

Lifelong vocational guidance for young people and adults

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 GERMANY

Timeline

2017 Implementation	2018 Implementation	2019 Implementation
2020 Implementation	2021 Implementation	2022 Implementation
2023 Implementation	2024 Implementation	2025 Implementation

ID number 28133

Background

Due to growing transformation processes and structural changes in the labour and VET market in the last years, lifelong vocational guidance for school graduates and later for employed and unemployed persons has become increasingly important.

Objectives

The aim of these measures is to provide guidance for young people for initial VET as well as career counselling for adults throughout their working life

Description

Building upon the results of its pilot project Continuing education and training guidance, the Federal employment agency launched in 2017 a more comprehensive Lifelong vocational guidance project. The project targets both young people and adults. In 2018, it was piloted at four locations.

The Lifelong vocational guidance (*Lebensbegleitende Berufsberatung*, LBB) is based on the Federal employment agency 2025 strategy of the employment service, which provides better support for customers during structural change in the training and labour market, as well as at important decision points in their employment biography. Lifelong career counselling pursues a preventive approach and contributes to people and work coming together more smoothly. The Federal employment agency cooperates with all stakeholders and network partners involved in the training and labour market. More than 4 700 professionally trained career counsellors are available nationwide. Several formats are used:

- (a) career guidance events,
- (b) individual guidance (in person, by telephone or video communication),
- (c) low-threshold consultation on site (e.g. in schools and companies),
- (d) customised online services for young people and adults for orientation and
- (e) own search.

The project started with the following focus areas:

- (a) area 1: continuing education guidance for young people, before starting a career,
- (b) area 2: employed and unemployed adults,
- (c) area 3: online services.

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

As of 1 January 2019, the service offering vocational guidance before entering working life will be introduced nationwide (Area 1).

2020 Implementation

Since January 2020, the lifelong career guidance of the BA has been extended to adults (Area 2: unemployed or in employment), in addition to young people.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, the online self-exploration tools *Check-U* and *New plan*, aim to inspire choices of new professional paths and shows the possibilities for development or further training on the job (Area 3).

A brochure describing all Lifelong vocational guidance services was published by the Federal Employment Agency in November 2021.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the Federal Employment Agency intensified its lifelong vocational guidance services by expanding the digital self-exploration tools (Check-U for new entrants into professional life and NewPlan for those in work).

As an association in which guidance associations and stakeholders, experts from science and research, business organisations and trade unions have joined forces, the German National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment (Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung e.V.) is committed to the professional development of guidance services in Germany and in Europe. The nfb brochure Career Guidance in the Life Course – Structures and Services in Germany (in English) was updated in 2022, in cooperation with the national Euroguidance centre in the Federal Employment Agency. This brochure informs guidance practitioners about the basic features of the German guidance system in the field of education, career and employment and provides a compact overview of guidance structures and guidance services in Germany.

Since the end of 2022, 600 counsellors have been available nationwide at 39 network locations to provide career guidance to employees and those returning to work. The overall aim of lifelong career guidance is to support young people and adults throughout their working lives, particularly with regard to changing conditions on the training and labour market.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, the BA's lifelong career guidance service, which is already anchored in the Social Code III (SGB III), was further strengthened. The service offers career guidance to people before entering employment (BBvE) and to people in employment (BBiE), for example when re-entry or career reorientation is involved. With BBiE, the Federal employment agency is expanding its career guidance services.

In December 2023, the IAB (Institute for employment research of the federal

employment agency) published the research report 21/2023: Who makes use of career guidance in working life (BBiE)? A process data analysis. As the Federal employment agency services addressed different target groups during the period investigated, the IAB research report examines 45 000 employed persons, almost 9 000 unemployed persons and around 17 500 other persons who attended at least one initial guidance appointment in 2021 and who fulfilled some additional conditions.

2024 Implementation

Since 25 June 2024, the New Plan - an online tool for professional development - has been integrated into the national education platform 'my NOW'.

The IAB research report 01/2024 presented the results of an online survey among employees and recipients of unemployment benefits. The sample analysed in this report comprised approximately 4 400 people.

The main results of the survey as presented in the report are:

- (a) on average, people receiving unemployment benefit knew about and used New Plan more often than those in full-time employment. People who had received the information letter sent in advance knew and used New Plan significantly more often;
- (b) two thirds of the full-time employees surveyed and three quarters of the unemployment benefit recipients surveyed were interested in professional development;
- (c) more than half of the full-time employees and unemployment benefit recipients surveyed unemployment benefit recipients felt (rather) well informed about their earnings and employment opportunities. The information letter sent out in advance had no influence on their responses.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, the portal 'my NOW!' run by the Federal Employment Agency provided career tests to check own skills and expertise, as well as information on job profiles and prospects, on professional development and further education programmes, on funding opportunities and on counselling services - all in one place.

For young people, the portal 'my vocation' (meinBeruf) run by the Federal Employment Agency provided guidance and vocational orientation in 2025.

In Germany, women interrupt their careers more often than men. This often leads to difficulties when returning to work. Qualifications can become outdated and uncertainties about career opportunities can arise. Support is available from the Federal Employment Agency's career guidance service. Studies by the IAB provide indications of the extent to which this advisory service reaches the group of women returning to work (IAB-Forum, July 2025). Further, the issue 02-25 of the online magazine DENK-doch-Mal.de ('Think about it!') focused on career and employment history in the course of life, featuring various expert articles.

Bodies responsible

- Federal Employment Agency (BA)

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)
Adult learners
Unemployed and jobseekers

Entities providing VET

Companies
VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs
Lifelong guidance

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

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

Osnabrück Declaration

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

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Web portal of Federal Employment Agency \(BA\)](#)

[Online self-exploration tool New plan](#)

[Online self-exploration tool Check-U](#)

[Portal 'meinBeruf' \('my vocation'\) of the Federal Employment Agency](#)

[IAB research report on the role of information in the use of New Plan \(2024\)](#)

[IAB research report on who makes use of career guidance in working life \(2023\)](#)

[nfb brochure "Career Guidance in the Life Course - Structures and Services in Germany" in English \(2022\)](#)

[Brochure \(01/2022\) on Lifelong vocational guidance \(LBB\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 **Implementation**

National education platform (NOW!)

In 2021, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is funding the first prototype of a technical infrastructure for a digital education platform.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET



2025 Implementation

Municipalities education programme

With the ESF Plus education municipalities programme, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) supports districts and independent cities in the further development of their education landscape.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET



2025 Implementation

Programmes supporting literacy and basic education for adults

In 2016, the national strategy for literacy and basic education for adults was followed by the Decade for literacy 2016-26, which provided EUR 180 million for the funding of related projects.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET



2025 Implementation

National Skills Strategy

In November 2018, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal

Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) launched a committee to develop a National continuing education strategy (*Nationale Weiterbildungsstrategie*).

 GERMANY

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Expanding financial support for CVET and advanced vocational qualifications

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

 GERMANY

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Expanding vocational guidance and support from school until completion of training

Nationwide standard support measures anchored in the Social Code (e.g. SGB III) cover the transition from school to work, for example with various forms of vocational preparation and continuous support during training.

 GERMANY

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:

 GERMANY

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ … ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Lifelong vocational guidance for young people and adults: 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/28133>