

Taking German Language Education to the next level How to enhance cooperation at state level

- Stärkung der Kooperation zwischen Bundesländern und US-Bundesstaaten-

AATG-Konferenz 2026

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**KULTUSMINISTER
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Standing Conference of the Ministers
of Education and Cultural Affairs
of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany

AATG July 12, 2026
Taking German Language Education to the next level – How to
enhance cooperation at state level

Educational Exchange Service of the Standing Conference
of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the
Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK)

Legal framework

Article 30 of the Basic Law:
Cultural sovereignty falls to the Länder
(countries)

- A consequence of German history



Establishment and composition

- The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) is a (voluntary) consortium of the ministers or senators of the federal states responsible for education and schooling, institutes of higher education and research and cultural affairs.
- The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs was founded in 1948 on 19th and 20th February 1948 (thus founded before Federal Republic of Germany)

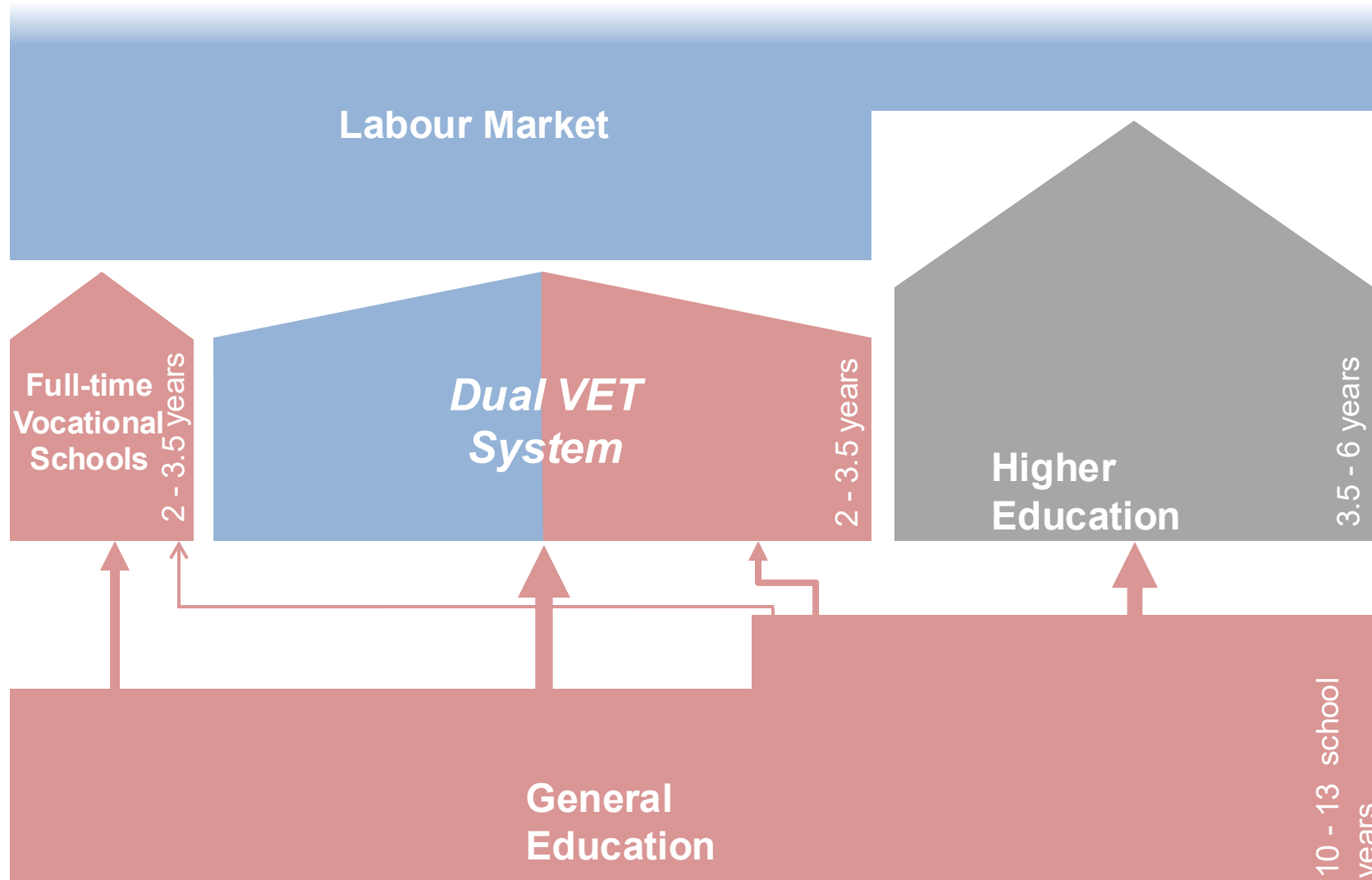
Organs and committees

- **Plenum:**
The Plenum is made up of the ministers or senators responsible for educational and cultural affairs in the 16 federal states.
- **President:**
The President chairs the plenary sessions and acts as the external representative of the Conference.
- **Committees and commissions**
The committees and commissions facilitate the exchange of information and networking between the representatives of the federal states and carry out preparatory work for decisions to be taken by the Plenum.
[For instance:](#)
[School Committee and Committee for Vocational Education and Training](#)

Secretariat

- carries out the day-to-day work of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs.
- has offices in Berlin and Bonn.
- is headed by a General Secretary, who also has a Permanent Representative.
- includes the Central Office for Foreign Education which is the Centre of Excellence of the federal states for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications in Germany.

Basic structure of the qualification system in Germany



Structure of the German School System

The German school system is structured in

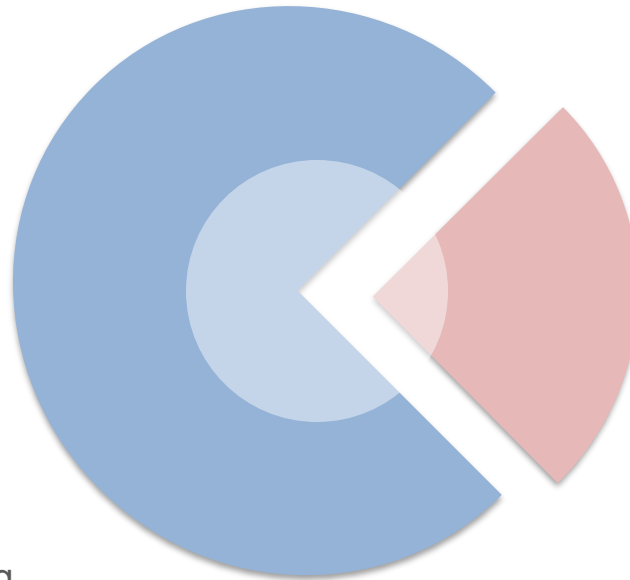
- the elementary school
- the primary school (age 6-10/12)
- the secondary school I (age 10/12 to 16)
- the secondary school II (age 16 to 18/19)

VET within the “dual system”

**70 % of VET
in company**

In-company training

- Legal basis: Vocational Education and Training Act (federal law)
- Follows in-company training standards (minimum standards) defined in "training regulations"
- Company provides systematic training under real-life working conditions (in-company trainer, up-to-date equipment, etc.)



**30 % of VET
in vocational
(part-time) school**

Vocational school education

- Legal basis: School laws of the Länder (compulsory school attendance)
- Follows vocational education standards defined in the "framework curriculum"
- Schools offer lessons in vocational (2/3) and general subjects (1/3)

Educational Exchange Service / PAD

The Pädagogischer Austauschdienst (PAD) of the Kultusministerkonferenz

The Pädagogischer Austauschdienst is the sole public organisation in Germany working on behalf of the Federal States to promote international exchange and cooperation in the school sector. The PAD is a department of the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kultusministerkonferenz).

Educational Exchange Service / PAD

The PAD's remit and responsibilities include:

- Providing information and advice for people and institutions in the school sector
- Linking and supporting people and institutions in the school sector
- Planning, implementing, evaluating and developing programmes
- Designing and developing new exchange programmes
- Providing information for their target audience as well as members of the public who are interested in the schemes



Our Programs with the US

- Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Director of the AATG and the general secretary of the Secretariat in February 2022
- German American Partnership Program (GAPP)
- Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program (in coop. w. Fulbright Germany)
- Deutschland Plus
- Summer Study Program (American Association of Teachers of German)

German-American Partnership Program (GAPP)



- Founded in 1972 by Goethe-Institut Boston
- Administered by Goethe Institut NY (American side) and, since 1983, by PAD (German side)
- Allows high school students from America and Germany to visit partner schools, live with host families, become immersed in their host country's culture, and form international friendships
- Provides joint grants by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. State Department
- Only short-term German-American exchange program to receive financial support from the U.S. federal government. As a result, it is the most extensive bilateral exchange program between the United States and any foreign country
- In the past 50 years, more than 400.000 students have participated



US-Teaching Assistant Programs - statistics



D-USA	2018	13
USA-D	2018	156
D-USA	2019	12
USA-D	2019	54
MYG	2019	14
D-USA	2020	6
USA-D	2020	144
MYG	2020	15
D-USA	2021	12
USA-D	2021	137
MYG	2021	14
D-USA	2022	11
USA-D	2022	163
MYG	2022	15

Deutschland Plus



- Founded in 1959 by the German Foreign Office (sister program to International Award Program)
- 3-week scholarship program for high school pupils between 15 and 17 years of age (18 nations / ca. 450 pupils)
- 2 weeks' stay with a German host family, attendance of a German comprehensive school (plus separate lessons in German as a foreign language) combined with a cultural program visiting Berlin for a week
- Administered by PAD
- After restructuring 4 courses with 12 scholarships (including travel costs from NYC)
- The courses are accompanied by a chaperone (teacher of German, also selected and prepared by the AATG)

Summer Study Abroad Program



- Founded in 2021 / 2022 by PAD and AATG
- 3-week program for high school pupils between 15 and 17 years of age
- 2 weeks' stay with a German host family, attendance of the German school (plus separate lessons in German as a foreign language) combined with a cultural program visiting a major German city for a week (Leipzig in 2022)
- Objectives: motivating to keep studying German, fostering intercultural awareness, making a trip to Germany accessible regardless of income, performance etc.
- Financed by the AATG; various grants on offer, but also open to paying participants
- Administered jointly by the AATG and PAD
- 2022: 6 courses with 12 places (various US scholarship opportunities) the program is destined to grow => big demand
- The courses are accompanied by a chaperone (teacher of German, also selected and prepared by the AATG)



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Thank you for your attention!

Questions?

GATE

GOETHE-INSTITUT GERMAN AMERICAN TEACHER EXCHANGE
TRANSATLANTISCHES AUSTAUSCHPROGRAMM FÜR
LEHRERINNEN UND LEHRER



Sebastian Vötter
Leiter Spracharbeit Nordamerika

**GOETHE
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Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



Präsenztreffen der Kohorte im Goethe-Institut WDC (Oktober 2025)



Zusammenarbeit mit Kollegen aus NRW und Abstimmung der Ziele



Möglichkeiten zum persönlichen Networking,
zum Knüpfen von Beziehungen und zum
Gedankenaustausch