been major adoptions of such regulations on age limits, not least in the laws regulating public service, which are now in line with the jurisprudence of the CJEU, although details and specific age limits may be open for debate (see section 4.7.3 above). The courts also follow the standards set out by the CJEU.

4.6.5 Redundancy

a) Age and seniority taken into account for redundancy selection

In Germany, national law permits age or seniority to be taken into account in selecting workers for redundancy.

The laws on protection against dismissal apply in principle to all ages, although exceptions exist. The right to a state pension does not constitute a reason for dismissal by the employer.³⁷⁹ Age is a factor within social choice (*Sozialauswahl*): age is a legitimate factor in selection for dismissal on social grounds in the sense that older employees may legitimately be retained in preference to others.³⁸⁰ However, the entitlement to state pension, and therefore indirectly the age of an employee, can count as a consideration within social choice (*Sozialauswahl*) facilitating privileged dismissal. Before the age of entitlement to pension, age might have a similar effect within selection procedures for redundancy, although there is conflicting case law.³⁸¹

The interest of the employer in maintaining an age balance among employees was also

³⁷⁷ Part-Time and Fixed-Term Employment Act, (*Gesetz über Teilzeitarbeit und befristete Arbeitsverträge*) (TzBfG), 21 December 2000, see Section 14(1). No such objective reason is needed if the employee is older than 52 (Section 14(3) TzBfG), though there are some qualifications.

³⁷⁸ Reasons cover entitlement to a state pension and consequently social security, decreased performance typical of this age and the need for intergenerational planning of the workforce, Müller-Glöße, R. (2019), in: Müller-Glöße, R., Preis, U. and Schmidt, I. (eds.), *Erfurter Kommentar zum Arbeitsrecht* (19th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, § 14 TzBfG para. 56ff; Federal Labour Court, Az.: 7 AZR 135/93, 20 October 1993; Federal Labour Court, 7 AZR 428/93, 1 December 1993; Federal Labour Court, 7 AZR 296/03, 19 November 2003; before that age, special requirements can justify early retirement.

³⁷⁹ SGB VI, Section 41.

³⁸⁰ KSchG, Section 1(3) (first sentence), 25 August 1969. In a case of dismissal due to urgent entrepreneurial reasons, the dismissal is, among other reasons, not justified if the employer does not take sufficient account of the age of the individual concerned.

³⁸¹ See Lower Saxony Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Lower Saxony/Az.: 10 Sa 2180/03, 28 May 2004, arguing that a guideline according to which employees over the age of 55 can be more easily dismissed is not in violation of Directive 2000/78, because these employees can live more easily with a higher risk of unemployment, due to social security. See Düsseldorf Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Düsseldorf/ Az.: 12 Sa 1188/03, 21 January 2004: proximity to pension age is no reason for choosing older employees for dismissal. This holds true even for small businesses, Federal Labour Court, 6 AZR 457/14, 23 July 2015, ECLI:DE:BAG:2015:230715.U.6AZR457.14.0.

held to be reasonable in this context.³⁸² This provision can be interpreted in accordance with EU law as a realisation of the general clause of Article 6 Directive 2000/78/EC, as long as there is no schematic preferential treatment of age groups.³⁸³

b) Age taken into account for redundancy compensation

In Germany, national law provides compensation for redundancy. Such compensation is affected by the age of the worker.

Age can and does play a role in redundancy compensation plans, which are contractual agreements between unions and employers. Age is one factor taken into account in a weighing and balancing exercise of different interests of affected employees that aims for an equitable solution that is mindful of the different needs of the employees. How this balance is to be struck depends on the particular mix of interests in the situation that gives rise to the need for such a redundancy compensation scheme.³⁸⁴

4.7 Public security, public order, criminal offences, protection of health, protection of the rights and freedoms of others (Article 2(5), Directive 2000/78)

In Germany, national law does not include exceptions that seek to rely on Article 2(5) of the Employment Equality Directive.

There is no general exception of this kind in national law, although such considerations would enter into the existing regime of exceptions.

4.8 Any other exceptions

In Germany, there are no other exceptions to the prohibition of discrimination (on any ground covered by this report) provided in national law.

³⁸² Federal Labour Court, 2 AZR 533/99, 23 November 2000: employee working in a kindergarten.

³⁸³ Cf. Brors, C. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 10 para. 13.

³⁸⁴ Cf. for an example Federal Labour Court, 9 AZR 20/18, 18 September 2018, ECLI:DE:BAG:2018:180918.U.9ZR2018.0.

5 POSITIVE ACTION (Article 5 Directive 2000/43, Article 7 Directive 2000/78)

a) Scope for positive action measures

In Germany, positive action is permitted in national law in respect of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Section 5 AGG provides that unequal treatment as positive action is permissible – notwithstanding the justification on other grounds – if, through suitable and appropriate measures, existing disadvantages caused by one of the covered grounds are to be prevented or compensated.

Positive action by public authorities, including legislation, must be reconcilable with the constitutional guarantee of equality.³⁸⁵ Explicit regulations make permissible positive action promoting the equality of men and women and disabled people.³⁸⁶ There is debate over whether positive action is permissible within the scope of the guarantee of equality for other written and unwritten grounds of discrimination (the latter cover, for example, sexual orientation).³⁸⁷ This has not been authoritatively clarified by the Federal Constitutional Court. Positive action in the form of preferential employment is legally regulated in accordance with the relevant CJEU case law,³⁸⁸ which permits such treatment in principle, as long as the schemes allow for individual cases to be assessed.³⁸⁹

The issue is highly contentious, especially as far as rigid quota systems are concerned. It has been extensively discussed regarding discrimination on the ground of sex. There has been no comparable debate regarding other grounds.

There are provisions on positive action, including institutional arrangements, for indigenous minorities, the promotion of their language, the protection of their territory, etc.,

³⁸⁵ Article 3, 33(2) and 33(3) GG.

³⁸⁶ Article 3(2) sentence 2, Article 3(3) sentence 2 GG. Article 31 GG: 'Federal law shall take precedence over Land law.' However, Article 142 GG states that, notwithstanding the provision of Article 31, provisions of *Land* constitutions guaranteeing basic rights in conformity with Articles 1 to 18 of the Federal Constitution remain in force. The disability law provides for the explicit admissibility of positive action, see Section 7(1) BGG.

³⁸⁷ See: Nußberger, A. (2018), in: Sachs, M. (ed.), *Grundgesetz: Kommentar* (8th ed.), München, Beck Verlag, Art. 3 para. 264ff.

³⁸⁸ See Judgment of 17 October 1995, *Kalanke*, C-450/93, EU:C:1995:322, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:61993CJ0450&from=DE>; Judgment of 11 November 1997, *Marschall*, C-409/95, EU:C:1997:533, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:61995CJ0409&from=GA>; Judgment of 6 July 2000, *Abrahamsson and Anderson*, C-407/98, EU:C:2000:367, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?isOldUri=true&uri=CELEX:61998CJ0407>. Cf. Mahlmann, M. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 3 para. 70.

³⁸⁹ Compare for such legislation e.g. Federal Civil Service Act (BBG), 5 February 2009, Section 9 (second sentence).

preferential rules for political representation and so on,³⁹⁰ constitutionally buttressed by basic policy clauses of the *Länder* constitutions.³⁹¹

Work councils and the staff councils of public authorities have the competence to promote the integration of disabled people, older and foreign workers and to initiate measures against racism and xenophobia.³⁹²

Social security law grants state funding to help people with disabilities participate in working life in areas such as training and education, equipment and transport,³⁹³ and also gives financial assistance to the employer for costs such as training and education, equipment and costs relating to integration.³⁹⁴ A disabled person can claim preferential treatment regarding promotion and training. The employer is under a duty to check whether qualified people with disabilities are available for vacant posts.³⁹⁵ Employers are under a duty to communicate and cooperate with public authorities. People with disabilities have the right to part-time work if it is necessary for reasons related to their disability.³⁹⁶ Furthermore there is a duty to conclude integration agreements,³⁹⁷ which are particular, binding legal provisions. There exists a right to such agreements, but the law does not offer a mechanism to resolve conflicts in cases where no agreement is reached.³⁹⁸ There is an obligation to create a representative body for severely disabled people if there are at least five severely disabled workers.³⁹⁹ Severe disability must be taken into account within social choice (*Sozialauswahl*) in relation to dismissals (*betriebsbedingte Kündigungen*).⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁰ See on the regulations of the *Land* constitutions, Article 31 GG: 'Federal law shall take precedence over Land law.' However, Article 142 GG states that, notwithstanding the provision of Article 31, provisions of *Land* constitutions guaranteeing basic rights in conformity with Articles 1 to 18 of the Federal Constitution remain in force. For *Land* laws, e.g. Law on the Rights of the Sorbs (Wends) in the Land of Brandenburg (*Gesetz zur Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben (Wenden) im Land Brandenburg, Sorben [Wenden]-Gesetz, SWG*), 7 July 1994; Brandenburg/Saxony: State Agreement on the Establishment of a 'Foundation for the Sorbian People' (*Gesetz zum Staatsvertrag über die Errichtung der "Stiftung für das sorbische Volk"*, *SorbVoStiftStVG*), 9 December 1998; Saxony: Law on the Rights of the Sorbs in the Free State of Saxony (*Gesetz über die Rechte der Sorben im Freistaat Sachsen, SächsSorbG*), 31 March 1999; Schleswig-Holstein: Law on the Promotion of Frisian in the Public Sphere (*Gesetz zur Förderung des Friesischen im öffentlichen Raum, FriesischG*), 13 December 2004; Schleswig-Holstein: Schleswig-Holstein School Law (*Schleswig-Holsteinisches Schulgesetz, Schleswig-Holstein SchulG*), 24 January 2007; Law on the Legal Status and Financing of Parliamentary Groups in the Schleswig-Holstein Parliament (*Gesetz zur Rechtsstellung und Finanzierung der Fraktionen im Schleswig-Holsteinischen Landtag, FraktionsG*), 18 December 1994; Electoral Law for the Schleswig-Holstein Parliament (*Wahlgesetz für den Landtag Schleswig-Holstein, Schleswig-Holstein LWahlG*), 7 October 1991.

³⁹¹ On *Land* constitutions: Article 31 GG: 'Federal law shall take precedence over Land law.' However, Article 142 GG states that, notwithstanding the provision of Article 31, provisions of *Land* constitutions guaranteeing basic rights in conformity with Articles 1 to 18 of the Federal Constitution remain in force. Brandenburg: Constitution of Brandenburg (*Verfassung des Landes Brandenburg*) (BbgVerf), 20 August 1992: Article 25: Rights of the Sorbs (Wends) (*Rechte der Sorben [Wenden]*). Law on the Rights of the Sorbs in the Land of Brandenburg (*Gesetz zur Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben (Wenden) im Land Brandenburg*) (SWG), 7 July 1994: Section 1: Right to national identity; Section 2, Sentence 3: no disadvantage because of commitment to ethnic group; Section 5: Council for Sorbian Affairs; Section 10: Education, see 3.2.8; Schleswig-Holstein: Danes, Frisians: Article 6 Constitution of Schleswig-Holstein (*Verfassung des Landes Schleswig-Holstein*) (SHVerf), 2 December 2014: minorities and ethnic groups (*Minderheiten und Volksgruppen*).

³⁹² Section 80.1 BetrVG: Nr. 4 integration of severely disabled people; Nr. 6: integration of older employees; Nr. 7: integration of foreign workers, initiating measures against racism and xenophobia. See also Section 68 Nrs. 4, 5, 6 BPersVG.

³⁹³ Section 49 SGB IX.

³⁹⁴ Section 50 SGB IX.

³⁹⁵ Section 164.1 SGB IX.

³⁹⁶ Section 164.5 sentence 3 SGB IX.

³⁹⁷ Section 166 SGB IX.

³⁹⁸ On all this, see section 2.6 above.

³⁹⁹ Section 177 SGB IX. The new 178(2) (third sentence) SGB IX reads as follows: 'The dismissal of a person with severe disabilities by the employer without participation according to sentence 1 is ineffective.' Previously the norm (former Section 95(2) SGB IX to which the above sentence was added) corresponded to the settled case law of the Federal Labour Court that even without the participation of the representatives of severely disabled persons a dismissal was not ineffective for the failure to include the representatives in the process of dismissal and could be remedied by subsequently including them in the process. Therefore, the new rule strengthens the rights of the person with severe disabilities.

⁴⁰⁰ KSchG, Section 1(3) (first sentence).

There is a special procedure involving the public authorities in the case of an ordinary dismissal of a disabled person.⁴⁰¹ The employer is under an obligation to cooperate with the representative body for people with disabilities and the integration authority to avoid dismissal.⁴⁰²

It should be noted that representatives of the Sinti and Roma community have voiced scepticism to this author about the usefulness of quotas for Sinti and Roma in the German situation, because of potential labelling and anti-integrational effects of such measures. The Sinti and Roma community pursues a decisively integrational policy, which focuses on non-discrimination, rather than positive action. In consequence, there are no quotas for Sinti and Roma or other 'hard' positive action measures. However, in the context of positive action, it is notable that there are some state policies by the Federation and the *Länder* which foster the acknowledgement of Sinti and Roma culture and history.⁴⁰³

b) Quotas in employment for people with disabilities

In Germany, national law provides for a quota for the employment of people with disabilities.

As mentioned above, Section 154(1) in conjunction with Section 156 Social Code IX (SGB IX) establishes the duty of any employer with more than 20 employees to employ at least 5 % severely disabled people. This rule is interpreted as not being directly prejudicial for individual claims, as it establishes only a general duty for the employer. The fact that the employer does not fulfil this duty does not necessarily mean that discrimination has occurred in a specific case.⁴⁰⁴ If the quota is not met, there are obligatory penalties/payments, ranging from EUR 125 up to EUR 320 for every disabled person who should have been employed, Section 160, SGB IX.⁴⁰⁵ Under Section 161 SGB IX, a special fund uses the money to foster the employment of persons with severe disabilities.

Section 9 (second sentence) of the Federal Civil Service Act also provides for legal measures for the enforcement of equality in employment, in particular by way of introducing quotas for persons with disabilities.

⁴⁰¹ Section 168ff SGB IX. There is a period of three months between dismissal and conclusion of employment (comparable with a period of notice) (Section 172(1) SGB IX); an extraordinary dismissal is nevertheless admissible.

⁴⁰² Section 167 SGB IX.

⁴⁰³ See the publications of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*) (2015), Mengersen, O. (ed.), *Sinti und Roma. Eine deutsche Minderheit zwischen Diskriminierung und Emanzipation*; Benz, W., *Sinti und Roma: Die unerwünschte Minderheit. Über das Vorurteil Antiziganismus*. For a recent update on Government measures ranging from general support of integration of foreigners including Sinti and Roma, to measures in the framework of the federal programme '*Demokratie leben*' [To live democracy], the support for the Sinti and Roma organisations and institutions, the conference 'Everyday is Roma day' at the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the memorial of the Sinti and Roma murdered under National Socialism or support for the European Rome Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), established 2017 in Berlin, see 'Situation von Sinti und Roma in Deutschland', *Bundestagsdrucksache* 18/13498 (05.09.2017), available at: <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/18/134/1813498.pdf>.

⁴⁰⁴ There are modifications for smaller companies. As of 2017, according to the most recent data published by the Federal Agency of Labour, 1 128 771 persons with severe disabilities were employed. That is a quota of 4.6 %. See in German https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche_Formular.html?nn=1523092&topic_f=bsbm-bsbm.

⁴⁰⁵ The payments have to be paid by 31 March of the following year and are calculated on a monthly basis. For 2020 and due to the coronavirus pandemic, the payments were due by 30 June 2020. According to relevant and most recent data, 102 529 employers had to make such payments in 2018. See <https://www.rehadat-ausgleichsabgabe.de/hintergrund/statistik/>.

6 REMEDIES AND ENFORCEMENT

6.1 Judicial and/or administrative procedures (Article 7 Directive 2000/43, Article 9 Directive 2000/78)

- a) Available procedures for enforcing the principle of equal treatment

In Germany, the following procedures exist for enforcing the principle of equal treatment:

According to Section 13 AGG, employees have the right to complain to the competent body within the enterprise. In the case of harassment, they have the right to withhold their services insofar as this is necessary for their protection (Section 14 AGG).

There are no special procedures for discrimination claims, only the general procedures. Matters of employment are dealt with by labour courts, general contract law in civil courts and public law matters (including social law, public education and public employment) by administrative review. All these procedures finally lead to binding court decisions. There is the possibility of alternative dispute resolution. There is increasing interest in Germany in mediation procedures, which would encompass matters covered by discrimination law.

Administrative acts and court decisions are binding. The binding power of alternative dispute resolution depends on the circumstances. Mediation often (although not always) leads to a binding settlement.

- b) Barriers and other deterrents faced by litigants seeking redress

The litigants in discrimination cases face the same problems that any litigant faces. A lawyer must be instructed in some procedures, such as higher instance civil procedures.

However, there is a well-developed system of legal aid in Germany and no problems related to infrastructure issues (location of courts etc).

There is no explicit time limit for a complaint, according to Section 13 AGG.

According to Sections 15(4) and 21(5) AGG, there is a time limit of two months for claiming material or non-material damages in labour or civil law. The time limit, as set out in Section 15(4) AGG, begins with receipt of the rejection of a job application or promotion, or, in other cases, with the knowledge of the disadvantageous behaviour.⁴⁰⁶

A claim can be brought after employment has ended, within the limits of general law, especially the statute of limitations.⁴⁰⁷

The empirical research in this area indicates more informal, but important problems of

⁴⁰⁶ Given the CJEU jurisprudence - among others - on the matter of effective pursuit of claims, there is an argument that the rule must be interpreted in such a manner that the earliest beginning of the time limit is the receipt of the refusal. Otherwise the rule is contrary to European Law, cf. Deinert, O. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden - Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 15 para. 120. The shortness of the time limit should be a matter of concern anyway. On this matter cf. the preliminary reference by Hamburg Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG Hamburg), Hamburg/5 Sa 3/09, 3 June 2009: Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), Judgment of 8 July 2010, *Bulicke*, C-246/09, EU:C:2010:418, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=83132&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4156771>. The CJEU ruled that the principle of equivalence does not require Member States to extend their most favourable procedural rules to actions for safeguarding rights deriving from EU law. On the demand of the principle of effectiveness, that the time period is sufficient to determine whether persons have been discriminated against, see Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment of 27 February 2020, TK, C-773/18 to C-C775/18, ECLI:EU:C:2020:125.

⁴⁰⁷ A dismissal protection case must be brought within three weeks, Section 4 KSchG; partly specific regulations for disabled people, Sections 4 (fourth sentence) KSchG in conjunction with Section 168 SGB IX.

access to justice, among them the fear endangering an employment relationship through litigation and problems of proof, e.g. as to the causality of ground protected for a disadvantageous decision.⁴⁰⁸

c) Number of discrimination cases brought to justice

In Germany, statistics on the number of cases related to discrimination brought to justice are available.

The statistics on the number of discrimination cases brought to justice are, however, limited. The most extensive empirical study up to now in Germany was conducted between summer 2006 and December 2009. It showed that 147 courts (and 1 385 judges) reported 1 113 cases related to discrimination. Nearly 90 % of the cases fell under the jurisdiction of the labour courts. However, it was extrapolated that only an estimated 0.2 % of all incoming cases at German labour courts relate to the AGG.⁴⁰⁹ This is a rather small number.

d) Registration of national court decisions on discrimination

In Germany, court decisions on discrimination are not registered as such by national courts.

6.2 Legal standing and associations (Article 7(2) Directive 2000/43, Article 9(2) Directive 2000/78)

a) Engaging in proceedings on behalf of victims of discrimination (representing them)

In Germany, associations, including trade unions, are not entitled to act on behalf of victims of discrimination. The initial draft of the AGG provided for the possibility of representation of complainants in court proceedings. This provision was changed due to last-minute political compromise.

Section 23 AGG provides for legal support through anti-discrimination associations (*Antidiskriminierungsverbände*) but does not include legal representation in court proceedings.

b) Engaging in proceedings in support of victims of discrimination (joining existing proceedings)

In Germany, associations are entitled to act in support of victims of discrimination.

Anti-discrimination associations are defined as associations of people which, in accordance with their charter, promote the interests of people or groups of people discriminated against on the grounds covered by the AGG on a non-commercial basis (Section 23(1) AGG). They must have at least 75 members or be an association of seven associations with the same purpose. Legal personality of these associations is not a precondition. They must operate permanently and not just on an ad hoc basis to support one claim.⁴¹⁰ Trade unions as such are not associations in this sense.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Rottleuthner, H. and Mahlmann, M. (2011), *Diskriminierung in Deutschland: Vermutungen und Fakten*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, including interviews with advocates dealing with discrimination cases.

⁴⁰⁹ In the empirical study by the author and Prof Dr Hubert Rottleuthner mentioned above, commissioned by the EU and the German Government, data were collected in this respect. See the executive summary (in German): <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library/doc/diskriminierung-in-deutschland---vermutungen-und-fakten-executive-summary>. Rottleuthner, H. and Mahlmann, M. (2011), *Diskriminierung in Deutschland: Vermutungen und Fakten*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag. Age played a prominent role, for details Rottleuthner, H. and Mahlmann, M. (2011), *Diskriminierung in Deutschland: Vermutungen und Fakten*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag. Interestingly, this remains the largest study to systematically investigate the cases in courts. Therefore it continues to be a reference point.

⁴¹⁰ These preconditions are not explicitly prescribed by the directives. The non-profit requirement may be justified by the intent not to foster inflationary claims, and the minimum requirement of size and stability by considerations of protection of claimants.

There is no centralised procedure for acceptance as an anti-discrimination association; a legitimate interest seems to be presumed if the membership requirement is met. The status of an anti-discrimination association has to be verified by the court in a specific case.⁴¹¹ No relevant case law on the type of proof has yet been reported.

The associations are limited to advising during court proceedings (Section 23(2) AGG). In this case, Section 90(2) ZPO provides that the actions of the counsel are taken as actions of the party, if the latter does not contradict them.⁴¹² These rules apply to other court proceedings as well.

Anti-discrimination associations may support claimants in court proceedings even if representations through advocates are mandatory. They are then able to act in support of the claimant in addition to an advocate.⁴¹³

Associations are allowed to conduct other legal matters for the claimant (Section 23.3 AGG), most importantly to give legal advice.

Although the AGG does not contain an explicit provision, it is generally held that anti-discrimination associations always need the consent of the victim when acting in support of the victim.⁴¹⁴ In cases where obtaining formal authorisation is problematic, the general rules of German civil law apply. In Germany, there is no special duty for associations to act in support of victims of discrimination.

Section 23(2) AGG does not contain any explicit limitation on certain types of proceedings. However, according to the explanatory report, associations may not engage in criminal proceedings.⁴¹⁵

The works council or a union represented in enterprises that are subject to the Works Constitution Act have the right to take court action against severe cases of discrimination (Section 17(2) AGG in conjunction with Section 23(3) Works Constitution Act). The complainant in these cases is neither representing a victim of discrimination nor acting in support of the victim (Section 17(2)(3) explicitly excludes the possibility of pursuing of the victim's claim). Rather, in this *sui generis* legal procedure, the complainant is entitled to force the employer to abide by the obligations under the AGG by legal action in qualified cases.

c) *Actio popularis*

In Germany, national law allows associations to act in the public interest on their own behalf, without a specific victim to support or represent (*actio popularis*).

Actio popularis is possible in the field of disability.

In disability law, associations have legal standing, given that representative action is possible in this field. This relates to the duties of public bodies to provide an accessible environment, as specified in various legal regulations and anti-discrimination law relating to people with disabilities.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹¹ Cf. the explanatory report to the AGG, *Bundestagsdrucksache* 16/1780, 48.

⁴¹² These actions encompass both factual declarations as to the matter of the case and procedural actions (recognition of a claim etc.).

⁴¹³ Advocates are mandatory in various instances, in civil law e.g. for all cases pending before a regional court (*Landgericht*) and a higher regional court (*Oberlandesgericht*), Section 78(1) (first sentence) of the Civil Procedure Code (*Zivilprozessordnung*) (ZPO).

⁴¹⁴ Schlachter, M. (2019), in: Müller-Glöge, R., Preis, U. and Schmidt, I. (eds.), *Erfurter Kommentar zum Arbeitsrecht* (19th ed.), München, Beck Verlag § 23 AGG, para. 1.

⁴¹⁵ Cf. *Bundestagsdrucksache* 16/1780, 26, 48.

⁴¹⁶ Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act, 27 April 2002, Section 14. (BGG): right to action against violation of law. If the case also concerns an individual, the right only exists if

In addition, there are general regulations concerning standard form contracts (*Allgemeine Geschäftsbedingungen*). A violation of the AGG can give rise to an action by associations seeking an injunction against this violation of the AGG. The association must be included in the relevant register for this purpose.⁴¹⁷ Similar possibilities exist with regard to consumer protection.⁴¹⁸ Such instruments could be used for cases involving discrimination, e.g. in standard form contracts.

d) Class action

In Germany, national law allows associations to act in the interest of more than one individual victim (class action) for claims arising from the same event.

Until 2018 there had been no class action in German law. Since 1 November 2018, consumer class actions have been allowed under the Act to introduce civil model declaratory proceedings⁴¹⁹ amending the Civil Procedure Code (*Zivilprozessordnung*) (ZPO).⁴²⁰ Potentially, such class actions could become relevant for discrimination law. In terms of the act, certain qualified institutions are authorised to sue a company on behalf of consumers before the higher regional court (*Oberlandesgericht*) (OLG). The definition of 'qualified' is formulated in Section 606 ZPO and describes institutions that:

- are composed of at least 10 other consumer protection associations or at least 350 natural persons;
- have been on the list of associations qualified to bring an action under Section 4 Injunctive Relief Act⁴²¹ or the list of the European Commission for entities qualified to bring an action under Article 2 of Directive 2009/22/EC on injunctions for the protection of consumers' interests for at least four years;
- generally, protect consumer interests in the execution of their statutory tasks on a non-profit basis by carrying out educational or advisory tasks;
- do not engage in model declaratory proceedings for profit;
- do not receive more than 5 % of their financial resources from businesses.

As already stated above, it is an open question whether the new class action will have any significance for matters of discrimination. So far this remains uncharted legal territory.

6.3 Burden of proof (Article 8 Directive 2000/43, Article 10 Directive 2000/78)

In Germany, national law permits a shift of the burden of proof from the complainant to the respondent.

Section 22 AGG regulates the burden of proof.⁴²² According to this norm, the complainant must prove facts of circumstantial evidence that make it reasonable to assume unequal treatment on one of the grounds covered by the AGG, so that the defendant carries the burden of proof that no violation of the regulations providing protection against discrimination has occurred.

There is some debate about how this clause should be interpreted. There is general agreement that a number of elements must be distinguished: the unequal treatment, the

the case has general importance; Section 85 SGB IX - Right of Action by Organisations (*Klagerecht der Verbände*): organisation has legal standing in place of disabled person with their consent.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. for details: Germany, Prohibitory Action Act (*Unterlassungsklagengesetz*) (UKlaG), 27 August 2002.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. for details: Germany, Act against unfair competition (*Gesetz gegen den unlauteren Wettbewerb*) (UWG), 3 March 2010.

⁴¹⁹ Act to introduce civil model declaratory proceedings (*Gesetz zur Einführung einer Musterfeststellungsklage*), 12 July 2018, with effect from 1 November 2018.

⁴²⁰ ZPO, 5 December 2005.

⁴²¹ UKlaG, 27 August 2002.

⁴²² For case law on Section 22 AGG, see the ruling of the Federal Labour Court, Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 736/15, 26 January 2017, ECLI:DE:BAG:2017:260117.U.8AZR736.15.0 and the case law section of this report.

causality of the characteristic and the objective reasons or justification for the unequal treatment that may be given. It is mostly argued by courts and doctrine that the claimant has to fully prove the unequal treatment. However, in contrast, the claimant must only prove the preponderant probability of the causality of the characteristic for the unequal treatment. If this is achieved, the defendant must fully prove the existence of objective or justifying reasons for the treatment.⁴²³

In public law proceedings inquisitorial principles are applied. Under Section 24 AGG, Section 22 AGG is applicable to lawsuits arising under civil service law. The regulation suggests that, in such cases, the burden of proof may be modified according to the inquisitorial system.⁴²⁴ However, also in this context, a preponderant probability of the causality of the characteristic is enough, whereas the unequal treatment and the existence of objective reasons or justification must be proved to the full conviction of the court. In addition, the regulation is relevant in *non liquet* situations.⁴²⁵

The directives provide for the possibility of the non-application of the burden of proof regulations in inquisitorial proceedings (Article 8(5) Directive 2000/43/EC and Article 10(5) Directive 2000/78/EC). It is thus in accordance with European law that the burden of proof rule is not extended to all lawsuits under public law, especially with regard to social benefits, education and the provision of goods and services in the case of discrimination on the ground of race and ethnic origin, as these lawsuits are inquisitorial proceedings.

6.4 Victimisation (Article 9 Directive 2000/43, Article 11 Directive 2000/78)

In Germany, there are legal measures of protection against victimisation.

Section 16 AGG prohibits victimisation in employment relations. The employer is not allowed to disadvantage employees because they claim rights flowing from the AGG or because they refuse to follow an order contrary to the AGG (Section 16(1) (first sentence) AGG).

The same principle holds for witnesses or people who support the employee (Section 16(1) (second sentence) AGG). Section 16(2) AGG provides that the rejection or toleration of a discriminatory act is not to be used as the basis of a decision against the employee. Parallel provisions exist in Section 13 SoldGG.

There are further prohibitions of victimisation in other legal norms.⁴²⁶ There is no special prohibition in civil law as set out in Article 9 Directive 2000/43/EC, which constitutes a deficit in implementation.⁴²⁷ Apart from civil service law (through Section 24 AGG) and public employees directly covered by the AGG, there is no regulation of victimisation in

⁴²³ Cf. e.g. Germany, Federal Labour Court, 9 AZR 791/07, 16 September 2008; Bertzbach, M. and Beck, T. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 22 for discussion, arguing that in terms of the establishment of the unequal treatment, a preponderant probability suffices, para. 33ff.

⁴²⁴ Some state disability laws contain such regulations for public law, see Section 3.2 [Berlin] Act on Promoting Equality between People with and without Disabilities (*Gesetz über die Gleichberechtigung von Menschen mit und ohne Behinderung, Landesgleichberechtigungsgesetz*) (LGBG), 28 September 2006; Section 8(3) Law of Saxony-Anhalt on Promoting the Equality of People with Disabilities (*Gesetz des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt zur Gleichstellung von Menschen mit Behinderungen, Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz Sachsen-Anhalt*) (BGG LSA), 16 December 2010; Section 7(2) Thuringian Law on Promoting Equality and Improving the Integration of People with Disabilities (*Thüringer Gesetz zur Gleichstellung und Verbesserung der Integration von Menschen mit Behinderung*) (ThürGIG), 16 December 2005.

⁴²⁵ Cf. Mahlmann, M. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 24 para. 79ff.

⁴²⁶ For example, prohibition on reprimand and disciplinary action in cases where employees pursue their lawful enjoyment of rights in the Civil Code, Section 612a BGB; persons of confidence (people representing the interests of the disabled employees) are specially protected in disability law so that they are not discriminated against because of their function, Section 179 SGB IX.

⁴²⁷ Cf. Armbrüster, C. (2007), in Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 9 para. 6.

other public law areas (e.g. social law, public education, and provision of goods and services through public bodies). However, given the authoritative standards of the rule of law (Article 20(3) GG), any victimisation is illegal. It is thus tenable to assume that no breach of European law exists in this respect. There is no special regulation on a shift of the burden of proof in the case of victimisation.

6.5 Sanctions and remedies (Article 15 Directive 2000/43, Article 17 Directive 2000/78)

a) Applicable sanctions in cases of discrimination – in law and in practice

Section 15 AGG provides regulation of compensation. Where there has been discrimination, the victim is entitled to damages for material loss if the employer is liable for the breach of duty (wilful or negligent wrongdoing) (Section 15(1) (second sentence) AGG). There is strict liability for damages for non-material loss (Section 15(2) AGG). If the employer applies collective agreements, the employer is only liable in the case of gross negligence or intent (Section 15(3) AGG).

The AGG does not establish a duty to establish a contractual relationship, unless such a duty is derived from other parts of the law, such as tort law (Section 15(6) AGG).

These norms are applied analogously according to civil service law (Section 24 AGG).⁴²⁸

In the case of a violation of the prohibition of discrimination in general civil law, the victim has a claim of forbearance (that the discriminatory act be stopped) and removal of the disadvantage and can sue for an injunction (Section 21(1) AGG). The discriminator is liable to pay damages for material loss caused by the breach of duty (wilful or negligent wrongdoing) (Section 21(2) (second sentence) AGG). There is strict liability for damages for non-material loss (Section 21(2) (third sentence) AGG).

Given the case law of the CJEU,⁴²⁹ demanding strict liability in the case of damages awarded in civil law for discrimination, the regulations in Section 15(1) (second sentence) and Section 21(2) (second sentence) AGG are in breach of European law.⁴³⁰

In addition, other norms of law can form the basis of compensation (Section 15(5) AGG). Section 21(3) AGG mentions only tort law, although other claims are not excluded by the application of the AGG.⁴³¹

Other violations of public law norms can give rise to state liability.

b) Compensation – maximum and average amounts

The amount of compensation for non-material damage under labour law must be appropriate. If the discrimination was not a causal factor in the decision not to recruit an individual, the compensation for non-material loss is limited to a maximum of three months' salary (Section 15(2) (second sentence) AGG).

In civil law, the compensation for non-material damage must also be appropriate (Section 21(2) (third sentence) AGG). It has been held that the damages due to discrimination do not encompass the difference between the salary of the previous employment and the

⁴²⁸ For details, cf. Mahlmann, M. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 24 para. 66ff.

⁴²⁹ Cf. Judgment of 22 April 1997, *Draehmpaehl*, C-180/95, EU:C:1997:208, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=100350&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3968846>, para. 37.

⁴³⁰ It may be argued that the same extends to Section 15(3) AGG in relation to collective agreements.

⁴³¹ For comments on civil law, cf. Armbrüster, C. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.) *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 7 para. 199ff.

lower, current salary until retirement.⁴³²

c) Assessment of the sanctions

There is some experience with existing rules (not including on the ground of sex, which is not covered by this report), for example on disability discrimination.⁴³³ In another recent case, the Federal Labour Court awarded two months' salary because of discrimination on the ground of religion.⁴³⁴ However, it is difficult to extrapolate any average patterns from the case law.

The norms of the AGG would enable the courts to apply sanctions that are effective, proportionate and dissuasive, as required by the directives, in the many differentiated spheres of law, with their particular standards and demands, where anti-discrimination law is applicable.

⁴³² Cf. Wiesbaden Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht*) (ArbG), Wiesbaden/5 Ca 46/08, 18 December 2008, (the parties settled in the next instance: Hessen Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht*) (LAG), Hessen/12 Sa 68/09 and Hessen/12 Sa 94/09).

⁴³³ Berlin Labour Court (*Arbeitsgericht*) (ArbG), Berlin/Az.: 91 Ca 17871/03, 10 October 2003, held that a general minimum for cases in which a disabled applicant would possibly have been employed is the equivalent of three months' salary; Berlin Labour Court, Berlin/Az.: 86 Ca 24618/04, 13 July 2005: non-material damages: three months' salary, finally (after decision by the BAG) confirmed by the Berlin Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Berlin*) (LAG Berlin), Berlin/5 Sa 1755/07, 31 January 2008. Frankfurt am Main Labour Court, Frankfurt am Main/Az.: 17 Ca 8469/02, 19 February 2003: 1.5 months' salary as compensation for mere failure to give reasons for the rejection of a disabled applicant, cf. Düwell, *jurisPR-ArbR* (*juris Praxis Arbeitsrecht*) 1/2004 Anm. 6.

⁴³⁴ Federal Labour Court, 8 AZR 501/14, 25 October 2018, ECLI:DE:BAG:2018:251018.U.8AZR501.14.0. For further examples see section 12.2 on case law below.

7 BODIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUAL TREATMENT (Article 13 Directive 2000/43)

- a) Body/bodies designated for the promotion of equal treatment irrespective of racial/ethnic origin according to Article 13 of the Racial Equality Directive

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (*Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*) (ADS)⁴³⁵ was established in August 2006 in Berlin, under Section 25 AGG. There are also various agencies with roles related to discrimination on the federal and regional level, most notably the Federal and Land Commissioners for Migration, Refugees and Integration and the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities (*Beauftragter für Aussiedlerfragen und nationale Minderheiten*), for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities (*Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für die Belange behinderter Menschen*) and the German Institute for Human Rights (*Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte*), which undertake advisory work for the Government and other public bodies, publish (extensive) reports and, to a limited degree, provide individual advice to victims of discrimination.

- b) Political, economic and social context of the designated body

Since its creation, the ADS has gained widespread acceptance and has become a well-respected voice in debates on discrimination issues.

As in other European countries, there is a lively political debate about questions of equality and diversity and the many fields of society in which these questions arise. A political debate that is widely supportive of equality of people of different sexual orientation had led to the introduction of 'marriage for all'; as of 2017, marriage is open to homosexual couples under German law.

An intense debate focuses on the consequences of the refugee crisis, which has particular relevance for Germany, given the comparatively high number of refugees that Germany has admitted. On the one hand, there are voices for integration and non-discrimination, epitomised in the now famous *Willkommenskultur* (culture of welcome) and on the other hand, there has been the rise of Alternative für Deutschland (AFD), a xenophobic party that is now strongly represented in the Bundestag. Although these debates have not affected the institutional standing of the equality body as such, they are important for the political environment in which the body operates, not the least given its activities to promote the idea of non-discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin.

- c) Institutional architecture

In Germany, the designated body does not form part of a body with multiple mandates.

Non-discrimination is the sole mandate of the ADS and its resources are devoted to this task.

- d) Status of the designated body/bodies – general independence

- i) Status of the body

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (ADS) is organisationally associated with the Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Section 26 AGG). The head of the agency is appointed by the Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth after a proposal by the Government.

⁴³⁵ Website: http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/DE/Home/home_node.html. In English: http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/Home/home_node.html.

The post of the head of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency has not been properly occupied since the retirement of the previous head, Christine Lüders, in 2018. As a temporary solution, Bernard Franke has been serving as the acting head. The position is still to be filled, a fact that has raised severe criticism of the Federal Government. The proposed appointment of a new head has been challenged before Berlin's Administrative Court by another competing applicant for the position. The Federal Government's explanations concerning the obvious delay in appointing a new head refer to a final judicial clarification of the legality of the already proposed appointment.⁴³⁶ The Berlin Administrative Court has criticised⁴³⁷ the selection decision of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth ruling that it was not compatible with the 'best selection principle' enshrined in the Basic Law (Article 33, para. 2). In addition, the court ruled that the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs displayed serious shortcomings during the application process, such as the fact that the person intended for the position had not actually submitted an application. Furthermore, the second assessor of the applicant had apparently not carried out a proper second assessment but had simply adopted the initial assessment.

Funding for the ADS is provided through the Ministry of Family Affairs, but the financial resources (about EUR 4 400 000) are administered independently by the ADS. It can recruit and manage staff. It is legally accountable to the ministry, although the ministry cannot give political directives concerning the operations of the ADS.

ii) Independence of the body

The head of the ADS is independent and subject only to the law. The tenure of the head of the agency is the same as the legislative period of the Bundestag. This could raise concerns with regard to the independence of the head of the body. Given the period of tenure, the head will always be appointed by the Government of the time. This is a source of possible informal influence on the policies of the agency by the Government. However, since the head is by explicit regulation legally independent and can only be removed in exceptional circumstances of breach of official duties, the agency may still be regarded as independent in the terms of the directives.

e) Grounds covered by the designated body/bodies

The role of the agency is to support people to protect their rights against discrimination on all grounds regulated by the AGG,⁴³⁸ (race, ethnic origin, sex, religion, belief, disability, age and sexual identity), notwithstanding the powers of specialised governmental agencies dealing with related subject matters. In recent years, the agency's thematic activity has focused on a particular characteristic in each year (age in 2012, disability in 2013, ethnic origin and race in 2014, sex in 2015, religion and belief in 2016 and sexual orientation in 2017). In 2018 it conducted research on sexual harassment and on the prohibited grounds of discrimination. In 2019 and 2020 there was no such thematic focus and diverse research studies were carried out. Any special activities of the ADS (e.g. commissioned studies) are devoted to the characteristic that is that year's theme. However, the ADS has no policy of concentrating its overall activities on any of these grounds specifically. The same is true for questions of intersectional discrimination. Some activities are driven by the need to react to current political affairs, such as the refugee crisis. Overall, the ADS has developed a differentiated pattern of attention to the different grounds, the emphasis depending on the chosen focus of that year.

⁴³⁶ See, in German, Deutscher Bundestag, *Drucksache 19/15353*, 21 November 2019: <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/153/1915353.pdf>.

⁴³⁷ Berlin Administrative Court (VG Berlin) 7 L 218.18, 8 February 2019, ECLI:DE:VGBE:2019:0208.VG7L218.18.00.

⁴³⁸ Sec. 25.1, Sec. 1 AGG

As discrimination against migrants may raise questions of discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion and belief in particular, the agency deals with this issue.

f) Competences of the designated body/bodies – and their independent exercise

i) Independent assistance to victims

In Germany, the designated body has the competence to provide independent assistance to victims. Under Section 27(2) of the AGG, the agency will give independent assistance to persons addressing themselves to the agency in asserting their rights to protection against discrimination. Such assistance may, among other things, involve: providing information concerning claims and possible legal action based on legal provisions; providing protection against discrimination; arranging for advice to be provided by another authority; and endeavouring to achieve an out-of-court settlement between the parties involved.

Thus, the agency has the powers demanded in the directives and exercises them independently.

There are no publicly available data to assess with sufficient validity the effectiveness of the advisory work. There are no indications, however, that there are deficiencies in this respect that would impair the operation of the body.

There are also no publicly available data to assess whether the resources – within the constraints of the overall budget – are sufficient for this advisory work, a central precondition for effective work of the body. There are no indications, however, that there are deficiencies in this respect that would impair the operation of the body.

ii) Independent surveys and reports

In Germany, the designated body does have the competence to conduct independent surveys, produce scientific studies and publish independent reports (Section 27(3) AGG). The ADS, the relevant Federal Government Commissioner and the Parliamentary Commissioner of the Bundestag jointly submit reports to the Bundestag every four years concerning cases of discrimination on any of the grounds covered by the AGG and make recommendations regarding the elimination and prevention of such discrimination. They may jointly carry out academic studies into such discrimination (Section 27(4) AGG).

Thus, the agency has the powers demanded in the directives and exercises them independently.

The agency exercises this duty effectively. This is confirmed by the fact that, over the years, the ADS has commissioned many substantial studies and continues to do so.

There are no publicly available data to assess whether the resources – within the constraints of the overall budget – are sufficient for efficient work. Given the amount of substantial studies, there are no indications that the resources are not sufficient for meaningful work in this area.

iii) Recommendations

In Germany, the designated body has the ability to issue independent recommendations on discrimination issues, including but not limited to, recommendations in the report to the Bundestag (Articles 27(3) and 27(4), AGG).

The ADS exercises this power independently. There are no indications that the recommendations that it formulates are the product of political directives. Given the fact

that the ADS wields only soft powers in this area, the main effects have been to contribute to the public and political debate.

The ADS has worked effectively in this context, given that it has no ability to force public authorities to follow its recommendations.

There are no publicly available data to assess whether the resources – within the constraints of the overall budget – are sufficient for efficiently formulating recommendations. There is no indication, however, that the ADS does not devote enough resources to this task.

iv) Other competences

Its further responsibilities include publicity work (Section 27(3) AGG) and taking action for the prevention of discrimination (Section 27(3) AGG).

The agency can demand a position statement from the alleged discriminator, if the alleged victim of discrimination agrees (Section 28(1) AGG).

In Germany, the designated body engages with stakeholders in implementing its mandate.

An advisory council is assigned to the agency for the purposes of promoting dialogue with social groups and organisations whose goal is protection against discrimination. The advisory council advises the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency on the submission of reports and recommendations to the Bundestag and may put forward its own suggestions to that end and with regard to academic studies. The advisory council comprises representatives of social groups and organisations, as well as experts on discrimination issues.

Depending on the project, the agency engages with civil society associations, employers, public bodies, local government and trade unions. Examples of such work include: a map of organisations providing independent advice; a study on anonymous employment applications in collaboration with employers; setting up a 'coalition against discrimination'; and engaging with *Länder* and local government.

g) Legal standing of the designated body/bodies

In Germany, the designated body does not have legal standing to:

- bring discrimination complaints on behalf of identified victims to court;
- bring discrimination complaints on behalf of non-identified victims to court;
- bring discrimination complaints *ex officio* to court;
- intervene in legal cases concerning discrimination, for example as an *amicus curiae*.

The agency has no legal standing in cases of discrimination and cannot *ex officio* bring cases to court. Possible victims of discrimination can contact the agency and submit a query or complaint. The online contact form is mostly used for this purpose. The agency will then, if necessary, provide referrals to other anti-discrimination bodies. The complainants are informed by the agency with regard to their rights based on the AGG. The agency has no power to intervene in court proceedings, though it can voice legal opinions, there being no formal *amicus curiae* procedure in this respect.

h) Quasi-judicial competences

In Germany, the body is not a quasi-judicial institution. Where legal claims can be pursued, the agency seeks amicable settlement between the parties. The agency can demand a position statement from the alleged discriminator, if the alleged victim of discrimination

agrees.⁴³⁹ However, there is no legal duty for the submission of such statements.⁴⁴⁰ Other public agencies have a duty to cooperate with the agency (Section 28(2) AGG). The agency can make recommendations.

Assistance provided to victims does not typically lead to court proceedings or tribunals, as the agency endeavours to achieve out-of-court settlements between the parties involved.⁴⁴¹ As the agency cannot issue binding decisions and does not possess the power to impose any sanctions against the parties, it cannot be regarded as a quasi-judicial institution.

There have been several conflicts settled in advance by the intervention of the agency. The agency engages in informal conflict resolution processes between parties, which appears to be done on a case-by-case basis. There is no larger scale conflict resolution practice in place.

The agency has contributed to the legal discourse on discrimination through its activities, e.g. commissioned studies and reports. Given its powers, the agency does not take action on its own initiative in court proceedings and is not active in strategic litigation.

i) Registration by the body/bodies of complaints and decisions

In Germany, the body registers the number of complaints of discrimination made, and decisions (by ground, field, type of discrimination, etc).

These data are only partially and not systematically available to the public.

Between 2013 and 2016, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency received a total of 9 099 inquiries on possible discriminatory situations regarding one or multiple discriminatory features. In 6 474 cases, the inquirers were suspected of being disadvantaged because of one or more of the discriminatory grounds mentioned in Section 1 AGG. Conversely, this means that in 2 625 cases the described facts did not relate to any of the grounds protected by the AGG.⁴⁴² In 2019, 4 247 inquiries reached the agency, which is 792 more than in 2018.⁴⁴³ In 2020 and most probably due to the pandemic, there was a remarkable rise in the number of inquiries, which reached a total of 6 383. Of those inquiries, 41 % concerned disability, 33 % ethnic origin, 9 % age, 5 % religion, 4 % sexual identity and 2 % philosophical belief.⁴⁴⁴

As already mentioned, these data are only partially and not systematically available to the public, depending on occasional need e.g. they are available in the context of thematic studies.⁴⁴⁵

⁴³⁹ Section 28(1) AGG.

⁴⁴⁰ Ernst. H. (2018), in: Däubler, W. and Bertzbach, M. (eds.), *Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handkommentar* (4th ed.), Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 28 para. 1.

⁴⁴¹ Section 27(2)(3) AGG.

⁴⁴² See the report to the German Bundestag, *Bundestagsdrucksache* 18/1360, p. 41.

⁴⁴³ See Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2020), *Annual Report*, April 2020 on the latest data: 33 % of these inquiries concerned race and ethnic origin; 29 % sex/gender; 26 % disability; 12 % age; 7 % religion; 4 % sexual identity (understood as sexual orientation); and 2 % philosophical belief. Less frequently than in 2018, about 10 % of the cases concerned multiple discrimination. Available at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Jahresberichte/2019_englisch.html.

⁴⁴⁴ Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2021), *Annual Report*. Available in German at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Jahresberichte/2020.pdf;jsessionid=527C02096FC39171FA2CE730B3EC8A75.2_cid360?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

⁴⁴⁵ See, for example, the relevant publications that present anti-discrimination cases, available at: http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/DE/Publikationen/publikationen_node.html. Data for 2020 are not yet available.

j) Roma and Travellers

The body has not yet developed any special programme with regard to Sinti and Roma in Germany.⁴⁴⁶ However, a representative of the Sinti and Roma community is part of the advisory body. Various activities address the topic, e.g. in the context of international Roma day. In 2015, the Alliance for Solidarity with Sinti and Roma of Europe (Bündnis für Solidarität mit den Sinti und Roma Europas), which unites NGOs, religious groups, cultural and public institutions, including the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, was founded with a special focus on, although not limited to, the International Roma Day in 2016. The Alliance carried out many activities, including public discussions, art campaigns etc.⁴⁴⁷ On International Roma Day 2017, the head of the ADS⁴⁴⁸ warned against the dangers of stereotyping.⁴⁴⁹ In 2017, the agency organised a public discussion on the police and anti-Gypsyism.⁴⁵⁰ International Roma Day 2018 was celebrated in Berlin with a parade (as part of the first Roma Biennale), from the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe murdered under National Socialism to the Maxim Gorki Theatre.

The Alliance for Solidarity with the Sinti and Roma of Europe celebrated International Roma Day 2019 from April 4 to 8, 2019, focusing on the perspectives of Sinti and Roma in Europe. The programme of the celebration included a contemporary witness discussion with 94-year-old Zilli Reichmann at the Czech embassy in Berlin and the annual parade from the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe murdered under National Socialism to the Maxim Gorki Theatre. The British Roma author, Damian James Le Bas also read from his book, *The Stopping Places: A Journey through Gypsy Britain*, and discussed in an interview the effects of the Brexit referendum, including his opinion that the EU legal framework had provided so far an important foundation in Great Britain in the battle against racism.⁴⁵¹

For International Roma Day 2020, on April 8, the Alliance for Solidarity with the Sinti and Roma of Europe celebrated the beginnings of the global emancipation and civil rights movement of Roma and Sinti and the first, world Roma Convention, which was held on April 8, 1971.⁴⁵² Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Romaday parade and the opening of the 2nd Roma Biennale entitled 'We are here' (*Wir sind hier*) took place in the form of an online live stream. 'We are here' became 'We air here' and the provisional studio was set up at the Maxim Gorki Theatre, a long-term partner of the alliance. As well as activists, guests on the live stream included the Berlin Senator for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs, Elke Breitenbach, the Berlin Senator for Culture and Europe, Klaus Lederer, the Member of the European Parliament Romeo Franz, and Maria Atanasova, who was made Young European of the Year 2020 for her efforts to increase the visibility of young Roma people. The evening before, the actress Carol Schuler had made a film of herself reading from the eyewitness account of Auschwitz survivor Zilli Schmidt, *God had something in store for me! Memories of a German Sinti*, recently published by the Stiftung Denkmal.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁶ The current report by Germany (Ministry of the Interior, 2011) to the European Commission in the context of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_germany_strategy_en.pdf) was extensively questioned by the relevant 2012 assessment by the European Commission, as stated in the National Roma Strategy – Country Factsheet Germany (available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/assessment_of_german_national_roma_strategy_2012_en.pdf) where, of 22 check points assessing progress in implementing the National Roma Integration Strategy, according to the Commission only one was met (allocation of resources to local and regional authorities).

⁴⁴⁷ See <https://romaday.org/Alliance>.

⁴⁴⁸ The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency is a member of the Alliance for Solidarity with the Sinti and Roma of Europe.

⁴⁴⁹ Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2017), 'Discrimination against Sinti and Roma' (7 April, 2017), https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Pressearchiv/DE/2017/20170407_PM_Romaday.html?jsessionid=AA56E6953ACF6F50609FB177556D8752.1_cid341.

⁴⁵⁰ See www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Aktuelles/DE/2017/20171017_Veransaltung_Polizei_und_Antiziganismus.html.

⁴⁵¹ See <https://www.gorki.de/en/node/5275>.

⁴⁵² For information in German, see <https://romaday.org/Romaday2020>.

⁴⁵³ Schmidt, Z. (2020), in: Mechelhoff - Herezi, J. and Neumärker, U. (eds.), *Gott hat mit mir etwas vorgehabt!*

In 2014, the ADS published a study regarding the opinions and attitudes of the German people towards Sinti and Roma.⁴⁵⁴ The study concluded that various forms of distance and rejection towards Sinti and Roma exist in Germany.

Erinnerungen einer deutschen Sinteza, Berlin, Stiftung Denkmal. The reading is online available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PekE7-55FZw>.

⁴⁵⁴ Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2014), *Zwischen Gleichgültigkeit und Ablehnung - Bevölkerungseinstellungen gegenüber Sinti und Roma* (Between indifference and rejection - Population attitudes towards Sinti and Roma), available in German at:
https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/expertise_bevolkerungseinstellungen_gegenueber_sinti_und_roma_20140829.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4.

8 IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

8.1 Dissemination of information, dialogue with NGOs and between social partners

- a) Dissemination of information about legal protection against discrimination (Article 10 Directive 2000/43 and Article 12 Directive 2000/78)

The Anti-Discrimination Agency has produced information material, commissioned studies and held conferences on discrimination matters.⁴⁵⁵

The German Institute for Human Rights (*Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte*), which had previously launched a special website for an online manual, *Active against Discrimination*, recently published a handbook for everyone interested in educational work on human rights, flight, asylum and/or racial discrimination, entitled *Scale of Human Rights - Educational Practice on the Topics of Flight, Asylum and Racial Discrimination*.⁴⁵⁶

The Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*) (BPB) offers comprehensive information on the topic of discrimination, which is available either on its website or in various print publications.⁴⁵⁷

Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection and the Federal Office of Justice provide online access to up-to-date national law free of charge.⁴⁵⁸

- b) Measures to encourage dialogue with NGOs with a view to promoting the principle of equal treatment (Article 12 Directive 2000/43 and Article 14 Directive 2000/78)

There are various anti-discrimination initiatives in Germany, most importantly relating to discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin including (institutionalised) cooperation with NGOs and social partners.⁴⁵⁹ Legislative consultation processes routinely include a wide range of NGOs.

- c) Measures to promote dialogue between social partners to give effect to the principle of equal treatment within workplace practices, codes of practice, workforce monitoring (Article 11 Directive 2000/43 and Article 13 Directive 2000/78)

The Anti-Discrimination Agency, for example, has sought to communicate the value of anti-discrimination policies for an efficient economy through a conference on the matter and related publications and programmes, including and underlining the role of social partners.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ On the activities of the agency, see www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/DE/Home/home_node.html.

⁴⁵⁶ Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte (2019), *Massstab Menschenrechte: Bildungspraxis zu den Themen Flucht, Asyl und rassistische Diskriminierung*, Berlin, available in German at: <https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/publikationen/detail/massstab-menschenrechte>.

⁴⁵⁷ For more information see <https://www.bpb.de/die-bpb/138852/federal-agency-for-civic-education>.

⁴⁵⁸ See www.gesetze-im-internet.de.

⁴⁵⁹ One example is the Alliance for Democracy and Tolerance (*Bündnis für Demokratie und Toleranz*), founded in 2000, which with active support from the German state, currently brings together hundreds of initiatives working against racism and xenophobia, amongst other things: www.buendnis-toleranz.de. For other examples of initiatives against discrimination including social partners see chapter 10 below. The programme 'Live democracy' (*Demokratie leben*) supports a variety of initiatives to combat racism and other patterns of discrimination, see <https://www.demokratie-leben.de/foerderprojekte/modellprojekte/handlungsfeld-vielfaltgestaltung.html>.

⁴⁶⁰ The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, for instance, has launched a funding programme for the period 2019-2020, supporting partner projects to combat discrimination in the labour market. Under the motto *Strengthening partnerships for a non-discriminatory labour market - Bundling forces* (Partnerschaften für einen diskriminierungsfreien Arbeitsmarkt stärken - Kräfte bündeln), civil society organisations, together with partners from business, trade unions and interest groups will be subsidised to develop effective instruments to prevent or eliminate discrimination in the workplace. See: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Dokumente_ohne_anzeige_in_Publik

d) Addressing the situation of Roma and Travellers

As already mentioned, the agency has no special programme concerning Sinti and Roma, although it has various activities relating to their situation. A representative of Germany's Sinti and Roma community is a member of the agency's advisory committee.

The Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma (*Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma*) in Heidelberg focuses on the documentation of and scientific work on the history, culture and presence of the Sinti and Roma and is supported by the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities (*Beauftragter für Aussiedlerfragen und nationale Minderheiten*).⁴⁶¹

8.2 Measures to ensure compliance with the principle of equal treatment (Article 14 Directive 2000/43, Article 16 Directive 2000/78)

a) Compliance of national legislation (Articles 14(a) and 16(a))

According to Articles 14(a) and 16(a), Member States must take the necessary measures to ensure that: (a) any laws, regulations and administrative provisions contrary to the principle of equal treatment are abolished. As explained, in the view of the author, certain laws may be considered to be in breach of the directives and no steps have been taken to derogate these norms. Moreover, there has been no systematic survey by the public authorities as to whether or not norms exist that are contrary to the directives. Therefore, arguably, Germany has not taken all the necessary measures required by the directives.

b) Compliance of other rules/clauses (Articles 14(b) and 16(b))

Section 7(2) AGG provides that (individual or collective) agreements contrary to the prohibition of discrimination in labour law are null and void. According to Section 21(4) AGG, the discriminating party cannot rely on a discriminating agreement in civil law matters. Section 134 BGB, which makes such acts null and void, is applicable in civil law only for unilateral legal acts and agreements with discriminatory effects on third parties.⁴⁶² The common rules to solve clashes of legal rules apply.⁴⁶³

[ationen/Foerderaufruf.html](#).

⁴⁶¹ See www.sintiundroma.de/start.html.

⁴⁶² Cf. Bundestag, *Bundestagsdrucksache* 16/1780, p. 47; Armbrüster, C. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 7 para. 202ff.

⁴⁶³ There are transitional rules for contractual obligations created before the coming into force of the AGG: Article 33(2) AGG: 'As regards discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, Sections 19 to 21 shall not apply to relationships under the law of obligations entered into prior to 18 August 2006. The first sentence shall not apply to subsequent changes to continuous obligations.' Article 33(3): 'As regards discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation, Sections 19 to 21 shall not apply to relationships under the law of obligations entered into prior to 1 December 2006. The first sentence shall not apply to subsequent changes to continuous obligations.' Article 33(4): 'As regards relationships under the law of obligations whose object is a private law insurance, Section 19(1) shall not apply where these were entered into prior to 22 December 2007. The first sentence shall not apply to subsequent changes to such obligations.'

9 COORDINATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

There is no body that has centralised authority in this regard. The authorities concerned with issues of discrimination include the Federal ministries, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, the Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration and the committees of the German Parliament, to name just a few.

In 2017, the Federal Government adopted a national action plan against racism, *National Action Plan Against Racism - Positions and Measures to Address Ideologies of Inequality and Related Discrimination* (*Nationaler Aktionsplan gegen Rassismus – Positionen und Massnahmen zum Umgang mit Ideologien der Ungleichwertigkeit und den darauf bezogenen Diskriminierungen*), which includes homophobia and transphobia.⁴⁶⁴ Specific measures include: improved information; training of administration and the judiciary; improved documentation; prevention and prosecution of hate crimes; expansion of cooperation of police and civil society; political education, including for the German armed forces; increased diversity in the civil service; guidelines for the administration to help civil servants who are transgender express their identity; measures to deal with discriminatory ideologies on the internet; and dialogue with researchers and expanded research. The national action plan was introduced as an additional step towards strengthening social cohesion. It is an expansion of the first national action plan against racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and related intolerance (*Nationaler Aktionsplan der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zur Bekämpfung von Rassismus, Fremdenfeindlichkeit, Antisemitismus und darauf bezogene Intoleranz*), which was launched in 2008 to prevent violence and discrimination by emphasising that neither society nor politics are willing to tolerate such phenomena, to integrate minorities and to promote 'politics of recognition' of diversity. However, the initial plan has been criticised for mainly containing descriptions of already existing political and legal measures to combat racism, xenophobia and antisemitism.⁴⁶⁵ The fact that both plans are non-binding when it comes to homophobia and transphobia has been condemned by the LGBT community, which has criticised the absence of a concrete LGBT national action plan to actually protect their community.⁴⁶⁶

Due to the refugee crisis faced by Europe and Germany in particular, the Federal Government adopted a national integration action plan (*Integrationsplan Deutschland*) in 2015.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ See BT Drs. 18/7936. See the *2017 Action Plan*: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/116798/5fc38044a1dd8edec34de568ad59e2b9/nationaler-aktionsplan-rassismus-data.pdf>. In English, available at: https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/EN/publikationen/2018/nap-en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4. This is still valid, at least till the end of the on-going legislative period (September 2021). The activities are ongoing (and will continue if the next German Government decides to that they should). There is no assessment of the measures.

⁴⁶⁵ Follmar-Otto, P./Cremer, H. (2009), *Der Nationale Aktionsplan der Bundesrepublik Deutschland gegen Rassismus. Stellungnahme und Empfehlungen*, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, Policy Paper Nr. 12, January 2009. Available at: https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/migrated/tx_commerce/policy_paper_12_der_nationale_aktionsplan_der_bundesrepublik_deutschland_gegen_rassismus.pdf.

⁴⁶⁶ In December 2019, the Greens submitted a proposal to the *Bundestag* concerning a national action plan for sexual and gender diversity (*Vielfalt leben – Bundesweiten Aktionsplan für sexuelle Vielfalt auflegen*). See: <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/672608/5c590376abe67e654882a235a366d9f6/19-13-67c-angef-SN-Petra-Follmar-Otto-data.pdf>.

⁴⁶⁷ See www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/neustart-in-deutschland--integrationsplan-vorgestellt/90032. A summary in English is available at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/975226/476922/783102dcc20e64cece8ced4686026306/2009-04-22-kurzfassung-nip-fortschrittsbericht-engl-data.pdf?download=1>.

10 CURRENT BEST PRACTICES

Relevant best practices include the following:

- There are many initiatives for the integration of migrants that offer support in various spheres of life, tailored to the needs of migrants with the aim of fostering equal standing and non-discrimination in society – from after-school tuition to sport.⁴⁶⁸ It is notable that in March 2020, employment agencies or job centres provided guidance to 210 000 refugees, while a total of about 360 000 refugees were registered in December 2019 as underemployed.⁴⁶⁹ Furthermore, in December 2019, 95 000 refugees were supported by labour market policy measures, which is 7 000 more than in 2018.⁴⁷⁰ The state provides numerous funding opportunities for companies hiring refugees, ranging from language courses to integration grants. Recognised refugees can directly enter the labour market. Asylum seekers and persons with provisional residence status are not allowed to work for the first three months of legal residence in Germany. Thereafter, there is limited access to the labour market. As a rule, asylum seekers can also begin vocational training after three months and those with provisional residence status can begin such training from the first day of the confirmation of their status. The training must lead to a recognised professional qualification. There are numerous programmes to support companies offering such training.⁴⁷¹

- *fair@school* initiative of the Anti-Discrimination Agency

A significant joint initiative between the Anti-Discrimination Agency and the publishing house Cornelsen in 2020 has been the *fair@school* (Schools against Discrimination) competition,⁴⁷² which was successfully launched in 2017. The aim is to support and promote engagement at school and the award-winning projects are intended to provide examples of how schools can work for diversity. The competition is open to everyone working at a general or vocational school in Germany, including school administrators, teachers, and (school) social pedagogues, who are publicly campaigning against discrimination at their school and initiating relevant projects. In 2020, the Erasmus-von-Rotterdam-Gymnasium in Viersen was awarded the first prize of EUR 3 000 for its project *Four Wins*, which promotes peer mediation, bullying intervention and conflict counselling against racism, discrimination, homophobia and transphobia and to strengthen moral courage.

- Grants for project funding for measures to combat discrimination

On 8 January 2019, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth issued the guidelines according to which the Federal Office of Administration (*Bundesverwaltungsamt*) (BVA) will distribute project funding for measures to combat discrimination (with effect from January 2019 until December 2022).⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁸ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*) (BAMF), <https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/Integration/AkteureEhrenamtlicheInteressierte/EhrenamtlichesEngagement/Integrationsprojekte/integrationsprojekte-node.html>.

⁴⁶⁹ Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Statistik/Arbeitsmarktberichterstattung*) (2020), Berichte: Arbeitsmarkt kompakt – Fluchtmigration Nürnberg, available in German at: https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/Statistikdaten/Detail/202003/fluchtmigration/fluchtmigration/fluchtmigration-d-0-202003-pdf.pdf?_blob=publicationFile&v=1.

⁴⁷⁰ Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Statistik/Arbeitsmarktberichterstattung*) (2020), Berichte: Arbeitsmarkt kompakt – Fluchtmigration Nürnberg, available in German at: https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/Statistikdaten/Detail/202003/fluchtmigration/fluchtmigration/fluchtmigration-d-0-202003-pdf.pdf?_blob=publicationFile&v=1.

⁴⁷¹ See <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/fluechtlinge-in-arbeitsmarkt-integrieren-448994>.

⁴⁷² For more information in German, see: www.fair-at-school.de.

⁴⁷³ See, in German, http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Dokumente_ohne_anzeige_in_Publikat

- *Fair in den Job!*

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency commissioned a study on discrimination in working life. The guide, *Fair at the job! Guidelines for non-discriminatory procedures*, is aimed primarily at employers, HR managers, staff and works councils. It clarifies the legal protection options for employees, shows a picture of the extent of discrimination in the recruitment process and provides support for specific practical options.⁴⁷⁴

Additionally, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency produced a flyer to prepare and adequately equip employees and jobseekers. The flyer gives examples of what formulations are permitted in job advertisements and which are not, and which questions may be asked in a job interview.⁴⁷⁵

The National Integration Award,⁴⁷⁶ which was set up in 2017, is the Federal Government's highest honour for valuable work on integration and fostering non-discrimination. In 2020, the National Integration Prize was awarded to Bjeen Alhassan, a woman of Syrian origin who runs an online learning platform to support displaced women.

- Publications and Legal Expertise

In November 2019, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency published a legal assessment on the need for a clarification and extension of the discrimination grounds as stated in the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG).⁴⁷⁷ Based on the cases reported at the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency in the context of relevant legal consultation, 3 out of 10 inquiries involve cases of discrimination beyond the protected grounds as stated in the AGG. The proposed grounds are marital and family status, socioeconomic status and social background.

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency also commissioned a study on the potential risks of discrimination due to algorithm and data-based decision making, which was published in 2020.⁴⁷⁸ The study recommends:

the definition of socially acceptable differentiations;
clarification of current data protection law that would also serve anti-discrimination purposes, particularly in relation to so-called informed consent;
more detailed regulation of algorithmic and data-based decision making in addition to the current regulatory focus on data processing;
that, given the difficulty in detecting and proving algorithm-based discrimination by those it affects, and according to the principle of subsidiarity, representative bodies should take action on behalf of the persons concerned, making use of collective redress.

[ionen/Foerderaufruf.pdf? blob=publicationFile&v=2.](#)

⁴⁷⁴ Available in German at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Leitfaeden/Fair_in_den_Job.html.

⁴⁷⁵ Available in German at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Flyer/Fair_in_den_Job.html.

⁴⁷⁶ See <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/integration-prize-1796116>.

⁴⁷⁷ Available in German, http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/Rechtsexpertise_Merkmalserweiterung_im_AGG.pdf? blob=publicationFile&v=3.

⁴⁷⁸ Orwat, C. (2020), *Risks of discrimination through the use of algorithms*, Berlin, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, available at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/publikationen/Studie_en_Diskriminierungsrisiken_durch_Verwendung_von_Algorithmen.pdf? blob=publicationFile&v=2.

Also in 2020, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency launched a series of publications called 'Positions' (*Standpunkte*) to communicate its views on current legal issues regarding discrimination. The first publication dealt with the applicability of the AGG to medical service contracts.⁴⁷⁹

In 2020, after the outbreak of the pandemic, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency received reports of hate speech at work and of racial profiling of persons of Asian appearance.⁴⁸⁰

- National Action Plan *INTEGRATION*

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, along with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, is responsible for the subject area 'Anti-Discrimination and Measures Against Group-Focused Enmity' under the fifth and final phase of the National Action Plan, headed 'Cohesion'.⁴⁸¹

- Campaign: Discrimination is forbidden - the General Equal Treatment Act protects

In November and December 2020, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency launched a nationwide poster campaign to raise awareness on discrimination. Valuable information and practical advice for those in need of support is provided on the website, which was specifically created for the needs of the campaign.⁴⁸²

Specifically, regarding the Sinti and Roma:

On 27 March 2019, the Federal Government announced the appointment of an expert commission on anti-Gypsyism (as agreed in the coalition agreement between the Christian Democratic Union, the Christian Social Union and the Social Democratic Party).⁴⁸³ The expert commission's report, with specific recommendations to the Federal State and the *Länder* is expected to be published in the spring of 2021. While preparing the report, the independent commission published in 2020 its opinion on the Post-2020 EU Roma Strategy Framework, highlighting aspects of particular importance, such as the need for a fundamental reorientation of the Framework, so that in future the emphasis lies not in the perception of the vulnerability of Sinti and Roma, but in the acceptance of the fact that they are a disenfranchised group.⁴⁸⁴

On 8 July 2020, the Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*) (BPB) published a brochure, 'Critical Confrontation with Antiziganism' (*Kritische Auseinandersetzung mit Antiziganismus*) providing a methodological handout for educators. The publication includes 11 tried and tested methods for addressing antiziganism specially selected with indications for best and worst practices. Additional material required for implementation can be downloaded from a suggested link. The explanations are supplemented by in-depth texts and a selected and annotated bibliography with a focus on methodological guidelines and easily accessible literature on the topic.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁷⁹ Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (2020), *Ist das Allgemeine Gleichbehandlungsgesetz auf medizinische Behandlungsverträge anwendbar?*, Standpunkte 1, Berlin, available in German at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Kurzmeldungen/DE/2020/nl_03_2020/nl_03_studien_und_veroeffentlichungen_1.html.

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Fn 20 above.

⁴⁸¹ For more information in German, see: <https://www.nationaler-aktionsplan-integration.de/napi-de>.

⁴⁸² See www.agg-schuetzt.de.

⁴⁸³ <https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/heimat-integration/gesellschaftlicher-zusammenhalt/unabhaengige-kommission-antiziganismus/unabhaengige-kommission-antiziganismus-artikel.html>.

⁴⁸⁴ See in German: https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/Sonstiges/Stellungnahme_UKA_zur_Frage_Post-2020_EU-Rahmenstrategie_in_Bezug_auf_Roma_und_Romnja.pdf.

⁴⁸⁵ Available in German and for free online orders: <https://www.bpb.de/shop/buecher/einzelpublikationen/312504/handreichung-kritische-auseinandersetzung->

Since 2013, Baden-Württemberg (2013), Bavaria (2018), Hessen (2018), Bremen (2012), Thuringia (2015), Brandenburg (2018) and Rhineland-Palatinate (2015) have all signed a state treaty with the Sinti and Roma association.

Within the terms of these treaties, the various *Länder* commit, among other things, to working together in common councils with the Sinti and Roma associations, to protect and promote the German Sinti and Roma's own Romani language, to foster the memory of the history of persecution of the Sinti and Roma at schools, to support initiatives and projects and to promote the participation of Sinti and Roma in cultural, social and economic life.

11 SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

11.1 Potential breaches of the directives at the national level

It is intended that the AGG and the accompanying legislation should provide a full transposition of the directives. However, in the view of the author, there are some shortcomings.⁴⁸⁶ Several problematic issues have been identified in this report:⁴⁸⁷

- a) The exception of dismissal from the application of the prohibition of discrimination, Section 2(4), AGG, though mitigated by case law (see section 3.2.3).
- b) The possible non-application of the AGG to occupational pension schemes, Section 2(2), AGG, depending, however, on the judicial interpretation of the relevant norm (see section 3.2.3).
- c) The exception from the material scope of the provision of goods and services of all transactions concerning a special relationship of trust and proximity between the parties or their family, including the letting of flats on the premises of the landlord for all grounds including race and ethnic origin, Section 19(5), AGG, which raises problems under the Racial Equality Directive, albeit depending on its contentious interpretation in this respect, (see sections 3.2.9 and 3.2.10).
- d) The exception in relation to housing, including unequal treatment on the grounds of race and ethnic origin, to provide for socially and culturally balanced settlements, Section 19(3), AGG, depending on judicial interpretation (see section 3.2.10).
- e) The formulation of the justification of unequal treatment for religion and belief, depending on judicial interpretation, Section 9(1), AGG, which has not been abrogated despite CJEU jurisprudence in this respect (see section 4.2).
- f) Section 622(2) (second sentence), BGB provides that employment periods under the age of 25 are not taken into account when determining notice periods. This regulation is – as the CJEU has ruled⁴⁸⁸ – not reconcilable with Article 6 of Directive 2000/78/EC (see section 4.7.5.a) and is no longer applied by German courts (see section 12.2).
- g) There is no special prohibition of victimisation in civil law, as set out in Article 9, Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) (see section 6.4).
- h) The dependence of compensation for material damage on fault (wilful or negligent wrongdoing) or gross negligence respectively, Sections 15(1), 15(3) and 21(2) AGG,

⁴⁸⁶ Assuming that European law demands a differentiated transposition, see Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), C-49/00, *Commission v. Italy*, 15 November 2001, EU:C:2001:611, para 21ff, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=46846&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&oc=first&part=1&cid=3967761>; Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), C- 236/95, *Commission v. Hellenic Republic*, 19 September 1996, EU:C:1996:341, para 13, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:61995CJ0236&from=EN>; Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), C-38/99, *Commission v. French Republic*, 7 December 2000, EU:C:2000:674, para 53, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=45861&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&oc=first&part=1&cid=3967912>; Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), C-144/99, *Commission vs. Kingdom of the Netherlands*, 10 May 2001, EU:C:2001:257, para 17, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=46355&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&oc=first&part=1&cid=3968067>; 'It should be borne in mind, in that connection that according to settled case law, whilst legislative action on the part of each Member State is not necessarily required in order to implement a directive, it is essential for national law to guarantee that the national authorities will effectively apply the directive in full that the legal position under national law should be sufficiently precise and clear and that individuals are made fully aware of their rights and, where appropriate, may rely on them before national courts.' With regard to case law the Court continues, '...even where the settled case law of a Member State interprets the provisions of national law in a manner deemed to satisfy the requirements of a directive that cannot achieve the clarity and precision needed to meet the requirement of legal certainty', *Ibid*, para 21.

⁴⁸⁷ For the following list in the main text, it is assumed that Article 3 GG protects adequately against discrimination on the ground of race and ethnic origin, religion, belief and disability explicitly or through the open-textured guarantee of equality in Article 3(1), GG for the grounds of age and sexual orientation in public law through a strict test of proportionality for the justification of any unequal treatment. This interpretation is contentious in detail, but tenable in the light of the jurisprudence of the BVerfG.

⁴⁸⁸ Judgment of 19 January 2010, *Küçükdeveci*, C-555/07, EU:C:2010:21, <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=72658&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=3967565>.

- is contrary to CJEU jurisprudence in this respect but continues to be valid law (see section 6.5).
- i) In public law, there is no comprehensive implementation of anti-discrimination law with regard to harassment and the instruction to discriminate regarding race and ethnic origin in the areas of social protection and social advantages, education and the provision of goods and services, depending on judicial interpretation (see sections 3.2.4 and 3.2.6 – 3.2.9).
 - j) There is no general regulation of reasonable accommodation of disability (see section 2.6.a).

11.2 Other issues of concern

There is enough empirical evidence of discriminatory opinions and behaviour in Germany to be concerned about the problem, although methodologically sound studies on many grounds of discrimination are rare.⁴⁸⁹ There are some empirical studies about the particular experiences of discrimination of migrants and refugees confirming the existence of discrimination on a significant scale.⁴⁹⁰ The substantial amount of violence against shelters for refugees and refugees themselves in the context of the arrival of refugees in Germany adds further reason for concern. This has been dramatically underlined by the racist terrorist attacks in Germany in 2019 and 2020.

In addition, there has been increasing awareness about the risks of algorithm and data-based decision making, which may lead to discrimination.⁴⁹¹ The fact that the effects of algorithms are almost impossible to trace suggests that it is highly unlikely that the persons concerned will be able to demonstrate discrimination due to algorithms. The difficulty of detecting potential discrimination cannot be effectively met even by the option of collective redress in the form of a class action suit.

Other issues of concern are the discriminatory effects of the closure of educational institutions on refugees and persons with a migrant background and the adverse effects in healthcare for these groups because of the pandemic. As yet, no reliable studies on these effects are available in Germany.

The mandate and the powers of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency have also been issues of concern and were addressed by the European Commission against Racism and

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Klose, A. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Mahlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 10. A substantive study was conducted by the author of this report in collaboration with Prof Dr Hubert Rottleuthner, Freie Universität Berlin (*Diskriminierung in Deutschland*, 2011), financed by the European Union and the German government to provide further information. See Rottleuthner, H. and Mahlmann, M. (2011), *Diskriminierung in Deutschland: Vermutungen und Fakten*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag. The executive summary (in German) is available here: http://ec.europa.eu/ews/UDRW/images/items/doc/16487_986472583.pdf. The Anti-Discrimination Agency (*Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*) commissioned similar work, see e.g.: www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/BT_Bericht/Gemeinsamer_Bericht_zweiter_2013.pdf?__blob=publicationFile. First results of another study are available under, Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (2017), *Diskriminierungserfahrungen in Deutschland - Ergebnisse einer Repräsentativ- und einer Betroffenenbefragung*, December 2017: www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/Expertise_Diskriminierungserfahrungen_in_Deutschland.html.

⁴⁹⁰ For example, Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (2016), *Diskriminierungsrisiken für Geflüchtete in Deutschland: Eine Bestandsaufnahme der Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*, 2016, https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/Diskriminierungsrisiken_fuer_Gefuechtete_in_Deutschland.html. The Federal Agency has published a guide to inform refugees and immigrants about their rights under anti-discrimination law: Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (2016) 'Protection against Discrimination in Germany. A Guide for Refugees and New Immigrants', www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Refugees/Fluechtlingsbroschue_re_englisch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7.

⁴⁹¹ See the relevant study commissioned by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency: Orwat, C. (2020), *Risks of discrimination through the use of algorithms*, Berlin, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, available at: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/publikationen/Studie_en_Diskriminierungsrisiken_durch_Verwendung_von_Algorithmen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

Intolerance (ECRI) in the relevant report on Germany, which was presented on 17 March 2020. ECRI underlines the importance of strengthening the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency as a national equality body and recommends that the 'provisions on the competences, powers, independence and effectiveness of the agency are brought in line with ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.2 on Equality Bodies'.⁴⁹² ECRI's specific proposals regarding the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency include suggesting that the German authorities:

- extend its mandate to cover hate speech, the grounds of skin colour, language, citizenship and gender identity, and intersectional discrimination;
- ensure that its mandate covers all areas of the public and private sector under the competence of the Federation;
- provide it with the competence to intervene in the legislative procedure, provide people exposed to racism and discrimination with legal assistance, represent them before institutions, adjudicatory bodies and the courts, bring cases in its own name and intervene in legal proceedings as *amicus curiae*, third party or expert;
- provide it with the power to hear witnesses;
- reform the appointment procedure for its head;
- stipulate that it drafts annual reports for discussion by Parliament and Government;
- provide it with sufficient human and financial resources for these tasks.⁴⁹³

As indicated in the overview of the context of anti-discrimination law in Germany, the guarantee of human dignity is the most fundamental provision of German law. This makes discrimination against human beings because of any characteristics, such as race, ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, impermissible on the most fundamental level. The directives aim to provide legal tools protecting individuals against such discrimination in the public and private spheres.⁴⁹⁴ The values the directives aim to protect are therefore part of the core of the German legal system. In addition, the regime of legal provisions envisaged by the directives was already in part a reality of Germany's legal system, as regards discrimination based on sex (which is not covered by this report) and disability. These regulations and their interpretation by federal courts include the definition of discrimination, the shift of the burden of proof, legal standing and a regime of sanctions. Therefore, the final implementation of the directives through the AGG and accompanying legislation was not a radical new start for German law, but rather the further development of relevant parts of the existing law.⁴⁹⁵

In principle, Germany has established a comprehensive legal framework to combat acts of discrimination. There are some shortcomings, as reported in the section on potential breaches of the directives, (see section 11.1 above). The challenge ahead is to interpret and apply this legal framework in a consistent way, realising the purposes of anti-discrimination law, the foremost of which is the protection of human dignity. The case law is still limited, in absolute terms. There are reasons to believe, as reported above, that this is due to informal barriers to access to justice and problems of proof. Legal tools, such as *actio popularis* could also be improved. Another issue of concern is the need to prevent attitudes that give rise to discrimination. Recent events, including xenophobic demonstrations of a significant scale, the electoral success of xenophobic political parties despite the strong reaction by civil society, Government and political actors, and a wave of racist terrorist attacks in recent years, including 2020, give reason to believe that persistent efforts in this respect may be of great importance.

⁴⁹² ECRI (2017), *General Policy Recommendation No. 2: Equality Bodies to Combat Racism and Intolerance at National Level*, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-/16808b5a23>.

⁴⁹³ Council of Europe (2020), *ECRI Report on Germany (sixth monitoring cycle)*, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-germany-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4be>.

⁴⁹⁴ See: McCrudden, C. (ed.) (2004), *Anti-discrimination law*, 2nd edition, Ashgate, Aldershot; Fredman, S. (2011), *Discrimination Law*, 2nd ed. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. on the legal ethics of anti-discrimination law, Muhlmann, M. (2007), in: Rudolf, B. and Muhlmann, M. (eds.), *Gleichbehandlungsrecht: Handbuch*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag, § 1.

12 LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN 2020

12.1 Legislative amendments

The most important development in 2020 in the field of anti-discrimination law has been the anti-discrimination law of the Berlin *Land*. The Berlin State Anti-Discrimination Act (*Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz*) (LADG),⁴⁹⁶ implements the European requirements in the area of anti-discrimination law in the *Land* law of Berlin, providing in addition an instrument with which affected persons can enforce the constitutional prohibitions of discrimination. The LADG offers protection against discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin, antisemitic and racist attributions, language, religion and beliefs, disability, chronic illness, age, sexual and gender identity, and social status. Whereas the AGG has so far been limited to employment and private law transactions, the LADG provides a comparable protection against discrimination in relation to public law actions by the administration and public bodies of the Berlin *Land*. The LADG provides for a right to file an *actio popularis* and for the creation of a (*Land*) Ombuds Office.

Furthermore, the *Bundestag* adopted on 7 May 2020 the Act to Protect against Conversion Treatments (*Gesetz zum Schutz vor Konversionsbehandlungen*) (KonvBehSchG),⁴⁹⁷ according to which all medical interventions and other systematic treatments aimed at deliberately changing or suppressing the sexual orientation or self-perceived gender identity of a person (so-called conversion therapies) are to be banned. Violations of the ban on conversion are to be penalised with a prison sentence of up to one year or a significant fine,⁴⁹⁸ while violations of the ban on advertising, providing and arranging will be penalised with a fine of up to EUR 30 000.⁴⁹⁹ The ban applies not only to professionals in the field but to everyone; adults or other legal guardians or persons with parental authority can also be punished in cases of gross violation of their duty of care or their educational responsibilities.⁵⁰⁰ In addition, the Act provides for a counselling service offered by the Federal Centre for Health Education (*Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung*) (BZgA)⁵⁰¹ for all those personally affected, family members, and, for instance, people who deal with the topic on a professional basis and provide advice.⁵⁰²

12.2 Case law

Discrimination on the ground of race and ethnic origin

Relevant discrimination ground(s): ethnic origin

Name of the Court: Local Court Charlottenburg (*Amtsgericht Charlottenburg, AG Charlottenburg*)

Date of decision: 14 January 2020

Name of the parties: N/A⁵⁰³

Reference number: 203 C 31 /19, ECLI:DE:AGBECH:2020:0114.203C31.19.00

Link: <https://gesetze.berlin.de/bsbe/document/KORE201212020>

Brief summary: The case concerns access to housing. The complainant sued a building company in Berlin owning about 110 000 apartments because of discrimination on the ground of ethnic origin. He enquired about a flat under his true ('Turkish sounding') name but received the information that the flat was no longer available. After having been informed about this, he enquired again with an invented ('German-sounding') name. After this, he was informed that he could visit the flat. When he tried to collect the key at the

⁴⁹⁶ Berlin State Anti-Discrimination Act (*Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz*) (LADG), 11 June 2020.

⁴⁹⁷ Act to Protect against Conversion Therapies (*Gesetz zum Schutz vor Konversionsbehandlungen*) (KonvBehSchG), 12 June 2020.

⁴⁹⁸ Section 5.1 Act to Protect against Conversion Therapies, 12 June 2020.

⁴⁹⁹ Section 6.2 Act to Protect against Conversion Therapies, 12 June 2020.

⁵⁰⁰ Section 5.2 Act to Protect against Conversion Therapies, 12 June 2020.

⁵⁰¹ See www.bzga.de/aktuelles/2020-05-15-sexuelle-identitaet-und-psychische-gesundheit-staerken/.

⁵⁰² Section 4 Act to Protect against Conversion Therapies, 12 June 2020.

⁵⁰³ In Germany, court decisions do not publish the names of the parties.

service point however, the attendant told him that the flat was already let to somebody else. A colleague of his, however, called an hour later and was informed that he could visit the flat to see whether he wanted to rent it. This happened a second time within the next month: he applied for a flat under his true name and was informed that the flat was no longer available. When he applied with a fictitious name again, he was invited to inspect the flat.

The Local Court of Charlottenburg argued that there was direct discrimination on the ground of ethnic origin. The complainant was treated differently because of his 'Turkish sounding' name. In the view of the court, the procedure of individual situational testing applied by the complainant was admissible. There was no indication that the complainant was not seriously interested in renting a flat. The complainant received compensation of EUR 6 000.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): ethnic origin

Name of the Court: Berlin - Brandenburg Higher Labour Court (*Landesarbeitsgericht Berlin-Brandenburg, LAG Berlin-Brandenburg*)

Date of decision: 22 January 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 15 SA 1163/19, ECLI:DE:LAGBEBB:2020:0122.15SA1163.19.00

Link: <https://gesetze.berlin.de/bsbe/document/JURE200004440>

Brief summary: The case concerns a complainant who applied for employment in the public service. The *Land* did not consider the complainant for the job because it demanded that the complainant prove that her Romanian university degrees are equivalent to German university degrees. The Court argued that this amounts to indirect discrimination on the ground of ethnic origin because of the origin of the complainant from Romania. It argued that there were no objective reasons for this indirect discrimination and that it is incumbent on the *Land* to assess the equivalence of the university degrees of the complainant. This is also, the Court argued, entirely feasible given existing databases that contain the relevant information. The complainant was therefore entitled to compensation amounting to EUR 4 076 according to Section 15.2 AGG.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): race

Name of the Court: Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht, BVerfG*)

Date of decision: 2 November 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 1 BvR 2727-19, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2020:rk20201102.1bvr272719

Link:

https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Entscheidungen/DE/2020/11/rk20201102_1bvr272719.html

Brief summary: The case concerns the insult of a person of colour who was addressed with monkey sounds. The Federal Constitutional Court upheld the decisions of lower instance courts that such an utterance is not protected by freedom of opinion, Article 5 Basic Law, and that consequently the dismissal of the persons who uttered these sounds was justified by these discriminatory behaviours. It regarded it a violation of human dignity because it denies the humanity of the person who was addressed in this manner. At the same time, it is a violation of the prohibition of discrimination on the ground of race, Article 3, sentence 1 of the Basic Law.

Discrimination on the ground of disability

Relevant discrimination ground(s): disability

Name of the Court: Administrative Court Gera (*Verwaltungsgericht Gera, VG Gera*)

Date of decision: 20 January 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 1 K 2039/18

Link: <https://landesrecht.thueringen.de/bsth/document/MWRE200000507>

Brief summary: The case concerns an application of a person with a severe disability. The complainant argued that that he was not considered for the post because of discrimination on the ground of his severe disability. The court decided that that was not the case. In his application for the job, the complainant did not highlight sufficiently that he is actually a person with severe disabilities. The court argued that indirect references to this status in a large document of 53 pages were not sufficient to make this situation clear. In addition, the complainant did not have the necessary qualifications to be considered for the post.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): disability

Name of the Court: Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht, BVerfG*)

Date of decision: 30 January 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 2 BvR 1005/18, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2020:rk20200130.2bvr100518

Link:

https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Entscheidungen/DE/2020/01/rk20200130_2bvr100518.html

Brief summary: The case concerns discrimination on the ground of disability. The complainant was a patient of a physiotherapist. She attended her physiotherapy sessions accompanied by a seeing-eye dog/guide dog to access the rooms of the physiotherapist. To access these rooms one could either use a staircase or pass through the waiting rooms of another medical practice. She was allowed to do the latter for several weeks accompanied by her dog. To access the rooms of the physiotherapist with her dog via the staircase was impossible because the dog could not climb the stairs. After some time, in addition, she needed to use a wheelchair. The defendant, the medical practice through which she crossed, prohibited the complainant from using this access route to the physiotherapy practice with her dog because of hygienic reasons. It argued that it was unnecessary to cross the rooms of the practice with the dog because she could leash the dog in front of the practice and let herself be helped by employees of the practice.

The lower court decided that the prohibition on passing through the rooms of the medical practice with a dog was allowable but the Federal Constitutional Court found the prohibition unconstitutional. The Constitutional Court argued that the prohibition of discrimination on the ground of disability according to Article 3.3 Basic Law was violated. Section 19 AGG prohibiting discrimination on the ground of disability was applicable. The contractual relations of the complainant with the medical practice and the physiotherapist were not excluded from the material scope of Section 19 AGG. This contract was 'bulk business' in the sense of Section 19 AGG, that is a contractual relation in which the individual party to the contract is of no significance. Section 19 AGG, the Court argued, has to be interpreted in light of the prohibition of discrimination in Section 3.3 of the Basic Law because of the indirect horizontal effect of that section. The Court argued that it did not have to decide whether the prohibition was direct discrimination on the ground of disability because in any case it formed indirect discrimination on the ground of disability. The prohibition on being accompanied by the dog to access the physiotherapy practice formed a disadvantage disproportionately affecting persons with disabilities. There was no objective reason justifying this indirect discrimination. Given expert opinions on the matter, there were no hygienic dangers for the medical practice because of the dog crossing the rooms on the way to the physiotherapist. The Court highlighted that particularly in light of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it was a disproportionate demand to expect the complainant to relinquish her autonomy by leaving her dog outside and by accepting guidance by the personnel of the medical practice. The Court underlined that the convention was formally federal law but could be used to interpret the rules established by fundamental rights of the Basic Law, thus strengthening its legal force. It left the question open which kind of contractual relations exactly existed between the complainant and the medical practice and the physiotherapist (apart from stating that it was 'bulk business' according to Section 19 AGG) and handed the case back to the lower instance court for further consideration.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): disability

Name of the court: Federal Labour Court (*Bundesarbeitsgericht, BAG*)

Date of decision: 23 January 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 8 AZR 484/18, ECLI:DE:BAG:2020:230120.U.8AZR484.18.0

Link: <http://juris.bundesarbeitsgericht.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bag&Art=en&nr=24273>

Brief summary: The case concerns the application of a person with severe disabilities for public employment. The applicant was not invited to a job interview as legally demanded according to Section 82, sentence 2 SGB IX (now Section 165, sentence 4 SGB IX). The Court clarified that a person qualifies as an applicant in the sense of Section 6.1, sentence 2, alternative 1 AGG if the applicant submitted an application by email and received a notice about its submission. The fact that the employer, due to organisational problems, did not take notice of this application and therefore did not invite the applicant, is irrelevant to the proper submission of the application. It is the responsibility of the employer to organise his email account appropriately. A violation of the duty to invite applicants to a job interview according to Section 82, sentence 2 SGB IX creates an assumption of discrimination on the ground of a disability. Section 22 AGG provides for a shift of the burden of proof if the applicant is able to establish facts from which it may be presumed that there has been discrimination on one of the prohibited grounds. In this case, the employer has to prove that non-discriminatory reasons were the ground for not inviting the applicant. The employer provided no such reasons. The Court upheld the lower instance decision to award compensation of EUR 3 717.20.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): disability

Name of the court: High Administrative Court Baden-Württemberg
(*Verwaltungsgerichtshof Baden-Württemberg, VGH Baden-Württemberg*)

Date of decision: 4 May 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 4 S 672/20, ECLI:DE:VGHBW:2020:0504.4S672.20.00

Link: http://lrbw.juris.de/cgi-bin/laender_rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bw&nr=31179

Brief summary: The case concerns the application of a person with severe disabilities for employment in the public sector. The person was not chosen after an interview because, the employer argued, he was not regarded as sufficiently qualified. The court underlined that the principle of equal access to public service (Article 33.2 Basic Law) also applies to groups of persons protected by the prohibition of discrimination, Section 7 AGG. A person with severe disabilities has no claim to be employed if there are better qualified applicants, here specifically with the necessary experience for the kind of employment advertised. Thus, in the view of the court, there was no discrimination.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): disability

Name of the court: Federal Labour Court (*Bundesarbeitsgericht, BAG*)

Date of decision: 28 May 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 8 AZR 170/19, ECLI:DE:BAG:2020:280520.U.8AZR170.19.0

Link: <http://juris.bundesarbeitsgericht.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bag&Art=en&nr=24462>

Brief summary: The case concerned an applicant with severe disabilities. He applied for employment at a public health insurance company. He was not invited to a job interview. The Federal Labour Court agreed with the lower instance court that this established discrimination on the ground of disability, given the legal obligation under Section 82 sentence 2 SGB IX (now Section 165 sentence 4 SGB IX). Section 22 AGG provides for a shift of the burden of proof if the applicant is able to establish facts from which it may be presumed that there has been discrimination on one of the prohibited grounds. Given the regulation in Section 22 AGG, the failure to invite the applicant for the job interview established an assumption that the applicant was not considered for the post because of his severe disability. The employer has not refuted that assumption.

The Federal Labour Court clarified the standards for the compensation paid according to Section 15.2 AGG. It emphasised that the sanction serves as both compensation and prevention of further discrimination. The Federal Labour Court clarified that various reasons cannot reduce the amount of damages contrary to what the lower instance court decided. This includes the fact that the employer employed more persons with severe disability than it was legally obliged to do. This is not relevant for the amount of compensation in the specific case because it is unrelated to it. Furthermore, it did not matter that the post concerned part-time work. Moreover, the Court considered the polite and respectful behaviour of the employer as merely a self-evident demand. Finally, the fact that the employer is a public entity also does not diminish its responsibility under anti-discrimination law. Considering all this, the Court awarded a sum of EUR 4 100.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): disability

Name of the court: Federal Labour Court (*Bundesarbeitsgericht, BAG*)

Date of decision: 25 June 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 8 AZR 75/19, ECLI:DE:BAG:2020:250620.U.8AZR75.19.0

Link: <http://juris.bundesarbeitsgericht.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bag&Art=en&nr=24618>

Brief summary: The case concerns the application of a person with severe disabilities for a post at a public employer. The complainant already worked for the public employer but sought a better kind of employment through his application. The employer conducted job interviews in two cities. The applicant was interviewed once in one city but not a second time in the other city. He claimed to have been discriminated against on the ground of disability because he was not invited to the second interview. The Federal Labour Court dismissed this claim. The Court argued that public employers are, according to Section 82, sentence 2 SGB IX (now Section 165, sentence 4 SGB IX), obliged to invite applicants with severe disabilities for interview. This is also the case if a person already employed by this public employer applies for a job. However, if there are various posts with identical profiles demanding the same kind of qualifications, and if the application process is identical for both posts, it is sufficient that the person with severe disabilities is invited once to assess her qualifications. Consequently, the Court argued there was no discrimination on the ground of disability and the complainant had no claim for compensation according to Section 7, 15 AGG.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): disability

Name of the court: Administrative Court Berlin (*Verwaltungsgericht Berlin, VG Berlin*)

Date of decision: 30 June 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 26 K 44.19, ECLI:DE:VGBE:2020:0630.26K44.19.00

Link: <https://gesetze.berlin.de/bsbe/document/JURE200017094>

Brief summary: The case concerns the question under which conditions an applicant has to be invited for a job interview according to Section 165, sentence 4 SGB IX if this applicant is a person with severe disabilities. According to standing case law, this is not the case if the applicant is objectively unqualified to fulfil the post. The court held that a specific test of the German Foreign Ministry to assess the abilities of applicants is a legitimate way to establish in a neutral and objective fashion which candidates are qualified for the respective job, and which are not. If an applicant has not passed this test with sufficiently good results, the employer is relieved from the duty to invite the applicant with severe disabilities for a job interview.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): disability

Name of the court: Administrative Court Berlin (*Verwaltungsgericht Berlin, VG Berlin*)

Date of decision: 12 November 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: K 11.19, ECLI:DE:VGBE:2020:1123.VG5K11.19.00

Link: <https://gesetze.berlin.de/bsbe/document/JURE200016605>

Brief summary: The case concerns the standards for the evaluation of an employee in the public service. Section 25.3 of the Berlin Law on the Promotion of Civil Servants, demands that the evaluation of the professional performance of a person with severe disabilities has to take into account the specific effects of the disability on the work performance. The work performance must not be assessed abstractly but with regard to the specific living conditions and their effects on the person with severe disabilities. The court held that if this norm has not been appropriately considered, the consequence is discrimination according to Section 7.1 AGG. The public authority applied only general standards to the evaluation of the employee, without considering specifically the particular tasks and how the disability impaired their performance and thus violated these standards. The court awarded compensation of EUR 600.

Discrimination on the ground of age

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the Court: Labour Court Dortmund (*Arbeitsgericht Dortmund, ArbG Dortmund*)

Date of decision: 23 January 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 6 Ca 3796/19, ECLI:DE:ARBGO:2020:0123.6CA3796.19.00

Link: http://www.justiz.nrw.de/nrwe/arbgs/hamm/arbg_dortmund/j2020/6_Ca_3796_19_Urteil_20200123.html

Brief summary: The case concerns an applicant who applied for a position advertised as being a member of a 'young dynamic team'. The applicant is 58 years old. He was not considered for the post. The court argued that such an advertisement provided sufficient grounds to shift the burden of proof according to Section 22 AGG. According to Section 22 AGG, if one of the parties is able to establish facts from which it may be presumed that there has been discrimination on one of the prohibited grounds referred to in the AGG, it shall be for the other party to prove that there has been no breach of the provisions prohibiting discrimination. The employer did not provide any reasons that would prove that no discrimination has occurred. Damages amounting to a full year's salary can be justified if the employer has not provided any reasons for its decision and has not shown that a lower compensation would be sufficient. The court consequently awarded compensation of EUR 60 000.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the Court: High Administrative Court of Bavaria (*Bayerischer Verwaltungsgerichtshof, BayVGH*)

Date of decision: 2 March 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 3 ZB 19.1090

Link: <https://www.gesetze-bayern.de/Content/Document/Y-300-Z-BECKRS-B-2020-N-4552?hl=true>

Brief summary: The court considered the question whether the age limit of 45 for being admitted to the civil service in Bavaria according to Section 23, sentence 1 of the Bavarian Civil Service Law is unjustified discrimination on the ground of age. The court held that this is not the case because the differential treatment on the ground of age is justified according to Section 10, sentence 1 AGG. Section 10, sentence 1 AGG provides for a justification of unequal treatment on the grounds of age that does not constitute discrimination if it is objectively and reasonably justified by legitimate aims, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary. The objective and proportionate reason according to the court is to maintain a balanced relationship between time employed as a civil servant and entitlements to pensions. According to the court, the age limit of 45 maintains a proper balance between time of employment and such claims to retirement benefits. It regarded these findings to be in line with EU law, in particular CJEU, judgment of 13 November 2014, *Vital Pérez*, C-416/13, ECLI:EU:C:2014:2371, para 65.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Regional Labour Court Baden-Württemberg (*Landesarbeitsgericht Baden-Württemberg, LAG Baden-Württemberg*)

Date of decision: 3 March 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 11 Sa 58/19, DE:LAGBW:2020:0303.11SA58.19.00

Link: http://lrbw.juris.de/cgi-bin/laender_rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bw&nr=32577

Brief summary: The case concerns the application of an employee employed in the public service who had retired and applied again for employment with the same employer. The court decided that it was admissible not to include the former employee in the selection procedure because the applicant had already reached the age limit for receiving a pension scheme. Otherwise, the court argued, the purposes of the age limits in collective agreements would become unachievable, including among other things, the inclusion of younger persons in the work force. There was thus no discrimination on the ground of age.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Administrative Court Gelsenkirchen (*Verwaltungsgericht Gelsenkirchen, VG Gelsenkirchen*)

Date of decision: 9 April 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 3 K 11500/17, ECLI:DE:VGGE:2020:0409.3K11500.17.00

Link: http://www.justiz.nrw.de/nrwe/ovgs/vg_gelsenkirchen/j2020/3_K_11500_17_Urteil_20200409.html

Brief summary: The case concerns a regulation in the law on the retirement benefits of civil servants, Section 19.1, sentence 2 number 2 Civil Service Benefits Act, which provides that a surviving dependant (here, the widow) is not entitled to particular retirement benefits from the pension schemes of the deceased civil servant if the marriage has been concluded after the moment in time when the civil servant had become entitled to receive the pension. The court argued that this regulation is not discriminatory on the ground of age. There are objective reasons for the differentiation. The purpose of the pension for surviving dependants is, among others, to compensate for the missed opportunities of the surviving dependent of gaining their own income that frequently occur; a consideration that, according to the court, is not equally applicable to marriages that have been concluded after the pension age of the deceased civil servant. In addition, the Court argued that it is a legitimate concern of public authorities to limit pension schemes to marriages concluded before the retirement age to limit financial risks due to over-expansive entitlements.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Higher Administrative Court Saarland (*Oberverwaltungsgericht des Saarlandes, OVG Saarland*)

Date of decision: 17 April 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 1 A 135/18, ECLI:DE:OVGSL:2020:0417.1A135.18.00

Link: <https://recht.saarland.de/bssl/document/MWRE200001522>

Brief summary: The case concerns a regulation that provides that employment in the public service before the age of 17 is not included in the years of employment relevant for the determination of the pension of the civil servant. The Court ruled that this regulation is contrary to Article 2(a) of Directive 2000/78/EC because it forms direct discrimination on the grounds of age. This direct discrimination is not justified according to Article 6 of Directive 2000/78/EC. In particular, the aim of the regulation to determine the entitlement according to the pension scheme of public servants based on the typical time of employment and to treat civil servants of different categories of salary equally are legitimate aims under EU law. The means to achieve these ends are, however, in the view of the court, not proportionate. In particular, the regulation does not account properly for situations where civil servants have started their vocational training before the age of 17 but retired earlier than the normal retirement age in the civil service. Nor are there other

reasons that could justify the unequal treatment. The respective norm is therefore not applicable because of the supremacy of EU law. The time of employment of the civil servant before the age of 17 has to be included in the calculation of the pension owed to the civil servant.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Labour Court Iserlohn (*Arbeitsgericht Iserlohn, ArbG Iserlohn*)

Date of decision: 27 May 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 3 Ca 1672/19, ECLI:DE:ARBGIS:2020:0527.3CA1672.19.00

Link: http://www.justiz.nrw.de/nrwe/arbgs/hamm/arb_g_iserlohn/j2020/3_Ca_1672_19_Urteil_20200527.html

Brief summary: The case concerns a collective agreement on the work experience included in the determination of salaries of employees. According to the collective agreement, employment before the age of 21 was not included in the assessment of work experience. The court held that this is direct discrimination on the ground of age that is not justified by Section 10 AGG. According to Section 10 AGG a differential treatment on the ground of age is justified if there are objective reasons for this treatment. Purely financial reasons are not sufficient in the opinion of the court. The employer did not argue that the respective regulation served the end of bringing younger employees into the workforce, which would be a legitimate objective reason. The court therefore included the time worked with the employer before the age of 21 of the complainant into the calculation of the owed salary and awarded EUR 15 759 as additional salary.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Regional Labour Court Nürnberg (*Landesarbeitsgericht Nürnberg, LAG Nürnberg*)

Date of decision: 27 May 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 2 Sa 1/20, DE:LAGNUER:2020:0527.2SA1.20.00

Link: https://www.arbg.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/lag/nuernberg/entscheidungen/2020/2_sa_1_20.pdf

Brief summary: The case concerns a 61-year-old applicant, who applied for a job advertised as an employee who would collaborate in a 'young and highly motivated team'. He was not considered for the job. The court held that in this case there is a discrimination on the ground of age. The job advertisement forms a plausible reason to shift the burden of proof according to Section 21 AGG. Section 22 AGG provides for such a shift of the burden of proof if the applicant is able to establish facts from which it may be presumed that there has been discrimination on one of the prohibited grounds. The job advertisement formed such facts. The employer did not show that age played no role in its decision not to employ the applicant. The Court awarded compensation of EUR 6 710.98.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Regional Labour Court Cologne (*Landesarbeitsgericht Köln, LAG Köln*)

Date of decision: 27 May 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 11 Sa 284/19, ECLI:DE:LAGK:2020:0527.11SA284.19.00

Link: http://www.justiz.nrw.de/nrwe/arbgs/koeln/lag_koeln/j2020/11_Sa_284_19_Urteil_20200527.html

Brief summary: The case concerns a so-called assistant service under German Social Law. An assistant service is provided for persons with severe disabilities to enable them to lead a self-determined life. The complainant applied for employment as an assistant in this sense. The employment was supposed to help a 20-year-old woman with severe disabilities in her everyday life. The job advertisement specified that the woman with severe disabilities was 20 years old and a student at a university. She was searching for an assistant preferably between the age of 18 to 30. The complainant is 50. She was not considered for the job. The court argued that not considering her for this particular

employment is not discrimination on the ground of age. She was treated differently on the ground of age, but this differential treatment is justified according to Section 8 AGG. Section 8 AGG provides for justification of direct discrimination on the ground of age. The precondition is that the ground for differential treatment constitutes a genuine and determining occupational requirement, provided that the objective is legitimate and the requirement is proportionate. The court argued that it follows from the general right to personality based on Article 2 in conjunction with Article 1 of the Basic Law that the person with severe disability is entitled to determine herself with whom she wants to establish this often highly personal relationship of assistance. The assistant has to provide help in all areas of life, including areas that are of a personal nature. It is therefore, the court argues, the right of the person with severe disabilities to specify, among other things, the age group of the assistant.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Federal Court of Justice (*Bundesgerichtshof, BGH*)

Date of decision: 27 May 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: VIII ZR 401/18, DE:BGH:2020:270520UVIIIIZR401.18.0

Link: <http://juris.bundesgerichtshof.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bgh&Art=en&az=VIII%20ZR%20401/18&nr=107827>

Brief summary: The case concerns a complaint by a mother representing her children that her children were discriminated against on the ground of age because they were not admitted to a hotel. The hotel pursued as a business model an 'adult-only policy', excluding guests under the age of 16. It provided wellness and conference services and excluded persons under the age of 16 in order to maintain a peaceful atmosphere at the hotel. The Court argued that there was no discrimination on the ground of age because the unequal treatment on the ground of age of the children of the complainant was justified according to Section 20 AGG. According to this norm, unequal treatment on the ground of age in the area of civil law is justified if it is based on objective grounds. The Court argued that the economic interests of the hotel company form such objective grounds. They are to be considered because they are protected by Article 12 Basic Law on freedom of profession. The exclusion of persons under the age of 16 was regarded as proportional, too. The complainants made no particular reasons plausible that they were dependent on being hosted by the hotel. Their visit had only the purpose of spending their free time at the hotel and other options for accommodation were available. In this context, the Court argued, it is permissible to pursue the particular business model of a wellness and conference hotel only for persons over the age of 16. The Court dismissed the complaint.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Federal Labour Court (*Bundesarbeitsgericht, BAG*)

Date of decision: 3 June 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 3 AZR 226/19, ECLI:DE:BAG:2020:030620.U.3AZR226.19.0

Link: <http://juris.bundesarbeitsgericht.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bag&Art=en&nr=24435>

Brief summary: The case concerns a pension scheme. The applicant had already availed himself of the possibility of profiting from the pension scheme after his fiftieth birthday. The pension scheme provided for an exclusion of a pension for companions if the marriage was concluded after the person started receiving a pension under the pension scheme. The Federal Labour Court argued that this regulation is not discrimination on the ground of age. It held that it was unequal treatment on the ground of age because the respective regulation only concerned people of 50 years of age or more. It argued, however, that the unequal treatment was justified under Article 10 AGG, which provides for the possibility of justification of unequal treatment on the ground of age if the unequal treatment is objectively and reasonably justified by a legitimate aim. The means of achieving that aim must be appropriate and necessary. The Court argued that the regulation of the pension

scheme serves the purpose to limit the financial risk of the employer. It regarded this as a legitimate aim and the specific regulations proportionate to reach it. It dismissed the complaint.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): age

Name of the court: Higher Administrative Court Berlin-Brandenburg
(*Oberverwaltungsgericht Berlin-Brandenburg, OVG Berlin-Brandenburg*)

Date of decision: 12 November 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: OVG 4 B 21.17, ECLI:DE:OVGBEBB:2020:1112.OVG4B21.17.00

Link: <https://gesetze.berlin.de/bsbe/document/MWRE200004885>

Brief summary: The court held that the claim of civil servants working in shifts after the age of 50 for additional holidays is unequal treatment on the ground of age justified by the need to protect the health of civil servants of this age group.

Discrimination on the ground of religion and belief

Relevant discrimination ground(s): religion

Name of the court: Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht, BVerfG*)

Date of decision: 14 January 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 2 BvR 1333/17, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2020:rs20200114.2bvr133317

Link: https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Entscheidungen/DE/2020/01/rs20200114_2bvr133317.html

Brief summary: The case concerns a ban on wearing a headscarf for legal trainees. The complainant was a legal trainee in the *Land* Hessen. Legal traineeships in Germany are monopolised by the state (*Referendariat*). The complainant wears a headscarf in public because of her Muslim faith. The Higher Regional Court as the responsible authority instructed her prior to her traineeship that legal trainees wearing a headscarf were not allowed to perform any tasks in which they may be perceived as a representative of the justice system or of the state.

The Federal German Constitutional Court⁵⁰⁴ decided that the relevant legal provisions, Section 27.1, second sentence of the Hesse Act on Legal Training (*Hessisches Juristenausbildungsgesetz – JAG*) in conjunction with Section 45, first and second sentence of the Hessen Civil Service Act (*Hessisches Beamtengesetz – HBG*) form a sufficient constitutional statutory basis for such a ban. The Court considered whether such a ban violates the freedom of religion, Article 4 Basic Law, the right to freely choose their place of training, Article 12.1 Basic Law, the right of personality, Article 2.1. in conjunction with Article 1.1. Basic Law, and the question whether such a ban would form indirect discrimination on the ground of sex or gender, violating Article 3 Basic Law.

The Court argued that there was an interference in the right to the free exercise of religion, the right to freely choose the place of training and the general right of personality. The interference in these rights, however, is justified according to the Court by considerations of the neutrality of the state especially in the judiciary, the proper functioning of the judiciary and the negative freedom of religion of those who are facing a member of the judiciary displaying visible religious symbols. It did not answer the question whether there was indirect discrimination on the ground of sex or gender because it argued that in any case such indirect discrimination would be justified for the same reasons as the interference in the other fundamental rights mentioned. It did not consider indirect discrimination on the ground of religion nor did it discuss EU anti-discrimination law.

The court argued that the legislature enjoys a margin of appreciation and is not prevented from allowing the wearing of headscarves in the courtroom. It is the choice of the

⁵⁰⁴ Federal German Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*), 14 January 2020, 2 BvR 1333/17, ECLI:DE:BVerfG:2020:rs20200114.2bvr133317.

legislature which solution it prefers. Certain provisions in the respective norms provided for the following: the occidental tradition of the *Land* Hessen which is taken to be shaped by Christianity and humanism has to be adequately taken into account when determining the content of neutral conduct. The court held that these provisions are not violating the principle of the neutrality of the state. The Court argued that, given the specific traditions of the *Land*, such a regulation could be justified without specifying exactly the legal consequences. It did state, however, that a ban on Christian symbols would be permissible, too.

The dissenting opinion argued that the interference is unconstitutional. It is disproportionate because the legal trainee is visibly performing different tasks than other members of the judiciary. The freedom of religion and the right of the trainee to freely choose training should therefore prevail over other considerations.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): religion

Name of the court: Higher Administrative Court Lüneburg (*Oberverwaltungsgericht Lüneburg*)

Date of decision: 24 April 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 5 LB 129/18, ECLI:DE:OVGNI:2020:0424.5LB129.18.00

Link: <http://www.rechtsprechung.niedersachsen.de/jportal/portal/page/bsndprod.psm?doc.id=MWRE200001922&st=null&showdoccase=1>

Brief summary: The case concerns the prohibition on wearing an Islamic headscarf in the *Land* law of Lower Saxony, Section 51 School Law Lower Saxony. In 2013, the applicant was not employed as a teacher because of that prohibition. In 2015, the Federal German Constitutional Court⁵⁰⁵ clarified that an abstract prohibition on wearing an Islamic headscarf in schools is not constitutional. The Higher Administrative Court Lüneburg held in its decision that the time limit for submitting the claim of an applicant that discrimination has occurred according to Section 15.4, sentence 2 AGG starts in the moment the person discriminated against has knowledge of the legal regulations. In cases of doubtful legal situations, this is the case when the legal situation is authoritatively clarified. That has been the case, according to the court, by the decision of the Federal German Constitutional Court in the year 2015. The complainant thus did not exceed the time limit set for her complaint. The court awarded compensation of EUR 4 128.62.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): religion and belief

Name of the court: Labour Court Karlsruhe (*Arbeitsgericht, Karlsruhe, ArbG Karlsruhe*)

Date of decision: 18 September 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 1 Ca 171/19, DE:ARBGKAR:2020:0918.1CA171.19.00

Link: http://lrbw.juris.de/cgi-bin/laender_rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bw&nr=32333

Brief summary: The case concerns the application of a person for a position as secretary in the Protestant Church of Baden-Württemberg. The job advertisement included the demand to identify the religious affiliation of the applicant. The applicant identified herself as having no religious affiliation and as being an atheist. She added that she felt open-minded about any religious orientation and that she had grown up in the former DDR and thus without particular religious socialisation. Her job application was not considered. The court argued that this is discrimination on the ground of religion and belief that is not justified by Section 9 AGG. Section 9 AGG provided for special exceptions for religious communities to enable them to demand adherence to special duties of loyalty. The court followed the recent jurisprudence of the Federal Labour Court (judgment 25.10.2018-8AZR501/14 and CJEU, 17 April 2018, *Egenberger*, C-414/16, ECLI:EU:C:2018:257). It argued that the justification of unequal treatment on the ground of religion and belief is only justified if the religious orientation makes an appropriate and proportionate demand

⁵⁰⁵ Federal Constitutional Court, 27.01.2015, 1 BvR 471/10.

for the kind of work concerned and the context in which it is performed. It decided that the post of a secretary has no particular connection to the religious mission of the Protestant church. Therefore, the court argued, a justification according to Section 9 AGG is impossible. It awarded compensation of EUR 5 037.

Relevant discrimination ground(s): religion

Name of the court: Munich Higher Regional Court (*Oberlandesgericht München, OLG München*)

Date of decision: 24 June 2020

Name of the parties: N/A

Reference number: 20 U 6415/19,

Link: <https://www.gesetze-bayern.de/Content/Document/Y-300-Z-BECKRS-B-2020-N-15428?hl=true>

Brief summary: The case concerns the denial of an airline to transport an Israeli citizen to Sri Lanka because the flight flew via Kuwait. Because of the political attitude of Kuwait towards Israel, Israeli citizens are not permitted to travel through Kuwait. The court argued that even if one regards this denial of transport as indirect discrimination on the ground of religion, because the majority of the citizens of Israel are Jews, the denial of transport is justified by an objective reason. This objective reason is the impossibility of transporting a passenger via Kuwait because of the regulations in Kuwait. It dismissed the claim.

ANNEX 1: MAIN TRANSPOSITION AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION

Country: Germany
Date: 31 December 2020

Title of the law: Basic Law

Abbreviation: GG

Date of adoption: 23 May 1949

Latest relevant amendment: 15 November 1994

Entry into force: 23 May 1949

Web link: <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg>

Grounds covered: Sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, religious or political opinions, disability

Civil/administrative/criminal law: Constitutional law

Material scope: Public authorities, indirect horizontal effect between private parties

Principal content: General equality clause (Article 3.1); specific anti-discrimination clause (Article 3.3)

Title of the law: General Act on Equal Treatment

Abbreviation: AGG

Date of adoption: 14 August 2006

Latest relevant amendment: 3 May 2013

Entry into force: 18 August 2006

Web link: <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/agg>

Grounds covered: Race or ethnic origin, sex, religion or belief (Weltanschauung), disability, age, sexual identity; belief not in civil law

Civil/administrative/criminal law: Civil and administrative law, esp. labour law (public and private), partially private contract law (not belief)

Material scope: Relationship between public and private employers and employees, incl. civil servants and judges; partially contractual relationship between private parties

Principal content: prohibition of discrimination, damages, anti-discrimination body

Title of the law: Act on Equal Treatment of Soldiers

Abbreviation: SoldGG

Date of adoption: 14 August 2006

Latest relevant amendment: 31 July 2008

Entry into force: 18 August 2006

Web link: <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/soldgg>

Grounds covered: Race or ethnic origin, religion, belief, sexual identity, partly severely disability

Civil/administrative/criminal law: Public law

Material scope: Soldiers: employment; (continuing) education; membership in union

Principal content: prohibition of discrimination

Title of the law: Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

Abbreviation: BGG

Date of adoption: 27 April 2002

Latest relevant amendment: 10 July 2018

Entry into force: 1 May 2002

Web link: <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bgg>

Grounds covered: Disability

Civil/administrative/criminal law: Public law

Material scope: Barrier free access

Principal content: Prohibition of discrimination, obligation to provide barrier free access; specialised body

Title of the law: Social Code IX

Abbreviation: SGB IX

Date of adoption: 23 December 2016

Latest relevant amendment: 28 November 2018

Entry into force: 1 January 2018

Web link: www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb_9_2018/BJNR323410016.html

Grounds covered: Disability

Civil/administrative/criminal law: Labour law, Social law

Material scope: Public and private employment

Principal content: General legal protection of (severely) disabled

Title of the law:

Abbreviation: LADG

Date of adoption: 11 June 2020

Latest relevant amendment: N/A

Entry into force: 21 June 2020

Web link: <https://gesetze.berlin.de/bsbe/document/jlr-ADiskrGBErahmen>

Grounds covered: sex, ethnic origin, racial attribution, antisemitic attribution, language, religion, belief (*Weltanschauung*), disability, chronic illness, age, sexual identity, gender identity, social status

Civil/administrative/criminal law: Civil and administrative law

Material scope: Public administration and all public bodies in *Land* Berlin

Principal content: prohibition of discrimination, damages

ANNEX 2: INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

Country: Germany

Date: 31 December 2020

Instrument	Date of signature	Date of ratification	Derogation s/ reservation s relevant to equality and non-discrimination	Right of individual petition accepted?	Can this instrument be directly relied upon in domestic courts by individuals?
European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)	04/11/1950	05/12/1952	N/A	N/A	Yes
Protocol 12, ECHR	04/11/2000	Not ratified	N/A	N/A	N/A
Revised European Social Charter	29/06/2007	Not ratified	N/A	Ratified collective complaints protocol? Not ratified	N/A
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	09/10/1968	17/12/1973	N/A	Yes	No
Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	11/05/1995	10/09/1997	N/A	N/A	No
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	09/10/1968	17/12/1973	N/A	No	No
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	10/02/1967	16/05/1969	N/A	Yes	No

Instrument	Date of signature	Date of ratification	Derogations/ reservations relevant to equality and non-discrimination	Right of individual petition accepted?	Can this instrument be directly relied upon in domestic courts by individuals?
ILO Convention No. 111 on Discrimination	25/06/1958	15/06/1961	N/A	N/A	No
Convention on the Rights of the Child	26/01/1990	06/03/1992	N/A	Yes	No
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	30/03/2007	24/02/2009	N/A	Yes	No

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