Muslim Community Life in Germany

on behalf of the German Islam Conference

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Summary

Key results of the two studies “Angebote und Strukturen der islamischen Organisationen in Deutschland” (“Activity offers and structures of Muslim organisations in Germany”) and “Islamische Religionsbedienstete in Deutschland” (“Muslim religious officials in Germany”)

I. Introductory remarks to the two studies

Muslim communities and their religious officials play an important role for the integration of Muslims in Germany.

Muslim communities and their religious officials play a key role in promoting the integration of Muslims in Germany. In fact, religious organisations are the type of communities which is most frequently attended by Muslim migrants and their relatives. Religious officials in these communities act as multipliers. Due to their position as religious authority figures they are usually trusted by the community members. At the same time they often represent their community in public and are important points of contact for members of the host society. Nevertheless, not much is known about Mosque or Alevitic communities in Germany or about the imams and Alevitic dedes who work there.
At its plenary meeting, the German Islam Conference underlined the importance of reliable, valid data on Muslim organisations and religious officials in Germany as a whole.

The two studies “Angebote und Strukturen der islamischen Organisationen in Deutschland” (“Activity offers and structures of Muslim organisations in Germany”) and “Islamische Religionsbedienstete in Deutschland” (“Muslim religious officials in Germany”) were prepared in order to provide comprehensive data on Muslim communities and Muslim religious officials in Germany for the first time ever. At its plenary session, the German Islam Conference (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, DIK) emphasised how important reliable data for Germany as a whole are for the development of an Islam-related integration policy, for example for the preparation of target-group-oriented training activities for religious officials or other players within the communities. The two studies are closely linked in terms of content and methodology, but were conducted independently of each other. The study “Angebote und Strukturen der islamischen Organisationen in Deutschland” (“Activity offers and structures of Muslim organisations in Germany”) was developed and evaluated by the foundation Zentrum für Türkeistudien und Integrationsforschung (ZfTI; centre for Turkish studies and integration research). It was supported by the European Integration Fund (EIF) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF). The study “Islamische Religionsbedienstete in Deutschland” (“Muslim religious officials in Germany”) was supported by the DIK and conducted by the BAMF.

II. Key results of the study “Angebote und Strukturen der islamischen Organisationen in Deutschland” (“Activity offers and structures of Muslim organisations in Germany”)

First nationwide study on Muslim organisations

The Zentrum für Türkeistudien und Integrationsforschung (ZfTI; centre for Turkish studies and integration research) at the University of Duisburg-Essen has conducted the first nationwide study on the offers and organisational structures of Muslim and Alevitic communities in Germany. Based on a survey of 1,141 religious organisations (i.e. roughly half the Muslim communities in Germany), it draws conclusions about the communities’ contributions to social integration and their importance for Muslim life in Germany.

Roughly 2,350 Muslim communities (including Alevitic communities) in Germany

Based on the survey results, the study concludes that there are 2,342 Muslim (including Alevitic) communities in Germany which offer rooms for prayer.

While Turkish members predominate, community members come from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds

In view of the structure of the Muslim population in Germany, it is no surprise that Turkish members are the predominant group in most communities. At the same time there are also attendants from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
Broad range of activity offers

Most communities do not only offer religious services, but also a broad range of activities. Many of these activities aim to provide orientation in German society (for example advice on social, education and healthcare issues, homework support). There is no competition between religious and non-religious activities. The broader the range of religious activities, the broader is the range of non-religious activities, too. Almost one-third of the communities offer German language courses for teenagers. Generally speaking, women are underrepresented in terms of participation in community activities. This applies more to religious services than to non-religious activities. In Alevitic communities women tend to be more equally involved in all activities.

Resources of the communities determine range of activities

The resources of the communities (e.g. different departments, rooms, real estate) are the key factor for the range of activities offered by the organisations. They determine the range of both religious and social/integration-oriented activities. Cross-sectoral activities are rare and also depend on the available resources.
Organisations are changing
In about half the communities the leaders and/or the majority of the attendants are already born in Germany. In this respect the differences between individual religious factions and Muslim associations are small. 39% of the communities plan construction projects.

Chart 3: Majority of attendants born in Germany; community leaders born in Germany in %

III. Key results of the study “Islamische Religionsbedienstete in Deutschland” (“Muslim religious officials in Germany”)

First nationwide study on Muslim religious officials in Germany
The study “Islamische Religionsbedienstete in Deutschland” (IREB; “Muslim religious officials in Germany”) by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees provides the first reliable results which give a comprehensive overview of the migration histories, the education, the areas of activity and the training interests of imams and Alevitic dedes in Germany. It is based on interviews with 821 Muslim religious officials who work in 835 mosques and Alevitic communities.

Number of Muslim religious officials in Germany
According to calculations based on the IREB survey, 1,700 to 2,500 Muslim religious officials regularly work in a mosque or Alevitic community. This total also includes roughly 60 dedes. This is in line with the number of 2,179 Muslim communities that employ a religious official, which is derived from the study on Muslim organisations; this figure is in the middle of the range calculated above. It should be noted that the number of Muslim religious officials in Germany fluctuates.

Heterogeneous ethnic and religious background
Imams are of heterogeneous ethnic origin, as Islam is a world-wide religion. According to the calculation, imams with a Turkish background predominate in Germany; their share amounts to 80%. Dedes, in contrast, are of largely homogeneous origin due to the history of the Alevitic faith. All surveyed dedes come from Turkey. A clear majority of Muslim religious officials (93%) are Sunnis. However, besides Alevitic dedes, there are also Shiite imams, Ahmadiyya members and Sufis/mystics in Muslim communities in Germany.

Types of communities in Germany
According to the calculation, almost two-thirds of all Muslim religious officials work in a community which belongs to one of the three large Turkish religious associations: the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB), the Islamic Community Millî Görüs (ICMG) or the Verband der islamischen Kulturzentren (VIKZ, Association of Islamic Cultural Centres). That means that one out
of three Muslim religious officials works in a community which is not represented by one of the three large Turkish associations. Their communities belong to smaller associations or none at all. About 4% of the Muslim religious officials are Alevitic dedes.

Majority of religious officials are immigrants who often stay in Germany for a limited time

Almost all Muslim religious officials are immigrants themselves. There are only a few with or without a migration background who have grown up in Germany, with most of these religious officials being VIKZ imams or Alevitic dedes. In many Muslim communities the religious officials’ employment contracts are for an unlimited period of time. Time-limited contracts for imams from abroad are particularly common in DITIB and IGMG communities. Two models are common: imams with longer-term contracts of several years and so-called “three-month imams” who stay in Germany for a very short time.

Deficits in terms of language skills

The study shows that there are problems in terms of German language skills. Muslim religious officials rate their knowledge of German considerably worse than the overall Muslim population in Germany. This is due to the fact that many of the surveyed officials have been living in Germany for a comparatively short time.
High level of education of Muslim religious officials

The religious officials in Germany have attained comparatively high levels of education; a majority has obtained an A-level equivalent, usually in their country of origin. Moreover, most Muslim religious officials in Germany have undergone some kind of theological training in preparation for their service. They have often attended a religious grammar school, college or private education centre outside a university. Many religious officials have read Islamic theology or Islamic studies, usually at a foreign university.

Chart 6: Muslim religious officials by theological training (in %)

- 20.2% No theological training
- 34.7% Studies in Islamic theology/Islamic studies
- 45.1% Religious training/grammar school

Widespread voluntary, non-profit commitment

The broad range of activities of Muslim communities in Germany is supported by widespread voluntary, non-profit commitment. In Alevitic communities religious tasks are taken on exclusively on a voluntary, non-profit basis. In IGMG mosques as well as other communities, be they dominated by attendants of Turkish or non-Turkish origin, the number of voluntary non-profit religious officials is high as well, amounting to about 50% of the total. In contrast to that, a clear majority of imams in DITIB and VIKZ mosques are professionals.

Ethnically heterogeneous attendants

A key challenge, in particular for imams, is that attendants at mosques in Germany come from different countries of origin. While imams often have the same migration background as most attendants, their mosques will often be attended by people from other ethnic backgrounds as well. That means that many imams have to integrate attendants with different linguistic and cultural roots in their communities.

Authority figures and multipliers with a large range of tasks

In addition to their traditional religious tasks, Muslim religious officials usually take on other tasks in their communities, for example in the social area or in public relations. As a result, their working hours are high.

Interest in training and education

Religious officials are highly interested in training and education. In particular, they are interested in social, advisory and pastoral issues.
Muslim religious officials largely represent dialogue-oriented factions

Contrary to public perceptions, the results of the IREB study suggest that the Muslim religious officials in Germany largely belong to dialogue-oriented Muslim factions. Their high participation in the survey already is an indicator for that hypothesis. In addition, they are very active in public relations work. The introduction of Muslim religious education lessons in state schools is not regarded as competition in terms of teaching children and teenagers about religion; rather, a large majority of the religious officials supports it, just like the training of Muslim religious education teachers at German universities. High interest in training by German educational centres and universities points to a large degree of openness, too.