



# Strategy of the Federal Government on international cooperation in vocational education and training

22.05.2019

*The Federal Government has been involved in international vocational education and training cooperation for many years and is encountering increasing demand for German expertise in dual VET. Global mega trends such as the transformation of the world of work being brought about by digitalisation, an increase in migration movements across the planet, climate change and globalisation are, however, creating new challenges. These are being addressed via vehicles such as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The strategy presented here forms an overall umbrella for the alignment of the international VET cooperation pursued by the Federal Government and for the shaping of activities in conjunction with further stakeholders. The Federal Government is committed to the joint strategic actions undertaken by its departments and strives to achieve the greatest possible degree of coherence and transparency in the international VET cooperation activities of the federal ministries. The new strategy updates instruments relating to coordination and agreement within the scope of existing budgetary and financial planning approaches and encompasses the supplementary goal of enhancing the effectiveness of international VET cooperation in overall terms by creating synergies and complementarity between individual initiatives.*

Initial and continuing vocational education and training has become a key international development factor which has gained worldwide recognition. The Federal Government's international involvement in VET cooperation reflects its commitment to equal access to vocational training and to vocational education and training which is inclusive, of high quality and aligned to the labour market. In establishing quality, practice-related vocational education and training, the Federal Government is pursuing the objective of making a worldwide contribution towards

- ensuring political, economic and social participation;
- raising the skills and qualification level of workers;
- increasing employability;
- securing a supply of qualified skilled workers for local, German and international companies abroad;
- supporting technological developments and competitiveness;
- creating future prospects;
- stabilising societies;
- providing people with good long-term opportunities in their home countries by enabling them to access qualified and decent employment.

The Federal Government favours the form of dual vocational education and training practised in Germany. This system combines company-based and school-based learning. It imparts comprehensive employability skills and ensures future-proof training, which is oriented towards the labour market and aligned to the needs of both companies and employees. Its high degree of permeability and connectivity opens up a wide range of career pathways, which offer opportunities for development and advancement.

The Federal Government also favours the use of this tried-and-tested form of vocational education and training abroad. It enters into dialogue with governments, which show interest in the German dual VET system. The aim of the Federal Government is to help partner countries in effectively integrating elements of practice-oriented or dual VET into their respective systems in a context-specific way by offering sustainable support in line with the partner country's needs. When cooperating with its partners, the Federal Government is guided by the five principles of the dual system:

- Joint responsibility of the state, trade and industry and the social partners
- Learning within the work process
- Acceptance of national occupational, training and examination standards
- Qualified vocational education and training staff at companies and vocational schools
- Institutionalised VET and labour market research and VET consultancy

The Federal Government emphasises the individual responsibility of each respective state for future-oriented and sustainable vocational education and training. Selection of partner countries takes place on the basis of educational, economic, labour market, cultural, social

and foreign policy objectives. The government departments set their own priorities for this purpose within the scope of their own areas of responsibility<sup>1</sup>. Agreement and decision-making processes between the federal ministries involved and the coordination of these with German cooperation stakeholders<sup>2</sup> and with German international structures abroad are a key part of the initiation of cooperation agreements by the Federal Government.

The Federal Government assists policy-making stakeholders in the partner countries with the creation and implementation of a framework for the structure and further development of vocational training. It uses this as a vehicle to empower state institutions, companies, employers' associations and social partners. The Federal Government also systematically and strategically integrates German state and non-state stakeholders such as the federal states, chamber organisations, social partners, key civil society representatives, and the education and training sector into international VET cooperation.

The Federal Government deploys a package of instruments to coordinate and agree international VET cooperation.

### **Round Table for international vocational education and training cooperation**

The "Round Table" acts as an information centre and coordinating agency for the agreement of activities in international VET cooperation. Its purpose is to facilitate collaboration between departments and across the organisation as a whole. The members of the Round Table comprise representatives from the federal ministries, from the various organisations which sustain the German VET system (in particular the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, the German Confederation of Trade Unions, the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training), from the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, from the Conference of the Ministers of Economic Affairs, and from the education and training sector. They assist with the implementation of international VET cooperation abroad. The way in which the Round Table operates is governed by rules of procedure. The German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (GOVET), which is based at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, acts as the administrative arm for the Round Table.

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<sup>1</sup> The main focuses of the departments are presented in the annex.

<sup>2</sup> A list of the members of the Round Table for International Cooperation in VET is provided in the annex.

## **Information provision of the German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training at BIBB (GOVET)**

GOVET supports the Federal Government in the implementation and further development of its strategy. In its capacity as a central point of contact, GOVET advises international VET cooperation stakeholders and interested parties from home and abroad. GOVET collates and provides information relating to cooperation agreements between international VET cooperation stakeholders. It also prepares analyses on countries, vocational education and training systems and specialist topics. Technical and financial responsibility for GOVET rests with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development also support GOVET by seconding staff.

### **Country strategies**

The federal ministries work together to develop joint strategies in countries where they perceive that coordination requirements are higher. These lay the foundations for coordination formats, cooperation models and the integration of state and non-state stakeholders. They may also stipulate joint contents and divisions of labour within the cooperation agreements.

### **Round Tables at German missions abroad**

German embassies or consulate generals and chambers of commerce and industry abroad act as initial contact partners for vocational education and training cooperation. In many cases, German missions abroad maintain “Round Tables” in order to coordinate and network with German stakeholders in international VET cooperation. The chambers of commerce and industry abroad use these to incorporate the interests of German and of local trade and industry. Information and experiences gathered from the Round Tables are fed back to the Federal Government.

### **Evaluation of German international VET cooperation**

German international VET cooperation is regularly evaluated.

## ANNEX:

### **I: The international VET cooperation activities of the specialist ministries**

- Federal Foreign Office (AA) – Whenever possible and useful, the Federal Foreign Office acts via its missions abroad and in close conjunction with the German chambers of commerce and industry in other countries to support networking between interested German stakeholders. It sets up “Round Tables” at the missions abroad to create a platform that can deliver a coherent presence and applies an appropriate weighting to vocational education and training in the context of bilateral relationships.
- Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) – The BMWi involves itself in international vocational education and training cooperation via its foreign trade funding instruments in particular. Its most important objectives are securing a supply of skilled workers for German companies abroad and their local partners and strengthening the international competitiveness of the German education and training sector. The German chambers of commerce and industry abroad, which are funded by the BMWi, act as locally established platforms for the promotion of foreign trade. They enable networking to take place between companies, education and training providers and state agencies. The German chambers of commerce and industry abroad work closely with the chambers in Germany to offer needs-based and quality-assured VET services in other countries. The Skills Experts Programme, which the BMWi offers at selected chambers of commerce and industry abroad, provides German companies with specific support for the dual training of the skilled workers they require. The BMWi’s SME Market Development Programme offers companies from the education and training sector the opportunity to explore new target markets and their areas of potential. The BMWi Advanced Manager Training Programme allows management staff from the partner countries to familiarise themselves with dual company-based training in Germany in a practice-related way.
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) – In the area of system consultancy, the BMAS focuses on ensuring that consideration is given from the very outset to aspects such as career choice, training placement and successful education-training-work transitions. The Federal Employment Agency (BA) has extensive expertise at its disposal and is able to adopt a holistic and systemic approach towards supporting the establishment and quality development of relevant provision in partner countries.



- Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) – The BMEL mainly works with selected emerging countries via the projects in its Bilateral Cooperation Programme. The basic formats of this cooperation comprise specialist dialogue, practice-related demonstration and training projects conducted in conjunction with trade and industry, and cooperation projects with associations. Some individual technical dialogue projects address issues relating to academic and vocational initial and continuing training in a detailed manner. Sustainable cultivation, modern and species-appropriate animal husbandry are piloted and showcased at demonstration and training centres, which also impart practical skills and knowledge. These centres are aimed at skilled workers and management staff (including consultants, teachers and students). The objective is to show governments the significance of practical advanced training and highlight the opportunities available if trade and industry are also involved.
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) – The BMBF is responsible for vocational education and training legislation and for BIBB. It coordinates decision-making within the Federal Government by heading the Round Table for International Vocational Education and Training Cooperation and synchronises the federal state-related approach of German stakeholders by liaising with important social partners and chamber structures. The BMBF is available to the education ministries of partner countries as a contact partner of equal status. With technical support from GOVET at BIBB, it assists partner states with the reform of their vocational education and training systems and helps trade and industry to secure a supply of skilled workers abroad. The BMBF uses the “iMOVE: Training – Made in Germany” initiative at BIBB and the “Internationalisation of Vocational Education and Training” funding initiative to support German education and training providers in expanding their activities abroad. The BMBF funds research into international vocational training.
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) – Vocational education and training is one of the core focuses of German development policy. The BMZ provides future-oriented, practice-related and inclusive vocational education and training in line with requirements in all partner countries. German development policy cooperation within the area of vocational education and training helps to foster the employability of people in developing countries, supports sustainable economic growth and social development, and creates future prospects. Skilled workers and VET staff in the partner countries are trained within the scope of state development cooperation and via direct cooperation with local and German companies. VET partnerships are used as a vehicle to strengthen local chamber structures and

vocational education and training institutions. The BMZ also finances the expansion and equipping of VET institutions and makes VET funds available to provide an incentive for companies to invest in vocational training. In addition, the BMZ supports vocational training measures offered by non-state stakeholders such as NGOs and churches.

## **II: International VET cooperation stakeholders represented at the Round Table for International Vocational Education and Training Cooperation**

Federal Employment Agency (BA)

Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)

Federal Office of Administration (BVA)

Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK)

Conference of the Ministers of Economic Affairs (WMK)

Federal Association for VET Export (BV-BBE)

Federal Association of Vocational Education and Training Teachers (BvLB)

Federal Association of the Wholesale, Foreign Trade and Service Sectors (BGA)

Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA)

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)

German Trade Union Confederation (DGB)

Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK)

German Aerospace Center (DLR- PT)

Didacta Association

Don Bosco Mondo

Teachers and Lecturers Trade Union (GEW)

Goethe Institute

iMOVE – Training Made in Germany (BIBB)

Institute for International Cooperation of the German Association of Adult Education Centres (dvv)

KfW Banking Group (German government-owned development bank)

sequa GmbH

Senior Expert Service – a foundation established by German Trade and Industry for

International Cooperation (SES)  
German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH)