

2 Getting migrants ready for vocational education and training in Germany

This chapter looks into the hurdles many migrants meet as they get ready for vocational education and training (VET). OECD data show that both migrants and natives with immigrant parents often possess levels of academic proficiency and types of professional aspiration which are significantly different from the native population. Obstacles relate to confidence in pursuing VET routes, possession of relevant knowledge and skills and access to social networks providing advice and support. The chapter explores policy options and illustrates examples of effective practice from Germany and other OECD countries on how to successfully equip migrants with the necessary skills to enter upper secondary VET. The chapter first discuss how to get migrants and natives with immigrant parents informed about the prospects of VET, while the second section is about the broad variety of preparatory measures to build up necessary skills to enter VET, including language, basic skills and vocational skills.

Getting informed: Supporting young people with limited networks and knowledge about the apprenticeship system

One fundamental question in getting migrants ready for vocational education and training (VET) is whether young arrivals perceive VET as a desirable option in the first place. Pursuing vocational education may not appear to be financially viable for asylum seekers or refugees if they have to support family members, including family members who are living abroad. Furthermore, in global terms, the status of the German VET system is high. Many migrants arriving in Germany can be expected to come from countries where VET is seen in much less attractive terms. The following section looks into the issue of getting migrants informed about VET.

Background: The provision of career guidance to migrants

Germany has a well-developed career guidance system

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of high quality careers guidance as a means to enhance the educational and employment outcomes of young people (Hughes et al., 2016^[1]). Germany has a strong but complex system of career guidance institutions, providing educational and professional counselling to students of all age classes. In beginning early, engaging students intensely in multiple activities and engaging employers and workplaces richly in its delivery, German provision embodies key characteristics of effective guidance (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018^[2]). The provision distinguishes between educational guidance (school guidance, educational paths, psychological services, higher education) and vocational guidance (employment agencies services, municipal agencies, adult centres, further training). During compulsory school, vocational counselling is an integral part of the curriculum, often including workplace visits or internships. Notably, the BMBF provides career guidance at the lower secondary level (“career guidance programme”, *Berufsorientierungsprogramm*, BOP), mainly through skills assessments (*Potentialanalyse*) and vocational workshops (*Werkstatttage*). The skills assessment, which usually lasts up to three days and takes place during the second semester of the seventh grade, intends to motivate students to engage in their career planning and serves as basis for subsequent support measures. During the two-week vocational workshop, students try out practical work in at least three different fields. An evaluation (BIBB, 2018^[3]) indicates that BOP can in general have positive effects, for instance that some students are more certain about the choice of future professions, which do not differ for migrants or natives. In 2017, the *Berufsorientierungsprogramm* offered grants for more than 190 000 students.

For students and also adults, the major counselling provider is the Federal Employment Agency (PES) with its local public employment services, i.e. job centres and career information centres (*Berufsinformationszentrum* BIZ). Due to the importance of dual VET in Germany, the PES are already involved at the lower secondary level, offering counselling regarding apprenticeship training and the labour market, for example within the BO (*Berufsorientierung*) and BOM (*Berufsorientierungsmaßnahmen*) context (Jenschke, Schober and Langner, 2014^[4]; BMBF, 2018^[5]). Within BOM (§48 SGB III), for which at least 50% has to be co-funded by a third party, the PES offers various career guidance measures (e.g. information about vocational fields; assessments of interests, eligibility, and competences; capacity building; socio-pedagogic support) in addition to the regular vocational orientation which is offered by counsellors of the PES (§33 SGB III).

Germany’s approach has been innovative

Besides such regular structures, federal ministries, *Länder* and communities together with chambers and networks have initiated innovative projects to facilitate the transition into VET and thereby address the skills shortage. Such measures engage members of the economic community to make it easier for young people to understand the opportunities that exist in occupational areas which are struggling to generate

interest from suitably qualified young people. With access to new information, contextualised through access to workplaces, it is anticipated that young people will come to make more informed decisions about their aspirations. One example is the *Educational chains initiative (Bildungsketten)* by the German Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Federal Employment Agency in co-operation with the federal states. The initiative aims to co-ordinate and connect federal and *Länder* career guidance programmes to support young people on their way from school towards apprenticeship.

These programmes are available to all students regardless of their background. Typically, the career guidance process starts in grade 5 helping young people to reflect on their interests and abilities (*Potentialanalyse*). Based on the results, they receive occupational information through counselling, vocational workshops and internships to get to know different occupational fields. If required, the students are accompanied by educational coaches (*Berufseinstiegsbegleitung*) through their final school year and, in cases where direct entry into VET is not possible, through the transition system. In 2019, 14 *Federal-Land-Agreements of Bildungskette* existed. 517 000 students received occupational counselling by the PES. Within the preparatory mentoring programme (*Berufseinstiegsbegleitung*), a further 113 000 were individually supported from the last school year up to the first year of their apprenticeship (BMBF, 2018^[5]). Studies of career guidance commonly highlight the greater needs of young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds to receive more intense interventions. Evidence indicates that their understanding of the labour market and its relation to educational provision is weak. All youth at risk of poor outcomes should be candidates for more intense careers guidance, and this includes in particular learners from migrant backgrounds (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018^[2]).

Additional guidance services for migrants

In general, migrants have access to all regular career guidance provisions. Addressing migrants increased need for information and counselling, Germany offers various services specifically targeting migrants (Box 2.1).

Social networks can affect the job search and the overall success in the labour market

By either providing information about available apprenticeships, information about the company's recruitment process, or putting in a good word, social networks can affect the success of an apprenticeship search (Roth, 2014^[6]). Networks or informal contacts are one of the most common ways to secure jobs across the OECD. Recently arrived refugees have difficulties finding networks and contacts across the economic community (Liebig and Tronstad, 2018^[7]). However, around one out of two employment changes in the immigrant population were due to social networks. Especially important are networks with the native population (Drever and Hoffmeister, 2008^[8]).

Box 2.1. Guidance services targeting migrants

Migration Services – Over 450 Youth Migration Service (jugendmigrationsdienste, JMD) offices for migrants aged 12-27 and over 1 300 Migration Counselling for adults (Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer, MBE) offices for migrants above the age of 27 in all regions support migrants on vocational, political, cultural and social topics. Social workers and pedagogues individually counsel migrants, using a case management approach. In 2017, roughly 125 000 persons were accompanied in the JMD. The JMD – part of the initiative “Strengthen the Youth” – are funded by the federal government with yearly expenditure of around EUR 50 million (BMBF, 2018^[5]). In the MBE, 305 000 people were counselled in 2018. The MBE was funded by the federal government with EUR 52 million in 2018. In 2019, funding was raised to around EUR 70 million.

KAUSA – The “Coordination Agencies for Education and Migration” (KAUSA) support migrants through counselling and preparation for VET. At 31 service points across Germany, especially self-employed entrepreneurs with migrant background but also young migrants interested in vocational education and their parents receive information and support while involving further institutions such as chambers or the PES.

IQ network – Initiated in 2005, the “Integration through Qualification” network is funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the European Social Fund (ESF), in strategic co-operation with BMBF and the PES. Aiming to improve employment opportunities for migrants, the network consists of 16 regional networks, around 360 subprojects and 5 competence centres. It facilitates peer learning and promotes quality development and best practices. Additionally, the network provides some services relating to career guidance.

The BMBF initiated in 2016, the programme “Career Guidance for Refugees” (Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge, BOF). Refugees are prepared for an apprenticeship in VET through intensive vocational counselling, vocational language and knowledge learning. So far, about 2 500 refugees have participated (BIBB, 2019^[9]).

In addition, the Federal Employment Agency offers targeted programmes including career guidance within the transition system, such as PerjuF and PerjuF-H (expired since December 2018) and PerF-W.¹

MySkills is a test that uses pictures and videos to assess foreign job-seekers’ skills or work experience which cannot be evidenced by other means. The idea is that job seekers do the test early in the integration and counselling process to allow employment services rapidly to determine further steps, such as occupational and/or language training. MySkills is currently available in six languages including Farsi and Arabic, and for eight occupations including cooks, skilled metal workers, building and object coaters and motor vehicle mechatronics technicians (www.myskills.de/en/).

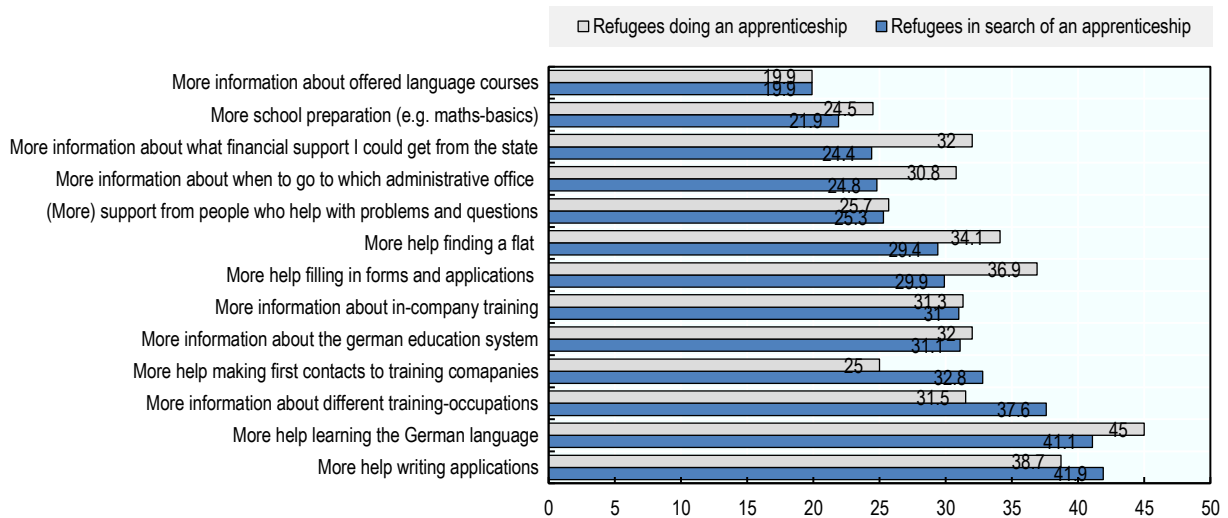
Source: BIBB (2019^[9]), Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2019. Informationen und Analysen zur Entwicklung der beruflichen Bildung, https://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/Datenreport_2019_Vorabversion_final.pdf; BMBF (2018^[5]), Berufsbildungsbericht 2018.

Challenges in providing career guidance for migrants

Some migrants lack basic understanding of the education system including of VET options

National education and training systems are often hard to navigate: different options lead to very different career prospects, with very different labour market outcomes. For new arrivals, this navigation can be even more difficult. First, they might have less knowledge of the host countries’ educational system, in particular vocational programmes. They may come from countries where educational structures differ substantially. For example, VET is virtually absent in countries such as Afghanistan and Eritrea. While in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran VET is available, programmes are school-based, and dual apprenticeships, as predominant in Germany, are largely unknown. Moreover, apprenticeships in some countries are associated with informal training in crafts (Brücker, Rother and Schupp, 2016^[10]; Stoewe, 2017^[11]). For instance, only about 6% of refugees and asylum seekers over 18 years old in Germany graduated from a vocational school in their home country, whereas among Germans this figure is over half (Brücker, Rother and Schupp, 2016^[10]). The German Federal Agency for VET (BIBB, 2019^[9]) shows that 37.6% of refugees searching for an apprenticeship are in need of more information about the different career opportunities, and 31.1% require more information about the German education system (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Survey on refugees' need of support when doing or searching an apprenticeship



Note: Multiple answers were possible.

Source: Adapted from BiBB (2019^[9]), *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht 2019. Informationen und Analysen zur Entwicklung der beruflichen Bildung*. https://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/Datenreport_2019_Vorabversion_final.pdf.

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In many countries the quality and prestige of vocational education is considerably lower than in Germany, and university education is a much more attractive pathway. As the OECD has illustrated, young people's thinking about career choices is as much, if not more, influenced by assumptions and social expectations as it is by "rational" decision making (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018^[2]). Therefore, recent arrivals who can be expected to have highly limited family connections to people familiar with the VET system, may not immediately understand the advantages of VET and rather aspire to university education, even when they may be more suitable for vocational education. This means that they may consider only general education options and be discouraged from engaging into VET.

The legal situation for migrants, the educational system and labour market, and migrant-specific services such as skills validation and recognition of foreign qualification are complex in Germany and often differ across the *Länder* (IQ, 2011^[12]). This complexity means that career guidance counsellors will require specific and extensive knowledge on the different procedures for adult migrants, including some specific intercultural skills.

Migrants aspirations are often high, while many tend to underestimate the prospects of VET

Across the OECD, there is strong basis to believe that young people's career expectations are often unrealistic and poorly aligned with actual labour market demand. Students often make career decisions with little knowledge of the labour market. Career thinking is shaped by many different individual characteristics, such as gender, family background and migration status (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018^[2]).

Migrants often have high aspirations and they tend to be optimistic about their chances, especially those in the less demanding tracks such as *Hauptschule* (Wicht, Siembab and Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2017^[13]). For instance, after accounting for socio-economic background and academic performance, immigrant students in Germany are 8.6 percentage points more likely to expect to graduate from tertiary education than natives, and 15.9% more likely to expect an "ambitious" career, i.e. to become a manager, professional,

associate professional or technicians by the age of 30 (OECD, 2018, p. 247_[14]). Evidence shows that students who underestimate the education required for their desired profession are more likely to become unemployed (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018_[2]).

Therefore, to be able to make fact-based decisions, it is essential that immigrant students and their parents have a good understanding of the German educational system, including of the vocational options and the occupational prospects to which they are gateways. Career guidance can help to correct potential misperceptions of dual VET, in particular of recently arrived migrants. Indeed, access to information has an impact on migrants' perception of the different tracks. Indeed, studies indicate that, the longer a migrant stays in Germany, the perceived status of VET tends to increase (Bolli and Rabeth, 2016_[15]).

While reasons for dropouts and contract apprenticeship terminations are complex, surveys indicate that some important factor relates to misplaced initial expectations about the profession. (Read more about contract termination in Chapter 4). Migrants, and especially humanitarian migrants have a higher rate of contract terminations. While the causal relationship is not clear, there are several reasons possible. First, migrants, as well as *Hauptschule* graduates, might have more difficulties in finding an apprenticeship place for their desired occupation, and thus start apprenticeships that are not their first choice. Second, migrants might have more difficulty in following the theoretic curriculum in VET schools, especially if they have limited language skills. Third, migrants might have expectations (e.g. concerning working conditions, the occupation or the employer) that differ from reality. The role of career guidance is to help to tackle such issues and thereby reduce the number of contract terminations. Individual counselling and mentoring can help to align the expectations or aspirations of migrants and the needs of the labour market.

The career guidance system is well-developed and extensive, but practices seem to vary between the Länder

The career guidance system in Germany is extensive, but practice tends to vary between the *Länder*. As laid out in the beginning of this chapter, Germany has a well-developed career guidance system, where different institutions are involved and provide comprehensive services to both natives and migrants. The legal situation for migrants, the educational system and the labour market, as well as the additional migrant-specific services are however complex, and provision differs in between *Länder*. Previous experience has shown that the provision of comprehensive, holistic career guidance requires intensive co-operation between different institutions (IQ, 2011_[12]). One important study suggests that co-operation is not always well developed between career counsellor and advisors in asylum institutions, such as social workers, who work closely with migrants. While the social workers expect a pro-active approach from career services, those in turn rely on mediation by the asylum institutions (Granato and Neises, 2017, p. 94_[16]).

The complex structures of the career guidance system provided by mainly the PES, but also by the federal ministries, the *Länder* and civil society, however, could induce parallel structures, duplication of efforts or even competing offers. As well as risks of inefficiencies, a complex structure can lead to confusion among the students. Some projects such as BOF and AsA are also short-term and might expire.

Despite general good provision, some new arrivals may not receive the support they need

To make sure that all young people are adequately informed to make career decisions, a pro-active approach involving career guidance specialists, teachers, employers and, in the case of migrants, social workers, is crucial (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018_[2]). The 2016 IAB-SOAP survey showed that only a small minority of refugees were aware of their eligibility to access counselling services. For instance, only 7% were aware of the Youth Migration Services, while 35% knew about the career guidance services of the PES (Brücker, Rother and Schupp, 2016_[10]). It is thus not surprising that young refugees often do not reach out to counselling services by themselves (Granato and Neises, 2017_[16]). Moreover, studies have illustrated that migrants with distinctive characteristics, such as the young, female refugees are less likely

to actively reach out for counselling services (Granato and Neises, 2017^[16]). PISA analysis of international practice also shows that commonly socio-economically disadvantaged students participate less in career guidance activities, such as job shadowing, career fairs, or advisory at schools (Sweet, Nissinen and Vuorinen, 2014^[17]; Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018^[2]). Humanitarian migrants, who are overrepresented among disadvantaged students, also tend to be less familiar with local career guidance structures.

In general, refugees do have access to career guidance services. For asylum seekers however, access to various support measures are limited to those with good prospects of remaining. In addition, those outside this category who nevertheless remain in Germany, including migrants from European countries, also require career guidance.

Policy message

Ensure that existing career guidance services are pro-active, personalised and co-ordinated.

The OECD welcomes current efforts in improving the coordination of career guidance. As such services are already strong in Germany, opportunity exists to continue building on these structures and ensure that the policy is better aligned in order to increase efficiencies by avoiding overlap and increase quality by expanding successful provision. It is important that guidance counsellors have the right skills to meet the migrants' complex needs.

Furthermore, it is important to ensure that the career guidance services are pro-active, personalised and accessible both for migrant students and adults, allowing them to consider the breadth of education and training options and challenge stereotyping that may exist about VET options. Direct encounters with workplaces are essential to effective career guidance for youth at risk.

Policy arguments

Why career guidance for migrants is important

While high-quality and effective career guidance provision is important for all students, migrants have an even larger need for information and counselling. As noted above, migrants in general and recent arrivals in particular often do not have enough knowledge about VET, the education system and services available in Germany, and thus need comprehensive counselling from an early stage. Often, this also applies to young people with immigrant parents, who may not be familiar with the German VET system or lack a professional network that they can activate to help their children find an apprenticeship placement. Socio-economic status affect career expectations, and education and training choices (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018^[2]).

Pro-active, accessible career guidance for migrant students can be an effective mechanism to broaden career aspirations

Socio-economically disadvantaged persons, especially new arrivals and their parents, often have weaker professional and social networks, making it very important that such students have access to career guidance services. High quality career guidance can have economic, education and social benefits, including preventing dropout (Hughes et al., 2016^[1]; Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018^[2]). It is therefore essential that schools and social workers systematically identify students at risk especially, and actively support their career development. Ideally, new arrivals are counselled as early as possible to ensure a smooth integration process. Informing has significant effect on the career development: Research studies suggest that refugees who received counselling were more likely to participate in the integration course (Brücker, Rother and Schupp, 2016^[10]).

There is also international evidence on the importance of a pro-active approach from other countries. In Denmark, municipalities are obliged to pro-actively contact those who dropped out of formal education up to the age of 19 (OECD/The European Commission, 2004^[18]). Switzerland introduced a 'VET case management' (*Case Management Berufsbildung, CMBB*), where school-leavers at risk of failing to transit into the upper secondary level are mentored throughout the transition and beyond. An evaluation (Egger Dreher & Partner AG, 2015^[19]) concluded that the programme is especially successful in cantons which systematically identify persons at risk. As the youth cohort is getting more diverse, creating a pro-active guidance service that is able to meet the needs of vulnerable youths can be an important measure to combat drop out.

Enhancing co-ordination can provide a holistic guidance service that meet adult migrants' complex needs

The needs of adult migrants are complex and guidance services need to be well co-ordinated, to avoid confusion and overlap in measures. Such competition should be avoided and whenever possible, measures should be consolidated into regular structures.

One promising way of coordinating different activities locally are one-stop-shops (Degler and Liebig, 2017^[20]) where migrants are provided with all information necessary to proceed their careers. Such agencies provide initial counselling regarding living and working in different languages and co-ordinate the services available in the region, often through a case management approach. Examples of such one-stop-shops are the "Integration Points" in North Rhine-Westphalia, the welcome center in Baden-Württemberg and the youth employment agencies (*Jugendberufsagentur*) (Jenschke, Schober and Langner, 2014^[4]). The knowledge and networks build through successful projects should be consolidated into the existing guidance and counselling structures through strengthened co-operation and co-ordination.

Individualised approaches can work better to meet the migrants' complex needs

Career guidance should not be limited to the provision of information, but include opportunities for migrants to explore for themselves, through career events, job shadowing and work placements (Musset and Mytna Kurekova, 2018^[2]; Jeon, 2019^[21]). Migrants vary in their language skills, prior knowledge, legal status and perceptions of VET. Also many migrants lack the network to help them make career choices. Especially adults can be left a bit on their own to figure out how the system works. Individual mentoring can be an effective way of making sure that many of the recent arrivals have access to the necessary information to make well-informed career decisions. Mentoring may consist of tutoring, social and emotional support, and educational and vocational orientation, as well as practical information about the local community. The success of mentoring rests on how well mentors have been trained, the extent of schools' co-operation, and the engagement of parents and children (OECD, 2018^[14]).

Building the necessary skills to enter VET

Introduction: Preparation for VET is differently organised for school-age migrants, young migrants and adults

Migrants and natives with immigrant parents tend to have lower levels of proficiency, but higher levels of aspiration. This works against easy progression into VET. For many recent arrivals moreover, given that their educational backgrounds and basic skills level are often low, pursuing VET requires a long-term investment. For employers, there are substantial costs in taking on a vulnerable candidate in risk of dropping out. Both employers and VET schools demand a high level of German fluency in order to start apprenticeship training. Most recent arrivals are in need of substantial support in order to build up their skills set and get ready for starting an upper secondary VET qualification. This section looks into the broad

variety of preparatory measures designed to build skills in order to prepare students for VET. Some of these measures are migrant-specific, while others are generally available for other groups of students who did not secure an apprenticeship at the end of lower secondary schooling. Although there are considerable regional variations, there is broadly speaking a difference in preparatory measures targeting young students of compulsory school age (younger than 18), young adults (mostly younger than 25) and adults.

The provision for school-age migrants

Recent arrivals in school age are obliged to attend compulsory school. *Länder*, which are responsible for compulsory education, implemented different models: While some are initially educated in separated classes and eventually enter mainstream education, others attend regular classes and receive remedial (language) courses, still other *Länder* have a mixed model. For asylum seekers, the start of schooling also differs across *Länder*. Some are obliged to immediately attend school, whereas in some *Länder* there are waiting periods (3-6 months) or the schooling starts after the distribution into municipalities (Massumi et al., 2015^[22]).

Support for young people who did not find an apprenticeship is largely organised through the transition system

There is a considerable number of pathways to prepare young people who have not managed to find apprenticeships. Most notably, these include programmes in the transition system (*Übergangsbereich*), after which students are supposed to enter dual or school-based VET or find employment. While programmes in the transition system are diverse, there are five broad options available: a pre-vocational year (*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr* and other school-based programmes that seek to build vocational skills); preparatory educational programmes offered by the PES; school-based programmes to obtain a lower-secondary diploma; introductory training (*Einstiegsqualifizierung*); and preparatory internships for VET in childcare.

Table 2.1. Programmes in the transition system

New participants, 2018

	All	Foreign born nationals	Share of foreign-born nationals
Pre-vocational year (berufsbildende und berufsvorbereitende programme)	195 422	78 158	40%
Preparatory educational programmes offered by the PES (berufsvorbereitende Bildungsgänge der BA)	39 795	5 145	12.9%
Programmes to obtain a lower secondary diploma (allgemeinbildende Bildungsgänge)	19 964	4 241	21.2%
Introductory trainings (Einstiegsqualifizierungen)	11 118	4 436	39.9%
Preparatory internships for VET in childcare ²	3 692	356	9.6%
Total	269 991	92 337	34.2%

Source: Adapted from Statistisches Bundesamt (2018^[23]) *Schnellmeldung Integrierte Ausbildungsberichterstattung Anfänger im Ausbildungsgeschehen nach Sektoren/Konten und Ländern – 2018*.

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As has become common practice, the majority of students who entered the transition system went into a pre-vocational year (73% in 2017) (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018^[24]). Pre-vocational years usually include training in vocational and academic core skills as well as career guidance. These can be offered by vocational schools (*Berufsschule* or *Berufsfachschule*) as well as private institutions, and depending on the programme can also lead to a lower secondary diploma. Given their importance in the transition

system, this section will focus on the pre-vocational year and how they have been adapted to support recent arrivals. Introductory training (*Einstiegsqualifizierungen*) is discussed in Chapter 3.

Länder have introduced specialised preparatory classes in VET school for young recent arrivals, combining language learning and skills building

As part of the transition system, all *Länder* currently offer special preparatory classes in VET schools for young recent arrivals, but who are older than the compulsory school age, combining preparation for VET with language courses. Programmes are diverse, but usually seek to prepare students within one or two years to be ready to secure an apprenticeship. The high number of recent arrivals has required considerable adjustment within VET schools. The share of foreign-born students in the pre-vocational year has increased sharply from 18 000 in the school year 2014/2015 to 81 000 in 2016/2017; around 70% of this group (55 000) were born in one of the main asylum countries³ (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018^[25]). Since the majority of *Länder* requires no or only limited language skills to enter such provision, the first half of the programme usually focuses on language learning and possibly alphabetisation. The second half has a stronger focus on career guidance and vocational and academic skills and may offer the option of an internship. Whether students have the option to finish these courses with a school diploma varies from state to state.

Many young migrants from the main asylum countries participate in preparatory traineeships

A closer look at participants in these measures shows that young people from the so-called main asylum origin countries are strongly represented in preparatory traineeships, but participate less in other preparatory educational programmes and mentorship programmes (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2. New participants in VET-related support measures offered by the PES, 2017

	Main asylum origin countries	German nationals
Introductory training (EQ)	7 961	12 479
Training-related assistance (abH)	5 540	25 623
Assisted vocational training (AsA)	2 090	7 715
Career entry support by mentoring programmes (BerEb)	1 806	26 271
Pre-vocational training measures (BvB)	1 669	54 974

Note: The main asylum origin countries include Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Source: Adapted from Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2018^[26]) Berufsausbildungsbeihilfe, Ausbildungsgeld, Übergangsgeld (Monats- und Jahreszahlen).

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Research shows that young people with immigrant parents generally are more likely to receive additional support whilst still in secondary school compared to apprentices with German-born parents. This reflects the aforementioned higher chance of this group to have lower grades, more difficulties in finding apprenticeships and also their higher concentration in lower secondary schools – a school type that is more strongly targeted by counselling and support measures in the first place (Eberhard et al., 2013^[27]). However, one out of four refugees who are searching for an apprenticeship require more support (Figure 2.1) (BIBB, 2019^[9]).

The PES provides programmes to prepare adults for VET

Many recent arrivals are too old to enter the regular transition system, even in *Länder* that have opened up preparatory VET classes beyond the age of compulsory schooling. This group of young adults is highly heterogeneous, possessing different skills, professional and educational backgrounds and career aspirations. This diversity in profiles is a challenge for countries, as a one-size-fits-all approach to integration policy is unlikely to succeed (OECD, 2016^[28]).

A considerable number of programmes were initiated in 2015/16 providing skills assessment, career guidance and information and first experiences in the labour market. Many of these targeted particularly young arrivals beyond compulsory schooling age (Box 2.2). Given the breadth of integration programmes on a federal, regional and municipal level, the following sections will only focus on federal programmes that address young adults specifically and seek to prepare them to enter VET, further education or employment.

Box 2.2. Programmes by the PES aiming to prepare adults for VET

The programme Perspectives for Young Refugees (*Perspektiven für junge Flüchtlinge, PerjuF*) aims to provide career guidance and practical insights into different occupational fields to prepare participants for VET. The programme lasts four to six months and in the first two weeks starts with an orientation and information phase to assess participants' language skills as well as their professional skills and interests. Based on this assessment, participants are interning or work shadowing in companies. Additional support, e.g. language courses or support in the application process, should be made available during the work experience phase, based on the individual needs of participants (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2016^[29]). The programme is open to refugees as well as asylum seekers - and tolerated persons with access to the labour market. Participants have to be between 18 and 24 years old.

The PES also offers this programme specifically for the skilled trades (*Perspektiven für junge Flüchtlinge im Handwerk, PerjuF-H*) that seeks to introduce participants to at least three different occupations in the skilled occupations. The aim was to offer this programme to 10 000 young migrants between 2016 and 2018 and is a joint initiative by the Ministry for Education and Research, the PES and the employers' associations for skilled crafts. The programme expired in December 2018 (*Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks, ZDH*).

In addition, the PES introduced a programme targeting refugee women (*Perspektiven für weibliche Flüchtlinge, PerF-W*), seeking to support their integration into the labour market or further education. There is no age limit in this programme and no specific VET focus, however it is currently the only targeted programme the PES offers for women.⁴ It seeks to provide career guidance, skills assessment and first practical experiences, and also supports participants in finding childcare during in the programme. The programme lasts four months and is offered part time.

Source: Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2016^[30]), Asylbewerber und Flüchtlinge. Überblick über wesentliche Aktivitäten der BA zur Integration von Flüchtlingen in den Arbeits- und Ausbildungsmarkt.

Language support for adult migrants

There is a relatively broad provision of both public and privately funded language courses in Germany, including the Integration Course – the main language course for adults – organised by the BAMF and funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) (Box 2.3).

In 2016, the Federal Government, in co-operation with the BMI and the BMAS, designed the so-called “*Gesamtprogramm Sprache*” (Overall Programme Language) which interlinks general and vocational language support. The first step in this programme is the Integration Course, which is followed by a successor programme (*Berufsbezogene Deutschsprachförderung*) that mainly focuses on labour market integration by providing additional job-related language courses and further qualification modules.

Unemployed people who receive social benefits, people with a migration background (including asylum seekers with good prospects of remaining) and people who concluded the integration course typically have access to the programme, even if they currently attend an apprenticeship. In 2017, about 80 000 persons participated (BMBF, 2018^[5]).

The BMAS has also introduced a language-learning programme *Vocational Language Support for Migrants*, co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) to enhance migrant's chances of integrating into the labour market. The course includes basic language teaching, but also vocational vocabulary and enables access to internships.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) also offers, in addition to the normal integration courses, integration courses that are specifically targeted at young adults. One example is a youth course (*Jugendintegrationskurse*), where participants have to be beyond compulsory schooling age (between 16 and 18) and under 27. Courses are offered by external service providers that apply to the BAMF for funding. Youth courses include language training (900 lessons, i.e. 675 hours) and civic education (100 lessons, i.e. 75 hours). The language learning component has been adapted, focusing on school-relevant terminology, such as vocabulary for mathematics, geography or natural science. In addition, participants learn how to write application letters, receive information about main recruitments channels and are introduced to other service providers, such as the PES or the Migration Services for Young People (*Jugendmigrationsdienste*).⁵ Courses should also include trips to companies to get to know working environments first-hand as well as a short internship, work shadowing, or sitting in on classes in schools or universities.

Although several language courses exist, 19.9% of refugees searching for an apprenticeship require more information about offered language courses and 41.1% are in need of more support while learning the German language. Refugees who are already doing an apprenticeship need even more support while learning the German language (45%) (Figure 2.1) (BIBB, 2019^[9]).

Box 2.3. Language learning for adults

The integration course is the first step to learn the German language

Although the main focus of the German integration course is civic and social integration, the German language is taught from the very beginning. The integration course usually consists of 600 lessons of language training, as well as 100 lessons of orientation, where information on the legal system, history and culture is taught. The language course is completed with a German test for immigrants (*Deutschtest für Zuwanderer*). Participants should by the end have reached level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Even though the integration course does not focus on labour market integration, 3 out of its 11 fields refer to labour market topics. In addition, non-native speaking persons have the possibility of attending various language courses, mainly offered by colleges or adult learning centres (*Volkshochschulen*), private commercial institutions, VET schools or the civil society. For instance, the BMBF co-ordinated the nation-wide programme “Entry German” (*Einstieg Deutsch*), where over 3 000 volunteers helped migrants above school age to learn German. The programme ended in December 2018.

Source: BMBF (2018^[5]), *Berufsbildungsbericht 2018*.

The challenges in preparing migrants for VET

As the skills of humanitarian migrants are often not directly applicable in highly formalised OECD labour markets, learning the language and building the necessary academic and vocational skills before entering VET is a key challenge. It is also of considerable importance. Risks of economic marginalisation are high

and arguably growing as low-skilled tasks are automated. This section looks into the challenges that can arise when migrants are building the necessary skills to enter VET.

Learning the language takes time

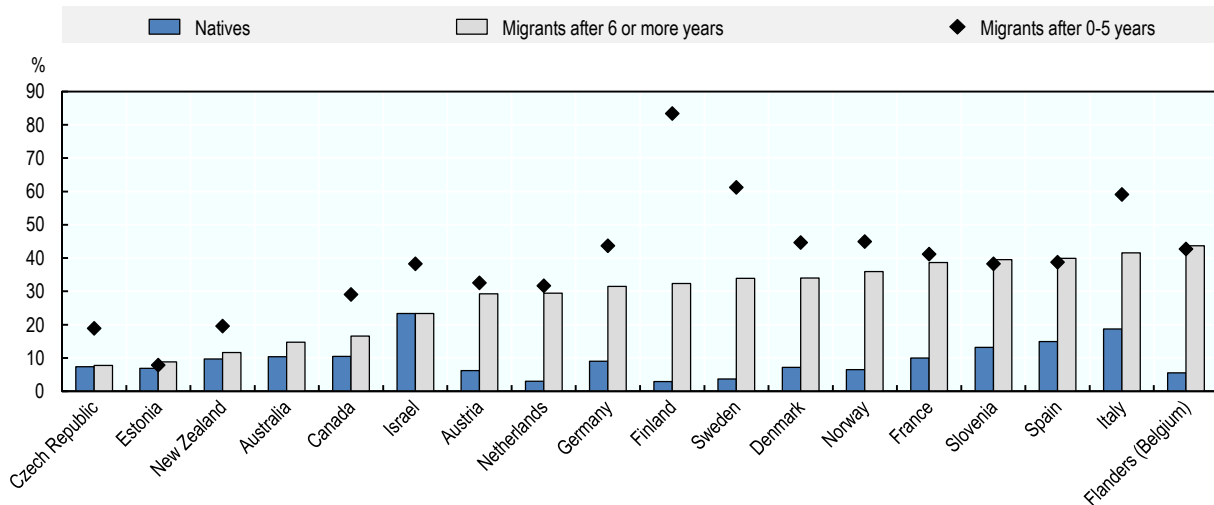
In general, it takes time for new arrivals to reach a level in the host country's language which enables them for work. In the Survey of Adult Skills, a product of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), data show how the literacy level increases with the time the migrants stayed in the country. For Germany, more than 40% of migrants in between the ages of 16-35 who had arrived in the country five years or fewer before the test, did not reach the baseline in literacy skills. For migrants staying more than five years, the share decreases to around 30%. Compared to natives, these shares are relatively high (Figure 2.2). These results indicate that learning the language is not a quick fix and require time.

For many migrants, the integration course alone does not seem to be sufficient to qualify for apprenticeship training. A substantial barrier for employers in taking on migrant apprentices is insufficient language skills. Throughout the visits that the OECD team undertook, a common requirement from employers was repeated; migrants need a B2 level in German in order to start apprenticeship training. Reaching a B2 level in a foreign language is in many ways a relatively high level of language proficiency, and probably unrealistic to reach for many migrants within a short time horizon.

Further the provision of vocational language courses seem to be insufficient. Not all have access to vocational language courses. For instance, 72% of local IHK-chambers report that such provision are insufficient in their region (DIHK, 2018^[31]).

Figure 2.2. Percentage of students not attending baseline literacy skills, by immigrant background

Share of natives and natives with immigrant parents aged 16-35 not attending baseline literacy skills, by duration in the host country



Note: Statistically significant differences to natives are marked in dark blue.

Source: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2015) (database) <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/publicdataandanalysis/>

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Assuring the quality of the language courses can be challenging in periods of high demand

A recent survey where refugees evaluated their own language skills, 31% of the respondents rated their language skills as very good or good, which is an increase compared to previous years. However, a main challenge of having a large group of migrants entering the country within a short time frame is to upscale

the supply of integration programmes. As language courses are one of the first stops in the integration process, the challenge would in the short term be most evident here. Considering the number of new arrivals in Germany during the exceptional inflow in 2015/16, it is impressive how fast Germany was able to expand language learning offerings. Nevertheless, the increase in demand have delayed access to such courses (Granato and Neises, 2017^[16]). Furthermore, the capacity of offerings varies across regions, and especially rural areas do not always provide sufficient language learning opportunities. In some regions, where participant potential is low, it is required that a minimum of 14 participants register for general integration courses and 10 participants for literacy and youth courses (DIHK, 2018^[31]). The low level of supply of language courses can be a considerable challenge in effectively integrating the migrants.

BAMF has created a system enabling the scaling up and down of the supply of integration courses according to the demand. Private course providers have to apply to BAMF for a licence and funding in order to engage with the work. BAMF has developed comprehensive guidelines on how to organise these courses. In addition, teachers have to be qualified to teach German as a second language. The criteria set for teachers can also be adjusted according to needs, which was done in 2016, but has now been reversed. Due to a great lack of teachers in Germany, attracting highly qualified labour to teach German as a second language can be challenging (forsa, 2019^[32]; Kultusministerkonferenz, 2018^[33]). At the same time as the provision needs to be flexible to meet increased needs, the job situation for teachers' needs stability.

Further, assuring programme quality can be a constraint. According to interviews that the OECD review team conducted, the BAMF has begun evaluating the impact of the youth courses, but findings are not yet available. The BAMF also seems to have limited capacity to follow up the courses provided by numerous private course providers. The courses are followed up by regional co-ordinators, who hold a broad responsibility, including assessing whether the local course providers meet predefined quality standards. The low number of such co-ordinators can give limited opportunity to make sure that the courses reach desired results (Degler and Liebig, 2017^[20]).

Many of the preparatory programmes within the transition system organised by the Länder are aimed at young people who are still of compulsory school age

As part of the transition system, the *Länder* offer special preparatory classes in VET schools for young recent arrivals who are older than the compulsory school age. In about half of the states, these preparatory programmes are mainly accessible to students up to the age of 18. A number of states have opened up these courses to older students up to age 20 or 21, e.g. Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, while others have introduced additional courses for those beyond compulsory schooling age allowing students up to the age of 25 to enter these special programmes (for example in Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia). Whether adult students are entitled to access these classes or whether it is up to the school or local school authorities to grant permission also varies across Germany.

While some Länder have started evaluating these preparatory classes within the transition system, there is generally little evidence on their effectiveness

There is currently limited knowledge as to how effective the preparatory classes aimed at adults to facilitate transition into VET are. First evaluations of the Bavarian preparatory classes in 2016 show that right after the two-year programme close to 40% enter dual or school-based VET, a preparatory traineeship (7%), continue with a general education programme within the upper secondary level (4%) or find employment (5%). Close to one in five continues with another educational programme in the transition system or repeats a year. For around 25%, next steps are not known (Schiffhauer and Magister, 2016^[34]).⁶ A second evaluation round for the school year 2017 has shown similar results (Magister, 2017^[35]). For Hamburg, around 30% enter VET, around 8% found employment and another 7% continued with upper secondary education right after finishing the preparatory classes (Hamburger Institut für Berufliche Bildung, 2018^[36]).

Whether these are “satisfactory” results is not easy to determine. Given that recent arrivals often arrive with very little formal schooling, findings that around 30-40% manage to “catch up” to the educational and language level required for VET within two years, can be read as a success story. It is striking that these results are similar to the outcomes of students in the transition system in general; evaluations on the effectiveness of the overall transition system – including all students – indicate that around 40% manage to find an apprenticeship within six months after having finished the preparatory programme (BMBF, 2016_[37]).

At the same time, these evaluations also show that a considerable proportion of learners does not manage to get into VET. For the regular transition system, findings indicate that after three years, 70% of all learners ultimately secure an apprenticeship (BMBF, 2016_[37]). Whether this will be also the case for recent arrivals remains to be seen and will strongly depend on what kind of programmes – if any – they participated after their pre-vocational classes. Currently, however, a systematic tracking of those who do not enter into VET after preparatory classes seems to be largely absent.

Participation in preparatory classes varies substantially across Länder

For those regions where data is available (13 out of 16), approximately 70 600 foreign nationals attended preparatory programmes in VET schools in 2016/2017 (Table 2.3). Not all students in these classes are asylum seekers or refugees, but given that these courses were largely introduced or expanded to cater to this group, it nevertheless gives an indication.

As Table 2.3 shows, close to one-third of all students enrolled in preparatory VET courses were in Bavaria, whereas in other *Länder* numbers are considerably lower. These differences partly reflect lower numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in certain regions, but it should also be noted that Bavaria has one of the most developed and comparatively long-standing systems in Germany for preparing recent arrivals for VET schools (Box 2.4).

Participation in preparatory programmes for adults by the PES has been rather low

So far, the participation in preparatory programmes offered by the PES for adults has been low compared to the number of new arrivals. In a representative survey among recently arrived asylum seekers and refugees, around 1% stated that they had participated or were still participating in PerjuF (Romiti et al., 2016_[38]). However, there is currently no evaluation available that assesses whether these programmes are effective. Therefore, it is currently not possible to conclude whether these programmes should be rolled out.

Combining different preparatory programmes for adults by the BAMF and PES can lead to a preparation time of up to three years

PES preparatory programmes require participants to speak a basic or intermediary level of German and therefore are mostly offered to persons who have already taken a language course. Thus, the trajectory that is usually foreseen would require recent arrivals to participate in a language course, PerjuF or PerjuF-H (expired since December 2018) and possibly BOF at the end. Such a trajectory would take around two to three years, assuming that all programmes are conducted full-time and back-to-back.

Nevertheless, if academic skills are lacking after this preparation period, participants would have to undergo additional training, adding further to the preparation time.

Table 2.3. Foreign nationals in preparatory programmes, in VET schools

School year 2016/2017

	New participants	Eligible age group
Baden-Württemberg	9 100	16-20
Bavaria	22 000	16-21
Brandenburg	1 300	16-18
Bremen	1 000	16-18
Hamburg	2 700	16-18
Hesse	7 400	16-18
Lower Saxony	5 600	16-18; up to 21
North Rhine-Westphalia	12 000	16-18; 16-25
Rhineland-Palatinate	2 200	16-18
Saxony	2 500	16-27
Saxony-Anhalt	1 300	16-18
Schleswig-Holstein	2 700	16-18
Thuringia	800	16-21
Total	70 600	

Note: Data for Schleswig-Holstein from Dec. 2015. For Brandenburg, Bremen, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, data are from a reporting month or beginning of the school year in 2016 rather than the full school year 2016/2017.

Source: Landtag von Baden-Württemberg (2017^[39]), *Sprachförderung von jungen Menschen mit Flucht- und Migrationserfahrung in Baden-Württemberg*, https://www.landtag-bw.de/files/live/sites/LTBW/files/dokumente/WP16/Drucksachen/1000/16_1929_D.pdf; Regierung der Oberpfalz, Bayern (2016^[40]), *Überblick über die Beschulung von berufsschulpflichtigen Flüchtlingen und Asylbewerbern in Bayern, Deutschland*, https://www.kmk-pad.org/fileadmin/Dateien/download/VERANSTALTUNGEN/PAD-Fachtagung_Integration/Workshop-Beitraege/D1_Englhardt-Kopf.pdf; Land Brandenburg (2017^[41]), *Neue Zahlen, neue Informationen*, <https://www.brandenburg.de/cms/detail.php/bb1.c.473404.de>; Bremische Bürgerschaft (2016^[42]), *Antwort des Senats auf die Kleine Anfrage der Fraktion der CDU*, Drucksache 19/406, https://www.bremische-buergerschaft.de/drs_abo/2016-04-27_Drs-19-406_d7c18.pdf; Bürgerschaft der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg (2017^[43]), *Schriftliche Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Franziska Grunwaldt und Karin Prien (CDU) vom 31.05.17 und Antwort des Senats*, Drucksache 21/9286, <https://www.buergerschaft-hh.de/ParlDok/dokument/58045/ist-die-ausbildungsvorbereitung-avm-dual-f%C3%BCr-fl%C3%BChtlinge-wirklich-ein-erfolgsmodell-.pdf>; Hessisches Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Energie, Verkehr und Landesentwicklung (2017^[44]), *Berufsausbildung in Hessen 2017*, https://www.hessen-agentur.de/mm/mm002/946_BAB_2017_komplett.pdf; Nieder Sachsen (2017^[45]), *Die Niedersächsischen Berufsbildenden Schulen in Zahlen Schuljahr 2016-2017*, https://www.mk.niedersachsen.de/download/119668/Die_niedersaechsischen_berufsbildenden_Schulen_in_Zahlen_Schuljahr_2016_2017.pdf; Landtag Rheinland-Pfalz (2017^[46]), *Antwort des Ministeriums für Bildung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Anke Beilstein (CDU)*, Drucksache 17/4257, <http://dokumente.landtag.rlp.de/landtag/drucksachen/4427-17.pdf>; Landeshauptstadt Dresden (2016^[47]), *Asyl in Dresden - Aktuelle Informationen*, https://www.dresden.de/de/rathaus/aktuelles/pressemitteilungen/archiv/2016/04/pm_070.php; Landtag von Sachsen-Anhalt (2016^[48]), *Antwort der Landesregierung auf eine Kleine Anfrage zur schriftlichen Beantwortung Abgeordnete Henriette Quade (DIE LINKE), Bildungszugang von geflüchteten Kindern und Jugendlichen in Sachsen-Anhalt Teil 2*, Kleine Anfrage, KA 7/294, <https://www.landtag.sachsen-anhalt.de/fileadmin/files/drs/wp7/drs/d0719dak.pdf>; Schleswig-Holsteinischer Landtag (2016^[49]), *Bericht der Landesregierung, Bericht zur Integration von Flüchtlingskindern ins Schulsystem*, Drucksache 18/3540, <https://www.landtag.ltsh.de/infothek/wahl18/drucks/3700/drucksache-18-3715.pdf>; Freistaat Thüringen Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport (2016^[50]) (2016), *Sprachförderung Deutsch als Zweitsprache an Thüringer Schulen*, https://www.thueringen.de/mam/th2/tmbwk/bildung/konzept_dummy.pdf.

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Box 2.4. Vocational Integration Classes in Bavaria

Bavaria had rolled out a successful programme within the region, Vocational Integration Classes (*Berufsintegrationsklassen*) state-wide, increasing provision from around 180 classes in 2014/2015 to around 1 150 classes in 2016/2017, with approximately 22 000 students participating in the same year.

The programme takes two years. The first year predominantly focusses on language learning with an option for additional literacy training. In the second year, language acquisition is continued, alongside preparatory classes that focus on building academic skills – predominantly in mathematics – as well as career guidance, application training and information about the German VET system. The final semester usually includes an internship. Students also have the option to obtain a lower secondary diploma after finishing the second year. Students can also repeat a year if skills are not sufficiently developed and additional support can be offered to students with limited or no literacy skills.

Vocational Integration Classes are mandatory for recent arrivals aged 16-21 whose language skills are not good enough to follow mainstream education or to find an apprenticeship. In exceptional cases, these classes are accessible to students up the age of 25. In addition, Bavaria has organised language classes for this age group to bridge the waiting times between arrival and the new school semester.

Source: Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Bildung und Kultus, Wissenschaft und Kunst (2017^[51]), *Lehrplan für die Berufsintegrations- und Sprachintensivklassen*, http://www.isb.bayern.de/download/19735/lp_berufsintegrationsklassen_07_2017.pdf.

Policy message

Ensure that recent arrivals have access to high quality language learning at an early point and throughout their training. Consideration should be given to scaling up provision that focuses on combining language learning and VET as this is a particularly effective mechanism for learning and integration.

Language acquisition is essential to integration in German economic life and the sooner it is achieved, the better the results for individuals and society. It is important, consequently, to make sure that migrants have access to high-quality language learning at an early stage and throughout their VET training. Building up quality assurance mechanisms are necessary to ensure that the quality of the language training is satisfactory.

Make sure that there is sufficient evidence on the effectiveness of existing preparatory programmes through evaluations.

Preparatory classes for recent arrivals demand greater evaluation with the educational and employment trajectories of participants tracked, identifying success factors and assessing their impact on finding apprenticeships or employment.

Make sure that existing preparatory programmes are consistently available across Länder.

Preparatory programmes in VET schools are essential to enabling access to apprenticeships, as it increases the skills of the students and thereby reduces the risks to employers that the costs of provision will not outstrip benefits.

Consider increasing the access to successful preparatory programmes to students over 18 years old.

In order to fully secure the opportunities presented by such successful provision, the age limit for preparatory classes in VET schools should be increased, so that a greater number of young migrants can benefit from such measures. Eligibility up to the age of 25 years might be considered.

Increase peer-learning between the Länder on successful programmes.

Finally, peer-learning across *Länder* in relation to the provision of high quality preparatory courses for recent arrivals should be strengthened, for instance by creating a co-ordinating body for the transition system across the regions. Opportunity exists to improve quality and to increase economies of scale through greater co-ordination.

Policy arguments

To improve language skills among migrants, make sure that the language courses are accessible and assure the quality of the training

Learning the language is one of the key issues in successfully integrating migrants into work and the society. Good language skills is particularly important in VET, as the employers value a high language level in order to take on migrants as apprentices. Providing migrants with language courses is one of the key measures in this regard. Making sure that the courses are available also in rural areas is important. To make sure that courses lead to desirable outcomes, putting increased emphasis on assuring the quality of the training is essential. This includes securing information and evidence on the outcomes of programmes.

Language courses that are relevant for a vocational area can improve learner motivation and thereby success rates

Vocational language training can not only improve the vocabulary relevant for VET, but can also be expected to be particularly motivating to learners, since they typically are unambiguously oriented towards employment and make use of applied learning environments. Evidence suggest that the German vocational language course provided by the BAMF have positive effects on the chances for employment. Controlling for personal background characteristics, participants in this course had 30% higher chances of employment compared to migrants who did not attend this course. In comparison, participants who completed the introduction course had a 10% higher chance of being employed (Vallizadeh et al., 2016^[52]). Such offerings can be further enhanced across Germany targeting recent arrivals. Ideally, vocational language learning is combined with practical work, for instance in form of internships such as the EQ. Indeed, recent analysis of OECD PIAAC data has shown that use of literacy (and numeracy) in workplace settings can have very significant positive impacts on proficiency levels (Jimeno et al., 2016^[53]). However, such internships rely on employers willing to engage in training. Other OECD countries are also providing such courses that combine language with VET. Sweden is offering migrants with subsidized employment (*introduktionsjobb*) that provides the opportunity to combine work with language training (Swedish for Immigrants). The results show promise, as almost half of the participants enter regular employment. Denmark has two courses which connects language learning with practical work. In a three step course, students first attend language learning lessons for four to eight weeks, before they enter a traineeship in an enterprise, followed by additional language lessons (26-52 weeks) (Jeon, 2019^[21]).

Regional differences in preparatory programmes can help to determine what approaches work best and how to improve programmes

While pre-vocational programmes across Germany all follow the same ultimate objective, there is considerable heterogeneity in how *Länder* organise and implement these courses, including their content, duration and eligible age groups. The variation of outcomes between their programmes tantalisingly is unknown. However, it is known that some are associated with very positive results. Thus, considerable opportunity exists to draw from these different experiences to gain useful insights into how to make these programmes effective across the country. In the long-run, combined with improved evaluation evidence and comparative data, such peer learning could also contribute to good practices becoming more widespread, thereby harmonising preparatory programmes across the country (see more on peer learning in Chapter 5).

It is beyond the scope of the youth course and PES programmes to build academic skills

Many recent arrivals have little educational schooling or have experienced considerable breaks in their schooling career. Consultation rounds with German employers and VET teachers have also demonstrated recent arrivals often struggle to follow the regular curriculum in VET schools, even when they are doing well in the workplace (OECD and UNHCR, 2018^[54]). Preparation for VET also needs to include the building of academic core skills and obtaining a certain level of general education. These go beyond German language skills and would enable recent arrivals to follow the regular VET school curriculum, including subjects such as maths, history and geography.

Both the youth courses and the PES programmes focus on language learning, career guidance and practical training. While this labour market focus may support those who seek direct employment afterwards, it is unlikely that participants will leave the course with the necessary academic skills to succeed in VET schools. Qualitative research with PES case workers, refugees and employers supports this assumption and also reveals a broad assessment that programmes are considered too short to prepare participants adequately (Knuth, 2016^[55]; Boockmann, 2017^[56]; Knapp et al., 2017^[57]).

Building on existing structures of the preparatory classes can be more effective and efficient

Thus, for those who want to continue with VET, it is quite likely that a considerable share would need to enrol in preparatory VET programmes first. However, given the age restrictions for these programmes, many will already be too old to be admitted. Therefore, increasing the age limit for preparatory courses at VET schools, for instance by granting access to everyone up to the age of 25, will allow for a more academic preparation and is likely to increase the chances of succeeding in VET to a larger degree than through the route of language courses and PES training.

Thus, trying to channel as many young people as possible into the existing structures of preparatory classes in VET schools appears to be the more effective and time-saving approach.

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Notes

¹ For a definition see Box 2.2.

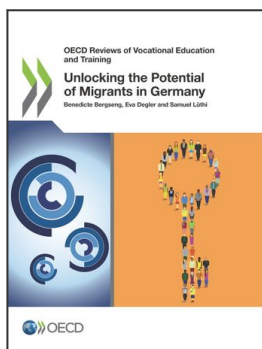
² Such internships may not be formally part of transition programmes, but are a mandatory requirement for accessing VET in childcare.

³ Data does not distinguish by legal status and citizenship is therefore taken as a proxy for asylum seeker or refugee status. The definition of “main asylum countries” follows the definition used by the PES and includes the main eight countries of origin of asylum seekers in the past years: Afghanistan, Eritrea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Somalia.

⁴ The PES also offers a similar programme, Perspectives for Refugees, (*Perspektiven für Flüchtlinge, PerF*) without a gender focus that aims to prepare refugees for the labour market, but has neither an explicit VET focus nor an age cap.

⁵ Migration Services for Young People provide counselling and information services for young migrants between the age of 12 to 27 regarding their integration into education, employment and a new social environment. There are more than 450 agencies in Germany that are financially supported by the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

⁶ The survey was conducted among 21 Bavarian VET schools. These schools all take part in a project that evaluates preparatory classes, connects schools with each other and produces guidance and materials on how to organise such classes for recent arrivals.



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