

# Integrating migrants and refugees in VET and work

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 GERMANY

## Timeline



ID number 28123

## Background

People with migration background are not as well integrated in VET as the native population. Support measures as the KAUSA training and migration service centres have been set up to address this. The major waves of war refugees in 2015-16 and again in 2022 have called for specific measures to support their integration in VET and work.

## Objectives

Integrating people with a migration background including refugees into the labour market and the education and VET system is a priority. Key to integration are the learning of the German language, validation of skills and competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings, provision of vocational guidance, and access to pre-VET and VET programmes, apprenticeships, upskilling measures and employment.

## Description

Since 2015, in line with the federal ESF integration guideline, the IvAF integration programme (Integration of asylum seekers and refugees) has contributed to the sustainable integration of asylum seekers, asylum applicants and refugees in training and employment through comprehensive counselling including qualification, placement and support provided during the first weeks of employment or training. The networks act as door-openers for the target group in companies and vocational schools, public administration and trade associations.

Since the 2016 amendment to the Social code (SGB II and III), young refugees with tolerated residence status who participate in dual VET are entitled to financial support after a 15-month stay in Germany instead of the previously required 4 years. The support is provided as training loans, pre-vocational training measures, and the so-called assisted training scheme.

The Integration Act, adopted in July 2016, facilitated refugee integration into society. Refugees with prospects of staying permanently get integration courses at an early stage

and legal certainty while in vocational training: up to the three-year right of residence for those in apprenticeship until successful completion of training, followed by the two-year right to reside, if the person works in the profession s/he was trained in. This so-called '3 + 2' rule was extended to well-integrated immigrants with a 'toleration' status: it is not the right of residence but a temporary suspension of deportation. The corresponding law came into force on 1 January 2020. Asylum seekers will be granted temporary residence permits once they have submitted their application for asylum, so they have a legal certainty and early access to integration courses and the labour market.

In 2015-17, a specific ESF-supported programme, German for professional purposes, was carried out to help people with migration background learn the German language and integrate into society and the world of work. 80 000 people participated in the programme in 2017. A new information hub for the German language courses, Handbook Germany, was set up, funded by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF).

The Federal Government, Federal States and local authorities, BAMF, the Federal Employment Agency (BA), the social partners, companies and foundations and civil society actors continued their various measures to improve the integration of migrants and refugees into training and the labour market in 2017 and 2018. Some examples are:

- (a) the municipal coordination of educational services for recent immigrants, the programme, *Einstieg Deutsch* (introduction to the German language) offered by the German Adult Education Association (DVV), and the individual analysis, competence assessment of refugees and vocational orientation (BOF) within the framework of the Educational chains initiative continued. BOF courses last between 13 and 26 weeks and have been financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) since 2016. They take place in apprentice workshops and companies and are aimed at disadvantaged refugees and immigrants with particular language support needs that are no longer subject to compulsory education. The specific objective is to prepare such persons for entry to VET. BOF courses afford participants insights into up to three training occupations.
- (b) since 1999, the Training and Migration Coordination Office (*Koordinierungsstelle Ausbildung und Migration KAUSA*), established by the JOBSTARTER programme (BMBF), provides nationwide training guidance to refugees and migrants and informs their parents about all issues relating to dual VET. In 2017, KAUSA regional service centres opened in three federal states. In 2018, the KAUSA service centres were integrated in the Educational chains initiative. The focus of KAUSA is on raising the awareness of self-employed people with a migration background for vocational training and also to provide apprenticeship training places for refugees;
- (c) the BA, the umbrella organisation of crafts chambers (ZDH) and the BMBF provided career guidance to more than 2 000 refugees under the initiative, Paths into apprenticeship for refugees (started in 2016);
- (d) the network Companies integrate refugees, which started in 2016 and is funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs (BMWi) and the umbrella organisation of the chambers of industry and commerce (DIHK), is aimed at companies that are involved or want to get involved in bringing refugees into training and employment. The network offers the opportunity to exchange experiences and practical information on the employment of refugees to its member companies, three quarters of which are SMEs;
- (e) the chambers' Welcome guides (*Willkommenslotsen*) are available to small and large companies as one-stop shop for all questions related to the integration of refugees in training, internships or employment. Since the start of the programme in March 2016 until mid-2018, the Welcome guides had achieved around 16 600 placements of refugees in employment, training or internship;
- (f) by means of a matching process, the online internship platform JOIN offered since 2016 opportunities for companies and refugees to find and get to know each other through internship placements. This joint initiative of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and business provided refugees the possibility of employment in a timely manner and provided a first proof of their qualification, even before they received a residence permit and a work permit.

■ 2016 Implementation

■ 2017 Implementation

## 2018 Implementation

## 2019 Implementation

Around 3 300 immigrants have taken advantage of the BOF courses nationwide thus far. Around half of those completing the programme were successfully placed in training or introductory training afterwards. New funding guidelines published at the end of December 2019 enable BOF courses to be implemented until the end of 2021.

With the support of the IvAF networks, around 55 000 asylum seekers and refugees have been integrated into the labour market since 2015.

20 regional KAUSA service points have received follow-up financing until 2021/22.

## 2020 Implementation

In September 2020, BIBB published the final report of a research project *Chances of access to vocational education and training for young refugees who are entitled to stay: Potentials and obstacles in guidance and support*.

BOF vocational orientation programme for refugees: there were about 1 060 participants in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, BOF guidance is now also provided online to keep the contact alive. The example of an online BOF course in Würzburg shows that integration can also work in digital form.

KAUSA transfer projects: the 20 KAUSA service centres continued to operate.

ESF integration programme IvAF: the duration of IvAF projects was extended until 31 December 2021 with an amendment to the funding guideline in July 2020. From 2015 up to December 2020, around 63 000 asylum seekers and refugees were integrated into the training or labour market supported by IvAF networks. In June 2020, ESF published the brochure *Mind the gap! Refugees at the transition from school to work - practical and solution approaches of the IvAF networks*.

Welcome Guides: in the first half of 2020, 1 958 companies received individual guidance from the Welcome guides: during this period, the facilitators helped fill 437 apprenticeship placements, 152 introductory training placements and 151 jobs, despite the pandemic. In 2020, around 110 guides were active at 93 chambers and business organisations throughout Germany.

## 2021 Implementation

To allow transfer of successful concepts and instruments to increase the participation in vocational training of people with a migration background, KAUSA transfer projects will be funded from 2021 in accordance with new funding guidelines focusing on the dissemination of KAUSA concepts. Entrepreneurs with a migration background are a growing group in the economy.

The BMBF published a leaflet in English and French about the Career orientation for refugees (BOF) programme. The leaflet is aimed at VET institutions, schools, policy makers and multipliers. It describes the core elements of the programme: workshop days, company-based training, courses on job-specific skills, specialist language teaching and an individual mentoring system.

Funding for the Welcome guides project was extended until 2023; the funding period for the IvAF integration programme (Integration of asylum seekers and refugees) was extended until the end of 2022.

## 2022 Implementation

In 2022, the BMBF continued to support the integration of refugees with one major package of measures - from learning German to taking up vocational training. Here are some examples:

For six years now, courses have been offered in vocational training centres (ÜBS) throughout Germany as part of the Vocational orientation for refugees (BOF) programme to prepare people for vocational training. This is currently taking place at over 50 locations with a total of 6 550 in the last six years. In the first years, only a very small proportion of women (up to 3%) attended a BOF course, but in the meantime their participation has increased to 36%. The main reason for the increase was an expansion of the range of occupations offered, which has led to more interest amongst women. Since 2019, BOF has not only offered insights into skilled trades, but also, for example, into apprenticeships in the occupational fields of health/education and sales. Last but not least, the possibility to participate in a BOF course on a part-time basis has increased the demand amongst women. In 2022, participants came from 84 different countries, mainly from Syria (22%), Afghanistan (12%), Ukraine (10%), Iran (8%) and Iraq (6%). In 2022, a BOF flyer was published in Ukrainian.

Since 2022, a new BMBF funding line allows the transfer of successful KAUSA tools to provide advice to self-employed people and young people with a migrant background on all aspects of VET within eight transfer projects.

Two BIBB publications focused on dual VET for refugees:

- (a) Qualification concept for preparing and supporting the training of young people with a refugee background in the company - Further training for training staff
- (b) Integration of refugees in training and employment: opportunities for refugees and challenges for the education system. The BIBB portal now provides information on VET for refugees from Ukraine.

In 2022, around 75 Welcome guides are working nationwide and are located at 60 Chambers and other business organisations and therefore easily accessible. Due to the current influx of Ukrainian refugees, chambers and business organisations are being given the opportunity to apply for a new Welcome Guide position in the short term. This is intended to quickly meet the increased need for guidance in some regions.

Since 2022, the ESF Plus programme My Turn - Women with migration experience are ready to get started, is funding projects providing longer-term, continuous and individual support over and above existing funding opportunities for migrant women with a low level of formal qualifications.

## **2023 Implementation**

In 2023, the federal government, Länder and local authorities, federal employment agency (BA), social partners, companies and civil society actors continued their various measures to improve the integration of migrants and refugees into training and the labour market:

In 2023, over 155 700 people took part in over 8 830 vocational language courses (69% women and 31% men). Further, over 2 000 apprentices benefited from the special language courses currently being trialled for apprentices (Azubi-BSK). The job-related German language support (Section 45a of the Residence Act) enables the teaching of German language skills related to the world of work up to language level C2 according to the CEFR. The range of vocational language courses is constantly being developed.

The 42 KAUSA regional centres have continued their activities in 2023. One example: MUT stands for Migrant Enterprises in Thuringia. From 6 to 11 February 2023, the MUT network presented itself for the first time in the pop-up store in the state capital Erfurt. With the MUT network, the KAUSA regional centre offers migrant companies the opportunity to network and exchange ideas on the topics of self-employment and training. Another example: The aim of the KAUSA-Transfer Elternarbeit @OST project is to establish and anchor a successful counselling structure for parents with a refugee or migrant background. A new toolbox for parental work, based on many years of experience, tried and tested materials and formats, reaches new multipliers: the members of local foreigners', integration and migration advisory councils.

The BOF programme was designed to prepare and place refugees in training. In 2023, after six years of funding, the BOF programme came to an end. The evaluation report was published in April 2023.

The network Companies integrate refugees offers the opportunity to exchange experiences and practical information on training and employing refugees to its member companies (almost 4 000 by the end of 2023), three quarters of which are SMEs.

In 2023, over 2500 companies and 3 025 refugees received individual counselling from the Welcome guides at the chambers. In the process, 975 apprenticeships, employment opportunities and introductory qualifications were found.

Finally, the follow-up ESF integration programme 'WIR - Networks integrate refugees into the regional labour market' held its kick-off meeting for the funded projects in June 2023. Aim of the programme is to promote the labour market integration of the target group and maintain, increase or restore their employability. Structural measures aimed at administrative institutions, companies and other organisations shall improve access to work and training. In addition, a nationwide social media pilot project offers initial outreach information and referral counselling (Digital Streetwork). 41 projects throughout Germany are being funded, including newly selected projects and those that were already active in the IvAF priority area. Almost 50 000 people are expected to be reached by September 2026.

The ESF Plus model programme *Rat geben - Ja zur Ausbildung!* (Giving advice - Yes to training! Period: July 2022 to December 2027) aims to sensitise and train direct caregivers of young immigrants or the young descendants of immigrants in their role as multipliers at the transition from school to work. As counsellors, they should be able to motivate and support the young people in overcoming barriers in the transition from school to vocational training. The 15 funded projects and the networking office started their work between May and August 2023.

In 2023, more than 130 000 young migrants were supported in the approximately 500 youth migration services (JMD), which provide counselling and individual support for young people with a migration background in their educational, professional, social and linguistic integration, with a focus on the transition from school to work.

Germany is also reliant on the immigration of foreign skilled workers to secure the needed workforces for the labour market. This means, among other things, that administrative procedures and the recognition of professional qualifications need to be simplified. The 'Recognition in Germany' portal is the central information platform for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications. The portal recorded around 3.9 million visits in 2023, the majority of which (53%) were from abroad. The Recognition Finder provides specific information on the recognition procedure and the body responsible for recognition (see PD Validation and recognition).

Along these lines, the new Skilled Immigration Act (FEG) was passed in July 2023 and makes it easier for skilled workers with vocational training and individuals with practical knowledge to immigrate to Germany (see PD on the subject).

In 2023, the ESF Plus programme '*MY TURN - Women with migration experience are ready to get started*' implemented by BMAS continued to fund 66 projects ensuring that (formally) low-skilled women with own migration experience participate in qualification measures to a greater extent than before and are then permanently integrated into the labour market. The MY TURN networking event in November 2023 in Berlin with around 200 participants, including project coordinators, representatives of the employment administration and higher-level stakeholders from ministries, business and the social partners, took a joint look at the successes and challenges of the first year of the MY TURN programme.

## 2024 Implementation

This 02/2024 issue of the BWP journal (Vocational Training in Research and Practice) presents relevant research results and practical concepts on the contribution of VET to

the integration of migrants. A particular focus is placed on the young people who have sought refuge in Germany since 2015/16. Topics include their access to initial and continuing VET, the factors which impede and foster participation, and measures aimed at encouraging integration.

In 2024, the federal government, *Länder* and local authorities, federal employment agency (BA), social partners, companies and civil society actors continued their various measures to improve the integration of migrants and refugees into training and the labour market:

The 42 KAUSA service centres continue their work on a regional basis in 2024. For example, until January 2024, the KAUSA ambassadors won over 175 companies in North Rhine-Westphalia in favour of the dual training system - creating over 100 new training places. Another example: the KAUSA regional office in Saxony-Anhalt helps to ensure that many apprentices with a migration background take advantage of a customised offer from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF): the vocational language courses for apprentices (Azubi-BSK). The aim is to support young people on their way to successfully completing their training.

With the launch of the follow-up programme BOFplus 'Vocational orientation for persons with flight and migration experience' in March 2024, the BMBF is funding courses in which immigrants are gradually prepared for training or qualification and continuously accompanied (2024 to 2027).

In the first 2024 issue of the online VET journal *Zeitschrift berufsbildung* (Vocational training magazine), the article Vocational orientation and support on the path to training for Ukrainian refugees shows how people from Ukraine were supported in their vocational integration by two BMBF-funded programmes (KAUSA and BOF) in 2022 and 2023.

In 2024, the Welcome guides and the advisors of the Perfect match programme were merged, adding up to 140 chamber guides supporting companies in filling training places with young people from Germany, abroad or with a refugee background with the right match.

The Vocational training validation and digitisation act (BVaDiG) was passed in July 2024. For the first time, people (older than 25 and with work experience) without a formal vocational qualification will be entitled to have their vocational skills assessed and certified against the standards of a dual training occupation. Migrants can also benefit from this new law, for example a migrant who has no formal vocational qualification acquired abroad, but has substantial work experience in the home country and sufficient language skills, but due to a lack of visibility here only carries out non-specialist helper activities (for example in the warehouse).

The network Companies integrate refugees in training and employment has now 4 298 members, three quarters of which are SMEs (10/2024).

In May 2024, the MY TURN networking centre invited the funded project organisers to a digital event, which was also attended by the BMAS. The MY TURN programme has set itself the goal of welcoming and individually supporting almost 30 000 women by the end of 2025. The initial results show: The target group's interest in the programme is high and the projects are on a successful path! Following an implementation phase, almost 14 000 women are currently being supported by the 65 MY TURN projects, e.g. the MY TURN project IT'S MY WAY creates new prospects of professional integration through part-time training.

MY TURN is designed for long-term support, so that intensive counselling is possible according to the personal needs of the participants. Currently, 20% of the women admitted have left the projects again. They have been strengthened through empowerment, individual counselling and skills development and have entered training, employment or qualifications, among other things. In September 2024, the MY TURN networking centre published a handout on cooperation between MY TURN projects and job centres and employment agencies: Hand in hand: How project organisers and employment agencies work together to support women with migration

experience.

## Bodies responsible

- Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)
- Federal Employment Agency (BA)
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)
- Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) (until December 2021)
- Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)
- Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) (until December 2021)
- German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH)
- Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK)
- Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI)
- German Adult Education Association (DVV)

## Target group

### Learners

Learners with migrant background, including refugees

## Thematic categories

### Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

### Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

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

### Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

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

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

## European priorities in VET

### VET Recommendation

VET promoting equality of opportunities

### Osnabrück Declaration

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

## Further reading

[Migration and flight on BIBB portal](#)

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[Overview of projects and initiatives \(BIBB portal Überaus\)](#)

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[Vocational orientation for migrants and refugees \(BOFplus\)](#)

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[KAUSA training and migration service centres](#)

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[Information on the chambers Welcome Guides \(ZDH\)](#)

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[Network Companies integrate refugees](#)

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[Portal on recognition of foreign professional qualifications](#)

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[Youth migration services \(JMD\)](#)

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[ESF Plus programme, My Turn - Women with migration experience are ready to get started](#)

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[ESF Plus programme 'WIR - Networks integrate refugees into the regional labour market'](#)

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## Related policy developments

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**2024 Implementation**

### Expansion and promotion of part-time VET

The amendment to the Vocational Training Act in 2020 (Section 7a BBiG), makes it possible to organise part-time vocational training individually in terms of time.

 GERMANY

#### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

#### Subsystem

IVET

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**2024 Implementation**

### Future Starters programme for young adults without initial vocational qualification (Zukunftstarter)

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal Employment

Agency (BA) joint initiative to provide initial vocational training for young adults *Training will be something - late starters wanted (AusBILDUNG wird was - Spätstarter gesucht)* started in 2013

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## Perfect match programme for SMEs

The *Perfect match* programme (2015-20; funding volume per year: EUR 6 million including ESF funding) is designed to counteract matching problems on the training market.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET

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**2024 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 Implementation**

## Intercultural competences for trainers

Following the enormous influx of refugees in 2015-16, BIBB expanded its support offer to trainers on developing intercultural competences and training refugees.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

CVET

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**2024 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

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**2024 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.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Strategy/Action  
plan

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## Cooperation among stakeholders to facilitate transition from school to work

To provide young people with the best possible one-stop support in the transition from school to work, local alliances known as JBA have been established in many places since 2011 (first in Hamburg but ten years later widespread in Germany with more than 350 agencies).

 GERMANY

#### **Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

#### **Subsystem**

IVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## **Skilled Immigration Act**

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs BMAS has drafted the Skills Immigration Act in December 2018, in the context of its Strategy to secure skilled labour. The Act features the following:

 GERMANY

#### **Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

#### **Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## **Partial qualifications to support the low-qualified and unskilled**

Partial qualifications (*Teilqualifikationen, TQ*) are educational offers, which allow learners to gain vocational qualifications through systematic, successive qualifications based on the dual training regulations.

 GERMANY

#### **Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

#### **Subsystem**

IVET

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**2024 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

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2024 Implementation

## Validation and recognition

The ValiKom project aims to promote the validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills in Germany and was initiated by the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (DHKT) and the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), together with the Federal Ministry for Education and Research

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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2024 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

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2024 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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