

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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14. ONGOING REFORMS AND POLICY INITIATIVES

14.1. Introduction

There is a consensus that, in light of demographic changes in Germany, and with a view to the emerging need for skilled workers, great efforts must be made to develop the German education system in the years ahead. This is especially true of the interfaces between early-childhood education, school, vocational education and training and higher education. Against this background, in October 2008 the Federation and the Länder agreed a common catalogue of objectives and measures in the Dresden declaration *Getting ahead through education – The Qualification Initiative for Germany*, which addresses all areas of education from early-childhood education through to continuing vocational training:

- Education is to have top priority in Germany,
- every child should have the best possible starting conditions,
- everyone should be able to gain school-leaving and vocational qualifications,
- everyone should have the opportunity to get ahead through education,
- more young people should take a degree course,
- more people should be filled with enthusiasm for scientific and technical vocations,
- more people should take advantage of the opportunity for continuing education.

Within the scope of the Qualification Initiative the Federal Government and the Länder aim to halve the number of adolescents leaving without qualifications from a national average of 8 per cent to 4 per cent and of young adults without vocational qualifications who are capable of undergoing training from 17 per cent to 8.5 per cent by the year 2015. Furthermore it is the joint aim of the Federation and the Länder to increase the percentage of new students to a national average of 40 per cent of a year group.

In October 2010, in the process of implementing the “*Europe 2020*” strategy, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs [*Kultusministerkonferenz* – KMK] communicated to the European Commission the following national objectives:

- reducing the number of pupils who leave school early without the upper secondary-level leaving certificate, do not have an apprenticeship and have not taken part in non-formal educational measures in the last four weeks to less than 10 per cent of 18 to 24 year-olds;
- increasing the share of 30 to 34 year-olds with a tertiary or similar degree to 42 per cent.

14.2. Ongoing Reform and Policy Initiatives Related to 'ET 2020' Framework

Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality

Lifelong learning

In May 2006, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* – BMBF] appointed a Committee on Innovation in Continuing Training [*Innovationskreis Weiterbildung*]. In its ten recommendations for a strategy to shape lifelong learning, the Committee on Innovation aims to increase flexibility and integration between the educational sectors, to expand educational counselling, to ensure a more effective integration through education, as well as to recognise competences. In addition, the promotion of participation in lifelong learning to the general public is to be strengthened. The Committee's recommendations form the basis for the Federal Government's position paper on lifelong learning [*Konzeption der Bundesregierung zum Lernen im Lebenslauf*] which was adopted in April 2008. This regards lifelong learning as a key political and social challenge in Germany. Its realisation is viewed as vital to the prospects of individuals, economic success and the future of society. In view of the fact that the willingness to carry out continuing education depends largely on motivation and the ability to learn independently from childhood onwards, the realisation of lifelong learning concerns all sectors of education. Since the school-leaving certificate forms the basis of every educational biography, it should be possible for everyone to achieve it, or to acquire it later in life. Continuing education should remain attractive to people at every stage of life, enabling them to maintain and develop their knowledge and skills and also to participate fully in society. The measures proposed by the Federal Government are also part of the Qualification Initiative for Germany which was adopted in October 2008 by the Federation and the Länder.

In March 2009, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs [*Kultusministerkonferenz* – KMK] resolved standard preconditions under which vocationally qualified applicants without a higher education entrance qualification obtained at school are granted the right of entry to higher education. More detailed information is available in chapter 7.3.1.

Through the competition “Getting ahead through education: Open higher education institutions” [*Aufstieg durch Bildung: Offene Hochschulen*] the Federation and the Länder plan to promote the development of practical, vocational and training-related study courses integrating employees and the professionally qualified into higher education more closely. Through target agreements with higher education institutions the Länder also support the expansion of studies and continuing training measures which accompany employment.

In the Federation scholarship programme *Aufstiegsstipendium*, non-repayable scholarships are awarded to highly vocationally qualified candidates as an incentive to start a course of higher education. Around 2,500 scholarships have been awarded so far.

The amended Upgrading Training Assistance Act [*Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz* – AFBG] entered into force on 1 July 2009. The amendments expanded the circle of eligible persons and introduced significant improvements in benefits.

The measures aim to step up participation in continuing education. Specifically, by 2015, the aim is to

- increase participation in formalised continuing education from the current 43 per cent to 50 per cent,
- increase participation in all forms of learning, including so-called informal learning, from 72 to 80 per cent,
- considerably increase the participation of the low-skilled.

European Qualifications Framework

Information on the link between the German qualification system and the European Qualifications Framework, and on the drafting of a German Qualifications Framework, may be found in chapter 2.6.

Expanding learning mobility

In May 2010 the Standing Conference adopted a declaration on mobility in the education sector in Europe [*Erklärung zur Mobilität im Bildungsbereich in Europa*] in which it emphasises that the mobility of pupils/students and teachers/lecturers forms a key element of education policy collaboration in Europe and represents a core task of the Bologna Process and of the European Union in the education sector. The Standing Conference considers the main obstacles to mobility in the school sector and in higher education to be insufficient information, financial difficulties and problems in recognising credits obtained abroad. Young people are, moreover, to be given an understanding of the many advantages of undertaking mobility and informed about funding opportunities, while the above obstacles to mobility are to be dismantled. Against this background the Standing Conference welcomed the diverse initiatives of the European Union and of the Bologna Process to promote cross-border mobility in the education sector. It particularly welcomed the Lifelong Learning Programme and the European Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education Sector and Lifelong Learning. To develop the Lifelong Learning Programme the Standing Conference proposes:

- adapting the financial support for students to the increased maintenance costs provided for in the ERASMUS sub-programme;
- reducing the administrative costs associated with the application in particular, and also those associated with project management;
- increasing the amounts of funding for COMENIUS-Regio projects;
- funding a practical work placement for pupils from all types of school.

The Standing Conference also advocates including a greater share of the financially or socially disadvantaged and those with special needs or with a migrant background in mobility programmes, and considering additional support in the form of increased rates of funding.

Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training

Language learning

The Standing Conference regards the learning of foreign languages as a prerequisite for access to other language communities and for acquiring key dialogue and communication skills. Multiple language acquisition by as many pupils as possible is therefore one of its goals. More information on foreign-language teaching can be found in chapters 5, 6 and 13.4.

Professional development of teachers and trainers

In December 2004 the Standing Conference adopted Standards for Teacher Training: Educational Sciences [*Standards für die Lehrerbildung: Bildungswissenschaften*]. The educational sciences include the scientific disciplines concerning educational processes, education systems and their basic conditions. The standards describe requirements for the actions of teachers. They refer to competences and thus to the abilities, skills and attitudes that a teacher must possess in order to meet professional requirements. They formulate competences in educational sciences that are particularly important for initial teacher training and everyday working life and that can be linked to further and continuing education. With regard to the improvement of diagnostic and methodical competence, the introduction of the standards for teacher training provide an additional foundation for a teacher training aimed at enhancing professionalism. The Standards for Teacher Training: Educational Sciences were adopted by the Länder at the start of the 2005/2006 academic year as the basis for the specific requirements of teacher training courses, including practical training components and the *Vorbereitungsdienst* or preparatory service in the Länder. In October 2008 the Standing Conference adopted common content requirements for subject-related studies and subject-related didactics in teacher training [*Ländergemeinsame inhaltliche Anforderungen für die Fachwissenschaften und Fachdidaktiken in der Lehrerbildung*] which apply to all Länder, in which, by laying down so-called subject profiles [*Fachprofile*], it has agreed a framework for the common content requirements for subject-related courses of study [*Fachstudium*]. Within this framework, the Länder and universities may set priorities and define their own specialisations, and also lay down additional requirements. The subject profiles include a description of the competences to be acquired through study and the key individual content requirements. The subject-related skills of future teachers are to be established and developed primarily through courses of study. The requirements for subject-related studies and subject-related didactics, in conjunction with the Standards for Teacher Training, form a basis for the accreditation and regular evaluation of teacher-training courses. At the same time they are an important element of efforts towards quality assurance and quality development in school education and training.

Governance and funding

In the SCHOOL SECTOR, the introduction of national *Bildungsstandards* [educational standards] and the establishment of the Institute for Educational Progress [*Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen* – IQB] marked the beginning of a paradigm shift towards an output-oriented control of the education system. In order to systematically link the individual measures for the observation and further development of educational processes, the Standing Conference has adopted a comprehensive strategy for educa-

tional monitoring. For more detailed information on the comprehensive strategy for educational monitoring, see chapter 11.2.

In the course of the shift towards an output-oriented control of the education system, school autonomy and responsibility is being further expanded. This includes in particular the extension of the financial autonomy of the schools and the development of school-specific programmes [*Schulprogramme*] in which 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. The state's influence on schools is increasingly exercised via the approval of school-specific programmes and the determination of target agreements with the individual schools or head teachers, respectively. The scope of duties of the head teacher has expanded due to the right and/or the obligation of the schools to pass, implement and evaluate school-specific programmes. As part of securing the quality of the lessons, the head teacher is additionally responsible for lesson development, staff development and organisational development as well as for the planning of further training, staff management and, where applicable, for the administration of budgetary funds.

In the last few years, extensive reforms have also been introduced in Germany for quality assurance and modernisation in the HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR. The development of the consecutive degree system and the further development of accreditation and evaluation serve the objectives of quality assurance and quality development. The accreditation of study courses ensures the observance of standards for the academic curriculum as well as the vocational relevance of the degrees. Evaluation is designed to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of institutions and degree programmes, and thus to assist higher education institutions in adopting systematic approaches to quality assurance in teaching. With the introduction of system accreditation focusing on the internal quality assurance system of a higher education institution in the field of teaching and learning, the institutions' own responsibility in this area is further reinforced. For more detailed information on quality assurance in the tertiary sector, see chapter 11.3.

As part of the current higher education reforms, the Länder have partly restructured the organisation and administration of their higher education institutions. Detailed state control is increasingly being replaced by the autonomous decision-making of higher education institutions. Deregulation has significantly increased the freedom of higher education institutions in terms of their organisational and staffing decisions. The partial shifting of decision-making competences from the Land ministries and the bodies of participation to the governing boards of the higher education institution or the heads of departments is intended to strengthen the capacity to act and the achievement potential of the individual higher education institutions. In joint target agreements, the state and the institutions of higher education cooperatively define the services to be provided, but without specifying concrete measures. The target agreements are also used as control elements within the higher education institutions. The growing autonomy of the higher education institutions is, for example, also demonstrated by the strengthening of their right to select applicants for admission and the introduction of global budgets.

Basic skills in reading, mathematics and science

A good command of the German language is viewed as the key to a successful education and career and forms an important prerequisite for participation in society. The many

language-promotion initiatives in the Länder range from procedures to establish language levels prior to enrolment at school, to measures supporting language development through language promotion at primary level and in lower secondary level, and career field-related and subject-integrated language promotion at vocational schools. Parents of children with a migrant background are deliberately involved in language promotion.

The Federation and the Länder have taken various measures to increase the attractiveness of the so-called MINT subjects [mathematics, IT, natural sciences and technology]. In the pre-school sector, for instance, the programme “*Haus der kleinen Forscher*” [“Little Scientists’ House”] which is funded by the Federation and implemented by the Länder, provides practical training which qualifies educators to teach the natural sciences in a child-friendly way. In the school sector, through recommendations adopted within the Standing Conference on the strengthening of mathematics, scientific and technical education, the Länder are focusing on the early promotion of scientific and technical interests, on raising the mandatory number of hours in pupil timetables and on a greater practical orientation. Emphasis is placed on close cooperation with foundations, research institutions, companies and higher education institutions. Special attention is paid to opportunities to attract teachers to the MINT subjects and to the training, further training and continuing education of teaching staff.

Measures to improve adult basic education may be found in chapter 12.8.

New skills for new jobs

The *Ausbildungsordnungen* [training regulations] for currently around 350 *anerkannte Ausbildungsberufe* [recognised occupations requiring formal training] are continuously reviewed and adapted to new requirements in the working world. Significant impetus for the re-structuring of occupations requiring formal training within the dual system comes from the changing skills requirements of the economy. The drafting of new or modernisation of existing training regulations and their coordination with the Länder framework curricula [*Rahmenlehrpläne*] for teaching in the *Berufsschule* [vocational school] takes place in a multistage process involving employers, trade unions, the Federation and the Länder.

The identification of future skills requirements is of great importance in the further development of vocational training. New or changed qualification trends in the professional and working world need to be recognised as quickly as possible and integrated into the process of vocational training policy regulation and organisation. Since 1999 the Federal Ministry of Education and Research has been promoting the identification of vocational skills requirements for professionals through its early recognition of skills trends initiative [*Früherkennungsinitiative*]. The networking project *FreQueNz* plays a key role in this process; as a nationwide research network it coordinates the research work of the various early recognition projects, and processes and publishes the individual results. Through the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [CEDEFOP] *FreQueNz* is also engaged in dialogue with the European early recognition of skills.

Promoting equity, social cohesion and citizenship

Early leavers from education and training

In March 2010 the Standing Conference adopted a targeted promotion strategy designed to increase the chances of poorer-performing pupils obtaining a school-leaving certificate and participating successfully in professional life and the life of society. The priorities and guidelines of the concept include individual support and teaching geared to the educational standards while at the same time incorporating practical and vocational educational contents. The promotion strategy expressly addresses pupils with special educational needs. With a special educational focus on learning, it aims in particular to increase the chances of eligible pupils achieving the *Hauptschule* leaving certificate on top of the school-specific leaving certificate. The promotion strategy is closely connected to the fields of action agreed as part of the Qualification Initiative for Germany “Getting ahead through education” [*Aufstieg durch Bildung*], in particular the target of halving the number of pupils leaving school without qualifications.

In this connection the attendance of pupils with special educational needs at general education schools is being increasingly promoted. The ability to transfer between *Förderschulen* [special schools] and general education schools is to be promoted by adapting the curricular requirements, for instance, or introducing the subject English at *Förderschulen*.

Integration measures in the elementary sector aim to reduce the proportion of special needs pupils overall.

In the vocational training sector, especially in view of the emerging lack of skilled workers, the focus is on those young people who have still not secured an apprenticeship. The Federation and Länder plan to work with business to implement measures suited to strengthening and consolidating the training culture in the dual system still further. Young people’s preparation to undertake training is to be promoted to facilitate the transition of the disadvantaged in particular to vocational training. Measures to improve individual training ability in the so-called transitional system are also to be further developed in close cooperation with companies and be geared to connectivity and transferability. The possibilities of taking equivalent full-time school education credits into account are also to be used. From grade 8 binding vocational guidance measures are to be implemented in all general education schools and *Förderschulen*. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is rounding out the Länder measures with the vocational guidance programme [*Berufsorientierungsprogramm – BOP*] in intercompany or comparable vocational training centres, which is intended to help young people transfer from school to dual vocational training. The BOP comprises an analysis of potential in grade 7, and in grade 8 a two-week workshop placement in a vocational training centre. In-depth career guidance is also to be offered through the Federal Employment Agency [*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*] in *Förderschulen* and in each school offering courses which lead to a *Hauptschule* leaving certificate. As part of the development of vocational training the Instructor Aptitude Ordinance [*Ausbilder-Eignungsverordnung*] was re-enacted in 2009. A further focus in the development of vocational training is, in cooperation with the social partners and in agreement with the Länder, to modernise the recognised occupations requiring formal training [*anerkannte Ausbildungsberufe*] in line with demand.

Pre-primary education

The Federation, the Länder and the local authorities have agreed to progressively establish quality and needs-oriented day-care services for children under three years of age. By 2013, the aim is to ensure child-care provision for an average of one in three children under the age of three nationwide. As part of the Qualification Initiative for Germany “Getting ahead through education” [*Aufstieg durch Bildung*] these objectives have been boosted and additional measures planned. The aim is in particular to ensure comprehensive language promotion for all children before enrolment at school, the training and employment of additional educators and child minders, and a suitable child-staff ratio.

From 2011 to 2014 the Federation is making around Euro 400 million available to expand 4,000 day-care centres throughout Germany into so-called “*Schwerpunkt-Kitas Sprache & Integration*” [i.e. day-care centres with a focus on language and integration] to 4,000 day-care centres throughout Germany. As part of the initiative to promote language and integration, a budget of Euro 25,000 from federal resources is to allow each day-care centre involved to appoint educational staff qualified to promote language-learning and to pay them commensurately. The additional staff should improve the quality of early language and integration promotion in particular of children below the age of three with a migrant background and from less well-educated social groups in which education is not valued as highly.

Migrants

The Länder have stepped up their language promotion measures, particularly in the field of early-childhood education, upbringing and supervision. In primary and secondary education schools particular value is placed on differentiated learning opportunities and additional remedial teaching, and on special homework assistance.

Learners with special needs

Recent years have seen a growing number of different organisational forms of support which have pursued the common aim of integration. Thus, various methods are used to provide opportunities for disabled and non-disabled children to receive instruction together. Since the 1980s disabled pupils have been increasingly integrated into mainstream schools under school pilot projects, some of which have assumed the status of a standard type of schooling since 1990. Also, various forms of cooperation between mainstream schools and special schools have emerged and approaches to inclusive teaching have been developed in educational science. A focus on institutions has given way to a focus on the needs of the individual. Formerly, the prevailing concept when making choices for a child’s school career [i.e. the decision in favour of a mainstream school or a special school] was the *need for education at a special school*. This has since been superseded by the concept of *sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf* [special educational needs], meaning education, instruction, therapy and care requirements depending on an individual’s physical disabilities and social disadvantages as far as the institutional setting allows. This development has been influenced by a new understanding of disabilities and educational needs, improved diagnostic techniques, more effective early detection and prevention as well as better overall conditions at mainstream schools [e.g. improved pupil-teacher ratios], more open approaches to instruction and education and, finally, a greater appreciation of the benefits to children of attending a school close to their home.

Within the context of the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by Germany and the equality legislation in the Länder, offers of integration into mainstream schools for pupils with special educational needs are currently being extended. In a resolution of November 2010 on the teaching and legal aspects of the implementation of the UN Convention the Standing Conference found that interaction between general teaching and special teaching is essential to achieving inclusive education. Teachers at all school types are to be trained in the various stages of training in teaching all pupils together.

Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

Transversal key competences

In March 2009 the Standing Conference adopted a resolution on the strengthening of democracy education [*Stärkung der Demokratieerziehung*]. Starting in primary school pupils are to be introduced to the basic principles of the democratic state and social order, and the differences with dictatorial forms of rule. In the secondary sector analysis of 20th-century Germany history is to be intensified as part of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching in particular.

An introduction to the professional and working world is a compulsory component of all courses of education at lower secondary level. The instruction is given either in a separate subject [*Arbeitslehre* – pre-vocational studies] or as part of the material covered in other subjects. Work experience placements, especially for pupils in the two last grades at *Hauptschule* and *Realschule*, aim to provide first-hand insight into the working world and guidance in choosing an occupation. The Länder have continuously developed their activities in order to convey a basic knowledge of the world of business and commerce. This has also taken place outside of lessons, for example, via model businesses set up by pupils [*Schülerfirmen*], information about entrepreneurial independence or cooperation projects between the schools and the world of business and commerce.

Innovation-friendly institutions

In the higher education sector the Länder support the expansion of work-related study and continuing training courses through target agreements with higher education institutions. New correspondence courses and online study courses, eLearning, eCampus initiatives, distance learning programmes and inter-higher education institution continuing education centres and networks are being promoted to this end among others.

Partnerships

In the school sector there are partnerships with employment agencies, foundations, companies, trade unions, and other local stakeholders among others promoting vocational guidance at general education schools and *Förderschulen* [special schools]. As part of the Qualification Initiative for Germany “Getting ahead through education” [*Aufstieg durch Bildung*] local partnership networks are increasingly being promoted in vocational guidance.

As part of the National Pact for Training and Young Skilled Staff in Germany [*Nationaler Pakt für Ausbildung und Fachkräftenachwuchs in Deutschland*] initiative ‘career

planning is planning for life' [*“Berufswegeplanung ist Lebensplanung”*], in order to provide targeted support for young people in their choice of career German industry's umbrella organisations plan inter alia to

- arrange partnerships with companies for each interested school,
- help young people gain an insight into working practice,
- support mentoring and sponsorship programmes which help, in particular, disadvantaged young people in the transition from school to training,
- support the continuing education of teachers and head teachers through suitable offers from companies.

The Standing Conference decided in October 2010 to join the National Pact for Training and Young Skilled Staff in Germany in Germany as a full member. The Länder also concluded complementary regional pacts. These are training networks with a wide variety of regional actors ranging from business and administration to the media and employment agencies.

To develop young skilled staff in the MINT professions the Federation and the Länder have invited business to engage more fully in activities in *Kindergärten*, at schools and in the training and higher education sector. This includes above all the expansion of MINT grants, in particular for teacher-training students, and increased funding for schools focusing on MINT subjects.

As part of the expansion of work-related study and continuing training courses, higher education institutions are cooperating with the regional economy inter alia.

14.3. Other Important Ongoing Reforms and Policy Initiatives at National Level

Federalism reform

The 2006 federalism reform for the modernisation of the federal system [Federalism reform I] redefined the relationships between the Federation and Länder in regard to legislation. The stated objectives of the federalism reform included, among others, improving the decision-making ability of the Federation and Länder and their capacity to act, and shaping the federal structure more efficiently with a view to growing international competition. In the education system the new regulations concern in particular the participation of the Länder in European Union Affairs, cooperation between the federation and the Länder within the scope of the so-called joint tasks and the division of responsibilities for the organisation and administration of institutions of higher education. Moreover, in the course of the federalism reform the legislative competences for the career, remuneration and pension system of Länder civil servants [e.g. teachers, professors and junior professors] have been transferred to the Länder.

Early childhood education and care

In a May 2008 position paper, the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Family Affairs [*Jugend- und Familienministerkonferenz* – JFMK] designated six areas of day care for children as priorities for future development:

- safeguarding, developing and reviewing the quality of educational work in day-care centres for children, in particular developing the quality of education offers for children under three years of age;
- developing education plans which take the experiences of the Länder into account as regards their binding character, content and structure;
- observing the further development of day care for children, particularly in relation to institutional day care;
- optimising the transition from day-care centre to primary school, with a particular emphasis on ensuring equal educational opportunities and promoting integration;
- expanding cooperation and developing interlocking concepts of content for all places of learning involved in the education of children;
- the requirements of degree courses for early-childhood education at *Fachhochschule* and university level with a view to enabling students to work in accordance with Land-specific education plans.

Within the scope of the Qualification Initiative for Germany “Getting ahead through education” [*Aufstieg durch Bildung*] of the Federation and the Länder, cooperation between day-care facilities for children and primary schools is to be made compulsory, in so far as this is not already the case. In this regard the Länder also plan to develop coordinated learning objectives for child day-care facilities and primary schools. In order to guarantee the continuity of early education between the early childhood sector and the primary sector, as early as 2004, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs [*Kultusministerkonferenz* - KMK] and the Youth Ministers Conference [*Jugendministerkonferenz*] together adopted a framework for early education in the early childhood sector [*Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen*], as well as a recommendation to strengthen and further develop the overall relationship between education, upbringing and supervision [*Empfehlung zur Stärkung und Weiterentwicklung des Gesamtzusammenhangs von Bildung, Erziehung und Betreuung*]. On the basis of this decision the Länder have now drawn up education plans to intensify educational efforts in day-care centres for children and ensure closer collaboration with primary education. The focus is on the acquisition of basic skills and on developing and reinforcing personal resources. Linguistic education is of particular importance. To support these efforts, offers to promote the active involvement of parents in day care are being extended and concepts developed to intensify the collaboration between school, parents and youth welfare services. A further goal is to improve the training of *Erzieherinnen* and *Erzieher* [state-recognised youth or child-care workers].

Primary education

Extensive pedagogical reforms aim at a pupil-oriented approach to teaching which enhances the children’s self-initiative and self-confidence and promotes learning in a cross-disciplinary context. Since the 1990s, the introduction of and increase in foreign language teaching has gained in importance. All Länder have introduced foreign language teaching as early as *Grundschule* [primary school].

The transition from the day-care centres for children to the primary school is of particular importance. In June 2009 the Conference of the Ministers of Youth [*Jugendministerkonferenz* - JMK] and the Standing Conference agreed on a range of common approach-

es to this transition, which can serve as guidelines for action for the day-care centres and schools, educators, teachers and parents involved. Other focal points of the current debate are the introduction of fixed school opening times, the further development of flexible school entrance phases, requirements for procedures of regular language status observation and the development and expansion of schools offering all-day activities and care in the primary sector [see chapter 5.2.]. Already at the level of primary school lifelong learning also is a concern. Furthermore, the collaboration between school and parents is to be improved because parental support is of special importance for the learning success of primary pupils.

Secondary education

At the centre of the current debate are measures for the further development and assurance of the quality of school education. In the course of this debate, the results of international comparative studies of pupil achievement are being taken into account. Special importance is attached to the introduction of national educational standards. In 2003 and 2004, the Standing Conference adopted *Bildungsstandards* [educational standards] for the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* in the subjects German, mathematics, first foreign language [English/French], biology, chemistry and physics, as well as for the *Hauptschulabschluss* in the subjects German, mathematics and first foreign language [English/French]. In October 2007, the Standing Conference resolved to develop the Uniform Examination Standards for the *Abitur* examination [*Einheitliche Prüfungsanforderungen in der Abiturprüfung*] into educational standards for the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife*. The educational standards are part of a comprehensive system of quality assurance, which also includes school development and both internal and external evaluation. The tendency to centralised examinations at Land level and the measures for improving professionalism in teacher training are also to be viewed against this background. More detailed information on quality assurance in the school sector is available in chapter 11.2.

To make it easier to combine career and family, full-day offers are being further developed. Within the scope of the investment programme Future Education and Care [*Investitionsprogramm Zukunft Bildung und Betreuung - IZBB*], the Federal Government from 2003 to 2009 offered Euro 4 billion to the Länder for building measures and investments in equipments. The Länder have, moreover, invested substantial funds in their own Land programmes. In this regard, the Länder and, if applicable, the *Kommunen* [local authorities] are responsible for the provision of personnel, while the individual schools are responsible for the development of a pedagogical concept for the all-day activities and schooling. More detailed information on the development of *Ganztagsschulen* is available in chapter 6.2.

In December 2009 the Standing Conference underlined the importance of the school part of vocational training in a declaration on the future place of the vocational school in dual vocational training.

Tertiary sector

Since the beginning of the 1990s and not least against a background of inadequate financial and human resources at the higher education institutes, the Federation and the Länder have increased their efforts to modernise and internationalise the higher education system in Germany. The reforms are aimed at facilitating differentiation by deregulating

lation, performance orientation, increasing the autonomy of higher education institutions and creating incentives, hence also enhancing the international competitiveness of the German institutions of higher education.

In order to implement these goals, reforms have been and still are introduced and carried out on the structure of higher education study and the internal organisation of institutions of higher education. In order to enhance the international mobility of students, consecutive courses of study are modularised and provided with a credit point system [European Credit Transfer System]; degree holders receive a *Diploma Supplement*. This development is given further impetus by the cooperation within the framework of the Bologna Process for the realisation of the European Higher Education Area.

In 2009 a controversial debate took hold in the academic world about the Bologna Process, revealing weaknesses in its implementation. The Standing Conference therefore set itself the goal of working with the higher education institutions to take up valid criticism, examine the causes of some erroneous developments and take appropriate corrective action, without challenging the principles of the study reform in the course of the Bologna Process. In this connection the Standing Conference adopted amendments to the *Ländergemeinsame Strukturvorgaben für die Akkreditierung von Bachelor und Masterstudiengängen* [common structural guidelines for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's study courses] and the *Rahmenvorgaben für die Einführung von Leistungspunktsystemen und die Modularisierung* [framework guidelines for the introduction of credit point systems and the modularisation of study courses] at the end of 2009.

As part of the current higher education reforms, the Länder have partly restructured the organisation and administration of their higher education institutions. Detailed state control is increasingly being replaced by the autonomous decision-making of higher education institutions. Deregulation has significantly increased the freedom of higher education institutions in terms of their organisational and staffing decisions. The partial shifting of decision-making competences from the Land ministries and the bodies of participation to the governing boards of the higher education institution or the heads of departments is intended to strengthen the capacity to act and the achievement potential of the individual higher education institutions. In joint target agreements, the state and the institutions of higher education cooperatively define the services to be provided, but without specifying concrete measures. The target agreements are also used as control elements within the higher education institutions. The growing autonomy of the higher education institutions is, for example, also demonstrated by the strengthening of their right to select applicants for admission and the introduction of global budgets.

Reform of teacher training

Due to the principle of cultural sovereignty [*Kulturhoheit*] and for historical reasons teacher training in the Federal Republic of Germany displays a high degree of diversification per levels and types of schools. Additionally, teacher training has to combine subject-related studies, educational science and subject-related didactics as well as to provide for a meaningful relation between theory and teaching practice during preparatory service. Furthermore, the subjects of the first phase of teacher training have to be adjusted to the subjects of the second, predominantly practical phase.

In all Länder, currently efforts are being made to reform teacher training for all types of schools. With regard to the reforms considered necessary, the efforts of many Länder,

with particular emphasis on their individual priorities, aim to focus on the following measures, amongst others, to reform teacher training:

- a more extensive practical orientation during teacher training
- intensification of the relations between the theoretical and practical phases of training
- particular significance of the induction period for newly qualified teachers
- the introduction of examinations taken alongside courses of study
- measures to improve teaching practice with regard to diagnostic and methodical competence

The basis for the current reform initiatives are the findings of the 1999 committee set up by the Standing Conference comprising experts from science and from educational administration [*Gemischte Kommission Lehrerbildung*] and the 2001 recommendations of the Science Council [*Wissenschaftsrat*] on the future structure of teacher training. The positions of the *Gemischte Kommission Lehrerbildung* were supported in a joint declaration by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, the teachers' unions and other unions in the field of education of October 2000 regarding the actual duties and responsibilities of today's teachers [*Aufgaben von Lehrerinnen und Lehrern heute – Fachleute für das Lernen*]. According to this declaration, the core responsibility of teachers as experts for learning is to plan, organise and reflect processes of teaching and learning. It is the responsibility of the teacher to impart basic skills and knowledge of methods which enable the individual to master the process of lifelong learning on his own. Teachers carry out the task of education in school and cooperate closely with the parents in promoting positive values, attitudes and actions of the pupils. They assess the performance of the pupils and give advice to pupils as well as to parents. Teachers are to continually develop their competences by participating in in-service and further training courses. With regard to school development they are increasingly asked to participate in committees and institutions on a regional level as well as to carry out administrative tasks and take over responsibility within the school administration.

In December 2004, the Standing Conference adopted Standards for Teacher Training: Educational Sciences [*Standards für die Lehrerbildung: Bildungswissenschaften*]. In doing so, it oriented itself around the outline of a profession as described in the declaration passed jointly with teachers' unions and other unions in the field of education of October 2000. The standards for the educational sciences contain several indications as to which competences teachers need to acquire in order to successfully organise their changing professional routine. In October 2008 the Standing Conference adopted 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*]. In conjunction with the Standards for Teacher Training in the Educational Sciences, these serve as the basis for the accreditation and regular evaluation of teacher-training courses. For more information on the Standards for Teacher Training: Educational Sciences and the common content requirements for subject-related studies and subject-related didactics in teacher training, see chapters 9.1. and 14.2.

Bachelor's and Master's degrees in teacher training

The reform of teacher training increasingly includes the implementation of the consecutive structure of study courses with Bachelor's and Master's degrees [BA/MA]. In the so-called *Quedlinburger Beschluss* of June 2005, the Standing Conference passed guidelines for the mutual recognition of Bachelor's and Master's degrees in teacher training courses conveying the educational prerequisites for teaching positions [*Eckpunkte für die gegenseitige Anerkennung von Bachelor- und Masterabschlüssen in Studiengängen, mit denen die Bildungsvoraussetzungen für ein Lehramt vermittelt werden*]. The guidelines specify that educational careers based on Bachelor's and Master's structures in teacher training will be acceptable and their degrees accredited if they meet the following requirements:

- integrative study at universities or equivalent higher education institutions of at least two subject areas and of the educational sciences at the Bachelor level as well as at the Master level [the Länder are at liberty to specify exceptions in the subject areas art and music]
- practical study in schools as early as during the Bachelor's course of study
- no extension of existing standard periods [without practical sections]
- differentiation of the curricula and diplomas by teaching position.

Like all other Bachelor's and Master's study courses, consecutive study courses providing the educational basis for a teaching position are also to be modularised and accredited. Master's courses of study conveying the educational prerequisites for a teaching position have a specific teaching-related profile that is established in the course of the accreditation procedure in accordance with the specifications of the Accreditation Council [*Akkreditierungsrat*] and is to be displayed in the *Diploma Supplement*. The degree designations for Bachelor's and Master's study courses conveying the educational requirements for teaching positions are:

- Bachelor of Education [B.Ed.]
- Master of Education [M.Ed.]

The accreditation procedure particularly involves monitoring the compliance with subject-specific requirements in teacher training valid for all Länder as well as with Länder-specific specifications concerning the content and structure. The subject-specific requirements valid for all Länder embrace the Standards for Teacher Training in the Educational Sciences [*Standards für die Lehrerbildung: Bildungswissenschaften*] and the 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*].

In the meantime, the framework agreements on training and examination for the six types of teaching careers have been adapted to the new training structures [more detailed information is available in chapter 9.1.]. The Länder decide whether the present study structure with the *Staatsexamen* qualification is to be maintained or whether there is to be a transition to the consecutive study system. In several Länder, consecutive study courses have already been introduced in teacher training, in others, the transition is currently taking place. In Länder which have a consecutive study structure for

teacher training, the Master's degree replaces the First State Examination as a rule. The [Second] State Examination must, however, be taken after the preparatory service.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance in schools and institutions of higher education is also central to the work of the Standing Conference in 2009. Particularly the close link between social background and competence acquisition is to be overcome in the school sector. Special efforts are to be directed at improving the performance of pupils with weak competences and children and young people with migrant backgrounds. In October 2007, the Standing Conference resolved to develop the Uniform Examination Standards for the *Abitur* examination into *Bildungsstandards* [educational standards] for the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife*.

For the further development of quality assurance in the higher education sector, in December 2007 the Standing Conference resolved to enhance the established accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's study programmes through the implementation of a system accreditation scheme. In June 2007, the Länder initiated a "Quality Offensive for Excellence in Teaching" [*Qualitätsoffensive exzellente Lehre*]. Together with the *Stifterverband für die deutsche Wissenschaft*, the business community's innovation agency for the German science system, the "Competition for excellence in teaching" [*Wettbewerb exzellente Lehre*] was launched; its objective is strategic concepts which higher education institutions can use to improve their teaching and study profile and increase their attractiveness as training institutes.

The competition provided funding totalling Euro 10 million; the winners [four *Fachhochschulen*, six universities] were announced in October 2009. The decision whether or not to continue the competition will be taken after an evaluation of this first round.