



spotlight on VET

# GERMANY

## VET in Germany

VET in Germany is based on cooperation between State, private sector and social partners. The Federal Ministry of Education (BMBF) is responsible for general VET policy issues and has a coordinating and steering role for all training occupations in cooperation with the respective ministries. The ministry also works closely with the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), which conducts research and advises the Federal Government and vocational training providers. The *Länder* (federal states) are responsible for school-based (parts of) VET and have VET committees with employer and employee representatives. The Ministries of Education in the *Länder* cooperate in a standing conference (KMK) to ensure a degree of uniformity and comparability.

The main pillar of VET is the dual system (apprenticeship, ISCED 3B). Every person who has completed full-time compulsory schooling has access to apprenticeship training (duration usually three years), which combines two learning venues, companies and vocational schools. Those successfully completing their training are qualified to be employed as skilled workers. Progression is possible through various school-based VET programmes and by acquiring master craftsman and similar qualifications. There are also programmes based on the dual principle at higher education level.

Parallel to the dual system there is a wide range of school-based programmes (ISCED levels 3-4), which differ in terms of entry requirements, focus, types and levels of qualifications they lead to, such as:

- programmes at vocational schools preparing people for work in many occupational areas (*Berufsfachschule*, duration one to three years depending on the occupational area and specialisation and the type/level of qualification). Where they do not offer a full vocational qualification, attendance can be credited as the first year of training in the dual system if certain conditions are met. Entry requirement is the lower secondary general school certificate or the certificate obtained on completion of year 10 (intermediate level, *Realschule*);
- programmes providing general upper secondary and vocationally-oriented education (ISCED 3A) and usually leading to the general higher education entrance qualification (*Berufliches*

*Gymnasium/Fachgymnasium*, duration three to four years depending whether they also acquire a vocational qualification). Entry requirement is the intermediate level certificate;

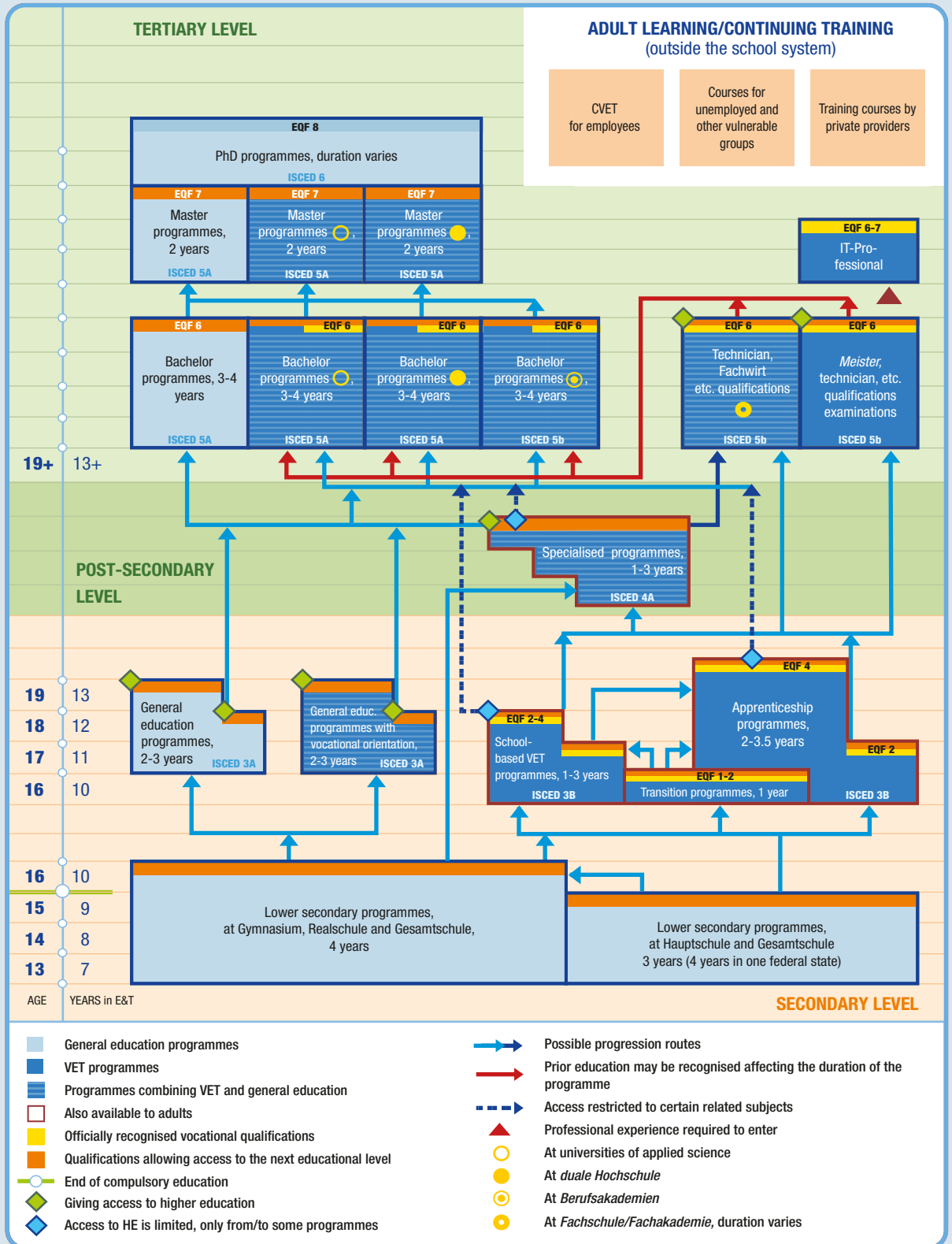
- specialised programmes that build upon intermediate level certificates or initial vocational training and impart deeper occupational knowledge (duration one to three years). They lead to entrance qualifications for universities of applied sciences or specific fields of study. Under certain conditions, learners may also obtain the general higher education entrance qualification.

VET at higher education level is becoming more important. A blend of vocational and academic training is offered by universities of applied sciences (duration four years) and other higher education institutes (*Berufsakademien, duale Hochschule* in some *Länder*, usually leading to bachelor or in some cases master degrees). Enterprises participating in *Berufsakademie* programmes bear the costs of the company-based training and pay learners a wage.

An important step in widening access to higher education is the 2009 KMK resolution, which defines common access criteria for vocationally qualified applicants without a school-based higher education entrance qualification: advanced vocational qualifications such as those of master craftsman, foreman and certified supervisor (*Meister, Techniker, Fachwirt*, see below); completion of relevant IVET lasting two years; three years of relevant occupational experience; passing an aptitude test; or successful completion of a probationary year of studies.

Continuing training is playing an increasingly important role in improving employability. It is characterised by a wide variety of providers (a training market) and a comparatively low degree of regulation by the state. Only a small part of provision leads to formal qualifications regulated by the Vocational Training Act, such as master craftsman/foreman/certified supervisor, technical engineer, and certified senior clerk qualifications (*Meister, Techniker, Fachwirt*). Courses to prepare for these advanced level qualifications are offered by chambers or schools (*Fachschulen*, master craftsmen schools). Access to the respective assessment usually requires several years of practice in the related occupation.

# VET in Germany's education and training system



NB: This is a simplified chart, based on the unified approach used for the spotlights on VET in all EU-28 countries plus Iceland and Norway. ISCED 1997 was used in this chart. Conversion to ISCED 2011 is ongoing. EQF levels have not yet been defined for all qualifications. Source: Cedefop.

## Distinctive features of VET

Germany's VET is seen internationally as a successful model, largely because of the dual system, which leads to high-quality vocational qualifications and enables smooth education to work transitions. A considerable share of those choosing this type of training have already obtained higher education entrance qualifications. Germany's well-trained, skilled workers are a prerequisite for economic success.

Companies conclude training contracts with applicants under private law and provide training in accordance with vocational training regulations. While the regulations are binding and guarantee national standards, they allow for flexibility to agree company training plans with the apprentices. The enterprises also bear the costs of in-company training and pay the apprentice remuneration as regulated by collective agreements. Learning at vocational school is based on a framework curriculum that is aligned to training regulations and is drawn up for every recognised training occupation. Enterprises and vocational schools conduct training, but the chambers are responsible for holding examinations.

Training regulations are revised every few years to keep pace with rapid technological and organisational change. The initiative for updating or developing an entirely new occupational profile comes from the social partners or BIBB. After consultation with all parties involved, the competent federal ministry decides in consultation with the *Länder* governments whether to proceed.

Cooperation between the social partners (employer organisations, trade unions and employee organisations) and the government is a core element of VET in Germany. Social dialogue and joint decisions are the means to ensure that VET reforms are accepted.

Advanced vocational training leading to qualifications such as master craftsperson certificates (EQF level 6, i.e. the same level as bachelor degrees) is at the heart of the VET system. It confers the right to exercise a trade independently, to hire and train apprentices and to enter higher education. It also supports acquisition of middle management qualifications in companies. Improved financial support included in the legislation has reduced obstacles.

## Challenges and policy responses

Current VET-related issues that need to be addressed include:

- improving transition from (compulsory) general education to VET and higher education;
- further developing guidance and counselling;
- preventing dropouts from VET;
- reducing the lack of qualified personnel.

An increasing number of unoccupied apprenticeship places coincides with high unemployment risk of early leavers, dropouts and learners with poor performance.

Various measures are in place to help young disadvantaged people manage the transition into VET and acquire a qualification. Introductory training (6 to 12 months' duration) uses qualification modules as a basis to prepare young people for dual VET. As these preparatory programmes reflect the VET content, this period may be credited towards the overall training duration.

A BMBF initiative (*Bildungsketten*) aims to ensure different initiatives complement one another. Complementary measures include competence analyses prior to VET, a career orientation and career management skills programme, preventing VET dropouts by providing a personal mentor who supports the young person during the apprenticeship, mentoring by senior experts and additional guidance and counselling.



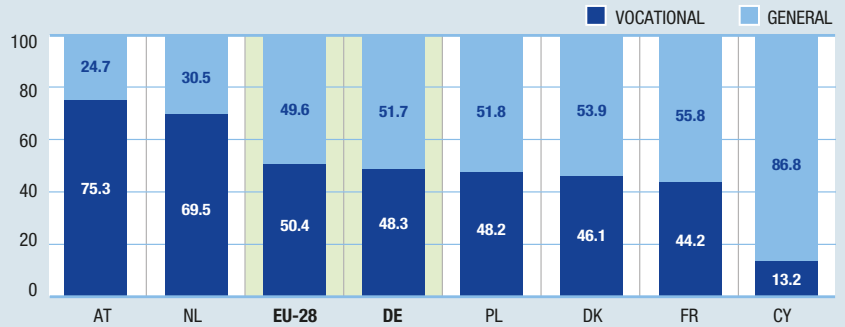
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## Education and training in figures

### Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

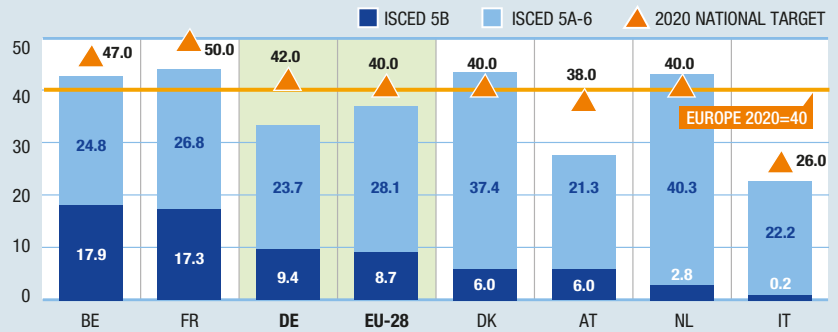
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2012



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 30.5.2014.

### Tertiary education by type

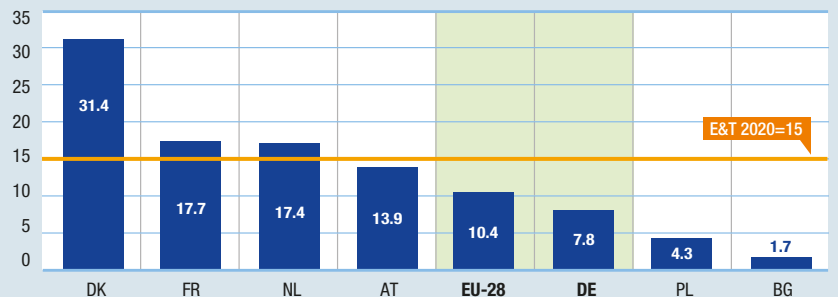
% of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2013



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.

### Lifelong learning

% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2013

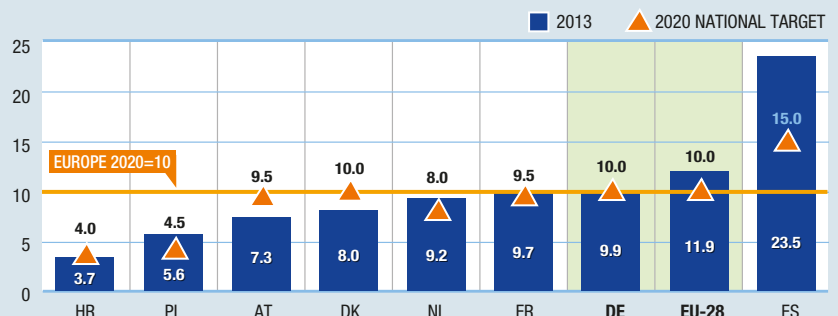


NB: Break in series for France.

Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.

### Early leavers from education and training

% of early leavers from education and training, 2013



NB: Break in series for France.

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.



## Further information

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<a href="http://www.refernet.de">www.refernet.de</a>	ReferNet Germany
<a href="http://www.bmbf.de">www.bmbf.de</a>	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
<a href="http://www.bibb.de">www.bibb.de</a>	Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB)
<a href="http://www.kmk.org">www.kmk.org</a>	Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (KMK)
<a href="http://www.refernet.de/html/en/47.php">www.refernet.de/html/en/47.php</a>	Information on the German ReferNet consortium

This spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Germany.



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