



The German Vocational Training System

The German vocational education and training system, also known as the dual training system, is highly recognized worldwide due to its combination of theory and training embedded in a real-life work environment.

The dual system is firmly established in the German education system. The main characteristic of the dual system is cooperation between mainly small and medium sized companies, on the one hand, and publicly funded vocational schools, on the other. This cooperation is regulated by law. Trainees in the dual system typically spend part of each week at a vocational school and the other part at a company, or they may spend longer periods at each place before alternating. Dual training usually lasts two to three-and-a-half years.

The German dual system offers an excellent approach to skill development, covering initial vocational education and training, further vocational education and training, careers, employability, occupational competence and identity. Thanks to the dual system, Germany enjoys low youth unemployment and high skill levels.

In Germany, about 50 percent of all school-leavers undergo vocational training provided by companies which consider the dual system the best way to acquire skilled staff.

The Vocational Training Act of 1969, which was amended in 2005, introduced this close alliance between the Federal Government, the federal states (the 'Länder') and companies with a view to providing young people with training in nationally recognized occupations which is then documented accordingly by means of a certificate issued by a competent body, i.e. a chamber of industry and commerce or a chamber of crafts and trades.

Continuous updating of training regulations

There are currently around 330 occupations requiring formal training in Germany. Employer organizations and trade unions are the drivers when it comes to updating and creating new training regulations and occupational profiles or modernizing further training regulations.

As a result, training, testing and certificates are standardized in all industries throughout the country. This ensures that all apprentices receive the same training regardless of region and company. Moreover, employers have trust in these certificates as they provide evidence of what an individual knows and is able to do.

The shared responsibility between government, employers and trade unions also helps in responding to emerging new challenges such as digital innovations like the Internet of Things which will have an increasing impact on manufacturing and the way work is organized.



The digital revolution will bring about significant changes to occupational profiles and training regulations as well as to continuing vocational education and training (CVET), providing challenges that are already being addressed, for example, by the joint “Skills for the digital workplace of tomorrow” initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). <https://www.bibb.de/>

Best form of recruitment for companies

Businesses that take part in the dual training scheme consider vocational training to be the best form of personnel recruitment. Companies which provide training not only save on recruitment costs but also avoid the risk of hiring the wrong employee for the job. Investment in first-class training is a key factor for success in an increasingly competitive world.

The main benefit for apprentices is that they receive market-relevant training that improves their chances on the labour market which is constantly evolving and upgrading skills in response to the latest innovations of the digital age while simultaneously broadening their social and democratic participation.

International attractiveness of high-quality training

There is a growing awareness across Europe and all over the world that excellent work-based vocational education and training is vital for competitiveness and social participation. Demand from other countries for cooperation with Germany in this area remains high. To this end, the Federal Education Ministry supports initiatives such as the European Alliance for Apprenticeships launched by the European Commission.

Together with the relevant ministries from countries which also have a dual system (Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Denmark), Germany has launched an online “Apprenticeship Toolbox” to provide support for decision-makers throughout Europe who want to implement the key principles of dual apprenticeship schemes (<http://www.apprenticeship-toolbox.eu/>). The development of high-quality vocational education and training is also the guiding principle of bilateral cooperation under the Berlin Memorandum of December 2013 with Greece, Portugal, Italy, Slovakia and Latvia.

The Federal Education Ministry is also closely cooperating with the OECD in the context of work-based learning.

By Federal Ministry of Education and Research <https://www.bmbf.de/en/index.html>