

The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2017/2018

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

– EXCERPT –

14. ONGOING REFORMS AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

This chapter provides a thematic and chronological overview of national reforms and policy developments since 2016.

The introduction of the chapter describes the overall education strategy and the key objectives across the whole education system. It also looks at how the education reform process is organised and who the main actors in the decision-making process are.

The section on ongoing reforms and policy developments groups reforms in the following broad thematic areas that largely correspond to education levels:

- Early childhood education and care
- School education
- VET and adult learning
- Higher education
- Transversal skills and employability

Inside each thematic area, reforms are organised chronologically. The most recent reforms are described first.

Finally the section on the European perspective provides links to European strategies in which education and training have a prominent role.

Overall national education strategy and key objectives

There is a consensus that, in light of demographic changes in Germany, and with a view to the emerging need for skilled workers, but also because of the challenges posed by digitisation and the ongoing migration of refugees, great efforts must be made to develop the German education system in the years ahead. As early as October 2008, the Federation and the Länder, with the Qualification Initiative for Germany “Getting ahead through education” (*Aufstieg durch Bildung*), had agreed a common catalogue of objectives and measures which addresses all areas of education from early-childhood education through to continuing 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

Many of the measures adopted within the framework of the Qualification Initiative for Germany have been implemented or will continue to be implemented. In addition, the joint efforts of the Federation and the Länder are focusing above all on the challenges for the education system associated with the integration of immigrants and digitalisation in the school, vocational education and training and higher education sectors.

The coalition agreement between the governing parties for the 19th legislative period announces a number of plans.

The following initiatives, among others, are envisaged for the school sector:

- Initiation of an investment offensive for schools on the basis of an amendment to Art. 104c of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz* – R1), which, in addition to the current school renovation programme, includes support for the Länder in their investments in municipal education infrastructure, in particular in all-day schooling and care services, digitalisation and vocational schools.
- Enabling all-day education and care for all pupils of primary school age. To this end, a legal entitlement to all-day care for all children of primary school age is to be created. Together with the Länder, the services are to be expanded in such a way that the legal entitlement can be fulfilled in 2025.
- Improving the equipment of all schools within the framework of the Digital-Pact School of the Federal Government and the Länder. While the federal government will ensure better equipment with digital technology, the Länder will train teachers so that they can make good didactic use of digital media and impart digital skills. The common goal is for pupils to be able to use a digital learning environment in all subjects and learning areas in order to acquire the necessary skills in the digital world.

In the field of vocational education and training, the coalition agreement provides, inter alia, for the following measures:

- Strengthen and modernise vocational education and training with a Vocational Training Pact, including improving equipment for vocational schools in the context of digitalisation, in addition to the technical infrastructure under the Digital School Pact.
- Development of a National Continuing Education Strategy for the Federal Government, the Länder and associations
- Initiation of an innovation competition in vocational education and training
- Strengthening the further training of trainers
- Strengthening innovative qualification pathways (e.g. higher vocational training, dual studies)
- Further strengthen vocational guidance at all general secondary schools in cooperation with the Länder.
- Extension of the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Education.
- Expansion of the individual promotion instruments for career advancement and the continuing education programmes offered by the higher education institutions.

For the higher education sector, the following projects, among others, are announced:

- Continuation of federal funding within the framework of the successor to the Higher Education Pact to strengthen higher education institutions and studies.
- Continuation of the funds from the Quality Pact for Teaching in accordance with the recommendations of the German Science Council (*Wissenschaftsrat*).
- Continuation and extension of the quality offensive for teacher training at federal and Länder level.
- Expansion of the Federal Training Assistance Act (*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz* – BAföG – R83) and improvement of services.

In addition, the Federal Government and the Länder are planning to set up a National Education Council along the lines of the Science Council. On the basis of empirical educational research, the Council is to submit proposals for greater transparency, quality and comparability in the education system and contribute to reaching agreement on future goals and developments in the education system and to promoting cooperation between the political levels involved in shaping educational provision throughout the entire educational biography.

In March 2018, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*) decided that the Federal Government and the Länder would jointly establish such an Education Council. The negotiations with the Federal Government will be based on a joint concept of the Länder on the tasks and structure of the National Education Council.

Overview of the education reform process and drivers

In the Federal Republic of Germany responsibility for the education system is determined by the federal structure of the state. Unless the Basic Law awards legislative powers to the Federation, the Länder have the right to legislate. Within the education system, this applies to the school sector, the higher education sector, adult education and continuing education. Administration of the education system in these areas is almost exclusively a matter for the Länder.

The scope of the Federal Government's responsibilities in the field of education is defined in the Basic Law, according to which the Federation bears responsibility particularly for the regulations governing the following domains of education, science and research:

- In-company vocational training and vocational further education
- Admission to higher education institutions and higher education degrees (here the Länder may enact laws at variance with the legislation of the Federation)
- Financial assistance for pupils and students
- Promotion of scientific and academic research and technological development
- Child and youth welfare (in particular early childhood education and care in day-care centres and child-minding services)
- Legal protection of participants of correspondence courses
- Regulations on entry to the legal profession
- Regulations on entry to medical and paramedical professions
- Employment promotion measures as well as occupational and labour market research

More detailed information on the distribution of legislative competences in the education sector is available in chapter 2.7.

In addition to the division of responsibilities described above, the Basic Law also provides for particular forms of cooperation between the Federation and the Länder within the scope of the so-called joint tasks (*Gemeinschaftsaufgaben*). Joint tasks in the field of science and education are regulated in Article 91b of the Basic Law. Pursuant to Article 91b, the Federation and the Länder may mutually agree to cooperate in cases of supra-regional importance in the promotion of science, research and

teaching as well as for the assessment of the performance of educational systems in international comparison and in drafting relevant reports and recommendations.

Federalism has proved successful as a state structure which encourages diversity and competition. The Federal Government and the Länder will introduce the appropriate measures and initiatives within their respective areas of responsibility. At the same time, there has been an increase in the common responsibilities of the Länder and the need to agree objectives and coordinated measures on the part of the Federal Government and the Länder in fields of national relevance.

Ongoing reforms and policy developments

The following account includes measures resolved by all Länder in the Standing Conference and measures by the Federal Government. Within their own areas of responsibility, the Länder take various and far-reaching measures which cannot be separately described. The reform measures of the Länder, mostly with substantial support or in cooperation with the Federation, affect the following areas in particular:

- Expanding full-day offers with the aim of extended educational and support options
- Raising the educational level of disadvantaged people
- Measures to improve linguistic competence
- Measures to improve dovetailing of the pre-school sector and primary school
- Measures to improve school education, reading competence and the understanding of mathematical and scientific correlations
- Vocational orientation measures and measures to improve transition from school to work
- Measures to strengthen the link between vocational and higher education
- Laws to improve the identification and recognition of professional qualifications acquired abroad by the Federation and the Länder
- Measures to increase the higher education graduation rate and that of comparable qualifications
- Measures for digitalisation in the school and higher education sector

The basic principle of sustainability should be anchored more firmly in the German educational system in future. To this end, the National Platform on Education for Sustainable Development resolved the National Plan of Action on Education for Sustainable Development (*Nationaler Aktionsplan Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung – BNE*) in June 2017. The members of the National Platform are, on behalf of the federal government, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF*), the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend – BMFSFJ*), the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (*Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit – BMUB*) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (*Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit – BMZ*), and on behalf of the Länder, representatives of the Standing Conference, the Conference of the Ministries of Youth and Family Affairs (*Jugend- und Familienministerkonferenz – JFMK*) and the Conference of the Environmental Ministers (*Umweltministerkonferenz – UMK*), and on behalf of the local authorities, a rep-

representative of the local authority organisations. Decision-makers from the fields of business, science and civil society are also members of the National Platform.

14.1. National Reforms in Early Childhood Education and Care

2017

Expansion of day-care for children

The common goal of the federal, state and local governments is to create a nationwide, needs-based and high-quality range of childcare places. In particular, the expansion of childcare places for children under three years of age has been driven forward in recent years. Since 1 August 2013 all children from the age of one have had a legal right to early-childhood education in a day-care centre or child-minding service. On 1 March 2017, nearly 763,000 children under the age of three were being cared for in a day care facility for children or in publicly funded child day care. This corresponds to a care rate of 33.1 percent.

The Federation made a total of Euro 5.4 billion available to the Länder up to 2014 to create additional places in day-care centres and child-minding services for children under the age of three and to finance their operation. Since 2015 the Federation supports the long-term operation of these newly created places with a total of Euro 845 million. To enable the Länder and municipalities to cope more easily with the challenges of funding crèches, day-care centres for children and child-minding services, the existing childcare development (*Kinderbetreuungs Aufbau*) fund has been topped up with a further Euro 550 million from 2015, bringing it to Euro 1 billion, and the Länder share of turnover tax has been increased against the Federal shares in 2017 and 2018 by Euro 100 million each year.

With the proclamation of the "Law on the further quantitative and qualitative expansion of day care for children" (*Gesetz zum weiteren quantitativen und qualitativen Ausbau der Kindertagesbetreuung – R63*) on 29 June 2017, the childcare financing investment programme 2017–2020 was launched. As a result, the special fund that was set up in 2007 for the expansion of child care will receive a further Euro 1.126 billion between 2017 and 2020 to help create an additional 100,000 childcare places. Special mention should be made of the fact that further childcare places can now be created for children until they start school.

Further development of early education and ensuring its funding

The federal, state and local governments have initiated a multi-year process to further develop the quality of child day care. As a result, the Conference of the Ministers of Youth and Family Affairs (*Jugend- und Familienministerkonferenz – JFMK*) in May 2017 reached a majority agreement on key points for a quality development law. It is envisaged that the Länder will select targets for action according to their own development needs and that the Federation will become more involved in financing quality development in child day care on a permanent basis. The key issues paper was based on the interim report "Further Developing Early Education and Securing Finances" (*Frühe Bildung weiterentwickeln und Finanzierung sicherstellen*), which had previously been prepared by the Federation, the Länder and the central municipal associations. For the first time, joint quality objectives were identified, cost estimates were made and new ways of financing the system for greater federal

participation were examined. More detailed information on quality development in early childhood education and care can be found in chapter 11.2.

https://www.jfmk.de/pub2017/TOP_7.1_Fruehe_Bildung_Eckpunkte-QE-Gesetz.pdf

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/jump/114052/fruehe-bildung-weiterentwickeln-und-finanziell-sichern-zwischenbericht-2016-von-bund-und-laendern-data.pdf>

2016

Federal programme „Kita-Entry“

The Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMFSFJ*) supports low-threshold offers that prepare the way and offer accompanying support for access to child day care with the federal programme Kita-Entry (*Kita-Einstieg – getting started in the day care facility for children*). The participating locations receive support for a coordination and network office, for specialist staff to implement the offer as well as additional project funds from 2017 until 2020.

Federal programme “KitaPlus”

Since the beginning of 2016, the BMFSFJ has been supporting families with the federal programme KitaPlus: Because Good Care Is Not a Question of the Time of Day (*KitaPlus: Weil gute Betreuung keine Frage der Uhrzeit ist*). This programme aims to create additional care offers in after-school and day-care facilities for children as well as in child-minding services that are tailored to the needs of the family from the very beginning of care through to the after-school care centre. More detailed information is available in chapter 11.2.

Federal programme “Language-Kitas”

The federal programme Language-Kitas: Because Language is the Key to the World (*Sprach-Kitas: Weil Sprache der Schlüssel zur Welt ist*) encourages the provision of linguistic education in day care facilities for children in everyday life. More detailed information is available in chapter 12.4.

<http://sprach-kitas.fruehe-chancen.de/>

Federal programme “Childminding Services”

In January 2016, the federal programme Childminding Services: Because the Youngest Need Close Proximity (*Bundesprogramm Kindertagespflege*) was launched. It runs until December 2018. The further development of the qualification of child-minders is indispensable in view of the equal status of child-minding services and day-care centres under the law. The German Youth Institute (*Deutsches Jugendinstitut – DJI*) has therefore developed a Qualification Manual Day Care for Children (*Qualifizierungshandbuch Kindertagespflege – QHB*), which provides for a qualification scope of 300 teaching units plus internships and self-study units. Further information on the federal programme Child Minding Services can be found in chapter 11.2.

14.2. National Reforms in School Education

2017

Recommendation on vocational orientation in schools

In December 2017, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*) adopted the „Recommendation for

vocational orientation in schools" (*„Empfehlung zur Beruflichen Orientierung an Schulen“*). According to the recommendation, the educational mission of schools is essentially to prepare pupils adequately for life in society and to enable them to participate actively and responsibly in cultural, social, political, professional and economic life. This includes preparing the pupils for the world of work and employment. An early, practice-oriented, individual vocational orientation is of central importance for a successful transition into education, study and occupation for all pupils. The Länder understand vocational orientation to mean a process that begins at school and continues until it leads to training, studies and employment. More detailed information on vocational orientation at schools can be found in Chapter 12.5.

Vocational schools 4.0

In December 2017, the Standing Conference adopted the declaration "Vocational schools 4.0 – further development of innovative strength and integration management of vocational schools in Germany in the coming decade" (*„Berufliche Schulen 4.0 – Weiterentwicklung von Innovationskraft und Integrationsleistung der beruflichen Schulen in Deutschland in der kommenden Dekade“*). Over the next ten years, the ministers see digitalisation, the integration of immigrants and the general trend towards academisation as major challenges for vocational education and training in Germany.

Against the background of a dynamic professional and working world, it is considered necessary to adapt the teaching content of vocational education and training again and again. Additional innovation potential arises from digitalisation and the resulting pedagogical possibilities. Synergy effects are to be achieved in the future through transnational working structures in these elementary fields of design. The digital infrastructure of vocational schools can be expanded within the framework of the DigitalPact School, for which the Federation will provide the Länder with financial assistance amounting to Euro 5 billion over the next five years.

By working well together, vocational schools and training companies ensure the long-term success of vocational education and training as a whole. In an increasingly international professional world, skilled workers need job-specific foreign language skills that will increasingly be taught in vocational schools in the future. International cooperation between vocational schools is intended to support and promote corresponding skills.

Dealing with heterogeneous groups of pupils is a growing challenge for the vocational education system. Future recommendations for language- and culture-sensitive pedagogy and individual support for pupils will establish a common framework of action for these topics.

The Länder will also further develop the quality of vocational schools by working more closely together. In particular, they will exchange information on existing quality management systems. Other important tasks for the quality development of vocational schools are to develop common concepts for attracting new teachers and further training for active teachers.

2016

Strategy „Education Campaign for the Digital Knowledge Society”

In order to implement the digital agenda of the federal government, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF*) resolved the Education Campaign for the Digital Knowledge Society (*Bildungsoffensive für die digitale Wissensgesellschaft*) strategy in October 2016, that covers aspects of digital learning across all educational areas from early childhood education, schools, institutions of higher education through to continuing vocational education and training and presents corresponding measures and programmes of the BMBF for digital changes in education.

The BMBF strategy defines five fields of action for this:

1. “Imparting digital education”
2. “Expanding efficient infrastructures”
3. “Creating an up-to-date legal framework”
4. “Supporting the development of a strategic organisation”
5. “Using international potentials”

Goals are named for each field of action, an overview provided of current and planned activities and further need for action set out. Apart from other new measures such as the pilot project for a school cloud, the “DigitalPact School” is one of the key elements of the Education Campaign for the Digital Knowledge Society strategy.

https://www.bmbf.de/files/Bildungsoffensive_fuer_die_digitale_Wissensgesellschaft.pdf

Strategy “Education in the Digital World”

Against the background of the possibilities and challenges that the progressive digitisation of all fields of life entails, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*) resolved a strategy for Education in the Digital World (*Bildung in der digitalen Welt*) in December 2016. This strategy formulates clear goals for digital education in schools and institutions of higher education and specifies the content orientation. Depending on their relevance for the respective educational sector, the two main chapters are based on the following fields of action, which are to be functionally linked to each other:

- Education plans and the development of teaching, curricular developments
- Initial, further and continuing education of educators and teachers
- Infrastructure and equipment
- Educational media, content
- E-government, school administration programmes, education and campus management systems
- Legal and functional framework

For the school sector, teaching and learning in the digital world have to follow the primacy of the pedagogical – in other words the training and educational mission. This means that a consideration of digital changes serves the objective of supplementing the current educational policy guidelines and of encouraging independence through changes in the content-related and formal organisation of learning

processes and of allowing a better development of individual potentials within inclusive education through the use of digital learning environments too.

Vocational education and training is particularly affected by digitisation and its repercussions for working, production and business processes. The teaching objective is increasingly the acquisition of competence in the use of digital tools and techniques. Apart from an understanding of digital processes, this also calls for an investigation of the direct effects of ever increasing digitisation, e.g. with respect to work organisation and communicative aspects in globally networked production, supply and service chains.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2016/Bildung_digitale_Welt_Webversion.pdf

Joint declaration on the teaching of Jewish history, religion and culture in school

In 2016 the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs resolved a declaration on the teaching of Jewish history, religion and culture in school. The joint declaration aims to present Judaism in schools in its diversity and authenticity, and to provide students with a lively and differentiated picture of Judaism. According to the declaration, awareness and recognition of the diversity and complexity of Judaism are key steps toward gaining understanding and reducing prejudice. The manifold perspectives of historical and contemporary Judaism should be discussed in as many grades and subjects as possible. A special responsibility is attached to subjects and projects of historical and political education. The analyses of current political developments and past events and processes are inseparable in this regard. In April 2018, the Standing Conference and the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland (Central Council of Jews in Germany) presented an annotated collection of material on the teaching of Judaism in schools at a joint symposium to support teachers.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2016/2016_12_08-Juedische-Geschichte-Religion-Kultur-Schule-engl.pdf

www.kmk-zentralratderjuden.de

Joint initiative of the Federation and the Länder for supporting high-achieving and potentially particularly capable pupils

In November 2016, the Federation and the Länder agreed upon a joint initiative for supporting high-achieving and potentially particularly capable pupils (*Gemeinsame Initiative von Bund und Ländern zur Förderung leistungsstarker und potenziell besonders leistungsfähiger Schülerinnen und Schüler*) under the slogan "Performance catches on" ("*Leistung macht Schule*"). Against the background of an educational policy aimed at equal opportunities and educational equity the best possible learning and educational success shall be ensured for all pupils independent of origin, gender and social status. The joint support initiative of the Federation and the Länder aims at optimising the opportunities for development of high-achieving and potentially particularly capable pupils. A particular focus is on children and young people from educationally disadvantaged families, especially those with a migrant background, and on gender balance, especially girls in the so-called MINT (mathematics, information, natural sciences, technology) subjects. Within the framework of the initiative, the Federation is responsible for scientific support and monitoring, evaluation and complementary research funding as part of the framework programme

for educational research. The Länder are responsible for the selection of schools following a call for applications on Land level, the monitoring of the schools and the implementation of promising measures. The joint support initiative *Leistung macht Schule* builds upon the Support Strategy for High-Achieving Pupils (*Förderstrategie für leistungsstarke Schülerinnen und Schüler*) of the Standing Conference which has already made a significant contribution to better support for high-achieving pupils. The initiative will run for ten years. In June 2018 concrete implementation began in the 300 participating schools. They will receive help in the development of practical concepts, measures and strategies from an interdisciplinary research alliance in the initial five-year phase. The most promising models will then be rolled out on a broader basis in a second phase. The Federation and Länder will provide a total of 125 million euros in equal shares for the initiative.

<https://www.leistung-macht-schule.de>

<https://www.bmbf.de/files/Beschluss%20zur%20gemeinsamen%20Bundesländer-Initiative.pdf>

All-day schools

The Federation and Länder support the continuation of the nationwide Study on the Development of All-Day Schools (*Studie zur Entwicklung von Ganztagschulen – StEG*) (2016–2019). Key topics are the nationwide monitoring of all-day schools with representative surveys on the development of all-day schools in Germany and studies on the quality and effects of the all-day offers.

www.projekt-steg.de

Declaration on the integration of young refugees through education

In October 2016, the Standing Conference passed a “Declaration on the integration of young refugees through education” (*“Erklärung zur Integration von jungen Geflüchteten durch Bildung“*). The goals and challenges named by the Standing Conference in its declaration include learning the language quickly and teaching basic democratic values as well as the commencement and successful completion of vocational education and training or a course of studies. More detailed information is available in chapter 12.4.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2016/RS2016-377_355-KMK_TOP4-Fluechtlinge-KMK-Erklaerung-A2_-_Internet.pdf

14.3. National Reforms in Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning

2017

Strategy „Education in the Digital World“

In December 2017, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*) added the chapter on continuing education to its strategy on “Education in the Digital World” (*„Bildung in der digitalen Welt“*). With its resolution, the Standing Conference is making an important contribution to ensuring that adults can continuously deepen and develop existing skills in the digital world even after they have completed school, vocational training or higher education. Digital learning environments enable learning to be tailored to personal knowledge needs and objectives. However, digital development does not

only influence the learning process. It will also change their infrastructure or the qualification of teachers.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2017/Strategie_neu_2017_datum_1.pdf

2016

Law on unemployment insurance protection and strengthening continuing education

The law on unemployment insurance protection and strengthening continuing education (*Arbeitslosenversicherungsschutz- und Weiterbildungsstärkungsgesetz – AWStG – R167*) from August 2016 extends the instruments to support further vocational education and training and aims to improve access to certification-related continuing education programmes for lesser qualified employees and long-term unemployed persons. These serve, amongst other things, to encourage the acquisition of basic skills (reading, mathematics, IT skills), the introduction of a further training grant if intermediate and final examinations are passed, and the provision of assistance to accompany retraining. In addition, support for further education and training has been made more flexible for employees in small and medium-sized enterprises.

Initiative „Future Starters“

The disproportionately high unemployment rate amongst lesser qualified employees (around 20 %), the cutbacks in jobs in the field of helpers and assistants associated with the structural transformation and the growing demand for well-trained specialists in Germany call for further and targeted efforts so that young adults in particular are given the chance to catch up on vocational qualifications. This is why the initiative Future Starters – Initial Education for Young Adults (*Zukunftsstarter – Erstausbildung junger Erwachsener*) was launched on 1 August 2016. It aims to attract 120,000 young adults to catch up on vocational qualifications by the year 2020. Substantive priorities include reducing the dropout rates and attracting more long-term unemployed persons for vocational post-qualification. Furthermore, greater support should be given to more retraining on a company by company basis and the acquisition of partial qualifications. The initiative addresses not only the unemployed but also employed persons without any vocational qualifications. Disabled young adults and refugees can also profit from the initiative.

Initiative „Vocational Education and Training 4.0“

The Vocational Education and Training 4.0 (*Berufsbildung 4.0*) umbrella initiative launched in 2016 by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF*) aims to prepare trainees and gainfully employed persons for the new or changed competence requirements resulting from digitalisation by means of well-founded initial and continuing training. The BMBF is therefore increasingly committed to keeping vocational profiles up to date, to strengthening the digital equipment of inter-company training facilities and competence centres, to promoting the use of digital media in training both qualitatively and quantitatively, and to advising small and medium-sized enterprises on training issues. The didactic requirements are also to be modernised: Trainers in companies

and educational institutions, teachers at vocational schools and examiners must be given appropriate further qualifications.

Since 2016, the Vocational Training 4.0 umbrella initiative has been further expanded and implemented with concrete project funding.

Amendment of the Upgrade Training Assistance Act

On 1 August 2016 the amended Upgrading Training Assistance Act (*Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz – AFBG – R166*) came into force. The most important changes, apart from significant improvements to the benefits, are the extension of the support options as well as numerous structural modernisations. More detailed information is available in chapter 3.4.

Measures for refugees

The BMBF package of measures in the field of vocational education and training as well as adult education includes, amongst other things, the Getting Started in German (*Einstieg Deutsch*) programme so that refugees can quickly learn the basics of understanding and speaking German, the use of successful instruments from the education chains (*Bildungsketten*) initiative (adaptation of potential analyses, expansion of the Programme for Vocational Orientation) as well as a strengthening and expansion of the Coordination Office for Vocational Education and Training and Migration (KAUSA – *Koordinierungsstelle Ausbildung und Migration*) including a doubling of the number of KAUSA service points.

The occupation-related promotion of the German language introduced in 2017 and enshrined in the Residence Act (§ 45a) can benefit in particular recipients of benefits under the Social Security Code II (*Zweites Buch Sozialgesetzbuch – Grundsicherung für Arbeitsuchende – R164*), but also job seekers, persons seeking training and persons in the process of vocational recognition.

Young refugees gain deeper insights into recognised skilled crafts requiring formal training with the programme Vocational Guidance for Refugees (*Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge – BOF*). The aim is the subsequent transition to an apprenticeship or entry qualification. BOF is part of the joint qualification initiative Paths to Education and Training for Refugees (*Wege in Ausbildung für Flüchtlinge*) of the BMBF, the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA*) and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (*Zentralverband der deutschen Handwerks – ZDH*). Up to 10,000 young refugees are to be given the chance to learn a skilled craft.

The Federal Recognition Act helps fugitives with already existing formal foreign vocational qualifications to integrate into the labour market. The procedure for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications is accompanied by extensive nationwide and target-group-specific information and counselling services for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications.

The aim of the Integration through Qualification (*Integration durch Qualifizierung*) support programme is to provide nationwide support for the implementation of the Federal Recognition Act through qualifications for migrants as well as counselling, information and training services.

14.4. National Reforms in Higher Education

2018

Accreditation of studies

In February 2016, the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) expressly confirmed the approach of a binding external quality assurance of teaching through the accreditation of study programmes, but saw shortcomings in the legal implementation. As a result, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK*) put the accreditation system on a new legal basis by means of a state treaty.

In December 2017, the KMK adopted the Model Law Ordinance on the State Treaty on Accreditation for Studies (*Musterrechtsverordnung zum Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag*). The ordinance is based on the State Treaty signed by all Länder on the organisation of a joint accreditation system for quality assurance in study and teaching at German higher education institutions (State Treaty on Accreditation in Higher Education – *Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag – R127*).

The aim of the Model Law Ordinance is to regulate the common requirements of the Länder for the structural and qualitative standards for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes. The Länder thus fulfil their obligation to guarantee the equivalence of corresponding study and examination achievements as well as degrees and the possibility of changing higher education institutions.

The existing system will be modified at key points. Decisions on accreditation from the agencies will now be transferred to the Accreditation Council (*Akkreditierungsrat*). In addition, the accreditation of agencies has been simplified. This is done on the basis of registration with the European Register of Recognised Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR) and is laid down as a substitute for the accreditation of agencies. In order to preserve the freedom of science, it has been anchored that the votes of the scientific members of the Accreditation Council count twice when dealing with questions of technical content. Thus, the representatives of the scientific community have a majority of votes for technical and content-related questions. Freedom of science is a central component of the German higher education system. The State Treaty on Accreditation in Higher Education and the state ordinances issued on its basis take this into account. Further information on the accreditation of study programmes can be found in chapter 11.3.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2018/SO_170601_StaatsvertragAkkreditierung.pdf

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2018/BS_171207_Musterrechtsverordnung.pdf

2016

Strategy „Education in the Digital World”

The Education in the Digital World (*Bildung in der digitalen Welt*) strategy of the Standing Conference also relates to the higher education sector. The institutions of higher education are both users of digital possibilities and at the same time a motor behind digital developments. Teaching hereby plays a special role in the context of digital education. Thanks to digital media, learning and teaching become less de-

pendent on a time and place; individual learning conditions can be taken into account more widely and allow lifelong learning to a greater extent than before. At the same time, new questions arise for research in education science. Because digitisation affects all areas of the institution of higher education, it also has an influence over university administrative processes in study, teaching and examinations as well as content-based and technical interfaces between research and teaching.

The digitisation of institutions of higher education is not concerned with turning classroom universities into online universities, but with exploiting the specific added value of digitisation for the work of the institutions of higher education. It plays an important role in the strategic alignment of the institutions of higher education as well as the regional and national centres of science in Germany.

More detailed information on the strategy of the Standing Conference „Education in the Digital World“ are available in chapter 14.2.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2017/Strategie_neu_2017_datum_1.pdf

Package of measures of the Federation and the Länder for refugees capable of study at a higher education institution

Refugees who wish to study in Germany find a wide range of support. Although the concrete demand can only be estimated on account of the lack of valid data on the educational background of the refugees, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF*) is providing the institutions of higher education with up to Euro 100 million over a period of four years through the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutschen Akademischen Austauschdienst – DAAD*). The package of measures consists of three elements as a basis for successful access to a course of studies:

- Recognise the competences and qualifications of refugees who want to study: instruments include the academic and scholastic aptitude test TestAS, the classification of specialist language proficiency by the onSET test and the verification of educational certificates by the service office for international university applications (*uni-assist*)
- Help with the specialist and linguistic preparation for the course of studies: *Studienkollegs* and comparable institutions at German higher education institutions prepare young adults from abroad without a direct higher education entrance qualification for studying at a German institution of higher education; in addition, the DAAD supports subject-related German courses at institutions of higher education
- Support the integration of new arrivals on campus: voluntary buddy and mentor programmes or language training offers through teacher training students or students of German, help refugees and strengthen the practical relevance of the course of studies

These are joined by information and continuing education offers from the DAAD specifically for refugees and improvements in the Federal Training Assistance Act (*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz – BAföG – R83*).

The Länder and a number of institutions of higher education have also developed programmes to integrate refugees who want to study. The spectrum ranges from

support with counselling offers through to funding for talented students through grants. Furthermore, the extramural science organisations also have specific schemes for the integration of refugees, in particular scientists.

Funding initiative „Innovative Institution of Higher Education“

The Federation and Länder agreed on the funding initiative “Innovative Hochschule” (innovative institution of higher education) in June 2016. The initiative to support the research-based transfer of ideas, knowledge and technology helps institutions of higher education that already have a coherent strategy for their interaction with business and society to raise their profile in their so-called third mission “Transfer and Innovation”. The initiative has been endowed with Euro 550 million for ten years and is aimed particularly at small and medium-sized universities as well as *Fachhochschulen*. An independent selection committee has selected 48 higher education institutions, including 35 *Fachhochschulen*, in 19 individual and 10 joint projects for the first five-year funding round in an expert-led competition procedure. Funding for the projects started on 1 January 2018.

Programme to support up-and-coming academics

The Federation and Länder agreed on a joint programme to support junior scientists in June 2016. The goal of the programme to support up-and-coming academics that has been endowed with Euro 1 billion over a 15-year period by the Federation is to make the career paths of up-and-coming academics at universities easier to plan and more transparent. It should also improve the international appeal of the German scientific system and help the universities attract and permanently retain the best junior scientists from home and abroad as far as possible. One key element of the programme is a strengthening of the tenure-track professorship, in other words preparation for direct transfer to a lifetime professorship after a successful trial period. By financing an additional 1,000 tenure track professorships, the programme will make an important contribution to establishing the tenure track process permanently in Germany as a separate career path alongside the conventional appointment procedure for professors. The tenure track professorships created by the programme will be retained after the programme comes to an end. The number of permanent professorships created by the programme will also be increased by 1,000.

<http://www.gwk-bonn.de/themen/vorhaben-an-hochschulen/foerderung-des-wissenschaftlichen-nachwuchses/>

Ways to reduce the costs of enrolment

In view of the strong influx of people with a refugee background, the Standing Conference discussed ways to reduce the costs of enrolment. The resolution of the Standing Conference from May 2016 on “Access and admission to higher education for refugees – possibilities for reducing the costs of enrolment” (“*Hochschulzugang und Hochschulzulassung für Flüchtlinge – Möglichkeiten, die für die Immatrikulation fälligen Kosten zu reduzieren*”) focuses in particular on those regulations that exist in the Länder that in principle enable the reduction of public fees, contributions and charges incurred in connection with attending an institution of higher education. With this in mind, the Standing Conference asked the Länder to work towards the institutions of higher education exploiting their option to facilitate the costs connected with enrolment in favour of the needy, with special consideration for the

situation of refugees, in a reasonable manner and ensuring the principle of equality.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2016/2016_05_12-Fluechtlinge-Immatrikualtionskosten.pdf

14.5. National Reforms Related to Transversal Skills and Employability

2015

Decade for Literacy and Basic Education

In 2016 the Federation and the Länder proclaimed the Decade for Literacy and Basic Education (*Dekade für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung*) in Germany which continues the National Strategy for Literacy and Basic Education of Adults (*Nationale Strategie für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener*) and is designed to tackle adult reading and writing skills which are not sufficient for full participation in society. As a broad social alliance the strategy includes, among others, the local authorities (*Kommunen*), trade unions, churches, the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA*) and *Volkshochschule* associations. Industry associations and chambers of industry and commerce are also invited to participate.

https://www.bmbf.de/files/NEU_strategiepapier_nationale_alphabetisierung.pdf

More detailed information is available in chapter 8.5.

14.6. European Perspective

One of the five core goals of the “Europe 2020” strategy of the European Union for intelligent, sustainable and integrative growth is to improve the level of education. An EU-wide core goal has been set out with the dual objective of lowering the share of premature school-leavers and increasing the share of graduates with a tertiary or comparable qualification. Reports on the implementation are made annually through the National Reform Programme. Moreover, the ‘Strategic framework for cooperation in education and training until 2020’ (ET 2020) focuses attention on the major challenges facing European education systems, and highlights the areas that need to be improved.

For information on reforms in the EU Member States that are explicitly linked to the Europe 2020 Strategy see the 2016 National reform programmes.