As part of its work programme Education and Training (ET2020), the EU also deals with early-childhood education issues. Its most recent initiative presented in May 2018 was a proposal for a Council Recommendation on quality early childhood education and care. The quality framework presented is the result of an increasingly internationalised (European) dialogue on early childhood education: it was produced by the European Commission’s thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care with the participation of the Member States. The aim of the Quality Framework is to support the development of the quality of early childhood education in the EU Member States. Joint objectives for early childhood education were also proposed.

European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder [1] (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK) first presented its general outlines on the European dimension in the school system in June 1978 in its Recommendation “Europe in the classroom” (Europa im Unterricht), which was amended in December 1990. In May 2008, against the background of developments in Europe, the Standing Conference adopted an update to the Recommendation under the title Europabildung in der Schule (educating about Europe in schools). Under the amended version the school has the task, by addressing key aspects and content of European history and the process of European integration, of developing skills and attitudes which contribute to a successful life in Europe.

Pupils should

- develop an understanding of the geographical diversity of Europe with its physical, social and economic structures
- compare and evaluate the political and social structures of Europe against the background of its similarities and differences
- assess the importance of the functions and procedures of European institutions
- examine the influential historical forces in Europe, especially the development of European legal and political thinking and the ideal of freedom, and draw conclusions about current developments and personal courses of action
- appreciate the lines of development, features and evidence of a common European culture notwithstanding its diversity and be prepared to defend them
- recognise the cultural richness which the linguistic diversity of Europe represents
- appreciate the history of European thinking and the efforts made towards integration by the states of Europe
- recognise the need for the balance of interests and joint action in Europe to resolve economic, environmental, social and political problems within the European states and beyond
- develop an awareness of and willingness for the mobility essential in a Europe which is growing closer together, in study, training and work
• be aware of the importance of their own commitment to a democratic Europe and a peaceful world

All subjects should, as a rule, contribute to the development of the European dimension in teaching and education. Primarily these topics are integrated into subjects of a social and economic nature and into German and foreign-language lessons. A range of specific goals and topics as well as information about suitable subjects, useful forms of work and desirable attitudes have been included into the education plans and curricula of the various school types and levels. Interdisciplinary and multilateral projects and school competitions, exchanges and school twinning projects, as well as the exchange of teachers and foreign language assistants, can be used to develop the European dimension. Within this framework, greater importance is attached to the new information technologies, which permit encounters, collaboration and exchange. The great importance of European issues is also reflected in school books. In addition, the institutes for school development of the Länder and the Central Offices of the Länder for Civic Education (Landeszentralen für politische Bildung) have produced recommendations and also material packs for teachers.

In order to develop the European learning theme further, the recommendation adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder proposes, among other measures, the following:

• implementing the recommendation of the Standing Conference on Europabildung in der Schule (educating about Europe in schools) when amending curricula and educational standards
• implementing pilot projects to promote Europabildung in der Schule in classroom teaching and school
• taking the European dimension of foreign language skills into account in teacher training
• implementing further and continuing training measures for teaching staff on the theme “Europe” and on the European dimension in classroom teaching
• upholding the test criterion “European dimension in classroom teaching” when approving teaching and learning materials
• promoting and applying the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP)
• promoting bilingual teaching
• promoting project work on European themes and with European school partners

In a globalised world, intercultural competences are increasingly important as key qualifications for all children and young people. The Standing Conference therefore emphasised, in its December 2013 amended recommendation Interkulturelle Bildung und Erziehung in der Schule (Intercultural Education at School) the potentials of cultural diversity, and developed cornerstones for the work at schools which are rounded out by suggestions for educational administrations and for cooperation with non-school partners. Intercultural competence here is understood to not simply mean engaging with other languages and cultures but most of all the ability to consider one’s own perceptions of other people and to put them in context, and being aware of and reflecting on the social framework conditions in which these perceptions have developed.

For a few years now, German pupils and teachers have increasingly taken up the opportunities provided by the education programmes of the EU (Lifelong Learning Programme from 2007–2013 or Erasmus+ from 2014–2020) for the acquisition of subject-specific, methodical, linguistic and intercultural competences.

FOREIGN-LANGUAGE TEACHING makes a key contribution when it comes to learning about European neighbours and Europe’s common cultural legacy. It cultivates a willingness and an ability to communicate whilst imparting intercultural and linguistic and communication skills. Great importance
has traditionally been attached to foreign-language teaching in Germany and in recent years teaching of foreign languages has been both intensified and diversified.

In all Länder, foreign language teaching is already firmly established in the curriculum of the primary schools as compulsory subject in grades 3 and 4. This is partly in the form of cross-border regional projects to promote cooperation between schools. Foreign-language teaching, including terminology related to the professional field, is being stepped up at vocational schools. The number of pupils learning the less common foreign languages of Italian and Spanish has increased appreciably over the last years, and Danish, Dutch, Polish and Czech are taught in the relevant neighbouring regions. In December 2011 the Standing Conference adopted recommendations to strengthen foreign language skills (Empfehlungen zur Stärkung der Fremdsprachenkompetenz). The report by the Standing Conference Fremdsprachen in der Grundschule – Sachstand und Konzeptionen 2013 (foreign languages in primary school – state of play and concepts 2013) provides an overview of the areas of competence and expectations as regards competences in the curricula, and the range of languages on offer, and also the organisational structures of foreign language lessons in the primary schools of the different Länder.

Bilingual educational courses were first established at the Gymnasium and are now increasingly available at primary schools, Realschulen, types of school offering several different courses of education, and in the vocational education and training sector. In all Länder bilingual education is offered both as part of bilingual branches and as bilingual subject lessons, particularly in social sciences subjects. In all Länder bilingual education involves the languages English and French. More information can be found in the Standing Conference report Concepts for bilingual teaching (Konzepte für den bilingualen Unterricht) of October 2013.

The bilingual Franco-German course of education in which pupils aim to attain both the German Allgemeine Hochschulreife and the French Baccalauréat is a special variant of this bilingual concept, and is currently on offer at 74 German schools. The offers are to be expanded.

As part of the Committee on Innovation in Continuing Training (Innovationskreis berufliche Bildung), in 2007 the Federal Government and the social partners in 2007 set out guidelines for the sustainable organisation of vocational education. The opening up of the national training and further training rules to Europe was viewed as an important instrument to this end in safeguarding internationally sustainable qualifications. Courses of education which provide additional international qualifications are therefore particularly desired by all partners involved in vocational education and training. Corresponding offers can be researched in the database of the portal for duales Studium (dual studies) and additional qualifications in initial vocational education – AusbildungPlus – at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – BIBB).

In March 2015 the Standing Conference adopted a new “Rahmenvereinbarung über die Berufsschule” (framework agreement on the Berufsschule). In order to be able to better react to the requirements of a globalised working world, the opportunities to spend time abroad during education and training were greatly improved. These include foreign language teaching offers that build on the skills acquired at general education schools and extend these for the specific vocation. By sitting an examination, interested trainees can obtain a certificate documenting the language level achieved in accordance with the specifications of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

**Partnerships and networks**

Under the key action 2 “Zusammenarbeit zur Förderung von Innovation und zum Austausch von bewährten Verfahren” (cooperation to promote innovation and exchange proven methods) Erasmus+
promotes one to three-year strategic partnerships in different types of projects and with a combination of cost modules in the school sector. In Germany the campaign is organised by the Educational Exchange Service (Pädagogischer Austauschdienst – PAD) of the Secretariat of the Standing Conference. Not only schools and pre-school institutions can take part in "Strategic partnerships in the school sector" but also different protagonists with a thematic relationship to the school sector, for example further training institutes for teachers, institutions of higher education or government authorities. Projects that cover several educational areas with a thematic focus on the school sector are also possible. Institutions from at least three programme countries are usually involved in a strategic partnership.

The eTwinning network as part of the EU Erasmus+ programme allows teachers in all subjects, types of school and grades to make contact with partner schools throughout Europe and to realise internet-based teaching projects. Participation is free. eTwinning offers a protected learning environment with tools to realise media projects. Through the cooperation with partner classes in Europe, pupils can learn foreign languages authentically via eTwinning and improve their media competence. More than 15,000 teachers from around 6,850 schools are currently registered from Germany. Within the scope of European contact seminars and workshops, around 200 teachers from Germany were able to participate in continued education courses in 2017 and 2018 each.

In 2008 the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt) launched the initiative “Schools: Partners for the Future” (Schulen: Partner der Zukunft – PASCH). The initiative strengthens and connects a global network of around 2,000 partner schools at which German is taught to a significant degree. The aim is to promote pupils’ interest in Germany and the German language worldwide, and to win teachers, parents, head teachers and education authorities over to committing themselves to the German language and its permanent integration in the education system. The most important instrument for networking partner schools more firmly with each other and with schools in Germany is the website of the initiative, which serves as the central interactive platform of the PASCH network and connects 600,000 pupils worldwide. Networking opportunities that allow for the increasing number of alumni to keep in contact with each other after schooling and as an orientation aid for studying and training are offered by the platform www.pasch-alumni.de. The Federal Foreign Office coordinates the partner schools initiative and is implementing it in cooperation with the Central Agency for Schools Abroad (Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen – ZfA), the Goethe-Institut, the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – DAAD) and the PAD. Partner schools include around 140 German schools abroad (Auslandsschulen), and about 1,100 schools in the national education systems of partner countries which offer the German Language Certificate (Deutsches Sprachdiplom – DSD) of the Standing Conference. The Level I DSD examination verifies a command of the German language to the A2/B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). A DSD I serves as proof of the necessary German language skills for admission to a Studienkolleg in Germany. The Level II DSD examination verifies a command of the German language to the B2/C1 level of the CEFR. A DSD III serves as proof of the necessary German language skills for admission to a degree course at an institution of higher education in Germany. Furthermore, around 600 schools overseen by the Goethe-Institute are part of the PASCH network, and have introduced or wish to expand German as an academic subject (“Fit-Schools”) as well as 27 German Profile Schools. The PAD is responsible for long-term school partnerships which are intended to make a contribution to promoting the teaching of German at foreign schools, and promote interest in modern Germany and its society. Targeted placement measures and a virtual marketplace for school partnerships have facilitated the development of numerous partnerships with schools abroad.

The PAD also supports schools that organise international exchange schemes by cooperating with foundations. For example, the initiative “JIA School Partnerships” (JIA-Schulpartnerschaften) of the Deutsche Telekom Foundation supports schools who organise MINT-based projects with schools in
Eastern Europe. Together with the Central Agency for German Schools Abroad (Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen – ZfA) and the PAD, the Deutsche Telekom-Stiftung (German Telekom Foundation) helps future MINT teachers from eastern Europe sit in on classes. The Mercator School Partnership Fund Germany-China (Schulpersonenfonds Deutschland-China) of the Mercator Foundation supports lighthouse projects in the field of German-Chinese school exchanges.

Schools abroad are a central element of foreign cultural and educational policy. The guidelines for schools abroad are encounter between the society and the culture of Germany and the host country, securing and expanding on school provision for German children abroad, and promoting German teaching in foreign school systems. The German schools abroad, the schools offering the German Language Certificate of the Standing Conference, and the “FIT Schools” overseen by the Goethe Institute, together teach over half a million pupils with pupil figures are rising constantly.

Further information on the placement of volunteers within the framework of the voluntary service "kulturweit" and on the exchange of volunteers with France in cooperation with the German-French Youth Organisation (Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk – DFJW) by the PAD can be found in the section on mobility in adult education [11].