

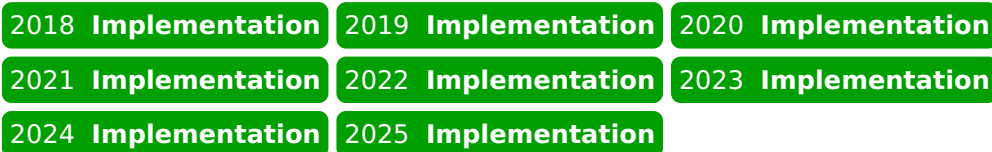
Attracting side entrants to the teaching profession

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 GERMANY

Timeline



ID number 28144

Background

Due to a VET teacher shortage, the 16 Federal States coordinated by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) jointly decided in 2013 to attract university students in certain subjects (mostly technical) to join the VET teacher university training programme. They are the so-called side entrants (*Quereinsteiger*). Since 2013, and especially from 2015 to 2017, there has been a significant increase in the recruitment of side-entrants.

Objectives

Fighting against teacher shortage.

Description

Education falls under the competence of the Federal States. In 2018, the education ministry of North-Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) launched a recruitment campaign to attract side entrants and career changers to teaching, including in VET schools, specifically targeting those able to teach subjects with particular teacher shortage:

- (a) machine technology,
- (b) electrical engineering,
- (c) social pedagogy,
- (d) health.

In principle, only trained teachers with a teaching degree from a university and who have successfully passed the state examination at the end of the preparatory service will be recruited into the teaching service of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Should there be no trained teachers available in some regions or for individual schools, the schools may also select persons without a corresponding teacher training if they can provide evidence of a non-teaching tertiary degree for the advertised subject and the schools consider them suitable. To ensure a successful start in the new job, all lateral entrants receive an in-

service training in which they are taught the pedagogical basics of the teaching profession.

As education policy falls within the remit of the federal states, each of the 16 federal states has its own programmes for lateral entry into vocational school teaching.

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

In 2019, due to the increasing demand for teachers, all 16 Federal States offered similar possibilities to side entrants and career changers to become a teacher, but with different conditions and focuses, depending on their own specific needs.

2020 Implementation

In 2020, due to the increasing demand for teachers, all 16 Federal States offered similar possibilities to side entrants and career changers to become a teacher, but with different conditions and focuses, depending on their own specific needs. In NRW VET schools for example, there is still a shortage in the topics machine technology, electrical engineering, social pedagogy, and health.

2021 Implementation

The issue of teacher shortages is still current in Germany. According to a study published on 25 January 2022 on behalf of the education union VBE, teacher shortages in the future will be much greater than indicated in the calculations of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK). Many Federal States already make use of applicants from side entry or lateral entry to ensure teacher supply. According to a report (Klemm, 2019), 34 281 teachers were recruited nationwide in 2017/18, of which 4 367 came to schools via side entry. This results in an average rate of 12.7%. However, the differences within the Federal States are great. In some, the demand for teachers can only be met by using side entrants.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the situation at German schools is becoming increasingly dramatic - there is a shortage of teachers everywhere, in particular in East Germany. Depending on calculations and estimates, there are currently 12 000 to 40 000 vacancies at German schools. In its report from 2022, the Institute of the German Economy (IW) sees a gap of 59 000 full-time equivalents for the school year 2030/31, assuming the learner-teacher ratio remains the same. According to forecasts, there could even be a shortage of 158 000 teachers at schools in Germany by 2035. The situation is particularly dramatic in the STEM subjects: In the school year 2030/31, only one third of all positions in mathematics at secondary schools in North Rhine-Westphalia could be filled by regularly trained teachers, and in physics only 18%.

Therefore, side entrants at schools are indispensable in most federal states, in particular in STEM subjects. Since the side entry models for teachers vary significantly between federal states, the Standing Scientific Commission of the KMK (SWK) recommended in January 2023 a systematic inventory of all side entry models with regard to organisation, scope and content, followed by evaluation and further development of such models - as one of many recommendations for dealing with the acute shortage of teachers.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, 12% of the 35000 new teachers recruited last year had no traditional teacher training.

In a statement issued at the end of January 2023, the Standing Scientific Commission of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs issued

recommendations on how to deal with the acute shortage of teachers. Statements by professional associations and professional institutions from the vocational school sector criticised the initiative and pointed out that it would counteract the associations' efforts to attract new teachers specifically to the vocational college system. The Association of Vocational Trainers in North Rhine-Westphalia is in favour of the increased use of multi-professional teams. Nevertheless, the recommendations would have undesirable side effects, leading to a deterioration in working and employment conditions.

The dossier 'Quereinstieg im Praxis-Check', available on the Robert Bosch Foundation's school portal, contains current studies on lateral entry into the teaching profession, interviews with experts from academia and practice and an overview of the distribution of lateral entrants in the federal states.

The lateral entry master's degree programme (Q-Master) in Berlin was developed and supervised as part of the K2teach project funded by the QLB (see Long-term quality initiative for teacher training).

2024 Implementation

The resolution of the Conference of ministers of education and cultural affairs (KMK) on the creation of additional pathways into the teaching profession dated 13 June 2024 has been published. Hereby, the KMK decided to create additional pathways into the teaching profession. These include opening up access to the profession to so-called single-subject teachers and graduates of so-called lateral entry Master's programmes (Quereinstiegs-Masterstudiengänge, Q-Master) and dual study programmes. The aim is to attract further professional groups with initially different educational or professional biographies.

One of the Q-Master-programmes, the lateral entry master's degree programme (Q-Master) in Berlin was originally developed and supervised as part of the K2teach project funded by the QLB (see Long-term quality initiative for teacher training) and started in 2016. With the increasing pressure caused by a shortage of teachers, the degree programme came into the focus of political instruments aimed at opening up teacher training to more students and ultimately, the study programme was included in the 2024 resolution of the KMK. In the 2026/27 winter semester students will be able to choose a so-called Flex Master's programme as a dual version in line with an existing employment contract at a school.

In 2024, the publication *Doppelter Praxistransfer in der Lehrkräftebildung für berufliche Schulen. Von beruflichen Vorerfahrungen über das wissenschaftliche Studium in die Schule* (Dual transfer of practice in teacher training for vocational schools. From previous work experience to academic study to the school) was published. It examines the topic of practice transfer from the perspective of quality assurance in teacher training (see also Long-term quality initiative for teacher training).

The calculation numbers in the KMK-publication 'Teacher recruitment needs and supply in the Federal Republic of Germany 2025–2035' from 13 December 2024 showed, that there will be too few teachers available for this entire forecast period. For VET schools in particular, the targeted qualification of lateral entrants and career changers is necessary to partially close the gaps in demand.

In addition to the acute shortage of teachers, the issue of quality assurance in teacher training is becoming increasingly important. In 2024, the Stifterverband launched the 'Future of Education' project. One of its main focuses is the Alliance for teachers, which aims to counteract the shortage of teachers in vocational schools, among other places. One challenge is ensuring the quality of teacher training, particularly for those entering the profession from other fields. A funding programme supports projects that contribute to strengthening the coherence of teacher training and professional orientation. An interactive map has been developed to showcase the multitude of projects and initiatives that are already working towards opening up and making teacher training more flexible. Since autumn 2024, stakeholders from all areas and

stages of teacher training, political decision-makers and representatives of civil society meet regularly in workshops to agree on specific reform measures based on the respective state political situation.

2025 Implementation

The KMK regularly publishes current model calculations and future forecasts up to 2035 on teacher recruitment needs and supply.

The figures from the Federal Statistical Office show the increase of lateral entrants: of the 123 800 teachers at vocational schools, 16.6% did not have a recognised teaching qualification in the 2023/2024 school year.

As a result of the workshop discussions within the 'Future of education' project by the Stifterverband, a roadmap with ideas for 'Teacher training in Rhineland-Palatinate' was drawn up in March 2025.

The page 'Lateral and lateral entry for teachers: requirements for lateral entry into teaching' on the German Education Server information platform is regularly updated to provide information on the conditions and opportunities for lateral entry into teaching in accordance with the regulations of the 16 federal states. On the portal 'Becoming a teacher', you can select your preferred type of school and federal state and you will be redirected to the relevant information. The German education server is an initiative of the federal and state governments.

Bodies responsible

- Federal States (Länder)
- Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK)

Target group

Education professionals

Teachers

Thematic categories

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Attractiveness of the teaching and training profession/career

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Designing additional pathways into the teaching profession - Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of 13 June 2024](#)

[Current figures on the proportion of lateral entrants and career changers in German schools](#)

[Teacher recruitment needs and supply in the Federal Republic of Germany from 2024 to 2035 - Summary of model calculations by the federal states](#)

[Dossier on VET teacher shortage](#)

Regularly updated overview of the conditions and opportunities in the respective federal states

Federal States recruiting side entrants as teachers

Side-entering teacher at part-time VET school in NRW [Lehrkraft am Berufskolleg] (in German only)

Side-entering teacher in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)

Career changers entering vocational school teaching supported by the Alliance for Teachers of the Stifterverband

Alliance for Teachers of the Stifterverband

Publication 'Double transfer of practice in teacher training for vocational schools. From previous work experience to university to the classroom' (2024))

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Attracting side entrants to the teaching profession: 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/28144>