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Germany



Spotlight  
on VET

Germany

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# Spotlight on VET

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## Basic principles

There is overall social consensus in Germany that all school leavers should be offered **vocational education and training**.

- The dual vocational training system forms the basis of such training.
- The task is to impart comprehensive employability skills.
- The concept is based on cooperation between the state and the private sector.
- Stakeholders operate within the framework of the Vocational Training Act.

## Structure

Different pathways lead to vocational qualifications.

- The **dual system** forms the core of vocational education and training (and is usually of 3 years' duration). Every young person who has completed full-time compulsory schooling has access to dual vocational training. This training pathway is characterised by two learning venues – companies and vocational training schools. The 2010 dual system provides broad basic vocational training and imparts occupational competences in around 348 recognised training occupations. Those successfully completing training are qualified to be employed as skilled workers. Companies conclude training contracts with applicants under private law and provide training in accordance with the binding provisions of vocational training regulations which guarantee a national standard. The system is monitored by competent bodies such as the chambers or autonomous trade and industry associations.
- **Full-time vocational schools at upper secondary level** differ in their emphasis.
  - ⇒ **Full-time vocational schools** have the highest numbers of students. These schools usually operate within the dual system and prepare young people for work activity or vocational training in many occupational areas such as the commercial sector, the craft trades, care services, language-related or artistic professions (duration is 1-3 years depending on the course of study). The usual entry requirement is a lower or intermediate secondary school leaving certificate.
  - ⇒ **Specialised upper secondary schools** and **vocational upper secondary schools** offer two-year training courses. They generally build upon vocational training in the dual system and impart deeper occupational knowledge. They lead to the acquisition of a *University of Applied Sciences* entrance qualification. Students who have completed a course of vocational education and training can obtain this qualification after one year. Those who can offer a second foreign language may also obtain a general higher education entrance qualification.
  - ⇒ **Vocational grammar schools/specialised grammar schools** provide both a general upper secondary education as well as specialised knowledge in various areas such as economics, technology, nutrition, agriculture and information and communication technologies. They usually lead to the acquisition of a general higher education entrance qualification and access to the universities (duration: 3-4 years).
- Institutions such as the Universities of Applied Sciences (4 years), the dual institutes of higher education and the Universities of Cooperative Education (which are available in some federal states only and offer a 3-year course) offer a **blend of vocational and academic training pathways**. They prepare their students for occupational activities requiring the application of scientific knowledge and methods by placing the emphasis on practically oriented training .
- **Continuing training** forms part of lifelong learning and is playing an increasingly important role in bringing about a continuous improvement in individual employability skills. The state does not play a major role in the regulation or organisation of such training.



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## Particular characteristics

- Training regulations guarantee a uniform **national standard** whilst at the same time affording companies the flexibility to agree a company training plan with trainees. As long as the provision of all remaining training content is secured, the content and scheduling of such a training plan may deviate from the stipulations set out in the training regulations if dictated by specific company practical requirements.
- Small and medium-sized companies in particular are frequently unable to provide all learning contents. This situation is covered by various forms of **cooperative training**.
- Various **transition management** instruments are in place to help young people disadvantaged on the labour market to overcome the so-called first threshold between school and vocational training. Measures such as introductory training (of 6 to 12 months' duration) use qualification modules as a basis to prepare young people for dual vocational education and training. Because these courses reflect the training content in vocational training itself, this preparatory period may be credited towards the overall duration of training.
- Advanced vocational training leading to qualifications such as **master craftsman** is at the heart of the training system and confers the right to exercise a trade independently, to hire and train apprentices and to enter higher education study. It also facilitates acquisition of qualifications by middle management in companies. Improved funding conditions contained within the Upgrading Training Assistance Act have reduced the financial obstacles involved.

The craft trade sector is lobbying for the qualification of **master craftsman** to be aligned to level 6 of the German Qualifications Framework, equivalent to a Bachelor degree.

## Challenges

Demographic changes, globalisation and European developments all require new strategies to strengthen vocational training.

- The breaking down of the existing educational gap and educational disadvantage, especially for young people from a migrant background.
- Securing the provision of young skilled workers by increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and training in terms of qualification, occupational and career perspectives.
- Linking and facilitating the transitions between schools, the transitional system and training in order to create connective educational chains.
- Promoting permeability between vocational and higher education.
- Ensuring the quality of the vocational training process and of trainers' qualifications and strengthening VET research in order to modernise vocational training.
- Improving the structures and provision of lifelong learning in order to increase participation in training and to enhance transparency.
- International opening of VET and implementation of new European Union instruments (EQF, ECEVET, EQARF).
- Development of cross-border educational mobility and recognition of qualifications acquired abroad.

(Source: Ministry of Education and Research, BMBF, Education Report 2010.)

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## Education in figures

GEO	People who have achieved at least an upper secondary school qualification, by age 2009 (%)		GEO	People who have achieved a tertiary qualification, by age 2009 (%)	
	20 to 24 years	25 to 34 years		20 to 24 years	25 to 34 years
EU 27	78.6	80.2	EU 27	13.7	32.3
Belgium	83.3	83.1	Belgium	23.6	42.5
Bulgaria	83.7	79.9	Bulgaria	6.2	26.9
Czech Republic	91.9	94.2	Czech Republic	6.8	20.2
Denmark	70.1	85.7	Denmark	4.9	44.7
Germany	73.7	86.0	Germany	4.5	25.7
Estonia	82.3	86.3	Estonia	13.4	36.6
Ireland	87.0	85.8	Ireland	26.4	47.6
Greece	82.2	74.9	Greece	9.1	28.7
Spain	59.9	63.7	Spain	20.0	38.2
France	83.6	83.9	France	26.6	43.3
Italy	76.3	70.3	Italy	6.7	20.2
Cyprus	87.4	83.3	Cyprus	30.4	47.5
Latvia	80.5	80.7	Latvia	10.7	31.2
Lithuania	86.9	87.8	Lithuania	13.6	43.7
Luxembourg	76.8	83.8	Luxembourg	16.3	44.5
Hungary	84.0	86.0	Hungary	6.6	25.1
Malta	52.1	45.3	Malta	14.8	22.2
Netherlands	76.6	82.4	Netherlands	16.2	40.1
Austria	86.0	88.4	Austria	4.4	21.1
Poland	91.3	93.5	Poland	10.8	35.5
Portugal	55.5	48.2	Portugal	10.3	23.3
Romania	78.3	76.8	Romania	6.1	19.5
Slovenia	89.4	93.5	Slovenia	3.5	30.4
Slovakia	93.3	94.8	Slovakia	8.6	20.6
Finland	85.1	90.4	Finland	4.2	39.4
Sweden	86.4	87.8	Sweden	9.3	42.4
United Kingdom	79.3	81.8	United Kingdom	23.7	40.1

(Source: own illustration based on Eurostat, 18.03.2011.)

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## Education in figures

International debate regards **vocational education and training** in Germany to be a successful model, largely because of the **dual system**. This leads to a high-quality vocational qualification and enables young people to make a smooth transition from school to the world of work.

The **dual system of vocational education and training** produces well-trained skilled workers, an essential prerequisite for economic success.

Various figures are available to illustrate the attractiveness of vocational education and training in Germany, including in international and European comparative terms.

- Although Germany's 2009 **tertiary qualifications** rankings of 4.5% for 20-24 year-olds and 25.7% for the 25 to 34 age group are at the lower end and in the mid-range respectively, the corresponding figures for **upper secondary qualifications** are in the top part of the scale. 73.7% of the population aged 20-24 and 86.0 % of those aged 25-34 earned an upper secondary qualification.
- Most school leavers in Germany decide to pursue **vocational training**. This is most evident in the case of the 19-25 age group. In 2008/09, the proportion of 19-25 year olds commencing vocational education and training was 53.5%. In contrast, only 38.5% of those aged between 19 and 25 opted for a course of higher education study (Source: Educational Reporting Group "Education in Germany 2010", Bielefeld 2010.)
- Only 33% of young people entering the **dual system** via a newly concluded training contract in 2008 were in possession of a lower secondary school leaving certificate. Another 3% had no school leaving qualifications. Students who had achieved the intermediate school leaving certificate made up the largest pre-training group and accounted for 43% of the total. Notwithstanding this, pupils who had obtained a university entrance qualification also entered the dual system on a frequent basis, 21% of this group signing a training contract.

In the past, the **dual system** was strongly aligned towards providing training for lower secondary school leavers. In 1970, almost 80% of trainees had only a lower secondary school leaving certificate. The remaining trainees mainly held the intermediate school leaving certificate. The representation of upper secondary school leavers was very low at only 1%. This distribution has, however, undergone a drastic change over the last 40 years.

One particular reason for this is the expansion of upper secondary schools. At the same time, the decreasing number of apprenticeships and the modernisation of vocational education and training have meant that trainee requirements have become higher.

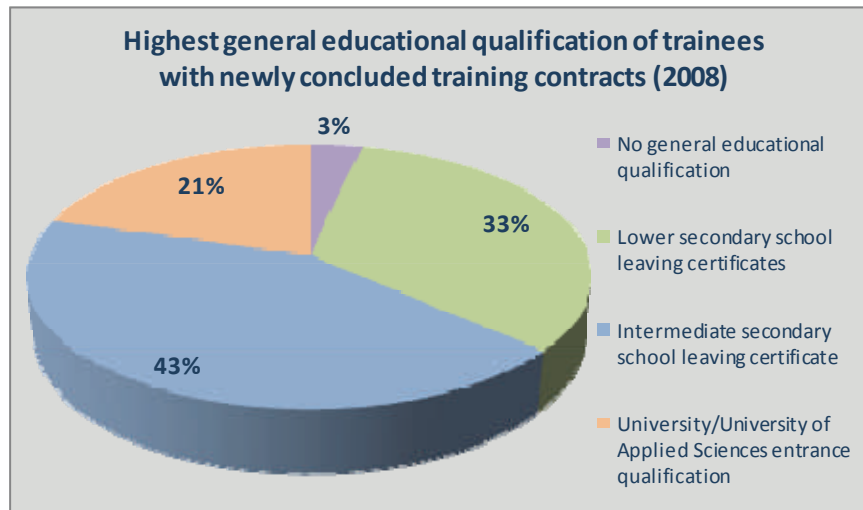
(Source: BIBB VET Figures, [http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/schaubilder\\_gesamtausgabe\\_2010.pdf](http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/schaubilder_gesamtausgabe_2010.pdf), cited: 28.06.2011.)

There are, nevertheless, problems at the transition from training to work. The transitional phase is characterised by a significant degree of **unemployment**, although this decreased between 2005/06 and 2007/08. The proportion of young people still unemployed after one month and one year of finishing training has reduced by one third in each case. One month after the end of training, 22% of young adults had no job, whilst two thirds were employed. After one year, the unemployment rate had declined to 9.6 % whereas the employment rate had risen to over 70%.

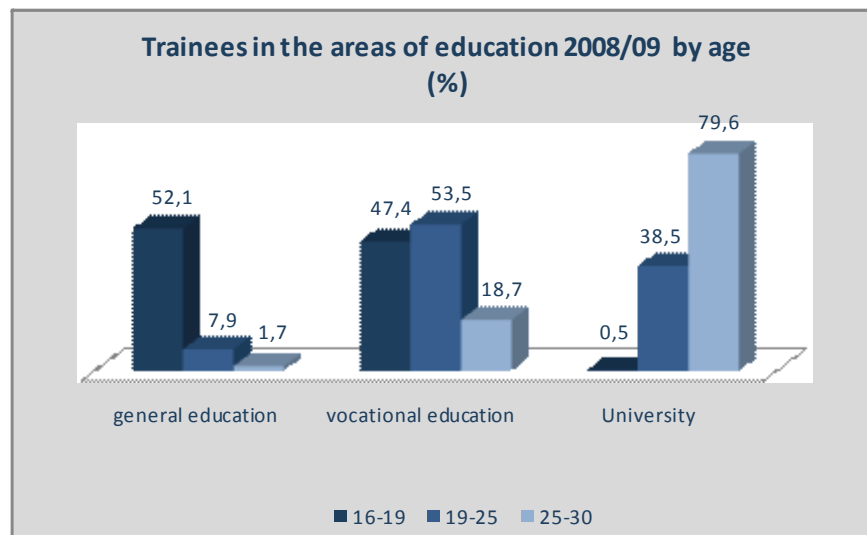
(Source: Education Report 2010.)

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## Education in figures



(Source: Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2010. Informationen und Analysen zur Entwicklung der beruflichen Bildung.)



(Source: Own illustration according to Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung „Bildung in Deutschland 2010“, Bielefeld 2010.)

## Further Information

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Institute for Labour Market and Occupational Research (IAB)	<a href="http://www.iab.de/">http://www.iab.de/</a>
German National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment (nfb)	<a href="http://www.forum-beratung.de/">http://www.forum-beratung.de/</a>
State Institute of School Quality and Educational Research (ISB)	<a href="http://www.isb.bayern.de/">http://www.isb.bayern.de/</a>
State Institute for Educational Development Baden Württemberg	<a href="http://www.ls-bw.de/">http://www.ls-bw.de/</a>
Pedagogical Institute Rheinland-Pfalz	<a href="http://bildung-rp.de/paedagogisches-landesinstitut">http://bildung-rp.de/paedagogisches-landesinstitut</a>
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GAB München Gesellschaft für Ausbildungsforschung und Berufsentwicklung mbH	<a href="http://www.gab-muenchen.de/">http://www.gab-muenchen.de/</a>
d&d - didaktik & diagnostik - Gesellschaft für angewandte Bildungsforschung mbH	<a href="http://www.didaktik-und-diagnostik.de/">http://www.didaktik-und-diagnostik.de/</a>
DEKRA Academy GmbH	<a href="http://www.dekra-akademie.de/">http://www.dekra-akademie.de/</a>
Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training in the Crafts Sector at the University of Cologne (FBH)	<a href="http://www.fbh.uni-koeln.de/">http://www.fbh.uni-koeln.de/</a>
Sektion Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft	<a href="http://www.bwp-dgfe.de/">http://www.bwp-dgfe.de/</a>
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