



Programm für lebenslanges Lernen



## **Immigrants Past and Present - Towards Greater Integration?**

### Heritage Centre Letter (Board 5) : Ethnic Germans

Up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ethnic Germans settled in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. They emigrated there for economic or religious reasons. They had also been invited to colonise these areas as there was a huge demand for labour.

On the one hand they soon developed ties with their new home, on the other hand they profited from their rights as a minority. So they were allowed to keep on using their mother tongue and to maintain their cultural heritage.

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during World War 1 and especially under the Soviet regime their living conditions deteriorated. Their previous rights were now clearly restricted and even their existence was endangered.

Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 and Germany's defeat in 1945 had considerable consequences for the ethnic German minorities in Eastern Europe such as rightlessness, convict labour, deportation or expulsion.

Individual emigration to the Federal Republic of Germany began as early as 1950. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Eastern Bloc emigration of ethnic German minorities became much easier.

On the whole more than 4 million ethnic Germans from the Soviet Union, her successor states and from Poland, Romania or other eastern countries moved to Germany.

According to the constitution they are German citizens.

'Quota refugees', such as Jewish immigrants from the former SU, have been welcomed in Germany since 1991 and they have found places where to live throughout the whole country. Their annual number accounts to 6.800 heads.

Fearing anti-Semitic hostilities many of them want to hide behind anonymity.

Presently, Seelze takes care of about 500 ethnic Germans and 'quota refugees' so as to facilitate their daily life; many of those who came to Seelze in the past years now feel at ease in this town.