



Peer Review on Early School Leaving

Background paper: BERLIN, GERMANY

Submitted: March 2013

1 Main characteristics of the education and training system in Berlin

Germany's education system is determined by its federal structure which consists of 16 so called 'Länder' (singular: Land). For school education, the national/federal level has no competence, and school education is differently organised in each of the 16 Länder.

The participant in this Peer Review is the Land of Berlin¹ (not the whole of Germany). The information below relates to Berlin specifically.

The length of compulsory education in Berlin starts at the age of 6 and lasts for 10 school years. Thus, the age at which compulsory education ends is typically 16. Different types of upper-secondary qualifications exist in Berlin, depending on the different main education pathways followed²:

- *Gymnasium*³ offers the qualification of 'Abitur' – which is the classic academically-oriented qualification. *Berufliches Gymnasium* is a type of Gymnasium (Vocational gymnasium, dual education with academic and vocational contents) offering the qualification of vocational 'Abitur'.
- *Integrierte Sekundarschule* - Integrated Secondary School (ISS) is a Berlin-specific type of school. With the introduction of ISS, Berlin closed the previous schools such as *Hauptschule*, *Gesamtschule*, and *Realschule* where pupils were directed on the basis of their ability.
 - The ISS combines elements of academically oriented learning with vocational training and offers a range of qualifications of 'Berufsbildungsreife' (BB, vocational training certificate), 'Erweiterte Berufsbildungsreife' (eBB, extended vocational training certificate) and 'Mittlerer Schulabschluss' (MSA), as well as the possibility of completing the 'Abitur', i.e. the same *Abitur* as offered in the Gymnasium. A specific feature of the ISS is the dual learning (*duales lernen*) which combines learning in school with learning outside of the school (such as in companies, public authorities, welfare services) and thus provides individualised comprehensive pre-vocational education.
 - A special form of ISS is *Gemeinschaftschule* (Community school pilot project since 2008 with 20 schools in 2011/2012 school year) that aims to provide more individualised learning and offers all of the existing upper secondary qualifications.

It is noted that after primary school, pupils make their choice for learning either in Gymnasium or ISS (*Integrierte Sekundarschule*) based on the recommendation from the primary school.

A certain level of flexibility in terms of education pathways exists as young people who drop-out of education can return to education at a later stage. Special programmes exist to offer different secondary education pathways through day and evening classes at different education providers for young people and adults without school leaving certificates. Young people who leave school without a certificate can obtain such a certificate in the framework of an examination aimed specifically at non-pupils or within the framework of a vocational education pathway.

A specific characteristic within the education system in Berlin that is linked to ESL relates to the systematic follow-up of school absences as an early warning signal. Since February 2011, all Berlin schools have to inform parents about absent pupils on the first day of absence. In this context, electronic class journals are trialled, which inform parents in real time directly from the classroom. In cases of longer unexplained absences, cooperation with

¹ The Land of Berlin is hereafter referred to as Berlin.

² For more information see <http://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/bildungswege/index.html> (in German)

³ For full explanations of individual institutions and diplomas see <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Germany:Glossary>

physicians, social workers in the welfare department and school social pedagogues is initiated to ensure the well-being of a young person.

The key approach is to offer individual support and differentiated learning. Young people at risk of ESL have an opportunity after Year 8 to participate in special, very practical support measures and vocational orientation measures.

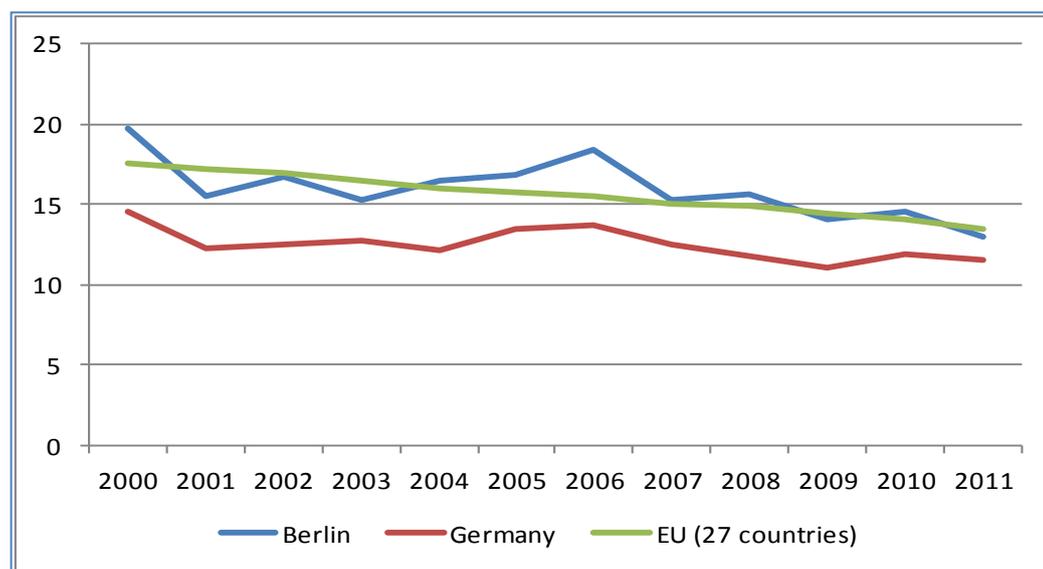
The National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) provides relevant information on educational trajectories and ESL. It tracks representative cohorts of students across Germany within all education pathways. As such, this approach provides comprehensive insights into the underlying success factors of the school system⁴.

2 Current situation, challenges and root causes of ESL

2.1 Scale of the problem – key challenges

The proportion of early school leavers in Berlin (Eurostat definition) was 13 % in 2011, which is above the EU target of 10 % of ESL (see Figure 2.1). The ESL proportion is higher in Berlin than in Germany overall (11.5 %), but is around the same as the EU-27 average (13.5 %). Noteworthy is the significant decline of ESL in Berlin of 34 % in the 2000-2011 period (this is a higher decline compared to declines in Germany and the EU-27 overall). This is a positive development, given that overall Germany is assessed as not making sufficient progress and is lagging behind in the minimum progress required for the EU27 to reach the headline target by 2020⁵.

Figure 2.1 Proportion of early school leavers, Berlin, Germany and EU-27, 2000-2011



Source: Eurostat, LFS⁶.

The official education statistics in Berlin have a different approach to measuring ESL, which is considered to be the number of school leavers without the school leaving certificate, reported by individual schools at the end of each school year (administrative statistics)⁷. In 2009, this was 10.7 % or 2,777 students in Berlin, compared to 7 % in Germany overall (based on data from school administrative statistics). In 2010/2011, the proportion was 9.2 %

⁴ See <https://www.neps-data.de/tabid/292/language/en-US> (in English)

⁵ Commission note on ESL Europe 2020:

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/21_early_school_leaving.pdf

⁶ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/main_tables

⁷ Bildungsbericht 2010, <http://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/bildungsstatistik/index.html>

and in 2011/2012 it was 7.1 %. This confirms the decreasing trend of ESL also noted in the Eurostat statistics.

Young males are particularly affected by early school leaving in Berlin (using the official Eurostat definition), compared to Germany overall (see Table 2.1). However, the difference between the proportion of male and female early school leavers is lesser in Berlin compared to the EU-27 average.

Table 2.1 Early school leavers, males and females, Berlin, Germany and EU-27, 2000-2011

	Males			Females			Difference between males and females 2009 (p.p.)
	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011	
Berlin	15.4	17.0	15.0	12.9	:	:	2.5
Germany	11.5	12.7	12.4	10.7	11.0	10.6	0.8
EU-27	16.3	16.0	15.3	12.5	12.1	11.6	3.8

Source: Eurostat, LFS⁸.

The official education statistics in Berlin also show that nationality and migration background play a significant role in the numbers of school leavers without the school leaving certificate. As illustrated in Table 2.2, in 2009, a quarter of such leavers were foreigners, and nearly half had a migration background (in Germany, this refers to second or third generation migrants who may have German citizenship).

Table 2.2 Early school leavers, nationality and migration factors, Berlin, 2009

	Nationality		Migration background	
	German	Foreigners	With migration background	Without migration background
Berlin	73.3	26.7	46.5	53.5

Source: Bildungsbericht, 2010.

2.2 Factors leading to ESL

The extent of early school leaving in Berlin is significantly affected by the overall economic and labour market situation in the city. Berlin is a city with 3.4 million inhabitants, containing a large proportion of immigrants⁹, its labour market is characterised by high unemployment rates and public budgets face significant problems with the decreasing tax base, lack of economic development and sustained need for transfers from the federal budget ('poor, but sexy' was for years the more or less official slogan of the town).

For example, only in the last 5 years Berlin's GDP per inhabitant exceeded the EU-27 average, and remains significantly below the overall value for Germany (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices, Euro per inhabitant in percentage of the EU average, 2006-2009

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Berlin	102	101	105	113
Germany	119	118	121	123
EU-27	100	100	100	100

⁸ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/main_tables

⁹ In Berlin, around a quarter of population has a migration background, see Bildungsbericht 2010.

Source: Eurostat.

Similarly, employment rates in Berlin exceed slightly the employment rate of the EU-27, but are significantly below the employment rates observed in the whole of Germany as shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Employment rates, Berlin, Germany and the EU, 2000-2011

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Berlin	60.4	60.2	60.1	58.0	57.9	58.9	60.0	62.4	62.9	65.2	65.6	66.9
Germany	65.3	65.7	65.4	64.9	64.3	66.0	67.5	69.4	70.7	70.9	71.1	72.5
EU-27	59.9	60.4	60.8	61.9	62.5	63.2	64.1	65.3	65.8	64.6	64.1	64.2

Source: Eurostat.

Youth unemployment and overall unemployment rates are also significantly higher in Berlin compared to the overall situation in Germany as can be seen in Table 2.5 and Table 2.6. However, both youth unemployment and overall unemployment rates are lower in Berlin compared to the average of EU-27. Also significant is the decrease of both youth unemployment rates and overall unemployment rates in Berlin, which mirrors similar decreases in all of Germany. However, both rates have increased in the EU-27.

Table 2.5 Unemployment rates 15-24 age group, Berlin and Germany, 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Berlin	21.2	17.9	17.5	16.7	13.4
Germany	11.9	10.5	11.2	9.9	8.6
EU-27	15.5	15.6	19.9	20.9	21.3

Source: Eurostat.

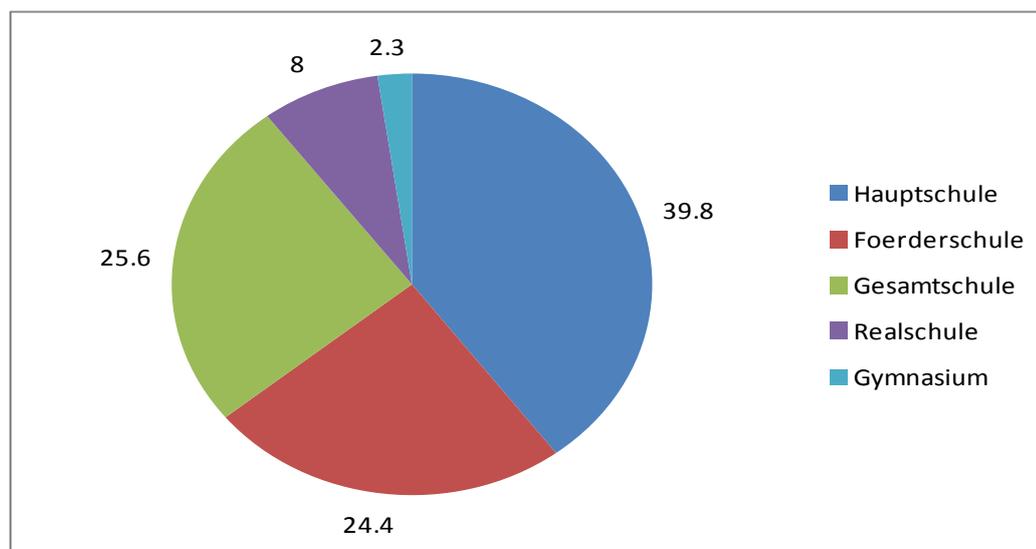
Table 2.6 Unemployment rates 20-64 age group, Berlin and Germany, 2009-2011

	2009	2010	2011
Berlin	13.8	13.2	12.0
Germany	7.7	7.1	5.9
EU-27	8.6	9.3	9.3

Source: Eurostat.

ESL affects primarily young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from migrant communities. This affects the type of support measures offered, amongst which language learning is very important to ensure a smooth transition to working life. Another factor is that often young people at risk of ESL have negative experiences of learning already in the primary school. Hence, a key challenge is to strengthen their existing competences through offering practical learning experiences very closely oriented to the world of work to offer future pathways for such young people.

Another factor at play is the link between ESL and early drop outs and certain types of schools in Berlin. Before the latest reform (the merger of different non-Gymnasium school forms), there was a clear prevalence of early school leavers in certain types of schools. The official education statistics in Berlin showed that the number of school leavers without a school leaving certificate differed significantly between the different types of school (see Figure 2.2), between very low rates in Gymnasium to high rates in Hauptschule in 2009.

Figure 2.2 Proportion of school leavers by type of school, Berlin, 2009


Source: Bildungsbericht 2010.

3 Policy approach to reduce ESL

3.1 Policy approach to early school leaving

At the national level in Germany, the target is to halve the number of school leavers without a certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*) by 2015 (from 8 % in 2008 to 4 % in 2015).¹⁰ The government is also seeking to reduce the number of young people who have not completed vocational education and training from its current figure of 17 % to 8.5 % by 2015.

The German EU 2020 national target is to reduce ESL to less than 10% (based on the Eurostat definition).

The key target groups at the national level are migrant young people coming into the education system. In terms of school sectors, the *Hauptschule* sector is being prioritised (compulsory schools at lower secondary level providing a basic general education).

At the national level in Germany, the strategy to support under-performing students has been adopted in 2010 and combines preventative, intervention and compensation measures as follows¹¹:

- Strengthen individualised support to learners: establish diagnostics, individual advice and guidance, additional support staff and others;
- Develop new forms of learning: develop learning oriented towards competences and acquisition of competences, new forms of learning closely linked with work experience, further development of all-day schools;
- Develop specific interventions showing good practice in tackling the problems;
- Integrate partners and cooperation networks: develop stronger partnerships with various stakeholders, including social workers, psychologists, employers, regional education networks and parents.

In Berlin, a range of preventative, intervention and compensation interventions are implemented to provide a far-reaching and comprehensive system to reduce ESL. The

¹⁰ ET 2020 National Reports, Germany 2012 national report, http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/progress-reports_en.htm

¹¹ ET 2020 National Reports, Germany 2012 national report, http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/progress-reports_en.htm

emphasis is on the prevention of ESL to ensure that ESL does not happen and that young people develop competences required in the world of work. The vocationally-oriented curriculum should prompt young people at the risk of ESL to identify and learn towards their future careers. Moreover, practical learning should enable continuing motivation to reach the desired certificate.

The system consists of several interacting levels of activity with a focus on individual professional orientation:

- For every learner individual support is offered where learning together for longer periods despite different learning levels helps to prevent ESL. The new structure of the school system (leaving just two forms of schools - Gymnasium and the ISS (*Integrierte Sekundarschule*) at the end of 2014/2015 school year) is expected to provide more individualised support and learning, together with the introduction of all-day schools and dual education with a strong vocational component. The introduction of all-day schools in all Berlin schools is expected to offer continuous and individual learning, including the offer of special support to reflect the individual needs of students.
- For young people who are able to learn (even independently) but do not want to learn in a standard school with a regular curriculum, the ISS (*Integrierte Sekundarschule*) offers a strong dual education approach, whereby students are exposed extensively to the world of work and practical experience. This is discussed in more detail below under 'Productive Learning' in section 3.2. In summary, 'Productive Learning' involves learning for 3 days a week in companies (without the support of social workers). Teachers at school are trained to support the individual curriculum and integrate the learning in companies with learning at school. In this approach, learners can achieve all qualifications offered in secondary education.
- For young people who are more wary of schooling, slow to learn (and learn better with practical examples) and have significant deficits in social competences, the approach of 'practical working groups' is available. This is an approach used in Years 9 and 10 of the ISS (*Integrierte Sekundarschule*). It offers every young person an individual curriculum based on their competences and interests. An individual learning plan is developed for each student. For such students, up to 3 days per week of learning can be provided outside the school environment with very practical work experience in a workshops or work learning environments offered by training providers (as opposed to actual workplaces at companies / other establishments as in the Productive Learning approach discussed above). The approach starts with the vocational orientation (getting to know three occupational fields), and continues with learning the basics in one chosen occupational field, deepening the vocational knowledge and transition to dual training place (or other further education offer). In the work learning environments, learners are supported by social pedagogues and receive practical vocational guidance / tasks.

Both Productive Learning and Practical working group methods offer very focussed practical learning, which provides for an alternative approach to learning, increases motivation and offers more realistic pathways for transition to working life through strengthened vocational orientation.

- For those young people whose support needs are very extensive and multiple, a special support system in cooperation with the youth welfare department and social workers (Cooperation school – youth care in day learning teams) exists. The aim here is to reintegrate such young people into the school life and / or prepare them to reach the first school diploma after compulsory education.

In addition special support measures are oriented towards the special needs of migrant young people:

- Language support measures are very important in the context of ESL in Berlin, where a large proportion of ESL are either foreigners or come from a migrant background. The spectrum of language support measures start in pre-school. A year before compulsory school starts at the age of 6, all children in Berlin take a German language test. Depending on the results, special language support is offered during the pre-school year.

During compulsory school education, a host of measures to support language learning are implemented, such as the professional development of teaching staff to deliver language training that is better integrated across the curriculum, extra language learning opportunities for individual students depending on the needs in addition to special summer camps oriented towards language learning.

- Special projects oriented towards the needs of migrant students also exist. For example, a special programme called *Förmig-Transfer* has been implemented between 2009 and 2013¹². It aims to tackle disadvantages faced by young people from migrant backgrounds through ensuring comprehensive language training across the curriculum. Teachers of all subjects are provided with training to integrate language learning into their subjects, and parents are also included in the process.

The key stakeholders involved in the implementation of various strands of activity to tackle ESL in Berlin are schools themselves, Land administration responsible for education matters (*Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft*), youth social workers (*Jugendsozialhilfe*), local and regional education networks and employer organisations. The prevention of ESL is foremost the objective of schools, which are supported by the Land government through advice and further training for teachers and school social workers. Cooperation with youth social workers in the welfare department helps to implement support measures which cannot be achieved in the regular learning pathways.

In the dual training pathway and vocational orientation and training, strong cooperation with employer organisations and individual employers is of key importance. Every year, a meeting of a working group is organised with the employer representative organisations to discuss special practice measures to prevent ESL.

3.2 Policy measures

3.2.1 Productive learning in the ISS

The main aim of the productive learning (*Produktives Lernen, PL*) concept in the ISS (*Integrierte Sekundarschule*) is the prevention and reduction in the number of school leavers without the school leaving certificate.

Productive Learning is offering for less well performing students in Years 9 and 10 in the ISS an individualised curriculum in the special form of dual education combining school-based academic education and practical work experience. Individualised learning is at the core of the PL concept, including learner carrying out self-chosen learning tasks and following individualised learning plans.

A key element of Productive Learning concept is 'learning in practice' (*Lernen in Praxis*) whereby the learner spends around a half of their weekly learning hours in 'practice learning places' in companies, social, political and cultural establishments and other workplaces undertaking practical learning tasks, including:

- Productive work-related tasks (*Produktive Tätigkeit in der Praxis*) which the learner determines and chooses individually,
- Learning German, English and maths in the work environment where the learner learns these subjects through tasks related to the practical work tasks in the actual workplace,
- Documenting and reflecting on the learning in practice, where the learner collects their work results in a portfolio format.

The learner chooses him/herself the practice learning place depending on their career orientation and preferences in a process which is supported by the school and practice learning places. Here, the cooperation between different stakeholders, including schools and employers is of key importance.

In the practice learning places, learners are supported by a mentor, usually a worker from the company. The Productive Learning concept foresees that learners are individually

¹² <http://www.foermig-berlin.de/>

advised by a teacher for one hour per week, including planning of learning tasks, and reflection of learning outcomes.

The other two elements of the Productive Learning concept are taking place at school:

- 'Communication group' where the learners plan the different aspects of 'learning in practice', as well as discuss, assess and deepen the experiences from the learning in practice. In the group, group projects on common themes are also undertaken.
- 'Subject related learning' where the learners study the subjects of English, maths and other subjects at school with a strong vocational and practical orientation differentiated reflecting the specific 'learning in practice' experiences of individual learners.

Teachers are trained especially to offer this learning concept in the ISS. In addition, funds are spent on the development of special working spaces and quality control. Partners from outside the schools, such as employers, support the implementation of the Productive Learning concept through offering work experiences. Often through work experience placements they develop actual dual learning places. One of the key challenges was to engage employers to participate in the Productive Learning concept, which was achieved through deepening existing cooperation links using previous cooperation experiences.

The results of the 2011/2012 academic year show that around 80 % of young people who took part in the Productive Learning concept achieved a school leaving certificate. This is considered to be a very positive result given the challenges faced by the Productive Learning participants. The approach shows that a very practical and individualised vocational orientation, practice-based and individualised learning of all subjects and cooperation with key partners (such as employers) can help young people at risk of ESL to consider their career and social aspirations more actively and positively.

3.2.2 Gemeinschaftsschule

One of the key recent developments in Berlin is the pilot project '*Gemeinschaftsschule*' (Community School) which is part of the new school system in Berlin¹³. The pilot project aims to introduce and enable differentiation into academic and vocational pathways over a longer period of time and provides optimal individual support to students depending on their needs. The curriculum offer is differentiated depending on the needs of students and all-day school is available. The '*Gemeinschaftsschule*' offers all types of qualifications available in the Berlin education system in general, thus enabling students to achieve and choose qualifications that best suit their needs and interests.

The pilot project started in the 2008/2009 school year in 11 schools across Berlin. By the 2011/2012 school year, 20 schools were participating in the project.

In '*Gemeinschaftsschule*', individualised learning without differentiation into academic and vocational pathways is possible over a longer period of time – from Years 1 to 10 and even in Years 12 /13. This is in contrast to mainstream education, where differentiation into academic and vocational pathways would typically occur in Year 5. Schools in the pilot project which do not have basic school (*Grundschule*) or Gymnasium options have compulsory cooperation agreements with other schools offering such learning, thus enabling students' smooth transition to other education pathways.

The key principles of the pilot project are:

- The new forms of learning should lead to more equality of opportunity irrespective of the starting points and background of the students;
- Students should be supported in an individual way, depending on their specific needs and abilities, including more support for individualised learning to maximise learning potential;

¹³ See <http://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/bildungswege/gemeinschaftsschule/> (in German)

- Individualised learning is reflected in compulsory and free choice subjects, learning in relation to projects, workshops, weekly planning or in environments outside of the school;
- Schools do not use differentiation in subject performance as an organising principle of assessing learners' performance;
- Strong cooperation between teachers, teaching assistants and school staff, students, parents and other partners outside the school are critical.

Scientific analysis of the first pilot implementation phase¹⁴ showed several key findings:

- In the area of teacher's competences and attitudes, the schools showed an increase amongst teaching staff to positively value the heterogeneity and individual needs of their students as a source of potential rather than a problem; it also showed the introduction of more heterogeneous learning groups and forms; improvements in teacher competences to diagnose and support and advice on specific learner needs, and assess performance of learners on an individualised basis.
- In the area of learner development, a clear emphasis in all schools has been placed on supporting German language learning. The learning process is increasingly characterised by a combination of independent completion of tasks, cooperative learning forms and self-regulated learning arrangements. The majority of learners welcomed the increasingly differentiated learning arrangements and felt they had the required competences to participate in such learning processes.
- The atmosphere at schools is noted to be increasingly positive and the culture of cooperation between learners and teachers has been observed to improve - this includes the explicit acknowledgement of conflicts and their constructive resolution. The majority of learners reported positive attitudes towards attending school.

These key findings show that the pilot project is successful in its aims and objectives to make the school more attractive and respond to the individual needs of the learner. Whilst it is not aimed exclusively at early school leavers and has a much broader approach to all learners, it is a good example of an all-encompassing preventive approach to ESL.

4 Conclusions

Approaches to ESL in Berlin are a combination of far-reaching and comprehensive prevention, intervention and compensation measures where the national strategy to support under-performing learners is highly relevant in this respect. Several interesting examples of various types of measures to tackle the ESL have been identified, including the pilot project of 'Gemeinschaftsschule' which adopts a broad preventative approach to individualise the learning and respond to specific learner needs and thus prevent exclusion before it occurs.

4.1 Key questions for consideration during the Peer Review:

1. Are there measures similar to ones identified in Berlin – especially focussing on migrant young people, and what are their key lessons?
2. To what extent can the balance between prevention, intervention and compensation be maintained – also in view of diminishing public budgets for education?
3. Should certain types of measures be prioritised and if so, which ones?
4. How can the success of policy measures in tackling ESL be best judged? What role is being played by the general economic and labour market situation?

¹⁴ WISSENSCHAFTLICHE BEGLEITUNG DER PILOTPHASE GEMEINSCHAFTSSCHULE BERLIN BERICHT 2012, available at <http://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/bildungswege/gemeinschaftsschule/>

5 Sources

5.1 Input from the country representative

Peter Handschuck, Land of Berlin, Education Department

5.2 Useful website links and bibliography

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