

Vocational Education Systems in the participating countries

Germany

Overview

Compulsory education until the age of:	Until 9 th / 10 th grade of secondary education
Age of usual entrance into the vocational training:	16-18, open for all types of school level finishers
What are the pupils' requirements for entering the VET system?	Lower secondary education
Is there a dual system?	yes
If not, do any other work-based trainings exist?	
Are internships scheduled during the training?	apprenticeships

1. Structure of the general school and VET system

After a four-year primary-school period, which all pupils in Germany complete, educational pathways diverge within Germany's «divided school system», which consists of secondary modern schools (Hauptschule), secondary schools (Realschule), grammar schools (Gymnasium) and, in nearly all “Länder”, comprehensive schools (Gesamtschule). Secondary modern schools are being reformed and restructured currently, so that there exist different regulations in the 16 Länder of Germany. Upper secondary education leads either to a higher education entrance qualification or a vocational qualification for skilled work. The vocational track means that pupils may enter into vocational training in full time schools or within the framework of the dual system (duales System), or seek employment. Compulsory full-time education must have been completed by the time of commencing vocational training. There are no further requirements for access to training in the dual system; it is essentially open to everybody although the majority of trainees hold either the intermediate certificate or the “Abitur”. In the dual system, the different pathways of earlier education all come together, as VET accepts graduates of special schools, secondary-modern schools, secondary schools, comprehensive schools and grammar schools.

2. Details of the Vocational Education System

In the general dual system trainees attend part-time vocational school on one or two days per week, where they are mainly taught theoretical and practical knowledge related to their occupation (two thirds of the training hours); in addition they attend classes on general subjects such as economic and social studies and foreign languages (one third of the training hours). Systematic teaching at vocational school is a supplement to process-oriented training in the company which is rather more based on specific in-house requirements.

In another type of the dual system, students attend full-time vocational schools (Berufsfachschulen). The training may include company placements, and covers a period of two or three years depending on the respective occupation. Final qualifications are awarded on passing a school examination which is supervised by the education authority and governed by the training regulations of the respective occupation.

In the dual system, training takes place at a company 3-4 days a week. The contents of the practical training are on the basis of training regulations. Students conclude a contract with their training company. Companies also pay their apprentices a salary as regulated by collective agreement which increases with every year of training, and averages about one third of the starting pay for a trained skilled worker.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are often unable to provide all the learning content that is regulated for the specific occupation. They may lack suitable training personnel, or, owing to their particular specialisation, they do not cover all the training content themselves. In order to overcome these problems, there are two main strategies. The first one is the offering of inter-company training periods at educational institutions (überbetriebliche Ausbildung). They are often sponsored by autonomous bodies in the relevant sectors of industry. The Federal Ministry for Education supports the sponsors with investment subsidies.

The second strategy implies that enterprises form coherent training structures (Ausbildungsverbände) for the company-based trainings. By cooperating, the companies are able to guarantee the provision of the training contents. There exist several possibilities of organizing the coherent training structures, which will not be closer looked at in this overview.

3. Statistics

After registering a constant increase in new training place contracts since 2005, a decline was noted in 2008. But since 2011 there is again an increase in new training place contracts; in 2011 (570,140 new training place contracts) there are 10,180 more Apprenticeship Contracts signed than in 2010 (559,960 new training place contracts). As had been the case in past years, most trainees entering the dual system with a newly concluded training contract were in possession of an intermediate secondary school leaving certificate (42.9%) or a lower secondary school leaving certificate (32.9%).

There are 345 different training occupations in Germany and currently about 1.5 million trainees. Around 50% of the apprentices are placed in the industry and commerce sector, 35% in skilled crafts, further are found in public service and agriculture among others.

4. Political responsibility

Employers and unions play a central role in initiatives or change of VET because the structure of vocational training claims to meet the demands of industry. If there is a need for changes

– in the qualification requirements, for example – the Federal Government, the Länder and the industry agree on the basic principles for adaptation.

Then the work in the training regulations and framework curricula is continued and constantly coordinated by the individual partners involved.

Action by all these stakeholders in dual training is governed by the federal framework provisions of the Vocational Training Act (BBlG). In addition, certain labour law provisions in different fields of law are also binding on initial and continuing vocational training.

The Federal Government is responsible for designing the content of training for the occupations it has recognized unless training is entirely school-based. The nationally binding recognition of the training occupations ensures that the basic principles agreed with industry and the Länder are taken into account and that training for a recognized occupation is only provided in accordance with the training regulations adopted by the Federal Government. What is more, the Federal Government promotes measures to support dual training, e.g. by individual support programmes or creating additional training places.

The Länder are fully and solely responsible for school education, concerning general education as well as vocational education. Each Land drafts the curricula for instructions at part-time vocational school for the training occupations in question with earlier coordination with the other stakeholders in dual training. The Länder also hold the responsibility for financing the teaching staff and supervising the chamber activities.

The chambers (German: Kammern) are self-governing bodies of the industry. Besides the social partners, e.g. unions or employers, they play a very active and important role in the German VET system. The chambers have been assigned public tasks in dual training. These include counseling and monitoring functions with regard to the individual training contracts. The chambers advise the stakeholders in training, supervise training in the company and verify the aptitude of companies and training instructors. Apart from that, they are also competent to register training contracts and administer examinations.

5. Advantages and challenges of the VET system

Advantages	Challenges and problems
Advantages for industry: secures the skilled labour needed	
Reduces costs of settling-in	
Increases motivation and loyalty of apprentices to company	
Job specific qualification	
Productive performance of apprentices	
Good prospects for young people on the labour market	

Practical know-how with acknowledged certification	
Financial advantages for young people: Apprentices are paid	
	Declining numbers of registered apprenticeships due to reduction of state-funded apprenticeships
	Increasing preference for universities among young people
High standards: Well qualified teacher and trainer Relevant training contents Modern equipment (material, tools, machines) Good organized processes (general regulations / framework) Adequate buildings and rooms	
Participation and engagement of social partners	
Clear division of responsibilities	
Postsecondary VET programmes are well-articulated with upper secondary VET	
Permeability: progression from vocational to academic education is being optimized	Not many choose academic higher education after postsecondary tracks, still many obstacles
	More than 300 occupations, that are very specialised

Literature:

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