The point of departure for the study was the fact that Germany has developed into a modern immigration country over the past few decades, and diversity in the classroom has become an everyday phenomenon: One third of all children under the age of 15 come from an immigrant background.

But how are migration and integration depicted in German textbooks with regard to social diversity? And to what extent do textbooks contribute to an increasing acceptance of diversity as a societal norm? These questions formed the basis of our analysis of 65 textbooks from five federal states (Bavaria, North-Rhine Westphalia, Saxony, Berlin and Brandenburg) and in the subject areas of social studies, political science, history and geography.

In the textbooks under examination, our results show that migration and integration are primarily addressed as a social and political problem. In the social studies, history, and to a certain extent geography textbooks, migration is for the most part portrayed as a matter of conflict and crisis. Ultimately, migration and diversity only appear to be a problem and challenge for a society that is conceived as being homogenous. People with an immigrant background are often reduced to this specific aspect of their biographies, and many opportunities are missed to provide a more nuanced portrayal: The IT expert from India, the Russian doctor or the student from South Korea are barely perceivable in the textbooks. The question as to who is depicted as an “immigrant” thus apparently not only depends on whether or not a person has indeed immigrated, but rather on his or her social position.

In all the subject areas examined in the study, integration is presented by the textbooks as a prerequisite for social cohesion in an immigrant society; however, there is no mention of the effects of the integration process on education, the workplace and participation in political and economical matters. Rather in the manner of a bold decree for integration, people with an immigration background are called upon by the textbooks to adapt to German society; and indeed the textbooks have nothing but praise for the efforts of the German state towards integration in this context.

Generally speaking, the terms and concepts used in the portrayal of migration and immigration need to be revisited. One problematic aspect of the textbooks analysed, for instance, is that terms such as “foreigner” (Ausländer), “stranger” (Fremde), “migrants” (Migranten) and “people with an immigrant background” (Menschen mit Migra- tionshintergrund) are often not differentiated between but used synonymously within one textbook or chapter. This encourages a lack of distinction between the meanings and frames of reference in which these terms are effective, a crucial aspect within this specific context. Similarly, the term “integration” primarily conveys – intentionally or otherwise – the idea of being “absorbed into the masses”. The textbooks thus do not make sufficient use of the opportunity to teach a sophisticated, self-conscious and deliberate use of certain terms.

The results of the study underline the need for textbooks and other educational media that are diversity-sensitive and which reflect the norma-
This study on the presentation of migration and integration in selected textbooks currently in use in schools was carried out by the Georg Eckert Institute in cooperation with the Centre for Diversity, Democracy and Inclusion in Education at the University of Hildesheim for the Federal Government Commissioner for Immigration, Refugees and Integration. The study generated a lively response when it was publicly presented at a press conference in Berlin in March 2015, and can be downloaded at the following link: http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/Infomaterial/BPA/IB/Schulbuchstudie_Migration_und_Integration_09_03_2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3.