

# Alliance for Initial and Further Training 2015 – 2018



Bundesministerium  
für Wirtschaft  
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## Vocational training is a success story for young people and companies

The dual system of vocational training in Germany offers young people a broad-based, high-value vocational qualification and ensures that the companies can draw on an outstanding pool of skilled labour coming on to the market.

The training provided is so close to actual working life that it sets young people up well for the world of work and, via further training options, opens up a variety of prospects for their careers and personal lives.

Well-trained skilled workers form the backbone of the innovative capacities of Germany's companies. The dual system of vocational training in Germany is the reason why we have low youth unemployment compared with the situation in other European countries.

A well-grounded, comprehensive vocational training course with a modern curriculum provides a good platform on which the young people and the companies can cope with the changing needs of the world of work. Many countries are interested in integrating elements of the dual model into their education systems.

## Vocational training is a vital factor for Germany's competitiveness

The dual vocational training system is a key factor for the success and competitiveness of Germany's economy. Vocational training plays an essential role in providing the German economy with the skills it needs, and makes a vital contribution towards strengthening its innovative capacities and competitiveness.

We have a shared interest in continuing to strengthen the dual system of vocational training in Germany and in highlighting even more clearly its significance and the opportunities it generates for careers and skilled employment.

The business community, the trade unions, the Federal Government, the Federal Employment Agency and the *Länder* want to work together in the Alliance for Initial and Further Training and ensure that vocational training remains fit for the future and promote it amongst young people and their parents, in schools and higher education institutions, and in society in general.

There will be a joint campaign in which the members of the Alliance will promote and strengthen vocational training.

The value of vocational training should once again become more deeply anchored in society.

Vocational training deserves the same degree of public regard as academic training. We need both vocational and academic training to maintain our economy's competitiveness. We need joint efforts to make a switch between the systems a natural progression, and we must improve permeability. The dual system of vocational training ensures that the necessary skills are delivered to the labour market and, like academic training, it offers a good platform for successful career development.

It is vital to enhance and improve the focus on future occupations at all schools. This will also play a major part in reducing the high number of young people switching or dropping out of courses, both in vocational and in academic training.

The social partners, the companies, the chambers and the vocational schools make a major contribution towards the success of the dual system. The social partners ensure that a fair balance is struck between the interests of employers and employees, particularly in terms of the ongoing evolution of the dual training system and the rules which govern it.

The situation on the training market has changed fundamentally over the last few years. There are considerable regional disparities. Due to the demographic trend, the number of school leavers will continue to fall in the coming years. At the same time, there is an increasing mismatch between the career hopes of young people and the regional availability of training places. In recent times, this development has become worse due to the increasing desire on the part of young people to study for a degree.

On the one hand, the number of people signing training contracts has decreased. On the other, many of the training places on offer remain unfilled. We also want to improve the opportunities for disadvantaged and disabled young people and for young people with migration-related problems to obtain vocational qualifications.

According to current forecasts, which take into consideration the immigration seen over the last few years and a higher labour participation rate, the labour force is expected to shrink by more than a million by 2030. The most severe shortages are expected to occur amongst skilled workers with vocational qualifications.

The business community, the trade unions, the Federal Government and the *Länder* agree that they wish to work together to improve the situation on the vocational training market. In the Alliance for Initial and Further Training, they have set out the following objectives:

- to clearly enhance the significance and attractiveness of vocational training in Germany,
- to further reduce the number of young people without a school-leaving certificate,
- to provide each person interested in training with a “path” - in the context of the training guarantee addressed in the Coalition agreement - which can lead him or her as quickly as possible to a vocational qualification,
- to achieve a lasting reduction in the mismatch between applicants and companies, both in regional and occupational terms,
- on the basis of better data, to increase the number of training places on offer and the number of companies willing to provide training,
- to further reduce the number of young people in the transitional sphere, and to orient the transitional sphere to state-recognised vocational training courses as much as possible,
- to keep developing the quality of the training,
- to strengthen further training, and particularly to strengthen upgrading training.

Here, vocational training for young people is a clear priority.

The partners in the Alliance wish to work together both to attract more high-achieving young people into vocational training and to make it possible for more young people with worse initial prospects, young people with migration-related problems, and people with disabilities to enter vocational training.

The partners in the Alliance have identified strategic fields of action and agreed on measures.

## Preparing young people better for their occupation and the world of work

The foundations for the choice of occupation and successful training of young people are laid in schools, families and the social environment.

The Alliance aims to ensure that each young person is given the necessary preconditions for successful vocational training and that the orientation towards future careers is strengthened in all types of schools.

A greater orientation towards the world of work at all schools will also play an important part in reducing the growing number of people switching and dropping out of both vocational and academic courses.

To this end, the partners in the Alliance are launching the following measures:

- Working from their various programmes and structures, and in cooperation with the Federal Government, the *Länder* will develop a coherent concept for vocational orientation and the transition from school to work. They will roll this out in close collaboration with all the local stakeholders. In particular, it is necessary to identify the potential of young people at an early stage and to ensure that they are given tailored, ongoing support as they orient themselves to a (choice of) career. For young people with a disability, this is of particular importance, as it provides an essential foundation for the most inclusive start possible in working life. With a view to providing comprehensive, needs-based careers advice, the *Länder* and the Federal Employment Agency will ensure that in future the dual system of vocational training is also given more prominence as a career prospect at *Gymnasium* (grammar) schools.
- The *Länder* will work to ensure that career orientation is made a firm element of initial and further training for teachers, and is also a task to be covered by schools with the involvement of the Federal Employment Agency.
- The best place to experience the real world of work is inside a company. High-quality internships offer both young people and companies the chance to build up lasting contacts, and can be a door-opener into a company offering vocational training. Other players (e.g. the public service) are also involved in this area.

- Each year, the business community will offer 500,000 internships for school students across the country as part of their career orientation. In order to ensure that these internships offer genuine added value for companies and school students, joint quality standards are being developed by the business community, trade unions and the *Länder*. Further to this, both teachers and advisers from the local employment agencies are to be able to participate in individual internships in companies.
- The business community and the trade unions will increase their commitment within the regional structures to early-stage orientation to careers and the world of work for school students. In order to implement this, the business community will for example make it possible for each interested school to engage in cooperation with companies.
- The *Länder* will examine the need to amend their legislation in order to improve the cooperation between general schools and the providers of vocational training and the welfare organisations so that an early dovetailing of the measures can offer each young person the best possible support as he or she moves on into working life. It is important to obtain and record better and more focused statistics on the transition from school to working life. The aim is to intensify the cooperation in the various “Young People and Career” alliances (e.g. careers agencies for young people) with the general schools. In order to achieve this, the partners in the Alliance will discuss and develop joint criteria for success.

All of the Alliance partners will offer various activities in the regions as part of a nationwide “Training Week” at the beginning of the year to promote the attractions of dual vocational training and its career opportunities. Also, they will keep up their efforts to promote vocational training.

### **Giving everyone a chance to obtain in-company training**

Every applicant is to receive an offer which can lead to a vocational qualification.

The priority will be placed on training in companies.

The business community will make available a sufficient number of training places for this. It will undertake additional efforts to make this happen, and intends to provide 20,000 additional training places in 2015 compared with the number of training places reported to the Federal

Employment Agency in 2014. We wish to maintain this level in the following years as well.

The chambers will contact individual companies which were unable to conclude any training contracts in the preceding year and will give them advice to improve their prospects of filling their training places. In mid-2015, the partners in the Alliance will agree on further measures and services for the 2016-2018 period.

The business community will make each young person wishing to receive a training place three offers of vocational training if he or she does not have a contract by 30 September. Here, the occupational and geographical mobility of the young person plays an important role, and may be backed with support from the local employment agencies or the *Länder*.

Collective agreements between employers and trade unions can make a contribution towards adequate provision of vocational training in general and for disadvantaged and disabled young people and people with migration-related problems in particular.

As part of the “Education Chains” initiative, the Federal Government and the Federal Employment Agency will cover the funding requirement for the career entry support programme for young people at risk of failing to obtain the lower secondary school leaving certificate up to the 2018-2019 school year (measure commencing in the school year before the pupils’ final year), and as far as possible will include more schools in the initiative. The aim is to integrate these young people directly into vocational training in a company wherever possible.

The partners in the Alliance, and particularly the business community and the trade unions, will conduct joint measures to significantly increase the proportion of young migrants receiving vocational training. In particular, this includes a greater expansion of local networks of chambers, trade unions and migrants’ associations. More efforts are to be made to address the young people’s families. Also, the proportion of companies providing training which are owned by someone with a migrant background is to be increased further. To this end, successful projects like KAUSA (Coordination Office for Training in Foreign-Owned Companies) are to be continued and expanded.

The business community and the trade unions will make it easier to find training places in different regions via specific services such as apprenticeship exchanges and mobility assistance for young people from different regions. Young people receiving instruction in the form of teaching blocks should not have to cope with additional

costs. Against this background, the *Länder* will examine the possibility of cross-regional local public transport tickets for these young people receiving training. The Federal Employment Agency is expanding its advisory services for young people interested in receiving training by providing detailed advice not only for the young person's main career interest, but also for the second or third interest, and will provide information about training places outside the region and the related mobility assistance. Also, in future applications for and approvals of vocational training grants from the Federal Employment Agency will be able to take place online.

The Federal Employment Agency will expand the assistance available for certain trainees. All young people who need this support in order to take up and successfully complete their training will be able to obtain it in future. The Federal Government initiate legislation to achieve this.

The new instrument of assisted training particularly aims to support small and medium-sized enterprises which offer training to lower-achieving young people. In order to ensure that assisted training meets with a high take-up rate, the detailed concept of this programme is being coordinated by the Federal Employment Agency with the business community and the trade unions.

The business community and the trade unions will promote the assisted training concept in the companies.

We believe that the instrument of assisted training is a good way to encourage more young people to obtain a vocational qualification and to support the young people as they receive their training. We now want to roll out the assisted training programme. In a first step, we aim to offer up to 10,000 places for assisted training in the 2015-16 training year. The funding for the assisted training comes from the budget of the Federal Employment Agency and, in the case of young people covered by the subsistence allowance for job-seekers, from the integration budget of the job centres. The partners in the Alliance also wish to put the assisted training scheme on a permanent footing. In 2015, they will take a joint decision on the expansion and its funding from the 2016-17 training year. The Federal Government will launch legislation for the instrument of assisted training.

The partners in the Alliance will evaluate the experience made with assisted training, other training-related support and the career entry support programme.

In order to stop people dropping out of training, the Federal Government and the *Länder* want to continue or build

on programmes like "VerA" (preventing drop-outs and strengthening young people receiving vocational training), "QuABB" (qualified vocational pedagogical support for training in vocational schools and companies) and "Stark für Ausbildung" (strong for training). The partners in the Alliance want to see greater use being made of the support available for people receiving training.

Help is to be given to young people from abroad who receive training via the MobiPro-EU programme (Special Programme for Promotion of Occupational Mobility of Young People Interested in Vocational Training and of Unemployed Professionals from Europe) in order to prevent them from dropping out of training, via the existing possibilities to offer professional and closely meshed support and appropriate language teaching.

In the case of young people who do not immediately commence vocational training, the business community will provide 20,000 "introductory training" (EQ) places a year as a bridge into vocational training. The business associations and the trade unions will encourage companies to provide introductory training places for disadvantaged young people (EQ Plus) and for young people with migration-related problems. The introductory training courses are to be particularly focused on these target groups. In order to increase the take-up of EQ and especially of EQ Plus places, chambers and trade unions will provide young people with information about this option. Companies issue documents of confirmation for those who successfully complete their introductory training courses. On this basis, the chambers will issue certificates in response to an application from the young person or the company.

The Federal Employment Agency will encourage employers to take on more disadvantaged young people and young people with migration-related problems under the EQ and EQ Plus schemes. The *Länder* will guarantee the right for all EQ participants to attend a vocational school course.

Vocational training in companies will continue to be the priority in future. Young people seeking a training course will receive training outside companies on a cooperative basis only if the individual in question did not receive any offers from a company. In this way, where individuals have problems, the services on offer to them can be closely related to the companies, and this can facilitate their entry into the world of work. These services will be organised by the Federal Employment Agency on an individual basis in coordination with the other regional partners in the Alliance.

The business community is prepared to take more young people receiving cooperative training outside the companies and to integrate them into in-company training after the first year of training. In order to achieve this, false incentives to remain in training courses outside the companies are to be reduced.

Various *Länder* measures offer some possibilities to catch young people in danger of falling through the system; here, again, the aim is to transfer these people into in-company training.

People with no vocational qualification bear by far the greatest risk on the labour market. In the group of 25-34-year-olds, approximately 1.4 million people do not have a vocational qualification. The Federal Government and the *Länder* are sticking to the promise made at the Dresden education summit and wish to reduce the ratio of young people without any training from roughly 13% at present to 8% in 2018. The partners in the Alliance agree to motivate and attract these people into vocational training as a “second chance”. To this end, the Federal Employment Agency will work together with the Federal Government, the business community and the trade unions to develop the measures further.

### **Improving the attractiveness and the quality**

The partners in the Alliance wish to improve the quality and the attractiveness of dual vocational training.

The training on offer has to be of high quality at both places of instruction - in the company and in the vocational school - if young people are to find it an attractive option and they and their parents are to choose it.

To achieve this, the following measures are planned:

- The partners in the Alliance want to make dual vocational training more attractive by offering additional services. These include the expansion of the availability of combined initial and further training courses, periods spent abroad, and additional qualifications. The intention is to attract more high-achieving school students into the dual vocational training system.
- The partners in the Alliance will work together to make significantly more part-time training courses possible in future. The business community and the *Länder*, which are responsible for the vocational schools, agree that the training environment needs to be made more family-friendly, whilst taking account of the needs of the companies. The aim is to achieve an equally weighted reduction in the time

spent receiving instruction in vocational schools and in companies.

- The *Länder* want to maintain the availability of vocational school services at reasonable distances. This includes the retention of the “specialised class” principle and the development of concepts to attract qualified specialised instructors and to ensure that the vocational schools can keep pace with advances in technology. The *Länder* will ensure that the quality of the vocational schools is maintained by undertaking regular assessments. The demographic development offers scope for this.
- The business community and the trade unions are joint advocates of high-quality in-company training. Together, they will disseminate examples of good training.

The works councils are also doing more in the companies to promote good training. The chambers are fulfilling their mandate to ensure the quality of training in the companies.

- The business community and the trade unions will work together to develop a low-threshold complaints management system and will test it out on a pilot basis in selected regions so that young people experiencing problems with the quality of the training can receive better support. The umbrella associations of the business community and the trade unions would like the vocational training committees to focus regularly on the question of quality.
- The business community and the trade unions want to reduce the number of contracts being terminated without an alternative on offer.
- The Federal Government will continue to work with the business community and the trade unions to foster the cross-border mobility of the trainees.

### **Strengthening advanced vocational training**

Vocational and academic training are of equal value. They are two good ways into the world of careers and work, and both open doors towards further qualifications and career opportunities. The partners in the Alliance support the equality of vocational and academic training. They want to increase the permeability between the educational systems in both directions and to get this message across much more strongly. The following is agreed:

- The *Länder* will work to ensure that the higher education institutions open themselves up more to people with vocational qualifications (including appropriate integrational measures). This will particularly involve a further reduction in barriers to people who have completed their vocational training (entry examinations, periods of professional experience, trial semesters, etc.).
- The *Länder* want a transfer of credits to be possible between higher education institutions for selected occupations and related degree courses.
- The partners in the Alliance want to target those dropping out of higher education and attract them into initial and further vocational training. The Federal Government and the *Länder* will back private-sector activities, and particularly those of the chambers, with corresponding measures.
- All the partners in the Alliance want the opportunities to receive upgrading training and the funding available for this to become better known.
- In close cooperation with the business community and the trade unions, the Federal Government will launch legislation to adapt the Upgrading Training Assistance Act.
- In the field of further vocational training, the partners in the Alliance particularly want to focus on “second chance” training for employees without a qualification. They want even more use to be made of the possibilities to provide support, and to develop these possibilities further so that young adults without vocational training in particular can obtain a vocational qualification.
- From 2015, the business community and the trade unions will, with support from the Federal Government, implement measures to promote further training in practice under the “ESF social partner guidelines on securing skills: offering further training and promoting equality”. The partners in the Alliance will take advantage of the findings from the implementation of this programme and will examine the ways to roll out good practice across the country.

## Acting together

The changed situation on the labour market necessitates networked and transparent action by all stakeholders at Federal, *Länder* and municipal level. Support is given to structured approaches in the *Länder*. The partners in the Alliance will make use of the practical experience made by the companies providing training. An ongoing analysis of the challenges forms the basis for a review of the policies and the funding conditions. This is the only way to ensure that people interested in receiving training go straight into companies for that training, and that no-one is “lost” after they leave general school. The Alliance for Initial and Further Training takes a partnership-based approach. Each partner makes its own substantive contributions. All of the stakeholders in the Alliance will regularly assess (in terms of quality and quantity) the agreed targets and contributions. Where necessary, they will bring them into line with the current developments on the training market.

Further indicators are to be developed jointly in the first year. To this end, better data are to be obtained on the number of vocational training places available and the number of companies willing to provide training.

The Alliance has two bodies: a high-level steering group and a working-level committee. The working-level committee will undertake a regular assessment of the ongoing activities of the Alliance and will pinpoint current challenges on the training market. Also, the committee will hold workshops with practitioners in the field of initial and further training. It will prepare the meeting of the steering group in which the leaders of the partners in the Alliance will exchange views. This will take place each spring.

The Alliance for Initial and Further Training will run until the end of 2018.