



PRESS RELEASE

Integration structures under scrutiny: SVR criticises insufficient coordination of integration policy in the German federal system

In its 2012 annual report, the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration - SVR) criticises the federal government, *Laender* and municipalities not only for their ineffective collaboration in integration policy but also for working against one another. Urgently needed: improved coordination, cooperation and networking; an end to the ban on cooperation between the federal government and *Laender* in the educational realm; better alignment of responsibilities for integration policy at federal level. Overall assessment: limited effectiveness of federal structures in integration policy; Integration Barometer: integration climate continues to be positive in Germany despite heated debates.

Berlin, 8 May 2012. The 2012 annual report of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) analyses the effectiveness of cooperation in integration policy between the federal, *Laender* and municipal levels. This analysis clearly shows the negative side of the federal system: the way that legislative powers and administrative tasks are allocated to various actors in the federal government, *Laender* and municipalities results in numerous parallel responsibilities that not only overlap but also compete with one another, thus making it difficult to effectively bundle integration policy measures. At the same time, the actors – depending on their political leanings – often pursue different integration policy agendas.

According to criticism from SVR Chairman, Prof. Dr. Klaus J. Bade, "A master plan is lacking at the crossroads of federalism and integration policy. The poorly coordinated side-by-side, cooperative and even opposing efforts of the various political actors have resulted in a proliferation of individual integration policy measures where the wheel is often painstakingly reinvented over and over again." While some municipalities with strong concepts have integration success stories and others just muddle through with a weak concept or none at all, there are also implementation obstacles, financial hurdles and even paralysing perception problems. According to the critical assessment of the SVR Chairman, coordination and networking of integration policy in the federal system is "functional overall but its effectiveness is limited in different areas and is urgently in need of improvement."

The results of the SVR Integration Barometer are surprisingly positive despite the heated integration debate in 2010-2011. Comparing this year's data with the initial data collected in 2009 shows that the pragmatic and positive integration climate solidified in 2011. The Index on the Integration Climate (IIC), which measures perceptions and experiences of everyday integration on both sides of the immigration society, is largely stable. Migrants awarded an index rating of 2.87 to the areas of education, employment, community and social ties, a score that is even somewhat higher than the rating given by the native population (2.66). Both IIC values are above the mean of 2 (on a scale of 0 to 4), an indication of an integration climate that continues to be friendly. This is also true to a lesser extent for the two survey regions of Berlin/Brandenburg and Halle/Leipzig in eastern Germany.

"The Integration Barometer shows that the population does not let itself be misled for long by heated or even hysterical discussions about integration," said Klaus J. Bade. "The prevailing attitudes about integration on both sides of Germany's immigration society are a critical yet pragmatic mindset and a cautious yet optimistic mindset." More than 9,200 people with and without a migration background were interviewed for the Integration Barometer which was also conducted for the first time in eastern Germany.



Support for municipalities, more effective use of potential

Integration policy is very pragmatic at the local level. This applies particularly to its specific implementation in key areas such as early childhood education, school or urban development and housing construction. Until now, however, the municipalities have often been left on their own to handle their integration policy responsibilities. What is missing is primarily a systematic exchange of promising integration concepts and best practice examples along with concrete advice. The municipalities must be given greater support so that they can capitalise more effectively on the potential that exists.

"We need an entity that is responsible for organising knowledge transfer and comparison among municipalities and provides appropriate networks and platforms to do so. We therefore recommend the creation of a central service agency for municipal integration policy," said Bade. Its functions would revolve around vertical and horizontal networking, information transfer and accompanying advice in applying concepts and models tested elsewhere. A new agency could be created. Alternatively, a clearly cheaper option would be to connect it to existing institutions such as the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - BAMF) or the local government office for municipal administration (Kommunale Gemeinschaftsstelle für Verwaltungsmanagement - KGSt). Such a central service agency would support the municipalities in pursuing a proactive integration policy. This would enable the municipalities to use the freedom they have to take action more effectively than before.

Integration is a process that spans many areas. But often, the municipalities do not consider the measures and instruments at their disposal to be part of integration policy. This is also reflected in the population's perception. The Integration Barometer shows that more than half of respondents without a migration background and almost two-thirds of those with a migration background feel that the Federal government and *Laender* are actively committed to integration policy. At a local level, this same figure is much lower at 44.0 and 48.8 per cent respectively. Bade: "Far too little value is placed on the accomplishments of the municipalities in integration policy due to poor communication."

However, the annual report also shows that the local conditions for integration vary considerably from community to community. The general structural-legal, demographic and economic conditions were consolidated into an SVR community typology with twelve types that can be assigned to the municipalities in Germany. This reveals significant regional differences: in Bavaria, for example, people live primarily in small communities with a high percentage of foreign nationals and a low rate of unemployment. In contrast, large communities with higher unemployment and a high percentage of foreign nationals are more common in North Rhine-Westphalia. If, however, more and more integration tasks are transferred to municipalities regardless of the financial resources at their disposal, they also need to be much better equipped to handle them when necessary. Otherwise, it is probable that financial differences will also be reflected in how successful the promotion of integration is at local level.

Enhancing synergy effects between federal, *Laender* and municipal level

More effective collaboration at the federal, *Laender* and municipal level could lead to synergy effects in many areas. As the example of labour market reforms shows, reality looks quite different: since the introduction of the *Hartz reforms* to the labour market, the municipalities also share responsibility for job placement with the employment agencies or, in the case of what are known as *Optionskommunen* (municipalities that have the option of taking full responsibility for the supervision of welfare recipients in their communities), bear



sole responsibility. An expert report created for the SVR annual report concludes that the *Optionskommunen* are much less successful at placing benefit recipients with a migration background in jobs than the job centres, which are the joint responsibility of the municipality and employment agencies. The SVR thus recommends that the processes of the *Optionskommunen* and employment agency be more closely integrated.

Ban on cooperation in the educational realm should be lifted

Education is one of the main areas of integration policy where improvement is needed. However, the competition among the *Laender* for the best spots in the ranking results leads in some cases to lower standards and not to the desired rivalry to provide the best possible education. In some *Laender*, the resources available for education are inadequate. The ban on cooperation between the federal and *Laender* level that was adopted as part of the reform of the federal system in 2006 is counterproductive and should be eliminated.

Integration may also not depend on arbitrary conditions in the municipalities. For instance, the provision of equipment in schools and nursery schools cannot be dependent mainly on the financial situation of the municipalities. "Poorly equipped schools – possibly in areas plagued by social problems – have devastating consequences that extend far beyond their immediate area of influence and thus for society as a whole," said Bade. To guarantee that educational facilities are well equipped everywhere in the country, the *Laender* have to compensate for the varying financial power of the municipalities better than they have to date.

Funding for nursery schools is particularly important for children with a migration background and/or from socially disadvantaged families. The introduction of the *Betreuungsgeld*, or childcare allowance, planned by the federal government and sharply criticised by the Chairman from the very beginning, should be abandoned. Its introduction is likely to mean that "nursery school attendance, particularly of children whose parents cannot compensate for the social disadvantages of their children in education and/or German proficiency by themselves until school starts, will decline," said Bade. In terms of integration policy, this would be a case of "shooting ourselves in the foot by introducing *Betreuungsgeld*".

The integration policy challenges in the educational realm can only be tackled through joint efforts between the federal government, the *Laender* and the municipalities. A negative example is the well-intentioned educational package for children of Hartz IV recipients. The newly introduced federal government benefits have led in some cases to the elimination of municipal benefits such as school meal programmes. Nothing is therefore gained for the children. "When it comes to education, we have to put an end to the meaningless principle of robbing Peter to pay Paul," said Bade.

Integration Barometer: Integration climate is stable in Germany

"There was a fear that the often polemic debates about integration that took place in the autumn of 2010 could cause long-term damage to the climate in Germany's immigration society. The Integration Barometer shows that these fears have proven unfounded," said Bade. At the end of 2010, the SVR measured temporary disruptions at either end of the opinion spectrum. Now, the 2012 Integration Barometer shows that the cautiously positive integration climate that was analysed for the first time in 2009 has largely solidified in the day-to-day immigration society. This is supported by two other findings. Firstly, more than three-quarters of all respondents think that the integration process taking place in their own community is better than elsewhere in Germany. Secondly, people's own sense of responsibility for the success of integration has risen by 17.3 per cent to 84.2 per cent among the native population. Contrary to widespread fears, a split in the immigration society has not taken place.



Some of those surveyed had already participated in the Integration Barometer in 2009. This subset makes it possible to analyse individual changes over time. When asked whether migrants are interested in integration, the same respondents had a much stronger opinion in 2011 than in 2009. The "undecided" camp shrank among respondents both with and without a migration background from around 24 per cent to around 13 per cent. The percentage of "integration optimists" and "integration pessimists" grew accordingly: in the native population, the percentage of "integration optimists" rose from 43.9 to 49.7 per cent and among people with a migration background, this figure increased from 53.3 per cent to 58.9 per cent. The percentage of "integration pessimists" grew from 32.0 per cent to 37.1 per cent (native population) and from 22.5 per cent to 28.4 per cent (individuals with a migration background). "The intensive, often very heated integration debate in 2010-2011 led to frustration on the positive end of the opinion spectrum," said Bade. "However, it also meant that those surveyed thought about this issue more intensively and formed clearer opinions."

All respondents agree that there is a negative bias in the public debate about integration in Germany. More than 50 per cent of all respondents complain that the discussion about integration was "more often than not" negative or "much too" negative. This also holds true when it comes to discussions about Islam. Media exaggeration and distortion in the integration debate was clearly recognised.

The 2012 Integration Barometer also makes it possible to compare eastern and western Germany for the first time. Surprisingly, the respondent's perception of the integration climate in both eastern German regions is only slightly more negative than in western Germany. Each side also perceives the other side to be reluctant when it comes to a willingness to integrate. In line with this, 57.9 per cent of those surveyed without a migration background in the former eastern states think that the native population is interested in integration. In western Germany, this figure is higher by more than 7 percentage points (and hence almost 13%) at 65.3 per cent.

The impact of integration policy is seen more positively: 47.6 per cent of respondents with a migration background in western Germany believe that integration policy has encouraged integration over the last five years. Only 17.6 per cent feel that the situation has deteriorated. Among the native population in the west, more than half of those surveyed (53.4%) even felt that integration policy had made a positive contribution while only around one in ten respondents (10.4%) rated its impact as negative. And expectations for the future are more positive than they were in the 2009 survey: more than half of respondents with and without a migration background in the former western states (54.5% and 56.9% respectively) expect policy to improve integration while only a small minority fears a change for the worse (15.9% and 12.1% respectively).

Collaborative networks

The practical implementation of integration policy takes place primarily at *Laender* and municipal level in the multi-level governance system. Over the last few years, there has been increased discussion of handling integration policy more or even completely at the local level. There have also been calls to largely shift integration policy powers from the federal and *Laender* level to the municipal level. In the SVR's view, this would be counterproductive. Integration policy primarily requires closer cooperation and improved networks between the federal government, *Laender* and municipalities, which is more consistent with the idea of 'cooperative federalism'.

Also at the federal level, the departments whose decisions have an impact on integration policy, primarily in the areas of the labour market, the social system, the economy, education and internal affairs, should be coordinated more effectively. To date, this has only occurred to a limited extent and has been largely improvised. Even though there is an inter-ministerial working group for integration, it is not adequately anchored institutionally and its



efficiency largely depends on the goodwill of the delegates and their departments. This is also true in almost all the ministries affected where integration has become a focus or separate integration departments have been created. In addition to the partial responsibilities of the various federal departments and the centrally responsible Federal Ministry of the Interior, there is the Minister of State in the Federal Chancellery who is responsible for migration, refugees and integration and, with almost the same name, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees which reports to the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Bade alluded to the recent time-consuming stages in the Recognition Act (Anerkennungsgesetz) as an example of what can happen when there is an overlap of powers and concluded: "It would be beneficial to talk about realigning responsibilities, no later than after the next *Bundestag* elections. This is a discussion that is always stifled by the 'sacro egoismo' of department interests and that was watered down in the recent coalition negotiations to the question of an 'Integration Ministry'."

From the SVR's point of view, the federal government, *Laender* and municipalities should shift from uncoordinated side-by-side efforts to productive collaboration and improve ineffective vertical and horizontal networks. The Integration Barometer shows that the population not only supports an active integration policy with clear and understandable objectives but also demands this. Policymakers should take advantage of this positive starting situation for making further, powerful reforms in the area of integration and migration. "They should," according to Bade "no longer assume that they are protecting their citizens from their own fears about migration and integration in a kind of kindergarten for adults."

The SVR's 2012 annual report is available for downloading along with a selection of graphics and press photos from www.svr-migration.de.

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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 eight member foundations. In addition to the Stiftung Mercator and the VolkswagenStiftung, these are: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Freudenberg Stiftung, Gemeinnützige Hertie-Stiftung, Körber Foundation, Vodafone Foundation Germany and the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius. The Expert Council is an independent and non-profit monitoring, evaluating and advisory council 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 researchers from different disciplines and research institutes: Prof. Dr. Klaus J. Bade (Chairman), Prof. Dr. Ursula Neumann (Vice Chairman) and Prof. Dr. Gianni D'Amato, Prof. Dr. Thomas K. Bauer, Prof. Dr. Wilfried Bos, Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann, Prof. Dr. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Prof. Dr. Christine Langenfeld, Prof. Dr. Ludger Pries, Prof. Dr. Werner Schiffauer.

More information is available at: www.svr-migration.de