

Spotlight on VET Germany 2014



VET IN GERMANY

VET in Germany is based on cooperation between state, private sector, and social partners. The Federal Ministry of Education (BMBF) is responsible for general VET policy issues and has a coordinating and steering role for all training occupations in cooperation with the respective ministries. The Ministry also works closely with the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), which conducts research, advises the Federal Government and vocational training providers. The Länder (federal states) are responsible for school-based (parts of) VET and have VET committees with employer and employee representatives. The Länder Ministries of Education cooperate in a Standing Conference (KMK) to ensure a certain degree of uniformity and comparability.

The main pillar of VET is the **dual system (apprenticeship, ISCED 3B)**. Every person who has completed full-time compulsory schooling has access to apprenticeship training (duration: usually 3 years), which combines two learning venues – companies and vocational schools. Those successfully completing their training are qualified to be employed as skilled workers. Progression is possible through various school-based VET programmes and by acquiring master craftsperson and similar qualifications. Programmes based on the dual principle also exist at higher education level.

In parallel to the dual system, there is a wide range of **school-based programmes** (ISCED levels 3–4), which differ in terms of entry requirements, focus, types and levels of qualifications they lead to:

- ▶ Programmes at vocational schools preparing people for work in many occupational areas (Berufsfachschule, duration: 1 – 3 years depending on the occupational area and specialisation and the type/level of qualification). Where they do not offer a full vocational qualification, attendance can be credited as the first year of training in the dual system if certain conditions are met. Entry requirement is the lower secondary general school certificate or the certificate obtained on completion of grade 10 (intermediate level, Realschule);
- ▶ Programmes providing general upper secondary and vocationally oriented education (ISCED 3A) and usually leading to the general higher education entrance qualification (Berufliches Gymnasium/Fachgymnasium, duration: 3–4 years depending whether the learners also acquire a vocational qualification). Entry requirement is the intermediate level certificate.

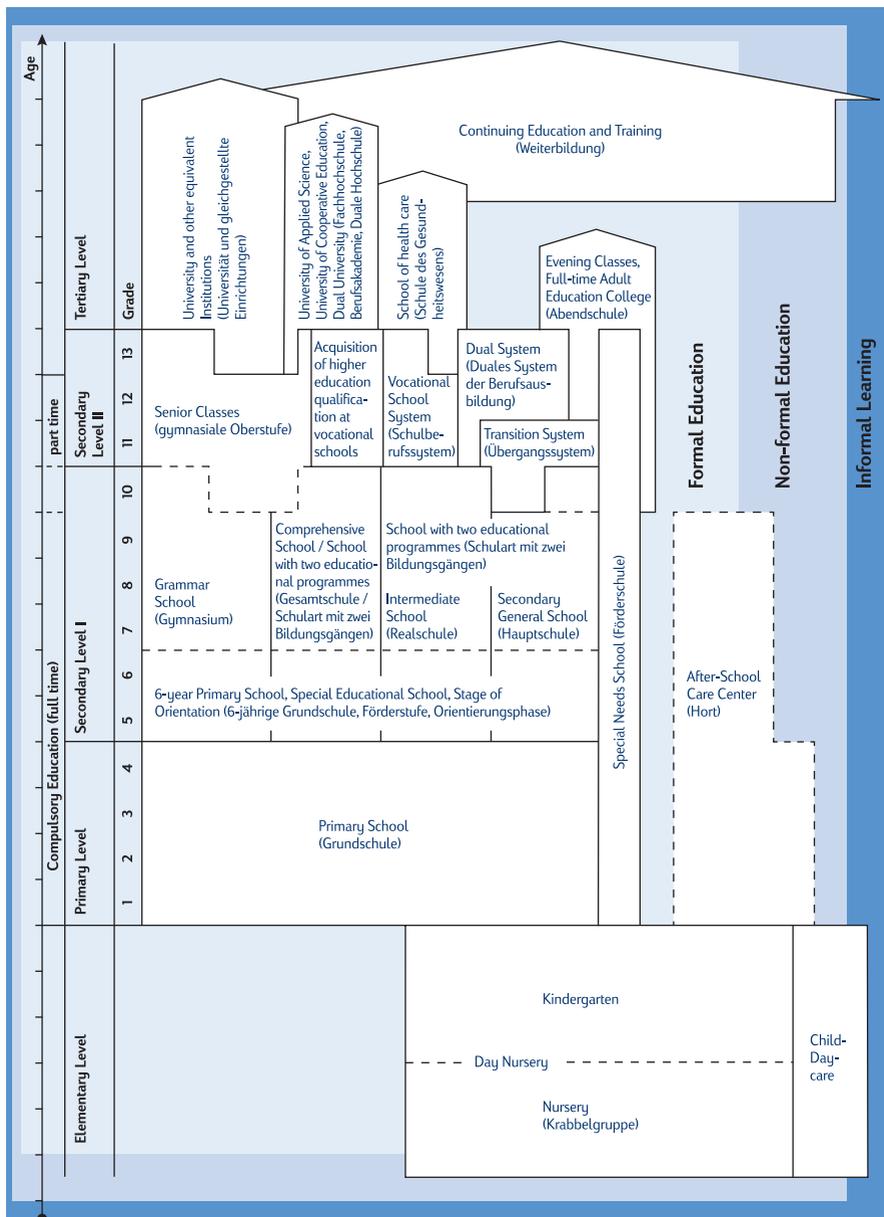
- ▶ Specialised programmes that build upon intermediate level certificates or initial vocational training and impart deeper occupational knowledge (duration: 1–3 years). They lead to entrance qualifications for universities of applied sciences or specific fields of study. Under certain conditions, learners may also obtain the general higher education entrance qualification.

VET at **higher education level** is becoming more important. A blend of **vocational and academic training** is offered by universities of applied sciences or Dual University (duration: 4 years) and other higher education institutes (Berufsakademien, usually leading to bachelor's degrees, in some cases also to master's). Enterprises participating in Berufsakademie programmes and Dual University programmes bear the costs of the company-based training and pay a wage to the learners.

An important step on the way to **widening access** to higher education is the 2009 KMK resolution, which defines common access criteria for vocationally qualified applicants without a school-based higher education entrance qualification. These include advanced vocational qualifications such as those of master craftsman, foreman and certified supervisor (Meister, Techniker, Fachwirt, see below) or completion of relevant IVET lasting two years, three years of relevant occupational experience, passing an aptitude test, or successful completion of a probationary year of studies.

Continuing training is playing an increasingly important role in improving employability. It is characterised by a wide variety of providers (a training market) and a comparatively low degree of regulation by the state. Only a small part of provision leads to formal qualifications regulated by the Vocational Training Act such as master craftsman/foreman/certified supervisor, technical engineer, certified senior clerk qualifications (Meister, Techniker, Fachwirt). Courses to prepare for these advanced level qualifications are offered by chambers or schools (Fachschulen, master craftsman schools). Generally, access to the respective assessment requires several years of practice in the related occupation.

VET IN GERMANY'S EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM



Source: Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (Hrsg.): Bildung in Deutschland 2014. Ein indikatorengeleiteter Bericht mit einer Analyse zur Bildung von Menschen mit Behinderungen. Bielefeld 2014.



DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF VET

Internationally, Germany's VET is seen as a successful model, largely because of the dual system, which leads to high-quality vocational qualifications and enables smooth education-to-work transitions. The possibility to proceed in educational programmes, e.g. Bachelor programmes, makes VET pathways in Germany even more attractive. A considerable share of those choosing this type of training have already obtained higher education entrance qualifications. If necessary, this qualification can be acquired in programmes offered by specialised vocational schools after an apprenticeship. Germany's well-trained skilled workers are an essential prerequisite for economic success.

Companies conclude training contracts with applicants under private law. They provide training in accordance with the vocational training regulations. Whilst the regulations are binding and guarantee national standards, they allow for the flexibility to agree company training plans with the apprentices. The enterprises also bear the costs of the in-company training and pay the apprentice remunerations as regulated by collective agreements. Learning at vocational school is based on a framework curriculum that is aligned to the training regulations and is drawn up for every recognised training occupation. Enterprises and vocational schools conduct training, but the chambers are responsible for holding examinations.

In view of rapid technological and organisational change, training regulations are revised every few years. The initiative for updating or for developing an entirely new occupational profile comes from the social partners or BIBB. After consultation of all parties involved, the competent federal ministry decides in consultation with the Länder governments whether to proceed.

Close cooperation between the social partners (employer organisations, trade unions and employee organisations) and the government is a core element of VET in Germany. Social dialogue and co-decision are the means to ensure that VET reforms are accepted.

Advanced vocational training leading to qualifications such as master crafts-person certificates (EQF level 6, i.e. the same level as bachelor degrees) is at the heart of the VET system. It confers the right to exercise a trade independently, to hire and train apprentices and to enter higher education. It also facilitates acquisition of middle management qualifications in companies. Improved financial support included in the legislation has reduced obstacles.



CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES

- ▶ Improving transitions from (compulsory) general education to VET and higher education
- ▶ Further developing guidance and counselling
- ▶ Preventing dropouts from VET
- ▶ Reducing the lack of qualified personnel

An increasing number of unoccupied apprenticeships places coincides with a high unemployment risk of early leavers, dropouts and learners with poor performance.

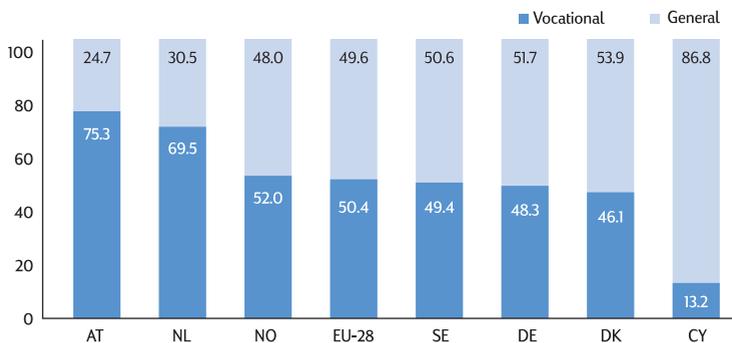
To help young disadvantaged people manage the transition into VET and acquire a qualification, various instruments are in place; introductory training measures (6 to 12 months' duration) use qualification modules as a basis to prepare young people for dual VET. As these preparatory programmes reflect the VET content, this period may be credited towards the overall training duration.

A BMBF initiative (Bildungsketten) aims to ensure different initiatives complement each other. Complementary measures comprise a competence analysis prior to VET, a career orientation and career management skills programme, the initiative to prevent VET dropouts by providing a personal mentor, who supports the young person for the time of the apprenticeship, and mentoring by senior experts and additional guidance and counselling.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN FIGURES

Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

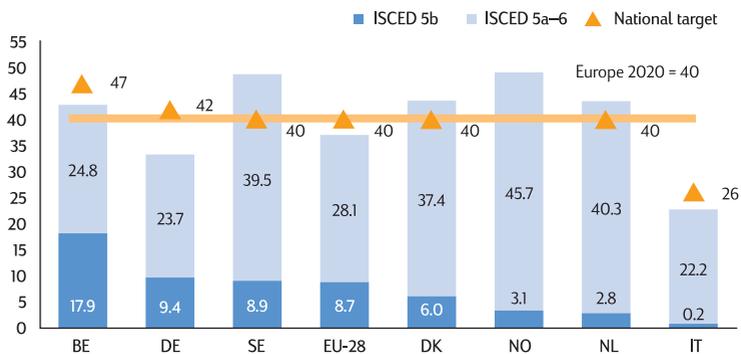
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2012



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction: May 30, 2014.

Tertiary education by type

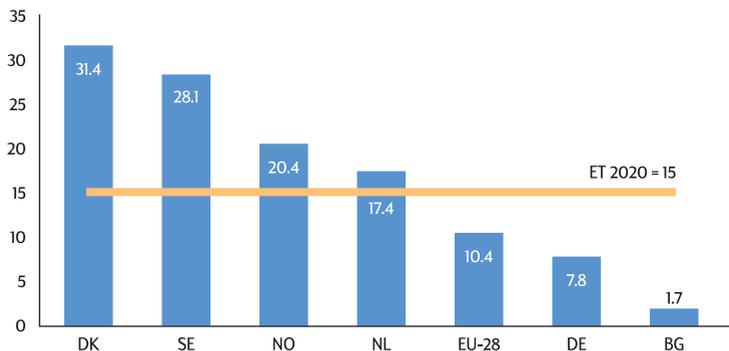
% of 30–34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2013



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction: May 19, 2014.

Lifelong learning

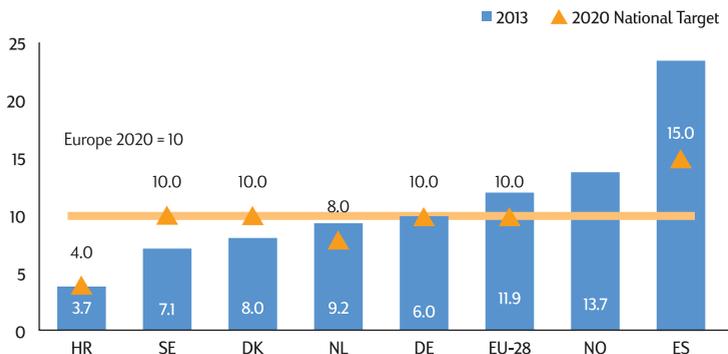
% of population aged 25–64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2013



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction: May 19, 2014.

Early leavers from education and training

% of early leavers from education and training, 2013



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction: May 19, 2014.



FURTHER INFORMATION

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http://www.bibb.de	Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB)
http://www.kmk.org	Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK)
http://www.bmbf.de	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
http://www.refernet.de/html/en/47.php	Information on the German ReferNet Consortium

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