



PRESS RELEASE

Overall Assessment and Works in Progress: Labour Migration Largely Liberalised – Integration Policy Lacks Momentum

The SVR's annual report examines Germany's transformation to a modern immigration country over the past five years: progress has been made in migration policy while integration policy is characterised by ambivalence. In the area of education in particular there is still a great need for action. The SVR also sees the need for an overall migration policy strategy and recommends a National Migration Action Plan. The SVR Integration Barometer once again shows a positive integration climate. For the first time, the survey includes questions about religious diversity: the majority favours equal treatment of religions; 'special treatment' for religious reasons is viewed with scepticism.

Berlin, 29 April 2014. In the annual report presented today, the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration provides an overall assessment of the migration and integration policy of the last five years. The researchers draw a positive conclusion in relation to immigration management, a paradigm shift is evident particularly in terms of labour migration policy. "Germany has transformed itself from an 'outsider' to a 'model student': the legal possibilities for the immigration of highly skilled and highly qualified workers were eased to a large extent in 2012 and are now among the most liberal in the western industrial countries," said Prof. Dr. Christine Langenfeld, Chairwoman of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR). In just a few short years, restrictive legislation has been eased, turning Germany into a liberal immigration country.

Despite this overall positive assessment of migration policy, in the SVR's view, there is still a flaw: no dialogue about an overall migration policy strategy has taken place to date. There is no consistent migration policy based on qualified analyses of future demographic, economic and social trends that doesn't consider people's motives for immigration separately (work, study, refugees, family reunification), but sees and manages the big picture. "A National Migration Action Plan could help create this kind of comprehensive migration policy," explained Langenfeld. "The National Migration Action Plan would be Germany's calling card for immigration and integration policy and serve as the basis for a migration policy communication concept. Far too little is still known abroad about the significant innovations that have been made in migration policy. The regulations shouldn't be swept under the shop rug but should finally be prominently displayed in Germany's shop window," said the SVR Chairwoman.

Many positive developments in the area of integration but also many negative aspects were identified by the SVR. "Several successful initiatives continue to be offset with works in progress and missed opportunities," said Langenfeld. The SVR's assessment is rather sobering in the key area of education: pupils with a migration background still lag far behind in performance despite improved scores on international performance tests (PISA, IGLU, TIMSS). "Schools, as an institution, are not yet nearly effective enough at remotely compensating for the initial disadvantages of pupils with a migration background," emphasised Langenfeld. "This challenge has to be tackled more resolutely. More has to be done to create equal opportunities for pupils with a migration background and pupils from socially disadvantaged families," said Langenfeld. Classroom instruction has to be structured more around individual needs so that pupils can be supported based on their strengths and weaknesses. To reach this goal, the SVR recommends improving education and training of teachers to prepare them to deal better with a diverse student body. Increasing the number of high quality, all-day activities at schools



must be encouraged and language acquisition at day care and schools coordinated better. In addition, a valid and uniform way to determine language acquisition needs is required in Germany's federal education system.

The Recognition Act (*Anerkennungsgesetz*) has not yet been implemented uniformly

The independent Expert Council's assessment of the Recognition Act, which has been in force for two years now, had mixed results. For the first time, people have a legal right to have a vocational degree obtained abroad reviewed to determine if it is equivalent to a German degree. The aim is to facilitate integration of immigrants into the job market consistent with their qualifications. "The law itself is a milestone but there are still difficulties with implementation," said Langenfeld. The goal of creating laws that are standardised and efficient nationwide for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications has not yet been reached. The pace of adoption of the state-level recognition laws in individual *Länder* is slow; it has not yet been implemented in two *Länder* (Schleswig-Holstein, Sachsen-Anhalt). A few *Länder* are insisting on using existing laws for the recognition of professions that fall under their jurisdiction instead of implementing possible improvements. It is also unclear to what extent the *Länder* mutually accept recognition of a degree. "This must be guaranteed. Anything else would be counterproductive and thwart the overarching aim of improving and simplifying the recognition process," said Langenfeld.

Equal institutional treatment of Islam: progress and setbacks

In terms of another central integration policy challenge, the equal institutional treatment of Islam, the SVR sees progress but also setbacks. Political efforts have borne fruit in many areas: progress was seen primarily in the establishment of Islamic religious classes as a regular subject at state schools and in the expansion of Islamic theology at the universities. At the same time, the current debate on the staffing of the chair for Islamic theology and the extent of academic autonomy shows that open and critical discourse on the further development of Islam and its standing in a pluralistic country is urgently needed. "Even though Germany is making progress in the equal institutional treatment of Islam, the state, as well as the Islamic associations, still have a lot to do," said Langenfeld. The Islamic associations must strive to form one or more Islamic religious communities with transparent structures.

SVR Integration Barometer: majority supports 'equality without special rights'

In the last few years, Germany has made progress in tackling the enormous tasks of, on the one hand, advancing equal institutional treatment of Islam and, on the other, avoiding the establishment of special religious rights. This policy of 'equality without special rights' is supported by the population. This is shown by the SVR Integration Barometer which addressed the question of the institutional equality of Islam for the first time this year: "The majority is in favour of equal treatment for religion, but there is scepticism about 'special treatment' for religious reasons," is the conclusion reached by the SVR Chairwoman. Most of the population is prepared to give Islam standing equal to other religions institutionally: a narrow majority of the approx. 5,660 respondents with and without a migration background expresses support for Islamic religious classes at state schools (51.3% with and 55.1% without a migration background). Around two-thirds (63.3% and 68.9% respectively) show support for teaching Islamic theology at German universities. However, the desire for special treatment for religious reasons is met with scepticism. Being excused from physical education or swimming lessons for religious reasons is clearly rejected (68.0% with and 75.9% without a migration background) as is permission for female Muslim teachers to wear headscarves at state schools (54.8% with and 63.1% without a migration background).



The SVR Integration Barometer also shows that it will still take time, effort and a smart approach on the part of participating actors until Islam is seen as an integral part of Germany's diverse religious landscape. The majority, albeit a small one, still did not agree with the claim that "Islam is part of Germany". 53.2% of respondents without a migration background did "not really agree" or "completely disagreed" with the claim that "Islam is part of Germany" while 45.2% agreed with the statement. The reverse was true for respondents with a migration background. In this group, a narrow majority (54.0%) "mostly" or "completely" agreed that Islam is part of Germany. But 44% also disagreed with this statement. Langenfeld warned not to arrive at premature conclusions based on these figures: "Anyone who believes that this is evidence of a generally sceptical or hostile attitude toward Islam in the population is mistaken. However, anyone who looks the other way and thinks that nothing needs to happen in the further development of institutional equality and interreligious relationships is also mistaken." According to Langenfeld, the findings of the Integration Barometer are an important signal that cannot be ignored.

SVR calls for further development of the Dublin mechanism

The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) adopted at European level in the summer of 2013 defined in particular improved regulations for asylum processes and protection standards. They can lead to more legal protection for refugees and form the basis for a standardised European asylum and refugee policy. "Uniform enforcement of these standards in all EU countries, however, is still a huge task," said Langenfeld. In addition, the member states did not confront the main refugee policy problem of uneven distribution of asylum seekers to the individual EU member states. Even though – as an analysis performed by the SVR's Research Unit shows – the widespread assumption in the general public that southern European countries are generally affected by high numbers of refugees and the countries in the north do not take in as many refugees due to their geographic location is false (and thus, in many countries, the rhetoric of being unable to cope with the influx of refugees and the reality of accepting and supporting refugees deviate substantially from one another), the fact is, however, that some countries do take in far more refugees than others. The SVR thus calls for fairer burden sharing. To achieve this goal, what is known as the Dublin principle under which the country of first entry is responsible for the asylum process would have to be expanded. Countries that are objectively overburdened could be helped by a process for fair burden sharing.

For refugees in acute crisis situations, the SVR also calls for a temporary protection status that spares refugees from the complex asylum process and offers coordinated and non-bureaucratic acceptance of a large number of refugee-seekers by the EU member states.

Modern citizenship law not yet a reality

The category of missed opportunities certainly includes the compromise reached by the federal government on citizenship law. Even though it will eliminate the *Optionspflicht* (obligation to choose one citizenship) which the SVR has been urging for quite some time, it will give rise to two new problems: an illogical asymmetry is created between citizenship acquired by birth on the one hand and through naturalisation on the other. Precisely immigrants who want to become citizens and not only have to furnish evidence of a secure income and German proficiency, i.e. 'successful integration', but also have to pass a citizenship test, are still not allowed to have dual citizenship. Dual citizenship is possible under certain circumstances, however, when citizenship is acquired by birth. Moreover, the compromise does not solve the problem of unlimited 'inheritance' of the citizenship of the country of origin. The result is politically and legally problematic multiple nationalities. One solution is the model of "dual citizenship with generational cut-off" proposed by the SVR. According to the SVR Chairwoman, "this model kills three birds with one stone": the *Optionspflicht* would be eliminated, dual citizenship would be possible for interim generations and upon naturalisation and unlimited



inheritance of nationality through jus sanguinis (principle of origin) would be prevented and thus the accumulation of multiple nationalities. "The coalition partners should find the energy to completely modernise the citizenship law still in this legislature period," recommended Langenfeld.

Overall, the SVR concludes that Germany, after many years of lethargy in migration and integration policy, has gained momentum once again and is now on track to become a modern immigration country. Policymakers continue to be called on to tackle these issues courageously, comprehensively and in line with goals. Integration policy needs to be more dynamic: there continues to be need for political action primarily in educational integration, in citizenship law and also in the equal institutional treatment of Islam. This shows the ongoing strong need for independent policy consultation in the areas of integration and migration. In its fifth annual report, the SVR again supplies concrete, research-based recommendations for action for the necessary further development of integration and migration policy. The prerequisites are already in place: The SVR Integration Barometer still shows a pragmatic-positive integration climate and thus the opportunity and the openness to push forward along the chosen path.

You can download the annual report and several graphics from www.svr-migration.de.

Your contact for press enquiries:

Dorothee Winden, Communication
SVR GmbH, Neue Promenade 6, 10178 Berlin
Tel. 030-288 86 59-18 and presse@svr-migration.de

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, Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft and the Vodafone Foundation Germany. 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 nine researchers from different disciplines and research institutes: Prof. Dr. Christine Langenfeld (Chairwoman), Prof. Dr. Ludger Pries (Deputy Chairman) as well as Prof. Dr. Gianni D'Amato, Prof. Dr. Thomas K. Bauer, Prof. Dr. Wilfried Bos, Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann, Prof. Dr. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Prof. Dr. Ursula Neumann and Prof. Dr. Hacı Halil Uslucan.

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