



## **A STATEMENT FROM THE LAZARUS UNION REGARDING INTEGRATION IN AUSTRIA**

***According to its statutes and as practiced as a union, the Lazarus Union is non-political and non-denominational. As a union registered in Austria, it is duty-bound to Austrian laws and as UN-NGO with consultative status (nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2017) to the Charter of the United Nations.***

***Hence, from time to time it is necessary, regarding the challenges of society, to define, to delimit, and to make people take note of the cornerstones resulting from these bonds.***

*(This text has been developed in the course of the actual discussion in the Lazarus Union International Leadership Academy)*

### **MIGRANTEN MUST ADAPT, NOT THE ACCOMMODATING SOCIETIES**

Humans from different cultures can only coexist within the same society when all of them regard a certain amount of common values as self-evident. Anyone immigrating to Europe today meets an open, predominantly secular world.

For us this liberality is the basis for living together and also a precondition for migration as a society can only then invite to migration if it has a clear understanding of its own identity. We need to convey these constitutional principles also to migrants.

Not Austria must change in the first place but many migrants will need to change. «*Integration*» does not mean to relieve the migrant from the need to adopt to the host society and to put the burden of this responsibility on the social services.

Migrants for whom e.g. a life without a belief in God, or a life with equal opportunities for both sexes, a freely decidable way of life (*also with regard to sexual self-determination and selection of a partner*), or the monopoly of the state on laws and the legitimate use of physical force is something despicable, and who also pass this mind-set on to their children, will never be able to become an integral part of our society.

Basically, the point is that Austria is to a large extent a liberal and secular country with equal opportunities. Someone who decides to spend his or her life in Europe needs to adapt and not the other way round. This is – last, but not least – also a question of respect towards the accepting society.

To persist in an archaic value system is not a human right.



## **LANGUAGE: DEMAND & SUPPORT**

The usage of official languages is regulated in the Austrian Treaty from 1955, article 7. For all of Austria, German is the official language<sup>1</sup>.

Acquirement of the German language is a basic module for successful integration of migrants into our society and later participation in our economic life. Without knowledge of the national language, integration is not possible. Also migrants need to learn and to adopt to traditions, manners, and customs of their new home country. Not only is a German vocabulary to be conveyed but also our non-negotiable liberal social order.

However, this does not mean that they have to abandon their own culture. A most important step towards this is mutual respect.

Yet, parallel societies, leading to people living an everyday life in their own language without any need for German language, even without needing the rules of the majority of society, need to be repelled consequently.

## **COMMUNITY OF VALUES AND “LEITKULTUR”**

No enlightened culture will think of itself as the single, only one possible, superior to all others. “Leitkultur”<sup>2</sup> does not demand to be valid for everybody all over the world, but only, yet self-evidently, for its own society and its members. So far, every culture that takes itself seriously is a “Leitkultur” with regard to this.

Austria owes its values to its Christian tradition on one hand, but on the other hand to the Age of Enlightenment and the heir of the large civil revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. As central Christian values are considered faith, a basic understanding of law and justice, and the social responsibility of the individual for the whole society. Values of the enlightenment which can be named here are tolerance, freedom, equal rights and solidarity (*human rights*), but also democracy and reason.

Especially the non-negotiable European values – respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equal rights, constitutional legality, and the protection of human rights – also must be defended against controversial ethnic or religious concepts of migrants.

A community of values, which is neglecting this, loses its credibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Additionally in some parts of Styria, the Burgenland and Carinthia Croatian, Slovenian and Hungarian languages are official languages in a few districts. In addition, sign language is an official non-ethnic minority language since Sept. 1st, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> The German term “Leitkultur” has no exact English equivalent, meaning German or Austrian cultural identity, host culture, dominant culture, (*identification with typical*) German or Austrian values. See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leitkultur>



## **THE ISLAM BELONGS TO AUSTRIA, BUT ...**

It is trivial and needs not to be discussed in detail that most humans – Muslims and non-Muslims alike – loathe acts of terrorism and hold peace and tolerance in high regard. Also not that an open society does not forbid any religion, yet in accordance with all rules of the law forces all religions to act within the constitution.

Islam is an officially acknowledged religion in Austria<sup>3</sup>. In 1912, Islam was officially accepted as an equal religious community in the Austrian part of the empire. In the group of Christian European countries, the Austro-Hungarian Empire took a leading role in this matter. This law is still basically valid until today, only being incorporated into the Austrian law system. Yet introducing (*parts of*) Sharia respectively introducing Sharia courts or integration of religious orders or bans, be it in everyday life or in institutions of the state, is not being considered as an option.

Therefore, not only Austria, but also the Lazarus Union is taking a leading role in Europe. In Turkey, there is one of the largest and fastest growing groups of the union, which shows the crescent in its insignias instead of the cross. This is an impressive proof how coexistence works based on MUTUAL respect and acceptance.

Every human is entitled to his or her own beliefs and free to decide, which religion to follow. In Austria, this right is called “freedom of religion” and is part of the federal constitution. Many Austrians believe in God, not because they are forced into such a belief by the state (*like in many migrant’s countries of origin, where apostasy (abandonment of a religion) is sometimes punishable by death<sup>4</sup>*) but because it is their opinion.

Persons who are not satisfied with this, or do have a problem with the fact that not every demand for privileges and special treatment of a religious minority is realized par to par and think that he or she cannot lead a life according to his or her religious or ethnic and cultural ideas under such circumstances, as they consider religious commandments above the local law system, must not be astonished when being met by (*fundamental*) distrust, leading to an existence as an outsider from society without any chances for economic success.

## **THERE IS NO RIGHT TO MIGRATION**

Our modern societies consider themselves to be solidary communities, wanting to create social justice (*e.g. by redistributing money using taxes*).

Protecting the weak, increasing prosperity, and securing the future is the main task of a welfare state and this first of all is valid for its own citizens, it can – by definition – not be valid for the entire world.

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<sup>3</sup> Reichsgesetzblatt Nr. 159/1912

<sup>4</sup> Sudan, Jemen, Iran, Somalia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan



In the sense of international solidarity and international responsibilities from treaties, also migrants can become a part of this solidary community. However, this is no one-way street. Therefore, the accepting community can rightfully expect that laws and values are followed and the lifestyle of the accepting community is being respected.

To those for whom this is not possible it must be allowed to suggest that their required form of lifestyle might be better realised in another country.

So, like the Lazarus Union is open to all humans regardless of their ethnical group, their religion, their social standing, their sex, or their age, such an openness need be expected also from new members of the solidary community. Therefore, the principle shall be valid: accept the country as the country has accepted you.

Immigration status is linked to rights and duties aligned towards integration.

## **OUTLOOK**

In the years since 9/11, the increasing religiously motivated terrorism (*London, Paris, Berlin, Bali ...*) has brought forth an increasing patriotism within the European population in most accepting societies, whose culture has grown over centuries. Obviously also in Austria. It is one of the major tasks of NGOs to take care in the future that in the sense of "*patriotism is love for your own; nationalism is hatred for the others*"<sup>5</sup> this does not change in an unfavourable way.

Patriotisms, i.e. love for one's own country, can be nicely coupled with international thinking, as long as this love towards one's own country does not become hatred towards other countries respectively "the other or the others", something the Lazarus Union proves daily in 120 countries of this world.

*It is our future - let us defend it together!*

### **REMARK:**

This text uses the term "migrants" (*from the Latin verb migrare migrate, wander, travel*) as an imprecise general term for persons belonging to a migration movement. This is because we hold the opinion that this term is applicable to all persons coming to Austria/the EU, regardless of their legal status (*refugee, asylum seeker, person with subsidiary right for protection, illegal immigrant ...*) without accentuating one single group in a special way.

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<sup>5</sup> Richard von Weizsäcker, Staatsakt, Vierzig Jahre Grundgesetz, Beethovenhalle, Bonn, 24.5.1989