The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2016/2017

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 2015.

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

Within the framework of the implementation of the measures agreed in the Qualification Initiative, the Federation and the Länder have also stepped up their financial commitments in the education sector. They have agreed the target of increasing the share of expenditure on education, science and research to 10 per cent of GDP. In 2015, according to preliminary calculations, this share amounted to 9.1 per cent of GDP.

The success of the Qualification Initiative for Germany is reflected amongst other things by the fact that the agreed goal of a 40 per cent share of new students was not only reached but greatly exceeded: in 2015 the share of new students for one age cohort was
around 54.5 per cent. And the goal of a 50 per cent participation in continuing education has also been reached in the meantime; in 2014, 51 per cent of the working population took part in continuing education measures. Great progress has also been made in lowering the dropout rates: the number of school-leavers without a Hauptschulabschluss in 2015 was only 5.9 per cent, those of young adults (20 to 34 years of age) without a vocational qualification 13.8 per cent. Nonetheless, further efforts to reach these two core goals are necessary.

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 (Grundgesetz – R1) 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 of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz* – KMK) 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 particularly concern the following areas:

- 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

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 (*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 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

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.

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 (Kinderbetreuungsaufbau) 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.

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.

Further development of early education and ensuring its funding

At a conference on education, support and development in early childhood in November 2014, the Federation and Länder agreed on a process to develop joint quality goals for day care for children. A study group was formed with representatives from the Federation, Länder and local authority organisations that is to work out proposals for concrete operational objectives for the further development of quality in day care for children and on its funding base.

In November 2016, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend – BMFSFJ) and the Conference of the Ministers of Youth and Family Affairs (Jugend- und Fami-
Lienministerkonferenz – JFMK) presented an initial interim report of the study group on further development of early education and ensuring its funding (Frühe Bildung weiterentwickeln und Finanzierung sicherstellen). The interim report outlines, for the first time, the joint goal and development prospects for quality assurance. More detailed information on quality development in early childhood education and care can be found in chapter 11.2.


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.

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

2015

Initiative “Education through Language and Writing”
In March 2015, the Federation and the Länder agreed to extend the duration of the initiative Education through Language and Writing (Bildung durch Sprache und Schrift – BiSS) to develop language promotion, language diagnostics and reading promotion until 2019, in order to perform planned evaluation measures and secure programme results for the long term and distribute them. In the research and development programme BiSS, the linguistic education of children and those schemes introduced in the Länder on language development, language diagnostics and the promotion of reading from the elementary sector through to lower secondary level are examined and developed further with respect to their efficacy and efficiency. More detailed information is available in chapter 12.4.

http://www.biss-sprachbildung.de/

14.2. National Reforms in School Education

2017

DigitalPact School of the Federation and the Länder
The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF) has announced that it will provide around Euro 5 billion on behalf of the Federation over five years to expand the IT infrastructure in schools as of 2018 within the scope of a Federation-Länder agreement. The DigitalPact School is being planned on the basis of Article 91c of the German Basic Law (Grundgesetz –
In order to implement the digital agenda of the federal government, the BMBF resolved the "Education campaign for the digital knowledge society" 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 independ-
ence 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.


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.


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

In November 2016, the Federation and Länder resolved a joint initiative to encourage high-achieving and potentially high-achieving pupils (“Wir können mehr!” – “We can do better!”). Against the background of an education policy aimed at equal opportunities and educational equity, the development possibilities for all pupils, irrespective of their origins, sex and social status, will be optimised. To this end, the broadest possible school development process will be combined with practical research on specific questions. Special attention will be hereby paid to children and youths from educationally deprived homes, in particular from migrant backgrounds, and to a balance between the sexes, especially girls in the MINT field. Within the scope of this initiative, the Federation is responsible for the scientific support and accompaniment, the evaluation as well as the supplementary research support that is part of the framework programme empirical educational research. The choice of schools following state-wide tenders, support for these schools as well as the state-wide implementation of promising measures fall within the area of responsibility of the Länder. The joint funding initiative builds on the “Förderstrategie für leistungsstarke Schülerinnen und Schüler” (support strategy for high-achieving pupils) of the Standing Conference, which has already made an important contribution to better support for high-achieving pupils. The initiative will run for
ten years. February 2018 will see the start of its concrete implementation in the 300 pilot 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 hereby provide a total of 125 million euros in equal shares for the initiative.


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 Ganztagsschulen – 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.


Comprehensive Strategy for Educational Monitoring
In June 2015, the Standing Conference revised its comprehensive strategy on educational monitoring from the year 2006. The various elements of the comprehensive strategy should not only describe developments in the education system but also create applicable knowledge. From the empirical data, the right conclusions should be drawn and put into action.

The comprehensive strategy provides for the following methods and instruments:

- participation in international school performance studies (PIRLS/IGLU, TIMSS primary school, PISA)
- monitoring and implementation of educational standards for the primary sector, the lower secondary level and the Allgemeine Hochschulreife
- methods to ensure quality at the level of schools
- the joint report on education of the Federation and Länder

More detailed information is available in chapter 11.2.

Recommendations on Work in the Primary School

In the light of the altered social and school framework conditions, the Standing Conference resolved a revised version of its “Recommendations on Work in the Primary School” ("Empfehlungen zur Arbeit in der Grundschule") in June 2015. According to the recommendations, the task of the primary school is to enable basic school education in a joint educational programme for all children. The goal is to acquire and extend basic and adaptable competences. These include above all the key competences of reading and writing as well as mathematics, which form a basis for not only all other educational areas in the primary school but also for continuing education as well as lifelong learning and independent appropriation of culture.


Educational standards for the Allgemeine Hochschulreife

In June 2015, a collection was published of exemplary Abitur tasks that was to provide schools with an orientation for the implementation of educational standards for the Allgemeine Hochschulreife. In October 2012 the Standing Conference had adopted educational standards for the Allgemeine Hochschulreife (general higher education entrance qualification) in German and Mathematics and in follow-on courses in the foreign languages English and French. In these subjects, from the 2014/2015 school year onwards, the educational standards form the basis of the subject-specific requirements for the Allgemeine Hochschulreife. The Standing Conference had already decided, in March 2012, to develop a shared pool of standards-based Abitur examination tasks which has been made available to the Länder from the 2016/2017 school year.

It is also planned to develop educational standards for the Allgemeine Hochschulreife in the natural science subjects biology, chemistry and physics from 2017 onwards. More detailed information is available in chapter 11.2.


Initiative Education through Language and Writing

In March 2015, the Federation and the Länder agreed to extend the term of the initiative Education through Language and Writing (Bildung durch Sprache und Schrift – BiSS) to further develop language development, language diagnostics and the promotion of reading, which also covers the school sector, until the end of 2019. More detailed information is available in chapter 14.1.

Framework Agreement on the Berufsschule

In March 2015 the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs adopted a new framework agreement on the Berufsschule (Rahmenvereinbarung über die Berufsschule). In order to be able to better react to the requirements of a globalised working world, the opportunities to spend time abroad during education and training were greatly improved. This includes the extension and deepening of foreign language competence according to its significance in the relevant Ausbildungsberuf (recognised occupation requiring formal training). In addition, the
Standing Conference's foreign language certificate is an opportunity to demonstrate the acquisition of foreign language competences on the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).


Joint Declaration “Teacher Training for a School of Diversity”
In March 2015, the Standing Conference and the German Rector's Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK) resolved a joint recommendation “Teacher training for a school of diversity (“Lehrerbildung für eine Schule der Vielfalt”) on the topic of inclusion. The teacher training courses should be further developed so that the future teachers are better prepared for the challenges of a diversified body of pupils.

In 2012 already, the Standing Conference had stipulated that special attention be paid to the "basic pedagogical and didactic qualifications in the subject areas dealing with heterogeneity and inclusion as well as the fundamentals of assessment practice" in training for all teaching professions by resolving the amended framework agreements on training and examination for the different types of teaching careers from 2012. With this in mind, the specialist profile for special education and further specialist profiles of the common content requirements for subject-related studies and subject-related didactics in teacher training which apply to all Länder („Ländergemeinsame inhaltliche Anforderungen für die Fachwissenschaften und Fachdidaktiken in der Lehrerbildung“) was also updated in 2014 and the Standards for Teacher Training: Educational Sciences (Standards für die Lehrerbildung: Bildungswissenschaften) amended with respect to the requirements of inclusive teaching. The agreements of the Standing Conference on inclusion will be gradually adopted by the Länder in specific state regulations.

The change of perspective towards inclusive teaching was formulated in 2011 with the basic recommendation of the Standing Conference "Inklusive Bildung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Behinderungen in Schulen" (inclusive education of children and young people with disabilities in schools) (inclusive education of children and young people with disabilities in schools). The recommendation defines the framework conditions for an increasingly inclusive pedagogical practice in general education and vocational schools. Starting from a different understanding of disability and the principles of participation and accessibility, the responsibility of general education schools for all children and youths with or without disabilities is emphasised.

More detailed information on inclusion is available in chapter 12.
14.3. National Reforms in Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning

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 Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF), in cooperation with the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – BIBB) supports the digital change in vocational education and training through the vocational education and training 4.0 initiative that was launched in the summer of 2016. Within the scope of this initiative, training regulations are developed further and the digital infrastructure of inter-company vocational education and training centres as well as the use of digital media is encouraged in training. On the whole, the measures should help adjust the structure and content of vocational education and training to the digital change in Germany and therefore make an important contribution to modern vocational education and training.
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 career guidance programme) 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. Young refugees gain deeper insights into recognised skilled crafts requiring formal training with “Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge – BOF” (vocational guidance for refugees). BOF is part of the joint qualification initiative “Wege in Ausbildung für Flüchtlinge” (paths to education and training for refugees) 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 also helps refugees with formal vocational qualifications become integrated on the labour market; it is accompanied by nationwide and target group-specific information and counselling offers to recognise foreign vocational qualifications.

2015

Assisted training

With the temporary instrument of assisted training that was introduced in May 2015 as a key measure of the Federation and the Alliance for Initial and Continuing Vocational Training 2015–2018 (Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung 2015–2018), disadvantaged youths and their training establishments receive intense and continuous support before and during vocational education. In 2016, around 11,600 young people and their training establishments availed themselves of the offer of assisted training. Three more age cohorts will begin assisted training up to the end of the Alliance for Training and Continuing Education. Furthermore, the aids accompanying the training have also been extended.

Alliance for Initial and Continuing Vocational Training 2015–2018

The Federal Government, the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA), industry associations, trade unions and Länder signed the „Alliance for Initial and Continuing Vocational Training 2015–2018“ (Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung 2015–2018) at the end of 2014. This replaces the National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development in Germany (Nationaler Pakt für Ausbildung
und Fachkräfteachwuchs in Deutschland – Training Pact) and will be in force until the end of 2018.

It is the joint objective of the partners to strengthen dual vocational education and training and promote the equivalence of vocational and academic education. Through concrete measures, the partners of the Alliance want to enable more young people for vocational education and training and facilitate taking up in-company training. The "Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung" also implements the training guarantee: anyone interested in training should in future be shown a way that leads them to the earliest possible vocational qualification. Vocational training is to take priority here.

With their declaration Together for the Prospects of Refugees ("Gemeinsam für Perspektiven von Flüchtlingen") in September 2015, the partners in the alliance also reacted promptly to the influx to Germany of mainly young people seeking protection. Together they agreed on concrete measures in the field of vocational preparation and education to support refugees. The Integration Act that came into force on 6 August 2016 also got key concerns of the partners in the Alliance for Initial and Continuing Vocational Training off the ground: asylum seekers and tolerated persons as well as their training establishments can be certain that trainees during and immediately after successful vocational training will be allowed to remain in Germany if they subsequently find employment. The age limits up to which qualified vocational training has to have begun have been abolished here.

With a view to the coming years, the Alliance for Initial and Continuing Vocational Training has agreed on ten key fields of work for a strong vocational education and training.

The goal for both German nationals and refugees is:

- to ensure a high number of company apprenticeships,
- to further strengthen the educational pathway with its supportive instruments,
- to address the adjustment problems on the training market,
- to further improve the quality of education and training in the dual system,
- to increase the appeal of vocational education and training with a view to high-achieving youths too,
- to make qualifications more visible and improve the data situation with a view to refugees,
- to expand post-qualification,
- to support vocational schools as places for language training too,
- to lead education and training in the dual system into a digital future and strengthen the exchange of experience as well as solicit education and training in the dual system.

**Training assistance for pupils and trainees**

Through the 25th amending law to the Federal Training Assistance Act (Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz – BAföG – R83), the Federation will assume the complete funding of financial allowances in accordance with the Federal Training Assistance Act as of 2015. The content of the BAföG has also been amended at the start of the school year 2016 or respectively the winter semester 2016/2017: the grant levels
and exemptions have been raised by around seven percent each. The rises have also been transferred, as usual, to trainees in vocational education and training and participants in pre-vocational education measures with the amending law to the BAFöG. The grant levels and exemptions for vocational education and training grants and the training grant for persons with disabilities thus increased by around seven percent on 1 August 2016. This rise also affects the remuneration during initial qualification and grants for the training allowance in the case of external vocational education and training accordingly.

In order to give young refugees, who are expected to stay longer in Germany, better opportunities for taking up vocational training in a company, the Act Amending the Volume XII of the Social Security Code (Zwölftes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch – Sozialhilfe) And Other Regulations as well as the Integration Act, expanded the support options, some of them limited in time, for persons allowed to stay and with good prospects of staying and for persons whose stay is tolerated in the promotion of training.

**14.4. National Reforms in Higher Education 2016**

*Strategy „Education in the Digital World“*

The Strategy of the Standing Conference (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK) 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 dependent 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.

**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: 
refugees whose higher education entrance qualification is not fully recog-
nised in Germany are made fit for a course of studies at Studienkollegs; in ad-
dition, 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 student financing (BAföG).

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 initia-
tive 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 Eu-
ro 550 million for ten years and is aimed particularly at small and medium-sized 
universities as well as Fachhochschulen.

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 Ger-
man 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 pe-
riod. By financing an additional 1,000 tenure track professorships, the programme 
will make an important contribution to establishing the tenure track process per-
manently in Germany as a separate career path alongside the conventional ap-
pointment 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.
Ways to reduce the costs of enrolment

In view of the strong influx of people with a refugee background, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK) 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.


2015

Verification of higher education entrance qualifications for refugees

In December 2015, the Länder agreed on a joint procedure in cases where an applicant is unable or not completely able to provide evidence of a higher education entrance qualification obtained in their home country with documents, on account of their refugee status. To facilitate verification, a three tier procedure to determine the academic aptitude will be introduced. This comprises the determination of the personal premises resulting from the specific asylum or residency status, a plausibility check of the educational biography and an examination and/or assessment procedure based on quality.

More detailed information is available in chapter 7.3.1.


Training assistance for students at higher education institutions

Through the 25th amending law to the Federal Training Assistance Act (Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz – BAföG – R83), the Federation has assumed the complete funding of financial allowances in accordance with the Federal Training Assistance Act as of 2015. This relieves the Länder to the tune of around Euro 1.17 billion each year so that they can better fulfil their funding responsibility for institutions of higher education and schools. Apart from the substantial rise in grant levels and exemptions, there have also been improvements to the content and structure as of the start of the winter semester 2016/2017. The rise and standardisation of the child care allowance improve the compatibility of parenthood and education and training; various detailed regulations on closing funding gaps, in particular for the two-tier Bachelor’s and Master’s structure of studies, an extension of the entitlement to
grants to non-German trainees as well as for periods of training abroad and other
detailed improvements accommodate the living and training situation of young
people better than before.

**Higher Education Pact**

Through the Higher Education Pact the Federation and the Länder are creating a
needs-based study provision and hence ensuring the quantitative expansion of
higher education. In December 2014, the Federation and Länder resolved the third
and final phase of the Higher Education Pact. Beyond the existing agreements, a
range of courses for an additional 760,000 new students is to be provided by 2020
and financed up until 2023. The Federation and the Länder are providing additional
funding of over Euro 19 billion for this, including Euro 9.9 billion from the Federa-
tion and Euro 9.4 billion from the Länder. The Higher Education Pact is in future also
providing targeted financing of measures which lead students to a successful quali-
ification. Moreover, the Länder pledge to grant more persons holding a vocational
qualification access to the institutions of higher education.

http://www.gwk-bonn.de/index.php?id=192

### 14.5. National Reforms Related to Transversal Skills and Employability

#### 2015

**Decade for Literacy**

In November 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 de-
dsigned 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 oth-
ers, the local authorities (*Kommunen*), trade unions, churches, the Federal Employ-
ment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA*) and *Volkshochschule* associations. In-
dustry associations and chambers of industry and commerce are also invited to par-
ticipate.

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

More detailed information is available in chapter 8.5.

#### 2014

**Initiative “Youth Strength”**

Under the auspices of the “Youth Strength” initiative the Federation is offering ad-
vice and support in the 2014-2020 European Social Fund (ESF) programming period
to disadvantaged young people with and without a migrant background in transi-
tioning from school into work. It is doing this through the new ESF pilot scheme
“*Jugend stärken im Quartier*” (Youth Strength Locally), as well as the youth migra-
tion services programme and a project with industry (“*Jugend stärken: 1000 Chan-
cen*” – “Youth Strength – 1,000 Opportunities”).

For the first pilot phase from 2015 to 2018 around Euro 115 million are being pro-
vided by the European Social Fund. The pilot scheme follows on from the former
“Youth Strength” initiative which in the 2007 to 2013 ESF programming period suc-
cessfully promoted the social, educational and professional integration of young people with special support needs.

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.