

## Summary

### Refugee and Integration Policy in Cities, Districts and Municipalities – Findings from Two Municipal Surveys, Early and Late 2016

- To date, cities, districts and municipalities have, in their own estimation, managed the tasks and challenges involved in the reception and integration of refugees well or very well. As key factors in their success they mention the efficiency of the municipal administration, the prevailing positive sentiment and openness of the general public, the strong voluntary involvement with refugees and good relations and coordination between the relevant actors in the municipalities.
- The attitude of the local population towards the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees is viewed as very positive or positive by most municipalities; one-third characterise it as neutral and less than 10 per cent as rather negative. The positive or at least neutral attitude of the population appears to have been largely stable during the period of investigation. In three out of four municipalities the attitude of the general populace did not change in the course of 2016.
- Efforts to help refugees in the local population was viewed as very high or high by 60 per cent of municipalities in late 2016 (in early 2016 it was still 80 per cent). Given the sharp decrease of refugee numbers in 2016 the findings indicate that a considerable proportion of those involved remained on board during the transition from reception and provision of basic needs to assisting and supporting refugees in the integration phase.
- As a result of the largely positive or at least neutral sentiment among the population with regard to the reception and integration of refugees, as well as the strong commitment to helping refugees on the part of civil society, social cohesion on the ground clearly rather improved than deteriorated. A majority of municipalities assess it as very high or high. In other words, to date immigration has barely altered local social cohesion.
- Among the measures taken by municipalities to reinforce social cohesion those surveyed attributed the highest significance to an early and comprehensive information policy, the involvement of the population in an active integration policy and support for welcome initiatives, as well as guidance, mentoring and sponsorship programmes. The findings show how mutually dependent municipal action, civil society commitment and social cohesion are.
- The reception and integration of refugees require municipalities to tackle a wide range of tasks, which concern above all the refugees themselves, but also the local community. Establishing access to the labour market, making available training, care and educational facilities, language courses and skills assessment and the matter of qualifications are all issues that came to the fore during 2016.
- Municipalities are able to draw on their own resources when tackling tasks and challenges. In this respect, those surveyed attributed most importance to the local citizens, followed by the municipal administration and local cooperation and contextual factors (labour and housing market, educational/training and community institutions). The management of the integration process, the integration of refugees in work and education/training, as well as integration as a joint municipal task were what gained most importance in 2016.
- The municipalities require strong support from the federal government and the *Länder* if they are to be able to cope successfully with the reception and integration of refugees over

the long term. Their particular needs include better coordination of refugee policy between state levels, improved reimbursement of municipal costs and the expansion of language and integration courses. Municipal support needs increased in 2016, in particular in the areas of language training and the integration of refugees in educational/training establishments and in the labour market.

- The municipalities mentioned cooperation and networking, inter-departmental action and a strategic approach as the key elements needed to develop municipal refugee and integration policy further. In these circumstances, improving the management of the situation by establishing refugee and integration policy as a cross-cutting inter-departmental task and making refugee integration a joint endeavour of political, administrative, economic and civil society actors became increasingly important in the course of 2016.

### **Suggestions and recommendations for a viable municipal integration policy in periods of heightened flight and migration (theses)**

1. Municipalities should embrace »policymaking in uncertain times« with regard to flight and migration and tackle it proactively.
2. Municipalities need to seek out integrated solutions to cope with the part of the populace with a migration background, which is becoming ever more complex and diverse.
3. Municipal policy should do more to get civil society on board and to get it involved in the development, design and implementation of urban and integration policy goals.
4. In future, municipalities should do more to facilitate and support refugee participation.
5. Municipalities should recognise the intercultural openness of the local population as a key resource and reinforce it.
6. It is incumbent upon municipalities to identify integrated policy solutions to the worsening socio-political line of conflict and division that might be characterised as »opening up versus closing down« the nation-state. The issues of migration and immigration have only intensified it.
7. Municipalities should exploit the challenge to develop inclusive local guidelines that conceive of refugee immigration and migration as an opportunity for development and to translate it into a coherent, strategically oriented integration and urban policy.