



## **Integration legislation at the federal state level: An updated review – and lessons learnt for the federal government**

### **Summary**

Between 2010 and 2021 a total of five of Germany's federal states adopted laws on integration and participation, two of which have already undergone wide-ranging reform. Generalising somewhat, they can be divided into two types: Legislation adopted in Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg and Schleswig-Holstein focuses on the participation of people with a migration history. These laws set the framework for integration policy at the federal state level by laying down basic principles and regulating both institutions and cooperation and coordination structures. Bavaria's Integration Act, by contrast, is aimed more at a one-sided obligation on the part of migrants to integrate. It contains provisions on individual migrants' integration and addresses cultural and regulatory issues.

The three political parties that make up Germany's current federal government agreed in their coalition agreement for the 20th legislative period to draft a law on the integration and participation of people with a migration history. The aim is to strengthen participation and adapt the federal administration to diversity in an immigration society. In anticipation of this, the Federal Conference of Migrant Organisations (BKMO) in 2021 produced the draft of a federal act on integration and participation. When drafting federal legislation, it can also be useful to draw on laws adopted at the federal state level (although the competences of the federal government and federal states are, of course, clearly defined and separate within Germany's federal structure). For that reason, and in view of the dynamic developments at the federal state level, the SVR's scientific staff updated its review of the federal states' integration legislation that was first published in 2017.

Various questions concerning the focus and design of the planned federal act on integration and participation can be inferred from experience gained with these laws at the federal state level. A comparison of the five existing laws shows that integration legislation at the federal state level can contribute to a coherent, targeted and suitable integration policy. However, their effectiveness is dependent on their design and structure. Targets and stated intentions need to be accompanied by concrete instruments, which should be backed by the necessary funding. Further, implementation needs to be monitored. So that the rules and regulations do not come to nothing and the integration laws can be effective, the basic principles enshrined in them also need to be shared by as many as possible of the large circle of involved actors. The legislative process itself is another important factor. In addition, sustainable structures need to be created and procedures regularly put into practice. Only then will it

be possible to actually create an awareness of the fact that integration is a cross-sectional task and thus forms part of every specialised policy area.

At the symbolic level, integration legislation forges an understanding of the issue of integration. It also lifts it up the policy agenda and helps to mobilise actors to get involved in this cross-sectional task. Such legislation can enshrine an integration policy consensus in law and thus objectivise the relevant debates. It can advocate for integration and participation among people with a migration history.