

## **A new Language and Integration Policy in Germany – The Implementation of a nationwide Integration Course**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please permit me to provide you with a brief overview of how a coherent language and integration policy was created in Germany.

The Act on the Residence, Gainful Employment and Integration of Foreigners on Federal Territory, which came into force on 1 January 2005, placed state integration services for immigrants in Germany on a uniform statutory footing for the first time. The Ordinance on the Implementation of Integration Courses for Foreigners and Ethnic German Resettlers, which came into force at the same time, gave the system of linguistic promotion applying until then an entirely new foundation. The introduction of these regulations simultaneously typified the climax and the provisional conclusion of a long, intensive social and political debate on re-designing immigration and integration in Germany.

In the three-and-a-half years which have now passed,

- More than 550,000 entitlements have been issued for participation in the integration course
- More than 360,000 participants have already attended or have started attending a course. What is remarkable here is that roughly two-thirds of all participants attend a course on their own initiative, that is, voluntarily - and this with an upward tendency.
- Nearly 200,000 participants have already completed the integration course, and almost half of them have reached competence level B1.
- 68 % - that is more than 2/3 - of all participants are women.
- More than 50% of all participants have been living in Germany for many years and more than two thirds of them attend the course voluntarily. This shows that these courses are highly accepted, especially among those who have lived in Germany for a long time.
- Nearly half of those who are legally bound to attend the integration course are people who live on social welfare.

What else do we know about the course participants?

### **School and Education**

Last year we conducted a representative survey in order to receive information about the impact of the integration course in the long term. 280 courses with 3960 participants were involved. The results are the following:

- More than 50% of all participants had attended school for more than 10 years in their country of origin, nearly 30% had attended school between 7 and 10 years, but there are still 16% who had attended school for less than 6 years.

- About one third of all participants had completed a vocational training and one third had actually finished an academic study in his or her home country, but one third didn't have any vocational or academic training at all.

What did these students think about the integration course?

- 80% of the participants came to the course in order to improve his or her competence of the German language and to be able to manage the new life in the new country.
- 77% of all participants hoped to get better access onto the labour market.
- With regard to the learning rate (course progression) - 20% thought it too fast and 9% would like a higher progression in the course, but 71% considered the learning rate absolutely right.
- 78% of all participants were highly satisfied with the course and said that they really enjoyed it. 20% told us, that they had still some fun and only 2,5% didn't like the course at all.

What is important about the institutions involved in the system?

- It was possible to offer the courses in all parts of the country via roughly 1,900 approved organisations, which offer their courses at more than 6.000 locations – that is across the whole country. The biggest group – that means nearly 30% - are publicly funded adult education centres (Volkshochschulen), which work across the whole country and offer nearly 50% of all courses.
- The teaching staff are either already highly-qualified or is to attend a specially-developed skill-building programme in order to acquire the qualification required to engage in teaching activity in the long term.

### **How did this success come about?**

As has already been stated, the Residence Act and the Ordinance on Integration Courses, which came into force on January the first 2005, placed the state integration services for immigrants on a uniform, national statutory footing, thereby completely reforming the system of language promotion which had previously been in place.

Against the background of national and international developments, which are reflected most clearly on the labour market, the question of how to shape a modern immigration and integration policy, which addresses the current needs of our society came to notice in the political sphere and among the public in the mid-nineties. A major problem at that time was that there was still no overarching strategic direction within German immigration and integration history, even after 50 years of linguistic promotion. This led to duplicate work in one place and to a lack of provision in another. The concepts frequently failed to accommodate suitably the links between the various areas of the different groups of immigrants, which often led to measures lacking in coherence, effectiveness and precision.

Representatives of all state levels and social groups participated in a lively exchange of opinions. At the end the conviction remained that, in order to be successful, immigration and integration must form a single unit. The debate as to how integration processes could be made efficient soon focused on the question of the German language knowledge required of all groups of migrants permanently living in the country, that is of new immigrants arriving after flight or having been expelled (asylum-seekers), immigrants arriving through family reunification and ethnic German Resettlers, and the question occurred of whether these groups had different needs within the integration process.

The outcome of this broad societal debate was the integration course as a main tool of integration promotion in Germany. In addition to promoting knowledge of German, this integration course was also to constitute an introduction to the basics of the legal and political system in Germany, as well as to serve as an orientation within society and at work. However, the promotion offered was to focus on language acquisition.

The following essentials typified the integration course at its beginning 2005:

- A language course with 600 lessons - divided into a basic and an additional course of 300 lessons each.
- The orientation course which provides civic orientation - with 30 lessons following on from the language course.
- The educational objective of the language course: competence level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
- At the end of the course there was a final language examination at level B1.
- A participant-related invoicing of the courses on the basis of 2.05 Euro per participant per lesson.

When implementing this ambitious programme, it was possible to fall back on the long tradition of language promotion during the last 50 years in Germany, which despite the lack of an all-embracing concept had produced tried-and-tested individual educational programmes and a profiled organisational landscape of adult education centres.

At the same time, new paths had to be taken. For instance, for the first time, uniform national standards were applied and then had to be adhered to in practice during the courses. They related both to the educational and the administrative spheres, and constituted a new challenge to course organisations and teaching staff.

In order to implement this ambitious project effectively and to gain information about how it worked in practice, almost at the same time as the introduction of the integration course, a nationwide evaluation was commissioned through all of 2006.

### **Results of the evaluation**

The evaluation showed that we had been really quite successful.

But despite of this there were still shortcomings and the potential to improve the system:

For example

- In order to increase the effectiveness of the courses in the long term, improvements would be needed in the quota of goal achievement of the integration course (competence level B 1), as well as the sustained effectiveness of the courses.
- Furthermore, procedural steps and the effort in the organisation and administration of the courses were to be streamlined.

The report on the evaluation had summarised the possibilities to optimise the system of integration courses in seven main fields:

1. Improving the success of the courses – which means in fact the success of the participants – by concentrating on their special needs through tailor made course concepts and by increasing the number of lessons required by different target groups.
2. Success control by introducing obligatory final tests.
3. Improving the quality of the orientation course by drafting a curriculum, a standardised test and introducing a special skill-building for the teachers deployed on the orientation course.
4. It was considered by the report that safeguarding a course supply across the whole country on an as needed basis had been achieved. But nevertheless the access for certain target groups, such as women or parents, had to be simplified.
5. The sustainability of the courses had to be improved by interlinking the courses with labour market promotion (e.g. internships) and through improved cooperation with the consulting services.
6. Reducing the administrative effort by reducing bureaucracy, e.g. by introducing online solutions.
7. Last but not least: Improving funding modalities.

These results of the evaluation formed a firm basis for the further design of the integration courses.

### **What has actually been completed, changed and improved since then and now?**

Let me begin with Organisational and Financial improvements

- The possibilities to participate in the integration course have been expanded.  
It is - for instance - now possible for Germans with a migration background to attend a course if they do not have adequate knowledge of German.
- A variety of different incentives has been created: For instance, those who successfully complete the course within two years are refunded half their own contribution, which otherwise is 1 Euro per lesson.
- Travel expenses are refunded for many participants, or a subsidy is awarded.

- Participants who receive social benefits have been exempted from the participant's contribution.
- The funding rate per participant and lesson was increased from 2.05 to 2.35 Euro in order to ensure that the teaching staff can be properly paid. This is particularly important since a high teaching quality is considered to be extremely important for course quality and this can only be ensured if well-trained teaching staff is employed.
- To meet the requirements of some special courses, such as literacy and youth courses, as to the organisation, maximum numbers of participants and the qualification of the teaching staff, these courses are now much better funded.
- To enable mothers in particular to attend courses and avoid dropping out funding of child-care has also been improved.

### **Pedagogical improvements**

Meanwhile there have been developed different tailor made course concepts for all main target groups, such as illiterate participants, women, parents, young students and we now concentrate on concepts for those students who have already lived in Germany for many years and are subsequently quite fluent in German, but can't read and write sufficiently. These learners struggle with other problems than those who have just arrived and have lived in Germany only for a short time.

Since all these special courses are provided with additional 300 lessons – that means 900 lessons in the first step – and the possibility to get another 300 lessons if students fail the final exam on competence level B1 – which means a maximum of 1.200 lessons all together for the language course – all teaching concepts are currently being drawn up for all these special target groups.

An appropriate concept is also being developed for participants who are able to reach the B 1 level in fewer than 600 lessons (intensive course).

Next to the course concepts, which outline the essentials for the different courses, such as the educational objectives, the main contents and course methods, the uniform framework curriculum - which was developed by the Goethe-Institute in 2007- is the common basis for all courses. It constitutes a listing of all possible learning goals for the target group of migrants in the field of German as a Second Language according to the CEFR. The teachers are now to adapt these learning goals according to the needs of their actual learning groups.

Also for the civic orientation course, a uniform curriculum has been developed. Its main contents are the legal system, history and culture of Germany. The number of class hours of the orientation course has also been extended, and it now covers 45 lessons. The Humboldt University in Berlin is currently developing a standardised final examination for the orientation course.

The number of class hours has been increased also for the standard integration course for those participants who have dutifully attended the integration course, but did not reach competence level B 1 in 600 hours. They are to receive an additional allowance of 300 hours.

What else has changed?

It is also worth mentioning the new testing system:

The grading test has been revised by the Goethe Institute, and because of its significance for the categorisation of the participant into the correct module of the integration course has been given an even more differentiated structure. Its use now having been made obligatory for the correct categorisation at all levels. Moreover a recommendation is now issued as to whether participants should attend a special course.

Another goal is for no one to leave the integration course (after 600 or 900 or even 1200 lessons) without having positive proof of his or her linguistic level, even if competence level B1 was not attained. That is why the “German Certificate” test in use so far at competence level B1 is currently designed by the Goethe Institute as an adaptive test, which is then to include competence levels from A2 to B1.

### **The teaching staff**

In order to enable the teaching staff to achieve all this, a special teaching qualification was developed by the Goethe Institute and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees - which in addition to didactic problems - deals with migration-specific problems, too. This means that with this newly developed programme for the first time there are national standards in Germany in skill-building for teaching as a second language for adults. The courses currently employ approx. 10,000 teachers, of whom more than 2,500 have now received special training.

Further training is not needed for graduates of Universities who have studied German as a Foreign or Second Language. Roughly 5,000 teachers have such or similar training.

### **Panel - Survey**

Finally, one more important tool for quality assurance should be mentioned: The Integration-Panel-Survey to measure and review sustainable integration success. Here, over a period of two years, both – non participants and participants in the integration course are asked about their respective situation before and at the end of the integration course, as well as one year after completing the integration course. The results of both groups are compared as to their integration success. Success is determined here by the self-assessment of the participants as to their own situation in Germany and as to their integration on the labour market. This is to examine in the long term whether the integration course is the right tool for an integration process, which aims to create equal opportunities and participation.

As you can see, we have done a lot in recent years in order to enable people who have immigrated to Germany to have a good start in their new lives. This has naturally not yet brought us to the end of the process, but we have taken major steps, which are now to be examined as to their effectiveness and naturally further adjusted. A major role will be played in this process by academic results, as well as by exchanges of experience such as this conference.