

Expanding vocational guidance and support from school until completion of training

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 GERMANY

Timeline



ID number 28118

Background

In 2006, 8% of school leavers (approximately 76 000) in Germany had not obtained a leaving certificate and 17.4% (or 2.55 million) of young people aged 20 to 34 were unskilled (had no formal qualification). Facing these rates, the German government and Federal States agreed in 2008 on a broad initiative aiming at helping everyone to achieve a school leaving certificate and a vocational qualification. Various existing funding programmes, instruments and different actors were linked together, coordinated and further developed to cover the whole education and training process of young people, especially those at risk of dropping out. In 2010, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) launched the *Educational chains* initiative (*Bildungsketten*) to promote training opportunities for young people and thereby to decrease the number of early leavers from education and training. The concrete objective of this initiative was to cut by half the rate of school leavers without a school leaving certificate and the rate of unskilled young people by 2014. This had not quite been achieved but there were significant improvements: the rate of school leavers without school leaving certificate went down to 5.8% (approximately 47 000) and the proportion of unskilled young people (age 20 to 34) dropped to 13.3% (or 1.93 million).

Objectives

The final goal of standard support instruments (Social Code, SGB III) in the transition from school to work and of the policy programme Educational chains is the completion of a qualification by all young people by supporting them in the following fields:

- (a) obtaining a general school leaving certificate;
- (b) making the transition from school to training;
- (c) completing a full VET qualification successfully.

Description

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. The main measures are: vocational orientation, training entry and placement support, introductory training (internship placement), vocational preparatory measures, assistance during training and vocational training grant.

In 2016, measures within the Educational chains initiative were expanded, mostly to strengthen vocational guidance and individual coaching until completion of a full vocational qualification. The initiative offers a close-meshed support net, using a comprehensive and holistic approach: nationwide standard instruments; early start in Grade 7; individual coaching through whole education process until VET qualification (Career start coaching; VerA mentoring); transition measures between school and training e.g. introductory training; preparatory VET; and support measures during training. Its main strategy is 'prevention instead of repair' starting in lower secondary school. The initiative has developed into a central cooperation model of the Federal Government, the Federal Employment Agency (BA) and the Länder. The Länder play an important role in this because they implement a large part of the measures, embedded in the respective Länder concept. For the Educational chains initiative, the BMBF, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the BA coordinate their activities and programmes with the Länder.

The vocational orientation programme BOF (*Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge*) was introduced in 2016, specifically offering vocational guidance to young refugees and migrants. By the end of 2017, agreements between the Federal and respective Federal States governments had been signed accordingly with 13 out of 16 Federal States. Cooperation between the Federal and regional levels was continued in 2018, with support for new measures in Rheinland-Pfalz, Nordrhein-Westfalen and Niedersachsen.

The vocational orientation programme BOP, an important element of the Educational chains, continued its expansion in 2018: with a funding volume of approximately EUR 77 million, it was able to reach 125 000 secondary school learners. In December 2018, a new funding priority was published for upper secondary general education schools (*Gymnasium*), where vocational orientation measures like workshop days in training centres were underrepresented. Since the end of 2018, 20 KAUSA service centres established by the JOBSTARTER programme have been part of the Educational Chains initiative.

The following initiative complements the Educational chains measures by creating alliances of cooperation between youth social work and VET and labour market integration services: since 2011, the youth employment agencies (*Jugendberufsagentur*, JBA) have been providing a local one-stop-shop for young people, bundling all youth support services at the transition between school and work, including vocational guidance and individual social support (see PD 28131).

2015 Approved/Agreed

2016 Implementation

2017 Legislative process

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

Within the cooperation agreements between Federal and State governments (valid until the end of 2020), suitable instruments and structures for vocational orientation have been successfully established. The basis is the respective Federal States concept. The Educational chains initiative is to be continued until 2026, with new agreements to be concluded with all 16 State governments. The vocational orientation programme BOP, an important element of the Educational chains, continued its expansion in 2019 (funding volume of approx. EUR 77 million per year), with a special focus on vocational orientation at upper secondary general education schools.

In 2019, talks about new agreements for the next phase of the initiative, from 2021

until 2026, have started with all 16 Federal States.

2020 Implementation

In April 2020, the collaborative funded project VerOnika started to help young people to find the educational path that suits them best. For 1 year, they receive insights into various training professions and courses of study.

In 2020, the BOP/BOF portal continued to provide updated information online: good practice examples, workshops and materials on vocational orientation addressing different target groups (young people, parents, schools, coaches) in different languages. The yearly BOP conference took place online from 7-11 December 2020 under the motto From medical doctor to carpenter: vocational orientation in upper secondary schools.

Career start coaching (*Berufseinstiegsbegleiter*) and VerA mentoring for apprentices by senior volunteers are pillars of the initiative. In 2020, the updated brochure for parents and teachers on career start coaches was published.

Talks about new agreements have been started in 2019-20 with all 16 Federal States for the next phase of the initiative, from 2021 until 2026. In 2020, agreements between the Federal Government and two Federal States were signed. More agreements were to follow shortly.

2021 Implementation

The Vocational Orientation for Refugees (BOF) programme has been extended until the end of 2022. A new application round for funding was carried out in 2021.

For the cross-regional and cross-target transfer of successful concepts and instruments to increase the participation in vocational training of people with a migration background, KAUSA transfer projects have been funded since 2021 in accordance with new funding guidelines to enable the KAUSA service centres and their network partners to undertake further transfer activities. Such services address and inform migrant-led companies, supporting them on their way to becoming or remaining training companies, and are important for increasing the participation of young migrants in training or for informing and involving parents with a migration background. Close cooperation with chambers, professional associations, migrant organisations or municipalities is central to the transfer.

The other initiatives in the Educational Chains programme have also been continued. For example, a total of 10 agreements have been reached with Federal States. The new agreements came into force on 1 January 2021. The education chain agreements cover several fields of action, for example vocational orientation, the further development of the transition area into a system and individual support for the transition from school to work. Successful support measures are to be further developed, expanded and, as far as possible, made permanent. The agreements run from 2021 to 2026.

In 2021 a new element was added to the Educational Chains programme: the online portal Berufenavi. It is a central signpost that bundles the diverse digital offers on the internet and makes them visible. Young people should find the portal contains everything they need to find their way in the world of career and training choices. Parents and teachers are also invited to try out the Berufenavi portal to help young people navigate the world of training and careers even better.

2022 Implementation

Nationwide standard support measures anchored in the Social Code (e.g. SGB III) covering the transition from school to work have been continued in 2022.

The Educational chains initiative aims to better interlink the funding instruments of the Federal Government and the sixteen federal states. Fourteen Länder-specific

agreements on the transition from school to work have now been reached.

For the 2023 application round, the BMBF has published a new guideline for funding vocational orientation in inter-company and comparable vocational training centres (BOP programme) in December 2022. A broader spectrum of possible vocational and academic careers is to be shown to the pupils during the practice-oriented BO days. In addition to skilled crafts, social, nursing and health professions, commercial-administrative professions and commercial-technical industrial professions are to be given more weight in the future. Important cross-cutting issues such as digitalisation, working world 4.0. and green working worlds are to be considered.

At the hybrid BOP conference *Exploring New Worlds - Digitalisation in Vocational Guidance* on 5-6 December 2022, more than 1 100 participants exchanged views on the future of vocational orientation.

With the new D-BOP competition, the BMBF awards prizes to successfully tested digital career guidance programmes that are particularly good at providing young people with digital access to career guidance.

The KAUSA transfer project *JUMP! young people with prospects* offers one-day events that combine sports activities (e.g. dancing, handball, judo) and information on the topic of training. The first JUMP event took place on 9 November 2022. Another current KAUSA transfer project is JOBWALK: young people can find out for themselves at a JOBWALK which training companies are in their city and how varied apprenticeships are. An interactive app on the smartphone shows them where to go via the GPS navigation system.

Flyers with information for parents on vocational guidance in Arabic, Russian, Turkish and Ukrainian language as well as KAUSA brochures for parents on VET in Germany in German, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian language have been published in 2022.

Beside the Educational Chains initiative, other programmes are promoting vocational orientation and training. One example is the SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT network (funded by the BMWK), which commits to practical vocational orientation and organises the annual *SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT - Das hat Potenzial!* award ceremony. The objective of the initiative is to recognise the commitment of companies and schools at the school-work interface and to create incentives for innovative projects in the field of vocational orientation and economic education.

Another example is the MINT Action Plan on VET (MINT stands for mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology). This action plan bundles existing BMBF funding measures along the education chain, from kindergarten to higher education and initial and continuing training. These include competitions for schoolchildren such as *Young Researchers (Jugend forscht)*, nationwide STEM clusters that coordinate STEM activities for young people at local level, and the central MINTvernetzt office. In the MINT Campus, qualification, advanced training and train-the-trainer modules and supporting materials (for example for social media work) are bundled and made freely accessible in order to support and further professionalise MINT actors.

In 2022, the Federal Employment Agency (BA) expanded the digital self-exploration tool Check-U for new entrants into professional life.

2023 Implementation

Nationwide standard support measures anchored in the Social Code (e.g. SGB III) covering the transition from school to work have been continued in 2023. For example, around 46 000 young people had access to pre-vocational training measures; around 31 000 people started assisted training; around 15 000 young people started a career start coaching; around 8 000 young people started an introductory training programme. Further, in the 2022/23 reporting year, around 545 000 training places were registered with the federal employment agency. This was offset by around 422 000 training applicants.

In January 2023, an updated fact sheet (in English) on the Educational Chains initiative was published. The various programmes (e.g. BOP, BOF, KAUSA, VerA) of the initiative have been continued, for example: since 2008, around 20000 apprentices with support needs throughout Germany have been accompanied by VerA volunteer senior experts.

The BOP is one cornerstone of the Educational Chains Initiative. The BOP aims to further expand vocational guidance in Germany and strengthen it at grammar schools in particular. To this end, the amendment to the BOP funding guideline came into force at the start of 2023. These activities are supplemented by digital career guidance measures such as the Berufenavi online navigation portal for career choice and the berufswahlapp to support the career choice process. In this context, the D-BOP competition for digital vocational guidance programmes was held in 2023.

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 Alliance for initial and further training between the main VET actors has been relaunched for 2023-26 to support the school-to-work transition and promote an inclusive VET. Its Summer of VET 2023 supported the VET market with events and campaigns nationwide. Young people are given insights into occupations and are brought together with training companies. Training seekers without placement receive support in finding opportunities. Along these lines, the German parliament has passed the Act to promote initial and further training including the Training guarantee in July 2023, introducing a subsidised vocational orientation internship, a mobility grant, and making participation in introductory training easier.

The joint project VerOnika (Interlinked orientation programmes for vocational and academic training) is being developed, trialled and scientifically monitored in three federal states - Baden-Württemberg, Berlin and Hesse - by stakeholders from vocational and academic education in subjects ranging from engineering to social work. The programmes differ from region to region, but are based on common quality standards. The follow-up project VerOnika up was launched in October 2023.

In 2023, 69 applications were submitted for the SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT competition (school business award 'Making commitment visible!') in six competition categories (e.g. companies, starters, exemplary regional network, cooperation between schools and companies). The award ceremony took place in November 2023 where 27 candidates were honoured.

The federal education ministry BMBF has published the third funding guideline for STEM clusters (STEM = MINT in German). It sets new priorities such as the promotion of educationally disadvantaged children and young people as well as the more intensive promotion of girls who are under-represented in the STEM field. The first MINT Campus Day took place in Cologne in November 2023.

2024 Implementation

Nationwide standard support measures anchored in the Social Code (e.g. SGB III) covering the transition from school to work have been continued in 2024. More details will be available by mid-2025.

The various initiatives in the Educational Chains programme have also been continued.

A new element is the 'zynd' portal, which is designed to help young people recognise skills and interests and make decisions. A special feature is the interactive learning modules and gamification elements. The service provided by BIBB since June 2024 is aimed at young people and educational professionals.

Further, the BOP podcast series on 'Accompanying professional orientation' broadcasted since October 2024 is aimed at trainers, teachers, educational professionals and people who give young people impulses for vocational orientation. The BOP information flyer addressing parents has been updated and was published in five languages (German, Turkish, Ukrainian, Arabic and Russian) in Mai 2024. The updated flyer addressing young people was published in Mai 2024 as well.

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 funding guideline 'Vocational Orientation for Persons with Flight and Migration Experience (BOFplus)' in March 2024, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research 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*, 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.

The VerA initiative is followed by the VerAplus initiative from January 2024 to December 2025. The abbreviation now stands for 'improving training success. Naturally, the new name also comes with a new logo, portal design and information materials (including a factsheet in English).

In 2024, the regional orientation programmes VerOnika in Berlin, Karlsruhe and Darmstadt focus on different subject areas. The duration also varies between one semester and one year. The Berlin orientation year *O ja!* focuses on STEM degree programmes (STEM stands for mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology) and related apprenticeships such as plant mechanic for sanitary, heating and air conditioning technology or electronics technician for energy and building technology. The Karlsruhe orientation semester TWIN! focuses on training and study opportunities in the vocational fields of electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and mechatronics. The Darmstadt orientation year for social professions focuses on various health and social professions such as educator, midwife, curative education, emergency paramedic, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, nursing specialist and social work studies.

In the SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT network, schools and local companies worked together in 2024 to pave the way for young people into the world of work, e.g. with practical career guidance. The network is made up of almost 400 regional networks and working groups in all federal states. The network offers tried and tested practical materials for local SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT co-operation, such as checklists, guidelines and sample contracts. It organises the annual SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT award and coordinates the Career Choice SEAL for schools with exemplary career guidance. With its JUNIOR student companies, they awake the entrepreneurial spirit and are active in the STEM field.

To continue implementing the MINT Action Plan in 2024, the BMBF is funding a central nationwide contact point that supports stakeholders with services, advice and networking formats: MINTvernetzt. MINTvernetzt has developed two specific formats:

- (a) The STEM community platform provides STEM stakeholders with their own digital forum. This is intended to further promote the quality development of STEM

- programmes;
- (b) The BMBF is also funding the digital learning platform MINT-Campus. The campus offers free learning programmes in various formats for a wide range of target groups. All learning opportunities are available with an open licence. The focus is on project and networking, STEM didactics and specialised STEM content. Further, between April and July 2024, 20 additional STEM clusters were added, focusing in particular on cooperation with schools, the promotion of girls and equal opportunities.

Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
- Federal States (Länder)
- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)
- Federal Employment Agency (BA)
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)
- Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

Learners with migrant background, including refugees

Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Entities providing VET

Companies

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

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

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

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

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

Further reading

[Educational chains initiative \[Bildungsketten\]](#)

[The vocational orientation programme BOP](#)

[Vocational orientation addressing migrants BOFplus](#)

[VerAplus mentoring for apprentices by senior volunteers](#)

[Collaboration project VerOnika up!](#)

[Portal Berufenavi](#)

[KAUSA projects](#)

[SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT network and award](#)

[MINT Action Plan \(BMBF\)](#)

Related policy developments

2024 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

2024 Implementation

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

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

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

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

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

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).



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

Providing gender cliché-free vocational guidance

Since December 2016, a dedicated website informs and supports young people in their career choice free from gender clichés; it also serves all actors involved in career guidance processes (schools, parents, companies).



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

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



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Promoting dual VET

Given the increasing trend towards academic education, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs (BMWi) have set up a joint campaign to present dual VET (apprenticeship) as an attractive option.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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. (2025). Expanding vocational guidance and support from school until completion of training: Germany. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28118>