



---

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

# GERMANY

---

**SYSTEM DESCRIPTION**



VET IN EUROPE 2023

**Cite as:** Cedefop, & Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Germany: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). *Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions* [Database].  
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/germany-u3>

Contributors: Adrienne Huismann, Ute Hippach-Schneider, Janine Grobe-Rath (ReferNet Germany) and Silke Gadji (Cedefop)

© Cedefop and Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) (ReferNet Germany), 2023

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

# Table of contents

- Chapter 1. Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET.
- Chapter 2. Main challenges and policy responses.
- Chapter 3. External factors influencing VET.
  - 3.1. Demographics.
  - 3.2. Economics.
  - 3.3. Labour market.
- Chapter 4. Education attainment.
  - 4.1. Share of high, medium and low level qualifications.
  - 4.2. VET learner share of the total VET population.
  - 4.3. VET learners by level.
  - 4.4. Female share.
  - 4.5. Early leavers from education and training.
  - 4.6. Participation in lifelong learning.
  - 4.7. VET learners by age.
- Chapter 5. VET within education and training system.
- Chapter 6. Apprenticeship.
- Chapter 7. VET governance.
- Chapter 8. VET financing mechanisms.
- Chapter 9. Teachers and trainers.
  - 9.1. VET teacher types.
  - 9.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers.
- Chapter 10. Shaping VET qualifications.
  - 10.1. Anticipating skill needs.
  - 10.2. Designing qualifications.
- Chapter 11. Quality assurance.
- Chapter 12. Validation of prior learning.
- Chapter 13. Incentives for learners.
- Chapter 14. Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision.
- Chapter 15. Guidance and counselling.
- Vocational education and training system chart.
- VET Programme Types.
  - General education programmes with vocational orientation incl. WBL, 2-3 years EQF level 4, ISCED level 344 (Berufliches Gymnasium or Fachgymnasium).
  - School-based VET programmes at EQF level 2-4, ISCED 354 (Berufsfachschule).
  - Transition programmes leading to EQF level 1-2 and ISCED level 254 and include the following programmes: pre-vocational training year (Berufsvorbereitungsjahr - BVJ); basic vocational training year (Berufsgrundbildungsjahr - BGJ); introductory training (Einstiegsqualifizierung - EQ)..
  - Apprenticeship scheme (dual system: duale Ausbildung) according to the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and the Trade and Crafts Code (HwO) at EQF level 3-4 and ISCED level 354 (in 2022: 326 programmes, one for each occupation that can be learnt in the apprenticeship scheme)..
  - Specialised programmes (Berufsoberschule BOS - Fachoberschule FOS - Schule für Gesundheits-, Erziehungs- und Sozialberufen GES nach Bundes- und Landesrecht) leading to EQF level 4-5, ISCED 444, 453, 454.
  - Advanced vocational qualifications and exams at three levels: - EQF level 5: professional specialist (Berufsspezialist), - EQF 6: Bachelor professional (master craftsperson, specialist: Fachwirte und Meister) and - EQF 7: Master professional (management experts: Betriebswirt)..
  - Advanced vocational programmes in trade and technical schools (Fachschule) leading to EQF level 6 and ISCED level 655..
  - Master programme (Master Programm) leading to EQF level 7, ICSED 747.

- Dual study bachelor programmes (Duales Studium im Bachelor Programm) leading to EQF level 6 and ISCED level 645.
- References.

## CHAPTER 1.

# Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

### Summary of main elements

Vocational education and training (VET) is based on close cooperation between the State, companies and social partners. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is responsible for general VET policy issues and has a coordinating role for all training occupations. The BMBF works closely with the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). BIBB conducts research, moderates the process of developing the training regulations and plays a crucial advisory role for VET policy. The Federal States (*Länder*) are in charge of the school-based part of VET. Social partner contribution is important at different levels.

### Upper secondary VET

Apprenticeship programmes (dual system) are the pillar of upper secondary VET. They are mostly offered at EQF level 4 and cover 326 occupations. Programmes usually last 3 years and combine two learning venues, companies and vocational schools: the work-based learning share is approximately 75%. Enterprises bear the costs of company-based training and pay learner remuneration. Those passing the final examination carried out by the chambers are qualified as certified skilled professionals.

In parallel, upper secondary VET programmes are offered in vocational schools at EQF levels 2 to 4. These include:

- school-based VET programmes, duration 1 to 3 years, leading to a qualification e.g. in the health sector such as physiotherapist (3 years, EQF level 4);
- general education programmes with vocational orientation, duration 2 to 3 years, leading to the general higher education entrance qualification.

Young people with learning difficulties, handicap or insufficient German language skills have the possibility to attend different one-year lasting transition programmes at EQF level 1-2.

At post-secondary level, specialised programmes are offered at EQF levels 4 to 5, lasting 1 to 3 years and leading to entrance qualifications for universities.

### Tertiary VET

At tertiary level, those with vocational qualifications and professional experience can acquire advanced vocational qualifications at EQF levels 5 to 7. At EQF level 6 (bachelor professional, e.g. *Meister*) the qualifications entitle graduates to exercise a trade, to hire and train apprentices, and to enrol in academic bachelor programmes. Graduates can continue at EQF level 7 (master professional). These qualifications support the acquisition of middle and top management positions in companies. Preparation courses are offered by chambers or schools.

Advanced vocational programmes are offered at state regulated technical and trade schools at EQF 6, lasting 1.5 to 4 years. Entrance requirements include specific vocational qualification and work experience. They lead to an advanced qualification (such as technician, educator) and give access to the relevant field of study.

Dual study programmes are offered at EQF levels 6 to 7 by different higher education institutions.

They provide a blend of academic and vocational training, in which in-company training is an important element (share of at least 40 to 50%). Enterprises bear the costs of company-based training and pay learners a wage.

### **Continuing VET**

Continuing training is playing an increasingly important role in improving employability by upskilling and reskilling in line with the digital and ecological transition. It is characterised by a wide variety of training providers and a low degree of State regulation. State incentives are in place to increase participation in CVET.

### **Distinctive features**

Germany's VET is a successful model, largely based on the dual system (apprenticeship) leading to high-quality vocational qualifications, valued on the labour market. Apprenticeship enables smooth education-to-work transitions, contributing to low youth unemployment: in 2021 this was 6.9% of those aged 15 to 24, versus 16.6% in the EU-27. Almost half of upper secondary school learners are enrolled in a VET programme; of those, about two thirds participate in apprenticeship. A growing share of apprentices has a higher education entrance qualification (29.7% of apprentices starting their training in 2021).

National standards and training regulations (curricula for in-company and school-based components) ensure the quality of the dual training programmes. Companies provide apprenticeships in accordance with the training regulations, developed by the four stakeholders (Federal and State governments, companies and trade unions). These regulations allow to agree on company training plans with apprentices and are technology open. Instruments such as additional qualifications as well as differentiation into various specialisations enable a high degree of flexibility and adaptability of the training regulations. Furthermore, regular revisions guarantee keeping pace with rapid technological and organisational changes.

Social partner contribution at different levels is important. As vocational training must respond to labour market needs, employer organisations and trade unions have a major influence on the content and form of IVET and CVET. At national level, they are represented in the BIBB board and participate in its vocational training committees. At regional level, the chambers play a crucial role in VET, such as in examinations. The initiative for updating or developing new occupational profiles comes mainly from social partners.

## CHAPTER 2.

# Main challenges and policy responses

**Access to training market.** This priority aims at securing the next generation of skilled workers by promoting young people's interest in dual VET and addressing matching problems in training companies, e.g. through vocational orientation and inclusion. To this purpose, the *Alliance for initial and further training* between the main VET actors has been relaunched for 2023-26.

**Excellence in VET.** In response to more demanding occupational profiles, the focus is placed on talented learners and establishing the equivalence of vocational and academic education at all levels. The umbrella initiative *Excellence in VET* combines existing and new measures, e.g. programmes supporting inter-company training centres or innovative VET projects.

**Ecological and technological transformation.** VET policies contribute in identifying future skills needs and developing competences and qualifications of learners and trainers in sustainability at all levels. The project *H2PRO* examines how skills requirements in apprenticeship occupations are changing along the hydrogen value chain, e.g. with sectoral analyses in production, transport, storage, industry and heat supply.

**Digital education and training area.** The digital transformation requires new skills for learners, VET teachers and trainers, and allows new formats for learning in vocational schools, in companies and in the CVET segment. The *National Skills Strategy (NWS)* for developing a CVET culture was renewed by all partners. One goal is to strengthen the acquisition of new skills and possible reorientation in working life in the company context through regional CVET networks.

**Internationalisation of VET.** This priority aims at promoting international VET mobility and skills competitions, fostering VET cooperation worldwide, with a focus on the European education and training area. One portal for VET learners compiles all information on how to organise an internship abroad; another portal addresses VET institutions on how they can support international apprentice mobility.

## CHAPTER 3.

# External factors influencing VET

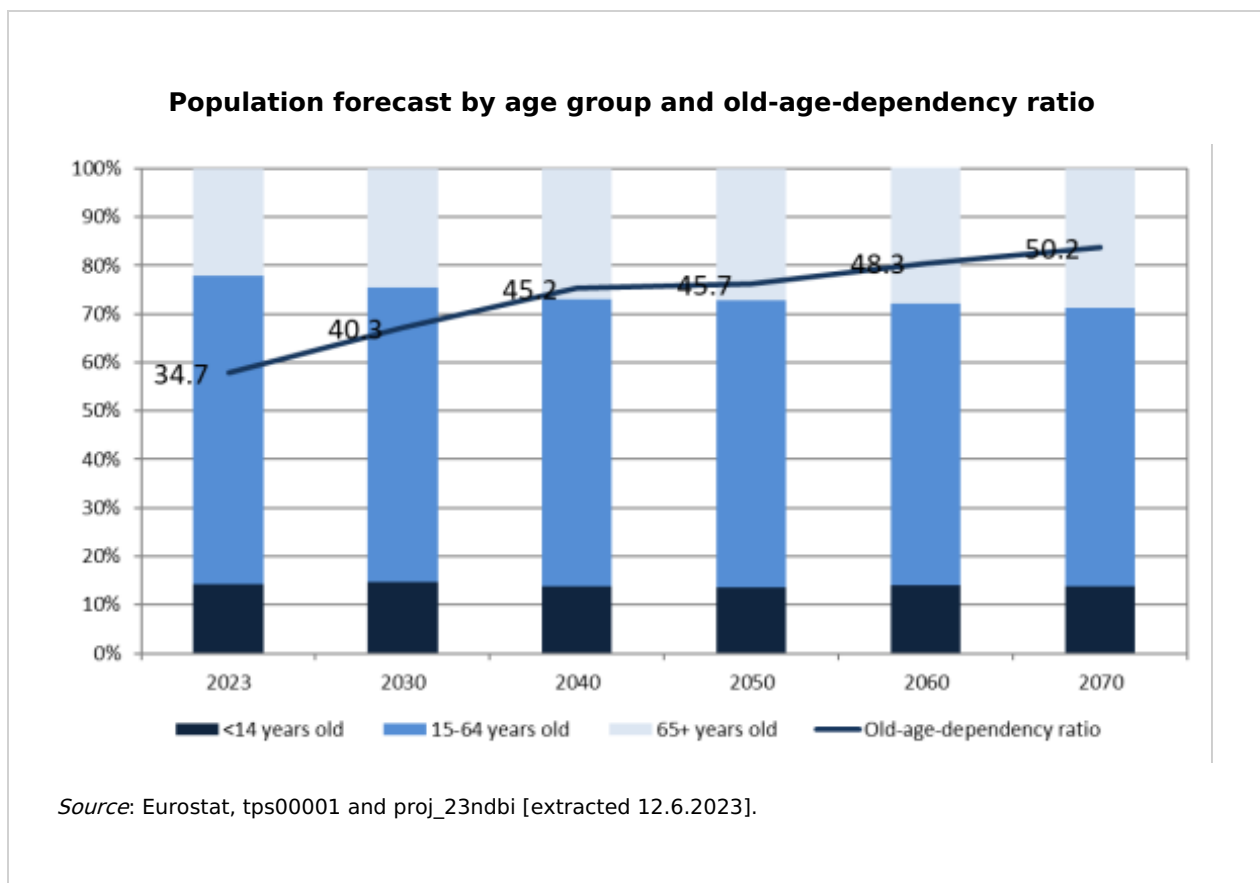
## 3.1 Demographics

Population in 2022: 83 237124 (1) .

It increased by 0.9% since 2017 due to migration (2) .

As in many other EU countries, the population is ageing.

The old-age-dependency ratio, which defines the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15-64), is expected to increase from 35% in 2023 to 50% in 2070. The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64 years).



The ageing of the currently high proportion of middle-age population cohorts will lead to significant shifts in the age structure, once they join the group aged 65+ years. In 2023, 14.2 % of the population were below 14, 63.7% were between 15 and 65, and 22.1% were 65 or older. By 2070, 13.8% of the population will be below 14, but only 57.4% will be between 15-64 years old, i.e. working age. The number of 65+ year-old people will increase to 28.8%. The old-age-dependency ratio will increase from 34.7% in 2023 to 50.2% in 2070. This indicator is the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and over (age when they are generally economically



inactive) and the number of persons aged between 15 and 64.

The Qualification and occupation projections provide an overview of a probable development of the German labour market up to the year 2040. Due to constantly changing framework conditions, the data basis and the modelling method of the projection are regularly updated and revised. The [seventh wave](#) of the BIBB-IAB Qualification and Occupation Projections ([QuBe project](#)) done in 2022, updates the development of labour supply and demand up to the year 2040, differentiated according to 141 occupational groups (three-digit classification of occupations 2010) and four qualification and requirement levels. The QuBe data portal illustrates possible development paths of labour supply and demand. It is becoming apparent that the economy and the labour market are facing upheaval due to shortages. Shortages of resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine are causing prices to rise, and a lack of skilled workers is preventing long-term growth in employment. In the long term, bottlenecks are particularly noticeable in construction as well as in health, IT and technical professions. Time is also running out to achieve the climate targets, despite an accelerated expansion of renewable energies.

## 3.2 Economics

The overwhelming majority (3.2 million) of [companies \(in 2021\)](#) were both micro-enterprises (1-9 employees) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs, 10-249 employees); 19% were classified as micro-enterprises, 21% were small and 17% were medium-sized. Only 17 000 enterprises (44%) had more than 249 employees. However, in terms of turnover, large enterprises dominate. SMEs were responsible for only 29% of turnover in 2021.

In 2023, 57% of the 32 million employees worked in micro-enterprises and SMEs: micro-enterprises employed about 19% of active persons, small enterprises (10-49 employees), 21% were employed in small enterprises, and a further 17% in medium-sized enterprises. These SMEs form the *Mittelstand*, which is playing a major role in the dual VET system by providing the most apprentice placements. Compared to previous years, a larger proportion of apprenticeship training activity takes place in medium-sized as well as large companies, while the participation of micro and small enterprises recorded declines (3) .

In 2023, most [employed persons were working in](#) the tertiary economic sector (mainly services), followed by the secondary sector (production industry) and the primary sector (agriculture, forestry and fishing).

Data from 2022 (4) shows that the share of enterprises providing apprentice placements continued to decrease over the last years: of the almost 2.2 million companies around 408 700 participate in IVET; that makes a company participation quota in VET of 18.9% (19.1% in 2021 and 19.6% in 2019). This trend exists predominantly in small and micro-enterprises, whereas large-scale companies reduce only slightly. There were also differences in terms of the region: in western Germany, one in five companies provides training, in eastern Germany only one in seven. A rise of apprenticeships only occurred in the economic sectors of agriculture and mining as well as in education and teaching. A clearly negative trend in the willingness to provide VET was observed in companies in manufacture of food, paper, wood and other products, metal and electrical products and other personal services (5) .

## 3.3 Labour market

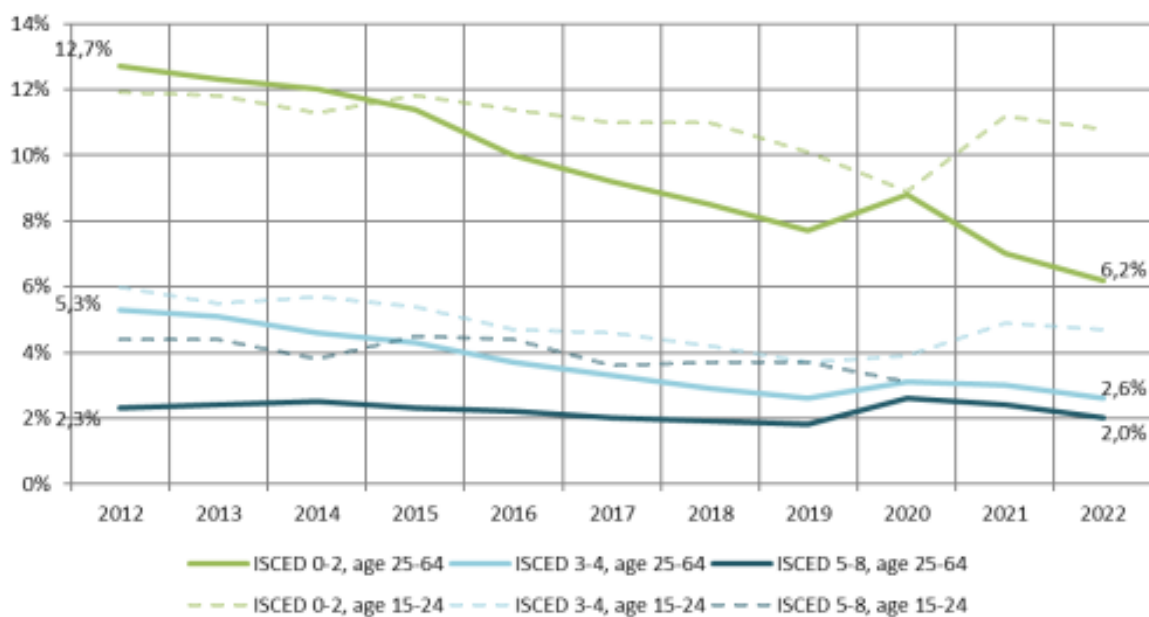
The German labour market faces multiple challenges like the growing shortage of skilled workers and the weak economic development. After an increase from 2.8% in 2018 to 3.3% during the pandemic in 2021, the total unemployment (percentage of active population, aged 25 to 64) has fallen back to the 2.8% in 2022 (5.4% in EU27) (6) . With 45.8 million people in employment (aged 15 to 65), the ratio is 76.9 % in 2022 (7) . Although employment has increased due to the shortage of skilled workers, the weak economic momentum is hampering the development on the labour market (8) .

Most occupations in Germany are regulated and only accessible with the relevant qualification. The dual training system is well established. Nevertheless, there has been a declining number of training demand for some years. This development is due to demographically related declining numbers of school leavers, but also to a trend towards higher school-leaving qualifications and an increased affinity for higher education compared to previous years.

The developments on the apprenticeship market in 2022 show only slight increases in the number of apprenticeships offered by companies. 475 100 training contracts were concluded in 2022. Compared to the previous year, the number rose again by +0.4%, but was still -9.5 % below the figure for 2019. After the number of apprenticeships on offer in 2020 fell by 50 700 (-8.8%) to 527 400 compared to 2019, the number was able to recover somewhat as the offer increased by 1.4%. But it is still 5.9 % behind the pre-Corona offer. Additionally, the number of young people seeking apprenticeships fell from 598 800 in 2019 to 535 500. There was only a slight increase in the number of newly concluded apprenticeship contracts.

Parallel to these changes, VET in Germany must find solutions, especially for the constant problem of matching apprenticeship places and applicants. In 2022, for the first time, there were more unfilled vacancies (68 900) than applicants (60 400) still seeking a VET position. And while the proportion of applicants still looking for a vacant apprenticeship place is gradually decreasing, the proportion of unfilled apprenticeship places is rising. This shows an uneven distribution at regional level and among different professional groups (9) .

**Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2012-22**



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.  
 ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.  
 ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.  
 ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.  
 Source: Eurostat, Eurostat, ifsa\_urgaed [extracted 12.10.2023].

Unemployment is distributed unevenly between those with low- and high-level qualifications. People without educational qualifications bear a higher risk of unemployment even in a good economic situation (10) .

The gap had increased during the Covid-19 crisis, as unskilled workers are more vulnerable to unemployment. Even during the recent years, the share of unemployment stayed the same. In 2020, the unemployment rate of people with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED levels 3 and 4) between the age of 25 and 64, the levels where most VET graduates exist was only slightly above the unemployment rate of people with tertiary education (3.1% compared to 2.6%). Low-skilled people (less than lower secondary education) however, faced a much higher risk of unemployment with the rate at 8.8%. All three levels of education were able to decrease their unemployment rates within the following two years when the shortage of workers in general put a stress on the labour market. But also in 2022, the distribution between the education levels remained the same.

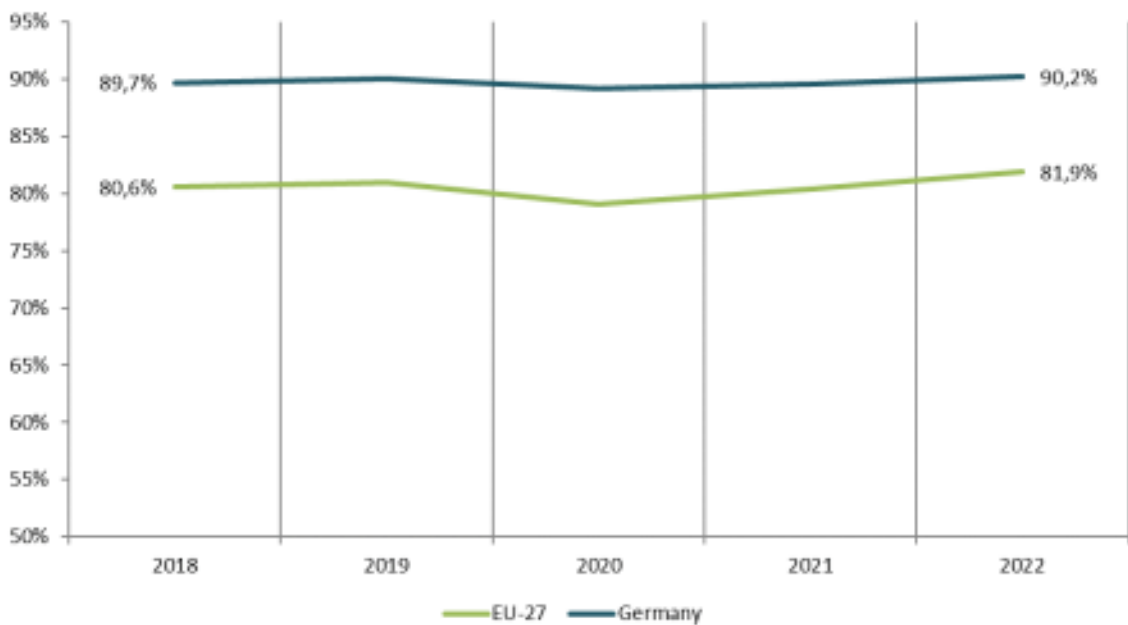
### **Unemployment rate on ISCED levels**

	2020	2021	2022
ISCED level 0-2, age 25-64	8.8%	7.0%	6.2%
ISCED level 3-4, age 25-64	3.1%	3.0%	2.6%
ISCED level 5-8, age 25-64	2.6%	2.4%	2.0%

Source: BIBB and EUROSTAT [Ifsa\_urgaed] [extracted 12.6.2023]

However, looking at the age cohort of 15 to 24-year-olds without a job, which is considered an indicator of youth unemployment, shows a different picture, especially for ISCED level 0-2 educational qualifications. Here, the number has remained largely constant since 2012 with 11.9% unemployed until 11% in 2018. There was a brief recovery in 2019 with 10.1% and even 8.9% during the pandemic in 2020. In 2021 it rose again to 11.2% and settled at 10.8% in 2022. In comparison, the number of unemployed young people with an educational qualification at ISCED level 3-4 was reduced more significantly from 6 % in 2012 to 3.7% in 2019. However, it also increased again in the past three years from 3.9% in 2020 and 4.9% in 2021 to 4.7% in 2022.

### Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.  
ISCED level 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.  
Source: Eurostat, edat\_ifse\_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

Regarding the employment rates of VET graduates aged 20-34 years old (ISCED levels 3 and 4), the developments in recent years showed both stability and little change. The number increased not significantly from 89.7% in 2018 to 90.2% in 2022. In 2019, it increased up to 90%. During the time of the pandemic, it declined to 89.2% but was able to level of at 89.6%. Since 2018, the employment rate of VET graduates in Germany was always much higher than in the EU-27 average, which was in 2022 at 81.9%.

The employment rate of all graduates remained with 83.7% the same from 2018 to 2022. They included the age group from 20 until 35 within all ISCED levels.

For more information about the external drivers influencing VET developments in Germany please see the case study from [Cedefop's changing nature and role of VET in Europe project](#).

- 
- [1] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 and proj\_19ndbi [extracted 12.5.2022].
  - [2] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 and proj\_19ndbi [extracted 12.6.2023].
  - [3] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 196 Tabelle A7.1-1.
  - [6] Eurostat table une\_rt\_a [extracted 12.6.2023].
  - [7] Federal Statistical Office. *Arbeitsmarkt: Erwerbstätigkeit* [Labor market: employment].
  - [8] Statistics from the Federal Employment Agency. *Monatsbericht zum Arbeits- und*

*Ausbildungsmarkt* ; see also: Federal Statistical Office. *Erwerbstätigkeit im August 2023 leicht gestiegen*. Employment increased slightly in August 2023.

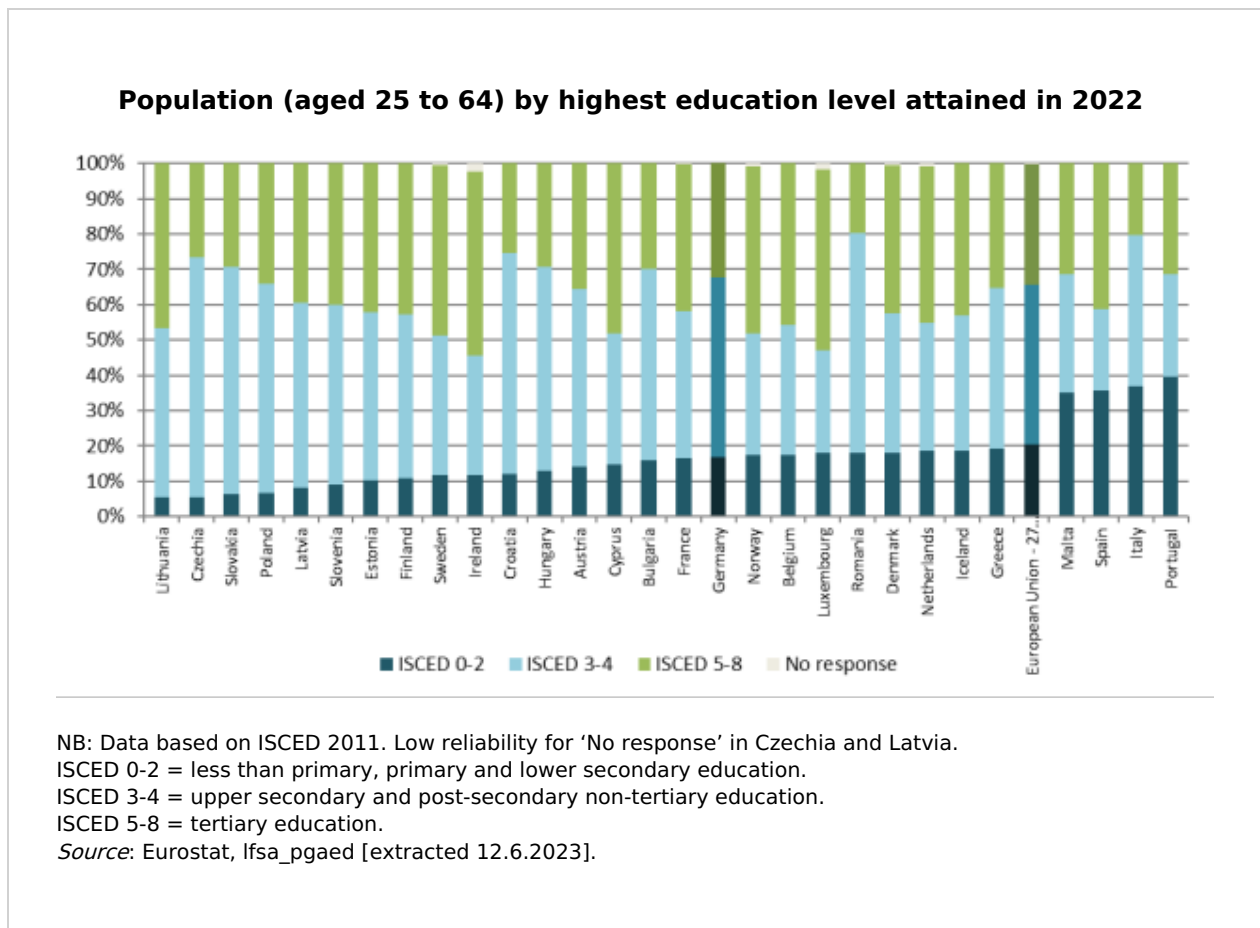
- [9] BIBB (2021). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2021* [VET data report 2021]. Bonn: BIBB, p.9ff.
- [10] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 286.

## CHAPTER 4.

# Education attainment

## 4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

The share of population aged 25 to 64 which has an upper and post-secondary education level (ISCED level 3-4) is the highest at 51% and is thus above the EU-27 average (45.2%). The share of 25-64 years old with higher education level (ISCED level 5-8) was 32.3%, slightly higher than the EU-27 average (34.2%). 16.8% of the population had only reached the lower secondary education level (ISCED level 0-2), which is lower than the EU-27 average of 20.5%.



In Germany, the number of people whose highest educational attainment is within the upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED level 3-4) has been falling steadily within recent years. In 2014, the number of graduates with an ISCED level 3-4 qualification was just over 30 000. In 2018, it was 29 447 and has further decreased to 28 013 in 2020 and to 26 000 in 2022. The number of tertiary education graduates (ISCED level 5-8) has increased from 12 232 in 2014 to 14 455 in 2020 and since then moderately increased to 14 997 in 2022. The number of people with an educational attainment of less than a primary, a primary or a lower secondary

level (ISCED level 0-2) stayed constant until 2020 with 10 633. In 2021 it was 11 640 and in 2022 the number rose to 12 274.

For more information about VET in higher education in Germany please see the case study on [The changing nature and role of vocational education and training in Europe](#).

## 4.3 VET learners by level

### Share of learners in VET by level in 2021

VET in Germany is mainly at the upper secondary and tertiary levels. Upper secondary education includes both the dual VET system (i.e. apprenticeship system) and full-time school-based vocational training. The post-secondary non-tertiary sector is almost exclusively characterised by programmes leading to vocational qualifications as double qualifications, i.e. a general education programme and subsequent vocational training or two IVET programmes in succession. In 2021, of all upper secondary level students the share of VET learners was 47.2%, slightly below the EU-27 average of 48.3%, and of all post-secondary level students, the share of VET learners was 94.6%.

There is a trend from 2017 up until 2021 of increasing shares of VET learners at the upper (2.5 pp) and post-secondary (2.1 pp) level. The share of VET learners on the lower secondary level decreased by 1.2 pp (11) .

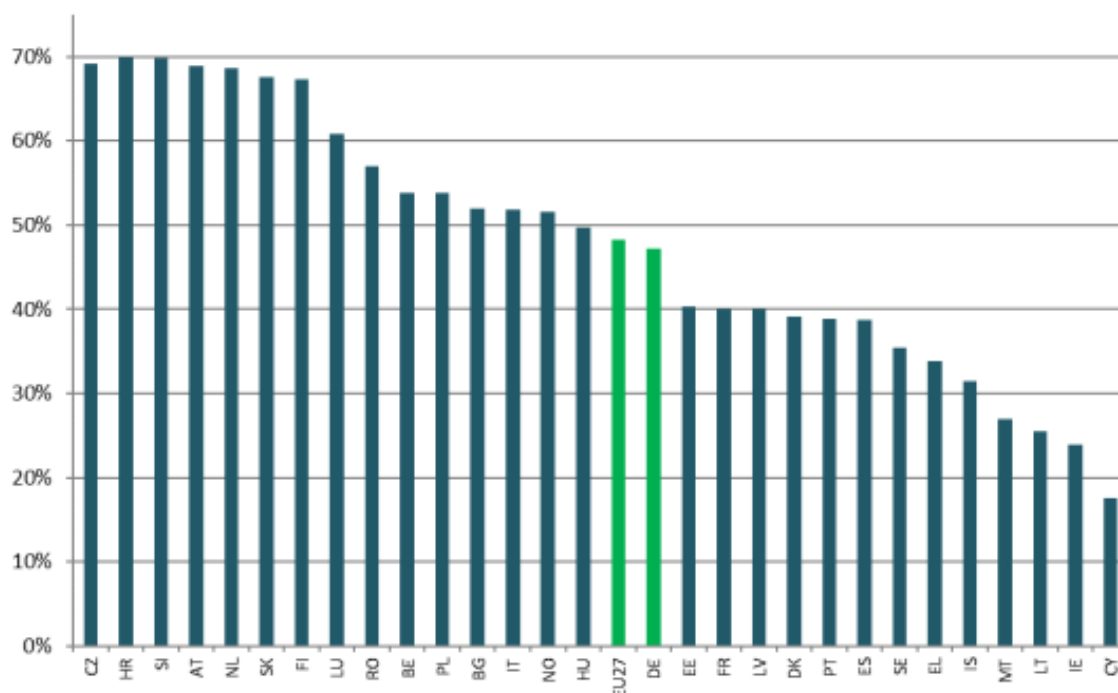
### Share of learners in VET by level in 2021

<b>Lower secondary</b>	<b>Upper secondary</b>	<b>Post secondary</b>
<b>3.5%</b>	<b>47.2%</b>	<b>94.6%</b>

NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ\_uoe\_enrs01, educ\_uoe\_enrs07 [extracted 12.6.2023]

### Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2021



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011;  
 Source: Eurostat, educ\_uoe\_enrs04 [extracted 1.11.2023].

## 4.4 Female share

Still, young women and men continue to orient themselves very differently on the VET market in Germany. This applies not only to the training paths taken by girls and boys, but also to the training occupations they choose. For example, male youths are overrepresented in the dual VET system (65.2% men to 34.8% women), with female youths in full-time school-based training mostly in healthcare, education and social occupations. In 2022, 36.4% of the apprenticeship contracts concluded were concluded with women. The trend observed for years that fewer and fewer apprenticeship contracts in the dual system are being concluded with women, continued in 2023. Over time, a continuous reduction in the proportion of women can be seen: 2020: 34.8%; 2019: 36.6%; 2016: 39.2%; 2013: 40.5%.

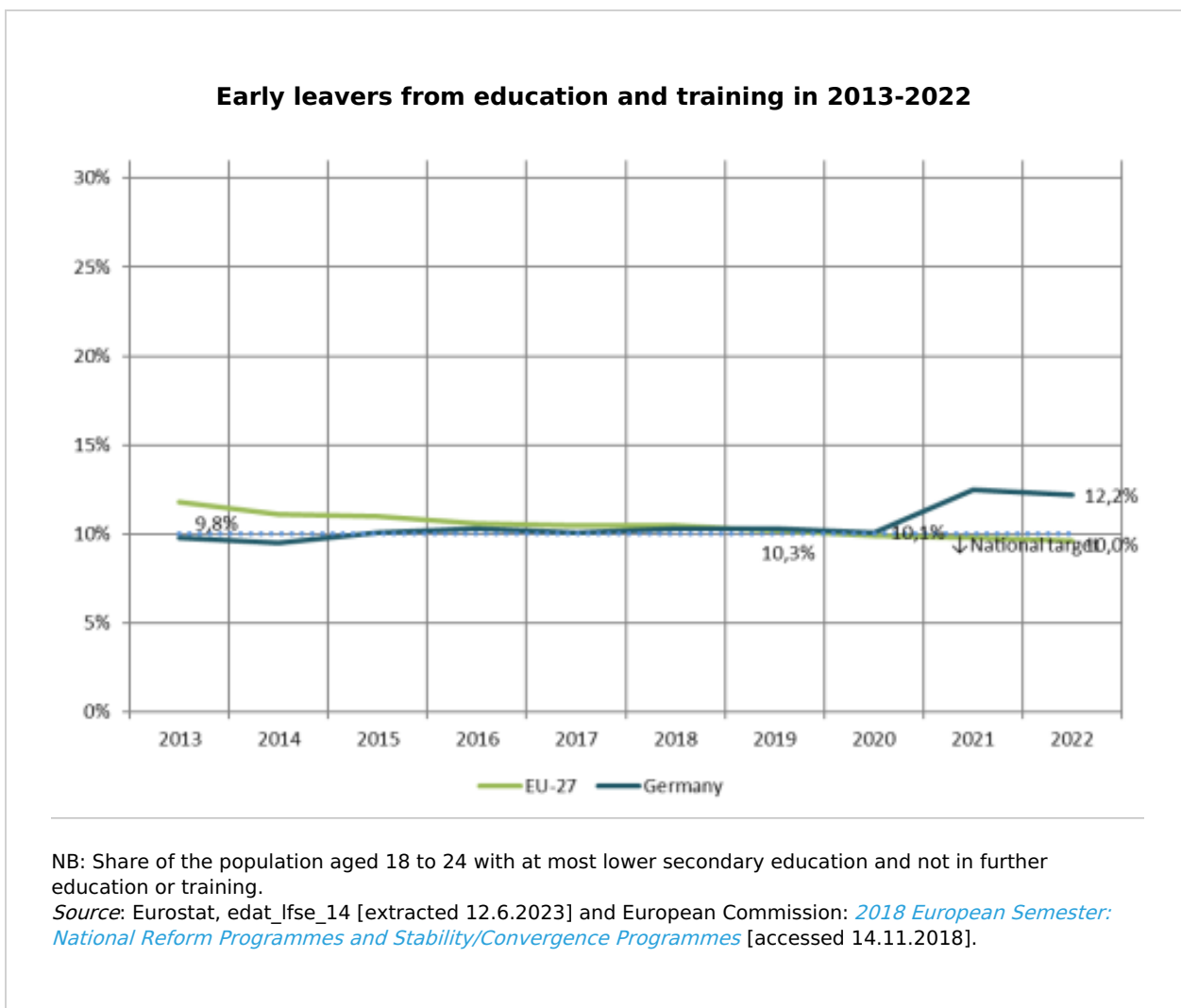
Female youths often opt for full-time school-based apprenticeships, predominantly in health, education and social occupations. While the number of female apprentices in industry, commerce and crafts is continuously falling, they continue to dominate in the liberal professions (2020: 91.6%; 2019: 91.3%), home economics (2020: 87.0%; 2019: 84.7%) and public service (2020: 62.7%; 2019: 62.3%).

In the apprenticeship programmes, the top five occupations for males are automotive mechatronics technician, electronics technician, IT specialist, plant and industrial mechanics. Among female apprentices, the top five occupations are office management assistant, medical assistant, dental nurse, retail saleswoman and saleswoman (12) .



## 4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of students in vocational upper secondary education increased by 2.5 pp from 46.3% in 2016 to 48.8% in 2020 (13) . However, the share of early leavers from education and training has increased from 9.8% in 2013 to 10.3% in 2018. The national target for 2020 of not more than 10% have been almost met with 10.1% in 2020 but exceeded with 12.5% in 2021 and 12.2% in 2022. Foreign-born pupils were three times more likely to drop out of school in 2019 (24.2%) than German pupils (average: 8.1%).



In 2020, joint funding from three federal ministries reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic with the programme [Securing apprenticeship places](#). It pursues the goals of avoiding training drop-outs and maintaining the supply of training places. The federal programme offers financial support to training companies and training institutions in the health and social professions so that the level of training can be maintained, short-time work can be avoided, trainees from other companies can be taken on and contract and joint training can be offered (14) .

Specific support is offered targeting young people who need help to complete vocational training. Enrolment is voluntary and the support consists of special classes and accompanying socio-educational mentors to help apprentices overcome language and education deficits and acquire specialist theoretical knowledge during at least 3 hours a week. The law establishing this measure came into force in May 2015 (15) . It helps apprentices to avoid dropping out of

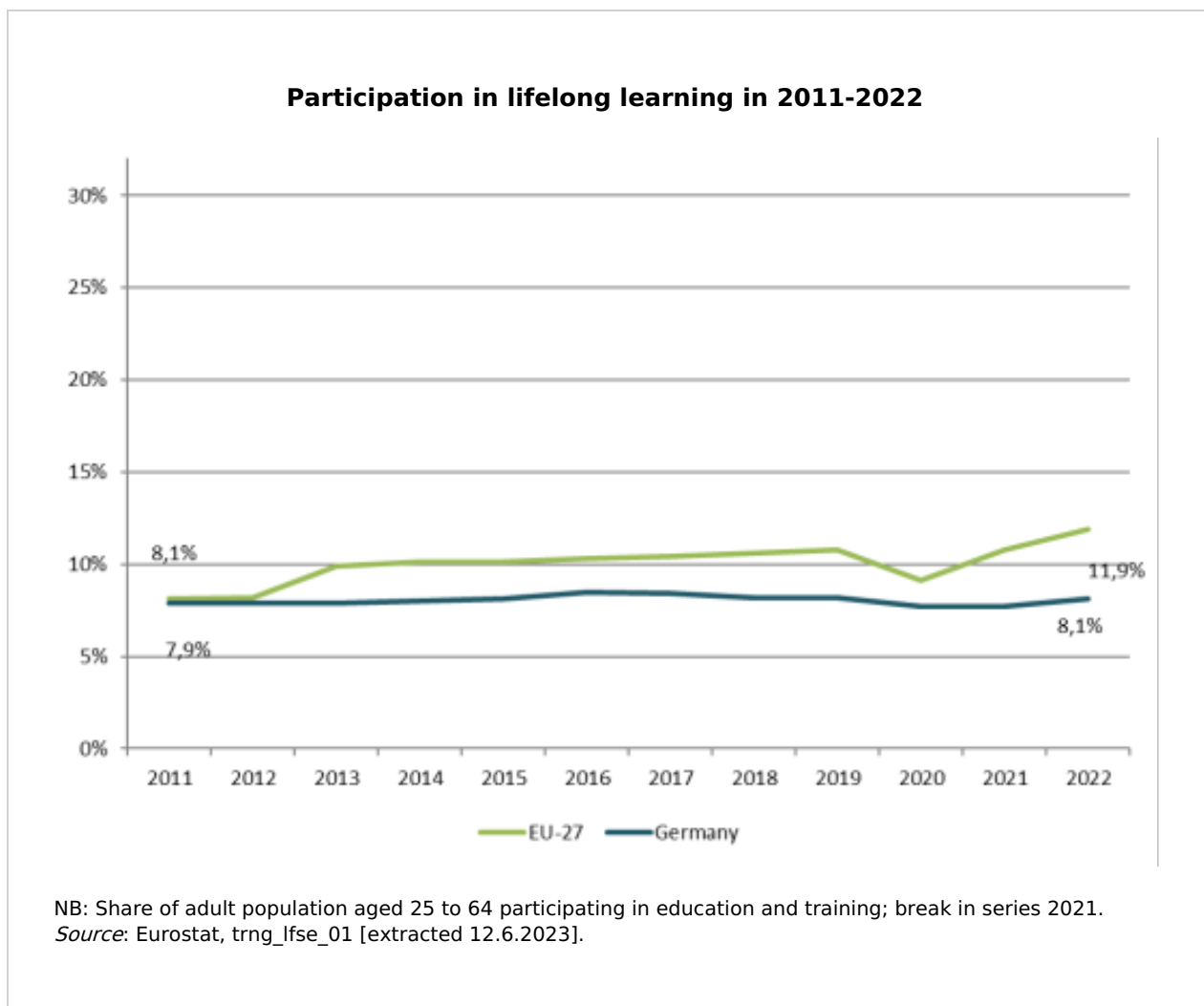
training, stabilise training relationships and complete vocational training. Apprentices with difficulties can receive additional individual coaching by senior volunteers working for the Prevention of training drop-outs initiative, VerA. The senior experts are retired professionals with broad experience in their respective field of work (16) .

Specific measures are also targeting young people who need support earlier, i.e. to obtain a general school-leaving certificate and to make the transition from school to training: it includes career start coaching, introductory training, and preparatory VET. All these measures are part of the Educational chains programme, with a strong preventive approach (17) .

For more information visit [Cedefop project page on tackling early leaving](#) and our interactive toolkits: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#).

## 4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

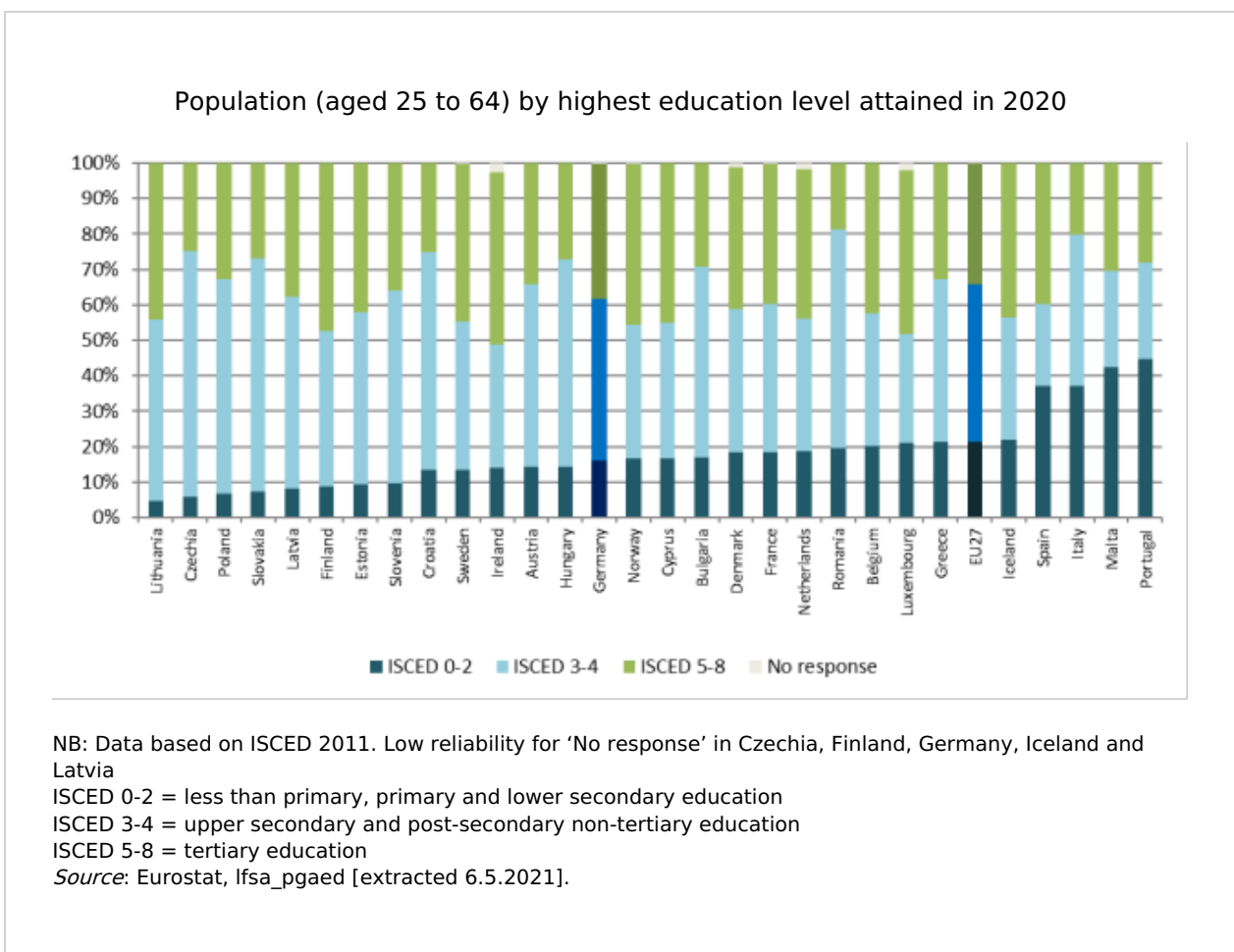
Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, including early leavers from education.



In Germany, participation in lifelong learning decreased from 8.5% in 2016 to 8.2% in 2019. Thus, it remained during those years still below the EU-28 average (9.1% in 2011, 10.7% in 2013 and 11.3% in 2019). Due to the slump in continuing education measures during the COVID-19

crisis, the share of participants in 2020 fell to 7.7%. By 2022, the German share had managed to increase the number to 8.1% which is little below the pre-pandemic share. The pandemic-related consequences such as the cancellation and termination of continuing education courses could only be partially responded to by expanding online-based continuing education offerings. As in other areas, a future shortage of suitable staff in this field of education is to be expected. The European benchmark includes non-formal and formal learning in the last 4 weeks before the survey (Labour force survey) among respondents aged 25 to 64. In the Adult education survey, respondents are asked about learning activities during the last 12 months. In this case, the participation rate in lifelong learning in Germany is much higher: 54% in 2020 (18) . With the [Integrated Continuing Education Reporting](#) project, systematic reporting on continuing vocational education and training was established. The aim of the project so far has been to and partial data from existing reporting systems into an overall picture, to analyse intersections analysing intersections and, if necessary, identifying potential for expansion.

## 4.7 VET learners by age



In 2022, the share of population aged 25 to 64 which has an upper and post-secondary education level is with 51.0% the highest and above the EU-27 average (45.2%), while their share with higher education level was 32.3%, slightly below the EU-27 average (34.2%). 16.8% of the population at this age had only reached the lower secondary education level, which was 3.7% below the EU-27 average.

In comparison to recent years, the trend to an older average age continues. The average age of apprentices in 2021 was 20 years (19) . On average in 2021, they were 22.7 years old when they

completed their apprenticeship. This development is partly due to the higher proportion of apprentices with higher education entrance qualifications (partly due to double Abitur cohorts). An even stronger increase in the average age can be seen among apprentices without a German passport. While the average age of apprentices with a German passport has risen moderately since 2011, for apprentices without a German passport it rose from 20.1 years in 2011 to 22.6 years in 2021.

There is no age limit to be eligible to start an apprenticeship in Germany however, older people mostly opt for vocational qualifications within the framework of retraining (also in-house) or further training (20) .

- 
- [11] NB: Data based on ISCED 2011. Eurostat, educ\_uoe\_enrs01, educ\_uoe\_enrs04 and educ\_uoe\_enrs07.
- [12] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 94.; BIBB (2021). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2021* [VET data report 2021]. p.37.
- [13] Eurostat table educ\_uoe\_enrs04: Pupils enrolled in upper secondary education by programme orientation, sex, type of institution and intensity of participation [extracted 13.06.2023].
- [14] BIBB (2021). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2021* [VET data report 2021]. Bonn: BIBB. p.250.
- [15] Actual expenditures 2017: EUR 97.1 million. Source: BMBF (2018). *Berufsbildungsbericht 2018* [Report on VET 2018]. Bonn: BMBF, p. 121.
- [16] Huisman, A. (2018). *Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed: Germany*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series, pp. 22-26.
- [17] Cedefop (2020). *Vocational education and training in Germany: short description*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- [18] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023], p. 4 and p. 306.
- [20] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 163ff.

## CHAPTER 5.

# VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- primary education (ISCED level 1, EQF level 1);
- lower secondary education (ISCED level 2, EQF level 2 and 3);
- upper secondary education (ISCED level 3), with the dual VET system, i.e. apprenticeship system (ISCED level 3 and 4; EQF level 3 and 4);
- post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED level 4; EQF level 4);
- tertiary VET and education (ISCED levels 5 to 8, EQF levels 5 to 8).

Compulsory education is for all those aged 6 to 18. [Compulsory full-time education](#) lasts 9 years (or 10 years, depending on the Federal State). Afterwards learners still have a [training obligation](#) until the age of 18.

Following 4 years of primary school for all, educational paths are divided in the subdivided school system, consisting of lower secondary programmes (until grade 9 or 10) and upper secondary programmes (until grade 12 or 13).

Progression from IVET at upper secondary level is possible through various regulated VET programmes provided at post-secondary and increasingly at tertiary level.

Besides the IVET system, the German VET system also includes continuing vocational education.

Below is an overview of the VET learning options, which all include WBL:

At upper secondary level:

- apprenticeship programmes (i.e. dual VET incl. WBL of ca. 70%);
- general education programmes with vocational orientation;
- school-based VET programmes;
- transition programmes.

At post-secondary level:

- specialised programmes;

At tertiary level:

- advanced vocational qualifications and exams at EQF level 5 (professional specialist), EQF level 6 (Bachelor professional, e.g. master craftsman, specialist) and EQF level 7 (Master professional e.g. management expert);
- advanced vocational programmes (technician, specialist and similar programmes);
- bachelor programmes;
- master programmes.

At upper secondary level, the apprenticeship or dual VET system (EQF level 4) in Germany is part of the upper secondary education area and is the main pillar of VET. Slightly more than half of an age cohort (2021: 50.7%) begins training in one of the 326 training occupations (21). The entry rate in 2021 represents a slight recovery from the corona-related slump of the previous year

2020 (47.7%). However, the pre-pandemic level (2019: 54.4%) could not be reached again. The distribution within the IVET sector underlines the relevance of the apprenticeship system: in 2022 almost two-thirds (65.1%) of young people started an apprenticeship, the rest started school-based vocational training (34.9%), especially in occupations, which are not offered in the dual VET system (22) .

General education programmes with vocational orientation: the vocational grammar school is a three- or six-year full-time school education programme at upper secondary level (years 11-13) or lower secondary level and upper secondary level (years 8-13) which, in addition to the general education subjects of the upper secondary school, also includes a vocational profile subject, such as economics and technology. Usually, two-week work internships are part of the programme.

School-based VET programmes: these programmes supplement the dual VET in specific professional areas. The spectrum of educational programmes, e.g. at vocational schools, ranges from commercial professions, foreign language professions and artistic professions. The largest sector is social care as well as healthcare. The duration of the obligatory internships varies from profession to profession. Taken as a whole, the school-based VET programmes at upper secondary level differ from dual VET in terms of access, length, types and levels of qualification they lead to (EQF levels 2 to 4) (23) .

Transition programmes: the term transition area covers educational programmes that include vocational preparation and do not lead to a vocational qualification. These are mainly educational programmes at vocational schools such as the pre-qualification year for work/vocational training or the vocational entry year.

At post-secondary level (EQF levels 4 and 5), specialised programmes building on secondary VET impart deeper occupational knowledge and lead to higher education entrance qualifications.

At tertiary level, there are the advanced vocational qualifications and exams. VET in Germany comprises three levels of advanced vocational qualifications (EQF levels 5 to 7). They differ regarding competence requirements and the related operational deployment in companies (24) . Admission to level 7 qualifications requires level 6 qualifications; level 6 qualifications do not require level 5 qualification but can be acquired directly after IVET in the dual system and mostly work experience is necessary (master craftsperson, technician or specialist qualifications).

As part of an [amendment to the BBiG in 2020](#), new designations for the qualifications were introduced: Certified professional specialist (EQF level 5), Bachelor professional (EQF level 6) or Master professional (EQF level 7), making the equivalence of VET and higher education more visible. The designations are internationally more comprehensible and are thus intended to promote mobility on the global labour markets.

These qualifications, which are valid nationwide, are based on standardised further training regulations. Unlike the training regulations for IVET in the dual system, they do not include a curriculum; however, they do define and describe examinations. Other features, which must be specified in the advanced training regulations, include (§ 53 para. 2 BBiG, § 42 para. 2 HwO):

- (a) designation of the advanced qualification;
- (b) the aim, contents and requirements of the examination;
- (c) admission requirements;
- (d) examination procedure.

As a rule, admission to an examination generally requires an IVET qualification in a recognised training occupation (dual VET). The advanced training regulations are laid down by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) by agreement with the competent ministries and following consultation with the Board of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). In line with the BBiG, advanced vocational training as a master craftsperson (*Meister, EQF level 6*) entitles the holder to practice a craft trade independently, to employ and

train apprentices, and opens up access to programmes at craft academies, universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) as well as universities.

Data about this qualification are not fully recorded in the ISCED statistics because admission to the examinations does not generally require participation in a preparatory course or formal education programme. There is political pressure to remedy this lack of transparency in international statistics and to include all programmes that meet the ISCED-2011 level definition in the future.

Advanced vocational **programmes** (ISCED 655; EQF 6) are offered at trade and technical schools, which are regulated according to the state law. Entrance requirements vary by subject area: an applicant normally needs a qualification in a recognised training. More than a quarter of all UAS programmes are offered as dual study programmes (25) . Occupation appropriate to the chosen subject, and relevant work experience of at least 1 year, or a qualification from a full-time vocational school and relevant work experience of at least 5 years. Advanced vocational programmes can be followed as **part-time** or full-time programmes (the latter last between 1 and 3 years) and they lead to a state vocational qualification (e.g. technician, specialist, educator;). Students adopt extensive responsibility and management functions at the workplace. Some trade and technical schools also provide programmes that lead to a formal entrance qualification for the universities of applied sciences. They exist for the following occupational fields: agriculture, design, technology, business and social care. They end with a final state examination under state law.

**Dual bachelor and master programmes** (ISCED 645, 747 and 755; EQF levels 6 and 7) combine two learning venues (the workplace and the education institution) similar to the apprenticeships at secondary level and are offered by universities of applied sciences (UASs, *Fachhochschulen*), the dual university (*Duale Hochschulen*), universities of cooperative education (*Berufsakademien*) as well as some universities. More than a quarter of all **UAS programmes are offered as dual study programmes**.

---

[21] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 59.

[22] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 76.

[23] Cedefop (2021). *Spotlight on VET – 2020 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

[24] Nickel, S.; Pfeiffer I. et al. (2022): *Duales Studium: Umsetzungsmodelle und Entwicklungsbedarfe*. Bielefeld. CHE Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung gGmbH, p. 128.

[25] Nickel, S.; Pfeiffer I. et al. (2022): *Duales Studium: Umsetzungsmodelle und Entwicklungsbedarfe*. Bielefeld. CHE Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung gGmbH, p. 128.

## CHAPTER 6.

# Apprenticeship

### **Apprenticeship scheme (dual VET system)**

Dual VET, which is used as a synonym for apprenticeships, has a high status in Germany. Slightly more than half of an age cohort (2021: 50.7%) begins training in one of the 326 training occupations. Nationwide, in 2021 about 1.26 million apprentices completed a dual VET training (2010: 1.51; 2019: 1.33) (26) . Particularly owing to how it links learning and work, as well as schools and companies, the system appears to be a successful model for structuring the transition from school to working life. It is characterised by two learning places, the in-company training which covers approximately 70% of the learning time, and the VET schools, which supplement the training with theoretical and general learning content.

The primary aim of the apprenticeship is to enable young people to acquire comprehensive vocational competence. After finishing the apprenticeship, they should be able to fulfil their duties as employees efficiently, effectively, innovatively, autonomously and in cooperation with others. The array of competences must be demonstrated in exams regulated by law (Vocational Training Act, BBiG). Final exams are geared to vocational practice, i.e., to the work requirements and processes of the occupation. They are conducted by the chambers. For this task, the chambers are authorised by the State and are officially acting as a public institution. Upon passing the final examination, apprentices receive a chamber certificate to document that training has been successfully completed. This certification of qualification is fully recognised and highly trusted among employers. Performance in VET school subjects is evaluated via school reports.

An apprenticeship in the dual system normally lasts 3 years (27) . On average, young people take up VET at the age of 20.0. Compulsory education must have been completed before starting an apprenticeship. There are no further formal access requirements but companies select their apprentices and the majority of them hold either the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate (*mittlerer Schulabschluss*) or the lower secondary school leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*). However, the share of apprentices with a higher education entrance qualification has been rising as well: in 2021, almost one in three apprentices (29.7%) was a high-school graduate (28) . This group followed successively both paths of education at upper secondary level: first the general, followed by the vocational qualification. Despite being classified as 'upper secondary', IVET is also considered by high-school graduates as an alternative option to tertiary education. As in the past years, the largest group in 2021 was those with the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate (*mittlerer Schulabschluss*), at 41.4%. About one in four (24.0%) had a lower secondary school leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*). The proportion of new trainees without a school leaving certificate was very low at 2.8%.

The repartition of apprentices according to the economic sector of occupation was as follows in 2019: 56.3% in commerce and industry, 28.4% in the craft sector, 9% in liberal professions, 3.3% in the public sector, 2.6% in agriculture and 0.4% in housekeeping.

Apprenticeship places are offered in both enterprises and public institutions. Enterprises enter into a contract with apprentices, where they bear the costs of the in-company training and pay the apprentice remuneration. The remuneration is regulated by collective agreement and increases with every year of training, averaging about a third of the starting pay for a trained skilled worker. In 2022 the average collectively agreed training remuneration was EUR 1 028 gross per month, exceeding for the first time EUR 1 000 (29) .



## In-company training part

Training regulations are the basis for the in-company training part. They define the professional competences that the apprentices have to acquire in their specific occupation. They are valid nationwide, which guarantees a uniform national standard. In 2021 **four new themes have been introduced to supplement all training regulations:**

- digitised working world;
- environment and sustainability;
- safety and health at the workplace;
- company, VET, labour and tariff law.

All companies involved in training are obliged to integrate these subjects into their individual training plans. The basis for learning in the VET schools is the framework curricula, which are aligned with the training regulations. If SMEs are unable to provide all the stipulated learning content: they may lack suitable training personnel, or, owing to their particular specialisation, may not cover all the training content themselves. There are various ways to overcome these problems:

- inter-company vocational training centres (*überbetriebliche Berufsbildungsstätten, ÜBS*) designed to supplement in-company training: education institutions offer periods in these training centres, which are often sponsored by autonomous bodies in the relevant sectors of industry. Since 2016, digital transformation in the training centers of the ÜBS has been promoted by funding the purchase of **digital equipment** as well as selected pilot projects on adaptation of teaching and learning processes;
- enterprises can form joint training structures (*Ausbildungsverbände*). There are four traditional models for this:
  1. lead enterprise with partners (*Leitbetrieb mit Partnerbetrieben*): one enterprise takes the lead and bears overall responsibility for training; however, parts of the training are conducted in various partner enterprises;
  2. training to order (*Auftragsausbildung*): some training takes place outside the regular enterprise, perhaps in a nearby larger one with a training workshop, on the basis of an agreement and against reimbursement of costs;
  3. training consortium (*Ausbildungskonsortium*): several SMEs sign a cooperation agreement and work together on equal footing. They take on apprentices and train them independently. If an enterprise cannot cover a specific area of content, the apprentice moves to another enterprise (rotation principle);
  4. training association (*Ausbildungsverein*): enterprises establish an organisation which takes over administrative tasks such as contracting, while the enterprises conduct training. Association structures usually comprise a general meeting and an honorary committee. A statute regulates members' rights and obligations.

## Flexibility of training occupations

Three structural models can be distinguished for training occupations in the dual system:

- the so-called mono-occupations, whose qualification profile does not formally show any specialisation. This means that the training content is identical for all trainees in the same occupation nationwide e.g. baker, bank clerk.
- training occupations allowing for differentiation in areas of specialisation and thus take into account specific company features, i.e. training can be differently in the same occupation in different companies. They affect a maximum of 6 months of the total training period. If there are sector-specific features, a stronger differentiation can be made via specialisations. These concern the last year of training and are examined accordingly at the end of the training, e.g. roofer, microtechnologist.

- training occupations allowing optional qualifications. This model is mainly considered for highly specialised sectors. Here, in the second half of the training, bundles of competences can be individually combined to form a vocational profile, e.g. electronics technician (30) .

Since the amendment of the [Vocational Training Act in 2005](#), there is the possibility of providing so-called 'codified additional qualifications' in the context of apprenticeship. They go beyond the content of a training occupation. Additional qualifications allow for flexible shaping of in-company training with regard to the qualification requirements in the company. This enables companies to respond promptly to changing skills needs, which is becoming increasingly important due to developments in digitalisation. At the same time, it is an attractive opportunity for young people to upgrade their vocational qualifications.

## Challenges

Dual vocational training has traditionally been highly valued in Germany. It enables young people to enter working life after leaving school and secures skilled workers for companies. Societal challenges such as demographic change and the slight decrease of the attractiveness of dual VET have a major impact on the ability of society to implement decarbonisation and digitization. Without enough skilled labour these goals can't be reached.

In a longer time comparison, the number of apprentices has declined significantly. This development is due to a demographically induced decline in the number of school leavers, but also to a trend towards higher education compared to earlier years. Furthermore, the training market had to cope with considerable losses in 2020 in the wake of the corona pandemic and the associated restrictions. It has not recovered from this by 2022. Compared to 2019, an of the market can be observed. The further declines on the demand side and the increasing difficulties of companies in filling vacancies may jeopardise the securing of skilled labour. According to the results of the BIBB survey as of 30 September 2022, 0.4% more training contracts were concluded in 2022 compared to 2020 (31) . Previously, however, the numbers of new contracts had declined in 2020 and 2021. For the first time (since 1992) in 2020, the number of new training contracts was below 500 000.

While staffing problems have increased for companies, the situation regarding supply has continued to improve from the point of view of many young people. In 2022, 68 900 apprenticeship places remained unfilled (+9.0%), while 60 400 training place seekers were still registered (2020: 78 200). However, the share of unsuccessful applicants as a proportion of the officially identified demand for 2022 decreased at 11.3% (32) . The matching problem varies significantly regionally but also with regard to occupations. The skilled crafts and trades sector was particularly affected by a shortage of applicants. Many public policy measures are aiming to counteract these developments.

The trend towards higher qualification of the last few years, with regard to the general school-leaving qualifications of trainees in the dual VET system, also continued in 2022. Since 2015, more new training contracts have been concluded with young people with a university entrance qualification than with a lower secondary school leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*).

The integration of young people with a migration background and refugees into the dual VET system is both an education policy and a social policy goal. The apprenticeship entry rate of young people with a foreign passport in 2021 was 35.1% and thus slightly lower than the entry rate before the pandemic (2019: 38.4%). In both years the rate was significantly lower than that of German youth, which was at 52.7% (2019: 56.3%) (33) . For young people with a migration background the entry into an apprenticeship can be difficult for a variety of reasons. The latest BA/BIBB survey (2021) among former dual VET applicants shows that almost one third (29%) of the young people with a migration background registered with the federal employment agency (BA) had found a placement and had begun an in-company apprenticeship. In contrast, this percentage was for those without a migration background with 43% much higher (34) .

As a result of the Russian war of aggression around 1.1 million refugees from Ukraine have been registered in Germany in 2022. According to the rules of the Residence Act, they can also start an apprenticeship. But the extent to which Ukrainian applicants in the context of refugee migration sought to enter the German dual training system in 2022 can not be determined on the basis of training market data from the Federal Employment Agency (BA) (ibid.).

Two important sources of information and data on the dual apprenticeship scheme in Germany are the yearly [Report on vocational education and training](#) and the corresponding [Data report on VET](#).

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from the [European database on apprenticeship schemes](#) by Cedefop.

- 
- [26] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB; BIBB (2021). [Verzeichnis der anerkannten Ausbildungsberufe 2021](#) [List of recognised training occupations 2021].
  - [27] Some occupations only require 2 years and there are also regulations allowing a shorter training period for apprentices with an *Abitur* (the school leaving certificate allowing entry to higher education).
  - [28] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 133; 163.
  - [29] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 90, 129, 219.
  - [30] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, pp. 58.
  - [31] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 9.
  - [32] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 10.
  - [33] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 296.
  - [34] BIBB (2021). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2021](#) [VET data report 2021]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 286.

# CHAPTER 7.

## VET governance

The constitution of Germany regulates the responsibility for education. It lies with the Federal States. The federal government is responsible for regulations on the company-based part of VET as well as continuing education and training. The governance system is characterised by a close partnership between the State and the social partners at all levels. The [Vocational Training Act](#) defines in detail, which institutions are in charge of organising, developing and monitoring in-company IVET in Germany as well as vocational training preparation, advanced vocational qualifications and vocational retraining.

### **The role of Federal government**

Dual VET, i.e. the apprenticeship system, is based on nationally recognised occupations and vocational training regulations, which guarantee a national standard. The federal government is responsible for designing the dual VET content for the occupations. Depending on the sector, different ministries are involved. In most cases, this is the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy. The approval of the Federal ministry of education and research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*, BMBF) is always required, so the ministry provides coordination and guidance for VET policy for all training occupations.

The BMBF is responsible for monitoring developments in VET and publishes [annual reports](#). These reports are supplemented by the [VET data report](#) of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) providing detailed data and background information. It is also responsible for the Vocational Training Act (35) and the legal supervision and funding of the BIBB. The federal government's responsibilities also include measures to promote dual VET. These measures include permanent support programmes as well as special funding programmes, which, for example, aim to create additional apprenticeship places in less popular regions or to finance specific programmes for disadvantaged. The federal government is involved in programmes and strategies to strengthen CVET and also provides funding for special research projects to ensure VET is constantly updated.

Nationally, the BIBB is the core institution for consensus building between all parties involved in VET. Its four-party Board advises the government on fundamental issues of in-company vocational training and is involved in setting standards and designing training regulations. The institute conducts research and identifies future tasks for VET, promotes innovations and develops new, practice-oriented proposals for solutions.

### **The role of the Federal States**

According to the Constitution, responsibility for education lies with the Federal States. This also applies to the area of VET with regard to VET schools. The respective competent State ministries coordinate their activities via a standing committee (36) to ensure a certain degree of uniformity and comparability. The standing committee decisions are recommendations, and only become legally binding when passed by the individual State parliaments. The Federal States have vocational training committees, with equal representation of employers, employees and the State authorities. They advise the Federal State governments on vocational training issues in schools and also contribute to designing schemes that support disadvantaged youths and provide opportunities for additional qualifications that require school-based training.

### **The role of social partners**

The dual system is based on a close cooperation between employers, trade unions and the government. Social dialogue and codetermination are important for reforms to be accepted. The

social partners - employer organisations and trade unions - have considerable influence on the content and form of VET to ensure their requirements and interests are taken into account. Responsible action by all participants - beyond each group's particular interests - is a precondition for the efficiency of the dual VET system. Their representatives are members of the Federal Institute for VET's main board, participate in the vocational training committees at the Federal State level as well as those of the competent bodies.

Organising apprenticeship/dual VET requires a complex but clear division of responsibilities. The structure of vocational training must meet the demands of industry but also of the learner. If there is a need for change - such as in qualification requirements - representatives of the federal government, State governments and the social partners agree on the basic principles. They are involved in drafting occupational standards requirements or developing new training regulations. The social partners are also involved in the process of referencing the German qualifications framework to EQF.

### **The role of competent bodies**

Competent bodies (*Zuständige Stellen*) play a crucial role in Germany. The largest group are the professional chambers. Their tasks are monitoring training in companies and ensuring the quality of in-company training, advising companies, trainers and apprentices; establishing and maintaining lists of training contracts; organising the exam system and holding final exams. Each competent body has a tripartite vocational training committee whose members represent employers, trade unions and teachers.

The chambers, including the chambers of industry and commerce, the chambers of skilled crafts and the appropriate professional boards for the liberal professions are non-profit corporations under public law. In some areas, they have been assigned public tasks as 'competent bodies' in dual VET, e.g. in the context of the examination. As self-governing business they also represent the interests of their economic sector in their chamber district vis-à-vis the political institutions and the public administration.

---

[35] Berufsbildungsgesetz (BBiG).

[36] Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK).

## CHAPTER 8.

# VET financing mechanisms

In Germany, initial and continuing VET is based on mixed financing by various public and private bodies. These include the [Federal Ministry of Education and Research](#), [Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action](#), the [Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#), the [Federal Employment Agency](#), the States and their ministries of employment, economic, education or cultural affairs, local authorities, companies, unions, chambers, associations, private institutions and individuals themselves. In this respect, financing for initial VET and continuing general and vocational education differs quite substantially from the schools and universities sector, which benefits from relatively comprehensive public funding.

### **Funding of IVET**

In the dual or apprenticeship system, in-company training is usually financed by the individual enterprise: an enterprise decides whether or not it will offer training and in which occupations. It decides how many apprentices it will take on, and how much it wants to spend on training in general. Enterprises enter into a contract with apprentices and pay them remuneration. This is regulated by collective agreement and increases with every year of training, averaging about a third of the starting pay for a trained skilled worker. In 2022 the collectively agreed training remuneration averaged EUR 1 028 gross per month and exceeded above EUR 1 000 for the first time (37) .

According to the most recent calculations by the Federal Institute for VET (38) , based on a representative study for the apprenticeship year 2017/18, the gross costs for companies were around EUR 27.2 billion for 1.3 million apprentices. In the same period, trainees generated earnings of EUR 18.7 billion, so the net cost to the companies for apprenticeships amounted to around EUR 8.4 billion (39) . The study also shows that employers invest on average EUR 20 855 per apprentice per year (61% for remuneration and social benefits for apprentices; 24% for salaries of trainers; 11% other costs and 4% equipment). If the companies' benefit from the apprenticeships is included in the calculation, 69% of investment is refinanced by the productive contribution of apprentices during training (40) .

Small and medium-size enterprises, in particular skilled crafts companies, are important training suppliers. It might happen that they are unable, or not fully able, to provide all the facets of training required by regulations. This is primarily due to the increasing division of labour in working processes, increasing specialisation or accelerated technological change. The limited suitability of such enterprises as training providers is compensated by supplementary external training measures in inter-company vocational training centres (41) or through joint training structures (42) . Inter-company vocational training centres are operated mainly by public law bodies (municipalities, chambers and guilds) or non-profit private law bodies (trade associations). There is mixed financing, with subsidies from the federal employment agency, the federal government (capital grants from the education ministry (43) and the Federal States added to the resources of the responsible body. Funding is offered for the [modernising and restructuring of inter-company training centres](#) to adapt them to changing education and training policy and economic conditions, as well as the [challenge of digitalisation](#).

The school-based element of dual VET is financed by Federal States and local authority public funds: EUR 3.5 billion in 2022 (EUR 3 billion in 2018) for the public vocational schools providing for apprentices (44) . The States bear the costs of internal school affairs (supervision of schools, laying down of curricula, teacher training, teachers' pay), and the local authorities are responsible for financing external school affairs (construction, maintenance and renovation of school buildings, management, procurement of teaching and learning resources).

A further EUR 6 billion is used to finance other types of schools in the vocational education system, such as full-time vocational schools, specialised grammar schools, specialised schools, specialised upper secondary schools and vocational preparation years in 2022 (45) . Additionally, special measures to promote VET, such as support programmes (often partly financed by ESF funds) to create additional apprenticeship places for specific target groups or in less popular regions, are financed from the Federal or State budgets (46) . The federal government also provides funding for special research and innovation projects to ensure that VET is constantly updated as well as in [international cooperation in VET](#) (47) .

The VET-related expenditure of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (48) and the Federal Employment Agency (49) applies to both pre-VET and IVET (i.e. grants for young people) and, since 2015, a support measure for companies training young people who would otherwise have difficulty finding a training place (50) . The Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action (51) supports SMEs in their apprenticeship training, among other things, by subsidising inter-company vocational training in the skilled crafts sector.

## **Funding of CVET**

Companies, the State, the Federal Employment Agency and private individuals themselves are involved in financing continuing VET.

The federal government contributes to [financing continuing training via funding programmes from various ministries](#). The Federal States participate in financing continuing training in a similar fashion. Acting together with local government, and in some case municipal associations, they continue to finance adult education centres (52) , teacher training institutes and other continuing training institutes (53) .

In order to increase the attractiveness of VET careers and to promote the permeability of VET into higher education, the [federal government finances an upgrading scholarship](#). Prerequisites for this are completed IVET programme, work experience and special achievements. In addition, further education while working.

The support of the Federal Employment Agency (54) for CVET focuses on the costs for CVET activities as well as on professional reintegration or the prevention of impending unemployment. Thus, the subsequent acquisition of a vocational qualification by adults or retraining are also supported. The possibilities for funding were expanded in 2019 by the employment service ([Qualification Opportunities Act](#)) as well as the counselling services for employees and companies. In 2022, the funding from the Federal Employment Agency was EUR 2.5 billion (55) .

In 2020, companies in Germany invested EUR 1 347 per employee in CVET. The overall economic investment volume in CVET increased by 2.3% and amounts to EUR 46.4 billion compared to 2019. Digitalisation is a major driver for continuing education: digitalised companies invest more time and money in continuing education than other companies. The largest share of CVET, 89.3%, takes place during paid working hours. 37.2 % of companies offer formal further training, 85.4% offer non-formal training (56) .

According to a study of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) from 2016, individuals contribute a considerable amount to the financing of CVET, although employers fund the majority. Most individual funding is for formal training courses and advanced vocational education; these are comparatively rarely jointly financed by employers. The total expenditure of private individuals on CVET amounted to EUR 17.8 billion (57) .

---

[37] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 219.

[38] Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB).

[39] Wenzelmann, F; Schönfeld G. et al. (2022). [Kosten und Nutzen der betrieblichen Ausbildung 2017/18](#) [*Costs and benefits of in-company training 2017/18*]. Bonn. BIBB. p.

117.

- [40] [THEMATIC\_8 BIBB (2021). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2021* [VET data report 2021]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 232.
- [41] Überbetriebliche Berufsbildungsstätten (ÜBS) and in the skilled trade sector (ÜLU).
- [43] Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)
- [44] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 232.
- [45] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 232. BIBB (2021). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2021* [VET data report 2021]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 239.
- [46] Specific information on all public funding activities is available on: BMWK. *Ihr Weg zum passenden Förderprogramm* [Your way to the right funding programme].
- [47] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 232. BIBB (2021). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2021* [VET data report 2021], p. 238, p. 239.
- [48] Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (BMAS)
- [49] Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)
- [50] assistierte Ausbildung (AsA)
- [51] Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz (BMWK).
- [53] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 366. BIBB (2021). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2021* [VET data report 2021]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 352.
- [54] Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA)
- [55] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 366.
- [56] Seyda, S. et al. (2024). *IW-Weiterbildungserhebung 2020: Weiterbildung auf Wachstumskurs* [IW Continuing Education Survey 2020: Investment volume at all-time high]. IW. Köln. p. 3, 6.
- [57] Müller, N., Wenzelmann, F. (2018). *Berufliche Weiterbildung: Aufwand und Nutzen für Individuen* [Continuing vocational development: Cost and benefit for individuals]. BIBB. Bonn. p. 4.



## CHAPTER 9.

# Teachers and trainers

## 9.1 VET teacher types

Germany differentiates between teachers and trainers in initial and in continuing VET. The focus of the following information is on teachers and trainers in the dual system of training (apprenticeship), but it also provides a brief description of teachers in full-time vocational schools and on continuing VET teachers and trainers (58) .

### Types of teacher and trainer in IVET

Type of training	Type of staff
Work-based IVET programmes (Dual system of training: apprenticeship)	<p>Training staff in companies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• at least one registered responsible trainer (mostly part-time) having passed the examination on trainer aptitude;</li><li>• skilled workers providing training at their particular workplace, without being trainers themselves;</li><li>• full-time trainer or master craftsperson in company or inter-company VET centre, as well as VET manager in large company.</li></ul> <p>Teachers in part-time VET schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• university trained VET teachers for vocational and general subjects;</li><li>• university trained grammar school teachers for general subjects;</li><li>• side-entering teaching staff, without a teacher qualification but with expertise for vocational subjects with teacher shortage (mostly university trained);</li><li>• ‘technical’ teachers for vocational practice with work experience (e.g. Meister, technicians) having attended a further training course with the Federal State seminars of pedagogy.</li></ul>
School-based IVET programmes	<p>Teachers in full-time VET schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• university-trained VET teachers for vocational and general subjects;</li><li>• university-trained grammar school teachers for general subjects;</li><li>• side-entering teaching staff without a teacher qualification but with expertise for vocational subjects with teacher shortage (mostly university trained);</li><li>• ‘technical’ teachers for vocational practice with work experience (e.g. Meister, technicians) having attended a further training course with the federal state seminars of pedagogy.</li></ul>
External learning facilitators (mentors, coaches, counsellors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual career-start mentors for the transition from school to apprenticeship and senior volunteer coaches for apprentices at risk of early leaving from VET until successful completion of their training;</li><li>• Youth social workers in training schemes for vulnerable groups, training counsellors at the chambers, vocational guidance counsellors employed by the federal employment agencies, etc.</li></ul>

In the dual system, there are in-company trainers and teachers at part-time VET schools: in-company trainers are in charge of training the apprentice at the workplace, according to the training regulation for the specific occupation and the individual training plan. According to the [Vocational Training Act](#), only in-company trainers who possess pedagogical and professional aptitude are eligible to train. The aptitude of the training staff is guaranteed by the competent chamber that registers them (e.g. chambers of industry and commerce, chambers of skilled crafts). These competent bodies are responsible for adopting examination regulations and setting up examination boards to conduct aptitude examinations for trainers, according to the [Trainer Aptitude Regulation](#). To support in-company trainers in acquiring the required competences, the chambers and other education providers offer different types of courses. The Federal Institute for VET recommends taking a 115-hour course to prepare for the Trainer Aptitude Regulation examination.

Most initial VET trainers are skilled workers, journeymen or forepersons. They engage in training part-time directly at the workplace. However, any company carrying out apprenticeship training has at least one employee who is the designated trainer and has proven his aptitude to take over this task by successfully passing the examination according to the Trainer Aptitude Regulation. Many trainers in skilled crafts also hold an advanced qualification certificate as master craftsman.

Vocational school teachers are trained under the jurisdiction of the Federal States (*Länder*). They teach theoretical knowledge (general and occupation-related). VET school teachers must have a university degree at the master level (EQF level 7), including internships in companies and schools. The master degree is followed by an 18-month preparatory school service (59) . The process is regulated by a framework agreement adopted by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (60) in 1995 and last amended in 2018: the Framework agreement on the training and examination for teaching at the Secondary Level II (vocational subjects) or for vocational schools. For occupation-related subjects and vocational practice at school, there are also special teachers without a university degree but with professional experience and further pedagogical training (61) .

### **Teachers and trainers in non-formal continuing VET**

There is a wide variety of professionals acting as teachers or trainers in non-formal continuing VET; there is no common standard for what constitutes a continuing VET teacher or trainer. Their formal qualifications vary widely as does their occupational status, from retired or unemployed to qualified employees in training institutions. If formal advanced vocational training takes place in public sector establishments (such as trade and technical schools, colleges), the training, employment and activities of the teaching staff are based on criteria laid down in the relevant State legislation for teaching staff (62) .

## **9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers**

The advanced vocational qualifications for in-company trainers build on one another. In addition to the examination in accordance with the Ordinance on Trainer Aptitude (63) , the advanced VET qualifications of Certified initial and continuing education pedagogue (64) (EQF level 6) and Certified vocational pedagogue (65) (EQF level 7) have been developed by VET stakeholders in 2009 and provide professional skills in pedagogy and management. These qualifications entitle trainers to take additional tasks, such as searching and selecting apprentices or managing training. The occupational profiles include online tutoring, development of teaching materials, ability to identify apprentice skills, and leadership skills (66) .

The range of the preparation courses is large and allows the choice between different forms of teaching and learning. In addition to part-time and full-time seminars, evening and weekend

offers, there are also numerous online courses, mostly combined with attendance phases. The courses can be provided in or outside the company, for example by the chambers or other institutions providing CVET. The durations of the advanced courses are 500 hours for EQF level 6, and around 2 years for EQF level 7 qualification. The 'competent bodies' (mostly the chambers) are responsible for organising and carrying out the examinations and certifications.

From the non-formal perspective, there is a variety of opportunities for CPD provided by the employer, the chambers and other educational institutions. For example, regular updating of specialist knowledge and skills is necessary, in particular in the technical-commercial and the skilled crafts occupations. Digital media literacy is of high importance as well. The portal [leando.de](https://leando.de) (former foraus.de) is a trainer information and exchange forum providing online learning modules. This flexible and low-threshold offer is important to address specific trainer competences.

The conditions for continuous professional development (CPD) of VET school teachers are determined by the Education Act (*Schulgesetz*) of the relevant State and therefore might differ among the single States (*Länder*). In general, teachers are obliged to follow continuous training to maintain and develop their skills and competences. In its Länder common guidelines for the CPD of teachers, adopted in March 2020, the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (67) underlines the importance of CPD due to changing conditions (e.g. growing heterogeneity of learners; inclusion and digitalisation) and encourages teachers to build their personal professionalisation portfolio.

Each school draws up a CPD plan for its educational staff. A broad spectrum of VET teaching competences and topics are covered: technical, pedagogical/didactic and transversal. The CPD is offered in different formats, the preferred being half-day CPD on-site (to avoid cancellation of classes), as well as in-process CPD at school, distributed over a school year. Online and blended learning formats are becoming more common, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. The CPD offer can be provided through different structures, but is often organised by federal institutions dedicated to quality development of schools and teachers and subordinated to the respective federal ministry of education. CPD can also be organised by the school or close to the school by a local institution, universities, and external providers (68) .

For more information visit Cedefop project page on [Teachers' and Trainers' professional development](#) and our interactive toolkits for VET practitioners: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#). You may also read [Cedefop/ReferNet country reports on Teachers and Trainers in a Changing World](#) and [Cedefop comparative analysis](#).

---

[58] See also: Huismann, A.; Hippach-Schneider, U. (2022). *Teachers and trainers in a changing world: Germany*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

[59] *Vorbereitungsdienst*

[60] Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK).

[61] This section is based on: Huismann, A.; Hippach-Schneider, U. (2022). *Teachers and trainers in a changing world: Germany*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

[62] See also: Hippach-Schneider, U.; Huismann, A. (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe: Germany*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018.

[63] AEVO, *Ausbildereignungsprüfung*.

[64] *geprüfter Aus- und Weiterbildungspädagoge*

[65] *geprüfter Berufspädagoge*

[66] BMBF (2013). *Qualification possibilities for trainers: certified education and training educator and certified vocational trainer*. Bonn: BMBF.

- [67] Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK).
- [68] Huismann, A.; Hippach-Schneider, U. (2022). *Teachers and trainers in a changing world - Germany: Building up competences for inclusive, green and digitalised vocational education and training (VET)*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

## CHAPTER 10.

# Shaping VET qualifications

## 10.1 Anticipating skill needs

Systematic recording and research into future skills needs was already initiated in the 1999 resolutions by the Alliance for Jobs, Training and Competitiveness (69) .

The Federal Institute for VET (70) monitors new skills requirements using the following different main approaches:

- [qualification and occupational fields projections](#) (71) : in cooperation with the Institute for Employment Research (72) and the Institute of Economic Structures Research (73) , forecasting model calculations on labour market developments by 2040 are set up. Longer-term developments in occupational fields and qualifications can now be displayed in a more differentiated manner. Projections include areas where a considerable shortage of skilled workers may occur and in which skills levels are at risk of being affected by unemployment. This makes it possible to take necessary action at an early stage to improve the match between supply and demand in the labour market;
- company surveys help to build a comprehensive picture of technological and organisational developments and the associated skills requirements. Such surveys are conducted once or twice a year among the companies represented on the Federal Institute for VET panel. Known as the [reference company system](#), these are more than 1 400 training and non-training firms which vary in size, sector, legal form, length of time in operation and main occupations. There are also surveys in selected sectors geared towards particular fields of work to receive reliable information on the requirements in individual occupations;
- [the VET 4.0 initiative Effects of digital innovation on vocational training](#) was launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Education and Research (74) and the Federal Institute for VET. It includes various projects;
- [Survey of the working population on qualification and working conditions in Germany](#): this data collection is meant to provide differentiated and representative information on the working population and jobs in Germany for quantitative employment and qualification research as well as for occupational health and safety reporting;
- [wbmonitor](#): in cooperation with the German Institute for Adult Education (75) , the wbmonitor makes a contribution to provide research and improvement of the continuing education data. Every year, it supplies information on developments within the sector, its organisation and the offers available;

These research activities focus on changes in existing fields of work or the emergence of new fields, and the accompanying development in qualification requirements, including the factors which influence these. In addition to quantitative assessment, the Federal Institute for VET qualification development also identifies qualitative trends. The Ministry of Education and Research also supports the development of a 'labour market barometer' (76) , a [future-oriented labour market monitoring system](#). The Federal States and several regions pursue individual early identification activities (including regional monitoring of qualification developments, and skill needs surveys). Social partners are also involved in early identification, mainly in the context of [modernising initial and further training regulations](#). All these activities help ensure that VET adapts to and meets qualification needs. Investigations into skill needs and qualification development are also carried out by:

- sector-specific associations, such as the Association of Engineers and the German Association of Information Technology, Telecommunications and New Media (BitKom);

- the Institute for Employment Research;
- several foundations, such as the [Hans-Böckler Foundation](#), [Friedrich-Ebert Foundation](#), [Konrad-Adenauer Foundation](#) and the [Bertelsmann Foundation](#);
- other stakeholders (77) .

See also [Cedefop's skills forecast](#) and [European skills index](#). More information on national qualifications frameworks and the qualifications types can be found in the [NQF online tool](#).

## 10.2 Designing qualifications

Cooperation based on mutual trust is essential between government and social partners. Employers and trade unions jointly formulate the requirements for the occupational standards. All cooperation related to VET is based on consensus; no regulations concerning initial or further VET may be issued against the declared will of either of the social partners. The employers and the unions assume responsibility through their codetermination in shaping VET. Without this codetermination, social partners would be unwilling to take responsibility. This connection forms the basis of a working 'public-private partnership' (PPP).

### Designing qualifications

This section describes the shaping of qualifications in the dual VET system (apprenticeship), which is the predominant form of initial VET in Germany (70% workplace training and 30% of participation in full-time school-based VET). Key elements of dual VET are training occupations (78) . These form the basis for in-company training and are complemented by the respective framework curricula from the school-based part of apprenticeships. The Vocational Training Act (79) defines the requirements that these training occupations must meet, ensuring binding quality standards and the protection of minors (80) . Since it is a federal government responsibility to decide on these training occupations, they are called 'State-recognised training occupations'.

### Developing standards

[Training regulations are issued for recognised training occupations](#) by the relevant ministry, usually the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (81) , in agreement with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (82) . These form the legal framework and contain minimum standards for the in-company part of initial training for individual occupations.

The development of new training regulations and framework curricula (or the adaptation of existing ones to meet changing vocational practices) follows a standardised procedure, involving the federal government, the State governments, employers, trade unions and vocational education researchers.

The Vocational Training Act (83) stipulates that training regulations shall specify:

- the name of the training occupation;
- the duration of training (between 2 and 3 years);
- the training occupation profile, i.e., what a learner is expected to know, understand and be in a position to do;
- the framework training curriculum, a guide to structuring the learning process in terms of time and content;
- the exam requirements.

These key points, also referred to as 'benchmarks', form the basis for a proposed revision or development of a new occupation. Usually, the initiative to modernise a training regulation or to develop a new one comes from the social partners. Once a proposal has been submitted to the relevant ministry, training regulations are drawn up in three steps:

So-called 'codified additional qualifications' provide an additional flexibility and adaptability of

training occupations to the changing qualification needs on the labour market. Since the amendment of the [Vocational Training Act in 2005](#), there is the possibility of providing them in the context of apprenticeships. They supplement or broaden vocational competence and go beyond the training occupation profile.

### **Defining the ‘benchmarks’**

These are set in a meeting (‘an application interview’) at the relevant ministry (in most cases the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action) (84) in which the social partners and State governments participate. In many cases, the Federal Institute for VET (85) issues an opinion or, particularly when larger scale revisions are being considered, conducts research before the ministry takes its decision. The Federal Institute for VET provides the platform for this process and also coordinates and moderates it.

### **Elaboration and coordination**

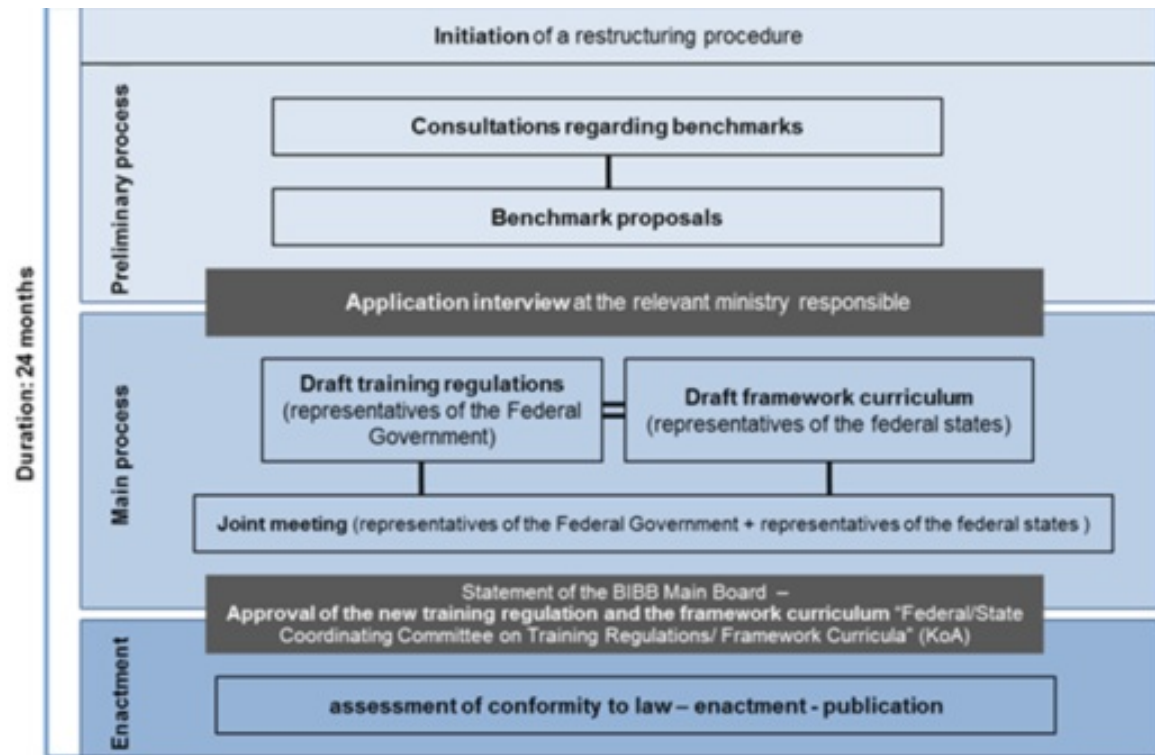
Social partner umbrella associations are asked to designate experts to design the [training occupation](#) together with the Federal Institute for VET (BIBB). The work on the training regulation framework curricula is coordinated with the work on the corresponding framework curricula for the part-time vocational schools drawn up by Federal State representatives to ensure they complement each other.

### **Adoption of the regulation**

The relevant coordinating committee of the federal government and the Federal States approves the new [training regulation](#) and the VET school framework curriculum. The training regulations generally offer enough flexibility to adapt to new technologies and to meet changing demands on training companies, because they are formulated in a broad sense, also with regard to digitalisation.

The Federal and State governments have agreed to limit the duration of the development process to around a year. In the years 2011 to 2022, 124 [training occupations were reorganised](#). These included 118 modernised and six new training occupations. Twelve modernised training occupations came into force on 1 August 2022 (86) . Additionally, in [2021 four new themes have been introduced](#) to supplement all training regulations: digitised working world, environment and sustainability, safety and health at the workplace, and company, VET, labour and tariff law. All companies involved in training are obliged to integrate these subjects into their individual training plans.

## Procedure for updating of training regulations



Source: Author's illustration following Barbara Lorig et al. in: bwp, [Konzept zur Gestaltung kompetenzbasierter Ausbildungsordnungen](#) [Concept for the design of competence-based training regulations] No 20, June 2011.

- [69] Bündnis für Arbeit, Ausbildung und Wettbewerbsfähigkeit.
- [71] Qualifikation und Beruf (QuBe).
- [72] Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung (IAB).
- [74] Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)
- [75] Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE)
- [76] Arbeitsmarktbarometer.
- [77] Hippach-Schneider, U.; Huisman, A. (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe: Germany*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018.
- [78] *Ausbildungsberufe*.
- [79] Berufsbildungsgesetz (BBiG)
- [80] BIBB (2017a). *Training regulations and how they come about*. Bonn: BIBB.
- [81] Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz (BMWK)
- [82] Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)
- [83] Berufsbildungsgesetz (BBiG)



- [84] Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz (BMWK).
- [85] Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB).
- [86] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p. 62.

# CHAPTER 11.

## Quality assurance

Three overarching principles are significant for understanding quality assurance in VET. These are the dual principle, the occupation principle (87) , and the principle of consensus:

- the dual principle combines learning in the work process with learning at a vocational school, and at the same time facilitates the acquisition of occupational experience;
- the occupation principle is based on certification, which is binding and recognised across the country. It offers the possibility to practise a wide range of occupational tasks;
- the principle of consensus guarantees proximity to the labour market as well as transparency and acceptance of training occupations via the involvement of the social partners, the Federal Government and the Federal States in developing national training standards.

Laws, ordinances and recommendations stipulate nationally-binding minimum standards for company-based training (88) .

Important instruments of quality assurance in VET are highlighted below:

- national standards based on the VET law,
- monitoring of initial and continuing VET learning, and
- the referencing of the German qualification framework (DQR) to the EQF, allowing more transparency and comparability of qualifications within the EU.

### **VET law as basis for quality assurance**

The [VET Act](#) and the [Trade and Crafts Code](#) describe the required standards for training facilities and trainers, training regulations and examinations. Training regulations are revised every few years to keep pace with rapid technological and organisational change (89) . As company-based VET is a core part of the German dual system, employer and employee organisations are important stakeholders in quality assurance in initial VET (90) . The Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) has a key role in VET policy, including developing training regulations and setting minimum standards for company-based initial VET. The local chambers of industry and commerce and chambers of skilled trades monitor regulations on training facilities and trainers. They also advise companies on these topics. Employer and employee organisations, as well as teachers, are equally represented on their examination boards. All apprenticeship contracts have to be registered at the chambers.

The framework curriculum required for the school section of dual education and training is regularly revised by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (91) . Compliance with quality assurance requirements by initial VET providers is monitored by the local school authorities. Quality assurance approaches are based on quality frameworks, education standards, centralised exams, monitoring and benchmarking exercises and school inspection. In some cases, for example *Baden-Württemberg Landesinstitut für Schulentwicklung*, specialised agencies for quality development are in charge of supervising the vocational schools.

### **Monitoring and data for evidence-based VET policy**

The education ministry (BMBF) publishes an annual report on VET, providing a wealth of information and analysis on various aspects of its development. It is accompanied by the Federal Institute for VET (BIBB) data report which brings together data from different sources (own data, data from federal statistical office, statistical offices of the States, Federal Employment Agency,

Institute for Employment Research) on training entrants and on the outcomes of training (such as share of employed learners, occupation obtained after training). The report sets the basis for policy decisions on VET, including programme funding. Several other projects also inform VET provision:

- the Federal Employment Agency and the Federal Institute for VET conduct regular surveys with school leavers and job applicants to follow up transitions to VET;
- every 2 years, the [national education report](#) analyses developments of the education system, including VET;
- the German education panel study (NEPS) investigates education returns, competence development during lifelong learning, and transitions from VET to the labour market.

### Quality assurance in CVET

Quality assurance is mandatory for continuous VET providers receiving public funding: employment agencies issue learning vouchers only in certified programmes offered by accredited providers. Accreditation of continuous VET providers and programmes is done by private certification bodies according to criteria set out in the ordinance regulating accreditation and certification in continuing training. A four-party (State and federal level; employer and employee organisations) advisory council consults the certification bodies. The BMBF funds regular checks of CVET providers through an independent foundation and has prepared a [quality checklist](#) to help find a CVET offer and provider of good quality. The BIBB together with the German Institute for Adult Education (92) , operates the online platform [wbmonitor](#), which is dedicated to supporting continuous VET in Germany. It conducts a [yearly survey of public and private CVET providers](#) and monitors developments in the labour market.

### National qualification framework

The German qualifications framework (DQR) has eight levels. It is based on learning outcomes and focuses on the German concept of 'vocational action competence': a holistic and integrated approach to competence acquisition during VET, rather than one based on acquiring isolated skills and competences. The DQR is developed as a transparency instrument without providing any legal duties or rights, neither for individuals nor for education providers or enterprises. The DQR was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in 2012. In addition to the equivalence of vocational and higher education, the equivalence of vocational and general education was made visible. Furthermore, criteria and procedures to include non-formal learning in the DQR are under discussion (93) .

---

[87] *Berufsprinzip.*

[88] BIBB (2017). [Quality assurance of company-based training in the dual system in Germany](#), p. 7.

[89] In the period from 2013 to 2022, 118 occupations (more than a third of all 326 recognised occupations) were modernised, while 6 occupations have been created (see BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023] A 3.2, p 62).

[90] BIBB (2017). [Quality assurance of company-based training in the dual system in Germany](#).

[91] Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK).

[92] Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE).

[93] Cedefop (2020). [Vocational education and training in Germany: short description](#). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

## CHAPTER 12.

# Validation of prior learning

### **Validation of non-formal learning: final exams for external candidates**

The most important tool for assessing non-formal learning outcomes is admission to final vocational examinations under the Vocational Training Act (*BiG*) and the Trade and Crafts Code (*HwO*), known as the *Externen-Prüfung* (examination for external candidates, i.e., those not involved in a formal vocational training programme). Under this provision, people can be admitted to a final examination for a recognised occupation requiring formal training (training occupation) if they provide evidence that they have been employed in the relevant occupation for a period that is equal to or longer than one and a half times the initial training.

Credit can be obtained for a higher level of general education attainment, such as the entrance qualification for specialised upper secondary school (94) , which shortens the period of employment for which evidence must be produced. A previous relevant initial VET programme in a different training occupation can also be credited towards the required periods of employment.

Apart from the practical part of the examination, where relevant professional competences are tested, external candidates must prove their theoretical knowledge in a written examination. Candidates can prepare either on their own or by following preparatory classes offered by the relevant chambers (95) .

In 2021, 4.9% of all final examinations for a recognised occupation were external examinations, almost identical with the previous year. There is, however, considerable variation in the proportions of external examinations between individual fields. Housekeeping is the area where external examinations are most significant for acquiring a vocational qualification, with just below 40.1% of candidates in the reporting year taking external examinations. In contrast, external examinations are virtually irrelevant for skilled crafts and liberal occupations, at 1.2% and 1.0%. Between these two extremes, other figures include 4.0% in the public sector, 6.4% in trade and industry and 8.5% in agriculture (96) .

### **Project to set up a validation system**

The [ValiKom](#) project, agreed between the education ministry and the national organisations of German chambers (DIHK and ZDH), has been operational since 2015. ValiKom is considered as the reference project to set up a validation system in Germany. It addresses adults who acquired skills and competences through work but lack a formal qualification, including those who wish to access further training. The approach refers to the prevailing training regulations and occupational profiles and leads to certificates (97) expressing the extent to which the skills demonstrated are equivalent to those normally gained under the Vocational Training Act. [The participating chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts started piloting in 2017](#). The results of this reference project in developing a validation system are presented in a handbook with process description, admission criteria, instruments, certificate of validation and recommendations (2018).

The follow-up project ValiKom-Transfer aims to expand and broadly transfer the standardised procedure for recording, reviewing, assessing and certifying informally and non-formally acquired vocational competences developed and tested in ValiKom, in about 40 selected occupations for people without vocational qualifications and for qualified career changers. By the end of 2022, 32 chambers participating in ValiKom-Transfer (now also chambers of agriculture) were carrying out.

### **Assessment and recognition of foreign vocational qualifications**

The [Vocational Qualifications Recognition Act](#), introduced in April 2012, provides individuals with the right to have their foreign-acquired qualifications matched to a German qualification by an appropriate authority. The act relates to over 600 regulated occupations including those in dual training, the master craftsman or other advanced vocational qualifications. It also covers occupations such as nurses, medical doctors and lawyers. Depending on the sector, assessment and recognition of foreign occupational qualifications is carried out by [IHK Fosa](#) or lead chambers (*Leitkammern*). The implementation of the [Recognition Act is monitored and documented](#) reports published regularly. The [2023 report on recognition act](#) was published in February 2024.

Information and guidance are essential to success in the recognition process. The federal government has established a range of comprehensive services, such as the '[Recognition in Germany](#)' website, the counselling network of the Integration through qualification (IQ) programme and the 'Working and living in Germany' telephone hotline, a project run jointly by the Federal Employment Agency and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (98) . Where documentation of the acquired qualification is missing or incomplete, a [skills analysis](#) can help to demonstrate professional competences in a practical way (via a work sample, a work test at a company or an interview). Since 2019, the NetQA network supports regional chambers in conducting skills analyses.

A project of the education ministry and the association of German chambers of commerce and industry, which started at the end of 2015, offers recognition consultants to provide personal consultancy for people interested in having their qualifications recognised while still in their countries of origin (ProRecognition). The funding and residency options available for upskilling training where a foreign qualification has not been judged fully equivalent to a German qualification were substantially expanded in 2015. In March 2020, the [Skilled Immigration Act](#) came into force. This grants applicants from non-EU-countries with a recognised VET qualification the possibility to live and work in Germany. There is one exception: IT specialists with highly developed practical professional knowledge can come to Germany without recognition and practice their occupation. The new Central Service Agency for Professional Recognition (ZSBA) makes the entire recognition procedure more transparent and efficient for applicants through counselling. Another new feature is the possibility to enter Germany for up to 6 months to look for a training place. The new [Skilled Immigration Act](#), passed in March 2023, makes it easier for skilled workers with vocational training and individuals with practical knowledge to immigrate to Germany. Some new provisions were phased in from November 2023 and some amendments were implemented in March 2024.

The federal government's law on assessing professional qualifications has proven an effective instrument in helping people with qualifications acquired outside Germany to integrate into the labour market and in securing a supply of skilled workers. Between 2012 and 2022, 279 375 applications for recognition were made in professions governed by federal law alone. Half of these qualifications acquired abroad, were certified as being fully equivalent to the relevant German reference qualifications. Most of the qualifications recognised were in the regulated professions, especially in healthcare (nurse, doctor) (99) .

---

[94] *Fachoberschulreife.*

[95] Cedefop (2020). [Vocational education and training in Germany: short description](#). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

[97] *Gleichwertigkeitsfeststellung.*

[98] *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF).*

[99] see also BMBF. [Die Duale - für das DU in AusbILDung](#). [The dual training] Cedefop (2020). [Vocational education and training in Germany: short description](#). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

## CHAPTER 13.

# Incentives for learners

### Promoting participation in VET

To promote participation in VET, the initiative [Alliance for initial and further training](#) (*Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung*) was launched in 2015 and [last prolonged in 2023 until 2026](#). The initiative was signed by representatives of the federal government, Federal Employment Agency, trade unions, employers' organisations and Federal States. The Alliance aims to:

- increase the number of training companies and apprentices and avoid drop-outs; to this effect, a *Training guarantee* was introduced in July 2023, providing a subsidised vocational orientation internship, a mobility grant, and making participation in introductory training easier;
- promote the attractiveness of vocational training to meet the need for skilled labour;
- strengthen continuing vocational training to face transformation processes and higher VET as equivalent alternative to academic education.

In 2017, the Pact for VET brought together diverse activities and initiatives of the education ministry for the development of a modern, attractive and dynamic VET to form an overall strategy, which increases the visibility and esteem of VET pathways. One important accomplishment was to modernise the Vocational Training Act (*BiG*), which came into force in 2020 and is explained in the [dual training portal](#). Following the Skilled labour strategy of the federal government in October 2022, the [umbrella initiative Excellence in VET](#) launched in December 2022 aims to increase the attractiveness of VET for all young people - with a special focus on talented learners. The initiative combines existing and new measures into an overarching agenda, e.g. InnoVET PLUS programme launched in May 2023. The *dual - VET with system campaign* promotes programmes supporting inter-company training centres or vocational orientation at secondary general education schools.

The [National skills strategy](#), launched in 2019 and renewed in 2022 by all main actors in continuing and advanced VET, is another pillar for promoting VET. The legislations that followed (Qualification Opportunities Act, Work of Tomorrow Act and Upgrading Training Assistance Act AFBG) expanded funding to promote participation in qualifying CVET measures and to secure employment of skilled workers despite changes brought by digitalisation, demography, and the climate and pandemic crises. Two funding programmes ([InnoVET](#) and [INVITE](#)) are supporting innovative projects for a modern and excellent CVET as well.

In the [care and nursing sector, which is in great need of skilled staff](#), an important reform was introduced in 2019-20, making the training and working conditions much more attractive. The BIBB Nursing Panel (with currently almost 6 700 participants) was set up in 2021 to improve the data situation in nursing through long-term monitoring of training activities (first survey wave in 2022/23).

To [secure apprenticeship placements](#) which were at risk during to the Covid 19 pandemic, the government had launched a programme in 2020 for the apprenticeship years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

### Incentives for initial VET learners

#### Apprentice remuneration

According to the [Vocational Training Act](#), the training company shall pay apprentices an appropriate allowance. The [amendment of the Act in 2020](#) introduced minimum training wages.

The amount and payment procedure are specified in the training contract. Training allowances are based on collective wage agreements or on minimum training wages.

Average apprentice remuneration across Germany for 2022 was EUR 1 028 gross per month (increasing from the first year of training at EUR 930 to the fourth year at EUR 1 135). There are significant differences in the level of remuneration between the training sectors and occupations. In 2022, the highest monthly allowances were for the skilled craft occupation of carpenter (EUR 1 254) followed by bricklayer (EUR 1 209). At the other end, the lowest monthly remuneration was for the apprentices as maker of orthopaedic footwear (EUR 652) followed by hairdresser and chimneysweep (EUR 657 and EUR 723) (100) .

For apprenticeships beginning in 2023 the minimum wage was EUR 620. In subsequent years, the minimum training remuneration will be adjusted annually to the average development of all training allowances. This regulation does not apply to apprentices in companies with collective bargaining agreements, where the wages are part of the social partner agreements (101) .

#### [Basic vocational training grant](#)

Financial support is offered during IVET and prevocational training organised by the federal employment agency to help apprentices overcome the economic difficulties that can stand in the way of appropriate vocational qualification. The overall monthly needs of the apprentice not living with his or her parents are estimated and the amount which cannot be covered by own/parents' income is subsidised. In 2022, 45 000 persons undergoing vocational training and 14 000 participating in pre-vocational training measures received funding and support through such a grant (maximum EUR 781 per month plus, if applicable, commuting expenses of max. EUR 476 per month) (102) . There are also [vocational training grants specifically adapted to the needs of learners with disabilities](#).

#### [Assisted training](#)

Since 2020, it has been legally anchored as a further developed permanent support instrument, in which the former 'support during training' measures (2015-20) are also included. This ongoing support and socio-pedagogical guidance before and during in-company vocational training is individually geared to the needs of the young person and also addresses the company side. In 2022, 34 403 young people were beneficiaries (103) . It helps apprentices to avoid dropping out of training, to stabilise training relationships, to complete vocational training, and to support starting a new job (up to 6 months). 6 months after completing a measure, 82% of participants were in jobs subject to social insurance contributions.

#### [Pre-VET measures](#)

[Prevocational education and training measures](#) as defined in the German Social Code (SGB III) prepare young people who need extra support for vocational training or, if they cannot yet start training for inherent personal reasons, to enter employment in the mainstream labour market.

Pre-VET measures give participants opportunities to assess their skills and abilities as part of the process of choosing a possible occupation, e.g. through internships. The measures also provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to start initial vocational training. They can support them in their preparation to acquire a secondary general school-leaving certificate or equivalent school leaving qualification; if this is not or not yet possible, it helps place participants in employment and sustainably integrate into the training and/or labour market.

Around 45 000 young people in need of extra support participated in a prevocational training measure in 2022 (104) .

#### [Introductory training for young people](#)

The primary goal of [introductory training](#) is to give young people (although there is no actual age limit) with limited prospects of being placed in training an opportunity to acquire modular qualifications towards a recognised occupation. Introductory training also offers companies

providing training an opportunity to get to know young people, not just in a brief job application interview, but to observe their skills and abilities over a period of 6 to 12 months in daily work processes.

Companies which offer introductory training enter into a contract with the young people concerned. Employers receive a subsidy per month to remunerate apprentices, plus a flat-rate contribution towards the average total social security amount payable. On completion of the work placement, participants receive a certificate issued by the competent body (e.g. chamber of industry and commerce, chamber of skilled crafts). In certain circumstances, up to 6 months' credit for the work placement can be offset against the qualifying period of a subsequent apprenticeship. In 2022, around 8 000 young people began introductory training (105) .

### Training placements

Training placements are offered to all young people through employment agencies and jobcentres. The agencies also offer employers specific consultancy services and approach them to enquire about training places. In the 2021/22 reporting year, 546 000 training places and 422 000 training applicants were registered with the federal employment agency (106) . In addition, a [Training guarantee](#) was introduced in July 2023, providing a subsidized vocational orientation internship, a mobility grant, and making participation in introductory training easier.

### Special measures for integrating refugees into IVET

Integrating young people with migration background and refugees in the education and VET system and in the labour market is a priority. Keys to integration are learning the host language, validation of formal and non-formal and informally acquired skills, provision of vocational orientation and access to pre-VET and VET programmes, apprenticeships, upskilling measures and employment. Following the arrival of about one million refugees at the end of 2015, existing programmes aiming to integrate disadvantaged groups into the labour market and the VET system opened up with an additional focus on refugees. New programmes were established in 2016, specifically addressing refugees. A synopsis of [integration measures for refugees](#) was updated in 2019. The [ESF-supported permanent programme](#) helps people with migration background learn the German language and integrate into society and the world of work. 665 423 people participated in the [programme between 2016 and 2021](#). An information hub for German language courses and work in Germany, [Handbook Germany](#), was also set up, funded by the federal office for migration and refugees (BAMF).

As part of the Educational Chains initiative, the [vocational guidance programme for refugees](#) (*Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge, BOF*) targets young migrants who are no longer subject to compulsory education. The objective is to prepare them for entry to VET. BOF courses last between 13 and 26 weeks. They take place in apprentice workshops and companies (50 locations in 2022). They give insights into up to three training occupations. From 2016 to 2022, about 6 550 young people from 84 countries (mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Iran and Iraq) have participated in these programmes, and about half of the participants could be placed in an apprenticeship or an introductory training;

The former federal ESF integration guideline for asylum seekers and refugees (IvAF) and its networks (2015 to 2022) contributed to the sustainable integration of asylum seekers and refugees in training and employment through comprehensive counselling including qualification, placement and support during the first weeks of employment or training. The networks acted as door openers for the target group in companies and vocational schools, public administration and trade associations. Starting in 2015 and up to December 2020, around 63 000 asylum seekers and refugees have been integrated into training or employment thanks to IvAF networks. The follow-up programme '[WIR - Networks integrate refugees in the regional labour market](#)' started in 2022 with 40 funded projects, which are expected to reach almost 50 000 people by September 2026.

Since a 2016 amendment to the Social Code, young refugees with tolerated residence status who participate in dual VET are entitled to financial support after 15 months' stay in Germany instead



of the previously required 4 years. Support is in the form of training loans, pre-vocational training measures, and the so-called assisted training scheme (see above). The [Integration Act](#) was adopted in July 2016 and intends to facilitate refugee integration into society through a 'support and challenge' approach. Refugees with prospects of staying permanently will take integration courses at an early stage, and have legal certainty while in vocational training: up to 3-year right of residence for those in apprenticeship until successful completion of training, followed by 2-year right to reside, if the person works in the profession s/he was trained in. Asylum seekers will be granted temporary residence permits once they have submitted their application for asylum, so they have legal certainty and early access to the integration courses and labour market.

Against the background of demographic changes and current and future skilled labour shortages in some sectors, Germany needs to attract skilled professionals both from EU and non-EU countries. The Skilled Immigration Act came into force on 1 March 2020. The law facilitates the immigration, expands labour market access (e.g. with fast-track recognition procedure) and offers good perspectives for qualified professionals from non-EU countries. Another new feature is the possibility to enter Germany for up to 6 months to look for a training place. From 1 March 2020 to 31 December 2020, in spite of the pandemic, German diplomatic missions abroad issued almost 30 000 visas to qualified specialists and trainees from non-EU countries (107) . In 2021, 97 292 work visas were issued, and in 2022, 89 000 people were in possession of an EU Blue Card and 244 000 foreign healthcare workers were employed in Germany. The new [Skilled Immigration Act](#) passed in March 2023 makes it easier for skilled workers with vocational training and individuals with practical knowledge to immigrate to Germany. Some new provisions will be phased in from November 2023 and some amendments from March 2024.

### **Incentives for CVET learners**

The State promotes participation in continuing VET with various support and funding instruments anchored in the Social Code SGB (grants, subsidies and loans to cover CVET and living costs), addressing various target groups. Some of them are regulated by law and others are in the form of programmes. The 2019 [National skills strategy](#) (renewed in 2022) and the latest legal acts related to CVET and advanced vocational training described below aim to:

- expand funding to acquisition of advanced vocational qualifications, making VET more attractive through career pathways and excellence, and meeting the growing need for highly qualified skilled labour:  
*[Upgrading Training Assistance Act \(AFBG\)](#) last amended in 2019;*
- open access to CVET funding regardless of qualifications, age or company size, if there is need of CVET because of structural change:  
*Act promoting further training (AWStG) amended in 2016; Qualification Opportunities Act adopted in 2019 and [Work of Tomorrow Act](#) adopted in 2020; Act to strengthen initial and continuing VET passed in 2023 ([108]).*

The following funding programmes promote the participation in CVET of different target groups:

[Upgrading Training Assistance Act \(Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz, AFBG, known as Meister-BaföG\)](#)

This law gives craftspeople and other skilled workers a statutory entitlement to financial assistance to cover costs of advanced vocational training and living expenses to acquire higher VET qualifications (at tertiary education level). This financial support, jointly covered by the Federal and State governments, comprises subsidies (or, from a certain amount, bank loans at favourable rates) for a master craftsperson course and exam fees or other programmes leading to a comparable qualification. The AFBG, the equivalent to university student grants (BAföG), was last amended in 2019 to improve the funding, support and expand available funding options to new target groups. It increases VET career attractiveness and its equivalence to academic education.

In 2021, the number of funding recipients was approximately 192 000. In 2023, EUR 880 million funding was available for this programme. The portal [AufstiegsBAföG](#) - BaföG for vocational

advancement explains who can apply for funding, how to get funding, gives examples of beneficiaries and features a blog full of information.

AFGB is the most comprehensive CET funding instrument. It is a major pillar and driver of skills upgrading and occupational advancement.

#### Continuing training grant (*Weiterbildungsstipendium*) ([\[109\]](#))

Since 1991, the education ministry (108) has offered particularly gifted and motivated young workers a specific CVET grant (there is a similar programme in academic education). Grants are awarded to approximately 6 000 (6 250 from 2023) new recipients every year and more than 164 000 grants have been provided since the programme started. Funding is provided for the measure itself, for travel and accommodation costs and for costs of work materials. Scholarship recipients may apply for a total of EUR 8 700 for an unlimited amount of advanced training courses eligible for funding within the 3-year funding period. They are required to bear 10% of costs themselves per course (109) .

#### Upgrading scholarship (*Aufstiegsstipendium*) ([\[112\]](#))

The education ministry's upgrading scholarship offers incentives to study for skilled workers with professional experience, whether or not they gained a higher education entrance qualification at school. It was established for professionals with at least 2 years' work experience and with outstanding talents. When qualified skilled professionals are already working, financial issues often prevent them from starting a course of studies. It is the only academic programme supporting talented students who are combining work and study (over a third of the scholarship holders) or studying full-time for the duration of their course of studies (standard prescribed study period). The funding provided for full-time study is EUR 1 014 a month (plus a one-off childcare payment) and EUR 2 900 a year offered for those combining work and study (110) . Scholarships are awarded to approximately 1 000 new recipients every year and about 15 000 were provided from 2008 to 2022 (111) .

#### Continuing education bonus (*Bildungsprämie*)

To encourage groups of people that tend to have lower rates of participation in company-based continuing vocational training (workers on low incomes, women, employees in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), people working part-time and healthcare professionals), the federal government approved an additional financing scheme in 2008: premium and savings vouchers. The premium voucher reduced training costs by up to 50% of tuition fees (max EUR 500) for job-related training courses or courses that helped improve people's employability. It targeted employees and the self-employed who worked at least 15 hours a week and had a maximum taxable annual income of EUR 20 000 (or 40 000 for couples; child allowances were taken into account) or were on parental leave. The voucher was valid for 6 months. People could receive vouchers every 2 years. This measure was supported by the European Social Fund. The savings voucher provided a right to withdraw money from capital formation saving plans without losing the savings grant. This was open to all people who had such saving plans, regardless of their income. From 2008 to 2022, 402 000 premium vouchers were issued and 30 000 individual CVET savings plans established. The programme ended in December 2022.

#### CVET for the unemployed and those at risk

One important national strategy is the prevention of unemployment through nation-wide standard upskilling programmes (under the German Social Code), specifically addressing those at risk of long-term unemployment: the low-skilled and the unemployed (112) - but also those at risk due to structural changes and transformation processes.

#### Education and training voucher for the unemployed

To be eligible for a CVET voucher, participation must be considered necessary to enable occupational integration, to avert pending unemployment or because the candidate does not

have a vocational qualification. When identifying the need for CVET measures, the employment agency or the authority providing basic income support for jobseekers must always consider labour market conditions. They must decide, among others, whether the candidate could find employment without continuing VET; whether other labour market policy instruments could be more appropriate; and whether the candidate could, in all likelihood, return to the labour market as a result of the training.

Persons meeting the general eligibility criteria are granted an education and training voucher (*Bildungsgutschein*) by the employment agency or the authority providing jobseeker support. This voucher contains data on the education objective, the time required to reach this objective and information as to where the voucher applies in the region. The holder can redeem it at any education institution of their choice which is accredited for funding under the conditions specified in the education voucher. The continuing VET activity must also be approved for funding and support. Information on approved continuing VET measures and providers can also be found in the relaunched database of the federal employment agency [KURSNET](#). The CVET measure may lead to acquiring a recognised VET qualification (for the first time for the low-qualified or retraining in a second occupation if necessary). It can also take place through [partial \(modular\) qualifications \(Teilqualifikation TQ\)](#) successive preparing for the final examination (113) .

By issuing an education and training voucher, the reimbursement of some or all of the following CVET expenses is confirmed: course costs, travel expenses, costs for external board and lodging, and childcare expenses. Candidates are also entitled to receive unemployment benefit for the duration of the CVET programme if specific requirements are met. Regulations related to unemployment benefits remain unchanged for the duration of the continuing VET programme.

#### The FbW standard instruments for funding CVET (114)

This is available both to the unemployed and employees under threat of imminent unemployment, as well as to workers with low levels of qualifications and employees in SMEs. Eligibility for funding also depends on labour market conditions, as with the education and training voucher. Eligible CVET courses aiming to obtain, update or upgrade a vocational (also partial) qualification are listed in the [KURSNET](#) database of the Federal Employment Agency. In 2022, 261 000 people received such funding for CVET.

### **Expanding financial support for CVET**

In 2016, the [legislation promoting further training \(AWStG\) was amended](#). It improved the financial conditions under which the low-qualified, the long-term unemployed and older workers could access CVET, in particular through allowances during training and financial incentives for passing exams (up to 1 500 EUR).

The [Qualification Opportunities Act \(Qualifizierungschancengesetz\)](#) introduced in January 2019 went one step further. The Act introduced the right of people in employment to access CVET funding regardless of their qualification, age or company size, if they needed CVET because of digital or any other structural change. The expansion of financial support also addressed those striving for further training in a shortage occupation. The funding covers CVET costs as well as salary compensations, subject to shared financing by the employer and proportional to the size of the company.

The [Work of Tomorrow Act \(Arbeit-von-Morgen-Gesetz\)](#) adopted in 2020 builds on these two acts. The objective is to improve the promotion of further (vocational) education for employees and the regulations governing education support: simplified application and approval procedures; higher subsidies; qualification in transfer companies; legal entitlement to further education for low-skilled workers; consolidation of assisted training programme by merging with assistance during training programme; extension of the scheme for payment of further education bonuses for successful examinations.

The two new acts replaced the WeGeBAU and IFIaS programmes with expanded funding and beneficiaries under the German Social Code.

In July 2023, the new [Act to promote initial and further training \(Aus- und Weiterbildungsgesetz\)](#) adopted in July 2023 aims to: simplify the funding of CVET for employees, introduce a qualification allowance for companies particularly affected by the transformation, and implement a training guarantee to enable young people to access vocational training, always primarily in a company.

### **Future Starters programme**

The initiative [Future starters \(Zukunftsstarter\)](#) targets young people between 25 and 35 years old without initial vocational training and aimed to attract 120 000 young adults to IVET between 2016 and 2020. This objective has been exceeded. This initiative offers support not only to the unemployed but also to employees who do not yet have a vocational qualification. Young adults with disabilities and refugees can also profit from this initiative, which was extended until 2025.

- 
- [100] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, Chapter A9.1.1, p 220.
  - [101] see also BMBF. [Die Duale - für das DU in Ausbildung](#) [The dual training]
  - [102] BMBF (2023). [Berufsbildungsbericht](#) [Report on vocational education and training 2023]. Bonn: p. 109.
  - [103] Actual expenditures 2022: EUR 127.34 million BMBF (2023). [Berufsbildungsbericht](#) [Report on vocational education and training 2023]. Bonn: p 107).
  - [104] Actual spending for 2022: EUR 202.64 million. BMBF (2023). [Berufsbildungsbericht](#) [Report on vocational education and training 2023]. Bonn:, p. 110.
  - [105] Actual spending 2022: EUR 23.13 million. BMBF (2023). [Berufsbildungsbericht](#) [Report on vocational education and training 2023]. Bonn:, p.112.
  - [106] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023], p. 107.
  - [107] See also: [Quick-Check: with the Quick-Check, you can check your options of working and living in Germany.](#) and [Information portal for the German government for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications](#)
  - [108] Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF).
  - [109] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, B 3.3.1, p. 358.
  - [110] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, B 3.3.1, p. 360.
  - [111] Funding volume in 2022: EUR 32 million. BMBF VET report 2023, p. 107.
  - [112] Huismann, A. (2018). [Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed - Germany.](#) Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.
  - [113] Several projects on partial qualifications are taking place: <https://www.dihk.de/tq-de>; <https://teilqualifikation.dihk.de/de>; <https://www.etapp-teilqualifizierung.de/>; Website of employer initiative on partial qualification <https://www.nachqualifizierung.de/>; <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildungstraeger/berufsanschlussfaehige-teilqualifikationen>
  - [114] See also: <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/karriere-und-weiterbildung> ; <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Arbeit/Aus-und-Weiterbildung/Berufliche-Weiterbildung/Foerderung-der-beruflichen-Weiterbildung/foerderung-der-beruflichen-weiterbildung.html> ; [https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/datei/merkblatt-6-weiterbildung\\_ba015381.pdf](https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/datei/merkblatt-6-weiterbildung_ba015381.pdf)

## CHAPTER 14.

# Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

For many German companies, it is a tradition and a matter of course to provide and to carry most of the costs for apprenticeship. In this way, they can meet their need for future skilled staff. However, the readiness to provide apprenticeship has been declining in the last decade (115) , especially among the smallest companies (1 to 9 employees) who face increasing difficulties in filling the apprenticeship places they offer - even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. This shows that companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), need support, which is provided in various forms, as described below (116) :

### **Inter-company vocational training centres and training structures**

SMEs, in particular skilled crafts companies, are important training suppliers, but are unable, or not fully able, to provide all the facets of training required by regulations. This is primarily due to the increasing division of labour in production processes, increasing specialisation and, in some cases, financial problems or accelerated technological change. The limited suitability of such enterprises as training providers is compensated for by supplementary external training measures in inter-company vocational training centres or through training structures. Inter-company training centres also have an essential position in further and continuing training in SMEs, especially in the commercial and technical sectors. Such [training centres also exist in the skilled trade sector](#). Funding is offered for the modernising and restructuring of inter-company training centres to adapt them to changing education and training policy and economic conditions, as well as the challenge of digitalisation. Since 2016, a programme has focused on the [digital transformation of these training centres](#) by funding the purchase of digital equipment and through selected pilot projects on adaptation of teaching and learning processes.

### **Programme securing apprenticeship placements during pandemic**

With the federal programme [Securing apprenticeship placements](#), the federal government aimed to support training companies in all sectors of the economy and training institutions in the health and social professions in the difficult economic situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, training capacities were to be maintained and [expanded with bonuses](#) (2 000/3 000 EUR), short-time work for apprentices was to be avoided (subsidy to cover 75% of training allowance), contractual and joint training was to be promoted (4 000 EUR) and incentives for taking over apprentices in the event of insolvency (3 000 EUR) were to be created. The programme was carried out for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 years of apprenticeship.

### **Support for SMEs:**

- **Training placement**

The employment agencies offer employers specific consultancy services and approach SMEs to enquire about training places. Employers are free to register any training places they are offering. In the 2021/22 reporting year, 546 000 training places and 422 000 training place applicants were registered with the federal employment agency (117) .

- **Alliance training guarantee**

As of 2016, a process to help find training places / apprentices has been put in place: every young person who is still looking for an apprenticeship on 30 September of a given year will receive three offers of company-based training from an employment agency.

- **Jobstarter plus**

The federal ministry of education funds and supports projects in the national [JOBSTARTER plus programme](#) with co-financing from the European Social Fund (ESF) to improve regional training structures and trial innovative training policy approaches to solving training market problems. The programme is designed to respond flexibly and actively to current training market developments with a range of variable funding priorities:

- advise and support SMEs in the process of (re-) starting participation in dual training and increasing their commitment to training;
- counteract matching problems and the difficulties that companies have in filling training places in certain industries and regions;
- advising and supporting SMEs in the process of adapting their training to the challenges posed by the increasing automation and digitalisation of the economy.

- **Future centres supporting CVET in SMEs**

Since 2019, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS; with ESF co-funding) has been funding '[Future centres' supporting SMEs](#) and their employees in future-proofing their working and learning processes through customised advisory concepts as well as the development and testing of innovative qualification concepts with a focus on CVET.

- ***Passgenaue Besetzung*** (Perfect match)

The [Passgenaue Besetzung programme](#), financed jointly by the ESF and federal ministry for economic affairs (118) , works to counteract matching problems in the training market. The programme provides funding for consultants (130 in 2022) at the chambers (89 in 2022) who support SMEs in filling the training places they offer with suitable young people. Since the programme began in 2007, *Passgenaue Besetzung* has successfully placed more than 27 000 young people in training and 4 300 in introductory training. In 2022, more than 6 600 SMEs and almost 17 000 young people received an individual counselling. In this context, around 3 300 dual training places and around 220 introductory training places were filled with young people (119) .

- **Federal employment agency consultancy on qualification for employers**

The federal employment agency (BA) supports personnel development measures in SMEs as part of its preventative approach to securing a supply of skilled workers. It informs and advises employers and identifies the possibilities for further developing the potential in companies through company-based qualification measures. This consultancy makes employers aware of the advantages of more frequently including groups of employees who are often not considered for participation in measures (e.g. those without formal qualifications and older employees) in further training measures. By offering consultancy on qualification and support for personnel development to employers, the federal employment agency is helping companies to fill training and employment vacancies from within their own ranks.

- **Support measures to help integrate refugees in dual VET and work**

The following support measures, helping to integrate refugees in apprenticeship, address especially SMEs and skilled trade companies:

- the network [Companies integrate refugees](#) funded by the federal ministry for economic affairs and the umbrella organisation of the chambers of industry and commerce (DIHK) is

aimed at companies that are involved, or want to get involved, with refugees. The aim is to bring refugees to training and employment. The network offers its more than 3700 member companies (three quarters of which are SMEs) the opportunity to exchange experiences and practical information on the employment of refugees;

- the chambers' *Welcome guides* (*Willkommenslotsen*) are available to companies on all issues relating to the operational integration of refugees, including those from Ukraine since the Russian aggression. Since the start of the programme in 2016, the *Welcome guides* have facilitated numerous placements of refugees in employment, training or internship. In 2022, more than 2 300 companies (and 2 600 refugees) made use of individual counselling by one of the 75 consultants at 60 chambers resulting in 1 000 placements (in apprenticeship, work or introductory training).

The 42 [KAUSA training and migration service centres](#) aim to increase the participation of migrants and refugees in VET. They provide guidance and counselling to companies opening up their training places for migrants and refugees, and to young migrants and their parents with regard to VET.

- 
- [115] According to BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, A 7, p 196-202: in 2007, 24.1% of all companies provided training against 19.1% in 2021 - if only considering the companies providing training, then 52% of them signed new apprenticeship contracts in 2021/22.
- [116] For further information on this, please consult: Cedefop (2020). *Vocational education and training in Germany: short description*.
- [117] BMBF (2023). *Berufsbildungsbericht [Report on vocational education and training 2023]*. Bonn: BMBF, p. 107.
- [118] Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz, BMWK.
- [119] BMBF (2023). *Berufsbildungsbericht [Report on vocational education and training 2023]*. Bonn: BMBF, p.126.

## CHAPTER 15.

# Guidance and counselling

[Vocational guidance and counselling provision](#) is embedded in Germany's overall employment strategy as well as in its education sector and lifelong learning strategy. Labour market policy has a long tradition of vocational guidance and counselling by the employment agencies. The federal employment agency (BA) is the largest and most important service provider for lifelong learning and guidance, even though the private and semi-private market has grown significantly. This includes services for the long-term unemployed from jobcentres under the social code (SGB II) (120) . Digital tools addressing different target groups have been developed, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Check-U or Berufenavi for school leavers and NewPlan for CVET learners).

Due to the country's constitution and its federal structure, with split responsibilities between the Federal Government, sixteen State governments and local municipalities, and between education, labour and youth ministries, guidance policy and provision is also split between these sectors. There are several institutional links and cooperation agreements between labour market and education policy: in the last decade, cross-sectoral national guidance programmes have been set up, including the Educational chains leading to vocational qualifications initiative, the Youth employment agencies (JBA) and the [National skills strategy](#) (including guidance) for adults. At local level, a [funding programme launched in 2022 helps municipalities to tackle challenges in education](#), such as digitalisation.

### **Umbrella initiative Educational chains leading to vocational qualification**

[Guidance and counselling in the education sector](#) mainly focuses on vocational orientation, guidance on VET paths or individual learning difficulties. Services vary between States and schools. School career orientation (also part of the general education curricula) and the local employment agencies' vocational guidance services cooperate closely, e.g. with visits to the local employment agency, to enterprises and by compulsory 1- to 3-week work placements in companies in grades 8, 9 or 10. The umbrella initiative [Educational chains leading to vocational qualifications](#) (*Abschluss und Anschluss - Bildungsketten bis zum Ausbildungsabschluss*) gathers existing and new programmes at Federal, State and local levels (e.g. the [vocational orientation programme BOP](#)). The initiative, as its name indicates, provides a close-meshed support net and its coverage is very comprehensive. Its final goal is the completion of a qualification for all young people by supporting them in the following fields:

- obtaining a general school-leaving certificate;
- making the transition from school to training;
- completing training successfully.

The range of support instruments is very broad and most are now nationwide standard offers anchored in the Social Code SGB:

- analysis of individual areas of potential (starting from school grade 7): young people learn about their strengths;
- vocational orientation (starting from grade 8): young people become aware of various occupational fields through internships in companies or inter-company vocational training centres. They can test their predispositions and talents, lately also with digital self-exploration tools (e.g. Check-U, Berufenavi.de and berufswahlapp.de);
- individual coaching and support (during school and apprenticeship):
  - career start coaching (starting from grade 8): salaried career start mentors accompany disadvantaged young people until they obtain a general school-leaving certificate and



- as they make the transition from school to training;
  - VerA initiative to prevent training dropouts (from first day of apprenticeship): young people who have trouble in their apprenticeship can receive individual coaching by senior experts volunteers. Senior experts are retired professionals with broad experience in their respective field of work;
  - apprentices may also receive assistance via special training support measures provided by the employment agency;
- measures in the transition period (between school leaving and apprenticeship placement): pre-VET measures and introductory training;
  - KAUSA service offices were set up to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees in VET. They provide guidance and counselling to companies opening up their training places for migrants and refugees, and to young migrants and their parents with regard to VET.

### **Youth employment agencies - *Jugendberufsagenturen (JBA)***

In many regions, the employment agency, the jobcentre and the youth welfare office are joining forces to form a [youth employment agency](#) and offer their services jointly to young people in the transition from school to training and work. This is not a new authority, but close cooperation at working level, with locally different models of cooperation and designation and facilitated by a joint IT system (YouConnect). For young people, guidance and support becomes a one-stop-shop. JBA targets young people at risk of dropping out of education and training, as well as those facing obstacles in (entering) the labour market. The first JBAs were established in Mainz, Düsseldorf and [Hamburg](#); by September 2023, there were about 360 JBAs in Germany. The Federal Employment Agency and the new coordination office at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) are monitoring and supporting their development and activities.

[Some measures address young refugees](#) specifically as well as [disadvantaged young people who are no longer reached by regular services](#) (new section in Social Code: 16h SGB II). The website [www.klischee-frei.de](http://www.klischee-frei.de) provides information and supports young people in their [career choice, with a brief to disregard gender clichés](#). In addition to regular student counselling services, universities have increasingly established career services to ease the transition from academic education to the labour market. In 2014, the federal education ministry started an initiative to [attract university drop-outs](#) (drop-out rate of 28% in bachelor courses in 2020) into vocational training followed in 2021 by a [counselling network addressing students at risk](#) of dropping out.

### **National skills strategy and guidance for adults**

The [National skills strategy](#), signed by all continuing education and training (CET) actors in 2019 and renewed in 2022, aims to develop and join up the existing lifelong CET guidance and counselling services, especially those of the Federal State, with its employment agencies, the *Länder*, chambers, associations and education organisations, to create a nationwide, high-quality counselling structure for lifelong learning. CET counselling must also aim, in close consultation with companies (in particular SMEs), to boost the motivation of the relevant groups of people (low-skilled individuals, skilled workers, future managers) to participate in CVET, and must seek to ensure that the threshold for access to CVET is as low as possible. One example is the [INVITE programme](#), which aims at increasing participation in CVET by connecting existing learning platforms, improving the transparency and quality of digital CVET offers, and allowing a low-threshold, individual, modular approach, building on existing skills, in a secure digital environment.

Further, the federal labour ministry, the social partners and the Federal States are supporting the Federal Employment Agency [Lifelong career counselling \(LBB\)](#) project (counselling before entering working life, counselling during working life, and a career counselling self-discovery tool), with a focus on the needs of organisations and in close consultation with the social partners and regional business self-governance structures. The LBB systematic career guidance and counselling service was introduced nationwide in 2019 and 2020, followed in 2021 by the online self-exploration tool New plan, which shows possibilities for development or [further training on](#)

the job. Another example is the association [German national guidance forum in education, career and employment \(nfb\)](#), which is committed to the professional development of guidance services in Germany.

At local level, several initiatives and networks support the transition of learners into the labour market as well as lifelong learning for adults:

- the [municipalities education programme](#) (*Bildungskommunen*) aims at supporting municipalities to tackle challenges in education, from digitalisation to developing new cooperation and services;
- the [regional transition management programme](#) (*Regionales Übergangsmanagement*) supports less well-performing school leavers and refugees to find an apprenticeship place;
- the [Transfer initiative municipal education management](#) (*Transferinitiative Kommunales Bildungsmanagement*) supports municipalities in setting up efficient education management systems, including monitoring and guidance.

Training providers, employment agencies, chambers, enterprises, local schools and municipalities, trade unions, as well as other local actors and stakeholders, participate in these networks.

Examples of online information and guidance tools include the offers of the federal employment agency addressing different age groups and situations (121) , [Berufenavi](#) und [Berufswahlsapp](#), [AusbildungPlus](#), [planet-beruf.de](#), [abi.de](#), [studienwahl.de](#), [bildungsserver.de](#), [InfoWebWeiterbildung iwwb.de](#).

Please see:

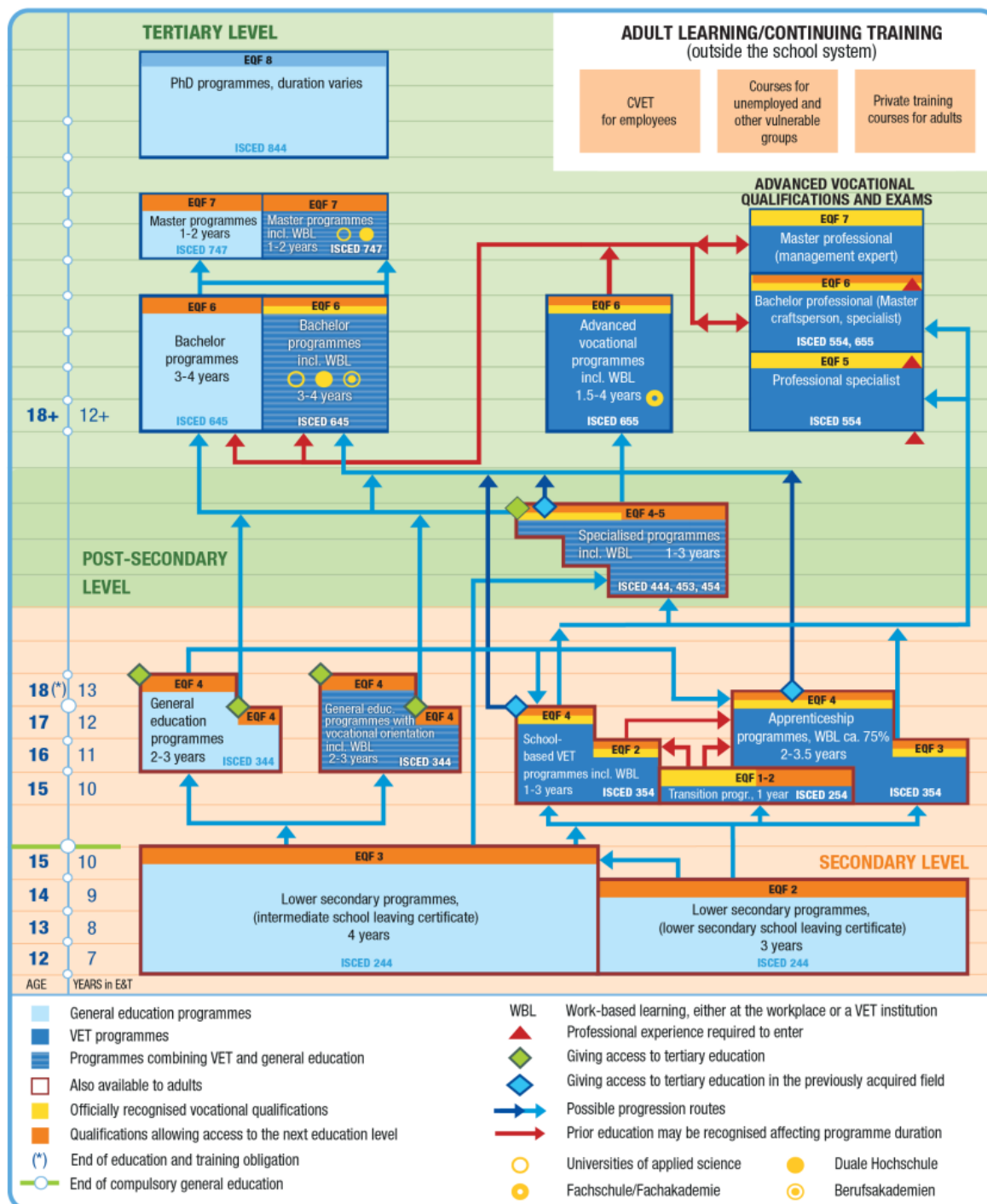
- [guidance and outreach German national report](#);
- [Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices](#).

---

[120] see also: Huismann, A. (2018). *Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed - Germany. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

[121] <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/karriere-und-weiterbildung> ;  
<https://berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de> ; <https://con.arbeitsagentur.de/prod/berufetv/start> ;  
<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung/welche-ausbildung-welches-studium-passt> ;  
<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/k/newplan> ;  
<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/institutionen/kurse-anbieten> ;  
<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/bildung/ausbildung/azubiwelt>

# Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.  
 Source: Cedefop, & Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Germany: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions [Database]. [www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/germany-u3](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/germany-u3)

# VET Programme Types

EQF 4
General education programmes with vocational orientation incl. WBL 2-3 years ISCED 344

## General education programmes with vocational orientation incl. WBL, 2-3 years EQF level 4, ISCED level 344 (Berufliches Gymnasium or Fachgymnasium)

<b>EQF level</b>	4	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	344
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	minimum 11	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	minimum 12/13
<b>Usual entry age</b>	minimum 15/16	<b>Usual completion age</b>	minimum 17/19
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	2-3		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✓	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✓	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓

**ECVET or other credits** *Information not available*

**Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

- school-based learning;
- work-based learning parts (with vocational subjects such as economics and technology as well as internships).

**Main providers**

Vocational grammar school (*Berufliches Gymnasium or Fachgymnasium*)

**Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies**

Information not available

<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	Information not available
<b>Main target groups</b>	Programmes are mainly available for young people.
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	An intermediate secondary school leaving certificate is required.
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	<i>Abitur</i> examination as in a general <i>Gymnasium</i> but with career-oriented subjects in addition; leading to a general higher education entrance qualification.
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	These programmes lead to the general higher education entrance qualification.
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	These programmes lead to the general higher education entrance qualification.
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	<p>Graduates can continue their education at tertiary level, by following a bachelor programme offered at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• university;</li> <li>• university of applied science;</li> <li>• university of cooperative education;</li> <li>• dual university.</li> </ul> <p>Graduates can also continue their education at secondary level in the following programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apprenticeship programmes;</li> <li>• school-based VET programmes;</li> <li>• specialised VET programmes at post-secondary level.</li> </ul>
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓
<b>Key competences</b>	✓
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	<i>Information not available</i>

EQF 2-4

School-based VET

programmes incl. WBL,

1-3 years

ISCED level 354

## School-based VET programmes at EQF level 2-4, ISCED 354 (Berufsfachschule)

<b>EQF level</b>	2-4	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	354
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	minimum 10	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	minimum 10/12
<b>Usual entry age</b>	minimum 14/15	<b>Usual completion age</b>	minimum 15/18
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	1-3		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✓	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✓	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓
<b>ECVET or other credits</b>	Information not available		
<b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school based learning</li> <li>• work-based learning elements</li> </ul>		
<b>Main providers</b>	Full time vocational schools ( <i>Berufsfachschule</i> )		
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	Varies		
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practical training at school</li> <li>• in-company practice</li> </ul>		
<b>Main target groups</b>	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.		
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	Minimum entry requirement is either the lower or the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate.		

<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	Assessment methods vary; some schools are governed by the Federal States; some are governed by federal law ( (122) ).
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Vocational school at upper secondary level offering a wide range of branches and courses of varying duration. A full-time school, it prepares or trains learners for a specific occupation at different levels of qualification.
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	Physiotherapist, chemical technician, business assistant, technical designer, tourism assistant, childcare assistant ( (123) )
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	<p>Graduates are qualified to enter the labour market directly or can continue their education at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• upper secondary level by following an apprenticeship programme. If it is in a related professional field, the study duration can be reduced;</li> <li>• post-secondary level by following specialised programmes;</li> <li>• VET tertiary level, preparing advanced vocational qualifications and exams at EQF level 5 (Professional specialist) or entering advanced vocational programmes under certain conditions;</li> <li>• general tertiary level if they also gained the higher education entrance qualification (double qualification). Graduates can enter advanced vocational programmes as well as bachelor programmes offered at universities of applied science, Duale Hochschule or Berufsakademie in the field in which they graduated.</li> </ul>
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>In cases where such schools do not provide a full vocational qualification, the successful completion of the <i>Berufsfachschule</i> may be credited, under certain conditions, as part of the training period in occupations requiring formal training (Art. 7 of the Vocational Training Act). In order to prove the equivalence of a vocational qualification at a <i>Berufsfachschule</i> with dual VET, successful graduates can sit an examination before the competent authority. Admission to this so-called chamber examination is possible if the <i>Land</i> in question has adopted appropriate regulations pursuant to Article 43, paragraph 2 of the Vocational Training Act or if there are arrangements to this end between the vocational schools and the competent authorities.</p>
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓
<b>Key competences</b>	✓
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	<i>Information not available</i>

---

<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
--	----------------------------------

---

- 
- [122] Read more at KMK (2024). [Rahmenvereinbarung über die Berufsfachschulen](#) *Rahmenvereinbarung über die Berufsfachschulen* [Framework agreement on vocational schools Framework agreement on vocational schools].
- [123] KMK. [Berufsfachschulen](#) [School-based VET programmes].



EQF 1-2

Transition programmes,

1 year

ISCED level 254

**Transition programmes leading to EQF level 1-2 and ISCED level 254 and include the following programmes: pre-vocational training year (Berufsvorbereitungsjahr - BVJ); basic vocational training year (Berufsgrundbildungsjahr - BGJ); introductory training (Einstiegsqualifizierung - EQ).**

<b>EQF level</b>	1-2	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	254
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	minimum 10	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	minimum 10
<b>Usual entry age</b>	minimum 14/15	<b>Usual completion age</b>	minimum 15/16
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	1		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✓	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✓	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓

**ECVET or other credits** Information not available

<b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b>	<p>School and work-based learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pre-vocational training year (<i>Berufsvorbereitungsjahr - BVJ</i>): the BVJ is a one-year course of training, usually offered full-time by schools and designed to prepare young people for the demands of vocational training. The majority of participants do not have a secondary school leaving certificate. However, this can be acquired in the course of the BVJ, thus improving the holder's prospects in the market for training positions;</li> <li>• basic vocational training year (<i>Berufsgrundbildungsjahr - BGJ</i>): basic vocational education can be completed either as a year at school (full-time) or in joint fashion at an enterprise and school. Successful completion of the BGJ can be credited as the first year of vocational training in the training occupations assigned to the relevant occupational field. In the BGJ, learners receive basic educational knowledge in a specific occupational field (e.g., metalworking techniques, electrical engineering, business and administration);</li> <li>• Introductory training (<i>Einstiegsqualifizierung - EQ</i>): EQ provides young people whose prospects of being placed in VET are limited due to individual reasons with an opportunity to acquire or enhance personal and vocational competences and gives companies offering training the chance to get to know these young people. It has proved to be a 'door-opener' to apprenticeship for approx. 70% of participants.</li> </ul>
<b>Main providers</b>	Varies
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	Varies
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practical training at school,</li> <li>• in-company practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Main target groups</b>	Young people and adults with social disadvantages, learning difficulties or handicap or insufficient German language skills (migrants) have different possibilities for pre-vocational education and training measures.
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	The minimum entry requirement is the lower secondary school leaving certificate for BGJ and EQ; for the BVJ, the certified attendance of grade 1 to 9 is enough.
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	<i>Information not available</i>

<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BVJ: lower secondary school certificate, in case not yet obtained;</li> <li>• Successful completion of the BGJ can be credited as the first year of vocational training in the training occupations assigned to the relevant occupational field;</li> <li>• EQ does not lead to a certificate but it has proved to be a 'door-opener' to apprenticeship for approx. 70% of participants.</li> </ul>
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	In the BGJ, learners receive basic educational knowledge in a specific occupational field (e.g. metalworking techniques, electrical engineering, business and administration).
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Progression is possible to school-based VET programmes and apprenticeship programmes (even in the second year, in case of the BGJ).
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	The former participants in these programmes mostly start an apprenticeship or a school-based VET programme ( (124) ).
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓
<b>Key competences</b>	✓
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	<i>Information not available</i> However, the share of apprentices having taken part in such a so-called transition or preparatory VET programme before starting the apprenticeship amount to 8% (2021: 37 296 out of 466 176 first-year-apprentices) ( (125) ).

[124] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023], p. 136-142.

[125] BIBB (2023). [Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023](#) [VET data report 2023], p. 137.

EQF 3-4

Apprenticeship programmes,

WBL ca. 75%

2-3.5 years

ISCED level 354

**Apprenticeship scheme (dual system: duale Ausbildung) according to the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and the Trade and Crafts Code (HwO) at EQF level 3-4 and ISCED level 354 (in 2022: 326 programmes, one for each occupation that can be learnt in the apprenticeship scheme).**

<b>EQF level</b>	3-4	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	354
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	minimum 10	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	minimum 11-13
<b>Usual entry age</b>	minimum 14/15 but in practice, average age of entry is higher: 20 years old in 2021 ( (126) )	<b>Usual completion age</b>	minimum 16/17 but in practice from 22 upwards
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	2-3.5		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✓	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✓ Apprentices are paid ( (127) ).	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓

**ECVET or other credits** Information not available

---

**Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

- school-based and practical learning in schools and inter-company vocational training centres (*überbetriebliche Berufsbildungsstätten, ÜBS*), (e.g. 1 or 2 days per week or 1 week per month);
- company-based learning (share of approx. 70%).

The system is described as dual because training is conducted in two places of learning: companies and vocational schools. Apprentices attend a vocational school 1 or 2 days per week, where they are mainly taught theoretical and practical knowledge related to their occupation; they attend classes on general subjects such as economics, social studies and foreign languages. Systematic teaching at vocational school is a necessary supplement to process-oriented training within a company, which is more based on specific in-company requirements. The primary aim of training is to enable young people to acquire comprehensive vocational competence. Training programmes are designed on the principle that they should be as broad as possible and as specific as necessary.

---

---

**Main providers** Companies in cooperation with vocational schools

Apprenticeship places are offered in both enterprises and public institutions. The professional competences to be acquired through in-company training are specified in training regulations and included by the training enterprise in an individual training plan. The binding requirements of the training regulations guarantee a uniform national standard. However, SME are often unable to provide all the stipulated learning content: they may lack suitable training personnel, or, owing to their particular specialisation, may not cover all the training content themselves.

There are various ways to overcome these problems:

- inter-company vocational training centres (überbetriebliche Berufsbildungsstätten, ÜBS) designed to supplement in-company training: training centres, which are often sponsored by autonomous bodies in the relevant sectors of industry. The federal ministry of education supports sponsors with investment subsidies (for buildings and infrastructure). The BIBB is responsible for promoting inter-company training centres and supporting the planning, establishment and development of these facilities. Since 2016, an additional programme is [promoting the digital transformation of these training centres](#) by funding the purchase of digital equipment as well as selected pilot projects on adaptation of teaching and learning processes;
- enterprises can form joint training structures (Ausbildungsverbünde). There are four traditional models for this:
  - lead enterprise with partners (Leitbetrieb mit Partnerbetrieben): one enterprise takes the lead and bears overall responsibility for training; however, parts of the training are conducted in various partner enterprises;
  - training to order (Auftragsausbildung): some training takes place outside the regular enterprise, perhaps in a nearby large enterprise with a training workshop, on the basis of an order and against reimbursement of costs;
  - training consortium (Ausbildungskonsortium): several SMEs sign a cooperation agreement and work together on equal footing. They take on apprentices and train them independently. If an enterprise cannot cover a specific area of content, the apprentice moves to another enterprise (rotation principle);
  - training association (Ausbildungsverein): enterprises establish an organisation which takes over administrative tasks such as contracting, while the enterprises conduct training. Association structures usually comprise a general meeting and an honorary committee. A statute regulates members' rights and obligations.

---

**Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies** About 75%

---

<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in-company practice (about 70%),</li> <li>• practical training at school,</li> <li>• practical training in inter-company vocational training centres (<i>überbetriebliche Berufsbildungsstätten, ÜBS</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Main target groups</b>	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	<p>Completion of full-time compulsory education, no further requirements for access (but companies select their apprentices).</p> <p>The majority of apprentices hold either the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate (<i>mittlerer Schulabschluss</i>) or the lower secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Hauptschulabschluss</i>). However, the share of apprentices with a higher education entrance qualification has been rising as well: in 2021, almost one in three apprentices (29.7%) was a high-school graduate ( (128) ). This group followed <i>successively both paths</i> of education at upper secondary level: first the general, followed by the vocational qualification. Indeed, despite being classified as 'upper secondary', initial VET is also considered by high-school graduates as an alternative option to tertiary education.</p>
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	<p>A final exam is testing the practical and general knowledge of the learner based on the work requirements and processes of the occupation. As a rule, a final exam covers four or five fields relevant to the occupation. Performance in general subjects is evaluated via school reports. The exams are regulated by law (Vocational Training Act - BBiG) and are performed by the chambers. For this task, the chambers are authorised by the State and are officially acting as a public institution. Upon passing the final examination, apprentices receive a chamber certificate to document that training was successfully completed. This certification of qualification is fully recognised and highly trusted among employers.</p> <p>In 2021, 413 625 apprentices took the final exams ( (129) ). The success rate was 91.5%.</p>
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• certificate from the training company,</li> <li>• certificate from the vocational school,</li> <li>• final examination certificate of apprenticeship (<i>Gesellen- oder Facharbeiterbrief; IHK-Prüfungszeugnis</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	<p>Among <a href="#">Top 10 dual apprenticeship programmes</a> (out of 326) in 2022: office manager, motor vehicle mechatronics technician, management or sales assistant for retail services, IT specialist, medical assistant, industrial clerk and electronics technician. The four most popular <a href="#">apprenticeship programmes</a> in skilled crafts are carpenter, painter, cook and hairdresser.</p>

<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	<p>In general, graduates of dual apprenticeship programmes are fully qualified to enter the labour market and most of them do so.</p> <p>Those who successfully completed their apprenticeship programme, have several possibilities to further progress to post-secondary programmes, such as specialised and technician programmes, or and master craftsperson. Access to certain tertiary vocational programmes are restricted to related subject of the graduate's apprenticeship programme. Short term apprenticeship programmes do not always provide access to tertiary education programmes.</p>
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	<p>Graduates of dual apprenticeship programmes are fully qualified to enter the labour market and most of them do so. They have very good prospects of finding a work placement in a short delay.</p>
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>The most important tool for assessing non-formal learning outcomes is admission to final examinations under Section 45 (2) of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG), known as the '<i>Externen-Prüfung</i>' (examination for external candidates, i.e., those not involved in a formal vocational training programme). Under this provision, people can be admitted to a final examination for a recognised occupation requiring formal training (training occupation) if they furnish evidence that they have been employed in the relevant occupation for a period at least one and a half times as long as prescribed for the period of initial training.</p>
<b>General education subjects</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>General subjects such as mathematics, economics, social studies and foreign languages, depending on the programme.</p>
<b>Key competences</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>The primary aim of apprenticeship is to enable young people to acquire comprehensive vocational competence. Apprenticeship programmes are designed on the principle that they should be as broad as possible and as specific as necessary. After finishing the apprenticeship, they should be able to fulfil their duties as employees efficiently, effectively, innovatively, autonomously and in cooperation with others.</p> <p>The professional competences to be acquired through in-company training are specified in training regulations and included by the training enterprise in an individual training plan. The binding requirements of the training regulations guarantee a uniform national standard.</p> <p>For teaching in vocational schools, a framework curriculum is drawn up for every recognised training occupation in accordance with the training regulations.</p>



---

**Application of learning outcomes approach**

As part of the implementation of the DQR (German qualification framework), the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), together with the social partners and the ministries, adopted in June 2014 a recommendation of the BIBB Board on the structure and design of training regulations which addresses the issue of **competence orientation**.

According to this recommendation, 'the Vocational Training Act equates vocational action capacity with the DQR's understanding of action competence. The four competence dimensions of the DQR are to be systematically taken into account in all training regulations that are to be developed from 2015 onwards, so that competence orientation is increasingly incorporated into the regulatory work.'

These are:

- professional competences: **knowledge and skills**,
- social competences: **social competence and independence**,

which together form the **vocational action competence** (*Handlungskompetenz*) ( (130) ).

---

**Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners**

The data available is on a different base: **almost two thirds (65.1%)** of new entrants in upper secondary VET programmes in 2022 chose the dual apprenticeship scheme (dual system), while 34.9% enrolled in a school-based VET programme ( (131) ).

- 
- [128] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023], p. 123.
- [129] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023], p. 154.
- [130] BIBB (2023). *Ausbildungsordnungen und wie sie entstehen* [Vocational training regulations and the process behind them]. Bonn: BIBB, pp. 9.
- [131] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023], p. 77 (iABE).

EQF 4-5

Specialised programmes

incl. WBL

1-3 years

ISCED 444, 453, 454

**Specialised programmes (Berufsoberschule BOS - Fachoberschule FOS - Schule für Gesundheits-, Erziehungs- und Sozialberufen GES nach Bundes- und Landesrecht) leading to EQF level 4-5, ISCED 444, 453, 454**

<b>EQF level</b>	4-5	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	444, 453, 454
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	minimum 11 ((132) )	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	minimum 11
<b>Usual entry age</b>	minimum 15/16 but higher in practice	<b>Usual completion age</b>	minimum 16/17 but higher in practice
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	1-3		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	in some cases	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✓	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✗
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	Varies	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓

**ECVET or other credits** Information not available

**Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

- school-based learning;
- work-based learning (practical training at school and work practice);

BOS: full time vocational schools;

FOS: school- and work-based VET programmes;

GES: many of these health VET programmes are attached to hospitals providing both theoretical and practical training.

**Main providers** Regulated by Federal or State law

- senior vocational school (*Berufsoberschule* BOS)
- specialised upper secondary school (*Fachoberschule* FOS)
- schools of health, education and social care (GES)
- other vocational schools such as *Fachschule* and *Fachakademie*

<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	Varies from low share (BOS) to high share (FOS and GES)
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practical training at school,</li> <li>• work practice (e.g. in attached hospital in the case of healthcare schools).</li> </ul>
<b>Main target groups</b>	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	<p>Leaving certificate from intermediate secondary school (<i>mittlerer Schulabschluss</i> at the end of grade 10) and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 years' successful vocational training or</li> <li>• (2) 5 years' practical experience.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	Final examinations
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Specialised programmes at post-secondary level aim at increasing the permeability between secondary (for holders of general intermediate secondary leaving certificate) and tertiary education, by acquiring a higher education entrance qualification (subject-specific or not).
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	<p>The qualification acquired is a higher education entrance qualification (subject-specific or not) in various areas, e.g. agriculture, biotechnology and environmental technology; nutrition and home economics; health and social services; technology (emphasis: construction and wood technology, electrical engineering, metal technology, textile technology and clothing, printing technology, and physics, chemistry, biology); business and administration.</p> <p>Post-secondary specialised programmes at ISCED level 454 correspond to cases having acquired <i>two</i> qualifications: a higher education entrance qualification and a dual VET qualification or two VET qualifications.</p>
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	<p>Specialised programmes at post-secondary level aim at increasing the permeability between secondary (for holders of general intermediate secondary leaving certificate) and tertiary education, by acquiring a higher education entrance qualification.</p> <p>Depending on their chosen programme and duration, graduates from specialised programmes can further progress to vocational and general bachelor programmes, as well as to advanced vocational programmes.</p>
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	Information not available
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	Information not available
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓

---

<b>Key competences</b>	✓
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	Information not available
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	Information not available

---

EQF 5-7

**Advanced vocational qualifications and exams**

Master professional

(Management expert);

Bachelor professional

(Master craftsperson, specialist);

ISCED 554, 655

Professional specialist

ISCED 554

**Advanced vocational qualifications and exams at three levels: - EQF level 5: professional specialist (Berufsspezialist), - EQF 6: Bachelor professional (master craftsperson, specialist: Fachwirte und Meister) and - EQF 7: Master professional (management experts: Betriebswirt).**

<b>EQF level</b>	5-7	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	554, 655 ( (133) )
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	Varies	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Varies
<b>Usual entry age</b>	Varies	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Varies
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	Varies: depends on preparation classes		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✗	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✓  It is advanced VET.
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	✗  ( (134) )	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓

**ECVET or other credits** Information not available

<b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b>	These advanced vocational qualifications do not contain a curriculum; however, they do define and describe examinations. The candidates can prepare themselves while continuing to work. Most candidates attend preparatory courses. These courses may be full-time, part-time or distance learning.
<b>Main providers</b>	Exams: Assessment/certification by the chambers;  Preparatory courses: provided by the chambers.
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	The candidates can prepare themselves while continuing to work. Most candidates attend preparatory courses (full time or part time after work), which mostly do not include any work-based learning. However, <u>professional practice is required</u> to access each new level of qualifications.
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	The candidates can prepare themselves while continuing to work. Most candidates attend preparatory courses (full time or part time after work), which mostly do not include any work-based learning. However, <u>professional practice is required</u> to access each new level of qualifications.
<b>Main target groups</b>	<p>Programmes are aimed at people who have already completed vocational or professional training and/or have a number of years of professional experience. They are designed to offer further professional development.</p> <p>Advanced vocational qualification as a master craftsperson (<i>Meister</i>; at EQF level 6) entitles the holder to practise a craft trade independently, to employ and train apprentices and opens up access to courses at craft academies, universities of applied sciences (UAS, <i>Fachhochschulen</i>) as well as universities.</p>
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	<p>The admission requirements to the examination are threefold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IVET qualification,</li> <li>• work experience,</li> <li>• advanced vocational qualification at EQF level 6 to obtain an advanced vocational qualification at EQF level 7.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	<p>Unlike the training regulations for IVET in the dual system, these federally regulated advanced training regulations do not contain a curriculum; however, they do define and describe examinations. Other features, which must be specified in the advanced training regulations, include (§ 53 para. 2 BBiG, § 42 para. 2 HwO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• designation of the advanced qualification,</li> <li>• the aim, contents and requirements of the examination,</li> <li>• admission requirements and</li> <li>• examination procedure.</li> </ul> <p>The assessment and certification is carried out by the Chambers.</p>

<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	<p>The <a href="#">2019 amendment of the Vocational Training Act</a> introduced new designations for advanced vocational qualifications at the three levels of tertiary or higher VET, to underline the equivalence to academic qualifications and to improve international visibility and recognition. The new designations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified professional specialist (EQF level 5),</li> <li>• Bachelor professional (master craftsperson, specialist, etc.) (EQF level 6),</li> <li>• Master professional (management expert; vocational pedagogue, IT-Professional) (EQF level 7).</li> </ul> <p>Existing and recognised professional terms such as master craftsperson (<i>Meister</i>) will not be replaced but supplemented.</p>
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	<p><b>EQF level 5</b></p> <p>IT specialists in different areas (e.g. component or software or digital media developer, IT sales advisor, industrial IT system or security technician), service technicians in different areas (e.g. automotive or two-wheel service technician, service technician for wind turbine technology), dietary cook, etc.</p> <p><b>EQF level 6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Skilled crafts</u>: e.g. Master painter, baker, hairdresser</li> <li>• <u>Commerce and industry</u>: e.g. certified industrial supervisor specialising in footwear manufacturing, certified audio-visual media production specialist, certified financial services consultant, certified commercial specialist for logistics systems.</li> </ul> <p><b>EQF level 7</b></p> <p>Certified Business Manager, Certified Technical Business Manager, Certified Professional Educator and Strategic Professionals.</p>
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	<p>Completion of advanced vocational training at EQF level 6 (Bachelor professional) and at EQF level 7 (Master professional) opens up access to all programmes offered at tertiary education.</p>
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	<p>Information not available</p>
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	<p>These advanced vocational qualifications do not contain a curriculum; however, they do define and describe examinations. Validation of prior learning is therefore not relevant for those advanced vocational qualifications.</p>
<b>General education subjects</b>	<p>Varies according to the qualification and corresponding examination</p>
<b>Key competences</b>	<p>Varies according to the qualification and corresponding examination</p>
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	<p>Information not available</p>

---

<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	Information not available
--	---------------------------

---

---



EQF 6

Advanced vocational programmes

incl. WBL

1.5-4 years

ISCED 655

**Advanced vocational programmes in trade and technical schools (Fachschule) leading to EQF level 6 and ISCED level 655.**

<b>EQF level</b>	6	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	655
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	Varies	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Varies
<b>Usual entry age</b>	Varies	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Varies
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	1.5 up to 4 years		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>	✗	<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	✓
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	✗	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	✓ advanced VET
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>	Varies	<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	✓

**ECVET or other credits** Information not available

**Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)** Depends on the field of study: mostly school-based learning but also work-based learning required in the fields of curative education care and social pedagogy (one third of the learning).

**Main providers** State regulated technical and trade schools.  
They exist for the following occupational fields: agriculture, design, technology, business and social care.

**Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies** Depends on the field of study: mostly school-based learning but also work-based learning required in the fields of curative education care and social pedagogy (one third of the learning).

**Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)** Work practice

<b>Main target groups</b>	<p>Programmes are available to graduates from apprenticeship and school-based VET programmes after a certain number of years working in the related profession.</p> <p>They qualify learners to take on management tasks and encourage them to become self-employed. They can also be used to prepare the master craftsperson, bachelor and master professional examinations.</p>
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	<p>Entrance requirements vary by subject area: an applicant normally needs a qualification in a recognised training occupation relevant to the chosen subject and relevant work experience of at least 1 year, or a qualification from a full-time vocational school and relevant work experience of at least 5 years.</p>
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	<p>They end with a final State examination under State law.</p>
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	<p>The programmes end with a final State examination under State law with a state certified qualification.</p>
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	<p>State vocational qualification (e.g. educator; technician)</p>
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	<p>Progression to bachelor programme is possible ((135) ) and prior education may be recognised affecting the programme duration.</p> <p>They qualify learners to take on management tasks and encourage them to become self-employed. They can also be used to prepare the master craftsperson, bachelor and master professional examinations.</p>
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	<p>They qualify learners to take on management tasks and encourage them to become self-employed. They can also be used to prepare the master craftsperson, bachelor and master professional examinations.</p>
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>An applicant normally needs a qualification in a recognised training occupation relevant to the chosen subject and relevant work experience of at least 1 year, or a qualification from a full-time vocational school and relevant work experience.</p>
<b>General education subjects</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>Depends on the field of study ((136) )</p>
<b>Key competences</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>Depends on the field of study</p>
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	<p>Information not available</p>
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	<p>Information not available</p>

- [135] KMK resolution of 5.6.1998 in the version currently in force.
- [136] KMK (2024). *Rahmenvereinbarung über Fachschulen* [Framework agreement on technical schools].

EQF 7







Master programmes

incl. WBL

1-2 years

ICSED 747

**Master programme (Master Programm) leading to EQF level 7, ICSED 747**

<b>EQF level</b>	7	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	747
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	Varies	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Varies
<b>Usual entry age</b>	Varies	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Varies
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	Minimum 1-2		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>		<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>		<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	
	can be both initial and continuing VET		can be both initial and continuing VET
<b>Is it offered free of charge?</b>		<b>Is it available for adults?</b>	
	in most Federal States, no general tuition fees during the minimum period of study.		

**ECVET or other credits** For a Master programme on average 30 credits have to be achieved each semester. A 1-year programme has therefore typically 60 credits, a 2-year programme 120 points in line with the European Credit Transfer System.

**Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)** Dual learning:

- school-based learning,
- work-based learning.

<b>Main providers</b>	<p><b>Dual programmes</b> (EQF levels 6, 7) are offered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• universities of applied sciences (UASs, <i>Fachhochschulen</i>): 69.7% of all dual study programmes;</li> <li>• the dual university (<i>Duale Hochschulen</i>): 15.6%;</li> <li>• universities of cooperative education (<i>Berufsakademien</i>): 8.6%;</li> <li>• as well as some universities.</li> </ul>
<b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b>	Information not available
<b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practical training at school</li> <li>• in-company practice</li> </ul> <p>Initial dual study programmes have the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alternation between theory phases in the institution of higher education or academy and practical phases in the training enterprise;</li> <li>• a regulation about the practical training;</li> <li>• learners have the status as a student-employee or a mostly unpaid-trainee, based on a contract with the company;</li> <li>• closely interwoven learning activity in the company and acquisition of theoretical knowledge in the higher education institution / academy;</li> <li>• close coordination and cooperation between the higher education institution and company.</li> </ul>
<b>Main target groups</b>	The initial VET dual study Master programmes address learners having obtained the Bachelor degree in this subject. The continuing VET dual study Master programmes with an employment component are primarily aimed at people who have already completed vocational or professional training and/or have a number of years of professional experience as well as the bachelor diploma.
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	To enter the dual study Master programmes, learners must have successfully graduated from a general or vocational Bachelor programme.
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	The examinations are in general performed as an accompaniment to studies. The study courses are provided with a credit point system (at least 60 to 120 ECTS for a Master's degree). A written dissertation (Master's thesis) is obligatory. The examinations regulations ( <i>Prüfungsordnungen</i> ) prescribe the objectives of and subject-matter on the examinations, the required standards and the examining procedures for each study course.
<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	Master's degree

<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	The most common combination for initial dual study programmes is a business management programme plus commercial training, as well as an engineering or computer science programme combined with technical training. There is a wide range of possible subject areas, such as insurance, mechatronics, commercial law, health economy, mathematics, biology, architecture, and media informatics.
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	Graduates holding a Master degree can progress to do a PHD programme and degree.
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>General education subjects</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Key competences</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	<i>Information not available</i>

EQF 6





Bachelor programmes

incl. WBL

3-4 years

ICSED 645

## Dual study bachelor programmes (Duales Studium im Bachelor Programm) leading to EQF level 6 and ISCED level 645

<b>EQF level</b>	6	<b>ISCED-P 2011 level</b>	645
<b>Usual entry grade</b>	13-14	<b>Usual completion grade</b>	Varies
<b>Usual entry age</b>	Varies but minimum 17-18	<b>Usual completion age</b>	Varies
<b>Length of a programme (years)</b>	3-4 (minimum)		
<b>Is it part of compulsory education and training?</b>		<b>Is it part of formal education and training system?</b>	
<b>Is it initial VET?</b>	 ( (137) )	<b>Is it continuing VET?</b>	 Some dual study bachelor programmes are considered as continuing education. The prerequisite is that the full- or part-time dual study programme is thematically linked with the job and has a designed frame of reference of study and work. The employer is informed about the enrolment in studies and regularly exchanges information about the contents with the student. Other courses of study during employment are not considered dual study programmes ( (138) ).

<p><b>Is it offered free of charge?</b> ✓</p> <p>In most Federal States, no general tuition fees during the minimum period of study.</p>	<p><b>Is it available for adults?</b> ✓</p>
<p><b>ECVET or other credits</b></p>	<p>Graduate need to prove a minimum of 180 to 210 ECTS points.</p>
<p><b>Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)</b></p>	<p>Dual learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school-based learning</li> <li>• work-based learning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Main providers</b></p>	<p>Dual study bachelor programmes (EQF levels 6, 7) are offered by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• universities of applied sciences (UASs, <i>Fachhochschulen</i>): 69.7% of all <a href="#">dual study programmes</a>;</li> <li>• the dual university (<i>Duale Hochschulen</i>): 15.6%;</li> <li>• universities of cooperative education (<i>Berufsakademien</i>): 8.6%;</li> <li>• as well as some universities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies</b></p>	<p>Percentage of in-company training varies, but at least 40-50%</p>
<p><b>Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)</b></p>	<p>The initial dual study bachelor programmes have the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practical training at school</li> <li>• in-company practice</li> </ul> <p>The initial dual study bachelor programmes have the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alternation between theory phases in the institution of higher education or academy and practical phases in the training enterprise;</li> <li>• a regulation about the practical training;</li> <li>• learners have the status as a student/employee or a mostly unpaid trainee, based on a contract with the company;</li> <li>• closely interwoven learning activity in the company and acquisition of theoretical knowledge in the higher education institution / academy;</li> <li>• close coordination and cooperation between the higher education institution and company.</li> </ul>



<b>Main target groups</b>	The initial dual study bachelor programmes address learners having obtained the higher education entrance qualification and VET graduates under standard preconditions (see next text on entry requirements). The continuing VET dual study bachelor programmes with an employment component are primarily aimed at people who have already completed vocational or professional training and/or have a number of years of professional experience.
<b>Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)</b>	<p>As a rule, enrolling in an IVET dual study bachelor programme requires a higher education entrance qualification (<i>Allgemeine Hochschulreife</i> or <i>Fachhochschulreife</i>). However, vocationally qualified applicants without a higher education entrance qualification obtained at school can be granted the right of entry to higher education under standard preconditions. (e.g. successful completion of apprenticeship, years of work experience in the field).</p> <p>The programme with a training component also requires an employment contract. In some cases, the completion of an internship (8 to 12 weeks) in a company working in the field of study is required before the start of studies (<i>Vorpraktikum</i>).</p> <p>Regarding continuing VET, dual study bachelor programmes with an employment component are primarily aimed at people who have already completed vocational or professional training and/or have a number of years of professional experience. They are designed to offer further professional development and combine a course of study with professional experience that is directly relevant to the course. No higher education entrance qualification is required.</p>
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	The examinations are in general performed as an accompaniment to studies. The study courses are provided with a credit point system (at least 180 to 210 ECTS for a Bachelor's degree). A written dissertation (Bachelor's thesis) is obligatory. Learners are to demonstrate the ability to independently address a problem from their subject within a specified period of time using academic methods. The examinations regulations ( <i>Prüfungsordnungen</i> ) prescribe the objectives of and subject-matter on the examinations, the required standards and the examining procedures for each study course.

<b>Diplomas/certificates provided</b>	<p>Programmes lead in general to a bachelor qualification, which can differ in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initial dual study programmes with an integrated training component combine a course of study with practical training in a recognised occupation in a company. In addition to the bachelor degree, learners obtain a formal IVET qualification;</li> <li>• initial dual study bachelor programmes with a work experience component combine a course of study with extended practical placements with an employer (about 40-50% in-company training). Learners obtain a bachelor degree but not a recognised vocational qualification;</li> <li>• continuing VET dual study bachelor programmes with an employment component are primarily aimed at people who have already completed vocational or professional training and/or have a number of years of professional experience. They are designed to offer further professional development and combine a course of study with professional experience that is directly relevant to the course.</li> </ul>
<b>Examples of qualifications</b>	<p>The most common combination for initial dual study bachelor programmes is a business management programme plus commercial training, as well as an engineering or computer science programme combined with technical training. There is a wide range of possible subject areas, such as insurance, mechatronics, commercial law, health economy, mathematics, biology, architecture, and media informatics.</p>
<b>Progression opportunities for learners after graduation</b>	<p>Graduates can further progress to professional or general Master programmes.</p> <p>The continuing VET dual study bachelor programmes with an employment component are designed to offer further professional development and combine a course of study with professional experience that is directly relevant to the course.</p>
<b>Destination of graduates</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Awards through validation of prior learning</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>General education subjects</b>	✓
<b>Key competences</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Application of learning outcomes approach</b>	<i>Information not available</i>
<b>Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners</b>	<i>Information not available</i>

# References

- [4] Information on employment statistics from the Federal Employment Agency as of 31 December 2022.
- [5] BIBB (2024). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2024, Vorversion* [VET data report 2024, preliminary version]. Bonn, 2024] p. 189f, p. 191, p. 192.
- [19] The average age is calculated as the arithmetic mean of the years of birth of the apprentice in the VET contracts in the respective reporting year. For more information on the calculation of the average age, see BIBB. *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2019*. Data Report 2019, Chapter A 5.8.
- [42] Ausbildungsverbände.
- [52] Volkshochschulen (VHS).
- [70] Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB)
- [73] Gesellschaft für wirtschaftliche Strukturforchung (GWS)
- [96] BIBB (2023). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2023* [VET data report 2023]. Bonn: BIBB, p 159 and 162.