

A new milestone: the German Bundestag decides to strengthen German schools abroad

Berlin/WDA, 07.11.2019¹

The German Bundestag has emphasised the exemplary role of German schools abroad in the PASCH network and has made 16 demands to strengthen German schools abroad. These include in particular a call to improve the quality of public/private partnerships by dividing the work involved and a review of how statutory rights can be extended to all German schools abroad. The decision takes up the central demands issued by the World Association of German Schools Abroad (Weltverband Deutscher Auslandsschulen e.V., WDA) and addresses the WDA's call to renew the last resolution on German schools abroad adopted by the German Bundestag in 2008.

On the evening of 7 November 2019, following an in-depth debate, the German Bundestag adopted the joint motion tabled by the CDU/CSU, SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary groups 'To further strengthen and develop German schools abroad on a broad scale'. The CDU/CSU, SPD, Alliance 90/The Greens and the FDP parliamentary groups were in favour of the decision. The Left parliamentary group abstained from voting and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) voted against the motion. The decision was an outstanding milestone for German schools abroad. The last resolution adopted by the German Bundestag in this regard was in 2008.

Exemplary role of German schools abroad in the PASCH network highlighted

The German Bundestag emphasises that German schools abroad play an exemplary role within the network of PASCH schools. German schools abroad are the top priority, according to the decision. Referencing the study commissioned by the WDA entitled 'Global value creation: quantifying the value contribution of German schools abroad' from 2018, the decision also recognises schools abroad as a primary economic factor – for Germany and the country where the school is located. With respect to the opportunities offered by the new skilled worker immigration law (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz), the pupils at German schools abroad — who currently number more than 80,000 — are particularly well-qualified.

16 demands to strengthen German schools abroad

The German Bundestag's decision addresses what the WDA considers to be necessary core issues in 16 demands. Among other things, these should make funding more flexible, increase the level of support for inclusion and social integration, and better promote early childhood education and vocational training. It is also crucial for the necessary conditions to be created to ensure that a sufficient number of teachers from Germany remain in post at German schools abroad, particularly head teachers. This means the framework conditions must be sufficiently attractive.

¹ <https://www.auslandsschulnetz.de/wws/6073702.php>

Call to improve the quality of public/private partnerships by dividing the work involved

The role civil society plays for German schools abroad has been particularly acknowledged by the members of parliament. The decision emphasises that schools abroad have been able to continue to grow only as a result of local civil society initiatives and while ensuring quality and economic efficiency. The decision calls for the German government to 'further improve the quality of public/private partnerships, strive for flexible solutions for collaborative management of the school board and school administration adapted to the relevant school's situation and to facilitate further professionalisation of school management through the division of tasks.' This creates a clear basis for a consensual solution as part of the discussion on expanded quality management, which is something the WDA seeks.

Extension of statutory rights to all German schools abroad under review

Finally, the decision recognises the central weak point of the Law on the Promotion of German Schools Abroad (Gesetz über die Förderung Deutscher Auslandsschulen, ASchulG). It calls for proposals to be developed as part of the evaluation of the Law on the Promotion of German Schools Abroad with respect to how the right to statutory funding can be extended to all German schools abroad in order to end the 'two-tier system' that has arisen between schools receiving statutory and voluntary funding. The WDA's central demand has now accordingly been addressed by members of parliament.

The WDA's call to renew the German Bundestag's 2008 resolution taken up

At the opening of the 2018 World Congress of German Schools Abroad, the WDA recalled the German Bundestag's last resolution from 2008 entitled 'Strengthening and developing German schools abroad'. It pointed out that the key points of the resolution had lost none of their relevance. On the contrary, it highlighted how important it is to nail our colours to the mast together in times when some are questioning diversity and openness. 'We have called on everyone to help renew and implement this commitment, and we have not given up,' stated Dr Peter Fornell, WDA President. 'On behalf of the board, I would like to thank all members of parliament, representatives of the funding bodies and members for their efforts. We can only achieve such extraordinary milestones together.' With the current decision, the German Bundestag has now renewed its commitment from 2008.

The debate in the German Bundestag

Thomas Erndl (CSU), deputy chairman of Germany's subcommittee for cultural relations and education policy, put forward the motion and concluded in his speech:

'Ladies and gentlemen, I can only encourage you to visit a German school abroad every time you travel abroad. There you will find highly committed teachers, as well as parents on the boards of trustees, who ensure that young people remain positively connected to our country for life and form additional links in our global network. Strengthening German schools abroad is a matter of economic policy, integration policy, employment policy, social policy, peace policy, and so much more.'

With regards to the important issue of pension allowance for teachers on leave, he is confident that 'from the 2020/21 school year, we can ensure equality when it comes to pension law so that teachers abroad are not financially disadvantaged.' In terms of support for schools abroad based on the Law on the Promotion of German Schools

Abroad, it should be reviewed 'whether rigid support based on annual accounts should continue to be the appropriate benchmark in future'.

Ulla Schmidt (SPD), who spoke on the record, emphasised:

'the quality of German schools abroad depends entirely on the quality of the teachers and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified staff. I am therefore very pleased that we have now reached an agreement with the states that from the 2020/21 school year, half of the pension allowance for all teachers on leave will be borne by federal and state governments each, and that this will create a basis of equal treatment between teachers abroad and official civil servants on leave in terms of pension law. Our aim remains the same – to ensure that teachers who go to teach abroad are not worse off than they are in Germany from a financial perspective.'

AfD spokesman Norbert Kleinwächter rejected the motion for his parliamentary group. He emphasised the importance of German schools abroad, but criticised the apparent lack of financial arrangements that would support the motion. According to him, the motion 'oozed ideological arrogance'.

Attachment:

Motion tabled by the CDU/CSU, SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary groups to further strengthen and develop German schools abroad on a broad scale, Printed paper 19/14814

German Bundestag

Printed paper 19/14818¹

19th electoral term

6 November 2019

Motion

**tabled by the CDU/CSU, SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens
parliamentary groups**

**To further strengthen and develop German schools
abroad on a broad scale**

The Bundestag is requested to adopt the following:

I. The German Bundestag notes:

In a world that seems turned upside down, in which old orders are breaking down and populism and nationalism are gaining ground even at the heart of Europe, Germany's cultural relations and education policy (AKBP) is becoming increasingly important, giving hope and showing the way forward. It highlights the unifying quality of an exchange as equals and creates a space that promotes open dialogue with civil societies. And it is based on viewing cultural diversity as something positive. Different perspectives and angles increase the level of creativity desperately needed to solve urgent problems in the age of globalisation.

Education is the key to social inclusion and is an increasingly important resource. Knowledge of other cultures and languages helps people to find their place in a rapidly changing world. It is important to convey at an early stage of education that diversity of people and cultures represents an opportunity to solve common challenges by working together.

This includes school education in particular. Schools shape pupils for their entire lives. With this in mind, the German international school system has undergone fundamental changes over the past ten years and has developed into a system of joint learning.

German schools abroad are the top priority within these changes. Originally intended as schools for expatriates, today over 90 of 140 schools are 'encounter schools', which means they are attended mainly by local pupils.

A global network of more than 2,000 schools has been established through the PASCH partnership initiative, which includes German schools abroad. Thanks to PASCH, over 600,000 pupils worldwide are currently learning German and forming a close connection to our country.

The network of German schools abroad is a particularly successful tool for the AKBP. Alumni of German schools abroad have been our reliable and trustworthy contacts in many countries for decades. Because of local civil society initiatives, this network has grown in recent years while still maintaining its level of quality and efficiency.

Education is also a key economic factor. The international education market is growing strongly. This also applies to the school sector, which is important simply

¹ <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/148/1914818.pdf>

because it shapes pupils' subsequent decisions on where to study and work. The immigration of skilled workers to Germany will increase in the decades to come. With respect to the possibilities offered by the new skilled worker immigration law (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz), the pupils at German schools abroad — the number of which currently stands at more than 80,000 — are particularly well-qualified to study at German universities, complete dual vocational training and spend part or all of their career in this country. They can also apply the knowledge they acquire in Germany when they return to their home countries, thereby creating new impetus for local development.

German schools abroad make a significant contribution to value creation for Germany and on a global level. According to a study released by the economic research institute WifOR GmbH 'Global value creation: quantifying the value contribution of German schools abroad' dated June 2018, German schools abroad make a direct contribution to value creation to the amount of EUR 462 million— and even contribute a 'value creation stimulus' totalling EUR 1.2 billion through multiplier effects.

Parents who send their children to German international schools are making long-term connections. They have to be able to trust that the international school runs in a stable way and at a high level of quality throughout their child's school career. This long-term focus must go hand-in-hand with stable funding for German schools abroad. It was therefore logical to introduce a statutory right to funding for schools through the Law on the Promotion of German Schools Abroad (Gesetz über die Förderung Deutscher Auslandsschulen, ASchulG).

II. The German Bundestag welcomes the following:

The Federal Foreign Office is evaluating the Law on the Promotion of German Schools Abroad this year. The objective of this evaluation is to assess the effects of the law, which came into force on 1 January 2014, and to draw conclusions.

The most important determinants of the quality of German schools abroad are the teachers who work there. Their task is not only to provide first-class teaching, but also to convey an up-to-date and diverse image of Germany. This is mainly achieved by employing teachers who are granted leave from federal state school systems. This being the case, the necessary conditions must be created to ensure that a sufficient number of such teachers remain in post at German schools abroad now and in the future.

Modernising the guidelines for granting funding to teachers working in the international school system was a step in the right direction. This created a reference framework that adapts to changing living and working conditions while at the same time bringing transparency to others working abroad through the alignment with many regulations in the Federal Wage Act (Bundesbesoldungsgesetz). However, the shortage of teachers, predominantly in STEM subjects (STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics) raises the question whether this reference framework is still adequate.

This particularly applies to head teachers, who play a key role in the German schools abroad. They require strong intercultural knowledge and managerial skills in order to promote the development of German schools abroad in close cooperation with school boards. In order for the necessary number of appropriately qualified head teachers to be available for this task, their working conditions must be sufficiently attractive.

Further training for teachers, particularly local teachers employed by German schools abroad in the countries concerned, remains a particularly effective

measure to assure quality in schools. The Central Agency for German Schools Abroad (ZfA) has significantly increased its training activities over the past few years. It is important to continue along this path.

Returning teachers give impetus to our school education system and have experience in dealing with pupils from different cultural backgrounds. They are an asset to the German education system and increasingly diverse classrooms. It is therefore important to offer them good career prospects once they return to the German domestic school system.

German schools abroad are an important part of the PASCH network—Schools: Partners for the Future. The joint event of the World Congress of German Schools Abroad and the ten-year anniversary of the PASCH network last year encapsulated this. German schools abroad play an exemplary role in this network, giving impetus to learn the German language abroad.

III. Within the available budget, the German Bundestag calls on the Federal Government

1. to review the network of German schools abroad for any gaps and, where these exist, to make efforts to support local private initiatives to establish German schools abroad;
2. as part of the evaluation, to review whether the number of teachers stated in the administrative arrangement for the Law on the Promotion of German Schools Abroad can be made more flexible and not solely dependent on the number of top sets, to better meet the needs of growing schools in particular;
3. as part of the evaluation, to review how more education opportunities can be created at German schools abroad through more funding for early years education;
4. to examine whether, and possibly also how, schools that offer the multilingual International Baccalaureate in German can be strengthened;
5. to continue to boost the appeal of German schools abroad for teachers from school systems in the German federal states, where particular attention should be paid to the appeal of senior management roles;
6. to continue to improve how German teachers abroad are prepared for their work in German schools abroad and to enhance provision of the corresponding preparatory courses;
7. to work towards covering or reducing school fees for German schools abroad through scholarships or other forms of funding, thereby strengthening the social dimension of such schools;
8. to pay more attention to inclusion, building on the work already carried out in this regard at German schools abroad;
9. to include the quality of support for inclusion at schools abroad in the evaluation and, if necessary, to increase funding amounts for inclusion and social issues;
10. to include support for vocational training at schools abroad in the evaluation, with the aim of strengthening it where the framework conditions are suitable and where sustainable vocational training appears to show promise;
11. to invest more in connections with German companies as part of this evaluation in order to provide needs-based training geared towards the job;
12. to embrace international competition in the education system more readily than before and to actively shape it, whereby increased advertising for German schools abroad is of great importance — including advertising to recruit staff. It is important to note the excellent quality of teaching at the German schools abroad as well as the teaching of the German language,

- internationally recognised German school-leaving certificates and the good training and study conditions in Germany;
13. to further improve the quality of public/private partnerships and to strive for flexible solutions adapted to the situation of the respective school for collaborative management of the school board and school administration and to also facilitate the further professionalisation of school management through the division of tasks;
 14. to include in the evaluation the question of whether qualification-based funding under the ASchulG is sufficient to flexibly respond to rapidly changing challenges in schools abroad and to crisis situations. It should be ensured that the particular situations of schools in crisis zones (e.g. in Erbil) are sufficiently taken into consideration in the evaluation;
 15. within the scope of the evaluation of the Law on the Promotion of German Schools Abroad, to develop proposals on how the claim to statutory funding can be extended to all German schools abroad in order to end the 'two-tier system' that has arisen between schools receiving statutory and voluntary funding;
 16. to extend the planned evaluation of the Law on the Promotion of German Schools Abroad to all relevant aspects and to report swiftly on the findings.

Berlin, 6 November 2019

**Ralph Brinkhaus, Alexander Dobrindt and the parliamentary group Dr Rolf Mützenich and the parliamentary group
Katrin Göring-Eckardt, Dr Anton Hofreiter and the parliamentary group**