Integration: Why Canada Does Better

The Berlin Institute has published an English-language update of its 2012 study “Leading on Points – What Germany Can Learn from Canada’s Immigration and Integration Policy”.

Germany and Canada are among those countries with the largest shares of immigrants worldwide. But whereas in Germany the majority of immigrants have low-level qualifications, immigrants to Canada are generally much better qualified than the Canadian population – 45 percent of them are graduates. This makes it easier for them to find work: in Canada around 75 percent of immigrants between the ages of 25 and 54 are employed, whereas in Germany the figure is only 70 percent.

These are the findings of the study “Leading on Points – What Germany Can Learn from Canada’s Immigration and Integration Policy” for which the Berlin Institute for Population and Development evaluated Canadian studies and data from the German micro-census. It was supported in this endeavour by the Robert Bosch Foundation. Despite the current high immigration figures for EU citizens to Germany, the Berlin Institutes argues that Germany should expand the opportunities for non-EU citizens to live and work in Germany. It regards this as necessary because Germany is unlikely to be able to recruit a sufficient number of immigrants from the states of southern and eastern Europe, whose populations, like that of Germany, are shrinking.

The Berlin Institute identifies two main reasons for the Canadian success story: first of all, Canada pursues a policy of systematically recruiting immigrants whose skills are needed by the labour market and who can help to build the country’s prosperity in the long term. At the heart of this policy is a transparent points system that selects would-be immigrants mainly according to education or training, language skills and age. Secondly, Canada offers new immigrants a large range of carefully tailored integration aids, from which second-generation immigrants also benefit. The majority of the latter go on to obtain a university education and in this respect do far better than the children of Canadians.

Because of the continuing low birth rate the number of people of working age in Germany is likely to shrink by 15 million by 2050. Some German companies are already having to recruit their labour from abroad. In the coming decades Germany can expect to experience labour shortages across the board, particularly of highly qualified people.

The Berlin Institute believes Canada’s experience with immigration and integration offers many promising approaches that could be emulated by German policy. So far Germany has not been assertive enough in projecting an image as a country of immigration. Given the rapidly increasing demand for skilled people the world over, Germany is hence in danger of missing the boat if it wishes to become one of the immigration societies of the twenty-first century.
Canada does better than Germany on almost all counts when it comes to managing immigration. Not only does it have a higher number of immigrants in absolute terms, it also succeeds in attracting highly educated people. As a result, Canada has experienced fewer problems integrating both first- and second-generation immigrants.