



**The German Association for Public and Private Welfare
(Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge e. V.)**

The German Association for Public and Private Welfare is unique in the Federal Republic of Germany. It is a forum, a platform for social work formed and supported by both public and voluntary welfare agencies.

In Germany, three main levels of government are responsible for social welfare:

- the Federal Government,
- the governments of the German Federal States (Bundesländer), and
- the local authorities (public agencies).

The main voluntary welfare agencies are the following:

- Federal Workers' Welfare Association (Arbeiterwohlfahrt),
- Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany (Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland),
- German Caritas Association (Caritas),
- German Association of Non-Affiliated Charities (Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband),
- German Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz),
- Central Welfare Agency of the Jews in Germany (Zentrale Wohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland).

The German Association for Public and Private Welfare has its headquarters in Berlin. It is a registered non-profit association with 2.400 members at present. In addition to the public and the non-profit welfare institutions, universities, unions, employers' associations and foundations are also amongst its members. The German Association is the central point for all efforts undertaken by both public and voluntary welfare organisations in the fields of social work, in particular with regards to social welfare, children and youth welfare as well as health. The actual practical social work is done by its members, not by the German Association itself.

The President of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare is Mr. Wilhelm Schmidt, Chairman of the Federal Workers' Welfare Association.

His Deputy Presidents are:

Dr. Stephan Articus, Executive Director of the German Association of Cities and Towns (Deutscher Städtetag),

Prof. Dr. Georg Cremer, General Secretary, German Caritas Federation

Mr. Georg Gorrissen, District Administrator of the County of Segeberg, and

Mr. Werner Hesse, Executive Director, German Association of Non-affiliated Charities.

Mr. Michael Löher is the Executive Director of the German Association and is empowered to act as its representative. His deputy is Ms. Bärbel Habermann, who also coordinates the work and responsibilities of the different departments making up the German Association.

The German Association is financed by the contributions of its members and through subsidies from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend), as well as from the Federal States.

The German Association for Public and Private Welfare was founded in 1880. Since then it has monitored and evaluated the development of social work and social services and thus offers a unique forum for its members to initiate, discuss and influence trends in social work and social policy. The German Association is widely recognized as a key factor in the policy process of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Furthermore, the German Association for Public and Private Welfare serves as a clearing house, as it coordinates and attempts to settle possible disputes arising from the efforts to develop social assistance, youth welfare and health care services. On the one hand, the German Association serves as a platform for airing controversial ideas and interests: on the other hand, it is an instrument for channelling the interests of its members to obtain results or arrive at a decision based on the principle of consensus. The expertise and social responsibility of the various members, operating on the basis of different philosophical, political and economic principles and backgrounds, are thus brought together in this forum, and represent the different forces active in social work.

The work of the German Association plays an important role in the legislative and executive areas thanks to the commitment and professional expertise of its members who serve in its specialized bodies.

Recommendations made by the German Association, for example on the application of social legislation, have an important impact.

The German Welfare Congress (Deutscher Fürsorgetag), the central social congress in the Federal Republic of Germany, is organised by the German Association and takes place every three years at a different venue. This very important forum brings together public and voluntary social work organisations, people engaged in research and those involved in the policy-making process. At this event the interested public can gain an insight into the significance and the work of the various institutions of social work. It addresses contemporary developments in social policy, as well as new issues, trends and problems in social work. Hence it contributes towards advancing the professional and political debate and progress in this field.

The departments exploring specific issues and aspects of social work and providing the board of the association with professional expertise in a consultative capacity are:

Department I: Planning, Controlling and Improvement in the Quality of social work and social services

Department II: Children, youth, family and equal opportunities/gender mainstreaming

Department III: Fundamental questions of social security, social assistance and social security systems

Department IV: Old age assistance, care, rehabilitation and health as well as fundamental questions of social assistance legislation

Department V: Publishing House

Department VII: Social work with an international background, international social service (ISS)

In 2006, a special Coordinating Unit for International Social Work was created – the **Department for International Affairs**. It explores the developments at the international

and European levels and coordinates that topics relevant to the work of the German Association are handled by or in cooperation with the other Departments.

Every department (with the exception of Department 5) is in charge of committees, constituted of experts from the field – representatives from public and voluntary social welfare agencies and research – who regularly meet at the headquarters of the German Association. Each committee is chaired by a member of the Board. The committees' main task is to comment on draft legislation and professional issues and to formulate recommendations for practical action.

The German Association offers the following services:

- to observe and inform about the development of social work in Germany and Europe
- to consult and advise in social policy and related fields
- to publish recommendations regarding the practical problems of social work
- to prepare and publish expertise in the field of social legislation
- to educate people in social work
- to edit specialised literature on social work and social legislation
- to plan, execute and evaluate projects, e.g. as a service for federal ministries.

The German Association for Public and Private Welfare is instrumental in

- developing concepts and standards of social work and social assistance
- publishing legal expertise and thereby supporting the unified interpretation and application of federal legislation in the social field
- developing the theory and practice of social work and social legislation in Germany by adding an international perspective
- furthering the participation in European networks of social action and information
- supporting international co-operation.