



PRESS RELEASE

Refugee Integration: Use Standard Structures, Not Special Programmes A Fresh Start for EU Refugee Policy: More Europe, and A Different Europe

SVR's 2017 Annual Report outlines proposals for further development of EU refugee policy. Tiered model for EU-wide rights of free movement for recognised refugees as a way to distribute responsibility fairly in the EU. Closer cooperation with transit countries is essential in a practical sense, but human rights have to be protected. SVR analysis of the new policies to integrate refugees in Germany shows a need for action in practice, particularly in education: ensure fast access to school, create flexible training models.

Berlin, 25 April 2017. Following the huge influx of refugees mainly in 2015/2016, the European Union is faced with the challenge of eliminating the design flaws in EU refugee policy; Germany is faced with the task of integrating recognised refugees. Many laws were changed in Germany after the arrival of around 890,000 asylum seekers (in 2015 alone). The SVR's eighth Annual Report looks at the progress that has been made and where there is still a need for action in European migration and German integration policy. The Annual Report avoids a purely crisis-oriented perspective. Instead it focuses on the opportunities arising from the crisis – for Europe and for Germany.

"To get a fresh start with EU refugee policy, we not only need more Europe, we also need a different Europe," said Prof. Dr. Thomas Bauer, Chairman of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) at the presentation of the Annual Report in Berlin. In terms of **'more Europe'**, the SVR supports the Europeanisation of asylum policy currently being pursued by the EU Commission in certain areas. This includes strengthening Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) as well as efforts to ensure that agreed EU regulations for refugee reception are applied more uniformly by the Member States. In addition, the SVR is in favour of drawing up a joint list of what are known as safe countries of origin. This kind of standardised and binding EU-wide list of safe countries of origin would strengthen the role of the EU and promote equal treatment of asylum seekers in the Member States. The same applies to the issue of returns. Here, the EU could reach better solutions in negotiations with the countries of origin if it spoke with a single voice rather than every Member State acting on its own. This is true for both financed return as well as deportations.

But 'more Europe' alone is not enough as a recipe to solve the current crisis in EU refugee policy. European policy must change. In the area of refugees and asylum, a **'different Europe'** is needed with new ideas that make more flexible cooperation possible. This is particularly true for the Achilles heel of asylum policy: the lack of a mechanism for sharing responsibility within Europe. From the SVR's perspective, there are many arguments in favour of retaining the Dublin Regulation, which stipulates that the country of first entry is responsible for carrying out the asylum procedures. However, this regulation must absolutely be supplemented by a mechanism of responsibility sharing so as not to leave the countries on the EU's external borders on their own to face the special challenges caused by their geographic location. The SVR thus proposes a 'different Europe' with respect to the structure of responsibility sharing. The focus here is **conditional rights of free movement for recognised refugees.**



The SVR already introduced this idea in its 2015 Annual Report. This report now develops various scenarios for the structure of these rights.

- At a minimum, various EU directives for labour migration for recognised refugees could be established, for example, for seasonal or highly skilled workers. Recognised refugees could then make use of the rights of free movement created in the directives.
- A second proposal would be to put the mobility rights of recognised refugees relatively on par with EU citizens. It would then be possible for a recognised refugee to move to another EU Member State if he finds a job there. This idea would be supported by current European Court of Justice case-law, tying the free rights of movement of EU citizens more to economic activity in the destination country.
- It would ultimately be conceivable to temporarily decouple mobility and social rights for this group and only grant reduced social benefits to recognised refugees who continue on to other countries for a transitional period in the destination country. For EU citizens in Germany there is already now a five-year exclusionary period for social benefits in certain cases.

"The scenarios offer leeway for political implementation. A new form of labour distribution could come about in Europe – even if only gradually," said Bauer. The EU Member States could make different contributions to solving the shared problem in the future; the EU Commission talks about flexible solidarity in this context. The countries on the EU's external borders would still be responsible for carrying out the asylum procedures and returning failed asylum applicants, but with support from the EU and concretely from Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). The contribution of the countries in northern and western Europe, on the other hand, would be to gradually open their labour markets to recognised refugees; they would therefore assume more responsibility than before for the integration of recognised refugees as long as their economic development allowed this and the job market had the capacity.

Extremely controversial to date is the question of opportunities and risks of stronger EU cooperation with third countries. The most prominent example is the **EU-Turkey Statement** commonly referred to as a 'deal'. The SVR generally supports the underlying idea of sending a clear message through the combination of a resettlement and return programme: on the one hand, by reducing the odds of reception in the EU in the case of irregular entry. On the other hand, making it possible to reach Europe via a resettlement programme through regular channels without traffickers as long as no attempt at irregular entry is made. The SVR, however, sees shortcomings in practice: the situation in the overflowing reception camps on the Greek Islands should be improved and humane housing guaranteed. The conditions of the refugees in Turkey must be continuously monitored; the efforts to improve them are very welcome. The number of refugees to be resettled from Turkey to the EU should be significantly increased and resettlement carried out more quickly.

In the SVR's view, considerations of the Federal Minister of the Interior to set up **EU reception centres** in Tunisia or Egypt where refugees can apply for asylum raises complex practical and legal questions (which also concern human rights) where a great degree of clarification is needed. It is unclear, for example, which legal foundations would apply for extraterritorial asylum procedures. It would also be conceivable that these EU reception centres would give rise to a stronger pull effect, resulting in higher numbers of applications. The result would be higher personnel and financial costs for



processing the applications if the aim is to prevent completely overfilled camps with inhumane conditions. Even though considerations about EU reception centres do not currently seem realistic, it is the SVR's view that closer cooperation with important transit countries is indispensable in practical terms. "Not doing anything and looking the other way is not a solution," said SVR Chairman Bauer. The EU is facing enormous challenges in migration and asylum policy that it cannot overcome without cooperation with countries of origin, transit and initial reception. "Human rights are the compass for a partnership with countries outside of the EU," said Bauer. No simple solution is evident here. But, in the SVR's view, it is also clear: sharing responsibility may not mean simply shifting it.

After a temporary collapse of the EU asylum system in autumn 2015, Germany became by far the most important destination country for refugees. The integration policy structures in Germany were and continue to be challenged by this situation. The second part of the SVR Annual Report is thus dedicated to the question of completed and pending measures to restructure the German integration infrastructure. The areas of housing, education and labour market integration as well the communication of values are examined in more detail. The SVR derives the central recommendation from the results: "No special programmes should generally be created for the integration of refugees, instead existing standard structures should be used," said SVR Chairman Thomas Bauer. "This means that pupils should be taught in regular school classes as soon as possible; the proven instruments of labour market policy should also be used for vocational training, post-qualification and labour market integration. "Special programmes should be the exception and should be limited to special needs that are unavoidable (e.g. in the area of language acquisition). "Refugee migration can and should be used to make sensible reforms to the standard structures. Then we all benefit," said Bauer.

Around half of refugees who applied for asylum in 2015 and 2016 were age 25 or younger. This is linked to considerable **challenges for the education system** – starting with child care centres, schools, vocational education all the way to universities. There is, for example, still too much time that passes before refugee children go to a day care centre or school or young people can begin a training programme. In several federal states (*Länder*), staying for several months in an initial reception centre delays the start of school for longer than prescribed in binding international treaties. The SVR is therefore pushing for refugee children and young people to go to school as fast as possible, at the latest, however, after three months. This mandatory time period is also stipulated in the EU Reception Conditions Directive. Intensifying the existing segregation tendencies in the school system must be prevented so that refugees and their fellow students all have true opportunities to participate.

The SVR also sees a need for action when it comes to vocational training for young refugees. While access to the training system was considerably facilitated for refugees legally speaking, the existing possibilities have not been adequately used to date in practice. To facilitate entry in vocational training for young refugees, the SVR proposes organising vocational training – at least on a trial basis – into a basic training programme and a phase of specialisation. Young people who have been unemployed for a longer period of time could also benefit from this kind of modular structure. In any event, it would have to be possible to pursue further training after basic training. If this is guaranteed and the system has no upward limits, a two-class vocational training system will be prevented from emerging. Other flexible training models like a part-time training programme for refugees could also be used to combine training and the possibility of earning money.

"We should view the financial resources that we spend on integrating refugees into the education system and the **labour market** as an investment," said SVR Chairman Bauer. This will pay off when



refugees become tax-payers in the medium term. "But if, on the other hand, we don't invest enough, the children and young people who have sought refuge in Germany will lose out in a few years with all of the individual and societal consequences," warned Bauer.

To support refugees in the search for a job or (post-) qualification, the SVR relies on the proven instruments of labour market policy. The SVR takes a sceptical view of special measures like the new programme on Refugee Integration Measures (Flüchtlingsintegrationsmaßnahmen - FIM). Intensive and tailored language acquisition, on the other hand, is indispensable and a prerequisite for successful entry to the labour market. Apart from that, the SVR warns against overestimating the impact of refugee immigration on the labour market (positively or negatively). "The influx of refugees will not solve the problem of the shortage of skilled workers," said Bauer. But also fears that refugee migration will put considerable pressure on wages or displace domestic workers are unjustified.

The **communication of values** has been given higher priority, not least because of the events on New Year's Eve on Cologne's Cathedral Square when many women were the victims of sexual assaults perpetrated by groups of young men mostly from Arab countries and North Africa. The number of hours allotted in the integration courses for teaching sociocultural values and basic political and democratic values was increased from 60 to 100 hours. "Teaching values in theory is important but should not be overestimated. In a second step, values also have to be internalised. This requires that people experience these values practically in their everyday lives," said Bauer. But successful integration also requires a respective willingness on the part of the host society. The aim here is to make it clear that the inclusion of people in need is a human imperative and corresponds to the values of our society.

The SVR's Annual Report and an informational graphic can be downloaded [here](#).

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About the Expert Council

The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration is based on an initiative of the Stiftung Mercator and the VolkswagenStiftung and consists of seven member foundations. In addition to the Stiftung Mercator and the VolkswagenStiftung, these are: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Freudenberg Stiftung, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft and the Vodafone Foundation Germany. The Expert Council is an independent and interdisciplinary committee of experts which takes a stand on issues relevant to integration and migration policy and offers practically oriented policy consultation. The results of its work are published in an annual report.

The SVR includes nine researchers from different disciplines and research institutes: Prof. Dr. Thomas K. Bauer (Chairman), Prof. Dr. Hacı Halil Uslucan (Vice-Chairman), Prof. Dr. Gianni D'Amato, Prof. Dr. Petra Bendel, Prof. Dr. Wilfried Bos, Prof. Dr. Claudia Diehl, Prof. Dr. Viola B. Georgi (since 2017), Prof. Dr. Christian Joppke, Prof. Dr. Daniel Thym and Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann (until 2017).

More information can be found at: www.svr-migration.de/en