



# CHARTER FOR LIVING TOGETHER IN DIVERSITY IN STYRIA



Das Land  
Steiermark



## The path towards the "Charter for Living Together in Diversity"

In the executive agreement for the legislative period XVI (from 2010 to 2015) of the Styrian State Parliament, SPÖ and ÖVP agreed on the development of a joint Styrian position regarding the topics of integration, dealing with diversity and diversity management. The objective is to ensure that integration is treated both as a joint responsibility and with high priority by the Styrian State Government.

By government resolution passed on 9 December 2010, an inter-departmental Steering Group was established. It was coordinated by the newly created Integration Service and tasked with the development of the **Charter for Living Together in Diversity in Styria**. Based on the preliminary work carried out in Styria as well as the available concepts – including the conceptual framework developed by the "Styrian Integration Platform" – and in consideration of the current state of knowledge and previous experience with the issue of integration and diversity, the definition of this joint position was developed.

This document was created between January and March 2011 with the collaboration of the political offices of

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- Deputy Governor Hermann Schützenhöfer
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- State Minister Dr. Christian Buchmann
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- State Minister Dr. Gerhard Kurzmann
- State Minister Johann Seitingner
- State Minister Dr.<sup>in</sup> Bettina Vollath as well as the Administrative Office of the State.

The development of the Charter was supported by the Specialist Department 6 A – Society and Generations and its Department for Integration – Diversity.

The Charter for Living Together in Diversity was passed in its current version by the Styrian State Government on 14 April 2011, and by the Styrian Parliament on 21 June 2011. The Charter defines the mission statement for the coming decade, and prescribes the framework for action for future integration activities carried out by the State of Styria. The State Government intends to gradually approach the Charter's vision within its sphere of action.



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## Preamble

Wherever people live, work, learn, reside and spend their free time together, the challenges and points of friction of everyday interaction become apparent. In a society which is constantly evolving due to the processes of globalisation, the opening-up of Europe, as well as migration and individualisation, people often no longer feel entirely certain regarding their homeland. However, it is an undeniable fact that society is diverse. Thus, the problem lies not in the existing diversity, but rather in how it is handled.

Styria is aware of the fact that the key to a good approach to a constantly changing society is not to focus on the deficits of individual members of this society, but rather to create ideal opportunities for self-realisation and development by emphasizing the resources of the people living here.

In order to achieve this, the primary approach of the State of Styria is to develop and strengthen public institutions and systems so that they are capable of meeting the requirements of a diverse society in a timely and competent manner.

In this sense, the "Charter of Living Together" expresses the self-conception of policy and administration in the State of Styria regarding a professional, future-oriented approach to societal diversity. As a starting point for Styria's path towards shaping an optimal coexistence of all people living in their Styrian homeland, it defines the common principles and attitudes and lays out the state's strategic objectives.

The State of Styria invites anybody in a position of responsibility from any area of society to sign this Charter, to transfer its contents to their own sphere of action and to fill them with life.





# 1 Principles

- 1.1 The State of Styria commits to the development of an open society on the basis of the fundamental rights established by the European Convention on Human Rights. **Human rights**
- 1.2 Cohabitation of all people living in Styria is based on equal rights and freedom of the individual – with identical rights and identical duties based on our legal order. This legal order cannot be relativized or ruled inoperative under reference to culture, religion, ethnicity, tradition or the like. **Rights and duties**
- 1.3 Living together requires interaction and communication. The diversity of the languages spoken in Styria represents a valuable resource. The common everyday language of the people living here is German. This common language provides support in learning and the passing on of rules and behaviours and in negotiating among equals the terms and manners of living together. **Language**
- 1.4 Styria is moving away from the image of a homogeneous "majority society". For the planning of activities, institutions and policies, it is understood that the people in Styria have different genders, skin colours, religions, first languages, traditions, world views and sexual orientations, that they have different ages and different degrees of financial security, and that they have different disabilities as well as diverging views, talents and capabilities. **Diverse society**
- 1.5 Politics in the State of Styria therefore aim at supporting and promoting equal possibilities for participation for all inhabitants. It is the responsibility of politics to create the framework conditions in a way which ensures that the aforementioned can be achieved. Participation in society, however, is an interaction between a joint social responsibility and the responsibility of the individual to assume personal accountability and to get involved. **Participation**

- 1.6 Integration is a cross-sectional issue which must be perceived as a responsibility in all areas of politics and administration. In this respect, the responsibility for a future-oriented approach to diversity lies with the persons responsible for the individual fields of action. **Joint responsibility**
- 1.7 The political commitment to diversity manifests itself in a mutually appreciative attitude towards differences and commonalities, as well as in the encouragement of the potentials lying therein, in the commitment to equal opportunities and in mutual respect in the course of interpersonal relationships. **Respect**
- 1.8 Discrimination with all its harmful effects is recognised and identified as such and resolutely eliminated. **Discrimination**
- 1.9 Immigration takes place in Styria. The plurality which has arisen therefrom, and which continues to grow and evolve, is not a temporary special situation, but rather a permanent normality. Styria is willing and able to handle this. **Immigration**
- 1.10 The people in Styria have diverse needs. What unites us all, however, is our need for peace, freedom, food and shelter, for safety, health, human contact and family life, for development, education and self-fulfilment and – last but not least – for respect for our personality and for participation in public life. **Commonalities**
- 1.11 Another thing we have in common is that Styria is the area we live in, our homeland. In this sense, "home" is not an exclusive term – it is possible to feel "at home" in various regions or groups, without diminishing our according affiliation. Furthermore, the term "home" is not an exclusive one as it always means sharing your home with others. **Home**

## 2 Attitudes

Dealing with diversity requires a consistent and professional attitude of all persons involved. The most important basic attitudes are listed below:

### We...

- 2.1 ... do not meet cultures or groups in our daily life, but rather individuals. **See the individual**
- 2.2 ... maintain and cultivate our curiosity. Positive curiosity is always focussed on discovering more about other people and not allowing oneself to get distracted by the affiliation with a group and assumptions related therewith. **Be curious**
- 2.3 ... ask to satisfy our curiosity – ideally, we thereby address our questions directly to the person concerned. **Ask questions**
- 2.4 ... focus on the individual, take them seriously and see them as a self-determined participant and not as the object of projects or plans. **Perceive people as self-determined**
- 2.5 ... recognise prejudiced images associated with certain groups and move them aside in order to be able to discover the person behind these prejudices. **Move prejudice aside**
- 2.6 ... develop and maintain an alert scepticism when incompatibilities or social imbalances are described, or mechanisms of exclusion (not allowing participation or not wanting to participate) are justified with reference to religious traditions, customs, "culture", etc. **Be sceptical**
- 2.7 ... therefore do not assume that persons with certain characteristics are generally in need of help without first challenging this notion. **Maintain equal footing**
- 2.8 ... are aware of our cultural and traditional behaviours and needs, stand by them and know that they are part of diversity in Styria. **Seeing ourselves as part of diversity**

2.9 .... are certain: diversity is reasonable. It can reasonably be expected from all persons living in Styria that they meet, work and live together with people who are different regarding their gender, skin colour, religion, language, traditions and world views, sexual orientation, age, national or social background, disabilities or other social characteristics.

Tolerate diversity

### 3 Strategic objectives

Based on the above principles and attitudes which are necessary to achieve a normalised approach to societal diversity, the long-term objectives of the State of Styria, which serve as guidelines for integration work in all areas of responsibility, are outlined below.

#### 3.1 Assuming responsibility and taking diversity into consideration as an influencing factor affecting all areas of society

*As decisions in different areas of politics and society have a long-term influence on the way we live together in Styria, a common sense of responsibility and a cross-functional strategy are needed.*

3.1.1 The factor "diversity of society" is taken into consideration for all planning activities concerned with an impact on how we live together. It is consciously perceived that the impact and the results of certain practices or structures can be different for different people.

#### 3.2 Allowing for equal opportunities

*Equal opportunities can only be ensured if the access to public and publicly supported services and offers is free from barriers.*

3.2.1 On the basis of this Charter, the State of Styria scrutinizes the access to its services with a critical eye, consistently eliminating physical and mental barriers, and in doing so also deals with prejudices or existing reservations. Within the scope of existing or evolving possibilities, all structures and measures are designed in a way which creates or maintains equal opportunities.

- 3.2.2 It is taken into consideration that equal opportunities must be ensured or created with regard to all standards and guidelines which are currently in existence or which are to be developed in the future.
- 3.2.3 In areas in which the manner of living together is regulated neither by laws nor by other generally accepted rules, the conditions for living together are addressed and jointly agreed.
- 3.2.4 Measures initiated or financed by the State of Styria are designed in such a way that they are, as a matter of principle, accessible and usable by any person with a specific need or interest. Based on a critical analysis of the prevailing circumstances, it is endeavoured to improve the access to measures and offers in the different spheres of life. However, the focus is not on short-term interventions and special measures for certain target groups.
- 3.2.5 Wherever there is an objectively justified need, specific offers and measures continue to be required. In some cases, it will be necessary to provide "transitional solutions" in the form of customized offers for individual target groups until the time when all public institutions and systems (statutory institutions and systems) actually ensure equal opportunities in pursuing their missions. As a matter of principle, this should not, however, lead to the establishment of parallel structures, but the focus is rather on a further development of the statutory institutions and systems.

### **3.3 Resolutely and visibly opposing discrimination**

*Discrimination based on gender, skin colour, religion, national or social background, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc. causes considerable tangible and intangible damage and creates barriers for living together.*

- 3.3.1 Discrimination as a major impediment to prosperously living together is taken seriously by all persons living in Styria.
- 3.3.2 Anti-discrimination, anti-racism and the prevention of violence are embedded as fundamental principles of action in all areas of societal coexistence.
- 3.3.3 With their moral courage, Styrians actively contribute to resolutely identifying and eliminating discrimination.

### **3.4 Styria is the home of all people living here**

*"Home" has a different meaning for each and every one of us. But for all of us it is something important, and never something random. Styria offers a diverse living environment which must be developed with a strong sense of responsibility so as to create a common home.*

- 3.4.1 People living in Styria are provided the opportunity of considering themselves "native" and having a feeling of belonging within the prevailing and evolving general conditions in Styria. It is not permitted that the attribution to social groups or an affiliation with such groups result in social marginalisation (for example with regard to educational disadvantages, unemployment or socio-geographical segregation).

### **3.5 Jointly contributing to social cohesion**

*Social cohesion means jointly developing Styria without letting attributed affiliations with certain groups form a barrier.*

- 3.5.1 Styria supports the development and strengthening of public institutions and systems so that they are able to cope with the growing and evolving diversity and can assume their responsibilities.
- 3.5.2 Styrians transfer the contents of this Charter to their individual spheres of life and influence, ensuring that it becomes noticeable throughout Styria in order that our manner of living together is a successful one.
- 3.5.3 Regarding the state's integration policy, the Styrian population develops a positive attitude and is proud to live in a state where diversity is addressed in an exemplary manner.

### **3.6 Regions, cities and communities participate in ensuring the successful living together for all**

*Our daily experience of living together takes place in the regions, cities and communities. Living together implies immediate personal encounters and interaction.*

- 3.6.1 Styrians experience that successful cohabitation has an immediate positive effect on the quality of living at those places where they reside, live, learn, work and spend their free time.
- 3.6.2 Being places where potential is recognised and opportunities are realised, the regions, cities and communities play a major role in ensuring that the objectives of this Charter can be experienced by and with their inhabitants.

### **3.7 Developing the Styrian state administration as a model for a professional approach to diversity**

*A major responsibility of public administration is the implementation of the prevailing legal provisions which shape societal coexistence within Styria.*



- 3.7.1 The diversity of the people in Styria is perceived and actively taken into consideration by the members of all levels of state administration.
- 3.7.2 Employees of the State of Styria are not left alone with the above mentioned challenges, but they will rather be supported in their individual areas of activities, so as to be able to deal with diversity confidently and professionally.
- 3.7.3 A professional and contemporary approach to diversity is a natural part of everyday activities in the service of the State of Styria.

## 4 Living environments

- 4.1 Based on recommendations, previous experience and challenges which have already been recognised, the State of Styria will implement targeted measures in all required areas over the next few years. The main focus will be on the areas of work and business, education and training, health, care and social issues, recreation, living and settlement development, as well as municipal and urban development, as these aspects have a strong influence on the people's living environments .
- 4.2 In addition to this, further activities based on the contents and objectives of this Charter will need to be initiated gradually in equally important areas influencing the people's spheres of life, such as environment, transport, culture, media, etc.





## APPENDIX

### EXPLANATION OF THE APPROACH TO DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

[Preamble, Sections 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 3.7.2, 4.1]

- A future-oriented approach to societal diversity is not an area which can be closely defined and delimited and thus delegated to specialised institutions or individuals for an implementation as a special task. Dealing with diversity is a cross-sectional issue. We encounter diversity in all areas of life, and the approach to this issue can only be understood and adapted when coupled with specific "spheres of life". In all social fields of action, a certain way of dealing with the existing diversity can always be found. This approach may have been consciously controlled, or it may have simply evolved over time. There are no societal fields of action in which it is not necessary to deal with the issue of diversity.

### EXPLANATION ON THE TOPIC OF HOME

[Preamble, Sections 3.3.3, 3.4.1]

- The emotions associated with the term "home" are very positive and strong. The term evokes a strong feeling of belonging, but also of ownership. "My home" is something very special – a living space for which I feel responsible, or of which I feel ashamed or proud. The emotions mentioned here already demonstrate the depth and thus the potential as well as the dangers of the concept of "home". Shame and pride are very powerful emotions, the importance of which cannot be overstated.
- Many people are refused the possibility of considering Styria their home because they are considered as not belonging here and are thus subject to numerous forms of discrimination. These acts of discrimination are real barriers for living together, and they cannot be eliminated by a change on behalf of the persons being discriminated against.
- In order to achieve progress in this area, one important step is to identify and resolutely eliminate discrimination with all its harmful effects. Despite according federal and state laws, discrimination on the basis of gender, skin colour, religion, national or social background, sexual orientation, age or disabilities continues to be an inculpatory element of our societal reality.

## **EXPLANATION ON THE TOPIC OF PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOUR ("unchallenged neediness")**

### **[Section 2.6]**

- Many sensitive people perceive that our society continues to be characterised by massive injustice manifesting itself in the form of discrimination and exclusion. In many cases, this issue is dealt with by assuming a "protective behaviour" towards persons with certain characteristics on a personal or professional level – be it well-intentioned or not. Among other things, such an attitude may manifest itself by expecting a lower performance from such persons, by holding back with criticism or by accepting special rules and exceptions for such persons without further discussion.
- At the same time, it is often assumed (without ever challenging this assumption) that these persons are generally in need. For example, for a long time it went unquestioned that certain measures and projects were conceived and implemented exclusively for "persons with a migration background" or other designated groups, even though the content of the measure was not really related to a certain characteristic, but rather constituted an independent service completely disconnected from the issue in question [e.g. health counselling for women vs. health counselling for Muslim women].
- Both this protective behaviour and the assumed general neediness are frequently presented as "morally right" and positive measures, even though both phenomena include a strongly discriminatory element.
- If somebody is constantly treated in a protective manner, they pay the price for this by not being taken seriously. The outcome is exclusion and an emphasis on how this person is different, as well as a related deprecative stance.
- For the person affected, it is often difficult to defend him- or herself against such mechanisms, as they are generally seen as "morally right" or at least as "well-intended". A negative reaction on behalf of the persons receiving special treatment is then frequently misunderstood as "ungratefulness" or "unwarranted aggression", and treated as "personal experience" in confirming according prejudices.

## **EXPLANATION REGARDING SPECIFIC OFFERS AND SPECIAL MEASURES**

**[Sections 3.2.4, 3.2.5, 3.5.3]**

- Migrants, persons with a migration background, persons who have experienced discrimination, members of ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities... the list of codes and labels for certain target groups is long. In dealing with persons with certain characteristics, it has become a matter of course to assume that they require specific and exclusive offers in many areas of life. The majority of efforts that are and were made under the label of "integration" focuses exclusively on these groups or certain segments thereof. Such special measures are usually justified either on the basis of statistical evidence, or by quite naturally making the assumption that: "If we do something (good) for certain "special target groups", this always results in a benefit for living together in diversity".
- We reject this approach due to its ostensible general validity. The Styrian approach focuses primarily on the individual, and only to a lesser degree on collectives and groups. One of the main reasons for this is the simple fact that the groups which are meant to serve as target groups generally simply do not exist as real groups. People are frequently aggregated to groups based on individual "social markers". These, however, say very little about their true initial position or their needs – or even of their commonalities, as it were. Different challenges and expectations, and even different forms of rejection and dismissal or acceptance prevail. It must be prevented that individuals are pressed or even locked into a certain "affiliation cabinet" based on their association with a certain group. The widespread concentration on group affiliation should be replaced with a focus on spheres of life.
- Sometimes, general measures can be adapted to specific needs, while in other cases temporary or permanent targeted specific measures are required. Organisations will learn how to balance out these different types of measures.
- The rise of targeted services for narrowly defined target groups, which are frequently offered by NGOs and self-help groups, offers one of the most obvious indications of an inadequate service offer by the statutory institutions and systems.

- The Styrian approach of focussing on the individual and not on groups (created through an aggregation on the basis of certain characteristics) also means that "counting heads or group attributions" does not become an instrument to evidence social diversity within organisations. In order to ensure that the diversity of the population is also adequately reflected in public institutions on all levels and in the long run, the approach is rather to identify and systematically eliminate any existing physical and mental barriers in such institutions in order to allow for equal opportunities.
- In the area of equal treatment of women and men, massively obstinate tendencies in certain systems, however, made it necessary to offer preferential treatment to women, for example regarding equal treatment in the working environment, where they continue to hold only a small portion of leadership positions in administration and business ("Where qualifications are equal, women will be preferred for employment"). Such a measure is only permissible on a transitional basis, until the consistent discrimination of the affected group is no longer given. The objective of such measures is to influence the societal reality of the area of employment, including means of a temporary discrimination of members of a group (here: men), in order to retain a situation of equal opportunities. Such a measure constitutes a very intensive intervention and should therefore never be applied without due deliberation. In addition to this, it is not always necessarily possible to apply such measures (e.g. "quotas") to other areas outside of the equal treatment of women and men.

## **EXPLANATION REGARDING THE ANALYSIS PROCESS IN THE INDIVIDUAL FIELDS OF ACTION**

### **[Section 3.2.3]**

- The transition from a deficit-oriented maxim to a resource-oriented view requires a certain perspective. For this, the analysis initially focuses less on individual groups of "persons with certain characteristics", but rather on spheres of life and the manner in which these are organised, structured and developed. The explicit or implicit access requirements or basic assumptions regarding the nature and needs of the persons acting within these spheres are then employed as the basis for a critical verification regarding the approach to diversity.
- In order to illustrate the resource-oriented approach when analysing a societal field of action, some of the core questions investigated through this approach are outlined below:

- Where is it easy for certain persons to find their bearings in this living environment and to make use of offers? What circumstances (structures, prerequisites, attitudes) make it possible and easy for them to make use of offers?
- What qualifications do these people have?

Are these qualifications really (objectively) necessary in order to avail oneself of certain offers? Are these qualifications linked to social markers which bear a risk of discrimination?

- How can that which already works well for certain people in the future work just as well for everybody?
- By what means is information on new developments and offers transported into these living environments and whom does it reach?
- What qualifications do the people have who receive this information easily and regularly?

### **EXPLANATION OF THE MEANING OF "NEGOTIATING" AND DISCUSSING THE CONDITIONS OF LIVING TOGETHER**

**[Sections 3.2.3, 3.6.1, 3.6.2]**

- We move through this world naturally, no matter what our current situation in life. At the same time, we experience these situations together with others – our fellow human beings. When it comes to living together, however, this matter of course can also become a trap: it can happen that people encounter each other, who – due to their different personal experiences – act completely rationally in their own perception when facing a certain situation. Their actions may, however, seem completely incomprehensible to others who might choose a different approach and achieve very different results.
- Living together therefore means coping with everyday life, encountering other people, sharing thoughts and ideas, cooperating, resolving and negotiating conflicts and working things out with each other time and again. On a day-to-day basis, this requires, above all, communication, as well as the possibility and the desire to address, to negotiate and then to jointly agree on the conditions of living together. In this respect, conflicts are not necessarily a negative factor. The problematic issue usually lies in "how" a conflict is resolved. The development of an according culture of debate helps in developing the skills necessary to assert one's own position, but also in accepting that others may, and are allowed to, have a different opinion. Finding new agreements also means critically evaluating tried and tested approaches which until now have not been questioned, and searching



for alternative solutions which allow both parties to reconcile their interests. The objective is therefore not to "win against somebody" or to "rip somebody off", but rather to agree on results with which all parties involved can accept.

## **EXPLANATION REGARDING MORAL COURAGE**

### **[Section 3.3.3]**

*"Because nothing is more difficult, and nothing requires more character than to be openly at odds with one's time and to loudly say: No."*

*(Kurt Tucholsky)*

*"Without moral courage, all other virtues are useless." (Edward Abbey)*

- Moral courage means showing courage in everyday life and publicly saying "No". Thus, it is not just about personal courage: moral courage must also be demonstrated in public in order to ensure a peaceful and solidary discourse within society.
- Moral courage begins with taking a close look and becoming aware of what is happening – instead of looking the other way. Personal disadvantages of "swimming against the current" must be consciously accepted, interventions must be guided by basic human values and personal conscience. This basic moral attitude is a characteristic of people who act responsibly and who assume risks in order to help others who are in distress or a dangerous situation.
- Under no circumstances should this Charter encourage people to carelessly and wantonly put themselves in situations in which their health or even their life may be threatened. A significant and important form of moral courage is organising help when threatening situations arise.



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