

The National Integration Plan – A Contribution of Germany Towards Shaping a European Integration Policy

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Our country looks back on a longstanding and formative tradition of migration with many examples of successful integration. As a cultural nation in Europe, Germany has always absorbed diverse external influences, which we now regard as a natural element of our country and its culture. With the end of World War II, millions of German refugees and displaced persons were integrated. At a later stage, our country became the home of more than 4 million persons of German origin resettling in Germany. Six decades have passed since the first recruitment of foreign workers. They came as “guest workers” and they wanted and were supposed to stay for a limited period. Many of them then decided in favour of a life in Germany and found their new home in this country. In later decades, millions of people came as family members or for humanitarian reasons. With the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe, many Germans returned to the land of their forefathers.

At present, 15 million people from 200 different countries live in Germany. This is nearly every fifth inhabitant of our country. After the USA, Germany thus has the highest share of migrants in any population worldwide. Every third child below the age of six comes from an immigrant family; in some major cities in Germany, more than half the population below the age of 40 will have a migration background in 2010.

Our society has profoundly changed as a result of our life with the migrants. It took a long time until the nature of this development was really understood: a reality which offers many opportunities and it is fraught with the risk of social tension - a reality which requires a forward-looking and sustainable integration policy.

The majority of immigrants have found their place in our society and are integrated well. More than half of them are German citizens, many were born in Germany. But we sometimes register considerable integration deficiencies especially among second- and third-generation immigrants: an insufficient knowledge of German, deficiencies in their training and education, frequent unemployment. And some of them do not accept the basic rules of coexistence in this country. It is of crucial significance for our future that everyone is prepared and willing to overcome these difficulties.

As a result, the Federal Government has defined integration as a key responsibility for the future and adopts a new approach, which will provide new opportunities. In its efforts, its orientation stems from two guiding principles:

❶ Integration cannot be imposed, it is a matter of living. On the one hand, it requires the preparedness of the immigrants to embrace life in our country, to unreservedly accept the constitution, the Basic Law, and all German legislation, and to learn the German language. The hosting society is required to show tolerance, acceptance and the willingness to honestly welcome people who lawfully live in our country. A sense of living together will develop, when people feel at home, when they participate in our society, in both their professional and private lives, and when they experience respect for their achievements.

❷ The government alone cannot fulfil the integrative tasks, which are a responsibility of our entire society. Integration will only be successful, when every one - immigrants and native Germans - assume practical and concrete responsibility. This is the only way to develop a lasting climate, which encourages migrants to consider themselves as natural parts of our society.

The key interdisciplinary task of integration must be jointly tackled on all levels, in all fields of politics and by the state and society as a whole. For this purpose, the Federal Chancellor invited representatives of all levels of state administration, local authorities, industry associations and trade unions, churches and religious communities, foundations and welfare organisations, sports, culture, the media and science to the first integration summit in summer 2006. But above all, it was also the first time that migrants themselves sat at the table as players in the integration policy.

At the summit, it was agreed to develop the National Integration Plan. It is the first in the history of the Federal Republic - for the first time, the integration initiatives of the Federal Government, the governments of the Länder (Federal States), local authorities, important groups in society and migrant organisations are put on a common basis. All integration initiatives will be networked, pooled and optimised.

The 10 working groups on the National Integration Plan agreed on the stocktaking, the specified targets and concrete actions as well as voluntary commitments with the following thematic emphases: improving integration courses; promoting the German language right from the start; ensuring good education and training, improving employment opportunities; improving the life and situation of women and girls, implementing equal rights; supporting on-site integration; living in cultural diversity; promoting integration through sports; making use of the media - diversity; strengthening integration through civic commitment and equal participation; science - open-minded.

At the second integration summit on 12 July 2007, the National Integration Plan was adopted, and it was the starting point for the Plan's implementation. The Plan includes 400 actions and voluntary commitments - 150 of them initiated by the Federal Government and 250 by non-governmental organisations and 50 of those are organised by migrant organisations. The key fields of action are promoting language training and equal opportunities in education, training and the labour market. The National Integration Plan is primarily a big qualifications drive for all individuals from immigrant families.

Successful integration needs a secure financial basis. The Federal Government will therefore make a sum of approx. EUR 750 million per year available for promoting integration directly. In addition, it will continue to fund a large number of activities indirectly promoting integration especially with in conjunction with policies for families,

education and employment. The existing funding programmes will be reviewed and reoriented, if necessary, so that they will reach the migrants more easily.

The most important actions by the Federal Government in the National Integration Plan are:

- a qualitative and quantitative reevaluation of integration courses, differentiated offerings for illiterate participants, youth and mothers, for example,
- a significant extension of job-related language training,
- a federal network of education sponsors to support children and youth from migrant families in school and training courses,
- the development of a concept for general language training for children in day-care centres,
- more intensive integration of youngsters with a migration background in connection with the Vocational Training Pact, increasing the number of places in the “Special programme for the initial qualification of youth” to 40,000, recruiting 10.000 additional traineeships in companies owned by individuals of foreign origin in connection with the “Active for traineeship” initiative,
- providing easier access to vocational training grants and student grants (BAföG) for foreign youth,
- supporting the “Diversity charter” business initiative, which intends to promote the recruitment and career development of employees with a migration background in a campaign entitled “Diversity means opportunities”,
- increasing the number of trainees with a migration background and the share of employees with a migration background in the public service in line with their qualifications, performance and skills,
- continuing the programme “Social city”, in which the Federal Government supports the on-site integration in municipalities.

With the decision of the Prime Ministers’ Conference of 14 June 2007, the 16 Federal States reached their first agreement on common guidelines for integration. This was an important step, as key areas for the concrete design of integration efforts such as day-care centres, schools and vocational training facilities are primarily in the scope of responsibility of the Federal States.

Key objectives and actions of the Federal States in the National Integration Plan are:

- determining the level of linguistic ability prior to school admission with subsequent remedial courses when necessary,
- developing joint education and service plans for day-care centres and primary schools,
- offering remedial language activities in all school types and all levels of schools,
- engaging in more intensive activities with parents from immigrant families,
- significantly reducing the school dropout rate among youth with a migration background,
- providing specific funding for schools with a high share of students with a migration background,
- offering special support for job-related language courses at vocational training schools.

The immediate or residential environment has a key role to play in the integration process. This environment will decide on the success of integration in the everyday coexistence of

people of different origins. Cities, counties and municipalities are aware of their crucial responsibility for integration. Numerous good examples bear witness to successful integration activities at the local level. In conjunction with the National Integration Plan, the Federal Association of Local Authority Organisations proposed a number of activities to its members and affiliated organisations. These include:

- embedding integration as an inter-departmental responsibility in local authorities and giving it a priority, which is in line with its significance,
- developing and following up on comprehensive strategies of local authorities,
- increasing the share of individuals with a migration background in the administration,
- supporting and promoting civic commitment of, for and with migrants,
- offering more participation for individuals with a migration background in the decision-making and design processes of the local authorities' social and political life,
- promoting the coexistence between ethnic groups in social spaces with integration deficits by managing residential quarters and networking,
- taking into account the increasing significance of ethnic economies in the context of local plans for promoting business and industry,

376 representatives of governments and society participated in the working groups on the National Integration Plan. All social stakeholders entered into voluntary commitments. They naturally differ in their scope and significance - but each one matters and is most welcome as a concrete contribution towards integration.

Some examples:

- The nationwide network *SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT (SCHOOLBUSINESS)* arranges for partner companies for schools. The objective is a better aptitude of the pupils - also those with a migration background - for vocational training.
- The Chambers of Trade and Industry offer special vocational training consultation services for foreign companies and provide information to foreign youth.
- The Crafts' Chambers train their vocational training counsellors for targeted counselling to companies and youth with a migration background.
- The Chambers of Trade and Industry and the Crafts' Chambers promote the recruitment of labour with a migration background in companies. They offer counselling to adults with a migration background wanting to acquire vocational training certificates.
- The Federal Association of German Employers' Associations (Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitsgeberverbände) will lobby for a more intensive consideration of the skills of migrants with its affiliated companies and promotes the adoption of the „Diversity charter“ in the companies' practical reality.
- The German Trade Union Congress DGB and its affiliated unions advocate equal access to vocational training systems for foreign youth irrespective of their residency status. For this purpose, they provide consultation and information to personnel managers as well as shop stewards and union representatives.

- The affiliated organisations of the Federal Association of Non-Governmental Welfare Associations (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege) provide a sustained programme of integration courses, integrate language training into the quality concepts for its day-care centres, support young migrants in their transition from the school to the labour market, promote intercultural openness in their outpatient and inpatient services and facilities for senior citizens or nursing care centres, and promote the voluntary services offered by migrants.
- The Mercator Foundation (Stiftung Mercator) runs a national project of “Remedial courses for children and youth with a migration background” in 35 locations. The foundation funds this project with EUR 10 million.
- The Read Foundation (Stiftung Lesen) will intensify its activities to promote reading as a key competence.
- The German Olympics and Sports Association (Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund, DOSB) will carry out a quality assurance process on its programme for “Integration through sports”, which it has organised since 1989. For the training of multipliers, the DOSB will commit itself to run a qualification activity on “Intercultural sports” in all Federal States. The DOSB Presidium designated three integration ambassadors in summer 2006 and has committed to the designation of additional ambassadors.
- The German Football Association (Deutscher Fußball-Bund, DFB) plans for development of a DFB network on “Integration”. On 1 December 2006, the DFB appointed an Integration Commissioner. In the context of the cooperation between DFB and DaimlerChrysler, the partners plan an annual competition for an integration award. The DFB promotes a model project on the social integration of girls through football.
- The Turkish Community in Germany (Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland, TDG) will start an education campaign for parents of Turkish origin; in this context it will establish academies for parents and appoint 100 education ambassadors.
- The Federal Association of Migrant Women in Germany (Bundesverband der Migrantinnen in Deutschland e.V.) plans a broadly based information campaign entitled “Women have rights”.
- The public broadcasters ARD, ZDF and the commercial broadcasters will consider migration and integration issues more intensively in all their programming and broadcasting formats, they will provide a credible view of the everyday life of people with a migration background while avoiding clichés and without denying the problems. Migrants are to be hired and promoted more intensively as actors, hosts, programme designers and editors.
- The Turkish Sabah/ATV Group plans a cooperation for German language courses together with “Deutsche Welle” public radio, and these courses will be targeted especially to female readers. In cooperation with the Turkish Community in Germany and the Federal Labour Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit), the publishing group plans an initiative to place youth of Turkish origin in traineeships.
- Until 2010, the Turkish Dogan Publishing Group will offer qualification courses of several months for 1000 young Turkish and German-speaking trainees.

The implementation of the National Integration Plan has already started. In autumn 2008, the Federal Government will present a mid-term review - also in order to examine the activities, which have proven to be effective, and the areas, where further fine tuning might be necessary.

In all these activities we are guided by the following principle: Integration is a key responsibility of our times, and it concerns everyone. It is a matter for us all to ensure that all people living in this country understand and experience an open-minded Germany as our common attractive home, which is worth living in.