

## VET VOICES Guidelines: Germany (2)

# Pathways to vocational education and training for asylum-seekers and other migrants in Germany

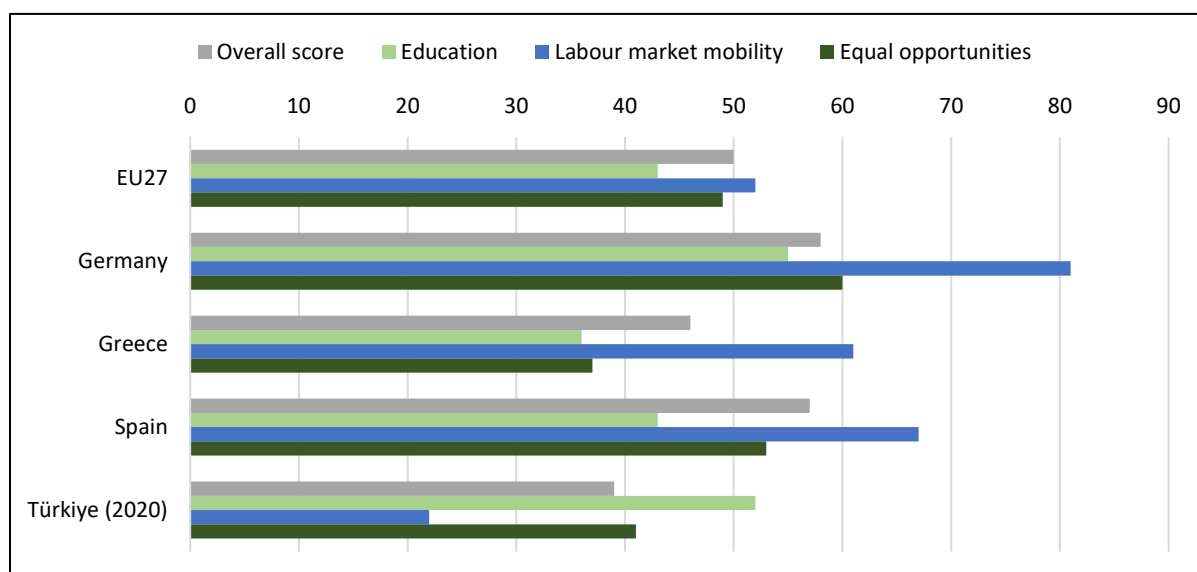
It is estimated that the number of persons living outside of their country of origin reached 281 million in 2020. The largest number of international migrants resided in Europe, with a total of 87 million. When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to robust and inclusive economies 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 discussion paper outlines **pathways to vocational education and training for asylum-seekers and other migrants in Germany**, with examples of good practices implemented by a range of institutions.

## Rights to education and educational integration policies

The German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) guarantees all children - both those with German nationality and asylum-seeking minors - the right to education. The legal framework in Germany is formed by twelve years of compulsory schooling, which generally lasts until the age of 18. As only a few refugee children have attended school without interruptions in their countries of origin, some federal states allow school attendance until the age of 25. The Migrant Integration Policy Index rates school integration policy in Germany as higher than the EU27 average, and significantly higher than the other VET Voices target countries of Greece, Spain, and Türkiye (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Migrant Integration Policy Index 2019 – maximum score = 100 (Solano & Huddleston, 2020)



However, it is impossible to assess the real-life situation in Germany on a federal level alone. Each of the country's 16 states decide independently on school policies and on how soon after arrival in Germany school attendance is compulsory. Also, only a few states have established transitional classes

at vocational schools. For refugees, this means that their chances of attending school, acquiring a graduation certificate, and getting access to regular VET programs strongly depend on the state.

## Access to the vocational education and training system

Refugees, tolerated persons, and asylum-seekers can access vocational education and training systems in Germany under certain conditions. As mentioned in the *VET Voices Discussion Paper: Germany (1)*, vocational education in Germany emphasizes the **dual apprenticeship system** model, in which trainees are employed in a company and complete the practical part of their training there, while also attending a vocational school. There are also full-time school-based programs, for instance in the social and healthcare sectors.

For school-based training in a technical school, the conditions specified by the respective school must be met (e.g., entry qualifications). A work permit by the responsible foreigners authority (*Ausländerbehörde*) is not necessary, since the training does not count as work. For in-company vocational training, on the other hand, a work permit or a residence permit granting work rights from the responsible foreigners authority is generally required.

Another precondition for entering VET in Germany (in nearly all cases) is sufficient German language ability. The 2005 Immigration Act (*Zuwanderungsgesetz*) grants immigrants access to free integration courses covering language and sociocultural orientation. Course content is planned by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), but courses are carried out by local institutions, including community colleges (*Volkshochschulen*) and non-state providers like Kolping-Bildungswerk. Some institutions additionally offer “dual apprenticeship preparation” (*Ausbildungsvorbereitung*) courses specifically oriented toward refugees and other migrants. Companies and independent VET providers can apply for funding specifically for language and preparatory courses for non-school-age refugees.

## Key institutions and good practices

The Federal Ministry of Education (BMBF) finances nationwide projects for vocational orientation for refugees and other migrants through the initiative **Graduation and Connection - Educational Chains up to the Completion of Training** (short: *Initiative Bildungsketten*). These activities are supervised by the Vocational Orientation Programme Unit at the federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). The BIBB both provides professional support to non-state VET providers, and organises its own programs: for example, **Career Orientation for Refugees** (*Berufliche Orientierung für Zugewanderte*), an intensive introduction to VET opportunities in different craft and trade fields, which provides ongoing support along the way to employment. Also on a nationwide basis, the **Youth Migration Service** (*Jugendmigrationsdienst*) provides free consultation on the bureaucratic and legal dimensions of the labour market, as well as help searching for open spots in vocational training programs (Jugendmigrationsdienste, 2023).

A wide range of orientation and training programs are also executed on a state or local level by non-governmental or public-private vocational training centres, such as for example the **Bildungswerk in Kreuzberg GmbH** in Berlin (BWK, 2023) or **Internationaler Bund Süd** in southern Germany (IB Süd, 2023). Requirements are usually a German level of B1 and a successfully completed integration course. Such orientation programs increase the potential for VET seekers to connect with instructors and companies in order to ensure that when the programs end, the participants are successfully guided to the next steps of their careers.

Stakeholders in specific critical fields also run targeted recruiting and training programs. For example, in the field of health, the central international and specialist placement (*Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung*) of the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) runs the program **Triple Win** to the sustainable recruitment of nurses from third countries (Bosnia, Philippines, Turkey, and Vietnam) for the German health and care industry. Another new approach in this field is to start training and language courses for VET seekers directly in their countries of origin, even before their immigration (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2023). For example, the project **uNowanga**, administered by the Order of St. John, is designed to increase interest in VET in nursing fields in Germany among young people in Capetown, South Africa (uNowanga, 2020).

On a local level, a wide range of organizations has taken advantage of the funding programs such as the European Social Fund to set up integration programs.

As dual apprenticeship programs are run directly by individual companies rather than the state, a number of initiatives have been set up to connect young refugees and other migrants to companies willing to sponsor their training. **Bridge-Bleiberecht**, for example, is a Berlin-based program that offers these placement services in cooperation with three organizations specialized in different fields of work: Berufsfachschule Paolo Freire, Arbeit und Bildung e.V., and Beratungs- und Betreuungszentrum für junge Geflüchtete und Migrantinnen (bridge - Berliner Netzwerke für Bleiberecht, 2023). In addition to placement in VET and qualification programs, this program offers individual career consulting, including intensive support before, during, and after placement in a particular field and job.

Another successful example of this matching process is the European Social Fund co-funded National Network Bavaria (Landesnetzwerk Bayern) project **IQ – Integration through Qualification**. This project focuses on helping immigrants gain recognition of their third-country qualifications and placement into advanced fields in Germany (IQ Vernetzungsprojekt, 2021)

**ARRIVO** is another good practice in VET financed and organized by the Berlin Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs (BUS gGmbH im Unionshilfswerk, 2023). Ten model projects were launched by Berlin sponsors, who advised training companies on how to support young refugees before and during their vocational training, as well as helping to arrange internships and apprenticeships for them in various occupational fields.

The forthcoming *VET VOICES Discussion Papers: Cross-Country Research Report* will focus on young refugees' and other migrants' experiences navigating vocational education and training systems in the target countries, and will offer concrete recommendations for addressing common barriers and concerns.

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