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European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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EN

spotlight on VET
GERMANY

2020

VET in Germany

Vocational education and training (VET) in Germany 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 partners' contribution is important at different levels.

Upper secondary VET

Apprenticeship programmes (dual system) are the main pillar of upper secondary VET. They are mostly offered at EQF level 4 (about 50 programmes at EQF level 3) and covers about 330 occupations in various economic sectors. Programmes usually last three years (two years for EQF level 3 programmes) and combine two learning venues, companies and vocational schools (work-based learning share is approximately 75%). There are no basic access requirements, but an apprenticeship contract must be concluded between a learner and a company. Enterprises bear the costs of company-based training and pay learners remuneration. Those passing the final examination carried out by the chambers are qualified as certified skilled professionals.

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

- school-based VET programmes, duration one to three years, leading, for example, to a qualification in the health sector such as a nurse. The minimum entrance requirement is the lower secondary school leaving certificate;
- general education programmes with vocational orientation, duration two to three years, leading to the general higher education entrance qualification. The minimum entrance requirement is the intermediate school leaving certificate.

Young people with learning difficulties, handicap or insufficient German language skills have the possibility to attend different transition programmes: the prevocational training (lower secondary school leaving certificate can be acquired) or basic vocational training year.

At post-secondary level, specialised programmes are offered at EQF levels 4 to 5, lasting one to three years. They build on the intermediate school leaving certificate or initial VET and lead to entrance qualifications for universities or provide direct access to the labour market.

Tertiary VET

At tertiary level, persons with vocational qualifications can acquire advanced vocational qualifications at EQF levels 5 to 7, contributing greatly to the attractiveness of the VET pathway. Those at EQF level 6 (bachelor professional, e.g. *Meister*) entitle graduates to exercise a trade independently, to hire and train apprentices, and to enrol in academic bachelor programmes. Graduates of the bachelor professional can continue at EQF level 7 (master professional). These qualifications also support the acquisition of middle and top management positions in companies. Preparation courses are offered by chambers or schools. Access to the respective assessment generally requires several years of practice in the related occupation.

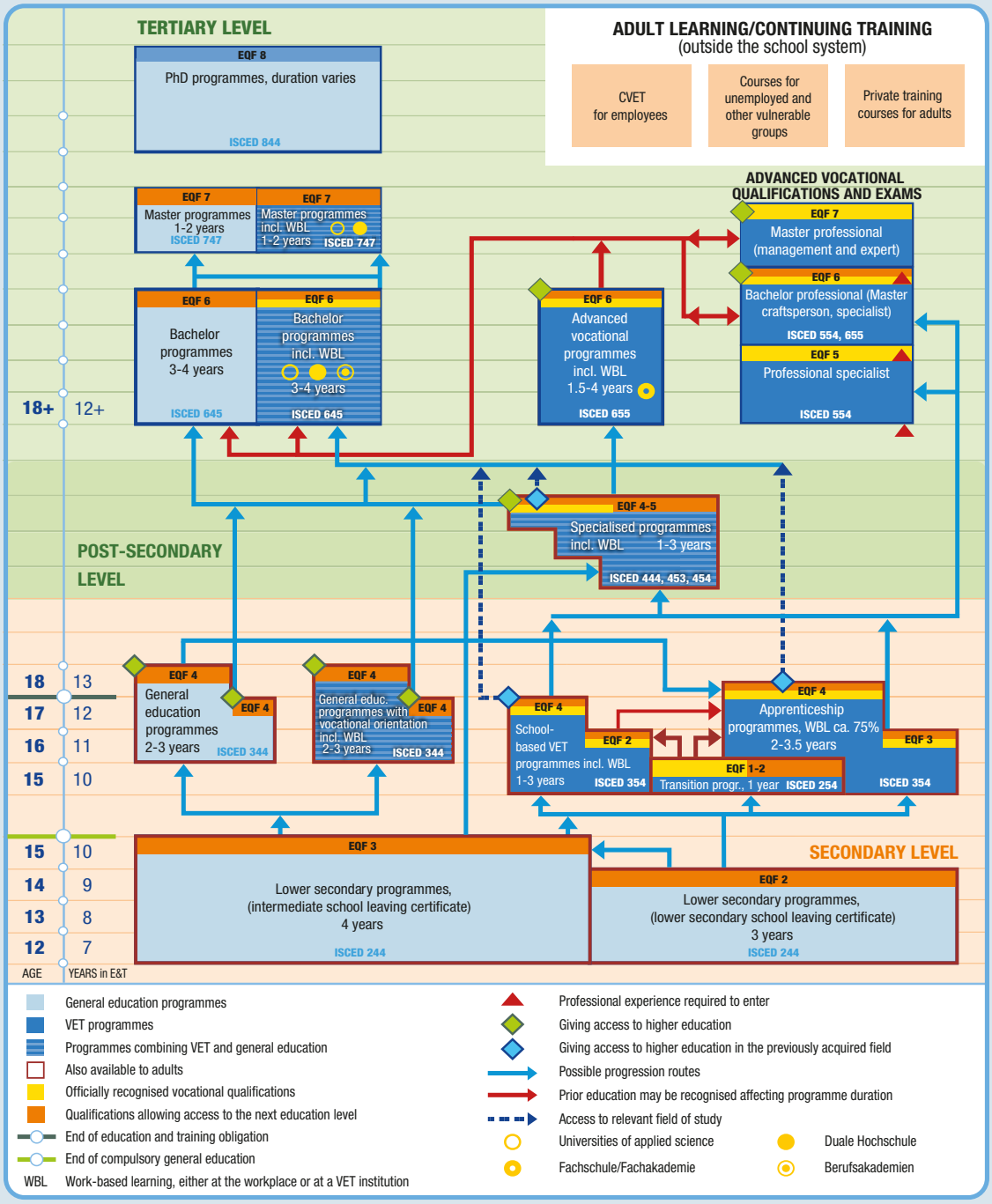
Advanced vocational programmes are offered at EQF 6, lasting one and a half to four years. Entrance requirements include specific vocational qualification and work experience. They lead to an advanced vocational qualification (such as technician, educator) and give access to the relevant field of study.

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%). Some of them lead to double qualifications (vocational qualification and bachelor or master degree). Enterprises bear the costs of company-based training and pay learners a wage based on the contract.

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.

VET in Germany's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011. This is a simplified chart, based on the unified approach used for the spotlights on VET in all EU-27 countries plus Iceland and Norway.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Germany, 2020.

Distinctive features of VET

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 2019, 5.8% of those aged 15 to 24 versus 15.1% in the EU-27. About 50% of upper secondary school learners are enrolled in a VET programme; of those, 70% participate in apprenticeship. A growing share of apprentices has a higher education entrance qualification (29.2% of apprentices starting their training in 2017). The success of the German apprenticeship system was also the main driver for implementing the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

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 for flexibility to agree on company training plans with apprentices. Regular revisions to training regulations 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.

Challenges and policy responses

Increasing the attractiveness of VET to secure a future skilled workforce:

- promoting vocational educational pathways up to EQF levels 6 and 7 (higher VET) and underlining the equivalence to academic education through new designations of bachelor professional and master professional (revised Vocational Training Act 2020) and revision of AFBG, a major funding instrument for advanced vocational qualifications;
- promoting excellence in VET with the funding scheme InnoVET, which supports high-quality cooperation between learning locations, for the transfer of knowledge and new developments (including artificial intelligence) from universities and research institutions via VET into company practice;
- promoting training for care and nursing occupations, such as by broadening the qualification, abolishing school fees and introducing appropriate remuneration for trainees of hospitals and nursing institutions.

Modernising IVET and CVET to prepare for digital and ecological transition:

- IVET: the VET 4.0 initiative investigates the effects of digitalisation on qualifications and competences requirements of skilled professionals. It includes various projects, which contribute to implementing the changes needed, such as the funding programme *Digital transformation in inter-company vocational training and competence centres*;
- CVET: the Qualification Opportunities Act (2019) introduces the right of employees to access CVET funding (including salary compensations), if they are affected by structural changes or strive for further training to access an occupation lacking employees. The National skills strategy (2019) responds to the challenges of the increasing digitalisation of the world of work, which changes qualifications and job profiles. The overall goal is to establish a new culture by understanding occupational CVET as a lifelong necessity.

Providing guidance and coaching to reduce matching problems and support inclusive VET:

- the number of unfilled training places shows a need for reconciling supply and demand while taking into account significant regional and branch-specific differences. Employment agencies play a major role in matching enterprises (especially SMEs) and applicants through databases, campaigns and support measures;
- the Alliance for initial and further training has committed to integrating all interested learners in a VET programme; pre-VET measures and support during training are offered to migrants, refugees and other disadvantaged groups to facilitate their transition to VET and successful completion.

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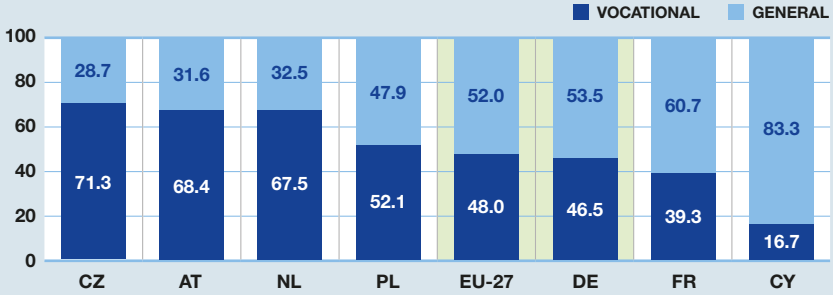
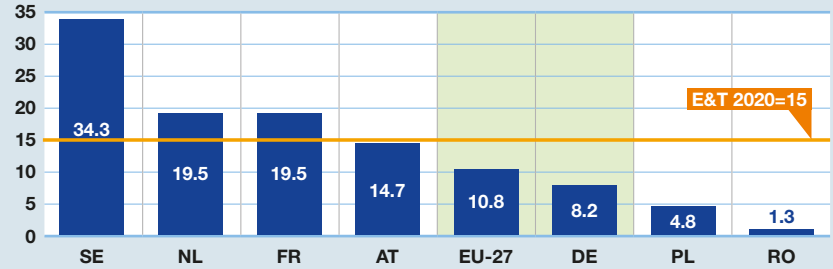
Education and training in figures[1]

Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2018



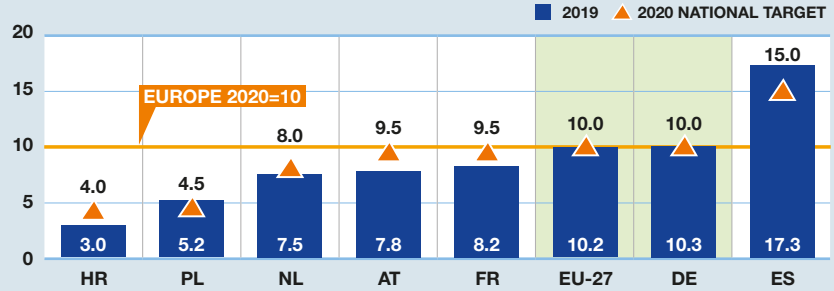
Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 5.5.2020.

Lifelong learning
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2019



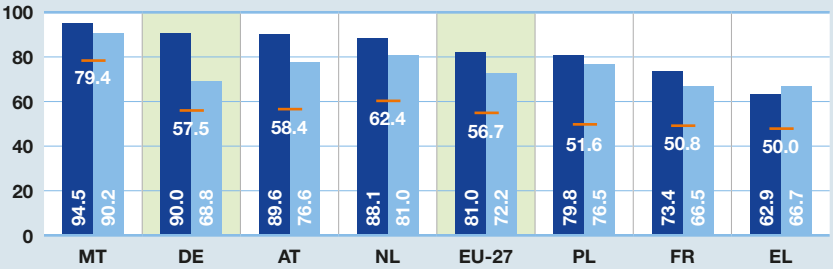
Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 6.5.2020.

Early leavers from education and training
% of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks prior to the survey, 2019



Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 6.5.2020.

Employment rates of young graduates
% of 20 to 34 year-olds no longer in education and training, 2019



Upper vocational secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)
Upper general secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)
Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 6.5.2020.

(1) The data displayed in each figure include the Spotlight country, its neighbouring countries, the EU-27 average as well as the countries with the highest and lowest rate.

Further information

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https://www.bmbf.de/en/index.html	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
http://www.kmk.org/	The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* of the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK)
https://www.bmwi.de/Navigation/EN/Home/home.html	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy
http://www.bmas.de/EN/Home/home.html	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
https://www.arbeitgeber.de/www/arbeitgeber.nsf/ID/home	Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA)
https://www.dgb.de/	German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB)
https://www.dihk.de/	German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK)
https://www.zdh.de/en/	German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH)
https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/en/welcome	Federal Employment Agency

This Spotlight is based on input from BIBB (ReferNet Germany 2020).

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CEDEFOP | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
Postal: Cedefop service post, 570 01 Thermi, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

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