

Madam President, Excellencies, dear
parliamentary colleagues from all over the world,

Germany is an immigration country. You might take that for granted, but this fact is indeed new in the political consensus of Germany. For decades German politics denied to confess in public that immigration became an substantial part of German society. The new established German government now is the first government, that explicitly expresses the need to create an immigration policy law for our country. Now we are able to give an answer to the international demand for legal pathways for migrants.

It was no longer possible to deny: Germany has become a main target for refugees and irregular migration within Europe. Our country realizes an exceptionally increasing number of immigrants in the last years, and our society is concerned about this.

While our German humanitarian help and admission is internationally appreciated, the German at least some citizens don't see the things in the same light and meanwhile many people evaluate it far more critical.

The changes we are challenging are immense, and as democrats we have to explain to our citizens, how we want to face this, what kind of regulation we suggest. This is a process which will take years, and it is a hard job to do. But you can be confident, that we will do this job in Berlin.

A lot of people see the immense and up to now not sufficiently regulated immigration as a loss of control of our institutions and the power of government itself – some feel personally overburdened. It would be grossly negligent to ignore those feelings of our citizens.

And this is, what we suggest: for example a consequent use of the rules of Schengen, the reformation of the common European system for asylum seeking persons (GEAS), the improvement of the control of the borders to non-EU countries (Frontex) or common operations for sea rescue or the struggle against human traffic criminality in the mediterranean region. But all this is not sufficient.

Our first aim should be to improve the life conditions of the possible refugees in their home countries, so that there is no reason for them to leave.

But for those who want to migrate: What should an immigration policy law look like? Thereby we intend to distinguish clearly in law between asylum seekers, war refugees, and request for permanent settlement due to economic reasons. Therefore we want to offer legal possibilities for those who want to work in our country, for people that can afford their lives by themselves.

Integrated refugees or asylum seekers willing to stay permanently after years of successful integration into our society and employment market should also have the possibility to get a permanent resident permit. This process also needs to be defined by law.

And, to be honest, we also need possibilities to lead those back to their origin countries who do **not** need protection and to whom we can **not** offer the possibility to stay permanently – or to those, who use in a criminal way the chances we offered to them. We all know, that those persons are very few in numbers – but in the target countries of immigration this is a very serious public debate we must not underestimate.

Our citizens want us to make sure, that those who really need our help get that help - today and also in the future.

If the process of asylum takes too long, if integrated immigrants are forced to leave the country, if on the other hand some persons use the gaps of the system to avoid the consequences of regulations and laws, then we have to fear to lose the acceptance for migration in our society. But if we manage to form an proper immigration law, that is coherent for citizens as well as for migrants, then in the long term people in Europe will recognize, that regulated migration is a benefit for both migrants and receiving societies.

Thank you for your attention.