

## Country Report Germany

### 1) Overview of the National Further Education System

In Germany, further education comprises vocational training such as vocational preparation courses, vocational retraining, “*Meisterkurse*”- master-courses, language teaching and the option to catch up on school leaving qualifications. Besides, there is an abundance of extracurricular education. [1]

The overall aim can be oriented towards general education and personal development with explicit focus on the vocational world. Also, overlapping can occur, for example when attending language courses, media competence, or “soft skills” training such as communication skills.

#### Common and private providers of further education in Germany

Examples of common providers: technical schools, senior technical colleges, chambers, trade unions, professional associations, adult education centres.

The offerings are wide-ranging- example: “Trade and technical schools offer courses in agronomy, design, engineering, business and social affairs, with over 160 subjects. Like master’s schools, they end with a final state examination under law of the federal state.” [2]

Commercial operators make up a third; the largest of group of providers of further vocational education is private, 15% are non-profit organisations. “Community adult education centres account for 14%. Business and industry establishments as well as establishments run by other major societal groupings (churches, parties, trade unions, associations, clubs, and foundations) represent 12% each. [3]

Moreover, private providers take on governmental instructions, for example from the *Arbeitsagentur* (employment agency), the *Jobcenter* (Job Centre) or in the context of funding programmes of the European Social Fund.

#### Legal requirements

In Germany, there is little state and statutory regulation concerning further education. “The field of CVET in Germany is characterised by: a pluralism of providers, a largely market character, and a comparatively minimal degree of regulation by the state.” [4] But national standardised further vocational training and retraining is based on statutory regulations which specify content, objective, examination requirements and conduct, conditions for authorisation and designation of the qualification. Normally, private providers need to

accredit themselves, if they decide to take on governmental instructions. 85% of all the providers have at least one approved accreditation, 43% are accredited in accord to the Accreditation and Certification in Further Training Ordinance (*Anerkennungs- und Zulassungsverordnung Weiterbildung, AZWV*) of the Federal Employment Agency. [5].

## Course offers, databases and other sources of information about further education

### 1) Web based databases and information:

- Webpage of the national employment agency - a great number of information regarding further education, career fairs and congresses and course offers (nationwide, search function for local offers) [www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de)
- **Kursnet**, web portal regarding vocational (further) education  
[www.kursnet.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.kursnet.arbeitsagentur.de)
- **BEN** (*Berufsentwicklungsnavigator*)-navigator for career development  
<https://ben.arbeitsagentur.de/>
  
- Webpages of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research *BMBF* (<https://www.bmbf.de/>) and the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs *BMWi* (<http://www.bmwi.de/>) both also available in English (partly)
- Website of the *BMBF* regarding occupation trainings and further education, including information to the dual system, most information also available in English:  
<http://www.praktisch-unschlagbar.de> (i.e. Vocational training – practically unbeatable)
  
- Webpage of the European Social Fund in Germany – information to funding, funding priorities and framework conditions in all federal states  
<http://www.esf.de/portal/DE/Foerderperiode-2014-2020/Foerderschwerpunkte/inhalt.html>
  
- Web portal of the federal states regarding (vocational) further education  
<http://www.bildungsserver.de/Weiterbildung-in-den-Laendern-1201.html>  
Example Baden- Wuerttemberg  
[www.fortbildung-bw.de](http://www.fortbildung-bw.de) - regional database and course offers  
Federal Network further education guidance: [www.lnwbb.de](http://www.lnwbb.de) – offers information about local, personal guidance (for free)
  
- Websites of the trade unions and chambers

## 2) Other sources of information:

- Since 2015 there is – at initiative of the BMBF- a free service telephone for career guidance, also counselling about the diverse (federal) support offers like education advancement grants or training credits etc. by telephone  
see <https://www.bmbf.de/de/servicetelefon-zur-weiterbildung-1369.html> [6]

## 3) Personal advice and guidance about course offers

- At the employment agencies and Job Centres, at the job information centres (BIZ – *Berufsinformationszentrum*), affiliated at the employment agencies (for free)
- Example Baden- Wuerttemberg: Federal network further education guidance (for free)
- Coaching and counselling of a (private) career coach/ vocational guidance practitioner (for a fee)

## Financial support of further education in Germany

There are a great number of different options regarding financial support for vocational education. These options can be rendered by the federal government and the federal states.

As a general rule the employment agency is the first choice for financial support. This applies to unemployed people, employed threatened with dismissal but also job starters with low-income background, early school leavers and college drop-outs. When looking for vocational further education and financial support offers they shall contact their competent local employment agency for (personal) initial counselling. Most support for unemployed persons is for free. The agencies pay e.g. for required retraining and support further education with an education voucher (e.g. for training care for the elderly, IT training).

The German Federal Training Assistance Act (*BaFöG* - *Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*) offers financial support for students at secondary schools and colleges/ universities.

Examples for federal and European financial support for employees in Germany:

- Advanced Further Training Assistance Act (*MeisterBaföG*) for employees, persons returning to the labour market, self-employed and unemployed people (if applicable); completed (recognised) vocational training required  
The act establishes an individual right to promote professional further training, i.e. master courses or the like. The "*Meister-BAföG*" supports the development of

professional qualification. Employees get a grant (e.g. 30 % of the costs, depending on income), the rest is provided as a loan. [7].

- Education grant (*Bildungsprämie*) of the BMBF for people keen for further education but lacking financial resources  
Maximum grant 500,- €, not more than 50% of the course costs [8]
- ESF funding of further education, as grant (up to 100% of the costs), for eligibility conditions see e.g. ESF website or funding database of the BMWi:  
<http://www.foerderdatenbank.de/Foerder-DB/Navigation/foerderrecherche.html>

In-house training for employees ordered by the employer is usually for free. „Continuing in-company training may take place in the company or outside but it is usually the company that pays for provision and it usually takes place during regular working hours.” [9]

### Strengths

- A great number of ways to receive information concerning vocational education (online, personal)
- Many possibilities for governmental grants regarding further education and qualification for promotion

### Weaknesses

- Social inequality regarding participation at further education: highly qualified persons 22,5 % - low skilled 6,7 % in the relevant age group 25 to 54 years old [10]
- The socio- economic background is not only decisive for school success but also for career opportunities
- Persons at risk of social exclusion, with no vocational qualification could profit very much from further education, but opportunities for better integration into the labour market and the related potential for the economy and social development are not exploited

### Outlook

The report “Atlas of Further Education in Germany 2015” outlines the following four points to be significant for fostering participation at further education and for the achievement of successful further education [11]:

- Considering regional conditions – which further education training is useful and promoting in the specific region, which training will offer realistic job opportunities
- Easy accessibility – for participants as well as for qualified trainers

- Networking – between relevant actors and stakeholders, coordinated offers and good public relations
- Transparent and independent guidance regarding providers, offers, and expected results

Of course also the quality of the (regional) further education offers is decisive for the participation. [12]

## 2) Vocation Education System in Germany

There are 330 officially recognised training occupations (*Ausbildungsberufe*) with a required training regulation. The respective training regulations determine essential components of the training process and ensure a nationwide uniform level of apprenticeships. “The German term “Ausbildungsberuf” (training occupation) describes a key element of the training and education system which comprises a vocational education and training standard, occupational characteristics, a training plan of two or three years and a qualification frame.” [13] More than 80 percent of all apprentices learn and work in small and medium- sized enterprises. [14]

### Dual system as success story

The dual training system in Germany combines theory and practice, the training takes place in a company and a vocational school, for example company-based training three to four days weekly, vocational school one or two days a week. In some training occupations, school is carried out in block instruction. The trainees acquire practical knowledge which they can implement in practice and deepen in their training company. The vocational school is a useful and necessary supplement. “Systematic teaching at vocational school is a necessary supplement to process-oriented training in the company which is rather more based on specific in-house requirements” [15] Furthermore the apprentices get to know new techniques, procedures, machines etc. in the professional practice. The main feature of the German VET system is the close partnership between employers, trade unions and the government. Responsible action of all participants, over and above each group's particular interests, is a precondition for the efficiency of the dual system.

Additionally there are different types of full-time vocational schools (*Berufsfachschulen*) and vocational colleges. The federal states are responsible for the implementation [16].

There are many possibilities for vocational education in the **tertiary sector** which may differ from federal state to federal state. You can study at public and private universities,

universities of applied sciences and colleges. „The higher education sector comprises various types of institutions of higher education and, to a limited extent, some *Länder* have vocational academies or universities (*Berufsakademien, Duale Hochschulen*) offering courses leading to vocational qualifications for those who have completed upper secondary education with at least a qualification entitling them to attend a university of applied science (*Fachhochschule*).“ [17]. Admission requirement is the *Abitur* - diploma from German secondary school qualifying for university admission or matriculation or the *Fachabitur* (vocational diploma), e.g. for universities of applied sciences.

### Duration of vocational education in Germany

Vocational education training (mostly in-company): mostly three years

Full-time vocational school: one to three years

Senior technical school: one, mostly two years

Vocational Education at tertiary level: three or up to five years

### **Time of change?**

Less and less young people start an apprenticeship in Germany. In 2014 there were 518.000 new training contracts. In the end of 2014 around 1,36 million adolescents were in a dual system training. This means 2,4% less than 2013 (1,7 % less in trade and industry, 1,5% less in crafts, and even 10,3 % less in housekeeping, gastronomy and care sector. The decline may be caused by declining number of school graduates and the parallel increase of students. According to preliminary data of the German Federal Statistic Office the entry rate in tertiary education in 2015 was higher than ever, 57,3 % (in 2013 53,1%) [18].

The “trend to study” will become “a growing challenge” [19] for the dual system Companies increasingly compete for junior staff. It is not yet possible to estimate the long term impact of this development [20].

### **Training costs**

School attendance at vocational schools is usually free of charge. “Funding for **vocational schools** – and in particular the public vocational schools – comes primarily from the public budget.”[21]. Apprentices receive a monthly allowance from their training company (depending on the training occupation, up to around 1,000 € per month) which increases every year.

Young people with social disadvantages, learning difficulties or handicaps and young people with migrant backgrounds with an inadequate command of German have different



possibilities for free pre-vocational training (*Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung*). This shall help these adolescents to find a suitable training occupation and enter the world of work.

## Legal requirements in Germany

The Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) provides that competence for school education lies with the *Länder* Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs. In the German Federal Government, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is responsible for general policy issues of vocational education and training. The recognition of the individual occupations requiring formal training is the task of the federal ministries responsible for the respective

occupational field. In the vast majority of cases, responsibility lies with the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWt). But approval by the BMBF is required in all cases. [22]

Training occupations and respective training regulations are recognised under the Vocational Training Act *BiG Berufsbildungsgesetz* or the crafts code (HwO). The content and learning outcomes of the vocational training is determined by the BiG and the training regulations. [23]

The most important tool for assessing non-formal and informal learning outcomes is admission to final examinations under Section 45 (2) of the Vocational Training Act (BiG), known as the “*Externen- Prüfung*” (examination for external candidates, i.e. those not involved in a formal vocational training programme). [24]

## Labour market demands

Vocational training must meet the demands of industry. If there is a need for changes, e.g. in the qualification requirements, the German Federal Government, the federal states, the industry and the trade unions agree on the basic principles for adaptation. As self-governing bodies of industry, the chambers have been assigned public tasks in dual training (i.e. competent bodies). These include counselling and monitoring functions with regard to the individual training contracts. Training advisers of the chambers verify the aptitude of companies and instructors for providing training and advise companies and trainees. [25]

## Strengths

- Public full-time vocational schools and studying at universities free of charge, apprentices in companies get an allowance
- Financial support (BaföG) for young people from low-income families visiting secondary school
- Several Government Programmes for increased vocational training (e.g. programme „*Jobstarter*“ and “*Perspektive Berufsabschluss*” - Perspective vocational

qualification) and to avoid early drop-out, e.g. Programme *VerA - zur Verhinderung von Ausbildungsabbrüchen*) [26]

- Pre- vocational training for young people with e.g. learning difficulties or poor language skills/ migrant background (*Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung*)
- The practical relevance of the dual system of training education entails a close link of the training system and the labour market and facilitates the entry into the world of work
- Nationwide standardised educational regulations allow professional mobility
- Under specific conditions a vocational qualification (degree) is possible also without a regular training - external examination by the chambers
- In 2014 the BMBF has started an initiative for the validation of non-formal and informal acquired professional competences, these shall be better attested and certified [27]

### Weaknesses

- Still not the same opportunities for all young people regarding professional qualification and career - in almost no other industrial nation the socio- economic background is as decisive for success at school and regarding (vocational) education opportunities as in Germany [28]
- Will the trend to study intensify the shortage of skilled professionals in Germany? What might be the long-term effects on the labour market, also regarding its absorption capacity of academically qualified persons?
- Do (information about) the many support offers for vocation education reach these young people who need them most? Are they accessible for adolescents at risk of social exclusion?

## 3) Guidance and Coaching Services

### Providers in Germany

The employment agency in Germany is legally obliged to offer (free) career guidance (§ 29 SGB III - Social Insurance Code). There are agencies in all major cities and towns (more than 150 employment agencies, with 600 branch offices) which are in charge for persons getting unemployment benefit and looking for a new job. Additionally there are so- called Job Centres which secure basic income and also offer guidance and coaching for jobseekers, partly by case management. At the employment agencies and Job Centres work many guidance practitioners for (initial) individual in-house guidance.



There is no nationwide uniform coaching and guidance programme, offers may differ in the different federal states and also in the regions of a state. Unemployed can also benefit from programmes of the European Social Fund (ESF) in Germany which support different coaching offers, often at regional level.

The employment agencies in all states offer (short-term) free coaching for school graduates, also high school graduates, unemployed persons and employed threatened of dismissal, and for persons returning to employment etc. If required the guidance practitioners from the public institution send the guidance seekers to contracted private coaching providers in order to allow longer coaching support (up to six month or longer).

Topics of the coaching can be inter alia career orientation and guidance regarding (re-)entering the world of work after a time-out, skills and competences, application training and coaching for job interviews.

Moreover many private/ for profit institutions and many self-employed coaches, guidance practitioners etc. offer career advice (fee-required). Interested persons can choose from several different approaches like e.g. psychoanalytic or systemic coaching or coaches using Transactional Analysis methods.

### **Legal requirements for coaching and guidance**

Career adviser or coach is not a protected term in Germany, and formally no legal minimum standard or consistent access requirements for this professional field exists. This also refers for self-employed guidance practitioners [29]. Independently from his or her profession, education or study everybody can call him- or herself coach or career adviser, and there are more than 300 coaching trainings from different providers in Germany. Associations in the field of career guidance like the DVB (*Deutscher Verband für Bildungs- und Berufsberatung e.V.* – German Association for Education and Vocational Guidance) or the International Coach Federation ICF in Germany have defined quality standards and seek to establish ethical guidelines and core competencies for coaching [30], but they are not legally binding.

Guidance practitioners of private providers in public mission must meet the requirements of the public client, e.g. the employment agency. These requirements can be e.g. a tertiary degree in pedagogic or social work and a relevant working experience in the field of coaching and guidance.

## Financial support

If necessary the employment agency or Job Centre bears the costs for counselling for jobseekers. There´s also financial support by the ESF and its national and regional support programmes. Costs for coaching in companies (group/ team coaching, individual coaching e.g. for managers) usually are paid by the employer.

## Strengths

- Free guidance and coaching services for unemployed provided by the employment agency and Job Centre, and assigned institutions
- Many coaches offer career guidance, different coaching approaches you can choose from

## Weaknesses

- Insufficient state control regarding professional training and qualification of a “coach”/ “guidance practitioner”
- Non- uniform, confusing market for coach qualification and graduation - certificates are mostly self- issued certificates (e.g. from a certain coaching association)
- Coaching and guidance is a very sensitive subject - inadequate qualification and/ or lack of personal suitability of a (self-titled) coach may cause more harm than good
- Are persons in need of coaching and guidance encouraged enough to make use of this possibility to make progress?

## References

- 1 cf. <https://www.bmbf.de/de/weiterbildung-71.html>
- 2 Hensen, Kristina Alice, Hippach-Schneider, Ute: CEDEFOP ReferNet Germany VET in Europe Country report, 2012, p. 20, hereinafter Cedefop
- 3 cf. *ibid.* p. 21
- 4 *ibid.* p. 19
- 5 cf. *ibid.* p. 21
- 6 also see <https://www.bmbf.de/de/haben-sie-fragen-zu-bildung-oder-weiterbildung-dann-rufen-sie-uns-einfach-an-264.html>
- 7 cf. <http://www.meister-bafoeg.info/de/36.php>
- 8 cf. <https://www.bmbf.de/de/bundesprogramm-bildungspraemie-880.html>
- 9 Cedefop p. 21
- 10 cf. Bürmann, Marvin and Frick, Frank: Deutscher Weiterbildungsatlas - Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse, 2015, p.6
- 11 cf. *ibid.* 56 ff
12. cf. *ibid.* p. 53ff
- 13 Cedefop, p. 26
- 14 [http://www.frankfurt-main.ihk.de/berufsbildung/marktplatz/projekte/schule/berufsvorbereitung/duale\\_system/](http://www.frankfurt-main.ihk.de/berufsbildung/marktplatz/projekte/schule/berufsvorbereitung/duale_system/)
- 15 Cedefop, p. 12
- 16 cf. *ibid.* p.12
- 17 *ibid.* p. 18
- 18 cf. <http://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/2015-04/ausbildung-studium-statistik-studienabbrecher>
- 19 Berufsbildungsbericht des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung 2015, p.124
- 20 cf. *ibid.* p. 4
- 21 Cedefop, p. 32
- 22 cf. *ibid.* p. 11
- 23 cf. <https://www.bmbf.de/pub/berufsbildungsgesetz.pdf>
- 24 Cedefop, p. 22
- 25 cf. *ibid.* p. 12
- 26 cf. <https://www.bmbf.de/de/berufliche-bildung-69.html>
- 27 cf. Berufsbildungsbericht des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung 2015, p. 6
- 28 cf. <https://www.bmbf.de/de/internationale-vergleichsstudien-1229.html>
- 29 cf. <http://www.dvb-fachverband.de/102.html>
- 30 cf. <http://www.coachfederation.de/>