



SUMMARY SHEETS ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

GERMANY

I. Description of education system

1. Education population and language of instruction

In 2002, the number of people aged 29 or less was 25,661,604 (31% of the population), and there were 8,975,623 young people in full-time compulsory education. The language of instruction is normally German.

2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

In 2002, 94% of the pupils attended public sector schools, and the remaining 6% attended privately maintained schools.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, responsibility for the education system is conditioned by the federal structure of the State. According to the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), educational legislation and administration are primarily the responsibility of the *Länder* (in a system comprising the *Land* Ministries of Education, Cultural affairs and Science, the regional authorities (*Bezirksregierung/Oberschulamt*) and the schools' offices at local level (*Schulamt*). This particularly applies to the school system, higher education and the adult education/continuing education sector. The responsibilities of the Federal Government in education are defined in the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*). Among these responsibilities are the legislation concerning the general framework for higher education, and the financial assistance for individual training, including promotion of younger academic staff. The Basic Law also provides for particular forms of cooperation between the Federation and the *Länder*, such as that which occurs in the sector of educational planning and the promotion of research.

School supervisory authorities in each *Land* are responsible for inspection and exercise academic, legal and staff supervision within the school system. Each school has a teachers' council responsible for educational matters, and a school council (comprising teachers, parents and pupils), which decides on school regulations or disciplinary rules. The relative powers of these councils vary between the *Länder*.

As regards initial training in the *duales System* (the Dual System of vocational training in both the workplace and at school), which is experienced by two-thirds of all young people, the training in the workplace is financed by firms, and the school element by the *Länder*. The workplace activity follows nationally coordinated rules for training, while there are curricula for the school-based work which are adapted to these rules and established by the *Länder*.

Vocational training in the workplace is supervised by public-law corporations (such as chambers of industry and commerce, chambers of craftsmanship, etc.)

3. Pre-primary education

In most *Länder*, responsibility for pre-school education lies with the social ministries. From three to six children can attend *Kindergärten* which are mainly run by non-public bodies (primarily churches and welfare associations) and to which parents are also required to contribute, despite the allocation of major public subsidies and reliance on other funds.

2002	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5
Pre-compulsory education	58.6%	85.8%	92.5%

4. Compulsory full-time education

(a) Phases

<i>Grundschule</i> (primary education)	6-10 years of age (6-12, Berlin & Brandenburg)
Lower secondary education - <i>Orientierungsstufe</i> ('orientation' phase within the different school types or as a separate organisational unit) - <i>Gymnasium/Realschule/Hauptschule/Gesamtschule</i> /Types of schools offering several courses of education such as the <i>Mittelschule</i>	10-12 years of age 12-15/16 years of age
Upper secondary education (see section 5)	15/16-18/19 years of age

Full-time education is compulsory from between the ages of 6 and 15 or 16 (depending on the *Land*), and part-time education is compulsory until the age of 18 for those who do not attend a full-time school.

(b) Admission criteria

Generally, children are admitted to *Grundschule* from the age of 6. At primary level, children undergoing compulsory schooling enter a local primary school, which is the same for all of them. Transition from primary school to one of the school types at secondary level is subject to different regulations depending on legislation in the *Land* concerned. The type of school attended at lower secondary level is decided by the parents on the basis of an assessment made by the primary school. Admission to the various types of secondary schools may be subject to pupils fulfilling certain performance criteria and/or a decision by the education authority. All compulsory schooling is free of charge.

(c) Length of the school day/week/year

The school year comprises between 188 and 208 days in the period from August to July. The length of the school day and week is determined by each of the *Länder*. Schools open on five or six days a week (mostly mornings). Each week entails 19-28 lessons at primary school, and 28-30 lessons at secondary level. A lesson lasts 45 minutes. The average minimum number of annual teaching hours is 698 in primary education in 2002/2003, and from 876 to 932 depending on the school type in lower secondary education.

(d) Class size/pupils grouping

In 2002 there were in primary education 22 pupils per class on average and, in lower secondary education, on average 24.9 pupils depending on the school type and the *Land*. Pupils are generally grouped by age and, at secondary level, setting occurs in some subjects. Primary classes initially have one teacher for all subjects, whereas secondary pupils have separate subject teachers.

(e) Curricular control and content

The *Länder* ministries determine the curriculum, recommend teaching methods and approve textbooks. Core subjects in primary education generally include reading, writing, arithmetic, *Sachunterricht* as an introduction to natural and social sciences, art, music, sport and religious education. Secondary curricula depend on the type of institution, but usually continue primary core subjects, and include at least one foreign language and natural and social sciences.

(f) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Continuous assessment based on written examinations and oral contributions is universal practice at all levels. Pupils may be required to repeat a school year. Pupils who reach the appropriate standard at the end of lower secondary education receive a leaving certificate. Assessment is teacher-led in most cases.

5. Upper secondary and post-secondary education

(a) Types of education

General upper secondary school (<i>Gymnasiale Oberstufe</i>) at the following school types: <i>Gymnasium/Berufliches Gymnasium/ Fachgymnasium/ Gesamtschule</i>	16-18/19 years of age
Vocational education	
<i>Berufsfachschule</i> (full-time vocational school)	15/16-18 years of age
<i>Fachoberschule</i> (full time vocational school)	16-18 years of age
<i>Berufsoberschule</i> (full-time vocational school)	18-19 years of age
<i>Duales System</i> (Dual System: part-time vocational school and part-time on-the-job training)	15/16-18/19 years of age

(b) Admission criteria

Admission to the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* (upper level of the *Gymnasium*) requires a lower secondary leaving qualification meeting certain standards of achievement. Admission requirements for full-time vocational education depend on the type of school chosen.

The *duales System* is open to all lower secondary school leavers, irrespective of their results.

(c) Curricular control and content

The curriculum varies in accordance with the type of upper secondary education and training. Pupils in the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* must study subjects from three groups: languages/literature/the arts; social sciences; and mathematics/natural sciences/technology. Vocational programmes in *Berufsfachschulen* include German, social studies, mathematics, natural sciences, a foreign language and sport, as well as vocational subjects.

The vocational training in the *duales System* is organised for 350 professions following nationally co-ordinated training rules (the workplace element) and curricula established by the *Länder* (the school-based activity) in all economic fields.

(d) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Pupils who pass the *Abiturprüfung* receive the *Zeugnis der Allgemeinen Hochschulreife*, which grants access to higher education. Vocational courses at full-time vocational schools prepare pupils for a specific occupation, or for access to higher education (*Zeugnis der Fachgebundenen Hochschulreife* and *Fachhochschulreife*). Candidates from the *duales System* pass a final examination before an examination board of the competent bodies concerned (chambers of craftsmanship, chambers of industry and commerce, chambers of liberal professions or other public-law corporations), and receive a leaving certificate from the competent body. Concomitantly, the *Berufsschule* issues a leaving certificate if the trainee has achieved a least adequate performances in all subjects.

6. Higher education

(a) Types of institution

Higher education institutions include *Universitäten* (universities) and equivalent higher education institutions, *Kunsthochschulen* (colleges of art), *Musikhochschulen* (colleges of music) and *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences).

(b) Access

The *Zeugnis der Allgemeinen Hochschulreife* entitles the holder to admission to all subjects and subject areas at all higher education institutions. The *Zeugnis der Fachgebundenen Hochschulreife* entitles the holder to study particular subjects at a university or equivalent higher education institution. Admission to studies at colleges of art and music generally requires the *Zeugnis der allgemeinen Hochschulreife* and proof of artistic aptitude. The prerequisite for admission to a *Fachhochschule* is either the *Fachhochschulreife* or the *Allgemeine/Fachgebundene Hochschulreife*. All applicants who

meet the entrance requirements are registered for the course of study of their choice without having to go through any special admission procedures.

If the number of applicants exceeds the places available in certain subjects, places are allocated on the basis of selection procedures that are operated either at national/regional level or at the relevant higher education institution. The main selection criteria are the average mark obtained by the applicant and recorded in the higher education entrance qualification certificate and the period of time between obtaining their certificate and applying to the institution of higher education. Further criteria may be: interviews, selection procedures carried out by the higher education institution and subject-related tests. Access to publicly-funded higher education institutions is free of charge up to the first academic degree qualifying for an entry into a profession. This does not exclude the possibility of administration fees.

(c) Qualifications

Qualifications in higher education vary according to the length and type of course followed. Studies at a university or equivalent institution are concluded by an academic examination (*Diplom* examination, *Magister* examination), a state examination, an ecclesiastical examination (in theology) or an artistic examination. In order to adapt the higher education system to the degree structure based on two main cycles, a new graduation system of Bachelor's and Master's degrees has been implemented since 1998 in all higher education institutions.

Studies at *Fachhochschulen* lead to the *Diplom (FH)* degree, Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Universitäten (universities) and equivalent institutions of higher education hold the right to award doctorates. *Fachhochschule* graduates holding a Master's degree or a qualified *Diplom (FH)* degree may be admitted for doctoral studies at a university with specified additional requirements.

7. Special needs

The main form of provision is in special schools, but programmes have been introduced to encourage the integration of pupils and students with special needs into mainstream education. In 2002, just over 4.8% of all pupils in primary and secondary schools attended separate schools and a growing number of pupils with special needs were integrated into mainstream schools (65.804). In the Dual System of vocational training, help is provided and regulated by law (*Sozialgesetzbuch III*) for young people who have special learning problems or who are socially disadvantaged (e.g. support in on-the-job training or vocational training in institutions outside the workplace). In 2002, 8.8% of some 1,62 million trainees received this help.

8. Teachers

All pre-school staff are trained at upper secondary level. Teachers are trained at universities and colleges of art and music, and pass the first and second *Staatsprüfung* (state examination) in usually two subjects and in educational science. Primary teachers are generalists and secondary teachers are subject specialists. Teachers are generally employed by the *Land* and have civil servant status.

II. Ongoing Reforms and Topics of Debate in Education

By virtue of the federal structure of the German state, discussions on reform are carried out at both *Länder* and Federal level. Although the individual *Länder* are initially responsible for the implementation of reforms in their education systems, they cooperate with each other within the framework of the *Kultusministerkonferenz* (Conference of Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs) on matters of importance for all *Länder* in order to prepare educational reforms by means of joint recommendations. The discussion forum responsible for all educational issues jointly affecting the Federal Government and the *Länder* is the *Bund-Länder Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung* (Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion), in which the Federation and the *Länder* cooperate under the provisions of Article 91b of the German Constitution. The permanent advisory bodies of the Federation and the *Länder* also include the *Wissenschaftsrat* (Scientific Council), which draws up recommendations concerning development of the content and structure of higher-education institutions, science and research.

Only a number of the points being discussed in the ongoing debate on reforms in all areas of the education system can be presented here. The following overview therefore sets out only those reform

plans that are of national interest and are being dealt with at Federal level or in the Bund-Länder bodies and are of particular significance.

1. Essential areas/aspects of reforms at the preparatory or planning stage

- Furthering children at an early age and improving individual support
- Providing of all-day schools
- Furthering of children from migrant families, especially in the knowledge of the German language
- Furthering of literacy in reading, mathematics and science
- Quality assurance in schools, introduction of nationally binding educational standards
- Shaping future-oriented teacher training programmes
- Strengthening the autonomy of higher-education institutions in conjunction with evaluation, performance-related funding mechanisms, reform of civil service law
- Implementation of the Bologna Process by means of the introduction of the new system of study courses based on two main cycles with Bachelor's and Master's degrees
- Enhancing the international attractiveness of Germany as a study location
- Promoting the new generation of academics and scientists
- Distance learning and new media in higher-education teaching
- Continued strategic development of further education and life-long learning
- Development of open, flexible and company-oriented training regulations and of new occupations and professions
- Reform of the procedures for admission to higher education institutions (allocation of study places)
- Development of competitive and efficient universities through the implementation of a 'network of excellency' in higher education

2. The education levels affected by reform plans are:

- Pre-primary and primary education
- Secondary education
- Tertiary education

3. Quantitative and qualitative objectives of the reforms

Establishment and development of all-day schools

The half-day school is the traditional form of teaching and all-day schools are still the exception in Germany. The extension of all-day schooling is intended to have lasting effects on the process of educational reform. The individual support of pupils shall move towards the centre of the schooling process in order to break the strong link between social background and educational success.

The establishment of all-day schools is intended to achieve the following goals: individual support for all pupils; reform of teaching and learning through the combination of lessons, additional offers and leisure time activities; integration of the school into its social, cultural and economical environment; qualification of pedagogical staff.

Shaping future-oriented teacher training programmes

Development of new approaches regarding

- a more extensive practical orientation during teacher training
- intensification of the relations between the theoretical and practical phases of training
- particular significance of the induction period for newly qualified teachers
- qualification of higher education graduates without formal teacher training
- measures to improve teaching practice with regard to diagnostic and methodical competence
- improvement of the image of the teaching profession
- the implementation of standards for the effectiveness and further development of teacher training

Reform of Vocational Training

Reform of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsbildungsgesetz*) in order to adapt the dual system of vocational training to the challenges of the labour market.

Structural reform of the higher-education sector and enhancing the international attractiveness of Germany as a study location

- Introduction of Bachelors' and Masters' degrees as well as performance-point systems to facilitate the transfer of study credits
- Accreditation procedures to enable the establishment of a quality assurance system based on diversity and competition, support for the recognition of private and foreign higher-education institutions in a preliminary phase, providing sufficient scope for the development of new Bachelors' and Masters' courses of study, creating transparency, facilitating international recognition
- A greater degree of autonomy and independence to provide scope for creativity
- Introduction of a more performance-oriented salary system, possibility for academics and scientists to qualify at an earlier stage for a professorship, greater flexibility in personnel deployment

To introduce these structural reforms the Framework Act for Higher Education was last amended in August 2002 and the Law on the Remuneration of Professors at Higher Education Institutions came into effect in Februar 2002.

Equal opportunity

- A socially just and transparent system of financial assistance for pupils and students (the reform of the Federal Training Assistance Act came into effect in April 2001)
- Equal opportunities for men and women

4. Essential issues being dealt with in the consultations/public debate related to the planned reforms or the education sector as a whole

— Quality assurance and measurement of performance in schools

A comparison between the *Länder* of school performance relating to reading skills, mathematical and natural sciences knowledge, as well as cross-curricular competencies of 15 year-old pupils is intended to serve as an empirical basis for decision-making on education policy. Germany is taking part in the OECD Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA). After the publication of the results in December 2001, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education named seven areas in which the *Länder* will act. These include the improvement of pre-primary, primary and secondary education, the development of nationally binding educational standards for primary and secondary schools as well as the further professionalization of the teaching profession. The international investigation is supplemented by so-called national options (PISA-E), which involve the recording of additional subject areas and problems and a considerable extension of the sampling.

In addition to these investigations that refer to the secondary level, Germany has also participated in the international reading study for fourth grade pupils in primary schools (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS). The investigation involving 10,000 pupils of about 250 schools was conducted in 2001 and the results were published in April 2003. The results of a comparative report involving 12 *Länder* were published in January 2004.

The results of comparative tests have made clear that various reforms are necessary in order to develop and enhance the quality of the German education system. The required measures include strategic educational objectives, output-oriented control for central areas of the education system, the focusing of all available resources as well as the evaluation of the reform measures based on previously established criteria. Additionally, empirically based research into the causes of success or failure of pedagogical processes is required.

Various documents pertaining to the results of international surveys of pupil achievement can be found on the internet at www.kmk.org/schul/home.htm?leistung

— Supervision and evaluation in the higher education sector

The compulsory assessment of the quality of teaching has only been provided for since the amendment to the Framework Act of Higher Education of 1998. The first evaluation structures covering sev-

eral higher education institutions have emerged since 1994. The results of the evaluation may have an direct effect on the higher education funding. Increasingly, the quantitative performance indicators are being used as a basis for allocation of resources. For the introduction of new Bachelor's and Master's Study Courses an accreditation procedure has been established to guarantee minimum standards in terms of academic content and to check the vocational relevance of the degrees.

— **Further development of the education system**

In 1999, the Federal Government and the *Länder* established the *Forum Bildung* in order to ensure the quality and future viability of the German education system. The recommendations published by the *Forum Bildung* in 2001 affect both the Federal Government and the *Länder*, but are also directed at those who work in the institutions and who are directly involved in the education processes.

The Federal Government and the *Länder* believe that the development, the implementation and the evaluation of nationally binding educational standards (*Bildungsstandards*) is a central element in order to assure the quality of the German education system. The necessary basics and requirements for the introduction of educational standards already have been scientifically elaborated. In December 2003, the *Länder* agreed upon a set of educational standards for a first general education qualification after grade 10 (*Mittlerer Schulabschluss*). The Federal Government will support the *Länder* with regard to the development, implementation and evaluation of educational standards, which are important for an assessment of the education system as a whole as well as for curricular development. Furthermore the Federal Government and the *Länder* agree upon the necessity of an overall national reporting on education as a basis for all programs and measures to improve and to assure the quality of the education system. A first national report on school education was published in autumn 2003 to take conclusions on the further development of the German education system.

Unrevised English

Information provided by the German Eurydice Units

For more detailed information on the education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (<http://www.eurydice.org>)