Martin French – Hanka Lent – Britta Will (Eds.)



# Interregional Teaching and Learning in the Baltic Sea Region
## On the Road to a European Education Area?!

**Universität Rostock**

Traditio et Innovatio

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– Chair of Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship Education –

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*Dedicated to all people committed to modern and innovative education!*

# Contents

*Martin French*

# INTRODUCTION:
# Learn globally, teach locally!

Educational systems and policies clearly have a major influence on the degree of innovation and the extent of internationalisation in a region or country's education, science and culture. In the 'day to day' of education and training, however, it is the teaching staff who give life to these systems and strategies. Teaching and training staff are active in a wide range of areas: as pre-school teachers in elementary schools, as general teachers in primary and secondary schools, as trainers in vocational schools, as lecturers at university, as social and special needs teachers and as teachers of initial and further training in companies or for educational service providers. The international and intercultural aspects of professional development for this heterogeneous group are increasingly important within the context of life-long learning. The professional development of teachers through international structures and international transfer of knowledge is becoming ever more important and necessary from a social point of view. Teaching staff face numerous examples of the trend to greater internationalisation in teaching and training. These may be within the context of globalized learning, working and living, in contact with students of different origins, and as part of interdisciplinary and intercultural teaching teams. In this context teaching and training staff who think and act on a global or international/intercultural level enable cities, regions and countries and even the European Union as a whole to develop in line with EU strategies, such as »Europe 2020«. This is true in particular for the European macro-region of the Baltic, which in matters of educational strategy is guided by the »European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region« (EUSBSR). Numerous funding programmes (e. g. Baltic Sea Region Programme, South Baltic Programme and Pomerania) or specific projects funded by them (e. g. »COHAB«, »RegFood«, »SBTP - South Baltic Training Programme«, »Generation BALT« and »SBP - South Baltic Professionals«) are working to develop teachers' international skills and are fomenting the development of ever stronger transnational and interregional networks of teaching professionals in the Baltic region. These teaching and learning processes and the associated teaching and training strategies across the Baltic countries should and must be encouraged further if the vision of a Baltic Education Area and, in time, a European Education Area, is to become a reality, not least as a contribution to ensuring greater political and economic stability, peace and prosperity.

The objective of this book is therefore primarily to make a detailed investigation of the conditions for interregional teaching and learning in the Baltic, in order to answer the questions of whether and how a Baltic (or, in time, a European) Education Area is feasible. To this end we present the latest research findings, important statements on trends taken from selected publications as well as experiences and well-founded recommendations taken from the South Baltic Programme project COHAB.

COHAB is an acronym for »Co-ordination and Integration of Higher Education and the Labour Market around the South Baltic Sea«. The project was carried out within the context of the EU »South Baltic Programme« (SBP) between 2011 and 2014. The SBP programme is financed through the »European Regional Development Fund« (ERDF) and is a cross-border cooperation programme which has the overall objective of contributing to the sustainable development of the South Baltic. The aim is to improve the competitiveness of the region and promote cooperation between people and institutions through common initiatives and projects.

There are 7 partners involved in the COHAB project, 5 universities[1] and 2 supporting institutions.[2] The starting point for this project is the low level of interregional mobility in the South Baltic labour market. The objective of the project is to investigate the reasons for this insufficient mobility, to establish where the barriers lie, and then to develop recommendations for action and suggest structures for improvement. In order to focus our investigation we concentrated on two professional areas: »Teaching staff« and »Nursing staff«. The following focal points in our study were identified:

- Presentation and analysis of the various national and regional education systems and labour markets in the Baltic,
- Information about both the professional fields in the regions involved and their transparency,
- Increase of mobility of students and academics from the two professional areas,
- Development of competences of students and academics from the two professional fields, above all in relation to qualification requirements for cross-border mobility.

In order to achieve its goal the project used a mix of teaching and learning arrangement involving both personal contact (staff visits, summer school, study visits) as well as virtual environments (parallel teaching courses, learning platforms). Two teams (»Team Teachers« and »Team Nurses«) were formed. Each team focused on the specific aspects of interregional teaching and learning arrangements and content in their professional field.

Further information on the COHAB project can be found at *www.cohab.eu* or on the website of the Chair for Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship Education at the University of Rostock.

As already mentioned, this book provides an account of the current system of interregional teaching and learning in the Baltic and aims to answer the questions of whether and how a Baltic or, in time, a European Education Area can be constructed. The analysis in the book is carefully built up in interlocking chapters. It begins with an overview of the different educational systems in the Baltic countries, before going on to analyse current teacher training systems in the region. There follows an explanation of the ways in which cooperation and networks should be organised and structured in order to make it possible for educational systems to develop and educators to receive professional training across national and regional boundaries. It continues with a closer analysis of the teaching and learning process, looking closely at the interregional experience of the COHAB (Co-ordination and Integration of Higher Education and the Labour Market around the South Baltic Sea) pilot project, which involves both personal contact and virtual environments.

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[1] University College Sjælland (Denmark), Medical University Gdansk (Poland), University of Rostock (Germany), University of Klaipeda (Lithuania), Linneaus University (Sweden).
[2] VUC Storstrøm (Denmark) – Adult Education, VIRTUS Rostock (Germany) – Non-profit Educational Institution.

The chapters focus on the following points:

**Chapter 1** deals with the characteristics and trends of the individual education systems in the Baltic. Without aiming to be comprehensive, this takes the form of short country profiles treating the particular characteristics of the education systems and educational policies of each country. The profiles of the educational systems of the Baltic countries are composed of accentuated statements or statements of trends, based on selected publications as well as individual reports from the South Baltic Programme project COHAB. There is also a sketch of the needs and potential of a »Baltic Education Society« along with the associated models of cooperation and networks. The chapter closes with a view of a desirable interregional educational policy in the Baltic. The strategies can be seen both as recommendations for further development in the Baltic and as proposals for the Baltic as a centre of education, knowledge and innovation.

**Chapter 2** focuses on the specifics and trends in initial and further teacher training in the Baltic countries. Without being comprehensive, this involves the characteristics and unique features of academic initial teacher training as well as opportunities for professional development in in-service training. As in Chapter 1 this involves accentuated statements and statements of trends based on selected literature as well as reports from the South Baltic Programme project COHAB. In Chapter 2 internationalisation strategies in university initial and in-service/further training of other teaching staff, for example in companies or in training service providers, are shown to boost regional, national and international/interregional innovations and added value for education systems and labour markets, above all for a macro-region like the Baltic.

**Chapter 3** goes on to illustrate the conditions, potentials and barriers to interregional educational networks in the Baltic. The chapter offers suggestions or conceptual approaches to the creation of successful and sustainable education networks and processes of cooperation in the Baltic. It is demonstrated that a strong Europe or a strong Baltic in a globalized world is only conceivable if experiences are fully shared. This openness makes it possible to understand cross-border qualifications, competences and learning objectives and to give formal recognition to them. This provides a justification for increased recognition and credit given to national qualifications in an interregional context, which in turn causes greater mobility in the European or Baltic Education Area, making staff mobility more likely.

In **Chapter 4** examples of practice from the South Baltic Programme project COHAB demonstrate how transnational cooperation in education and interregional teaching and learning can be implemented. Amongst other things, this is facilitated by the internet and new/social media. Chapter 4 points to strengths, weaknesses, potentials and barriers evident in the development, implementation and sustainability of interregional teaching and learning arrangements. Cooperation in interregional education is fostered by the development and practical testing of new teaching approaches and methods in the field of e- and blended learning when used in virtual teaching and team teaching arrangements. In this context a need is expressed for the promotion and implementation of further pilot projects such as COHAB.

The analysis in this publication portrays the basis and need for future cutting edge research into education and the labour market and further pilot projects in the Baltic. Institutions of higher education, in particular, those whose teaching staff provide academic education, should

work together with partners from secondary and professional schools as well as businesses and education service providers in teaching, applied research and well-founded guidance in order to deal with the various questions and issues which emerge when setting up and organising teaching and learning processes in the most varied educational areas.

The research in this publication provides the following focal points for further research projects in the Baltic area:

- The modernisation of national educational systems and structuring of regional educational policies through transnational/interregional education networks,
- Interregional pilot projects and research into innovation, above all into sustainable programmes of mobility as well as internationalised professional development for teaching and training staff,
- Analysis of regional characteristics of in-company initial and in-service training,
- Development of interregional teaching and learning arrangements in relation to developing intercultural competences, the promotion of transnational mobility, and global thinking and acting in companies.

Relationships between the individual teachers and between the various institutions, regional characteristics, and the overall conditions of the educational systems should be fully taken into account in all the above focal points. From a methodological point of view there should be considerable use of the instruments of qualitative empirical social research, for example in biographical research into staff training and development.

The publication contains practical guidance, provides insights gained from project experience, and gives specific recommendations concerning the conditions and processes of interregional teaching and learning in the Baltic. The aim is thus to encourage the further international growth of the educational systems, policies and structures in the region and to inspire initiatives, in particular to assist in the development, application for and implementation of pilot and innovative projects which can be funded by the numerous Baltic funding programmes.

The publication should finally and most importantly serve to illustrate to the many committed teachers in the Baltic the value of cooperating with colleagues from other regions in the daily teaching and learning process, in keeping with the maxim: **Learn globally, teach locally!**

Rostock, June 2014                                                                                   Martin French

*Martin French*

# 1  Education System Trends and Developments in the Baltic Sea Region

Education systems are integral sub systems of regional, national and even international (or interregional) knowledge and innovation systems. The design, generation, application and networking of knowledge and, eventually, the use of such knowledge for the development and establishment of new products, services and processes require from protagonists involved in the innovation process enhanced needs for education and further training particularly in face of the rapidly increasing digitalisation and/or technological advances.[1] The countries and regions of the Baltic Sea Region also have to face this challenge and develop and establish modern education system structures via innovative education policy strategies and measures.

Against this background, this chapter covers mainly three priority areas:
Firstly, an attempt is made to classify the Baltic Sea Region as education, knowledge and innovation area. Related to this it shall be outlined which necessities or, respectively, potentials a »Baltic Educational Area« and the associated collaborations and networks include.[2] In this regard, the conceptual approach »interregional education networks« as the basis for creating a Baltic Educational Area is indicated and will be explained in a later chapter of this publication in further detail.

Afterwards, characteristics and trends of the individual education systems in the Baltic Sea Region are presented. This information shall be considered as abridged country profile presentations on education system and policy peculiarities here, still making no claim to be exhaustive. In fact, the individual information on the Baltic Sea Region countries' education systems are accentuated statements or trend statements[3] based on selected literature as well as on experience reports from the South Baltic Programme project COHAB[4]. National accentuations of education levels, participation in education and education structures are pointed out for the different education fields or education levels (pre-primary level – primary level – secondary level I/II – tertiary level – quarternary level/further education[5]). The paper also covers the challenges many Baltic Sea Region countries face related to demographic change, migration/integration issues or even the global competition for specialists. In addition, the approaches state which education strategies have been developed and implemented by the countries over the last years in order to ensure that their education systems can meet the necessities of an education, knowledge and innovation society.[6]

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[1] Cf. Voßkamp/Dohmen (2008), p. 11.
[2] Cf. Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) (2003), p. 1.
[3] The information provided in the second sub-chapter is based on international research and development work of the Chair of Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship Education at the University of Rostock. A group of students from the business pedagogy field elaborated a trend report titled »Education systems in the Baltic Sea Region – similarities and differences« within the context of a scientific project work in winter term 2013/14. This paper serves as the basis for the information provided in this chapter. The scientific process was supervised by the scientific staff of the chair respectively the staff of the EU project COHAB.
[4] For further information on the EU project COHAB visit *www.cohab.eu*.
[5] Cf. European Commission (2013a) regarding the structure or education levels of the education systems in the Baltic Sea Region.
[6] Cf. Voßkamp/Dohmen (2008), p. 11.

The chapter is completed by an outlook regarding opportune development strategies of a transnational or interregional education policy in the Baltic Sea Region. The presented strategies can also be considered as recommendations for action aiming to an advancement of the Baltic Sea Region as macro-regional education, knowledge and innovation site.

## 1.1 The Baltic Sea Region as „Think Tank" for Education, Knowledge and Innovation

The social, political and economic significance of the Baltic Sea Region derives not at least from its scope. Almost 150 million people live in the eight EU countries located directly at the Baltic Sea, economically responsible for nearly 30 percent of the gross domestic product of all EU states. In the field export, the countries bordering the Baltic Sea are also important for Europe. They sold, for instance, goods worth about 725 billion euro to other EU member states in 2009, which is about one third of all export deals within the European Union and about 7 percent of the world trade. The Baltic Sea Region countries had about 67 million employees in 2009 which means that nearly one third of all EU employees comes from the countries bordering the Baltic Sea.[7] In addition, the number of jobs that are subject to social insurance contribution can be described as increasing since 1999.[8]

The development of the Baltic Sea Region towards an important education, knowledge and in-novation site has, in this regard, a mainly historical background. The distinctive traffic and trading routes in the Baltic Sea Region originating back to the Middle Ages have been the basis not only of international or interregional logistic lines to the present day but also of the people's sensitiveness for intensive knowledge and innovation exchange in these regions.[9] Be-nefitting from this »historical setting« and not least also from various EU funding programmes, the number of collaborations, networks, projects, special meta-institutions and strategic deve-lopment concepts and structures[10] has expanded significantly over the last years, ultimately also to cope more and more with the requirements of a modernized, interregionally networked »Baltic education, knowledge and innovation society« in the 21st century.[11] Thus, excellent key success factors related to the advancement of a sustainable, interregionally networked education, knowledge and innovation area[12] can be certified for the Baltic Sea Region even in the future. Here, the positive development indicators are mainly:

- A high education level in many parts,
- Various already cooperating education and research institutions,

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[7] Cf. Pfannkuche (2011), p. 9 pp.
[8] Cf. Thönnes (2011), p. 3.
[9] Cf. Stiller/Wedemeier (2011), p. 16 pp.
[10] Cf. Baltic 21 (2002), p. 16 pp.
[11] Cf. Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) (2003), p. 1 pp.
[12] Cf. Stiller/Wedemeier (2011), p. 33 pp.

- A well-positioned innovation-oriented medium-sized business sector or many high-tech SMEs,
- Interregionally cooperating industry networks as well as technology, innovation and start-up centers,
- A very pronounced establishment of information and communication technologies in business, education and science,
- Already interregionally interrelated labour market systems or structures[13],
- A high degree of internationally compatible products and services as well as, in particular, internationally demanded human resources,
- A dense network of maritime connections,
- Enormous scientific expertise and a strongly pronounced entrepreneurial know-how and interregionally-economic potentials in the forward-oriented sectors »Green Technologies« and »Maritime Industries«,
- Twinnings where cities and towns collaborate for a cooperative exchange providing impulses for the development of the Baltic Sea Region[14] as well as, pointed out again,
- Numerous networks and cooperation institutions with a wealth of experience and expertise in transnational or interregional cooperation in fields relevant for civil society, political, economic, scientific and also and foremost education.[15]

Thus, the Baltic Sea Region has an outstanding model character as »think tank« of interregional cooperation for innovation strategies and subsequent education and knowledge-based implementation processes. For many years, it has already been a European benchmark macro-region, which manages, as inherently linked think tank, outstanding in many respects, to develop and implement constantly new education and knowledge strategies and, thus, innovations via generation, transfer, discussion and advancement processes.[16] Therefore, the Baltic Sea Region is able to provide solution strategies for overcoming a multitude of current, globally relevant problems or issues to be faced in the future, here, mainly related to

- Social and economic threats related to demographic developments[17],
- A modern migration and integration policy and, thus, an adequate integrative education policy,
- Combating environmental pollution or the climate change and, thus, saving natural living, education and working spaces,
- A sustainable, efficient, environmentally save transport and logistics business,
- An environmentally sound water and energy supply for the population and
- A peaceful coexistence of different cultures and ethnic groups based on social welfare and security and modern labour market conditions for the people.[18]

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[13] Cf. Pfannkuche (2011), p. 18 pp.
[14] Cf. Stiller/Wedemeier (2011), p. 40 pp.
[15] Cf. Thönnes (2011), p. 3 p.
[16] Cf. Voßkamp/Dohmen (2008), p. 26 pp.
[17] Cf. Stiller/Wedemeier (2011), p. 26 pp.
[18] Cf. Thönnes (2011), p. 3.

In this context, only innovative education systems and a modern education policy in the individual countries as well as, in particular, a linking of the Baltic education systems with each other that has to be expanded further regarding best practice structures will enable a sustainable advancement and promotion of the Baltic education, knowledge and innovation area.[19] The information provided in the chapter below shall provide some inspiration regarding possible education system innovations in the individual Baltic Sea Region countries which, structurally and conceptually adjusted, could be established even in other countries or regions of the Baltic Sea area.

## 1.2 Characteristics and Trends of the Education Systems in the Baltic Sea Region[20]

### Estonia

After becoming independent at the beginning of the 1990s, Estonia's education system underwent fundamental change processes. New education laws were adopted and constantly reviewed in terms of a state-of-the-art education policy aiming to adjust to the given new market situations and to meet the challenges of global economy. Latest PISA study results show that the Estonian education system achieves good education levels among pupils and, thus, that the change processes have fulfilled their purpose in many respects. According to OECD information, Estonia is above OECD average in almost all fields and leaves e. g. Germany behind in a comparison related to mathematics or reading but also to natural sciences in general.[21]

Particularly notable within the context of Estonia's education system development is the establishment of information and communication technologies in the country's schools that has been intensified over years. It was initiated by the programme »Tiger Leap« started in 1997 aiming to improve the education quality by using new technologies. Apart from advancing the technology in education institutions, for instance, more virtual platforms have been established to provide the teaching staff with digitally networked training material within the context of this programme. In addition, there have been communications portals since 2003 that serve as link between school and parental home and shall integrate parents more actively into their children's learning process. This happens, among others, by transparentizing marks, absences, training contents or even homework, e. g. via »online class registers« where teachers, pupils

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[19] Cf. Hanse Parlament (2006), p. 40.

[20] The information provided in the second sub-chapter is based on international research and development work of the Chair of Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship Education at the University of Rostock. A group of students from the business pedagogy field elaborated a trend report titled »Education systems in the Baltic Sea Region – similarities and differences« within the context of a scientific project work in winter term 2013/14. This paper serves as the basis for the information provided in this chapter. The scientific process was supervised by the scientific staff of the chair respectively the staff of the EU project COHAB.

[21] Cf. a. o. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012), no page.

and parents have access at any time. This shows that Estonia's education system has arrived in the communicative-networked era.[22]

Over the past years, Estonia's education system has been the subject of many additional reforms. As, for instance, the vocational training shall meet the demand to be accessible for many different target groups, the government adopted a review of the development plan for vocational training in 2009. This new development plan shall promote an innovative and knowledge-based development of economy and society via a modernized vocational training.[23] Thus, for instance, curricula were modernized in this context, vocational training institutions were renovated and equipped with latest technologies.[24] Also the increasingly professional orientation of the secondary levels I and II allows pupils, for instance, an early insight into different professional specialisations. Partially, various subject contents from the general education field can even be credited in later professional trainings which can be considered as very innovative regarding the permeability between the education levels.

The (further) development of the national qualification system or qualification reference framework plays an equally important role. Already in May 2008, the reviewed qualification law was adopted with the principal aim to promote the willingness for lifelong learning and, thus, the mobility of the Estonian population and its competitiveness. Merging the recognition processes related to vocational and academic competences to a standardized Estonian quality system that is compatible with the European Qualification Framework is in the focus here.[25]

Also the reduction of the partially very high dropout rates on all education levels is considered as extremely important. To achieve this, various projects and programmes were (co-)financed by European support programmes – here, among others, comprehensive support systems for recipients of training at all education levels, optimized  career and study advisory services or flexible study opportunities at universities.[26]

Within the course of the modification of the Estonian education system, the language policy, mainly related to national minorities in the country, is of crucial importance. Thus, the share of the largest minority, the Russian population, e. g. amounts to about 25 percent. Already since the mid-1990s, Estonia advocates for a protection of national minorities and supports, enshrined in laws, the ambitions of all national and ethnic minorities in culture and education. Thus, national minorities are enabled by the »Act on the cultural autonomy of national minorities«, for instance, to open private secondary schools where a language different from Estonian is taught.[27] Thus, Estonia is one of the few European states that finance even the »non-official language school network« as part of the public education system. Furthermore, in order to enable or to facilitate the non-Estonian population the integration into the Estonian (education)

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[22] Cf. Ruus/Reiska (2010), p. 218.
[23] Cf. Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (2009), no page.
[24] Cf. Cedefop (2012 a), p. 7.
[25] Cf. ibid., p. 2.
[26] Cf. Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (2009), no page.
[27] Cf. Federal Ministry for Education and Research (2013 a), no page.

society, Estonia's national integration programme (2008 – 2013) was started in 2008 as follow-up of the programme »Integration into the Estonian Society« (2000 – 2007). It also continues the basis of the state's integration policy and eventually the integrative education policy in Estonia. Successes of the programme are, among others, the expansion of Estonian language learning opportunities, the improvement of teaching methodology and training materials in Estonian language and the language training, particularly in the pre-primary and primary school sector.[28] One of Estonia's areas of concern related to the pre-school sector is that, due to partly significant capacity bottlenecks, not every child gets the opportunity to attend a pre-school institution as, for instance, the waiting lists e. g. of kindergartens are very long.[29]

Due to the increasing opportunities for Estonian schools to create own curricula based on those issued by the state, pupils get more and more the chance to specialize individually by choosing between electives (especially at secondary level II) and to determine own general education as well as vocational preparation focuses themselves. This enhances their autonomy by planning their class schedule autonomously and, in addition, improves their social competences via learning in different course compositions instead of the only typical class communities.[30]

Vocational education shall, as stated above, be more accessible for many target groups which is why different professional qualification pathways exist. Still, learners predominantly aspire the general extended secondary education level (mainly gymnasium) after completing secondary level I to start studies later, while there is only limited interest in the vocational training approach. It can be stated that all education options are only aspired to a very limited extent where vocational training is concerned which mainly results in the current lack of reputation of this area of education.[31] Besides, the drop-out rates in the field of vocational training, comparatively high over the last years as amounting up to 20 percent, are particularly problematic.[32] Still, the Estonian education policy has recognized the problem and tries to make the vocational training and even the further education market more attractive. This shall be achieved via an increasingly permeable education system that shall allow crediting achieved degrees, competences and learning successes across all education levels.[33] In addition, the modernization of education institutions (particularly vocational training schools) has been and will be expanded. Still Estonia is facing the challenge to make the vocational education system more attractive and, thus, increasingly establish it to enable sufficient acceptance mainly by the younger generations, will remain valid over the coming years. Many approaches, as, for instance, an enrichment of school education content with more and more (job-related) practical content, provide an excellent basis here for, subsequently, using this practical work in the general education stage of a later training and crediting it there.[34]

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[28] Cf. Eurydice (no year of publication), p. 36 pp.
[29] Cf. Ruus/Reiska (2010), p. 214.
[30] Cf. Eurydice (no year of publication), p. 36 pp.
[31] Cf. Toomsalu (2012), p. 1.
[32] Cf. Cedefop (2012 a), p. 49.
[33] Cf. Toomsalu (2012), p. 2.
[34] Cf. Eurydice (no year of publication), S. 36 pp.

**Latvia**

Latvia's education system has, in many respects, specific characteristics and implementation strategies at all education levels. A one-year obligatory pre-school, for instance, ensures, that children are prepared for the learning content at the subsequent nine year general education school period and that it can, at least theoretically, profit from advanced education levels and contents. This, for instance, becomes apparent from the introduction of the school subject English already in form three. In general, the standardized nine year school ensures that pupils are not allocated to rigid school types as part of a possibly rigid confusing multiunit structure at an early stage and, thus, that individual education paths, professional orientations and, later, even training and study opportunities are kept available as long as possible and, in an ideal case, promoted by suitable support systems.[35]

The conventional vocational training at vocational schools has been not very popular in Latvia over the last years, as a majority of the pupils decides to attend a general-education secondary school with the opportunity of starting higher vocational educations or studies. Still, there have been increased education policy efforts to make the vocational training in vocational schools more practice-oriented and, thus, more attractive.[36]

The Latvian education system is, in many respects, strongly centralized. Central requirements determined by the state regarding general education, vocational training and university education are of, compared to other European countries, above-average significance. Thus, Latvia's education landscape has little or even no regional specifics although this would partly enable a much more homogeneous education level in many Latvian regions as significant performance gaps resulting from specific regional education programmes and support systems would be avoided.[37]

The dual vocational training system as implemented in Germany is internationally considered as success model. Still, this education model, probably also exposed to many challenges and improvement options, has been capable of being integrated or have been integrated in only few European countries with system relevance. Exceptions are some Scandinavian countries as well as Switzerland and Austria. In times of high youth unemployment in Europe, it is worth also for Latvia to consider related dual vocational training structures at least partly on system level. Because in Germany, where the youth unemployment amounts only to eight percent according to official statistics, the dual education system is considered as one key factor for combating it.[38] Thus, the Republic of Latvia also has shown big interest in the German vocational training system because the Latvian vocational training system is organised only at school-institutional level, i. e. not in cooperation with companies. Resulting from this, a declaration of intent was signed by the German and the Latvian Ministry of Education in 2013 which foresees a close cooperation in the field of vocational training.

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[35] Cf. Latvian Institute (Latvijas Institūts) (2012), no page.
[36] Cf. e. g. Döbert et al. (2010).
[37] Cf. Valsts Izglitibaz Attistibas Agentura (2007), no page.
[38] Cf. Astheimer (2013), no page.

Initial aim is to test elements of the German vocational training system in the Republic of Latvia in joint pilot projects to increase quality and attractiveness of the country's vocational training programme. The German side finances human resources at the German-Latvian Foreign Trade Chamber in Riga especially for this purpose. This even institutional localisation of the German-Latvian vocational training cooperation shall mainly serve the purpose of initiating or facilitating mutual exchange of knowledge and experience between German and Latvian vocational training experts, schools and companies.[39]

Despite increasingly successful acquisition and use of European funding, the Latvian education system is still partially characterised by severe financing and budget problems. Due to economic problems resulting from the global financial crisis, public spending has been reduced significantly since 2009 which results into a severe decline of employees in the state education sector and of related salaries. It should be noted that Latvia, similar to Estonia and Lithuania, was and is counted among the so-called »Baltic Tiger states« which were, mainly before the financial and bank crisis, assessed as countries with high economic growth in various sectors and, thus, even positive effects on public budgets.[40] Currently, this country, as many other countries in Europe too, is on the way towards economic recovery which suggests even an improving of public education budgets.[41]

One challenge Latvia is facing related to professionalising teaching or training staff is that teachers in Latvia are traditionally found among the low-paid workers. Thus, the average gross salary of a teacher with ten years professional experience amounts to converted scarcely 400 euro – compared to this, the average Latvian monthly gross salary amounts to about 700 euro.[42] To remedy this, the Latvian trade union of employees from the education and science sectors demanded a budget increase for, converted, about seven million euro in 2013. According to recent surveys, a majority of the educationists is willing to enforce their demands for a budget increase in the public education sector with strike actions.[43] The currently significantly increasing number of enrolments in Latvian private schools – at least in the nine-years lasting general education school sector – can, at least partially, be interpreted as a reaction of many parents to the partial deficits in Latvian public education sectors.[44]

The financial crisis of the year 2009 had and still has an impact on the state-managed tertiary education sector, also related to the public academia. Due to the fact, that the general education budget was reduced by 48 percent over this period, partially radical saving measures were implemented also at Latvian universities. Resulting from this, parts of the university lecturer staff were dismissed, seminars were cancelled and university institutions were closed down. In addition, the number of free university places was reduced so that many students have to pay the

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[39] Cf. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2013 b), no page.
[40] Cf. European Economic and Social Committee (2013), no page.
[41] Cf. Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Latvia (2013), no page.
[42] Cf. Latvian Press Review (2013), no page.
[43] Cf. Caspari (2013), no page.
[44] Cf. World data atlas (2013), no page.

partly very high tuition fee of in average 1,700 euro with the help of loans or side jobs, which is a truly difficult undertaking considering the rather low wage and salary structure in the entire country. Even university lecturers are – different from many countries in Western Europe – not among the higher earners in Latvia. This results into a situation where many lecturers and professors have to have side jobs in addition to their university work due to drastic salary cuts. One logical consequence is that teaching activities and research often cannot be implemented at the needed quality level.[45]

The partially very rigorous budgetary policy of the Latvian government, the high unemployment caused by the financial crises and the generally low wage level resulted into a situation were mainly young and highly qualified specialists left their home country over the last years – specialists which are urgently needed by the Republic of Latvia and here also and foremost the education system or the related institutions in their current economic recovery process.[46] Nevertheless, one should credit the Latvian government with partly improving the economic situation thanks to implementing a rigid budgetary and reform policy, but this was foremost at the expenses of the »Latvian education generation« of recent years.[47] It is to be hoped that the Latvian education policy will profit from the renewed economic boom and that, over the coming years, adequate models and financing concepts for modern education structures counter the in-depth education policy austerity measures of the past.[48]

**Lithuania**

Already since 2003, a large-scale national education policy funding programme in Lithuania has set itself the task to implement comprehensive national education strategies. It aims, among others, to optimizing resources, strengthening partnerships between public and private institutions, improving the quality assurance and infrastructure of open learning environments, making learning more attractive via promotion, enhancing competences, capabilities and skills needed for a knowledge society and optimizing human resource training and further education in all fields of education. The cooperation between school and parental home and the optimization of pedagogical decision-making processes are other important aims of Lithuania's national education strategy.[49]

Lastly, a new law on education system changes and, thus, improving the education quality was adopted in 2009. The aim has been and is mainly to make the universities more attractive so that the students as »Lithuania's educated elite« have a stronger motivation to remain in the country, which ensures the future specialist recruitment and retaining for Lithuania.[50] The last specifically vocational education-related reform took place in Lithuania in 2011. Still, this was

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[45] Cf. Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Latvia (2013), no page.
[46] Cf. Lobenstein (2011), no page.
[47] Cf. Pallokat (2011), no page.
[48] Cf. Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Latvia (2013), no page.
[49] Cf. Kiliuviené (2010), p. 425 p.
[50] Cf. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2013 c), no page.

only an amendment of the wording of the vocational education system, no fundamental innovations were initiated here.[51] Still Lithuania continues to work, regarding vocational education but also at other education levels, intensively with education system development perspectives for the country and will presumably expand this even further by acquiring and using more and more European funding in the future.[52]

One special feature of the Lithuanian education system is, amongst others, the strong focus the Ministry of Education and Sciences puts on prevention measures that aim to supporting pedagogical specialists with early stage recognition and promotion of children and adolescents from socially vulnerable groups. The measures intend to prevent violence among children, crime, prostitution, risk of suicide and other negative social and mental phenomena. With these measures, children are provided with intensive support systems and activity offers. Furthermore, the education chances and careers of children with an adverse background are expanded and pedagogical and legal awareness raising is implemented in the society. The parents shall be also included into the measures. There are special programmes, mainly for adolescents, as this group of persons is particularly at risk. Large-scale funding has been provided since 2005 to implement these programmes. Thus, 300,000 children and adolescents may participate in these programmes every year.[53]

Despite the segmentation of the Lithuanian school system into primary level and secondary levels I and II, the schools or school types are composed according to an interconnecting or overarching principle. Many primary schools are not separated from the basic or secondary school. There are, for instance, secondary schools that include form 1 to 10 or grammar schools with the forms 1 to 12.[54] In addition, there are schools in rural areas where several classes are taught in one group of pupils.[55]

One problem that has been an issue in the Lithuanian education policy over many years can be found in the field of life-long learning. Currently, the system of professional and university continuing and further education is not variable enough and not sufficiently adjusted to the transition from one education level to the other. In addition, acquired competences are not accepted or credited adequately in many cases. Therefore it is hard for some persons or age groups to make up for education in form of a »second chance«. Challenges ahead are overcoming the separation of the educational programmes, strengthening the connection between vocational and academic education institutions, increasing the coordination of formal and informal learning processes and recognizing and crediting formally, non-formally and informally acquired competences.[56] For these reasons, Lithuania improved the education policy structures for lifelong learning over the past years so that adults have improved further education oppor-

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[51] Cf. Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln e.V. (2008), no page.
[52] Cf. Gries et al. (2005), p. 47.
[53] Cf. Kiliuviené (2010), p. 424 pp.
[54] Cf. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2013 c), no page.
[55] Cf. ibid., no page.
[56] Cf. Kiliuviené (2010), p. 426.

tunities now. In special adult education institutions, vocational schools, universities of applied sciences, universities and the education centres of the employment agencies, they may participate in formal and non-formal training programmes, attend courses organised by private or public educational institutions or enroll at distance learning centres.[57] However, the further education fields are still in the development phase.[58] A lifelong learning strategy was elaborated in 2004 with the aim to reorganise not only the work in the education institutions but of the entire education system towards lifelong learning. The objective is to invest more into lifelong learning to achieve a more efficient treatment of human resources. Thereby, career advancements shall be facilitated and obstacles on the labour market shall be removed. The Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Sciences is currently investing more money into information campaigns about the necessity of lifelong learning but is still confronted with lacking acceptance of or interest in professional or university further education processes. The Lithuanian state offers, among others, the makeup of general education degrees, vocational trainings and partially extra-occupational further education study formats, fully financed by the state, to solve this problem. These and other programmes shall also support the integration of young unemployed adults who have no professional qualification, long-term unemployed, employees at a more advanced age (55 plus), disabled persons and ethnic minorities.[59]

The Lithuanian education policy is, probably more than in other European states, very much depending on the country's economic success, which can cause financial difficulties in times of recession. Particularly in rural areas, a closing down of schools might be a consequence, which could jeopardize the country's education strategy. Furthermore, the decrease of population might turn into a financial structure problem in the future. In this context, the education system financing has already been gradually changed towards more effective financing related to the number of pupils from 2002 on. The so-called »school fees« are provided by the government and two thirds of it go directly from the state budget into educational institutions. It shall be used for paying the teacher salaries, the school managers, class books and learning aids etc. One third is provided to the institutions by the school authority in charge which shall ensure an efficient and rational administration of the funds. These funds must not amount to less than 6% of the GDP. One specific feature related to the Lithuanian education financing was adopted in 2003 by entitling inhabitants with place of residence in Lithuania to donate 2 percent of their income tax to legally predetermined public institutions (mainly education institutions).[60] One particularly positive financial aspect is the additional monetary progress not only in the educational field resulting from the rapprochement with Europe. Thus, numerous Lithuanian education institutions, here mainly the country's universities, have participated very successfully in many EU funding programmes and projects over the last years, such us, for instance, in the South Baltic Programme.

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[57] Cf. IBW – Institute for Research on Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy (no year of publication), no page.
[58] Cf. Gries et al. (2005), p. 47.
[59] Cf. Kiliuviené (2010), p. 421 p.
[60] Cf. ibid., p. 412 pp.

**Poland**

Poland's entire political system has been in a situation of change from the end of the 1980s respectively beginning of the 1990s. Since that time, »fundamental political, social and economic changes« took place.[61] The education landscape is confronted with »new challenges that result from the system reforms, the extended autonomy, the privatisation, innovations and the new role in the European Union (Poland's accession to the EU in 2004)«.[62] As of now, two decisive education reform periods can be identified. The first one lasted from 1990 to 1999 and focused on the reform of the higher education system, the second took from 1999 to 2005 and its emphasis was on school and vocational education.[63] The alterations have already started with expanding the care services for children under three years and progressed towards pre-school education with new core curricula.[64]

Innovations implemented in the general education sector were the introduction of a multilevel school system, the centralized final secondary-school examinations and the two obligatory foreign languages as well as the revision of the high-school system. In the vocational education field, vocational training profiles were renewed and new vocational school systems with reformed vocational school types were introduced. In addition, a vocational supplementary education was integrated into the system and the transparency between education, economy and labour market was increased. Regarding university education, the higher education act adopted in 1990 was comprehensively revised for the first time in 2005 and the last amendment took place in 2011 in which the universities became more autonomous. As a result, many new private but also public universities were established.[65] The vocational education system and, thus, the basic vocational schools were reformed for the last time in 2011. Here, one innovation is mainly the closer meshing with vocational education and further education centres. The new system allows pupils an even more specific or individual qualification by passing courses and single examinations in different learning sites which are certified and accepted for the training.[66]

With its partially comprehensive reforms of the past years, the Polish education system approaches Western EU standards. To achieve a sustainably successful implementation of these processes, the education policy can currently build on positive feedbacks and, thus, wide support of many education institutions, which can be interpreted as indicator for a functioning education system consensus policy and successful education strategies of Poland's political decision-makers.[67]

Still, the Republic of Poland's young education system is in its initial stage yet and will have to combat changes even in the future, as, for instance, related to the obligation of teachers to

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[61] Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2012), no page.

[62] Ibid., no page.

[63] Cf. ibid., no page.

[64] Cf. European Commission (2013 b), no page.

[65] Cf. Cedefop (2011), no page.

[66] Cf. European Commission (2013 c), no page.

[67] Cf. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2012), no page.

evaluate and assess pre-schoolers before the primary school starts from 2014 on.[68] The demand that children enter the education system at the earliest possible stage and to have a permeable education system with as smooth as possible transitions are a surely good basis for promoting the future education mobility of children and adolescents individually. Still, major efforts have presumably to be taken to reach the factual implementation respectively sustainable establishment. This includes the early introduction of foreign language classes and the reorganisation of university degrees. Language teaching often starts during the primary school period in Poland with English being the predominant foreign language here. Due to a lack of teachers, the language class options are currently very limited at most of the schools.[69] Due to demographic and geographical circumstances, not all education institutions are available in all areas. Still, the municipalities are obliged to strive for a free transportation of the children to the closest education institution. Remarkable regarding the education system is the pronounced »national idea« in Poland and the related strong involvement of the population into the development of the Polish education system.

Poland is striving not only to best arrange the education paths of children, adolescents and young adults but also to enhance life-long learning and to improve and enhance continuing and further education structures in the context of EU education policy. Special training/qualification programmes and measures for specialists and executives from the education sector are, among others, in the focus here. Facilities from the so-called quarterny sector are here, for instance, state education centres, schools for adult education or further education departments at universities.[70]

As an interim summary can be stated that Poland's overall socio-political objective is human resources development. Looking to the future, Poland's education policy will be strongly oriented to overall European strategies. The strategy »Europe 2020« that stands for sustainable, intelligent and integrative growth and shall improve the education level of European citizens serves as one of the probably most important European promotion strategies here. The promotion programmes in the context of the »Europe 2020« strategy offer, apart from many other European funding programmes, an excellent monetary framework for additional finances to the Republic of Poland, allowing further competence development of human resources. More ambitious than many other European countries, Poland set itself the related goal of reducing the share of school-leavers and of increasing the share of persons with university degree among the 30 to 34 years old population more strongly than determined by the European strategy.[71]

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[68] Cf. European Commission (2013 d), no page.
[69] Cf. Hörner (2004), p. 400.
[70] Cf. Federal Ministry of Research and Education (2012), no page.
[71] Cf. European Commission (2013 e), no page.

**Germany**

Compared to other European states, the German education system has some specific characteristics. Among them, for instance, the federal states' cultural autonomy (federalism) that highly influences the entire education system of the Federal Republic of Germany, the four-level-structure of secondary level I that results into allocating the pupils to different school types depending on their performances, or the vocational training in a dual system. Latest OECD reports stressed that the dual system is one of the main reasons why the business and education location Germany has coped so well with the global economic crises and the youth unemployment problem. Resulting from this, Germany's dual system is considered as European best practice transfer model for modernizing vocational training, which is, among others, demanded in many Baltic Sea Region countries. Due to this, the dual system is presented in more detail hereinafter.[72]

The dual vocational training is implemented in two learning locations, usually over a period of two to, maximum, three and a half years. In the company, the trainee completes the practical training part that ideally has a strong content link to the theoretical lessons taught at the vocational training school. Based on a framework curriculum both, professional and general education competences are taught. In principle, both learning sites act independently regarding management, working and learning process structure here. Still, the regulations are coordinated in so far that a solid vocational training in one of the currently about 330 state-recognized occupations requiring formal training can be enabled.[73] From this combination of theory and practice can be said that the practical occupational training is approached from a sound theoretical basis and, thus, can be considered as more productive or reflected. In addition, practically experienced things can be better implemented than those only addressed in theory.[74] It is particularly the practical training part that qualifies for a comparatively smooth transfer to the work-process oriented professional world after completing the vocational training. The graduates do not need time and cost consuming on-the-job trainings but can quickly offer themselves as full-value manpower as enough applicable experiences had been gained already beforehand. Furthermore, the companies ensure to have their specialists whom they can train according to own needs. Still, the training always has to be in line with the training regulations which determines the framework conditions that have to be met. Through these framework conditions that are binding for the companies, a standardized job profile within the Federal Republic of Germany or respectively in all federal states can be ensured, which provides the opportunity to apply also in other companies in case the trained persons cannot be employed in the training company after the vocational training.[75] The dual system is financed from private and public funds. Employers and social partners show a high commitment. They are controlled at national,

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[72] Cf. Kultusministerkonferenz (2013), no page.
[73] Cf. Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (2013), no page.
[74] Cf. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010), p. 12.
[75] Cf. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2007), p. 4 pp.

regional, local and company level to ensure that not short-term demands overrule the determined training objectives.[76] Currently, the resulting trend in Europe is the export of Germany's dual system respectively its education system parts and structural elements to countries with high youth unemployment and inadequate vocational training structures, such as, for instance Spain, Portugal and Greece as well as, partially, also the Baltic Sea Region countries.[77]

The high number of education service providers in the so-called transition system in Germany shows that the dual system is by no means free from weaknesses or challenges. The transition system works with all those adolescents who have not obtained the needed adequate occupational qualification during the stage between general education to possible career entry. This can result, for instance, from the fact that the general education degrees or marks needed for starting a dual vocational training are not available or that a person lacks the sufficient training entrance maturity due to, for instance, psychological or social disorders. There is a multitude of different service providers that offer education formats below qualifying vocational training level (or accompany adolescents in addition to their dual education, e. g. in case of learning difficulties) to improve the individual lacks of competences of adolescents related to starting an education or employment within the context of the transition system.[78]

One current major challenge or education policy focus in Germany is the gradual improvement of the education system's permeability, which shall, also in the context of national or European qualification frameworks, allow to improve the recognition and crediting of existing degrees, competences and learning successes. It is mainly the permeability from vocational to university education and vice versa that shall enable a more open, more innovative education system. This shall allow even more individual education and career paths and, thus, counteract the serious education system problems of vocational training and study drop-outs or misallocation of future specialists and executive in Germany as well as in other European countries.[79]

The adequately pedagogically organised transition from elementary to primary level is to some extent a problem field in Germany. Pre-school institutions and primary schools as independent institutions have not binding cooperation structures, as it would be usually needed to enable a smooth change or transition in this particularly important education period. Possible measures could be, for instance, the enhancement of joint events, mutual »education visits« and joint further education measures for the pedagogical staff.[80]

An adequate migration policy and a related integrated education policy have been widely debated in Germany over the past years. For a long time, there was a lack of sustainably functioning concepts for integrating migrant families and, thus, also children and adolescents from a migrant background the German education system had to and increasingly has to

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[76] Cf. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010), p.12 p.

[77] Cf. Baethge (2008), p. 541 pp.

[78] Cf. ibid., p. 541 pp.

[79] Cf. e. g. Faulstich (2008), Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung (2010) and Kultusministerkonferenz (2013).

[80] Cf. Rossbach (2008), p. 314.

prepare for. Still, many federal states managed to improve the migration policy respectively to enhance a related integrative education policy via model projects, enacted laws or civil society support systems over the past years. Particularly worth mentioning here are integrated language classes in the school system right from the elementary or primary level on, continued over all education levels. As one thing is certain: children, adolescents and young adults who do not understand German language will not be able to achieve the same results as they would have reached with a comprehensive understanding. Role models for this approach were, among others, Swedish concepts and measures, which have intended state-wide efforts and support programmes over many years aiming to offer Swedish as second language for pupils of non-Swedish origin.[81]

It can be stated that Germany's education system, despite of many presumably modern education policy structures still includes, partially even a lot, education unfairness regarding possible education paths and options for children and adolescents from socially weak backgrounds or with disadvantages of any kind. Parents who cannot afford investing into their children's education, for instance by paying private lessons or extracurricular education offers, are often confronted with inadequate and strongly formalized, bureaucratic structures to cope with the situation. Over the past years, not least supported by many inclusion concepts and projects, even this problem has been increasingly addressed in Germany through legislative amendments, support programmes and model projects. However, there is probably still a long way to go towards an »educational career« as fair as possible for all education recipients and Germany's education federalism makes this additionally difficult.[82]

**Denmark**

Denmark considers education as main indicator for successful and sustainable research, development and innovation activities. Together with the Nordic states Sweden and Finland, Denmark is among the global top positions in the field of vocational and university education in 2010 according to the »Global Competitiveness Report«.[83] However, Denmark achieved, similar to Sweden, rather unsatisfactory results in the PISA study in 2009. To take the results seriously and to respond adequately to it related to the education system, thus mainly reducing the youth unemployment rate, which affects Denmark as much as other European countries, the Danish government set the goal that 95 percent of the adolescents shall achieve an extended secondary level degree by 2015. Furthermore, 60 percent of the adolescents shall attend a university by 2020. An accordingly established national programme is the job and study advisory system »Act of Guidance« which has already existed since 2003 and shall support the adolescents with advice regarding the transition from primary to secondary school, from general education towards vocational training or study and thus eventually towards the labour market. The Danish Ministry for Children and Education is in charge of central coordination and control

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[81] Cf. Stanat (2008), p. 741 pp.
[82] Cf. Institute of Social Research, Computer Science and Social Work (2005), p.17 p.
[83] Cf. Niller (2011), no page.

here. Still, the relevant regional authorities are mainly responsible for organising and implementing the individual advisory processes here. 51 of these municipal Youth Guidance Centres exist all over Denmark. They advise mainly school leavers, disadvantaged adolescents and young people under 25. In addition, the so-called »eGuidance« system, which provides the additional opportunity to get consultancy via SMS, chat forums, telephone hotlines and email services, has been available since 2011. Even the social network »facebook« became part of the »eGuidance« system in January 2012.[84]

The state-financed incentive and support system aiming to motivate or guide disadvantaged adolescents towards a qualified education and school degree plays a particularly strong role in Denmark.[85] Once again, the Danish education society's claim or Danish government's objective to let nobody alone on his/her course of education is illustrated here. Key objective is that all children and adolescents pass and complete a general education schooling that is individually suitable for them. Here, the specifically Danish school type, the production school, is an alternative for disadvantaged young people aged between 16 and 25. It gives them the opportunity to acquire general education, social and job-qualifying competences to get prepared for an adult life as independent and active as possible and potentially have the chance for a further professional education. The attendance is limited to one year or an even shorter period. Production schools, in addition, serve to promoting the education performance of adolescents as well as enhance social integration.[86] Both, the state and the municipalities, are in charge of financing this school type. Production schools have been established as autonomous school type in Denmark since 1996. They are also a model for German production schools. They were originally introduced to reduce youth unemployment.[87]

Particular emphasis is put on equal opportunity or educational equality in the Danish education system combined with the claim of enabling every person his/her optimum educational career. Because established human resources are one of the most significant bases of the country's high economic power. Thus, every learner shall get the same chances for accessing education. What has to be rated positively is that all pupils, independent from gender, origin or mental/physical disabilities, shall support each other in the schools and learn from each other. Thus, better education opportunities for all pupils shall arise and the social competence of all involved parties shall be strengthened. The pedagogical-conceptual approach of inclusion is one key element of Denmark's education system. In addition, the Danish education system offers a very comprehensive and transparent structure in the quarternary sector. It comprises various lifelong learning opportunities that aim to enabling all persons an access to education and further education at any time. This is one of the reasons why people in Denmark have above-average chances for professional advancement compared to other European countries.[88]

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[84] Cf. Fachstelle für internationale Jugendarbeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e.V. (2011), no page.
[85] Cf. Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (2012), no page.
[86] Cf. Cedefop (2012 b), no page.
[87] Cf. Brus (2010), p. 50 pp.
[88] Cf. Werler (2004), p. 89.

The relatively high salary structures and resulting high taxes enable that cost-intensive »inclusion schools« as well as Denmark's education system in total are fully financed by the state, with a few exceptions. Still, related to state financing or adequate budgeting of education issues, already the Danish »folkeskole« act adopted in 1993 effected an increasing competition for pupils as every pupil increases a school's budget. This shows that, despite Denmark's state-organised standardized school, education structures characterized by increasing market-orientation and economisation of education prevail. The question remains if a more efficient and productive school system allows meeting the objectives related to quality assurance and curriculum.[89]

International occupational mobility plays, mainly in view of the neighbouring country Germany, an important role in Denmark. In November 2013, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany and the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Denmark signed a joint declaration aiming to enhance the comparability of obtained occupational qualifications in Germany and Denmark. As a principle, a comparability of vocational qualifications is assumed, unless significant differences regarding taught skill and knowledge exist. Thus, mainly those people who live in German-Danish border regions profit from this. On the one side, it becomes much easier for employees to work in another country. On the other side, apprentices get more options when deciding for a vocational training.[90]

As an interim summary, a high standard of the Danish education system can be attested, mainly because of the education institutions' good material and financial resources and well-qualified staff. The well-established lifelong learning system, the state support systems, the single school type concept, the use of most modern technologies in general education schools, vocational schools and universities and various education programmes for persons who are disadvantaged within the education system are, despite of the youth unemployment challenges, success factors of the Danish education system.[91]

**Sweden**

The Swedish education system has been characterized by the »One school for all«-concept from the beginning of the 1990s on. All pupils shall get the necessary support processes they need to achieve the curriculum objectives. Already then, important instruments were the employment and establishment of special needs educationalists at schools. On the other hands, special needs education became an essential element of Sweden's entire teacher training system.[92]

Where the Swedish education system was strongly focused on formal education processes over the past decades this idea changed at the beginning of the 21st century. The importance of informal learning at school or other areas of education has been increasingly stressed and

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89 Cf. Cedefop (2012 b), no page.
90 Cf. Fachstelle für internationale Jugendarbeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (2013), no page.
91 Cf. Cedefop (2012 b), no page.
92 Cf. Werler (2010), p. 648.

didactically integrated.[93] In this context, informal learning refers to learning processes that take place in everyday life, within the family or during spare time. Informal learning is (related to learning objectives, learning time and learning support) not structured and generally does not result into certification. It can be target-oriented, but in most cases it is not intentional but, instead, incidental and unscheduled.[94] The developments towards a stronger consideration of informal learning processes or informally acquired competences in Sweden takes place also against the background of developments in the entire European education in the context of lifelong learning.[95]

Sweden is one of the wealthiest or socially prosperous European countries and has always been scored good or even very good in the Europe-wide education rankings and reports of the recent past. As other Scandinavian countries, Sweden is one of those EU states where the education system is structured in accordance with the school model, i. e. the state continues to play a particularly important and outstanding role and even vocational education is increasingly implemented at schools.[96]

Resulting from the Bologna process and the related objective to harmonize degrees from all over Europe, Sweden is, as other EU countries, demanded to envisage a transparent, permeable education system to make Swedish degrees more recognizable or creditable everywhere in Europe. A higher competitiveness of human resources in the single countries is one of the issue addressed by the objective. Sweden follows this path partly very successfully. Many Swedish citizens take, for instance, the higher claims for international employability on the EU labour market very seriously and those who can afford it make increasing use of vocational and university education and further education even at an advanced age – mainly by using private education service providers. Sweden's education policy has responded to this trend so that municipalities in Sweden are obliged to increase their financial support even for private schools or successful education service providers. The general tendency is that more and more state schools are shut down, particularly in rural areas, and more and more private education institutions open or expand their existing offers.[97]

As indicated above, Sweden's special needs education is of special importance and internationally considered as exemplary. Based on the 1960s education developments that included the introduction of the nine year general education schools, various reforms took place over the last years or decades, focusing particularly on the field of care for and integration of disadvantaged children and adolescents. Contrasting with the good outer perception of Sweden's special needs education promotion structures, Swedish education experts are far more critical towards the current development status and see major challenges this area will have to face.[98] Thus, for

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[93] Cf. Werler (2010), p. 648.
[94] Cf. Bohlinger (2009), p.166.
[95] Cf. Gries et al. (2005), p. 64.
[96] Cf. ibid., p. 64.
[97] Cf. Bohlinger (2009), p.166.
[98] Cf. Barow (2011), no page.

instance, the integration of children and adolescents who need special pedagogical support shall be enhanced. In addition, special schools for particularly severe special needs education cases currently undergo further reform processes.[99]

As other European countries, Sweden has been an immigration country for many years now. Many people from all over the world come to Sweden every year to secure a foothold on the modern labour market there and to profit from the stable welfare state Sweden. This requires, partly even major, efforts related to the state integration policy or the related integrative education policy in Sweden. The integration measures taken in the context of Swedish education policy are, in many respects, very modern and successful here. Thus, people from a migrant background get the opportunity to make use of an efficient recognition/crediting system related to the qualification acquired in their home country in various Swedish cities, e. g. via the nationwide funded large-scale programme »ULV«, which aims to employ persons with international pedagogical qualifications as teachers in Sweden. In this context, educational staff usually gets an individual post-qualification, for instance regarding Swedish technical language in the relevant pedagogical field or specific didactical/methodological issues related to the specifics of the Swedish education system. One other specialty related to Sweden's integration policy is the Sami minority. It has an own primary school structure from form one to form six before all adolescents attend the regular (i. e. central) general education school from form seven on. The Sami minority got the right to control their education over the first years independently even in 1980 which still applies today.[100]

One of the latest challenges in Swedish education is that education structures and offers are not always oriented to or relevant for current economic issues and that adaptation processes in respond to economic developments and trends, mainly in the vocational training field, are often started too slowly. Thus, school education misses working reality to some extent. Currently, for instance, the phenomenon occurs in Sweden that policy does not respond quickly enough to increased demands or declining demand situations from the economy side related to certain training courses by initiating needed education system adaptations or labour market reforms, e. g. via support programmes. This, again, forces an increase of youth unemployment as, because of this, too many young people may chose a training where not enough job are available or a training with too little practical relevance and, thus, insufficient labour market orientation. Due to this, there are efforts taken in Sweden to adopt aspects or structures from Germany's dual system, mainly for giving greater priority to practical elements of the vocational education, as the education in Sweden has been currently too theoretically oriented, yet.[101]

Finally, the high trust of Sweden's population into state care and education firmly anchored in the national consciousness shall be indicated which, again, has education system effects. Wor-

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[99] Cf. Federal Ministry for Education and Research (2013 d), no page.
[100] Cf. Bührig/Budde (2007), p.193.
[101] Cf. Federal Ministry for Education and Research (2013 d), no page.

king parents are, for instance, significantly released by pedagogical full-day care for their children in Sweden. In addition, the state-financed nine year, full-day general education school is widely supported among the Swedish population.

**Finland**

The Finnish education path is characterized by many modern and innovative education system approaches. One specialty can be noted already at elementary level, considered as particularly important in Finland, as every child from the age of four can claim a place in a state daycare center which is available for free as soon as the parents need it for their offspring. In case the daycare centers of one region reach their capacity limits, the municipality usually expands the institutions very quickly or even accredits new daycare centers in the direct vicinity. Accordingly, no waiting lists exist at this education level, as, for instance, in many other European countries. Parents who do not use or need this kindergarten place get a 300 euro payment from the state as the early education is, in such a case, completely in the parents' hands. The third, increasingly frequented opportunity in the early education context are private care centers, which are controlled by the municipalities.[102]

The majority of parents in Finland place their children at daycare centers from an early stage on.[103] The share is above average compared to other European countries, which results mainly from the typical family model in the Scandinavian countries' societies characterized by usually two working parents. Accordingly, reconciling work and family is a strong element of the Finnish education and labour market policy. A majority of the women works fulltime. Only about 14.8 percent work part time while the share amounts to, for instance, 24.9 percent in Denmark and 39.4 percent in Germany.[104]

One particular strength of the Finnish elementary education level, but also applicable to other educational fields, is the high degree of professionalism of the pedagogical staff. The teaching staff in day care centres usually has a university degree and in-depth science-based and practice-tested pedagogical competences. The staff-children ratio on the elementary level indicates, in addition, a high number of educationalist per child to achieve a promotion and development of the child that is as individual as possible. On average, one kindergarten teacher, for instance, is responsible for three to four children here. To some extent, even 24-hour-kindergartens are available, mainly used by parents who work in shifts.[105]

Furthermore, the Finnish education system is characterized by pronounced pre-school lessons. They take place before the Finnish basic education, i. e. the primary school, starts and is implemented on voluntary basis for all children at the age of six.[106] No specific conditions of admission apply[107] and the municipalities have been obliged to offer such places from 2001 on. The aim

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[102] Cf. Matthies/Skiera (2008), p. 128.
[103] Cf. Knoller (2011), p. 67.
[104] Cf. Oppacher (2010), p. 96.
[105] Cf. Knoller (2011), p. 67.
[106] Cf. Bennack et al. (2010), p. 228 p.
[107] Cf. Döbert et al. (2004), p. 146.

is to create beneficial learning conditions and to develop the children's social competences together with other children. The knowledge transfer is not obligatorily focused on fixed course or group formats here, but on subject areas such as language, interaction or mathematics. The education is based on already existing knowledge and the child's experiences. A positive view of life and playing as pedagogical method are in the focus here. 97 percent of all Finnish children take part in the pre-school lessons.[108]

Other specific Finnish education features are the wide use of most modern technologies and the excellent material equipment at general education schools, vocational schools and universities. Many education institutions, particularly in the city of Helsinki and Helsinki region, meet most modern architectural requirements to innovative education facilities, classrooms with an explicitly learning-friendly design included. Usually, sufficient books or learning materials exist and numerous computers are available to the learner. It should be noted here that it is not only the good material and technical but also the above-average personal resources that characterize the Finnish education system as already indicated above related to the elementary education level. As not only teacher but also special needs teachers, social workers, psychologist, nurses or school nurses work at the schools.[109]

Of great support for Finland's education system is the public confidence in the respective pedagogical staff. Contrary to many other European countries, it is mainly the teachers who enjoy highest social reputation in Finland, which also additionally promotes the teaching-learning-process between pupils and teachers.[110]

Admittedly, the Finnish education society and its education system faces, despite many positive framework conditions, some challenges. The share of non-nationals amounts only to 2.7 percent, so that Finland, from a social point of view, is a rather homogeneous country. But considering the global migration flows it can be assumed that the number of persons who come to Finland from various countries from all over the world to build up a career on the modern labour market and to profit from Finland's stable welfare state will also increase in Finland. This means that, partly major, efforts related to the national integration policy respectively the integrative education policy in Finland will have to be taken and even the financial burden the state will have in these fields will increase then.[111]

Despite of the good results achieved in international educational comparison studies, in-deficit developments related to education can be identified even for Finland to some extent. Thus, for instance, the reading performance of Finnish people has radically changed. Only 70 percent of the Finnish people still like reading where it was still 80 percent ten years ago. 56 percent of the teachers complain in a study implemented in 2008 that, despite certain resources, there is not enough time for a sufficiently individual support of children and adolescents, which partly

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[108] Cf. Bennack et al. (2010), p. 228 p.
[109] Cf. Knoller (2011), p. 69.
[110] Cf. Oppacher (2010), p. 100.
[111] Cf. Knoller (2011), p. 72.

reduces the always strong Finnish focus on pupil-oriented lessons.[112] Furthermore, the share of pupils who are, despite of the good school resources, reluctant to go to school partially increases in Finland. The reason for this is an increasing level of mobbing at schools, partly advanced by anonymous mobbing in social networks like »facebook«.[113] In addition, Finland, as many other European countries, has to combat the youth unemployment problem, which amounted 19.9 percent in 2013.[114] In fact, this is beyond the EU average of 23.7 percent, but anyhow causes, mainly over the medium term, a major economic, but also educational and social, problem if no suitable political measures will be taken. Here, the Finnish education policy has to develop and establish appropriate structures and support programmes for an efficient and successful transition from school into vocational training or studies and, finally, into vocation.

Summarizing, Finland can be considered as benchmark of innovative education policy in many fields. »Knowledge and creativity as well as values like equality, tolerance and equal opportunities for men and women and a responsible handling of nature and internationalisation are basics of the Finnish society. All citizens have the same right to participate in education in accordance with their skills and the principle of lifelong learning.«[115] These priorities and values, also relevant for the education system, are reflected in the main objective of Finland's education policy: »[…] to ensure equal opportunities in the education system for all citizens, independent from age, place of residence, financial situation, gender or native language«.[116] The right to education is considered as basic right in Finland, hence, a free basic education for all citizens is ensured. In addition, the state sees creating equal opportunities as its duty, not at least to offer all citizens the opportunity for following further education and career paths in accordance with their skills and capabilities after completing the basic education comprehensive school.[117]

## 1.3 OUTLOOK: Future Development Strategies Related to Education Policy in the Baltic Sea Region

The experience and knowledge exchange between educational protagonists from Baltic Sea Region countries or regions to be strongly further enhanced is presumably the most outstanding success factor for a sustainably prosperous Baltic education, knowledge and innovation area. Here, for instance the project »Baltic Education« summarizes, among others, the following project experiences respectively results in its final report as impulse for strategic further development approaches related to education policy in the Baltic Sea Region and, thus, additional support projects:

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[112] Cf. Fuhrmann/Beckmann Dierkes (2011), p. 17.
[113] Cf. Knoller (2011), p. 72.
[114] Cf. APF (2013), no page.
[115] Kyrö (2006), p. 14.
[116] Bennack et al. (2010), p. 227.
[117] Cf. Döbert et al. (2004), p. 143.

Learning from each other – particularly in consideration of culturally different national economies in the Baltic Sea region – and further development as a consequence of this help to increase the quality of [general education,] professional vocational training, [university education] and further education. Herein lies the potential of cooperating.

Open information and experience exchange are indispensable for building trust. A stable relationship of trust which has been […] developed by involving the members […] is essential for unbureaucratic implementation […].

The international project work has also shown that the relevant protagonists have only very few information on country-specific cultures, education systems, economic structures etc. An intensive promotion of the exchange particularly regarding such basic issues should absolutely be continued.

In addition, the project work has shown that few information and reliable insights on specific mobility cultures are available and that there is a significant need for further investigations.[118]

In the context of »Agenda 2020 – education policy and strategies for the Baltic Sea«, the Hanse Parliament issued the following continuing **»Guiding themes for a future Baltic Sea Region education policy«:[119]**

**Prospects Baltic Sea Region**

The Baltic Sea Region is considered as one of Europe's most innovative regions and as economically very strong, with its potentials still far from being fully exploited. At the same time, revolutionary developments are on the horizon that may limit the Baltic Sea Regions economic dynamics significantly and require a stronger commitment particularly in the education policy sector. Accordingly, one of the five ambitious objectives of the EU strategy »Europe 2020« is related to education.

**Changed labour markets**

Such a further development of education policy is a key factor for shaping a fulfilling life and for the social integration of every adolescent. Still, such improvements are also very much in the interest of the economy that is moving towards a completely modified labour market situation.

**Quantitative and qualitative bottlenecks**

Over the coming 20 years, the number of employed persons, with the exception of Sweden, will decrease for between 5 % and 18 % in all Baltic Sea Region countries. These quantitative problems will aggravate significantly due to qualitative bottlenecks. The entrepreneur's demands towards young employees are high and further increasing. Personal and social competences are as important as factual knowledge. An increasing share of school leavers in most of the Baltic Sea countries has less and less required competences.

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[118] Hanse Parliament (2008), p. 91.
[119] Hanse Parliament (no publication year a), p. 3.

**Increased competition**

An increased competition between medium-sized companies, larger companies, universities and administrations for qualified adolescents will occur. Small and medium-sized companies that provide about 70 % of all jobs in the Baltic Sea Region will be at risk of losing it and of being pushed to a lower level. Securing the availability of young staff with good qualification and high innovation will become a question of survival for the Baltic Sea Region's small and medium-sized businesses.

**Domestic labour potential and immigration**

Increased immigration to the Baltic Sea Region will be needed, attractive education offers are one decisive factor here. The society has to open up for multicultural challenges. In particular, the exploitation of domestic potentials has to be significantly improved. Education policy has to ensure that the share of adolescents without school-leaving qualification and the number of adolescents incapable of getting educated will be significantly reduced. No adolescent shall be excluded, everybody deserves a second chance.

**Holistic education**

The overestimation of a purely intellectual educational ideal has to be opposed to the eminent generally educating character of education that addresses all senses and promotes all mental, artistic and manual skills at the same time. School education seems to result more and more into egalitarianism. Even stronger individualized lessons with individual learning objectives and successes are imperative.

**Support of persons with learning disabilities and of fast and motivated learners**

Such a holistic education that includes the promotion of individual talents is urgently needed for both, persons with learning disabilities and fast and motivated learners. A genuine forming of elites is missed out in some countries and must no longer be a taboo subject there. A systematic promotion of the stronger without excluding the weaker is essential for integrating all of them.

**Early education**

The early education must be significantly expanded, following the example of some, few Baltic Sea countries. This particularly includes a provision of enough kindergarten places and an obligatory one year pre-school with the best and excellently paid educationalists.

**Priority to quality improvements**

Creating new structures alone cannot result into sustainable improvements if no far-reaching cultural reforms with quality improvements antecede them. New structures will almost inevitably result from a further development of cultures. School structures play a subordinate role, even a structured school system may achieve good successes if it is highly permeable. Long collaborative learning is no prerequisite for good school education but facilitates the teaching of personal and social competences and enhances sustainably integration. The successes achieved in most of the Baltic Sea countries are more pointing towards as long collaborative learning as possible.

**Attractiveness and quality increase in vocational training**

The attractiveness of vocational training has declined in all Baltic Sea countries and, with a share of 10 to 15 % of the school leavers completing a vocational training, has reached an alarmingly low level. The practical parts in vocational training have to be significantly increased particularly in countries with school systems. Wherever possible, the education should be implemented in a dual system.

**Admission requirements and differentiation**

Introducing Baltic Sea region wide standardized admission requirements for vocational training which are determined specifically for every occupation is desirable. Specific vocational education ways with complete permeability have to be created for fast and motivated adolescents as well as for those with learning difficulties.

**Opening and permeability of the education system**

The vocational training is too much disconnected from the other education fields and leads quickly into dead ends. A complete permeability within the vocational training as well as between this and the general and university education with smooth transitions and crediting opportunities are imperative. This includes even, following the example of some Baltic Sea countries, a Baltic Sea wide entitlement to study with apprenticeship or skilled worker status.

**Opening for not qualified staff**

The medium-sized business, particularly the skilled crafts and trades, have to open much more for not qualified persons (among others also student dropouts) and win them for a long-term employments. Tailor-made start-up training periods, custom-fit further educations and any opening of education processes and improved permeability enhance this important process.

**Dual study course**

Adolescents tend to avoiding vocational training and preferring studying. Still, most of the study courses are so much theoretical and, thus, little oriented to the practical needs of medium-sized companies, so that not enough young entrepreneur and specialist staff can be attracted despite of high numbers of students. Dual study courses that connect a vocational education or work to studying have to be established on a broad basis.

**International exchange**

Stays abroad during the vocational training, studies or occupational activity promote the increasingly important international skills and experiences as well as personal and social competences. The Baltic Sea wide unbureaucratic recognition of education and further education degrees is a decisive requirement here.

### Education and site policy

Further decreasing transport and communication costs enhance the production factor mobility. Companies move to attractive sites with a high supply of skilled workers and employees to sites with attractive education offers and a manifold labour market. The competition of locations for (highly) qualified workforce becomes clearly more intensive. A Baltic Sea Region-wide education policy has to be embedded into the EU Baltic Sea Region strategy and to ensure that this competition takes place not only inside the Baltic Sea Region, in fact mainly strengthens the entire Baltic Sea Region compared with other regions and expands the existing lead via outstanding education offers.

### Top priority for education policy

The Baltic Sea Regions considerable chances can only be exploited via highest innovations and outstanding qualifications. Education policy, to a large extent, is at the same time location, regional and spatial planning policy. Education promotes innovation and competitiveness and includes the most important support task for small and medium-sized companies. Thus, education policy must be superior to all other political fields and should have top priority even in the EU Baltic Sea Region strategy. According to the EU strategy »Europe 2020«, policy, economy and society of the Baltic Sea Region have to indicate the education policy's outstanding position and recognize that investing into human resources generates the safest and highest interests.[120]

The innovation capability and the education system development status that creates the basis for this in the Baltic Sea Region can be characterized as above-average in European comparison. Having more than hundred universities and research institutions and already being in many respects very well interlinked, the Baltic Sea Region is an education, knowledge and innovation area of global significance. Many of Europe's oldest universities are located in the Baltic Sea Region. Still, if these standards of technological capability and innovation performance shall be sustainably established or continuously developed, this needs innovative Baltic education systems and related modern labour market structures as well as further intensive research and development work. In principle, the Baltic Sea Region has an enormous potential of well to excellently educated specialists and executives. Still, the European macro-region Baltic Sea Region is confronted with major challenges mainly regarding demographic, migration and technologisation developments. To address them, it seems to be eminently important that, in addition to the many already existing networks and cooperations between universities and non-university research institutes, also more and more transnational cooperations or interregional education networks in the fields general education, vocational training and vocational and university further education should be established, e. g. in the form of sustainable school partnerships or exchange programmes.[121]

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[120] Hanse Parliament (no publication year a), p. 3 pp.
[121] Cf. Thönnes (2011), p. 12.

Another also eminently important strategic field of education policy advancement in the Baltic Sea Region is the increasingly internationally oriented professionalisation and the related exchange of expertise between teaching and educational staff from schools, vocational schools, universities as well as training staff of companies and industry-wide education service providers within the Baltic Sea Region to be intensified significantly. As it is mainly the pedagogical staff who will be a multiplier that is able to anchor the »spirit« of a future-oriented »Baltic education, knowledge and innovation society« of the 21st century among its learners – based on »innovation through intercultural exchange«.[122]

The following chapter will provide some related inspirations or conceptual approaches by presenting specific features and tendencies of initial academic and further teacher training in the relevant Baltic Sea Region countries, showing to what extent increasingly international contexts can be located in the related national teacher professionalisation and where thematically sound options of exchange of expertise programmes between countries or regions are.

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[122] Cf. Thönnes (2011), p. 12.

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*Martin French*

# 2 Qualification and Professionalisation of Teaching and Educational Staff in the Baltic Sea Region

Establishing a Baltic education, knowledge and innovation area sustainably needs a stronger focus on qualifying and professionalising teaching and educational staff in the Baltic Sea Region in the context of modern education policy strategies and education system structures. The heterogeneity of the target group »Baltic teaching and education staff« addressed by the professionalisation should be considered here as it differentiates a great variety of pedagogical staff, e. g. general and vocational education teachers, university teachers, special needs educationalists, social education workers, in-company trainers, continuing training instructors, teaching staff from education companies etc.

As specific priority area of considering the »Professional Careers in Baltic Education«[1], this chapter will focus on initial and further teacher training. Because it is mainly the pedagogical general education specialists from the elementary and primary sector as well as from the secondary sectors I and II and the teaching staff of the vocational schools who have to meet ever-increasing demands to the teaching-learning-processes by developing new or enhancing existing pedagogical competences. Thus, adequate theory-based and practice-related as well as international qualification and professionalisation are preconditions of modern pedagogical work.[2]

Taking up this direction of thought, this chapter focuses on discussing three main thematic issues:

In a first step it will be explained why it is so significant and important to increasingly approach international thematic issues and innovations in the context of initial academic and further teacher training. It is emphasized here that internationalisation strategies in initial academic and further teacher training but also in any professionalisation fields of other teaching and educational staff, e. g. also for teachers and continuing training instructors at companies and education service providers, enable regional, national and international/interregional innovations and added-value for education systems and labour markets – above all related to macroregions like the Baltic Sea Region.

Subsequent to these basic information, specifics and tendencies of initial academic and further teacher training in the Baltic Sea Region countries are presented. These remarks display, for instance, specifics and peculiarities of initial academic teacher education and subsequent professionalising structures related to further teacher education in the form of summarizing country profiles, but raise no claim for completeness. Similar to the chapter on education system comparisons, the information provided on the individual Baltic Sea Region countries are accentuated statements or trend statements based on selected literature and experience reports from the South Baltic Programme project COHAB[3].[4]

Here, the information on professionalisation systems related to initial academic and further te-

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[1] Cf. Weyand/Justus/Schratz (2012), p. 30.
[2] Cf. Baltic 21 (2002), p. 16 pp.
[3] For more information on the EU project COHAB visit *www.cohab.eu*.

acher training present an overview on education policy responsibilities, on the organisational structure of the initial education stage and of the continuative professionalisation, on specific features related to didactic-methodological concepts and models of pedagogical competence, on linking teacher professionalisation with practical experiences in education institutions or in companies and already existing internationalisation structures for each country. This second sub-chapter partly focuses even more on pedagogical staff who works in the vocational training field, i. e. mainly vocational teachers, which is motivated by the target group focus respectively the research and development priority of the Chair of Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship Education at the University of Rostock on the vocational training field.

The chapter closes with an outlook to (further) development strategies of international professionalisation of teaching and educational staff in the Baltic Sea Region. These passages also summarize structural approaches or education system realignments, which are needed for sustainably establishing an initial academic and further teacher training that is oriented to international standards and linked internationally/interregionally in the Baltic Sea Region.

## 2.1 Teaching and Educational Staff as Driving Force of a Baltic Education Area

It cannot be disputed that education policy and education system framework conditions are crucial for success and innovation in the fields of education, science and culture – from the regional, national and even international point of view. In the end, however, it is the task of qualified and professionally acting pedagogical staff to fill this systemic and political framework with life day by day. The teaching and educational staff works in various fields here, i. e., for instance, as kindergarten teacher in the elementary field, as general education teacher in the primary field or on the secondary levels I and II, as vocational school teacher, university teacher, as special needs teacher or as educationalist or in-service trainer at companies or education service providers. With their pedagogical work, they contribute to a development of the municipalities, regions, countries or even the entire European Union as it is intended by the education policy strategies. The same applies to the macro-region Baltic Sea Region where, mainly due to various EU funding programmes, the international or interregional networking of educational players from the Baltic Sea Region countries keeps increasing.[5]

If one considers the numerous links pedagogical staff is very much confronted with these days,

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[4] The information provided in the second sub-chapter is based on international research and development work of the Chair of Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship Education at the University of Rostock. A group of students from the business pedagogy field elaborated a trend report titled »Teacher training in the Baltic Sea Region – similarities and differences« within the context of a scientific project work in winter term 2013/14. This paper serves as the basis for the information provided in this chapter. The scientific process was supervised by the scientific staff of the chair respectively the staff of the EU project COHAB.

[5] Cf. Weyand/Justus/Schratz (2012), p. 14 pp.

this internationalisation of pedagogical professionalisation via international knowledge transfer and networking becomes more and more important and necessary also from the societal point of view:

- The pedagogical staff is confronted with a globalized living, learning and working environment of children, adolescents, young adults or all education recipients.
- The pedagogical staff works with classes or learning groups where a migrant background or migrant characteristics are less an exception than the normal case.
- The pedagogical staff should autonomously qualify (further) even for a work outside the home country, if it does not want to rely on the, partly very unstable, labour market and education policy framework conditions alone.
- The pedagogical staff has increasingly to be able to work in interdisciplinary and intercultural teams, which are often very heterogeneous, regarding socio-cultural as well as regarding ethnical aspects.
- The pedagogical staff, mainly teachers or trainers, has to be able to communicate with the parents of children or adolescents entrusted to him/her, who do not communicate interculturally or multiculturally themselves, but mono-culturally instead, so that the entire teaching-learning process that includes work with parents is successfully implemented.[6]

The (vocational) education policy of the European Union – and, thus, broken down, even the macro-regional education policy strategies of the Baltic Sea Region – stand in direct context to the social necessity to expand the internationalisation of education systems for international professionalisation structures of pedagogical staff. It is the European Union's dedicated education policy objective to establish a »European Education, Knowledge and Innovation Area« that shall implement efficient permeability and, thus, barrier-free mobility structures at the transition between education and occupation systems. This education policy paradigm results into new claims and system modifications related to a stronger interregional/international networking for education system advancements, transparent recognition/crediting systems, the development and establishment of efficient mobility programmes and mainly also on the necessity and meaningfulness of increasingly internationalised qualifications of pedagogical staff as driving force of the European or, broken down to the macro-regional level, Baltic Sea Region.[7]

A sustainable internationalisation of initial academic teacher training, also in connection with modern educational science research and development approaches, is ultimately also an increase of the teaching profession's professionalisation level, as the educating universities shall not only train the teacher's vocational aspiration when training teaching profession students. In fact, students who graduate from an increasingly internationally oriented teacher education shall also develop a global employability adapted to education system changes and modern labour market structures that exceeds the mere teaching profession.[8] This claim for increasing the pro-

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[6] Cf. Lenzen (2013), p. 4.
[7] Cf. Ministry of Education of Lower Saxony (2012), p. 5.
[8] Cf. for an innovative teacher education concept with international topics, among others, the University of Oldenburg (no year of publication): »Module offers of the study course ´ProfaS – Technical didactics structuring processes in school practice and teacher education«.

fessionalisation degree of the teaching profession by increasingly implemented internationalisation in teacher education is oriented to the »global citizenship« concept. This conceptual approach focuses on educating teaching profession students as »professionally competent world citizens who are able to act responsibly in local, regional and global contexts«[9]. Such a comprehensive educational approach should, of course, apply to all university students in principle. Still, the »global citizenship« education approach is particularly significant and important for teaching profession students as they are the ones who will (be able to) act as »internationalisation multipliers«, being the training and education staff for numerous people in their education institutions later.[10] »Only teachers who have acquired international and intercultural experiences themselves will be able to prepare their pupils to the chances, risks and insecurities of a globalized society.«[11] This pedagogical paradigm becomes increasingly important considering the fact that life, education and professional careers of many education recipients, mainly of those in urban centres, are more and more characterized by migrant characteristics and cultural diversification. Against this background, comprehensive internationalisation strategies in initial academic and further teacher training as well as in all professionalisation areas related to other teaching and education staff, e. g. with education and further education at companies or education service providers, create added value for national education systems as well as international/interregional education contexts.[12]

Because of the aforementioned framework conditions, only highly qualified, continuously professionalised, internationally networked specialists and, in this respect, efficient initial and further education structures for these specific specialists in the individual countries, as well as mainly even a further advancing interregional networking and interlinking of initial and further education structures for educational staff related to best practice structures can be the driving force for a sustainable education, knowledge and innovation area.[13] The information provided in the following chapter shall give some inspiration related to possible innovations in the field of initial academic and further teacher training in the individual Baltic Sea Region countries that, which, conceptually and structurally adapted, could even be established in other countries or regions along the Baltic Sea.

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[9] Lenzen (2013), p. 4.
[10] Cf. German Academic Exchange Service (2013), no page.
[11] Lenzen (2013), p. 5.
[12] Cf. ibid., p. 4 p.
[13] Cf. e. g. Baltic Sea Parliament Member Conference (BSPC) (2003), p. 1 pp.

## 2.2 Specifics and Trends of Initial and Further Teacher Training in the Baltic Sea Region[14]

**Estonia**

As most of the other Baltic Sea Region countries, Estonia has to combat a decline in prestige and attractiveness of the teaching profession (or educational staff) particularly resulting from the low wage level. This results into a situation where teaching as a profession is only considered as an alternative to unemployment, but is not the first choice so that it is very difficult to motivate young people to entering this profession.[15] The declining prestige affects also the educational staff's age structure. Thus, 20 percent of the working teachers in Estonia have already reached retirement age. New teachers are recruited locally, i. e. on school level, but scarcely human resource development plans exist there. At best, they are mentioned in the annual school development plans. In addition, there is generally no system that encourages, for instance, staff from the business sector or others to work as vocational school teacher. Furthermore, there is a growing trend towards an increased pupil-teacher-ratio. While vocational school teachers used to work with class sizes of twelve pupils, currently 18 to 20 pupils have to be counted, which makes the job increasingly unattractive for modern educationalists.[16]

Another trend is the expected decreasing need for vocational school teachers due to the decreasing interest of adolescents in vocational training. Due to this, no vocational school teacher (or trainer) shortage has occurred so far except in individual cases related to specific subjects such as information and communication technology or even foreign languages.[17] Still, a future shortage of well-qualified education staff has to be assumed not at least because of the aforementioned bad reputation of the profession in Estonia.

The current quality of lessons and learning in Estonia needs permanent change. The teaching and learning processes are largely very traditional and teacher-oriented, although also pupil-oriented teaching and learning approaches with focus on teamwork, communication skills and critical reflection have enhanced in the context of internationally supported reform programmes. Likewise, curricula have been synchronized with labour market requirements. Still, the implementation of new curricula develops very slowly by now, as, for instance, the genuine practical experiences of the educationalists or the networks of teachers towards the business sector are still very limited and often only outdated teaching and training materials are available. In addition, teachers have frequently problems with implementing the new, externally developed

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[14] The information provided in the second sub-chapter is based on international research and development work of the Chair of Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship Education at the University of Rostock. A group of students from the business pedagogy field elaborated a trend report titled »Teacher training in the Baltic Sea Region – similarities and differences« within the context of a scientific project work in winter term 2013/14. This paper serves as the basis for the information provided in this chapter. The scientific process was supervised by the scientific staff of the chair respectively the staff of the EU project COHAB.

[15] Cf. ReferNet (2009 a), no page.

[16] Cf. Faudel (2002), p. 2 pp.

[17] Cf. ibid., p. 2 pp.

curricula due to lacking resources for teacher professionalisation processes. Developing additional new or advancing existing training materials is often complicated at vocational schools as the material, in an ideal case, should be developed further individually and pupil-centered for nearly 150 special subjects with a limited number of pupils each. This is exacerbated by the fact that every school would have to develop these teaching and learning materials independently then, as there is no institution in charge of developing subject-specific methods for vocational training.[18]

In addition to the Vocational Training Institution Act issued in 1998, the three provisions on certificates (1998), quality requirements (1998) and the latest structural requirements to the teacher education are the core of the legislative framework for teachers (and partially also for trainers). The improvement of further teacher training and of the teacher education quality, the creation of new curricula on all levels and the modernization of study conditions, a review of the vocational school network included, were planned in 2000 and have been the key task of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research since then.[19] It was decided already in 1999 that the vocational training shall increasingly focus on developing practical skills. Since then, vocational school teachers participate in practical retraining organised by companies every three years for a period of two months. This concept is unique in its way and enables the teachers to get a realistic view on the labour market. Another quality assurance measure is the participation in at least 160 hours of further training within five working years mandatory for every teacher, e. g. in the fields innovative didactics or use of technical equipment in teaching-learning processes.[20]

Regarding the field of education and research, Estonia's currently governing coalition is sure: The key to Estonia's economic success are educated people which is why education will have top priority over the coming years here. The aim is to bring many fields of the Estonian education system to the level of the Scandinavian countries. Related to this, an internationally oriented project on advancing the structures and the system of initial academic and further teacher training was successfully launched with European Social Funds from 2005 to 2008 and successfully completed with many developed professionalisation concepts elaborated with teachers who contributed to curriculum committees. A study was elaborated within the project that provided an overview on career models for today's vocational training teachers in Estonia, which was subsequently compared with the practices in other European countries. On this basis, the project was able to compile new necessary, subject-specific competences for adapting Estonia's teacher education to international standards.[21]

Good education means higher salaries, a lower unemployment risk and better pension plans for the Estonian population. Thus, it seems inevitable to continue with restructuring the education system and also with modifying initial and further training of educational staff to sustai-

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Cf. Faudel (2002), p. 2 pp.
Cf. ReferNet (2009 a), no page.
Cf. Faudel (2002), p. 13 p.
Cf. ReferNet (2009 a), no page.

nably establish a stronger, export-oriented and innovation-based economic power of Estonia. The promotion of the university education for teachers, mainly for vocational school teachers, and the increase of the profession's popularity are emphasized in the Estonian governmental programme. To achieve this, the government intends, among others, to modernize the vocational training institutions and to increasingly support them with unlocking new potentials.[22]

This strong education policy commitment regarding further development and quality enhancement, mainly of the vocational education in Estonia respectively of the teachers who work in this field, has to be considered as a very positive sign. The problems have been recognized by all institutions involved in the education system. The aforementioned measures and projects represent only a fraction of the measures that shall help to solve the identified problems in Estonia's education system or in the outdated initial academic and further teacher training.[23] Estonia has sufficiently sound concepts for reforming the education system and the teacher professionalisation and takes currently the probably not easy approach to implement them, mainly regarding the more intensive financing of academic initial teacher education.[24]

Estonia can be described as a country with clearly formulated objectives on professionalising the educational staff, but will need the involvement of all persons employed in the education sector into this process, their networking and active contribution in the future. If this joint advancement in adequate education and professionalisation networks, mainly between the Estonian Ministry for Education and Research, teacher associations, general education and vocational schools, universities and companies, will not work, these theoretically partly very innovative approaches can hardly be implemented.[25]

**Latvia**

Latvia has been one of the first countries that has advanced the European Bologna process massively in its own national education system and has focused also on renewing the initial academic teaching profession education into this system of modularization and bachelor-master-study programmes at a very early stage. Thus, international comparability and transparency were established early compared to other European countries. As one special feature has to be mentioned that two different models of academic initial teacher education, for general education and vocational education teachers, are to be identified, the integrative and the consecutive model. Both models are internationally accepted, also applied in other European countries and imply that there is not only one, direct way but different career profiles that lead towards teacher profession. In this context, the Latvian education policy is striving to continue the adaptation and advancement of Estonian teacher education in accordance with international standards.[26]

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[22] Cf. Aarna/Silla (2012), p. 6 p.
[23] Cf. ReferNet (2009 a), no page.
[24] Cf. Aarna/Silla (2012), p. 47 p.
[25] Cf. Council of the University of Tartu (2011), p. 1 pp.
[26] Cf. ReferNet (2009 b), no page.

Choosing the integrative model of Latvian teacher education, students systematically decide for teaching profession studies that end with a »Bachelor of Educational Science« with an extent of 160 credit points after four years. Main feature of the model is the correlation between single study components, composed of expert knowledge, pedagogy, psychology and didactics. Thus, the integrative model is a cross-faculty study programme that aims to teaching the students in a modularized and integrated professionalisation process over their entire study period; i. e.competences a future teacher currently needs. The integrative model implies here that all university lectures a student takes during his/her period of study serve for theory-based vocational preparation for the teaching profession.[27]

With the consecutive model, a student firstly acquires a Bachelor degree in a technical study programme that does not necessarily include pedagogical professionalisation topics after 3 years, with 120 credit points and studies at a purely technically oriented faculty. If the student decides to become a teacher then, this can be achieved in a continuing pedagogical study course with 40 to 80 credit points and an additional study duration of up to two years. This is, therefore, a master study programme with focus on pedagogics, psychology and didactics. This study programme teaches pedagogical knowledge that builds on the technical studies which are needed for the teaching profession. The degree obtained with the total academic teaching profession education according to this model over 5 to 6 years is the »Master of Educational Science«. Therefore, the consecutive model is the longer and indirect way towards teaching profession and the opposite of the integrative model that always targets directly to the teaching profession. The consecutive model can also be described as appropriate teacher professionalisation strategy for lateral entrants and re-entrants from business sectors or similar.[28]

Laws related to teaching profession education in Latvia are based on education law, school law, university law and other regulations of involved education institutions. According to Latvian university law, the responsibility lies with the individual decentralized university institutions (universities and universities of applied sciences), which determine study contents, pre-requirements, education duration etc. for different study programmes (§ 55 university act).[29]

The Further Education Office under the supervision of the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science[30] is responsible for the further education of teaching staff subsequent to academic teaching profession education in Latvia. The school management is commissioned to check and coordinate the further trainings of its employed teaching staff in regular intervals. As a principle, a teacher has to take paid training leaves of up to 30 days per calendar year for further education every three years which has to be guaranteed. Teachers may participate in further education at universities, school authorities, professional associations, national training

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[27] Cf. Cedefop (2004 a), p. 57 pp.
[28] Cf. ibid., p. 57 pp.
[29] Cf. Ministry of Education and Science Latvia (2013), no page.
[30] Cf. Artzfeld/Chaudhuri (2000), p. 3254.

and examination centres or even private further education centres here.[31] The incentive for further teacher trainings are indeed very large in this respect in Latvia, as a permanent professionalisation also increases the number of possible lessons, partly also in new subjects, and thus the teacher salary. Due to this, further teacher trainings increase the professional flexibility and availability of the teacher. Most of the further teacher trainings in Latvia are dedicated to technical priority themes. Still, topics such as modern teaching-learning arrangements or efficient organisation or human resource development at school have become important. Other important and due to permanently increasing challenges eminently necessary further education field focuses on pedagogical concepts and measures aiming to integration or inclusion.[32]

The different university study programmes for teaching profession education and the numerous further teacher training opportunities in Latvia can be absolutely determined as high quality and oriented to international standards regarding their concepts. Furthermore, the financial framework conditions for starting teaching profession studies can be positively evaluated as no tuition fees occur at higher state education institutions (at least for a certain number of students). The situation with state-supported further teacher training is a similar one. Still, as for the entire education system, major austerity measures taken by the Latvian government over the past years had negative effects on teaching profession education and further teacher training. The investments into the Latvian education system and particularly the university education, teaching profession education included, have been radically reduced, so that underfunding caused losses of quality in teaching profession education occurred despite of the aforementioned basics incorporated into law and of the conceptual innovations.[33]

The financial constraints of the past years the Latvian government is responsible for, mainly in the educational field, did not at least have negative impacts on the teaching staff income. As teacher salaries are very low in Latvia and neither an increase nor other financial incentive systems are in sight, the long-term »career goal teacher« is, despite of the cost-free studies, not in the professional focus of most of the Latvian citizens, even not necessarily via the generally well-structured option for lateral or re-entries from business or similar via the consecutive study model. According to 2011 statistics, the annual gross salaries for educated teachers who work full-time is the lowest in Latvia compared to the rest of the European Union. The salary difference e. g. compared to Germany is dramatically big, as German teachers earn eight to ten times more than Latvian teachers. One speciality of the wage structure of Latvian teachers in this respect is that the actual average salary of a teacher is higher than the pay scale maximum wages related to the formally determined lessons as Latvian teachers (can) work many additionally paid overtime hours.[34] In addition, many Latvian teachers get additional

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[31] Cf. ReferNet (2009 b), p. 50.
[32] Cf. Schmid (2005), p. 1 p.
[33] Cf. ReferNet (2009 b), no page.
[34] Cf. Bongartz (2013), no page.

income from side jobs, for instance private lessons, translations, tourism services etc.[35]

In summary, Latvia can be characterized as a country which has implemented many successful programmes and measures aiming to analyse university education and extra-occupational pro-fessionalisation structures for teaching staff, partly financed by European funds, over the years of global economic crisis. A lot of innovative structural, systemic and conceptual pedagogical education and further education strategies have derived from this, always oriented to international standards and European education policy. The fact that these concepts and strategies of modern teaching profession education and further teacher training have not improved the professionalism and image of the teaching profession as much as intended, results mainly from the education policy underfunding of the last years caused by the Latvian government. Here, more budget reallocations in favour of the education system have to be arranged in the future and better financial incentive systems have to be created.

## Lithuania

As a consequence of the EU memorandum on lifelong learning issued in 2000 where the decisive role of education for the long-term development of a country's human resources was underlined, the focus of the European Union's education policy and, thus, also of the education policy in Lithuania, was increasingly placed on lifelong learning. This does not only affect the Lithuania's quarternary education sector, but also the initial university education for professional teachers. As lifelong learning has not only a high priority related to further education, but basically starts already in the education stage. Thus, Lithuania pursues a new pedagogical approach that, for instance, no longer focuses on vocational school teachers in the teaching and learning process but mainly on the trainee. Instead, vocational school teachers shall act as planners and developers of teaching and learning programmes now and shall encourage their pupils to be, among others, open for innovation and to actively contribute to shaping the change. This requires focusing on exactly these didactical and methodological innovations already during the initial academic teacher training and will continuously be developed further and advanced in the process of lifelong learning at a later stage. The focus of teaching didactical qualifications in the field of initial academic teacher training and in the in-service teacher professionalisation will currently be even more strengthened as investigations on the topic have shown that a majority of the Lithuanian teachers for vocational training schools has a job-qualifying degree related to the taught subject, but has never acquired a formal didactical degree.[36]

Considering the technological progress, an additional focus in teacher education is put on latest technical innovations or technology-based teaching equipment. It is important for the Lithuanian education policy in times of change to keep pace in the international »education competition« which is why teachers shall be increasingly enabled to use every innovation in their lessons and to train their pupils accordingly.[37]

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[35] Cf. ReferNet (2009 b), no page.
[36] Cf. Cedefop (2004 b), p. 66 pp.
[37] Cf. Cedefop (2012 a), p. 21.

From the organisational and structural point of view, the university education for teachers is very differentiated in Lithuania regarding the sighted fields of education the teachers will later work in. The education of pre-school and primary school teachers is implemented as three- or four-year study course at a pedagogical university or a pedagogical vocational college. Teachers for secondary level schools pass a four- or five-year study course first and complete it with a Master degree. Afterwards they start a one-year preparatory service, comparable with the internship to be implemented in Germany.[38]

Furthermore, the vocational school teacher in Lithuania is very much differentiated in itself. It can take place as university studies, as studies at a pedagogical or educational science university or at a vocational training school or continued vocational training institution. While the universities mainly focus on teaching didactical and theoretical technical content, the vocational training schools prioritize teaching practical teaching and learning methods. University education students complete a pedagogical practical training at a vocational school where university and vocational training school cooperate closely to ensure an optimum interaction of theoretical and practical education contents. Future vocational school teachers are supervised by university tutors and vocational school mentors here, each of them with clearly defined tasks. Tutors are university lecturers who are, among others, in charge of reviewing the practical training results regarding the objectives determined in the previously elaborated education programmes. In addition, their tasks include the work shadowing and remote supervision of students during their school internships. Mentors are experienced vocational school teachers who instruct the students regarding their practical work at the vocational training school and support them to implement their previously acquired theoretical skills in practice.[39]

One way of becoming vocational school teacher that is increasingly widespread in Lithuania can be described as follows: On the first level, the future vocational school teacher attends a vocational school and acquires his/her first occupational qualification in a two- to three-year education. This level is desirable but not a prerequisite for the subsequent education. Level two comprises the acquisition of a higher occupational qualification over three to six years at a higher vocational school or technical school. On level 3, the future vocational school teacher acquires advanced technical qualifications via occupational activities and experiences in one field of expertise over at least three years. The fourth level intends that the future vocational training expert starts to teach at a vocational training school and significantly enhances his/her didactical and pedagogical skills during an extra-occupational scheme within the first two years. This is usually done by acquiring pedagogical qualification during an initial pedagogical university education.

It has to be ensured here that the vocational school teacher's education is always one level ahead of the trained pupil and that the vocational school teachers have professional as well as pedagogical qualifications.[40] Notwithstanding their educational level and the aforementioned

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[38] Cf. Cedefop (2012 a), p 21.
[39] Cf. Schaub/Zenke (2007), p. 408 pp.
[40] Cf. European Training Foundation (2002), p. 2.

education procedures, teachers without any pedagogical qualification are only entitled to teach after they acquired basic pedagogical knowledge in courses at a certified institution or university, comprising 120 hours.[41] This educational path is virtually a consecutive educational model towards vocational teaching profession, that comprises of vocational and university education stages.

The education stages are followed by further vocational or further academic education stages. It should be noted here that the participation in further education measures has significantly increased, in total but primarily also within the target group educational staff, in Lithuania, which is also due to the fact that participating in further education measures has meanwhile become a precondition for professional promotion and pay raises.[42] Currently, qualification programmes are offered by hundreds of different institutions in Lithuania, most of them financed by the state but some also by private or international organisations. Although a majority of the institutions are public bodies, occupational and private service providers are also entitled to offer recognized further education programmes after getting a related licence issued by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science.[43] In the context of the new pedagogical approach in Lithuania's education policy, future teachers shall, here and in connection with the lifelong learning model, participate in further education measures in regular intervals and even get qualified for elaborating individualized further education plans on their own.[44] In addition, as indicated above a stronger focus, not only during initial teacher education, but also during further teacher training, is placed on working with latest technologies.[45] Thus, for instance, Lithuania offers courses on the basis of the European Computer Driving Licence that certify a certain knowledge about computers and computer handling, aiming to enhance the relevant knowledge.[46] Although Lithuania's education policy realized that a high quality of education in the country depends primarily on the professional pedagogical skills of teachers, it can be attested regarding the initial and further education situation of educational staff in Lithuania that it currently still strongly lacks the needed financial resources as well as professionalisation networks of the involved educational institutions to ensure an adequate didactical-methodological teacher professionalisation, mainly for vocational school teachers. Furthermore, a majority of the teachers has not realized yet how important the education policy concept of lifelong learning is – for the own professionalisation as well as for the development of the whole country's education – and which chances it provides. Due to this, the integration of this »pedagogical meta-approach« into the daily pedagogical work has only been started. Still, Lithuania has taken the necessary steps for implementing these intentions as the preconditions for lifelong learning and the needed permeability between the education levels are established,

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[41] Cf. Cedefop (2012 a), p. 18.
[42] Cf. European Trade Union Committee for Education (2012), p. 17.
[43] Cf. Cedefop (2012 a), p. 13 pp.
[44] Cf. Cedefop (2004 b), p. 67 pp.
[45] Cf. Cedefop (2012 a), p. 21.
[46] Cf. European Training Foundation (2002), p. 4.

for instance with the consecutive education system for vocational school teachers. Furthermore, teachers, in principle, have even today a de-central access to general and occupational further education, which allows them to enhance their pedagogical qualifications. In addition, the adaptation of the consecutive education system for vocational school teachers gives them the opportunity to adapt their occupational and didactical qualification to latest education system and labour market requirements.[47]

**Poland**

When joining the European Union in 2004, Poland signed the Bologna Declaration and agreed to establish a European university area. This had effects on the country's initial academic teacher training. It varies depending on which education level shall be taught later. Elementary school teachers, teachers for primary and secondary schools, vocational school teachers as well as, partly separately, foreign language teachers are educated at universities. Foreign language teachers pass independent academic studies at a foreign language college that is completed with a diploma or bachelor degree after three years. They have the opportunity to add two-year complementary academic studies for obtaining the Master degree. All other teacher training is completed at universities or pedagogical universities. The standard period of study amounts five years here and ends with the Master degree. A specialty of the Polish teacher training compared to many other European countries is basically that Polish teachers are only educated for one school subject.[48]

Provided that the teaching profession studies have been successfully completed, every graduate gets the teaching profession accreditation. The national Polish teacher law determines preconditions and requirements for teacher employments in Poland. This includes the corresponding qualification, the observation of moral principles and the physical aptitude and fitness. The qualification to be presented is a final university degree or university college degree related to the subject to be taught. Furthermore, a pedagogical preparation is needed. Exceptions are made for practical vocational school teachers. Partially, no university degree is required for them as long as the technical competence can be proven by a completed apprenticeship. Another exception is made for foreign language teachers as here, firstly, too few teachers are available and, secondly, a lack of interest in this profession occurs. Still, well-educated foreign language teaching staff is increasingly needed due to the increasing internationalisation of Poland's education system and labour market. Due to this it is permitted to work as teacher upon proof of a university degree and after passing a state-recognized examination on the studied foreign language.[49]

To meet the urgent need for foreign language teachers also on the organisational and structural level, Poland's education policy has increasingly established the aforementioned foreign language

[47] Cf. Cedefop (2004 b), p. 26.
[48] Cf. Faudel (2002), p. 18 pp.
[49] Cf. ibid., p. 18 pp.

colleges over the last years. Up to the 20th century, Russian was the foreign language mainly taught at Polish schools. It was even punishable for a long time to use the German language in some regions. This changed by the end of the 20th century when the Russian language became less important and the Polish population increasingly longed for Western languages. Due to this, the Ministry of National Education has developed a new education system with 90 teacher colleges for the meanwhile urgently needed foreign language teachers. The advantage of this education path is the shorter duration of only three years. In contrast to the already mentioned  university studies, this training takes usually five years until graduation. The colleges, some of them state-run, some of them private, train teachers in the languages English, German and French. Subsequently, the teachers are authorized to teach at all types of schools. This system has successfully counteracted the need for foreign language teachers over the last 15 years.[50]

Already in the course of the large education reform of 1999, the teacher act stipulated new provisions to structure the professional career of all Polish teachers into four levels. These levels are decisive for the current salary of the teacher. When starting the teaching work, the graduate gets the status of a teacher-trainee. The prospective teacher retains this status for nine to twelve months. It can be compared to the German internship. Over this period, the teacher-trainee is permanently supervised by a teacher who has a higher status or by a school manager. After this period, an examination by the school board takes place, thereupon the trainee becomes a teacher under contract. The teacher will retain this status for at least two years and nine months. After another examination that takes place subsequently, the person is appointed as fully-fledged teacher. When obtaining this status, the teacher's time of probation is over and the employment becomes permanent. After another two years and nine months, the appointed teacher may pass an education authority examination or an examination at the ministry to achieve the highest status, that of a graduated teacher.[51]

There are no specific further education requirements for teachers in Poland which means that teachers are not obliged to educate themselves further. Still, the offer enjoys great popularity as further education measures may provide the prerequisites for professional advancements. These measures are mainly offered by an extensive network of teacher training institutions, universities, various non-state further education providers and pedagogical universities. In addition, there are offers available at regional methodology centres or via the central further teacher training institution in Warsaw.[52]

Generally, the extra-occupational professionalisation programmes are implemented as courses, seminars, conferences, workshops or consultancy. The duration of the further education measures differs. Training is, for instance, offered in the afternoons or at weekends. Furthermore, the foreign language colleges do not limit themselves to educating new teachers only, but also

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[50] Cf. Cichon (2010), p.1 pp.
[51] Cf. Kopycka (2013), p.102 p.
[52] Cf. Cedefop (2011), p. 45.

offer the chance to learn a foreign language via further education. Many previous Russian language teachers currently learn English or German this way. Even teachers who already have a Magister degree participate in further education offers and learn another foreign language to maintain or increase their chances for career advancement in the education system.[53]

Teachers who have just started to work in their profession increasingly use further education offers as they were educated only for one subject during their basic studies. Thus, it is essential that teachers acquire new competences to become more versatile at school and mainly to be able to give more lessons. The principle of continuous further education of teachers is closely connected to career advancement. With the new teacher law, additional financial incentives for starting the teaching profession and for participating in further education measures have been created. This includes e. g. extra payments of 1 to 20 percent per year of service after making use of further education offers and a village surcharge of 10 percent. For difficult teaching conditions, such e.g. bilingual lessons, teachers, in addition, get 5 to 10 percent more salary.[54]

Municipalities were assigned a special role regarding further education and qualification of educational staff. They bear a certain share of the training costs and, thus, both support teachers and increase the quality of teaching in their regions. The condition for using and partly get refund of the training is that the newly acquired qualifications meet the needs of the school or of the municipalities. There are two different approaches in the municipalities for determining which further teacher trainings are necessary. On the one hand, school managements may apply, if they consider the participation in an individual further education measure as essential because it, for instance, corresponds with the schools human resource policy. In case the school management's argumentation is plausible, the municipality contributes to the financing. On the other side, the municipality may organise further education measures for all teachers. Priorities of further educations are determined in agreement with the school management, which are co-financed by the municipalities. Thus, the needs of the relevant municipalities and schools shall be covered and, simultaneously, the pupil's performance shall be regionally improved. The municipalities' active assistance is highly appreciated by schools as it increases the individual competences of the »regional teaching staff«.[55]

In conclusion, the teacher professionalisation in Poland can be characterized as demanding a lot from the teaching staff regarding their teaching activities. According to latest studies, the teacher salaries are, measured in terms of gross domestic product, the second lowest in Europe.[56] The remuneration of teachers depends on their education level within the aforementioned 4-level-model here. As comparatively low starting salaries are predominant in Poland, teachers depend on continuing their education towards a higher education level. According to

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[53] Cf. Cedefop (2011), p. 45.
[54] Cf. Cichon (2010), p. 3.
[55] Cf. Kopycka (2013), p. 132.
[56] Cf. European Commission (2013), p. 6 pp.

OECD (2013), the salaries are even then lower than those of other university graduates.[57]
Another challenge for the current situation of teachers in Poland is the demographic change. The people in Poland are, with an average age of 38.5, much younger than those in many other countries. Still, the birth rate has significantly decreased since 1989 and is, thus, today even below the low German level of 1.4 children per women. The accordingly more and more decreasing number of pupils results into a teacher supply surplus on the Polish labour market, so that many teachers lose their jobs in some regions or their temporary employment contracts expire. This trend will presumably further accentuate over the coming years.[58]

Despite of these partly very challenging general conditions, the changes of the teacher act have resulted into teacher performance and quality improvements. In addition, many problematic issues related to teacher education and qualification have already been addressed by education system and labour market policy measures. Due to numerous professionalisation offers and regular participations in further educations, the teachers, for instance, increase their didactical competences and get qualified for new subject combinations. Performance bonuses and premiums, also determined by the new teacher law, create additional incentives for high-quality pedagogical work.[59]

## Germany

Most of Germany's education system specifics and, thus, initial academic and further teacher training specifics result from Germany's partition into 16 federal states and, thus, 16 generally independent »education autonomies«. Due to the education and school systems federal character, initial academic and further teacher training structures are accordingly specific. Thus the structure of initial academic teaching profession study programmes differs from one federal state to the other: Type 1 – teaching profession for basic or primary school, Type 2 – comprehensive teaching profession for primary school or single or all types of secondary level I schools, Type 3 – teaching professions for single or all secondary level I school types, Type 4 – teaching profession for secondary level II (general education subjects) or for gymnasium, Type 5 – teaching profession for secondary level II (occupational subjects) or for vocational schools and Type 6 – special needs teaching profession. Depending on the federal state, the name of the single teaching profession types may vary here and not all of the six teaching professions are offered in every federal state. Depending on the federal state specific regulation, a teacher can be authorized to teach even in other school types (e. g. study format 4 may qualify also for teaching in secondary level I classes in some federal states).[60]

However, the principal organisational structure of teacher education has similarities in all federal states. Thus, teacher education is always divided into two stages. The first stage is an explicitly

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[57] Cf. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2013), p. 2.
[58] Cf. Kopycka (2013), p. 75 pp.
[59] Cf. Cedefop (2011), p. 105 pp.
[60] Cf. Rischke/Baedorf (2013), no page.

academic education, the university entrance qualification is the main admission requirement. These stages are usually implemented at universities. The only exception is the federal state Baden-Württemberg. Here, the education of teaching staff for primary and elementary schools as well as for secondary schools and special schools is offered by pedagogical universities. Extended secondary and vocational school teachers are educated at universities in Baden-Württemberg as in all other federal states. In addition to acquiring theoretical knowledge, students are obliged to implement a certain amount of practical trainings at a school during this stage.[61]

Subsequent to the theory-based university teacher training stage, a training period in the practice, at schools, is implemented. This is the internship (respectively the preparatory service), which is a practice-oriented preparation for the job that takes place at study seminars or training schools. Precondition for this is the first state examination or the master degree. The duration of the internship differs between the federal states, from 18 to 24 months, and can be, for instance, reduced from 18 to 12 months by a one-term practical school study (six months). To get an internship place, every graduate of the university education stage has to apply at the school authority in charge. During the internship period, the prospective teacher is normally a civil servant candidate. Depending on the federal state, his/her occupational title is applicant to become a teacher or teacher candidate. The salary received during this period depends on the candidate salaries of the relevant federal state, but remains still very much below the salary a fully qualified teacher gets. Tasks of a teacher on probation in this second teacher education stage are the observation of lessons and teaching educational classes as well as planning and implementing lessons autonomously. The internship aims to provide methodological and didactical competences and getting acquainted with what teachers do. The education is only formally and completely finished for every type of teaching profession after studies and internship were completed.[62]

The described 2-stage model of teacher education is the classical approach for becoming a teacher in Germany. Still, due to the shortage of skilled professionals, there are numerous aspirations in Germany to open the way to state teaching profession also to lateral entrants and re-entrants. University degrees and university of applied science degrees can partly be recognized as state examination here or at least as a part of it. Furthermore, pedagogical experts from business, e. g. training and continued training experts, are increasingly employed mainly in vocational schools, as teachers or lecturers, here. Lateral entrants and re-entrants usually have, to get the permission to teach at schools, to participate in extra-occupational further education in the fields pedagogy/educational science, didactics/methodology or school law/organisation.[63]

In terms of further teacher training in Germany, advanced and specialist training is referred to as the third phase of professionalisation. It follows on from the successful completion of the degree course(s) and the subsequent internship. What this means in formal terms is that only

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[61] Cf. Terhart (2007), p. 45 p.
[62] Cf. Kultusministerkonferenz (2013), p. 177 pp.
[63] Cf. Frost (2008), no page.

fully trained teachers can take advantage of state-sponsored advanced and specialist training opportunities. The normative basis for advanced and specialist training in this context is, as it is in all European countries actually, the commitment of every single teacher to life-long learning thereby continuously maintaining and developing existing skills and know-how.[64] Legislative regulations pertaining to the field of advanced and specialist training for teachers are to be found in the relevant school- and/or educational laws of individual federal states. The Schools Act of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the federal state on the Baltic coast, may serve as an example. Pursuant to §100 Clause 5 »all teachers have an obligation [...] to undertake on-going training in order to maintain their ability to teach«.[65] Nevertheless, the content and scope of any continuing education in support of their own professionalisation are left to the discretion of individual teachers. To add to this, it must be noted that there are no sanctions for teachers who fail to participate in advanced or specialist training courses, whether on the part of the individual federal states or at the national educational policy level.[66]

Advanced and specialist training provision is not subject to unified standards at a federal level. For this reason there is no unified federal organisation in this area. The providers of advanced and specialist training courses may be independent institutions, trade unions, universities, ministerial facilities etc. Providers such as these usually deliver advanced and specialist training in the form of seminar-like events. It is very likely that teachers will be given time off or permitted to work reduced hours during the training period. However this is predicated on there being a requirement within the regional educational authority for the resulting additional qualifications.[67]

Specific subjects in which teachers in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, for example, can take advanced and specialist training include role play, education/teaching/support, community studies, ICT training, inclusion, teacher health, mathematics, media in the classroom, science, productive learning, special needs pedagogy, sport and languages.[68] In addition, in-house school teacher training courses represent another distinctive feature of the overall provision, whereby advanced and specialist training is provided directly within schools. The objective of these is to encourage the school development process. This may, for example, include such things as multi- and interdisciplinary teaching, performance assessment or »learning to learn«.[69]

In summary, with regard to the federally structured German system of teacher training, university-based teacher training is particularly strong in terms of mediating technical knowledge and skills. This means that even during the degree course there is a strong focus on the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge in at least two and sometime even more subjects in addition to pedagogic theory. In an international comparison Germany shows a high degree of

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[64] Cf. Daschner (2005), p. 290 pp.
[65] Ministry for Education, Science und Culture Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2009), p. 103.
[66] Cf. Terhart (2007), p. 48 pp.
[67] Cf. Daschner (2005), p. 293.
[68] Cf. Ministry for Education, Science und Culture Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2013), no page.
[69] Cf. Saxon Ministry of State for Education (no year of publication), no page.

technical teacher professionalisation in this respect. However student teachers often feel that they are less well educated in terms of their pedagogic and didactic methodology skills due to the high technical content of training courses. However the transition of teacher training programmes to the bachelor-master system over the past few years, and the concomitant content modularisation have already partially improved the balance between technical requirements and pedagogic knowledge. Another strength of university courses is the specific and systematic coordination between teacher training and the school system. This means that student teachers receive specific training in accordance with the type of school they will later teach at and therefore tailored to specifically to various target groups.[70]

One of the strengths of the internship or provisional teaching period is the intensive familiarisation it provides in relation to the daily routine in schools, i. e., graduates of the university training phase are given an opportunity to plan and deliver their first individual lessons in this context. In addition it provides trainee teachers with an opportunity to analyse specific lesson plans in relation to methodology and content, which have been produced by fully trained teachers. However the often inadequate inter-meshing of the university-based theory phase with the pre-vocational practice phase represents a failing, as it is often the case that technical course content is not applied in actual practice, which means that there is no systematic continuity with the previously acquired knowledge.[71]

This failing can sometimes even occur during the course of a trained teacher's professional career because the content of teacher training courses is often not specifically coordinated with what will eventually be required in schools, for example the core curriculum. There are also some differences between the requirements of everyday school teaching and core curricula between the various federal states, which often presents particular challenges to those teachers who relocate to a different state. Furthermore, there is barely any uniformity in the organisation of advanced and specialist training as the third phase of teacher training in Germany. There are hardly any incentives for German teachers to participate in advanced and specialised training courses. This is due to high career-entry-level salaries, the existing civil servant induction structures in many federal states as well as the extremely restricted opportunities for promotion within the teaching profession. This can result in teachers spending very little time familiarising themselves with new teaching methods and content, which means that they are not in a position to integrate them into their daily practice.[72] However even in this context it can be verified that on-going teacher professionalisation, above all within the context of voluntary participation in training opportunities by many committed teachers and of in-house advanced teacher training courses in schools, some of which are even organised by teacher committees, continues to be enormously significant in Germany, not least because of the historical legacy in relation to education.

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[70] Cf. Terhart (2000), p. 26 pp.
[71] Cf. ibid., p. 28.
[72] Cf. ibid., p. 28 pp.

**Denmark**

As it is the case in places like Lithuania, for example, teacher training at Danish universities is also subject to, sometimes significant, variation both from an organisational and structural perspective, and in relation to the areas of training in which teachers will eventually work. Teacher training for the Folkeskole i. e., for the primary sector as well as for secondary level I, is provided at so-called University Colleges. A subject-specific bachelor degree is awarded following a four-year course of study (240 ECTS points including a school-based teaching internship worth a further 30 ECTS points).[73]

Secondary level II teachers wishing to join the civil service require a master's degree from a university, which usually encompasses one major and several minor subjects. The university-based master's degree phase builds upon a subject-specific bachelor degree as well as the so-called »Paedagogikum«, a one-year course that comprises of further studies in the subsidiary subjects, educational theory, and teaching practice (worth 60 ECTS points). It is possible for career changers to become teachers in certain subjects or technical areas without having a master's degree, if the candidate teacher has taken advanced subject-specific tertiary level training, e. g., at a school of engineering or economics, or if they have worked at a university in a subject-specific capacity.[74] In all cases the candidate teacher must be able to provide proof of having achieved a professional level in the special subjects or technical areas in question. Specifically, the technical pre-qualification must correspond to at least 90 ECTS points from a traditional university degree course.[75]

There are two different vocational teacher training profiles: either the student pursues the »general teaching specialist« training profile and acquires a teaching qualification in a traditional university degree course (comparable with that for a Folkeskole teaching post[76]), or else the »vocational teaching specialist« profile route. For the latter profile there are no rules stipulating the requirement for a pedagogic qualification prior to beginning a vocational teaching specialist career. Instead this is acquired in part-time sandwich courses that run in parallel with the job in order that direct links can be made between practice and theory. The prerequisite is at least five-years professional experience in one of the subject areas. The part-time training is provided by the state advanced and specialist training authority known as the »Danish Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (NCE)«, and results in a diploma worth 60 ECTS points, which therefore corresponds to one years' full-time study. Three mandatory modules and two optional modules are taken followed by a final assignment. This diploma programme replaces the traditional »Paedagogikum«[77] and forms the basis for reforms introduced

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[73] Cf. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education (2013), no page.

[74] Cf. Schaub/Zenke (2007), p. 148.

[75] Cf. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education (2013), no page.

[76] Cf. ibid., no page.

[77] »professional training for academic teacher graduates for secondary level II«, for more on this cf. Cedefop (2012 b), p. 85.

in 2010. Vocational teaching specialists are required to start it during their first year on the job and complete it within six years.[78]

At the end of this, the teacher training qualification for secondary level II is awarded, on the basis of which lessons may also be taught in two of the available general subjects (Danish, a foreign language, science, social sciences, economics, marketing or ICT). Ultimately, however, vocational teaching specialists are not only qualified to teach within the field of initial training organised on a dual-track basis (VET system), but also in advanced training for adults (AMU system), and therefore represent potential head teachers within Denmark's extremely significant adult education system.[79] Many vocational teaching specialists teach exclusively in one or other of the two educational systems, whilst others teach in both.[80]

There are no regulations pertaining to how and when teaching professionals are to continue with advanced or specialist training once they are fully qualified, irrespective of which training route they have followed. However there is a generic or normative obligation for individual teachers to keep abreast of the latest developments both within their relevant subject specialisms as well as in pedagogic science. In this context Denmark's universities have a particular responsibility to work out strategies for skills development for teaching personnel on the basis of which, and in collaboration with the teachers, individual plans are produced for advanced and specialist training.[81] Individual teachers compile a schedule of potential training courses based on this. There is a plethora of advanced and specialist training courses on offer locally from various providers depending upon the prevailing market conditions. Whilst formal evidence of the skills and knowledge acquired in the course of advanced and specialist training is usually provided in the form of certificates, this does not always mean that such qualifications are also recognised by the authorities.[82] In this context NCE, the state authority for advanced and specialist training, offers various advanced training courses of its own aimed at vocational teaching specialists and other target groups. These are recognised by the state and some of them involve adult education or mentoring tasks for student teachers during the diploma programme, among other things.[83] Mentoring training in this context involves special advanced training for experienced teachers who wish to pass on their knowledge and skills to up-and-coming teachers. This specialist training currently encompasses[84] 111 hours during the course of which theory and practice alternate regularly.[85]

In the context of life-long learning key issues faced by teachers in advanced and specialist training are the challenges of globalisation and technological change.[86] One of the things intro-

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[78] Cf. Cedefop (2012 b), p. 57.
[79] Cf. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education (2013), no page.
[80] Cf. ibid., no page.
[81] Cf. Cedefop (2012 b), p. 58.
[82] Cf. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education (2013), no page.
[83] Cf. Cedefop (2012 b), p. 57.
[84] Mentor training is currently being reformed.
[85] Cf. Cedefop (2013), p. 41 p.
[86] Cf. Cedefop (2012 c), no page.

duced in connection with discussions on which skills will prove to be indispensable during the 21st century was, for example, a »pedagogic IT driver's license« for teachers in the field of vocational training. The objective of this advanced training is to integrate IT technologies in the teaching process both didactically and technically. In this way teachers should be better able to accompany the development of trainees' IT skills.[87]

In summary, Denmark's extremely significant adult education system represents a distinctive feature in terms of a modern and permeable teacher training and advanced training system. For it is possible for almost all teachers, but especially for vocational training specialists, to become established within this educational sector, which enjoys generous public funding, in the medium to long term, through innovative professionalisation routes. Thus, rather than all being trapped within specialist areas in which they originally trained, new fields of activity are open to pedagogic specialists. In addition, the high level financial support for Danish educational policy plays an enormous role in encouraging people to participate in advanced and specialist training courses as part of life-long learning. As a logical consequence the willingness to professionalise is extremely high on the part of teachers themselves, particularly among those working in adult education, but also in other educational sectors. The core focus of advanced and specialist training in this context are keeping abreast with developments in one's specialist field over the long term, and becoming skilled in the use of modern technologies in one's professional practice.[88]

Denmark's educational system is very open and permeable for career changers from industry and similar, particularly in the field of vocational teaching specialists, as practical experience and the resulting skills are highly valued in vocational training. Provided they have at least five-years' vocational experience, candidate teachers can start teaching immediately whilst obtaining the requisite pedagogic qualifications in parallel on a part-time basis and enjoying mentor support at the vocational college.[89]

In addition, teaching personnel in Denmark enjoy a significant degree of autonomy, which is emphasised by the fact that they are even involved in specifying the core curriculum, to which end they must learn about and take account of the requirements of industry and society as well as the individual needs of students. The task of meeting the objectives of the curriculum is managed jointly by teams of teaching staff at individual schools. Another interesting point in this context is the fact that Danish educational processes often occupy a very flexible position between traditional teaching methods and innovative pedagogic approaches. One example of this is that whilst in the rest of Europe there is a strong trend towards a student-orientated approach depending on the subject, the trend in Denmark is becoming strongly teacher-centred once more. That is one of the main reasons that teachers in Denmark are held in high regard generally, despite not being state officials. Even part-time teaching staff with no formal pedagogic

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[87] Cf. Cedefop (2002), p. 41 p.
[88] Cf. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education (2013), no page.
[89] Cf. Cedefop (2012 b), p. 58.

qualifications are respected for the job they do, and because they contribute to the professions in question with know-how based on practical experience and therefore above all pursue the promotion of businesses in schools. Also, the necessary flexibility and professionalism of the educational system required to continue to meet the challenges facing Denmark's knowledge economy over the long term appear to be given, especially because of these framework conditions concerning teacher training and teaching itself.[90]

**Sweden**

Comparable to other European countries, teacher training in Sweden is geared towards the conditions and requirements of the educational and school system. In this regard teacher training in Sweden, which is provided at an academic level at 26 universities throughout the country, can be regarded as being highly focused on professional practice. Teacher training standards are set at national level through a series of regulations and directives in order to ultimately provide specific framework conditions for regionally-specific skills development measures for new teachers in different localities.[91]

Over the past few years, teacher training in Sweden has undergone a transformation. One of the first things the country did upon becoming a member of the European Union in 2007 was to adopt the system of higher education developed during the Bologna Process. However, teacher training in Sweden was not immediately affected by this process until teacher training courses were adapted in line with the Bologna resolutions in the course of reforms beginning in the autumn of 2011.[92] This entailed the replacement of Sweden's former credit point system with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for performance measurement, whereby one Swedish credit point equates to 1.5 ECTS points. As a result each academic year of a full-time teacher training course is now worth 60 credit points.[93] In addition specific training for vocational school teachers was not formerly available due to the integration of vocational colleges within secondary schools. This situation was corrected through the 2011 reforms, which resulted in the introduction of specific kindergarten, primary school, technical, and vocational school teacher qualifications.[94]

The current bachelor degree courses for pre-school and primary school teaching staff comprise a total of 210 ECTS points, which corresponds to a minimum of seven semesters. Of these, specialist studies worth 110 points, account for a large proportion of the performance requirements. This also includes professional didactics, which students complete at accredited internship schools through work shadowing, examinations, or the evaluation of various teaching approaches. A further 90 ECTS points must be acquired in teacher training, which includes pedagogic and didactic exercises as well as internships. In addition, these study programmes require

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[90] Cf. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education (2013), no page.
[91] Cf. Niklasson (2011), p. 97.
[92] Cf. Hakala (2012), p. 196.
[93] Cf. Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (2011), p. 12.
[94] Cf. Hakala (2012), p. 195 pp.

trainee teachers to take foundation courses in languages and mathematics. An additional advanced qualification at master's level can then be obtained by taking further courses totalling 240 points, provided that 60 points are acquired in courses relating to the planned teaching activities in the pre-school and primary education sectors.[95]

Teacher training courses for secondary levels I and II actually comprise a total of 270 points at bachelor degree level. In each of these study programmes 180 points are to be taken in technical training and 90 in teacher training, which is to take the same form as that completed by elementary and primary school teachers.[96] They too can obtain an advanced master's level qualification whereby their studies must include courses worth 60 points, focused on secondary levels I and II. Interested students and those transferring in from other faculties or changing careers, who want to go on to teach vocational subjects at a Swedish secondary school as vocational college teachers, undertake studies in a specific bachelor degree study programme, focused on vocational college teacher training, comprising just 180 points. Career changers from industry or similar must demonstrate that they have comprehensive relevant professional experience and possess the corresponding expertise at university level equal to at least 90 ECTS points or the equivalent. Thus full-time teacher training to secondary levels I and II with a generalist focus takes a minimum of 4.5 years as opposed to that of a vocational college teacher, which takes just three years.[97]

In Sweden the practical phases of teacher training courses are usually completed in partner schools in which students are given the opportunity to teach, as well as to shadow the teachers employed there and discuss technical issues with them. All students taking degree courses in teacher training in Sweden are assigned one of these partner schools as soon as they enroll at a university.[98] This involves both contractual ties and close collaboration between the universities and partner schools, which also employ student support personnel. Among other things these have a duty to report any irregularities pertaining to the prospective teachers. In this way any problems arising can be countered through skills development strategies specifically tailored to the needs of the trainee teacher on the basis of three-way discussions between representatives of the university and the school as well as the student.[99]

Teacher training degree courses are usually rounded off with a project task to the value of 15 or 30 ECTS points depending upon the type and points total of the degree in question.[100] As soon as they complete their university training graduates are fully qualified teachers, and can set about applying for work in schools. There is a one-year probation and mentoring period at Swedish schools, designed to induct new teachers and gradually familiarize them with their allotted tasks. During this familiarization period new teachers carry out all of the same tasks as

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[95] Cf. Niklasson (2011), p. 99 pp.
[96] Cf. ibid., p. 103.
[97] Cf. Niklasson (2011), p. 99.
[98] Cf. Möller (2006), p. 63.
[99] Cf. Niklasson (2011), p. 106 p.
[100] Cf. ibid., p. 101.

their more experienced colleagues. The only differences likely to arise are in terms of a lighter workload and shorter working times. New teachers do not receive any additional qualification at the end of their probation period, but may have the opportunity to be retained in their current position on a full-time basis, whereby the final decision on this rests with the responsible school authority or employer.[101]

Advanced and specialist training courses for teachers in Sweden are organised in both the public and private sectors. Consequently there is a large number of providers devoted to providing professional training to teachers. University-based advanced teacher training courses are provided free of charge and mostly cover a technical syllabus. Most of university-based training opportunities are master's degree courses, which address educational management matters among other things. By contrast, advanced and specialist training courses organised and provided by private training institutes, which deal with topics such as ethics, quality assurance, and mobbing, are fee paying. Such advanced and specialist training courses available through the private sector generally lead to the award of a certificate or credit points. However the ultimate decision as to whether or not any qualifications obtained in this way are recognized and deemed sufficient for promotion purposes rests with the school's board (or the responsible authority). It is they too who decide whether to reduce a teacher's working hours for the duration of the advanced training course or whether it has to be completed out of hours. In addition to the university-based and private sector advanced and specialist training programmes, Swedish municipalities organise a range of advanced and specialist training courses for their local teachers several times a year in which these are free to participate for a few days. For example, these training courses present the latest results from research carried out throughout Europe into different teaching methodologies within the individual faculties.[102]

Information and communications technologies in particular have played a major role in teacher skills development in recent years. This was demonstrated, for example, in a nationwide programme aimed at promoting these technologies in schools between 1999 and 2002, during the course of which around fifty percent of Swedish teachers received further training in this area.[103] It is safe to assume that pedagogic processes will continue to be strongly influenced by technical development processes in future, with which teachers will have to keep abreast in order not to become disconnected from potential innovations. In all likelihood then, in addition to the development of interpersonal, social, and professional competencies, media and technology skills will continue to be significant within the field of advanced and specialist training for Swedish teachers.

Summarizing the infrastructural facilities for the professionalisation of teachers in Sweden one can recognize positive aspects even during teacher training courses in universities. Firstly, despite being heavily regulated through various pieces of legislation and government ordinances,

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[101] Cf. Niklasson (2011), p. 107 p.
[102] Cf. ibid., p. 109.
[103] Cf. Cedefop (2009), p. 51 p.

Swedish universities continue to enjoy a high level of freedom and autonomy in terms of designing the teacher training courses they offer. These are accompanied by a quality assurance process run by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education and individual universities, which ensures high training standards throughout. Overall the practical part of the corresponding educational programmes are to be regarded as one of the system's key strengths. Particularly noteworthy in this context is the existence of fixed partner schools for all enrolled students where they have access to mentors and advisers who gradually familiarise them with the tasks they will perform later in their careers, and which maintain close ties with the universities. This enables the rapid clarification of any problems that may arise, in collaboration with the student. Another positive aspect of teacher training in Sweden is the opportunity for a one-year probation period upon entering the workplace, which attenuates any potential 'reality shock' on the part of new teachers and enables a gradual introduction to the practice of teaching. Beyond this the many opportunities for advanced and specialist training must be seen as beneficial, as it enables all teachers to construct their own individualised teacher professionalisation profile, tailored to specific requirements.[104]

Nevertheless there are some weak points in the field of teacher training in Sweden. The first thing that strikes one about it in comparison with other European countries is that teachers there undergo significantly less training in didactic methodology and less faculty-specific training.[105] Another shortcoming in this country's teacher training is that there has only been a separate training route for vocational college teachers since the reforms of 2011. Whilst this is a fundamentally positive development, the recent introduction of this university-based training path is also linked to a certain amount of inexperience and a lack of confidence in terms of its success as well as the continuous development of this specialist programme of study. For in the final analysis it is Swedish economy, above all, who require the pedagogic specialists in the field of vocational training to operate at as a high level of professionalisation as possible, both from a techno-theoretical and a practice-relevant perspective. The need for additional modernisation and reform processes cannot be discounted in this context, which would involve better integration of economic practice with pedagogic theory as well as increased educational policy expenditure.[106]

**Finland**

As it has already been established in relation to other countries on the Baltic seaboard, teacher training at Finnish universities is also subject to, sometimes significant, variation both from an organisational and structural perspective, and in relation to the areas of training in which teachers will eventually work. Accordingly, a range of different teacher training courses are offered at universities, which can be categorised in line with the following five teacher groups:

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[104] Cf. GHK/Research voor beleid (2011), p. 9.
[105] Cf. Hakala (2012), p. 197.
[106] Also on this topic see, inter alia, Boström/Boudard/Siminou (2001).

Kindergarten teachers, teachers in the field of primary education, specialist teachers, special needs teaching professionals and student counsellors/support teachers.[107] In this context all applicants are required to undergo a special selection process in order to secure a place at university. The primary considerations for this are the upper secondary school leaving certificate and the university's in-house in-take procedure in the course of which applicants are tested in various tasks in order to assess their aptitude for a degree in pedagogy.[108]

For example the selection process at the University of Helsinki is as follows: the initial assessment is based on the upper secondary school leaving certificate, whereby the marks achieved are not considered decisive in and of themselves. Another award criteria considered in the selection process for a place on one of these popular degree courses is experience acquired in the field of education such as voluntary youth work. The remaining application process is then divided into two parts: in the first stage, texts relating to pedagogic topics are published on an online portal accessible by all applicants, on the basis of which candidate teacher trainees can prepare themselves over a period of four weeks in relation to specific issues. Candidates must then answer questions on these in an exam held throughout the country on the same day, whereby the examiners are particularly interested in the quality of analysis in relation to the published texts as well as the structure of the answers submitted and the degree to which these are informed by personal experience. The second stage consists of an interview and a group test. In this context more emphasis is placed on the content and presentation of the responses. In summary, during the selection process special attention is paid to the applicant's commitment, aptitude, motivation and personality as well as his or her adaptability and flexibility.[109]

Having successfully completed the selection process the applicants embark upon their sometimes very different university training courses based on the educational fields in which they later plan to work. For example the teacher trainees for Finland's primary education sector must acquire a total of 300 ECTS points. The relevant three-year bachelor degree programme, which is worth 180 ECTS points, and the subsequent two-year master's course, in which a further 120 ECTS points are acquired, are focused on the following: language and communication studies, studies in the main subject specialisation, pedagogic studies for teachers, a general course covering all-subjects taught in non-denominational schools, courses in one or two sub-specialist fields, and optional studies.[110] The trainee teachers are prepared for daily teaching practice and are supposed to derive insights into the general development of human beings and the interactions between teachers and students based on pedagogic theory and experience them in practice. Practical experience is gained both within the university's own traineeship schools as well as in municipal schools. Sub-specialisms are often chosen that are taught in the 7th to 9th grades, so that teachers trained for work in the primary education sector are, in

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[107] Cf. Mikkola (2008), p. 181.
[108] Cf. Müller (2008), p. 76.
[109] Cf. Döbrich (2008), p. 32 p.
[110] Cf. Mikkola (2008), p. 181 p.

principle, also qualified to teach these classes. It is also possible to specialise in languages, technology, or media and communication teaching.[111]

Specialist teachers who complete a bachelor's degree worth 300-350 ECTS points over five to six years opt for a single specialism in addition to the mandatory courses on pedagogy, and are therefore particularly strong in their chosen teaching subject. Specialist teachers are employed in non-denominational schools, secondary schools, vocational colleges and in the field of adult education, and may specialise in one particular type of school.[112]

A university-based vocational teacher training course can only be undertaken on condition that the trainee vocational teacher has completed a relevant vocational training course in a specific profession or trade and can demonstrate long-term experience in the field. The relevant recognition/credit transfer process as well as on-going quality assurance during the course of study are monitored both by individual universities and the National Evaluation Council for Universities.[113] For teachers in vocational training institutes, the opportunity to specialise is already given during the university training phase. In this context a distinction is made between specialist subject teachers, subject teachers for practical subject teaching, pedagogic specialists, support teachers, and vocational training school directors, for each of which specific qualification requirements apply.[114]

Our complex modern societies with their ever increasing pace of life, characterised by enormous data-flow volumes and a high degree of digitalisation require the continuous adaptation, and development of existing skills and abilities; this is especially true for teachers. Crucial for this are efficient structures for advanced and specialist training. These have increasingly been established in Finland over many years and reflect systematic and programmatic educational requirements. One example is the »Life as Learning (LEARN)« research project financed by the Finnish Academy for Advanced and Specialist Training, which services the need for teacher training and advanced training. In this example the focus is on lifelong learning and changes in the workplace and learning environment, which are having an increasing influence on the teaching profession.[115] Teachers in Finland place a high value on advanced and specialist training measures in principle and see them as the most effective means of developing the education system.[116] Despite this, the number of participants in advanced training courses has declined in recent years. However this has nothing to do with a lack of interest on the part of the teachers and everything to do with their ability to pay for them, for financial restrictions and state budgeting issues are having an increasing impact in Finland's municipalities.[117]

Charges for teachers' advanced and specialist training are regulated under collective agreements,

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[111] Cf. Mikkola (2008), p. 182 p.
[112] Cf. ibid., p. 183.
[113] Cf. Cedefop (2006), p. 39.
[114] Cf. ibid., p. 40 p.
[115] Cf. Mikkola (2008), p. 188.
[116] Cf. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2007), p. 229.
[117] Cf. Välijärvi (2008), p. 92.

whereby the relevant municipalities are responsible for ensuring that the teachers receive advanced training on three days of the year outside of school working hours. The majority of costs associated with the advanced and specialist training are borne by the municipal school authorities. But teachers are also required to bear a portion of the costs in around 25 per cent of these advanced and specialist training measures. In addition to these state-regulated advanced and specialist training courses, teachers also have the opportunity to make use of voluntary training offers, for the support of which budgetary funds are also made available. In these cases universities and training centres provide teachers from all areas of education with advanced and specialist training based on individual needs on a voluntary basis. Participation in such voluntary advanced and specialist training courses requires the approval of the school's board (or the responsible authority) if they take place within school hours. But in addition, as the teacher's employer, the school's board (or the responsible authority) decides on the choice of subject as well as whether a specific service provider (public or private provider) will be commissioned to provide the advanced training or not.[118] The Finnish State Institute for Advanced Teacher Training and Curriculum Development should also be mentioned in this context as an important organisation for lifelong learning in the field of education. As a national provider it offers teachers a range of very specific advanced and specialist training measures in relation to their specific areas of specialism, teaching using information and communication technologies, or regional teaching specifics.[119]

In addition to the framework conditions within its educational system, the main key to this success in »Finland, the Land of Education«, which leads the field in Europe in many areas of educational policy, seems to be the professionalisation of the teacher. Advanced and specialist training for teachers in Finland, and the teaching profession itself, are held in high regard throughout society due to the demanding route to qualification. The teachers' autonomy in their lessons in terms of pedagogical professionalism develops as a consequence of their high-quality initial training, the high level of qualification and the well-conceived practical phases at in-house university trainee schools and municipal schools undertaken in parallel with students' academic training.[120]

In addition to this, teacher training degrees include many research aspects, which improve teachers' abilities in terms of scientifically-informed analysis of individual problem solutions in relation to the heterogeneity of pupils or in training and educational processes. Later, in their day-to-day teaching practice, teachers can, on this solid basis, also exchange ideas with differently qualified teacher colleagues relating to experiences in teaching and learning processes. Not infrequently they can find joint solutions to issues relating to specific teaching situation.[121]

In a country that claims to provide equal opportunities for all within its educational system the

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[118] Cf. Mikkola (2008), p. 189 p.
[119] Cf. Klimaszyk (2013), no page.
[120] Cf. Mikkola (2008), p. 194.
[121] Cf. Välijärvi (2008), p. 92.

strong selection of candidates at the start of the teacher training degree during the acceptance procedure must be viewed critically to some extent. Certainly a conscious effort is made to accept only those people onto teacher training courses who have a real interest in the profession and have the requisite aptitude and skills to be able to meet the challenges involved. However this early selection does not make allowances for those who do not yet completely meet the requirements for the degree to discover and develop their teacher personality during the course of their studies. For there are many applicants who have a great interest in a teacher training degree. Another criticism that one can cite is the fact that more needs to be done to reinforce the development of skills relating to educational issues pertaining to social and special needs education during teacher training and advanced training, to better enable teachers to deal with heterogeneous learning needs.[122]

In summary Finland is and remains exemplary for the professionalism of teachers based on a good balance between practice and theory during teacher training, advanced and specialist training focused on actual teaching practice, lessons backed by a team of variously qualified educators, and the confidence this engenders in people pursuing a career in the teaching profession.

## 2.3 OUTLOOK: Strategies of Internationalised Professionalisation of Teaching and Educational Staff in the Baltic Sea Region

Although regional, national and international or interregional education, knowledge and innovation added values of an internationally oriented teacher education are obvious, many universities in the Baltic Sea Region are, if at all, only at the beginning of an comprehensive internationalisation of their teaching profession study programmes. The reasons for this are very diverse. The partially very school-like or small-scale initial academic teacher training, partially even intensified by the modularisation implemented in the context of the Bologna process, make student mobility in the context of the studies difficult in terms of time and organisation because of too few mobility windows. The consequence of this is that teaching profession students make below average use of mobility offers, e. g. by exchange programmes or EU funding opportunities.[123]

Even educationalists who have already been active in professional life and would like to enhance their pedagogical competences via international professionalisation processes are confronted internationalisation obstacles.[124] Thus, for instance recognition/crediting procedures between the countries and the support structures in home and also destination countries have not been sufficiently developed or are still too restrictive.[125]

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[122] Cf. Mikkola (2008), p. 192.
[123] Cf. Lenzen (2013), no page.
[124] Cf. Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – Nationale Agentur (2010), no page.
[125] Cf. Lenzen (2013), no page.

To develop and implement workable strategies for internationalised professionalisation of teaching and education staff in the Baltic Sea Region, all involved players, namely education policy, schools, vocational schools, universities, companies, education service providers etc., are requested to investigate in continuing future discussions, studies and research projects, why the mobility of teaching and educational staff, mainly teaching profession students or teachers, is significantly underdeveloped.[126] These findings will finally allow to modify existing qualification and professionalisation programmes or to make them more flexible. Even funding programme focuses in the sense of special funding programmes for internationalising teaching and education staff seem to be needed in this context – mainly with focus on (prospective) teachers as well as trainers and continued training providers from companies or education institutions here. Furthermore, incoming strategies have to be successfully developed also in this field, so that universities increasingly admit international teaching profession students in study programmes so that these, again, internationalise national lectures with their specific inputs.[127] As already mentioned, optimized outgoing as much incoming strategies need more flexible and transparent recognition/crediting procedures related to foreign degrees or formal, non-formal and informal competences.[128] One positive side-effect would be a more intensive consideration of foreign education systems as previous achievements must be considered in case of stays abroad and, after return, the education offers completed abroad have to be recognised/credited in the home country.[129]

On a higher level, its seems to be important or necessary that a clear understanding of internationalisation as cross-sectional competence of teaching and education staff professionalisation in the Baltic Sea Region is conceptually elaborated in the countries itself as well as in an international/interregional dialogue over the coming years.[130] The internationalisation should exceed the pure mobility aspect here and also foresee an in-house strategy, e. g. via an increasing thematic internationalisation of curricula, multilingual teaching-learning-processes or an international interculturally competent teaching staff at universities.[131] Furthermore, more incentive systems for internationally acting educationalists should be established, e. g. by rewarding international study and practical experience of teaching profession students when changing over to the internship or to school teaching itself or by offering free periods or additional renumeration for teaching staff for monitoring international projects.[132]

Educational staff in the Baltic Sea Region, regardless of being e. g. child care workers/teachers who work on the elementary level, general education teachers for primary level as well as on secondary levels I and II, vocational school teachers, lecturers at universities, social pedagogues

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[126] The South Baltic Programme project COHAB has delivered scientific results and also some new approaches/concepts concerning this aspect.
[127] Cf. Lenzen (2013), no page.
[128] As possible approach for exchange models of international university partners cf. Christoforatou (2013), no page.
[129] Cf. Lenzen (2013), no page.
[130] Cf. Hanse Parliament (no year of publication), p. 3 pp.
[131] Cf. Lenzen (2013), no page.
[132] Cf. Weyand/Justus/Schratz (2012), p. 30 pp.

and special needs educationalists as well as trainers and continued training providers in companies or education service companies, is, despite of many »construction sites«, offered various opportunities for increasing internationalisation of their working and learning environment even today, as, for instance:

- Initiation and establishment of international/interregional partnerships or partnership agreements between education institutions or companies in the Baltic Sea Region,
- Conception, application, organisation/implementation and evaluation of mobility projects or exchange programmes for pedagogical expert staff itself or for other education recipients (pupils, trainees), e. g. in the EU funding programmes »South Baltic Programme« and »Baltic Sea Region Programme«,
- Subject specific or topic-related cooperation of transnational/interregional partners, e. g. in the fields inclusion or information and communication technologies in lessons,
- Contribution to contests, e. g. in the fields »International school« or »European school«,
- Implementation of action days/weeks related to Baltic Sea Region countries, e. g. on the occasion of the European Day,
- Cooperation in virtual interregional education networks based on information and communication technologies, e. g. via specific intranet portals linking certain education institutions or via social media as facebook, google+ and similar or via regular, interregional professional exchanges of teachers via video conferencing,
- Topic-specific study visits related to interregionally relevant education topics in the Baltic Sea Region,
- »Teaching rotation« models where education specialists from two different countries or regions take over entire lectures in the respective other country for a certain period of time, e. g. for one term.[133]

Concluding, mainly the following framework conditions can be considered as necessary with focus on the initial academic teacher training in the Baltic Sea Region countries, if an increasingly internationalised professionalisation of teaching and education staff in the Baltic Sea Region shall be successful:

1. Mobility windows can hardly or even not be enabled for teaching profession study courses, because of the modularized structure and »pillarization« into several special studies, didactics and educational science shares. The requirements determined by the state should be simplified instead of further differentiated to make study visits abroad possible.

2. The complexity of practical stages during the studies is currently increased, e. g. by introducing practice seminars and by demanding an intermeshing of theory and practice. Here, it should become possible that every practice stage can [in principle] also be implemented abroad […]. State regulations and funding structures […] have to become [accordingly] more flexible here.

3. Currently there are little incentives or obligations for teaching profession students to collect inter-

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[133] Cf. Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony (2012), p. 53 pp.

national experiences. [Still] the new culture that is developing all over the world (‚global citizenship‘) necessitates [imperatively] enhanced experiences abroad and acquiring intercultural competences. This message has to be placed among the students [via suitable structures, programmes and measures [...].

4. Furthermore, positive incentives for students have to be created: Easier access to master studies, preparatory services or employments in school teaching [...] [through international education policy law and institutional partnership agreements] should promote [the opportunity to start teaching profession even in other Baltic Sea Region countries] […].

5. It would be wrong to apply these measures only to coming generations of teachers – in this respect also currently working teachers must be involved into further education measures and foreign activities in cooperation with universities.

6. Internationalisation is no one-way road which is why also incoming teaching profession students should be identified and promoted by the host university as special group. Together with invited visiting scientists they provide the opportunity to get acquainted with the school and education systems of other countries and to use this for developing […] the [national] school system. Furthermore it must be stipulated by the political side that stay and working opportunities for incomings exist so that they can enrich lessons as teachers.

7. The universities have to fulfil their obligations to integrate mobility windows and international structures […] into teaching profession study courses and to promote cooperation with foreign partners. Considering the higher complexity of teaching profession study courses […], this needs (working) time and financial resources that are hardly available. This, again, calls for politics that shall provide incentives and resources via appropriate funding measures.[134]

Finally, the motivation for lifelong learning and an intercultural openness of the teaching and education staff are the fundamental requirements in order to get pedagogical experts involved at all into the process of dealing with the own pedagogical professionality related to internationality. International or interregional education networks, mainly in the Baltic Sea Region, play a strongly motivating and opening role here. After all, these networks assemble many pedagogical experts who have already gathered good experiences with international or interregional cooperation on educational issues. This »International Education Spirit« of such multipliers must be increasingly used in the future to motivate other pedagogical expert for internationalising their educational work and, thus, enhancing and establishing international and interregional education networks.

In this context, the subsequent chapter continuatively examines which preconditions, potentials and barriers exist related to international education networks, mainly in the Baltic Sea Region. The chapter provides suggestions or indicates conceptual approaches how education-related network and cooperation processes in the Baltic Sea Region can be sustainably successful.

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[134] German Academic Exchange Service (2013), no page.

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# 3   Interregional Education Networks as an Instrument of Collaboration en route to a European Education Area

Because of its application across various disciplines[1], the concept of the network is very complex and has in the last two decades experienced a tremendous increase in significance. For example, in his work »The Information Age: Economy; Society; Culture«, CASTELLS uses the description 'the network society'.[2] In this perpetually changing society, it is primarily the so-called megatrends that have considerable influence on the requirements of the people and organisations active within them. Throughout these developments, the network is considered to be one of the most modern forms of organisation as, because of its flexibility and open structures, it can largely support the increasing breakdown and division of labour as well as the subsequently arising need for coordination and cooperation.[3] In particular as regards regional development and European (education) policy, the network concept appears to be a modernisation strategy within the framework of structural change.

In 2000, the European Council adopted the Lisbon Strategy with the ambitious goal of making the European Union (EU) »the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economic region in the world«[4] by 2010. In order to achieve this enthusiastic goal, a work package of investment was scheduled for the areas of research and development and education and innovation. Within this framework, the Education Ministers of the EU and the European Commission (EC) agreed a work programme in 2002 for general and vocational education through to 2010. Due to the fact that education policy is one of those political areas in which the member states hold discretionary competence and the EU can undertake only a coordination and support function, the methods of open coordination have been established. »Here, the member states set common goals and are supported by the European Commission in their achievement. [...] Important elements of open methods of coordination are mutual exchange and mutual learning.«[5] It is precisely with this in mind that networks arise as a suitable form of management and activity coordination. On the basis of successful collaboration connected with these methods, the decree for continuation as »Strategic Framework for European Collaboration in the Field of General and Vocational Education« (ET 2020) was adopted in May 2009 by the Council of the Education Minister. The aims, set out until 2020, are:

- Realisation of lifelong learning and mobility;
- Improvement of quality and efficiency of general and vocational education;
- Promotion of justice, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- Promotion of innovation and creativity.[6]

In regional development, the network concept has initiated a paradigm shift. Previously it was the individual systems that were the focus, but the network construction pulls their relational

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[1] E. g. in biology, social anthropology, political sciences, pedagogy and information technology.
[2] Castells (2001).
[3] Cf. Bienzle et al. (2007), p. 9.
[4] European Council (2000), no page.
[5] Federal Institute for Vocational Education (2014), no page; The essence of these methods lies in the identification of common goals, and also common checks regarding the achievement of these goals (indicators and average reference values (benchmarks)) at a European level.
[6] Federal Ministry for Education and Research (2010), p. 6.

structure into the foreground and thus the region in its entirety. The development of the individual region is dependent on various factors, including the dimension and quality of the cultural and social infrastructure and also the availability of qualified human resources. The latter has increased in significance primarily since the 1990s under the term 'soft location factors', which is why education is placed in the center point of regional policy. In the course of globalisation, regional policy is however also facing the challenges of increasing complexity and dynamism. Because of this, the ability both to adapt and to innovate must be continually enhanced. Individual measures to reduce costs or combine businesses are no longer anywhere near sufficient to satisfy the requirements for flexibility within market processes. Here, networks offer the chance to implement core economic structures in order to operate (resources) efficiently.[7] If the dimensions of European education policy and regional development are combined together, the result is a necessity to expand the regional education networks. This relates to the creation of logical and harmonious education provision through a planned and coordinated exchange between all partners participating in education. This enables the creation of the necessary parameters for a competitive region through the qualification of human resources.[8]

Considering the Lisbon Strategy once again, arising from its goals[9] are the premises of interregional collaboration, which results in the concept of interregional education networks. This concept and its functionality as an instrument en route to a European Educational Area are to be considered more closely hereafter. This firstly requires a presentation of the basis of education networks as well as their challenges and potentials. Subsequently, the Baltic Sea region will be considered as a possible region of collaboration. Relating to this, implications as regards the »European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region« (EUSBSR) will be listed. This will be built on this with the help of the COHAB Project and experiences and results will be presented, from which subsequent recommendations can be drawn.

## 3.1  Prerequisites of Education Networks

**General Definitions**

Based on the fact that networks are often formed on the basis of productive and effective cooperative relationships and the borders between two types of organization are in practice mostly fluid, the result is frequently a synonymous use of terms. As both concepts can demonstrate their peculiarities however, a delimitation must first be made.

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[7] Cf. Scheer (2008), p. 1 pp.
[8] Cf. Tiemeyer (2002), p. 7.
[9] Development of the European dimension in the education system, promotion of mobility of learners and teachers, promotion of collaboration between educational facilities, expansion of the information and experience exchange regarding common problems within the framework of the education systems in the member states and promotion of the development of distance learning.

Cooperations arise through the collaborative activity of at least two parties with the aim of improved goal achievement. In order to benefit from the collaboration, each party must demonstrate a special, useful qualification and contribute this willingly. Thus from a socio-psychological point of view, collective capability is greater than the sum of individual performances, which constitutes the basic synergy effect of cooperation.[10]

According to Payer, there are six features that define cooperation:
(1) The *number of members is limited* and they are known.
(2) There exists a *benefit orientation*, i. e. expectations prevail that a certain benefit can only and/or can more easily be achieved through cooperation. However, there is no security regarding the achievement of aims, i. e. in this regard, cooperation has an experimental character and the result of collaboration is to be regarded as open.
(3) Cooperation is *strengths oriented*, i. e. during collaboration, only the strengths of the cooperative partners are counted while the weaknesses are masked.
(4) There exists only a *partial bond*, i. e. in contrast to a fusion, cooperation does not involve the entire institution.
(5) During cooperation, the *autonomy of the partners* is maintained.
(6) The cooperation is a social system, i. e. it develops its own dynamics and its own rules and legality regarding its activities. Although cooperation is controllable, it is limited in its predictability. It has many different development potentials.[11]

Considering networks first in general, they can be described as:
> »a number of nodes and the quantity of connections running between them. The nodes and connections are common features of all network definitions. Nodes – understood to be actors – can be both individuals and groups (corporate actors), such as companies, associations, ministries or even countries. […] The connections link the nodes together and represent an affiliation or relationship.«[12]

When compared to the features of cooperations outlined above, this network definition can also apply. On the assumption that networks are so-called meta-cooperations, it can be deduced that the following features of cooperations also apply to networks:
- Benefit orientation,
- Strengths orientation,
- Partial bonding and
- Autonomy of the partners.[13]

Direct comparison however highlights the essential differences of the two organisation types. The bonding of actors is significantly looser in a network than in a co-operation. This can be

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[10] Cf. Payer (2008), p. 6 p.
[11] Cf. ibid.
[12] Gramlinger (2002), p. 1 p.
[13] Cf. Payer (2008), p. 13.

partly attributed to the disparity of their connections, which can be expressed as formal affiliation to an institution, economic performance relationships or simply as friendships. Through the likewise available informal relationships there arises less bonding than in a cooperation. The crucial difference however is primarily between constructed relationships and real-life contacts, as social relationships develop within a social network only through direct contact. This arises chiefly through communication, which can be regarded as a significant but not sole condition for networking. So networks offer per se the opportunity for collaboration – whether, how and when this opportunity is perceived by the actors depends however on their own discretion. They can thus be viewed as a communicative space for opportunities, which is predominantly free of hierarchies and is organization by horizontal relationships. The actors playing a role in the network are separate yet mutually dependent and are interested in the common good.[14] As regards this structure, the number of actors in the network is not limited, which means that the »members« of a network do not necessarily need to know all other participants. As in cooperations, a network also develops its own rules of conduct, a so-called network culture. Even in view of the already noted structural dimensions of branches, the network is understood rather more to be a social infrastructure with complex intentions, which offers a space for the emergence of new relationships, which indicates its own attraction. Particularly to be organization is that networks demonstrate a special regulatory process. Namely, they are supported neither through monetary nor hierarchical connections, but rather through contextual conditions such as common intentions and interests, and mutual trust and recognition. This again reminds us how important communication is in a network.[15]

With regard to the level of education collaboration in Europe, it is in particular difficult to make the distinction between European networks and transnational cooperation projects. It is common in both cases that they are frequently founded *bottom-up*[16], i. e. as a reaction to a need. Furthermore, they are designed for a limited period, the funding phase. Likewise, both organization types should bring together actors that demonstrate expertise that is complementary to a particular purpose. Their crucial difference is however of a strategic type. While in cooperation projects it is  rganization products, so-called Outputs, that form the focus of objectives, in networks it is rather more the Outcomes that are of interest to the actors. This can be attributed to the fact that networks are considered to be process-oriented. These processes however present a particular challenge to management and planning as they are less predictable than in cooperation projects, which are frequently linked to a concrete work plan. This process orientation causes the emergence of multiple intentions and/or objectives. In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary that many different actors with diverse expertise participate in networks, which leads to an enormous heterogeneity of actors.[17]

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[14] Cf. Payer (2008), p. 5et. seqq. and Bienzle et al. (2007), p. 9 pp.
[15] Cf. ibid.
[16] More detail in the »Structures« section.
[17] Cf. Bienzle et al. (2007), p. 32 pp.

**Structures**

Based on the general definition of a network, it can be seen that a variety of manifestations of networks can develop. Various types have evolved, In particular in the practice of education networks. For network research it is therefore of significance to consider these types separately in order to be able to give specific hints as regards composition in terms of their initiation, configuration and their organizations.[18] Various criteria can be used to support such classification. The criteria for the characterisation of social networks can be  rganizati in three categories:

*Functional features*, that enable conclusions to be drawn as to the content-related configuration of the relationships. This includes the thematic orientation of the network and the type of reciprocal services.

*Structural features*, that give information about the construction and the composition of the relational network. This includes for example the geographical reach of the network, which can be local, regional, national or even global, or also the stability of the network over time, which can be differentiated for example as long-term/short-term or stable/unstable. Frequently, network structures follow a typical course over time[19] or they are designed from the outset for a specific period, e. g. network projects.

*Relational features*, which allow statements on the character/nature of the relationships. So differentiation can be based for example on

- Degree of openness: How available and/or accessible are networks, are there for example linguistic or cultural barriers?
- Manner of emergence: Was the network planned (top-down) or has it arisen from a need (emergent/bottom-up)?
- Distribution of power: Is the structure hierarchical or heterarchical or has the network been  rganizat strategically?[20]

This aspect includes the varying degree of formalisation in networks. Here, informal and formal relationships are the polar characteristics. Informal relationships are also termed latent social networks, which are based on voluntary contacts; they often have little structure and are dependent on people, making them often very direct and making great use of shortcuts. In contrast to this, formal relationships are rather more hierarchical and thus indirect, which can lead to longer pathways. This formal polarisation however is often not perceived by the network actors, as in practice a close integration of the two interaction forms prevails. They do not represent alternatives but enhance each other mutually, blurring the boundaries in the process of collaboration.[21]

Furthermore, strong and weak relationships can be differentiated between depending on time expenditure, emotional intensity and the reciprocal services.

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[18] Cf. Bienzle et al. (2007), p. 13 pp.
[19] Forming – Storming – Norming – Performing – Transforming – Declining.
[20] Cf. Payer (2008), p. 14 pp.
[21] Cf. Bienzle et al. (2007), p. 13 pp.

- Strong relationships/strong ties: these are enduring, emotionally-binding and are based on reciprocity, e. g. with friends. They often take on a supportive function. However, as they are often redundant, no informational advantages arise from these.
- Weak relationships/weak ties: these are less intensive and reciprocal. They serve the purpose of gaining information and making work easier. In addition, their bridging function (connection of »islands« and »social circles«) can be viewed as a strength, as new and heterogenous information can be gained.[22]

Because of the complexity of the relationships, a term used ever more frequently alongside the terms of strong and weak relationships is that of multiplex relationships. These make available several resources simultaneously (information, material resources, solidarity, …) and thus are considered to be supportive and voluntary as well as personal and stable.[23]

One of the most important factors in the construction and maintenance of networks is the trust of the participating actors, as this is indispensible in the construction of enduring and reciprocal relationships. Trust is counted as a so-called soft factor and helps to substitute control in many cases. Trust is an intangible resource, which can have a variety of bases. So trust can arise for example based on commonly determined rules (rule based trust) or on the basis of previous experiences (history based trust) or even in view of common social, cultural or rganization l affiliations (category based trust).[24]

**Education Networks**

According to Gramlingers general network definition, regional vocational education networks can be described as a number of institutions in a region that are concerned with education and between whom various relationships exist. The characteristics of the relationships can be differentiated into enduring or temporary and/or strong or weak. Strong relationships (strong ties) form for example a good base of trust but require enormous concentration from the relevant actors, which makes these relationships limited in number.[25] Dealing with education are for example (vocational) schools, training companies, private (further) education providers, local authorities, intercorporate education facilities, universities etc. This incomplete list makes it clear that a differentiated and pluralistic trusteeship prevails in the education sector. But precisely this distribution of trustees, their ability to innovate and their striving to a particular degree to work together are very significant in the regional provision having the required abilities and skills in the qualified workforce to ensure the competitiveness of the region.[26]

WILBERS identifies *regional education networks* in vocational education as an opportunity to organize certain potentials and differentiates them according to their objectives in pedagogic and economics-oriented networks. Networks with a pedagogic intention aim either for a qua-

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[22] Cf. Bienzle et al. (2007), p. 14 p.
[23] Cf. ibid., p. 16.
[24] Cf. ibid., p. 19 p.
[25] Cf. Wilbers (2002), p. 3 and Wilbers (2003), p. 6.
[26] Cf. Tiemeyer (2002), p. 10.

litative improvement in vocational education, e. g. the overcoming of transition problems, or a quantitative improvement in vocational education, e. g. the generation of a better qualified workforce. Networks with an economic intention however strive either for regional development or resource and burden sharing.[27]

| Objectives of regional vocational education networks | |
|---|---|
| *primarily pedagogic* | *primarily economic* |
| 1. Qualitative improvement of vocational education: | 1. Resource sharing, burden sharing |
| | 2. Regional development: |
| a. Strengthening of design/process/ activity orientation | a. Strengthening of the endogenous potentials |
| b. Strengthening of technical support (e. g. e-learning) | b. Construction of innovation networks and/or innovative environments |
| c. Management of transition problems (e. g. on first entry) | |
| d. Improvement of differentiation (e. g. additional qualifications for highperformers support measures for under-achievers) | |
| e. Further development of full-time provision | |
| f. Expansion of support structure (e. g. advice, transparency creation measures) | |
| g. Need orientation: Better recognition of regional needs, earlier understanding of future qualification requirements | |
| 2. Quantitative improvement of vocational education (e. g. development of additional workforce) | |

**Table 1: Aims of regional vocational education networks (source: Wilbers (2002), p. 4)**

Through its strong potential for development, regional education networks are used time and again for the most various discussion approaches in vocational and economic education, primarily in the field of vocational education research. Initially designed through developments in the »classic« learning location cooperations, the network idea has developed into a leading concept even in further education research. Furthermore, the network approach has been adopted by the OECD in its concept for *Lifelong Learning*. It can be assumed from this that the solution of transition problems necessarily requires the collaboration of all actors at all levels.

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[27] Cf. Wilbers (2002), p. 4.

The new demand and opportunity for increased regional collaboration is likewise initiated by the revised draft regulations in the vocations (e. g. learning curricula). Furthermore, regional networks and/or the concept of the educational landscape also play a particular role in research into school reform. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for example in the framework of school and quality reforms planned until 2017/2018, to date 27 vocational schools are being transformed into 13 regional vocational educational resource centres. The EU project Learning Regions has also been essential to the rapid growth in significance of the network concept. Learning Regions establish their own identity and/or a general principle. Essential to this is the recognition of challenges and the resulting development goals. In order to enable consistent work, networks are used by regional protagonists, who act responsibly to deal with problems and find solutions. Because of the assumption that the cooperation of regional actors generates synergy effects, regular reviews attempt to increase the participation opportunities for potential actors.[28]

**Side Note: Learning Regions**

In order to give stimulus for further development in today's 21st-century knowledge-based society, it is important for regions to demonstrate a good assortment of resources, institutional structures, modern technology and open ideals. With the concept of lifelong learning as a focus of European employment strategy and as a fundamental component part of the European social model, understanding of the Learning Region has progressed since 2000. Just as for networks, there is also no consistent definition for the Learning Region. In consideration of the current socio-economic conditions, each Learning Region is developing its own mix of resources. All Learning Regions however show particular commitment to innovation and learning as the core of their development. The aim is the initiation and maintenance of economic activities with the help of different combinations of lifelong learning, innovation and the creative use of ICT. By  rganiza on the issue of learning, an alternative or better work opportunities on the one hand or and better income opportunities on the other are opened up to the learner. On the other hand, an advantage arises for society through a more flexible workforce trained in modern technology. The challenge for the region consists in the embedding of the individual learning into a comprehensive context, in which the institutions are aware of the learning and innovation need and can also implement this. Networks and partnerships are in this respect key components, as collective learning and stability are dependent on a continual exchange and flow of information about products, processes and work organization. In these networks and/or partnerships, the perception of the common goal and the identity are of primary necessity. The stimulus during creation is trust and during maintenance is common values. Only under these conditions can networks build social capital, which provides the region with a competitive edge.[29]

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[28] Cf. Tiemeyer (2002), p. 7 pp.
[29] Cf. Larsen (no year of publication).

## Challenges[30]

A major challenge in shaping networks is their control. A successful network requires from their players sensitiveness, social competence, interactive experience and the ability to change the perspective. The three different perspectives, which need to be adjusted, are depicted in the following figure:
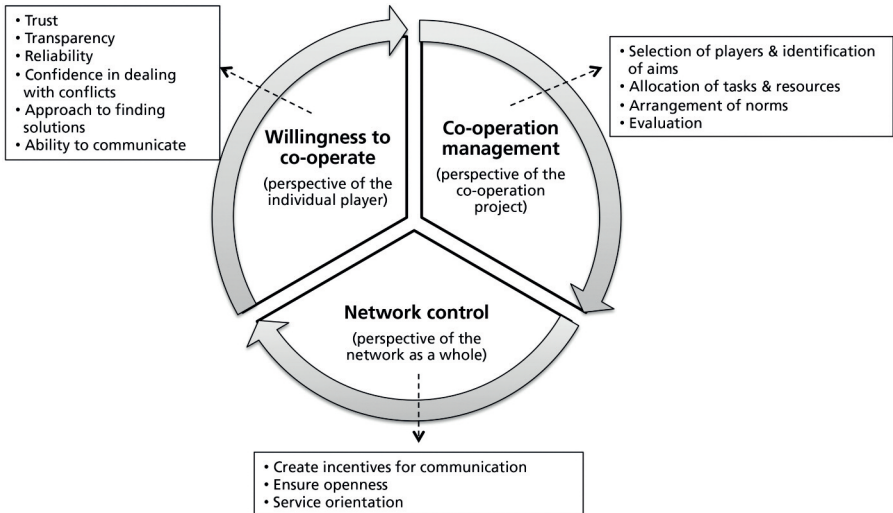


**Figure 1: Perspectives in the network (source: own presentation on the basis of Payer (2008), p. 24 pp.)**

At the same time, the perspectives denominate the elements, which must complement each other in mutual interdependence for the success of a network. For this, the willingness to co-operate of the individual players is the most important precondition. That means, the players must be able to interlink their own strengths with those of the others in order to achieve lasting benefits for themselves and the network. For this, it is crucial to have:

- Confidence in oneself and in the partners,
- A balanced level of transparency,
- Reliability in the context of compliance and co-responsibility of agreements, whereby the degree of formalisation must be considered,
- Confidence in dealing with conflicts, here understood as addressing problems and/or conflicts openly and their constructive solution, which my lead to an enormous creative potential,

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[30] The detailed approach is based on the characteristics demonstrated by Payer (2008) and the definition of Gramlinger (2002) as well as the extrapolations of Kohlmeyer (2010), p. 123 p.

- An approach to finding solutions towards accomplishing the overall aim, which includes willingness to compromise and
- The ability to communicate which requires the adherence to communication rules[31] and the use of the social climate of the co-operation and the reflexive added value (scrutinising the things that have not been communicated).

As a result of the manifold implementations of networks as a type of co-operation, the necessity arises to establish the organisational capability of the network. The network management subdivides in four interdependent sub-spheres of operation: the selection of players and the setting of targets (selection), the allocation of tasks and resources (allocation), the agreement on regulations concerning the co-operation and process flows (regulation) and the evaluation, which can be either performed internally or by third parties. Particularly the subtask selection is of enormous significance in this context, since the common target is composed of the subset of individual interests and/or aims of the players. The target of the network will be, from the viewpoint of the individual player, just one of many targets. Therefore, opposite interests can not be excluded in general. Their number affects considerably the inner structure of the network, which is to, based on the tasks and the constellation of players, enable an appropriate organisation in terms of set-up and process flow. Consequently, it appears to be sensible to narrow down the circle of network partners. However, when selecting the partners one should take into consideration that the comprehensive problem solving competence can only be achieved through the heterogeneity of competences among the partners involved. This may cause integration problems with players, who are considered to be essential for the network, however do not share the targets of the overall process, think that the efforts are too high or have tensions with other network partners. In respect of the network structure, one should pay attention to the fact that neither an over- nor an under-institutionalisation will arise. It is undoubted that a minimum is crucial for every network, which stresses the necessity that a control function is mandatory. With an increasing level of complexity of the network, a central organisational unit is inevitable to fulfil this management task. The further functions of the network management are compulsory, whereby the resources used to manage the network operations should be adequate to the benefits arising from the operations. Due to the necessity to have the competences and resources of all partners involved and the joint work to develop a comprehensive problem-solving competence in order to achieve the benefits, a mutual interdependence arises. From this, the interest of players derives to achieve a long lasting and continuous, at most unlimited, collaboration.

From the perspective of the network as a holistic structure, it is necessary to define the task of network control. This includes to arranging social spaces as opportunities to communicate, ensuring the structural openness and a commitment to rendering services. The first task means to enable the exchange of network partners. This is frequently implemented through the orga-

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[31] For instance, the communication models of Watzlawick (*http://www.paulwatzlawick.de/axiome.html*) or of Schulz von Thun (*http://www.schulz-von-thun.de/index.php?article_id=71*).

nisation of events or the professional use of public relations work. Ensuring the openness is, in the light of its attractiveness to network partners and their characteristics, the biggest strength of the network and therefore mandatory. The open structure of a network can, as experience has shown, quickly change into different forms. Therefore, it is crucial to have simple, though qualified and still flexible structures, which require only a minimum of resources to maintain their status. The general conditions to succeed need to be applied to networks as a form of organisation, and in particular for interregional education networks.

It appears to be substantial, particularly in interregional/transnational education networks, to have a consensus of players and the identity of the network. In order to achieve the consensus, it is necessary to address the existing opposite interests – which especially arise from the different educational systems as well as work styles shaped by the historical and cultural background – and find compromises that help to satisfy the benefits. In order to create an identity in a network, all players must be convinced of the urgency in terms of the problems to be solved. The latter condition can, especially in the light of the progressing demographic change and the increasing demand for qualified labour forces, be considered as fulfilled. However, specific challenges in interregional networks can also pose language barriers or high administrative efforts created by the different national work styles. In addition, the time limit may also be perceived as a challenge if the networks or their implementation are designed as a project. In summary, it is obvious that interregional/transnational networks face the challenge to define their targets clearly and establish their start-up and implementation organisation respectively and in accordance with the prevailing framework conditions in the countries involved. If the network succeeds in defining clear targets, it can evolve extraordinary potentials.

**Potentials[32]**

In general, one can state that interregional education networks provide the opportunity to cope with the sophisticated challenges of the European educational policy if a coordinated approach is adopted. The specific advantages of the networks as a form of organisation for interregional collaboration in the field of education arise from the characteristics in terms of the player constellations and their interrelations. That means that the common objective to successfully implement the aims of the European educational policy can be better accomplished if all partners involved act in a coordinated and collaborative way. Through the linkage of spheres of action which have so far operated separately, the following can be achieved:

- The bundling of competences,
- A knowledge and innovation transfer through exchange of experience,
- An optimised utilisation of resources,
- An enhanced transparency (e. g. in the operations of the individual countries, institutions etc.) and
- Creating the awareness for available opportunities.

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[32] Cf. also Czerwanski (2003), Dobischat/Kutscha (2000) and Wilbers (2003).

In addition, the networking allows to setting up an information infrastructure by using information and communication technology (ICT), because, particularly for cross-regional networks, it is crucial for the co-operation to use new media and information channels. Furthermore, the improved focusing on actual requirements and thus the early recognition of future qualification demands will lead to more sophisticated solutions of transition problems through networking. Interregional networks can also be considered as tools: on the one hand as differentiation tool by offering additional qualifications and further qualification opportunities and, on the other hand, as tool in the regional development. The mobilisation of the intraregional human resources and the promotion of additional own regional potentials will initiate the development of an innovative setting that helps to enhance the competitiveness of the region.

To what extent the possible potentials can emerge depends on how the challenges mentioned in the previous chapter can be coped with. Equally, the potentials develop in relation to the respective framework in the countries involved and in relation to the commitment of the associated institutions and persons.

## 3.2 Implications for the Baltic Sea Region

The Baltic Sea Region is a macro-region in the European Union. The EU disposes of a wide range of cultures, languages and historical traditions. With its 8,000 kilometres of coastline and the alliance of eight EU countries, the Baltic Sea Region is of particular significance.[33] The countries of the Baltic Sea Region look back to more than 1,000 years of common relations, which had and still have a specific impact on the common cultural and histoial developments (Viking Age → trade routes in Northern Europe – Christianisation → resettlement of farmers and merchants – the Hanse as an organised trade and integration of entire cities and countries – 1st and 2nd World War – foundation of the European Community 1953).[34] Such common bonds lead to collaborative principals and ideals, which become links and help to develop guiding principles of a region. These guiding principles include, among others, equal opportunities, the right of decent work, health care, a clean environment and, not to forget, education for everybody. They result into strong interdepencies but also create the chance to exploit joint opportunities, since we face significant challenges that affect the entire Baltic Sea Region and where only the community can find suitable solutions, e. g. in respect of the asymmetrical economic developments. For this, the coordination must be enhanced and joint actions are required. To set this in motion, the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) was adopted in 2009 and it represents the first Macro-Regional Strategy of Europe.[35]

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[33] Cf. European Commission (2011), p. 128 p.
[34] Cf. Rasmussen/Ransby Stahl (no year), p. 7.
[35] Cf. European Commission (2011), p. 56.

**Side Note: Macro-Regional Strategy**

There is no standard definition for the term macro-region. Under the EUSBSR the macro-region is an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges. However, that means at a European level, that the number of regions of one macro-region must be significantly smaller than the number of EU member states. Consequently, the EUSBSR understands the macro-regional strategy as a holistic framework, which allows the EU and their member countries to identify needs and exploit available resources in order to ensure that the Baltic Sea Region can benefit from a sustainable ambience and an optimal economic and social development. The objectives of a strategy of this kind depend on the respective region. In general, one can say that the added value is to be created through interventions, which strengthen the key functions of the macro-region. The background for the introduction of a macro-regional strategy is the fact that there are some specific and obvious opportunities and challenges, which can neither be addressed by one region or one country alone but rather through joint action at sectoral level. In addition, overall coordinated actions beyond political fields achieve a higher rate of better results than individual initiatives. This new and integrated style of work across many sectors provides significant chances for specialisation, co-operation and higher performance capability, e. g. in networks. Furthermore, it is assumed that solutions within smaller groups of countries facilitate the path for a better cohesion at an overall European level.[36]

Its general objectives are directed to the improved co-operation, the identification and solving of challenges and the promotion of the regional development per se. For this, an integrated approach is used, i. e. collaboration of all countries in the Baltic Sea region is envisioned in the most diverse policy areas. The EUSBSR focuses on four challenges: environmental aspects, wealth, accessibilty and safety. The cornerstones of the general structure have been identified as 15 priority and/or thematic focuses in the strategy's action plan. At this point, special importance should be given to the thematic focus »Education: Devloping innovative education and youth« in order to meet the partial objective wealth – an enhanced competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region in a global market.[37] As a matter of fact, full accessibility to profound general education and occupational training provides, apart from an effective and comprehensive social system and a well-functioning labour market, the basis for geographical, occupational and socio-economic mobility, which is then again the precondition for more wealth. Therefore, careful and comprehensive growth needs an educational system which stimulates both learning and further education /qualification.

Considering the superior objectives – conveying of values, personality development and promotion of acitive citizenship – the educational and youth policy is to contribute to the improvement of the educational quality and living conditions of young people. For this, the Strategy Europe 2020 and ET 2020 provide the foundation for the educational and youth policy as well

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[36] Cf. also Sameki (2009) and Dühr (2011).
[37] Cf. European Commission (2011), p. 128 p., and European Commission (2013).

as education as the specific focus of EUSBSR. Based on transnational and/or corss-border co-operation, the collaborative learning from each other, and closely related to this, the sustainable exchange of experience are contibutions that are to be made under the defined educational and political objectives of the programme. Therefore, one of the objectives set by the EUSBSR is to increase the »Volume of transnational co-operation on education, youth and labour mobility within BSR, i. e. co-operation between universities, schools, VET institutions offering adult learning or non- learning«.[38]

The EUSBSR assumes that if young people are given the chance to collect experience about their and with their neighbouring countries and thus establish cross-border, interregional/transnational contacts, this will, in every respect, have an impact on their general activity regarding the commitment in the co-operation within the Baltic Sea Region. Equally, the mobility of future labour forces will be positively affected and thus motivate to establishing cross-border, economic activities. So far however many opportunities of exchange programmes, either for students or professionals, remain unused due to the lack of contacts and insufficient information.[39]

Under the focus of education, various operations were planned to accomplish the objective and implemented in respectives projects. One example is the operation »Development of new methods to convey entrepreneural and innovative competences«, whereby this deals primarily with the development of start-up skills and competences to rapid market adjustment. One meta-project closely related the previous operation was the *Baltic Training Programme*, which promotes the internationalisation in vocational training and the entrepreneurial thinking and the internationalisation in business operations. A further example is the operation »Dealing with the challenges of demographic change and fighting youth unemployment«, which tries to balance the discrepancy between the lack of skilled labour forces and increasing youth un-employment through exchanging experience among the countries and, for instance, implement the dual vocational training system.[40]

The EUSBSR demonstrates that the focus for the collaborative work in the Baltic Sea Region is the utilisation of potentials available in human resources. It is of greatest significance for an efficient and economic development of the society to ensure a high level of education for the future generations. In order to achieve this level we need to collaborate. The most efficient way for a cross-border or even transnational co-operation appears to be, based on its described structure and the potentials arising from it, the organisational form of education networks in interregional and/or transnational dimensions.

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[38] Cf. European Commission (2013), p. 88 pp.
[39] Cf. ibid.
[40] Cf. ibid., p. 90 pp.

## 3.3 Practical Application: Experiences and Results of the COHAB Project[41]

COHAB is a project acronym for »Co-ordination and Integration of Higher Education and the Labour Market around the South Baltic Sea«. The project was implemented under the South Baltic Programme (SBP). The SBP belongs to the cross-border co-operation programmes and has the overall aim to strengthen the sustainable development of the South Baltic Region. The competitiveness of the region is to be enhanced through joint actions and the integration is to be promoted between individuals and institutions.[42]

The COHAB project comprised seven partners, i. e. five universities[43] and two supporting institutions.[44] The project partners identified that the interregional mobility in the labour market of the South Baltic Region is not sufficiently developed. Consequently, the project tried to identify the reasons for the missing mobility, i. e. the barriers, in order to  roject the situation. In the course of the project, the partners have established that the main barriers include ignorance of each other's local culture in education and labour market, educational recognition and lack of strong educational links.

As a focus for targeted investigations, the two occupational profiles »teaching staff« and »nursing staff«[45] were chosen. The aims of the project included:
- To make the selected educations/professions well known and transparent,
- To increase the mobility of students and university staff and
- To increase staff and student competencies in order to equip them for cross-border mobility.

Consequently, the project did not primarily envisage to establishing a network, however, the project partners assumend that mobility can only be achieved if the educational co-operation already exists among the institutions of the individual countries or is about to be established. Study trips, collaborative working in virtual courses and the participation in a summer school gave students and university staff an insight into the subject and helped to familiarize them with the different cultures in the South Baltic Region, the employment opportunities, the educational systems and structures and the people living there as well as their local traditions and values. That way, the participants were supposed to become »ambassadors« for interregional mobility who can transfer their experience and knowledge and thus achieve a dissemination effect.[46]

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[41] For more detailed information on the project COHAB visit *www.cohab.eu*.

[42] Cf. Rasmussen/Ransby Stahl (no year), p. 5.

[43] University College Sjælland (Denmark), Medical University Gdansk (Poland), University of Rostock (Germany), University of Klaipeda (Lithuania), Linneaus University (Sweden).

[44] VUC Storstrøm (Denmark) – Adult education, VIRTUS Rostock (Germany) – not-for-profit learning institute.

[45] Both occupational profiles require an academic degree. Therefore, the target groups comprised students of the respective specialisations and their university teachers.

[46] Cf. Rasmussen/Ransby Stahl (no year), p. 5.

A survey among the participating students before the start of the summer school showed that they were particularly looking forward to working in groups, collecting cultural experiences, participating in social activities and being eager to broaden their knowledge and competencies through the exchange of experience. Concerns were expressed in terms of the language barriers, which might be an obstacle for a vivid exchange. During the summer school, the students especially pointed out the intercultural experience, discussions, new and exciting teaching and learning materials, the work in English language and the establishment of contacts and/or the set-up of networks. Their personal goals in terms of the project participation included the acquisition and expansion of knowledge, competencies and qualifications, the  rojectscation of a perspective regarding future employment opportunities through more mobility, transparency and established contacts.[47]

Towards the end of the project term[48], a similar survey was repeated in order to determine the actual results of the project participation.[49] As a general result, both groups of students confirmed that they collected new and different things through the project. These experiences led to a better understanding of the cultural values in general, and in particular in terms of people who have a different cultural background than they have. Furthermore, they stated to have acquired intercultural and international abilities. The nursing staff pointed out additionally that they were able to upgrade their professional career, that their self-confidence has strengthened and their communicative and language abilities have improved. The group of teacher students indicated as additional results that their abilities in handling cross-border meetings/gatherings and their capacity for teamwork have improved. In addition, their interest in the South Baltic Region has improved in general and they were able to further develop their personal competencies.

In respect of the general job advantages arising from the participation in the COHAB project, the students agreed that the knowledge they acquired about equipment and technologies of the partner countries in terms of education and nursing care were significant for them. Another job advantage was the acquisition of relevant intercultural and international experience for their future employment. The teachers-to-be emphasized the enormous importance of cross-border occupational co-operation and the acquisition of competences for professional networking and international collaboration. Here, the COHAB project was able to initiate and/or support first steps towards competence development. However, it is mandatory to advance the activities in follow-up projects, particularly if interregional education networks should succeed in the long term.

In summary, the interesting teaching-learning arrangements for students were those which enabled direct contacts with each other and insights into the practical work, i. e. the summer school and the study trips. Both groups emphasised the intercultural experience, the work in

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[47] COHAB Expectation Survey (internal project documentation).
[48] COHAB Final Evaluation; All further results of this survey have been summarized.
[49] Due to the separation of the two occupational groups during the practical implementation phase, the final survey was performed separately in order to dervive better conclusions.

English and the cultural offerings and social activities as the most interesting aspects during the project. Naturally, teacher students considered the learning and study abroad as important in general, similar to the aspect of establishing contacts and/or networking. All participants confirmed that they would participate again in an interregional and/or international exchange programme. When asked about the plans for an international career, only five students[50] stated that they find it unlikely to work abroad.

In general, the results show that the students considered the project and/or the participation as very rewarding. Especially the intercultural experience and the improvement of personal and social competences can be hightlighted as sustainable effects of the projects, which, in fact, are based on an international educational co-operation of the partner countries.

The project experience in the group of teacher students also revealed that the positive effect of a project is closely related to the willingness of the participants to show commitment. That means specifically for the COHAB project that the idea of networking could establish at two levels:

- Firstly, at the internal project level between the partner institutions, the university staff and the students, and
- Secondly, at the external project level, initially among individual university employees/students and involved educational experts during the study trips or the summer school.

There is consensus at the internal level that the established contacts will be beneficial in the future professional career and therefore should not remain unused after the project has terminated. During the project, special attention was given to the enhancement of ICT competences in order to ensure that the utilisation of new communication channels, particularly videoconference equipment, and the targeted use of social media can contribute to the sustainability of contacts.[51] One visible result is the Google+ group named »Baltic Sea Teaching« launched towards the end of the project and in the light of the networking idea which consolidated during the project. The group is open to all those people who are interested in the development of education in the Baltic Sea Region. It is designed to exchange ideas and contacts and thus enable an improved cross-border co-operation.[52]

In summary, the project has demonstrated that working across borders is feasible thanks to state-of-the-art technology. Admittedly, the network relations at internal and external level are still at the very beginning. The next aim should be to find a consensus among the partners involved what exactly is to be pursued with the networks that are still in their infancy. Afterwards a clear target can be set which enables further options for interaction aimed at initiating new projects with innovative character.

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[50] Three nurses-to-be and two teachers-to-be.
[51] E. g. blogging used to for documentation purposes and as teaching tool.
[52] *https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/108900137004270573322*.

## 3.4 Outlook and Recommendations

In the light of the strategic framework for the general and vocational education until 2020[53] and the relevant cohesion policy, the future direction of Europe's development can be clearly identified. In order to achieve the ambitious objective for a smart, sustainable and integrated growth, single actions of individual countries to meet the current challenges are rather counterproductive, therefore co-operation should become a reflex action at all levels.

A European co-operation of this kind should efficiently use the method of open coordination in the sphere of general and vocational education and with the aspect of lifelong learning and establish synergies among the various spheres of general and vocational education. Utmost importance should be given to cross-sector and transparent co-operation, which has the capacity to involve the respective policy areas and all relevant stakeholders. In that respect, it is crucial to disseminate the results of this co-operation and to review it in regular intervals. Furthermore, it shlould aim to better interlink the Copenhagen and Bologna process, enable an intensive exchange with third countries and focus on the co-operation with international organisations.[54]

Behind the background of implementing the OMC and thanks to their open structures, interregional/transnational education networks provide in particular efficient options for the cooperation in Europe, and specifically in the macro-regions of the Baltic Sea Region. When implementing further networks of this kind, we recommend:

- At European level: to promote networking relations, such as under the key action 2 »Cooperation and strategic partnerships« in the new EU programme Erasmus+.
- At national level: to facilitate co-operation through removing bureaucratic obstacles.
- At regional level: to recognize the potential of interregional co-operation.
- At institutional level: to shield institutional logics in favour of an overarching aim, e. g. the use of human resources through better educational opportunities for young people.
- At individual level: in particular motivation and the willingness to co-operate.

Based on the project partners' viewpoints, the experiences of the COHAB project showed that the co-operation in the context of efficient interregional education network structures is a necessary precondition for the implementation of project aims. When looking at the initially mentioned aims of ET 2020:

- To implement lifelong learning and mobility,
- To improve the quality and efficiency of the general and vocational education,
- To promote justice, social cohesion and active citizenship, and
- To promote innovation and creativity

it becomes obvious that even for these aims the co-operation among educational experts in Europe is inevitable. As a matter of fact, a strong Europe is only conceivable in a globalised

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[53] Aligned to the »Europe 2020« Strategy.
[54] Cf. European Union (2009), no page.

world, if experiences are mutually shared instead of keeping them for themselves. This will create transparency which, among others, allows a better understanding for learning performances in a cross-border context and to also recognise them formally. Conversely, an increased recognition of national graduations in an interregional context means also an improved permeability in the *European Educational Area* and thus an enhanced mobility of skilled labour forces.

One of the challenges towards the collaboration for a stronger Europe is, in particular, the different workstyles, that have evolved as a result of the different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, this aspect requires to understand (inter-)regional solutions as forerunners and movers, since they frequently indicate similar approaches due to similar local conditions.

With the focus on the enhancing utilisation of human resource potentials towards a more enhanced collaboration, the EUSBSR has created an excellent foundation for interregional education networks in the Baltic Sea Region as a co-operation tool towards a *European Educational Area*. This tool needs to be further advanced, primarily through projects such as COHAB and other successful projects in the Baltic Sea Region[55]. That way the modern economic development of the European society can be sustainably promoted through a high level of education.

In conclusion, it can be stated that an efficient way to a *European Educational Area* should or will be implemented in several steps: Initially, with cross-border, interregional or even transnational collaborations set up as *interregional education networks* (initiated, for instance, through co-funded model projects such as COHAB), via *Learning Macro-Regions*, such as the Baltic Sea Region, which evolve as a result of the interaction of successful interregional education networks and/or model projects in the superordinated macro-region and finally result in the *European Educational Area*, which is achieved through the transfer of successful structures and processes of benchmark macro-regions in other macro-regions in Europe.


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*Britta Will*

# 4 Teaching and Learning Arrangements in Interregional Cooperation

## 4.1  Interregional – Mutual – Learning

Interregional co-operation and thus the strengthening and promotion of regions[1] is an idea and principle of numerous promotion initiatives/subsidy programmes of the EU (e. g. INTERREG). Projects that promote the exchange of education-specific aspects/contents provide for the players involved (teachers, multipliers etc.) and institutions (schools, education partners etc.) special chances for advancement and co-operation. The interregional exchange provides opportunities of mutual exchange and »learning from one another« as well as »learning with one another«.[2] For this, structures need to be established that enable co-operation. Wink (2009) and Hassink/Hülz (2010) discuss the opportunities and limits of interregional /trans-regional institutional learning and clearly point out that, first of all, learning barriers must be overcome, in order to succeed in learning from one another and with one another in a cross-border context. Wink (2009) demands the development of a common »closeness« and defines five different levels of closeness to be established:

- The development of a common identity, i. e. to achieve a common framework and the respective cognitive interpretation of the new experiences - **cognitive closeness**.
- The intensification of the face-to-face communication, i. e. to improve the **geographical closeness**.
- The utilisation of standardisation, i. e. to improve the **institutional closeness** through common formal norms.
- The generation of individual incentives for knowledge exchange, i. e. to create a kind of **cultural closeness** through the following common objectives.
- The promotion of participation opportunities, i. e. to demand **organisational closeness.**

Even if the explanations rather refer to the institutional learning, it can also refer to didactical and methodical aspects. At the same time, the five levels can be taken as a framework to shaping the interregional educational co-operation.

This essay presents the options to shaping cross-border teaching and learning arrangements. In general, the essay gives a detailed description of learning and teaching arrangements with personal contact (summer schools/study trips and work placements/visionary seminars/dialogue seminars (experience workshops)) as well as teaching and learning arrangements in a virtual environment (parallel teaching/videoconferences).

This essay focuses on the design perspectives of teaching staff. Therefore, the following explanations are to be considered as didactical and methodical design and implementation options of interregional learning.

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[1] The previous chapter in regard to interregional education networks gives an insight into the aspects of interregional and trans-national co-operation.
[2] Hassink/Hülz (2010), p. 496.

## 4.2 Didactical and Methodical Challenges

The European liberality provides to educational institutions numerous opportunities for colla-boration and cross-border co-operation. Promotion programmes such as »Lifelong Learning Programme« (PLL) or »ERASMUS+« support this type of co-operation through various activities (exchange projects, innovation projects etc.) – a valuable chance to collaborate with counterparts and institutions of neighbouring countries and/or other member states. The implementation of cross-border/interregional teaching and learning requires organisational, administrative and expert collaboration. A special challenge is the common design of cross-border teaching and learning arrangements. The agreement on common learning outcomes and guiding pedagogic principles as well as the design of teaching and learning arrangement under didactical and methodical aspects require from all partners involved a high willingness to communicate, inter-cultural competence and ambiguity tolerance.[3]

### 4.2.1 Team Teaching Concepts in an Interregional Context

Teaching and learning in cross-border dimensions requires methodical and didactical rethinking. The Internet enables cross-border learning with suitable and freely available tools, software of-ferings and many more. Furthermore, teaching and learning arrangements also require a new expert-based pedagogical design. The collaboration in interregional teaching and learning groups is characterised by a strong heterogeneity. Not only cultural but primarily differences in the expert level provide diverse challenges (e. g. language barriers, different training contents) and chances (e. g. wealth of experience, intercultural exchange) for an intensive co-operation. With that in mind, team teaching arrangements appear to be a meaningful tool. Even if the theoretical foundations originate from the 80s and were rather developed in terms of inclusion, the team teaching addresses valuable aspects in learning from one another and with one another in interregional teaching and learning collaborations.

»Team teaching means planning, implementation and evaluation of communicative teaching and learning processes through co-operative teachers in collaboration with flexible student groups.«[4] Team teaching as a lesson format requires at least two teachers. They teach simulta-neously a group of students. The teaching and learning arrangement is jointly planned (con-tents/methods) and implemented. The teacher team bears also the responsibility for the planning and implementation. The teaching unit can/will then be held in changing roles (pre-sentation/support). The opportunities for an individual interior differentiation will be significantly improved through team teaching, because it allows, for instance, an orientation to performance or themes through respectively supported group work.[5]

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[3] Insecurity and uncertainty tolerance.
[4] Mayer (1994) in Halfhide (2002), p. 8.
[5] Halfhide (2002), p. 7.

The process of team teaching is subdivided in four phases:

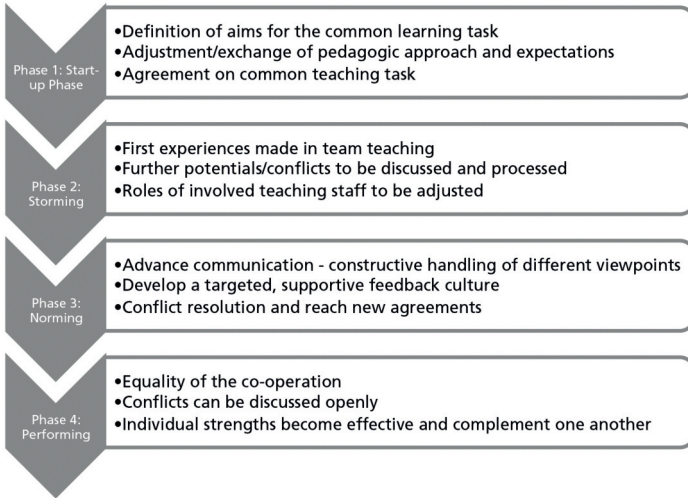| Phase 1: Start-up Phase | • Definition of aims for the common learning task<br>• Adjustment/exchange of pedagogic approach and expectations<br>• Agreement on common teaching task |
| --- | --- |
| Phase 2: Storming | • First experiences made in team teaching<br>• Further potentials/conflicts to be discussed and processed<br>• Roles of involved teaching staff to be adjusted |
| Phase 3: Norming | • Advance communication - constructive handling of different viewpoints<br>• Develop a targeted, supportive feedback culture<br>• Conflict resolution and reach new agreements |
| Phase 4: Performing | • Equality of the co-operation<br>• Conflicts can be discussed openly<br>• Individual strengths become effective and complement one another |

**Figure 1: Phases of team teaching (source: acc. to Halfhide (2002), p. 8)**

Successful work in team teaching requires specific preconditions, particular creating the »feeling of togetherness«. The development of the team spirit but also common objectives and the acceptance of agreed rules are the major keys to success.

Team teaching can take place in different forms of co-operation. Meyer (1997) differentiates among four forms that are outlined in the following figure.
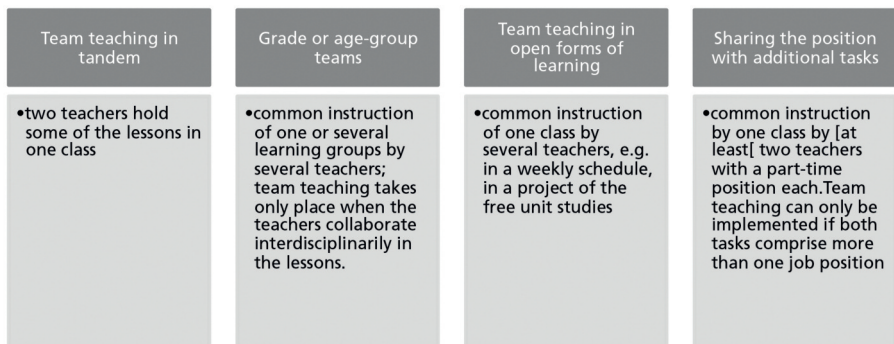
| Team teaching in tandem | Grade or age-group teams | Team teaching in open forms of learning | Sharing the position with additional tasks |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| • two teachers hold some of the lessons in one class | • common instruction of one or several learning groups by several teachers; team teaching takes only place when the teachers collaborate interdisciplinarily in the lessons. | • common instruction of one class by several teachers, e.g. in a weekly schedule, in a project of the free unit studies | • common instruction by one class by [at least[ two teachers with a part-time position each.Team teaching can only be implemented if both tasks comprise more than one job position |

**Figure 2: Basic forms of team teaching (source: acc. to Meyer 1997 in Halfhide (2002), p. 9)**

Team teaching in tandem, grade or age-group teams or team teaching in open forms of learning are suitable in terms of interregional teaching and learning co-operation, since the collaboration takes place in a co-operation project and the employment contracts of the teaching staff are maintained in the respective locations of the co-operating institutions. The sharing of positions with additional tasks appears, therefore, not suitable for interregional team teaching arrangements.[6]

If the interregional teaching and learning co-operation is project-related, such as under the COHAB project, one team of teachers is working together for a defined period of time. The teaching and learning arrangements can be made through personal contact – face-to-face or in virtual teaching and learning arrangements. The following figure presents options for didactical arrangements of interregional learning. Naturally, further arrangements are possible and can be implemented respectively. This essay focuses on the presentation and explanation of the arrangements listed in the figure below.
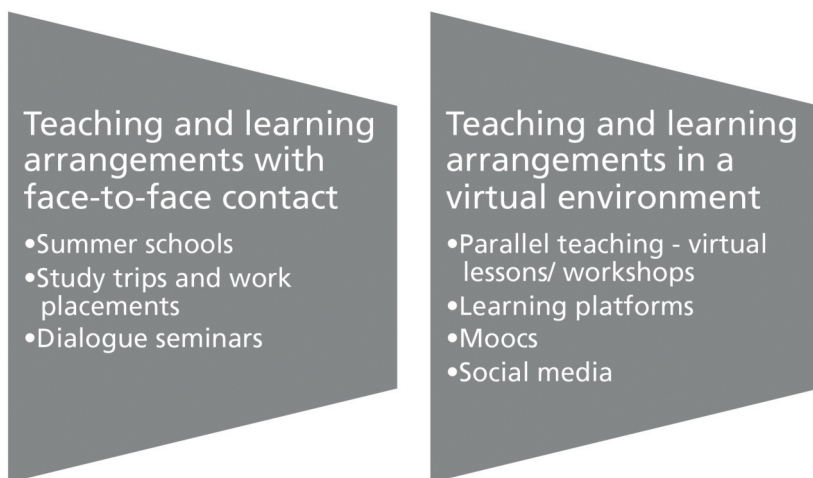


**Teaching and learning arrangements with face-to-face contact**
- Summer schools
- Study trips and work placements
- Dialogue seminars

**Teaching and learning arrangements in a virtual environment**
- Parallel teaching - virtual lessons/ workshops
- Learning platforms
- Moocs
- Social media

**Figure 3: Options for didactical arrangements in interregional teaching and learning (source: own presentation)**

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[6] Cf. Halfhide (2002), p. 8.

### 4.2.2 Teaching and Learning Arrangements with face-to-face Contact

### 4.2.2.1 Summer Schools

Summer schools and/or summer academies are intensive short-term programmes in the summer season, which are offered in addition to the regular studies/training. They often have a thematic focus. The summer school concept originates from the US. In recent years, summer schools have been able to attract more attention and significance. Summer schools primarily address students with high potential and are arranged between two and six weeks. Interested students must submit an application and pass an application procedure/selection procedure. The participating students get the opportunity to gather information about a specific topic, learn about latest research results and establish contacts with fellow students. Every year, a large number of summer schools are being organised and implemented throughout the world.[7] The following figure presents a possible set-up in terms of geographic and content-related aspects. In addition to regional/local summer schools at the home institution of higher education, national, inter-regional/transnational or even international summer schools can be offered. Furthermore, the level of professional focus can also vary. Apart from highly specialised summer schools, inter-disciplinary or even multi-disciplinary summer schools are conceivable.



geographical:
•regional
•national
•bilateral
•interregional/ transnational
•international

professional:
•disciplinary
•interdisciplinary
•multidisciplinary

**Figure 4: Categorisation of summer schools (source: own presentation)**

Even the teaching staff may find it interesting to be involved in a summer school. Apart from the content-related exchange, the attractive arrangement of workshops and the collaboration with co-workers can generate personal added value for the teaching staff. The use and/or testing of innovative teaching methods, e. g. team teaching and the use of new tools, e. g. learning platforms or the common planning of workshops can represent a special added value.

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[7] Cf. Naue (2014), no page.

The workshop planning per se can be implemented with known methods and tools[8] of didactics. However, a new incentive is the exchange of experience with the participating co-workers or the common implementation of new techniques. The trend for and application options of digital media and tools that are, for instance, implemented in an innovative workshop planning can provide smart incentives for the collaboration. In terms of international summer schools, these applications provide valuable opportunities for exchange, since the integration of digital tools and media in teaching has significantly advanced in some countries, e. g. in Scandinavia.

It is crucial for the joint planning of a collaborative teaching design to prepare and agree the content and ensure the methodical implementation. And it is essential to ensure a good communication of the learning targets. Digital tools provide diverse opportunities in the coordination process. For example, videoconferences can be used for team meetings or documents can be jointly processed online, e. g. in googledocs. The use and (further) advancement of learning platforms can be an additional tool in this respect. The documents saved there are thus available for all participants.

The chapter »Teaching and learning arrangements in a virtual environment« will present a further insight into the use of digital media.

### 4.2.2.2 Study Trips and Work Placements Abroad

»Learning by leaving«[9] – in recent years, stays abroad have gained an excellent reputation in the labour market, because employers increasingly admire the famous »look at the wider picture«.[10]

Study trips and work placements provide a wide spectrum to gain experiences. The acquisition of international qualifications and language skills, intercultural competences, international professional competence and network competence represent a major profiling and personality shaping feature in terms of individual and professional stays abroad.[11]

The organisation and implementation of such stays can be performed in many different ways. They can either be organised at institutional level or as individual stays. The objective, purpose and period can vary. The following table[12] tries to give a structural overview. Naturally, the purpose and objective of internships abroad can be similar for institutionally and/or individually organised stays. To make a clear logical differentiation in this respect is obviously difficult. The professional support and organisation of study trips and stays abroad facilitate their implementation and can possibly decrease objections of the participants in relation to the challenge.

Institutionally organised stays abroad are stays, which were organised and implemented with the help of an institution. For example, schools and institutions of higher education work spe-

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[8] Cf. also Hilbert/Meyer (2007) or Bonz (1999).
[9] Kristensen (2004).
[10] Cf. Hölbing (2010), p. 65 p.
[11] Cf. Borch et al. (2003), p. 16 pp.
[12] The table does not claim to be exhaustive.

cifically under the framework of projects, such as exchange projects of the promotion programme ERASMUS+ and/or the Lifelong Learning Programme, and co-operate with partner institutions throughout Europe. Such projects stipulate previously agreed aims or contents and take place within the defined and agreed framework. Similarly, the aims of mobility projects are being agreed. In addition, individual learning agreements help to identify the specific learning outcomes of the participants. The financial resources are mostly provided by the subsidy programmes used.

In contrast to this, individual stays abroad are organised »on one's own«. Objectives and purpose are highly individual and differ significantly from the institutionally organised stays abroad. As a matter of fact, an extensive vacation can open up diverse development perspectives, e. g. in terms of intercultural competences, language skills etc.

| | Institutionally organised | Individually organised |
|---|---|---|
| Institutions | • Foundations<br>• Associations<br>• Enterprises<br>• Institutions of higher education (universities/ technical colleges/ colleges)<br>• Schools | • Foundations |
| Objectives | • Learning the language<br>• Expertise<br>• Acquire qualifications<br>• Acquire international competences[13]<br>• Explore the country/culture | • Learning the language<br>• Expertise<br>• Acquire qualifications<br>• Acquire international competences<br>• Explore the country/culture<br>• »Immigrate« |
| Purpose | • Expatriates<br>• Development aid<br>• Peace helpers<br>• School/study trip<br>• Exchange<br>• Internship<br>• School trip | • Expatriates<br>• Development aid<br>• Peace helpers<br>• Work&Travel<br>• School/study trip<br>• Internship<br>• Language school<br>• Vacation |

**Table 1: Overview of institutionally organised and individual stays abroad (source: own presentation)**

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[13] Cf. Borch et al. (2003), p.16 pp.

Individually organised stays abroad can be financed from »savings« or by scholarships or similar sources.

Study strips are targeted to the formal participation in organised learning units. That specifically includes university semesters or language schools. The focus is clearly on the share of formally planned learning.

Work placements – the learning in a real work environment, therefore dissociate from the vacation-based or university/school stays abroad and focus on the professional or practical aspect in the first line. Kristensen (2004) defines the following criteria to dissociate work placements from other stays abroad:

- Work placements take place in a real work environment, whereby the learning situation is a work situation, i. e. *learning-in-the-work process*.
- The learner has an active role as co-worker.
- The term ranges from two weeks to two years.

In the interregional collaboration, study trips and work placements provide to both learners and teaching staff attractive opportunities to gather and share new experiences. Learners have the abovementioned learning outcomes in mind if it comes to added values for study trips and work placements. Teaching staff, however, will be offered an insight into the work environment of their counterparts. The active participation or the exchange of experience in the teaching sector enriches and broadens the own knowledge. Previously unknown learning and teaching arrangements, such as the use of tablet PCs in lessons, can be observed and supported. There is possibly the chance to overcome reservations on unknown things and find ideas for the own development of the institution, e. g. the school.

Dialogue learning is a method to exchange experience and implicit knowledge. The following chapter will, therefore, deal with this method.

### 4.2.3 Dialogue Learning

To make knowledge transparent and share it is one of the tasks of knowledge management. The individual professional career requires both explicit and implicit knowledge[14], whereby implicit knowledge components can represent effective routines and/or core competences. This chapter will not deal with issues of knowledge management but rather present a method that allows to identifying and describing knowledge.

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[14] SIDE NOTE: »Explicit and implicit knowledge«. In general, we differentiate explicit and implicit knowledge, whereby explicit knowledge is perceived as cognisant, verbalised knowledge. In contrast to this, implicit knowledge describes knowledge and experience based on explicit knowledge and/or through the interaction with explicit knowledge, and can only with difficulty conveyed through the language. In the context of professional acting, implicit knowledge components can rather be identified in the high degree of professional handling abilities, e. g. in craft. The operations in educational or pedagogic contexts are based on a number of theories, methods and tools, i. e. rather as explicit knowledge. The reason why a teacher decides in favour of or against a specific action/specific situation is hard to answer by the acting person in many cases. Frequently, they possibly explain their action with 'intuitional' or 'gut feeling'. Situations of this kind have mostly social, communicative features. But it also describes the knowledge on social courses of action. They can be either related to individuals, contexts, experiences or cultures. The professional action of teaching staff in these social situations shows high shares of implicit knowledge and can even indicate the suitability or non-suitability for the teaching profession. (cf. Schelten (2009), p.114 pp.)

Dialogue learning is a method that can help to identify explicit and implicit knowledge. The method uses the thoughts, experiences and associations of participants as a major component of the dialogue. When skilled workers talk about their own professional competences and capabilities they predominantly use their own very personal and reflective language. Examples and methaphors serve as tools to transfer experiences and findings. At home, the participants prepare for the workshop and put down their thoughts and impressions spontaneously by using an artificial incentive (e. g. drama, poems, music, picture etc.) and associate it to their professional actions. During the workshop, each participant reads his/her impressions triggered by the incentive. Afterwards, the other participants get the chance to respond to the thoughts and add own thoughts. An open dialogue atmosphere ensures the necessary tolerance towards the thoughts of all participants. During the discussion, minutes are taken and key issues are collected. A total of 6 to 8 persons is the ideal group size.

In the context of cross-border teaching and learning arrangements, this method provides for teachers and learners an innovative opportunity to exchange experience and findings. Due to the cultural differences of the participants, interesting implications can arise and indicate different culture-related opinions. The identification of new or completely different approaches contrary to the expectations is also possible. The experience of this method allows teachers to learn new approaches for conveyance, exchange and reflection. Consequently, this method differs widely from conventional and/or common didactical methods, because the participants contribute a very personal and individual position as input to the seminar due to the prepared impressions. A professional behaviour of the seminar teacher is therefore mandatory.[15] It may be sensible to use team teaching when this method is applied. For this, the supporting teachers should lead the discussion and take the minutes, in order to give the participants a clear structure and/or role allocation.

Another reason why this method is perfect for the interregional co-operation is the fact that the elaborated essays and the impressions, ideas, experiences contained therein provide a common basis to exchange experience. It is a kind of »arena« where explicit and implicit professional knowledge components are expressed, made transparent and are interwoven. The impressions triggered by this method open up an intensive exchange for the experts involved. The next chapter focuses on the teaching and learning arrangement in a virtual environment. Basically, it deals with teaching and learning arrangements that are primarily used in new media and/or arrangements performed with the help of new media.

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[15] Cf. Alvunger/Nelson (2014), p. 9 pp.

## 4.3 Teaching and Learning Arrangements in a Virtual Environment

### 4.3.1 Digital Media to Plan Interregional Learning

Learning processes are increasingly affected by information and communication technologies – the new media. That refers to conventional forms of learning, such as in educational institutions, and also to non-conventional forms of learning, such as in leisure time.[16] The Internet and the currently increasing use of mobile end devices play a dominant part in this. The changes and/or the increasing diversity of opportunities to learn also entail didactical and methodical challenges. What is the best way to plan teaching and learning arrangements in order to master the technical opportunities and the continuous advancement of the new media? This represents an immense challenge for all parties involved. The expectations in terms of the utilisation and application of these technologies »considering the special potential for the exchange of information, the conveyance of knowledge, the teaching and learning«[17] have particularly increased in recent years. Learning at and/or with the PC is generally not new. At the beginning of the 80s, the first learning programmes have emerged, primarily in the language sector. eLearning – electronic learning – was »born«. The advancement of technology and the Internet have significantly changed the opportunities of electronic learning to date. Konrad/Straub (1999) define and summarise: »eLearning« is a method of teaching/learning which is supported and enabled by new information and communication technology and is designed to record, save, process, apply and present information and/or learning modules. The digital content can be provided interactively using multimedia, i. e. texts, graphics, audio- and videosequences, animations and interactive functionalities can be used. The learning processes can be complemented by web-based communication between learners, tutors, teachers or co-learners – e. g. via e-mail, chat and collaborative working environments.[18] Since their early years in the 80s, the opportunities to use electronic media for teaching and learning have considerably advanced. With the web 2.0 idea, the role of the user has fundamentally changed. Now, the user participates actively in what is going on in the Internet and the doors for collaboration, commenting, citation and self-articulation are wide open. In addition, the innovations in terms of capabilities and application spheres for mobile high-performance cellphones, notebooks, tablet PCs and many more are paradigmatic and unbelievably fast. The development of high-performance PC technology provides the basis for attractive software and allows completely new options (mobile learning/»paducation«). Basically, there are almost unlimited opportunities for collaboration and participation in the web world.[19] The level and relevance of individual networking (personal/professional/specialised) have multiplied in recent years, if we look at platforms such as facebook, LinkedIn, blogspot etc. The networking and utilisation of different communication

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[16] Cf. Hugger/Walber (2010), p. 9.
[17] Köhler et al. (no year of publication), p. 478.
[18] Revermann, C. (2004), p. 14.
[19] Cf. Hugger/Walber (2010), p. 9.

channels provide for each individual user/learner diverse and complex opportunities to communicate and also to learn. The following figure shows the structure (example) of an individual network.
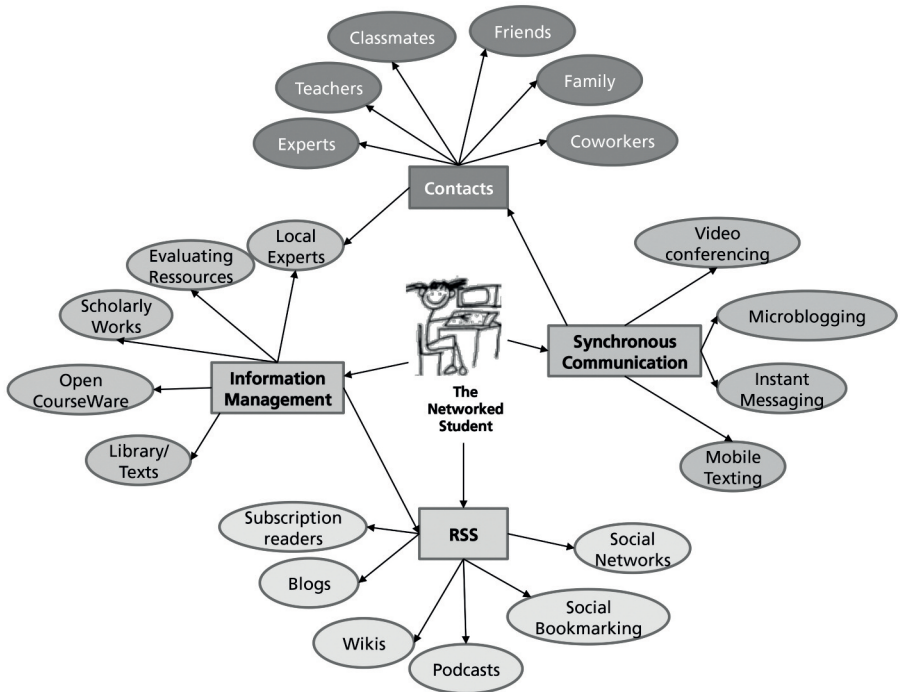


**Figure 5: The networked student (source: Drexler (2008), p. 372)**

Based on this structure, Dexter (2008) differentiates four sectors of individual networking: contacts, information management, synchronous communication[20] and RSS[21]. Accordingly, the individual networking results from a mixture of different tools and instruments, whereby not all sectors are used equally but, depending on the individual preferences, are used more or less frequently.[22]

The utilisation potentials for educational and learning modules are nearly unexhaustible but have, so far, hardly given attention in a pedagogical/didactical context. The following figure[23]

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[20] Synchronous communication is understood as simultaneous and/or »live« communication, e. g. telephone conversation, videoconference (cf. Revermann (2004), p. 14).

[21] Really Simple Syndication.

[22] Cf. Drexler (2008), p. 371 p.

[23] The figure does not claim to be exhaustive. With the advancement of technology, e. g. smartphones, further tools will emerge, e. g. apps and applications.

shows the diversity of opportunities[24] in eLearning-based learning. Kimpler (2008) differentiates according to the individualisation level (individual/collaborative) and the method of learning (formal/informal). Particular interesting is the varying level of participation to be implemented in the learning process. Basically, eLearning provides to the learner a high level of freedom and individulisation in learning. The learning is mostly self-controlled and/or self-organised. The learner plans, monitors and reflects his/her learning process independently.
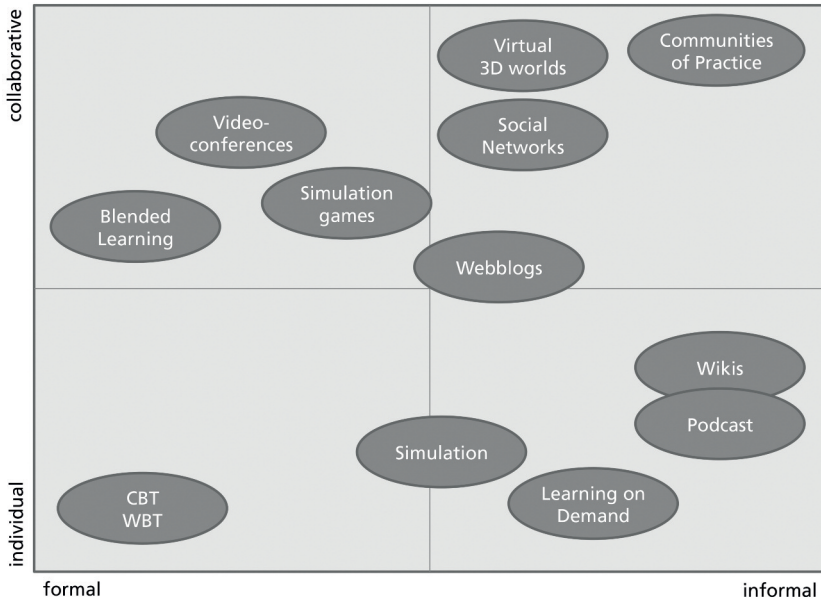


**Figure 6: Diversity of didactical methods in eLearning – learning with online media (source: Kimpeler (2008), p. 377)**

ELearning offers give learners more flexibility in terms of their personal time management. Individual timing needs can be implemented. Nevertheless, learners still appreciate the contact and exchange, i. e. the social contact with other learners. Surveys that review the success of eLearning showed that learners, despite time flexibility, still wish to keep in contact with other learners in the learning process. Blended Learning combines attendance learning, e. g. in seminars, with elements of E-learning, e. g. learning platforms. »Blended Learning has become the standard term for the use of a wide range of learning technologies and methods in the workplace. Examples include the traditional classroom, web-based tutorials, web-based simu-

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[24] In general, there is a differentiation between asynchronous and synchronous eLearning tools. However, this differentiation is not explained here.

lations, online-collaboration, online-coaching, video conferencing, phone conferencing, knowledge management systems … the list goes on«.[25] In addition, the individual networking should be mentioned which has emerged in recent years. That way, blended learning becomes a trend-setting method for the cross-border and/or boundary-less co-operation. It appears to be important to point out the role of the learner in the teaching and learning arrangements, because he/she is in the focus of his/her own actions when he/she uses the application at the end device. Therefore, the teaching and learning arrangements should use and promote self-controlled and self-organised learning.

Furthermore, the role of the teacher changes in the digital age. The integration of state-of-the-art media in teaching and learning arrangements poses pedagogical and didactical challenges to teachers. Teachers are requested to deal with the opportunities and design teaching and learning arrangements, which use elements/tools of media-based, media-integrated E-learning. Similar to the presented example of the networked learner, the networking of teachers becomes more and more important. The concept of the »networked teacher« shows the frame of action for teachers in terms of state-of-the-art technology and Internet support. Couros (2006) states different levels of networking and communication of teachers. The following figure shows the »typical« networking of teachers.
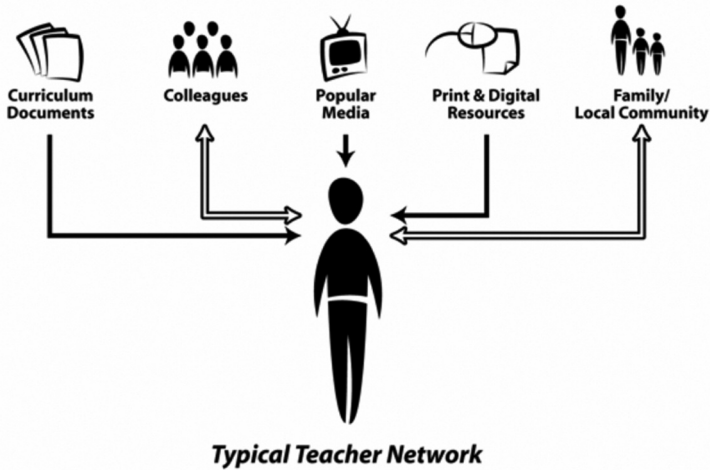


**Figure 7: Typical Teacher Network (source: Couros (2006), p. 172)**

The five channels presented here specify the frame of action that a teacher typically uses. Media and digital resources, such as PC or printer, are equally available as the personal network (friends/acquaintances/co-workers), and naturally, the own family. However, some teachers

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[25] Davis (2001).

use more communication channels and/or communicate more versatile. Couros (2006) deno-minates these teachers as Networked Teacher. The following figure shows how the »typical network« is complemented by digital media and tools. Couros (2006) attributes this »different« and/or »new behaviour« to individual interests in new media and their opportunities to use them in teaching.[26]
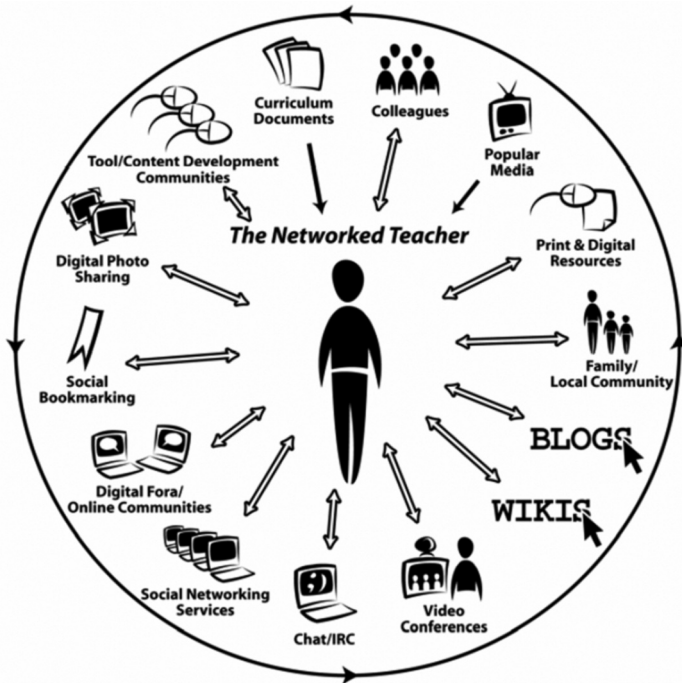


**Figure 8: The Networked Teacher (source: (Couros) 2006, p. 172)**

There is no doubt that the growing significance of new media in everyday life will also have an impact on teaching. The necessity to use more communication channels in one's own profes-sional actions has to establish also among teachers. And after all, the students as target group and »digital natives«[27] are used to the diversity of technical opportunities, and therefore, school, teaching or lessons can win more attractiveness as this technology fits into daily life and thus integrates into the individual networking structures.[28] From a didactical and methodical

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[26] Cf. Couros (2006), p. 172 p.
[27] »Digital Natives« is the generation of young people who grew up with digital media and the Internet as an integral component of their daily life (cf. Prensky (2001), p. 1).
[28] Cf. Prensky (2001), p. 1 p.

viewpoint, the integration and utilisation of these tools will fundamentally change teaching and/or lessons. The development and performance of E-learning-based and/or media-based teaching requires a high level of open mindedness from the teachers.

The following chapter explains parallel teaching in planning teaching and learning arrangement as one option of learning and teaching in a virtual environment.

### 4.3.2 Boundary-less Lessons – Parallel Teaching as Collaborative Teaching and Learning Arrangement

As already explained, new media technology allows completely new paths of lesson planning and let »melt away« physical boundaries. Parallel teaching opens the own classroom and provides a teaching and learning arrangement that contains conventional aspects of lessons supplemented with media-based elements, thus creating a complete new structure. The teaching and learning arrangement presented here uses comprehensive technical equipment in classrooms. The technical equipment comprises one smartboard[29] and high-performance videoconference equipment. The following figure presents one arrangement option.[30] Smartboard and videoscreen are arranged side by side and fulfil the known function of the blackboard and/or presentation screen. The concept of parallel teaching is to interlink several classrooms and thus perform the lessons jointly, i. e. boundary-less. The teaching and learning arrangements can either be designed in a collaborative manner or by just one teacher. However, one »guiding teacher« should ensure the support of the participants in the physical classrooms without teacher. In addition, the aspects of team teaching can be very successful in implementing such arrangements.
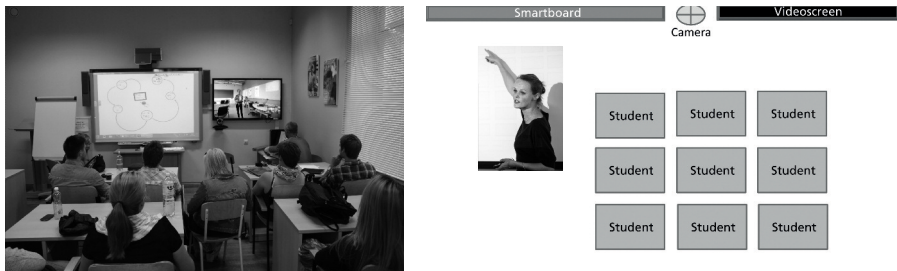


**Figure 9: Arrangement of a smartboard-video conference setting (source: own presentation; photo: Martin French)**

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[29] A smartboard is an interactive whiteboard and uses touchscreen technology. The functions of a conventional blackboard are complemented by countless addtional functionalities. The processed files/videos can be saved, further used at home or displayed at a later point of time. Further information can be referenced at *www.smarttech.com* and other sources.

[30] Naturally, more versions are conceivable, which will be, similar to the technical equipment, not further explained at this point.

In collaborative arrangements, the organisation and performance of the unit should be agreed in detail. Particularly, in terms of the didactical and methodical planning, agreements in advance are mandatory in order to avoid misunderstandings about the objective and purpose of the lessons. Furthermore, make sure to have a »plan B«, if the equipment fails and adjust the lesson planning adequately.

The didactical planning itself is a challenge if the teachers have only few experiences with such methods of teaching. In general, many known methods of teachings are suitable to use in boundary-less lessons.

Schulmeister (2009) suggests didactical methods subdivided in two categories. As a general rule, he differentiates the online phase and the phase between online sessions. The following overview shows the didactical proposals.

| Online Phase | Phase between Online Sessions |
| --- | --- |
| • Agree topics<br>• Brainstorming<br>• Set up workgroups<br>• Explain one task (e.g. case study)<br>• Select a topic<br>• Present a group work and first discussion<br>• Online exercise (e.g. group puzzle)<br>• Role play<br>• Draft a questionnaire<br>• Describe a scientific (theoretical, methodical, ethical) concept and first discourse | • Search and upload documents<br>• Structuring proposals<br>• Formation of groups<br>• Handle the case step by step<br>• Discuss the topic in forums<br>• Further commenting in forums<br>• Follow-up comments<br>• Evaluation<br>• Survey and present outcome<br>• Continue discourse through commenting, writing abstracts or reviews |

**Figure 10: Selection of didactical methods in parallel teaching (source: Schulmeister (2009), p. 7 p.)**

However, the biggest challenge is to complement the methods by media components. For example, group work/partner work can be planned and performend in a cross-border context by means of media tools. Tools such as online document processing, video telephony or figures provide interesting solutions for the entire task process.

Another important factor is the smart integration of the learner and/or the change between online phases and »classroom phases«, in order to avoid the impression of a »television« that may quickly arise and thus making the learner to »rest his/her mind« in front of the screen. Diversified learning elements help to involve and motivate the learner and keep his/her focus and interest in the lessons, e. g. through group work phases/partner work. The »input phases«, i. e. the conventional instruction phases, e. g. in form of lectures or presentations, should be kept

brief and in no cases exceed 15 minutes. The human media attention is consumed after 15 minutes almost completely and the »conveyance of information« is almost not provided.[31]
A special challenge for the teacher is the classroom management. Parallel teaching requires to managing at least two classrooms simultaneously.
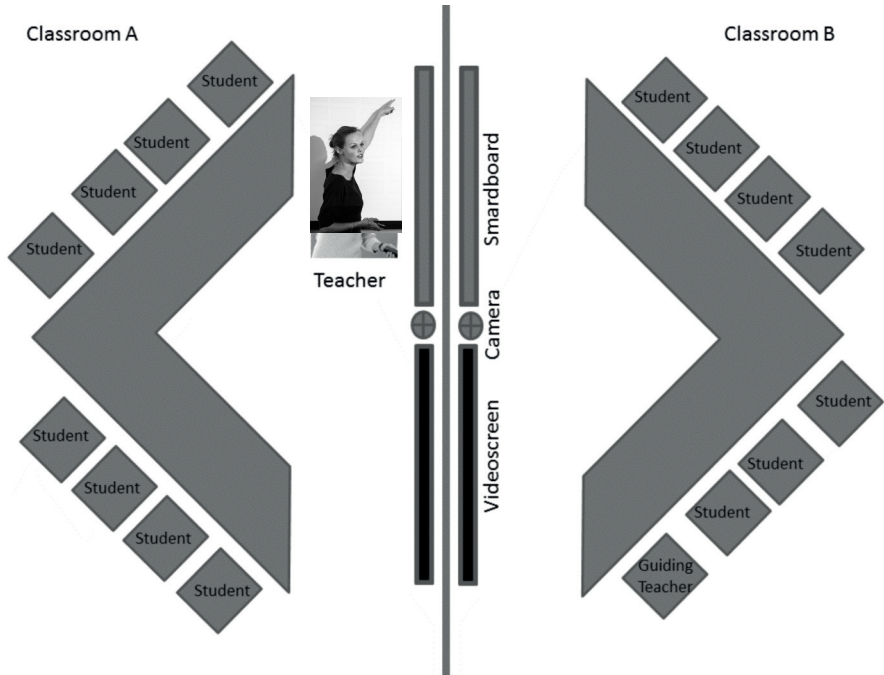


**Figure 11: Parallel teaching – classroom management (source: own presentation)**

This also concerns the learning support and tution of the learner during the learning unit. Aspects of team teaching can be used for a successful planning and implementation.
The learners on the other side of the screen should not have the feeling of »being-on-the-other-side-of-the-screen« but rather feel as direct participants of the seminar, similar to those who have a teacher in their classroom. In addition, the installation of the videoconference equiment and the video broadcast require a thoughtful action of the teacher before the screen. The teacher should avoid, for instance, to speak with the back turned to the learners. The version presented in the figure »Arrangement of a smartboard – videoconference setting« would bring the teacher frequently into this situation. An appropriate arrangement of chairs and tables can

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[31] Recommendation of a specialist from VUC – Storstrøm under the COHAB project.

improve this unfortunate situation. The above graphics shows one arrangement option.

Teaching and learning in these teaching and learning arrangements requires from all persons involved a high level of openness and the determination to be part of a creative process. Despite media focusing, it should be ensured that the learning outcome is accomplished und relevant knowledge is conveyed.

Parallel teaching is one good opportunity to open teaching and learning arrangements in a media context and enable boundary-less teaching and learning through the Internet. Known elements of conventional lessons are complemented by collaborative interregional work phases. Parallel teaching helps to provide the presented aspects of the valuable contacts among the participants.

The previously mentioned rapid technological development poses methodical and didactical challenges to teachers. Not only that the technology is advancing at a breathtaking speed, there is also only little time to test methods and types of lessons and develop them in the long term. Particularly, state-owned/publically financed educational institutions find it a costly undertaking to purchase such equipment. Nevertheless, parallel teaching provides attractive and valuable aspects of media-based learning, particularly in respect of collaborative teaching and learning arrangements.

## 4.4  Practical Application: Experiences and Results of the COHAB Project

The EU project COHAB  promotes interregional co-operation among institutions and universities in the South Baltic area and addresses barriers and backgrounds of professional mobility of the teacher profession (general and vocational education) and professions in the Nursing sector of the South Baltic Region. The project is aimed to explore chances in the labour market and employment opportunities in both professions and promote occupational mobility.

**Design**

The EU project COHAB[32] used a combination of teaching and learning arrangements with personal contact (summer school, study visits) and teaching and learning arrangements in a virtual environment (parallel teaching course, learning platform). The project itself addressed students in the professions »teaching staff« and »nurse specialists«. The development of the teaching and learning arrangements were aligned to the two occupational fields and two thematic teams were established: »Team Teacher« and »Team Nurse«. The project structure provided the scope of action for the individual elements: summer school, study visits and parallel teaching course. The following figure shows the selected didactical structure within the project. The project aim is implemented alongside two fundamental stages: stage of development and

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[32] Find more information on the objectives and contents of the COHAB project under *www.cohab.eu*.

stage of implementation. The following chapter gives some experiences and results from the COHAB project. The focus is set on the implications from the interregional collaboration and the experiences from the co-operation with partner countries.
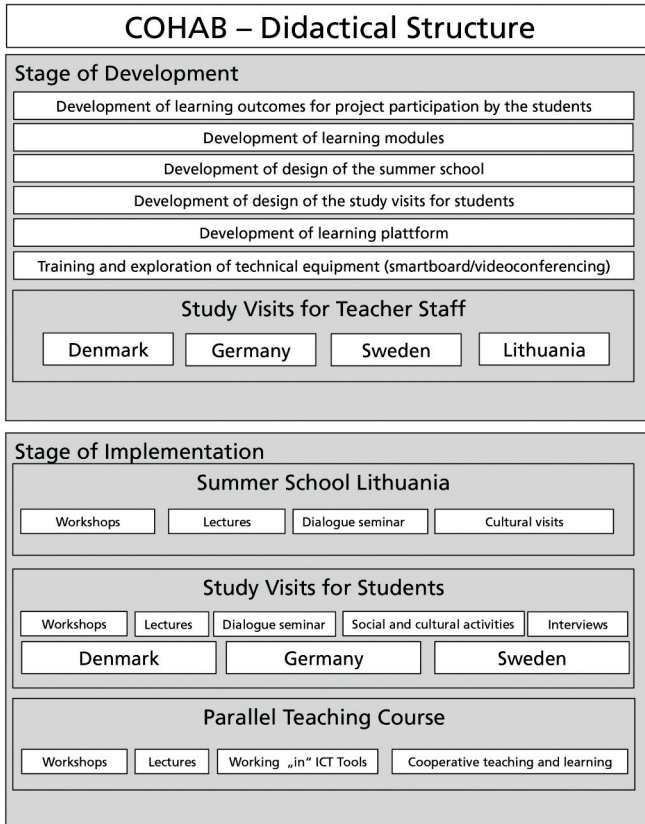
## COHAB – Didactical Structure

**Stage of Development**

- Development of learning outcomes for project participation by the students
- Development of learning modules
- Development of design of the summer school
- Development of design of the study visits for students
- Development of learning plattform
- Training and exploration of technical equipment (smartboard/videoconferencing)

### Study Visits for Teacher Staff

| Denmark | Germany | Sweden | Lithuania |

**Stage of Implementation**

### Summer School Lithuania

| Workshops | Lectures | Dialogue seminar | Cultural visits |

### Study Visits for Students

| Workshops | Lectures | Dialogue seminar | Social and cultural activities | Interviews |

| Denmark | Germany | Sweden |

### Parallel Teaching Course

| Workshops | Lectures | Working „in" ICT Tools | Cooperative teaching and learning |

**Figure 12: Didactical structure of the COHAB project (team »teacher«) (source: own presentation)**

## Stage of Development

The teaching and learning arrangements for both teams were developed independently. Following a conventional development of lessons, the first task was to identify the learning outcomes and learning modules. For this, the involved teaching staff worked together and used regular meetings and work phases between the meetings for the development. That included to assign work tasks to the individual teachers and deliver their results in due time. A learning platform served as work platform. The key objective was to develop the instruments for the stage of implementation.

Videoconferences or study visits (also called staff visits) helped to ensure regular meetings. In addition, the stage of development was intended to familiarise the teaching staff with the equipment to be used. The innovative smartboard technology and the *moodle* learning platform were, for instance, tested before they were intensively used in the interregional teaching and learning arrangements.

The study visits for teaching staff served both as team meetings and co-operation visits of schools and educational institutions in the partner countries. The stays abroad of the teaching staff were aimed at gaining new partners to organise study visits for students and to get an insight into the educational structures of the partner countries.

A key challenge for the partners was to establish teams and implement collaborative working in an interregional co-operation context. Although the South Baltic Region would imply a cultural closeness of all partners, the intentions and objectives of all involved parties had to be brought into a common context. That was an important process since particularly the »Team Teacher« had to integrate very different occupational areas in the project operations. Teaching and learning in the primary education is completely different to vocational learning and teaching. Despite the dissimilarity, the teaching staff is connected by specific professional ethics. The aim is to convey specific learning modules and thoroughly support the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, the team decided to develop the occupational profile *Baltic Sea Teacher* in the course of the co-operation. As a visionary occupational profile, the Baltic Sea Teacher is to work across borders as an interregionally operating expert in the South Baltic Region. The professionalisation of this occupational profile enhances the conventional profile of a teacher by elements of intercultural learning and also by pedagogic and didactical aspects. The integration and use of advanced media-based methods and associated equipment again take on the aspects described in the »networked teacher« approach.

The key objective in the stage of development was to establish a consortium in both teams. The planned interregional teaching and learning arrangements required collaborative working. The implications of team teaching enable collaborative working however need to be agreed and coordinated in order to plan the learning units and should be a key aspect in interregional co-operation.

The stage of development was followed by the stage of implementation where the developed modules, methods and tools were applied in the respective teaching and learning arrangements.

**Stage of Implementation**

The stage of implementation involved students from both occupational profiles and lasted seven months. The planned »COHAB teaching and learning arrangements« (see figure above) were implemented. The **summer school** as the official start initiated a two-weeks work phase that took place in Klaipėda (Lithuania). Workshops, seminars and school visits formed the basic structure of the summer school and offered to the participating students the opportunity to get in contact and gain first experiences in working together. The summer school also served to set up student teams who would collaborate in the course of the projects and to introduce the equipment and relevant online tools (learning platform, blogs etc.). During the

planning, special attention was paid to a high share of collaborative work phases in order to enable the students for interregional collaboration and gain the necessary experience. One example included interregional work groups, where students from all involved partner countries could work together in dealing with tasks and topics. These experiences also formed the basis for the future collaboration in the project.

The following **study visits** served to get an insight into the work structures of the partner countries. For this, visits at institutions and facilities associated with the occupational profiles were organised (primarily general educational/vocational schools and/or hospitals /care facilities) and meetings with the local actors were held. The aim was to give the students an insight into the local labour market structures of the respective occupational area.

A special challenge for all participants (teachers and learners) was the communication in English. The language proficiency differed widely in some parts. Therefore it was particularly important to conduct in a collaborative and team-based manner in order to enable good communication and knowledge transfer. The interregional work groups promoted the communication in English since none of the participants could communicate in his/her native language during the group phases. In addition, the work group concept ensured the exchange and understanding between the student groups of the individual countries.

What especially turned out to be valuable is that the students experienced an intensive phase of getting to know each other in the summer school right at the beginning of the »COHAB journey«. During the warm-up phase, the students learned the names and some personal background of their new fellow students in an unconstrained atmosphere during the first learning unit. That way, they communicated with each other much better and nobody became an outsider.

The training with the technical equipment and the online tools turned out to be an unexpected challenge. The technical IT equipment in some seminar buildings could not always provide the required data volumes, so that the media design of the workshops could either not or only partly implemented. At this point, the teacher staff was required to convey the contents nevertheless and thus ensure the knowledge transfer for the students.

The **parallel teaching arrangements** were planned, implemented and managed under the changing responsibility of one partner country (Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden). The arrangements were implemented in four-hour sessions and met the demand for boundary-less lessons. Theoretical input phases interchanged with group/partner work phases (interregional/local). The long duration of the sessions turned out to be very uncomfortable and tiresome in some respect. The concentration decreased in many cases rapidly both among the teachers and the students and additional breaks were necessary. The participants however found it positive to act commonly, e. g. commonly handling tasks with a smartboard. The following figure shows an example for a collaborative, interactive task handling in the project. Answers were collected at the smartboard and then transferred to all virtually connected seminar rooms by means of technology. Thus the participants were able to be actively involved in the seminar.
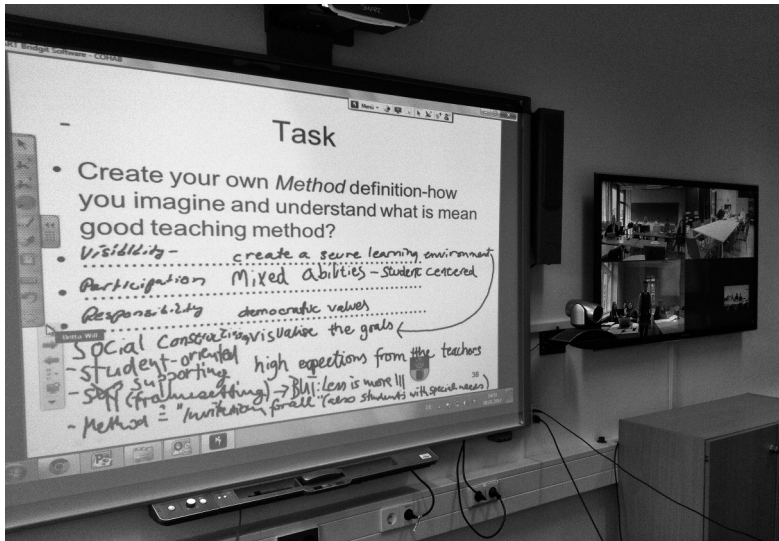
**Figure 13: Example for a common task handling at the smartboard (photo: Martin French)**

The used learning platform moodle could frequently not fulfill the expectations in terms of communication and functionality of the project. Therefore, the students decided in the course of the project to also use other platforms (google+, facebook) which can provide more flexibility and have a more user-friendly screen. Although the originally designed learning platform moodle will be further used, it has nevertheless lost its significance as primary communication tool.

## 4.5 Trends and Recommended Course of Action

Interregional cooperation offers educational institutions especially interesting added values. The educational structures vary in the respective EU countries and are differently organised and developed. Therefore, cross-border collaborations provide the chance to exchange experience and the opportunity to transfer knowledge. The collaboration is based on aspects of networking/co-operation and consequently requires suitable longterm efforts. The levels of interregional collaboration by Winks (2009) should therefore become a constituent part of any co-operation effort.

The Internet and the world of media facilitate transnational collaboration and are actually the very precondition to teach and learn in this context. The practical application of the COHAB project described in this essay exemplifies how interregional co-operation and transnational learning can be implemented. In the context of a model project, interregional teaching and

learning arrangements were planned and tested with students. The previous chapter detailed the experiences made under the collaboration project. Consequently, the question arises what recommended course of action can be derived and what trends can be identified.

**Arrangement Options for Interregional Teaching and Learning**

The COHAB project used a combination of teaching and learning arrangements with personal contact and in a virtual environment. This is indeed an aspirational design for future concepts because the needs of the learners (social structures in learning) are considered while testing innovative elements of media-based learning. The summer school as a two-weeks common learning phase has, apart from the expert competences, established primarily personal ties and thus promoted the personal and social competences in the intercultural context of teaching and learning, which proved to be a good start into the phases of learning in a virtual environment. The participants got to know each other intensively over two weeks and could gain first experiences in interregional collaboration. Similar projects should also implement teaching and learning arrangements as a combination of personal contact and virtual environment.

**Collaborative Working – Team Teaching**

The available didactical theory regarding team teaching originates from the 1980s and has hardly advanced since then. Project concepts such as COHAB, which promote interregional learning, can profit from this approach because the developed steps can be generally applied in the development of virtually-based team teaching concepts. Interregional co-operation and the application of suitable team teaching arrangements allow a special exchange of experience of the teacher staff involved and give the jointly planned and implemented teaching and learning arrangements an open and »transnational« character. However, the planning and implementation of team teaching arrangements require didactical agreements (organisational/content-related/methodical) and a fundamental professional collaboration. The integration and utilisation of media elements allow arrangements such as parallel teaching. The planning of such arrangements and the integration of media elements and/or the use of complex equipment require from the teaching staff that they constantly improve their skills and develop the necessary openness towards such challenges.

Consequently, it appears to be sensible to further advance and implement new didactical approaches and methods in E-learning/blended learning in order to implement virtual lessons and suitable team teaching arrangements in an interregional collaboration context. The development and testing of such didactical approaches and methods encourages further model projects such as the COHAB project.

**Media Use/Equipment**

Under a longterm perspective, the rapid technological development makes it difficult to test and develop sustainable models and approaches in teaching with respective tools and suitable equipment etc. As the COHAB example showed, the designed learning platform was unexpectedly caught up by new technical developments and became partly obsolete, because

better and more userfriendly technical alternatives were launched within the three-year term of the project. This is in fact a very serious challenge for every long-term didactical development. Consequently, future projects should be designed more open and flexible and the limitation to explicit equipment and media elements should be reconsidered. Sustainable teaching and learning arrangements are obviously such approaches that use the media as learning and teaching elements but give leeway in decision making when it comes to planning and implementation.

Projects such as COHAB provide good opportunities for transnational collaboration and networking. They enable educational institutions to develop, test and further advance interregional teaching and learning. The development of a trustful collaborative working and the longterm development of educational networks require committed, interested and technologically skilled players. The added values to be generated should eventually be integrated in the everyday routine of schools and other educational facilities so that interregional lessons become a natural element in an ideal scenario of the near future. The training and further qualification of school teacher staff in terms of media applications is mandatory in this context. The concept of the »networked teacher« will become crucial for teachers of the future.

The rapid technological development provides challenges for the advancement of interregional teaching and learning arrangements, which makes it mandatory to test stable, sustainable concepts and further model projects, primarily also to professionalise teaching and educational staff.

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# Interregional Teaching and Learning in the Baltic Sea Region

## On the Road to a European Education Area?!

This book provides an account of the current system of interregional teaching and learning in the Baltic and aims to answer the questions of whether and how a Baltic or, in time, a European Education Area can be constructed. It begins with an overview of the different educational systems in the Baltic countries, before going on to analyse current teacher training systems in the region. There follows an explanation of the ways in which cooperation and networks should be organised and structured in order to make it possible for educational systems to develop and educators to receive professional training across national and regional boundaries. It continues with a closer analysis of the teaching and learning process, looking closely at the interregional experience of the pilot project COHAB (Co-ordination and Integration of Higher Education and the Labour Market around the South Baltic Sea), which involves both personal contact and virtual environments.

The publication contains practical guidance, provides insights gained from project experience, and gives specific recommendations concerning the conditions and processes of interregional teaching and learning in the Baltic. The aim is thus to encourage the further growth of internationalisation of the educational systems, policies and structures in the region and to inspire initiatives, in particular to develop, apply for and implement pilot and innovative projects with the help of the numerous Baltic funding programmes. The publication should finally and most importantly serve to illustrate to the many committed teachers in the Baltic the value of cooperating with colleagues from other regions in the daily teaching and learning process, in keeping with the maxim: Learn globally, teach locally!

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