Migration and Schools in Bremen
Challenges and Opportunities

Ausgabe 2019

www.gew-hb.de
Imprint

Publisher
Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW) Bremen
Bahnhofsplatz 22-28, 28195 Bremen
Tel.: (0421) 33 764 0, Fax: (0421) 33 764 30
info@gew-hb.de, www.gew-bremen.de

Editorial Project Team
Katharina Lenuck, Barbara Schüll, Nick Strauss (GEW Bremen).
Many thanks to the colleagues who have assisted us in producing this brochure.

Photo Material
GEW Bremen

Layout
Matthias Klump (m.punkt media, Bremen)

The research for this brochure has been conducted with due care and professionalism, however the publisher cannot assume any liability for the accuracy of the information provided.

Redaktionsschluss: Dezember 2019
Migration and Schools in Bremen: Challenges and Opportunities

A brochure of the GEW Landesverband Bremen
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1 Introduction

Barbara Schüll, Joint State Chair of the GEW Bremen

December 2019

Emigration and immigration aren’t new problems of the 21st Century. In the past, poverty, war, hunger and violence have all pushed people to go on journeys looking for security and a better future, where the paths were unclear.

For some decades the GEW in Bremen has had a working group (AGIL - Arbeitsgruppe Interkulturelles Lernen - intercultural learning) which gave colleagues the space for swapping experiences and developing ways of supporting one another. The negative aspects of Bremen’s education system were looked into and demands for change formulated.

In 2016, the working group “Gute Bildung für Geflüchtete” (‘good education for refugees’1) was founded for union members whose focus at work was working with refugees and migrants. The working group understood itself as being on the one hand a

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1Translator’s Note: ... although the official name in English: “Teachers Organising For Quality Education Provision for Refugees” ... never actually matched the German name.
place where members could support one another and exchange information about their work but also on the other hand a place for organising conferences and seminars, speeches and actions.

The founding of the working group was encouraged by the Brussels based Education International (EI) call for “Teachers (to) Mobilise for the Rights of Refugees”. The EI encouraged and supported unions across Europe over the next three and half years to work on the issue, including meetings of education trade unionists, to exchange what was happening on a national level in terms of migration across Europe and the actions that unions could take. This brochure shows the Bremen activities.

At a national level within Germany, the GEW Bremen participates in the union's federal working group BAMA (Committee for Migration. Diversity and Anti-Discrimination - prior to 2013 Committee for Multicultural Affairs). Union activists meet three to four times a year to discuss national and international questions, as well as support and solidarity actions.

For members of the Education Union, the GEW, it's important to discuss current issues in education and to campaign for good learning and good working conditions.

Education International's European wide project “Teachers Mobilise for the Rights of Refugees” came to an end in December 2019. The friendships and connections that developed will mean that the participants will keep on networking on important developments.

Migration is a theme in our globalised world that isn’t going to go away. We must stand up for the right of students to get a good education and the right to be able to develop their own futures.
The state election in Bremen in May 2019 resulted in the first 'Red Green Red' Government in a west German state.

Parties of the far right achieved less than 10% in total (down 0.2% to a combined 8.5%), with increases in support for the Greens (up 2.3% to 17.4%) and, to a lesser extent, for the Left Party (up 1.8% to 11.3%). ... this of course needs to viewed against the losses for the Social Democrats (27.9% down 7.9%). Turnout increased significantly - from 50% to 64%.

The resulting government is largely seen within the GEW in Bremen as the best possible result under the existing conditions. An examination of the coalition agreement gives cause, at least on paper, for hope. Education is the main theme - coming before climate policy. Migration has a big role within it:

“A diverse society also lives from cultural differences. Over the past years, migration has enriched schools in many ways. The many successful educational autobiographies of migrants in Bremen and Bremerhaven show the centrality of education institutions in successful integration.” (coalition agreement - lines 537 - 540 - translation by the GEW)
Continuing support for an expanded Heritage Language tuition was promised (lines 561 to 564) as well as the commitment that “support for multilingualism enriches our multi faceted society.”

Simultaneously it was noted that “Immigration challenges the education system ... Increasing numbers of students at all age levels ... challenge the (admissions and integration) capacity of schools and classes. Language is the key for successful integration. ...[At schools] the partial integration model should be strengthened and where possible, shortened in favour of a full integration into mainstream classes. We reject any division through separate education. ... The financing of the initial linguistic integration [translators note - preparatory courses either integrated or partially integrated] must be secured on an ongoing basis. The concept for language support after these initial intensive measures needs to be more clearly developed. ...” (translation by the GEW - coalition agreement - lines 540 - 551)

The union finds it difficult to quarrel with the sentiment and most of the concrete proposals. As the state branch spokesperson commented: There is:

“A whiff of fighting poverty and democratisation, of sustainability and social justice - and not just in the part on education.” However “... There are no empty promises in the education section of the agreement. 'Given the financial limitations, we will only be able to meet these aims on a step by step basis.' The realism - as early as in line 96 (from almost 6,000) means no one is jumping up and down.”

As quoted from the coalition agreement - the financing of the preparatory course is unclear - up til the end of 2019 they were funded above and beyond the planned budget - the finance minister used the regulations for emergency spending (for natural catastrophes etc.) above the required maximum deficit rules for the period 2016 - 2019. The refugee 'emergency' of 2015 is clearly over - the day to day grind caused by underfunding and the constitutional ban on deficit funding continues.

In addition, funding for students for the time after the preparatory course isn't even mentioned - instead the lack of a concept is criticised - but staffing for a good concept doesn't come cheap!

The reality of the structural underfunding of the Bremen education system is clear when compared to those of Hamburg and Berlin (the two other comparable German states) - extremely low. In 2016 in Hamburg and Berlin it was more than 9,000 € per student... in Bremen only 6,700 € which is even below the national average of 7,100 €.

The plan of the previous government was to achieve parity with Berlin and Hamburg by 2035.

The consequences of this structural underfunding combined with 'Schuldenbremse' - the constitutional ban on deficit financing at state and national level after 2020 - is that expansion of the education system is only 'possible' using 'ALMO' (Arm’s Length Management Organisations) style financing through housing associations as planned in Bremen, or full PPP models as now agreed in Bremerhaven.

2 Latest figures in 2019 refer to 2016 ... 2017 figures will be out in early December
The Bremerhaven PPP envisages payment of over 8 million Euros per year for the next 30 years for 3 school buildings costing around 120 million. What little money there could be for programmes such as post preparatory course language support ... as well as many other things ... is now booked for the next generation as a transfer to a bank in Luxembourg or the Virgin Islands.

If the development of the coalition agreement had taken a long time - some four months after the election were needed before the new government could take up work - the double year budget deliberations for 2020 and 2021 are unlikely to be completed before the summer or autumn of 2020.

Late summer in 2019 saw a new school year beginning. Although there had been a significant reduction in new arrivals of refugees and asylum seekers, and a nationally engineered stop to all but a trickle of family reunions, the number of preparatory courses remained relatively high. In part this is due to other forms of migration remaining high but also due to a reduction in numbers per course - for the colleagues who had spent the last few years working at maximum capacity - and in some cases had carried class sizes increases of 25% - this was a welcome reduction of workload.

In this context the praxis-based conference on the first of October gave us a chance to gather our forces in a context where there wasn't an impending “must do.” A clear success of the conference was in the bringing together of colleagues from the working group in organising the day. A further clear success of the day was the engagement with colleagues who worked as 'mainstream' classroom or special needs teachers - which showed how the challenges are shifting out of the preparatory courses and into the rest of the education system - no wonder when more than 10% of students in Bremen have arrived over the past 5 years.

Education staff in the state of Bremen - particularly those in the preparatory courses - have achieved much providing education for (in international comparison with similar countries) a large number of refugee and
migrant children with comparatively few resources. This brochure gives an insight into the issues and challenges which informed this process and those that remain.

As the new government’s coalition agreement said on line 2315 - “We Are All Bremen” - it’s nowhere more than in our schools and nurseries that this is the case - and it’s no one more than Bremen’s education workers whose achievement it is!

“We Are All Bremen”
3 Learning German on the Road to University

Experiences of an academic secondary school in Germany

Dita Vogel and Marguerite Lukes

This is a reprint of the blog entry by Dita Vogel and Marguerite Lukes, written after a research visit to the school. Further reports (mostly in German) can be found under https://tramis.de/blog/

The director of the school ushers Amir into his office and raises concerns about his poor academic performance. Amir will have to switch into high gear if he is serious about completing high school. Later Amir runs into a friend who tells him about academic support that the school offers. Amir is grateful for the advice.

The scene is from a role play developed by four 10th grade students at the Alexander von Humboldt Gymnasium (AvH)- an academic secondary
school in Bremen, Germany. The story of 15 year old Amir from Afghanistan who has lived for the past year in a youth shelter in Germany and is striving to complete secondary school is based on one of six case studies being explored at different schools as part of the TraMiS Project. Although Amir is a fictional boy, there are many immigrant youth in similar situations.

The group of students who developed this role play also includes young people who only recently arrived in Germany. It is unusual to encounter recently arrived immigrant youth in upper secondary education in Germany. It is even more unusual that they are attending a Gymnasium - a school that aims solely at preparing students for university.

The Bremen school system - one of 16 systems in the Federal Republic of Germany

Germany has a system of graded school leaving certificates, with the highest credentials (Abitur) enabling graduates to go to university. Other types of school leaving certificates are required for access to occupational training courses. To make the situation even more complicated, these school leaving certificates are implemented differently in the 16 German states. However, all states have an Intermediate School leaving certificate usually after grade 10 (called MSA or Realschulabschluss) and at least one basic school leaving certificate (usually after grade 9 or 10 called Hauptschulabschluss or Berufsbildungsreife). The only certificate that provides direct access to university is the Abitur.

In Bremen, secondary education takes place in two school types: The Gymnasium is attended from grade 5 to 12 and is directed at achieving the Abitur. The Oberschule is a track going from grade 5 to 10 or 13, leading to all types of school leaving certificate. In general, the majority of students at Oberschule are not on a track for the Abitur.

Immigrant adolescents and young adults arriving in Bremen without German language proficiency are usually enrolled in German language clas-
ses in vocational school tracks leading at best to vocational training courses. 857 newcomer students were enrolled in German as a Second Language (GSL) classes in vocational school tracks, but only 98 attended GSL-classes in upper secondary education on the road to Abitur. Of those 98, 22 students were enrolled at AvH-Gymnasium. These numbers reveal that of every ten new immigrant students, only one is put on the path to university, although among them many were aiming at university access in schools in in their home countries. AvH is the only Gymnasium in the city that offers GSL-classes for new immigrant youth arriving at age 15 and older.

This academic high school is one of the twelve schools participating in the TraMiS Project. During a school visit in June 2019, we were able to talk with parents, students, and teachers about their experiences and use case studies to discuss transnational mobility in schools. We are Dita Vogel from University of Bremen und Marguerite Lukes from Internationals Network for Public Schools in New York. Because it is rare in Germany to find academic secondary schools that enrol newly arrived immigrant youth with emergent German proficiency to complete the German Abitur, this blog entry will focus on AvH’s 20 years of experience supporting these students.

At AvH Gymnasium, the upper secondary level is normally divided into an introductory year in the 10th grade and two qualification years in 11th and 12th grade. Newly immigrated youth (age 15 and older) are required to complete two years of GSL-training, including a growing portion of linguistically responsive subject matter instruction, before before entering the upper secondary level.

» In the first year students receive primarily GSL-instruction and instruction in three subjects: Politics, English and Physical Education (Vorkurs I).

» In the second year, students attend classes in a wide array of content areas to prepare them to pass the Intermediate School Leaving Certificate (MSA) exam so that they can enter upper secondary
level. This year subjects include Politics, English, Math, History, Biology, Drama/Acting, and Physical Education. In contrast to students with German school careers, they have no elective subjects so that schedules are designed to leave time for 12 instructional hours in German as a Second Language (Vorkurs II).

After passing the exam, students are promoted to the introductory level (Eingangsphase) of the upper secondary track, and then have a very good chance of completing their Abitur, according to the school’s director. For example, of 11 new immigrant youth who were promoted to the upper secondary level in 2015 at AvH, 10 received a school leaving certificate that gives access to university. The newly immigrated youth are on average somewhat older than their peers who have been raised in Germany when passing the exams.

Teacher qualifications and motivation are key ingredients for the success of this model, according to the school’s director. AvH employs only fully certified teachers in its GSL classes. Highly motivated teachers were identified for the GSL courses who also serve as important mentors and who point persons for the transition to the upper secondary track.

In addition, from the very start students also take content area classes taught by qualified subject matter teachers who teach them disciplinary knowledge, while simultaneously developing their academic language proficiency in German. The subject matter teachers voluntarily choose to teach in the GSL courses. “They so yearn for the students to succeed,” the school director told us. When hiring teachers, the school pays special attention to qualifications in instruction in GSL or German as a Foreign Language and linguistically responsive subject area teaching. About one-third of faculty at AvH teach subjects in GSL-classes and as a result are not surprised when a well-reasoned argument is presented in somewhat halting German.

A significant challenge faced by schools including AvH is foreign language instruction and graduation requirements. This challenge stands out to us because author Marguerite Lukes works with high schools in the USA,
where English proficient students can conceivably complete their High School diploma without learning a foreign language. In Germany, in contrast, all students are required to demonstrate proficiency in English, and those who take Abitur have to demonstrate proficiency in an additional language.

In theory, these requirements should not present a challenge for students in GSL classes. In a round of introductions with students from such a class, 16 students shared their name and the languages they spoke. Among them was not a single student who spoke fewer than two languages other than German. In practice, many of them will be required to learn at least one additional language because proof of their existing language proficiency is not sufficiently facilitated by existing regulations.

If any of these students happen to be French speakers, then they could take regular French foreign language classes with German-raised students at AvH and in that way demonstrate their language proficiency. For a few other languages, such as Spanish, it is also possible to take a foreign language class at another school in the afternoon after regular classes.

Otherwise, in principle, these students are able to demonstrate proficiency in the home language through a written test, something that should be straightforward if they attended school regularly in their home country prior to emigrating. Yet Bremen offers these language proficiency test options in very few languages, and it is not possible to sit for a language proficiency test in another German state. One of the students who developed the Amir role play shared that he had to learn Spanish as a “second foreign” language (after German and English) because Vietnamese testing options were not available in Bremen and no alternative was open to him.

This leads us to one of the considerations we would like to share after the visit to AvH. First is the indication that too few newly immigrated youth are directed toward an educational pathway that leads to a university. It is highly probable that the intellectual potential of many immigrant youth is squandered only because they were forced to migrate during a critical
time in their youth. The experience at AvH demonstrates that a great deal can be achieved with pedagogical competence, engagement and subject area teaching from the very first day of school.

In addition, it may be time to reconsider the language proficiency requirements for the Abitur diploma. Existing requirements for “first” and “second” foreign language proficiency are designed with the assumption that students’ first language of instruction throughout their life has been German. It seems absurd to ignore students’ home language proficiency and to require them instead to develop proficiency in a fourth language. The upper secondary school credential Abitur would gain rather than lose in quality by articulating language requirements in a general format, for example: to complete the Abitur successfully, students must be able to demonstrate proficiency in three languages, including German with the level of C1 using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Such a formulation corresponds to the European Union recommendations that each person should develop proficiency in two languages in addition to their home language.

Not only newly arrived immigrant youth, but also a significant portion of the next generation who speak a language other than German at home could benefit from this perspective. Proficiency in German (C2), English (B2) and Latin or French (A2) are generally accepted for Abitur, and it should be equally possible to reach Abitur with proficiency in German (C1), English (B2) and Arabic or Vietnamese (C2). The legal right to complete a language proficiency exam in a known language of the students’ choice would be a first step in the right direction.
How much language education do newly arrived migrant students need?

Prof. Dr. Nicole Marx

The acquisition of German by immigrant schoolchildren became a focal point of educational politics and educational practice over 40 years ago in Germany, when increased numbers of foreign workers were wooed by the German government - and brought their families with them. Since then, various concepts for the social and language integration of these pupils have been introduced. Despite its long history of educating immigrant students, the educational system was ill-prepared when, in 2015, increased numbers of young refugees crossed the border. As a result, new and divergent models for the education of young immigrants were created nationwide, most lacking guidelines regarding language and subject
content. Unfortunately, very little is actually known about language pro-
gression and even proficiency levels needed to be integrated successfully
into mainstream. In the following, I will consider relevant questions for
this context - and some possible answers. Further information about the
situation in Bremen can be found in Gill, Marx, Reichert, & Rick, 2019, as
well as Rick & Gill, 2015.

How are new immigrants being integrated into the school system?

The schooling of new immigrants in the first months and years after their
arrival differs from one federal state to another. Regardless of model
enacted, the primary goal is to allow new immigrants to transition suc-
cessfully into mainstream education and, consequently, to have the same
educational chances as their mainstream peers.

In Bremen, newly immigrated students are taught in preparatory classes
for approximately 20 lessons weekly for up to one year (secondary
school) or half a year (primary school). Depending on the school, they are
also partially integrated in mainstream and attend subjects like English,
Music, Physical Education, or Art. In the academic year 2018/2019, for
example, there were more than 2,000 such pupils in about 200 prepara-
tory courses in the city of Bremen alone.

What makes the schooling of newly immigrated students so difficult?

Central to the development of curricular models is knowledge about the
time needed to achieve required language competence to succeed in
school. Unfortunately, the schooling of new immigrants is still fraught
with many uncertainties and difficulties. Three main reasons account for
this situation:

First, a highly diverse target group: New immigrants have heterogeneous
educational experiences. Some have had uninterrupted schooling, others
have little or interrupted formal education, any may have spent a number
of years outside of the school system. Since school success depends on
this and many other factors such as age at arrival, school education in
their first language, time spent in a preparatory course, participation in lessons given in their first language, the experience of migration, consequences of educational history may be unpredictable. The resulting heterogeneity makes it difficult to predict the learning needs of these pupils.

Second, inconsistent schooling in preparatory courses: Within Bremen alone, major differences in preparatory course education are to be found. This even applies to length of stay in preparatory courses. In a study we conducted in 2016 in 15 secondary schools in Bremen and Hamburg, we found that only 54% of all new immigrants actually completed the recommended preparatory course year (Marx/Gill, submitted). Further, administrative difficulties can make lesson planning almost impossible. Even more of a problem: courses are often taught by untrained teachers working without a school curriculum, explicit learning objectives or even appropriate classroom materials. Small wonder this is often considered an overload by teachers.¹

Third, dearth of information on students’ learning trajectories: Research on new immigrants in Germany is sparse. Little is known about their further language and subject learning. One ballpark figure for the success of immigrants at school might be school finishing rates - which are less than satisfactory. In Bremen, for example, 36% of migrant adolescents left school last year without any school-leaving qualifications at all²; one

¹ Even though Bremen recommends language targets at the completion of preparatory courses (GeR level A2 for speaking and writing, B1 level for reading and listening), 75-80% of students at secondary level seem to transfer into mainstream education without attestation of this level. As well, most pupils who attempt DSD-I assessment exam do not pass at the required level (Source: independent calculation, based on personal communication, Statistics Department, Senator for Children and Education).

third only achieved a middle-school leaving certificate (Mittlerer Schulabschluss), only 2% achieved a level necessary for university study (Abitur) (in contrast to 40% of non-migrant students). This data alone shows that new immigrants are not experiencing equivalent education opportunities.

**What can we do to improve migrant students’ education?**

The difficulties presented above make it even more important than usual for teachers to think about three fundamental questions: what kind of language support should students receive in what way and for how long?

What? If former preparatory course students are expected to be able to “keep up” in regular lessons, then they need proper preparation. Paramount to school success are reading and writing skills; beginning in third grade, subject matter is taught increasingly through written texts, and grading often reflects written performance. This needs to be addressed in preparatory courses. Everyday communication skills, on the other hand, are not reflected as strongly in coursework. Fortunately, they can be trained continuously outside of the classroom (through sports, in the schoolyard or just interaction with the outside environment). As well, since students are partly integrated in school, they can acquire language skills in subjects like Art or Music. As a result, topics, content, and language forms which do not arise naturally in everyday life can be trained in preparatory classes.

How? The continual movement of students and the diversity of preparatory courses make curricular progression more difficult. One possibility involves including concepts such as scaffolding and spiral curriculums. Both of these principles are integrated into a curriculum proposal for secondary level that we submitted to the Senatorial Authority for Children and Education in January 2018 (Marx, Gill, Reichert, & Rick, 2018). The spiral progression follows a two-week rhythm through five topics relating to specialised subjects, whereby the same topic can be worked on at three levels at the same time. This concept was passed on to several
schools in 2019 by the school authorities and is presently being tested in Bremen.

How long? This question is probably the trickiest, since there is next to no data available in Germany. However, long-term, large-scale studies from English-speaking countries (for example Collier & Thomas, 2017) do provide evidence that different time frames are necessary to reach the grade-level norms of non-migrant pupils. Pupils who are continuously receiving extra support in the new language need 4-7 years, but 7-10 years (or more!) if they are transferred into mainstream education after only one year. By contrast, if students are educated in their family language for at least 40% of their lessons, they catch up to their mainstream peers in only about four years. Only one year of preparatory class is not at all sufficient to help new immigrants keep up with their fellow students. This data is also supported by our research in Bremen and Hamburg: Even students who spent up to six years in regular education have no developed grade-level reading skills (Marx/Gill, submitted).

**Some conclusions on teaching preparatory courses**

Three conclusions for preparatory courses can be drawn based on the reflections above:

1. Written texts need more attention in preparatory courses in order to facilitate the transfer into mainstream education.

2. A flexible pedagogical approach is recommended for very heterogeneous situations. For this, spiral curricula and scaffolding can be of great support.

3. Long-term planning of education for new immigrants is crucial. Comprehensive language support in the new language should be enacted over several years; comprehensive learning opportunities in the family language supported.

With the schooling of newly arrived immigrants, the German school system has been faced with an impressive task which cannot be mastered
without the active commitment of highly motivated preparatory course teachers, mainstream class teachers and school administrations. After the first shock concerning the challenges which immigration brought to the German education system, it is now time to reflect how the preparatory course system can be developed further. We are still far from our goal of reaching equal education opportunities for these students.

Bibliographical references


“I fight alone all the time - for myself and for my pupils”

A preparatory course teacher reports from her day to day working life

The interview was conducted in December 2018 in the course of the activities of the project “Gute Bildung für Geflüchtete” (“Teachers Organising for Quality Education for Refugees”). We believe that this report is an example for the experience of many colleagues in preparatory courses. We thank Hanna Müller (name changed), who wants to remain anonymous, for her frank report about the working conditions in preparatory courses. Hanna Müller works in a literacy class at a secondary school in Bremen.
GEW Bremen: Let us begin with an introductory question - Where are you currently working?

Hanna Müller*: I have been working in a preparatory course at Harburg Secondary School (name changed) for seven years. My work has changed significantly since 2014. The course was not even full at the beginning but after a while more and more pupils with different needs came. I now work in a basic literacy course. This is the only preparatory course at my school. The basic literacy course was established in the district after recognising that illiterate students need a different kind of support. The children attend my preparatory course for four lessons and then join regular classes. I also do language support at school.

The pupils in my preparatory course are still very heterogeneous. I teach some children who have already acquired a language level of A2. Others have just begun to learn reading and writing. The children in my class are between 10 and 15 years old which is, of course, a difficult age.

The different levels in my class have different reasons: for one thing, some pupils from my previous preparatory course stayed on. I also took a pupil in who was already in a regular class but still had the right to participate in a preparatory course. It would certainly have been unpleasant for the child to have to go to another school.

GEW Bremen: What do you teach in your preparatory course?

I mainly teach German and Literacy of course. Meanwhile, I also teach Maths twice a week. Simply so that my pupils don't forget it or for some, to acquire basic skills first of all. That's why I'm also a Maths teacher now. But it's also fun for me and my pupils.
GEW Bremen: Teachers in regular classes probably can't imagine what daily work in a preparatory course is like. Would you like to tell us about it?

I don't know if I really have a daily routine. Often I have to face new challenges. I always go to school with an uncertainty about what the day will be like. Generally nothing is predictable and everything is always chaotic. Of course I realise this when I go to work in the morning and of course it does affect me.

I am always the only teacher in the room and have to pay attention to the needs of very different pupils. I cannot expect illiterate pupils to cope with all methods and tasks by themselves. I often have to repeat and explain tasks again to my pupils. At one time, when I didn't have so many illiterate children in my class, I made “work plans” for my pupils. That was relatively easy because they were able to work independently. I had to give this up because I have to explain every step to my illiterate pupils. Of course this costs me a lot more work.

GEW Bremen: How do you keep in touch with other teachers at your school?

I barely have any contact with other teachers. For example, at the beginning of the school year, I wrote an email to form teachers asking them to name pupils who, in their opinion, have support needs in terms of special education. I received almost no replies. Instead, children are sent to me, to my lessons, without my knowledge and often cannot find the room.

It would be so much easier if form tutors would contact me. Then we could organise language support much better. I really wish that I didn't have to run after everything all the time.

GEW Bremen: What are the biggest problems for you and your pupils?

Two things come to my mind. One of them is space and the other is the lack of support from colleagues.
Let us start with space: When I started, I had three pupils. That was before I taught in preparatory courses. A small room was enough. Then my small support class became a preparatory course. Even though the size of my class was limited to 10 pupils, the room is by far too small. I once read how much space each pupil requires: two square metres! Erm, well, at most, my pupils have one square metre and I don't even have a teacher's desk. This is especially difficult for younger pupils because they have a much stronger urge to move. I also share the room with an after school girls' club. So I cannot leave any teaching materials in the classroom.

The second problem is that I don't feel equal to my colleagues at school. I am not part of a team and do not even have another preparatory course colleague. Therefore I have hardly any possibilities to talk about problems in the classroom and to ask for advice. Also it makes it difficult to feel connected to the school.

For example, I rarely see the teacher in charge of language support. There isn't even a language support concept at school, nobody thinks about how children from preparatory courses and those who need language assistance are supported at school. I fight alone all the time - for myself and for my pupils. This is very difficult and very frustrating!

**GEW Bremen: Finally a positive question: What do you like about your job?**

Actually, I am finding it rather difficult at the moment to see anything positive in my work. Right now my work is very exhausting. But I guess it's the same for many other teachers at the end of term.

At the moment my pupils are paying me more attention and apologise when they see that I'm not feeling so good. It's nice to be able to develop relationships with them in this way. One pupil made Christmas cookies at home and gave some to me in a little box. It's nice to have such a positive influence on their lives and to see that they think about me outside of school.
Apart from that, the times when I can get out of the classroom and do something special with the children are especially nice. We went on a trip to the SEA LIFE aquarium and I organised swimming lessons for the children - unfortunately this isn't normal for preparatory course pupils. It is always nice to see how happy they look after swimming.

**GEW Bremen: Thank you for the interview!**

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**Info on the author:**
The interview was conducted by Katharina Lenuck. Katharina Lenuck was the project worker for “Teachers Organising for Quality Education for Refugees” from 2016 to 2019.
6 “It’s not just about learning German.”

GEW Bremen Election Panel April 29th 2019.
Nick Strauss, GEW Bremen
May 2019

Some 40 people attended a pre election panel hosted by the GEW Bremen Working Group “Teachers Organising For Quality Education for Refugees.”

Mostly teachers directly affected by the challenge of teaching the more than 10% of students in Bremen, who have arrived in the past 5 years, but also community organisers from the Bremen Refugee’s Council were there, along with interested students and even a senior official for vocational education from the education department.
On the panel were 5 politicians who had spent a morning in a preparatory course in a Primary, Junior Secondary or Vocational School in Bremen. These visits were conducted away from the gaze of the media - they were meant to be a time for the politicians to learn as well.

All opposition parties were represented from the pro market liberal ‘Free Democrats’ (FDP), the party of the German Chancellor Merkel the Christian Democrats (CDU) to the left wing party ‘die Linke’. As well, the ruling coalition in Bremen of the Social Democratic (SPD) and their junior partners, the Greens, were there.

In line with GEW policy, and that of the broader German trade union movement, far right parties such as the so called ‘Alternative for Germany’ (AfD) and the local populist party ‘Angry Citizens’ (BiW) were not given a platform.

As Ina von Boetticher, one of the State Spokespersons of the GEW in Bremen, said in her opening words:

“It’s not just about learning German and getting to know a new school and school system - and that’s hard enough for many (!) - at the same time many of the children and young people have brought with them severe trauma - including the loss of family and a secure, known home. ... becoming a part of a new society as opposed to just coping, is an enormous challenge which needs time!”

So what did the politicians say?

Julie Kohlrausch, a former head teacher standing for the FDP said that her party supported integration as opposed to segregation and that without additional resources no improvements would be possible. For example she supported the campaign for additional basic literacy support in primary schools. She also supported a mother tongue offer in every neighbourhood and encouraged the participants to stay active on the issues affecting refugee and migrant children. Ms Kohlrausch emphasised the
importance of early years education as one of her goals for the first 100 days should the FDP be in government after the elections.

Sandra Ahrens from the CDU was the one speaker who hadn’t been able to spend time in a preparatory course - she did make a date for a visit at the end of the meeting though. Ms Ahrens could see the point of a more ‘dynamic approach’ to the length of attendance at school - which met many of the concerns about refugee and migrant children being put through the system too fast. The CDU supported mother tongue tuition but with an increase of state provision as opposed to relying on the home countries governments for teachers and curriculum.

Sophia Leonidakis from the Left Party had come straight from a visit that morning as the party leader who had done a visit before Easter was unable to attend. She criticized long waiting times of up to one year for some students to access courses, and the ongoing outsourcing of initial provision in Bremerhaven. Ms Leonidakis pointed out that she preferred to talk about inclusion rather than integration and said the “role of education was to meet the challenge of heterogeneity” with a wide range of offers including more public provision of mother tongue tuition.

Mustafa Güngür from the SPD, who’s his party spokesperson on education, said that his visit to a preparatory course at a high school in the working class suburb of Gröplingen had made a deep impression on him ... and also proudly showed the monster he had drawn during his visit. He supported child based solutions but agreed that the communication between the education department and practitioners need to be improved. Mr Güngür stated that the state had the best range of mother tongue tuition in the country but that this could be better supported with legislative guidelines.

Christopher Hupe from the Greens was the one representative who was not an existing member of the Bremen state parliament. He was the one visitor to a vocational college - the sector which has educated the significant number of unaccompanied minors over the last years. He argued for a far better advice service for, and placement of, the students in their
vocational courses. “Successful integration is when the students like going to school”. He said that his party would strive to improve flexibility of provision in the first 100 days after the election if they were returned to government.

Many of the politicians spent much of the discussion learning about new aspects the field and taking notes. Many in the audience found this listening to practitioners a pleasant change from our usual experiences … but it is election time.

What were some of the points colleagues made?

» Some union members pointed out the bizarre situation (during a massive staffing shortage) where staff wanting to work more hours were not allowed - the reason being: ‘unqualified’ staff are good enough to teach the preparatory courses but not to work in the rest of the school system.

» Many colleagues called for improvements in vocational education - more time than the two years and better and more flexible placements.

» The difficulties of teaching cross aged groups in the preparatory courses - either from 6 to 11 year olds in primary or 10 to 16 year olds in secondary was noted.

» Special needs provision for migrant and refugee children as part of an inclusive education system - at the moment there is simply no provision made.

» Better communication - many problems had been raised before - again and again and yet it felt like nothing was being achieved.

“Leading up the election, almost all the parties in Bremen have said that education is a vital theme. As a union that’s pleasing news and it means
that it’s particularly interesting to see what actually happens after the election ... because that’s when it is that it really counts.”

Ina von Boetticher, State Spokesperson for the GEW in Bremen.

Sometimes elections feel like the Olympics - the politicians compete every four years and win or lose.

But for the children and young people in the education system in the state of Bremen and the education workers, teachers and social workers who work with them ... education is more like a marathon. We just have to keep on 'keeping on'.
7 Impressions from the Conference

7.1 “Migration. Refuge. School.”
Barbara Schüll

On 1st October the GEW union working group “Teachers Organising for Quality Education for Refugees” organised a conference called: “Zuwanderung. Flucht. Schule.”. 60 colleagues working in different parts and levels of the school system, and in different professions, met at the Trades Union Hall (DGB Haus) in Bremen.

The day began with the Senator for children and education, Claudia Bogedan, the chair of the combined schools’ works’ council (PR Schulen) Angelika Hanauer, and a GEW state spokesperson, Christian Gloede, making supportive yet clear and critical statements about the present situation for migrant and refugee pupils at our schools.

Afterwards followed a report by Max Gabel, Fluchtraum Bremen, on the current state of immigration and different aspects that people affected have to deal with on a daily basis. He described the effects of having to flee one’s home and seek refuge, the obstacles and fears when dealing with authorities. He spoke of the challenges and insecurities which people have to master and about issues and demands that arise from his daily work.
After a short break we went into a workshop phase concentrating on the following points: special needs education, social work at schools, non-violent communication in the context of interculturality, and a teaching/learning base for refugee and migrant pupils at Bremen Uni.

During the short breaks stimulating discussions took place all over the building and spontaneous reactions varied from “at long last” to “if I had only known this before”.

After the lunch break there were workshops on the topics: primary schools, secondary schools, and vocational schools as well as a theatre workshop. Mainstream and special needs teachers, school social workers, and educational support staff met and exchanged results, impressions, and ideas from the morning. We also spoke about what we would like to request or demand from the education department.

All in all it was a very inspiring event that combined a symposium with a training day. There was a lot of positive feedback and the organisers are looking forward to further work in the working group “Gute Bildung für Zugewanderte”.

Texts from different workshops and talks from the day can be found on the following pages.
7.2 Questions Concerning the Right of Residence and the Social Situation of Refugees in Bremen

Impulse lecture
Max Gabel (Fluchtraum Bremen e.V.)
(www.fluchtraum-bremen.de)

The situation of refugee families and unaccompanied minors and young adults in Bremen is complex. People have come to Bremen with different experiences in their home countries and during their escape. Their life and daily routine here differs significantly from that in their home countries. Examples for this can be the importance given to bureaucracy, family or religion. Some refugees have studied at universities, whilst others are illiterate. Some have been able to reunite with their families after successful asylum procedures, many have not seen their family for years. The housing situation of refugees in Bremen also differs greatly from initial reception facilities to shared accommodation, private flats or youth community accommodation.
On a federal level, a policy of tightening asylum, immigration and residency laws has been promoted via parliamentary fast-track procedures for years now. A discourse based the rhetoric of fear and false statistics is often used which the media tends to favour and spread. For many refugees this has lead to uncertainty, fear as well as a real reduction of legal rights in regards to immigration.

The situation of unaccompanied minors has also been made more difficult. If they arrive without a passport they have to undergo an age assessment test at the youth welfare office. If they are assessed to be of legal age then this has negative consequences for their rights to residency and generally leads to the termination of youth welfare services. Many young refugees suffer from emotional exhaustion due to experiences before or during their escape. They have also experienced racism in Germany besides, as well as also having to deal with the “normal” issues of adolescence.

Despite all the difficulties, refugees try to come here and develop a perspective. Members of Civil-Society also support them and oppose either directly or indirectly the increasingly reactionary discourse.
The workshop was divided into two parts. It dealt with ReBUZ’s (regional counselling and support centre) services and with the basics of working with pupils and their families who have social and emotional problems in an intercultural context.

In general, ReBUZ’s services are available to all pupils, parents and colleagues. Language barriers, experiences with school systems in home countries and, in contrast, differences to the German school system can cause obstacles for refugee pupils and their families. In order to reduce these, participants and speakers agreed that interpreters and humanistic values are needed in order to avoid intercultural conflicts.

**Part A: Structure and ReBUZ services**

ReBUZ forms a support system for education that is active in its respective region in close cooperation with the ZuPs (the schools’ centres for special needs). ReBUZ work multiprofessionally with specialists in areas like counselling, diagnostics, support, prevention and intervention. ReBUZ works along side other providers, and or in depth, on individual cases as well as addressing systemic issues, especially when the problems are not able to be covered by specialists in schools through the ZuP. With the task of offering provision outside of, and in addition to, mainstream schools, ReBUZ is more than a simple counselling and support system.

ReBUZ works multiprofessionally in its respective regions in the fields of counselling, diagnostics, support, crisis intervention, emergencies and in
cases of violence as well as supporting schools (at different levels: supportive, complementary or the provision of an curriculum offer outside of the school on a temporary basis). Another task is to give assistance in overcoming structural problems as well as actively participating in networking with other institutions, especially with youth welfare.

Schools, parents or pupils can get in touch with a ReBUZ. Representatives of other institutions and authorities can address ReBUZ. Topics covered in individual cases as well as in systemic counselling can refer to the following:

» Social-emotive development
» Learning and attainment development
» School career and transitions (e.g. primary to secondary school)
» Violence, crises, and emergencies
» Inclusion
» Independent counselling for parents

Part B: Working with pupils and their families with social-emotive problems in an intercultural context in a complementary curriculum offer\(^1\) by ReBUZ West

Target group: pupils who show irregular behaviour at mainstream school through externalising and internalising behaviour.

\(^1\) Translators note - UK readers would recognise the term - “nuture group.”
Pillars of work in school complementary measures:

» Behaviour modifying measures in lessons or in the family
» Transfer into the class context
» Education partnership with the family
» Networking

Requirements for successful partnership between families and schools:

» Welcoming ambience
» A culture of discussion that's accepting
» Availability of educational staff
» Availability of parent representatives
» Asking for support for parenting
» Home visits
» Parent guides
» Development and strengthening of the school community

Trauma caused through the experience of persecution, of becoming a refugee and the journeys to Germany, is an obstacle in education partnerships:

**Trauma = Body and mind in a state of emergency**

A trauma is an event (which can be life-threatening) in which our usual defence and coping mechanisms are not sufficient any more because we are overwhelmed by the intensity of the event. One is helpless and defenceless, at the mercy of the event. The body reacts with an emergency programme to protect itself. A traumatic event leads to an emotional wound that divides life into “before” and “after”.
What can attending school give traumatised children and adolescents?

» Normality and daily routine
» Reliable attachment figures
» School as a refuge

How can I as a pedagogue support my traumatised pupils?

» A lot of praise and encouragement
» Mindfulness practice, for example sensory and sensory motor exercises for self-perception
» Relaxation exercises, for example baking a pizza on your partner's back during a partner massage
» Coordination exercises, for example rhythmic exercises through body percussion
» Facing one's own and other's emotions, for example a mood barometer
» Exercises for the acquisition of interpersonal skills, for example school staff give a model for finding compromises

The participants stressed the need for further training in trauma and trauma pedagogy during the workshop.
7.4 “Other Subjects as Well as German from Day One”
Katja Baginski

Knowledge of German is undoubtedly indispensable for educational success in the German education system. Besides German as the teaching language, role expectations, task formats, the routine of lessons, valuation standards, specific content and many other things may be unfamiliar or different to what they expect for pupils in preparatory courses.

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At the same time, pupils have generally had some schooling in their home countries. They often have also had experience in learning new languages. This potential is taken advantage of didactically in the “Subject, Language, Migration” learning center at Bremen University to make it easier for pupils to learn German and subjects from the rest of the curriculum.

Parallel to a German-as-a-foreign-language-textbook, university students of education have developed teaching materials with references to regular lessons. These materials were presented and tested in the learning center. Participants learned reading strategies for extracting the meaning in discontinuous texts and entire school book pages. The materials included numerous tasks in which pupils could explicitly use and reflect their specialised and linguistic resources.

The collection of materials, “German at schools“, can be found at www.lehrlernwerkstatt.uni-bremen.de
7.5 Intercultural Social Training

Petra Kumm

The workshop “intercultural social training” focused on making prejudices and privileges visible in order to make people more aware of their experiences with discrimination.

In one initial exercise some participants objected to naming stereotypes and prejudices that are associated with other nationalities or cultures here in Germany. They expressed the concern that naming prejudices and stereotypes would unnecessarily direct energy towards these.

We therefore bypassed this step and spoke about the danger when only one story about other people exists in people's minds. I recommend watching Chimamanda Adichie's talk on TED: The Danger of a Single Story.
We talked about how important it is to counteract the trend to only believe in one story about other people in education institutions.

In the second part of the workshop we dealt with the conception of humanity and the principles on which nonviolent communication is based:

» No person is good or evil by nature.

» People want to feel good.

» Everything we do has the purpose of fulfilling our needs.

» All people have the same needs.

» There are no negative needs.

» When our needs are fulfilled we feel good, if they are not fulfilled, we feel uneasy.

» People need a feeling of belonging. They enjoy contributing to the well-being of others if no important needs oppose this.

These theses do not only form the basis of nonviolent communication but at the same time form the basis for a prejudice free living together. Because: if I assume that all people have the same motivation for their actions, which is to fulfill a universal need, and only choose different strategies, it becomes clear that it is possible to understand each other and to keep an eye on everyone's needs.
Teachers from preparatory courses, and a ZUP manager participated in the workshop. There was an exchange on achievement and issues at secondary schools in Bremen concerning the integration of refugee and migrant pupils.

First of all, colleagues reported on achievements in the schooling of these students at their schools. There were many positive developments over the last years. The acceptance from staff has grown. School headteachers having positive position to the integration of refugee and migrant children and adolescents, was seen as an important factor.

There is a mainly positive and tolerant climate in preparatory courses. Background and religion are generally not so important in everyday school life. Preparatory course pupils support each other and new pupils are quickly integrated into the classroom community.

At some schools specialised lessons like Maths or English are firmly established in preparatory courses. This makes moving on to regular classes easier for pupils. Furthermore there is a peer to peer mentoring system which also has a supportive effect. Subsequent assistance also works well at many schools. Individual school concepts were developed, for example

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1 Preparatory Course: Children and adolescents from the age of 6 to 18 years can acquire first language skills in learning groups. These are called preparatory courses in Bremen and take place everywhere in Bremen.

2 Zentrum für unterstützende Pädagogik: the schools' centres for special needs
DaZ support is offered in the timetable slot where profile courses are offered. ³

These developments are positive but only apply to a few schools. The way migrant pupils are integrated is left up to each school. Therefore, not just the existing problems but also demands on education authorities as well as concrete proposals for changes at schools were discussed.

First of all, the lack of a curriculum that also meets the requirements of heterogeneity in preparatory courses was pointed out. It was pointed out that in November 2019 a spiral curriculum was to be published which was to go into a pilot stage in the current school year. This should do justice to the heterogeneity in preparatory courses and satisfy the needs of preparatory course pupils in coping with the demands of the German school system.

Another problem is further assistance after the students leave the preparatory courses. The assigned ten teacher lessons per week per school are often not enough. This is also due to the fact that each school decides on how it organises these lessons. There are often not enough due to shortage of staff. It would be welcomed that authorities make mandatory guidelines for this assistance.

Furthermore preparatory course teachers would like extra qualification possibilities for 'unqualified staff', as well as extra paid non contact time in order to be able to meet the many and varied demands. Preparatory course teachers also often have an isolated position at school. They would like to be in a team of preparatory course teachers, subject tea-

³ From 6th grade on, pupils at secondary schools choose a subject which they keep until the end of 10th grade. This can be a second foreign language but can also be a technical, artistic or scientific subject.
chers and social workers and have closer cooperation with ZuP management. This would improve communication and open up possibilities for the better integration of preparatory course pupils.

The continual cooperation of all persons involved in the entire education system (from daycare to secondary school level), especially when changing from one school level to the next is essential.

Other demands and proposals for changes were made. These addressed the lack of social workers, lack of German as a second language support for migrant pupils with more severe learning disabilities\(^4\) and the lack of linguistically sensitive teaching in subjects across the curriculum.

The participants requested that the GEW convey their demands to the education authorities.

\(^4\) W+E is the German term for status for pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and or Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)
7.7 “Challenges for Vocational Schools”
Karsten Krüger

Positive conditions - things that help - selected aspects:

» In vocational schools there are many colleagues who have specialised in this field. They have extensive knowledge about adolescents who are in danger of dropping out of the education system or who have already done so. There are multi-professional teams who work in smaller groups and can thus concentrate more on young people and develop much stronger relationships with them.

» In Lower Saxony, adolescents can choose what subjects they want to specialise in.

» It is partly possible to increase English lessons to four lessons per week. There are often different learning groups (beginners and advanced learners).

» The foreign language exams in BoSp classes (vocational orientated classes with language support) do not have to be written in English but can also be taken in the student's first language.

» School based social work support is mostly well organised. Pupils' questions or problems can be discussed immediately and often also solved.

» Differentiation when learning German is possible.

» Outreach counselling works. Many teachers do good networking.

» Cooperation with the State Institute for Schools (LIS) also works.

» The number of lessons is sufficient.
Negative conditions - things that hinder - selected aspects and demands:

» Counselling in BoSp classes is insufficient and could be improved. This is why pupils often don't like the focus of their courses.

» A lot of time has to be spent on counselling for pupils and their parents. Staff are willing but not enough time is scheduled for this.

» More teaching time to achieve graduation. The courses are not actually two years but only 18 months. This is often too short. In fact, pupils should have to repeat classes but this is often frustrating because the syllabus is the same - they've 'heard it before'.

» Some teachers are not sufficiently qualified, especially not for lessons with pupils learning English for the first time.

» Truancy increases the amount of work.

» There is not enough time for certain administrative tasks - and some seem pointless.

» There should be support possibilities for high-achieving pupils (because they already had already been to school for a long time in their home countries).

» 'Tradesperson Instructors'\(^1\) are often not very understanding. Further training for them in this field would help.

» There should be more training in German as a second language.

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\(^1\) Translators note: In German Vocational schools, much practical teaching is carried out 'Lehrmeister*innen' i.e. by experienced trades persons with 'Master' Builder / Mason / Craftsperson etc etc status
» Paid non contact time for form tutor duties is necessary.

» “Transition management” needs to be improved. Often BoSp colleagues have to pass pupils on. There are similar problems for students with special needs in 'rehabilitation' courses

» The education union should act as a political player.

» In Service Training for all colleagues in intercultural competency needs to be further developed.
8. Education for Refugees and Migrants in Bremen

Statistics

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Quellen:

2016  * Bremen – Antwort des Senates auf die Große Anfrage der Fraktion der Linke, Drucksache 19/396 – 01.11.2016
     * Bremerhaven – Stand der Integration und Schulraumbedarf, Dezernat IV, Schulamt, Seestadt Bremerhaven
2017  * Bremen und Bremerhaven – Antwort des Senates auf die Große Anfrage der Fraktion der Linke, Drucksache 19/1227 – 12.09.2017
2018  * Bremen – Senatorin – Presse Mitteilung 7.8.18
     * Bremerhaven – Mail 3.12.18
2019  * Bremen – Senatorin – Presse Mitteilung 13.8.19
     * Bremerhaven – Mail 19.9.19

Siehe auch:  https://www.bildung.bremen.de/zahlen_und_fakten-117153
Membership Application

Please complete in block letters

Join the GEW
www.gew.de/mitglied-werden

Please return to:
GEW Landesverband Bremen • Bahnhofsplatz 22-28 • 28195 Bremen

Personal Details

Surname (title) first name(s)

Address

Postal Code, City

Telephone e-mail

Date of birth Citizenship

Desired entry date

Previous union membership: where, from through (month/year)

(Please include membership of our Education international sister unions overseas - e.g. AEU / NTEU (Australia), NEU, NASUWT, EIS or UCU (UK), AFT or NEA (USA) etc.)

☒ female ☐ male

Membership fee

• Employees with a wage agreement pay 0.73 % of the respective pay scale group unemployment; employees without wage agreement pay 0.7 % of their gross income.
• The minimum fee is always 0.6 % of the lowest level of pay scale group 1 TVöD.
• Members in teacher training or completing an internship pay a fixed amount of 4 Euro.
• Retired members pay 0.6 % of their retirement income.

Please refer to our member fee regulations for further information.

Please note: union dues in 2019 are now 0.75% of your pre tax income rising to 0.76% in 2020 and 2021. The increase in membership dues is being ring-fenced to cover the costs of industrial action and strike pay.

For assistance filling out this form, or for any other questions, contact Sabine Gross on 0421 337 640 or mail Gross@gew-hb.de in German or English.

GEW Landesverband Bremen • Bahnhofsplatz 22-28 • 28195 Bremen
Telefon 0421 / 33 764 -0 • Fax 0421 / 33 764 -30 • www.gew-hb.de • info@gew-hb.de
IBAN - DE45 6609 0800 0000 8128 70 • BIC - GENO DE 61 BB8 • BB8 eG.
**Professional Details** (explanatory notes overleaf)

Job title (students: aspired job title), professional group

Entry into service / beginning of career (month/year)

Pay scale area / salary area (civil service)

Gross monthly income € (only if not in public service)

Pay scale group- / salary class level since (month/year)

Institution / agency / school

Provider of the institution / agency / school

Address of the institution / agency / school

Postal code, place of the institution / agency / school

**Employment relationship:**

- Salaried employee
- Partial retirement
- Part-time employed: ___ hours/week
- In parental leave until __________
- Part-time employed: ___ %
- In fixed-term position until __________
- Freelance
- Student teacher / Vocational internship
- On unpaid leave until __________
- Retired / pensioned
- Other: _______________________

Each member of the GEW is required to pay the statutory fee. By signing this application I acknowledge the GEW’s statutes.

Place, date

Signature

**SEPA Direct Debit Mandate**

Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW), Reifenberger Str. 21, 60489 Frankfurt

Creditor identifier: DE31ZZZ00000013864

By signing this mandate I authorize the GEW to send instructions to my bank to debit my account and I authorize my bank to debit my account in accordance with the instructions from GEW.

Note: I am entitled to claim a refund of the debited amount within eight weeks, starting from the debit date. The terms agreed with my bank shall apply in each case.

Surname, first name (owner of account)

Bank (name and BIC)

IBAN

City, date

Signature

The personal data provided will be recorded on media exclusively in the performance of our statutory tasks and will be protected according to the regulations of the German Data Protection Act.