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German Nationality

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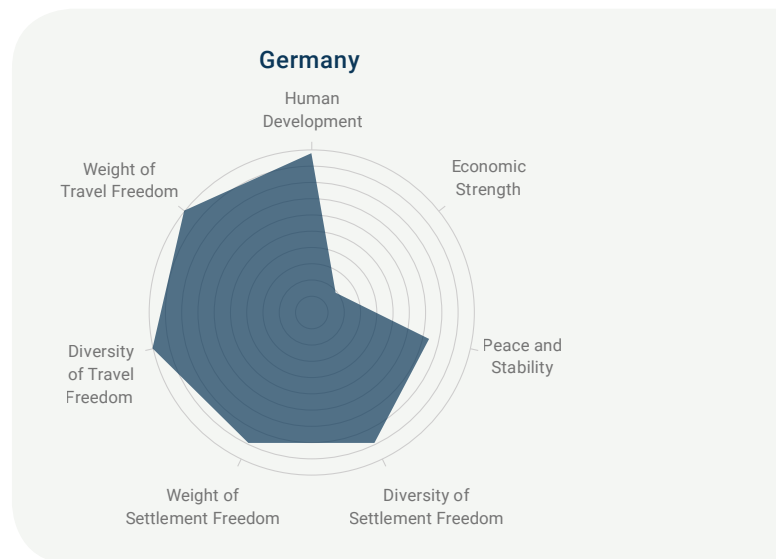
German Nationality



By Daniel Thym
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Germany is the incumbent at the 2018 FIFA World Cup, and its nationality is the second most valuable in the 2017 edition of the QNI, only 0.1 percentage point behind France, after having topped the Index in previous years. These results are not interrelated, of course, but they hint nonetheless at an underlying reason for the German passport being so 'valuable': Germany is an important player in many fields, including economics, politics, football, and tourism, and has a comparatively good reputation across the globe. Yet closer inspection of the QNI data demonstrates that it is not primarily the external factors (Diversity and Weight of Settlement Freedom and Travel Freedom) but rather the internal parameters (Human Development, Economic Strength, and Peace and Stability) that explain why Germany ranks highly, besides the colonial heritage boosting the value of the US and many European nationalities, as Prof. Platon explains. The *external* value ranking gives the German passport a value that is more or less equal to several other European states, including France, the Nordic countries, Italy, Spain, and the Benelux countries. It is, in other words, the *internal* factors that define Germany's success. In that respect, Germany's lead is very much the result of its overall economic prosperity, internal stability, and functioning welfare state, which underlie its good internal results (even though there is only a marginal difference between Germany and its neighbor to the west and north, and you may well arrive at a different result by using different datasets).



While the appeal of the German passport may appear obvious for many readers across the globe, it is not self-evident from a domestic perspective. Opinion polls have revealed regularly over the years that Germans may be confident about their economic situation, but they fear terrorism and are concerned about migration and the state of the education system. In the pan-European

Eurobarometer opinion poll of autumn 2017, no fewer than 40% of all Germans responded that, in general, things were *not* going in the right direction. It may be a typical German trait to be pessimistic about the future, but it indicates, nonetheless, that from the perspective of those living there, things may not be as rosy as statistical indicators alone suggest – even in a country with a high standard of living. Life in Germany is not necessarily defined by happiness.

Nationality	Ranking 2012	Ranking 2013	Ranking 2014	Ranking 2015	Ranking 2016	Ranking 2017
Germany	1	1	1	1	1	2

When it comes to the QNI's external value ranking, Germany may not be in the lead, but, again, there is only a marginal difference between it and the other European countries mentioned above. One reason explaining these countries' collective success is the European integration project. The EU alone has 28 member states (including, for the time being, the UK), and many neighboring countries are associated with its freedom of settlement and travel regime. The continental arrangements in Europe are one reason European countries have such a good external ranking. There is a noteworthy distinction between settlement and travel: while Germany tops the Travel Freedom ranking, it is among the least successful European states when it comes to settlement. How can we possibly explain that cleavage?

Explaining Germany's success in the Travel Freedom ranking is comparatively straightforward. It has to do with Germany's good reputation, mentioned at the outset. German history may be full of dark episodes, including, of course, the Holocaust and the Second World War, but the country has generally behaved benevolently towards other countries ever since. It is a sponsor of European integration, refrains from using its military abroad, and supports peace and dialogue worldwide. It has, in other words, tried to make as many friends as possible over the past decades. This strategy need not have been motivated by altruistic motives alone, since it also serves Germany's self-interest. The excellent state of the German economy, which, as explained above, underlies Germany's success in the QNI ranking, relies heavily on exports (Germans are terribly proud of the 'Made in Germany' label) – and these exports go to countries around the globe. German companies export diverse products and services, and they are, moreover, investing heavily in subsidiaries abroad. German foreign direct investment is among the largest in the world. Germans also love traveling and enjoy visiting far-flung places. As a result, countries across the globe are eager to guarantee smooth travel for German nationals, for both economic purposes and leisure, which explains why Germany tops the travel ranking.

But how to explain Germany's relatively poor result in the Settlement Freedom ranking in comparison to other European states? One reason may be reciprocity. Countries will be more willing to allow nationals of another state to settle if that state grants the same right to its nationals. Indeed, Germany has traditionally been quite reluctant when it comes to migration, despite its global economic outlook. German politicians have traditionally defined the country as a 'non-immigration country', and it took the German public 20 years to accept that former guest workers would not return home. Things may be changing, but the pace and direction of the adjustment remain politically contested. Many readers will remember Germany's open-door policy towards refugees during 2015–2016, but migration has become a highly controversial topic domestically ever since. Although political developments are diverse, the essence of recent policy initiatives is that Germany accepts that it will be a destination country for migrants in the future, but it wants to have a greater say in who comes into the country. On that basis, politicians are moving towards facilitating the economic migration of those who have a job offer in Germany and meet certain

education or income criteria. In addition, most politicians favor the proactive resettlement of refugees from third countries over asylum seekers who arrive irregularly via the Mediterranean. Germany will, in the future, allow more nationals of other countries to settle there, but admission will remain highly selective based on standards defined as appropriate on the basis of economic or humanitarian considerations in domestic law.

These policy developments may not directly affect the German QNI ranking, but they will have repercussions for the value of other countries' passports, considering that Germany is an important player at the level of the EU, which makes important decisions about free access to the Schengen Area as well as migration and asylum these days. The new tendency towards selecting those who enter for economic or humanitarian reasons implies that Germany and other European countries will no longer offer generalized free travel or resettlement regimes for countries outside the European continent as a matter of course. Instead, they will propose selective migration channels. Even if visa requirements are abandoned for travel to the Schengen Area, such liberalization will be combined with policy initiatives, such as technical standards for passports, that make it easier for European countries to apply their rules regarding entry and stay within the framework of visa-free travel. Such initiatives include combined visa facilitation and readmission agreements, which make visa-free travel conditional upon enhanced migration control capacities. As a result, the future of travel to, and settlement in, Germany and Europe may be more selective than the old tradition of (not) having visa requirements. Europe is at the forefront of what social theorist Zygmunt Bauman calls 'liquid modernity': states combining smooth travel for the happy few nationals of diverse states with enhanced and technology-based restrictions for those they would prefer to stay at home.

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