The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2012/2013

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

– EXCERPT –
12. EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

12.1. Introduction

General objectives of special education needs provision

The aim of special educational support is to enable children and young people who are either disabled or facing the threat of disablement to exercise their right to a form of schooling and education that is tailored to their personal capabilities. Children and young people receive support in the form of individual assistance measures so that they can achieve the highest possible level of integration at school and at work, participate in society and lead an independent life as far as possible. The aim of special educational support at mainstream schools is furthermore to promote the integration of the disabled within mainstream education and to provide all pupils irrespective of their physical and mental capabilities with the opportunity for closer contact and easier mutual relations.

Specific legislative framework of special education needs provision

The right of disabled children to education and training appropriate to their needs is enshrined in the Basic Law (Grundgesetz, Art. 5 – R1), in equality legislation, in Book Twelve of the Social Code (Sozialgesetzbuch XII – Sozialhilfe –) and in the Länder constitutions [R12–27]. More detailed provisions are set out in the school legislation of the Länder [R85, R87, R89, R91, R94, R96, R98, R100–101, R105, R111, R113–115]. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force in Germany in March 2009. The Federation and the Länder have thus undertaken to:

• guarantee the human rights of persons with disabilities;
• prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities; and
• take appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to achieve the objectives of the Convention.

The development and organisation of special education in the Länder was harmonised by several resolutions adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (Kultusministerkonferenz - KMK) and especially by the Recommendations on the Organisation of Special Schools (Empfehlung zur Ordnung des Sonderschulwesens, Resolution of March 1972) and recommendations for the individual types of special education. The Recommendations on Special Needs Education in the Schools of the Federal Republic of Germany (Empfehlungen zur sonderpädagogischen Förderung in den Schulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Resolution of May 1994) have in recent years initiated important developments aiming to dismantle barriers and promote the equal participation of young people with disabilities in education.

schulischen Bildung]. In October 2011 the Standing Conference adopted the decision on inclusive education of children and young people with disabilities in schools [Inklusive Bildung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Behinderungen in Schulen]. The recommendations are guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They build on the basic positions of the 1994 Recommendations on Special Needs Education in the Schools of the Federal Republic of Germany [Empfehlungen zur sonderpädagogischen Förderung in den Schulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland] and set out the framework conditions for increasingly inclusive educational practice in general education and vocational schools. The aim of the recommendations is to enable children and young people to be educated and trained together and to guarantee and develop the standards achieved in special education teaching, advisory and support services. More information on the development of inclusive education offers can be found in chapter 14.2.5.

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

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

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

In addition, the Standing Conference has made recommendations on the Education and Teaching of Children and Young People with Autistic Behaviour [Erziehung und Unterricht von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit autistischem Verhalten].

12.2. Special Education Needs Provision within Mainstream Education

In pre-school education the joint education, supervision and care of children with and without a disability is achieved to a greater extent than in the school sector. The data from the Education Report “Education in Germany 2012” [Bildung in Deutschland 2012] show that in the same age group the share of five year-old children in receipt of an integration allowance [Eingliederungshilfe] for day-care for children due to an [incipient] physical, mental or psychological disability is over three per cent. The vast majority of these children attend an establishment with an integrative care concept.

Cooperation between Förderschulen and mainstream schools exists independently of more recent attempts at inclusive teaching. When a pupil is transferred from one type of school to another the teachers and head teachers of the schools concerned work together. It is always possible for pupils to return to mainstream schools. In the majority of the
Länder, the education authority makes the decision on whether to transfer a pupil following a request from the Förderschule or from the parents or legal guardians. Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it is increasingly being made possible for pupils with special educational needs to follow lessons in mainstream schools with the same learning objectives as other pupils, and in some cases with different learning objectives. Schools for children and young people with the support priority speech or emotional and social development are designed as transitional schools; their objective is to remedy impairments in speech and behavioural problems sufficiently that pupils can attend a mainstream school. Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Länder are developing different forms of access to the mainstream school system or joint teaching also for pupils who cannot successfully attend mainstream schools and are therefore taught according to different learning objectives.

Recently, diverse forms of institutional and educational cooperation between mainstream schools and special schools have developed. Some of these are part of school pilot projects or action programmes run by the Länder. They range from joint extracurricular activities and inclusive classes to holding classes on the same premises.

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

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

Special educational needs are to be determined in relation to the tasks, the requirements and the support measures the respective school can provide. Furthermore, a determination of the special educational needs of the child must take into account the environment of the child, including the school as well as the pupil's personal abilities, interests and expectations for the future.

The procedure of determining special educational needs comprises establishing the individual need for support as well as deciding on the course of education and the place of support. The responsibility for the procedure lies in most cases with the school supervisory authorities: Either the authorities themselves have the competence for special educational needs as well as sufficient experience in the field of educational support for handicapped persons, or they consult experts in the field of special educational support. Access to mainstream schools is also possible in some cases without a formal procedure to establish the place of support.

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

Inclusive education for pupils with special educational needs

Children and young people with special educational needs can attend mainstream schools provided that the required special educational assistance, practical support and the right physical environment are guaranteed. Special education teachers are deployed at Förderschulen and at mainstream schools that meet special educational needs, e.g. by providing mobile assistance and advice and cooperative instruction with another teacher in inclusive classes or cooperative classes. Apart from the external environment, this also requires qualified special education teachers, individualised forms of planning, carrying out and monitoring the teaching process and coordinated cooperation between the teaching and specialist staff involved. Special educational support is provided during class lessons and, if necessary, alongside lessons.

Special educational support in the form of cooperative measures

Many Förderschulen and mainstream schools are in the process of developing close educational cooperation. This can greatly benefit both lessons and the general life of the school. Also, this trend expands the opportunities for changing between school types and educational courses, increases the proportion of joint lessons and encourages the transfer of pupils from Förderschulen to mainstream schools. By holding special school classes and mainstream school classes on the same premises a suitable basis for cooperation can be created.

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

Around 28 per cent of children with disabilities are cared for in separate establishments. These include special school kindergartens [Förderschulkindergärten] and establishments preparing for school, and special and remedial education day-care centres which take only children with disabilities. In the more populous Länder in particular these forms of separate care are often practice.

For children who have reached compulsory schooling age but whose level of development does not yet allow them to cope with the challenges of primary school, Schulkindergärten or Vorklassen have been established in some Länder. In most of these Länder the school supervisory authorities are authorised by law to require that children attend such institutions. As a rule, these institutions have organisational links with Grundschulen [primary schools] or Förderschulen. Schulkindergärten and Vorklassen seek to create and optimise the conditions for the healthy development of the children's ability to understand, show feeling and willpower by nurturing – as far as possible on an individual basis – the children's ability to gain expressions and express themselves, through exercises and the handling of materials designed to arouse and develop attention on the part of the children. The aim is to equip the children for school by channeling their natural urge to play and engage in activity but without anticipating the subject-matter dealt with at school.

In Berlin school-age children whose developmental stage indicates that they would be better supported in a youth-care facility may, under certain circumstances, attend a child day-care centre.
Some Länder have established so-called *Vorklassen* [pre-school classes] for five-year-olds who have not reached compulsory schooling age but whose parents wish them to receive assistance with their preparation for primary school. Attendance of *Vorklassen* in *Grundschulen* is voluntary. The purpose of such pre-school classes at primary school is to encourage the children to learn by playing but without anticipating the subject-matter dealt with in grade 1 of the *Grundschule*.

Within the compass of measures for the improvement of linguistic competence in the early childhood sector, the range of methodical instruments for the diagnosis and improvement of linguistic competence is currently being further developed from an academic perspective. Important instruments in this regard are the assessment of the stage of linguistic competence before school entrance and, if necessary, subsequent language promotion courses. These and other measures are designed to particularly support migrant children and children with deficits in language development as well as to compensate for social disadvantages. By 2010, all Länder should have established the preconditions for language status observations and assessment procedures in early childhood education. By 2012, needs-oriented language promotion is to be provided for children prior to starting school. For facilities that mostly or to a large extent accommodate children with migrant backgrounds, additional funds are to be provided in order to enable an effective compensatory promotion of language skills. Additionally, increasing numbers of *Erzieherinnen* and *Erzieher* [state-recognised youth or child-care workers] with a migrant background are to be trained and employed.

Particular importance is attached to providing early assistance to children with disabilities.

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

Under the *Hamburg Agreement* between the Länder of October 1971 on harmonisation in the school system, the basic school structure which applies to all Länder is such that a clear distinction is made between mainstream schools and special schools [usually known as *Förderschulen* but also called *Sonderschulen*, *Förderzentren* or *Schulen für Behinderte* in some Länder].

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

**Special education within special education centres**

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

Definition of the target group(s)

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

Admission requirements and choice of school

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

When a child reaches school age, his/her parents or legal guardians enrol the child either with the Grundschule or, if he or she is found to have special educational needs, with the relevant Förderschule. If it is assumed that a child cannot be sufficiently helped in lessons at a mainstream school without special educational assistance, the school supervisory authority recognises that the child concerned has special educational needs and a decision is taken on what sort of school he or she should attend and where [a certain type of Förderschule or a mainstream school offering additional assistance on an individual basis]. If it is established that pupils who are attending a mainstream school have special educational needs, they may be transferred to another type of school in the course of their school career.

The decision on a child’s school career should be taken following consultation with the parents and, as far as possible, with their agreement. If the parents do not agree with the decision taken, they can seek redress through the courts or arbitration.

Age levels and grouping of pupils

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

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

Curriculum, subjects

Apart from Förderschulen with special educational focuses on learning and mental development, all special schools work on the basis of curricula which in terms of educational goals, lesson content and performance requirements match those of mainstream schools [Grundschule and the educational courses offered by the Hauptschule, Realschule and Gymnasium]. However, the methods used must take into account the special learning requirements and impairments relating to the special educational focuses. Förderschulen with special educational focuses on learning and mental development
work according to their own guidelines which, like all other curricula, are issued by the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of the relevant Land. General information on the development of curricula can be found in chapter 5.3.

**Teaching methods and materials**

_Förderschulen_ are often schools with all-day offers or boarding schools. Comprehensive assistance for pupils with disabilities is part of the teaching concept and instruction and education complement each other.

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

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

**Progression of pupils**

Continuous assessment of performance takes place in _Förderschulen_ in a similar form to that of mainstream schools. In the case of pupils with intellectual disabilities or severe intellectual disabilities, assessment is confined to reports on personality development.

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

**Certification**

In so far as the type of disability or illness allows, _Förderschulen_ award the qualifications obtained from mainstream schools _[Hauptschulabschluss, Mittlerer Schulabschluss, Allgemeine Hochschulreife]_, provided that instruction was based on the curricula of the respective school type and the educational course was completed successfully. The subjects may be taught over more years than at mainstream schools. In some Länder, specific qualifications are awarded for the types of special education _Learning and Mental Development_.

Within the scope of the Qualification Initiative for Germany “Getting ahead through education” _[Aufstieg durch Bildung]_, the preconditions for enabling all suitable pupils from _Förderschulen_ to take the _Hauptschule_ school leaving certificate in addition to their own specific school leaving certificate are to be improved. This is also one of the objectives of the action framework to reduce the number of pupils leaving school without a school-leaving certificate, to secure transition from the lower secondary school to the next educational level or to vocational education and training in the dual system, and to reduce the number of trainee drop-outs _[Handlungsrahmen zur Reduzierung der Zahl der Schülerinnen und Schüler ohne Schulabschluss, Sicherung der Anschlüsse, Verringerung der Zahl der Ausbildungsabbrücher]_ adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder _[Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK]_ in October 2007.
For pupils who were not taught using the curricula of mainstream schools, the teachers’ conference deems that an educational course has been successfully completed when the pupil has passed through all the stipulated school levels successfully.

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

**Definition of target group(s)**

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

**Remedial teaching (Förderunterricht)**

Pupils with learning difficulties usually receive remedial teaching within the framework of teaching in mixed ability classes. To support these pupils, learning groups may also be set up for a certain period of time. However, these measures are accompanied by integrative work in class. In December 2005, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder [Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK] adopted basic principles for the individual promotion of pupils experiencing particular difficulties with reading and writing. Plans for remedial teaching are to be developed to support these children that, as part of the overall schooling concept, will be agreed with all the teaching staff involved, as well as with the parents and pupils. For this group of pupils, the schools provide general remedial instruction during school hours or complementary remedial instruction after hours. Individual remedial instruction should continue until the end of grade 10. The resolution of December 2005 was revised in November 2007 and enhanced by principles governing the individual promotion of pupils experiencing particular difficulties in mathematics.

Through the Offensive *Frühe Chancen: Schwerpunkt-Kitas Sprache & Integration* [Early Opportunities Offensive: Focus Kitas Language and Integration] the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth [Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend – BMFSFJ] is also financing, in around 4,000 day-care centres, additional staff resources for systematic early language development integrated into everyday life. A budget of Euro 25,000 from federal resources is to allow each day-care centre involved to appoint educational staff qualified to promote language-learning and to pay them commensurately. To give all children fair chances from the start, the initiative begins in early childhood and is directed at establishments which take care of children under the age of three. The focus is on day-care centres which are attended by greater-than-average numbers of children with particular language needs.

In October 2012 the Standing Conference, the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Family Affairs [Jugend- und Familienministerkonferenz – JFMK], the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF] and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth agreed a joint initiative to develop language promotion, language diagnostics and reading promo-
tion from pre-school education to lower secondary level. More information on the initiative *Bildung durch Sprache und Schrift* [BISS] [education through language and writing] may be found in chapter 14.2.2.

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

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

For information on support for children of occupational travellers see the notes on primary schooling contained in chapter 5.5.

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

The language abilities of all children and young people with migrant backgrounds who have deficits in the German language are to be promoted, enabling them to take part in instruction and education on an equal footing with others. This is considered a task for all teachers and all subjects. Measures for the promotion of language skills are to be provided at all types of school and at all levels if demand exists. For establishments that mostly or to a large extent accommodate children with migrant backgrounds, additional funds are to be provided in order, for instance, to increase the number of teachers with a migrant background or to support teachers with socio-educational staff of the youth welfare, to enable an effective compensatory promotion of language skills. In the area of early childhood education and care increasing numbers of *Erzieherinnen* and *Erzieher* [state-recognised youth or child-care workers] with a migrant background are to be trained and employed.

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

- preparatory classes for children and young people with migrant backgrounds without a knowledge of German
- special classes which combine instruction in the core subjects with intensive study of the German language
- bilingual classes [held in the native language and German]
- intensive courses in German as a foreign language
- special support lessons outside school hours for children and young people with migrant backgrounds who are already taught in integrated classes with German children and need to improve their German skills
• greater cooperation between home and school

To preserve their cultural identity and to promote bilingual competences, in some Länder, children and young people with migrant backgrounds receive supplementary instruction in their native language for up to five periods a week, which covers the geography, history and culture of their native country.

If need be, measures shall also be offered at vocational schools to promote the language skills of young people with migrant backgrounds. For vocational schools attended by a large number of young people with migrant backgrounds, additional funds are to be provided, so as to increase the number of teachers with migrant backgrounds, for example, or to provide assistance to teaching staff from qualified youth and community workers.

Action framework for reducing the number of school drop-outs

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

• individual promotion of disadvantaged children and young people, as well as children and young people from migrant backgrounds
• continuing expansion of all-day schooling, particularly for those children who need encouragement and promotion
• intensification of encounters with the workplace in lower secondary education
• support of promotion through networks of partners from school and outside school
• improvement of teacher training with regard to learning theory and learning psychology
• special assistance for pupils who are in danger of not achieving the Hauptschulabschluss
• the deepening of vocational orientation

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

Closely associated with the action framework for reducing the number of school drop-outs, the promotion strategy for poorer-performing pupils [Förderstrategie für leistungsschwächere Schülerinnen und Schüler] was adopted by the Standing Conference in March 2010. More detailed information on the promotion strategy for poorer-performing pupils is available in chapter 14.2.3.

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

In recent years the number of young people who have been unable to find a training place after attending a general education school has decreased. According to the joint report by the Federation and Länder Bildung in Deutschland 2012 [Education in Germa-
ny 2012], in 2011 50 per cent of all new entrants to the vocational education and training system first completed pre-vocational measures in a transitional system. A common factor of the many different courses on offer in the transitional system is that they do not provide a vocational qualification, but endeavour to improve the trainability of individuals and sometimes enable participants to obtain a general education qualification. The main transitional system study course providers are Berufsfachschulen which do not award a vocational qualification, Berufsschulen offering courses for pupils with no training contract, the Berufsvorbereitungsjahr at school [a year of pre-vocational training], the Berufsgymnasium at school [i.e. basic vocational training year], the Federal Employment Agency [Bundesagentur für Arbeit] pre-vocational measures and the Federal Government’s special programme for entry-level qualification at the workplace, which provides funding for work-experience placements of between six and twelve months preparatory to apprenticeship. Successful attendance of Berufsfachschulen which do not award full vocational qualification can under certain conditions be counted towards the period of formal training required for a recognised occupation and lead to the award of a general education qualification. The Berufsvorbereitungsjahr at school and the Berufsgymnasium at school enable young people as a rule to obtain a Hauptschulabschluss. The Berufsgymnasium at school can, moreover, also be counted towards the period of formal training required for a recognised occupation.

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

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

12.5. Guidance and Counselling in Early Childhood and School Education

Academic guidance

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

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

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

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

Pursuant to the Vocational Training Act [Art. 76 Section 1 – *Berufsbildungsgesetz* – R78], the competent body shall provide support in the form of advice to the persons involved in vocational education and training preparation or initial vocational education and training. To this end, the competent body shall appoint training advisers.

**Psychological counselling**

School psychological services are either part of the school supervisory authorities at lower or middle level school administration, or they are separate institutions. They offer individual assistance using psychological diagnosis, counselling and treatment methods. They do so in collaboration with the pupil concerned and his/her parents and teachers. However, comprehensive counselling and, above all, therapy, may only be given with the consent of the parents and the pupil affected. Special data protection regulations apply to the way in which personal data [test results, counselling records etc.] is handled.

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

School psychological services, however, do not only deal with individual cases. They advise teachers and schools on key issues with a psychological component like the assessment of performance, individual promotion and on conflicts. They may be involved in school pilot projects and help with in-service teacher training, particularly courses for counselling teachers [see also chapter 10.5.].

**Career guidance**

The employment agencies have careers information centres [*Berufsinformationszentren* – BIZ]. These are facilities where everyone facing career decisions can find information,
especially about training, different trades and professions and educational requirements, continuing education and labour market trends.

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

Systematic skills profiling procedures [e.g. competence analysis, career choice passport [Berufswahlpass], skills passport, competence portfolio, Profilpass, etc.] are used in all Länder on an occasional basis or across-the-board for the individual support of pupils.

Since 2008, moreover, the Federation has been promoting vocational guidance measures in inter-company and similar vocational education and training centres. The Länder are supporting the programme through funding for investment in the modernisation of vocational training centres, for instance. Following a pilot phase, the vocational guidance programme of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF] became permanent in June 2010. The support is directed at pupils aspiring to obtain a lower secondary school-leaving certificate as their highest qualification. It promotes an analysis of potential, which takes place as a rule at the end of grade 7, and workshop days in grade 8. During the analysis of potential pupils initially establish their preferences and competences. During the workshop days they then have the opportunity of learning about at least three vocational fields over a period of two weeks. For the 2013/2014 application round increased quality requirements have been included in the guidelines. The funds are being allocated to the Länder on a regional basis in line with the respective proportion of pupils leaving school without qualifications. The vocational guidance programme contributes to the Bildungsketten [educational chains] initiative of the BMBF, which also incorporates the nationwide use of career start advisors to accompany pupils in need of particular support. More detailed information on the Bildungsketten initiative is available in chapter 14.2.3.

Each local employment agency offers special careers consultations for secondary school leavers who have completed the gymnasiale Oberstufe [upper level of the Gymnasium].

12.6. Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education

Definition of the Target Group(s)

Students in special circumstances are, for instance, students with children, chronically ill students or students with disabilities.

Specific Support Measures

Under the Framework Act for Higher Education [Hochschulrahmengesetz – R119] and the Länder legislation on higher education [R124, R126, R129, R131, R133–134, R137, R159, R141, R143–144, R146, R147–150, R152, R155, R157, R160], the higher education institutions are responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities are not disadvantaged and can take up courses without assistance where possible. The examination
regulations must take account of the particular requirements of students with disabilities in order to ensure equal opportunities. Advocates representing the needs of students with disabilities, and lobbies for students with disabilities have an important function as an intermediary between the students and the higher education institution’s governing boards. Most student support organisations [Studentenwerke] also offer advice for students with a disability or chronic illness. In April 2009 the German Rectors’ Conference [Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK] adopted a recommendation on study with a disability or chronic illness.

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

Training programmes and programmes for gifted students have been expanded in recent years by special promotion opportunities for students with a migrant background. Access to financial assistance for students with a migrant background has been facilitated for instance through an amendment of the Federal Training Assistance Act [Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz – BAföG]. Private foundations are also increasingly becoming involved in supporting young people with a migrant background.

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

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

- within the framework of the National Pact for Women in MINT [mathematics, IT, natural sciences and technology] professions [Nationaler Pakt für Frauen in MINT-Berufen], the share of new female entrants in natural science and technical professions is to be increased;
- the Network “Pathways to Study” [Netzwerk “Wege ins Studium”] is carrying out an information campaign to increase the propensity to study;
- the needs of students in special circumstances are to be considered in terms of admission to study, workload and examinations including, inter alia, as part of the accreditation of study courses and the system accreditation of entire higher education institutions;
- the financing of the additional costs which arise for students with disabilities in connection with study and living costs (“disability-related additional study needs”), is to be ensured by adapting the social security regulations to modern educational pathways;
• higher education institutions are to be made aware of the specific needs of students in special circumstances;
• study organisation should be made more flexible and part-time study programmes expanded;
• efforts will be made to further improve the Educational Credit Programme [Bildungskreditprogramm] of the Federation, so as to meet student needs even more effectively [see chapter 3.5].

12.7. Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

Academic guidance


The responsibilities of counselling in the higher education sector include the provision of information and advice for students and those applying for higher education on the content, structure and requirements of a course of study; it assists students during their complete course of study, and in particular on completion of their first year, by providing subject-related advice. Counselling tasks are divided among lecturers, who provide specialist guidance, and the student counselling office, which provides general guidance. The student counselling offices are also responsible for helping students cope with personal difficulties and for dealing with questions relating to their studies. In addition to lecturers and the student counselling offices, student bodies in each department also offer support and assistance relating to the individual subjects. In many cases special introductory seminars are held at institutions of higher education for future applicants. In providing counselling, higher education institutions are intended to cooperate in particular with the employment agencies responsible for careers advice and the offices responsible for the Staatsprüfungen [state examinations].

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

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

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

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

**Psychological counselling**

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

**Career Guidance**

According to the German Rector’s Conference [Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK], since the start of the Bologna Process increasing numbers of higher education institutions have set up so-called career centres or career services to support students in their professional orientation. At the end of 2011 there were around 100 such centres at German higher education institutions.

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

Career services can also help improve the practical relevance of the study programmes, by strengthening exchange between teaching and the working world. Specifically, this can take place through the processing of contemporary practical examples in lectures, and through in-company projects and final papers, employing skilled teaching staff from the professional sphere, or through practical training stages accompanied by teachers.

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

Definition of the Target Group(s)

The target group of the National Strategy for Literacy and Basic Education \textit{(nationale Strategie für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung)} is functional illiterates.

Specific Support Measures

Within the scope of the national implementation of the Literacy Decade announced by the United Nations for the period up until 2012, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research \textit{(Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF)} has placed priority on research and scientifically-backed development projects for literacy and adult basic education. At the same time, within the scope of its responsibilities the BMBF supports the manifold activities of the Länder in the area of basic adult education. Together with appropriate partners, such as the Federal Employment Agency \textit{(Bundesagentur für Arbeit)} and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees \textit{(Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge)}, the Länder plan to develop and expand educational offers for migrants ranging from literacy up to career maturity \textit{(Berufsreife)}.

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

Information on the National Strategy for Literacy and Basic Education in Germany, which was adopted by the Federation and the Länder in December 2011, can be found in chapter 14.2.2.

12.9. Guidance and Counselling in a Lifelong-Learning Approach

Academic Guidance

Within the framework of lifelong learning, educational guidance has become increasingly important in recent years. It is perceived as a prerequisite for the assurance of the individual right to education and creating more permeability and equal opportunities in the education system. Despite increased efforts, given the numerous institutions and competences and the different legal rules, educational guidance is still very heterogeneous.

Psychological Counselling

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

Career Guidance

In its recommendations the Committee on Innovation in Continuing Training \textit{(Innovationskreis Weiterbildung)} appointed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research \textit{(Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF)} called in 2008 for an integrative system of educational guidance covering all stages of learning and incorporating career advice. The Committee on Innovation recommends the following individual measures inter alia:

- increasing the transparency of guidance offers
- setting up and extending neutral guidance centres, and cross-educational/cross-provider guidance centres
• creating a uniform state financing basis
• improving quality management
• expanding educational guidance for small and medium-sized enterprises,
• professionalising staff
• introducing accreditation and certification