

# National Skills Strategy

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 GERMANY

## Timeline



ID number 28121

## Background

The transformation of the working world - driven in particular by the digital revolution - will result in massive changes to occupational and qualification profiles. Continuing education and training (CET) is the key to securing our supply of skilled labour, to maintaining the employability of all workers, and to our country's innovative and competitive abilities. It is also an investment in social participation and equal opportunities. More than ever, continuing education and skills development are necessary to enable people to control their own professional lives.

## Objectives

The National Skills Strategy (*Nationale Weiterbildungsstrategie* NWS) aims at the sustainable promotion of employability in the changing world of work, strengthening the skilled worker base and facilitating career advancement for broad sections of the population. The overall goal of the strategy is to create a new culture by understanding occupational CVET as a lifelong necessity.

## Description

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*). The social partners were part of the committee which was expected to formulate answers to the digital change in the world of work. The focus should be on SMEs, micro enterprises and people in need of help to increase their opportunities on the labour market. The strategy should not only address the question of the provision of CVET, but also how the demand from companies and individuals for continuing training could be increased.

The National Skills Strategy was presented in summer 2019 by the Federal Government, Federal States, industry, trade unions and the Federal Employment Agency. Here are the 10 action goals of the strategy with a selection of examples:

- (a) creating transparency of occupational CVET opportunities and offers, e.g. CVET online data platform by end of 2019; new algorithms will make matching learning needs with education programmes easier; certificates will be digitally certified and securely stored online;
- (b) closing funding gaps, setting new incentives, adapting existing funding systems, as does the Qualification Opportunities Act, e.g. increasing funding for occupational CVET participation for individuals;
- (c) (nationwide networking of occupational CVET guidance for individuals and companies, especially SMEs, and strengthening motivation to participate in occupational CVET; CVET mentors should support and promote learning activities of low-qualified employees;
- (d) strengthening the responsibility of the social partners, e.g. identifying the competences that will be required in the future to provide adequate CVET measures; collective agreements offer a broad leeway for trade unions to ensure the promotion of occupational CVET;
- (e) making visible and recognising non-formally and informally acquired competences of employees, e.g. new nationwide approaches (Valikom and MYSKILLS) will make informal competences visible and valued;
- (f) developing continuing education qualifications and programmes:
  - (i) BMBF: creation of innovative, high-quality cooperation between learning venues (InnoVET);
  - (ii) BA: develop standardised and vocational partial qualifications for the low-skilled as an alternative gradual path to a vocational qualification;
  - (iii) BMAS: develop individual in-company retraining;
- (g) qualification of personnel in CVET, also in view of digital change, e.g. the qualification initiative, Digital Change Q 4.0 for CVET personnel;
- (h) strategic development of education institutions as centres of excellence for CVET, e.g. inter-company vocational training centres (ÜBS) will be further strengthened as centres of competence to support SMEs;
- (i) assessing and strengthening quality and evaluation of continuing education programmes; the evaluation of success criteria of CVET measures (e.g. integration and dropout rates) and the quality of implementation will be relevant for public procurement for the first time from 2019;
- (j) Improving CVET statistics nationwide for a better strategic forecast of future skill needs.

## 2018 Design

### 2019 Implementation

In 2019, the partners of the National Skills Strategy were in the process of implementing their contributions (commitments) to the realisation of the 10 action goals of the National Skills Strategy.

### 2020 Implementation

In 2020, BIBB was commissioned by the BMBF to provide technical and organisational support for the National Skills Strategy (NWS). BIBB will support the further development of the strategy and the implementation and coordination of resulting activities until the end of 2023.

On 26 August 2020, BIBB presented the results of its survey on the general mood amongst the strategy partners on the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on CVET, particularly with regard to the use and potential of digitalised CVET offers and structures.

In 2020, the partners of the National Skills Strategy were in the process of implementing their contributions (commitments) to the realisation of the 10 action goals of the strategy. For example, the innovation competition INVITE and InnoVET are embedded in the National Skills Strategy (see related policy developments).

## 2021 Implementation

In June 2021, the partners of the National skills strategy presented their implementation report. The report documents what has been achieved so far. It provides recommendations for the further development of the fields of action addressed and shows a perspective for a continuation of a strategic approach to strengthen CVET. Together, three quarters of the agreements reached in 2019 have already been implemented or implementation is underway.

## 2022 Implementation

The current coalition agreement gives a clear mandate to continue the successfully started strategy process. The updated paper on the continuation and further development of the National Skills Strategy (NWS) was agreed by all 17 NWS-partners in September 2022 and represents the basis of the National Skills Strategy for the coming years. On the one hand, the paper builds on the implementation report presented in the last legislative period (June 2021), but at the same time also identifies new challenges and strategies for action.

Four cross-cutting themes for the coming years will continue to establish CVET as a component of vocational and entrepreneurial developments and develop a common CVET culture:

- (a) facilitate access to guidance, promotion and CVET offers;
- (b) deepen cooperation in regions and sectors;
- (c) further develop concepts for future skills, as well as collective agreement and company-based approaches to CVET;
- (d) strengthening digital continuing education.

The goals of the partners in the National Skills Strategy (NWS) are to develop and implement approaches so that more low-skilled people participate in CVET and strengthen the development of required competences and possible reorientation in working life in the company context, especially for SMEs, since participation in CVET is lower amongst them than amongst larger companies. In addition, the German government has set a target of 65% participation in CVET as part of the EU 2020 strategy.

For example, with the help of CVET mentors, BMBF-funded projects organised by the trade unions and the chemical industry social partners are expanding company support structures to establish sustainable educational guidance and support so that employees are more aware of CVET and more motivated to participate in it.

Another example is the further development of regional CVET networks, to improve the innovation and competitiveness of companies (especially SMEs) and to maintain and promote employees' professional competence through the development of sustainable CVET structures.

## 2023 Implementation

The five working groups agreed upon by the NWS partners were formed and have started their work in 2023 (Topics: e.g. future and key competences; qualification concepts for transformation; access, counselling and skills assessment for under-represented groups). The first National CVET Conference took place in November 2023 and strengthened the exchange and networking of the NWS partners with other external stakeholders (400 participants). Ideas for the further implementation process of the NWS were developed and adopted.

There were more than 300 CVET mentors in approx. 100 companies in 2023 (BMBF-funded projects organised by trade unions and social partners).

The focus of the programme Development of CVET networks (funded by the labour ministry BMAS and carried out by social partners) is to increase the participation of SMEs in further training and to strengthen regional business and innovation networks.

Both industry-specific and cross-industry CVET networks (53 in 2023) support companies in securing their skilled labour potential and preparing employees for changing professional requirements.

In July 2023, the Act to promote initial and further training was passed, supporting particularly SMEs. With the introduction of the qualification allowance in April 2024, the law makes continuing vocational training more accessible. Fixed funding rates make CVET funding more transparent and will be accessible to all companies. Employment agencies pay companies the qualification allowance for their employees, who are threatened with losing their jobs as a result of structural change, but for whom further training can enable them to find future-proof employment in the same company. The allowance will be paid instead of remuneration during training.

For the CVET programmes INVITE, InnoVET, online CVET platform NOW and Partial Qualifications, please refer to the corresponding policy developments.

### **2024 Implementation**

The five NWS working groups continued their work in 2024.

The four CVET mentors' projects are funded by BMBF in the period from 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2024 (approx. EUR 11.3 million). In parallel to the individual projects, the BMBF is funding cross-project scientific support (BIBB, 2022-25), which is developing a standardised, flexible qualification instrument for further training mentoring based on the qualification concepts of the individual projects.

In its first interim report, the external evaluation of the programme Development of CVET networks characterised the CVET networks as innovative drivers of the German continuing education landscape. The final results of the evaluation are to be incorporated into the further development and consolidation of the federal programme.

## **Bodies responsible**

- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)
- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)
- Federal Employment Agency (BA)

## **Target group**

### **Learners**

Adult learners

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

### **Entities providing VET**

Companies

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

## **Thematic categories**

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

Coordinating VET and other policies

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

### **Modernising VET offer and delivery**

Acquiring key competences

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

### **Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences**

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

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

### **Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation**

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

## **European priorities in VET**

### **VET Recommendation**

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

### **Osnabrück Declaration**

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

## **Subsystem**

CVET

## **Further reading**

[National skills strategy \(BMBF website\)](#)

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[National skills strategy \(BIBB website\)](#)

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[National skills strategy \(BMAS website\)](#)

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[CVET networks](#)

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[CVET mentors](#)

## **Related policy developments**

**2024 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.

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### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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2024 Implementation

## Developing digital CVET area - innovation programme INVITE

Starting point was the innovation competition INVITE, initiated by BMBF within the National skills strategy and is implemented by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) with the support of an IT consulting company (VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH).

 GERMANY

### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

### Subsystem

CVET

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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

## 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 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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**2024 Implementation**

## Lifelong vocational guidance for young people and adults

Building upon the results of its pilot project Continuing education and training guidance, the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, BA) launched in 2017 a more comprehensive Lifelong vocational guidance project. The project targets both young people and adults.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2023 Discontinued**

## Telephone and online guidance service

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) offers a telephone information and guidance service supporting individuals who are considering their further education and

qualification options.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## Sustainable development in VET

In 2015, the Federal Institute for VET (BIBB) started 12 pilot projects in VET aiming to ensure a sustainable development (*Berufsbildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung BBNE*). With the EUR 12 million budget, the projects intend to develop vocational competences in sustainability.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## Promoting innovations for excellent VET - InnoVET programmes

In January 2019, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) launched the project Shaping the future - innovations for excellent vocational training (InnoVET) and ran the first call.

 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**

## Amendment of Vocational Training Act

The legislative process for amending the Vocational Training Act started in November 2018. Several key changes to be introduced:

Introducing a minimum training wage for apprentices.

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## Integrating migrants and refugees in VET and work

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

 GERMANY

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**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**

## **Expanding financial support for CVET and advanced vocational qualifications**

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

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#### **Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

#### **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**

## **Annual surveys among CVET providers**

The online platform wbmonitor, operated by BIBB and the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE), conducts a yearly survey of public and private CVET providers. The surveys have a yearly focus and monitor labour market developments and helps identify training needs.

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**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

CVET

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