

***Opening of the 22nd German Congress on Crime
Prevention in Hanover on 19 June 2017***

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Against the background of the current development of immigration to Germany, with approximately one million people seeking protection in the years 2015-2016 alone, the 21st German Congress on Crime Prevention referred in its Magdeburg Declaration to the potential and actual contributions that crime prevention work can make, and is already making, in terms of the integration of these immigrants.

With the aim of discussing these contributions of crime prevention to integration, of asking how the tried and tested efforts of prevention can be applied to integration, today's 22nd German Congress on Crime Prevention has made prevention and integration its key theme and commissioned a number of reports, whose key concerns, findings and demands I would like to briefly outline for you here.

I shall begin with Chancellor Merkel's well-known phrase from 31 August 2015, "We can do this" ("Wir schaffen das") – without, however, stopping there, but rather asking: What is it that needs to be done? What insight does the data give us about the people who have sought refuge in Germany, particularly since 2015? What do we know about their number, their social composition, their circumstances, their prospects, their hopes and aspirations?

Who is to be integrated, and how? And I ask, how is this task of integration to be accomplished? What needs to be done, what needs to be encouraged, fostered, and certainly also overcome? And what about attitudes and responses in the host society and in politics towards this immigration and the challenges it entails?

1) On the first point, the first question: What is it that needs to be done?

Here we already have the first data problem, because not even the exact number of those seeking protection is known. Estimates suggest some 890,000 asylum seekers for the year 2015, and approximately 280,000 in 2016, making a total of almost 1.2 million people, prima-

rily from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The overall protection rate – meaning reasonably good prospects of remaining in the country – was 50 % in 2015 and 62 % in 2016. There is hardly any reliable data on the circumstances, the individual and social conditions, the hopes and aspirations of those seeking protection, either. From what we know, the refugees are very heterogeneous, predominantly male, have a low average age, approximately 2/3 young men under 30 years of age, including a large number of unaccompanied minors. They have high aspirations when it comes to education and earnings, thus presenting considerable potential for integration into the education system and the labour market; also, however, a great challenge and a great effort if this potential is to be leveraged for the benefit of everyone.

Opportunities for this are also presented by the fact that the number of refugees has been decreasing significantly in recent months. Nevertheless, there are more than 1 million immigrants to be integrated. Even if we assume that perhaps about 60 % of the refugees will stay or want to stay, the task of integration is enormous.

2) How is this task to be accomplished? Unlike some years and decades ago – I recall the xenophobic sentiments and actions against asylum seekers and ethnic German resettlers in the early 1990s – this time the underlying mood among the population of the German host society is, surprisingly for many, very positive. It is true that the so-called “welcoming culture”, which has been and is still expressed, among other things, in a very high level of voluntary commitment, has now given way to a kind of “welcoming realism”, but in my view this is by all means a positive development.

A welcoming culture and a welcoming realism are surprising not only in view of the former attitude in the host society towards migration and towards migrants, but also because of the great public dissatisfaction with politics that has been there from the outset. The cause of this dissatisfaction was and is the, shall I say, indecisive policies, above all of the federal government, its vacillation between irreconcilable intentions, namely between integrating refugees and keeping them out.

On the one hand, failures in migration and integration policies of the past are admitted and are to be avoided; on the other hand, asylum and refugee policy has been steadily tightened, particularly also with regard to refugees’ prospects of remaining in the country – one of the key prerequisites for their integration. Instead of this political shilly-shallying, what has long been needed is an evaluation, commensurate

with the challenge at hand, of the future opportunities and risks from an economic and social perspective, and the development of a viable overall concept for immigration to Germany. And this not least in the context of the shift that has come about in the last 10 to 15 years in terms of attitudes to migration among the population and to a certain extent – here the public seems to be a step ahead of the politicians – to a certain extent in politics, too.

Whereas until at least the turn of the century, the opinion was held that “Germany is not a country of immigration”, in recent years the social reality of migration has been recognised and acknowledged. Germany as an immigration society is the new normal, especially for the younger generation. This has also altered the way in which integration is understood. Integration is no longer a one-way street that demands integration efforts from immigrants only, but is understood rather as set out in the EU’s basic principles of 2004 as a dynamic process of mutual accommodation by immigrants and host country nationals, it is both individual effort and an obligation of the majority society to break down barriers to integration. Integration is understood as equality of opportunity, as equal opportunities for participation, and as an equalisation of the living conditions of people with and without a migrant background.

Integration, as Minister-President Stephan Weil has repeatedly pointed out, is no easy task. But, to quote migration researcher Klaus Jürgen Bade, “We could relax”. One way or the other, he said, integration in Germany had always worked out in the end. Integration is not an administrative measure. It is a protracted process that plays out in the job market, in civil society, and in political values.

As was already the case with the welcoming culture, here, too, the local communities are pivotal in ensuring that the integration of refugees can succeed, because people live together locally, in the cities and municipalities. And the communities are also where preventive strategies, programmes and measures are in the first instance implemented, tested and appraised. Which brings us to the question of how crime prevention can contribute to the integration of those seeking protection.

There is, first of all, its very fundamental contribution that stems from the fact that crime prevention is directed at inclusion, at social participation, that it protects the public sphere, improves the sense of safety and security, and clearly demonstrates the socially binding norms and values. Crime prevention thus creates an atmosphere of solidarity, of

belonging and of social trust, of the reliability of the shared norms and values, and not least of confidence in the institution of the state. Furthermore, crime prevention work has for decades adopted a cross-departmental and interdisciplinary approach that takes in the whole of society and can therefore draw on proven strategies, measures and concepts with the objective of integration. This also means recognising that the crime prevention measures must not relate only to the refugees but also, in at least equal measure, to the German host society itself.

Prevention with the objective of integration must also begin by addressing the uncertainties, the anxieties and fears of the population, by taking them seriously and not immediately stamping them as right-wing. Prevention work has many years of positive experience with these kinds of strategies and concepts of universal prevention that go far beyond crime prevention. There are numerous projects and initiatives across Germany in the communities that are helping to overcome prejudices, engender social interaction and provide concrete assistance to the refugees, for example in terms of language acquisition, the job market, integration, education, etc.

Prevention can, however, not only contribute to integration but also do this in a particularly effective and lasting manner if it itself is integrated. Allow me, therefore, to conclude by emphatically reiterating the German Congress on Crime Prevention's call for the establishment of cross-departmental crime prevention centres, a call that was also made at the 19th and the 21st German Congress on Crime Prevention. In order to meet the challenge of integrating refugees into our society, all stakeholders need to work together and develop integrative prevention strategies. For this purpose, cross-departmental crime prevention centres should be established or developed further at all levels – local authorities, federal states and the Federal Government. All areas of prevention – civil society institutions, youth welfare services, the police and judiciary, education and social policy institutions, the fields of public health, media, business, etc. – could work together in these crime prevention centres and build the foundation for a systematic and, in particular, lasting prevention strategy and prevention policy for the whole of society.

In view of the major task of integration, the German Congress on Crime Prevention calls on policymakers to make appropriate funding available so that such crime prevention centres can be established and tested, particularly at the local level.

I thank you for your attention.

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