



# spotlight on VET GERMANY

## VET in Germany

Vocational education and training (VET) in Germany is based on cooperation between State, companies and social partners. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is responsible for general VET policy issues and has a coordinating and steering role for all training occupations in cooperation with the respective ministries. The BMBF also works closely with the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), which conducts research and advises the Federal Government and VET providers. The *Länder* (federal States) are responsible for school-based parts of VET and have VET committees with employer and employee representatives.

The apprenticeship programme (dual system) at upper secondary level (EQF level 4) is the main pillar of VET. It usually lasts three years and combines the two learning venues, companies and vocational schools (work-based learning share approximately 70%). There are no basic access requirements for participating in the dual VET programme, but an apprenticeship contract must be concluded between learner and company. Enterprises bear the costs of company-based training and pay learners a wage. Those successfully completing training are qualified to be employed as skilled workers. Progression is possible through various VET programmes offered at post-secondary and tertiary level (see below).

Parallel to the apprenticeships, there are school-based VET programmes at upper-secondary level (EQF level 2 to 4) which differ in terms of access, length, types and levels of qualifications they lead to. These include:

- programmes at full-time vocational schools (*Berufsfachschule*, duration one to three years depending on the type and level of qualification), for example: schools for non-academic occupations in the healthcare sector. Minimum entrance requirement is the lower secondary general school certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*);
- general upper secondary programmes with a vocational component which usually lead to the general higher education entrance qualification (*Berufliches Gymnasium/Fachgymnasium*, duration two to three years). Entrance requirement is the intermediate level certificate (*Realschulabschluss*).

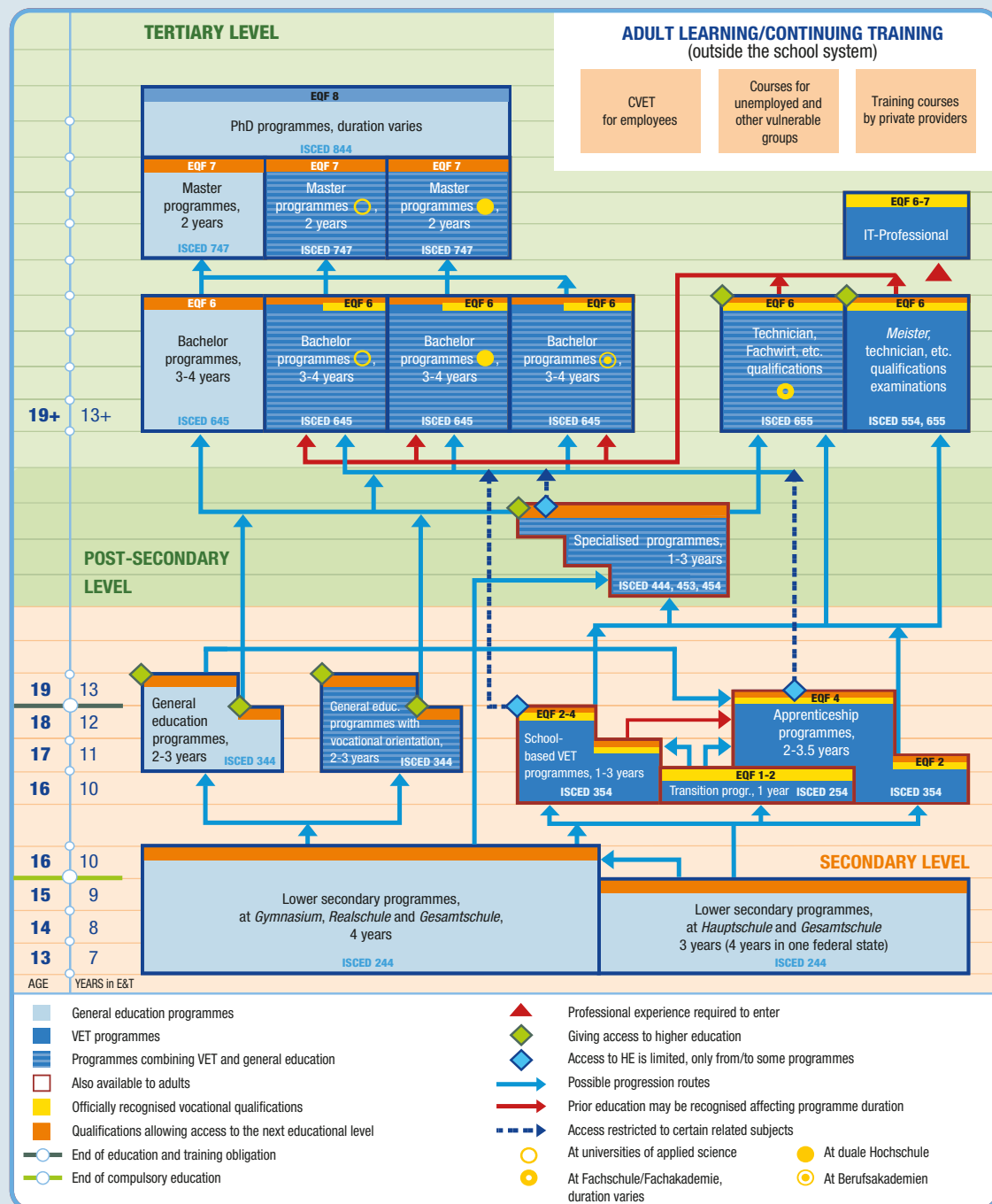
At post-secondary level, specialised programmes (*Berufsoberschulen* and *Fachschulen*) build upon the intermediate school-leaving certificate or initial VET and impart deeper occupational knowledge (duration one to three years). These lead to entrance qualifications for universities of applied sciences.

At tertiary level, vocationally qualified applicants without a school-based higher education entrance qualification can access advanced vocational training (AVT) leading to qualifications at EQF level 6, such as master craftsperson, technical engineer, certified senior clerk (*Meister, Techniker, Fachwirt*). AVT is at the heart of the VET system. It confers the right to exercise a trade independently, to hire and train apprentices and to enter university education. It also facilitates the acquisition of middle management qualifications in companies. Courses to prepare for these advanced VET qualifications are offered by chambers or schools (*Fachschulen*, master craftsman schools). Access to the respective assessment generally requires several years of practice in the related occupation.

The idea of dual practice-oriented learning is becoming more important in higher education (at EQF levels 6-7). Dual study programmes provide a blend of vocational and academic training, offered by universities of applied sciences (duration three to four years) and other higher education institutions (*Berufsakademien, duale Hochschule*), leading to double qualifications (vocational qualification and bachelor degrees or bachelor/master degree). Enterprises participating in programmes offered by the *Berufsakademie* bear the costs of the company-based training and pay learners a wage.

Continuing training is playing an increasingly important role in improving employability. It is characterised by a wide variety of providers (training market) and a comparatively low degree of regulation by the State.

# VET in Germany's education and training system



NB: This is a simplified chart, based on the unified approach used for the spotlights on VET in all EU-28 countries plus Iceland and Norway.

ISCED-P 2011. EQF levels have not yet been defined for all qualifications.

Source: Cedefop.

## Distinctive features of VET

Germany's VET is seen as a successful model, largely based on the dual system and especially thanks to the successful apprenticeship leading to high-quality vocational qualifications. Apprenticeship enables smooth education-to-work transitions, resulting in low youth unemployment (2015: 7.2% of aged 15 to 24 versus 20.4% in the EU-28). An about one in two secondary school graduates chooses a vocational education programme; of those, 70% participate in apprenticeship. A growing share has a higher education entrance qualification, which shows the attractiveness of apprenticeship. Dual study programmes at tertiary level and advanced vocational training support the acquisition of middle and top management qualifications in companies. Germany's well-trained skilled workers are a prerequisite of its economic success.

National standards and training regulations (curricula for both in-company and school-based components) assure the success of the dual training programmes. Companies provide training in accordance with the vocational training regulations, developed by the four stakeholders (Federal and State governments, companies and trade unions). These regulations allow for flexibility to agree on company training plans with apprentices. Learning at vocational school is based on a framework curriculum aligned with training regulations, drawn up for every recognised training occupation.

Regular revisions to training regulations guarantee keeping pace with rapid technological and organisational changes. The initiative for updating or developing an entirely new occupational profile comes from social partners or BIBB. After consultation with all parties involved, the competent federal ministry decides whether to proceed. Cooperation between State and social partners is a core element of VET: social dialogue and shared decisions are the means to ensure that VET reforms are accepted.

Another particularity of the German VET system is its approach to how to acquire vocational competences, the so-called concept of 'vocational action competence': a holistic and integrated approach to competence acquisition during VET compared to the acquisition of isolated skills and competences based on the

learning-outcomes approach of the European qualifications framework (EQF).

## Challenges and policy responses

### Improving transitions from general education to VET

The number of unfilled training places recently increased again, showing a need for reconciling supply and demand while taking into account significant regional and branch-specific differences. Individual assistance for unsuccessful applicants and guidance for SMEs are provided in case of problems with matching.

The Alliance for Initial and Further Training has committed to integrating all applicants in VET, including those with unfavourable starting chances, through pre-VET measures, assistance and support during training. To prevent training dropouts, senior experts provide individual coaching to apprentices.

### Modernising and developing new occupational profiles in view of digitalisation

Digital innovation has an impact on qualification profiles and curricula. The Vocational training 4.0 initiative identifies changing demands in the qualification of skilled workers and how to respond to the challenge of digitalisation.

### Increasing the attractiveness of VET

A large multimedia information campaign on apprenticeship was relaunched and early vocational orientation guidance in schools is now widely implemented from grade 7. Online VET portals are addressing specific target groups like young women or university dropouts.

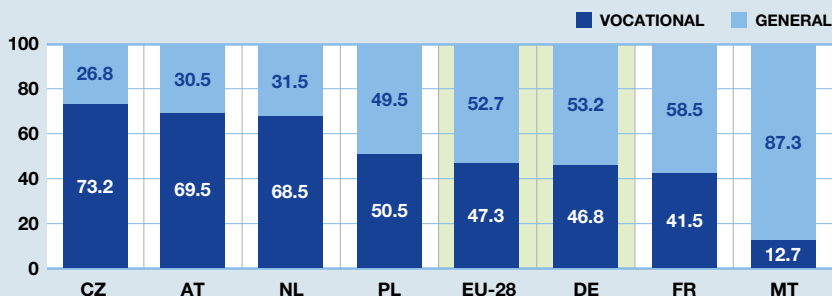
### Integrating migrants and refugees into education and training

Since 2015, more than one million asylum seekers have arrived in Germany. Their integration into the labour market and VET system is a priority: enabling German language learning, validating formal and non-formal skills, providing vocational orientation and access to VET, apprenticeships and employment. Existing programmes addressing disadvantaged groups (such as migrants) extended their focus to include refugees and new programmes were initiated specifically for this group.

## Education and training in figures

### Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes

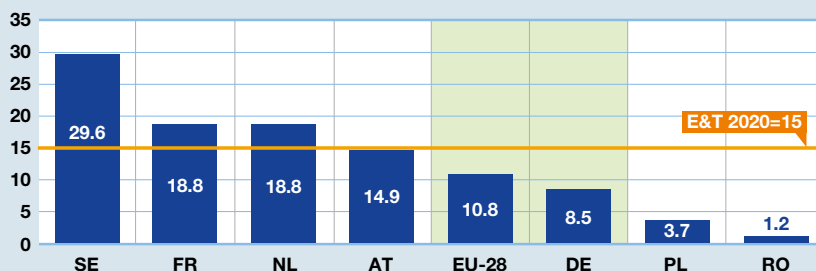
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2015



Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 2.6.2017.

### Lifelong learning

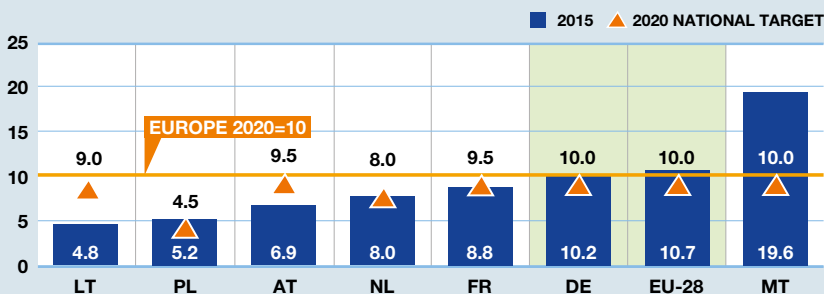
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2016



Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 2.6.2017.

### Early leavers from education and training

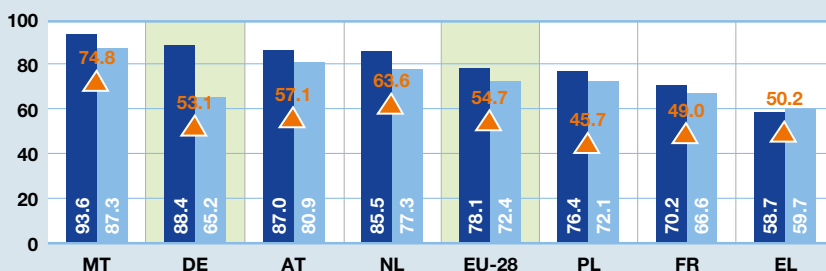
% of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks prior to the survey, 2016



Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 2.6.2017.

### Employment rates of young graduates

% of 20 to 34 years old no longer in education and training, 2016



■ Upper vocational secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)  
 ■ Upper general secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)  
 ▲ Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 2.6.2017.



## Further information

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<a href="http://www.bmbf.de/en/index.html">www.bmbf.de/en/index.html</a>	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
<a href="http://www.kmk.org/">www.kmk.org/</a>	Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (KMK)
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**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE  
 PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE  
 Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, E-mail: [info@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:info@cedefop.europa.eu)

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