



## REFERENCE YEAR 2023

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# UNDERSTANDING OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

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### Content updates and contributors

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#### **Q1. Is there a stable legal basis for apprenticeships in your country?**



✓ YES



✓ NO



✓ IN  
DEVELOPMENT

The main legal basis for the dual apprenticeship system at the upper secondary level is the Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz). It was adopted in 1969, providing a common framework for the traditional system of dual VET, which had been subject to fragmented legislation until then. The Vocational Training Act regulates the company-based part of apprenticeship. Its key provisions concern the mission of training, the standards for training curricula, requirements for the approbation of training enterprises (including qualification requirements for training staff), guidelines for training contracts and the working conditions, remuneration and social security of apprentices, and the responsibilities of the institutions involved (e.g. enterprises, chambers of commerce etc.).

The school component of the dual system is not covered by federal legislation but by the school acts of the 16 Länder. Common standards for the organisation of VET schools and the development of syllabi for the different training programmes are agreed between the Länder under the umbrella of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK).

#### **Q2. Is there an official definition of 'apprenticeship' or 'apprentice' in your country?**



✓ YES

✓ NO

Apprenticeships are generally understood as vocational education and training at the level of upper secondary education taking place in companies and part-time vocational schools, i.e. training within the 'dual system'.

Learners (apprentices) have a training contract with their employer and receive training according to an occupational profile, which is defined by an official training curriculum for in-company training and complemented by a corresponding school syllabus for theoretical instruction. Apprenticeships last 2 to 3 ½ years. After passing the final examination, learners are awarded a recognised vocational qualification at the level of skilled workers.

The term 'apprenticeship' (Lehre, Lehrlingsausbildung) is used only for programmes at upper secondary level.

### Q3. At which level do apprenticeship schemes exist in your country?



✓ AT UPPER  
SECONDARY LEVEL

✓ AT POST-  
SECONDARY (NOT  
TERTIARY)

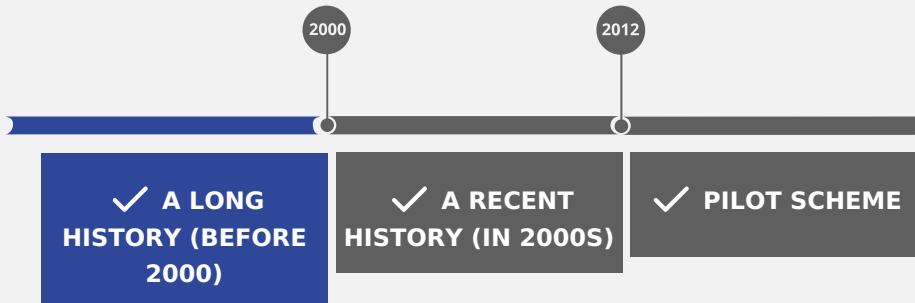
✓ AT TERTIARY  
LEVEL



✓ AT SECTORAL  
LEVEL

The apprenticeship scheme at the upper secondary level is officially referred to as 'Berufsausbildung' [1], which literally translates to '(initial) vocational education and training'. The term 'dual VET' ('duale Berufsausbildung') is not used in the law but appears frequently in the literature as well as policy documents such as the federal government's annual report on vocational education and training. Alternatively the scheme is referred to as 'Duales System' (dual system), which is also a term used in policy documents but not in the law.

#### **Q4. How well-established are apprenticeship schemes in your country?**



The origins of the apprenticeship system date back to the training model of the medieval guilds, which remained the dominant regime of occupational socialisation from the 14th century to the beginning of the industrial revolution in the 19th century. The current 'dual' model of apprenticeship, i.e. the combination of training in the enterprise and theoretical instruction in part-time VET schools, evolved from the 1870s onwards when trade schools for apprentices and young factory workers were gradually established in order to make up for the disintegration of the feudal order and its training regime. While the mission of these schools was initially focusing on civic education, their curricula were increasingly adapted so as to include specific vocational contents. The model of systematic in-company training was extended from the craft trades and the commercial sector to the manufacturing industry after the establishment of the Weimar Republic, and at the same time the trade schools were upgraded to (compulsory) VET schools. Thus, the dual system in its 'mature' form has been in place since the 1920s; however the harmonisation of its legal foundations did not come into being until the 1969 enactment of the Vocational Training Act.

The Crafts Statute is the legal base for the German skilled crafts and their self-government. The part regulating vocational training is aligned to the Vocational Training Act.

The 1969 Vocational Training Act (BBiG) was amended in 2005 and in 2020. It regulates vocational training preparation, vocational training within the dual apprenticeship system, continuing vocational training and vocational retraining. In particular, it contains:

- regulations on the apprenticeships,
- requirements in terms of personal and technical skills, knowledge and qualifications for in-company training staff,
- requirements defining the suitability of in-company training premises, and
- regulations on the examination system.

#### **Q5. Relevant information that is essential to understanding the specificity of apprenticeships in the country.**

Tertiary IVET termed 'Duales Studium' ('dual studies') fulfils some of the characteristics from the Cedefop definition of apprenticeship, but this is not considered "apprenticeship" in the country. Its legal basis are set in the higher education acts of the Länder. These acts regulate the organisation of universities and other institutions of higher education, and provide fundamental standards for higher education programmes. Programme details and curricula are specified by the universities. Like any higher education programme, dual study courses are subject to accreditation in accordance with the Bologna process.