



## 2022 Tübingen Declaration of the Fachverband Chinesisch (Association of Chinese Language Teachers in German-speaking Countries) on the Development and Expansion of China Competence in Germany ("Tübinger Erklärung")

Due to the repeatedly diagnosed deficit in knowledge about China (cf. reference material below) and the increasingly confrontational developments in global politics, the Fachverband Chinesisch as the representative of Chinese language teachers at German schools and universities takes the following position:

The Fachverband Chinesisch emphasizes the necessity of nationwide (educational) political activities with regard to a stronger involvement with China. Our education system is still dominated by Eurocentric worlds of knowledge, irrespective of the fact that a growing number of young persons in Germany have a non-European background. Against this backdrop, we see China competence as one possible orientation among many - in our opinion, the examination of Islamic societies, the Indian language area, the history of Africa or Vietnamese immigration is also insufficiently reflected and anchored in curricula and society.

Regardless of different values, the role of the state or the individual - technological, economic and social developments in the Chinese-speaking world are increasingly influencing Europe, too. However, as far as public reporting on China is concerned, there is room for improvement, and an active engagement with discourses and collective memories outside Europe rarely finds its way into Western perceptions. In our view, it is precisely the ability to critically examine even controversial images of China that constitutes the core of the intercultural competence we are striving for. A constructive and critical engagement with Chinese (and other non-European) worlds should thus be part of the school education of young Europeans in the 21st century.

Also, and especially in the interest of consolidating a democratic consciousness, one of the core goals set by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung), China appears to be an ideal counterpart against which young people can negotiate world views, cultural imprints or possibilities of political participation in controversial discussions. Yet, to do so, our society needs more extensive knowledge about China and its historical, social and political dimensions.

In our view, an increased China competence should cover the following areas:

1. China-related knowledge should increasingly be part of the framework curricula of social science school subjects such as geography, history and politics, as well as in the training of teachers of these (and other) school subjects, and should accordingly be strongly promoted in initial and further teacher training, especially at times when dialogue with China is difficult.
2. Chinese as a school subject, which is currently an elective subject at about 100 secondary schools in Germany (in Italy and France numbers are already considerably higher), has been established in schools in a “bottom-up” process since the 1990s. To date, financial or organisational support for the subject beyond the planning of curricula has only taken place in a few regions. Especially in view of its complexity and the many unanswered questions, the discourse on the learning goals of the subject and the further training of Chinese teachers should be particularly promoted.
3. Only in the last ten years a few universities have started offering the possibility of regular teacher education (M.Ed.). Yet, this also requires the establishment of corresponding interdisciplinary professorships, the development of transversal structures in the research landscape, and corresponding competencies in educational institutions. The only two professorships for Chinese didactics to date were established as endowed professorships with start-up funding from the People's Republic of China. In the long term, the necessary discussion about the linguistic and extra-linguistic learning goals of the school subject requires further experts working at the interface of Chinese studies and educational sciences, who will also help to shape the general interdisciplinary discourse on the teaching of extra-European worlds of knowledge at the level of educational policy. The Fachverband expressly welcomes corresponding initiatives by the German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), the public universities and the Länder (federal states).
4. Young people growing up bilingually in Germany need support in developing their Chinese (or other) language and writing skills to be able to act as competent advocates of our free democratic basic order and mediators between languages and cultures. Bilingualism should be seen as an enrichment of our society; accordingly, we need heritage-language instruction for distant languages that builds on comprehensive language skills - independent from foreign-language instruction for beginners.

5. Individual personal and digital exchange with China must be promoted. Corresponding requests should also be made to the Chinese side and be part of bilateral talks (exchange projects, possibility of school internships). In this sense, the Fachverband explicitly welcomes the initiative of the Mercator Foundation and the Goethe-Institut to establish the “Bildungsnetzwerk China”, and hereby emphasizes the need for further nationwide (education) policy activities towards a stronger active engagement with China - and with all other regions of the world.

Tübingen, 2 September 2022

On behalf of the Fachverband Chinesisch e.V.

Prof. Dr. Andreas Guder, Chairman  
Prof. Dr. Henning Klöter, Vice Chairman

#### Reference material:

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