

## Language barriers and language policies in public service institutions: Germany as a case in point

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As in many other countries, a significant proportion of the population in Germany consists of people whose first language is not German. In addition to recognised linguistic minorities such as the Sorbs and Danes, Germany is home to sizeable language communities speaking languages such as Russian, Turkish, Polish and Arabic, a result of the country's history of migration. The group of people who encounter language barriers when dealing with public institutions originates from these language communities. Individuals with limited German proficiency need linguistic mediation (spoken or written) in order to overcome language barriers. This lecture describes the practices, regulations and associated ideologies that govern the use of linguistic mediation in public institutions in Germany. Mediation policy in Germany, as in many countries, is characterised by improvisation or bricolage. As a result, many public institutions are more difficult to access for people with limited German language skills. In addition to describing linguistic mediation policy, the lecture discusses how these challenges can be addressed in academic training programs.

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