



Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Germany

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Introduction

Lifelong guidance provision reflects the constitutional setup of the education and employment system in Germany distributing tasks between the federal, the regional level (*Länder*) and municipalities. A strong legal base is evident; according to the German Law (*Social Code III*), the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* (Federal Employment Agency) has to offer vocational guidance to young people and adults including guidance for further training for those participating in the labour market or intending to do so. However, in Germany, like in many other countries, career guidance is not a (legally) regulated profession. Training requirements are set by the providers and vary across the provision landscape. The same also applies in terms of quality assurance, as the quality standards are set by guidance providers, except for the field of education, where quality standards are included in legally binding regional standards.

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Coronavirus Update

Major functions of the German guidance system were maintained throughout the lockdown phase of the COVID pandemic, as they are web-based including comprehensive information, self-help tools and contact functions. The online platforms at national level have issued "Corona" information and guidance for their clients on their websites steering visitors towards telephone and e-mail channels. At national level, this regards above all the [user-oriented web-portal](#) of the Federal Employment Agency Germany as main provider for vocational, educational and employment guidance in Germany. The portal offers comprehensive information for young persons structured along a customer's

journey in the process of orientation. A similar approach for adults is under development. A second portal is dedicated to [job search](#). On both portals, users can create an individual portfolio, present their competences and match these with vocational education and training paths, or study courses based upon their strengths in terms of skills and competences. In addition, the orientation portal offers the possibility for exploration and assessment of skills, interests to identify, with the help of AI, possible vocational trainings and study courses (Self-exploration tool - SET).

Online-information and self-help tools are also available on other regional and local portals as well as university portals (see section guidance for higher education students). Continuity has been maintained by providing numerous possibilities to contact counsellors of the different relevant agencies (Federal Employment Agency, the Ministry of Education and Research, regional or municipal educational guidance providers for young persons and adults or jobcentres). In Germany, web-portals of many career guidance providers in the field of education and employment offer information and guidance on dedicated web platforms including a connection to telephone hotlines. In addition to the Federal Employment Agency, the Ministry of Education is present with its [information phone](#) contact for further training. The Federal Employment Agency has also significantly increased telephone capacities to cope with further requests.

As response, in many organisations, users have been informed online to use telephone lines or mail contacts presented. Relatively, the Federal Employment Agency has significantly increased telephone capacities, while many providers for educational guidance for adult learners steer users online towards telephone channels or mails. For instance:

- a. Weiterbildung Hamburg Service und Beratung gGmbH (W.H.S.B.): <https://www.weiterbildung-hamburg.de/>
- b. Landeshauptstadt München, Referat für Bildung und Sport, Pädagogisches Institut, Bildungsberatung: <https://www.pi-muenchen.de/aktuelles-bildungsberatung-und-corona-virus-2/>
- c. Institut für Modelle beruflicher und sozialer Entwicklung (IMBSE GmbH): <http://www.imbse-gmbh.de/>
- d. Agentur für Erwachsenenbildung (AEWB): <https://www.aewb-nds.de/aewb/aktuelle-informationen-zum-umgang-mit-der-covid-19-pandemie/> (Source: Newsletter Nationales Forum Beratung – National Guidance Forum, April 2020, not yet online).

To reduce early school leaving from education and training including dropout from VET (apprenticeships), Germany offers a special form of support for disadvantaged young people. The so-called “transition coaching” supports students at school in acquiring general secondary education or to complete (assisted) VET or another form of upper-secondary education. Currently, around 5,000 coaches work at 3,000 schools. At general secondary schools, the transition coaches (mostly social pedagogues) hold regular meetings and appointments with final class students at risk of dropout or having difficulties managing the transition. In cooperation with the individual student, the coach prepares a transition plan. This programme is managed by PES Germany and co-funded by the European Social Fund. To ensure continuity of tailored support during the Corona pandemic, the transition coaches have adjusted their services, steering young people as much as possible towards individual guidance services by phone.

Furthermore, both the German Association of Career Counsellors as well as the National Guidance Forum support the numerous self-employed guidance

counsellors through information on new financial support programmes for self-employed. The National Guidance Forum has recently sent an [open letter](#) addressed to the German government calling for the latter to take account of the particular situation of this group of counsellors.

In Germany, despite all efforts to maintain more in-depth guidance for those in need during the lockdown, the Federal Employment Agency, unemployment claims departments are currently placing a higher priority on ensuring the living income for those dismissed and to support companies in keeping their workforce in times of disrupted demand, above all in retail, the hotel and restaurant industry. Being responsible for both, passive and active labour market measures, the Federal Employment Agency is required to ensure a quick payment of expanded short-time subsidies and, together with municipalities, the payment of allowances in the jobcentres. Germany is facing a drastic increase in applications for short-time work schemes, having proven a very successful instrument of labour market policies during the financial crisis of 2008. Keeping workers in employment despite decreasing demand, they help to cushion effects of economic downturns through avoiding friction costs for job search and recruitment that otherwise would occur. Workers can benefit from training during the period of short-time work. By mid-April, nearly 700 000 applications for short-time work subsidies have been submitted by employers to the Federal Employment Agency. In order to ensure the quickest processing possible, employment and orientation counsellors are temporarily shifted to support the payment services. This has been accompanied by introductory training by the Federal Employment Agency.

The lockdown appears to have triggered the use of web-based interactive guidance tools and services (e.g. video-communication with counsellors, YouTube-live or webinars including a chat function and facilitation) as this was not previously common.

However, as an interviewee put it, *“the lockdown has positive side effects triggering the use of interactive online tools. It did not only considerably widen the use of applications for online staff and other meetings, but also pushed the ongoing development of new online communication formats”*. For example, the Federal Employment Agency is planning to introduce soon live interviews with a vocational counsellor using YouTube. Further, jobseekers can use already now the so-called online ‘job guide’ and get into connection with an employment counsellor for a profiling via skype (tbc). Specialists of the Employment Agency have elaborated a concept to introduce interactive online services into vocational guidance of young people – in line with their preferences for communication. Its implementation requires an expansion of internet lines.

To enable guidance staff for these new settings, the Federal Employment Agency is developing an update of the competence profile for career guidance counsellors and on this basis, an introductory training for the new online tools. Given the rise of using online communication, a number of other guidance stakeholders equally offer training in online counselling and use of online tools:

- a. The German Association for Career Guidance Training (dvh) is launching a number of training opportunities (e.g. digital tools – pros and cons; data protection; video presentations and online surveys; new skills requirements for career guidance counsellors). The training will combine webinars and individual coaching.
- b. The National Guidance Forum Germany [presents a training manual](#) on specifics of telephone and online guidance elaborated for the Regional

Qualification Centres. Further, it includes guidelines for crisis counselling in in the context of the Corona crisis.

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Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

Several relevant coordination and cooperation institutions have been created to increase transparency, synergies, effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

The German National Guidance Forum

Following the adoption of the first European Council Resolution on Lifelong Guidance in 2004, an inter-institutional working group pushed for the establishment of a cooperation structure involving all relevant stakeholders. In 2006, the National Forum for Educational, vocational and employment-oriented guidance ([*Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung - nfb*](#)) was founded in September 2006 taking the form of a civil society association. It involves numerous stakeholders and guidance experts on the basis of institutional and individual membership, thus providing a national platform for exchange, cooperation and quality development. The Forum was a member of ELGPN. Ministries and the Federal Employment Agency participate as observers.

The Forum has published a comprehensive mapping of the lifelong guidance system in Germany: nfb (2014): [*Lebensbegleitende Bildungs- und Berufsberatung in Deutschland: Strukturen und Angebote*](#).

Moreover, it has elaborated a concept for quality assurance for career guidance providers (see section [Quali](#)

[ty assurance](#)).

In addition, the forum promotes political transparency carrying out surveys among parties on their plans for lifelong guidance provision before federal elections (e.g. nfb Special newsletter, September 2017).

Member organisations

- a. Agency for Adult and Further Education ([Agentur für Erwachsenen- und Weiterbildung](#))
- b. Work and Training Association ([Arbeit und Bildung e. V.](#));
- c. Professional Association for Counselling, Pedagogy and Psychotherapy ([BVPPT - Berufsverband für Beratung, Pädagogik und Psychotherapie e.V.](#));
- d. Federal Committee of the Vocational Training Centres ([Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Berufsbildungswerke - BAG BBW](#));
- e. Federal Institute for Vocational Training ([BIBB - Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung](#), www.bibb.de);
- f. Federal Association of vocational training providers ([BBB e.V: Bundesverband der Träger beruflicher Bildung - Bildungsverband](#));
- g. Federal Association of services for outplacement, employee transfer ([BVTB e.V. - Bundesverband der Träger im Beschäftigentransfer](#));
- h. German Society for Career Advice ([Deutsche Gesellschaft für Karriereberatung, DGfK](#));
- i. German Society für Supervision and Coaching ([DGSV - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Supervision und Coaching e.V.](#));
- j. German Society for Behavioural Therapy ([DGVT - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Verhaltenstherapie](#));
- k. German Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance ([dvv - Deutscher Verband für Bildungs- und Berufsberatung e. V.](#));
- l. German Association of Adult Education ([dvv - Deutscher Volkshochschulverband](#));
- m. German Institute for Adult Education, Leibniz-Centre for Lifelong Learning ([DIE - Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung e.V., Leibniz-Zentrum für Lebenslanges Lernen](#));
- n. Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training ([f-bb - Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung](#));
- o. Association for Innovative Employment Association ([G.I.B. - Gesellschaft für innovative Beschäftigungsförderung mbH](#));
- p. Society for person-centered Psychotherapy and Counselling ([Gesellschaft für personenzentrierte Psychotherapie und Beratung e.V.](#));
- q. Trade Union for Education and Science ([GEW - Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft](#));
- r. Institute for Vocational Training, Labour Market and Social Policy ([INBAS - Institut für Berufliche Bildung, Arbeitsmarkt und Sozialpolitik](#));
- s. Institute of the Association for Adult Education Hesse ([Institut des Hessischen Volkshochschulverbands gGmbH](#));
- t. Institute for models of vocational and social development ([IMBSE - Institut für Modelle beruflicher und sozialer Entwicklung GmbH](#));
- u. International Confederation ([IB - Internationaler Bund](#));
- v. State Capital Munich, Department for Education and Sport, Pedagogical Institute, Educational Guidance ([Landeshauptstadt München, Referat für Bildung und Sport, Pädagogisches Institut, Bildungsberatung](#));
- w. Association of regional Qualification Centres – educational guidance and competence development ([RQZ - Verbund regionaler Qualifizierungszentren, Bildungsberatung und Kompetenzentwicklung](#));
- x. Services and guidance for further training Hamburg – Service and Guidance ([W.H.S.B. - Weiterbildung H](#)

[amburg Service und Beratung gGmbH](#));

- y. Information and guidance for further training in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern ([WIB - Weiterbildungs-Information und Beratung - in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern](#));
- z. Guide for educational guidance / Network educational guidance Freiburg ([Wegweiser Bildungsberatung/ Netzwerk Bildungsberatung Freiburg](#)).

Funding members

- a. Guidance teachers in Bavaria ([bib - Beratungslehrer in Bayern e.V.](#));
- b. Profiling Institute Düsseldorf ([www.profiling-institut.de](#)).

Further, 19 guidance experts participate as individual members, e.g. experts from universities such as the *Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit* (University of the Federal Employment Agency), *Humboldt Universität Berlin*, *Universität Heidelberg*, *Zentrale Studienberatung* (central student advisory office) University Bielefeld, representatives from providers for training and labour market integration as well as from international or European associations such as [IAEVG](#) or [EAIE](#), the European Association for International Education.

Member contributions alone finance the forum's activities. From 2009-2014, the Federal Ministry for Education funded the project *Beratungsqualität - BeQu* (Guidance Quality), currently, the forum is partner.

Further institutionalised partnerships exist to bridge the structural gap between education and employment and coordination gaps across governance levels. Gaps are of structural nature because the education system is federalised with an exclusive competence of the *Länder* (states) in this area while employment and vocational (guidance) services are governed at central level (PES Germany). Moreover, a mixed system exists for those on means-tested, tax-financed allowances including their families as career guidance services are delivered either by a partnership of the PES Germany with municipalities or municipalities alone.

Various mechanisms have been adopted over time to make career orientation and career guidance provision as simply and coherent as possible for citizens. Conferences of state ministries for culture (KMK - [Kultusministerkonferenz](#)) and relevant bodies adopt agreements and recommendations to improve transition management through partnerships between the education institutions and the Federal Employment Agency:

- a. since 1971, an agreement between the state ministers of culture and the Federal Employment Agency sets an approach of structured cooperation to provide career education and vocational orientation as an element of the school curriculum. The most recent revision dates from June 2017 stressing a preventative and sequenced approach to achieve a high level of individual career choice competences;
- b. before that, a recommendation adopted by the Conference of state ministers of culture in October 2013, promotes a unified approach in schools including the design of curricula to prepare transitions in cooperation with the PES Germany.

Further, several initiatives foster a coordinated approach of all actors to provide career education and support to young people:

- a. *Education chains (Bildungsketten)*

Following an education summit of the states and the Federal Ministry for Education in 2008, the German government approved in 2010 the initiative "[Bildungsketten](#)" (Education chains). The federal level and the

states cooperate in order to coordinate orientation programmes at local level to improve the management of transitions from schools and to reduce early school leaving. The objective is to ensure completion of general secondary school education and continued education. For this purpose, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, federal states and the regional directorates of the Federal Employment Agency concluded agreements on programmes and measures including guidance and orientation. Key components of such a chain include the analysis of the potential (strengths, weaknesses, interests), vocational orientation programmes, internships, coaching for youth at risk and support measures during VET. All partners provide resources and coordinate these along the process. Increasingly, orientation programmes implemented by schools start at grade five or six, at the latest in grade seven or eight. These are complemented by more specific information, guidance and support for the transition provided by the Federal Employment Agency in the final school grades nine or 10 depending on the type of secondary school. For high schools (*Gymnasium*), separate orientation concepts exist. To reduce early school leaving including dropout from VET (apprenticeships) the programme established *Bildungslotsen* (education coaches) and *Berufseinstiegsbegleitung* (transition coaches, often with a background in social pedagogy, a programme managed by the Federal Employment Agency) at general secondary schools (see section [Career management skills](#)).

b. Youth career agencies

In the same vein, the Federal Employment Agency together with the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs created in 2010 a 'Working Alliance Youth and Work (*Arbeitsbündnis Jugend und Beruf*)' bringing together stakeholders from education, jobcenters, PES and municipal social services for young people in order to develop a coordinated approach for all young people. Before that, organisational responsibilities differed depending on whether parents received insurance-based unemployment benefits (Federal Employment Agency) or social allowances (jobcenters). The Federal Employment Agency elaborated the concept of *Jugendberufsagenturen* (Youth Career Agencies) involving cooperation of key actors along four axes: a) transparency of offers, b) exchange of information, c) harmonised processes and measures, d) one-stop-government, either as one-stop shop with presence of relevance services (in cities) or as gateway, i.e. well organised transferral system in case of need of other services (above all in rural areas). At its heart is a preventative approach focusing on vocational orientation programmes from grade seven. This approach of bundled services has been tested in summer 2010 in six cities. Hamburg was the first model. In 2013, the federal government decided to roll out Youth Career Agencies out all over Germany. Participation is voluntary and local actors can decide on the concrete set-up. In January 2017, 290 Youth Career Agencies had been created. There exists a mechanism of voluntary self-assessment to identify areas for improvement. To inspire further action, the PES Germany plans to issue an online database of good practices.

The Youth Career Agencies could build upon experience from more than 200 "*Kompetenzagenturen*" (Competence agencies) consolidated with support from European Social Fund (ESF) (2008-2013) by the Family and Youth Ministry in cooperation with bodies for youth social work. In these agencies, young people with multiple problems could receive guidance for complex situations by case managers. These worked in partnership with other social, training and employment services to develop tailor-integration plans. More than 70% of young people entered VET, work or education. Furthermore, 60% indicated increased motivation and empowerment and many municipalities maintained this service concept after funding ended.

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Access to guidance

According to the German Law ([Social Code III](#)), the [Bundesagentur für Arbeit](#) (Federal Employment Agency) has to offer vocational guidance to young people and adults including guidance for further training for those participating in the labour market or intending to do so. The PES has equally to offer guidance on the labour market for employers. Guidance shall be tailored to the needs of a counselee. Further it offers guidance support for labour market integration for jobseekers and, in partnership with municipalities, for long-term unemployed.

Legal base and responsibilities

A specific feature of the lifelong guidance system in Germany is its strong legal base putting at the same time the Federal Employment Agency of Germany into a key role as it provides lifelong guidance services throughout the whole country. The Social Code III sets as key objective to enhance employability through promoting skills and competences in order to fight inferior employment. Against this background, the Federal Employment Agency has the task to:

- a. offer career guidance to young people, to working adults and those who want to work (vocational guidance including guidance for further training / upskilling) and to provide labour market guidance to employers (including training counselling), in particular for SMEs not having an own HR department;
- b. deliver guidance and, if needed, in-depth support for labour market integration of unemployed and young people looking for VET;
- c. provide guidance support after placement into an apprenticeship or a job to ensure consolidation;
- d. tailor the type and scope of guidance to the guidance needs of a counselee;
- e. ensure a gender-sensitive approach and to broaden the range of vocational choices for women and men.

Similarly, according to the Social Code II, long-term unemployed and members of the joint household in

need are entitled to tailor-made guidance by an individual contact counsellor. The law sets out a case load of max. 75 young people up to 25 years and of max. 150 for adults. In case of multiple problems, case managers (*Fallmanager*) shall ensure guidance and integration pathways in cooperation with a network of partners.

A Law adopted in December 2018, the “[Qualifizierungschancengesetz](#)” (Law on improvement of qualification opportunities) aims to increase adaptability of the workforce to technological changes on the labour market. Above all, it supports workers to take up further training by providing career guidance in combination with financial incentives. Consequently, the law expanded the legal mandate for provision of guidance by the Federal Employment Agency with a view to career guidance for employees.

According to Federal Law ([Social Code IX](#)), Germany provides special guidance for handicapped to support labour market integration including rehabilitation.

Given the regionalised education system in the federal state of Germany, regional codes exist in the 16 Länder for career orientation at schools. The same holds true for regional university laws of the *Länder* (states).

Responsibilities in lifelong guidance provision reflect the constitutional setup of the education and employment system in Germany distributing tasks between the federal, the regional level (*Länder*) and municipalities:

- a. the national level is responsible for initial and continued vocational education outside schools and for all types of guidance supporting the transition to employment. The Federal Employment Agency offers specific services targeted at young people and disabled. Further, it provides guidance support for migrants and refugees;
- b. the 16 states (*Länder*) are responsible for education and culture. Provision of guidance can be delivered by the Länder or by others in agreement with the responsible bodies in the Länder such as schools, universities;
- c. municipalities are responsible for guidance within their remits, i.e. for adult learners (e.g. *Volkshochschulen* - adult education centres) or for recipients of social allowances (the so-called *Arbeitslosengeld II* - Unemployment Benefit II for those who are able to work and *Grundsicherung* - Basic allowances for others plus dependent family members).

The Federal Employment Agency as an independent organisation is the main provider of lifelong guidance; it offers vocational and educational guidance throughout Germany with a view to career choices and orientation for young people and adults. It provides guidance for unemployed with a view to integration into the labour market and (together with municipalities) also for long-term unemployed. The PES Germany offers information, counselling and advice in career information centres ([Berufsinformationszentren](#) - BIZ). Guidance counsellors can request support from the in-house Vocational *Psychological Service* ([Berufopsychologischer Service](#)) as well as an in-house Medical Service ([Ärztlicher Dienst](#)), for example, to test learning or physical capacities.

Regarding governance, the Federal Employment Agency agrees strategies and concepts including for guidance with the tripartite Administrative Council involving employers, trade unions and representatives from the labour and education ministries.

In 2017, the Federal Employment Agency adopted a Lifelong Guidance Strategy ([Lebensbegleitende Beratung](#)

g). It intensifies guidance provision for young people before entering the labour market and expands vocational guidance to adults including employed and those needing support when returning from a period of parental leave or caring or from a stay abroad. Further, it stresses the role of guidance for entrepreneurship. In times of digitalisation new interactive online tools and mobile apps are being developed. Putting a stronger focus on prevention, this strategy shall help to mitigate the challenges of digitalisation, of demographic change as well as of changing expectations implying, for example, a stronger emphasis on meaningful jobs and a good work-life balance.

The lifelong guidance strategy comprises three key components:

- a. career guidance prior to working life: in addition to career orientation at schools, building up guidance in VET schools and at expanding career guidance at universities;
- b. career guidance during work life: more in-depth career guidance for unemployed and new career guidance service for those at work targeting in particular low-educated;
- c. self-testing tools: to support vocational orientation and the choice of a study course a comprehensive online test (90 minutes) helps to prepare and complements counselling sessions.

Career guidance prior to working life will be rolled out starting with the school year 2019/2020, the self-testing tool for young people has been completed. The third strand, career guidance during working life, will be rolled out soon building upon previous experience with active labour market programmes for low-qualified.

In the education sector (schools, universities, adult learning), service provision is more heterogenous as this is a competence for the *Länder* (states), the municipalities or the individual universities. In all fields, the states and municipalities have developed own services to fill service gaps and to complement the services provided by the PES Germany. In order to avoid duplication of services, good horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms are needed.

Following liberalisation of career guidance and placement in the 1990s, a colourful landscape of private and not-for profit providers arose complementing public service provision. Career guidance is not a regulated profession in Germany, and therefore, access to the market is not restricted by law. Typical forms of career guidance include group activities, orientation camps or individual guidance by social pedagogues as part of commissioned ALMPs (Active Labour Market Programmes) or testing and counselling by psychologists of HR consultancies targeting mainly pupils from upper secondary education preparing their transition to a university (or VET). Increasingly, coaches or counsellors offer career guidance for employees. Further, Chambers offer career guidance, in particular for young people and with a focus on VET and apprenticeships.

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Quality assurance

Various systems for quality assurance and quality standards are in place including several legally binding regional standards in the field of education. The concrete design of concepts for quality assurance depends on the guidance provider. Some service providers apply the quality standards developed by the National Guidance Forum. Others use regional certification systems or have in-house concepts for quality assurance. No binding national quality framework exists for lifelong guidance provision covering all dimensions and service providers.

In its [Mission Statement](#), the National Guidance Forum underlines the importance to promote the quality of guidance as well as exchange of information and experience (e.g. own publications, ELGPN work including translations into German).

The forum has produced a [Quality concept for Guidance](#) (*BeQu – Beratungsqualität*) consisting of a competence profile and a framework for quality development in public and private sector organisations. Two stakeholder and expert groups covering a broad range of stakeholders from the field of education and employment supported its elaboration.

These guidance quality standards (*BeQu Beratungsqualität*) comprise five areas: a) overarching principles (client-orientation, voluntary and open-ended, transparency and accessibility, ethic principles, continuous quality improvement), b) counselling competences and professionalism, c) process standards (working relationship, assessment of individual needs, interests, problem-solving approach), d) organisational standards (mission, structures and processes, organisational and communication culture, staff and material resources, cooperation and networks) and e) societal context and objectives such as self-efficacy and shaping competences.

Any organisation that provides career guidance services and is interested to apply the concept for quality development can get support from the National Guidance Forum (e.g. advice, workshops, access to an online platform providing “tips and tools”). Organisations having participated at a *BeQu workshop* and committed to implement these *Guidance Quality Standards* can apply at the National Guidance Forum to use the quality label for guidance:



In order to strengthen systems of quality assurance, the National Guidance Forum Germany (nfb) takes part in the ERASMUS+ project "[Quality implementation in Career Guidance](#)" (QUAL-IM-G) under the lead of a Slovakian guidance company. Other partners are a not-for profit organisation, professional associations and one University from SK, NL and UK. The outputs of the project include a mentoring programme, a certification/accreditation procedure, a quality development framework as well as audits/awards for guidance services.

As regards career orientation in schools, the *Partnerschaft Schule Wirtschaft* (Partnership Schools – Business) awards a "[Berufswahlsiegel](#)" (Quality label career choice). Individual schools can apply and at regional (state) level interdisciplinary juries assess the applications. The Federal Employment Agency participates in this network including financial support.

At regional level, Saxonia, like several other states (*Länder*), issued a Directive setting standards for career education and orientation at schools as precondition to apply for the European Social Fund (ESF). This had a lasting impact after funding ended. Further, several states have introduced a quality label for education guidance (*Gütesiegel Bildungsberatung*) based upon a procedure of certification for state-funded guidance providers.

The Federal Employment Agency complies with the Social Code. This suggests that guidance has to correspond to individual needs, to respect confidentiality and impartiality. The Federal Employment Agency

has a dedicated department for Quality management including guidance services. As an essential element of quality assurance, the Federal Employment Service Germany has elaborated detailed *Beratungskonzepte* (Guidance concepts or manuals) for career counselling in the fields of vocational orientation and labour market integration. These set operational internal quality standards for delivery of guidance services:

- a. guidance concept for career guidance counsellors for vocational orientation (including choice of VET or tertiary education);
- b. guidance concept for integration of unemployed (employment-oriented guidance and placement including choice of job, training for jobseekers);
- c. guidance concept for integration support in a situation of complex problems (including cooperation with social and health services).

The manuals specify concepts derived from guidance research for the setting of the employment agency. They provide guidelines for the concrete counselling process and present counselling techniques for different types of clients including those with complex problem constellations. In addition, they present operational guidance on how to deal with difficult situations, such as combining a supportive with an administrative role (activation, monitoring up to sanctioning). They also invite to a continuous process of reflection.

These manuals are a common basis for initial and further staff training together with supervision and case conferences.

Quality of guidance forms also part of the counselling training offered within the Bachelor study courses "Labour market management" (*Arbeitsmarktmanagement*) and "Career guidance" (*Beratung für Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*) at the PES corporate University *Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit* (University of Applied Labour Studies). A large part of PES counsellors are graduates from this university, the others undergo internal training courses for vocational guidance having work experience as employment counsellors.

Regarding guidance services as part of ALMP measures, basic quality standards are set by the tender specifications as part of the procurement procedure.

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Career management skills

Career education at schools lays the foundation for the development of career management skills (CMS), as well as guidance services at universities and services for adult learners, unemployed and employed that aim at enhancing career management skills over the lifecycle. Schools use portfolios to document acquired skills and competences.

Provision of vocational orientation and career guidance in schools by the Federal Employment Agency is based on a framework agreement regarding the cooperation between schools and the PES Germany in the field of career orientation. The state ministers of culture and the Federal Employment Agency renewed the agreement of 2004 in 2013. The aim is to equip young people with competences to manage the transition from school to VET, another school or university. Orientation shall start as early as possible, be anchored in the school curriculum and include a variety of methods such as information, meetings with parents, practical experience and work placements, group and individual counselling and support for searching an apprenticeship, further education at school or a study course. The *Länder* (states) set up operational orientation schemes involving the PES Germany at state level and other relevant stakeholders to support youth at risk and disabled. Based on a dedicated state administrative regulation, individual schools and local employment agencies set up concrete schemes for career orientation considering the specific features of the school.

Education chains – cooperation for coordinated transition management in general secondary schools to reduce early school leaving

To reduce early school leaving and to ensure “completion of schools and continuation - education chains until the end of VET”, the Federal Ministry for Education and the states (*Länder*) organised in 2008 an education summit. As a follow-up, the German government launched in 2010 the initiative “*Bildungsketten*” (Education chains) targeted at general secondary schools. The federal level and the states cooperate in order to coordinate orientation programmes at local level to improve the management of transitions from schools. For this purpose, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, federal states and regional directorates of the Federal Employment Agency conclude agreements on programmes and measures including guidance and orientation. Key components of such a chain are networking of partners, support for school Career Orientation programmes ([Berufsorientierungsprogramme - BOP](#)) and Transition coaching for acquiring an occupation ([Berufseinstiegsbegleitung](#)), as well as support measures during VET.

The Career orientation programme includes a comprehensive analysis of the potential (strengths, weaknesses, interests, practice-oriented tests) and internships to test occupations in priority fields identified. All states implement these career orientation programmes except for a few that have already set up their own similar programme. Orientation programmes offered by the states start at the latest at class seven or eight. Then the Federal Employment Agency offers specific information, guidance and support for transition in classes nine or 10 depending on the type of school. In several regions, the introduction of education chains for transition management has received funding from the European Social Fund.

Education chains include a special form of support, “transition coaching” for acquiring an occupation ([Berufseinstiegsbegleitung](#)). Anchored in the German Social Law (Social Code III), this programme is

managed by the PES Germany and co-funded by the European Social Fund. Currently, around 5000 coaches work at 3000 schools, the total financial volume for this measure accounts for EUR 1 b including EUR 500 m co-financing by the national budget. At general secondary schools, the transition coaches (mostly social pedagogues) hold regular meetings and appointments with final class students at risk of dropout or having difficulties to manage the transition. In cooperation with the individual student, the coach prepares a transition plan. This involves general career guidance and cooperation with specialised vocational guidance counsellors from the PES Germany as well as work placements.

Implementing education chains for transition management has triggered the development of quality standards and binding elements of career orientation with a view to developing career management skills. States define standard elements including expected competences and minimal requirements. The use of ESF has considerably contributed to this development. Concepts of implementation slightly vary across the states.

One example is the state Northern Rhine Westphalia, that introduced the programme [Kein Abschluss ohne Anschluss](#) (KAoA – no school leaving without subsequent education) in 2012-2013, promoting a concept for systematic management of the transition from school to VET or university starting in grade eight (analysis of potential, exploration of occupational fields, work placements and reflection, concrete decision - application or transition to upper secondary education, exploration of universities and study courses, concrete decision). At each stage, individual career guidance is foreseen. Each municipality coordinates the actors involved (municipal coordinating body).

In accordance with its renewed [Concept for career orientation Baden-Wuerttemberg](#), issued in May 2018, this state ensures an early start. CMS are taught in a mixed approach. The related administrative regulation for all secondary schools prescribes the following key elements:

- a. all schools have to start with career orientation from grade five;
- b. all subjects integrate examples to make the link to the world of work and to open opportunities for pupils to reflect these in light of their interests and capabilities;
- c. a specific subject “Economy/Vocational and study orientation” discusses competences in the world of work;
- d. further measures include one day of career orientation per year (in addition to information, self-assessment of career choice readiness, preparation and follow-up, involvement of parents), practical experience (minimum 10 days, visits to companies, education fairs, work placements etc.) and systematic cooperation with the career guidance service of the Federal Employment Agency.

A third example is the programme careers orientation programme [Boby](#) in Bavaria equally starting from grade five. It promotes as further element, setting up pupils’ companies to enhance entrepreneurship.

In a fourth state, Hamburg, schools have to offer at least 34 hours of [career orientation lessons](#) during the last three school grades based upon a dedicated curriculum to be in place at each school. Moreover, performance has to be assessed and marked.

Above all, in secondary schools, but also in career services at universities, specific tools and concepts have been developed to make career orientation more effective:

An internationally recognised good practice is the so-called [Berufswahlpass](#) (Vocational choice passport) for young people. This is a portfolio documenting the steps in a process of occupational or educational choice

including tasks completed and the progress that has been made. Schools use it for orientation classes. It is structured as follows: a) *offers for orientation* - presentation of providers and who does what, b) *my path towards an occupational choice* - profile including strength and weaknesses, self-assessment and assessment by others, objectives; learning plan; occupational fields and profiles; practical experience; steps to prepare the transition, e.g. checklist for application, c) *documentation* including a Vocational choice passport, overview of orientation activities, documents and certificates including social or sport activities and d) *help for life* - templates, looking for accommodation, financial management, insurance etc.

In 2017, the Federal Employment Agency in cooperation with the Foundation of German Business ([Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft](#)) issued a manual to strengthen orientation at upper secondary schools (*Gymnasium*). This reference manual titled "Effective support for career orientation – tertiary education and VET", includes modules on strengthening the sense of self-responsibility, self-assessment, search for information using various sources, taking a decision and tools to strengthen transversal competences. It also presents recommendations for schools, such as working methods and assessment of performance (Source: *Studien- und Berufsorientierung wirksam begleiten*. Bundesagentur für Arbeit – Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft 2018). It has been and will be adopted to Länder-specific needs.

The [internet portal for career orientation](#), re-launched at the end of 2016 by the PES Germany (following systematic involvement of users), is structured along with key questions in the process of career orientation. It contains the following fields integrating links to other relevant portals and databases: a) *What fits best for me?* - comprehensive self-assessment test, b) *I want to go for VET* - including links to information and videos on occupations (Planet Beruf), c) *I want to study* - links to databases on study courses, application, d) *VET or university or both?* - pros and cons; e) *How to find a place for an apprenticeship?*, f) *How to prepare an application?*, g) *Personal career guidance* - telephone number, button for appointment, h) *Support measures*, i) How to benefit from *second-chance education*, j) *Information for parents*, k) *Information for teachers*.

Specialists from the [Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit](#) (University of Applied Labour Studies of the Federal Employment Agency) have elaborated a web-based self-assessment tool "Career choice readiness" or, to put it in other words, of the state in the process of career orientation. The tool allows for a short and simple assessment along five dimensions: a) problem awareness and motivation; b) vocational preferences; c) level of career information; d) decision-making behaviour and e) skills for implementation. After having been tested for two months in 2015, a slightly adjusted version will be rolled out soon. According to the evaluation, more than two of three career guidance counsellors found the tool useful for the first as well as for follow-up meetings (Source: *dvb-forum* 1/2019, pp. 50-57).

Starting with adult learners, the [ProfilPASS®](#) coordinated by DIE (*Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung* - German Institute for Adult Education) has become a tool to assess the competences developed during formal, informal and non-formal activities for other groups, such as young people and migrants. Its sections include: a) my life - experience; b) my activities; c) my competences + competences level; d) my objectives and e) collection of documents. Like it encourages self-assessments, self-reflection, self-awareness and self-understanding and supports the development of career plans. Many schools use it for the analysis of potential during the vocational orientation programme from class seven.

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Evidence, monitoring and assessment

The Federal Employment Agency as main provider of guidance regularly carries out customer satisfaction surveys. [Recent surveys](#) show best results in the area of career guidance for young people before job entry: at the start, during and after the end of vocational guidance provision (1,8 quality - 2,3 impact on a scale reaching from 1 - very good to 5 - insufficient).

Examples of evidence of impact

To test the web-based self-assessment tool “Career choice readiness” (state of career orientation, see section [Career management skills](#)), specialists from the [Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit](#) (HdBA - University of Applied Labour Studies of the Federal Employment Agency) collected feedback from users, PES career guidance counsellors and counselees. More than two of three career guidance counsellors found the tool useful for the first as well as for follow-up meetings. Counselees considered it as particularly helpful for a situation of unspecific expectations and ideas as well as in a situation of uncertainty about the choice at a later stage. The tool will soon be rolled out in the Federal Employment Agency (Source: dvb-forum 1/2019, pp. 50-57).

An evaluation showed a positive impact of face-to-face career guidance interventions. There was evidence for a multi-dimensional increase following the counselling session along the five dimensions used in a tool for self-assessment of “Career choice readiness” or the individual state in the process of career orientation. The dimensions used were: a) problem awareness and motivation; b) vocational preferences; c) level of

career information; d) decision-making behaviour and e) skills for implementation; see section [Career management skills](#)). Effects were moderate (nfb 2017: pp. 166-173).

Evaluation of pilots showed faster and better integration rates due to more frequent and thus more intensive guidance interventions to prevent long-term unemployment. These results changed the service approach for those at risk of long-term unemployment: The Federal Employment Agency increased expenses for counselling staff and created “INGA-teams” with reduced case-load (Project: INGA - *Interne ganzheitliche Integrationsberatung* - Internal Holistic Integration Counselling), (Source: Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Geschäftsbericht 2018: 43)

Holistic guidance and case management for complex problems

The Youth Career Agencies could build upon experience from more than 200 “[Kompetenzagenturen](#)” (Competence agencies) consolidated with support from ESF funding (2008-2013) by the Family and Youth Ministry in cooperation with bodies for youth social work. In these agencies, young people with multiple problems could receive guidance for complex situations by case managers. These worked in partnership with other social, training and employment services to develop tailor-integration plans. More than 70% of young people entered VET, work or education. 60 % indicated increased motivation and empowerment.

A model project, “*Respekt*” carried out by the Federal Labour Ministry, targets young people “difficult to reach” by existing services. An [evaluation](#) of 18 projects working with a variety of approaches targeted at different sub-groups provided evidence which type and setting of guidance had a positive impact on (re-)integration: a continuous contact person, sufficient time, trustful relationships, low-threshold offers, coaching to guide them through the system of support, no sanctioning. Nearly two of three young participants entered training, education or work and many found (better) housing.

Challenges for measuring guidance impact - a summary from research

- a. difficulties of interpretation: No regular monitoring or reporting system for guidance exists contrasting to the Adult Education Survey (continuing the German reporting system on adult education in place since 1979). This survey includes a number of items with a view to guidance delivery in the field of adult education (guidance during last 12 months; satisfaction with guidance; request for more information/guidance). There is evidence for increasing satisfaction, decreasing consumption of guidance and also a decreasing, even if still considerable share of respondents asking for more information and guidance. The researchers point to challenges regarding the interpretation of these results: there are indications that higher satisfaction concerns mostly guidance by employers, not by public services; decreasing consumption of guidance does not obligatorily mirror decreasing interest but can result from a decreasing guidance offer (pp. 65-76);
- b. difficulties to single out the effect of guidance: Systematic evaluation of guidance is more developed in the field of employment, above all for commissioned active labour market programmes. Such evaluations tend to measure the impact of a support and integration programme as a whole, without singling out the effect of guidance;
- c. need to take into account information from qualitative research: The evaluation of “transition coaches” working with young people at risk of early school leaving showed that qualitative information from participants and case studies are necessary to explain why in some cases coaching did not lead to positive results, thus pointing to further conditions needed, such as a clearer and realistic vocational choice or complexity of personal problems pointing to the importance of (psycho-)social factors (pp.

177-180, pp. 7).

(Source for all references above, if not indicated otherwise: Nationales Forum Beratung: *Wirksamkeit der Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung* - Effectiveness of educational, vocational and employment guidance, Bielefeld 2017, including English abstracts).

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ICT in lifelong guidance

In Germany, digitalisation drives the development of new forms of 'blended service delivery' or so-called 'omni-channelling', i.e. using a mix of online self-services, interactive online services involving career guidance counsellors (co-careering), webinars for group information, thus channelling resource-intensive face-to-face guidance increasingly to clients with more complex needs.

The main provider of national career information and career development tools in Germany is the Federal Employment Agency. In addition, states have own career orientation websites. Some offer direct information, tools or vacancies for apprenticeships, others contain mainly the framework concepts for orientation and manuals to be used by different types of schools, whilst referring to databases and tools of

the Federal Employment Agency or other providers.

The Federal Employment Agency launched at the end of 2016 a revamped [internet portal for career orientation](#), following systematic involvement of users in its development (e.g. online survey). The portal is structured along key questions during the process of career orientation (education) (see section [Career management skills](#)).

Within this problem and process-oriented structure relevant databanks have been integrated such as [BERUFENET](#) (data bank on occupational profiles, careers, training and labour market information), films ([BERUFE.TV](#)), [KURSNET](#) (portal for vocational and further training), [JOBBOERSE](#) (portal for vacancies, apprenticeships to match jobseekers and employers), and [LERNBOERSE](#) (e-learning offers on around 100 topics such as business, application training, working with e-mails, office programmes, intercultural competences, time management, languages). Another portal, [Abi.de](#) is targeted at those completing a university level entrance qualification (*Abitur*) including tests and other information.

Recently, several apps for mobile phones complement the offer, including games that target at young people as well as unemployed. For instance, in [Azubiwelt](#) (Apprenticeship World) young people can explore occupational areas, concrete occupations, look for apprenticeship places and activate a push notification for new vacancies; the game [Amtliche Helden](#) (Official heroes) – where participants manage a labour agency and learn about integration of unemployed and [Jobsuche](#) (Job search App), that provides an interactive map, where someone can save vacancies that interest him/her.

For adults, the [Berufsentwicklungsnavigator](#) (*BEN* – Career Development Navigator) provides tools and information equally in a problem- and process-oriented way for: a) changing occupation; b) upwards mobility in your occupation; c) return to work and d) continued professional development.

A further portal provides information on wages and salaries, the [Entgeltatlas](#) (Wage Atlas). This interactive tool offers the opportunity to compare wages in different regions of Germany based on profession, age, gender and location. The data is presented on an interactive map of Germany as well as graphs and figures. The information offers not only career starters, but also jobseekers an orientation about the earning possibilities in the different professions. The *Atlas* can, for example, help decide whether it is worthwhile to complete further training or to move to another region.

The main German portal in the education sector is the [Deutsche Bildungserver](#) (German Education server) at federal and similar portals at state (*Länder*) level. These provide information regarding school education, VET, universities, inclusion, special needs education, education research, education worldwide, but also offers information in relation to education and school guidance. Another portal is dedicated to information on further training ([InfoWebWiterbildung](#)). A special internet portal supports the [recognition of foreign qualifications](#). Study and vocational choices are facilitated by further portals, the [Studienwahlportal](#), the official guide for study choices and [Planet Beruf](#) (planet occupation), a portal facilitating the choice of an apprenticeship. These portals have been developed by the Conference of state ministers of culture in cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency and are integrated into the German Education Server.

The *Federal Employment Agency* runs an [Arbeitsmarktmonitor](#) (Labour Market Monitor) which aims to increase the transparency on regional labour markets for PES staff, policymakers, employers, project developers or other interested customers on the ground. The monitor facilitates problem-solving partnerships. It contains data on the regional employment situation, the economic and social situation, demographics and education in the form of an interactive map of Germany together with analytical news

feeds. A dedicated map presents employment-related networks and projects in Germany. There exists a personal section, where users can log in, serving as platform for network communication, projects and practices.

In addition, an *Ausbildungsmarktradar* (VET radar for apprenticeships) presents the relation of demand and supply in the states (*Länder*) for apprenticeships for a broad range of occupations showing for many occupations a surplus of labour demand.

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Training and qualifications

In Germany like in many other countries, career guidance is not a (legally) regulated profession. Training requirements are set by the providers and vary across the provision landscape.

Several *Länder* (states) have binding rules for the training of orientation teachers responsible for the coordination of career orientation at school. In addition, counselling teachers (*Beratungslehrer*) must complete a training. These help in case of learning problems, problems with teachers or other students, education problems etc. Specialist help is provided by school counsellors or school psychologists that have completed their studies in Psychology. Many youth coaches providing intensified support for transition management for youth at risk are social workers or social pedagogues. The latter holds also true for career and integration counselling in complex situations as provided by various contracted commercial or not-for profit organisations in active labour market programmes. Guidance for further training of adults in municipalities is often provided by teaching staff having a pedagogical background.

An own training system exists in the Federal Employment Agency. The PES Germany trains career guidance counsellors at its corporate University of Applied Labour Sciences (*HdBA - Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) in a [dedicated Bachelor study course](#) Career guidance for Education, Career and Employment (*Beratung für Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung*). Modules include an intensive training of counselling techniques for different target groups, labour market and education system and trends, sociology, networking (for further information please see [here](#)). A specialisation is possible either in career guidance for orientation (i.e. vocational or educational choices) or in case management, the latter consisting of holistic career guidance for integration targeted at clients facing complex problems. A second Bachelor Course *Labour market management (Arbeitsmarktmanagement)* qualifies employment counsellors (and other PES specialists). Several modules are dedicated to career guidance and counselling techniques. Both study courses apply the *Beratungskonzepte* (Guidance concepts). These manuals have been elaborated within the agency's strategy for quality assurance (see section [Quality assurance](#)). Since October 2015, the University of Applied Labour Studies offers the part-time master's course *Labour market-oriented guidance* (M.A.). Most of the specialist staff has completed this qualification. In addition, the Federal Employment Agency recruits a number of employment and career guidance counsellors externally, though numbers are decreasing. These receive an initial training including a module on guidance, equally based upon the Guidance manuals (*Beratungskonzepte*).

A certified comprehensive training is provided for case managers in job centres providing integration guidance in case of multiple problems.

Several universities offer Master study courses in guidance or coaching having different profiles: e.g., [Univer](#)

[University of Applied Sciences Münster](#) – Guidance, mediation, coaching; [University of Applied Sciences Frankfurt](#) – Guidance in the world of work: Coaching and Supervision; [University Dresden](#): Master of Counseling; [University Kassel](#) - Coaching, organisational development and supervision; [University of Applied Sciences Kempten](#) - job-accompanying Master in Supervision, organisational consulting, coaching (for further information see: www.hochschulkompass.de).

It must be also mentioned that the Association of regional training centres (*Verbund regionaler Qualifizierungszentren*) offers a certified training “*Educational guidance and competence development*” with a focus on adult learning.

Career counsellors are organised in several professional associations, e.g. (see National Guidance Forum):

- a. Deutscher Verband für Bildungs- und Berufsberatung ([dvb – German Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance](#));
- b. Berufsverband für Beratung, Pädagogik und Psychotherapie ([Professional Association for Counselling, Pedagogy and Psychotherapy](#));
- c. Career Service Netzwerk Deutschland (www.csnd.de);
- d. Gesellschaft für Information, Beratung und Therapie an Hochschulen ([Association or information, guidance and therapy at universities](#));
- e. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Beratung ([German Association for Counselling](#));
- f. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Karriereberatung ([German Association for Career Guidance](#));
- g. Bundesverband der Träger im Beschäftigtentransfer ([Federal Association of service providers for outplacement](#)).

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Funding career guidance

Funding of lifelong guidance provision in Germany corresponds to the distribution of competences and responsibilities. Sources for funding include:

- a. unemployment insurance (contributions by employees and employers): The insurance finances career guidance services for career choices as preventative service and guidance for unemployed as curative activity. The share of PES staff directly in contact and dealing with clients stands at 23.4% in Germany, around 23 000. A part of these have other tasks than career guidance, such as counselling for employers, information for clients at the reception or in call centres. Guidance delivered through ALMP

- measures is also financed by the Unemployment insurance;
- b. tax-funded: Guidance services for long-term unemployed receiving social allowances are sourced by the federal budget and partially by municipalities. Guidance services at universities are funded by each university, while school psychologists at schools or social workers at schools are financed by the states (*Länder*);
 - c. membership fees: Chambers of Commerce and Industry offer guidance services above all in the context of VET and apprenticeships. These are funded through membership fees by employers;
 - d. European Social Fund: Guidance within active labour market programmes or special programmes like Transition coaching for acquisition of an occupation or Integration through qualification for migrants are co-financed by the European Social Fund;
 - e. private funding: HR consultants for vocational orientation, commercial orientation camps or coaching are paid by the private purse.

Career guidance for school pupils

Please see section [Career management skills](#).

Guidance for VET participants

As part of its Lifelong Guidance Strategy adopted in 2017, the Federal Employment Agency plans to build up guidance services for VET participants.

A [Senior Expert Service](#), founded in 2008 as an organisation of retired specialists and leaders created a support service on the basis of voluntary mentoring called *VerA* (Avoiding dropout from apprenticeship - *Verhinderung von Ausbildungsabbruch*). Mentors from the expert service accompany young people at risk of dropout from VET to support them in learning, language skills, motivation and social competences. Apprentices, parents or chambers can ask for this service. Mentors receive a basic preparatory training. The Education Ministry supports this initiative as component of the Education chains (see section [Career management skills](#)).

At regional level, the State Hessen issued in 2016 a manual [Ausbildungsabbrüche vermeiden](#) (How to avoid dropout from VET) presenting a concept and process of guidance for this specific setting.

Specialists from the University of Labour Sciences of the Federal Employment Agency (*Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) together with other European project partners have elaborated an early alert mechanism "[PraeLab](#)" (*Prävention von Lehrabbrüchen* - prevention of dropout from apprenticeship). The mechanism has three components: a) early identification: comprehensive online survey for a self-assessment of social, methodological, personal competences and self-efficacy. A separate section concerns satisfaction with the VET; b) guidance: specific training for guidance in a situation of risk of dropout (three days) and c) partnerships: building up a cooperation network. The *PraeLab* mechanism has been rolled out in 2018.

Please see the description of VET system in Germany [here](#).

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Guidance for higher education students

Regarding career guidance at universities, the Plenary of University Directors (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz*) issued a Recommendation in November 2011 to establish Career Services as interface between universities and the employment system. The recommendation underlines that the existence of career services should be considered a quality component of all universities. These complement the central study advice service (*Zentrale Studienberatung*) and the connected service for psychosocial support for students. The Federal Employment Agency coordinates its career guidance services with University career services offering, for example, individual career guidance or training for job search.

Examples of activities at universities include meetings with employers or programmes such as "[Rückenwind für den Berufseinstieg](#)" (Backing for job entry). This programme at the Humboldt university Berlin offers a series of modules including transversal skills (e.g. communication, conflict management, effective presentations, management and leadership, marketing and PR). Other modules concern career management skills (e.g. successfully shaping the future career, networking for career development, company visits, application trainings or job entry trainings for students of human sciences). Modules include the completion of tasks and students are awarded five credit points.

Many universities offer workshops and start-up guidance for students and graduates interested in setting up a business. The [Federal Ministry for Economics and Technology](#) (*Bundesministeriums für Wirtschaft und Technologie, BMWi*) provides financial and network support for students starting a business in connection with research.

The [Career Service Netzwerk Deutschland](#) (CSND) is the association of the career guidance centres from universities. It aims to enhance the quality of the guidance services provided in HEIs by developing standards and offering trainings. Further, it presents good practices.

The Ministry of Education launched in Summer 2015 a portal "[Studienabbruch - und was dann?](#)" (Dropping out from a study course - what next?). This provides support through information and guidance about different options including VET. An interactive map presents information points at chambers and the PES Germany as well as job - apprenticeship vacancies. The website informs also about local activities for those at risk of dropout and guidance services offered by universities and the Federal Employment Agency.

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Guidance for adult learners

Career guidance with a view to the labour market is a legal entitlement in Germany. The Social Code III says that the Federal Employment Agency offers vocational guidance and guidance for further training to adults participating in the labour market or intending to do so. In 2017, the Federal Employment Agency adopted a lifelong guidance strategy. It extends and intensifies career guidance for young people before entering the labour market; further, it is planned to expand vocational guidance to adults, employed and those needing support when returning from a period of parental leave or from a stay abroad.

Workers and unemployed who are early school leavers or returning from inactivity (e.g. women returners) can get financial support from a second-chance programme (*Zukunftsstarter* - Starting future) (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)).

In June 2019, a broad alliance of stakeholders has adopted a *Nationale Weiterbildungsstrategie* (National Strategy for continuous training) under the lead of the Federal Ministry for Education and the Ministry of Labour. Partners are the Federal Employment Agency, the 16 states (*Länder*) having the competence for education and the social partners. Components of the action plan include a digital platform for continuous professional development (*Digitale Plattform Berufliche Weiterbildung*) with modular, interactive learning platforms, strengthening assessment and validation of competences for persons without any formal vocational qualification, establishing mentors for continuous training in enterprises, promoting regional alliances for further training and strengthening career guidance by the Federal Employment Agency in this field.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has launched in 2015 a pilot for a *Weiterbildungstelefon*. This is an online portal presenting information plus a telephone hotline for continuous training of adults. It has been rolled out on a permanent basis from 2017. Partners are the Federal Employment Agency and the Federal Authority for Migration and Refugees (BAMF - *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*).

To make continuous professional development more attractive, the ministry introduced in 2008 a *Bildungsprämie* (learning subsidy of max. EUR 500) for those with a low income to finance up to half of the training fees. As a first step, an appointment in one of the 530 guidance offices in adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*) has to be agreed with a specially trained counsellor informing about the subsidy, but

also about learning offers. The programme is supported by the European Social Fund.

There are also initiatives at regional level, such as *Beratung zur beruflichen Entwicklung* (Guidance for career development) in Northern Rhine Westfalia where counsellors, accredited by the Ministry of Labour, offer career guidance for employed and those wishing to return to work. In addition, a map indicates the 150 guidance providers all over Northern Rhine Westfalia offering also services for balancing competences and for recognition of vocational qualifications acquired abroad. Guidance providers are mostly adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*), but also several NGOs and chambers

ProfilPASS® coordinated by DIE (*Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung* - German Institute for Adult Education) has become a tool to assess the competences developed during formal, informal and non-formal activities for other groups, such as young people and migrants (see section [Career management skills](#)).

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Guidance for the employed

Career guidance with a view to the labour market is a legal entitlement in Germany: The Social Code III says that the Federal Employment Agency offers vocational guidance and guidance for further training to adults participating in the labour market or intending to do so.

In 2017, the Federal Employment Agency adopted a lifelong guidance strategy. It extends and intensifies career guidance for young people before entering the labour market and plans to set up career orientation for adults, employed and those needing support when returning from a period of parental leave or from a stay abroad.

A law adopted in December 2018, the "*Qualifizierungschancengesetz*" (Law on improvement of qualification opportunities) aims to increase adaptability of the workforce to technological changes on the labour market.

Above all, it entitles workers to further training and expands the legal mandate for provision of guidance by the Federal Employment Agency with a view to career guidance for employees.

During the last decade, access to guidance for adults has indirectly been promoted by various guidance initiatives aiming at employers. After having piloted and evaluated three delivery models, in 2013, the PES Germany launched *Qualifizierungsberatung* (Guidance for upskilling) for companies, above all for SMEs, as a new in-house service to be delivered by specially trained PES consultants for employers. They support employers with a tool for demographic staff analysis, assessment of recruitment and training needs, selection of training providers and adequate learning forms, controlling methods of upskilling.

There exist also initiatives at regional level, such as *Beratung zur beruflichen Entwicklung* (Guidance for career development) in Northern Rhine Westfalia where counsellors accredited by the Ministry of labour offer career guidance for employed and those wishing to return to work. In addition, a map indicates the 150 guidance providers all over Northern Rhine Westfalia offering also services for balancing competences and for recognition of vocational qualifications acquired abroad. Guidance providers are mostly adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*), but also several NGOs and chambers.

Starting with adult learners, the *ProfilPASS*[®] coordinated by DIE (*Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung* - German Institute for Adult Education) has become a tool to assess the competences developed during formal, informal and non-formal activities for other groups, such as young people and migrants. Its sections include: a) My life - experience; b) My activities; c) My competences + competences level; d) My objectives; e) Collection of documents. Like it encourages self-assessments, self-reflection, self-awareness and self-understanding and supports the development of career plans.

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Guidance for unemployed adults

The Federal Employment Agency offers integration-oriented guidance and placement for unemployed. Having registered with the PES, every unemployed agrees a personal appointment with an employment counsellor. Based upon an assessment of resources and weaknesses with a view to skills, competences and the personal situation (mobility, care for children, health, economic and social situation, etc.), the employment counsellor elaborates an individual action plan in collaboration with the unemployed. An IT system for competence-based profiling, matching and action planning (*VerBis*) supports employment

counselling. Depending on the needs identified, actions are job search, job search training, other training/qualification or more in-depth support involving in-house or external services. As part of its Lifelong Guidance Strategy, the Federal Employment Service plans to set up a more in-depth career guidance service for adult unemployed in case a more comprehensive qualification or vocational re-orientation is necessary for a sustainable integration.

Further guidance and continuous support is offered as part of a training or other ALMP measures by social pedagogues or social workers for all target groups including refugees. Contracted providers are responsible, the PES Germany ensures supervision. Many training measures include traineeships to facilitate placement into a job. Before a training measure ends, the unemployed meets with the employment counsellor to start job search, thus avoiding the log-in effect of training measures.

When dealing with complex support needs, integration counsellors are promptly brought into play to prevent long-term unemployment. They offer more intensive guidance and support (INGA - [Interne ganzheitliche Integrationsberatung](#) - Internal Holistic Integration Counselling). Evaluation of pilots showed faster integration and higher integration rates due to more frequent guidance interventions (lower case load), thus justifying increased expenses for counselling staff and up-skilling of unemployed (Source: BA Geschäftsbericht 2015: 43).

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Guidance for early leavers

Germany gives priority to prevention (see section [Career management skills](#)). Those leaving school before compulsory schooling ends, those not having passed the final certificate of the general secondary school (*Hauptschulabschluss*) or not having an apprenticeship or a job for continuation, can receive vocational and employment guidance for young people offered by the Youth Career Agencies or by the local labour agencies and jobcentres.

Schools or counsellors offer the possibility to complete the second-chance programme "*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr*" (Vocational preparatory year). It is legally anchored in the Social Code. This scheme combines class lessons with practical exercises and internships to test several occupational fields. It provides the opportunity to complete a school degree. Social workers support young people with guidance. Vocational guidance counsellors of the PES Germany help with career orientation and placement into an apprenticeship. As part of its orientation programme in schools, the state Bavaria offers pupils at risk the possibility to attend a "*Praxisklasse*" (Practice-oriented class). Young people attending this class receive learning and other support to foster motivation and a positive attitude towards learning and work. Due to partnerships with companies and chambers, work placements are possible. Further partners are youth services (support by social pedagogues), training providers and vocational guidance counsellors of the PES Germany. The programme is supported by the ESF.

Workers and unemployed who are early school leavers or returning from inactivity (e.g. women returners) can get financial support from a second-chance programme ([Zukunftsstarter](#) - Starting the future). The

Social Code expanded the previous programme “*Spätstarter*” (Latecomer) for early school leavers without VET to cover those aged between 25 and 35 years as a means for upskilling and tackling talent shortages. Participants benefit from guidance, support and financial incentives. Training, transport and accommodation fees, costs for child-care and learning support can be granted to for re-qualification (VET), preparation for external certification exams at chambers, partial (modular) VET qualifications and for training of basic skills. The new law is based on an agreement between the Federal Labour Ministry, the Federal Employment Agency and its tri-partite Administrative Council. It has the objective to provide 120 000 programme participants by end of 2020 with a VET qualification. Around 100 000 early school leavers entered a VET during the previous programme “latecomer” supported by ESF.

The ongoing ESF project *Jugend stärken im Quartier* (Strengthening youth in the quarter) combines support, guidance and case management for young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with activities to develop the neighbourhood. Given the presence of social workers on the ground, it allows for targeted outreach to young people having dropped out from the education and employment system. Municipal youth services cooperate with jobcentres and the PES Germany, quarter management, employers and further partners. Evaluation shows that 60% of young people (re-) entered school, VET or a job. The Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth leads this project supported by ESF (2014-2020) in cooperation with the Ministry for Internal Affairs.

The Federal Employment Agency launched the concept of *Jugendberufsagenturen* (Youth Career Agencies) involving cooperation of key actors along four axes (see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)). A further programme, “*Respekt*”, under the lead of the Federal Labour Ministry, targets young people difficult to reach” by existing services. An [evaluation](#) of 18 projects working with a variety of approaches targeted at different sub-groups provided evidence which type and setting of guidance had a positive impact on (re-)integration: a continuous contact person, sufficient time, trustful relationships, low-threshold offers, coaching to guide them through the system of support, no sanctioning. Nearly two of three young participants entered training, education or work and many found (better) housing.

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Guidance for NEET

Germany gives priority to prevention. NEET youth can receive vocational and employment guidance services for young people offered by the youth employment agencies or by the local labour agencies and jobcenters. Depending on the personal situation, they can benefit from further support programmes and

guidance, in particular programmes for early school leavers (see section [Career guidance for early leavers](#)) and unemployed (see section [Guidance for unemployed adults](#)).

A number of ESF initiatives under the programme *Jugend stärken* (Empowering Youth) aim at strengthening individual support for the transition from school to a profession as well as the provision of municipal youth social work. The programme includes the following initiatives: a) Strengthening youth in the quarter - see description below; b) Youth Migration Services - 450 services offer guidance and help young people with migration background to find a VET or work or to participate in sport or culture activities. Until end of 2017, a special initiative supported young refugees with a good perspective to stay; c) Strengthen youth: 1000 opportunities - new ways of cooperation between youth social workers and employers including volunteers to support disadvantaged youth with practice-oriented, low-threshold insights into the world of work for orientation and motivation and d) Guarantee fund university: support for young refugees to continue or take up an academic career (for additional information see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)).

The Federal Employment Agency launched the concept of *Jugendberufsagenturen* (Youth Career Agencies) involving cooperation of key actors along four axes (see section Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders). Furthermore, a project, “*Respekt*” carried out by the Federal Labour Ministry, targets young people “difficult to reach” by existing services (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)).

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Guidance for young people at risk

In Germany, various services and programmes exist to support young people at risk of dropout at schools, VET and universities.

The programme *ESF Elternchance II* (ESF - Opportunities for parents II) under the lead of the Family and Youth Ministry trains specialist ECEC staff to provide basic career guidance for parents on education opportunities in everyday life and educational choices and transitions for their children. This is a modularised further training qualifying as certified “*Elternbegleiter*” (Parents’ coach).

At general secondary schools, a special form of support exists: transition coaching for acquiring an occupation (*Berufseinstiegsbegleitung*). The transition coaches (mostly social pedagogues) hold regular meetings and appointments with final class students at risk of dropout or having difficulties to manage the transition. In cooperation with the individual student, the coach prepares a transition plan. This involves general career guidance and cooperation with specialised vocational guidance counsellors from the PES Germany as well as work placements (see section [Career management skills](#)).

The ongoing ESF project *Jugend stärken im Quartier* (Strengthening youth in the quarter) combines support, guidance and case management for young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with initiatives to develop the quarter (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)).

In addition, to prevent dropout from VET, a [Senior Expert Service](#), founded in 2008 as an organisation of retired specialists and leaders created a support service on the basis of voluntary mentoring called VerA

(Avoiding dropout from apprenticeship - *Verhinderung von Ausbildungsabbruch*) (see section [Guidance for VET participants](#)). At regional level, the State Hessen issued in 2016 a manual "[Ausbildungsabbrüche vermeiden](#)" (How to avoid dropout from VET) presenting a concept and process of guidance for this specific setting.

Furthermore, specialists from the University of Labour Sciences of the Federal Employment Agency (*Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) together with other European project partners have elaborated an early alert mechanism "[Praelab](#)" (*Prävention von Lehrabbrüchen* - prevention of dropout from apprenticeship). The mechanism has three components: 1) Early identification: Comprehensive online survey for a self-assessment of social, methodological, personal competences and self-efficacy. A separate section concerns satisfaction with the VET. 2) Guidance: Specific training for guidance in a situation of risk of dropout (3 days), 3) Partnerships: Building up a cooperation network. In one employment agency using this tool, the number of dropouts decreased, though this has to be interpreted with caution given other factors that intervene. A "Praelab team" at the University of the PES Germany (*Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) thus continues a former EU Leonardo da Vinci Project.

To avoid dropout into inactivity at universities, each university has a *Central Study Advice Service (Zentrale Studienberatung - ZSB)* together with a connected service for psychosocial support for students having learning or other problems.

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Guidance for special needs and disabilities

Complying with the [Social Code IX](#), those with physical and mental illnesses and handicaps receive special support to ensure the best vocational education and labour market integration possible.

The Federal Employment Agency offers specialised vocational guidance, placement and integration services for disabled and consults employers on working arrangements and subsidies. Handicapped able to work receive social allowances. In such occasions, tax-financed jobcentres are responsible for offering similar services like the insurance-based PES Germany. Career guidance counsellors for handicapped receive a specialisation in guidance for handicapped during their study course at the University of Applied Labour

studies of the PES Germany (HdBA). Each local labour agency has a dedicated team for integration of disabled. The PES counsellors refer clients for medical and psychological assessment to specialist in-house services if needed.

Integration is supported by two types of vocational training centres offering also supporting guidance. First, young people with physical and / or mental handicaps can complete VET in more than 50 [Berufsbildungswerke](#) (Vocational training centres) in Germany. These offer initial vocational education and training including common and several specific occupations for disabled. Social pedagogues provide guidance resulting in an individual support plan. Young people can also get medical and psychological support. In addition, preparatory vocational courses are offered for vocational orientation and to increase capacities for VET (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)). There exist also assisted study courses.

Second, around 30 [Berufsförderungswerke](#) (Vocational support centres) for rehabilitation offer VET in occupations which are in demand on the labour market and which can be carried out with certain health restrictions. With a view to guidance, orientation courses help to find the appropriate occupation including work tests, if necessary. These courses last some days up to several weeks depending on individual needs. Furthermore, a specific [Rehabilitationsvorbereitungstraining](#) (preparatory rehabilitation training) exists for persons with psychological and / or social problems. They work in small groups to reduce fears, and to enhance learning and social skills with support from psycho-social guidance involving vocational psychologists from the PES Germany. Sheltered workshops provide employment opportunities for strongly handicapped.

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Guidance for immigrants

For immigrant women, numerous programmes and projects exist to facilitate integration starting with low-threshold language and integration courses at the reception authority (see section [Guidance for immigrants](#)). In many of these, guidance is a relevant component. An example is the ESF programme [Mütter mit Migrationshintergrund steigen ein](#) (Mothers with migration background join in) targeted at labour market integration. Around 90 local contact points raise awareness, provide guidance and individual coaching, support with language courses and training. All cooperate with the labour agencies and job centres. In addition, they enhance partnerships with relevant actors and employers.

Refugees get general information and guidance at an early stage by the *BAMF* - [Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge](#). The Federal Authority for Migrants and Refugees is running an online portal [Welcome to Germany](#) providing access to a service centre by phone. It presents information and links to guidance services for immigrant adults [Beratung für Erwachsene](#) (Guidance for Adults, also available as app for mobiles) as well as

for young immigrants [Beratung für junge Menschen](#) (Guidance for young people). Guidance is delivered by local welfare organisations and youth social work agencies ([Youth migration services](#)).

Germany applies an early intervention strategy to all those having good prospects to stay. Following a compulsory integration course (general language course + first orientation), the Federal Employment Service Germany and Jobcentres come in with special services, online tools and support measures for labour market integration.

Jobcentres have set up [Integration points and Focus teams “Refugees”](#). While the first provide information and advice for everyday life in several languages, the focus teams offer career guidance for VET or work.

The German *Welcome App* and as second app [Ankommen](#) (Arriving), have been developed to provide information on living in Germany and combines this with information on the asylum procedure and finding work, as well as providing an interactive basic language course.

The setup of the multilingual information portal [Recognition in Germany](#) provides possibilities for migrants/refugees to carry out their own research and gain an initial overview on recognition or assessment of qualifications for themselves.

The Federal Employment Agency (BA) has developed in cooperation with partners from business and education a tool for visual skills assessment called [MYSKILLS](#) for around 30 occupations (e.g. mechatronics, salesperson or plumber). Task-oriented tests supported by images and videos are available in six languages and allow to identify a differentiated set of competences. After a piloting phase, it has been rolled out in 2018.

[KompAS](#) (*Kompetenzfeststellung, frühzeitige Aktivierung und Spracherwerb* - competence assessment, early activation and language acquisition) is a programme organised by the PES Germany. It combines vocational language courses with skills assessment and recognition of qualifications, career orientation including work tests and placements, guidance by social pedagogues, vocational guidance and employment-oriented counselling and supporting measures such as job search training for refugees with good prospects to stay.

With support from ESF, the programme [IQ - Integration through Qualification](#) has been in place since 2014 and includes: a) guidance for recognition of qualifications, b) complementary qualification measures for recognition, c) intercultural competence training for counsellors and other staff in employment agencies, jobcentres, municipal administration or SMEs and d) since 2019, expert support for regional networks to recruit migrants as specialists for sectors experiencing labour shortages.

For young refugees, the Federal Employment Agency has developed a specific measure: [Perspektiven für junge Flüchtlinge](#) (*PerjuF* - Prospects for young refugees). It lasts six to eight and combines language training with practice-oriented vocational orientation and guidance along with further support if needed. In addition, participants can get help from PES employment counsellors and vocational guidance specialists.

To improve integration, the state Berlin has set up the project [Kumulus](#) with support from the ESF in the early 1990s. The project has been adapted over time. In its current form, its objective is to optimise career orientation, guidance and a coordinated approach for young refugees in the so-called “welcome classes”, as well as for their parents in general secondary schools and in VET schools.

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Gender-based policies

The Social Code stipulates gender equality as important principle of career development. In particular the situation of women shall be improved to reduce disadvantages and gender segregation in VET and the labour market. In compliance with the Social Code, the Federal Employment Agency has *Beauftragte für Chancengleichheit* (Commissioners for gender equality) at all levels. These do not only provide guidance for jobseekers and employers, but they are also responsible to ensure that guidance provision and other support by the employment agency corresponds to the principles of gender mainstreaming.

An EU project under the Leonardo da Vinci programme developed already before 2010 an innovative virtual Women's career counselling community (WCC). Project partners from eight EU countries worked together to

provide online career counselling for women interested in changing their professional path, obtaining a promotion or continuing their studies. Through the multi-language internet community platform, the users had access to a virtual counselling centre, online discussion forums, members search engine and articles. When creating an account, each participant had to provide data about the working experience and areas of interest. More information about their family context and job plans was asked for before an online counselling appointment. Moreover, the platform stimulated active networking among participants, facilitated the exchange and raised the empowerment among the women. The website is unfortunately no longer accessible (Cedefop, 2009).

Several initiatives exist to provide guidance for girls and women (and more recently for boys and men) to reduce gender segregation. In the field of career orientation, since 2001, Germany has been organising an annual [Girls' Day](#) to give female pupils the opportunity to get information and on-the-site insights into technical occupations and skilled trades that are predominantly male. Under the lead of the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth this initiative brings together a broad alliance of partners including the Federal Employment Agency, employer associations and chambers as well as trade unions. More recently, a [Boys' Day](#) has been introduced taking place at the same date as the Girls' Day so that boys can make themselves familiar with occupations in the fields of education, caring and social welfare where women prevail. The activity targets boys and girls from grade 5.

Another initiative helps to overcome gender stereotypes in the bodies providing career orientation: [Initiative klischeefrei](#) (Initiative free from stereotypes). It brings together key actors like the Federal Employment Agency and state ministries, as the *Länder* are responsible for education, employers, social partners and practitioners. This initiative issues good practices, fact sheets on various topics of career orientation free from stereotypes. Furthermore, it provides guidance on how to shape and carry out gender-sensitive career orientation.

The Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth together with the Federal Employment Agency offers support for those who wish to return to the labour market after a period of economic inactivity due to caring for children (or other family members) through a dedicated portal [Perspektive Wiedereinstieg](#) (Perspective comeback). The portal is problem-oriented and provides a starter package with key information. Moreover, it presents an interactive map with guidance bodies (employment agencies and municipal gender equality bodies). The ESF (2014-2020) supports 21 providers of supporting measures and partnerships to strengthen activation, guidance, orientation and training for women and men-returners.

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