



OPINION

Viewpoint: Olaf Scholz

Driven by Inclusiveness and Diversity



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For years now, Germany's economic powerhouse Hamburg has been attracting immigrants to evolve into a highly cosmopolitan city of 1.8 million. To Mayor **Olaf Scholz**, this diversity is what gives Hamburg its charm. In this Viewpoint, he shares that it is now the government's duty to give those who work hard opportunities to excel. This means using the city's economic prosperity to spur inclusive growth and innovation that will, in turn, empower residents to continue adding to the vibrancy of the city.

In 2012, *The New York Times* wrote, “no one tells you how pretty Hamburg is”. This “thrilling discovery” was probably due to Hamburg's reputation as a business centre. Germany's world trade is anchored in Hamburg—home to Europe's third-biggest container port, and the world's third largest aviation industry. Hamburg is also a media capital and centre of innovative technologies such as wind power.

Hamburg is famously cosmopolitan: people from 200 countries live here, with one in three residents a migrant or a descendant of one. The city has a population of 1.8 million and is the economic centre of a metropolitan region with over 5 million people. As mayor, I have personally written to more than 150,000 foreign residents encouraging them to apply for German citizenship. We also take freedom of religion very seriously. Plurality is normal here—there are over 100 active religious communities in Hamburg, and an active inter-religious dialogue about topics such as religious instruction in schools. Not only has the city signed cooperation agreements with the Protestant Church, by far the largest grouping, but also with the

Catholic Church, the Jewish community and, recently, an accord with Muslim communities.

Hamburg is growing, largely due to migration, as an increasing number of people see their future in this city. We welcome this; it is the government's duty to give people who make an effort and work hard a proper chance. This includes using economic prosperity to generate growth that is inclusive and empowers residents to continue adding to the wealth of the city.

Education for All

The logical consequence is investment in the city's social infrastructure. Compulsory schooling and equal-opportunity vocational training are keys to integration in Hamburg. All children may attend free day care in the municipal facilities; at every secondary school it is possible to gain a university-entrance qualification and good-quality municipal universities are likewise free. Some successful non-state universities with good international reputations have also been established. And among the numerous institutions engaged in basic

research, the biggest star is Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron (DESY), one of the world's leading accelerator centres, which is currently working on building the X-Ray Free-Electron Laser (XFEL) research facility. When completed in 2017, the facility will place Hamburg as the world's premier site for research into the structure of matter.

Employment

In Hamburg, all government departments work together to ensure that no young person—regardless of citizenship—is left behind in terms of employment. For years the German system of combining at-work and theoretical education has produced excellent skilled workers for trade and industry. Hamburg has therefore established a youth careers advice agency to help every young person gain a school-leaving certificate and vocational qualification. We have roped in the Chamber of Commerce and other business confederations so that they can give their input on an institutional level. We seek to work with as many businesses as possible and have developed an especially close working relationship with the bigger Hamburg industries as they are our best bet when it comes to placing young people in jobs.

Spurring Housing Development

A liveable city is nourished by the spirit, zest for life and energy of its residents, and we do not want them worn down by hours of commuting or precarious housing arrangements. Therefore, as soon as I took over the government of Hamburg in 2011, an ambitious housing programme to build new apartments was introduced. Today, there is more construction activity in Hamburg than anywhere else in Germany—a demonstration of what inclusion means for urban development policies.

Each year we have achieved, and often surpassed, our target and we are starting to see signs that price increases are being curbed. But we shall not stop building houses. The population is still growing, and we have also had a recent influx of refugees last year. In spring, the Senate increased the house-building target. How will that work? By including house-building at every stage of town-planning, by facilitating private and public housing construction and making smart use of land.

The “Alliance for Homes” has been Hamburg's response to the need for house-building. It is a voluntary agreement between local authorities, developers, and associations representing landlords and tenants, whereby the city boroughs have agreed to issue 10,000 or more planning

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and building permits per year while developers would aim to meet this target collectively, on a voluntary basis. So far, 50,000 permits have been issued since 2011, with 20,000 already built.

Expanding Social Housing

As is usual in Germany, most people in Hamburg rent their apartments. About a third of these apartments belongs to the municipal housing association or other cooperative societies, providing reasonably-priced homes. When municipal building land is sold, social factors play a role as well as the price. Overall, building permission is granted in a three-way split: one third privately-funded housing, one third “buy-to-let” apartments and one third social housing.

Expanding social housing serves to widen our city’s typically stable, diverse social fabric. HafenCity’s development is one such example. This tract of disused port and industrial land increases the central city area by 1.57 square kilometres or 40%. About 7,000 apartments for more than 14,000 people are being built here. Since 2011, we have reserved 30% of the building lots for subsidised housing. There are barrier-free dwellings, child-

friendly homes and apartments for artists. Within walking distance of the main station and with excellent underground train and bus services, the district has space for 45,000 workplaces, cultural events, public parks and educational facilities, including two universities.

Hamburg has tapped road construction projects to benefit house building: a local interest group first suggested that the motorway to Scandinavia, which cuts straight through our city, could be roofed over to reduce noise and unite the districts on either side. Funding is now in place. The “roof” is 3.5 kilometres long, offering 0.25 square kilometres of new, open green space; in return, space for 3,000 new dwellings in an attractive district of the city will be freed up.

Hamburg is characterised by public spaces, shaped by people who meet together as free citizens. The new arrival of many different people is what gives the city so much charm. Today, more than ever, this model of the open urban society needs a public infrastructure that supports housing construction and facilitates access to work and education. One more reason why people say Hamburg is a truly remarkable city. 