



Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024

GERMANY



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1. Introduction

This VET policy brief ⁽¹⁾ produced by Cedefop presents a snapshot of vocational education and training policy developments in Germany between 2020 and the end of 2024 ⁽²⁾. It presents the context and the challenges the country faces, a selection of the latest VET-related statistics as well as the national priorities until 2030 identified in Germany's [national implementation plan](#). This VET policy brief provides information from Cedefop monitoring and analysis on the implementation of the [Council Recommendation on VET](#) and [Osnabrück Declaration](#) and contributes to shaping new EU priorities in VET as of 2026 and informing the mid-term evaluation of the Council Recommendation on VET.

2. National VET context and challenges

2.1 National VET context

Political responsibility for VET in Germany is shared among the Federation, the Federal States (*Länder*), and the social partners. Within the education system, work-based learning is not only a traditional but a fundamental pillar that underpins most secondary and tertiary VET programmes.

The apprenticeship system stands at the core of upper secondary VET, serving as the primary pathway that ensures an effective transition from education to employment. Its pivotal role in combining practical experience with formal education makes it essential for developing skilled professionals and meeting labour market demands.

At the post-secondary level, learners can enrol in programmes at EQF level 4 to 5, while at tertiary level programmes offer vocational qualifications at EQF levels 5 to 7. These qualifications prepare graduates for middle and top management positions within companies. The permeability and equivalence between vocational and academic education provide attractive career pathways for VET graduates and help ensure a steady supply of skilled workers in the labour market.

Continuing training plays a crucial role in enhancing employability by enabling upskilling and reskilling according to labour market demands. It is characterised by a high number of training providers and relatively low level of State regulation. The Federal Employment Agency is the main body for counselling and guidance.

The continuous updating and restructuring of training occupations in Germany's dual vocational training system ensure that qualifications remain relevant to current economic, policy, and societal demands. Regular revisions and new regulations establish national standards for qualifications, examinations, training structure, and requirements, maintaining the high quality and competitiveness of the training. These measures are primarily driven by social partners, who play a significant role in shaping VET at multiple levels. At the regional level, the chambers are key VET stakeholders, especially concerning

⁽¹⁾ See also the previous edition: Cedefop. (2024). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2023 – Germany](#). Cedefop monitoring and analysis of vocational education and training policies.

⁽²⁾ For some developments, the information available until mid-2025 has been included.

examinations. The roles, responsibilities and services of VET stakeholders are regulated by a legal framework that defines clear rules and funding provisions (Cedefop, 2020, 2021; Cedefop & BIBB, 2022).

Germany's 2021-25 Coalition Agreement '[Dare more progress – alliance for freedom, justice and sustainability](#)' set goals to maintain Germany's leadership in economy and technology through innovation and climate neutrality, aligning with European VET priorities. It emphasises future-oriented investments in climate protection, digitalisation, education, and research, while aiming to enhance sustainability and attract skilled workers through improved education, targeted training, increased labour market participation, and modernised immigration laws (Germany, 2022).

2.2 Challenges

In 2020, the German training market saw significant declines, with both the supply of training places and demand from young people dropping nearly simultaneously. This caused increasing difficulties in matching applicants to vacancies and a rise in unfilled training positions (Germany, 2022). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) faced challenges in recruiting apprentices, contributing to skilled workforce shortages, as many apprentices tend to remain employed at their training companies (BIBB, 2023). At the start of the 2021-22 school year, the number of vacant training places (68 868) exceeded applicants without a place (60 400) for the first time, with vacancies rising by 9% compared to the previous year. Although applicants found it somewhat easier to secure training places, many SMEs struggled at attracting enough apprentices, risking further skilled labour shortages (BMBF, 2023).

Dual VET remains an attractive model for facilitating the school-to-work transitions, and graduates benefit from high employment rate. However, demographic changes and the growing appeal of academic education have reduced young learners' interest in dual VET. Promoting VET, providing guidance to young people and adults, and offering support to companies, especially to SMEs, are crucial. Employment agencies play a key role in matching applicants with companies, particularly SMEs, using databases, campaigns, and support measures.

Germany's working-age population is expected to further decline, with demographic ageing and rising skill demands from digital and green transitions intensifying labour shortages (European Commission, 2023). Skills shortages have particularly affected engineers, programmers, technology specialists, craftsmen, logisticians, scientists and mathematics specialists, as well as care, health and social work professionals. This highlights the need for targeted continuing upskilling and reskilling measures and increased participation in lifelong learning.

3. National VET policy priorities

In response to the [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#), [Germany's national implementation plan](#) focuses on five thematic priorities.

- (a) Improve the integration and access to training and the labour market: relevant measures and initiatives need to be taken to secure the future need for skilled workers, through promoting VET and addressing problems when filling training places in companies.
- (b) Implement a future-proof VET policy by addressing the ecological and technological transformation of the economy: continuous adaptation of qualifications is needed as well as a well-trained workforce that continuously updates its skills.
- (c) Develop VET strategies for a digital education and training area: the availability of online platforms and digital infrastructure need to be increased. At macro level, the development of a digital framework to exploit the potential of digitalisation (e.g. for the application of artificial intelligence) is needed. Pedagogical staff in VET institutions should receive needs-based further training, to qualify them for their role in the networked world of work.
- (d) Focus on VET excellence including higher-level VET, in response to more demanding career profiles and job descriptions: digitalisation is opening up the possibility of making VET more attractive and of establishing the equivalence of vocational and academic education in practice.
- (e) Expand the European education and training area in a globalised economy: initial and continuing VET needs to become more international, by strengthening intercultural and linguistic skills, promoting cross-border mobility and activities in European and international VET cooperation programmes.

[Germany's recovery and resilience plan](#) (2021) responds to the National implementation plan and emphasises the high importance of the green and digital transition.

4. Main policy developments and progress 2020-24

4.1 Improve the integration and access to training and the labour market

Since 2020, several measures have been implemented to address the decline in training places and applicants and to secure the next generation of skilled workers. These include expanding guidance and support for learners and training providers, integrating migrants and refugees into VET and the labour market, as well as promoting the validation of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

4.1.1 Guidance and support services

Since 2020, various measures have been taken to increase the guidance and support services offered to learners and training companies.

[Lifelong vocational guidance for young people and adults](#) has been strengthened through several measures, many of which were offered in virtual format. Examples of measures include [Check-U](#), [New plan](#), or [Berufenavi](#), which support career orientation and self-assessment. Since 2020, the employment service has extended vocational orientation

services to general education and vocational schools and, from 2021/22, to higher education institutions (BMBF, 2022). Since April 2020, the [VerOnika](#) project has provided young people with insights into various training professions and study courses. Additionally, since 2021, the [Queraufstieg](#) web portal offers guidance for [university dropouts](#) and those uncertain about their studies, presenting alternative qualification paths in VET. The portal promotes free counselling services from the federal states of Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. These states also formed the [Counselling Network Queraufstieg](#), which, after its initial phase from 2021 to 2023, was extended until the end of 2026 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The [Youth employment agencies](#) (JBAs) coordinate the [regional implementation of the training guarantee](#), offering a one-stop contact point for young people under 25. They combine [vocational guidance and social support to facilitate the school-to-work transition](#) and help prevent early dropout from VET. JBAs are cross-jurisdictional cooperations involving employment agencies, job centres, youth welfare offices, schools, chambers, and other partners, with over 350 operating in 2023. Key initiators include the ministries of labour and youth, federal employment agency, German county association, cities association, and BIBB, which hosts the [national JBA service point](#). Cooperation between JBAs is supported by the joint IT system [YouConnect](#), enabling digital cooperation across jurisdictions to provide targeted support for young people. In November 2024, the Berlin service point hosted a national symposium with around 350 participants, fostering in-person exchanges among JBA stakeholders (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

With the amendment of the Vocational Training Act in 2020, the potential to [follow part-time vocational training was expanded](#). Since then, every trainee is allowed to complete the in-company part of the training on a part-time basis, with the consent of their training company. The amendment aims to attract new target groups such as people who are already in gainful employment, or refugees.

Further, [partial qualifications](#) (*Teilqualifikationen*, TQ) allow learners to gain vocational qualifications step-by-step based on dual training regulations. After completing all partial qualifications, learners can take the final examination as external candidates. Certification procedures and training modules have been further developed. In 2021, the employers' initiative [AGi TQ](#) introduced the nationwide [quality seal One TQ better](#), ensuring nationwide standardised partial qualifications guaranteeing quality for graduates and employers. In 2023, three nationwide initiatives by employers, chambers, and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF) ⁽³⁾ developed certification procedures (including digital competence assessments), created new training modules for occupations such as industrial electronics technician, IT specialist, cook, and hotel specialist, and promoted these qualifications to companies and employees. In 2024, some chambers cooperated with prisons to offer inmates partial qualifications as a training opportunity (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

⁽³⁾ In May 2025 the name of the education ministry changed from BMBF to Federal ministry of Research, Technology and Space (*Bundesministerium fuer Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt*, BMFTR).

Until 2023, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für berufliche Bildung, BIBB) funded the [JOBSTARTER Plus](#) programme, which aimed to motivate SMEs to engage in VET and supported them in training-related challenges. The programme adapted to evolving challenges in the training market, including declining participation from the smallest companies and increasing digitalisation. From 2014 to 2023 the programme funded a total of 240 projects, while the last nine ended in June 2023 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

4.1.2 Integration of migrants and refugees

Since 2020, various measures have been taken to improve the [integration of migrants and refugees](#) into training and labour market (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The training and migration coordination office [KAUSA](#) supports the integration of migrants and refugees into dual VET, who [have less chances to receive a training place](#). The offices provide target group-oriented advice and offer various event formats, publications or opportunities for exchange. They also motivate entrepreneurs with a migrant background to offer young people an apprenticeship. The number of KAUSA offices increased from 20 in 2020 to 42 in 2023. By January 2024, the KAUSA ambassadors had convinced over 175 companies in North-Rhine-Westphalia to participate in the dual training system, resulting in more than 100 new training places.

Additionally, the [Vocational orientation for refugees](#) (*Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge*, BOF,) courses have continued to offer 13 to 26 weeks of practical experience in up to three training occupations within training centres and companies. Targeted at individuals with special language support needs who have completed compulsory education, the BOF programme concluded in 2023, accompanied by an evaluation report. Its successor, [BOFplus](#), was launched in March 2024 and offers immigrants the possibility to try out various professions in practice in a vocational training centre, learn technical language and acquire specialist knowledge of the selected professions, get to know companies and be accompanied until they are placed in training or education. For part-time participants, the course duration can be extended from a maximum of 26 weeks to up to 34 weeks, facilitating thereby the participation of parents (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The network [Companies Employing Refugees](#) facilitates experience-sharing and practical training information among its members. In October 2024, it had 4 298 members, with three-quarters being SME.

Since 2022, the ESF Plus programme [MY TURN – women with migration experience are ready to get started](#), has funded projects providing longer-term, continuous and individual support for migrant women with a low level of formal qualifications. The target is to provide individual support to around 30 000 women by the end of 2025. In 2024, the MY TURN networking centre published a handout on cooperation between MY TURN projects and job centres and employment agencies (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The funding programme [Perfect Match](#) (Passgenaue Besetzung) continued in 2023 to assist SMEs in filling their training places with suitable candidates, including supporting the integration of foreign skilled workers. In parallel, the chambers' Welcome Guides (*Willkommenslotsen*) programme offered in 2023 individual counselling to 3 025 refugees

in over 2 500 companies, supporting them in their integration in training, internships or employment. From 1 January 2024, the Welcome Guides and Perfect Match programmes were merged. This merger created a network of over 140 chamber guides, who assist companies in filling vacant training positions with suitable young people from Germany, abroad, or with a refugee background. The new programme directive for this combined programme is valid from January 2024 until end of 2027. Industry contributes 40% of the funding costs, and the programme is administered by the Federal Office of Economics and Export Control. Continuous support for the funding programme is provided by the Alliance for Initial and Further Training (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The follow-up ESF integration programme '[WIR – Networks integrate refugees into the regional labour market](#)' (2022-28) funded 41 projects in 2023 aimed at promoting labour market integration and strengthening the employability of refugees. Structural measures targeting administrative bodies, companies, and other organisations seek to improve access to work and training opportunities. Almost 50 000 people are expected to be reached with this programme by September 2026 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

4.1.3 Validating skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning

The [ValiKom project](#) promotes the validation of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, targeting adults who have gained competences through work but lack formal qualifications, including those seeking further training. In 2022, the follow-up project, ValiKom Transfer, was extended, expanding validation procedures to 32 chambers across 40 occupations in industry, trade, crafts, and agriculture. In 2023, awareness-raising events and social media campaigns were carried out, alongside piloting closer cooperation between employment agencies, job centres, and ValiKom chambers to improve labour market opportunities for the unemployed. ValiKom Transfer also collaborated with the [TalentPASS](#) project, supporting employed individuals with recognised severe disabilities in having their professional skills assessed and certified through ValiKom's validation method. The Valikom Transfer project concluded in October 2024.

In July 2024, the [Vocational Training Validation and Digitalisation Act \(BVaDiG\)](#) was passed, stating that from 1 January 2025, professional skills can be assessed and certified by the competent chamber using a newly established legal assessment procedure. For the first time, individuals aged 25 and older without a formal vocational qualification have the right to have their vocational skills assessed and certified against the standards of a dual training occupation. This new law helps making vocational competences more visible and comparable, supporting integration and reducing bureaucracy (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

4.1.4 Promoting VET

Since 2021, the [Alliance for initial and further training](#) has promoted VET through its Summer of VET initiative including hundreds of events and campaigns. The alliance has been relaunched for 2023-26 to support the school-to-work transition and promote inclusive VET. In July 2023, the German parliament passed the Act to Promote Initial and Further Training, which includes the [Training Guarantee](#). This act introduced subsidised vocational orientation internships and a mobility grant. It has made participation in introductory training

more accessible since April 2024, while off-the-job vocational training has become possible since August 2024 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). Another key component, introduced in April 2024, is the qualification allowance, which provides fixed funding rates, increased transparency and CVET funding accessible to all companies. Employment agencies pay this allowance to companies for employees at risk of job loss due to structural changes, enabling further training to secure future-proof jobs within the same company. This allowance substitutes employee remuneration during the training period (Hippach-Schneider & Huismann, 2024).

Further to increase the attractiveness of VET, Germany saw a [significant increase in apprenticeship wages](#) in 2024, continuing the upward trend in recent years aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of apprenticeships. Companies in sectors facing applicant shortages notably raised apprentice salaries to attract more young talent. Since 2020, wages for apprentices in companies not bound by collective labour agreements have increased by 20%, outpacing the average salary growth of 13%. Additionally, the pay gap between eastern and western Germany has narrowed considerably, driven by a higher increase in apprenticeship salaries in the east (8.9%) compared to the west (6.1%). The average gross monthly wage for apprentices in collectively bound companies in 2024 was EUR 1 133, about EUR 70 more than the previous year (ReferNet Germany, & Cedefop, 2025).

The measures taken helped to stop the ongoing decrease in number of applicants for apprenticeship. In the [2022/23 school year, the continuous decline in applicant registrations since 2012/13 came to a halt](#). However, compared to 2019, there were still -17.5% fewer applicants and 38.2% more vacant training positions as of September 2023. The Federal Employment Agency's statistics showed, for the second year in a row, more unfilled vocational training positions (73 444) than applicants still seeking a training position (63 697) (BMBF, 2024; BIBB, 2024). In 2024, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks, ZDH) still reports more than 20 000 unfilled positions. To present skilled crafts as a modern career option, the [ZDH continues to support Germany's chambers of skilled crafts with an image campaign](#). The campaign runs on popular social media, podcasts, hands-on events like skilled craft competitions for youth, and occasions such as the Day of Crafts on 21 September 2024. Under the slogan 'Time to make', the campaign highlights the social contribution of skilled craftspeople. Moreover, the 'Next level trade' project shows how companies can attract apprentices via social media. The '[modern craft campaign](#)' offers concrete support for public relations and image cultivation (ReferNet Germany, & Cedefop, 2024).

4.2 Implement a future-proof VET policy responding to ecological and technological transformation

Since 2020, various developments have been undertaken to modernise competences and qualifications, ensuring they meet the rapidly evolving skills demands of the labour market, with particular focus on the green and digital transitions.

BIBB developed the [Occupation and Competence Radar](#), a data-driven information portal funded by the federal education ministry. This portal combines retrospective data dating back to 2000 with forecast data extending to 2040 from various sources, enabling new analysis and insights at the sector and occupation levels. It aims to guide stakeholders in the labour market, VET policy, researchers, companies, employees, and apprentices. By the end of 2023, data collection, processing, and harmonisation were completed to establish a comprehensive baseline, with ongoing development planned (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The two-year initiative 'VET for Sustainable Development in Transfer for Training Personnel' ([BBNE-transfer 2020-22](#)) aimed to develop sustainable skills of apprentices and training staff by transferring insights from seven pilot projects in the field of [VET for sustainable development](#) to education and training professionals (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In order to update the competences of the pedagogical staff, the German Economic Institute launched the website [netzwerkq40.de](#) in 2020, to create a network connecting VET actors and support trainers in further developing their technical and social skills to design the content and processes of dual training in a digital environment (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Several structural changes have been made in the VET landscape to boost innovation and competitiveness of companies. Between late 2020 and April 2021, [13 continuing education networks](#) were introduced, funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. These networks assist companies in adapting the skills of their employees to evolving skills needs. After its planning phase in 2022, the funding programme '[Training cluster 4.0 in the Lignite Regions](#)' started in 2023. This programme supports structural changes in the three Lignite Regions by establishing six training clusters, which are sector-specific collaborations between companies and trade unions (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In 2021, the three-year research project on [qualification and skills development on hydrogen technology \(H2PRO\)](#) was launched to examine emerging qualification needs for skilled workers for green hydrogen becoming a key raw material for the green economy. In 2023, three factsheets were published, presenting sectoral analyses on hydrogen production, the chemical and refining industry, and the mobility sector (Hippach-Schneider & Huismann, 2024).

Since August 2021, the [modernisation of VET qualifications](#) has mandated that all training occupations must include descriptions addressing the following [four standards](#): the digitalised working world, safety and health at the workplace, environment and sustainability, as well as company, VET, labour and tariff law (ReferNet Germany; Cedefop, 2021). Training regulations are updated on a regular basis and in 2024, eight initial VET and 28 advanced VET regulations were updated, while the mandatory integration of the four cross-occupational training standards continued (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

At the end of 2022, the [National Skills Strategy](#) was renewed and reinforced at the national continuing vocational education and training (CVET) conference in November 2023. It focusses on new strategies such as strengthening skill acquisition and support for career

reorientation within companies. Key initiatives include education ministry-funded CVET mentors (over 300 in nearly 100 companies in 2023) who raise awareness and motivation for continuing VET (CVET), particularly among low-skilled workers. Additionally, the Development of CVET networks programme, funded by the labour ministry BMAS and supported by social partners, aims to boost SME participation in further training and strengthen regional business and innovation networks. By 2023, 53 industry-specific and cross-industry networks supported companies in securing skilled labour and preparing employees for evolving job requirements (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In 2023 the education ministry also launched the 'Sustainable at work – future-oriented training' programme with a budget of around EUR 43 million running until 2027. This programme builds on previous initiatives by strengthening [training staff](#) competences in sustainability and expanding BBNE offerings across institutions. A total of 21 projects were selected, with the first commencing in 2024. A centre was established at BIBB to support knowledge transfer and networking among VET initiatives and stakeholders (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Since 2024 the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action has been supporting sector-specific training clusters, consisting of at least five actors, such as companies and chambers. These clusters focus on training skilled workers to facilitate successful structural change in their region, while promoting innovation, sustainability, digitalisation and education. They offer career prospects to young people to prevent their migration. Since [June 2024](#), [three training clusters](#) have been working with associations of up to 40 companies to modernise and promote training in this region over a period of three and a half years and with a budget of up to EUR 1.2 million per cluster (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

4.3 Develop VET strategies for a digital education and training area

Several measures have been set up since 2020 to facilitate the adaptation and modernisation of competences and qualifications in line with the needs for VET's digital transition.

In August 2020, the [updated training regulation](#) for four IT occupations came into force to meet current economic demands. From August 2021, the standard occupational profile item [Digitalised world of work](#), was included in all newly regulated dual training occupations covering skills, knowledge and competences, e.g. in privacy and data security, as well as on finding appropriate and efficient means of communication for the relevant target group and documenting results (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Further, since 2020 several measures have advanced digital infrastructure in VET. The [Digital school pact](#) (2019-24) supported the states and municipalities in upgrading digital education infrastructure with a focus on pedagogy. The pact improved the digital networks, Wi-Fi, digital learning environments, and the availability of devices for schools. States implemented digital education through pedagogical adaptations, curriculum updates, and teacher training reforms, aiming to foster innovative teaching cultures and equitable digital learning opportunities across schools. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Digital

school pact was expanded in 2020 by [three additional agreements](#) with a total volume of EUR 1.5 billion, supplementing the original budget of EUR 3.5 billion. This additional budget was spent for the creation of digital content, for borrowable school mobile [devices for students](#), for [IT administration](#) and for [rental devices for teachers](#) (Corona Aid I, II and III). At the end of 2024, the education ministry and the conference of the Ministers of Education (KMK) launched the [Digital Pact 2.0](#) (BMFTR, 2024) for a duration of six years with EUR 5 billion, equally shared between the federal and state governments, to further improve school digital infrastructure, [teacher training and innovative teaching and learning methods](#) (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The project '[Apprentices as digitalisation scouts](#)', funded by the national ministry for economic affairs and carried out by the chambers, [makes dual VET more attractive](#) while identifying digitalisation potential in companies. Each participating company involves at least two apprentices who, supported by experienced coaches, explore digitalisation opportunities within their training environment. By March 2025, over 600 companies and more than 2 000 apprentices had taken part in the project (Digiscout, n.d.; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Since autumn 2020, several learner-focussed platforms have been launched, including [ProNet Crafts](#), a virtual platform offering digital and flexible blended learning courses for the craft sector. The education ministry supports developing the national digital education platform. As a 'hub', it intends to integrate educational platforms and offers into a nationwide platform system, establish common standards, and facilitate access to education. From April 2021 to June 2025, the research and development project Digital education space [BIRD](#) (*Bildungsraum Digital*) led by the University of Potsdam, created the first prototype of a [national education platform](#) in Germany (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In 2021, the [innovation programme INVITE on digital platforms for CVET](#) started, aiming to increase participation in CVET by connecting existing learning platforms, improving the transparency and quality of digital CVET offers, and enabling a modular, skill-based approach in a secure digital environment. With a budget of about EUR 88 million over three years, it funded 35 projects from 182 institutions across sectors like health care, logistics, and production. These projects developed and tested AI-supported training courses, prototypes involving AI, blockchain, and serious games for diverse users such as HR staff, teachers, specialists, managers, and career changers. The prototypes were initially tested in 2022 and retested in 2024 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Since 2021, the education ministry has funded the development of a national education platform, to integrate various education services nationwide using common standards, making access to education easier. The first prototype of a technical infrastructure was developed in 2023, and in early 2024, the Federal Employment Agency launched the first version of the [National education platform 'meinNOW'](#) (myNOW). This platform provides companies and people in employment with a central, low-threshold online portal for continuing VET (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The web portal [Digital Media in VET](#) promotes the use of digital media and innovative technologies in VET among trainers and apprentices to enhance teaching and learning.

Since 2021, it has featured 229 projects that developed exemplary solutions using digital media, Web 2.0 and mobile technologies in initial and continuing VET, including virtual and augmented reality or digital networks. The portal also promotes digital media competence and the dissemination of open education resources (OER) in VET. In 2023, the education ministry organised three roadshows titled 'Digital media in everyday VET' with practical workshops in Nuremberg, Rostock and Bonn. In 2024, the content of the Digital media in VET portal and of the former trainer portal 'foraus.de', were integrated into the new [Leando portal](#) for training and examination staff. That year, BIBB held a roadshow in five German cities to present the portal's services (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The education ministry's [Open Educational Resources \(OER\) strategy](#), funded with EUR 150 million until 2032, supports digital transformation by promoting OER and Open Educational Practices (OEP). The strategy aims to foster a new teaching and learning culture focused on 21st-century skills. Its objectives include embedding OER and OEP competences and advancing a digital ecosystem of technologies and services to co-create future digital learning spaces. Additionally, the strategy incorporates application-oriented research linking scientific knowledge with practical use (European Commission, 2024).

Training and examination staff play a crucial role in delivering modern VET, which is rapidly evolving due to technological and socio-economic changes. To support [digital strategies for vocational training staff](#), various digital competence training courses have been set up. Digital platforms are also being developed to provide further training for vocational training staff. The digital VET platform [HubbS](#), initiated in autumn 2021 and conceptualised in February 2022, supports sharing teaching materials and concepts, as well as communication and collaboration among vocational schoolteachers. Additionally, the [Leando portal](#), launched at the end of 2023 (see also Section 4.4 for further information), offers information on everyday training practices and the examination system.

Moreover, the [Media and IT Competence for Training Personnel \(MIKA\)](#) initiative offers continuous professional development in digital media skills for trainers and was in 2023 threefold: the MIKA-Campus learning platform, the MIKA-Seminars continuing VET programme, and the MIKA-Trainer training sessions for future seminar leaders called. In mid-2024, the offerings were expanded to include three new services: MIKA-Game, an educational quiz game assessing knowledge in digitalisation and media education; MIKA-VR, a user-friendly virtual reality application designed for company training staff; and MIKA-Do, a digital pinboard for VET teachers and trainers featuring learning and work tasks (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In July 2023, the review and update of the [Trainer Aptitude Ordinance](#) (AEVO, *Ausbilder-Eignungsverordnung*), was completed, modernising standards for qualifying vocational trainers to prepare future skilled workers for a transforming labour market. The updated framework emphasises sustainability, demographic changes, digital and hybrid learning environments, and diversity.

4.4 Focus on VET excellence including higher-level VET

Several measures which focus on VET excellence, including higher-level VET, have been introduced since 2020.

In 2020, the new designations of [Bachelor Professional and Master Professional](#) were introduced for advanced vocational qualifications at EQF level 5 to 7, to emphasise the equivalence to the qualifications of the general bachelor and master degrees (Cedefop & BIBB, 2022).

In 2022, the education ministry launched the [Excellence Initiative for VET](#) to boost the attractiveness of dual VET for all young people, particularly those with a higher education entrance qualification. Serving as an umbrella, this initiative further develops selected existing programmes and introduces new ones until 2026, supported by a budget of EUR 750 million. It is a key part of the [Federal Government's skilled labour strategy](#), which seeks to modernise dual VET by offering attractive training opportunities, including qualifications at EQF level 6 and 7 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The pilot [scholarship programme for talented apprentices and skilled workers \(BAFF\)](#) was launched in 2024, introducing two innovations: extending scholarship funding to the early training phase and broadening support organisations focussed on gifted academic students to include vocational training. The Excellence initiative encompasses several other projects, such as the [excellent inter-company training \(INex-ÜBA\)](#), which started in 2023 and aims to test and implement innovative, training-related concepts for designing excellent teaching/learning locations. From 2024 to 2027, inter-company training centres receive EUR 120 million funding to develop into top-quality teaching and learning venues. Moreover, the InnoVET projects are part of the excellence initiative. The InnoVET project [Shaping the future – innovations for excellent vocational training](#), funded [17 four-year projects in 2020](#) to develop and pilot attractive and high-quality qualification programmes for VET. These programmes respond to the needs of companies and help to train highly qualified specialists. In 2024, the InnoVET plus project started with [28 new projects](#) for which a total budget of EUR 60 million is available. The social partners also continue to support excellence in VET through their own initiatives, such as the annual [German Craft Skills Championships](#), where around 3 000 VET graduates from 130 trades compete for the national title (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Finally, excellence in VET in Germany continues to be [promoted through various competitions](#), showcasing young talents and promoting top performance in the skilled trades. As Europe's largest vocational competition, the skilled trades organise the [German Craft Skills Championship](#) annually from August to December. In 2024, again over 3 000 talented VET graduates competed in more than 130 skilled trades, who then might continue to compete in EuroSkills, which will take place in Düsseldorf in 2027 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

4.5 Expand European education and training area in a globalised economy

Several developments took place since 2020 to strengthen internationalisation of VET, including boosting participation in international projects, as well as promoting intercultural competences among education staff and mobility among learners.

Various measures were introduced concerning international VET cooperation programmes. The [Skills experts programme](#) aims to train and secure skilled workers for German companies abroad. It supports chambers of foreign trade (AHK) in 10 countries to establish sustainable vocational training structures. In 2023, a new funding round began for these AHKs, focusing on building basic VET structures in Ghana, Japan, Singapore and the Baltic States (Lithuania), as well as expanding training courses related to climate protection and green jobs in Argentina, Chile, Nigeria and South Africa.

Germany participates also actively in the Bridging innovation and learning in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) project ([BILT](#), 2022-25). This aims to create a global knowledge bridge, by supporting VET providers across Europe, Africa and Asia Pacific to address current challenges in the VET system, arising from technological, social, environmental and workplace changes. This agenda is a joint initiative of UNESCO-UNEVOC, BIBB and BMBF.

Germany engages in bilateral projects with various countries. In 2021, the German-Greek project [Future4VET](#) began, running for three years. It focusses on jointly developing innovative job profiles and training formats addressing the megatrends of greening and digitalisation to strengthen the attractiveness and relevance of VET. The German-Italian project [ConnActions](#) started in 2023 to deepen bilateral VET cooperation at the local level, establishing five model networks of stakeholders, including representatives of schools, companies, chambers, associations, and trade unions (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). The [German-Latvian project on Strong VET through strong expert councils](#) (2024-25), aims to strengthen Latvia's sector expert councils' ability to shape VET policy and better align training with labour market needs (ReferNet Latvia & Cedefop, 2025).

In September 2022, the BMBF published the [Cooperation VET framework announcement](#), which aims to support partner countries including China, Ghana, Greece, India, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, South Africa and the USA in their efforts to reform their VET systems, and German companies in recruiting and qualifying skilled workers abroad (ReferNet Latvia & Cedefop, 2025).

The education ministry, the ministry for economic affairs and the BIBB are funding the participation of the national team of the best skilled workers to compete in their disciplines in the [skills competitions](#) EuroSkills and WorldSkills. In the [2022 WorldSkills competition](#), Germany was the venue for 9 championships for the professions and participated in competitions in 10 countries. In 2024, 44 top professionals from industry took part in the Worldskills competition in Lyon/France. In 2023, team Germany won a total of 24 medals at European vocational competitions and was ranked European vice-champion overall (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

To support trainers working with refugees and newly arrived migrants, strengthening [their intercultural competences](#) is crucial. In 2021, as part of the *überaus* project funded by the education ministry, a qualification concept for on-site training for trainers was developed

to enhance the [intercultural competences of trainers](#) in response to the high number of newly arrived migrants (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The 2022 evaluation of the Vocational Orientation for Immigrants (BOF) funding programme highlighted integration challenges faced by companies employing refugee and immigrant apprentices. To address this, various web portals, such as BIBB's 'Foraus' and the chambers' '[Strong for Training – the Trainer Portal](#),' provide resources on intercultural aspects for company trainers working with refugees and skilled workers from abroad. The university of Bonn offers continuing professional development programmes for trainers, including the 2021 course on 'Integrating perspectives - language at work'. In 2024, the chambers organised a workshop for trainers, focusing on raising awareness of cultural differences (Cedefop & Refernet, 2025).

Since 2023, the [portal Stays Abroad in Training](#) has offered comprehensive guidance to support apprentices in gaining international experience. Moreover, it promotes [mobility to various other stakeholders](#), such as training companies, VET schools, and chambers or craft associations. This portal complements the existing *Mein Auslandspraktikum* ([My internship abroad](#)) website, which provides direct counselling to apprentices (Cedefop & Refernet, 2025).

[Mobility of VET learners](#) is actively encouraged, allowing apprentices to undertake an internship or a part of their apprenticeship abroad through various programmes. The National Agency (NA) at the BIBB serves as the main hub for information on outgoing VET mobility, offering resources via its website, social media, events and publications. The NA supports mobility of initial VET learners, adult learners, and staff through initiatives such as the [AusbildungWeltweit \(VETworldwide\)](#) programme, which expands IVET mobility outside the EU, and various bilateral cross-border programmes. The NA also manages the [Erasmus+ programme for VET](#), which accounts for about half of all VET mobility activities.

Additionally, chambers promote IVET learner mobility through initiatives like [Berufsbildung ohne Grenzen \(Training without borders\)](#), funded by the federal ministry of economics. This initiative provides mobility coaches who advise SMEs on planning, organising, and evaluating apprentices' stays abroad. The number of coaches operating across Germany in more than 50 chambers of skilled crafts and commerce rose from 35 in 2020 to 80 in 2022. Although VET mobility decreased in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19, numbers rebounded, and in 2023, applications for Erasmus+ and VETworldwide programmes surpassed pre-pandemic levels. For young craftspeople, the [Weltwalz](#) project started in 2022, offering them the opportunity to gain experience in international cooperation in the target countries (Georgia, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda). During their 2-4 weeks stay, they can lead projects in companies, carry out smaller training courses, support teachers in vocational training institutions and be used as ambassadors for the skilled trades (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

5. Statistical information in relation to EU targets

VET is highly valued in the German society, and recent IVET graduates (20 to 34-year-olds) have excellent job prospects. In 2024, their employment rate was 92.2%, well above the EU-27 average of 80.0% and surpassing the 82% EU target set for 2025 in the Council Recommendation on VET. In terms of combining training with practical experience, 94.5% of recent IVET graduates (20 to 34-year-olds) had a work-based learning experience as part of their VET in 2024. This is very high compared to the EU-27 average of 65.3% and already exceeding the EU target of 60% set in the Council Recommendation on VET for 2025. In 2024, the rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) aged 15-29 years old was 8.5%, below the EU-27 average rate of 11.0% and already below the EU target of 9% for 2030.

According to the 2022 statistics, 53.7% of adults (aged 25 to 64) participated in learning in the previous 12 months; this percentage is higher than the EU-27 average of 39.5% and above the EU target of 47% for 2025. Among the low-qualified adults, 30% participated in learning activities in the previous 12 months, which is much higher than the EU-27 average of 18.4%. Germany aims to increase annual adult participation in training to 65% by 2030, up from 46% in 2016 (European Commission, 2023).

While in the above indicators Germany performs very well and better than the EU-27 average, the country has a higher rate of young people leaving education and training early compared to the EU-27 average, with 12.4% versus 9.3% in 2024 and remains above the 2030 EU target of less than 9%. Moreover, in 2023 there were only 52.2% adults (16-74 years old) with at least basic digital skills, which was slightly below the EU-27 average of 55.6%, but still far below the EU targets of 70% for 2025 and 80% for 2030.

Table 1. **European vocational education and training policy dashboard: Germany**

Type of indicator ⁽⁴⁾	Indicator	Last available year	DE	EU-27	Policy Document	EU target (year)
VET for developing a lifelong learning culture						
Progress	Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) [*]	2022	53.7	39.5	Skills Agenda Council Resolution on EEA ESPR Action Plan	50% (2025) 47% (2025) 60% (2030)
Progress	Low-qualified adults with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) ^(*)	2022	30	18.4	Skills Agenda	30% (2025)
Progress	Unemployed adults with a learning experience in the last 4 weeks (%)	2024	14.9 ^b	15.3	Skills Agenda	20% (2025)
Context	Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	2024	81.3	75.8	ESPR Action Plan	78% (2030)
Context	Early leavers from education and training (%)	2024	12.4 ^b	9.3	Council Resolution on EEA	<9% (2030)
Context	NEET rate for 15-29 year-olds (%)	2024	8.5 ^b	11.0	ESPR Action Plan	9% (2030)
VET for Resilience, transitions, sustainability and excellence						
Progress	Adults (16-74 year-olds) with at least basic digital skills (%)	2023	52.2	55.6	Skills Agenda ESPR Action Plan	70% (2025) 80% (2030)
Progress	Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%)	2024	92.2 ^b	80.0	Council Rec on VET	82% (2025)
Progress	Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	2024	94.5 ^u	65.3	Council Rec on VET Council Resolution on EEA	60% (2025)
Context	25-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	2024	40.5	44.2	Council Resolution on EEA	45% (2025)
Context	Gender employment gap (%)	2024	7.3	10.0	ESPR Action Plan	To be halved (2030)
Context	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (1000s)	2024	17687	93 333	ESPR Action Plan	15 million decrease (2030)
Context	Employed ICT specialists (1000s)	2024	2268.4	10273.6 ^e	2030 Digital Compass	20 million, with convergence between men and women (2030)
VET for the European Education Area						
Progress	Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%) ^{**}	2021	0.7	2.1 ^{dv}	Council Rec on VET Skills Agenda	8% (2025)
Context	Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2023	0.6	1.2 ^d	Council Rec Europe on the Move	12% (2030)

Available flags: b – break in time series, d – definition differs, e – estimated, u – low reliability, V – Cedefop estimate.

^{*}Eurostat data (Adult Education Survey, special calculation excluding guided on-the-job training).

^{**} Provisional estimates affected by the Covid19 pandemic.

Source: Cedefop. (n.d.). [European VET policy dashboard](#).

⁽⁴⁾ Definitions on the type of indicators is available [here](#).

6. Conclusion

Germany has taken steps across all priority areas of its national implementation plan, with a broad range of reforms and initiatives introduced since 2020. While progress is evident, gaps remain in meeting commitments, and further efforts are needed to ensure that flagship measures deliver their intended impact.

On improving integration and access to training and the labour market, Germany strengthened partial qualifications, guidance, introduced training guarantees and mobility support, and expanded measures to integrate migrants and refugees. The enactment of the Vocational Training Validation and Digitalisation Act represents a milestone in making competences visible and strengthening parity between vocational and academic routes. These actions helped sustain apprenticeship numbers and promote inclusiveness. However, persistent shortages in applicants for training places show that challenges in matching learners to vacancies remain. Addressing these imbalances and strengthening the attractiveness of VET will be essential for delivering on the commitments of the NIP and tackling skills shortages, as also underlined in the country's specific recommendation for 2025 (European Commission, 2025a, 2025b).

With respect to implementing a future-proof VET policy responding to ecological and technological transformation, Germany has systematically updated training regulations, promoted green and digital competences, and set up training clusters and networks to support regional transitions. These measures provide a strong basis for workforce adaptation. Still, further reinforcement of adult upskilling and reskilling is needed if the ambitious targets set in the NIP and national skills strategy are to be achieved. Advancing this agenda will also help meet Germany's country's specific recommendation for 2025 to raise skill levels in green and digital areas.

On developing VET strategies for a digital education and training area, Germany has invested heavily in digital infrastructure, created platforms for continuing VET, and introduced competence development schemes for trainers. A prototype national education platform has been launched, and new strategies on open educational resources are under way. These initiatives mark important progress, yet sustained implementation will be needed to close the gap with the EU digital skills targets, where Germany continues to underperform. Ensuring that all VET learners and teachers benefit from digitalisation will be crucial to delivering on NIP commitments.

In the area of VET excellence, including higher-level VET, Germany has modernised qualification pathways, introduced new designations at EQF levels 5 to 7, and set up a dedicated excellence initiative with significant investment. Continued expansion of advanced vocational pathways, as foreseen in the NIP, will help raise the attractiveness of VET and secure highly skilled specialists.

Finally, to expand the European education and training area in a globalised economy, Germany has reinforced its international engagement through bilateral cooperation, mobility initiatives, and support for trainers' intercultural competences. Participation in global and European VET cooperation projects has also increased. While these measures strengthen Germany's role in the European and international VET landscape, more

systematic efforts are needed to broaden learner mobility, where Germany remains below the EU benchmark.

Further steps in the above measures would allow Germany to meet the objectives set in its NIP in line with the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration, while also supporting the transition towards the new EU priorities as of 2026.

Abbreviations

AEVO	<i>Ausbilder-Eignungsverordnung</i> [Trainer Aptitude Ordinance]
AHK	Chambers of Foreign Trade
BOF	<i>Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge</i> [Vocational orientation for refugees]
BIBB	<i>Bundesinstitut für berufliche Bildung</i> [Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training]
BMBF	<i>Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung</i> [Federal ministry of education research]
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
ESF	European social fund
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
JBA	<i>Jugendberufsagentur</i> [Youth employment agencies]
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NA	<i>Nationale Agentur</i> [National Agency]
NIP	National implementation plan
OEP	Open Educational Practices
OER	Open Educational Resources
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TQ	<i>Teilqualifikationen</i> [Partial qualifications]
VET	Vocational education and training
ZDH	<i>Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks</i> [Confederation of Skilled Crafts]

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