

1 December 2014**Teachers for schools that embrace diversity****Meeting of KMK and HRK on inclusion competences in teacher education**

What competences do teachers need to teach a group of young people with different learning needs? This was the question under discussion at a joint meeting of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) in Berlin on Monday, 1 December 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare a joint recommendation from both organisations that crystallises their shared objectives for the enhancement of teacher education.

In all areas of education there is a mandate to bring together people with different experiences and abilities. Therefore, higher education institutions want to prepare teachers-to-be for making maximum use of the potential of inclusive education.

"Inclusion and teacher training has been a topic of major concern to the KMK during 2014, which is why we revised the standards for teacher education in Germany with respect to inclusion," said KMK president and education minister for North Rhine-Westphalia Sylvia Löhrmann prior to the meeting. The aim, she explained, is to take a constructive and heedful approach to differences between children and young people. She describes the revision of the teacher education standards as the foundation for further professionalisation in relation to inclusion. "Our task now is to discuss how this can be integrated in teacher training curricula," she added.

"The design of courses and the profiles of the universities are very different. So each institution needs to decide how to provide teachers-in-training with the necessary competences for professional life – and that's what we want to develop guidelines for at today's meeting," said Professor Dr Holger Burckhart, the HRK's Vice-President for Teaching, Learning, Teacher Training and Lifelong Learning.

"The implementation of the policy guidelines in schools and universities will require a joint effort," stressed Sylvia Löhrmann. In the future, schools will need teachers with the training to deal positively with diversity. The same applies to higher education, as Holger Burckhart underlined: "To research and teach on inclusion-specific didactic and social issues, you need the right toolkit. That doesn't just mean money to fund appointments. Above all it means we need people with the knowledge and competences to fill these posts. Funding early career researchers in the area of inclusion is absolutely crucial."