

# Memet Cinar

## **"Integration succeeds through genuine participation".**



© Bruno Wansing

**Memet Cinar is a member of the integration council of the city of Bocholt and one of the three deputy chairpersons. He is introduced in conversation with Bruno Wansing, the integration officer of the city of Bocholt, for the series "Wir im IR".**

Memet Cinar, born in 1972, has two children with his wife Behice. Ali Aydin is 22 years old, Ümit Emre is 17. Cinar has lived in Bocholt since 1987. Due to a lack of language skills, he was placed two classes behind at the Melanchthon School. He quickly made up for this and started an apprenticeship as a cutting machine operator at FLENDER after finishing school. After the apprenticeship, he completed his technician's certificate - virtually on the side - and got a job in production planning even before completing the technician's examination.

He has been a permanent member of the Integration Council since 2004. At first, he was still a member of the DITIB list, but since 2020 he has been an elected member of the current Integration Council as an individual candidate and one of the three deputy chairpersons. "I deliberately chose the path from being on the list to being an individual candidate," Cinar reports. In the DITIB list, he had already been the spokesperson and had often stood there as a lone fighter, but always with the requirement that he had to represent the opinion of the list. "For me it was important that I could represent my own opinion.

That is now possible for me as an individual candidate," Cinar emphasises. He was surprised by the success of his application. "As an individual candidate, I did not expect so many votes," Cinar reports.



**All in all, I want all people, whether born in Bocholt or people with an international family history, to feel comfortable and at home here in Bocholt.**

**Memet Cinar**

## **Integration with real participation**

For him, integration is only successful if it is linked to genuine participation. "It's about people with international family histories being allowed to make decisions - politically - and to help shape things together," Cinar emphasises. There are many people in Bocholt who come from third countries, have lived here for 50 years and do not know the mayor. "If I don't have a say (because I'm not allowed to vote) in how my city looks, how my city develops, then I lose interest. That is why it is important that we awaken interest in political work," Cinar demands. After all, the citizens of a city need to know who decides on the city's design, the development of fees, and so on. Therefore, the municipal electoral law must be changed so that people with an international family history who do not have a German passport can also participate in the municipal elections. "This group of people is often accused of not being interested in politics in the city. But it is the case that I am not interested in things that I cannot influence (with) myself.

## **Culturally sensitive care, intercultural exchange, equal opportunities**

Cinar has also set priorities for his integration work. In addition to the large area of "culturally sensitive care", where he is also active in the working group of the Integration Council, he is committed to intercultural exchange in schools and clubs and would like to address the issue of "equal opportunities". "It sometimes happens that people come to me and complain that their son gets a lower grade at school just because his name is Ali," Cinar reports. Such things have to be verified and then addressed. In the area of integration in and through sport, he would like to get the parents of athletes, who are often not involved, on board, especially with people with international family histories. "It would be great if the parents would get involved as well, as trainers, coaches, companions, in the work of the board, etc.," Cinar wishes. On the subject of racism and unconscious discrimination, he wants to work to improve the relationship between sender and recipient. "We have to sensitise the sender to the fact that some things simply cannot be said in this way or can be misunderstood and discriminated against, and we have to get the receiver to not be immediately offended and close down, but to overlook certain things," Cinar demands.

## **Language no longer the main issue in the third and fourth generations**

The German language is important, especially for people who are currently arriving in Germany. "In the third or fourth generation of people with international family histories who have settled in Germany and especially here in Bocholt, the German language is no longer an issue. On the contrary, we have to make an effort to bring the language of origin, the mother tongue, back into focus by means of teaching in the language of origin. And here I am primarily concerned with quality, which must be improved in any case," says Cinar, addressing an important issue.

## **Cooperation has potential**

When asked whether the Integration Council is accepted by the Council, the administration and also by society, he differentiates his answers. "There is still some potential in the relationship between the council and the integration council as far as real cooperation is

concerned," Cinar is sure. The administration is very interested, he says, and makes a positive effort to address issues that affect people with international family histories. This is the case, for example, with the topics of cemeteries and culturally sensitive care. "That works," says Cinar. In society as a whole, the Integration Council is not yet so well known. "We definitely need to focus more on this and make sure that we ourselves are better known," Cinar says, adding that he sees the Integration Council itself as a starting point. "In a conversation with an employee of a senior citizens' facility, I once asked how well known the Integration Council was. I was very disappointed by the answer 'not really', we have to do something about that," Cinar demands.

On the subject of "intercultural opening of the administration", he sees the city administration on a good path. "The administration is interculturally open, but nobody *really* knows that. Everyone - the council, the administration, the integration council, but also our cultural associations - must work on making it clear to people with international family histories that the administration is an employer for everyone and that everyone can apply for a job there," says Cinar clearly.

### **People should feel at home in Bocholt**

He does not have a direct special wish that he would like to see fulfilled during this election period. "Nevertheless, I would like the building blocks we are putting in place now to bear fruit in 5 or 10 years. If the people here then say that was right and that was a merit of the Integration Council, as for example with the Muslim burial ground, then we have done many things right," Cinar looks to the future with hope. "All in all, I would like all people, whether born in Bocholt or people with an international family history, to feel comfortable and at home here in Bocholt."

## **Contact**