

# **The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2019/2020**

**A description of the responsibilities, structures and  
developments in education policy for the exchange of information in Europe**

– EXCERPT –

## 12. EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

### 12.1. Introduction

The promotion of underrepresented social groups in the education system is achieved through a number of measures which aim to overcome social obstacles and enable equal participation.

#### Specific legislative framework

The right of disabled persons with disabilities to education and training appropriate to their needs is enshrined in the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*, Art. 3 – R1), in equality legislation, in the Social Security Code XII (*Zwölftes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch – Sozialhilfe*) and in the Länder constitutions (R13–28). More detailed provisions are set out in the school legislation of the Länder (R86–103).

The special concerns of students with disabilities are taken into account in the Higher Education Acts of the Länder. In many Länder, the appointment of university officers for the concerns of students with disabilities and chronic illnesses is now anchored in law. The regulations on the participation rights differ from Land to Land.

#### Early childhood education and care

Different offers for education, support and development in early childhood before entering school are available for children with disabilities. The majority of children who receive integration support related to an institution in accordance with the Social Security Code VIII (*Achtes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch – Kinder- und Jugendhilfe* – R61) and/or Social Security Code XII or for whom special educational needs have been identified and who attend a day care facility for children will be cared for there along with other children without disabilities.

#### Special education needs provision in the school sector

The aim of special educational support is to enable children and young people who either have disabilities or face the threat of disablement to exercise their right to a form of schooling, training and education that is tailored to their personal capabilities and needs. Children and young people receive support in the form of individual assistance measures so that they can achieve the highest possible level of integration at school and at work, participate in society and lead an independent life as far as possible. Support for special educational needs in inclusive educational schooling encourages children and youths with and without disabilities to work together.

The development and organisation of special education in the Länder was harmonised by several resolutions adopted by the Standing Conference and especially by the “Recommendations on the organisation of special schools” (*Empfehlung zur Ordnung des Sonderschulwesens*’, Resolution of March 1972) and recommendations for the individual types of special education. The “Recommendations on special needs education in the schools of the Federal Republic of Germany” (*Empfehlungen zur sonderpädagogischen Förderung in den Schulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*’, Resolution of May 1994) have in recent years initiated important developments aiming to dismantle barriers and promote the equal participation of young people with disabilities in education. In spring 2008 the Standing Conference decided to revise the Recommendations in order to take account of the intentions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Länder inter alia. On

18 November 2010 the Standing Conference adopted a position paper on “Educational and legal aspects in the implementation of the United Nations Convention of 13 December 2006 on the rights of persons with disabilities in school education” (*“Pädagogische und rechtliche Aspekte der Umsetzung des Übereinkommens der Vereinten Nationen vom 13. Dezember 2006 über die Rechte von Menschen mit Behinderungen (Behindertenrechtskonvention – VN-BRK) in der schulischen Bildung”*). In October 2011 the Standing Conference adopted the decision on “Inclusive education of children and young people with disabilities in schools” (*“Inklusive Bildung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Behinderungen in Schulen”*). The recommendations are guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They build on the basic positions of the 1994 “Recommendations on special needs education in the schools of the Federal Republic of Germany” (*“Empfehlungen zur sonderpädagogischen Förderung in den Schulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland”*) and set out the framework conditions for increasingly inclusive educational practice in general education and vocational schools. The aim of the recommendations is to enable children and young people to be educated and trained together and to guarantee and develop the standards achieved in special education teaching, advisory and support services. In March 2019, in addition to the recommendation “Inclusive education of children and young people with disabilities in schools” (*“Inklusive Bildung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Behinderungen in Schulen”*), the KMK presented “Recommendations on school education, counselling and support for children and young people with special educational needs LEARNING” (*“Empfehlungen zur schulischen Bildung, Beratung und Unterstützung von Kindern und Jugendlichen im sonderpädagogischen Schwerpunkt LERNEN”*). These recommendations take into account the development of an inclusive education system in Germany, the need for subsidiary special educational support and the relationship to general pedagogy and lifelong learning. They incorporate various recommendations of the KMK.

The recommendations of the Standing Conference apply to pupils with special educational needs, regardless whether support takes place at a mainstream school or at a special education institution. The following recommendations of the Standing Conference on the individual focuses of special needs education are in effect on a complementary basis for the time being, provided that the statements they make do not contradict the above Recommendations. A differentiation is made between eight funding priorities:

- sight
- learning
- emotional and social development
- speech
- mental development
- hearing
- physical and motor development
- instruction for sick pupils

For the statistical distribution of pupils with special educational needs according to the individual types of special education, please refer to chapter 2.9.

In addition, in June 2000 the Standing Conference has made recommendations on the “Education and teaching of children and young people with autistic behaviour” (*“Erziehung und Unterricht von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit autistischem Verhalten”*).

## School career advice and vocational guidance

School career advice at lower secondary level consists of not only counselling on questions of transferring to other schools and the choice of the further educational path but also advice on study courses leading to a professional qualification in the educational system. It also cooperates with the Employment Agencies (*Agenturen für Arbeit*) in providing career advice for pupils.

Vocational Orientation (*Berufsorientierung*) offers for pupils exist in all Länder for all educational programmes; in all Länder, Vocational Orientation is now a firm part of the curricula and guidelines or ordinances.

The Employment Agencies also offer Careers Information Centres (*Berufsinformationszentren – BIZ*), facilities where anyone facing vocational or career decisions can find out more for themselves, in particular about training, professional activities and requirements, further education and training as well as developments on the labour market.

## Higher education

The goal of support measures in university education is to eliminate social obstacles for hitherto underrepresented groups and allow their equal participation. Hitherto underrepresented groups in the German higher education system include women, students with children, students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, children from low-income or educationally disadvantaged origin groups, and students with a migrant background. Support for underrepresented social groups in the educational system is provided through a number of measures. More detailed information is available in chapter 12.6.

### 12.2. Special Education Needs Provision within Mainstream Education in the Elementary Sector and the School Sector

The data from the seventh national education report Education in Germany 2018 (*Bildung in Deutschland 2018*), which focuses on the effects and benefits of education, show that in the same age group the share of children until school entry in receipt of an integration allowance (*Eingliederungshilfe*) for child day care due to an (incipient) physical, mental or psychological disability is 2.5 per cent in 2017. The vast majority of these children attend an establishment with an inclusive care concept.

Cooperation between special education institutions and mainstream schools exists independently of more recent attempts at inclusive teaching. When a pupil is transferred from one type of school to another the teachers and head teachers of the schools concerned work together. It is always possible for pupils to return to mainstream schools. In the majority of the Länder, the education authority makes the decision on whether to transfer a pupil following a request from the special education institution or from the parents or legal guardians. Through the implementation of the UN Disability Convention, the Länder have created the prerequisites for teaching pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools with the same learning objectives as other pupils, and in some cases with different learning objectives. Schools for children and young people with the support priority speech or emotional and social development are designed as transitional schools; their objective is to remedy impairments in speech and behavioural problems sufficiently that pupils can attend a mainstream school. In addition, the Länder are developing different forms of

access to the mainstream school system or joint teaching also for pupils who are taught according to different learning objectives.

Within the framework of inclusive education, recently diverse forms of institutional and educational cooperation between mainstream schools and special education institutions have developed.

### **Definition of the target group(s)**

It can be presumed that children or young people have special educational needs if their opportunities for education, development and learning are limited in such a way that they cannot be sufficiently promoted within the scope of instruction at mainstream schools without additionally receiving special educational assistance. In this regard, therapeutic and social aid provided by other external institutions may be required as well.

Special educational needs are to be determined in relation to the tasks, the requirements and the support measures the respective school can provide. Furthermore, a determination of the special educational needs of the child must take into account the environment of the child, including the school as well as the pupil's personal abilities, interests and expectations for the future. In some cases, access to mainstream schools is also possible without a formal procedure.

The procedure of determining special educational needs comprises establishing the individual need for support as well as deciding on the course of education and in some Länder also the place of support. The responsibility for the procedure lies in most cases with the school supervisory authorities: Either the authorities themselves have the competence for special educational needs as well as sufficient experience in the field of educational support for children and young people with special educational needs, or they consult experts in the field of special educational support.

The procedure of determining special educational needs may be applied for by the parents or legal guardians of the pupil, by the pupil provided he is aged 18 or above, by the school or, if applicable, by other competent services, and is to take into account the competences of the persons who participate or are to participate in the measures of support and instruction in a suitable manner.

### **Specific support measures**

#### **Inclusive education for pupils with special educational needs**

Children and young people with special educational needs can attend mainstream schools. Special education teachers are deployed at special education institutions and at mainstream schools that meet special educational needs, e.g. by providing mobile assistance and advice and cooperative instruction with another teacher. Apart from the external environment, this also requires qualified special education teachers, individualised forms of planning, carrying out and monitoring the teaching process and coordinated cooperation between the teaching and specialist staff involved. Special educational support is provided, as a rule, during joint class lessons.

#### **Special educational support in the form of cooperative measures**

Many special education institutions and mainstream schools have developed close educational cooperation. Cooperative or inclusive forms of organisation can greatly benefit both lessons and the general life of the school. Also, this trend expands the

opportunities for changing between school types and educational courses, increases the proportion of joint lessons and encourages the transfer of pupils from special education institutions to mainstream schools.

### **12.3. Separate Special Education Needs Provision in Early Childhood and School Education**

Around 28 per cent of children with disabilities who have not yet started school are looked after in institutions or groups which almost exclusively take in children with integration assistance or special educational needs. In some Länder, this includes day care facilities with more than 90 percent children with integration assistance as well as groups with more than 90 percent children with integration assistance, school preparation facilities as well as special and curative day care facilities that exclusively receive children with disabilities.

Children and young people who are not attending a mainstream school receive instruction either at special education institutions, at *Berufsschulen* with special emphasis on different types of special educational support or at comparable institutions.

Under the *Hamburg Agreement* between the Länder of October 1971 on harmonisation in the school system, the basic school structure which applies to all Länder is such that a clear distinction is made between mainstream schools and special education institutions (e.g. *Förderschulen*, *Förderzentren*, *Schulen mit sonderpädagogischem Förderschwerpunkt*, *Sonderpädagogische Bildungs- und Beratungszentren*).

The structure of the special school system may vary from Land to Land. Special education institutions must be able to provide the required technical equipment and special teaching aids. They may turn to external organisations to obtain assistance such as therapy, care and social support. Special education institutions vary according to the type of special education on which they focus and the educational courses they offer. They provide support to pupils in any developments which may lead to their possible transfer to a mainstream school and to training.

The aim of special education centres (*sonderpädagogische Förderzentren*), either as regional or supra-regional institutions, is to meet individual special needs or a range of different needs (e.g. physical and motor development, hearing and sight, and so on) and to guarantee special education in inclusive or specific forms. This form of education is based as near to the home as possible and provided by specialists. Within the scope of the responsibility of special education centres for preventive measures, support is provided even before the determination of special educational needs has taken place, sometimes as early as *Kindergarten*.

#### **Definition of the target group(s)**

For the definition of the target groups of special educational support at special schools, the information in chapter 12.2. applies.

#### **Admission requirements and choice of school**

Children and young people with disabilities or special educational needs are required to attend school, just as are their non-disabled peers.

When a child reaches school age, his/her parents or legal guardians enrol the child either with the *Grundschule* or, if he or she is found to have a disability, with the relevant special education institution. Against the background of the

implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there are currently different rules in the Länder. This is also true of the rules on transferring pupils who attend a general school but are identified with special needs in the course of their schooling.

In principle the parents or legal guardians decide whether their child attends a standard school or a special school. If their preference is not acceded to, they can seek redress out of court or through the courts.

### **Age levels and grouping of pupils**

Special education institutions can be classified according to educational courses, grades and year groups. Various types of special education institutions (e.g. for those with sensory impairments) combine the educational courses of the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule* and in some Länder also the *Gymnasium* and lead to the qualifications normally awarded by these schools. As at mainstream schools, these educational courses are divided up into the primary and secondary levels and organised in grades according to age, although instruction may be spread over more years than at mainstream schools.

Special education institutions with a special educational focus on learning are organised in grades according to age or performance levels. Special education institutions with a special educational focus on mental development, as a rule, comprise three levels, each of which is made up of several grades, the last of which is known as *Werkstufe*, *Berufsschulstufe* or *Abschlussstufe*. These two types of educational courses can also be established at other special education institutions, e.g. at a special school for those with sensory impairments.

### **Curriculum, subjects**

Apart from special education institutions with special educational focuses on learning and mental development, all special schools work on the basis of curricula or education plans which in terms of educational goals, lesson content and performance requirements match those of mainstream schools (*Grundschule* and the educational courses offered by the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*). However, the methods used must take into account the specific conditions and effects on learning with regard to the special educational focuses. Special education institutions with special educational focuses on learning and mental development work according to their own guidelines which, like all other curricula or education plans, are issued by the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of the relevant Land. General information on the development of curricula can be found in chapter 5.3.

### **Teaching methods and materials**

Special education institutions are often schools with all-day offers. They are sometimes also run as a boarding school. Comprehensive assistance for pupils with disabilities is part of the teaching concept and instruction and education complement each other.

Instruction is designed to particularly meet individual needs and some lessons are held in small groups or on an individual basis. In addition, the class sizes at special education institutions are particularly small.

Depending on the type of disability, therapeutic measures such as physiotherapy, behavioural therapy, speech therapy, and so on, are integrated into lessons. Technical and disability-related aids and devices are used where necessary.

### **Progression of pupils**

Continuous assessment of performance takes place in special education institutions in a similar form to that of mainstream schools. In the case of pupils with intellectual disabilities or severe intellectual disabilities, the assessments take the form of reports on their cognitive, social and emotional development.

Special education institutions examine regularly whether the needs of the pupil can still be catered for there and in which grade he or she should be placed or, alternatively, whether the pupil should move to another special school or to a mainstream school. The decision on which grade a pupil should be placed in is, as a rule, a matter for the school but it is the education authority that decides on a school transfer, following consultation with the parents or at their request and consideration of commissioned opinions or reports.

### **Certification**

In so far as the type of disability or illness allows, special education institutions award the qualifications obtained from mainstream schools (*Hauptschulabschluss*, *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* and also *Allgemeine Hochschulreife*), provided that instruction was based on the curricula of the respective school type and the educational course was completed successfully. The subjects may be taught over more years than at mainstream schools. In some Länder, specific qualifications are offered for the types of special education *Learning* and *Mental Development*.

For pupils who were not taught using the curricula of mainstream schools, as a rule, the teachers' conference deems that an educational course has been successfully completed when the pupil has passed through all the stipulated school levels successfully.

## **12.4. Support Measures for Learners in Early Childhood and School Education**

For children who have reached compulsory schooling age but whose level of development does not yet allow them to cope with the challenges of primary school, *Schulkindergärten*, *Vorklassen* oder *Grundschulförderklassen* have been established in some Länder. Attendance is usually voluntary, although in most of the Länder in question the authorities are entitled to make it compulsory. As a rule, these institutions have organisational links with *Grundschulen* (primary schools) or special education institutions. *Schulkindergärten* seek to create and optimise the conditions for a form of schooling, training and education that is tailored to the children's needs by nurturing – as far as possible on an individual basis – the children's ability to gain expressions and express themselves, through exercises and the handling of materials designed to arouse and develop attention on the part of the children. The aim is to equip the children for school by channelling their natural urge to play and engage in activity but without anticipating the subject-matter dealt with at school.

Some Länder have established so-called *Vorklassen* (pre-school classes) for five-year-olds who have not reached compulsory schooling age but whose parents wish them to receive assistance with their preparation for primary school. Attendance of *Vorklassen* in *Grundschulen* is voluntary. The purpose of such pre-school classes at



primary school is to encourage the children to learn by playing but without anticipating the subject-matter dealt with in grade 1 of the *Grundschule*.

### **Definition of target group(s)**

In recent years the Länder have made intensive efforts to establish diagnostic procedures as a basis for individual promotion. These include for instance establishing language levels prior to enrolment at school, studies of learning backgrounds on starting school, establishing learning levels, comparative and orientation work, and competence analyses in different primary and lower secondary level grades. On this basis, essential individual support measures can be initiated, which are systematically developed in individual learning plans and in individual support plans if there is a special need for support.

### **Specific Support Measures**

#### **Language diagnostics and language support in the early childhood sector**

Within the compass of measures for the improvement of linguistic competence in the early childhood sector, the range of methodical instruments for the diagnosis and improvement of linguistic competence is currently being further developed from an academic perspective. Important instruments in this regard are the assessment of the stage of linguistic competence before school entrance and, if necessary, subsequent language promotion courses. These and other measures are designed to particularly support children and young people with a migrant background and children with deficits in language development as well as to compensate for social disadvantages. In recent years, almost all Länder have introduced diagnostic procedures for language status observation and assessment in early childhood education and in some cases have established obligatory language promotion measures.

#### **Language Day-Care Centres for Children – Because Language Is the Key to the World**

With the federal programme Language-Kitas: Because Language is the Key to the World (*Sprach-Kitas: Weil Sprache der Schlüssel zur Welt ist*), which has been running since 2016, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend – BMFSFJ*) promotes the teaching of language education in day-care centres integrated into everyday life, inclusive pedagogy and cooperation with families. Language day-care centres are supported on the one hand by additional language education specialists who work directly in the institution. On the other hand, they are continuously accompanied by specialist counselling. The programme is aimed at day-care facilities for children with an above-average proportion of children with a special need for language education and support. Between 2016 and 2020, up to Euro 1 billion will be made available to implement the programme.

#### **Education through Language and Writing**

To further develop quality in the field of language promotion and language diagnostics following a phase of intensive development and expansion, the Standing Conference, the Conference of the Ministers of Youth and Family Affairs (*Jugend- und Familienministerkonferenz – JFMK*), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF*) and the BMFSFJ agreed in October 2012 to implement a joint initiative to develop language promotion, language diagnostics and reading promotion. The research and development programme Education

through Language and Writing (*Bildung durch Sprache und Schrift* (BiSS)) scientifically develops and further tests the linguistic education of children and the effectiveness of measures introduced in the Länder for language promotion, language diagnostics and reading promotion from primary to lower secondary level. Clusters of day care facilities for children and schools, in some cases together with other education institutions such as libraries, media centres, etc., work together closely within the BiSS to exchange their experiences in the field of language diagnostics and development and to implement and optimise proven measures. The programme supports the necessary continuing and further qualification of the *Erzieherinnen* and *Erzieher* as well as teachers in this field.

In addition, special attention will be paid to the needs of refugee children and youths as well as their access to (fast) language education on account of the increased new immigration.

From 2013-2019, the BMBF will provide a total of around Euro 23.8 million to finance the overall coordination and scientific design of the programme by a consortium of sponsors, as well as evaluation and development projects and the further training of multipliers. Wherever this is wished by the Länder, the BiSS consortium of maintaining bodies that is funded by the BMBF supports the transfer of positively evaluated language education concepts and measures to a wider audience.

BiSS is organised by scientists and coordinated by a consortium of maintaining bodies that provides a counselling and support system for the parties involved in the programme. In the course of the programme, some of the measures that are carried out will be evaluated to find out which concepts offer particularly effective support for the language development of children and youths. An accompanying research programme investigates parallel questions of particular urgency, thus contributing to the development of new instruments in the field of diagnosis, support and professionalisation.

### **Support Strategy for poorer-performing pupils**

In October 2007, the Standing Conference adopted an “Action framework to reduce the number of pupils leaving school without a first general education qualification, to secure transition from the lower secondary school to the next educational level or to vocational education and training in the dual system and to lower the number of trainee drop-outs” (*Handlungsrahmen zur Reduzierung der Zahl der Schülerinnen und Schüler ohne Schulabschluss, Sicherung der Anschlüsse, Verringerung der Zahl der Ausbildungsabbrecher*). Among other measures, the action framework provides for:

- individual promotion of disadvantaged children and young people, as well as children and young people from migrant backgrounds
- continuing expansion of all-day schooling, particularly for those children who need encouragement and promotion and use of the extended timeframe for measures of in-depth career guidance and transitional accompaniment
- intensification of encounters with the workplace in lower secondary education
- support of promotion through networks of partners from school and outside school
- improvement of teacher training with regard to learning theory and learning psychology

- special assistance for pupils who are in danger of not achieving the *Hauptschulabschluss*
- the deepening of Vocational Orientation (*Berufliche Orientierung*)

As far as possible, these measures aim to halve the number of pupils leaving school without a general education qualification in all sectors of education.

The studies on international comparisons of school performance (PISA, PIRLS/IGLU, TIMSS), and the preliminary investigations into the attainment of the educational standards for the *Hauptschulabschluss* secondary general school certificate, have shown that a significant share of pupils in the different subjects do not achieve a minimum level of competences. As a result of these results, the Standing Conference has agreed to make the targeted promotion of poorer-performing pupils a focus of joint activities.

In March 2010 the Standing Conference adopted a targeted Support Strategy for Poorer-Performing Pupils (*Förderstrategie für leistungsschwächere Schülerinnen und Schüler*), which includes prevention, intervention and compensation measures. The aim of the support strategy is to significantly reduce the number of pupils not achieving a minimum competence development level by the end of their course of education. At the same time this should considerably improve their chances of achieving a school-leaving qualification and successfully participating in society and the world of work. The support strategy is, therefore, also related to the fields of action agreed as part of the Qualification Initiative for Germany “Getting ahead through education” (*Aufstieg durch Bildung*), particularly the goal of halving the number of pupils without a school-leaving qualification.

In this context particular attention is given to children and young people with a migrant background. The support strategy resolved by the Standing Conference relates to the achievement of the minimum standards for the *Hauptschulabschluss* or a comparable qualification. This also includes pupils with special educational needs covered by the individual focus Learning, more of whom are to be given the chance to achieve a *Hauptschulabschluss* or comparable qualification.

The guidelines of the promotion strategy include:

- individual support in teaching geared to the educational standards;
- facilitation of and targeted support for longer learning periods;
- hands-on lesson planning;
- greater support for pupils with a migrant background;
- help for pupils with special educational needs to achieve a *Hauptschule* leaving certificate;
- development of suitable all-day offers and strengthening of educational partnerships;
- the professionalisation of Vocational Orientation, and the shaping and securing of transitions;
- development of teacher training;
- evaluation of results.

Various approaches and measures are already being pursued in the Länder to promote poorer-performing pupils. These can be grouped into five strategy areas:

- improving individual support;
- restructuring learning: development of teaching geared to competences, new forms of acquisition of competences;
- facilitating qualifications, structuring transitions and safeguarding connections;
- connecting partners, coordinating action, building networks and cooperation;
- strengthening quality assurance and quality development, intensifying educational research.

In September 2017, the Standing Conference presented a “Report on the status of implementation of the support strategy for poorer-performing pupils” (*Bericht zum Stand der Umsetzung der Förderstrategie für leistungsschwächere Schülerinnen und Schüler*). The successful approaches and measures to promote poorer-performing pupils will be continued in the coming years and the objectives associated with the promotion strategy will be pursued continuously and emphatically.

### **Remedial Teaching (*Förderunterricht*)**

Pupils with learning difficulties usually receive remedial teaching within the framework of teaching in mixed ability classes. To support these pupils, learning groups may also be set up for a certain period of time. However, these measures are accompanied by integrative work in class. The primary focus is on differentiating forms of planning, teaching and organising the teaching and education processes. In December 2003, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*) adopted basic principles for the individual promotion of pupils experiencing particular difficulties with reading and writing.

Plans for remedial teaching are to be developed to support these children that, as part of the overall schooling concept, will be agreed with all the teaching staff involved, as well as with the parents and pupils. For this group of pupils, the schools provide general remedial instruction during school hours or complementary remedial instruction after hours. Individual remedial instruction should continue until the end of grade 10. The resolution of December 2003 was revised in November 2007 and enhanced by principles governing the individual promotion of pupils experiencing particular difficulties in mathematics.

As well as the compulsory sports lessons at schools, adapted physical education may be offered. This is designed above all for pupils with motor deficits and psychosocial problems. Its aim is to impact positively on their motor development and improve their health and hence well-being.

Pupils who are experiencing difficulties in the learning process and who are liable to fail to achieve the educational goals of a school year may be given learning support individually in small groups in addition to the instruction they receive in class. Remedial programmes mainly concern German and mathematics as well as foreign languages. Additional instruction may be given in any timetabled subjects. The instruction is normally provided in the afternoon.

## Support for children of occupational travellers

For children and young people whose life is characterised by continual moves and a consequent lack of continuity in their school development, an improvement in the schooling situation must aim above all at continuity, and at elements which stabilise their school career and motivate those pupils to attend school. Children of circus artists, fairground entertainers and other occupational travellers have to change school up to thirty times a year. This particular situation calls for coordinated supporting systems that take into account the special learning conditions of these children and young people, allowing them to gain a school-leaving qualification and thus guaranteeing a successful transfer to working life.

The Länder have developed several schemes to improve the school education of the children of professional travellers. In almost all Länder, special regulations apply for teaching the children of professional travellers. This teaching is based on a system of *Stammschulen* and *Stützpunktschulen* (regular and base schools) that has been introduced in all Länder. The *Stammschule* is the school attended by the children of travelling families during the periods when they are not travelling. This is usually a school at the primary residence or winter quarters of the family. This is where the pupils' files are kept and where certificates and the learning materials, and usually the school logbooks, are issued too. The *Stützpunktschule* are schools that the children attend when travelling. They are normally located near fairgrounds or the residential locations of the travelling family and are specially adjusted to meet the needs of travelling children. Remote supervision can supplement and in some cases even replace classroom teaching during the travelling periods of the children of professional travellers. This enables instructed learning over greater distances, i.e. without the children having to be present in a school. In addition, some Länder also provide pupils with additional digital learning offers (*E-Learning*) that they can deal with on their own during the travelling period. In addition to the system of regular and base schools, mobile schools for the regular teaching of the children of professional travellers were introduced in Nordrhein-Westfalen in 1994 and in Hessen in 2010. The School for Circus Children (*Schule für Circuskinder*) in Nordrhein-Westfalen is a state-approved private alternative school on the primary and lower secondary level offering all-day teaching. The School for the Children of Professional Travellers (*Schule für die Kinder beruflich Reisender*) in Hessen is also a pilot project under private sponsorship.

The *Bereichslehrer* (regional teachers) make an important contribution to supporting and encouraging the travelling children in 15 Länder. They look after not only the children from their own Federal State but also travelling children and act as a link between the school and parents, the *Stammschule* and *Stützpunktschule* as well as the relevant teachers. They particularly offer counselling and information during the child's entire school career, accompany the children outside the lessons and can also offer homework supervision and remedial teaching. So as to enable clarity and continuity in the learning processes of travelling children, the school logbook with individual learning plans for the subjects German, mathematics and the first foreign language was introduced in 2003 through a resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*). The school logbook lets the children of professional travellers continue learning at their individual level of learning. Furthermore, the school logbook documents the

individual learning development and is proof of their attendance at school. The school logbook and the handout for teachers were updated in 2012 and have been introduced in all Länder.

In addition to the general education sector, vocationally-oriented educational measures are also offered at individual institutions within the scope of the EU project BeKoSch (development of professional skills for showmen by means of modules). Children of circus artists can also attend this scheme.

The Standing Conference discusses educational issues for travelling children and related questions, in particular on schooling and support schemes, in annual joint conferences with representatives of the associations and parents of professional travellers. The medium-term goal is to enable nationwide comparable schooling based on the existing concept for travelling children that takes into account the current framework conditions in the Länder. The existing schemes should be expanded in particular through a nationwide network of *Bereichslehrer* and through the gradual establishment of a nationwide digital platform.

### **Measures to promote high-achieving pupils**

In June 2015 the Standing Conference resolved a Support Strategy for High-Achieving Pupils (*Förderstrategie für leistungsstarke Schülerinnen und Schüler*). The recommendation emphasises the role of teaching staff in identifying high performance potentials and thus determining the initial learning situation in classes.

The target group covers pupils who already display very good performances as well as pupils whose potentials are to be identified and developed by targeted encouragement and support. The successful development of potentially capable and high-achieving pupils essentially depends on an early identification of their abilities and needs. A careful observation and diagnosis of the learning conditions of pupils is particularly important as the basis for an individualised plan of support in the school.

A systematic diagnostic process that accompanies learning in the school is indispensable to identify the high-achieving pupils at an early stage and encourage these through appropriate measures. The preparation of strengths and interests profiles as well as the sensitisation of the teaching staff for the necessity of appropriate encouragement for this group of pupils are the bases for pedagogical and methodological considerations as well as for advising the parents and legal guardians.

Various monitoring instruments are available for the targeted support of the individual development of pupils. Alongside observations in standardised situations, observation instruments for competence assessment in class are becoming increasingly important. Unlike occasional observations of the pupil's behaviour, the systematic use of a learning portfolio or a competence grid for certain learning pathways provides a valuable basis for an age-appropriate planning of concrete support measures. All of the results have to be documented in a continuous development and support plan if the diagnostic method is to be effective for the school and personal development of the pupil; this plan includes a regular comparison with the pupil's self-assessment as well as the perceptions of the parents and legal guardians. This kind of documentation is becoming increasingly important as a career advice and support instrument, above all at the interfaces of the school career. In some Länder, special educational institutions exist to support gifted or highly gifted pupils.

Apart from the primary encouragement of general intellectual abilities, support for the musical, sports and emotional abilities are also important.

In November 2016, the Federation and Länder resolved a Joint Initiative to Encourage High-Achieving and Potentially High-Achieving Pupils (*Gemeinsame Initiative von Bund und Ländern zur Förderung leistungsstarker und potenziell besonders leistungsfähiger Schülerinnen und Schüler – ‘Leistung macht Schule’*). More detailed information is available in chapter 14.2.

### **Support programmes for children and young people with migrant backgrounds**

The language abilities of all children and young people with migrant backgrounds who have deficits in the German language are to be promoted, enabling them to take part in instruction and education on an equal footing with others. This is considered a task for all teachers and all subjects. Measures for the promotion of language skills are to be provided at all types of school and at all levels if demand exists. Additional funds are to be provided for facilities that are mainly or largely attended by children from a migrant background, e.g. to increase the number of teachers from a migrant background or to support teachers with socio-educational staff from child and youth welfare, so as to enable an effective, compensatory promotion of language skills, taking into account the legal framework. In the area of early childhood education and care increasing numbers of *Erzieherinnen* and *Erzieher* (state-recognised youth or child-care workers) with a migrant background are to be trained and employed.

To integrate children and young people with migrant backgrounds, various support programmes are run by the schools to help the children and young people learn German and obtain German school qualifications. Measures to promote the educational success of children and young people with migrant backgrounds include, for example, specially assigned teachers for German as a second language and the recruitment of teachers from migrant families. Programmes to integrate children and young people with migrant backgrounds into German schools are variously organised in each Land:

- preparatory classes for children and young people with migrant backgrounds without a knowledge of German, partly with acquisition of the German Language Diploma of the KMK - First Level (DSD I) and First Level for Vocational Schools (DSD I PRO) (*Vorbereitungskurse, Vorkurse Deutsch or Deutschförderkurse*)
- special classes which combine instruction in the core subjects with intensive study of the German language (*Sprachlernklassen, Deutschförderklassen or Übergangsklassen*)
- bilingual classes (held in the native language and German)
- intensive courses in German as a foreign language
- special support lessons outside school hours for children and young people with migrant backgrounds who are already taught in integrated classes with German children and need to improve their German skills
- greater cooperation between home and school

In addition, adapted potential analysis methods are used to estimate the children's talent and to support them according to their abilities.

To preserve their cultural identity and to promote bilingual competences, in many Länder, children and young people with migrant backgrounds receive supplementary

instruction in their native language for up to five periods a week, which covers the geography, history and culture of their native country.

Measures shall also be offered at vocational schools to promote the language skills of young people with migrant backgrounds. This is supplemented by vocational orientation measures with analyses of potential and practical investigations of professional fields. Additional funds are to be made available for vocational schools with a high proportion of young people with a migration background, e.g. to increase the proportion of teachers with a migration background or to support teachers with socio-educational experts from child and youth welfare.

The significant rise in the number of refugees of compulsory school age poses a big problem for the Federation and Länder, a problem that can only be overcome by using a considerable number of resources. This relates to additional funds to create spatial capacities and the employment of teachers, social workers and integration helpers. The integration of young refugees in schools also calls for special support measures, socio-educational and psychological care as well as a complex cooperation between all persons and institutions involved in caring for and supporting refugees. Furthermore, the Länder are greatly expanding their schemes for teacher training as well as continued education and training for teachers in the field of inter-cultural education and German as a second language or German as a foreign language. The Federation and the Länder hold regular talks to coordinate the responsibilities, the organisation and the financing of these schemes.

In October 2016, the Standing Conference passed a “Declaration on the integration of young refugees through education” (*‘Erklärung der Kultusministerkonferenz zur Integration von jungen Geflüchteten durch Bildung’*). The goals and challenges named by the Standing Conference in its declaration include learning the language quickly and teaching basic democratic values as well as the commencement and successful completion of vocational education and training or a course of studies.

### **Measures of support for transition from school to vocational education and training**

In recent years the number of young people who have been unable to find a training place after attending a general education school has decreased. According to the joint report by the Federation and Länder Education in Germany 2018 (*Bildung in Deutschland 2018*), in 2017 29.3 per cent of all new entrants to the vocational education and training system first completed pre-vocational measures in the transition system (*Übergangsbereich*). A common factor of the many different courses on offer in the transition system is that they do not provide a vocational qualification, but endeavour to improve the trainability of individuals and sometimes enable participants to obtain a general education qualification. In individual cases, part of pre-vocational training programmes and access qualification may be able to be credited to the subsequent vocational training. The main transition system general education course providers are *Berufsfachschulen* which do not award a vocational qualification, *Berufsschulen* offering courses for pupils with no training contract, the *Berufsvorbereitungsjahr* at school (a year of pre-vocational training) and the *Berufsgrundbildungsjahr* at school (i.e. basic vocational training year). At the end of compulsory full-time schooling, the Employment Agency offers pre-vocational schemes of the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA*) and, like the Jobcenter, supports the vocational access qualification (EQ), a long-term work placement scheme lasting six to twelve months in preparation for the actual training.



Successful attendance of *Berufsfachschulen* which do not award full vocational qualification can under certain conditions be counted towards the period of formal training required for a recognised occupation and lead to the award of a general education qualification. The *Berufsvorbereitungsjahr* at school and the *Berufsgrundbildungsjahr* at school enable young people as a rule to obtain a *Hauptschulabschluss*. The *Berufsgrundbildungsjahr* at school can, moreover, also be counted towards the period of formal training required for a recognised occupation.

In October 2013 the Standing Conference adopted a “Recommendation on optimising and standardising school provision in the transition system” (*Empfehlung zur Optimierung und Vereinheitlichung der schulischen Angebote im Übergangssystem*). The transition from school to working life is to be guided inter alia by the following principles:

- gearing the curricula of education programmes in the transition system to the targets and contents of recognised training occupations, and integrating practical on-the-job training phases
- creating a flexible set of instruments that leads to a qualification in a recognised occupation requiring formal training, through differentiated transition offers
- offering all young people who are ready and willing to train an apprenticeship in a recognised occupation requiring formal training, preferably in the system of dual vocational education and training
- efficient, targeted and standardised use of resources with close coordination between the Federation, the Länder and the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA*) to develop a sustainable support system
- strategic and operative management of the transition system at Land level between all stakeholders under reliable framework conditions
- coordinating measures and educational offers between all stakeholders and monitoring in a regional transition management

A mandatory Vocational Orientation (*Berufliche Orientierung*) at all general education schools should open the opportunity for young people to develop their potential and make an informed career choice (more detailed information on Vocational Orientation and on the “Recommendation on Vocational Orientation at schools” of the Standing Conference is available in Chapter 12.5.). Consistently orienting the transition system to the above principles should, moreover, facilitate individual, tailored support for young people with difficulties getting off the ground. In the long term the transition system should, therefore, become such an efficient instrument that it only has to be available for young people with particular support needs.

To achieve these goals, the Federation, the Federal Employment Agency and the Länder have extended the initiative Qualification and Connection – Education Chains through to the Completion of Training” (*Abschluss und Anschluss – Bildungsketten bis zum Ausbildungsabschluss*). In June 2014, a process was initiated to create an efficient system for the transition from school to training and vocational training or the choice of studies in specific agreements with the Länder. The partners’ support offers are geared to each other on the basis of concepts of the individual Länder. A potential assessment, usually in grade 7 of general education schools, is followed by a practical, multi-stage Vocational Orientation with extracurricular partners. Pupils with corresponding special needs receive individual support through to the training

phase. This is complemented by the various measures of the Federal Employment Agency, which are closely interlinked with the vocational training structures of the Länder.

Young people with social disadvantages, learning difficulties or handicaps and young people with migrant backgrounds with an inadequate command of German need special assistance in order to begin and successfully complete a course of training. Various possibilities exist to achieve this. Disadvantaged young people can, for instance, attend a *Berufsvorbereitungsjahr* at school (a year of pre-vocational training) aimed at preparing them for the requirements of in-company vocational training. In this context, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs has passed recommendations on measures in vocational schools for young people requiring particular support in the acquisition of professional qualifications owing to learning difficulties. Or the disadvantaged young people can be supported by the Employment Agency or the Jobcenter. These programmes are designed to provide preparation for vocational education and training to young people who have been unable to secure a training place, to provide parallel training assistance to young people who are currently undergoing in-company training or to provide disadvantaged young people with non-company vocational training.

Companies can convey training-relevant basic knowledge as well as initial vocational in-company experience to disadvantaged or less competitive young people by means of individual preparatory training courses and hence introduce them to in-company vocational training.

## 12.5. Guidance and Counselling in Early Childhood and School Education

### Academic guidance

Counselling pupils on the choice of school career is, first of all, the responsibility of the schools themselves, e.g. when pupils move from primary to secondary schools (see chapter 6.2.), and when pupils choose their further school or training career following lower secondary education. The same also applies to opting for courses in the *Gesamtschule* and the *gymnasiale Oberstufe*, i.e. the upper level of the *Gymnasium*. Such advice may be obtained from the pupil's teachers.

At the lower secondary level school career advice includes consultation not only on a possible switch to another school type and on which educational path to pursue, but also counselling pupils on the vocational qualifications offered by the education system (for information on counselling teachers, see chapter 10.3.). The school guidance services also collaborate with local employment agencies to provide the pupils with vocational guidance.

School leavers with a higher education entrance qualification usually do not immediately seek employment. Those who do not take up studies at a higher education institution, may acquire vocational qualifications at various institutions of secondary or tertiary education (e.g. in the dual system, at *Berufsfachschulen* and *Berufsakademien*).

For school career advice at vocational schools, the information given on school career advice at general education schools essentially applies. At most vocational schools, preparation for working life (*Arbeitslehre*, *Wirtschaft-Arbeit-Technik* or *Arbeit-Wirtschaft-Technik*) is a subject in its own right.

Pursuant to the Vocational Training Act (Art. 76 Section 1 – *Berufsbildungsgesetz* – R81), the competent body shall provide support in the form of advice to the persons involved in vocational education and training preparation or initial vocational education and training. To this end, the competent body shall appoint training advisers.

### **Psychological counselling**

School psychological services are either part of the school supervisory authorities at lower or middle level school administration, or they are separate institutions. In Bayern school psychologists are always teachers in a certain kind of school and are therefore usually employed directly in a school and are responsible for the school psychological service in their school, and possibly other schools too, as members of the school's own staff. They offer individual assistance using psychological diagnosis and counselling methods. They do so in collaboration with the pupil concerned and his/her parents and teachers. However, comprehensive counselling may generally only be given with the consent of the parents and the pupil affected. Special data protection regulations apply to the way in which personal data (test results, counselling records etc.) is handled.

The reasons for seeking the help of the psychological service may be of various kinds, from learning difficulties and psycho-social problems to conflicts at school, uncertainty about the choice of the school career, etc. To provide effective assistance that tackles the problems at their root, school psychological services collaborate with other counselling services such as the school health service of the local public health office, the careers advice service or the service for vocational psychology at the employment agency, the counselling units of the public youth and welfare authorities, paediatricians, neurologists and psychiatrists.

School psychological services, however, do not only deal with individual cases. They advise teachers and schools on key issues with a psychological component like the assessment of performance, individual promotion and on conflicts. They may be involved in school pilot projects and help with in-service teacher training, particularly courses for counselling teachers (see also chapter 10.3.). School psychologists also offer supervision for teachers and are responsible for help and assistance in school crises and emergencies.

### **Career guidance**

As early as 1969, in its "Recommendation on the *Hauptschule*" (*Empfehlung zur Hauptschule*), the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz* – KMK) stressed the need to prepare pupils for the adult world, especially working life. This approach is continued in the 1993 "Agreement on types of schools and courses of education at lower secondary level" (*Vereinbarung über die Schularten und Bildungsgänge im Sekundarbereich I*) of September 1993 in the version of September 2014, in which the introduction to the world of work and occupation is laid down as an obligatory component of all educational programmes. Teaching takes place either in a separate subject (*Arbeitslehre*) or as part of the material covered in other subjects. Company internships are intended to provide exemplary insights into the world of work and contribute to the orientation of the student in his or her choice of occupation. According to the "Agreement on the structure of the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* in the upper secondary level" (*Vereinbarung über die Gestaltung der gymnasialen Oberstufe in der Sekundarstufe II*) of July 1972 in the

version of February 2018, teaching in the upper secondary school also includes appropriate information about occupational fields as well as structures and requirements of the world of work and occupation.

In the framework agreement between the Standing Conference and the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA*) from 2004 as amended in June 2017, the cooperation partners argue in favour of enabling all young people to make a successful transition from general and vocational schooling to vocational training or studies and then to qualified employment. To this end, the effectiveness of cooperation between schools and vocational guidance is to be increased through the application of joint action strategies and offers systematically built on one another. By increasing the use of modern means of communication, among other things, each individual pupil should be able to make use of continuous counselling and guidance in order to be able to make a viable decision about further education independently and in a reflective manner. Further information on career guidance by the employment agencies can be found below.

According to the "Recommendation on Vocational Orientation in schools" (*Empfehlung zur Beruflichen Orientierung an Schulen*) adopted by the Standing Conference in December 2017, the educational mission of schools is essentially to prepare pupils adequately for life in society and to enable them to participate actively and responsibly in cultural, social, political, professional and economic life. This includes preparing the pupils for the world of work and occupation. An early, practice-oriented, individual Vocational Orientation (*Berufliche Orientierung*) is of central importance for a successful transition into education, study and occupation for all pupils. The Länder understand Vocational Orientation to mean a process that begins at school and continues until it leads to training, studies and employment. The framework requirements of the Länder for Vocational Orientation are anchored in systematic and coherent school concepts.

In accordance with the principles of the "Recommendation for Vocational Orientation at Schools", Vocational Orientation takes place within the framework of individual support over several years as an examination of the pupils' inclinations and wishes, perspectives and possibilities. On the basis of interests, competences and potentials, the pupils should be empowered in a long-term process to decide sensibly, independently, free of gender stereotypes and actively upon their further education and career path, above all for a profession and thus for an education or a study or an occupational field. The involvement of all local school and extracurricular actors is seen as indispensable. The promotion of the pupils is oriented towards their interests, competences and potentials. It is associated with continuous monitoring and counselling. Pupils should be enabled to organise the transition process from school to vocational training or higher education on their own responsibility and successfully.

Vocational Orientation based on these principles of the Recommendation should be anchored in all secondary schools and further developed where necessary. As part of Vocational Orientation, pupils receive information about different occupations and practice-oriented insights, partly in their own subject and partly across disciplines. In particular, the internships, some of which last several weeks, in companies, business enterprises, administrative authorities or social institutions enable them to develop a picture of the world of work close to practice. This contributes to the fact that the young people can make their career choice on the basis of a realistic assessment.

The concrete implementation of Vocational Orientation measures is the responsibility of the schools and of vocational counselling by the local employment agencies.

The Federal Employment Agency is closely involved in the implementation of the school and Land concepts for Vocational Orientation.

The coordination of regional advisory and accompanying structures between schools, the Employment Agency, Jobcenter, youth welfare institutions and other advisory services will be further intensified.

The Employment Agencies also offer Careers Information Centres (*Berufsinformationszentren* – BIZ), facilities where anyone facing vocational or career decisions can find out more for themselves about education, training, the labour and training markets for free. These provide access to descriptions of the professional activities and requirements, opportunities for further qualification as well as developments on the labour and training market for every profession.

The Employment Agency is also responsible for career advice for young people in accordance with the Social Security Code III (*Drittes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch – Arbeitsförderung* – R164). Their career advice service is an important partner for schools and counselling teachers. It advises pupils from all kinds of schools, trainees, students and graduates as well as anyone looking for vocational training for the first time or who wants to strike out in a new direction professionally.

Counselling in schools takes the form of regular consultation hours in the school and in the Employment Agency as individual counselling. In some cases, Vocational Orientation measures are also held on site during regular lessons in agreement with those concerned. Furthermore, the career advice service can also take part in parents' evenings and occupational events at the school locations with its counselling and training placement measures. Employment Agency offers usually begin three years before the school-leaving qualification in the lower and upper secondary levels, in the lower secondary level too in schools with an *Oberstufe*.

Vocational Orientation offers for pupils exist in all Länder; in all Länder Vocational Orientation has now become a fixed part of the curricula and guidelines or regulations. In all Länder there are also supraregional or Land-wide offers for advanced Vocational Orientation agreed between the relevant ministries and the regional directorates of the Federal Employment Agency and financed in part by the European Social Fund (ESF). The advanced Vocational Orientation at general education schools incorporates inter alia information on professional fields, exploration of interests, establishment of aptitudes and skills, teaching of decision-making strategies, practical professional experience in companies, and improved reflection on aptitudes, interests and abilities.

Systematic skills profiling procedures (e.g. competence analysis, career choice passport (*Berufswahlpass*), skills passport, competence portfolio, *Profilpass*, etc.) are used in all Länder on an occasional basis or across-the-board for the individual support of pupils. These offers are systematised and further developed with respect to further Vocational Orientation measures within the scope of the initiative Qualification and Connection – Education Chains through to the Completion of Training" (*Abschluss und Anschluss – Bildungsketten bis zum Ausbildungsabschluss*). In this, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* – BMBF) together with the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

(Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales – BMAS) and the Federal Employment Agency are concluding bilateral agreements also with the Länder to make the transition from school to training and work or a choice of studies more efficient. More detailed information can be found in Chapter 12.4.

An important contribution is being made by the Vocational Orientation measures in inter-company and similar vocational education and training centres, which have been supported by the BMBF since 2008. The programme is partly supported by the Länder through supplemental financing. Following a pilot phase, the vocational guidance programme of the BMBF became permanent in June 2010. The support is aimed at all pupils in grades 7 and 8 of general education schools. It promotes an analysis of potential, which takes place as a rule at the end of grade 7, and workshop days in grade 8. During the analysis of potential pupils initially establish their preferences and strengths. During the workshop days they then have the opportunity of learning about at least three vocational fields over a period of two weeks. The funds are being allocated to the Länder on a regional basis in line with the respective proportion of pupils leaving school without qualifications. Within the scope of the Education Chains Agreements (*Bildungsketten-Vereinbarungen*), the federal programs can be adapted to the specific Länder, whereby the programme's basic approach is retained. The Länder supplement the offer and expand Vocational Orientation in an ongoing process.

## **12.6. Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education**

### **Definition of the Target Group(s)**

Germany has, within the framework of the Bologna Process, committed to the social requirement that students entering higher education, participating in higher education and completing a degree should, at all levels, reflect the composition of the population at large. Given the growing need for highly qualified higher education graduates, and their better-than-average labour market and career opportunities, there is therefore a need to overcome social barriers and facilitate equal participation for previously underrepresented groups.

Hitherto underrepresented groups in the German higher education system include women (in certain groups of subjects and amongst scientific staff), students with children, students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, children from low-income or educationally disadvantaged origin groups, and students with a migrant background.

### **Specific Support Measures**

With a view to ensuring the equal participation of the sexes, the distribution in various subject groups and its consequences for social development (school sector, MINT subjects) has to be followed up on. At many higher education institutions, gender commissioners or offices support the promotion of gender equality.

For students with children higher education institutions offer places in child care, either through their own child-care services or with the support of other providers. More than half of the places available are for children under the age of three. Many student support organisations (*Studentenwerke*) supplement the classic care offers with care provision outside standard operating times, at the weekend and in holiday periods, and flexible short-term care arrangements. For questions relating to the

compatibility and funding of study and family life, student support organisations have set up advisory and information services (e.g. family offices). Other support measures include the provision of special housing for students with children, play-rooms, baby-changing rooms and nursing rooms, and children's equipment and eating areas in student cafeterias. When setting up family-friendly study conditions the higher education institutions cooperate with local authorities and other higher education institutions, inter alia within in the framework of the *audit familiengerechte hochschule* ("family-friendly university" audit).

Under the Framework Act for Higher Education (*Hochschulrahmengesetz* – R123) and the Länder legislation on higher education (R129–144), the higher education institutions are responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities are not disadvantaged and can take up courses without assistance where possible. The examination regulations must take account of the particular requirements of students with disabilities in order to ensure equal opportunities. Advocates representing the needs of students with disabilities, and lobbies for students with disabilities have an important function as an intermediary between the students and the higher education institution's governing boards. Most student support organisations (*Studentenwerke*) also offer advice for students with a disability or chronic illness. In April 2009 the German Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* – HRK) adopted a recommendation on study with a disability or chronic illness.

Information on support measures for students from low-income families may be found in chapter 3.3. on the financing of the tertiary sector.

Special promotion opportunities for foreign students in training programmes and programmes for gifted students have been expanded in recent years. For example, foreign students who only live in Germany with a temporary residence permit for humanitarian reasons or with mere acquiescence have been granted access to training assistance after 15 months (instead of four years as before) by amending the Federal Training Assistance Act (*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz* – BAföG – R84). Private foundations are also increasingly becoming involved in supporting young people with a migrant background.

The promotion of underrepresented social groups in the education system is achieved through a number of measures which aim to overcome social obstacles and enable equal participation. At the level of the system as a whole these include, inter alia, efforts to ensure success at school for all social groups, or the implementation of the National Integration Plan (*Nationaler Integrationsplan*) adopted in 2007, which contains measures to promote young people with a migrant background at all stages of education and training and was substantiated in January 2012 through the National Action Plan for Integration (*Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration*). The stipulations made in the context of the Federal Government's National Action Plan to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (*Nationaler Aktionsplan der Bundesregierung zur Umsetzung des Übereinkommens der Vereinten Nationen über die Rechte von Menschen mit Behinderung*) are also to be viewed in this connection.

In the higher education sector, measures to promote underrepresented social groups include the following:

- The *Professorinnenprogramm* (women professors programme) of the Federation and Länder contributes to an increase in the number of female

professors at institutions of higher education; the central goal of the programme is also to strengthen the equal opportunities structures at institutions of higher education through specific measures;

- within the framework of the National Pact for Women in MINT (mathematics, IT, natural sciences and technology) professions (*Nationaler Pakt für Frauen in MINT-Berufen*), the share of new female entrants and female graduates in natural science and technical professions is to be increased;
- the Network “Pathways to Study” (*Netzwerk “Wege ins Studium”*) is carrying out an information campaign to increase the propensity to study;
- the needs of students in special circumstances are to be considered in terms of admission to study, workload and examinations including, inter alia, as part of the accreditation of study courses and the system accreditation of entire higher education institutions;
- at the recommendation of the Standing Conference the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF*) has since 1982 been promoting the information and advisory service for study and disability (*Studium und Behinderung*) at the German Student Services Association (*Deutsches Studentenwerk*); the information and advisory service has served for a number of years as the competence centre for students with health concerns, and is regarded by all stakeholders in German higher education as the competent German authority with specialist expertise ([www.studentenwerke.de/behinderung](http://www.studentenwerke.de/behinderung));
- the financing of the additional costs which arise for students with disabilities or chronic diseases in connection with study and living costs (“disability-related additional study needs”), is to be ensured by adapting the social security regulations to modern educational pathways;
- higher education institutions are to be made aware of the specific needs of students in special circumstances;
- study organisation should be made more flexible and part-time study programmes expanded.

## 12.7. Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

### Academic guidance

The Framework Act for Higher Education (*Hochschulrahmengesetz – R123*) and the Higher Education Acts of the Länder (R129–144) stipulate that institutions of higher education are responsible for providing subject-related advice accompanying a student's studies throughout the entire duration of their course.

The responsibilities of counselling in the higher education sector include the provision of information and advice for students and those applying for higher education on the content, structure and requirements of a course of study; it assists students during their complete course of study, and in particular on completion of their first year, by providing subject-related advice. Counselling tasks are divided among lecturers, who provide specialist guidance, and the student counselling office, which provides general guidance. The student counselling offices are also responsible for helping students cope with personal difficulties and for dealing with questions relating to their studies. In addition to lecturers and the student counselling offices, student bodies in each department also offer support and assistance relating to the



individual subjects. In many cases special introductory seminars are held at institutions of higher education for future applicants. In providing counselling, higher education institutions are intended to cooperate in particular with the employment agencies responsible for careers advice and the offices responsible for the *Staatsprüfungen* (state examinations).

Some institutions and departments provide tutorials and refresher courses to students during their first semesters. These courses are conducted by undergraduate and research assistants and have the following functions:

- to furnish information about facilities, academic/scientific working methods, the structure of the course of study and examination requirements
- to help in overcoming difficulties understanding and learning the material and encourage self-study in study groups
- to provide long-term individual support and further social relations between students

The quality of the counselling and care programmes for all students, in particular for students in special circumstances and foreign students, is to be extended and assured. For foreign students, central administrative bodies such as international offices or international centres are as a rule the first points of contact at higher education institutions. Networking their central procedural knowledge with non-centralised advisory offices affiliated with the different university departments is important and essential to successful academic counselling. The establishment of posts for independent ombudsmen, which are filled voluntarily, by lecturers for instance, should be promoted. These may also be service centres with an arbitration role.

Student support organisations (*Studentenwerke*) also play an important role in academic counselling. The institutions of higher education and student welfare organisations have set up a variety of independent offers especially for foreign students. The central point of contact at the German National Association for Student Affairs (*Deutsches Studentenwerk*) is the *Servicestelle Interkulturelle Kompetenz* (service office for intercultural competence); this is supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bildungsministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF*). Offers include special student counsellors, clubrooms, grants and service centres. Cooperation between academic counselling offices at the higher education institution and student support organisations should be promoted, for instance to enable problems encountered by foreign students to be resolved quickly, including with regard to their residence status. The Federal Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*) has for many years been financing various funding programmes of the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – DAAD*) providing general counselling and care services for foreign students at German higher education institutions. In addition, through various DAAD programmes, BMBF funding has been used in recent years to develop and disseminate diverse pilot projects on the internationalisation of German institutions of higher education (e.g. PROFIS) and the integration of foreign students (e.g. PROFIN).

Special counselling offers also exist for refugees who want to study. For example, the DAAD, with the support of the BMBF, provides information for refugees in a special portal (<https://www.study-in-germany.de/fluechtlinge/>). What's more, the handout "access to institutions of higher education and courses of study for refugees"

(*Hochschulzugang und Studium von Flüchtlingen*) provides answers to key questions related to the integration of refugees into institutions of higher education. It helps employees in institutions of higher education and student support organisations and has been drawn up by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* – BAMF), the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Culture of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz* – KMK), the DAAD, the German National Association for Student Affairs and the German Rector's Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* – HRK) in conjunction with the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration and can be called up on the websites of the institutions involved.

Besides, student counselling for students with impairments has been improved. The Studying with Disability Information and Advice Centre (*Informations- und Beratungsstelle Studium und Behinderung* – IBS) at the German National Association for Student Affairs is the nationwide competence centre on the topic of “studying with a disability”. The aim of the IBS was, and still is, to realise an inclusive institution of higher education. Within the meaning of Art. 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), it advocates that people with disabilities should have non-discriminatory access to higher education and be able to study with equal opportunities. It is funded by the BMBF. On site counselling is also guaranteed in the institutions of higher education through the commissioners for the disabled and other advisory services.

The Counselling and Advisory Services and Studying with Children Unit (*Servicestelle Familienfreundliches Studium*) at the German National Association for Student Affairs supports the development and sustainable continuation of supporting offers for students with family commitments. It is supported by the BMBF. In addition, there are 47 student services organisations that offer social counselling for students, in some cases in advice centres, that have specialised in the interests of students with children. A number of institutions of higher education have also set up advice centres for students with children.

### **Psychological counselling**

Students who have personal problems or learning difficulties can also consult student counselling offices and psycho-social counselling services of the student support organisations (*Studentenwerke*).

### **Career Guidance**

Since the start of the Bologna Process increasing numbers of higher education institutions have set up so-called career centres or career services to support students in their professional orientation.

Career centres or career services inform and advise students in the transitional phase from study into their professional or academic career path. The specific offers can be varied and range from job application training to individual coaching. Mentoring programmes which bring together students and graduates who are already established in their career have proven particularly successful.

Career services can also help improve the practical relevance of the study programmes, by strengthening exchange between teaching and the working world. Specifically, this can take place through the processing of contemporary practical

examples in lectures, and through in-company projects and final papers, employing skilled teaching staff from the professional sphere, or through practical training stages accompanied by teachers.

A third strand of the work of the career centres is to facilitate contact management between higher education institutions and employers, and to place trainees and graduates. Examples include traineeship and job boards, “career books” with portraits of graduates, and career fairs. Even in career planning for young scientists, career centres can help ensure reliability and point to opportunities outside academia.

## **12.8. Support Measures for Learners in Adult Education and Training**

### **Definition of the Target Group(s)**

The target group of the Decade for Literacy and Basic Education (*Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung*) is functional illiterates.

### **Specific Support Measures**

In November 2016, the Federation and Länder proclaimed the National Decade of Literacy and Basic Education 2016–2026 (*Nationale Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung*), which takes up the findings and results of the National Strategy for Literacy and Basic Education of Adults 2012–2016 (*Nationale Strategie für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener*) that was launched in 2012. As a broad social alliance, the strategy includes, among others, the local authorities (*Kommunen*), trade unions, churches, the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA*) and *Volkshochschule* associations. The goal of the National Decade is to raise the reading and writing skills as well as the level of basic education amongst adults in Germany.

More detailed information is available in chapter 8.5.

The *Volkshochschulen* (local adult education centres) make a significant contribution to improving the situation of people who cannot read or write.

## **12.9. Guidance and Counselling in a Lifelong Learning Approach**

### **Academic Guidance**

Within the framework of lifelong learning, educational guidance has become increasingly important in recent years. It is perceived as a prerequisite for the assurance of the individual right to education and creating more permeability and equal opportunities in the education system. Despite increased efforts, given the numerous institutions and competences and the different legal rules, educational guidance is still very heterogeneous. Since 2017, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF*) has been offering a nationwide helpline service on CET counselling.

### **Psychological Counselling**

No information is available on psychological counselling for participants in continuing education.