

# Supporting excellent inter-company training (ÜBA) and CoVE centres (ÜBS)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 GERMANY

## Timeline

|                     |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2016 Implementation | 2017 Implementation | 2018 Implementation |
| 2019 Implementation | 2020 Implementation | 2021 Implementation |
| 2022 Implementation | 2023 Implementation | 2024 Implementation |
| 2025 Implementation |                     |                     |

ID number 28150

## Background

Inter-company training centres supplement the training provided in companies with practice-based education and training courses. Apprentices of SMEs often do a part of their training in inter-company training centres (*Überbetriebliche Berufsbildungsstätten*, ÜBS) where they find newest technologies and training methods that are not always available in a small training company. Competence centres are ÜBS that provide training as well as further and advanced training in a specialist focus.

## Objectives

Promoting excellence and accelerating digitalisation in the training of skilled workers in inter-company training centres (ÜBS to CoVEs), especially for SMEs, with digital equipment and innovative training concepts.

## Description

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) initiated the programme of promoting digitalisation in competence centres and inter-company training centres in 2016. The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) has the task of supporting the planning, establishment and further development of inter-company vocational training centres (ÜBS). Inter-company training centres are meant to be learning places to include digital innovation for skilled workers. For this, they need to meet technological challenges by adapting their training infrastructure and learning and teaching processes. Through the programme, ÜBS receive funds to improve their digital infrastructure – such as CNC machines, 3-D printer, touchscreen – to qualify future skilled workers for the digital demands of the labour market. Since 2016, a total of more than 200 ÜBS centres with more than 39 000 units of digital equipment and eight pilot projects to modernise training courses have been funded. The funding of this special programme is EUR 30 million per year.

## 2016 Implementation

## 2017 Implementation

## 2018 Implementation

## 2019 Implementation

In 2019, 71 projects were funded.

The symposium, Designing a place of learning – securing the future. Digitalisation in inter-company vocational training centres, took place in Berlin on 25-26 June 2019. In June 2019, the programme was extended to 2023 and new funding opportunities were added. In 2019, BMBF published a brochure that describes good practice projects from the first funding phase 2016-19 and presents the new funding guidelines for 2019 to 2023.

## 2020 Implementation

In 2020, 48 projects were funded under the first guidelines.

In 2020, BMBF published a brochure (in German and English, see sources) that describes the special programme on digitalisation in inter-company vocational training centres (ÜBS), its achievements since 2016, and its future perspectives.

Due to the measures to contain the coronavirus, the ÜBS had to suspend their teaching nationwide from mid-March to the beginning of May 2020. Since then, the ÜBS in all Federal States have gradually resumed their training courses. To ensure that the training system continues to function well, the nationwide network of inter-company training and competence centres has played a key role in shaping training, both during and after the Corona crisis. Digital learning resources can contribute to this. Online modules or web-based learning platforms developed with BMBF funding are available to ÜBS throughout Germany and can support them in conducting courses digitally. As a rule, the offers require tutorial support by the trainers. There are learning offers for apprentices and training staff.

In September 2020, 15 projects selected for the second funding phase started. The new projects involve 25 ÜBS from the skilled trades, construction industry, agriculture, industry and trade. In some of the projects, the focus is on identifying the requirements of the economy from digitalisation and implementing these in training courses for apprentices. In the other projects, the focus is on transferring new technologies to inter-company vocational training centres. On 25 November 2020, within the European vocational skills week, the new project met for their first transfer strategy workshop.

The online portal for company-based and inter-company trainers, foraus.de (see sources below), disseminates the project results. Online learning modules, explanatory videos and more information on the completed projects of the first funding phase, as well as on the 15 new projects of the second funding phase, can be found on the site (in German).

## 2021 Implementation

In 2021, applications for development and trial projects can no longer be submitted.

ÜBS can still submit applications for funding for digital equipment until 30 June 2023. The new, updated equipment list has been available since 31 March 2021.

In February 2021, the ko.ve.di project started. Through digital networking, the current requirements and needs of the economy are determined and the necessary competences in four exemplary trades are derived from this.

## 2022 Implementation

A completed work: Co-operation between the Federal Government (BMBF) and the

*Augmented reality for the implementation of digital building models (AKUB)*, which is the 20th and for the time being, last project in the special *ÜBS-Digitalisierung* programme, started on 1 January 2022. Apprentices implement actual building models created with CAD (computer-aided design) programmes with the help of augmented reality applications. The physical workpieces created in this way are evaluated by trainers using digital technologies such as rotary scanners and then returned to the digital world for learning purposes using AR glasses.

In 2022, the funding guidelines for digital equipment were adapted to the requirements of the joint guidelines on the funding of inter-company vocational training centres and their further development into competence centres. This means that digital procurements are also eligible for funding outside of the state education mandate if they predominantly serve the further and continuing education that is part of the state education mandate. Use for inter-company training or to prepare, enable or support vocational training or a vocational qualification is permissible. Funding for innovation spaces is now also possible. Applications for grants for the digital equipment of inter-company vocational training centres can be submitted until 30 June 2025.

The 3rd transfer workshop of the special programme *ÜBS-Digitalisierung* took place in autumn 2022 and focused on the transfer of project results and the stabilisation of knowledge. In view of the limited project duration until mid-2023, it was determined how project results can be secured, processed and made usable in the long term.

The *ProMech-I* project has developed the series of events *Training Workshop 4.0* to discuss with the trainers in the ÜBS how the training there is to be further developed with regard to digitalisation. The third meeting in autumn focused on personnel and organisational development in the age of digital transformation.

## 2023 Implementation

In 2023, the web dossier 'Qualification of inter-company training personnel in the digital transformation' provides an overview of the current state of research and the need for discussion. It highlights existing challenges and presents concepts and solutions from practice.

The funding guideline for the digitisation of inter-company training centres focusses on investments in construction, equipment and modernisation and on the further training of digital skills among trainers. In 2023, 135 projects were supported with a funding volume of EUR 86.1 million in federal funding. Parallel to the special ÜBS programme, there were 26 digital equipment funding programmes by BAFA. Funding for innovation rooms is also possible as part of the funding for digital equipment. Innovation rooms serve to demonstrate, communicate and test innovative technologies and services.

This special programme will expire in 2025.

In parallel to the funding of the digitalisation of the inter-company training centres, the idea of excellent inter-company training was further developed by developing the inter-company training centres into technology-oriented centres of excellence. At the *Future Forum for Inter-company Training 2023* conference, the transformation of the inter-company training centres into VET centres of excellence was further developed. Ideas for excellent inter-company training that is fit for the future were drafted and the '*Initiative for Excellent Inter-company Training - INex-ÜBA*' was presented in this context.

The funding programme for excellent inter-company training (*INex-ÜBA*) aims to test and implement innovative, training-related concepts for designing excellent teaching/learning locations. During the period from 2024–2027, interested inter-company training companies will be provided with a funding volume of EUR 120 million to enable them to develop into excellent teaching and learning locations. In particular, the quality improvement and development of the ÜBA, using future-oriented technologies and innovative methods, should help to enable excellent educational work in ÜBS. The following outlines are relevant to the following priorities:

- (a) use of digital technologies and AI-supported systems with a view to the learning and support needs of trainees;
- (b) development of cooperation structures with partners from business and science;
- (c) measures to attract and qualify training personnel;
- (d) concepts for redesigning training rooms and workshops;
- (e) focus on managing the digital and ecological transformation processes;
- (f) development of new topics for the future viability of excellent inter-company training.

INex-ÜBA is funded under the Excellence Initiative for Vocational Education and Training.

Project ideas from inter-company training centres could be submitted until 31 December 2023.

### 2024 Implementation

An initial evaluation process of the ideas submitted to the Initiative for Excellent Inter-company Training (INex-ÜBA) was completed in the summer and 31 concept outlines from prospective funding recipients were approved for funding. These are spread across centres for a wide range of apprenticeships. Many projects involve the use of AI and other future-oriented technologies. At the same time, they range from project ideas for overcoming training bottlenecks in inter-company training to concepts for innovation spaces for learning based on personal initiative and ideas, and more sustainability.

### 2025 Implementation

In a two-stage application process, the Federal education ministry, together with the BIBB and other experts from the field of vocational education and training, had selected a total of 29 projects for *Excellent Inter-company Training (INex-ÜBA)* funding. The projects shall start in the course of 2025 and shall all run for 36 months.

The funded ÜBS shall develop and test – either alone or in collaboration with others – innovative concepts and courses that can be sustainably anchored in the inter-company training system and the educational offers of ÜBS. In doing so, they shall also work together with (supra)regional and/or industry-specific actors and draw on scientific expertise. The funded projects are spread across Germany and cover the training areas of construction, skilled crafts, industry and agriculture. Here are two examples:

- (a) the project ‘DilA’ aims to modernise inter-company agricultural training in terms of both teaching methods and technology. This will enable prospective farmers to meet the new requirements for animal welfare and environmental protection;
- (b) with the ‘E-Mobi\_Boot’ project, the Travemünde vocational training centre of the Lübeck Chamber of Crafts is initiating, testing and implementing electric mobility for inter-company training (ÜBA) in the boatbuilding trade. Plans include the introduction of an ÜBA course on working with high-voltage systems and further training courses on electric mobility.

The BIBB supports the projects during implementation and provides scientific backing for the funding. Since August 2025, INex-ÜBA has been based at the Federal Ministry of Education, Family, Seniors, Women and Youth (BMBFSFJ).

## Bodies responsible

- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)
- 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)

### Education professionals

Teachers  
Trainers

### Entities providing VET

Companies  
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

## Thematic categories

### Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

### Modernising VET infrastructure

Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

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

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

### Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

### Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

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

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

## European priorities in VET

### VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

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

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

## Further reading

[Initiative for excellent inter-company training \(INex-UBA\) \(2024-28\)](#)

[Funded projects for excellent inter-company training \(2025\)](#)

[BIBB website on special programme 'digitalisation in UBS' \(2016-23\)](#)

[BIBB portal on inter-company training centres \(UBS\)](#)

[Conference: Future Forum for Inter-company Training 2023](#)

[Brochure on new developments and pilot projects from the programme UBS digitalisation \(2022\) \(German\)](#)

## Related policy developments

### 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

#### Support for inter-company apprenticeship training (ÜLU)

The Federal Government provides subsidies of around EUR 50 million annually for the inter-company apprenticeship training (ÜLU), making a contribution to the course and accommodation costs for apprentices from the second year of training onwards.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET

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**2025 Implementation**

## Supporting SMEs to provide future-proof VET

Under the umbrella initiative, VET 4.0, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) initiated a special funding line (Initial and continuing vocational training in the economy 4.0 – Support structures for SMEs in the adaptation process of in-company training) within the JOBSTARTER plus

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**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.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2022 Completed**

## VET 4.0 project: effects of digital innovation on vocational training

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), in cooperation with the Federal Institute for VET (BIBB), started the initiative VET 4.0 for the period from February 2016 to April 2018. The initiative is based on three pillars.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**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

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28150>