

Germany country profile

17 September 2018



Germany is Europe's most industrialised and populous country. Famed for its technological achievements, it has also produced some of Europe's most celebrated composers, philosophers and poets.

World Wars left it shattered, facing the difficult legacy of Nazism, and divided between Europe's Cold War blocs.

Germany rebounded to become the continent's economic giant, and a prime mover of European cooperation. With the end of the Cold War, the two parts of the country were once again united, although the economy of the former east continues to lag behind the rest of the country.

FACTS

Federal Republic of Germany

Capital: Berlin

Population 82 million

Area 357,027 sq km (137,849 sq miles)

Major language German

Major religion Christianity

Life expectancy 78 years (men), 83 years (women)

Currency euro

UN, World Bank

LEADERS

Chancellor: Angela Merkel

The Christian Democrat Angela Merkel, Germany's first female chancellor, has governed since 2005 in coalition with either the liberal

the 2017 elections as the populist anti-immigrant Alliance for Germany (AfD) surged into third place.

The AfD exploited social tensions over the arrival of more than a million people from the Middle East, West Asia and Africa after Mrs Merkel offered asylum to refugees fleeing turmoil in Syria in the autumn of 2015.

After attempts to build a government with the Free Democrats and left-leaning Greens failed, Mrs Merkel reassembled a "Grand Coalition" with the much-weakened Social Democrats.

Angela Merkel became leader of the Christian Democratic Union in 2000 after a party funding scandal that tainted her long-time mentor, former Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

She was born in Hamburg in 1954 but grew up in communist East Germany, where her father was a Protestant clergyman.

President: Frank-Walter Steinmeier

Former foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier was elected federal president in February 2017, succeeding Joachim Gauck.

A Social Democrat, Mr Steinmeier enjoyed the support of Chancellor Angela Merkel's "grand coalition" of centre-right and centre-left parties.

In his acceptance speech, he pledged to stand up to the rising trend of xenophobic populism, and promote inter-communal dialogue and democracy.

This became all the more topical in September, when the anti-migrant Alternative for Germany broke through to become the first hard-right party to win seats in parliament since the Second World War.

Germany's competitive television market is the largest in Europe, with some 34 million TV households.

The many regional and national public broadcasters - organised in line with the federal political structure - vie for audiences with powerful commercial operators. Each of the 16 regions regulates its own private and public broadcasting.

Around 90% of German households have cable or satellite TV, and viewers enjoy a comprehensive mix of free-to-view public and commercial channels. This has acted as a brake on the development of pay-TV.

Germany is home to some of the world's largest media conglomerates, including Bertelsmann and the publisher Axel Springer. Some of Germany's top free-to-air commercial TV networks are owned by ProSiebenSat1.