

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

OF THE

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

TO

FIGHT RACISM, XENOPHOBIA,

ANTI-SEMITISM AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

II. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POLICY

In 2002, the Federal Government designed a long-term, dynamic and comprehensive strategy to fight racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. This strategy rests on the following pillars:

1. human rights policy and human rights education,
2. supporting civil society and strengthening civic values,
3. promoting the integration of immigrants, and
4. measures targeted at perpetrators and their environment.

This strategy continues to be significant today, and each of its components is constantly revised to keep up with the latest problems and information.³

³ The four-pillar strategy is outlined in the "Report on the current and planned measures and activities of the Federal Government against right-wing extremism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and violence", which was sent to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights already in 2003 as the first building-block in Germany's national follow-up to the World Conference Against Racism in Durban.

1. Human rights policy and human rights education

1.1 Human rights policy

As part of its policy on human rights, the Federal Government gives high priority to combating racism and xenophobia.

The Federal Government's 8th Human Rights Report, its latest report on its human rights policy in the context of foreign relations and other policy areas, contains extensive information on combating racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism as a priority of German human rights policy in the field of foreign relations. The Federal Republic of Germany works in particular within the framework of the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), among other things supporting the work of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), established in 2007 as an outgrowth of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

At UN level, Germany ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) of 7 March 1966 already in 1969; since then Germany has worked closely with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which monitors implementation of the Convention. The Federal Government provides the Committee with regular country reports on measures taken at national level to prevent and eliminate racial discrimination.

The Federal Government's Human Rights Report also deals with the human rights situation within the Federal Republic of Germany; one area of emphasis is presenting means and methods used to fight racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in Germany.⁴

Further, the Federal Government supported the creation of an independent human rights institute in Germany in terms of both substance and structure (by guaranteeing institutional support): The German Institute for Human Rights (DIMR), founded on 8 March 2001, fulfils

⁴ The Report of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on Its Human Rights Policy in the Context of Foreign Relations is available in English on the Internet at www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/Themen/Menschenrechte/8.MR.Bericht.html

the criteria for independent human rights institutions as defined in the “Paris Principles”. The Federal Government, parliament and non-governmental organizations belonging to the Forum Menschenrechte network of German human rights organizations were all involved in defining the institute’s tasks, powers and organs. According to its by-laws, the DIMR has the following main tasks:

- Information and documentation; the institute is to organize an information network to serve as central point of contact
- Human rights education within Germany, in order to anchor the significance of human rights in the public consciousness
- Praxis-oriented research, in particular studies to develop strategies for avoiding and overcoming relevant conflict situations
- Policy advising
- Promotion of dialogue and cooperation between government and non-governmental institutions and organizations

The Federal Government believes the DIMR should be a civil-society institution and independent of the government; as a result, the government representatives who serve on the institute’s boards do not have voting rights.

Until 1998, only a subcommittee of the German Bundestag’s Committee on Foreign Affairs was devoted to human rights. The Federal Government therefore welcomed the Bundestag’s decision in 1998 to establish a full-fledged Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid.

Future plans:

The Federal Government will carefully evaluate its human rights reports with regard to the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in order to ensure effective implementation.

1.2 Human rights education

Education to increase tolerance and awareness of human rights is certainly a core task for all types of schools. In the Federal Republic of Germany, schools and preschool education are the sole responsibility of the 16 German states (*Länder*). All the states' constitutions and school legislation define human rights education as their highest educational aim. The Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (KMK) has repeatedly laid great stress on the importance of human rights education in the curriculum and in schools' everyday operations, and has drafted and implemented educational strategies to this end. The Federal Government has expressly welcomed and supported these efforts. In their recommendation on promoting human rights education (KMK decision of 4 December 1980, in the version of 14 December 2000), the ministers stated that human rights cannot be upheld through state action alone, but through the conduct and engagement of every individual.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted relevant resolutions, which Germany expressly supported. For example, after the end of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004), the World Programme on Human Rights Education was unanimously adopted on 10 December 2004 and on 14 July 2005 a plan of action was adopted which calls for national plans of action for schools of general education in order to expand the human rights curriculum. The UN Human Rights Council underscored the outstanding importance of human rights education when it decided on 28 September 2007 to extend the initial phase of the world action plan to 2009. In addition, on 9 November 2007 the UN General Assembly agreed to proclaim an International Year of Human Rights Learning, to begin on 10 December 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The foundations for the significance of human rights should be laid with public and private education and training. Young people in particular need to develop an intellectual and emotional understanding of democracy and fundamental rights. There must be an awareness in society that democracy must be lived, further developed and occasionally fought for.

As part of their task of educating and socializing children and young people, families, kindergartens, youth services and schools play an important role in preventing right-wing extremism, xenophobia, racism and violence, thus helping to sustain and advance democratic culture. The Federal Government places special value on preventive efforts starting at an early

stage. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in particular have the important task of sharing experience by constantly developing and updating appropriate model projects.

All the German states see it as a substantive task of the schools to teach pupils respect for human dignity and to convey fundamental values as defined in the Basic Law. In addition to learning about the democratic system in the Federal Republic of Germany, children and young people should also develop tolerance and respect for other cultures and a sense of responsibility towards society. On this basis, schools attempt to counteract unequal opportunities and discrimination as far as possible and enable all individuals to develop to their full potential. In this context, everyone has the right to suitable education and training, regardless of background or social status. The states also recognize parents' ordinary rights in raising their children and take these into account in their actions.

The states determine how many hours of instruction per week and year in which subjects can and should be devoted to the issues mentioned above. Subjects such as religion, ethics, philosophy, history and social studies as well as economics/politics, geography and German play an important role. Values and norms as well as human dignity can be discussed in religion, ethics and philosophy classes, while totalitarian systems are often discussed in history classes; the concepts of slavery, oppression and racist ideology are contrasted to the values of enlightenment, freedom and equality. The basic elements of democracy, such as free and fair elections, can be taught in social studies classes, while discussion may focus on issues of social inequality or terrorism. In economics-related courses, it is possible to address the social market system or the concept of globalization and its problems, while German classes can study and reflect on relevant literary texts. And in geography, topics such as developing countries, other cultures and the (unequal) distribution of natural resources are relevant in this context.

Despite the variety of possible topics in various subject fields listed here as examples of human rights education, in most cases schools or departments are usually free to choose the platform they use for human rights education. The topic of human rights can be addressed at every age level if the appropriate subject matter and methods are used.

Various guides and publications are available to help schools with human rights education. There is also a wide range of textbooks for schools and departments to choose from.

In order to ensure effective human rights education, most of the states take targeted measures in the form of in-service training, symposia and teachers' conferences in specialized fields; these measures start already with teacher training, where special attention is given to human rights education as an interdisciplinary theme. At the institutional level, targeted measures are incorporated into the revision of framework lesson plans and objectives as well as legislation on education. Further, the states also provide support for schools and teachers in the form of newsletters and relevant websites. For their part, schools have the possibility to demonstrate their acceptance of social interdependency by carrying out projects, project days and project weeks; establishing partnerships with other schools; and working on behalf of developing countries. Further options include offering internships, acting as a sponsor and supporting institutions active in development aid, as in the case of the UNESCO Associated Schools, for example. In this context, schools have the opportunity to build contacts with non-school partners in addition to working with government institutions. To mention a few examples: UNICEF, UNESCO, the Federal Agency for Civic Education and the state agencies for civil education, as well as partners from the private sector, church organizations, universities and social agencies in general.

Human rights education as a component of civic education at the federal level

The aim of civic education is to promote, throughout society, the understanding of political facts and processes, to strengthen democratic consciousness, and to encourage willingness to participate in the political system. Because civic education conveys the knowledge and insights necessary to deal successfully with right-wing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, the Federal Government gives it outstanding priority especially in this context.

In its educational work, the Federal Agency for Civic Education must address all important social and current political developments. The Federal Agency has also overhauled its offerings and oriented them more closely on the needs of young people and those in the former East Germany. For example, in addition to its print publications for young people, it also offers Internet publications (www.fluter.de) which are very popular, as indicated by the constantly growing number of visitors to its website www.bpb.de. On the Internet, the Federal Agency has also stepped up its activities against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. For example, the website www.bpb-aktiv.de offers informational materials, literature, a calendar of events, addresses of relevant initiatives and an annotated list of links on the subject of right-wing extremism.

Human rights education at federal and interregional level is another central task of the German Institute for Human Rights (DIMR). In addition to general informational events and seminars, this can include drafting curriculum for different occupational groups and offering advanced training for specialists in certain fields for whom human rights issues are especially relevant. The German Institute for Human Rights also functions as a national clearinghouse for human rights education and has initiated a human rights education network which is intended to promote cooperation and exchange between those involved in human rights education in various areas.

2. Supporting civil society and strengthening civic values

The Federal Government is firmly convinced that, to fight racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, state efforts alone are not enough to ensure long-term success. Grounding such strategies in democratic civil society is one of the main factors in their success or failure.

For this reason, the Federal Government has already taken a number of measures to support civil society actors in this field materially, structurally and at the level of ideas, and continues to expand and upgrade these measures depending on the situation.