

VET VOICES Guidelines: Germany (1)

Migration, vocational education, and work in Germany: Challenges and opportunities

It is estimated that the number of persons living outside of their country of origin reached 281 million in 2020. The largest number of international migrants resided in Europe, with a total of 87 million. When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to robust and inclusive economies and societies in countries of destination. However, integration challenges persist for many migrants, especially those who have experienced forced migration. *The VET VOICES project seeks to expedite integration by allowing migrants to quickly and easily assess their interests, explore jobs, create a watchlist, network with professionals, and watch short videos of other migrants who have made it in relevant fields.*

This guideline introduces the topics of **migration, vocational education, and the labour market in Germany**, with a focus on conditions facing asylum-seekers and refugees.

Refugees and other migrants in Germany

Germany is recognised as an important destination country for both refugees and other migrants. Between the forced migration surge of 2015 and the year 2020, net migration trended downwards, then rose again somewhat in 2021 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023). The number of asylum applications followed the same trend line, with the most-represented countries-of-origin for asylum-seekers in 2022 (excluding Ukraine) being Syria, Afghanistan, Türkiye, Iraq, and Georgia (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2022, p. 3). In 2022, 73% of asylum-seekers were younger than 30, and 38% were minors (i.e., under age 18) (ibid, p. 8). In a country in which the average age is 45.9 (and rising), this represents a tremendous human resource potential.

Migration to Germany: Key numbers in 2021

- Total population: **ca. 83 mil.**
- Net in-migration: **393,342**
- **190,816** asylum claims

Source: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2022

VET and the labour market in Germany

Despite the fame of large international companies such as Volkswagen, Daimler, and Siemens, over 56% of the German workforce works in small and medium-sized enterprises – and in many sectors and industries, such enterprises are in need of staff.

VET in Germany:

Key numbers in 2021

- **1,807,057** pupils enrolled in VET
- **513,427** graduates in VET

Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET. Source: Eurostat 2023a, b.

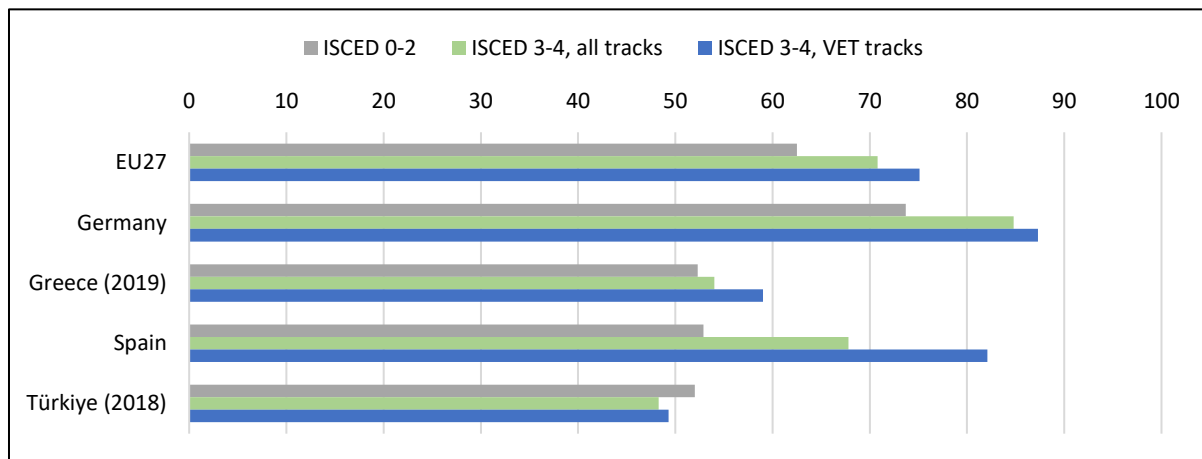
Germany's VET model emphasises the **dual apprenticeship system**, i.e., apprenticeship programmes conducted in tight cooperation with enterprises which cover the expenses of on-the-job training and provide apprentices with a stipend. In addition, for certain professions such as nursing, school-based VET programmes are offered (Cedefop; BIBB - Federal Institute for Vocational Education and

Training, 2022). As the share of work-based learning in apprenticeships as a whole is approximately

75%, the dual system provides smooth education-to-work transitions (ibid., p. 5). It is suggested that the model is a key driver for low youth unemployment in Germany (which was 5.8% in 2019 among those aged 15 to 24, versus 15.1% in the EU-27) (ibid., p. 6).

It follows that VET in Germany serves as a powerful means to enter the labour market, including for refugees and other migrants. Among 13-34-year-olds born abroad, vocational education tracks have proven a successful pathway to employment. For reference, this is also the case in the EU27 as a whole and the other VET Voices target countries of Greece, Spain, and Türkiye (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of foreign-born 15-34 year-olds employed, by education level, 2021 (source: Eurostat 2023c)

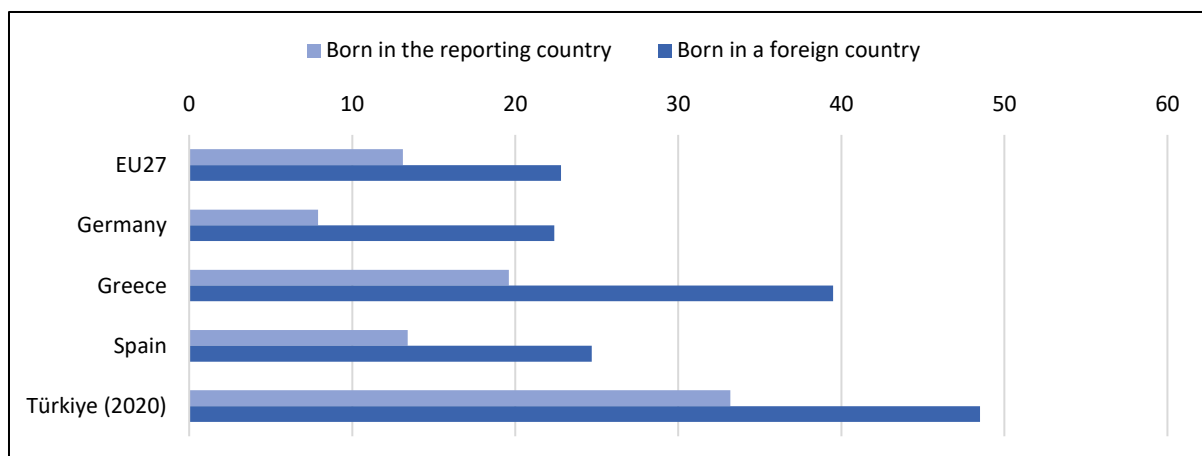


Integrating asylum-seekers and other migrants into VET in Germany

For certain professions in Germany in particular, such as nursing, childcare, driving, and gastronomy, there is a significant demand for skilled individuals who have completed vocational training (EURES, 2022). Refugees and other migrants could help fill this demand.

However, factors such as social inequalities currently block the realisation of this potential. As in the European Union as a whole and the other VET Voices target countries, young residents of Germany who were born in a foreign country are more likely to be neither in employment nor education and training (see Figure 2). Similar discrepancies show in other job- and education-related figures.

Figure 2: Percentage of 15-34 year-olds neither in employment nor in education and training, 2021 (source: Eurostat 2023d)



Barriers to employment, education, and training can be particularly challenging for asylum-seekers and refugees. Whereas the majority of job-seekers in Germany in general have at least a secondary-school leaving certificate, most job-seeking and unemployed asylum-seekers did not (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2022a). Among residents in Germany applying for vocational training, the percentage of asylum-seekers who cannot find such training is higher than among residents in general (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2022ab).

Because of this, integrating young refugees and other migrants into the German labour market is regarded as a core priority, that is incentivized by German policies and programs. For instance, refugees who start a VET program are provided with legal certainty about their residence status for up to 5 years (Cedefop; BIBB - Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, 2022, pp. 44-46). A result of this is that access to VET for young migrants and refugees is critical not only from an economic development standpoint, but also from a legal status and social integration perspective.

VET VOICES Guidelines: Germany (2) will focus on **pathways to vocational education and training for asylum-seekers and other migrants in Germany**.

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