

The Excellence Initiative for VET

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 GERMANY

Timeline

2022 Implementation

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 43712

Background

The shortage of skilled labour is one of the greatest challenges for implementing innovation in Germany. More professionally qualified skilled workers are needed and must be trained and educated in the best possible way.

Objectives

With the Excellence Initiative for vocational education and training (VET), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is providing targeted impetus for a necessary boost in attractiveness and modernity. The aim is to contribute to the necessary change in society's appreciation of VET. The Excellence Initiative for VET is a crucial part of the Federal Government's skilled labour strategy.

The initiative aims to increase the attractiveness of VET for all young people. A special focus is on young people who can choose between different qualification paths (dual training, technical college, university).

Description

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.

In order to give new impetus to VET, the Excellence Initiative focusses on three central fields of action.

Improving individual opportunity support for talents in VET, to ensure that skilled workers and young people can develop their potential in the best possible way:

- (a) more vocational orientation in all kind of schools including grammar schools;
- (b) increasing financial support for VET learners;
- (c) better visibility of excellent VET programmes and career chances.

Targeted initiatives for innovative and high-quality VET programmes to build an attractive

and modern VET landscape including infrastructure and content:

- (a) higher financial support for innovative concepts in IVET and CVET;
- (b) intensifying innovation and cooperation in the CVET sector;
- (c) increasing support for VET teachers and trainers;
- (d) increasing digitalisation (including curricula) and reducing bureaucracy in administrative processes in dual VET programmes.

Expanding the international orientation of VET to enable young people and skilled workers to benefit more actively from international exchange and global opportunities:

- (a) extending international VET mobility;
- (b) gaining more skilled labour from abroad by increasing subsidies for recognition procedures;
- (c) strengthening dual VET for international companies abroad.

2022 Implementation

The Excellence of VET initiative was launched at the end of 2022.

2023 Implementation

The umbrella initiative Excellence in VET launched by BMBF has a special focus on young people who have a higher education entrance qualification and tend to choose university over professional qualification paths such as dual training. The initiative includes existing and new measures, such as InnoVET and InnoVET PLUS programmes (follow-up launched in May 2023), the campaign 'the dual - your training, your profession', programmes supporting inter-company training centres (such as the new funding programme for innovative and excellent inter-company training INex-ÜBA, launched in August 2023) or vocational orientation at secondary general education schools. The initiative also cooperates with the Alliance for initial and further training, e.g. its Summer of VET.

The 17 selected InnoVET funded projects are to increase the equivalence of VET with a focus on higher VET through innovation and excellence, as well as new learning location collaborations. For example, the BM=x³ project developed and tested in 2023 a decentralised supra-regional vocational training academy for the high-technology sector with micro- and nanotechnology occupations. The follow-up InnoVET PLUS federal competition was published in May and by 31 August 2023, 128 concepts had been submitted. The new competition addresses the ever-shorter development cycles and the associated skills and qualification requirements in the areas of digitalisation, ecological and technological transformation.

With the Initiative for excellent inter-company training (INex-ÜBA), the BMBF is encouraging inter-company vocational training centres (ÜBS) to develop ideas and concepts for high-quality and innovative inter-company training. The aim is to increase the quality and attractiveness of inter-company training, including through the use of future-oriented technologies and innovative methods. The call for proposals was from August to December 2023. The selected projects will be funded for three years, starting at the end of 2024.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the website of the Excellence of VET initiative shows a new video on 'Securing skilled labour - updates for vocational training' moderated by Federal Education Minister. The video describes what the Excellence initiative has already achieved.

The campaign 'The Dual' is integrated into the communication strategy of the Excellence of VET initiative. The campaign and its dedicated website continue to highlight the diverse career prospects of dual VET, adding new testimonial portraits with individual career paths (almost 30 testimonials). The contents were updated and extended, e.g. the options for financial support during and after a dual training are

now described.

One new option for financial support is the pilot scholarship programme for talented apprentices and skilled workers (BAFF), which started in 2024. This is a double innovation: on the one hand, scholarship funding for talented professionals now also includes the early phase of training. Secondly, the organisations for the promotion of gifted academic students are opening up to vocational training. Initially, around 1000 scholarships will be awarded to talented apprentices. The pilot phase covers three intake years: 2024, 2025 and 2026 for scholarships with terms of up to three years.

The provision of dual training is to become more digital – and thus more attractive to apprentices and training companies. To this end, numerous amendments to the Vocational Training Act (BbIG) were passed in July 2024 as part of the Vocational training validation and digitisation act (BVaDiG). They apply from 1 August 2024 and can therefore already be used for the new training year. Companies and chambers were enabled to implement an end-to-end digital process, primarily by eliminating written form requirements. To this end, the digital training contract, possibility of digital remote training and increased digital communication are planned.

The 28 selected projects of the InnoVET PLUS federal innovation competition started in July and August 2024 and were presented during the InnoVET conference on 6 November 2024 in Berlin.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, around 3000 VET graduates in 130 trades competed again for the national title of the German Craft Skills Championships (DMH). The closing ceremony took place on 5 December 2025, as part of the German Craftsmanship Day in Frankfurt am Main.

The 28 selected InnoVET PLUS innovation projects (2024-28) continued their work in 2025. Further, the Federal education ministry, together with the BIBB and other experts from the VET field, selected a total of 29 projects for Excellent Inter-company Training (INex-ÜBA) funding. The projects started in the course of 2025 and shall run for 36 months.

In 2025, the campaign 'the dual – your training, your profession' and its dedicated website continued to inform on all aspects of apprenticeship and highlight the diverse career prospects of dual VET.

At the start of the Summer of VET on 5 May 2025, the Alliance for initial and further training was supported by the Federal Chancellor with a personal greeting (video) and by the ZDH President (Video 'Discover over 130 skilled trades and #AusbildungSTARTEN'). The partners of the Alliance advertised and informed between May and October 2025 online (#AusbildungSTARTEN) and in face-to-face formats about starting an apprenticeship.

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)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers

Entities providing VET

Companies

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Optimising VET funding

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET infrastructure

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Developing and updating learning resources and materials

Acquiring key competences

Integrating green transition and sustainability in VET curricula and programmes

Integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula and programmes

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Attractiveness of the teaching and training profession/career

Supporting teachers and trainers for green transition and sustainability

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

Lifelong guidance

European and international dimensions of VET

VET internationalisation strategies

Mobility of learners and staff

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

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

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

European Education and Training Area and international VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Website on the Excellence Initiative for VET](#)

[Portal promoting dual VET](#)

[Scholarships for talented apprentices and skilled workers](#)

[Vocational training validation and digitisation act \(BVaDiG\)](#)

[InnoVET website](#)

[Initiative for excellent inter-company training \(INex-UBA\)](#)

[Key paper on the Excellence Initiative for VET \(in German\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

International cooperation in VET

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.

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation**Promoting international mobility of VET learners**

Outgoing mobility:

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation**Supporting excellent inter-company training (ÜBA) and CoVE centres (ÜBS)**

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) initiated the programme of promoting digitalisation in competence centres and inter-company training centres in 2016.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Completed**Digital media and innovative technology in VET**

The web portal, Digital media in VET, has provided information since 2015 on the use of digital media in VET and selected project findings.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

2025 Implementation

Alliance for initial and further training

The 2015-18 Alliance for initial and further training was agreed between the Federal Government, Federal States, business and industry, the unions and the Federal Employment Agency at the end of 2014.

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Promoting innovations for excellent VET - InnoVET programmes

In January 2019, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) launched the project Shaping the future - innovations for excellent vocational training (InnoVET) and ran the first call.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Expanding financial support for CVET and advanced vocational qualifications

In 2016, the legislation promoting further training (AWStG) was amended.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

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.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2021 Completed

Pact for vocational training

The Pact for VET (*Der Berufsbildungspakt*) includes the following measures, partly addressing work-based learning:

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Modernising VET qualifications

The regulated qualifications of apprenticeships and advanced training occupations are based on examinations with nationwide uniform examination regulations.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). The Excellence Initiative for VET: Germany. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/43712>