



PRESS RELEASE

Migration Report 2011 calls for “more courage for developing clear concepts”. Policy must become better equipped for the future. Migration realism prevails among the population.

The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) acknowledges that progress in immigration policy has been made, yet further reforms are needed. The SVR recommends facilitating immigration for skilled workers and highly skilled professionals. The Migration Barometer reveals that the population is open-minded about these issues. The SVR calls for an “end to the policymakers’ game of hide and seek” under the pretext of responding to the population’s alleged fears. The upheaval in Northern Africa requires an alignment of migration and development policy.

Berlin, 13 April 2011. At the presentation in Berlin of its second annual report entitled ‘Migration Country 2011’ today, the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) called for “bold concepts” to make Germany’s immigration policy “better equipped for the future”. The report analyzes and evaluates immigration, out-migration/emigration, and migration policy in Germany from an international perspective. Over 2,450 persons with and without a migrant background were surveyed about their views and assessment of migration and migration policy for the first SVR Migration Barometer. The results reveal a gap between heated media and political debates and the quite pragmatic and straightforward views of ordinary citizens. The SVR Chairman Prof. Klaus J. Bade therefore calls for “an end to policymakers’ game of hide and seek under the pretext of responding to the population’s alleged fears” and “more courage for developing clear and palpable migration policy concepts”. This applies to both out-migration and immigration, as well as to the admission of refugees and asylum seekers.

Immigration policy better, but not yet equipped for the future

Germany has cautiously modified its immigration management measures in recent years. Though largely overlooked by the general public, the temporary and seasonal immigration of low skilled workers has been a success story of immigration management for quite some time. In 2010, 289,000 workpermits for seasonal workers were issued, and workers left the country once their fixed-term employment contract had expired. After coming across initial stumbling blocks, the immigration of skilled workers has gained stronger impetus: Although only 629 highly skilled foreign professionals immigrated to Germany between 2005 and 2009 (in accordance with paragraph 19 AufenthG), approximately 16,000 skilled workers immigrated in 2009 with the prospect of an initially temporary residence. This influx is still, of course, too low to counterweigh the rising shortage of skilled workers and the strong out-migration of qualified individuals from Germany. In the last 15 years, over half a million more Germans have left the country than returned. The level of out-migration to other European countries in terms of educational attainment and professional qualification is higher than that of the labour force in Germany (the immigration of “Spät-/Aussiedler”, i.e. ethnic Germans, who are statistically considered “German remigrants”, has not been included here).

While the number of immigrants was high for decades – which, against the backdrop of high unemployment rates, was often depicted as a threat by policymakers – the migration surplus continued to decrease over the years until a negative migration balance was recorded for the first time in 2008 and again in 2009 (in 2009 there was a net loss of 13,000). The lack of a buffer to absorb the accelerating demographic change on the labour market will have an



even greater impact. "We are still in the lead-up to the demographic hurricane", according to Bade, "once the high school graduates of 2013 enter the labour market, it will quickly become more turbulent". The SVR therefore calls for further reforms in addition to a campaign for the promotion of skills which addresses all available potentials to win over and convince more highly skilled professionals from abroad to migrate to Germany.

These views are backed by the population. The results of the SVR's Migration Barometer indicate: A clear majority of approximately 60 per cent of respondents with and without a migrant background favour higher levels of immigration by highly skilled professionals.

What is currently needed: Three pillar model to promote immigration

With reference to the current reform of immigration management, the SVR proposes a three pillar model: (1) reduction of the minimum gross annual income of highly skilled foreign professionals from currently € 66,000 to approx. € 40,000. (2) Fostering a "residence policy" for international students as an "ideal immigrant group": They are young, well-qualified, usually have good German skills, and are familiar with the institutions in the country. They should therefore be granted two years instead of only one to find a job upon graduation. The provision that their gainful employment must correspond to the qualifications acquired should be loosened. (3) Introduction of a flexible point system. It should be a temporary pilot project with a subsequent evaluation and be initially limited to the sectors of engineering, mathematics, informatics, and natural sciences, which are most affected by the shortage of skilled workers.

Demand for the future: Germany must reinvent its migration policy

"In the long term, Germany needs a bold general overhaul of its migration governance system, if the demographic and economic challenges of the future are to be met", explains Bade. Germany is an ageing and shrinking migration country with only one resource: Human capital, i.e., a skilled labour force.

In addition to the internal promotion of skills, a migration policy campaign is necessary. This includes several components: a) efforts to retain one's own top professionals or to not lose them permanently; b) a permanent and at least balanced immigration of highly skilled workers; c) a partially permanent, partially temporary admission of skilled workers, and d) a temporary or seasonal admission of labour migrants in low skilled occupations.

The country needs a clear and politically bold overall concept. Functional components already exist. They must, however, be supplemented and aligned into a flexible and unbureaucratic overall concept that is clear and comprehensible to citizens. "Germany has to reinvent its migration policy", asserts the SVR Chairman. If that succeeds, then "Germany could become a pilot migration country in the face of demographic change".

Policymakers underestimate the migration realism among citizens

The SVR reiterates its call: To slow down the out-migration of top professionals from Germany and to manage the immigration of such individuals, Germany must increase its internal and external appeal. Bade: "Otherwise, those we need will leave and we will be left without sufficient replacements. Both of these factors are linked to the same lack of appeal." The citizens recognize this more clearly than policymakers think; the results of the SVR survey from November/December 2010 reveal: A high level of information, a largely realistic assessment of the migration situation, and differentiated expectations of future migration policy. For example, over half of the respondents consider the out-migration from Germany as too high and, hence, as problematic. 64.2 per cent of respondents without a migrant background and 61.6 per cent with a migrant background shared this opinion.

The migration barometer also indicates a surprisingly high level of support for increased admission of refugees and asylum seekers: 48.5 per cent of respondents without a migrant



background and 40.9 per cent of immigrants are in favour of this. "In this context, policymakers also often confuse citizens' views with hysterical media debates", explains the SVR Chairman. Policymakers should no longer underestimate the views of citizens with regard to migration. "The paralysis or inactivity legitimated under the pretext of the population's allegedly widespread 'the boat is full' panic" should finally come to an end. The SVR recommends using resettlement programmes as a supplementary instrument of humanitarian refugee admission for those who are particularly vulnerable.

Countries of origin: Cultural panic exacerbates immigration policy

The SVR's annual report also examines which countries could possibly provide (highly) skilled immigrants in the future. In addition to Eastern European countries in which the immigration potential will decrease due to the prevailing demographic developments, these include, among others, the primarily Muslim Northern African states. The SVR therefore urgently warns against "populist cultural panic that is detrimental for the economy".

Domestic and election strategically and culturally defensive positions towards immigration from countries with a predominantly Muslim population are not only being carefully monitored by Muslim skilled workers inside and outside of Germany. They also damage Germany's position as an immigration country. Bade: "Instead of populism, we need to develop a pragmatic openness, a critical welcome culture, and institutional measures, such as the stronger involvement of consulates and chambers of trade in the recruitment of skilled immigrants."

Northern Africa: Migration, development and refugee policy

In view of the upheavals in the Northern African states, the EU must rethink its migration and refugee policy. 'Fortress Europe' can no longer simply limit itself to the protection of its external borders. Practical and controllable initiatives to fight the causes of involuntary migration must be given greater importance. The EU must additionally open legal and controllable immigration routes. One possible instrument are circular migration programmes which afford closer links between development and migration policy and which have been discussed at the EU level for quite some time. They are targeted towards the host country's labour market needs and simultaneously pursue development policy goals. Simulation models commissioned from the SVR show that: Circular migration programmes are only successful if all three participants recognize its advantages, namely, immigration countries, countries of origin, and the migrants themselves. This, however, requires the availability of development opportunities which often do not exist in the countries of origin, in particular, legal certainty, a bureaucracy free of corruption, and viable development and economic conditions.

The EU must, without delay, offer the Northern African countries development perspectives. The eased trade relations envisaged by the EU, visa facilitation within the scope of mobility partnerships, a student exchange programme, and regulations for legal labour migration are steps in the right direction. Ultimately, a kind of Marshall Plan for Northern Africa would be necessary. Circular migration programmes could be implemented here as well.

Because the boundaries between forced and economic migration are blurred, the host country's interests should to some degree also play a role in the admission of refugees. This may not come at the expense of humanitarian obligations. What should be avoided, however, is the sending home of skilled refugees (as has been the case numerous times in the past), while it is specifically this professional group that is being recruited with only minor success. How a pragmatic transfer of individuals from a refugee country to an immigration country can be achieved without questioning the humanitarian dimension as such is exemplified by Canada.



The causes, accompanying factors, and consequences of global mega crises and regional disaster are becoming increasingly complex. Concepts for a 'global migration management' must be all the more complex if they are to successfully meet the anticipated global challenges.

The annual report can be downloaded from www.svr-migration.de

The press photo (300dpi) can be downloaded 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 integration and migration policy-relevant issues, and offers practice-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. Klaus J. Bade (Chairman), Prof. Dr. Ursula Neumann (Vice Chairman), as well as Prof. Dr. Michael Bommers (†), Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann, Prof. Dr. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Prof. Dr. Christine Langenfeld, Prof. Dr. Werner Schiffauer, Prof. Dr. Thomas Straubhaar and Prof. Dr. Steven Vertovec.

Additional information is available at www.svr-migration.de