

Here is an article that deals with the elections of foreigners in Düsseldorf. This is the topic in the Sprachcafe on Tuesday, 8.9..Place: Park-Kultur, Oststrasse 118, 7pm.

Integration Council hopes for more voters

Düsseldorf Only 7.8 per cent of migrant people went to the polls in Düsseldorf in 2014. This is to change in September. Eight lists and three individual candidates will compete.

More than a third of Düsseldorf's citizens have international roots. So integration is part of the DNA of the metropolis on the Rhine. History, culture, politics, business: Düsseldorf is also prospering so well because the world is at home here. The interest in the Integration Council, the political representation of the interests of migrant people, should therefore be great. On 13 September, the council will be newly elected - parallel to the local elections. The most important facts.

How is the turnout? Actually, interest is very restrained. In 2014, about 10,500 of the 135,926 eligible voters went to the polls. Thus, the voter turnout was just 7.76 percent. "That is not a rate you can accept," says Pavle Madzirov, CDU politician, teacher and member of the Integration Council. Katharina Kabata, until now chairperson of the committee and again a candidate for the "SPD - International List", also hopes that the quota will reach double figures this year: "20 percent would be great.

Here the Integration Council is elected

Election Rooms The Integration Council is expected to be elected on 13 September (8am-6pm) in 27 separate voting rooms. These locations will also be used as voting rooms for the local elections.

Alternatives Voting in another constituency or by postal vote is also possible with a ballot paper.

Website www.duesseldorf.de/integrationsrat

Who can vote? 177,765 Düsseldorfers have received their right to vote in the last few days, more than usual. Anyone with foreign citizenship is entitled to vote - including those who also hold a German passport and Düsseldorfers who have become Germans through naturalisation. "As well as those whose at least one parent has a foreign nationality," says Manfred Golschinski, head of the Office for Elections and Statistics. Only those who have had their main residence in Düsseldorf since 28 August 2020 at the latest and who are at least 16 years old on election day may vote, with the exception of asylum seekers and tolerated foreigners.

What does the Integration Council decide? "Definitely not enough," says Madzirov. For many immigrants, the council is a debating club with little

influence. And, unfortunately, there is some truth in this assessment: "We only make binding decisions on the allocation of funds to migrant organisations, otherwise it remains an advisory function.

Kabata also knows that a lot of persuasion is needed among potential voters: "Some people tell me they have no time or desire to even consider it. They would throw their documents into the waste basket as soon as they received them. That "really hurts", he says, because nobody could seriously want to do without a mouthpiece for all immigrants at local political level. Kabata, on the other hand, is not bothered by the predominantly advisory function: "We are a cross-sectional body that cannot work like a specialised technical committee.

How should the Council develop? Kabata, who has two daughters and works as a volunteer coordinator for workers' welfare, would like to have permanent membership of all Council committees. "Senior Citizens' and Youth Councils each send one of their representatives - that is exactly what I would like to see for our committee," she says. And for Madzirov, one thing is clear: "In future, we should be allowed to have a say in decisions when new posts in the administration are filled. The current proportion of people with a migration background among the workforce is at a shamefully low level". The Integration Council must be given more influence here. "This is right at the top of our agenda."

Who is going to run for election? Eight lists of candidates and three individual candidates will stand for election on 13 September. The lists include: "SPD International List" (top candidate: Katharina Kabata), "Green International Open List" (Goce Peroski), "Turkish-Islamic Cultural Associations" (Besel Genctürk), "International Citizens' Union" (Pavle Madzirov), "Greek Initiative" (Nikolaos Papadopoulos), "Aussiedler Initiative" (Eugen Eichelberg), "Info Point. Poland in Düsseldorf" (Karolina Chadzinska), "New Perspective" (Olga Dudko). The individual candidates are: Ernest Emmanuel Okyere Ampadu, Ivicar Bodnar and Karina Datta.