

***Berlin Declaration of the  
15th German Congress on Crime Prevention***

by

**GERMAN CONGRESS ON CRIME PREVENTION AND  
CONFERENCE PARTNERS**

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## **German Congress on Crime Prevention and Conference Partners**

### **Berlin Declaration of the 15<sup>th</sup> German Congress on Crime Prevention**

Education and qualification are the prerequisites for social participation and individual opportunities in life. In Germany, however, educational success is quite significantly determined by social class and background. Income, educational and integrational poverty, as well as the experience of social injustice and social exclusion, can favour crime, especially violent crime. For this reason educational equality and equal opportunities for access to education also contribute to the prevention of violence and crime.

The education of the coming generation is one of the key future tasks of our society. That is why the 15th German Congress on Crime Prevention “Education –Prevention –Future” has made this its central topic of focus and thus taken up and elaborated on a complex of problems which had already become apparent at the discussions of the 14<sup>th</sup> German Congress on Crime Prevention: the interaction of educational equality, integration and social participation regarding the emergence and, to an even larger extent, prevention of violent crime.

On the foundation of the expert appraisal of Dr. Wiebke Steffen “Lern- und Lebensräume von Kindern und Jugendlichen als Orte von Bildung und Gewaltprävention” (Learning and Living Spaces of Children and Young Adults as Places for Education and Prevention of Violence) on the topic in focus, the German Congress on Crime Prevention, its permanent conference partners as well as its partner, which is hosting this year’s event, hereby issue the “Berlin Declaration”.

***Changes in society and their social consequences adversely affect educational equality in Germany: educational success is determined by social class and background to a great extent, and therefore social inequality is inherited***

- Modernisation processes have led to a situation in which children and juveniles are presently growing up in a society which is characterised on the one hand by the pluralisation of lifestyles, value systems and objectives and on the other hand by life opportunities and situations that are formed by social structures in vastly different ways.
- These changes involve opportunities but also risks. Most children and young adults are able to master the challenges without any major conspicuousness and are well able to find their place in life. On the other hand, however, there also are young persons who are not able to utilise life’s opportunities; those who are unable to cope and fail as a result of the risks.
- This is because the conditions for self-determined utilisation of the chances presuppose resources that are not accessible for these children and young adults. This applies in particular to children and juveniles of the lower social classes –

including many with a migration background. These risk groups include at least one fifth and up to one quarter of all young persons.

- Currently the educational systems are still not sufficiently able to break down these disadvantages. Risk situations lead to a clear deterioration of educational opportunities. In Germany the problem of inequality due to a different background still remains – and therefore also the related discussion regarding equal opportunities and educational equality.

***Education is more than school: learning and living spaces of children and young adults as places of education***

- Education is more than school. It is a continual process in the course of life which takes place at numerous stations in the lives of children and young adults. However, it is evidently less and less certain that the educational effects of these learning and living spaces can be secured for all young persons. For this reason young people also cannot fall back on the educationally relevant resources that are necessary for success at school.
- Much that is attributed to schools, both positive and negative, both successes as well as failures is by no means solely or even predominantly to be attributed to schools alone. Formal education, namely schools, can only function when the places of education function in the forefront and alongside the schools. This applies particularly to the educational places of family, day care facilities for children, as well as the offers and facilities for children and youth welfare. These places of education are – in conjunction with schools – relevant for the upbringing and education of virtually all children, and of equal importance. Hence, they should also be related to one another and cooperate with one another.
- Family plays a decisive role in the success of learning and educational processes; and this success significantly depends on the family's social background and life circumstances. The influence of the family is so great that it is very hard for inequalities to be compensated for by means of support systems and educational institutions later on. For this reason the family must be recognised and strengthened as a place of education if the subsequent measures aimed at advancing education are not to be in vain.
- Child care at day care centres, growing up in public responsibility, is a path that can be taken to compensate for disadvantages through early access to educational places and educationally supportive life environments that are organised publicly and for which the public is responsible. What is more, the other offers and facilities for children and juvenile support also play a significant role in the educational trajectories of children and young adults of school-going age, and play a key role as extra-curricular places of learning which facilitate educational processes on the foundation of active participation and co-operation.

***Education is prevention, prevention is education***

- As spaces for learning and living, places of education for children and young adults are at the same time also places where acts of violence can occur and where violence can be prevented. Strategies, programmes and measures for the prevention of violence in childhood and juvenile age can therefore also be understood and described under the aspect of education.
- On the one hand, all forms of violence prevention that are focussed on persons are educational objectives, because they are targeted at the development of the personality, the formation of identity or the acquisition of abilities to act. On the other hand, most of the strategies developed in recent years can be described as pedagogical strategies. This orientation does justice to the fact that it is a question of preventing violence in the course of childhood and adolescence, and that instances of such violence or of the mere threat of such violence can be understood as opportunities for learning and, as the case may be, also as opportunities for providing pedagogical support.
- Violence preventive strategies within the family are predominantly aimed at the parents and have the objective of strengthening and promoting their parenting and relationship competences, and thus (also) of preventing children from becoming victims of parental violence, which lead to considerable problems regarding the children's future development. However, in the child day care facilities, at school and also in the offers and facilities for children and young adults, it is particularly the young persons on whom the measures, programmes and strategies are focussed.
- The positive development observed in recent years regarding the occurrence of violent crime in the life of children and young adults in general, but also at the four places of education that have been analysed here, namely family, children day care facilities, school and facilities for children and juveniles confirms the pedagogical alignment of violence prevention, just as its importance for integration and social participation of the children and young adults.

***The German Congress on Crime Prevention appeals to the responsible persons in politics and in the media, as well as in civil society groupings at communal, state and federal levels:***

1. To take note of and respect the contribution of the increasingly pedagogically aligned violence and crime prevention offers for integration and social participation and to support and extend this proven path for pointing out and clarifying socially binding standards and values.
2. To continue to make every effort to support the families in their educational and relationship competences; to decisively combat the causes of poverty and discrimination and to facilitate providing children and their families with an adequate

standard of living as well as opportunities to participate in society. Given the significance of the measures for early encouragement and early assistance, it is necessary to avoid perfected control systems, to respect the parents' right to bring up their children and to rely on voluntariness and participation.

3. Further expand the day-care offers for children, whereat one does, however, have to be sure not to place great expectations on these facilities for early, individually-oriented advancement which they are presently not able to meet at all, given the currently applicable framework conditions. Parents have to become more intensively and systematically involved in the upbringing and educational processes of the child day care facilities. The objective is to expand these facilities so that they become centres for integrated service offers that are readily accessible to their realistically defined target groups.
4. To force the erection and expansion of schools to all-day schools, in particular also with the objective of supplementing the conventional teaching schools with other curricula and forms of learning. The educational systems are to be further developed with regard to a strengthening of the principles of individual advancement and support, the expansion of available all-day offers and the networking of formal and informal education. In order to achieve this, not only should one strive to attain the cooperation of children and young adults, but also to succeed at creating new places of education, right up to local alliances for education and communal educational infrastructures.
5. To undertake all efforts needed in order to establish educational equality as the prerequisite for individual opportunities in life and participation in society, and thus also for the prevention of violence and crime.

In this regard, the 15th German Congress on Crime Prevention refers to the discussions of the 12th, 13th and 14th German Congress on Crime Prevention, the demands and appeals of the "Wiesbaden Declaration", the "Leipzig Declaration" and the "Hanover Declaration." Their topicality and urgency continue unabated.

Berlin, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2010

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