

# Reforming the care and nursing occupations and training

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 GERMANY

## Timeline



ID number 28130

## Background

Alongside dual training, school-based vocational training is a second option for vocational training in Germany. By far the largest proportion of students in this approach are trained in the health, education and social services sectors. These are vocational programmes outside of the BBiG and HwO that are regulated by federal or Federal State law. They are carried out at full-time vocational schools, health care schools and technical schools.

Societal, demographic and epidemiological developments (rising life expectancy; increase in multi-morbidity and dementia), have led to changing demands on nursing care and nursing staff, with increased need for skilled nursing staff. The demand for educators has also grown, not least as a result of the legal entitlement to a childcare place from the age of one introduced in 2013.

## Objectives

The law on the nursing and care occupations aims to:

- (a) increase the attractiveness of care and nursing occupations and training by improving occupational conditions for nursing and care personnel;
- (b) retain staff in these fields in the long term.

A policy target of the Care and nursing training offensive is to increase the number of trainees in the nursing occupations by 10% by 2023.

## Description

The Law to reform the care and nursing occupations (*Pflegeberufsgesetz*) was published on 24 July 2017. The initiative 'Concerted action on care' (*Konzertierten Aktion Pflege* – KAP) was launched on 3 July 2018, including the 'Care and nursing training offensive' (*Ausbildungsoffensive Pflege*) targeted at ensuring the successful implementation of the law (2019-23). Training in healthcare and nursing care occupations, which used to be separated in three areas (general, elderly and paediatrics), have merged into uniform

nursing training with a generalist orientation. For the trainees, this expands their employment and development opportunities. In parallel, there is also the possibility of obtaining degrees in health care, paediatric nursing and geriatric care.

The law abolished school fees. Hospitals, nursing homes and outpatient nursing services shall pay trainees an appropriate remuneration. The training costs will be financed in future by compensation funds to be set up in the Federal States. More training places will be created, including 5 000 provided by associations of nursing facilities for the training of nursing assistants. The initiative involves several stakeholder organisations including nursing occupation and nursing occupation training associations, associations of nursing facilities and hospitals, churches, nursing and health insurance funds, patient associations, the Employers' Liability Insurance Association, social partners, cost bearers and the Federal Employment Agency.

The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) assumes the task of research on vocational training and higher education institutions and the nursing profession in accordance with Section 60 (4) of the Nursing Professions Training and Examination Ordinance (PflAPrV). The research is approved by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG). The BIBB awards and supports various research projects at the interface between policy, research and practice. These projects have different thematic focusses within vocational and higher education institutions and BIBB prepares an annual research programme.

### 2017 Legislative process

### 2018 Implementation

### 2019 Implementation

A first part of the law to reform the care and nursing occupations came into force on 1 January 2019.

In 2019, the partners of the 'Care and nursing training offensive started to implement the agreed 111 individual measures in three fields of action, including an information campaign, a new portal and support measures in nursing training to help increase the number of trainees.

### 2020 Implementation

On 1 January 2020, a second part of the law to reform the care and nursing occupations came into force and the nursing training campaign *Ausbildungsoffensive Pflege* (2019-23) accompanied the introduction of the new nursing training courses started. In 2020, the new care and nursing VET programmes (at secondary and tertiary levels) under the law to reform the care and nursing occupations (*Pflegeberufsgesetz*) began. A first implementation report on the Care and nursing training offensive and the 111 supporting measures was published in November 2020.

The information and advertising campaign *Mach Karriere als Mensch* (Make a career as a human being) provides information about the opportunities offered by the new nursing training. High access numbers to the portal's further information offers speak for great interest in the training among young people as well as persons who want to retrain.

Within the framework of the new generalist nursing training, closer cooperation between the various training institutions is necessary. In order to support the *Länder* in the implementation of the nursing training, the BMFSFJ and the BMG have launched a funding programme of up to EUR 19 million.

In many *Länder*, the funding provided by the *DigitalPakt Schule* and the subsequent Immediate equipment programme have led to better equipment for nursing schools with digital technology.

### 2021 Implementation

In 2021, the Concerted action on care (*Konzertierten Aktion Pflege*, KAP), which was launched on 3 July 2018 with the Care and nursing training offensive (*Ausbildungsoffensive Pflege*), continued.

BIBB supported the reform of the nursing professions under the Act of the Nursing Professions. In 2021, it developed the *Handreichung für die Pflegeausbildung am Lernort Pflegeschule* (Handbook for nursing education at the nursing school learning site) to support teachers at nursing schools and those who are responsible for the school's internal curriculum. Further, it published recommendations for the trainers and instructors of the practical part of the programme, organised several conferences and meetings and reported on the progress of the related research projects.

BIBB was responsible to develop and introduce a monitoring system for the implementation of vocational and higher education nursing training. This also included the establishment of a Nursing Panel consisting of training institutions, nursing schools and higher education institutions. The BIBB Nursing Panel started its work on International Nursing Day on 12 May 2021.

## 2022 Implementation

Second implementation report on the Care and nursing training offensive and the 111 supporting measures was published in November 2022. A total of 61 329 people took up training to become nurses in 2021. This is 7% more than in the previous year and makes it the largest training occupation in Germany.

The interim report on the training situation in nursing by the Working Group on Statistics was published in 2022.

The establishment of the BIBB nursing panel has been completed in 2022 and since then continuously collects data on development of nursing education in Germany. The first survey wave on the development of training activities started in October 2022. A special survey of the BIBB Nursing Panel provides an up-to-date overview of nursing degree programmes at higher education institutions that lead to professional qualifications, which started in April 2022.

First research-based recommendations on generalist nursing training were published and other research projects are awarded. On 8 November, the nationwide information and publicity campaign *Pflege kann was* (Care can do something) was launched. Until 2025, the campaign informs about career and employment opportunities and aims to break down clichés and prejudices against working in care.

## 2023 Implementation

The federal government, federal states and associations agreed on numerous measures with the aim of supporting those involved in nursing training, creating attractive training conditions and further increasing the number of trainees and training institutions. Recommendations from the working group on the job profiles of academically qualified nurses were published in August 2023. The initiative Concerted action on care expired at the end of 2023.

In 2023, the number of new nursing trainees rose by 6.4% (compared to 2022) to 60 312 and the first class of the new generalist training programme completed their training. To honour the graduates, the BMFSFJ awarded the Nursing training prize 2023 for the best graduates of training in November 2023.

The BIBB research congress 'Shaping education and care provision in nursing together' took place on 25 and 26 May 2023 in Bonn with around 500 participants.

The reform of nursing training also requires new qualification measures for future trainees to prepare them for vocational nursing training. In-company introductory qualification (EQ) is one of the qualification measures. BIBB published a handout in 2023, which provides recommendations for qualification modules for EQ.

Leaders in care management bear great responsibility for ensuring high-quality care in care facilities and managing the associated processes. In 2023, BIBB published a study

which examines the current and future requirements and qualification programmes for managers in the care sector. In addition to researching existing further training programmes, it also includes an analysis of current and expected future qualification requirements and the development of a framework concept for further training based on these findings.

The results of the study on the workplace situation in acute and long-term care were published in May 2023. They confirm the agreements of the Concerted Action on Care, which adopted a comprehensive package of measures to improve working and training conditions in the care sector in 2019 and has already largely implemented them. They also provide more detailed information than previously available on what professional carers want and which measures could be useful in the future - at a political level, but also in operational practice - to further improve working conditions in the care sector.

The Act to strengthen higher education nursing training, to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications in nursing and to amend other regulations was promulgated on 15 December 2023 (comes mainly into force on 1 January 2024). In particular, the aim is to strengthen higher education nursing training by introducing a training allowance for students and improving the financing of the practical part of the degree programmes for training institutions. In addition, recognition procedures for foreign nursing professionals will be standardised and simplified.

## 2024 Implementation

The BIBB Nursing Panel in cooperation with the Bonn Survey Centre, surveys more than 6 000 people responsible for nursing training from training institutions (e.g. hospitals, nursing homes), nursing schools and universities every year. The aim is to systematically monitor the qualification process in nursing over the long term. The report published in March 2024 summarises the key findings of the survey, which took place between October 2022 and May 2023. The second survey wave started in January 2024.

The published survey shows that many training places in vocational and higher education nursing training remain unfilled indicating an obvious problem on the demand side. Other key challenges: finding suitable applicants, different educational backgrounds of learners and acquisition of teaching staff. Further, in autumn 2024, a special survey was conducted among facilities that did not offer their own training places in nursing to find out more about the decision in favour of or against having their own trainees. The results will be used to derive support requirements and recommendations for action.

BIBB coordinates 26 research projects on nursing training and occupations. In 2024, BIBB published a report covering the period July 2023 to June 2024 on this research programme with various focal points: improving educational architecture, transparency and permeability of educational pathways, shaping digital change, shaping sustainable migration, ensuring the quality of education and improving the quality of care.

The occupational profile of 'nursing specialist' brings together the professions of geriatric nursing, nursing and paediatric nursing in a generalist training programme. Trainees are qualified to care for people of all ages. The BIBB flyer *Pflegeausbildung aktuell* (current nursing training) is a brief guide for those interested in this training. It explains the nursing training programme and the entry requirements. The second edition was published in August 2024 and contains revisions and the new licensing system as well as the current collectively agreed training allowances in nursing. The flyer is available in nine languages.

The final report of the nursing training campaign *Ausbildungsoffensive Pflege* (nursing training offensive; 2019-23) was published in September 2024. The report documents the implementation of the agreed measures and analyses in depth the development of the first three years of the new nursing training programme. According to the report, the training programme introduced in 2020 has established itself as the largest training occupation in Germany.

BMFSFJ awarded the nursing study prize: ten graduates from the first year were honoured for their academic achievements and their commitment to nursing. The award ceremony took place on 18 November 2024 in Berlin.

## 2025 Implementation

In October 2025, the law on the on new vocational training 'Nursing Assistant Training' passed. The new regulation replaces the 27 nursing assistant training programmes that previously existed under state law to make it easier for trained nursing staff to move between federal states in the future. The training is generalist in nature. It includes compulsory placements in the central care areas of inpatient long-term care, outpatient long-term care and inpatient acute care.

For nursing staff with foreign qualifications, a uniform regulation with a knowledge test or adaptation course is planned instead of a comprehensive equivalence assessment. Following the change of government, regulatory work will be carried out by a specialist commission convened by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG).

The *Pflege-Netzwerk Deutschland* (German Care Network) was established as an initiative of the Federal Ministry of Health to facilitate networking and exchange among individuals working in and for the care sector. The network was launched at the end of March 2020. It offers current training courses, such as a recent 'train-the-trainer' course on the topic of self-determination and dignity from the perspectives of various stakeholders in nursing homes.

The Nursing Panel of the BIBB conducted in 2025 its regular survey to systematically monitor nursing training in Germany. The initial results were published at the end of 2025. In 2025, the BIBB published a wide range of publications on nursing training: The flyer 'Nursing training today' provides information on dual study programmes. In addition to this, as part of a research project commissioned by the BIBB, the module curriculum for the additional qualification in university practical instruction was developed as a curricular basis for university continuing education institutions. It is tailored to nursing professionals who have completed university nursing training or who have a bachelor's degree in nursing.

A BIBB article published in 2025, examined the question of why care facilities decided against providing training. It also compares the attitudes of facilities that do and do not provide training with regard to generalist nursing training.

## Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Health (BMG)
- Federal States (Länder)
- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)

## Target group

### Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices  
Young people (15-29 years old)  
Adult learners

### Education professionals

Teachers  
Trainers

## Thematic categories

## **Governance of VET and lifelong learning**

Coordinating VET and other policies

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

## **Modernising VET infrastructure**

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training

Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision

## **Modernising VET offer and delivery**

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

## **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

## **Subsystem**

IVET CVET

## **Further reading**

[Information portal on nursing training and studies](#)

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[The new nursing assistant training programme \(2025\)](#)

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[Information from the Federal Ministry on the completed Initiative Training Offensive for Care](#)

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[Concerted action on care \(BMG\)](#)

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[Background information on the Act on the Nursing Professions](#)

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[Care Network Germany](#)

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[BIBB activities in the context of the Act on the Nursing professions](#)

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[BIBB report on why care facilities decide against providing training \(2025\)](#)

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[BIBB: Module curriculum for practical instruction qualification for nursing professionals who have completed university nursing training or a nursing-specific bachelor's degree](#)

## **Related policy developments**

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**2025 Implementation**

**Monitoring VET system - BIBB annual Data reports**

BIBB annual Data reports supplement the VET report published each year by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) by providing additional in-depth information and analysis on the current situation and the newest developments in VET. The reports have a yearly special focus:

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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“ … ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Reforming the care and nursing occupations and training: 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/28130>