

International cooperation in VET

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 GERMANY

Timeline

2022 Implementation

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 44050

Background

The Federal Government has been involved in international vocational education and training cooperation (iBBZ) for many years. Global megatrends such as the transformation of the world of work in the context of digitalisation, the increase in worldwide migratory movements, climate change and advancing globalisation present new challenges; these are addressed in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Vocational education and training (VET) in Germany contributes significantly to economic growth, employment and social participation. The growing international demand for German know-how in dual VET is met through a broad and diverse range of VET cooperation activities. However, the motives and objectives of German VET cooperation stakeholders often differ. Some pursue development cooperation objectives, while others focus on business interests; foreign education policy considerations are involved. In order to merge this diversity into a consistent and balanced representation and action of German stakeholders, in 2013 the Federal Government adopted a strategy paper for one-stop international collaboration. In 2019, the Strategy on international VET cooperation was updated, forming the common umbrella for the orientation of the Federal Government's iBBZ and for its design together with other actors.

Objectives

The Federal Government wants to support further the development of VET in the partner countries and to strengthen Germany's international cooperation in VET. The aim of the Federal Government's bilateral VET cooperation is to help partner countries effectively integrate elements of practice-oriented or dual VET into their respective systems by sustainable support in line with the partner country's context and needs. Another objective is to support German companies abroad in their efforts to recruit and train local skilled workers.

Description

The subject of bilateral VET cooperation is usually the intentions of a partner country to reform its VET system. Project funding in international VET cooperation serves to make

expert knowledge and implementation competences from Germany available to the partner countries. Examples of good practice are developed and tested on various VET topics and can stimulate reforms in the partner countries. Pilot projects are funded by BMBF, which regularly publishes relevant funding guidelines to promote them with specific aspects of international and bilateral VET cooperation e.g. Unions4VET, SCIVET – Skilled Crafts from Germany. When cooperating with its partners, the Federal Government is guided by the five principles of the dual VET system:

- (a) joint responsibility of the State, trade and industry, and the social partners;
- (b) learning in the work process;
- (c) acceptance of national occupational, training and examination standards;
- (d) qualified VET staff at companies and vocational schools;
- (e) institutionalised VET and labour market research and VET consultancy.

The Federal Government supports political actors in partner countries in creating and implementing a framework for the design and development of VET. Within this framework, the role of State institutions, companies and business associations, and as the social partners is strengthened. The Federal Government uses a bundle of instruments to coordinate and harmonise its international VET cooperation (iBBZ).

Round Table for international VET cooperation is a formal body where German stakeholders regularly exchange information and coordinate their activities regarding topics and countries. Various Federal Government departments, representatives of the Federal States, social partners, chamber organisations, civil society institutions, implementation bodies and institutions with links to government bodies all participate in the Round Table discussions.

GOVET (German office for international cooperation in VET) is a one-stop shop for international VET cooperation for interested parties from across the world. The office provides guidance regarding the German dual VET system and links to relevant and interested German cooperation partners. The office collaborates with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Foreign Office (AA), the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), who have all an important role in international cooperation in VET. GOVET acts as secretariat of the Round Table and supports bilateral cooperation of BMBF in VET. It establishes, structures and supports cooperation agreements with partner countries and the implementation of pilot projects.

BMWK funds the Competence Centre for International VET (KIBB) at the Association of German chambers of industry and commerce (DIHK) to support chambers of commerce and industry abroad (AHK), as they act as initial contact partners for VET cooperation, along with German embassies or general consulates. Skills experts based at the AHKs promote dual VET based on the German model abroad and support the training activities of German companies, their business partners and local vocational schools. The range of services offered by the AHKs helps German companies to provide local skilled workers with the right qualifications.

iMOVE (International Marketing of VET) is a networking platform initiated in 2001 by BMBF to promote international cooperation in VET between German training providers and international partners. iMOVE is part of the international department at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). iMOVE seeks to inform interested parties around the world about German competence in the field of vocational training and continuing education, along with 'made in Germany' qualifying opportunities.

The BILT project (Bridging innovation and learning in technical and vocational education and training) has since 2019 complemented national developments of the partner countries to explore and support innovative, society-oriented modes of learning and cooperation in VET. BILT is a peer learning and knowledge exchange platform for VET providers in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Europe. It helps them address current challenges in VET systems arising from technological, social, environmental and workplace changes. Good practices and lessons learnt are then made available to other interested VET stakeholders. In 2021, the BILT Agenda 2025 was adopted, setting the goal of promoting modern and competitive qualifications and competences in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) through international bridging of innovation and learning. This Agenda is a joint initiative of

UNESCO-UNEVOC, the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and BMBF. It supports the achievement of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (goals 4 and 17).

2022 Implementation

The Cooperation VET framework announcement published by the BMBF in September 2022 aims to support partner countries (China, Costa Rica, Ghana, Greece, India, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, South Africa and the USA) in their efforts to reform their VET systems, and German companies in their efforts to recruit and qualify skilled workers abroad. Based on the respective needs in the partner country, different topics and institutions can be funded, e.g. exploratory projects up to 12 months and cooperation projects up to three years.

In 2022, the following bilateral VET cooperations took place.

Future4VET (BMBF funded project), continues the dialogue between German and Greek trade union organisations started in the strategy project, Unions4VET, and develops dialogue formats in a shared creative way. The special focus of these formats is on knowledge transfer, capacity building and direct support for Greek regional advisory councils, which are to be strengthened and qualified in their advisory function on VET.

ConnActions (BMBF funded project), coordinated by AHK Italy, aims to intensify bilateral VET cooperation between Germany and Italy at local level (e.g. city/municipality). Five model networks between German and Italian stakeholders, such as representatives of schools, companies, chambers, associations, and trade unions, will be initiated and established in the long term.

The GOVET continued its various activities, such as supporting bilateral VET cooperation with Ghana by advising the Ghanaian Commission for TVET on organisational development. In October 2022, GOVET and BIBB hosted a one-week study visit of a Ghanaian delegation focused on VET reporting, VET research and monitoring, and the dual training system. As part of the BMBF bilateral cooperation with Costa Rica, GOVET representatives visited the Costa Rican partners in November 2022. GOVET and the partners assessed the current status of the dual training programmes and implementation activities introduced in April 2022. GOVET also provided information material (e.g. films, slides) on the German VET system, particularly for people from Ukraine.

Alongside these bilateral VET cooperation projects, other international VET cooperation activities also took place in 2022.

In 2022, iMOVE (BIBB) published the issue Digital train-the-trainer solutions (available in six languages) in its series Developing skills for employability with German partners - 8 case studies. In addition, iMOVE reported on four new VET success stories:

- (a) online training for Colombian trainers;
- (b) E-tourism management for travel agencies and tour operators in Iraq;
- (c) the three H's: head, hand and heart, setting up a training farm for organic farming in Namibia;
- (d) dualised training for the future in Rwanda: the PartnerRwanda project implements dual training programmes and practice-based short-term training.

In October 2022, iMOVE and the German-African Business Association organised the second German-African Forum where the German education sector was introduced to around 85 attendees, including three education ministers from Angola, Ghana, and Namibia. In November 2022, iMOVE organised an online event, VET on the move; four German training providers presented their training offers on training of trainers at the iMOVE online event VET on the move targeting over 70 participants from India and other countries in South and South-East Asia.

BILT organised nine bridging events in 2022 on diverse topics, e.g. two learning labs, H2Skills - training development for the hydrogen economy; and MilleaLab -the all-in-

one virtual reality platform for educators and learners.

2023 Implementation

On 1 January 2023, a new funding round started in the *Skills expert programme* of the BMWK and the DIHK. Funding is provided for AHKs in 10 countries (chambers of commerce and industry abroad). The countries and regions of the Baltic States, Ghana, Japan and Singapore were selected in the category 'Foundation building'; Argentina, Chile and Nigeria in the category 'Green jobs', and Brazil and Turkey in the category 'Skilled workers for Germany'.

In 2023, GOVET organised a specialist conference to mark the 10th anniversary of the Federal Government's strategy for international VET cooperation, answered around 450 enquiries from 67 countries about German VET and VET cooperation, provided information on VET with a ten-language website and information products in 14 languages and supported more than 55 visitor groups with over 750 participants from 50 countries and regions.

In 2023, iMOVE organised seven events (country seminars, 'VET on the move' webinars and face-to-face events), accompanied delegation trips to eleven countries and took part in trade fairs on site. In addition, iMOVE issued six publications.

BILT organised ten events in 2023 in various formats and on diverse topics, e.g. learning labs: 'Fifty shades greener' focusing on how a woman-led TVET provider is developing sustainable practices and curricula in the tourism and hospitality sector, and Young Africa: embracing equal opportunities for women in TVET both online and offline.

In order to promote the internationalisation of VET (IBB), 75 projects in 20 countries were funded by BMBF. A large proportion of these projects support the relevant vocational training reforms in the third country or the market entry of German training providers. Further, to promote research for the internationalisation of VET (IBBF), 16 projects on current topics of VET cooperation were funded. In 2023, German universities and research institutes worked with their partner organisations in eleven different countries on the internationally oriented research projects.

The involvement of economic and social partners is being developed and trialled in 16 individual and joint projects for the BMBF's VET cooperation programmes (WiSoVET). The operational involvement of chamber and employee organisations supports the design and implementation of VET reforms in the partner countries. The projects also strengthen the visibility of VET in partner countries, e.g. by establishing and awarding prizes for VET. Further, to promote international VET cooperation projects (CooperationVET), four calls for funding have been published by BMBF for Mexico, India and Latvia until the end of 2023.

Within the BMBF ClusterVET funding programme, a training cluster for German companies abroad is being trialled to train local skilled workers in line with demand. To this end, analogue and digital training modules (so-called mixed reality learning scenarios) are being developed and the digital modules implemented using virtual reality technology. Further, the project MasterVET promotes the development and testing of a Master's degree programme in management and teaching for international VET personnel. At the start of the 2022-23 academic year, 16 students from twelve countries began the part-time Master of Vocational Education and Innovation programme.

2024 Implementation

The eight expert forum of the BMBF funding initiatives in international VET cooperation (iBBZ) took place in Bonn on 31 January 2024. The first collaborative projects prepared under the BMBF's 'CooperationVET' framework announcement addressed the topic of governance. In June 2024, the BMBF, in coordination with the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), published a call for proposals within the CooperationVET framework on 'modular training and further education for

South African vocational school teachers in the fields of mechatronics, energy and water management, and renewable energies', addressing all German vocational training stakeholders. The bilateral cooperation project aims to develop, test and scale up training measures for innovative teaching approaches and authentic learning activities. The project builds on the successfully implemented BMBF-funded projects TRAINME and TRAINME2.

The Competence Centre for International VET (KIBB) supports 'Skills Experts' at chambers of commerce and industry abroad (AHK). The KIBB interactive world map shows where in the world AHKs offer dual training: in 52 countries, more than 32 949 apprentices have been trained and more than 10 181 apprentices were trained as of October 2024.

In 2024, the German Skilled Craft Sector for International VET Cooperation (SCIVET) continued to cooperate in VET projects abroad, e.g. in the CoRiCert project in Costa Rica, it gives advice to develop action-oriented examinations for apprentices. Another 2024 project: Examiner training for Chinese vocational school teachers at the Educational Academy of the Chamber of Skilled Crafts Karlsruhe after the pandemic pause.

Sustainability is making its way into the training and framework curricula as a cross-cutting standard profile item in VET. Although the implementation at both learning venues, company and school, is a challenge for training and teaching staff, it is also an opportunity to explore new room for manoeuvre. In this context, GOVET has developed the 'VET Chain' counselling tool, which celebrated its premiere as a specialist workshop at Didacta 2024 in March. In 2024, GOVET continued its bilateral cooperation in VET, e.g. with Ghana, Costa Rica and South Africa.

In 2024, iMOVE published new VET success stories on its portal, e.g. a success story on drinking water management for Mongolia: together with project partners in Mongolia, Bau Bildung Sachsen – a construction training provider based in Saxony, Germany – is using curricula, teaching materials and training activities to deliver expertise in all matters relating to drinking water and integrated water resource management. From 29 to 31 May 2024, the global education scene met at eLearning Africa in Rwanda. More than 1 200 visitors from 82 countries confirmed the importance of the exhibition and congress. The preceding iMOVE visitor programme was met with great interest and a positive response from German education providers. Later on, in June 2024, the second German-Botswana Symposium on VET attracted almost 300 participants to the Botswana capital Gaborone. Botswana's education minister, Dr. Douglas Letsholathebe, and a delegation of German training providers also attended.

From end of 2024, iMOVE has an additional task: it offers information on networking possibilities between German business associations and internationally active German training providers, who facilitate the recruitment and preparation of international skilled labour or potential apprentices for the German labour market (see PD on Recruiting skilled workers abroad).

By October 2024, BILT has organised several events in various formats and on diverse topics, e.g. a webinar series on clean energy. Further, it has published two brochures on the hospitality and tourism sectors.

2025 Implementation

The Competence Centre for International VET (KIBB) at the Association of German chambers of industry and commerce (DIHK) supports 'Skills Experts' at chambers of commerce and industry abroad (AHK). The KIBB interactive world map shows where in the world AHKs offer dual training: in 48 countries, more than 35 323 apprentices have been trained and more than 10 662 apprentices are currently trained (as of September 2025).

In 2025, iMOVE published new VET success stories on its portal, e.g. the 'Youth Skilling and Employment Initiative Rwanda' of the Education Centre of the Baden-Württemberg Business Association (BIWE) trains young Rwandans in areas such as sales, customer service, welding and plumbing and places them in companies. iMOVE organised or/and

took part in several international meetings in 2025, e.g. from 7 to 9 May 2025, over 1 500 participants from more than 80 countries gathered in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for the 18th edition of eLearning Africa. In the run-up to the trade fair and conference, iMOVE visited key players in vocational education and training over three days with 16 German education providers.

How well does a VET system work? Data and their analysis provide the answers. The topic of data reporting was the focus of a visit by a delegation from Ghana. In April 2025, GOVET received a high-level delegation for a one-week exchange. In August 2025, GOVET and the National Learning Institute (INA) in Costa Rica held a webinar on the topic of 'Inclusion of people with disabilities in VET'. The event provided a platform for discussing experiences, challenges, and potential solutions within an international context, offering an opportunity to learn from each other.

By October 2025, BILT has organised several events in various formats and on diverse topics, e.g. a webinar series on TVET for employability. The BILT Conference on 28-30 May 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was jointly organised by UNESCO-UNEVOC, the BIBB, and the host institution of University Tun Hussein Onn (UTHM). This event highlighted how the digital transformation and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) are presenting vocational education systems worldwide with similar structural, didactic, and ethical challenges. International cooperation is essential to navigate this transformation effectively, sustainably, and inclusively.

Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMBFSFJ) (since 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWE) (since 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- Federal Foreign Office (AA)
- UNESCO-UNEVOC
- Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK)
- German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHK)
- German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH)
- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)

Target group

Learners

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Education professionals

Trainers

Entities providing VET

Companies

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

National, regional and local authorities

Thematic categories

European and international dimensions of VET

VET internationalisation strategies

Transnational VET initiatives, including joint VET programmes

International qualifications

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Osnabrück Declaration

European Education and Training Area and international VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Funding initiative International VET cooperation](#)

[GOVET \(German office for international cooperation in VET\)](#)

[iMOVE Training - Made in Germany](#)

[KIBB - Competence Centre for International VET \(DIHK\)](#)

[Skills expert programme \(BMWK / DIHK\)](#)

[SCIVET - Skilled crafts from Germany \(ZDH\)](#)

[BILT- Bridging innovation and learning in TVET \(UNEVOC / BIBB / BMBF\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Recognition of foreign professional qualifications

The procedure for the assessment and the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications is regulated and standardised through the Federal Recognition Act (including the federal states recognition acts for professions regulated at this level), which was adopted in 2012.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

2025 Implementation

Recruiting skilled workers from abroad

There are various approaches and actors contributing to a sustainable skilled labour immigration.

Legal framework for access to labour and training market

 GERMANY

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Second Skilled Immigration Act (2023-24)

The German government published the 'Key points on skilled labour immigration from third countries' in 2022.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Vocational competitions EuroSkills and WorldSkills

WorldSkills - the World Skills Championships - and EuroSkills - the European Skills Championships - take place alternately every two years. The WorldSkills Germany network promotes and supports national and international competitions of non-academic professions.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

The Excellence Initiative for VET

With the Excellence Initiative for VET policy projects are combined into an overarching agenda. Individual activities will be launched successively during 2022 to 2026. Over EUR 750 million have been earmarked for this purpose.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Promoting international mobility of VET learners

Outgoing mobility:

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2023 Completed

First Skilled Immigration Act (2020)

The Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) has drafted the Skills Immigration Act in December 2018, in the context of the government's Strategy to secure skilled labour. The Act features the following:

 GERMANY

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Promoting dual VET

Given the increasing trend towards academic education, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs (BMWi) have set up a joint campaign to present dual VET (apprenticeship) as an attractive option.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

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