



German Institute  
for Human Rights

# The German Institute for Human Rights

Input for the Taiwan Conference on  
Human Rights Training in the  
public sector 10.12.2024

# Welcome!

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1. Introduction to the GIHR (slides 4-6)
2. Police and policing as field of work of the GIHR (9-14)
3. HRE education & police (16-21)
4. Q & A

# The German Institute of Human Rights

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- is Germany's **independent National Human Rights Institution (NHRI)**
  - promotes the integration of human rights into **domestic and foreign policy decisions**, and monitors the **implementation of international human rights treaties** in Germany
  - is accredited with **A-status** according to the “**Paris Principles**”, the international standards of the UN for NHRI
  - “Federal Act on the Legal Status and Mandate of the German Institute for Human Rights” provides **legal basis and core funding** from the budget of the German Parliament

# Independent and not-for-profit

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## The Institute

- as a **politically independent body is solely committed to human rights** and self-determined as to the focus of its work
- a **Board of Trustees** provides guidelines for the work of the Institute; the Board features representatives of civil society, academia, the political arena and the media
- is a **not-for-profit registered association** with 86 members (individuals and organisations), as of 2024
- has about **130 people employed**, mostly researchers & advisers (many part-time positions)

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- **Monitoring** the human rights situation in Germany
  - Interdisciplinary, application-oriented **research**
  - **Documentation** and **information**
  - **Facilitating dialogue** between civil society and government
  - **Policy advice**
  - Human rights **education**
  - **Dialogue and co-operation** with national, regional and international human rights bodies (e.g. UN treaty bodies, Council of Europe, EU Fundamental Rights Agency)

# Policing an human rights – work of the GIRH

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# Addressing racism in policing

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- **Racism in policing as key issue** since 2012
  - flawed police response to domestic and murderous right-wing terrorism („NSU“)
  - racial profiling / Black Lives Matter issues
  - right-wing extremism and racism among police forces
  
- **GIHR works on**
  - investigations of racist hate crime
  - stop and search powers
  - bias in police data processing
  - Police oversight and accountability

# Challenges – opinions in police forces

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- MEGAVO online survey of 50,000 police officers by Federal Ministry of Interior
- Compared with representative studies on German population, the report concludes misanthropic attitudes can be found in the police as in the general population
- 15% had a problem with “Sinti and Roma staying in their area”; 27% felt “sometimes minoritized / dominated by Muslims”.
- Critics suspect results offer a selective picture

[https://www.polizeistudie.de/wp-content/uploads/Abschlussbericht\\_MEGAVO.pdf](https://www.polizeistudie.de/wp-content/uploads/Abschlussbericht_MEGAVO.pdf) (S. 104ff.)

# Challenges - racial profiling

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- „stop and search“ powers: 2.3 Million people have been controlled by federal police in 2021
- survey of 5,800 persons of African descent: 57% of respondents reporting police checks „without apparent reason“  
(<https://afrozensus.de/reports/2020/Afrozensus-2020.pdf>)
- survey of 15,000 persons: respondents „possibly seen as foreigners due to appearance“ report more often checked by police (8.3%) than respondents not seen as foreigners (4.4%).

(<https://www.svr-migration.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SVR-Policy-Brief-Racial-Profiling-bei-Polizeiaktionen.pdf>)

# Selected works I: policing and racism



- **Lack of effective investigations of alleged police violence** as long-standing problem
- HR bodies and civil society calling for establishment of **independent police complaints mechanisms** since 1990s
- Due to this public pressure, several federal states and national parliament have established **police ombudspersons**
- Means
  - research and publications
  - advising policy-makers
  - exchange with police oversight bodies and civil society
  - reporting to international HR bodies & EU fundamental rights body (FRA)

# Selected works II: police accountability



# Human Rights Education Department & Police

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# What exactly is “human rights education”?

- an educational approach to human rights, defined in an UN resolution (66/137 from 2011); three core elements:
  1. education **about human rights**, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles ...
  2. education **through human rights** ... learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of ... educators and learners ...
  3. education **for human rights**, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights ...



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- the state has the duty to **respect, protect and fulfil** human rights
  - all **civil servants** have to know the human rights and how to respect, protect and fulfill them, and especially have to be **alerted to specific risks of discrimination and human rights violation**
  - unfortunately, not all vocational training in Germany is up to that task
  - HRE aims to improve awareness of human rights through **dialogue, trainings and policy advice**, especially on curricula of (state) education institutions

# particular challenge of HRE with police / law enforcement

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- **law enforcement** is the only profession given special powers to **interfere with civil rights** and some human rights, in order to protect higher ranking rights
- this balance between intervening in rights and protecting rights is inherently difficult; **mistakes** are to be expected and **need to be properly addressed**
- great danger looms when misjudgements occur **systematically to the detriment of certain groups** of the population, e.g. BPOC, migrants, women; that amounts to discrimination and is a grave human rights violation

# HRE focus 1: trainer network

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- In Germany, police academies employ not only professors, but **freelance trainers** to cover classes on current topics
- we have built a **network of trainers** that work with police forces - mostly on racism - and try to identify encouraging practice and promote professional exchange
- trainers themselves often come from communities affected by discrimination and can therefore, through their experiences, provide us with **important perspectives** on human rights education within police training

# HRE focus 2: police academies

## - curricula research

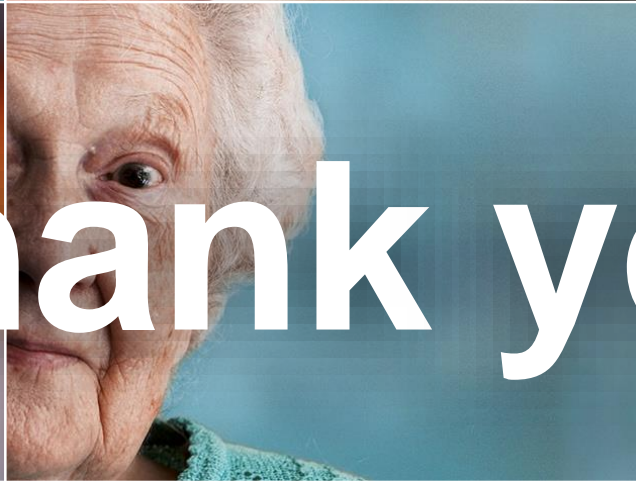
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- The federal government and 16 federal states each maintain **police academies** (universities of applied sciences), each responsible for training of the respective police forces
- In cooperation with these police academies, we are currently examining their **framework curricula**
- Do human rights have the necessary place in **vocational training**? Are they taught not only theoretically (political education or ethics classes), but also in a practitioner-oriented way (operational training)
- We will publish a preliminary **research summary 2025** and probably **policy recommendations** in 2026

# key findings

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- due to the decentralised structure both of the German police and the responsible „Länder“ governments, **no unified research or situation assessment** is feasible; many topics are (political) controversial
- police forces often work under immense **public pressure** and are not always prepared to react to criticism on human rights issues open-minded and dialogical
- **institutional change** (grievance mechanisms, positive error culture, changes in vocational training) happens piecemeal and in different speeds, depending on local conditions and political support



Thank you





**German Institute  
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