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BINDING BY DESIGN –
STRENGTHENING SOLIDARITY

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Only when a country's society has a strong sense of inner cohesion can great things be achieved and visions be realised. Only a society working together towards specific goals is capable of establishing the security we, as humans, need.

That is why integrating people from other cultures who come to Upper Austria seeking a new home is so crucial. This coexistence must be underpinned by safety, fairness and social aspects. To that end, integration services must be targeted and sound.

The aim of this Integration Mission Statement is to provide a sense of orientation and to build bridges. However, its purpose is also to clearly communicate how we envision living together here in our common home. This includes a clear commitment to speaking a common language – German – and to our structure of values. I want Upper Austria to benefit from a sense of togetherness, not simply existing in parallel, and certainly do not want to see any kind of conflict.

Representatives from all of the political parties in the Upper Austrian Landtag have collaborated with experts coordinated by the Upper Austrian Future Academy to further develop Upper Austria's Integration Mission Statement, which was originally drafted in 2008, and adapt it to today's social conditions.

The result is a compass for successful coexistence in Upper Austria – an expression of our position towards integration and social interaction.

I would like to thank all of those involved for their important work and hope every single resident of Upper Austria benefits from optimum coexistence and a strong sense of cohesion.

Governor
Mag. Thomas Stelzer

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The social challenges involved in integration have undergone significant changes in recent years with the increased levels of immigration we are seeing from non-EU third country nationals. It was absolutely crucial to reorient Upper Austria's Integration Mission Statement. In some areas, failures have led to anti-integration or anti-immigrant attitudes – something that needs urgent attention. These kinds of attitudes are not only directed at recent immigrants, but also to people who have been living here with us for many years – both with and without Austrian citizenship – as well as second and third generations of descendants. We have, of course, seen many positive experiences of a well-functioning integration policy.

These experiences have shown that a person's willingness to adapt to their new society is indispensable for integration to succeed. And they also show that incentives alone are not enough to create this willingness. Appreciable consequences must be in place for refusal to engage with and failure of integration measures. Integration can only succeed if immigrants do their part and accept the laws and values of Austrian and Western culture. For example, we must resolutely oppose parallel societies, which set religious rules over our democratically legitimised laws.

I'm pleased to see that this new Mission Statement has incorporated a change in perspective that is now based on reality. Ten years on from the first Mission Statement, the 2018 Upper Austrian Integration Mission Statement is setting a new path to overcoming the challenges we are faced with today.

It is essential that those immigrating to our country and permitted to reside here with us permanently are integrated as well as possible to ensure social peace and the future of the country.

Deputy Governor
Dr Manfred Haimbuchner

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Yes, integration is a challenge, and it is a process that is not carried out overnight. It takes years. It is a demanding process, both for the people forced to flee from war, oppression and persecution and granted protection in Austria as well as for those of us born in Austria who must learn to get along with our new neighbours, classmates and colleagues. It is a challenge for both sides, but it can also be an opportunity. And one thing is clear: We want our lives together to go well.

The best way to get over initial reservations is to get to know one another and approach people. Many communities in Upper Austria offer wonderful opportunities to do so with festivals, events and voluntary integration initiatives. I can only recommend these and hope you choose to get involved.

The purpose of this Integration Mission Statement is to demonstrate that the State of Upper Austria is willing to support the coexistence of different cultures and to affirm the standards that apply to all people in our country – regardless of their place of birth or country of origin. That is why it is also important for the entire state government, regardless of their political affiliations, to come together and agree with a clear basis of common understanding and the ability to communicate with one another. After all, “talking together brings people together”.

State Government Representative
Rudolf Anschöber

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Some 50 years ago, Austria was actively engaged in recruiting workers from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia. The men were brought to Austria by train, where they were sent off to companies that urgently needed the extra staff.

Integration? We didn't want it. There weren't any German language courses. Workers were being housed in barracks and camps.

But today we know that when people come to us, we must do our utmost to integrate them into our community. This is the only way coexistence can work. And integration needs both sides to get involved in order to work. Integration not only grants people rights, but demands that they fulfil certain duties.

Today's demand for foreign labour has not seen its like since the 1960s. We urgently need both highly skilled and non-skilled workers. In industry, in the service sector, in healthcare.

If we go about things smartly, we will come to see this influx of people from other countries – whether as refugees from war or professionals who have been recruited – as an opportunity, as reinforcements for our country. If we go about things smartly, we will convey our values and traditions and, in return, make an effort to learn about those of the immigrants who have come to our country. If we go about things smartly, we will do our utmost to ensure that the men, women and children and young people who immigrate here have the opportunity to put down roots here.

BECAUSE we are going about things smartly, we in Upper Austria are tackling this issue with open-mindedness and impartiality. And this Integration Mission Statement is the foundation.

State Government Representative
Birgit Gerstorfer, MBA



The Integration Mission Statement drafted in 2008, entitled, “*Inclusion, Not Classification*”, forms the basis for the State of Upper Austria’s programmatic approach to integration policy. The aim was to implement national and regional integration work on a cross-sectional basis and to facilitate positive coexistence. Since then, integration work has been greatly expanded and professionalised. All told, evaluations of previous integration work have shown positive results.

However, along with these successes come challenges and problem areas that have not been dealt with satisfactorily. Without question, our approach to these needs improvement. This is the case, for example, for some of the old and new groups of immigrants. Added to this are the dynamism and impact of global crises – something that is specifically reflected locally and puts strain on our coexistence.

These and other questions made it clear that a reassessment and accentuation of our integration policy was necessary. The result is that our integration policy is now more mobilising and binding across all spheres. This also requires the values, attitudes and requirements for successful coexistence to be well established, and problem areas must be identified more clearly.

This new Mission Statement follows in that spirit. Political affiliations notwithstanding, all the parties represented in the Landtag have sought to draft this Mission Statement according to reason and insight, our common beliefs and across party lines. This Mission Statement would not be possible without the critical and communicative attitude of everyone involved. For that, I must express my wholehearted respect.

Research Support
Kenan Dogan Güngör



Shaping the future for all those living in Upper Austria and laying the foundations for successful coexistence, regardless of people’s origins and nationality, are based on societal cohesion. The Integration Mission Statement of the State of Upper Austria aims at bolstering this cohesion. To this effect, it formulates the goals, principles and attitudes of the state’s integration policy, taking into account both native and immigrant population groups.

It presents the expectations of the host society along with those of immigrants to facilitate everyone’s participation in economic, social, cultural and societal life in Upper Austria.

The Integration Mission Statement emphasises fundamental and human rights as a common basis for an open society, and identifies key values for successful coexistence rich in diversity. The broad discussion process involved in drafting the Mission Statement is a testament to willingness and commitment we all share to approaching integration as a task for the future.

Research Support
Prof Dr Katharina Pabel

INTEGRATION: BINDING BY DESIGN – STRENGTHENING SOLIDARITY

INTEGRATION MISSION STATEMENT OF THE STATE OF UPPER AUSTRIA

1. Integration policy aims

The Integration Mission Statement of the State of Upper Austria is entitled, *Integration: Binding by Design – Strengthening Solidarity*. This expresses the aim and task of integration policy, which is responsible for facilitating the successful, peaceful coexistence of all people in Upper Austria, regardless of their origins and nationality. We are choosing to meet this responsibility.

The Integration Mission Statement of the State of Upper Austria is being released at a time that is still characterised by the challenges posed by the large numbers of refugees and other immigrants, especially in 2015 and 2016. In recent years in particular, great efforts have been made to integrate this group of refugees. However, people from Member States of the European Union and third countries still constitute the most important groups of immigrants. Institutionalised integration policies have long since failed to reach them. Yet their integration is also essential for coexistence in Upper Austria and should be covered by this Mission Statement just as much as integrating the youngest immigrants is. This Mission Statement is also aimed at the local population. They have responded to the various changes in immigration in recent years and decades with openness and a great deal of individual commitment, but also with concern and scepticism. The goal of all people in Upper Austria successfully coexisting must take into account all population groups – both native Austrians and immigrants.

The Integration Mission Statement of the State of Upper Austria formulates principles, guidelines and attitudes for integration policy over the next ten years. It builds on the existing Integration Mission Statement, entitled, *Inclusion, Not Classification – Integration in Upper Austria in Practice*, published in 2008, responds to the changing underlying conditions and develops a perspective for the future. The new Integration Mission Statement compactly sets out the strategic guidelines for future integration policy. It is on this basis that concrete measures will be developed and resources will be made available. It therefore establishes a binding framework for future integration policy and work, including funding, in the state of Upper Austria.

2. Principles of integration policy

Conditions for successful integration

The following conditions are absolutely indispensable for successful integration and therefore for social cohesion: learning German as a common language, actively working towards economic self-stability, the acceptance of basic values and respect for national and everyday culture in Upper Austria as the basis of coexistence. At the same time, it requires a certain degree of open-mindedness and willingness from the host society. The integration efforts made by immigrants and integration on a policy scale must be based on this foundation.

Integration as a long-term, macro-societal process

Integration is a cross-sectional issue and, to varying degrees, affects nearly all sectors of society. It should not be treated as an isolated or special issue, but as part of everyday policy in a society in which immigration and plurality are part of normal life. Integration policy is therefore part of education, economic and labour market policy, healthcare, social and housing policy as well as security policy in both the narrower and broader sense. It is networked and coordinated at the state, city and municipal policy and administrative levels. Integration is not something that is done in a single step. Instead, integration is a long-term process that takes time and must be accompanied by a stable, reliable and long-term approach. As a result, integration policy is geared towards the long term, planning for future needs and requirements and ensuring continuity.

Integration as a reciprocal process with different requirements

Integration Mission Statement Those covered by integration policy are both governmental and non-governmental organisations and institutions, such as the administrations of the various regional authorities, associations as well as Austrians and immigrants and Austrian and immigrant groups involved in integration work. The Integration Mission Statement is not only aimed at those who have recently come to Upper Austria, but also at those who may have migrated to Upper Austria for any of several reasons many years ago and are now part of the population of Upper Austria with their children and sometimes even grandchildren.

Expectations of immigrants

Under the condition of reciprocity, it must be acknowledged that the process immigrants face in establishing themselves and thereby the requirements placed on them for integration are significantly greater than for the host society. Learning a new language, getting one's bearings and arriving in a new society demand a much greater effort from immigrants. Immigrants are required to use the means at their disposal to play a part in Upper Austria with their personal commitment to their own adjustment and progress. They contribute to successful integration by learning German, working towards being able to support themselves, and accepting Austrian values.

Expectations of the host society

These efforts and endeavours must be actively supported by the host society. Integration policy is tasked with promoting integration and societal cohesion and creating the conditions necessary for this. In addition to federal measures, the state of Upper Austria considers itself responsible for establishing good underlying conditions and services for mobilising integration policy. Volunteers – be they individuals, groups, churches or associations – who take on various tasks in the field of language acquisition, jobseeking or searching for housing, or those who simply provide assistance, play a key role in the integration process.

Extending opportunities and facilitating participation

Many fellow citizens with immigrant backgrounds who have been living in Austria for some time have long since successfully established themselves and taken their place as a natural part of society. Through their work and the roles they take on, they have made a contribution to state's and the country's social and economic advancement. At the same time, there are some sub-groups for which integration and participation have not seen sufficient successful. Past shortcomings must now be made up for with 'catch-up' integration. However, the integration of newer immigrants should be ensured through integration work that mobilises them.

Inclusion should enable everyone – regardless of their origins or nationality – to participate in the economic, social, cultural and societal life of Upper Austria. The underlying conditions necessary for this must be established by integration policy on both an institutional and informal level. Of crucial importance to the integration process are the opportunities posed by inclusion into normal systems and existing institutions. The starting conditions are different: Immigrants usually

need to learn German in order to use it as their everyday and colloquial language, and some newcomers do not have the right education and qualifications for the Austrian labour market. Steps must be taken here to promote integration in order to facilitate fair participation.

However, integration also requires the commitment of individuals to their abilities and possibilities. Willingness to learn German, readiness for education and training and willingness to actively participate in the job market and in society are expected. Generally speaking, these expectations extend to all people living in Upper Austria. Institutional barriers to participation – such as unjustifiably lengthy procedures for recognising foreign qualifications that are heavy on prerequisites – must be identified and eliminated.

Fundamental rights and human rights as common ground

Upper Austria is home to people of different origins and nationalities. Moreover, people also differ according to other criteria: age, gender, religious beliefs and political convictions. Diversity is a social reality in Upper Austria and throughout Austria as a whole. Immigration means the diversity in our country is only increasing. The cultural diversity of the people living in Upper Austria is met with respect. Although diversity can mean enrichment, it can also cause confusion, misunderstandings, contradictions and problems in certain areas.

A society in which different people can live, with common values and customs is needed for cohesion. In Upper Austria, we consider our society to be one of openness, committed to its core values. In addition to the rule of law and democracy, the fundamental and human rights guaranteed in Austria form the fundamental values on which our community is based. These values must be known, accepted and supported by everyone. Any legal obligations derived from these values must be acknowledged and followed without reservation. As long as everyone recognises these basic values, there is no reason large numbers of people should not be able to live together in rich diversity.

Countering problematic environments

Life in Upper Austria is shaped by tolerance and openness. There is no tolerance for trends and ideologies that do not align with the binding rules that apply in Austria and Upper Austria, nor for any such ideologies that call our fundamental values into question. We reject the spread of hatred, religious or political extremism, Islamism, anti-democratic ideologies and derogatory opposition to specific groups. The state of Upper Austria is working to combat these trends, networks and institutions with the rule of law, but without betraying

its values and principles of freedom and equality. Deintegrative, problematic environments that preach ways of life that cannot be reconciled with our values and fundamental democratic structures must be countered. This requires security policies and social and preventive measures to be taken early on to prevent any possible or further drift towards problematic, de-integrative environments.

Core values

The core values we share in living together in Austria and Upper Austria are rooted in the constitutional provisions and laws of our country, supplemented by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and from international treaties, in particular the UN Charter. The notions of national and social order set out in these laws have been developed over centuries – fought for, in some cases – and often serve as a magnet for migration to Austria.

- ❖ **Democracy and the rule of law:** Laws and generally binding regulations are made following debate and subsequent voting by representatives of the people in parliaments based on the applicable procedural rules. The State is bound by these democratically established laws, which is what characterises a country as a constitutional State. The rights and obligations held in these laws apply to all people living in Austria; they must be acknowledged and followed without reservation.
- ❖ **Separation of state and religion/religious freedom:** The Austrian State acts independently of any religion, and its decisions are secular. Every person in Austria enjoys the freedom to enjoy their own beliefs and to live according to those beliefs, provided this falls within the framework of the law, or to live their lives without committing to a particular belief system or religion. Compliance with applicable laws cannot be qualified by relying on religious rules.
- ❖ **Physical and mental inviolability:** Physical, psychological and sexual violence, especially against children and women, is prohibited. To protect people against (sexual) exploitation, forced marriages and polygamy, for example, are prohibited.
- ❖ **Right to individual lifestyles and freedom of expression:** Every person has the right lead their own lives according to their beliefs, their traditions, their interests and their sexuality. As long as the exercise of these rights complies with Austrian law, it cannot be restricted.

- ❖ **Equality of gender:** Men and women enjoy the same rights; both have the right to make determinations themselves concerning all aspects of their lives. Women should be regarded as equals and respected.
- ❖ **Educational opportunity and compulsory education:** Girls and boys have the same right to attend educational institutions of all kinds. Children are required to attend nursery, school and/or vocational training.

3. Attitudes for a mobilising and binding integration policy

The state of Upper Austria is committed to a **mobilising and binding integration policy**. This is characterised by the following approaches and principles:

→ Mobilising & empowering

The aim of integration policy is for all people to be able to shape their lives in a self-determined and self-sustaining way. To get the integration process started, it may be expedient provide immigrants with support services and mentoring upon their arrival in Upper Austria. Steps should then be taken to provide qualified mentoring and support that may include specific measures such as education, training and qualifications, ultimately helping people on the path to independence. In this context, it seems important not to merely view the people in need of integration as passive in the sense of being beneficiaries of this support, but also to empower them to take their lives into their own hands and participate in society through mobilising integration policies. An integration policy of mobilisation works best if the participants voluntarily contribute to finding their way and advancing in society.

→ Binding: carrot & stick

Mutual obligation is part of joining society, an expression of mutual appreciation and trust, and forms a key foundation in the integration process. Integration policy must be binding on both sides, and should follow a carrot and stick principle. This requires that the objectives to be achieved with integration measures be defined, subject to binding agreement between the provider and the recipient, and that their compliance and effectiveness be reviewed. Motivation and active effort should be acknow-

ledged and encouraged. A lack of willingness or even flat-out refusal, however, have consequences, which could even entail sanctions. The Mission Statement is binding in the sense that integration policy and work, funding and cooperation should be geared towards the goals, principles and attitudes laid down there. Successful integration facilitates participation in economic, social and societal life in Upper Austria. The (further) development of funding guidelines based on this model fosters a mutual commitment between the providers and the recipients of the funding, be they individuals or associations.

→ Needs-driven, knowledge-based & effective

Positive acceptance of the services being offered can be ensured by the fact that they are designed to meet specific needs and are designed for specific target groups, making them affordable and accessible as well. The state of Upper Austria relies on differentiated, needs-based and potential-oriented funding, which requires precise knowledge of individual support needs. In an economic sense, support measures (the carrot) should be differentiated according to immigrants' legal residence status. Given that integration and successful coexistence are complex, multifaceted and dynamic processes, integration work must be structured in a knowledge and evidence-based manner. Effective services aimed at self-empowerment must be developed on this basis.

This focus on needs and impact applies to all integration-related support services in the state. The focus on impact includes the need to evaluate integration policy activities and measures. Measuring the success of integration, evaluating integration measures and monitoring the integration process require appropriate new and further development. In terms of the sustainable use of resources, it is important to take into account the profitability of support services.

→ Future-focused & sustainable

Against the backdrop of labour market policy needs, Upper Austria will develop a modified, differentiated immigration and integration policy for the future. The immigration of highly qualified people, skilled workers and students should be encouraged, and basic conditions should be established for these people to stay in Upper Austria. Integration policy in Upper Austria is a long-term policy. The goal of fostering independence and immigrants being able to support themselves cannot be achieved through short-term

support measures. Integration is a marathon, not a sprint. It is not always the easiest or the shortest route that should be taken, but the most sustainable, or one that ultimately leads to immigrants' ability to support themselves and integrate into life in Upper Austrian society.

→ Cross-sectional & networking

Integration is a cross-sectional issue and, to varying degrees, affects nearly all sectors of society. Education and vocational training, the economy, the labour market, healthcare, social issues, housing, security and culture often affect issues of integration policy in particular. Integration policy measures are being implemented at both the municipal and city level as well as the state level. At the same time, we must bear in mind that, in addition to state actors, non-governmental organisations, including associations, volunteer groups and individuals, carry out integration work in a variety of highly effective ways. This multitude of state and non-state actors and institutions requires continuous coordination and networking. The cross-sectional nature of integration in many respects emphasises the importance of coordination and networking between all integration-related institutions run by the state of Upper Austria or simply located there. Better liaising and improved coordination on transitions is also important in minimising friction losses and avoiding duplicate structures as much as possible.

4. Core aspects of integration policy

Language and education as key qualifications

As a common language, German forms a key basis for living together in a society and is a crucial skill for seizing the opportunities life in our state presents. This common language facilitates communication between native Austrians and immigrants, but also between immigrants of different origins and language backgrounds. It must be apparent to everyone that only by achieving a sufficient command of the German language are equal opportunities and social participation possible.

Adequate language skills open the door to education and training, entry into the labour market and participation in cultural and social life in the cities and municipalities of Upper Austria. At the same time, language courses should convey knowledge about Austria and Upper Austria as well as basic values and the customs inherent to successful coexistence.

Offering language training is therefore an essential building block for successful integration policy. Language instruction should be differentiated, customised and regionally tailored to the needs of the people benefiting from it. In this respect, attention must be paid to the language level and degree of literacy, as well as to any special requirements someone's later profession might require. Particular attention should be paid to language training that specifically facilitates the acquisition of language by women. On the one hand, women are important multipliers for learning the language. On the other, learning German is often an essential step, especially for women, in making decisions about their own lives in Upper Austria.

Stressing the importance of the German language in no way conflicts with maintaining multilingualism. Mastering several languages in addition to German is both valued and encouraged. In an economic hub like Upper Austria that cultivates and engages in many international contacts, multilingualism is a qualifying feature that not only shapes the personality of the individual, but is also of economic interest. Future-oriented integration policy therefore considers multilingualism an opportunity.

In our society, education and training are essential to finding a place in the labour market and laying the economic foundations for living a self-determined life. Social and societal advancement are achieved primarily through education. One of integration policy's most important tasks is therefore to convey the importance of education for social advancement, to spark and develop educational ambitions and to ensure access to educational institutions.

Mobilising, binding integration policy must particularly focus on the children of immigrants. With the right education and, where appropriate, support, they have the best chance of finding their place in Upper Austria and shaping their lives. Liaising between the different educational institutions (kindergarten, nursery, primary school) is essential to ensure children enjoy uninterrupted schooling, especially with regard to language skills. Working with parents must be intensified.

The economy and the labour market – encouraging participation

Each and every person must nurture their own opportunities for supporting themselves. Our social system, which is based on solidarity, is a safety net for those who, for various reasons, are unable to support themselves. The welfare state will only work if everyone provides for their own financial support within their means and contributes to this system of solidarity. This means, for example, that by learning German, receiving education and qualifications, looking for work and working, immigrants are providing for their own economic independence in

the long term. Those who fail to make the effort are not only harming themselves, but are undermining the society of solidarity on which the welfare state relies.

Immigrants' participation in the labour market benefits each and every one of us – and society as a whole. It forms the basis for a self-determined life by creating the economic conditions necessary for it. In addition, work also indirectly serves to foster integration: The workplace offers opportunities for diverse social contacts, which, in turn, opens up additional opportunities for social integration. Last but not least, the participation of immigrants also contributes to Upper Austria's economic strength.

A mobilising and binding integration policy is therefore another important building block in the state of Upper Austria's economic policy, the intention of which is to further expand Upper Austria's position as a leading location for doing business in Austria. In this sense, economic policy and integration policy are even more important than ever before. The Upper Austrian economy needs skilled workers. Immigrants willing to learn German, attain qualifications and get involved represent a huge opportunity for Upper Austria as a business location. At the same time, it should be noted that many immigrants who have come to Upper Austria in recent years do not arrive with the skills and qualifications necessary for the labour market, but must first acquire them in Upper Austria. Targeted support measures, differentiated according to residence status, must be used to master the challenge of making as many people as possible fit for the labour market through education and training. Effective interaction between the public and private sectors is indispensable. In light of the developments on the labour market, young people and young adults who immigrate should be advised and motivated to complete training courses in sought-after occupational fields in the next few years. Women in particular should be targeted to convince them of the benefits of obtaining qualifications, undergoing training and entering the labour market. Immigrants who already hold qualifications that are in demand by the business community should quickly learn German through corresponding occupational courses and should be given further training if necessary in order to be able to take advantage of the opportunities on the labour market as quickly and easily as possible. Highly skilled immigrants should receive the best possible support in the process of recognising their qualifications.

Recent years have shown that the educational success of girls with a migrant background significantly improves compared to boys with a migrant background. However, this educational success is not reflected to the extent desired in success in vocational training and employment. Time and again, traditional gender roles represent a barrier for girls. These barriers must be overcome by engaging in positive work with girls, women and parents as part of integration

policy. At the same time, special attention should be paid to men who have come to Upper Austria alone and who are living without family. General and specific integration measures will continue to be required for this immigration group.

Integration and coexistence on a local scale

Integration is a nationwide task that must be carried out in accordance with the constitutional distribution of authority between the federal and state governments. At the same time, integration is a process that is part of everyday life for people at a local level. As a territorial federal state with cities, districts and municipalities, Upper Austria therefore pursues a cross-institutional, regionalised and decentralised integration strategy. Accordingly, supporting the work being done by committed communities and districts on integration is of particular importance.

Migration can lead to more and more people from certain social groups or countries of origin living together in districts, quarters or streets in cities, regions or municipalities. As long as this occurs to a limited extent and there is enough space and there are enough opportunities for meeting and building bridges, this kind of growth is not problematic. Optimum coexistence requires people to cooperate and coexist in an open-minded, laid-back way. Neighbourly coexistence should be underpinned by mutual respect. However, if a high degree of social inequality is evident in these places, this can lead to segregation, de-integration, and problematic parallelism, which can be detrimental to everyone. Isolated sub-societies in which people live their everyday lives without interacting with the majority society and contravene the local customs should be prevented. It is important to ensure a good mix – both in terms of social strata and ethnicity – even in the planning stages of cities and towns, as well as when allocating housing. After all, it is not our origins that connect us in the long run, but our common interests and passions.

Values and traditions worth passing on

Coexistence is often subject to unwritten rules. Values, traditions, customs and practices conveyed by culture shape our everyday lives and hold value for every society. However, these kinds of cultural practices are not uniform in Upper Austria. On the contrary, they are highly diverse; they are dynamic and constantly changing. Despite all these differences, there are many old, proven and shared habits that are worth preserving. These form one basis for coexistence, which means that everyone must come to know them as part of life in Upper Austria.

For example, this includes that Austria is a secular country, but one that is open and friendly to religion. Austria is an open, Christian country committed to humanism and the Enlightenment. Dissent is overcome by focusing on reason and the rational justifiability of positions and decisions. Austria is a country with a strong consensus that values peace. Not only does this mean a disapproval of any form of violence, it also means that Austria is a place that cultivates the ability to question itself and its norms and values and to deal with and withstand criticism. As a state in which education and economic development are of key importance, Upper Austria is built on the willingness of everyone who lives here to educate and train themselves and use their own abilities to provide for their own personal advancement and the development of the state as a whole. Virtues such as punctuality, organisation, reliability, openness and warmth are what our state should stand for and they all foster a positive shared future. Upper Austria continues to celebrate the traditional holidays every year as a form of shared cultural heritage. In the knowledge that these written and unwritten values, practices and customs of living together only partially reflect reality and partly an ideal state of affairs, they create a sense of home, dependability and togetherness, serving as a guidepost and cementing social cohesion.

Our cultural heritage in Upper Austria is worth passing on. However, we must always be open to discussion about our social and cultural practices and habits to determine what should continue and develop further as an ingrained value and what should not. This state draws the strength it needs to shape the future from this tension between the constant and the dynamic, the individual and the communal, the openness to change and what is firmly rooted.

Nobody in Upper Austria need deny or repudiate their origins, cultural roots or religious convictions. Nevertheless, it is important for immigrants to familiarise themselves with and respect the social and cultural practices and habits prevalent in Upper Austria in order to have the opportunity to engage with others on an equal footing.

Treating one another with respect

Mutual knowledge and respect are the basic prerequisites for peaceful coexistence as well as for a constructive culture of discussion and negotiation. Conflicts must be handled openly and fairly by engaging in debate. Mutual respect means that each and every person treats their counterpart with respect. At the same time, we have come to expect the other person to behave in a manner that deserves respect. Conversely, a person can only demand respect

if they behave in a respectful manner themselves. Only those who are respectful of others may expect and demand respect for themselves. In this regard, mutual respect requires the recognition of the equality and equal status of others and is closely related to tolerance.

This requirement of mutual respect should not be seen as a formula for appeasement that circumvents or fails to address possible areas of conflict or problems. Instead, a basic level of respect is the prerequisite for a constructive discussion that increases capacity for criticism and debate. Respect applies to everyone, including public servants such as teachers, police officers, etc., regardless of their gender. Culturally and religiously motivated devaluations of the sexes or of non-believers or those of other faiths has no place here. It is important to realise that this kind of devaluation can occur both in the host society and within immigrant groups. Regardless of where this attitude stems from, it must be opposed with equal determination.

In everyday life, optimum coexistence requires mutual consideration and empathy. Greeting one another, accepting other people's need for quiet and considering their sociability, respecting nature, carefully handling common goods and public spaces are all aspects of this willingness to understand one another – the requirement necessary for positive coexistence. That's what this state stands for.

