

The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2010/2011

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

- EXCERPT -



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11. QUALITY ASSURANCE

11.1. Introduction

The debate about evaluation in the education system, in other words the systematic assessment of organisational structures, teaching and learning processes and performance criteria with a view to improving quality, did not start in Germany until the end of the 1980s, later than in other European countries. Although the actual concept of evaluation may not yet have been institutionalised, this does not mean that no control mechanisms existed. State supervisory authorities for schools and higher education, statistical surveys carried out by the Federal Statistical Office and by the Statistical Offices of the Länder as well as educational research in institutes that are subordinate to federal or Land ministries or jointly funded by the Federal Government and the Länder are used for quality assurance and evaluation purposes.

Within the school system, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder [*Kultusministerkonferenz* – KMK], in the so-called *Konstanzer Beschluss* of October 1997, took up quality assurance processes that had already been introduced in several Länder in the school sector and declared these a central issue for its work. Since then the Länder have developed evaluation instruments in the narrower sense which may be employed depending on the objective. In June 2002, the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs adopted a resolution to introduce national *Bildungsstandards* [educational standards]. In 2003 and 2004, educational standards were adopted for the primary sector, the *Hauptschulabschluss* and the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*. In June 2006, the Standing Conference adopted a comprehensive strategy for educational monitoring which consists of four interconnected areas:

- participation in international comparative studies of pupil achievement,
- central review of the achievement of educational standards in a comparison between the Länder,
- comparative studies within the Länder in order to review the efficiency of individual schools,
- and the joint education reporting of the Federation and the Länder.

For further information on the procedures and tools of the educational monitoring, see chapter 11.2.

The evaluation of research and teaching has been provided for in the higher education sector since the amendment to the Framework Act for Higher Education [*Hochschulrahmengesetz* – R121] of 1998. The evaluation of study courses and subjects is also established in the higher education legislation of most Länder. In a resolution of March 2002, the Standing Conference laid down the future development of quality assurance for all Länder and institutions of higher education; in the long-term, this should lead to an overall concept for quality assurance, taking account of all types of higher education institution and all study courses. With the introduction of the accreditation of study courses, the setting up of the Accreditation Council [*Akkreditierungsrat*], the foundation of accreditation agencies and the adoption of joint structural requirements for all Länder for Bachelor's and Master's study courses, standards and procedures were established for the teaching sector. These should provide students and employers with reliable orientation and create transparency in international cooperation with regard to

the study offer and study qualifications in Germany. In September 2005, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder passed a comprehensive quality assurance framework concept for teaching [*Qualitätssicherung in der Lehre*]. For further information on quality assurance for all Länder and higher education institutions, see chapter 11.3.

The 2004 Standards for Teacher Training in the Educational Sciences [*Standards für die Lehrerbildung: Bildungswissenschaften*] and the December 2008 edition of the common content requirements for subject-related studies and subject-related didactics in teacher training which apply to all Länder [*Ländergemeinsame inhaltliche Anforderungen für die Fachwissenschaften und Fachdidaktiken in der Lehrerbildung*] serve as the basis for the accreditation and evaluation of teacher-training courses. For more information on quality assurance and quality development through the Standards for Teacher Training and the common content requirements for subject-related studies and subject-related didactics, see chapters 9.1. and 14.2.

In October 2003, the Standing Conference first published a report on the education system in Germany, *Bildungsbericht für Deutschland: Erste Befunde* [Education Report for Germany: First Findings], which mainly focuses on schools providing general education. The first joint education report of the Federation and the Länder, *Bildung in Deutschland* [Education in Germany], which mainly focuses on education and migration, was presented in 2006. The second national education report concentrates on the transition from school into vocational education and training, higher education and the labour market, and was presented in June 2008. The third national Education Report presented in June 2010 was devoted primarily to “perspectives of education in demographic change”. The joint education reporting of the Federation and the Länder is part of the new joint task pursuant to Article 91b, Paragraph 2 of the Basic Law [*Grundgesetz – RI*], as well as of the comprehensive strategy of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs for educational monitoring. For more detailed information on joint education reporting by the Federation and the Länder, see chapter 11.2.

Specific legislative framework

Primary and secondary education

Land authority to carry out academic supervision is derived from the state sovereignty over schools enshrined in the Basic Law [*Grundgesetz – RI*]. This states that the entire school system is under the supervision of the state [Art. 7, Paragraph 1]. Detailed provisions are set out in the Education Acts [R85, R87, R89, R91, R93, R96, R98, R100, R102–103, R105, R107, R113, R115–117] and regulations of the Länder. The school legislation of most Länder provides for measures of external and internal evaluation beyond state supervision. The full texts of the current Education Acts are available on the website of the Standing Conference [www.kmk.org].

In-company vocational training

Quality assurance in in-company vocational training is achieved mainly through laws and regulations and through the recommendations of the board of the Federal Institute for Vocational Training [*Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung*]. The Vocational Training Act [*Berufsbildungsgesetz – R80*] places a high value on quality assurance and quality development.

Higher education

Under Section 59 of the Framework Act for Higher Education [*Hochschulrahmengesetz* – RI21] and the higher education legislation in place in the Länder [RI26, RI28, RI31, RI33, RI35-136, RI39, RI41, RI43, RI45-146, RI48, RI49-152, RI54, RI57, RI62], higher education institutions are subject to state supervision which is exercised by the Länder. The full texts of the current laws for higher education institutions are also available on the website of the Standing Conference [www.kmk.org].

The evaluation of research and teaching has been provided for in the higher education sector since the amendment to the Framework Act for Higher Education of 1998. Higher education legislation of most Länder now includes regulations regarding both internal and external evaluation.

Continuing education

In their laws and statutory provisions for the promotion of continuing education [RI69-170, RI72-173, RI76, RI78, RI80, RI82, RI84, RI86, RI88-189, RI92], Federation and Länder have formulated general minimum requirements of a structural and quantitative nature for institutions of continuing education. Furthermore, some Länder have adopted specific quality assurance standards in their statutory provisions. In the area of distance learning, the Law on the Protection of Participants in Distance Education [*Fernunterrichtsschutzgesetz* – RI67], as well as the control by the Central Office for Distance Learning of the Länder [*Zentralstelle für Fernunterricht der Länder*], assure the quality and further development of the offer.

11.2. Quality Assurance in Early Childhood and School Education

Responsible bodies

Early childhood education and care

In the Länder, there are manifold measures to ensure and develop the quality of day-care centres and day care for children. The Federal Government's quality assurance initiative is being accompanied by the Working Party of the Highest Youth and Family Authorities of the Länder [*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Obersten Landesjugend- und Familienbehörden* – AGJF] in an advisory capacity, on behalf of the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Family Affairs [*Jugend- und Familienministerkonferenz*].

Primary and secondary education

School supervisory authorities exercise *Fachaufsicht* [academic supervision], *Rechtsaufsicht* [legal supervision] and *Dienstaufsicht* [staff supervision] within the school system. Special educational support and academic evaluation is provided in school pilot projects carried out by the school supervisory authorities and the Institutes for School Pedagogy of the Länder. Accompanying research examines the effectiveness of the reform measures and the framework that should be created if they are to be successfully implemented. The introduction of new curricula is often preceded by a test phase. In some Länder, for example, teachers are surveyed in order to establish whether the new guidelines have proved successful or require amendment.

By providing advice and assistance and recommending changes in schools and by reporting to higher-ranking education authorities, the school supervisory authorities and institutes for school pedagogy are to make a contribution to the evaluation and further development of the school system.

In almost all Länder, schools are evaluated by external quality or evaluation agencies and inspection procedures. In the Länder where there are legal provisions for external evaluation, as a rule, responsibility lies with the school supervisory authorities. In several Länder, responsibility lies with the institutes for school pedagogy [*Landesinstitute für Schulpädagogik*].

The vocational training committees and the Land committees shall, within the framework of their duties, work towards a continuous improvement of the quality of vocational training.

In June 2004 the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder set up the Institute for Educational Progress [*Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen - IQB*] at the Humboldt University in Berlin. The main task of the IQB is to define precise educational standards and elaborate and use them as the basis for developing tasks which can determine whether the expected competences set out in the educational standards are being achieved.

As part of the joint task “assessment of the performance of the German educational system in international comparison” in October 2010 the Standing Conference and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*] set up the Center for International Large Scale Assessment [*Zentrum für Internationale Vergleichsstudien - ZIB*] which is based in Munich. A network formed by the Technical University of Munich [TUM], the Leibniz Institute for Educational Research and Educational Information [*Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung - DIPF*], and the Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education [*Leibniz-Institut für die Pädagogik der Naturwissenschaften und Mathematik - IPN*], the ZIB is initially responsible for implementing PISA studies in Germany up until 2016, including drafting national reports. The ZIB is also responsible for ensuring and coordinating continuous participation in international academic committees on educational comparative studies, and for research and the promotion of up-and-coming academics in the field of competence diagnostics [*Educational Measurement*] and international educational comparative studies [*Large Scale Assessments*]. In general it is to make a contribution to securing the educational monitoring in an international comparison which is jointly funded by the Federation and the Länder, and to increasing the extent and presence of German educational research in the context of international educational comparative studies.

The Federation and the Länder have, moreover, agreed on cooperation between the ZIB and the Institute for Educational Progress at the Humboldt University in Berlin. To this end a coordination office has been set up at the IQB.

Approaches and methods for quality assurance

Early childhood education and care

In November 2010 the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth [*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - BMFSFJ*]

launched the *Offensive Frühe Chancen: Schwerpunkt-Kitas Sprache & Integration* [Early Opportunities Offensive: Focus Kitas Language and Integration]. Additional qualified professionals are to be employed in up to 4,000 day-care centres thereby supporting children's individual language development. The promotion of language skills is to be integrated into daily practice in day-care centres as an interdisciplinary task. This is intended to improve children's chances of participating in the education system regardless of their origin. The Federation is providing around Euro 400 million for this as part of the Qualification Initiative for Germany "Getting ahead through education" [*Aufstieg durch Bildung*] up until 2014.

With the Action Programme Child Day Care [*Aktionsprogramm Kindertagespflege*] the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth promotes the structures and expansion of day-care for children. In June 2009 a quality label was introduced for educational institutions destined to ensure that new day-care staff throughout Germany have a minimum qualification based on a professionally recognized standard. The programme is carried out in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency [*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*] and the majority of the Länder. The further training initiative for early childhood teaching professionals [*Weiterbildungsinitiative Frühpädagogische Fachkräfte - WIFF*], launched by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung - BMBF*] in conjunction with the Robert Bosch Foundation [*Robert Bosch Stiftung*], and implemented in collaboration with the German Youth Institute [*Deutsches Jugendinstitut*], promotes early pedagogical continuing training content on which a consensus may be reached, and models to recognise high-quality continuing training measures, and develops them in a nationwide quality development process.

Primary and secondary education

School supervisory authorities

School supervisory authorities exercise *Fachaufsicht* [academic supervision], *Rechtsaufsicht* [legal supervision] and *Dienstaufsicht* [staff supervision] within the school system. *Academic supervision* concerns the teaching and educational work carried out by schools. The school inspectors support and foster the work of the school, ensure that curricula and other legal provisions are being adhered to and that teaching and education are being conducted professionally using appropriate methods and further improved wherever possible. Academic supervision is carried out by visiting schools, observing lessons and providing advice at school level. *Legal supervision* is a further element in school supervision. It involves monitoring the legality of management of what is called external school affairs [for example, the construction and maintenance of school buildings] by the *Schulträger*, the school's maintaining body. Finally, school supervisory authorities exercise *staff supervision* over teachers and head teachers at public-sector schools, thus ensuring that teaching staff are carrying out their duties. Civil service guidelines stipulate the need for the appraisal of teachers on specific occasions [end of probationary period, promotion, transfer] and in some cases at periodic intervals. This serves both to advance the career of the individual teacher and to maintain the efficiency of the school system. Teaching ability and aptitude are assessed, as are the teacher's professional competence. Assessment is based on visits to classes by the head teacher and school inspectors, performance reports by the head teacher on the

teacher concerned, conversations with the teacher and inspection and assessment of pupils' work.

Evaluation measures in schools

In recent years, initiatives have been taken in all Länder in order to develop measures for assuring the quality of education at both the level of the school system and the level of the individual schools; this goes beyond the customary range of instruments of the school supervisory authority and project supervision. The Länder have taken a number of evaluation measures in which various quality assurance and quality development procedures interact. These procedures include

- the development or further development of framework curricula,
- comparative tests across the Länder and schools in core subjects,
- the extension of external evaluation,
- the development of standards and their review,
- the development of quality management in schools,
- centralised final examinations [lower and upper secondary education].

These measures are embedded in the comprehensive strategy of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs [*Kultusministerkonferenz* – KMK] for educational monitoring as well as in strategies of individual Länder for quality evaluation and quality assurance which, amongst other measures, include the strengthening of the autonomy of the individual school, the development of school-specific profiles, the promotion of inter-school cooperation as well as the strengthening of the advisory functions of the school supervisory authority. The evaluation procedures for schools in the Länder are in line with the educational standards for the primary sector, the *Hauptschulabschluss* and the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in 2003 and 2004. These cross-Länder target criteria are in most Länder complemented by the provisions of the so-called frameworks for school quality which by means of indicators of school and teaching practice quality provide schools with a frame of reference.

As part of these overall strategies, increasing weight is given to measures for the evaluation of individual schools. In the majority of Länder, the obligatory development of school-specific programmes plays a central role. In the school-specific programmes, the individual schools specify the main focuses and objectives of their work on the basis of Land regulations regarding the content and qualifications obtained after completing the courses. At the same time, the school-specific programmes determine internal evaluation methods and criteria based on the requirements specific to the Land [e.g. curricula, timetables]. The areas to be evaluated are determined autonomously by the schools in the school-specific programmes. School-specific programmes should take account of the social and demographic requirements of the individual school. The frameworks for school quality referred to above are of central importance for the implementation of school-specific programmes.

The Vocational Training Act [*Berufsbildungsgesetz* – R80] puts great emphasis on quality assurance within the dual system of vocational training. This focus includes a flexibilisation of the training quality control instruments and their supplementation by a number of new quality assurance guidelines, amongst other measures. Moreover, procedures

are to be drawn up for the external evaluation of quality assurance in continuing vocational training and education.

Comprehensive strategy for educational monitoring

In June 2006, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs adopted a comprehensive strategy for educational monitoring which consists of four interconnected areas:

- international comparative studies of pupil achievement,
- the central review of the achievement of the *Bildungsstandards* [educational standards] in a comparison between the Länder,
- comparative studies in order to review the efficiency of individual schools within the Länder,
- and the joint education reporting of the Federation and the Länder.

In the following, these four areas of the strategy for educational monitoring are described in detail.

Participation in national and international comparative studies of pupil achievement

The Standing Conference, in the so-called *Konstanzer Beschluss* of October 1997, took up quality assurance processes that had already been introduced in a variety of forms at Land level in the school system and declared these an object to be tackled through joint efforts on the part of all Länder. These should also include a comparison of performance within Germany. The investigations necessary to this end should take the following points into consideration:

- the specific framework conditions as well as differences in terms of the curriculum and organisation of different types of school
- levels of competence in the mother tongue and foreign languages, mathematics, technology and natural sciences
- the development of personal and interpersonal skills [so-called key qualifications].

The joint task pursuant to Article 91b, Paragraph 2 of the Basic Law [*Grundgesetz - RI*] includes the cooperation of the Federation and the Länder for the assessment of the performance of educational systems in international comparison and in drafting relevant reports and recommendations. A corresponding administrative agreement has entered into force at the beginning of 2007. Under this accord, Federation and Länder are able to deliver joint recommendations on the results of international studies of pupil achievement.

Currently, Germany is taking part in international comparative studies of pupil achievement such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study [TIMSS], the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS] and the OECD project entitled Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA] as a means of establishing pupils' performance. The general objective of the OECD project is to provide OECD states with indicators concerning the knowledge, skills and abilities of 15-year old pupils in the areas of reading, mathematics and sciences. A PISA survey cycle incorporates three surveys focusing on reading, mathematics and the natural sciences in turn. The results are published one year after the main survey. In the first survey cycle

[PISA 2000, PISA 2003, PISA 2006], additional issues were covered through national extensions [PISA-E] and the sample was substantially expanded to allow a comparison between the Länder.

After the publication of the results of the PISA 2000 OECD study in December 2001, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder named seven areas in which the Länder and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs will become active:

- measures to improve linguistic competence as early as early childhood education
- measures to strengthen the link between the early childhood sector and primary school with the aim of an early school entry
- measures for the improvement of primary education and the continuous improvement of reading literacy and basic understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts
- measures for efficient support of educationally disadvantaged children with particular regard to children and young people with a migrant background
- measures to thoroughly develop and assure the quality of teaching and schools on the basis of binding educational standards and result-oriented evaluation
- measures to improve professionalism in teaching with particular regard to diagnostic and methodical competence as an element of systematic school development
- measures to expand provision of all-day activities and care with the aim of increasing opportunities for education and support with particular regard to pupils with educational deficits and especially gifted pupils

In their comments on the results of PISA 2003 and PISA 2006, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research stressed that the German education system had developed positively on the whole. At the same time the seven areas of action remained a very important basis for reform measures for quality development in the school sector. The wide differences in performance between weak and strong pupils and the close link between social background and competence acquisition required greater efforts.

The results of the PISA 2009 survey, which was carried out by a consortium under the direction of the Leibniz Institute for Educational Research and Educational Information [*Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung*], confirmed the continuing positive development of the German education system. Alongside improved reading competence and mathematical competence, progress was made in the field of equality in education in particular. The close link between social background and reading competence has declined perceptibly since the year 2000. The differences between pupils with a migrant background and pupils without a migrant background have also fallen considerably. To improve learning outcomes further, quality development is to be focused even more on improving lesson quality and on targeted individual support.

From 2009 onwards the comparison of school performance within Germany is no longer part of an extension of the PISA study but is carried out as a central review of the achievement of educational standards in a comparison between the Länder.

In addition to the PISA investigations that refer to the secondary level, Germany also participated in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS] for grade 4 pupils in 2001; its results were published in April 2003. In the synopsis of the seven are-

as of action, named by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder as a consequence of the PISA results and of the results of the PIRLS study, new assessments of the importance attached to individual areas as well as to additional priorities have been revealed. However, in this context, the seven areas of action lose none of their significance for quality assurance in the school system. In November 2007, the results of the PIRLS/IGLU 2006 study were published. The Standing Conference and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* – BMBF] jointly emphasised the positive trend in the achievements of pupils. At the same time, they pointed out the necessity for further reform in order to effectively counter the link between social background and success at school in the primary sector as well.

In coordination with the Federation, the Standing Conference also participated in TIMSS 2007. The results of TIMSS and the results of the PIRLS 2006 comparison between the Länder, which were both published in December 2008, also confirmed the efforts by the Länder to gear the development of teaching practice towards the promotion of pupils on an individual basis. Germany will again be taking part in TIMSS and PIRLS in 2011.

Quality assurance through the development and review of educational standards

After the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs had adopted measures to thoroughly develop and assure the quality of instruction and school education on the basis of binding standards, in December 2003 national *Bildungsstandards* [educational standards] for the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* after grade 10 in the subjects German, mathematics and first foreign language [English, French] were resolved. At the start of the 2004/2005 school year, these standards were adopted in the schools of all Länder as the basis for subject-specific requirements for the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*. In October 2004, the Standing Conference adopted educational standards in the subjects German and mathematics for the primary sector [grade 4] and in the subjects German, mathematics and for the first foreign language [English/French] for the *Hauptschulabschluss*. In December 2004, finally educational standards were adopted for the subjects biology, chemistry and physics for the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*. The standards adopted in 2004 were introduced and binding at the beginning of the 2005/2006 school year. Thus, for the first time, quality development in the general education schools of all Länder can be checked against jointly agreed criteria in the form of qualification-related educational standards. In October 2007, the Standing Conference resolved to develop the Uniform Examination Standards for the *Abitur* examination [*Einheitliche Prüfungsanforderungen in der Abiturprüfung*] initially in the subjects of German, mathematics and first foreign language [English/French] and furthermore for the natural sciences [biology, chemistry, physics] into educational standards for the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife*.

The standards are based upon the areas of competence of the individual subject and

- take up the basic principles of the respective subject
- determine the subject-specific competences including basic levels of knowledge that pupils should have achieved by a certain stage of their school career
- are aimed at systematic learning and learning in networks and thus follow the principle of cumulative acquisition of competence

- describe expected levels of performance as part of requirement profiles
- are related to the core area of the respective subject and provide scope for pedagogical measures taken by the schools
- relate to a medium level of requirements
- are illustrated by examples for test questions

The main task of the Institute for Educational Progress [*Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen* – IQB] is to define precise educational standards and to elaborate and use them as the basis for developing tasks which can be employed to determine whether the expected competences set out in the educational standards are being achieved. The expected competences can also be systematically portrayed in increments through the standardisation and review of the educational standards. In this context the IQB establishes empirically validated competence level models to help determine the extent to which the expected competences are being achieved. In June 2009 the Standing Conference agreed competence level models and the associated levels of competence requirements for the educational standards in Mathematics and English for the *Hauptschulabschluss* [*Hauptschule* leaving certificate]. Thus the IQB has now presented competence level models for all educational standards in Mathematics [primary sector, *Hauptschulabschluss*, *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*].

Since 2009 the Länder are examining the attainment of the educational standards by pupils at primary school and lower secondary level in a comparison between the Länder based on the IQB assignments. Extending the content of PISA, for the first time the IQB comparison between the Länder reviewed centrally the extent to which the educational standards of the Standing Conference had been achieved in the subjects German and First Foreign Language [English/French] for the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*. Alongside reading competence which is also examined as part of PISA, listening comprehension was tested in both subjects, while spelling was also examined in German.

In all 16 Länder a large proportion of pupils already meet the grade 10 German performance expectations laid down in the Standing Conference educational standards towards the end of grade 9.

Good performances are achieved in *Gymnasien* in all Länder, in some Länder more than 50 per cent of pupils in grade 9 are already above the general standards for the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*.

In many Länder in courses of education provided by schools other than the *Gymnasium* a sizeable share of pupils do not achieve the Standing Conference general standards, this is true in particular of English and of reading competence in German.

Considerable differences still remain in competence development between young people with and without a migrant background. This is also true of pupils who have been born and raised in Germany [second generation].

The results of the 2009 comparison between the Länder, particularly in English, point to the importance of teacher education with a solid subject-related and didactic foundation. The Länder will step up their efforts to improve the training and further training of teachers still further. This fits into the seven areas of action identified by the Standing Conference as a response to PISA 2000, which describe a longer-term perspective that continues to be valid.

The results are, moreover, grounds for consistently implementing the promotion strategy for poorer-performing pupils adopted by the Standing Conference in March 2010 and for consolidating individual support so as to reduce substantially the share of pupils who do not achieve a minimum level of competence development at the end of their education.

The 16 Länder are agreed that educational standards serve not only to determine the quality of teaching but at the same time to develop teaching. In December 2009, therefore, the Standing Conference presented a concept for the use of educational standards for teaching development [*Konzeption zur Nutzung der Bildungsstandards für die Unterrichtsentwicklung*] which is intended to help make the competence levels useful in the further development of teaching. The concept points to the close connection between the two functions of the educational standards, i.e. examining competence development and developing teaching further, and shows promising ways to structure a teaching and learning culture geared to the teaching of competences. Teaching development based on standards is accompanied by training and further training measures for teachers and school boards, technical support services of the Land institutes and adaptation of curricula to the educational standards.

Länder-specific and cross-Länder tests

For some years, the Länder have been conducting Land-specific as well as cross-Länder comparative studies, in addition to national and international performance comparisons. This includes for example measurement of language proficiency for different age groups, surveys on learning levels, or comparative studies in different grades or Land-specific performance comparisons. Contrary to international studies and to central comparisons between the Länder which are based on representative samples, comparative studies serve to investigate the performance levels of all schools and classes throughout a Land and in relation to grades. Since 2009 these cross-Länder comparative studies are conducted for grades 3 and 8 [VERA 3 and VERA 8] on the basis of, or in connection with, the educational standards of the Standing Conference. The surveys on learning levels are carried out annually in order to regularly provide important information for the targeted promotion of pupils.

“On the basis of” means following the educational standards in terms of content, whereas “in connection with” includes giving feedback as to the level of achievement of such standards. Comparative studies in connection with the educational standards can be conducted in grades for which competence level models with standardized assignments based on the educational standards are available.

Joint education reporting by the Federation and the Länder

Another important element both of the comprehensive strategy for educational monitoring and of the new joint task pursuant to Article 91b, Paragraph 2 of the Basic Law [*Grundgesetz*] is the joint education reporting of the Federation and the Länder. Based on the guiding principle “Education in the course of life” [*Bildung im Lebenslauf*], the national education report provides an overview of the German education system, from early education over general education schools, vocational training and higher education institutions, up to continuing education, including informal learning. The education report is published every two years and informs the public, based on verified data, on framework conditions, results and gains of educational processes in the course of life.

The first joint education report of the Federation and the Länder, *Bildung in Deutschland* [Education in Germany], which mainly focuses on education and migration, has been drawn up by an independent scientific consortium with the participation of the Statistical Offices of the Federation and the Länder and was presented in June 2006. The second National Education Report has been compiled by the same group of authors and was published in June 2008. It concentrates on the transition from school into vocational education and training, higher education and the labour market. The third national Education Report with an analysis of the perspectives of the education system in times of demographic change was published in June 2010.

To ensure continuous work on the further development of education reporting, the Federation and the Länder have argued in support of a continuation of joint education reporting. The Leibniz Institute for Educational Research and Educational Information [*Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung* - DIPF] has been commissioned to produce the education reports for 2012, 2014 and 2016.

11.3. Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Responsible bodies

The supervision of higher education institutions is exercised by the relevant Land Ministry of Science and Research. External evaluation is performed by regional evaluation agencies at Land level or by networks or associations of higher education institutions covering all Länder.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder [*Kultusministerkonferenz* - KMK] has established a Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Courses in Germany [*Stiftung zur Akkreditierung von Studiengängen in Deutschland*] which serves to fulfil the following tasks:

- accreditation and re-accreditation of accreditation agencies by the time-limited granting of the entitlement to accredit study courses through the award of the foundation's seal
- compilation of the common and the specific structural guidelines of the Länder into binding guidelines for the accreditation agencies
- regulation of minimum requirements for accreditation procedures including the prerequisites and limits of bundled accreditations
- monitoring of accreditations undertaken by the accreditation agencies

The Foundation will also work to ensure fair competition among the accreditation agencies. Furthermore, taking account of the development in Europe, the Foundation determines the pre-requisites for the recognition of accreditations by foreign institutions. It promotes international cooperation in the field of accreditation and quality assurance and report regularly to the Länder about developments regarding the conversion of the system of study into a consecutive study structure and on quality development in the context of accreditation. The Accreditation council makes decisions on all matters of the Foundation. The Council comprises four representatives from institutions of higher education, four representatives from the Länder, five representatives from among professional practitioners, including one representative from the ministries of the Länder responsible for legislation governing service and wages, two students and two foreign rep-

representatives with accreditation experience, as well as one representative of the accreditation agencies in a consultative capacity. The Foundation Accreditation of Study Courses in Germany also acts a central documentation service for the accreditation system and administrates the data base of the study courses accredited in Germany.

Approaches and methods of quality assurance

Supervision of higher education institutions

Higher education institutions are subject to state supervision which is exercised by the Länder [for the statutory framework of higher education supervisory authorities, see chapter 11.1.]. Legal supervision encompasses all activities of the higher education institution. It is checked here whether the higher education institution has, by its actions or omissions, infringed laws or other statutory provisions. A more wide-ranging supervision is carried out in those areas for which the state is responsible, as opposed to academic affairs. This includes staff administration and economic, budgetary and financial management, i.e. participation in the preparation of the responsible minister's budget and in its implementation, the organisation of the higher education institution and the establishments affiliated to it, the management of budgetary funds, and so on. Within the relevant Land Ministry of Science and Research, the higher education supervisory authority examines whether actions taken are appropriate and economically efficient and whether targets are being fulfilled. Economic efficiency is also monitored by the audit office of the relevant Land.

The tasks of determining training capacity and setting admission figures are also subject to supervision by the higher education supervisory authority. Higher education institutions or rather the respective Land ministries issue ordinances or regulations on admission figures for the number of available places in higher education. These require education and training capacity to be used to the full, subject to budgetary constraints and the available premises, and to subject-related factors. The quality of research and teaching, and the proper performance of the functions of the higher education institution, particularly in research, teaching and study, must be guaranteed.

A legal obligation to submit regular reports on teaching and study already exists in most Länder. These reports are usually set up by the departments within higher education institutions and published by the institution's governing body. The following factors, among others, may serve as indicators in the report on teaching: the ratio of those that start a course to those that complete it, the proportion of students within the standard period of study, the examination success rate and the whereabouts of graduates. Several Länder have begun to develop stipulations on the content and form of teaching reports.

Evaluation in the higher education sector

Since 1994, various structures have been established for supporting both internal and external evaluation and these now cover the institutions of higher education in all sixteen Länder. Meanwhile, in Germany a two-tiered system of evaluation is widely applied which combines internal and external evaluation. The internal evaluation consists of a systematic inventory and analysis of teaching and studying, taking account of research, performed by the individual department or the faculty and concludes with a written report. On this foundation, an assessment by external experts takes place who also lay down their findings and recommendations in a written final report.

At both the level of the institutions of higher education and at ministry level, various international cooperations exist for the development and implementation of evaluation measures. External evaluations generally take the form of peer reviews, i.e. they are performed by competent experts from other institutions of higher education, research establishments or from the business community and are repeated at various intervals. Reports on the implementation of evaluation results are now available for the study courses of some institutions of higher education.

The aim of the evaluation measures is, firstly, to subject academic standards in teaching, teaching methods and the success of teaching to regular assessment. The findings can then be used to identify possible measures for improving courses and teaching. Furthermore, it is also necessary for higher education institutions to account to the public for their achievements in teaching and research. The results of the evaluation are increasingly being taken into account in the Länder as a basis for allocating resources to higher education institutions [cf. chapter 3.3.].

Student criticism of classes, in some cases involving graduates, has now also become a widespread method of evaluating teaching in the sector of higher education. Such criticism primarily serves the purpose of optimising teaching within the higher education institution and is not an official means of monitoring teaching staff. The aim is for higher education teaching staff to listen to criticism so that they can assess themselves better and rectify shortcomings.

In its resolution on quality assurance in teaching at higher education institutions from September 2005, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs [*Kultusministerkonferenz*] defined the indispensable core elements of a coherent quality management system encompassing all aspects of higher education institutions, which combines different measures and procedures of quality assurance. Such measures and procedures also include an evaluation which refers to certain indicators and specifies individual tools [e.g., combination of internal and external evaluation, involvement of students and graduates]. In October 2008 the Standing Conference and the *Stifterverband für die deutsche Wissenschaft*, the business community's innovation agency for the German science system, together launched a competition to award and promote convincing concepts developed by universities and equivalent higher education institutions and *Fachhochschulen* for the development of strategies in teaching and learning. In October 2009 four *Fachhochschulen* and six universities were chosen as prize winners out of over 100 higher education institutions which applied.

Reform of the study structure and evaluation of teaching

At a time when student numbers are rising with no corresponding increase in funding, it is felt that the instruments for monitoring and control in the higher education sector, which are available in the traditional form of inspection and which principally come down to a standardisation of the conditions at the outset, are insufficient. At national and Land level, in higher education institutions, at the German Rectors' Conference [*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* - HRK] and in the Science Council [*Wissenschaftsrat*] a debate has therefore been in progress for some time about evaluating the efficiency of the higher education sector, especially in teaching and courses of study. As a result, the first structures for evaluation have been created over the last few years. Attempts to evaluate higher education institutions should be viewed against the overall background

of renewal of the higher education sector, the main elements of which include a reform of the structure of study, greater financial autonomy for higher education institutions and improved management.

Reform of the structure of study courses is aimed, inter alia, at streamlining study and reducing its duration. This can be achieved by setting guideline data and key figures for courses, especially *Regelstudienzeiten* [standard periods of study], hours of attendance, time allowed for completion of dissertations, number of certificates required for admission to examinations and examinations required in one particular subject. Reform measures also include the improvement of examination organisation and procedures: final examinations taken alongside courses of study and what are known as free attempts [*Freiversuche*], i.e. when a final examination which was not passed the first time is considered not attempted if it was taken within the standard period of study. As a further measure to support reform of the structure of study, efforts are being made to bring about a qualitative improvement in teaching, for example, by taking into account didactic qualifications when appointing professors and by examining teaching loads and regulations on the compulsory attendance hours of teaching staff.

The assessment of the quality of teaching has been provided for since 1998. In accordance with the principle of academic freedom, professors and junior professors perform their research and teaching duties independently. The scope and organisation of teaching is subject to supervision by the higher education supervisory authorities only in so far as the scope of teaching commitments is laid down in a teaching load ordinance and the contents of Bachelor's and Master's degree courses must provide a qualification for a profession.

Accreditation of study courses

For Bachelor's and Master's study courses, the Standing Conference has adopted accreditation as an instrument of quality assurance which is functionally separate from the state approval of study courses: As with the other study courses, the state approval refers to guaranteeing the fundamental financial means for the study courses to be set up and the inclusion in the higher educational planning of the respective Land. In contrast to this, the objective of the accreditation is to guarantee standards in terms of academic content, the maintenance of structural guidelines, and to determine the professional relevance of the degrees. It is to ensure quality in international competition and create transparency for international collaboration. In the accreditation system, the state is assuming its responsibility for higher education studies through structural requirements for study offers, which guarantee the equivalence of qualifications and the possibility of changing to another higher education institution. Observance of the structural requirements is a pre-requisite for the accreditation of a study course. They form the basis for the accreditation process. Land legislation determines to which extent accreditation is a pre-requisite for the state approval of a new study course. It is essentially performed by external peer review. Periodically, the study courses are re-accredited.

In accordance with the principles for the future development of quality assurance for all Länder and institutions of higher education [*Grundsätze für die künftige Entwicklung der länder- und hochschulübergreifenden Qualitätssicherung*], also adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in 2002, the system of accreditation is to be extended to all courses of study. In 2004, consecutive study courses

at colleges of art and music, as well as Bachelor's study courses at *Berufsakademien*, were included in the accreditation system. Bachelor's and Master's study courses conveying the educational prerequisites for a teaching position are also subject to the accreditation process.

In December 2007, the Standing Conference resolved to enhance the accreditation of study programmes through the implementation of a system accreditation scheme by which the internal quality assurance system of an entire higher education institution is assessed for the quality of its learning and teaching. The responsibility for quality assurance in terms of the given criteria is thus transferred to the higher education institution. The subject of assessment is whether the higher education institution provides for a quality management system ensuring the implementation of these criteria. System accreditation aims to reduce the administrative burden of higher education institutions and to accelerate certification.

11.4. Quality Assurance in Adult Education and Training

Responsible bodies

The employment agencies entrusted external certification bodies with the task of inspecting maintaining bodies for continuing education in the area of vocational continuing education as promoted by the Federal Employment Agency [*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*].

The Central Office for Distance Learning of the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany [*Staatliche Zentralstelle für Fernunterricht der Länder der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* - ZFU] decides whether or not a distance learning course is to be approved.

Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* - BMBF] promotes comparative tests of continuing education media, continuing education measures and continuing education advice by *Stiftung Warentest*, Germany's independent consumer-product testing agency.

Approaches and methods for quality assurance

The increasing importance of lifelong learning has also promoted the awareness of binding quality standards in the field of continuing education. The plural structure of maintaining bodies which support continuing education is also expressed in the number of different efforts and approaches for quality assurance in continuing education. Both jointly and individually, Federation and Länder promote numerous projects for improving quality assurance in continuing education.

In 2004, the support of continuing education was reformed with the aim of improving competition and transparency in the area of vocational continuing education as promoted by the Federal Employment Agency. Certification of the maintaining body of a continuing education measure or of the continuing education course by an expert body is a prerequisite before participants can obtain support in accordance with the Social Security Code III [*Sozialgesetzbuch III* - R165]. Amongst other things, organisers of continuing education must prove that they apply a recognised quality assurance system.

The quality management models currently applied cover countrywide supra-regional procedures specific to general or continuing education, as well as systems that are re-

gional or specific to particular associations or federations. An outline of the various quality management models in continuing education as of 2006 is given in the publication *Quality Models at a Glance [Qualitätsmodelle im Überblick]* published by the German Institute for Adult Education – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning [*Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung – Leibniz-Zentrum für Lebenslanges Lernen – DIE*].

Since 1 January 1977, distance-learning courses provided by private organisers [institutes of distance-learning] must be approved by the state on the basis of the Law on the Protection of Participants in Distance Education [*Fernunterrichtsschutzgesetz – R167*]. In the admission procedure, the subject-related and didactic quality of the learning material with regard to the objective of the course, as well as the advertising placed for the course and the form and content of the distance-learning contract entered into is examined by the Central Office for Distance Learning of the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 2007, the new quality standard PAS 1037 for providers of distance-learning courses, distance-teaching and E-learning was introduced. The new standard meets the specifications of the Federal Employment Agency for the certification of bodies of further education and furthermore relates to international standards of quality management. For newly developed distance-learning courses from providers who have already been certified in accordance with the new quality standard, a simplified admission procedure with the ZFU can be anticipated.

In October 2004, a quality certificate was introduced for all of Germany for suppliers in all areas of continuing education. The Learner-oriented Quality Certificate in Continuing Education, Version 2 [*Lernerorientierte Qualitätstestierung in der Weiterbildung, Version 2 – LQW 2*] quality seal was developed as part of the joint project Quality Certificate in Continuing Education [*Qualitätstestierung in der Weiterbildung*] of the Commission of the Federation and the Länder for Educational Planning and Research Promotion [*Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung – BLK*] and should provide orientation when searching for high-quality education offers.

