STATE REPORT FOR THE SEVENTH CONSULTATION OF MEMBER STATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND RECOMMENDATION AIGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION (1960)

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

This Report was compiled by the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany

Article 1

17. Member States are requested to furnish detailed information explaining how discrimination in education based on grounds specified in the Convention/Recommendation is outlawed, bearing in mind in particular requirements specified in paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) of this Article, and how equality of treatment in education is ensured. The importance of the provisions of this article and of the Convention in general should be appreciated in light of the recent resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights (resolution 2002/23, resolution 2003/19 as well as resolution 2004/25) on the right to education which mention all the grounds of discrimination prohibited by the Convention and urge all States: „to give full effect to the right to education and to guarantee that this right is recognized and exercised without discrimination of any kind.“

As set out in the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) “No one may be disadvantaged or favoured as a result of their gender, parentage, race, language, home country and origins, faith, religious or political views. No one may be disadvantaged because of their disability” (Art. 3 (3) GG.

The Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) and the constitutions of the *Länder* include a number of fundamental provisions on schools (inspection, parents’ rights, compulsory schooling, religious instruction, privately-maintained schools). One of the responsibilities of the Länder in their education policy is to maintain a sufficiently varied range of schools. As the highest school supervisory authority, the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs of each Land is therefore concerned with establishing the base for an efficient school system. Accordingly, present and future school needs and school locations are identified in a school development plan drawn up at Land level. The establishment of plans for developing schools is regulated by the Education Acts in some *Länder.*

The local authorities (*Kommunen),* i.e. the municipalities, districts and municipalities not being part of a district, must, in their capacity as the maintaining bodies of public-sector schools, ensure that a well-balanced choice of education is available in their area. This means that school development planning is also a task of the local authority maintaining bodies (*Schulträger*), which identify the school capacity required and determine the location of schools. The plans of each of the local authorities must be established on the basis of mutual consultation and approved by the schools’ supervisory authorities, in most cases by the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. The exception to this is Bavaria where schools are generally established by the Land in consultation with the local authorities.

Article 2

18. Please describe measures taken (a) for ensuring gender parity in education, (b) relating to the parental choice and establishment or maintenance, for religious or linguistic purposes, of separate education systems or establishments and (c) regulatory framework for private educational institutions in order to ensure equality of educational opportunities and treatment. It will be appreciated if information is supplied in the form of a table on all these categories (a), (b) and (c).

(a) According to Art. 3 (2) of the Basic Law (GG), men and women are equal. This applies in particular in the education system where the same education is open to boys and girls, men and women. The state is committed to the real implementation of equality and endeavours to remove any inequalities which still exist.

(b) The right to establish privately-maintained schools is expressly guaranteed by the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*, Article 7, Paragraph 4) and, to some extent, by provisions in the constitutions of the individual *Länder*. This freedom to establish privately-maintained schools is combined with a guarantee of the privately-maintained school as an institution. Thus, constitutional law rules out a state monopoly of education. The proportion of privately-maintained schools varies considerably from Land to Land and between the different types of school. The main legal provisions for the establishment of privately-maintained schools are the relevant provisions in the Education Acts and the special laws on privately-maintained schools, as well as financial aid regulations in the form of laws and regulations of the *Länder.*

In the primary sector, privately-maintained schools may only be established on very strict conditions (Basic Law, Article 7 Paragraph 5). Their establishment is permitted only where the school authority finds that they serve a special pedagogical interest or where - at the request of parents - they are to be established as *Gemeinschaftsschulen* (non-denominational schools), denominational schools or schools pursuing a certain ideology and no public-sector primary school of that type exists locally. Privately-maintained primary schools are therefore the exception; in almost all cases they are either denominational primary schools, *Freie Waldorfschulen* (Rudolf Steiner schools), reformist schools or primary schools with an integrated boarding facility.

(c) Under the Basic Law, privately-maintained schools are also under the supervision of the state. When establishing a privately-maintained school, general legal requirements must be observed. The criteria for approval of *Ersatzschulen* (alternative schools) are laid down in the Basic Law (Art. 7, Paragraph 4). Such approval is given by the competent education authority of the respective Land on condition that privately-maintained schools are not inferior to public-sector schools in terms of their educational aims, their facilities and the training of their teaching staff and that they do not encourage segregation of pupils according to the means of their parents. Approval shall be withheld where the economic and legal status of the teaching staff is not adequately secured. The school supervisory authority must monitor whether the criteria on the basis of which approval was granted are being respected and can withdraw approval if these criteria are no longer being met.

Article 3

19. Please explain the legal and administrative measures adopted to give effect to the provisions of this Article, including non-discrimination in the admission of pupils to educational institutions, and non-differential treatment, assistance granted by public educational authorities to educational institutions, and treatment of foreign nationals resident in your country.

As set out in the Basic Law "No one may be disadvantaged or favoured as a result of their gender, parentage, race, language, home country and origins, faith, religious or political views. No one may be disadvantaged because of their disability" (Art. 3 (3) GG). Accordingly, the state guarantees its citizens equal access to education and works to prevent discrimination (of minorities). Foreign nationals residing in Germany have the same access to education as given to German citizens.

The General Equality of Treatment Act (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* – anti-discrimination law) which entered into force on 18 August 2006 relates to the access to all forms and all levels of careers advice, vocational education, including vocational training, vocational further training as well as retraining and practical occupational experience, and also to employment and working conditions including wages and conditions of dismissal. The aim of the law is to prevent or remove disadvantages due to race or ethnic background, gender, religion or philosophy, disability, age or sexual orientation.

20. What action is your Government taking or contemplating in order to introduce or guarantee equal access to all levels of education within your country, for instance in the form of anti-discriminatory measures, financial incentives, fellowships, positive or affirmative action? Please describe the effects of such measures.

<u>Financial aids to pupils</u>

So that pupils have access to all teaching aids used in lessons regardless of their economic and social circumstances, most Länder have regulations on the provision of financial assistance for pupils to purchase teaching aids (*Lernmittelhilfe*), or on their provision free of charge (*Lern-mittelfreiheit*); this provision is, in part, staggered according to parents' income and number of children. Under these regulations, pupils are either exempt from the costs of teaching aids or only have to pay part of the costs. The funds are provided either by the *Schulträger* (the local authority responsible for establishing and maintaining the schools, or by the Land in question. In the majority of Länder, pupils at public-sector schools are lent textbooks and other expensive teaching aids (e.g. pocket calculators) for the time they require them. When teaching aids become the property of pupils, parents may be required to pay a portion of the costs in some cases.

Each of the *Länder* has arrangements as regards the transport of pupils to and from school. There are certain differences as to who is entitled to use school transport and the scope of services provided. In all cases, however, there are comprehensive provisions for the period of compulsory full-time schooling to which the following statements refer. In general, fares are reimbursed, usually for public transport, while under certain conditions a school transport service is established in its own right. The purpose is to guarantee fair opportunities for pupils from all walks of life, between urban and rural areas, non-handicapped and handicapped schoolchildren.

Article 4

21. *Please indicate how education laws and policy have been developed and strategies and programmes are being implemented with a view to achieving in your country the full realization of the right of everyone to education without discrimination or exclusion, and ensuring equality of educational opportunities, and to achieving Education for All. What are the actions planned in your country to give especial consideration to gender equity and equality in education and the educational needs of the poor, economically and socially marginalized and vulnerable groups? What difficulties have you encountered in the realization of the right to education, as spelled out in paragraph 1? What time-related goals and benchmarks has your Government set in this respect?*

There are no structural variations in the education system for men and women or people from differing social backgrounds (cf. 18).

Disadvantages which become apparent in children with a migrant background, for example, because of their insufficient language skills, are sought increasingly to be tackled already in early years education through catchment and support programmes to improve the opportunities when starting schooling.

Following PISA 2000, the Standing Conference took special account of the support of children and young people with a migrant background in the seven fields of action it set out. In 2002, it identified measures in its "Immigration" report which could lead to better support for children and young people. The report is currently being updated. In recent years, the *Länder* have responded to the report with the implementation of language support in the pre-school and school fields. The language skills of the children are assessed as early as a few months before starting school. Special language support measures are taken on that basis if necessary. Some *Länder* have already identified that these measures have enabled children to better follow lessons in primary school. In order to support the integration of the child's family and dismantle the fear of contact with the school, several *Länder* have even set up so-called "Courses for mothers" and "Courses for families" at the children's schools so that the German language skills of the parents can also be improved.

In primary school, the measures of the Länder to support disadvantaged children are aimed above all at flexibility with regard to school enrolment, the avoidance of deferment of school entry and improvement of primary school education as well as at thorough improvement of reading competencies and the basic understanding of mathematical and scientific issues. By enrolling in school at the earliest possible age, account is to be taken not only of the changed living conditions of many families but also of the early and meaningful handling of children's willingness to learn and the necessity of using learning periods optimally.

Flexible school enrolment phases offer the opportunity to complete the first two school years in 1-3 years depending on individual ability. The objective is to enrol all children in primary school on schedule in order to avoid deferment in school entry. The principle of mixing age groups allows for the target group-specific support of faster and slower learners.

In numerous Länder the central findings of the PISA study have been integrated into the primary school curricula for German, mathematics and applied science/social studies at primary level: reading and language competencies are to be strengthened by anchoring reading competencies in the curricula for all subjects and raising the value placed on written work. In addition, new emphasis will be placed on reading support as well as promotion of self-regulated learning as a common task of all subjects.

Pupils who are not ready to go back to school following hospital treatment may receive lessons at home. Teachers of the school type which the pupil is to attend after his or her convalescence are employed to this end, thus effectively working towards the pupil's reintegration.
Pupils who cannot attend school for a longer period or even permanently, due to illness, without requiring hospitalisation, should also be taught at home. This depends on their ability to follow lessons. This, and the pupil's physical capacity, is certified by a school doctor.

For children whose life is characterised by continual moves and a consequent lack of continuity in their school development, an improvement in the schooling situation must aim above all at continuity, and at elements which stabilise their school career and motivate those pupils to attend school. Children of bargees, and children of circus members and show people, are particularly affected by constant moves. The Länder have developed concepts to guarantee an improvement in school provision for the children of occupational travellers. The measures include parental counselling and improved access to *Kindergärten*, primary schools, secondary schools and to vocational training. Under a resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs last amended in 1999, these measures also include subsidies for the costs of accommodating children of the travelling professions in homes.
Special measures in the primary sector include, for instance, keeping primary school places aside for children of occupational travellers, or creating additional facilities during an annual fair, for example. Some Länder have a system of regular schools (*Stammschulen*) and base centre schools (*Stützpunktschulen*). The regular school assumes responsibility for the child's school career at the family's winter site, while the base centre schools are situated near fairgrounds and endeavour in particular to provide educational support for travelling children. In addition, pilot projects are underway in some Länder in the form of a *travelling school*, which allows the children of circus performers to be taught at the same time at different locations. The *travelling school* accepts pupils of primary and lower secondary level age with the aim of guaranteeing uninterrupted school attendance.

At the lower secondary level, a number of Länder are initiating or supporting programmes or pilot projects in schools which aim to reduce the number of pupils who leave school without a qualification. Their objective is to strengthen the motivation and individual responsibility of pupils in the transition into the world of employment and work and to deal with transition problems of pupils. This includes practical learning classes at *Hauptschulen*, the combination of learning at school and work experience, vocational orientation days as well as pilot projects for vocational orientation and preparation. The support of language competencies of pupils of foreign origin is continued in lower secondary level.

In classes with a practical orientation, so-called practice classes, young people whose performance in grade 6 show that they are unlikely to achieve a qualification on leaving school

are to be offered project and practice-oriented teaching. The purpose of this intervention is to create the prerequisites in grades 7 and 8 for advancing to grade 9 or the successful attendance at a vocational provision. In cooperation with youth welfare, particular forms of care and re-structured organisational forms have arisen.

Programmes to promote the integration into the world of employment and work are aimed at young people and young adults threatened by unemployment, specifically migrants as well as pupils with language deficits. These measures are carried out, for example, by vocational schools in cooperation with youth and community work organisations. Integrated practice phases establish contacts with businesses. The support is focused on the previous experience of the individual participants and consists of strengthening cultural techniques, general education and personal development, vocational guidance and counselling as well as basic training in information and communications technology (incl. use of the Internet). Social disadvantages are to be dealt with through social education.

With its "JOBSTARTER – Training for the Future" programme, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) supports the sustained improvement of regional training structures, winning in-company training places as well as improving information and advice about vocations of the future for which training exists. Total funding of 125m euros, including resources from the European Social Fund, is being made available for the programme from 2005 to 2010.

- With this newprogramme, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is providing nation-wide funding for innovations and structural development in vocational education and training. The programme aims at a better regional supply of in-company training places for young people by means of motivating companies to providetraining.

  The programme pools, develops and complements existing BMBF activities in the area of in-company training by means of additional priority topics and funding instruments. The programme is flexible regarding regional and changing demand for training and thus contributes to optimizing regional training structures. It strengthens regional responsibility in the field of vocational training by providing support in networking regional structures so that synergies can be optimally used.

Under JOBSTARTER, the BMBF is funding the KAUSA (*Koordinierungsstelle Ausbildung in Ausländischen Unternehmen* – Coordination Centre for Training in Foreign Companies) initiative, a nationwide information and service centre to support the involvement in training of companies with a migrant background. The additional acquisition of training places in companies with a foreign owner benefits young migrants in particular.
As part of JOBSTARTER, there is a twofold target with regard to support for migrants:

a) The increasing economic importance of companies with owners of foreign origin in Germany is also to be reflected in greater participation in in-company training.
b) Foreign companies make an important contribution to integration by providing training places. On the one hand, they become models regarding questions of vocational training for their nationality group (particularly for young people and their parents). On the other hand they improve the training opportunities of all young people, i.e. also Germans,

through the provision of additional training places and thus help to dismantle prejudices and resentment.

A further activity in the context of KAUSA is support for the "Mosques working actively for vocational training" project. Its aim is to win over prayer leaders and chairmen of the Turkish mosque associations as mediators between the vocational training advisory institutions and their community members – i.e. young people, parents and business people – to increase their awareness of the subject of vocational training.

The JOBSTARTER programme is flanked by annual training campaigns, industry campaigns as well as the "National Pact for Training and Young Skilled Staff in Germany" of the Federal Government and business.
With the development of a system of qualification modules from recognised training occupations and the funding of entry qualifications (EQJ), the Federal Government wants to ease the entry to vocational training for young people with unfavourable starting opportunities.

The new system of qualification modules was introduced to link training preparation and vocational training. This system means that, already during training preparation, disadvantaged young people are taught specific skills which form part of certain training occupations and which will be certified and credited towards subsequent training. In addition, this improves young people's prospects on the labour market when transfer to training is not achieved at the first attempt.

For a comprehensive modernization and structural development of the support measures for the less privileged in the area of vocational training, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research has launched the programme 'Promoting Skills – Vocational Qualification for Target Groups with Special Learning Problems and for the Socially Disadvantaged' (Kompetenzen fördern – Berufliche Qualifizierung für Zielgruppen mit besonderem Förderbedarf – BQF-Programm). Co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), the programme will run through 2006. This programme is to offer new starting points and qualification pathways to youths who have not yet completed a vocational training. The model measures funded within this programme concentrate on optimising support structures, improving the work of the educational facilities, strengthening approaches to prevent lack of vocational training (*Ausbildungslosigkeit*) already at school, as well as improving the vocational training prospects of immigrants.

Particularly for young people with disabilities, the situation on the training market currently fails to offer favourable prerequisites for integration into companies. School qualifications, the choice of occupation, and vocational training are of key importance for the occupational integration of young people. In 2004/2005, careers advisory services were used by 158,477 young people with disabilities. Vocational training – under the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and Trades Regulation (HWO) – can, if necessary, be modified such that the learning requirements of this group of persons are taken into account. In 2005, a total of 58,517 young people with disabilities were being trained. In private enterprises and administrations, 16,397 young people with disabilities were being trained in recognised training occupations and 28,839 in special training courses for young people with disabilities. In addition, 13,281 young people with disabilities acquired qualifications in training outside companies.

22. Please furnish detailed information on the progress with respect to ensuring universal access to primary education; Is primary education in your country available free of charge to all? If so, what laws and policies ensure the universal free availability of primary education? If not, how does your Government intend to ensure free primary education? What strategies and programmes are implemented and planned to ensure hat „by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality"?[5] What difficulties has your Government encountered in the realization of universal access to free primary education? If compulsory and free primary education in your country is not currently enjoyed, please provide details for its implementation, in line with the Education for All objective.

School attendance in Germany is available to everyone free of charge. Here no difference is made between boys and girls or persons from different social backgrounds so that everyone is guaranteed the same quality of education.

For about a century, children in Germany have been legally required to attend a full-time school for initially eight, now nine or ten years. As a rule, general compulsory schooling begins for all children in the Federal Republic of Germany at the age of six and involves nine years of full-time schooling (ten years in Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen and Nordrhein-Westfalen). Those young people who do not attend a full-time general education school or vocational school at upper secondary level once they have completed their period of compulsory general schooling must still attend part-time schooling (compulsory *Berufsschule* attendance – *Berufsschulpflicht*). This usually lasts three years, according to the duration of training in a *anerkannter Ausbildungsberuf* (recognised occupation requiring formal training). For pupils who do not attend a general education school at upper secondary level or enter training, some Länder have regulations under which pupils are required to remain in full-time education and attend some sort of vocational school.

Disabled children and young people are also required to attend school and complete their compulsory education. On the basis of their *Sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf* (special educational needs), they are either taught in mainstream schools together with non-handicapped pupils, or in *Sonderschulen* (special schools).

Compulsory schooling involves regular attendance of lessons and other compulsory school events. Both pupils and parents are responsible for seeing that this obligation is met and training companies are also responsible for ensuring that their trainees fulfil their obligation to attend vocational school. The school head checks on attendance records and can, if necessary, enforce attendance through various measures against the pupil, parents or the training company.

The legal basis for the *Grundschule* as the first compulsory school for all children is to be found in the Education Acts, the Compulsory Schooling Acts and the *Schulordnungen* (school regulations) for the primary school enacted by the Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs in the Länder. Compulsory education starts on 1 August for children who have reached the age of six on 30 June of the current calendar year at the latest. But the *Länder* are increasingly moving this date forward and are making the school entry date more flexible to do justice to the

[5] Dakar Framework for Action, adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar 2000.

development of each individual child and enable individual support. Thus, since the 2002/2003 school year, there have for the first time been more early than late school enrolments.

Extensive pedagogical reforms aim at a pupil-oriented approach to teaching which enhances the childrens' self-initiative and self-confidence and promotes learning in a cross-disciplinary context. In October 2004, the Standing Conference released educational standards for the primary sector in the subjects German and mathematics. These relate to general educational objectives and determine which competencies and knowledge with regard to relevant content pupils should have attained by grade 4. Other focal points of current policy reforms are the introduction of fixed school opening times, the further development of flexible school entrance phases and the development and expansion of schools offering all-day activities and care in the primary sector. Already at the level of primary school life-long learning also is a concern.

23. What efforts has your Government made to establish a system of continuing education on the basis of individual capacity, especially basic education for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education? What are the measures and actions being implemented and planned to ensure equitable access to basic and continuing education so that the basic learning needs of all young people and adults are met through elimination of illiteracy, and equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes? What time-related goals and benchmarks has your Government set in this respect?

Continuing education in Germany is regulated by the state to a lesser degree than other areas of education. The justification given for this is that the diverse and rapidly-changing demands on continuing education can best be met by a structure which is characterised by diversity and competition among the institutions and the range of courses and services on offer. The aim is that the wide range of institutions should meet the diverse interests of those in continuing education. A central principle of continuing education courses is that attendance should be voluntary.
The activities of the state in the field of continuing education are restricted to laying down principles and to issuing regulations relating to organisation and financing. Such principles and regulations are enshrined in the legislation of the Federal Government and the Länder. State regulations are aimed at establishing general conditions for the optimum development of the contribution of continuing education to life-long learning.
The joint responsibilities of the Federation and the Länder include research and pilot schemes within the scope of educational planning in all sectors of continuing education. In addition, Federation and Länder are responsible for statistics on continuing education and for drawing up reports on continuing education in their respective areas of responsibility.
The responsibilities of the Länder include in particular the following powers to regulate and promote:

- continuing general education,
- continuing education leading to school-leaving qualifications,
- continuing academic education at higher education institutions
- continuing cultural education
- some elements of continuing political education and
- some elements of continuing vocational training.

In July 2004, the Federation and the Länder adopted a joint strategy for lifelong learning in Germany. The strategy is aimed at demonstrating how learning can be encouraged and supported for all citizens of all ages and at all stages in their lives; this takes place at different locations and teaching is offered in various forms. Lifelong learning includes all formal, non-formal and informal learning. The strategy is oriented around the various phases in a person's life, ranging from early childhood to old age, as well as around key elements for lifelong learning that represent main development focuses. Within this framework, realistic prospects are to be developed for the long-term that build on the existing educational structures, activities and experiences and define a structured framework for lifelong learning that is flexible and open for the necessary continuous further development. Development focuses of this strategy are:

- inclusion of informal learning
- self-guidance
- development of competences
- networking
- modularisation
- learning counselling
- new learning culture / popularisation of learning
- fairness of access.

In Germany, it is the Länder and the local authorities which are responsible for preventive measures (in the schools sector) and programmes for adults (courses). The Federal Government (Federal Ministry of the Interior - BMI) provides funds for literacy training for migrants via the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF).
The Federal Ministry of Education and Research supports innovative developments in this area of education through projects within the framework of its competences and possibilities. Germany has been able to significantly increase the funds provided for such projects in the course of the UN's Decade of Literacy. 4.5 million Euro were made available in between 2005 and 2007.

The projects which are funded:

* APOLL ("ALFA PORTAL Literacy Learning") and the extension of "Zweite Chance online" ("second chance online")
* "ALFA-Mobil" / "ALFA-Mobil TT (Trainers Teaching)"
* "F.A.N.- Football Literacy Campaign Network"
* Film project "ABC of Life" (Over a period of one year, the film documents the life of three people who cannot, or can hardly, read and write but want to learn to do so.)

a) ProfilPASS
Within the framework of a collaborative project financed by the Federal Government and the European Social Fund, the ProfilPASS was developed in the context of the Programme on Lifelong Learning of the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK). The ProfilPASS is an instrument for identifying and documenting individual abilities and skills. It was tested and evaluated positively in over 30 regions in Germany between September 2004 and May 2005. An updated model, which was developed further on the basis of the results of the test phase, was published in May 2006. A coordination and service centre at the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) will ensure the dissemination of the ProfilPASS system on the German education market in cooperation with a publisher of education materials. A fully digitized version is currently being planned (ePortfolio).
(http://www.bildungspass.de/aktuell.htm).

b) Financing instruments (Bildungssparen)
Despite tight public budgets, the German Federal Government has since 2001 been making enormous efforts to develop new financing instruments and strategies to ensure socially balanced access to education. Thus the Expert Commission on Financing Lifelong Learning (KoFiLLL) was established in 2001 by decision of the German Parliament (Bundestag); the Commission's recommendations were published in 2004. Acting on these recommendations, the Federal Govenment is currently drafting a concrete proposal for a continuing education savings scheme: a system of public incentives for individual investments to maintain and improve employability by means of systematic continuing vocational training.

c) Learning Regions (Lernende Regionen)
The BMBF's "Learning Regions - Support for Networks" programme represents the core of the "Lifelong Learning for Everyone" programme of action. Funding is provided for the establishment and expansion of regional networks that span different education sectors and education providers. By involving as many stakeholders as possible on a regional level (e.g. general, vocational and secondary schools and education providers, companies, employment offices, organizations promoting economic activity, chambers of commerce, local authorities, social partners, socio-cultural institutions, inter alia) it is intended that these networks should develop and test innovative measures in the field of lifelong learning and introduce them in the long term. The themes of the Learning Regions are based on the potential of and the issues facing the respective regions. These include, among others, the establishment of a regional education management body, holistic counselling, education marketing, education databases and the drafting of concepts at the interfaces between education sectors: the transition from school to career, the development of new training courses for SMEs, honorary posts, mentoring, etc. Funding is currently being provided to 70 Learning Regions nationwide in two phases. Projects during the first phase (51 projects; start: summer 2001) run until autumn 2006. The second phase (23 projects; start: spring 2002) ends in spring 2007. 35 projects in the first funding phase began programme intensification in July 2006 (duration: until 31 December 2007). The aim is to support particularly successful developments - which are also suitable for transfer - in the fields of "educational and vocational counselling", "self-directed learning centres" and "transitional management".

24. Is secondary education, including technical and vocational secondary education, generally available and accessible to all in your country? To what extent is such secondary education free of charge? Please furnish quantitative and descriptive information on the progress realized and the difficulties encountered. What time-related goals and benchmarks has your Government set in this respect?

The range of secondary education courses in Germany includes general education, on the one hand, and vocational courses, on the other, as well as courses that combine general education and vocational training. The attendance of public-sector secondary schools is free of charge.(cf. 22)

The participation in education and the general level of educational attainment have steadily risen in recent years in the context of a growing demand for higher level educational qualifications and are very high particularly in an international comparison. Ninety percent of students of the typical

age group possess an upper secondary level leaving certificate. Sixty percent acquired this leaving certificate in vocational courses, 30% in the general education school system.
Each year some 565,000 young people enter vocational training in the *duales System*, Germany's dual education system. This corresponds to about 60 per cent of the population of this age. Of the trainees, around 30.6 per cent achieved the *Hauptschulabschluss* as their first general education qualification at the end of the lower secondary level in 2003, whilst 37.3 per cent gained a *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* . The number of those undergoing training within the dual system who have already completed the upper secondary level and obtained a *Hochschulreife* or a *Fachhochschulreife* (higher education entrance qualifications) corresponded to 14.3 per cent in 2003. To maintain the appeal and quality of vocational education and training provided on the job and in the vocational schools known as *Berufsschulen*, the curricula as prescribed by the state are regularly adapted to the demands of the employment system by reviewing the recognised occupations requiring formal training, known as *anerkannte Ausbildungsberufe*.

With respect to the development of courses of general education, the reform of the upper level of the *Gymnasium* , known as *gymnasiale Oberstufe* , dates from a 1972 agreement of the *Kultus-ministerkonferenz*, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder. The basic idea of the reform was to encourage pupils to learn on their own, to introduce them to the propaedeutics of scientific work and to foster the development of their personalities. The 1972 agreement as amended in 2000 and the other relevant resolutions adopted by the Standing Conference all maintain the principle that those who have passed the *Abitur* examination *Abiturprüfung* gain the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* (entitlement to proceed to higher education in any subject). In recent years, efforts to secure the equivalence of general and vocational education have brought about that vocational education courses are increasingly also offering the leaving certificates generally issued by general education schools.

25. What are the measures and actions being implemented and planned to eliminate „gender disparities in primary and secondary education, and achieving gender equality in education, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality"?

See also sections 18, 19, 21, 26

In addition, there are special support programmes which, for example, promote girls' understanding of science.

The dual system of vocational training continues to provide access to a high quality occupation for the vast majority of the young generation in Germany. Here men and women fundamentally have the same opportunities in the vocational training system. By
30 September 2005, about 550,000 new training contracts for in-company training in the dual system had been concluded, of which almost 42 percent were for girls and young women. Competent careers guidance as early as classes 8 and 9 of general education schools ensures that young people, irrespective of social background, gender, etc. make the optimum decision for themselves with regard their entry into working life.

With the amendment of the Vocational Training Act which entered into force on 1 April 2005, the Federal Government has laid the foundations for greater flexibility and mobility in vocational training. Alongside the improved crediting of qualifications acquired abroad or preliminary qualifications acquired in other ways, a statutory basis was also given to part-time vocational training for trainees looking after their own child or a relative in need of care. This is intended above all to improve the circumstances under which young women who decide to have a child during their training can start or resume their vocational training.

With regard to average apprenticeship pay, there are differences between male and female apprentices. But this is primarily due to the gender-specific choice of occupation.

Since occupational designations influence the occupational choices of young women and men, and are therefore not without relevance to a gender-specific choice of occupation, the objective is to avoid all stigmatising elements in the reorganisation of training regulations. Both the occupational designation and the training content are to be formulated in such a way that they attract men and women alike.

26. To what extent is access to higher education based upon individual capacity realized in your country? What efforts has your Government made to ensure that there is no discrimination on the ground prohibited by the Convention to enter and complete higher education, both in public and private institutions? What are the financial costs for students to receive education in such institutions? Please furnish quantitative and descriptive information on the progress realized.

Equal access to higher education is guaranteed by law in Germany. Within existing capacities access to higher education is open to everyone who has the required qualification. All Germans are entitled to undertake the higher education studies selected by them if they can show that they have the qualification required for the course of study. Such evidence is fundamentally provided by the successful conclusion of a preparatory school education. Nationals from other member states of the European Union enjoy equal status with Germans if they can show that they have the language skills necessary for the course of study. The basic condition for the admission of foreign applicants is a prior education equavalent to the German certificate giving entitlement to go on to higher education or a successfully passed examination for a higher education entrance certificate.

Selection criteria for courses for which there are national or local access restrictions as a result of excess demand comprise mainly the average mark of the applicant and the waiting period.

In the report period, there were no fees for studies up to the first vocational qualification or the consecutive Master. But in the meantime the *Länder* of the Federal Republic of Germany are at liberty to charge students financial contributions to their studies. The first *Länder* will make use of this opportunity in the 2006/2007 winter semester and as a rule levy financial contributions up to €500 per semester. In parallel, loan systems are being developed which only require repayment following conclusion of the study course and given appropriate earnings. An upper limit will be set for such loans which also takes account of a Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG) loan.

All state higher education institutions levy administrative fees of approx. €50 per student. In addition, most *Länder* charge fees for long-term students and second undergraduate study courses of up to €500 per semester.

In order to enhance equality of opportunity, the Federal Government has reformed federal Federal training assistance is half awarded as a grant and half as a loan. With the reform of the Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG) in 2001 the percentage of federal training assistance recipients among students rose to 23 % (2000: 20%). The average funding amount was raised to €375 (2000: €306). The level of debt resulting from federal training assistance was limited to a maximum of €10,000 .

Students in special social need are supported in some *Länder* by the student services (*Studentenwerke*) or the higher education institutions themselves with loans of various amounts. In addition, a number of smaller, mostly regional private foundations support students in need. Specially gifted students are eligible for grants from organisations for the promotion of young talent (*Begabtenförderungswerke*) which as a rule are associated with the Churches, the political parties, the trade unions or business. The Federal Government supports the work of these organisations with considerable funding; the *Länder* participate in the funding of the German National Merit Foundation (*Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes*), the largest of the organisations for the promotion young talent.

For foreign students and young academics, the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*) offers grants for a limited study or advanced training visit at a German higher education institution. Furthermore, some *Länder* have special funds for the support of foreign students at the respective higher education institutions.

On conclusion of a course leading to a first degree, grants can be awarded for postgraduate studies on the basis of the postgraduate support laws and ordinances (*Graduiertenförderungsgesetze und -verordnungen*) of the *Länder*. The organisations for the promotion of young talent also provide corresponding grants.

A key part of indirect student financing is represented by the 61 student services which provide reduced price catering in refectories and cafeterias in all higher education institutions as well as low cost accommodation. In addition, child care, psycho-social counselling, social and first semester counselling are provided by the higher education institutions, local authorities, student services and student unions. Furthermore, there are cheap semester tickets for local public transport.

With regard to the higher education sector, special reference should be made to the endeavours to reduce the gender imbalance e.g. in the natural, engineering and technical sciences. Since the decision to pursue a particular course of study is taken at school, a key component is represented by information and image campaigns which are carried out in cooperation with the schools. Their objective is to enable pupils to make an open-minded decision in favour of a study course in the fields of mathematics, natural sciences and engineering and to dismantle any aversion that might exist. Some of these measures, intended to increase the take-up in these fields of study, are specifically addressed to girls (vocational orientation days, practical experience for girls, campaigns).

We refer to the comprehensive measures for the advancement of women in the higher education and academic programme (*Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsprogramm*). A majority of *Länder* have additionally set up special *Land* programmes for the advancement of women in general. Thus the development of networks is supported to the same extent as the establishment of coordination

offices and centres of excellence. In addition, study courses specifically for women are offered. In setting up and designing the study courses, there are a number of measures which can be taken to make it easier for women to decide to enter higher education. They include extended examination deadlines for parents, the establishment of part-time study courses and child care support.

The endeavours to reduce the gender imbalance are also a criterion governing the performance-related allocation of funds to and within higher education institutions. If target agreements are concluded between *Länder* and higher education institutions, the issue of the adequate representation of women at all qualification levels plays a key role. This ensures that incentives for further measures are assured.

27. Have there been/are there instances of discrimination as regards the training for the teaching profession in your country? Please describe the conditions of teaching staff at all levels in your country. How do teachers' salaries compare to salaries of (other) civil servants? How has this ratio developed over time? What measures does your country take or contemplate to improve the living and professional conditions of teaching staff?

Teachers are employed by the Länder either as public civil servants or salaried employees.

In Germany there are six types of teaching career:

2. Teachers at primary schools
3. Teachers covering both primary schools and all or individual types of school at lower secondary level
4. Teachers for all or individual types of school at lower secondary level
5. Teachers at upper secondary level (general education subjects) or at *Gymnasium*
6. Teachers at upper secondary level (vocational subjects) or vocational schools
7. Teachers at special schools

All types of teaching career are salaried in line with the corresponding grades in the upper and highest grades of the civil service. There is no discrimination in teacher training and in the subsequent practice of the career.

Following PISA 2000, teacher training was fixed as one of the seven fields of action in which priority measures are to be taken. The objective is to improve professionalism in teaching – particularly with regard to diagnostic and methodological skills. In this connection the Standing Conference adopted "Standards for teacher training: education studies" in 2004 which are already being implemented in the *Länder*. In continuation of this, the Standing Conference is currently working on the requirements with regard to the content of the subject-related studies and teaching methodologies common to the *Länder*. In addition, the *Länder* are endeavouring to an increased extent to train teachers with a migrant background and deploy them in schools.

Against the background of the Bologna Declaration, the *Länder* have modularised the teacher training courses. Connected with this, there is a greater focus on vocational aspects within teacher training (placements, practice semesters). To an increasing extent consecutive study courses are being set up in teacher training which provide for components covering education studies and practical elements as early as the Bachelor phase.

Article 5

28. Please report on national efforts for directing education towards the objectives mentioned in Article 5, paragraph 1(a) of the Convention/Recommendation.

Human rights education, education for tolerance and democratic citizenship are anchored in the school legislation of the individual *Länder*. In this context all the *Länder* see education to respect human dignity and transmit the basic values set out in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany as a substantial part of the task of schools. Thus, alongside the pure teaching of knowledge, an understanding of the liberal democratic basic order of the Federal Republic, esteem, tolerance and respect for other cultures, as well as a basic responsibility towards society is to be developed. On this basis the schools enable the free development of the personality of each individual and endeavour within the bounds of their possibilities to counter inequalities of opportunity and compensate for disadvantages. In this connection each person, irrespective of their origin or social standing, has the right of an appropriate education for him or her. Furthermore, the *Länder* accept the primary right of participation of parents in the education of their children and include them in their actions as a second pillar of educational work.

The timetable allocations of the *Länder* set out in which subjects there can and should be a special focus on the above subject and for which overall number of weekly hours per year. Here a particular importance accrues to subjects such as religion, ethics, philosophy, history, civics, social studies, and it extends to economics/politics, geography and German. While values and standards as well as the dignity of the human being can be discussed in subjects such as religion, ethics and philosophy, it is often totalitarian systems which are the subject of debate in history. The concepts of slavery, suppression and race ideology are contrasted with the values of enlightenment, freedom and equality. In social studies, the ideals underlying our understanding of democracy such as free and fair elections can be taught and the subject of social inequality or terrorism can be raised. Subjects in which economics dominates provide the opportunity to take up the social market economy or the concept of the now omnipresent globalisation with the problems it raises, while in the subject of German literary texts extending into the above contexts can be studied and reflected upon. The subject of geography, too, has its place here with its issues relating to developing countries, the nature of other cultures as well as the (unequal) distribution of the earth's resources and raw materials.

Despite the diversity of content cited here as examples of human rights education in the individual subjects, it is in most cases left to the schools or subject conferences themselves which platform they chose for the teaching of human rights. The principle applies that the subject of human rights can be taken up in all grades if content and methods appropriate for the age and maturity of the pupils are used which are suitable for the grade in terms of their level and degree of difficulty.

There are handouts and various publications to support schools in carrying out human rights education. There are also many different suitable school books from which the schools or subject conferences must make a selection.

In order to ensure efficient teaching also in the context of human rights education most *Länder* have taken special measures tailored to this issue which take the form of in-service training for

teachers, symposia and teaching conferences in particular subjects, but which also start as early as teacher training where the subject of human rights as a cross-sectional subject receives special attention. At an institutional level, targeted measures flow into the reform of the framework curricula and guidelines as well as schools legislation. In addition, the *Länder* as a rule endeavour to support schools and teachers through regular newsletters and suitable Internet materials. The schools, in turn, have the opportunity – by carrying out projects, project days or weeks, but also through the development of school partnerships and a commitment to developing countries – to highlight their understanding of social interdependencies. Here further options are presented by providing corresponding placements, the assumption of sponsorships as well as the support of institutions working in development assistance as is the case, for example, with the UNESCO ASP schools. In this connection schools have the opportunity beyond the collaboration with the institutions of the *Länder* to build up contacts with non-school partners. As examples we can quote here UNICEF and UNESCO, the Central Federal Office for Political Education or the individual *Land* offices, but also partners from private business, church organisations, universities and social institutions in general.

The school system has special importance and responsibility with regard to human rights education. Hence the Standing Conference has repeatedly concerned itself with this subject, particularly in the form of agreements and declarations such as in March 2006 with the "Declaration on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child". They provide the basis for the corresponding ordinances and decrees of the *Länder*.

29. Please describe education policy framework for minimum educational standards as regards the rights of the parents/legal guardian for providing religious and moral education for their children and the choice of educational institutions in accordance with the provisions of Article 5, paragraph 1(b) of the Convention/Recommendation.

Parents are enabled to observe their primary educational responsibilities. This includes the choice of school for their children as well as the decision whether or not they should attend religion lessons. In view of the importance of religious education, religion lessons are the responsibility of state and church in accordance with the applicable regulations. It contributes to realising the basic constitutional rights of parents and pupils. The Basic Law (GG) further says:

"The care and upbringing of children is the natural right of parents and a duty primarily incumbent upon them. The state shall watch over them in the performance of this duty" (Art. 6 (2) GG).

The Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) also guarantees freedom of belief and conscience and the freedom of creed, religious or ideological; the undisturbed practice of religion is guaranteed (Art. 4).

"Parents and guardians shall have the right to decide whether children shall receive religious instruction" (Art. 7 (2) GG).

"Religious instruction shall form part of the regular curriculum in public-sector schools, with the exception of non-denominational schools. Without prejudice to the state's right of supervision, religious instruction shall be given in accordance with the tenets of the religious community

concerned. Teachers may not be obliged against their will to give religious instruction" (Art. 7 (3) GG).

The stipulations contained in the Basic Law on religious instruction as a standard subject are not, however, applied in Brandenburg, Bremen and Berlin since these Länder had already laid down different regulations under Land law on 1 January 1949, in other words prior to the promulgation of the Basic Law (Art. 141).
The Basic Law stipulates that parents have the right to decide whether children receive religious instruction (Art. 7, Paragraph 2). According to the Law on the Religious Education of Children (*Gesetz über die religiöse Kindererziehung*), once a child has reached the age of 12, the decision made by the parents must have the child's consent. From the age of 14, each child is free to decide whether to attend religious instruction, unless Land legislation makes other provision.

30. How are the rights of national minorities protected for carrying out their own educational activities in accordance with Article 5, paragraph 1(c) of the Convention/Recommendation? Please describe legal and policy framework relating to the educational standards in educational institutions run by minorities, as provided for in this Article. Information should cover the language facilities, such as the availability of teaching in the mother tongue of the students, use of teaching of languages in education policy, etc.

Compulsory schooling applies to all children, irrespective of their origin, social background, etc. (cf. 19). This guarantees i.a. uniform conditions for the transition from (school) education to the labour market.

Language teaching keeps growing in importance in a time of increasing globalisation. Hence multi-lingualism is specially supported. In addition, there is a great deal of provision for attending mother-tongue lessons, which are also counted as compulsory hours with regard to language lessons.

German is stipulated by law as the official language of administration and the judiciary. The two main provisions can be found in the Administrative Procedure Act (*Verwaltungsverfahrensgesetz*, Paragraph 23 – R5). Education differs from administration and justice in that there are no legislative provisions on the language of instruction. German is the normal language of instruction and training at general education and vocational schools as well as institutions of higher education. The exceptions in the school sector include, alongside certain privately-maintained schools, all bilingual schools and classes as well as instruction and extra classes in the mother tongue for pupils whose native tongue is not German

In 1998, Germany joined the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages of the Council of Europe and applies this agreement to those speaking Danish, Frisian, Sorbian, Romany and Low German. The children of the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein can attend privately-maintained *Ersatzschulen* (alternative schools) instead of the general education schools of the public sector, as long as the educational objectives of these schools essentially correspond to those of the school types provided for in the Schleswig-Holstein education act. Lessons in these schools are taught in Danish. As a rule, German is a compulsory subject as of grade 2.

Parents may choose whether their children should attend schools catering for the Danish minority. They merely have to inform the local *Grundschule* (primary school) that their child has been accepted at a school which caters for the Danish minority, and thus absolve him/her from the need to attend the public-sector school. The children of the Sorbian minority in the settlement area of the Sorbs in Brandenburg and Sachsen are taught in the Sorbian language at Sorbian and other schools either as the mother tongue, a second language or a foreign language. Here, too, parents can decide freely whether their children are to attend the Sorbian schools where Sorbian is a compulsory subject and sometimes also the language of instruction. Additionally, Romany, the language of the German Sinti and Romanies, as well as Frisian and Low German in the Länder of northern Germany are taken into account to varying degrees in schools, higher education institutions and in adult education.

Article 7

31. Please highlight (i) the results achieved; and (ii) obstacles in the process of the implementation of the Convention/Recommendation? The Report should present an assessment of the positive results as well as shortcomings. It should highlight difficulties that have been encountered in eliminating discrimination and reducing disparities in education, especially in the context of the EFA process? If you so like, you could present such an assessment using an existing analytical tool or template, such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

For about a century, children in Germany have been legally required to attend a full-time school for initially eight, now nine or ten years. The participation in education and the general level of educational attainment have steadily risen in recent years in the context of a growing demand for higher level educational qualifications and are very high particularly in an international comparison. Ninety percent of students of the typical age group possess an upper secondary level leaving certificate.

After PISA 2000, fundamental changes in the education field have been introduced.. Here particular significance accrues to the many different endeavours regarding quality assurance and quality development at all levels of the education system, from the child day-care facilities through schools to the higher education sector. The emphasis was placed on early-years and individual as well as on targeted language support in order to provide consistent help for children at an educational disadvantage. The expansion of full-day schools also makes it easier to provide individual and better support during the afternoon. This particularly increases the opportunities of children with a migrant background or from educationally disadvantaged families.

Furthermore, in the process started in July 2006 to draw up a "National integration plan", the integration of children and young people with a migrant background is given particular prominence, alongside the improvement of educational opportunities and participation, through targeted language support in kindergarten and school.

In the field of individual educational funding [Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG) and Social Code (SGB III)], the Federal Government intends to present an amendment which will contain improved conditions for migrants. The opening of funding to all foreigners passing through the German education system (from EU and non-EU states), and thus access to further qualification, will make an important contribution to integration. Foreign students who already have a long-term residence entitlement or who have at least lived in Germany for a long time and can count on permanence under residency law will be funded without a previous minimum earnings period of the parents.

32. What are the main issues that need to be addressed for promoting equality of educational opportunities in your country? Please provide a brief description.

The results of the first cycle of the OECD assessment of student outcomes (PISA) were published on 4 December 2001. Central general findings from a German perspective were, among others:

- The performance distribution is wider in Germany than in most OECD states – in the field of reading competencies it is the widest. There are particular problems at the lower end of the performance range. The problems which appear at the upper end are less pronounced.

- The correlation between social background and acquisition of competencies is statistically particularly close in Germany in all three domains investigated. In the reading literacy domain, it is closest in comparison to all other OECD states.

- The international comparison shows that there is no trade off between securing an overall high performance level and narrowing the achievement variance if all performance groups are appropriately supported.

- Young people from families with a migrant background – particularly those families who speak a language other than German at home – on average remain clearly below the competence level achieved by 15-year-olds both of whose parents were born in Germany. That applies not just to reading competencies, but – in some instances in increased measure – to other learning areas as well. Support for pupils from families of comparable migrant groups is partly more successful in other countries than it is in Germany.

One of the greatest challenges facing the German education system therefore is to break through the dependence of educational success on social background and to give all children and young people – no matter from which background – the best educational opportunities in school, work or higher education. This affects, above all, young people from migrant families. The demographic changes, too, represent one of the major challenges facing the German education system in view of the dynamic international developments.

Against the background of demographic developments, Germany must make a sustained effort to make full use of all its skills reserves. The improvement of permeability within and between the educational areas and the recognition of skills which have already been acquired (recognition of prior learning) are central concerns also in the promotion of equal opportunities.

V. Awareness-raising

33. In its decision 6.3 taken at the 170 session, the Executive Board has expressed its concern as regards the low level of ratification of the Convention and underlined the need for awareness-raising and a ratification campaign. Given the importance of normative action at the national level, the Convention must be given wide dissemination, with the support of National Commissions.

34. Please describe the steps taken towards creating greater awareness about the fundamental principles of non-discrimination and of equality of educational opportunities enshrined in the Convention and in the Recommendation, including their translation into national and possibly local languages and their dissemination at national/local level. Please specify activities developed/supported by the National Commission for promoting non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities and for raising debate on critical issues, recognizing these principles as important aspects of the right to education.

The German Commission for UNESCO is engaged in a number of various activities promoting non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities in Germany.

With a view to fostering the implementation of the United Nations Literacy Decade in Germany, the German Commission for UNESCO and the Federal Literacy Association (Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung e.V.) founded in 2003 an "Alliance for Literacy and Basic Education in Germany" (Bündnis für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung in Deutschland). Apart from the initiators, several other partners engaged in the field of literacy are members of the alliance, such as the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE), the German Association of Adult Education Colleges (DVV), the Trade Union for Education and Science (GEW), and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). The Alliance aims at raising public awareness of the importance of Literacy and Basic Education. It supports the national implementation of the Decade by

- Organizing different campaigns and events
- Coordinating German contributions to the Literacy Decade
- Encouraging private and public partners to contribute, with their own programmes, to the improvement of educational opportunities for adult illiterates

Special emphasis is put on improving

- the prevention of illiteracy in non-formal education, in families and in primary and secondary education
- the quality of teacher training
- the quality and quantity of literacy courses

In this context, an outstanding example of the work of the members of the "Alliance for Literacy and Basic Education" is for instance the APOLL Project (Alpha-Portal Literacy Learning) which aims at using the potential of the new media to enhance the media skills of functional adult illiterates. APOLL developed the first e-learning portal in the world for reading and writing ("www.ich-will-schreiben-lernen.de") which is specially designed for the target group. Participants can either register for on-line literacy courses or access the portal anonymously and choose their own curriculum. All learners benefit from the support of on-line tutors. In a second

phase, the project is now being further developed and will shortly also comprise internet courses in arithmetic and English (www.zweite-chance-online.de).

In the field of special needs education, the German Commission for UNESCO supports the work of the non-profit-making organization "Toys for Children's Rehabilitation" (Fördern durch Spielmittel – Spielzeug für behinderte Kinder e.V.), which is one of its members. The association is engaged in the development, testing and dissemination of toys for children with mental and/or physical disabilities. The association has been regularly organizing international UNESCO Creativity Workshops for teachers, designers, craftsmen, students and parents, where new toys are developed in cooperation with disabled children and adults.

In the context of the right to education, the German Commission for UNESCO has been fostering the debate on the national level in an inclusive manner, together with the German Institute for Human Rights, the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education at the University of Magdeburg and several non-governmental institutions organized in the platform "Forum Menschenrechte" ('Forum on Human Rights) by

- Translating and distributing the Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (together with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany)
- Editing a booklet entitled "Standards of human rights education in schools" in the German context of standards based education (together with the Working Group Human Rights Education of the "Forum Menschenrechte")
- Offering seminars on upfront Human Rights Education to all German Länder (together with the Working Group Human Rights Education of the "Forum Menschenrechte")
- Promoting new forms of trainings on Human Rights Education via the Internet and through innovative train-the-trainer concepts

In addition, the Commission maintains international dialogue, e.g. via discussions with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.

The German ASP network is also very active in the field of promoting non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities.

1. With regard to children and young adults with migration backgrounds
    - German language courses for mothers of children and young adults with migration backgrounds
    - Older students assist and support younger students with deficits in their proficiency in German
    - Additional classes (mainly German language courses) for children and young adults with migration background
    - Mother languages classes (e.g. Polish, Turkish, Albanian, Russian etc.) are treated as equal subjects for children with migration background
    - Specifically designed preparatory classes to promote the integration of children and young adults with a migration background

To increase their effectiveness, such initiatives are accompanied by

- the implementation of intercultural learning as an emphasis in the school's agenda; the consideration of intercultural learning in classroom teaching (addressing cultural similarities and differences, e.g. with respect to different cultural perspectives); the promotion of a culture of understanding between cultures and nations in schools
- consistent human rights education (particularly with respect to human dignity as one of the core themes of the UNESCO ASP network)
- the integration of the students' culture of origin into classroom teaching
- the invitation of guests from other countries to participate in events or teach in classes
- international parents' evenings
- cooperative initiatives between schools and the local public, e.g. events to promote intercultural contacts and to present background information about other cultures

2. With regard to children and young adults with special needs
   - Inclusion of students with special needs into regular classes in primary schools (promotion of inclusive education)
   - Cooperative projects between students from special needs schools and general schools

   Human Rights Education, in particular with respect to issues of human dignity as one of the main foci of the ASP network, plays a crucial role in this context.