



Germany

Ute Erdsiek-Rave
**Minister for Education and Women's Affairs
of the Land of Schleswig-Holstein**



Born in 1947 in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, married, 1 child. 1972-1974 Teacher, 1974-1977 Stay abroad, Goethe Institut in Stockholm, 1977-1987 Teacher in Schleswig-Holstein. Since 1969 member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), 1983-1986 Member of the Communal Parliament of Rendsburg-Eckernförde in Schleswig-Holstein. Since October 1987 Member of the State Parliament (Landtag) of Schleswig Holstein, 1992-1996 Chair of the State-Parliament of Schleswig--Holstein, 1996-1998 Chair of the parliamentary group of Social Democrats in the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein, 1998-2005 Minister of Education, Science, Research and Cultural Affairs and since 04/2005 Minister of Education and Women's Issues of Schleswig Holstein and Deputy Minister-President of the Government of Schleswig--Holstein. 2006 President of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany. 1999-2005 and since Jan 2007 Member of the Council of Ministers of Education of the European Union (Representative of the German Federal Council- Bundesrat).

Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future

I most welcome the topic of the 48th ICE. Successful education policies tackle risks of exclusion from the outset and promote equal learning opportunities as early as possible. For this reason, it is the declared objective of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education of all 16 German states - the Länder - to break the link between educational opportunities and socio-economic background, which is particularly pronounced in Germany. As for the education of children and young people with disabilities this is increasingly regarded as a common task for all schools.

Participation in education and equal opportunities can best be realised if children are allowed to develop their individual potential as early as possible. For this reason, the development of greater educational opportunities for young children is of paramount significance in Germany. Children who come from a disadvantaged socio-economic background as well as children from immigrant families benefit disproportionately from high quality early childhood education. By strengthening their language skills prior to school enrolment, we want to help all children to have a successful start at school.

In Germany some 15.1 million people have a migration history. In 2007 we adopted a National Integration Plan that includes commitments by the various stakeholders – namely the Federal Government, the Länder, municipalities, NGOs and migrant associations. Educational success is a crucial prerequisite for successful integration. Competence in the German language is key here. Support measures are, therefore, directed particularly at furthering language skills. In pre-service and in-service teacher training the Länder have now introduced training modules to reinforce teachers' diagnostic and methodological skills, intercultural learning and "German as a second language"

For children and young people with disabilities, all German Länder have now issued regulations enabling them to be integrated into lessons in mainstream schools. Given the federal structure of Germany, the approaches made towards

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this particular goal vary considerably. For the country as a whole, around 15% of the disabled students are integrated in mainstream schools although the level of integration varies from less than 10 to over 40 per cent depending on the individual Land.

In many Landers, as in my own Land of Schleswig-Holstein, there is a general trend to create stronger linkages between various types of schools and to increase permeability in Germany's tiered school system. In many places the idea of learning together in heterogeneous groups has been superseding the concept of separate learning in homogeneous groups.

I am convinced that inclusive education will have a positive impact on the development of all students, on their performance and their social conduct. The 48th ICE provides an important opportunity to further the debate on inclusive education and to learn from one another by exchanging opinions and sharing experiences.