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Nationality Act

Nationality Act of 22 July 1913 (Reich Law Gazette I p. 583 - Federal Law Gazette III 102-1),
as last amended by Article 1 of the Act of 20 November 2019 (Federal Law Gazette I p.
1626)

Section 1 [Definition of a German]¹

A German within the meaning of this Act is a person who possesses German citizenship.

Footnote 1: Headings in square brackets are not official headings.

Section 2 (repealed)

Section 3 [Acquisition of citizenship]

(1) Citizenship is acquired

1. by birth (Section 4),
2. by a declaration pursuant to Section 5,
3. by adoption as a child (Section 6),
4. by issuance of the certificate pursuant to Section 15 (1) or (2) of the Federal Expellees Act (Section 7) (*Bundesvertriebenengesetz*),
- 4a. for Germans without German citizenship within the meaning of Article 116 (1) of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) under the procedure laid down in Section 40a,
5. for a foreigner by naturalization (Sections 8 to 16, 40b and 40c).

(2) German citizenship is also acquired by any person who has been treated by German public authorities as a German national for 12 years due to circumstances beyond his or her control. In particular, any person who has been issued a certificate of nationality, a passport or a national identity card is treated as a German national. Acquisition of citizenship applies as of the date when the person was deemed to have acquired German citizenship by treating him or her as a German national. The acquisition of German citizenship extends to those descendants who derive their status as Germans from the beneficiary as defined in sentence 1.

Section 4 [Acquisition by birth]

(1) A child acquires German citizenship by birth if one parent possesses German citizenship. Where at the time of the birth only the father is a German national, and where for proof of descent under German law recognition or determination of paternity is necessary, acquisition is dependent on recognition or determination of paternity with legal effect under German law; the declaration of recognition must be submitted or the procedure for determination must have commenced before the child reaches the age of 23.

(2) A child found on German territory (foundling) is deemed to be the child of a German until proved otherwise. Sentence 1 applies accordingly to a child born to a mother under condition of anonymity in accordance with Section 25 (1) of the Act to Prevent and Resolve Conflicts in Pregnancy (*Schwangerschaftskonfliktgesetz*).

(3) A child of foreign parents acquires German citizenship by birth in Germany if one parent

1. has been legally ordinarily resident in Germany for eight years and
2. has been granted a permanent right of residence or as a national of Switzerland or as a family member of a national of Switzerland possesses a residence permit on the basis of the Agreement of 21 June 1999 between the European Community and its Member States on the one hand and the Swiss Confederation on the other hand on the free movement of persons (Federal Law Gazette 2001 II p. 810).

The acquisition of German citizenship is to be recorded by the registrar responsible for certifying the child's birth. The Federal Ministry of the Interior, with the consent of the Bundesrat, is authorized to issue statutory instruments concerning the procedure for recording the acquisition of citizenship pursuant to sentence 1 by way of ordinance.

(4) German citizenship is not acquired in accordance with subsection 1 in case of birth abroad if the German parent was born abroad after 31 December 1999 and is ordinarily resident abroad, unless the child would otherwise become stateless. The legal consequence pursuant to sentence 1 does not ensue if within a year after the child's birth an application for certification of the birth under Section 36 of the Civil Status Act (*Personenstandsgesetz*) is filed; to observe this deadline it is sufficient if the application is received within the above deadline by the competent diplomatic mission. Where both parents are German nationals, the legal consequences pursuant to sentence 1 ensue only if they both fulfil the conditions stipulated therein.

Section 5

[Right of declaration for children born before 1 July 1993]

By declaring a wish to become a German national, a child born before 1 July 1993 of a German father and a foreign mother acquires German citizenship if

1. paternity has been recognized or determined with legal effect under German law,
2. the child has been legally ordinarily resident in the federal territory for three years and
3. the declaration is submitted prior to the child's 23rd birthday.

Section 6

[Acquisition by adoption as a child]

A child younger than 18 years of age at the time of application for adoption acquires citizenship as a result of valid adoption by a German under German law. The acquisition of citizenship extends to the child's descendants.

Section 7

[Acquisition by issuance of the certificate pursuant to Section 15 (1) or (2) of the Federal Expellees Act]

Repatriates of German ancestry and their family members included in the admission notice acquire German citizenship when they are issued a repatriates certificate in accordance with Section 15 (1) or (2) of the Federal Expellees Act.

Section 8

[Discretionary naturalization]

(1) A foreigner who is legally ordinarily resident in Germany may be naturalized upon application if his or identity and nationality have been established and he or she

1. possesses legal capacity as defined in Section 37 (1) sentence 1 or has a legal representative,
2. has not been sentenced for an unlawful act and is not subject to any court order imposing a measure of reform and prevention due to a lack of criminal capacity,
3. has found a dwelling of his or her own or accommodation and
4. is able to support himself or herself and his or her dependants and

it is guaranteed that he or she accepts German social norms.

(2) The requirements stipulated in subsection 1 sentence 1 nos. 2 and 4 may be waived on grounds of public interest or in order to avoid special hardship.

Section 9

[Naturalization of spouses or life partners of Germans]

(1) As a rule, spouses or life partners of Germans must be naturalized in keeping with the requirements set out in Section 8 if they lose or give up their previous citizenship or if there is a reason for accepting multiple nationality in accordance with Section 12, unless they do not have sufficient command of the German language (Section 10 (1) sentence 1 no. 6 and (4) and do not fulfil any condition that would justify an exception under Section 10 (6).

(2) The provision in subsection 1 also applies if the spouse or life partner applies for naturalization within one year of the German spouse's death or of a ruling dissolving the marriage becoming final and the applicant is entitled to custody of a child issuing from the marriage who already possesses German citizenship.

(3) (repealed)

Section 10

[Entitlement to naturalization;

derivative naturalization of spouses and minor children]

(1) A foreigner who has been legally ordinarily resident in Germany for eight years and possesses legal capacity as defined in Section 37 (1) sentence 1 or has a legal representative must be naturalized upon application if his or her identity and citizenship have been established and he or she

1. confirms his or her commitment to the free democratic constitutional system enshrined in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany and declares that he or she does not pursue or support and has never pursued or supported any activities
 - a) aimed at subverting the free democratic constitutional system, the existence or security of the Federation or a *Land* or
 - b) aimed at illegally impeding the constitutional bodies of the Federation or a *Land* or the members of said bodies in discharging their duties or
 - c) jeopardizing foreign interests of the Federal Republic of Germany through the use of violence or preparatory actions for the use of violence

or credibly asserts that he or she has distanced him- or herself from the former pursuit or support of such activities,

2. has been granted a permanent right of residence or as a national of Switzerland or as a family member of a national of Switzerland possesses a residence permit on the basis of the Agreement of 21 June 1999 between the European Community and its Member

States on the one hand and the Swiss Confederation on the other hand on the free movement of persons or possesses an EU Blue Card or a residence permit for purposes other than those specified in Sections 16, 17, 17a, 20, 22, 23 (1), 23a, 24 and 25 (3) to (5) of the Residence Act,

3. is able to support him- or herself and his or her dependants without recourse to benefits in accordance with Book Two or Book Twelve of the Social Code, or if recourse to such benefits is due to conditions beyond his or her control,

4. gives up or loses his or her previous citizenship,

5. has not been sentenced for an unlawful act and is not subject to any court order imposing a measure of reform and prevention due to a lack of criminal capacity,

6. has sufficient command of the German language,

7. possesses knowledge of the legal system, society and living conditions in the Federal Republic of Germany, and

it is guaranteed that he or she accepts German social norms, in particular the prohibition on polygamous marriages. The conditions under sentence 1 nos. 1 and 7 do not apply to foreigners who do not have legal capacity as defined in Section 37 sentence 1.

(2) The foreigner's spouse and minor children may be naturalized together with the foreigner in accordance with subsection 1, irrespective of whether they have been lawfully resident in Germany for eight years.

(3) If a foreigner confirms the successful completion of an integration course by presenting a certificate issued by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the qualifying period stipulated in subsection 1 is reduced to seven years. This qualifying period may be reduced to six years if the foreigner has made outstanding efforts at integration, especially if he or she can demonstrate a command of the German language which exceeds the requirements of subsection 1 sentence 1 no. 6.

(4) The conditions specified in subsection 1 sentence 1 no. 6 are fulfilled if the foreigner passes the oral and written language examinations leading to the *Zertifikat Deutsch* (equivalent of level B 1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Where a minor child is under 16 years of age at the time of naturalization the conditions of subsection 1 sentence 1 no. 6 are fulfilled if the child demonstrates age-appropriate language skills.

(5) As a rule, the conditions specified in subsection 1 sentence 1 no. 7 are fulfilled if the foreigner has passed the naturalization test. To prepare for the test, foreigners may participate in voluntary integration courses.

(6) The requirements of subsection 1 sentence 1 nos. 6 and 7 are waived if the foreigner is unable to fulfil them on account of a physical or mental illness or disability or on account of his or her age.

(7) The Federal Ministry of the Interior is authorized to issue statutory instruments not needing approval by the Bundesrat which define the test and certification requirements as well as the basic structure and content of the naturalization courses under subsection 5, based on the contents of the orientation course under Section 43 (3) sentence 1 of the Residence Act (*Aufenthaltsgesetz*).

Section 11 **[Grounds for exclusion]**

Naturalization is not allowed

1. if there are concrete grounds to assume that the foreigner is pursuing or supporting or has pursued or supported activities aimed at subverting the free democratic constitutional system, the existence or security of the Federation or a *Land* or at illegally impeding the constitutional bodies of the Federation or a *Land* or the members of said bodies in

discharging their duties, or any activities which jeopardize foreign interests of the Federal Republic of Germany through the use of violence or preparatory actions for the use of violence, unless he or she credibly asserts that he or she has distanced himself or herself from the former pursuit or support of such activities, or

2. if there is a particularly serious interest in expelling the foreigner in compliance with Section 54 (1) nos. 2 or 4 of the Residence Act.

Sentence 1 no. 2 applies accordingly to foreigners within the meaning of Section 1 (2) of the Residence Act and also to nationals of Switzerland and their family members possessing a residence permit on the basis of the Agreement of 21 June 1999 between the European Community and its Member States on the one hand and the Swiss Confederation on the other hand on the free movement of persons.

Section 12

[Naturalization accepting multiple nationality]

(1) The condition stipulated in Section 10 (1) sentence 1 no. 4 is waived if the foreigner is unable to give up his or her previous citizenship, or can do so only under very difficult conditions. This is to be assumed if

1. the law of the foreign state makes no provision for giving up its citizenship,
2. the foreign state regularly refuses to grant release from citizenship,
3. the foreign state has refused to grant release from citizenship for reasons beyond the foreigner's control, or attaches unreasonable conditions to release from citizenship or has failed to reach a decision within a reasonable time on the application for release from citizenship which has been submitted in due and complete form,
4. the subsequent multiple nationality represents the sole obstacle to the naturalization of older persons, the process for release from citizenship entails unreasonable difficulties and failure to grant naturalization would constitute special hardship,
5. in giving up his or her foreign citizenship the foreigner would incur substantial disadvantages beyond the loss of his or her civic rights, in particular disadvantages of a financial or property-related nature, or
6. the foreigner holds a travel document in accordance with Article 28 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951 (Federal Law Gazette 1953 II, p. 559).

(2) The condition stipulated in Section 10 (1) sentence 1 no. 4 is further waived if the foreigner holds the citizenship of another member state of the European Union or Switzerland.

(3) Further exemptions from the condition stipulated in Section 10 (1) sentence 1 no. 4 may be granted under the terms of agreements under international law.

Section 12a

[Decision in case of conviction for an offence]

(1) The following is not taken into consideration in the process of naturalization:

1. the imposition of educational or disciplinary measures under the Juvenile Court Act (*Jugendgerichtsgesetz*),
2. sentencing to fines of up to 90 day fines, and
3. the imposition of suspended sentences of up to three months' imprisonment which are waived after expiry of the probationary period.

Where more than one term of imprisonment or more than one fine as referred to in sentence 1 nos. 2 and 3 have been imposed, they are to be cumulated, unless doing so would result in a lesser punishment overall; where a fine and imprisonment are imposed simultaneously,

one day fine equals one day's imprisonment. If the punishment or the total of all punishments slightly exceeds the framework under the first two sentences, it is decided in the individual case whether it can be disregarded. Where a measure of reform and prevention under Section 61 no. 5 or 6 of the Criminal Code (*Strafgesetzbuch*) has been imposed, it will be decided in the individual case whether this measure of reform and prevention can be disregarded.

(2) Foreign convictions are to be considered if the offence concerned is to be regarded as punishable in Germany, the sentence has been passed in proceedings conducted in accordance with the rule of law and the sentence is commensurate. Such a conviction cannot be considered if its removal from the records would be required in accordance with the Federal Central Criminal Register Act (*Bundeszentralregistergesetz*). Subsection 1 applies accordingly.

(3) If a foreigner who has applied for naturalization is under investigation on suspicion of having committed an offence, the decision on naturalization is to be deferred until conclusion of the proceedings, and in the case of conviction until the judgment becomes unappealable. The same applies if the imposition of youth custody is suspended pursuant to Section 27 of the Juvenile Court Act.

(4) Convictions abroad and criminal investigations and proceedings which are pending abroad must be stated in the application for naturalization.

Section 12b

[Interruptions of residence]

(1) Ordinary residence in Germany is not considered interrupted by stays abroad of up to six months. In case of longer stays abroad, ordinary residence in Germany is deemed to continue if the foreigner re-enters the federal territory within the deadline stipulated by the foreigners authority. The same applies if the deadline is exceeded solely on account of the foreigner carrying out statutory military service in his or her country of origin and the foreigner re-enters the federal territory within three months of discharge from military or community service.

(2) If the foreigner has resided abroad for more than six months for a reason of a non-temporary nature, the previous period of residence in Germany may be counted towards the duration of residence which is necessary for the purposes of naturalization, up to a period of five years.

(3) Interruptions in the lawfulness of residence are disregarded if they arise as a result of the foreigner having failed to apply in good time for initial issuance or subsequent extension of the residence title.

Section 13

[Discretionary naturalization of former Germans abroad]

A former German and his or her minor children who are ordinarily resident abroad may be naturalized on application if their identities and nationalities have been established and they meet the requirements of Section 8 (1) nos. 1 and 2.

Section 14

[General discretionary naturalization abroad]

A foreigner who is ordinarily resident abroad may be naturalized subject to the other conditions of Sections 8 and 9 if ties with Germany exist which justify naturalization.

Section 15

(repealed)

Section 16

[Certificate of naturalization]

Naturalization becomes effective upon delivery of the certificate of naturalization issued by the competent administrative authority. Before the certificate is handed over to the foreigner he or she must make the following solemn statement: "I solemnly declare that I will respect

and observe the Basic Law and the laws of the Federal Republic of Germany, and that I will refrain from any activity which might cause it harm." Section 10 (1) sentence 2 applies accordingly.

Section 17
[Loss of citizenship]

(1) Citizenship is lost

1. by release from citizenship (Sections 18 to 24),
2. by acquisition of a foreign citizenship (Section 25),
3. by renunciation (Section 26),
4. by adoption as a child by a foreigner (Section 27),
5. as a result of joining the armed forces or a comparable armed organization of a foreign state or as a result of actively participating in fighting by a terror organization abroad (Section 28)
6. by a declaration (Section 29) or
7. by revocation of an unlawful administrative act (Section 35).

(2) Loss of citizenship pursuant to subsection 1 no. 7 does not affect German citizenship of third persons acquired by law, if they have reached the age of five.

(3) Subsection 2 applies accordingly to decisions pursuant to other acts which would result in the retroactive loss of German citizenship of third persons, in particular in the case of withdrawal of a settlement permit under Section 51 (1) no. 3 of the Residence Act, in the case of withdrawal of a certificate under Section 15 of the Federal Expellees Act and where non-existence of paternity is determined in accordance with Section 1599 of the Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*). Sentence 1 does not apply if paternity is contested pursuant to Section 1600 (1) no. 5 and (3) of the Civil Code.

Section 18
[Release from citizenship]

A German is released from citizenship upon application if he or she has applied for foreign citizenship and the competent body has furnished an assurance that such citizenship will be granted.

Section 19
[Release from citizenship of a person in parental custody or in the care of a guardian]

(1) Application for the release from citizenship of a person in parental custody or in the care of a guardian may be filed by the legal representative only and requires approval from the German family court.

(2) The approval of the family court is not required where the father or mother applies for release from citizenship for himself or herself and for a child at the same time by virtue of the right of custody and the applicant is entitled to custody for the child concerned.

Sections 20 and 21
(repealed)

Section 22
[Refusal of release from citizenship]

Release from citizenship may not be granted to:

1. civil servants, judges, members of the Bundeswehr and other persons employed in a service or official capacity under public law, for as long as they remain employed in said service or official capacity, with the exception of persons employed in an honorary capacity;

2. persons liable for military service, until the Federal Ministry of Defence or a body designated by the said Ministry has confirmed that no reservations exist regarding release from citizenship.

Section 23

[Certificate of release]

Release from citizenship becomes effective upon delivery of the certificate of release from citizenship issued by the competent administrative authority.

Section 24

[Invalidity of release from citizenship]

The release from citizenship is deemed to be null and void if the released person fails to acquire the foreign citizenship of which he or she was assured within one year of delivery of the certificate of release.

Section 25

[Loss of citizenship when acquiring a foreign citizenship upon application; permission to retain German citizenship]

(1) A German loses his or her citizenship upon acquiring foreign citizenship where such acquisition results from an application filed by the German concerned or his or her legal representative, whereas the represented person suffers such loss only if the qualifying conditions for application for release from citizenship apply as stipulated in Section 19. The loss under sentence 1 does not take effect if a German acquires the citizenship of another member state of the European Union, of Switzerland or of a state with which the Federal Republic of Germany has signed a treaty under Section 12 (3).

(2) Citizenship is not lost by any person who, prior to acquiring foreign citizenship following their application for the same, received written approval from their competent authority for retention of their citizenship. Where an applicant is ordinarily resident abroad, the German diplomatic mission abroad is to be consulted. The public and private interests are to be weighed up in reaching the decision on an application pursuant to sentence 1. With regard to an applicant who is ordinarily resident abroad, special consideration is to be accorded to the question of whether he or she is able to furnish credible evidence of continuing ties to Germany.

(3) (repealed)

Section 26

[Renunciation]

(1) A German may renounce his or her citizenship if he or she possesses multiple citizenships. Such a renunciation must be declared in writing.

(2) The written renunciation requires the approval of the authority competent to issue the certificate of release under Section 23. Such approval is to be withheld if release may not be granted under Section 22; this does not apply, however, if the person renouncing citizenship

1. has been permanently resident abroad for at least ten years or

2. has performed military service in one of the states whose citizenship he holds as a person liable for military service within the meaning of Section 22, no. 2.

(3) The loss of citizenship takes effect upon delivery of the certificate of renunciation issued by the approving authority.

(4) Section 19 applies accordingly to minors.

Section 27

[Loss of citizenship on adoption by a foreigner]

A German under the age of majority loses his or her citizenship as a result of adoption by a foreigner in accordance with German law, if he or she acquires the adopting person's citizenship by virtue of such adoption. The loss of citizenship extends to his or her

descendants where the acquisition of citizenship by the adoptee as referred to in sentence 1 also extends to the descendants. The loss pursuant to sentence 1 or 2 does not take effect if the adoptee or his or her descendants maintain a legal relation to their German parent.

Section 28

[Loss of citizenship as a result of joining the armed forces or a comparable armed organization of a foreign state]

(1) A German

1. who, without the consent of the Federal Ministry of Defence or a body designated by the said Ministry, voluntarily enlists with the armed forces or a comparable armed organization of a foreign state whose citizenship he or she possesses or
2. who actively participates in fighting by a terror organization abroad

loses German citizenship unless he or she would otherwise become stateless.

(2) The loss referred to in subsection 1 does not take effect

1. if the German is still a minor or
2. in cases covered by subsection 1 no. 1 if he or she is entitled, on the basis of a bilateral treaty, to join the armed forces or armed organization.

(3) In the cases covered by subsection 1 no. 2, loss of citizenship is to be established ex officio under Section 30 (1) sentence 3. For all Germans who are ordinarily resident in Germany, this assessment is made by the supreme *Land* authority or the authority designated by it under *Land* law. If the person concerned is still abroad, the assessment that he or she has lost German citizenship is not contestable; any legal actions have no suspensory effect.

Section 29

[Declaration]

(1) The following persons are required to declare whether they wish to retain their German or foreign citizenship:

1. persons who have acquired German citizenship under Section 4 (3) or Section 40b,
2. persons who did not grow up in Germany as defined in subsection 1 a,
3. persons having a foreign citizenship other than that of another European Union member state or Switzerland, and
4. persons who within a year of their 21st birthday have been notified of the requirement to declare in accordance with subsection 5 sentence 5.

Persons required to declare must declare after their 21st birthday whether they wish to retain their German or their foreign citizenship. The declaration must be submitted in writing.

(1a) A German as defined in subsection 1 is regarded as having grown up in Germany if, by his or her 21st birthday, he or she

1. has normally resided in Germany for eight years,
2. has attended school in Germany for six years, or
3. has completed school or occupational training in Germany.

Persons having a similarly close relation to Germany in the individual case and for whom having to declare would represent a special hardship under the circumstances of the case are also regarded as having grown up in Germany as defined in sentence 1.

(2) If the German required to declare as defined in subsection 1 declares a wish to retain the foreign citizenship, German citizenship is lost when the competent authority receives the declaration.

(3) If the German as defined in subsection 1 declares a wish to retain German citizenship, he or she is required to furnish proof that he or she has given up or lost the foreign citizenship. If the loss of the foreign citizenship does not go into effect within two years of notification of the requirement to declare in accordance with subsection 5, German citizenship is lost, unless the German as defined in subsection 1 received prior written approval from the competent authority to retain German citizenship (permission to retain German citizenship). The application for permission to retain German citizenship, including as a precautionary measure, may only be filed within one year of notification of the requirement to declare under subsection 5. The loss of German citizenship does not take effect until the rejection of the application becomes legally valid. The possibility of provisional legal redress pursuant to Section 123 of the Code of Administrative Procedure (*Verwaltungsgerichtsordnung*) remains unaffected.

(4) Permission to retain German citizenship referred to in subsection 3 is to be granted where renunciation or loss of the foreign citizenship is not possible or cannot reasonably be expected or where acceptance of multiple citizenship would be required in case of naturalization in accordance with Section 12.

(5) At the request of a German who acquired German citizenship in accordance with Section 4 (3) or Section 40b, the competent authority establishes the continuation of German citizenship in accordance with subsection 6 if the necessary conditions are met. If the continuation of German citizenship has not been established by the German's 21st birthday, the competent authority uses the registration data to determine whether the conditions of subsection 1a sentence 1 no. 1 are met. If this is not possible to determine, the authority informs the person in question of the possibility to provide evidence that the conditions of subsection 1a have been met. If such evidence is provided, the competent authority establishes the continuation of German citizenship in accordance with subsection 6. If no evidence is provided, the competent authority is to notify the person in question of his or her obligations and the possible legal consequences referred to in subsections 2 to 4. This notification is to be formally served. The provisions of the Act on Service in Administrative Procedure (*Verwaltungszustellungsgesetz*) apply.

(6) The continuation or loss of German citizenship in accordance with this provision is to be determined ex officio. The Federal Ministry of the Interior may, by statutory instrument requiring the consent of the Bundesrat, issue provisions regulating the procedure to determine the continuation or loss of German citizenship.

Section 30

[Establishment of German citizenship]

(1) Possession or lack of German citizenship is established by the nationality authority upon application. The outcome of this assessment is binding in all matters for which possession or lack of German citizenship is of legal relevance. In the case of a public interest, possession of German citizenship or lack thereof may be established upon the competent authority's own motion.

(2) To establish possession of German citizenship it is required and sufficient to give reliable evidence that German citizenship was acquired and has not since been lost by furnishing documents, extracts from the population registers or other written evidence. Section 3 (2) remains unaffected.

(3) Where possession of German citizenship has been established upon application, the nationality authority issues a certificate of citizenship. Upon request, the nationality authority issues a certificate confirming lack of German citizenship.

Section 31

[Personal data]

Nationality authorities and diplomatic missions abroad may process personal data as far as necessary to discharge their duties under this Act and in accordance with provisions relating to nationality contained in other laws. Personal data the processing of which is prohibited under the terms of Article 9 (1) of 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 of 4.5.2016, p. 1; L 314 of 22.11.2016, p. 72; L 127 of 23.5.2018, p. 2) in their applicable versions may be processed if they were transmitted to the naturalization authorities by the authorities for the protection of the Constitution in accordance with Section 37 (2) sentence 2 to investigate grounds for exclusion as referred to in Section 11 or if processing is necessary in individual cases to discharge assigned duties. For decisions on the citizenship of persons specified in Article 116 (2) of the Basic Law, this also applies to data relating to the political, racial or religious reasons for which these persons were deprived of their German citizenship between 30 January 1933 and 8 May 1945.

Section 32

[Transmission of data to nationality authorities]

(1) Public bodies are to transmit personal data to the bodies specified in Section 31 upon request, insofar as knowledge of these data is necessary to discharge the duties referred to in Section 31. Public bodies are to transmit these data to the competent nationality authority even without a request if the public body considers such transmission to be necessary for the nationality authority to decide on a pending application for naturalization or loss or non-acquisition of German citizenship. With regard to naturalization procedures, this refers particularly to data relating to the initiation and execution of criminal proceedings, proceedings for the collection of fines, and extradition procedures of which the foreigners authorities became aware under Section 87 (4) of the Residence Act. The data referred to in sentence 3 are to be transmitted without delay to the competent nationality authority.

(2) Personal data are not transferred pursuant to subsection 1 if such transfer is precluded by special statutory regulations on the processing of the said data.

Section 33

[Register of decisions relating to nationality law]

(1) The Federal Office of Administration (registration authority) maintains a register of decisions relating to citizenship matters. The following items of information are entered into the register:

1. decisions on certificates of citizenship;
2. decisions on the possession and statutory loss of German citizenship;
3. decisions on the acquisition, possession and loss of German citizenship made between 31 December 1960 and 28 August 2007.

(2) More specifically, the following items of information may be stored in the register:

1. the basic personal data of the person concerned (surname, surname at birth, former surnames, given names, date and place of birth, sex, and the postal address at the date of the decision) and any blocks on releasing information pursuant to Section 51 of the Federal Act on Registration (*Bundesmeldegesetz*),
2. legal basis and date of the certificate or of the decision, and legal basis and date of the acquisition or loss of citizenship; in cases governed by Section 3 (2) also the date as of which the acquisition applies,
3. name, postal address and file reference of the authority which made the decision.

(3) The nationality authorities are required to immediately transmit to the registration authority all personal data referred to in subsection 2 relating to decisions made under subsection 1 sentence 2 nos. 1 and 2 after 28 August 2007.

(4) The registration authority transmits the data referred to in subsection 2 to the nationality authorities and diplomatic missions abroad upon their request insofar as knowledge of the

data is necessary to discharge their duties relating to nationality law. The provisions of the Federal Data Protection Act (Bundesdatenschutzgesetz) apply to the transmission to other public bodies or for research purposes. Information listed in subsection 1 may only be transmitted for research purposes in anonymized form or if the scientific interest in the research project significantly overrides the interest of the data subject in excluding the processing of his or her data.

(5) The nationality authority transmits the data specified in subsection 2 to the competent authority to which a person must report his or her current address or to the competent diplomatic mission abroad immediately after it has established that a person has been naturalized, retains German citizenship or has lost, renounced or never acquired German citizenship.

Section 34 **[Opting procedure]**

(1) To implement the opting procedure, in the cases of acquisition of German citizenship referred to in Section 4 (3) or Section 40b in which German citizenship may be lost under the terms of Section 29, the registration authority is to transmit, by the tenth day of each calendar month, to the competent nationality authority the following personal data relating to persons who will turn 21 in the following month:

1. surname,
2. previous names,
3. given names,
4. current and previous addresses and, in case of immigration from abroad, the last previous address in Germany,
5. date moved in, date moved out, date last moved out of a residence in Germany and date last moved to Germany from abroad,
6. date and place of birth,
7. sex,
8. current nationalities,
9. the fact that the person may lose German citizenship under Section 29,
10. any blocks on releasing information under Section 51 of the Federal Act on Registration.

(2) If a person referred to in subsection 1 has moved to a foreign country, the registration authority is to transfer the data specified in subsection 1, the date when the person moved abroad and the new address abroad, if known, to the Federal Office of Administration within the period specified in subsection 1. In case of immigration from abroad, sentence 1 applies accordingly.

Section 35

[Withdrawal of unlawful naturalization or permission to retain German citizenship]

(1) Any unlawful naturalization or permission to retain German citizenship may be withdrawn only if the administrative act was obtained under false pretences, by threat or bribery or by deliberately providing incorrect or incomplete information which determined the issuance of this administrative act.

(2) As a rule, subsequent statelessness of the person concerned does not preclude such withdrawal.

(3) Withdrawal is permitted only within ten years after notification of naturalization or permission to retain German citizenship.

(4) The administrative act is withdrawn with retroactive effect.

(5) If the withdrawal affects the lawfulness of administrative acts issued on the basis of this Act with regard to third persons, a discretionary decision on the merits of the individual case is to be taken for every person affected. In particular, involvement of the third person concerned in committing fraud, threat or bribery or in deliberately providing incorrect or incomplete information on the one hand, and his or her legitimate interests on the other, is to be weighed in reaching the decision, also taking particular account of the welfare of the child.

Section 36

[Naturalization statistics]

(1) Annual naturalization surveys are conducted for the purposes of federal statistics, beginning in 2000 and relating in each case to the previous calendar year.

(2) The surveys cover the following attributes for each naturalized person:

1. year of birth,
2. sex,
3. marital status,
4. place of residence at time of naturalization,
5. duration of residence in the federal territory in years,
6. legal basis for naturalization,
7. previous citizenships and
8. continuation of previous citizenships.

(3) Supplementary attributes covered in the survey are

1. designations and addresses of those obliged to furnish information under subsection 4,
2. names and telecommunication numbers of the persons available to answer queries and
3. registration number of the naturalized person at the naturalization authority.

(4) In respect of the surveys there is a duty to furnish information. This duty is incumbent on the naturalization authorities. The naturalization authorities furnish the information to the competent statistical offices of the *Länder* by 1 March each year. Provision of the information pertaining to subsection 3 no. 2 is voluntary.

(5) The Federal Statistical Office and statistical offices of the *Länder* may transmit tables containing statistical results, including where a field in a table only shows a single case, to the competent highest federal and *Land* authorities for use in dealings with the legislative bodies and for planning purposes, but not for measures pertaining to individual cases.

Section 37

[Procedural provisions]

(1) Anyone who is 16 years of age or older is capable of performing procedural actions pursuant to this Act, provided that he or she would not be legally incapacitated in accordance with the Civil Code or, on attaining majority, would not require supervision and prior approval in this matter. Section 80 (3) and Section 82 of the Residence Act apply accordingly.

(2) The naturalization authorities transmit the personal data which they have stored on applicants aged 16 or over to the authorities for the protection of the Constitution for the purpose of investigating grounds for exclusion in accordance with Section 11. The authorities for the protection of the Constitution notify the inquiring body without delay in accordance with the applicable special statutory provisions on the processing of the said data.

Section 38

[Fees]

(1) In the absence of any statutory provision to the contrary, official acts in citizenship matters are subject to costs (fees and expenses).

(2) The fee for naturalization under this Act is 255 euros. This fee is reduced to 51 euros for a minor child who is naturalized at the same time and who has no independent income within the meaning of the Income Tax Act (*Einkommenssteuergesetz*). No fee is charged for the acquisition of German citizenship under Section 5 or for the naturalization of former Germans who have lost their German citizenship as a result of marrying a foreigner. Establishing whether a person holds German citizenship under Section 29 (6) and Section 30 (1) sentence 3, as well as issuing a permit to retain German citizenship under Section 29 (4) are free of charge. The fee stipulated in sentence 1 may be reduced or waived on grounds of equity or public interest.

(3) The Federal Ministry of the Interior is authorized to determine the additional circumstances in which fees are payable and to make provision in respect of the levels of fees and the reimbursement of expenses via statutory instruments requiring the consent of the Bundesrat. The fee may not exceed 51 euros for release from citizenship, 255 euros for permission to retain German citizenship and 51 euros for the certificate of citizenship and other forms of certification.

Section 38a

[Ban on issuing certificates of citizenship in electronic form]

Issuing certification pertaining to citizenship matters in electronic form is not permitted.

Sections 39 and 40

(repealed)

Section 40a

[Acquisition of German citizenship by Germans without German citizenship within the meaning of Article 116 (1) of the Basic Law]

Any person who, on 1 August 1999, is a German within the meaning of Article 116 (1) of the Basic Law without possessing German citizenship acquires German citizenship on the said date. For a repatriate, his or her non-German spouse and his or her descendants within the meaning of Section 4 of the Federal Expellees Act, this applies only if they were issued a certificate on the basis of Section 15 (1) or (2) of the Federal Expellees Act prior to the aforesaid date.

Section 40b

[Transitional provision for children up to the age of ten]

A foreigner who is legally ordinarily resident in Germany on 1 January 2000 and is under ten years of age is to be naturalized upon application if the conditions referred to in Section 4 (3) sentence 1 were met at the time of his or her birth and continue to be met. The application may be filed up to 31 December 2000.

Section 40c

[Transitional provision for persons applying for naturalization]

Sections 8 to 14 and Section 40c as last amended before 28 August 2007 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 1970) continue to apply to applications for naturalization filed before 30 March 2007, as far as these sections contain more lenient provisions.

Section 41

[No possibility of deviation on the part of the Länder]

Land law may not deviate from the provisions of the administrative procedure set out in Sections 32, 33 and 37 (2).

Section 42

[Penal provision]

Anyone who furnishes or uses incorrect or incomplete information concerning essential requirements for naturalization with a fraudulent intent to procure naturalization for themselves or any other person will be punished with imprisonment of up to five years or a fine.