



## Federal Initiative on Integration and Television

### The fundamentals, goals, measures and players

“Address people where they are”

**Michael Mangold**

**Starting point:** Over the next decade, the topics and issues related to the integration of immigrants will tend to become even more relevant, compelling and urgent than they are now. At the same time, it is evidently not clear for many that the tasks of integration can no longer be accomplished with the “customary” means alone. The reason for this is that today the problem is considerably tougher and there are fewer financial means to combat it. We could also say that there is less time and money, while the task to be overcome has got larger. Given this scenario, the measures required to integrate immigrants must be emphatically improved, must be taken swiftly, and must also be efficient. Here, integration is construed in particular as integration into the education system and the labor market. This is the best way to outline the basic setting for our media-focused work to integrate immigrants.

Seen from the viewpoint of social policy and economics, there are two key reasons why the topic of integration needs to be tackled:

- **Social justice and stability:** Now that the third generation of immigrants is experiencing considerable disadvantaging in the labor market and in education, there are clear signs of social isolation and separation. In the German speaking world, the concept of “parallel

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worlds” has become the accepted term to describe this. This trend must not be allowed to continue, if only for reasons of social justice and stability.

- **Demographic change:** The signs are that in coming years there will be a serious lack of skilled employees, and not just in the German labor market. Hence for economic reasons “personnel reserves” need to be tapped. Immigrant youth is one of the most important groups as regards potential that has not yet been exploited. (This is increasingly an issue being discussed by German employee associations.)

All in all there are social and economic reasons to develop new and sustained approaches and instruments for the integration of immigrants. It is precisely the coincidence of these completely different reasons that highlight both the urgency of the problem and the hopes for changes.

### **Television as the key medium for low-threshold education processes**

The integration of immigrants into the education and vocational system must first be given broad roots in everyday life. Here, activities must impact on the everyday life of all addressees and must not remain superficial – we must lock into the habits of the target group. In German there is a saying used to describe this basic idea, namely to “pick the people up where they are”. Put differently, this means developing educational and integration measures that take the everyday life of the addressees as the starting point and directly lock into the way of life they practice. Traditionally speaking, such measures tend to be conceived such that appeals are followed by positive and negative sanctions in order to ensure that the addressees adapt to the state measures and focus their attention on them. However, this does not function on the scale desired. And precisely this is the point where the integration measures to date have been inefficient, and these are the crucial reasons why we have lost so much valuable time, namely decades, and have also wasted massive resources. In coming years, we cannot afford to do so again!

To cut things short – and I am sure you have already seen from the structure of my arguments what tack I am taking: Television is the central element in the everyday lives of those groups of people who are not to be reached with the traditional measures (educational offerings, counseling, etc). I would like to draw your attention here to the especially

pronounced consumption of Television among immigrants. Studies in Germany have shown, for example, that Turkish adolescents spend significantly more time in front of the Television than their German counterparts (Turks on average 4.5 h versus Germans 3.5 h a day). Even if now the Turkish satellite Television stations have acquired a strong status and are thus increasingly squeezing the German stations out of the market, the latter still dominated only a few years ago. German TV still plays a major role here – not least owing to the fact that integration also has to be promulgated by representatives of the host country.

It bears noting in the context of the more pronounced influence of Turkish Television stations that this is without doubt a product of the German programming content and/or of the way in which immigrants have to date been present in Television. If young Turks find themselves always represented in the media in negative roles, as losers or as marginal figures, then this will not really boost their propensity to watch German Television and they will swiftly shift their focus to other Television offerings that take their identification needs more strongly into account.

## **Federal Initiative on Integration and Television**

### **Objectives**

On the basis of these considerations, we founded the “Federal Initiative on Integration and Television” at our ZKM|Institut für Medien und Wirtschaft in the summer of last year. Now I would like to familiarize you with its objectives and the steps we have taken:

- Giving the topics of immigration and integration firm roots in public and private Television: To this end, the complex of issues involved needs to be considered in factual and information programming as well as and primarily in entertainment formats. This should foster stronger roots in the public mind, and thus help integration processes in Germany become more intensive and enduring.
- The successful integration of immigrants in the Federal Republic of Germany is closely bound up with people leading self-determined lives in a democratic society in which they bear responsibility for themselves. Education and employment are the precondition for

personal responsibility and self-determination. For this reason, with the aid of Television we wish to try and help convey positive stimuli for education and vocational training, in particular through entertainment formats. Television as a medium can be used to impart these stimuli as it has a central position in the course of processes of socialization and enculturation.

- Strengthening the personal responsibility of girls and women is an especially important goal that bears special emphasis. This goal can only be effectively pursued if the issue of gendered characters is underscored in a reflected manner overall. Here, too, entertainment formats can play a decisive role.
- Then objectives of the Federal Initiative are closely bound up with the future opportunities the medium of Television has. Thus, film and Television projects have to date only covered the lifeworld of immigrants to a limited extent. The reflected presentation of milieus, life styles, biographies and not least of characters promises to be a considerable benefit for programming content.

## **Federal Initiative on Integration and Television**

### **Measures**

The afore-mentioned goals can in particular be achieved by the following **measures**:

- On balance, immigrants should have a stronger personal presence in documentary and entertainment formats, and thus play high-profile roles imbued with positive attributes. The roles should offer immigrants people with whom they can identify.
- Authors and artists with an immigrant background should be more strongly involved in devising content and on the production side. They must be more strongly represented in front of and behind the camera.
- Cooperation should be triggered between people active in film and Television, researchers on the media and on immigrants, and representatives of the education

system and the business world, as in this way the topic of integration and the related problems can be enduringly anchored in the context of film and Television.

- Ideas and stimuli kindled by this exchange of opinions should be used to develop film and Television projects. This is currently taking place in the form of workshops in which filmmakers are brought together with experts on immigration/integration to develop new formats.
- The inclusion of the subject in training and advanced training needs to be discussed with representatives of the film academies and colleges.
- A public debate should be encouraged on the opportunities afforded by Television and its duties with regard to the subject in question.
- The realization of complex objectives, such as those foreseen by the Initiative, will only be possible on the basis of swift feedback in the sense of accompanying research. We therefore attach great importance to linking media productions and research.
- Given that, for several years now, experts in countries outside Europe in particular have partly focussed on the topics of immigration, integration and the media, we would like to see close collaboration with international partners.

## **Barriers**

There are various barriers to these objectives being achieved. It is therefore critical that we overcome them and I shall thus outline some of them briefly. As in many other areas of social policy, in the world of Television there are ossified notions on a subject (here, among others, on viewer interests and the evaluation of the social reality of immigrants) that constitute an obstacle to innovative approaches.

For example, the idea has established itself that immigration and integration are only a matter for the “Politics” or “Culture” desks in Television stations, in other words are “factual” topics that would be an irritant in entertainment programming and in which viewers would not be interested, as the topics are ostensibly not compatible with their need to be entertained. In

Germany we have traditionally deployed an especially sharp distinction between “entertainment” and “culture”, and this serves to solidify this barrier.

This mindset prevents a focus on the existing opportunities: The exceptionally interesting biographies and related stories, the highly diverse lifeworlds of immigrants, the wealth of different constellations and social types as well as fresh faces/actors – these are the material and basis for “good entertainment”. Their reflective realization would decisively contribute to the integration of immigrants. To date, this link has been far too strongly ignored. A bitter loss for German Television entertainment formats!

The afore-mentioned institutional division between “factual themes” and “entertainment” in the German Television stations has led to stereotypes finding their way into entertainment formats and thus essentially to processes that run against integration. Studies on the presentation of immigrants in German Television show this clearly.

Finally, owing to the above-mentioned mindset and institutional responsibilities the integration potential innate to the entertainment formats has gone undiscovered and unused. We must change this over the next few years! This would also be to the benefit of Television stations that require new formats and want and need to attract new viewer groups. Last but not least, public Television stations have a special public brief to fulfill – and this must not be forgotten!

Television can become one of the key partners in the process of integrating immigrants into society, and also assume a crucial role in the transition to the knowledge society. However, this presumes that traditional notions be overcome. My cursory remarks were intended to outline this.

In the afternoon, as part of a workshop we will go into the substantive work on content more closely. Since we will be working with German film material, the workshop will be held in German.

For additional information and for further studies, please visit the Federal Initiative's Web site at:

**[www.bundesinitiative.org](http://www.bundesinitiative.org)**

I do not wish to end without first thanking the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Baden-Württemberg most cordially for supporting our project! The platform will be financed by the Ministry with funding from the European Social Fund until December 2007. We require financing after that and would therefore be most grateful should sponsors and partners be found who wish to fund our work. At the European level, too!

I also do not wish to end without at least mentioning some of those who have already supported our initiative and we would of course be very pleased should the list become longer and in particular if Television stations were to join up:

## **Federal Initiative on Integration and Television**

### **Supporters**

So far, the following partners – individuals and institutions – have agreed to take part in the “Federal Initiative on Integration and Television” (BIF) or support it:

- Tayfun Bademsoy (actor)
- Hans Beerstecher (Deputy Chairman of the Communications Division of the State of Baden-Württemberg LFK)
- Dr. Axel Boetticher (Judge, Federal Supreme Court BGH)
- Jörg Buschka (TV journalist and film-maker)
- European Assembly of Turkish Academics Baden-Württemberg e.V. (EATA)
- Prof. Rolf Funck (Professor Emeritus, Institute for Economic Policy Research, University of Karlsruhe)
- Mario Giordano (screenwriter and author of children's books)
- Felix Huby (screenwriter)
- Michael Jungfleisch (executive director, GAMBIT Film and TV Production GmbH)

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- Hussi Kutlucan (actor and film director)
- Mehdi Moinszadeh (actor)
- Multiline Netzwerk für MultiplikatorInnen zur Förderung der Medienkompetenz von Mädchen (Scientific Institute of the Youth Welfare Works Freiburg e.V.)
- Ercan Özcelik (actor)
- Edzard Reuter (former CEO of Daimler-Benz AG)
- TELLUX-Film GmbH München
- Turkish Community in Germany (TGD)
- Dominik Wessely (screenwriter and film director)
- Jale Yoldas (executive secretary, German-Turkish Forum Stuttgart e.V.)
- Feridun Zaimoglu (author and screenwriter)