



Normalising Integration
Living together in an
intercultural metropolis

Dear Reader,

When the topic of integration is brought up, the conversation often turns to us here in Neukölln. We have striven to find the best way to live and thrive together in a diverse metropolitan city. Our wealth of experience is now an enormous advantage: we would even go so far as to say that integration is normal for us. Equal participation is something we always take into account in our work. Our District Office focuses on five key principles of integration.



Our district puts societal problems under the microscope. The art of interaction at the civic and even the individual level has become an ongoing plague on policy, bureaucracy and the everyday life of citizens. Yet we are doing more than simply putting up with the problems facing our neighbourhood – we are actively working towards a better Neukölln. Every day I see a great many Neukölln residents devote a lot of love and commitment to this district and its people – making enormous contributions to integration, whether intentionally or incidentally.

People from over 150 different countries live together in harmony in our local communities. They meet in supermarkets, in their neighbourhood, in local businesses and in our schools. Untold numbers of people advocate for our district, each and every one of them doing their bit in their own way, in their own environment, in their own neighbourhood. But it is together that we will make a difference – and move Neukölln forward!

This booklet will provide you with an overview of the specific work being done in the policy and administrative spheres of Neukölln. The principles set out here can provide all of us living in Neukölln who are committed to positive coexistence in our district with a sense of orientation. I would also like to use this opportunity to present our approach to the cities and communities facing similar challenges today.

This brochure represents a summary of our comprehensive policy document detailing the current situation in our district and our policy approach. The full version also contains the complete list of the measures and projects being implemented by the Neukölln District Office, only one of which will be presented here in each case as an example.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Hikel

Preamble

Berlin-Neukölln is an intercultural metropolis shaped by its long history as a place where immigrants choose to build a new life. From the Bohemian religious refugees to guest workers and those from Arab countries and what was formerly Yugoslavia who found protection here from war and persecution. Even today, people from all over the world are finding their new home in our district. Many of them were forced to flee from crisis regions or precarious living conditions. The district also attracts numerous students and creatives from Germany and the world.

Neukölln is an intercultural metropolis

Today, 329,000 people from 150 nations live next door to each other here. Nearly half of Neukölln's residents have a migrant background. This means that **diversity is the norm** here in the day-to-day life of both our district and our administrative work. Integration is not the work of individual projects and programmes. We see integration as a **job for society as a whole**, which is why, from a policy standpoint, we tackle it as a cross-sectional issue.

Key partners in this have been organisations run by migrants themselves. Together with them and other independent institutions, we have developed numerous **innovative solutions**, which we have implemented as part of **successful projects** such as District Mothers and Campus Rütli.

Our view of integration has changed

And it's not only individual projects that are benefiting from innovation. Our view of the oft-discussed concept of integration has changed as well. As a matter of principle, our focus is not on individual population groups, but on the **people of our district as a whole**.

This new outlook on integration has been central to the development of Neukölln's integration policy since 2009. To us, integration means **empowerment for equal participation in our society**.

We are working to ensure safety and justice

The overarching goal of policy and administrative work is to ensure safety and justice for the entire population. Optimum coexistence – for everyone – exists only if we facilitate people’s participation in society, regardless of their social background.

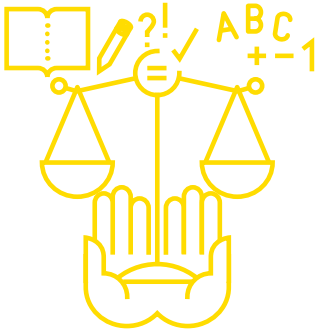
Five principles that guide our work

Our daily work on the ground in an intercultural city is based on the idea that integration succeeds best when it is regarded as the norm. Some insights have come up so often that we have condensed them into five principles for comprehensive integration policy. The focus here is not on whether but rather how we can do it.

Our principles are as follows:

- ① Promoting equity in education
- ② Empowering people instead of just providing for them
- ③ Taking a holistic approach
- ④ Acting pragmatically and transparently
- ⑤ Enforcing democratic values and rules

An overview of our principles:



Principle 1:

Promoting equity in education

Strategic guidelines

1. We promote education and equality of opportunity from birth.
2. We are bolstering our educational institutions.
3. We support educational networks and campus projects.
4. We promote literacy, basic education and lifelong learning.
5. We offer guidance for educational transitions.

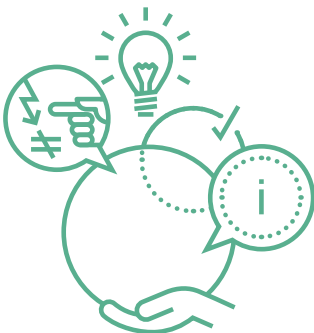


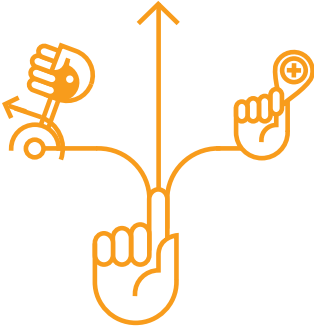
Principle 4:

Acting pragmatically and transparently

Strategic guidelines

1. We acknowledge grievances and do not whitewash anything.
2. We consistently take action against rule violations.
3. We provide comprehensive information.
4. We ensure a balanced distribution of resources.
5. We opt for pragmatic solutions.





Principle 2:

Empowering people instead of just providing for them

Strategic guidelines

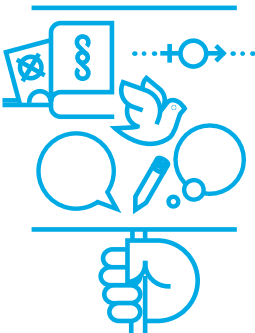
1. We illustrate personal prospects.
2. We foster responsibility.
3. We encourage self-determination.
4. We encourage volunteering.
5. We promote participation.

Principle 3:

Taking a holistic approach

Strategic guidelines

1. We not only think about our jurisdiction, but about our responsibility.
2. We facilitate access to offers.
3. We adapt regulatory structures..
4. We work in an interdisciplinary and inter-agency manner.
5. We work in an open, intercultural way



Principle 5:

Enforcing democratic values and rules

Strategic guidelines

1. The Basic Law – Germany’s constitution – is our standard.
2. We condemn violence and misanthropy.
3. Child and youth protection is a high priority.
4. We are consistent in practising gender equality.
5. We work closely with the police.

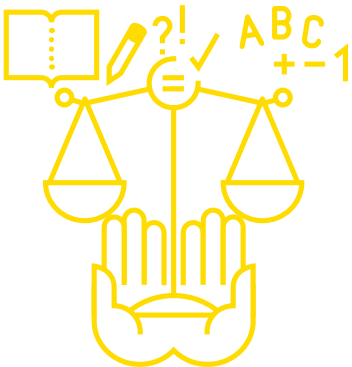
Principle 1:

Promoting equity in education

The current situation

Neukölln is a young city with many young families, young people and young adults. Children and young people under 21 make up nearly 19% of the population. There is great potential here, but there are challenges too as nearly half of the children living in Neukölln are affected by poverty. Their families lack the financial means to support their education.

We are doing everything we can to overcome educational disadvantage and a lack of opportunities. To do so, we must succeed in providing educational equity to all and ensuring educational success regardless of social background.



Strategic guidelines

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We need strong educational institutions to achieve equity in education. In **Neukölln**, we rely on early support, which ideally starts before children begin at school through one of the more than 200 nurseries in the district. More than **80% of all district investment** and additional funding from the state, national government and the EU goes towards our schools and educational institutions.

We are supporting the **expansion of full-day initiatives**, where children are obliged to attend for a full day a certain number of days a week, the creation of **parent cafés**, **learning workshops** and **support centres in schools** as well as the nearly 70 **welcome classes** available for children with no German language skills.



For children whose first language is Turkish, we offer **supplementary education with Turkish language and cultural studies** at more than 25 primary schools in Neukölln. We offer classes in **Turkish as a foreign language** at three of our secondary schools. The clear aim of these measures is to strengthen the **multilingualism of children** in our district.

The district is supporting local **educational networks** to optimise transitions and increase **equity** through cooperation among educational stakeholders..

We are also committed to ensuring the **security of our schools** where necessary. Our work prevents outsiders from bringing conflicts into schools, which, in turn, facilitates a more positive learning atmosphere. We are also taking a consistent **approach to tackling truancy**. In particular, we are doing all this to reduce the number of early school leavers.

Our focus on education as a key aspect to integration is not limited to children. The **Neukölln Adult Education Centre** is a central educational institution open to everyone – regardless of their country of origin, residence status or prospects for remaining in the country. And because education must be accessible to everyone, adult education centre sites are also located in two Neukölln shopping centres.

Because illiteracy poses a significant challenge to our population, we are actively partnering with **Alphabündnis Neukölln**, which is working towards **basic education and literacy** for all adults.

Best practice example

EU FIT IN – European family integration in Neukölln

The EU FIT IN (European family integration in Neukölln) project is funded by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. It offers advice and support to socially disadvantaged families with small children who have immigrated from south-eastern Europe. The Neukölln Youth Welfare Office works with voluntary agencies forming a project association to ensure advice, support and guidance on all issues surrounding early childhood education and attending nursery.

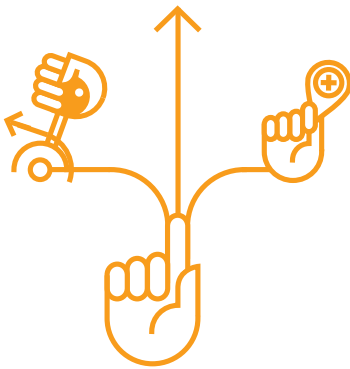
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Principle 2:

Empowering people instead of just providing for them

The current situation

Nearly 90,000 people in our district depend on state financial aid to secure their livelihood. But merely providing financial protection through the welfare state does not do the people of our district justice. Financial subsistence alone does not empower people to participate. On the contrary, dependence on transfer payments often goes hand-in-hand with social and societal exclusion. In Neukölln, we know that positive coexistence for everyone means social disadvantage must not be tied to real-life prospects.



Strategic guidelines

1. We illustrate personal prospects.
2. We foster responsibility.
3. We encourage self-determination.
4. We encourage volunteering.
5. We promote participation.

Our work is **based on each person and their individual history** so we can provide optimal support for transitioning between the different stages of life. Our district's **Youth Advice Centre** and **Youth Employment Agency** provide different kinds of advice to young people as they transition from education to employment.

Projects like “Unternehmen Neukölln” (“Business Neukölln”) and “Carriera – Paths for EU Citizens to Work, Education and Qualification” are based on **customised placement programmes between jobseekers and local companies**.

The **Neukölln District Office itself is doing its part to help skilled young worker as one of the largest employers in the district**. With our five training programmes and four dual Bachelor's degree programmes, we are one of the strongest and most innovative local authorities in the federal state of Berlin.



But we also look beyond labour market policy in empowering our residents. We encourage them to identify with their surroundings and take responsibility not only for themselves, but also for their immediate environment: Different committees facilitate participation in **helping to shape our society, regardless of nationality**. These include, for example, the Migration Advisory Council, the Youth Jury and the neighbourhood councils. Our **neighbourhood management** and **BENN (Berlin Develops New Neighbourhoods) locations** allow us to work with locals to develop **good neighbourhoods** and counteract socio-spatial segregation.

Best practice example

Neukölln Engagement Centre

The Engagement Centre, which was founded in November 2017, has bolstered voluntary engagement in Neukölln and provided additional support. The Engagement Centre's key objectives include providing information, advising and networking with dedicated stakeholders, developing a common vision for volunteering and promoting corporate engagement.

<http://nez-neukoelln.de/>

Principle 3:

Taking a holistic approach

The current situatio

The challenges we face in Neukölln can only be overcome if we think beyond what is simply our jurisdiction and consider what our responsibility is, and act accordingly by acting holistically. We believe that the coexistence of social and ethnic groups takes priority: in housing estates, in school classrooms, in social projects and in the labour market. That is why we are promoting integrative, holistic approaches.



Strategic guidelines

1. We not only think about our jurisdiction, but about our responsibility.
2. We facilitate access to offers.
3. We adapt regulatory structures.
4. We work in an interdisciplinary and inter-agency manner.
5. We work in an open, intercultural way.

It is important for us to **build bridges** with those who have special requirements in terms of the support they need. These bridges then lead to coexistence in regulatory structures. If projects have proven themselves in this respect, we advocate that they be incorporated into our approach.

Cooperating with **organisations and associations run by migrants themselves** in a way that is based on trust is a crucial building block in this process. One example is “**Citizens Helping Citizens**”, a programme that has been running for years directly from Town Hall. The programme offers on-site assistance to anyone who has not yet mastered the German language. Volunteers help explain the structure of the local and national authorities, assist their counterparts in filling out forms and applications and, where necessary, accompany them to appointments to provide linguistic assistance.



We consider our own **intercultural open-mindedness** to be an integral part of promoting integration as an administration. Some **25% of junior administrative staff in Neukölln come from a migrant background** and we are hoping to increase this. In future, we aim to recognise and foster **multilingualism and diversity skills** among our employees.

Climate change, military and economic crises and other disasters all contribute to people being forced to leave their homelands. And some of this responsibility lies with each and every one of us. In order to live up to our global responsibility and bolster sustainable development in Neukölln, we have created the post of **Neukölln Sustainability Officer**.

We believe that acting holistically also means facilitating societal participation for all **generations**. That is why we have been working on **seniors' representation in the district** since 2017. Their policy work and the specific advice they provide on a case-by-case basis makes a great contribution to ensuring residents can enjoy a happy life in their old age.

Best practice example

Berlin Needs You“ – A campaign by the Berlin Qualification Network

The Neukölln District Office is actively supporting the campaign being run by the Berlin Qualification Network (BQN) – Berlin Needs You – and holds a place on the coordination committee. Neukölln is pursuing the goal of increasing the number of young people from immigrant families among apprenticeship positions, thereby contributing to increasing openness to intercultural issues within the administration. Opportunities include: Occupational first contact, work experience, internships, recruitment days and programmes to prepare young people for training and programmes to accompany their training that focus on strengthening language skills.

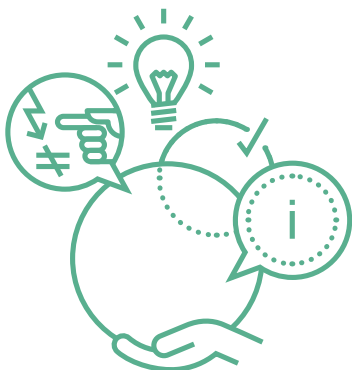
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Principle 4:

Acting pragmatically and transparently

The current situation

We can only maintain public confidence in the state's ability to act if we can ensure public safety and order. Our door is always open for people in our district to come and discuss their concerns with us. Our employees offer clarification, pass on the necessary information to the right person and communicate directly with their colleagues in the appropriate department. We know that open communication between the people and those in a position of responsibility with the state is a key contribution to fostering social harmony within our district.



Strategic guidelines

1. We acknowledge grievances and do not whitewash anything.
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We took action when trade in illicit drugs, their public consumption and the associated criminal offences accumulated near the Neukölln S-Bahn station. The aim is to maintain a good quality of life for residents and passers-by in the area and to provide help to those who are addicted to drugs. To do so, **we expanded our street social work programme**. For example, we set up a **mobile drugs counselling and consumption centre**.

Our approach is to get everyone in a position of responsibility involved. Our priority here is **child and youth protection**. That's why our administrative employees are working with the police to carry out increased numbers of **youth protection checks** in restaurants and public spaces around Neukölln.



We have put together an independent **child protection team** at the youth office to ensure a strong approach to the issue. It can quickly, competently and flexibly respond to threats to a child's welfare.

Not even property owners and residential landlords are left out of the action. We are determined to confront those who take advantage of the plight of the poorest among us for their own gain. Our **Officer for Problem Properties** focuses all the information and measures available to tackle precarious housing conditions. The officer works across different departments and offices in close cooperation with the police.

Neukölln's "Prevention and Intervention of Child and Youth Criminality" action plan brings together all the different parties involved when young people repeatedly engage in criminal delinquency. The Youth Welfare Office, the police and schools are working together to provide these young people with a way back to a life without crime.

Best practice example

Accounting fraud task force at emergency shelters

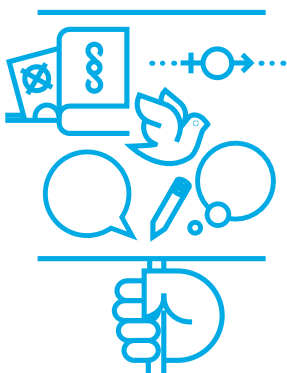
his special working group identifies illegal and inappropriate forms of housing for homeless people and combines all the measures necessary to combat this exploitation of the hardship being faced by the most vulnerable among us. For this purpose, the District Office is working across different departments and in close cooperation with the job centre, the police and social counselling centres.

Principle 5:

Enforcing democratic values and rules

The current situation

The values set out by our constitution form the foundations of coexistence in our society. Our policy and administrative work focuses daily on making sure that the values of our liberal, democratic constitution are non-negotiable.



Strategic guidelines

- ① The Basic Law – Germany’s constitution – is our standard.
- ② We condemn violence and misanthropy.
- ③ Child and youth protection is a high priority.
- ④ We are consistent in practising gender equality.
- ⑤ We work closely with the police.

Our common struggle is with **racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Romanyism and any other form of group-focused discrimination.**

For many years now, the district has been working with different institutions and talking about its **counselling and project options for promoting democracy** in schools, youth facilities and refugee accommodation. These institutions can provide advice, workshops and coaching on dealing with right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim racism, radical Islamism and the Middle East conflict.

Democracy starts with the family. The district of Neukölln is working to support measures and projects that contribute to young people being able to achieve their right to a **non-violent upbringing, the right to choose their own partner and the right to develop their own personalities freely.**



If families want to determine who their children will marry, this represents a fundamental, event criminally relevant, interference with their basic rights. To raise awareness of the issue, the district, in collaboration with the **Working Group on Girls' Work** and TERRE DES FEMMES, has been working to provide education in all of its schools through a letter on forced marriage during the summer holidays and has called on teachers to be more vigilant. We work closely with the Turkish-German Women's Association, which runs a crisis centre called PAPTAYA for girls and young women suffering from domestic violence.

The **Basic Law** is always the foundation for dialogue and cooperation. This means that we consistently strive to guarantee the protection of every person who lives here and defend them against hostility and discrimination. We are consistent in our fight against those who would seek to pit individual population groups against one another, endangering peace in our society.

We are resolute in taking action – together – against those forces that discriminate against people on the basis of their descent, their origin or their faith and who want to see them placed under the blanket of general suspicion.

Best Practice example

Point of Contact for Protection against Discrimination in Schools (ADAS)

ADAS is an independent, Berlin-wide drop-in and advice centre for cases of discrimination in schools. As part of a pilot project, an internal school complaint management system is being developed in Neukölln in cooperation with the schools inspectorate and the District Office. This is being implemented in close cooperation with immigrant organisations, mosque associations and the School Psychology and Educational Inclusion Counselling and Support Centre (SIBUZ). In 2018, the pilot project will address Berlin's education policy with specific recommendations for action.

A holistic approach for an intercultural metropolis

Integration is a long-term process that requires input from all **societal forces** to successfully manage it. That is why we here in Neukölln are working towards a **holistic approach** based on our experience that integration succeeds best when it becomes the norm.

In particular, we recognise the **significant contribution towards integration** that residents of Neukölln have already made and continue to make on a daily basis: People from 150 nations live next door to each other here in our intercultural metropolis. We have over 80 religious communities in our district. Neighbours of different faiths and creeds come together to discuss issues with each other through six inter-religious dialogues. **In Neukölln, we have a long tradition of peaceful coexistence of different cultures and religions** – something that is succeeding in many places day after day. Our express goal is to maintain our district's special diversity.

Many **people in Neukölln are active volunteers** in many places. They see volunteering as a matter of course and have done so for many years – as part of student and neighbourhood initiatives, associations and organisations run by migrants themselves. The **multilingualism** of many of our volunteers here in Neukölln is brought to bear to help more recent immigrants, representing an enormous **gain and providing relief** for the social services and the local authorities in Berlin.

The commitment of all those who work towards positive coexistence here in the intercultural metropolis of Neukölln is unprecedented and highly valued. **We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude.**

This policy paper is based on the practical work done by our policy-makers and administration over the past several years. It was developed as part of a **participatory process** that involved all members of the District Office, all the departments and officers at the District Office, the Integration Committee and the Neukölln Migration Advisory Board.

District Office of Neukölln, Berlin
District Mayor
Martin Hikel
Karl-Marx-Straße 83
12040 Berlin
Tel. (030) 90239-0
<http://www.berlin.de/ba-neukoelln/>
info@bezirksamt-neukoelln.de



be  **Berlin**

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Bezirksamt
Neukölln

