

excellent

# kiel's office of immigration

**The office of immigration is often the first contact that foreign students and scientists have with German administrators whatsoever. Two years ago, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Endowment for German Science (Stifterverband für die deutsche Wissenschaft) started an initiative to award the friendliest offices of immigration in Germany.**

The Kieler Anker questioned Manfred Rotzoll, the director of Kiel's head department, which encompasses all office branches, and Christoph Cassel, the director of Kiel's office of immigration, over the tasks of offices of immigration and, of course, on their achievement in this competition. Upon asking what the actual tasks of an office of immigration are, one encounters three large areas. The office of immigration takes care of the general affairs of foreigners, to which the distribution and extension of the residence permits belong. An additional area is the naturalization of foreigners. In the past years, 1,000 foreigners were naturalized



**Christoph Cassel und Manfred Rotzoll**

on average. As the distribution of residency permits is a task of the administrators, they must naturally also terminate the residency permits of people who, for example, stay in Germany illegally. The Kiel office of immigration cannot complain under any circumstances over the lack of work. Two new permanent posts were created in the area of naturalization, due to the new nationality law, because since the law, there have been more people who fulfill the citizenship requirements. "Nevertheless, the absolute number of foreigners in Kiel is not rising, and remains at a level of approximately 20,000 people," observed Manfred Rotzoll. Among them are around 2,000 students. The largest group of foreigners originates from Turkey. This is the result of Turkey being the classical area for enlisting workers in the 60's. "There is hardly any country, by which at least one or

two people would not be represented in Kiel. With very few exceptions, the whole world is represented by us," said Christoph Cassel. Kiel can be described in quite a positive sense of the word as multi-cultural. Kiel is a very open city and the inhabitants show a large readiness to positively interact with the foreign fellow citizens, considered Manfred Rotzoll. "There is a bunch of foreign fellow citizens who have lived here for five, ten or twenty years and I receive much positive feedback in regards to the integration," remarks Rotzoll as a positive balance. *Are there nevertheless Problem areas that are hard to handle?* "One problem area that frequently comes up in the field of foreigner integration is that of the linguistic integration of school children. Whenever children go into German classrooms from abroad, they certainly

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have it more difficult than children who have already lived in Germany for a long time. This issue clearly goes beyond the legal duties of the office of immigration, but there are at least 70 international associations in Kiel, from the German-Polish and German-Chinese Unions to the America Society, all of which exist for the sake of the people," explains Christoph Cassel on a point, which already came to light in the spreading PISA Study.

"In order to deal with this problem, it is important to make contact with the impacted people. This can happen through the previously mentioned, countless international associations. Also, our administration's foreign report concerns cultural and integrative aspects as well, in contrast to us, who exclusively have to cover administrative affairs," indicates Manfred Rotzoll as a possible solution to the problem.

*To what extent do the foreign students represent a special group within the community of foreigners as a whole?*

"They differ, for sure, on the basis of their educational standing. Otherwise it is naturally difficult to make generalizing statements about foreign students, since a homogenous group is not concerned in this case," explains Christoph Cassel.

*You were distinguished by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Endowment for German Science as one of the friendliest offices of immigration in Germany. Did that surprise you?*

"To start with, we were very happy about it. We were more surprised at the nomination. The news reached us in July/August of last year. With it came the request to contribute even more information. The nomination came from the outside, and then the task of passing on information was our responsibility. The suggestion appeared from the circle of foreign students and scientists. At the end of last year we found out that the Kiel office of immigration belonged to the elite. The competition is split in two parts. In

one part, there are ranks of one through three, for which particular cities were chosen. In the second part, there is a group, in which twelve cities were mentioned and praised. The Kiel office of immigration belongs to this as well," said Manfred Rotzoll cheerfully.

*What do you suppose were the reasons for being so positively evaluated?*

Manfred Rotzoll: "I see it as a marked confirmation of the fact that we are on the right track and we are working closely together with the university. There is very close contact to the coworkers of the individual institutes and organizations here. It also goes to show that we are headed in the right direction regarding coworker training. This is particularly the case in the realm of citizen friendliness, which the foreign students and scientists profit from in the long run."

*Why do you think the Endowment for German Science and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation have such a competition?*

Christoph Cassel: "I think that the competition's planners intend to initiate positive competition among the offices of immigration, which, in the long run, should contribute the improvement of Germany's places of higher learning.

Manfred Rotzoll: "The offices of immigration frequently represent only contact to administrators that foreigners have. If the contact is not positive, then it quickly leaves a negative impression, which can damage the atmosphere for a long time. The fact that we have been distinguished shows that we are on the right track. We are, for example, presently educating our coworkers with Spanish courses. If we have the capability of reducing communication problems, then this is a positive signal that we can emit.

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