

# Integration

## Our target

Integration 2020: We wish to shape Germany's immigration society and drive integration forward

We live in a society of immigration that is characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity. To ensure that this society continues to thrive in the future, it is crucial that advantage be taken of the potential offered by everyone living in Germany and that they be given the opportunity to take part in central areas of society's life.

A key prerequisite for successful participation is education. We are therefore committed to eliminating the inequalities which exist between people of migrant and German origin in terms of school and university qualifications.

Our goal is to reduce by 2025 the inequality in Germany in terms of school and university qualifications achieved by people of migrant origin aged 15 to 30 by 70 percent, based on the 2005 level. As an interim target, we are working to reduce these discrepancies by 30 percent by 2015.

## Thematic background and relevance

In 2004, the German Immigration Council defined integration as the opportunity to participate in central areas of society's life on as equal a footing as possible. This is a reciprocal process whereby the majority society must evolve to become a society which embraces immigration.

In Germany, a society characterized by immigration of growing diversity is evolving. In total, 20 percent of Germany's population is of migrant origin; the figure is even higher among children and young people. Demographic changes will give rise to even greater linguistic, cultural and religious diversity.

In a society in which liberty and social justice prevail, diversity must be associated with open opportunities in life. The chance for everyone to take part in central areas of society's life is also crucial for social peace. Germany relies on the best possible utilization of all the talent available in the country, as the social and fiscal costs of any wasted potential are high. Creating equal opportunities, in other words, is not a matter of social charity but a socio-political challenge that must be overcome in the interests of the immigration society as a whole. If the potential tied up in social diversity is to be fully leveraged, however, viable institutions must be developed to manage it. This is why we are keen to bring about a systemic change which will offer people of migrant origin equal participation opportunities.

We have chosen to concentrate on education, as this is the key prerequisite for successful integration and participation. In the area of education, the aforementioned diversity is currently coupled with social inequality: immigrants are three times more likely than Germans to leave school without any qualifications. They are three times less likely to take the Abitur – the higher education entrance qualification – and three times more likely to obtain no vocational qualifications; last but not least, they are less likely to achieve a university degree. These educational disadvantages are also experienced by second-generation immigrants born in Germany.

## Methods

Education plays a critical role on the road towards equal opportunities. The education system is the only process which every young person in Germany has to undergo; as such, it is a central mechanism of socio-political effect. Social advancement nearly always presupposes an improved educational level. Educational institutions are thus the places where social advancement is made possible outside and independently of the family, or where inequality is reinforced.

Stiftung Mercator concentrates its work in the area of education on children and young people of migrant origin, a target group which is potentially at a particular disadvantage. The reasons for the lack of integration are to be found in a country of immigration which long refused to acknowledge precisely this fact, namely that it is a country of immigration. It is also noticeable that insufficient integration tends to go hand in hand with social problems. Only once this cycle is broken will activities aimed at promoting and supporting particular groups in society become focused less on integration and more on social milieu.

The genuine equality in education that is the goal of Stiftung Mercator differs both from formal equality and from an equality that is based on outcomes. An education system that gives equal merit to equal performance yet fails to give sufficient consideration to unequal starting points simply cements social inequalities. By the same token, education is no guarantee of success; even with optimal support it by no means succeeds for everyone.

To give the immigrant and majority populations genuinely equal opportunities in the area of education, the approach followed by Stiftung Mercator is

primarily systemic in nature. It aims to take preventive action to ensure that everyone involved in the education system (pupils, teachers, parents) is able to competently handle the requirements arising from growing diversity, thereby improving the individual educational results of children and young people and enhancing the performance and efficiency of the system as a whole. Compensatory measures are chosen where an acute need for action is identified.

Private foundations can achieve a great deal more in the field of education than they can in other fields in which inequalities exist between people of migrant and those of German origin. After decades of inadequate integration policy, today's education system is characterized by dynamic change and great complexity in the way it deals with migration and diversity. This offers foundations a chance to achieve particularly great impact through focused intervention.

What is more, within Germany's federal system it is the federal states that are responsible for education. Innovations require strong local initiators who are able to involve partners on a cross-sectoral basis. In addition, educational innovations aimed at greater equality must be communicated across the different levels (local, state and federal). Private foundations can use their networks and their reputations to bring these different levels together and arrange dialogues between decision-makers in the various areas.

If fundamental and strategic influence is to be exerted on the education sector in this manner, an international dialogue is also required in order to learn from good practice in other countries. Stiftung Mercator is sufficiently well-connected in international networks to achieve this.

## Fields of action

In our efforts to help more children, adolescents and young adults achieve better educational qualifications, we are keen to address the core educational institutions, that is to say schools and universities. Our aim is to improve the structure of the educational system, the educational process and the qualification of key actors within the system.

// School and university structures: The structure and the environment in which learning takes place play an important role in successful teaching and the achievement of good qualifications. We are committed to developing the optimal institutional framework conditions to support learning in and with diversity.

// Educational processes in schools and universities: We want educational processes to be geared better to the needs of students, a group which is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. In this context, our focus is not only on generating a stimulating culture of teaching and learning – one which is sensitive to different cultures – but also on designing appropriate curricula in schools and universities. Giving particular consideration to individual potential must become a fundamental principle when redesigning educational processes.

// Qualification of key actors: Our long-term goal is for school and university students of migrant origin to achieve more and better qualifications. For this to happen, the key actors who influence the development of this target group must learn how to handle the needs of a heterogeneous student body and how to satisfy their individual tuition requirements. All actors – teachers, head teachers, parents, professors, lecturers and student counsellors,

not to mention governmental department heads responsible for education and education ministry staff – should be trained so that they are able to design high-quality tuition programmes, promote individuals and work in a participatory and culturally-sensitive manner.

Stiftung Mercator attributes particular importance to the areas of language teaching and the monitoring of educational biographies, which it sees as key aspects of integration work in schools and universities. Additional areas of thematic focus can also be pursued in connection with the aforementioned fields of action.

Since migration and integration are embedded within a transnational context and thus also require European standards and cooperation in addition to local endeavours, we support initiatives in our fields of action that place German integration policy in a European context and develop effective and fair policies and legal standards for Europe.