National Skills Strategy

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THE NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY
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The National Skills Strategy was adopted by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, the Federal Employment Agency, three Conferences of Ministers of the Länder (ASMK, KMK and WMK), trade unions, and employer and business associations in June 2019.

Within ten key priority areas, the partners agreed to measures and activities for advancing the continuing education and training (CET) system and strengthening Germany’s CET culture. They stipulated that in 2021, the state of implementation and objectives of the National Skills Strategy would be reviewed and, where necessary, further developed.

Further, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research commissioned the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to monitor the implementation process by way of a country report on CET in Germany. The OECD report was published on 23 April 2021.

The present implementation report for the National Skills Strategy documents what has been achieved thus far. It contains recommendations for the advancement of the key priority areas and shows the outlook for the continuation of a strategic approach to strengthening CET and the CET culture in Germany.
Much progress, much accomplished, much remains to be done

Two years of the National Skills Strategy

The past two years were an eventful period. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us once again how infinitely valuable and important the people are who keep things going during crises and develop solutions to help us quickly get back on our feet. In particular, nurses and carers, teachers and IT specialists are called upon to manage the many challenges of a completely new routine under pandemic conditions – thanks to sheer ability and the willingness to improvise.

The crisis is not yet over, but we hope for economic recovery in the near future. At the same time, we are aware that one of the pandemic’s effects was to accelerate structural change in the world of work. Digitalisation has picked up pace and made such developments as mobile work a routine matter for many employees. The consequences of the crisis are also perceptible in the labour market. The number of long-term unemployed persons is rising and, simultaneously, the skilled worker gap in understaffed professions such as electrical technology, nursing and geriatric care is growing wider.

Given the circumstances, the claim that continuing education and training are the basis for successful economic activity has become all the more true. New products and applications are being developed at a rapid pace. Germany is in an outstanding position with regard to vocational training, thereby laying a solid foundation for continued participation in the labour market. But, as a rule, it is not enough to stay up-to-date with the everyday routine right up to retirement. That is what makes a solid continuing education and training (CET) system important. Well-qualified skilled workers are key to the implementation of innovation, which maintains our position of growth and prosperity in international competition. The employees of today must also be able to do the work of tomorrow.

That is why we have come together in a broad political and social alliance under the umbrella of the National Skills Strategy. In June 2019, the 17 partners from the Federation and the Länder, employer and business associations, trade unions and the Federal Employment Agency defined numerous commitments within 10 key priority areas with the aim of strengthening the CET culture in Germany. Since that time, we have made great progress in implementing our commitments.

HUBERTUS HEIL

has been Germany’s Minister for Labour and Social Affairs since March 2018.

One of the political scientist’s primary objectives in carrying out his office is to enable everyone to have the opportunity to enjoy a self-determined life, thereby providing protection and security in an era of change.
Our approach has helped us to attain a favourable position in international comparison. In its most recent country report, the OECD confirmed that with the National Skills Strategy, Germany has laid a crucial foundation for strengthening both its CET system and its competitiveness.

**BUT WHAT EXACTLY HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR?**

First of all, the partners discussed the challenges in innovation labs and workshops with many experts and practitioners and discovered new paths to many solutions. Together, we have already implemented or initiated the implementation of three-quarters of our commitments.

All the participants have gone through a very intense process in the past two years. We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who, through their engagement, made the National Skills Strategy and its implementation a matter of personal concern. It was well worth the effort. As evidenced in the present implementation report, it enabled us to establish and develop an excellent culture of collaboration.

**WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED A LOT, YET MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE**

The implementation report documents how we can continue to enhance the CET landscape in Germany. Above all, digitalisation creates opportunities for more employees participating in CET and skills development programmes. It creates more transparency with regard to programmes and higher flexibility in the implementation of skills development measures.

Making continuing education and training strong in order to strengthen skilled workers and the economy in turn is in the common interest of the National Skills Strategy partners. We bear the responsibility together – in companies, with social partners and in employment management, as well as at the Länder and federal government levels. If we are successful at providing new paths of access to education and work, it will have been worth the effort. After all, the time to invest in our future is now!
What is the status of continuing education and training in Germany?
Developments in the labour market

Since the National Skills Strategy was presented in summer 2019, the structural change in the private sector and in the world of work that is primarily driven by digitalisation and decarbonisation has progressed. In some areas, further acceleration of the change process can be observed. The conversion of the German economy to carbon neutrality is gaining momentum due to strengthened climate-policy targets at the EU level and national measures such as the federal government’s National Hydrogen Strategy. An added factor is demographic change. The baby-boom generation is beginning to enter retirement and the trend has become noticeable in the labour market. This contributes to a shrinking working population in the face of growing demand for labour migration.

Independent of medium-term trends, society is currently feeling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the lockdown measures, Germany’s economy slipped into a recession in the first half of 2020. Overall, gross domestic product shrank by five per cent in 2020, whereby individual areas of the economy such as manufacturing and the hospitality industry were clearly hit much harder. Up to six million employees had periods of short-time work or furlough in the interim. Such measures in conjunction with sector policy and collective bargaining measures for employment protection, as well as interim financial aid, limited the rise in unemployment. At the end of 2020, around half a million more persons were unemployed than the year before. Of these, more than half had not had formal vocational training. At the structural level, it can be simultaneously observed that the crisis caused by the pandemic also contributed to the further acceleration of the digital transformation: for example, due to the boom in online retailing.

With a focus on the coming years, studies show that between ten and 15 per cent of employees in Germany are at high risk of their previous professional roles being replaced by technology. If jobs for which significant change is expected are also considered, according to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimate the number of jobs affected rises to more than one-half (54 per cent). The federal government’s Fachkräftemonitoring skilled labour monitoring tool currently estimates that by 2040 around 5.3 million jobs will disappear but, at the same time, around 3.6 million new jobs will be created.

The federal government’s Fachkräftemonitoring skilled labour monitoring tool currently estimates that by 2040 around 5.3 million jobs will disappear, simultaneously making way for around 3.6 million new ones. The calculations also cover the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The disappearance of jobs can be explained in part by the demographic development towards a reduced labour force size (1.7 million fewer persons). When the ‘retirement effect’ caused

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by demographics is considered, the emerging and disappearing jobs resulting from structural change balance each other net-net at around 3.6 million. Jobs will emerge and disappear in different industries and sectors, causing a significant rise in the need for employees to start new careers or switch careers. The skills requirements and tasks associated with existing jobs will change as well. In various sectors of the economy, a trend towards higher qualification can be observed, and meta skills such as the ability to grasp complex facts, work in a team, be creative and develop solutions are becoming increasingly important. To some extent, this development goes hand in hand with the stronger growth of jobs for low-qualified employees in comparison to the middle qualification range: take the case of machine manufacturing, for example.

Current situation and challenges

Germany has a complex and highly differentiated landscape of professional, vocational and general continuing education and training (CET), which often builds upon the proven system of initial training and enables transitions between general and professional or vocational CET. In the present implementation report and in accordance with the objective of the National Skills Strategy, the primary focus is on professional or vocational CET.

A high proportion of CET activity takes place within companies. As a result, social and business partners play a central role in the overall structure of CET, the organisation of which is market-based and encompasses around 18,000 public and private CET providers. At the same time, the system is structured by various regulatory levels and a number of legal bases. Alongside the business and social partners, the German Federation (federal government), Länder and the

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Federal Employment Agency are key stakeholders. Beyond collective bargaining and company agreements, the regulations of the German Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz), Crafts Code (Handwerksordnung), Upgrading Training Assistance Act (Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz), Works Constitution Act (Betriebsverfassungsgesetz), the German Social Code Books II and III (Sozialgesetzbücher II und III) and various regulations at the Länder level have an impact. Länder-level regulations include laws about CET, educational leave and university personnel structure and internal organisation, state-specific regulations on specific occupations and funding programmes.

In general, the guiding basis for action is and will remain the premise that companies, employees and public authorities share the responsibility and obligation for CET and its financing. While on the one hand the overall architecture of CET policy permits the regional adaptation of programmes to the relevant target group, on the other hand the multi-layer organisational structure of CET demands a high level of cooperation and coordination among the various stakeholders.

In view of the profound structural and technological changes that are taking place, the importance of CET for companies, employees and job seekers has clearly grown. This also includes personnel planning and development and the determination of qualification needs. CET is essential for retaining and increasing companies’ innovation and performance levels on the one hand and employment security and self-determined professional or vocational development perspectives on the other. The income of each and every person must also be safeguarded. Here, the proactive, precautionary qualification of employees must be ensured. The existence of sufficient numbers of skilled workers with the right skills will also be instrumental in deciding the extent to which Germany’s economy is future-proof. For example, the most recent Commission of Experts for Research and Innovation (EFI) report recommends the ‘testing of tools for the support of preventive upskilling that makes it easier for employees to switch to a new employer in time and involve both the giving and receiving companies’.

The National Skills Strategy is not only part of the federal government’s skilled labour strategy, it also lays the groundwork for deepening cooperation among the various stakeholders, advancing the CET system and strengthening Germany’s CET culture. It makes an important contribution to leveraging Germany’s opportunities for transformation, shaping the future and offering protection and monitoring in the process.

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9 The National Skills Strategy focuses on professional or vocational continuing education and training. It aims to either safeguard vocational competence, in the case of upskilling and refresher training, or increase vocational competence, in the case of personal and professional development and upgrading training. It also aims to enable professional advancement. Retraining or return-to-learn programmes to acquire basic skills or obtain a vocational qualification can also be regarded as professional or vocational CET in a broader sense. The aim of in-company CET is to meet skills needs within organisations.
Facts and figures on CET

ACTIVE POPULATION

In general, many persons are highly motivated to participate in CET. According to NEPS – Nationales Bildungspanel, a longitudinal survey on education processes and skills development in Germany, 30 per cent of employed persons would like to acquire further qualification through a CET programme. At the same time, there are also groups of people whose awareness of the importance of CET and motivation to participate could be raised. With a view to the actual individual CET activities, the latest data of the Adult Education Survey (AES) from 2018 show that 54 per cent of adults ages 18–64 have participated in CET. That is an increase of four percentage points in comparison to 2016. Differentiated consideration by employment situation and employment status reveals large differences among CET participants. For example, the proportion of employed persons in CET was the highest (59 per cent), followed by persons in school or vocational training (56 per cent) and unemployed persons (49 per cent). Measured in time spent (hours), the allocation of CET activities came to approx. 45 per cent in CET measures, around 33 per cent in individual, occupation-related CET measures and around 21 per cent in non-occupation-related CET measures. The average duration of a CET course depends heavily on the relevant segment. According to the AES, in-company CET lasts 29 hours on average. And on average, 153 hours are spent in individual CET and 56 hours are spent for non-professional or vocational CET.

ACTIVE COMPANIES

The proportion of companies active in CET has continued to rise in recent years, according to the Institute for Employment Research Establishment Panel. In the first six months of 2016, companies (53 per cent) actively pursued CET. Participation varied strongly with company size. While 44 per cent of micro-entities with fewer than 10 employees were active in CET, almost all large companies with at least 500 employees (98 per cent) were active. Further company surveys yielded significantly higher CET participation, which can be caused by differences in the time periods studied, the underlying CET-related terminology or the duration of the CET activity surveyed. For example, according to the 2020 German Economic Institute CET survey, the CET participation of German companies in 2019 was around 88 per cent. Almost nine out of ten companies consider CET a key response to the digitalisation of the world of work and more than 40 per cent already have a dedicated CET strategy.

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12 Federal Ministry of Education and Research. p 44, Fig. 15.
Section 1: What is the status of continuing education and training in Germany?

PROGRAMMES

More than 18,000 public and private providers offer CET programmes. When considering the provider side of CET, the ideal-typical attribution of providers is to one of four contexts: the state with a public service context, communities, the market (commercial providers) and companies. In 2018, 17 per cent of the CET activities identified in the AES fell under the community context, 13 per cent the state, 22 per cent commercial and at 45 per cent, almost half were attributable to in-company providers.19

INFLUENCING FACTORS

A number of factors influence the need for skills development and participation in CET, including the macroeconomic environment, business and company decisions and, ultimately, the specific further progress of structural change. Other factors and challenges are linked to the consideration of sociodemographic aspects. For example, persons with a migration background (first generation), low-skilled persons and those with low literacy participate significantly less frequently in CET courses.20 According to a current study by University of Hamburg, there are around 6.2 million persons with low literacy in Germany. Of them, a total of 62.3 per cent are employed.21 According to the 2018 Employment Survey conducted by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BIBB/BAuA), the CET rate for employed persons in unskilled jobs is only around half as high as that of employed persons in skilled jobs.22 In this context, the type of job also plays a key role. Data show that, on average, employed persons in jobs with a likelihood of being replaced by digital technologies participate less often in CET.23 Further, women participate less frequently in work-related CET than men.24 The differences are primarily due to differences in the scope of employment, occupational status, the incidence of fixed-term or marginal employment and,.

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last but not least, the need to take on private care work within the family context.\textsuperscript{25} The most frequently cited obstacles for potential participants were lack of time and financial considerations. The lower the household income, the greater the challenge involved in the realisation of CET ambitions. For both men and women, the existence of children or persons requiring care in the household significantly reduced the likelihood of participating in CET.\textsuperscript{26} And ‘learning skills atrophy’ also has a negative effect on motivation for CET. In one survey, a good two-thirds of employed persons without any full formal or vocational qualification agreed with the statement that they are no longer used to learning and view that as an obstacle.\textsuperscript{27} The question of whether needs-compatible and tailored CET programmes are available is thus also an influencing factor.

**INVESTMENT**

According to the *Educational Finance Report (Bildungsfinanzbericht)*,\textsuperscript{28} total expenditure for CET was €16.6 billion in 2017.\textsuperscript{29} The public sector’s proportion of total financing was €5.6 billion. Ten years earlier, total expenditure for CET was €11.7 billion with a public sector proportion of total financing equal to €4.0 billion. Accordingly, the solid 33 per cent public sector proportion of total financing has remained stable.\textsuperscript{30} Data from the *IW Survey of Further Training* (German Economic Institute) indicated an increase in corporate investment from €27 billion (2009) to €41 billion (2019). Other studies, however, indicate considerably lower corporate investment amounts.\textsuperscript{31} These studies employ different bases for calculation and model calculations of varying resilience. In this context, an Institute for Employment Research study on the macro-fiscal impact of CET funding showed that higher investment in CET can generate higher fiscal return flows.\textsuperscript{32} Therefore, it can be assumed that alongside the individual benefits of CET, education also yields a high macroeconomic return.

\textsuperscript{25} Federal Ministry of Education and Research. p 33.
\textsuperscript{26} Ehlert, M. (2020).
\textsuperscript{28} The Educational finance report does not completely map CET expenditure. In particular, it does not contain the fiscal funding of CET costs and therefore underestimates public sector CET expenditure. The report includes expenditure for in-company CET, the support of CET participants, adult education centres and other educational programmes.
\textsuperscript{30} When the tax deductibility of CET costs as part of advertising costs is considered, government expenditure increases by an estimated €6.5 to €7 billion.
\textsuperscript{31} Dohmen, D., Cordes, M. (2019): Kosten der Weiterbildung in Deutschland. Verteilung der Finanzlasten auf Unternehmen, Privatpersonen, öffentliche Hand. Study as part of the ‘Economic and regional costs, funding structures and benefits of continuing education’ project. Funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, FiBS Forum No. 61, FiBS Research Institute for the Economics of Education and Social Affairs, Berlin.
Section 1: What is the status of continuing education and training in Germany?

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

Germany is known for its highly developed vocational training system. More than one in two German adults has a vocational qualification in accordance with ISCED level 3-4 (ISCED = the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education). That is the second-highest proportion among all OECD countries. At just over 60 per cent, only Slovakia has an even higher proportion. In the last European survey in 2016, with a 52 per cent proportion of adults who participate in lifelong learning (in formal, non-formal and informal contexts), Germany lies significantly above the EU average (just under 45 per cent). With regard to participation in non-formal education, Germany’s rate rose by four percentage points between 2016 and 2018 to 54 per cent. Compared to other European OECD nations, adults in Germany (ages 25 to 64) learn more frequently in non-formal settings and less frequently in formal and informal ones. If the learning intensity with which persons participate in formal educational and CET activities is considered, Germany has the highest levels by far. On average, the formal educational and CET activities of adults add up to a total of 872 lessons per year. This is equal to more than five months of full-time studies.

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33 OECD (2021): Continuing Education and Training in Germany. Getting Skills Right. OECD Publishing, Paris, p 30, Fig. 1.9.
34 The next European AES survey will be conducted in 2022.
35 Formal education includes courses of education at the primary and secondary levels and the tertiary educational sector. Non-formal education encompasses all organised teaching/learning settings that are not integrated into the German Qualifications Framework. All forms of self-organised learning are considered to be informal learning as long as the intention to learn is present.
36 OECD (2021), p 40.
What have we achieved so far?
A | AT A GLANCE

Key priority areas and implementing the National Skills Strategy

The changes in the labour market, in particular the digital and ecological transformation, are posing major challenges to continuing education and training (CET) in Germany. CET must be so aligned that it contributes towards the success of structural change – for the economy as a whole, for companies and for every individual. The National Skills Strategy makes a key contribution to this by framing CET as a natural part of everyday life and laying the groundwork for a new culture of CET.

In autumn 2018, a consultation and discussion process with a total of 17 partner institutions was initiated. The aim was to develop a common strategic approach to strengthening CET in Germany. The partners agreed to the ten key priority areas listed below, and in June 2019 a joint strategy paper was published. In the strategy paper, the partners declared the aim of safeguarding or improving the occupational participation and vocational competence of all persons who are able to work, including the unemployed and job seekers. Employees and companies should be supported as they manage and shape structural change according to their needs. CET measures as part of upskilling and refresher training as well as development and upgrading training are particularly important here. Retraining or second-chance programmes to acquire basic skills or obtain a vocational qualification are just as important. Within ten defined key priority areas, the partners have committed to concrete measures and input in order to implement the strategy paper’s aims.
KEY PRIORITY AREAS OF THE NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY

1. Supporting the transparency of CET opportunities and programmes
2. Closing gaps in support, creating new incentives, adapting existing support systems
3. Ensuring full-coverage, lifelong CET guidance and strengthening skills development advisory services, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises
4. Strengthening the responsibility of the social partners
5. Reviewing and enhancing the quality and quality assessment of CET programmes and products
6. Increasing the visibility of and recognising the skills acquired by workers through vocational education and training
7. Developing further training qualifications and CET programmes
8. Strategically advancing educational institutions as centres of excellence for professional/vocational CET
9. Strengthening CET personnel and equipping them with the skills required for the digital transformation
10. Strengthening strategic forecasting and optimising statistics on CET

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

In the now-finalised implementation process, the partners pooled their efforts to address the opportunities and challenges in the CET field defined during the strategy process and to advance joint initiatives. An implementation board with all partners was established in order to coordinate the individual implementation activities and facilitate the networking required.

As part of four innovation labs and in consultation with other experts, the partners developed specific solutions and recommendations for the following areas:

- strategic forecasting and analytical tools
- literacy and basic skills
- advisory structures in CET
- quality assurance in CET
Further, a working group dedicated to the subject of employment conditions for CET staff in publicly funded CET was set up. A workshop around digital learning infrastructures and the opportunities and challenges connected to them through the digital transformation was held.

A Federation-Länder (federal-state government) committee was also established. The overarching aims of the committee are to enhance the transfer and exchange of experience and harmonise the various forms of public support for CET.

In the implementation phase, the partners implemented or initiated most of the agreed activities. A selection of highlighted measures and agreements from the now-finalised implementation phase is documented as an overview here.
IMPLEMENTATION CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY (SELECTION)

Supporting transparency

- In December 2020, the project definition phase for NOW!, the planned central entry portal of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, was initiated by the Federal Employment Agency. Upon completion of the phase, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Federal Employment Agency Administrative Board will decide upon the course of the further implementation process.

- The INVITE innovation competition supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research strengthens the digital CET space via funding projects launched in spring 2021.

- Establishment of the Federation-Länder Committee for the better harmonisation of support measures.

Advancing funding programmes

- The ‘Work of Tomorrow Act’ (Arbeit-von-morgen-Gesetz) significantly expanded the Federal Employment Agency’s funding of qualification for reasons of structural change in order to enhance the employability of labour force participants during the digital transformation. For adults pursuing their first vocational qualification, the law created a right to financial support under specific conditions.

- By simplifying and enhancing support for CET, among other measures, the Act to Secure Employment (Beschäftigungssicherungsgesetz) was used to increase the incentive to take advantage of periods of short-time work/furlough during the COVID-19 pandemic to pursue CET.

- Additional incentives for strengthening higher-qualifying vocational education now exist due to an amendment of the Upgrading Training Assistance Act (Aufstiegsfortbildungs Förderungsgesetz) that increased funding rates, grant rates and allowances.

- The Länder have expanded regulatory structures and funding for literacy and basic education according to need and with sustainability in mind.

- Many Länder have advanced their funding programmes for CET, taking the new federal funding programmes into consideration.

- As part of the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Skills (AlphaDekade), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is funding new development projects from the year 2021 for work-orientated literacy and basic education.

Strengthening advisory services

- With the projects of the trade unions and chemical industry social partners funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and assisted by CET mentors, in-company implementation structures for the establishment of sustainable educational advice and supervision have been expanded since 2020 in order to raise employee awareness of CET opportunities and motivate them to participate. Some of the Länder are following a similar approach.
Section 2A: What have we achieved so far?

- Regional collaboration among the Federal Employment Agency, the Länder and other partners was strengthened and is being developed further in order to enhance the interlinking of local programmes.

**Strengthening the responsibility of the social partners**

- Together with the social partners, the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has enhanced the ESF Social Partner Guidelines, and from 2021 to 2027 will fund innovative projects for CET and equal opportunity.

- The collective bargaining regulations for CET were also developed further (German Federation of Chemical Employers’ Associations (BAVC), IG Bergbau, Chemie, Energie (IG BCE), Federation of German Employers' Associations in the Metal and Electrical Engineering Industries and IG Metall, the metalworker’s union).

**Strengthening quality**

- Key improvements in accreditation and approval procedures in employment promotion were implemented as part of the ‘Work of Tomorrow Act’.

**Increasing the visibility of skills**

- The social partners, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses (ZDH) have strengthened their auditing of legal and financial conditions so that the process of validation of vocational skills can be continued in the next legislative term and put on a legal footing wherever necessary.

**Developing programmes**

- By 2024, the funding projects launched by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in 2020 as a result of the nationwide competition Zukunft gestalten – Innovationen für eine exzellente berufliche Bildung – InnoVET (designing the future – innovations for excellent vocational education – InnoVET) will provide strategic impetus for further job advancement prospects.

**Developing institutions further and strengthening regional networking**

- The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs’ nationwide programme for the funding of more than 40 CET networks was launched in 2020 with the aim of strengthening vocational and training opportunities in small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) – also an aim of individual Länder programmes.

**Optimising the data situation**

- To better assess CET activities, a project supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research was launched to establish transparent, systematic reporting in the field of CET.

Info box 1: Selected contributions to the implementation of the National Skills Strategy
Supporting the transparency of CET opportunities and programmes

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

The variety that exists in the continuing education and training (CET) field is a foundation and an opportunity for needs-based, individual and lifelong learning. A large number of regional and local stakeholders have taken on responsibility in the field. Many education providers organise CET courses in accordance with a wide range of needs. There are relevant regulations at the federal and state levels, and in collective bargaining agreements as well. The complexity that goes hand in hand with this diversity places special requirements on collaboration and coordination for all those involved.

As a result, potential CET participants still too often find it difficult to identify suitable CET programmes among the existing – increasingly digital – programmes and to leverage funding opportunities in order to identify and realise their needs and wishes with regard to education. Nor is it always easy for companies to find programmes that are suitable to cover their employees’ need for skills development.37

The National Skills Strategy partners have therefore identified two aims: ‘making it easier for people who are interested in CET, employees and company human resource managers to navigate the CET market effectively and increasing transparency’.38

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WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

The Federation-Länder Committee was established to serve as a new platform for discussing and coordinating CET policy in federal collaboration, facilitating an exchange of experiences and the alignment of funding and advisory measures.

In order to significantly improve guidance and transparency for potential CET participants and companies, several activities were initiated.

- In cooperation with Tech4Germany, the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs created a user-centric prototype as orientation for the development of a central entry portal for CET. Based on that, the Federal Employment Agency was commissioned to examine the establishment and operation of a CET portal as part of the Act to Secure Employment (Beschäftigungssicherungsgesetz). The project definition phase (PDP; NOW! – Nationale Online Weiterbildungsplattform) adopted by the Federal Employment Agency Administrative Board will end in August 2021. It will integrate existing Federal Employment Agency online products and those of other stakeholders, in particular the existing CET websites and portals of the Länder. The effort’s initial focus will be on employees who are potential CET participants, SME and education providers. When the PDP is finished, the next implementation steps will be decided. The Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has made up to €30 million available from the federal government’s AI strategy budget for the development of the entry portal.

- The Federal Ministry of Education and Research published the INVITE (Digital platform for CET) innovation competition for designing an innovative, user-centric and secure digital education space for work-related CET. The selected projects feature innovative technology and contain promising structural and didactic development approaches to the networking and advancing of internet-based platforms, applications and services (e.g. search engines) and the development of innovative digital teaching and learning programmes for work-related CET. The project funding began on 1 March 2021, for a total volume of €88 million.

The INVITE and NOW! projects follow complementary approaches. They both aim to increase transparency and accessibility in CET and are therefore closely coordinated.

The Federal Employment Agency already provides an array of digital information products, including KURSNET, Germany’s largest database for continuing education and training, and BERUFENET, an online encyclopaedia of occupations. The New Plan online tool, an in-depth platform for inspiring employees to start out on new occupational paths and displaying opportunities for professional/vocational development, went live at the end of 2020. As part of NOW!, a merger of the above products is being examined.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is funding the hoch&weit project, which is developing an information portal for science-oriented CET (duration: 2020 to 2023). Alongside degree courses, the portal will map shorter CET courses such as certification courses. Its implementation will be closely monitored, among others, by the German Association for University Continuing and Distance Education and coordinated with the portal development of individual Länder.
The Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses have agreed to raise awareness of higher-qualifying vocational education (formerly called ‘advanced further training’) for the continuing education certificates in their areas of responsibility and to increase the transparency of career and development opportunities. With regard to chambers of industry and commerce, various informational events on new certificates of completion in higher-qualifying vocational education have been held, including one about an internet dossier,\(^{39}\) and publications with a focus on successful employment biographies in higher vocational training.\(^{40}\)

OUTLOOK

- To intensify their collaboration in the CET field and strengthen the coherence of the support programmes, the German federal government and Länder are working towards a coordinated procedure, also in the context of ‘CET chains’ (sequences of complementary CET courses) if necessary. The continuation of the Federation-Länder Committee aims to further enhance the exchange of information and coordination among the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Employment Agency and the Länder with a focus on publicly-funded CET.

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KEY PRIORITY AREA 2

Closing funding gaps, creating new incentives, adapting existing support systems

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

During the current structural change, the need for investment in CET and skills development has significantly increased. Alongside CET and skills development for unemployed persons, individual CET is growing in importance. As different industries and economic sectors are influenced to varying degrees by the emergence and disappearance of jobs due to structural change, the necessity for employed persons to advance their training in their current occupation or to re-orientate and change industries as required is increasing. In addition to support for employed persons during the transformation, the aim is to more actively promote the participation of low-skilled persons in CET and their acquisition of basic skills.

The responsibility for satisfying the more complex requirements is shared by companies, employees, social partners and public authorities. At the same time, investment in CET is worthwhile for all the stakeholders mentioned: they can systematically support both the labour market’s adaptability and resilience and economic innovation processes, thereby safeguarding employability and competitiveness.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

Since 2019, the Federal Employment Agency’s spectrum of tasks and level of commitment with regard to support for CET based on the Skills Development Opportunities Act (Qualifizierungschancengesetz) have significantly increased. This law gives employees access to CET support under certain conditions irrespective of age, qualifications and company size.

With the ‘Work of Tomorrow Act’, at the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, CET funding through unemployment insurance for employees was expanded again. Employees and companies with an increased need for CET due to structural change can now be supported to a much greater extent. At the same time, the application process was simplified. The majority of Länder have supplemented the funding channel with their own measures, which are targeted towards funding individual or in-company CET.

With the Act to Secure Employment, support for CET during periods of short-time work or furlough was improved.

At the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the federal government and Länder have perceptibly improved their financial support for persons who look to upgrade their skills through higher qualifying vocational education and expanded the funding options with


Alongside CET and skills development for unemployed persons, individual CET is growing in importance.
the fourth amendment of the Upgrading Training Assistance Act. For example, the contribution to living expenses was extended to equal a full subsidy. Further, the subsidy component of course and examination fees was raised to 50 per cent and the loan remission options were supplemented. In particular, the amendment supported 'step-by-step upgrading' encompassing up to three stages of further training.

In order to strengthen the individual employability of unemployed persons and employees without a formal vocational qualification, the 'Work of Tomorrow Act' also implemented a basic legal right to undertake a formal vocational qualification and access the related financial support for this group of persons as long as the qualification improves their individual employability and the probability of completing the qualification.

'CET financial bonuses' will continue to be granted for successful interim and final examinations as part of re-training support from the Federal Employment Agency and the job centres. With the extension of the relevant regulations, additional incentives to participate in and complete CET-related vocational qualification will continue to be offered. The encouragement of persons with low incomes to participate in CET-related vocational qualification measures is an important aim. That is why the funding period for the Federal Ministry of Education and Research's Bildungsprämie (education bonus) support programme was extended for applicants until the end of 2021 and the deadline for the redemption of education bonuses was extended until mid-2022.

In line with its commitment to review, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs developed its own conceptual considerations for state-subsidised educational leave and part-time educational leave. These considerations aim to more strongly support individual vocational CET – as preparation for a change in job/sector, for example – in view of the structural changes in the
labour market. Accordingly, in future the primary need for action will be in areas where people aspire to new individual professional/vocational goals or changes in occupation become necessary. As a supplement to vocational CET in accordance with the German Social Code Book III, state-subsidised educational leave or part-time educational leave could expand education-related options for employees and open up an individual pathway to a new occupation with an improved employment outlook or a future-orientated industry. In the process, the significance of entitlements in social insurance schemes during phases of education should be considered. In industries or regions that are widely impacted by structural change, collective rights-based approaches to skills development with prospects via relevant works or collective agreements should also be considered.

An innovation lab was set up to examine the subject area of literacy and the improvement of basic skills.\textsuperscript{42} The main question was how the existing diverse activities of all stakeholders could be expanded and dovetailed more effectively. The innovation lab presented a results report with the following recommendations for action.

- In order to improve the basic skills of persons who have fundamental difficulties with reading and writing, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs aims to enable the acquisition of basic skills as part of continuing vocational education programmes that do not lead to a formal qualification – for a limited time. It should also be made easier to ‘return-to-learn’ and gain a secondary school education certificate as part of CET supported by the Federal Employment Agency and the job centres.

\textsuperscript{42} For a more detailed presentation, see the innovation lab’s ‘Results report’ in the Annex.
• The Federal Employment Agency and the job centres will continue their support for adults with low literacy, in particular the expansion of learning programmes for adults with low literacy, as part of the labour market policy services.

• The Länder are also expanding the subject area through their participation in the Alpha-Dekade by the federal government and the Länder. In many of the Länder, support for and the expansion of basic education centres is a focus. Further, the Länder are concentrating on developing more sustainable structures for increasing literacy through both nationwide coordination and specialist offices and nationwide networks in order to promote communication to adults with low literacy within the partner organisations from the private sector and civil society.

• As part of the AlphaDekade, in 2020 the Federal Ministry of Education and Research published a new announcement on the funding of development projects for work-orientated literacy and basic education. Under the announcement, projects that build upon ongoing projects can also be funded. Further, 14 research projects on adult literacy and basic education are being funded under a funding announcement published at the end of 2019. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is also funding the continued expansion of the German Adult Education Association’s vhs (adult education centre) learning portal. In the current funding phase, the new learning field of digital basic education will be established, among others.

OUTLOOK

• The awareness and take-up of the expanded funding opportunities for employees and companies must continue to be improved in collaboration among all partners. Further, and particularly given the ongoing structural change, all CET stakeholders should continually verify the need to further develop the existing support and funding tools and where necessary, close any existing funding gaps in a coordinated manner. In the area of individual CET, further effort should be made to more strongly support needs-based, self-determined employment biographies during the structural change in all income and skills categories and irrespective of gender. In the process, encouraging employees to participate in CET measures and the strengthening of individual capabilities will make key contributions to the establishment of a new CET culture.

• The Länder aim for the needs-oriented, sustainable development of a regulatory structure for adult literacy and basic education and funding for learning programmes provided by adult education centres, basic education centres or courses. They aspire to enhance the transparency of existing learning programmes, expand their cooperation at the local and regional levels with the federal government as part of its project funding or with Federal Employment Agency courses and institutionalise this cooperation whenever possible through roundtables, for example.

• In this context, a joint working group with representatives of the federal government (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Federal Ministry of Education and Research), Länder (Standing Conference of Education Ministers), Federal Employment Agency, the social partners, practitioners and researchers will examine, based on practical experience, which course models would be expedient for implementation and how projects on literacy and basic education and the existing support instruments of the Federal Employment Agency can be used even more effectively. The working group will also develop recommendations for structural improvements.
The nationwide and regional networks of the social partners and the educational institutions they sponsor are indispensable multipliers, particularly for the long-term establishment of workplace-orientated basic education in the company context. Company consultants and in-company CET mentors could also assume key roles here. The model’s establishment and development in the area of work-orientated basic education would therefore require further support. The potential of digital products and programmes should also be tapped.

**KEY PRIORITY AREA 3**

**Ensuring full-coverage lifelong CET guidance and strengthening skills development advisory services, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises**

**CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE**

CET guidance provides important support for decisions on tailored CET and skills development, as well as professional/vocational upgrading or advancement. As a result, this key priority area is closely connected to the measures set out in key priority area 1 for the improvement of transparency.

The current findings of the Adult Education Survey show that those who take advantage of advisory services have a higher probability of participating in CET. Alongside services for individuals, skills development guidance for companies – SME in particular – represents an effective tool for identifying potential for development and employees’ specific skills development needs. It safeguards skilled worker potential and helps acquire new participants in the labour force. SMEs often lack strategic personnel planning, which is the basis for skills development planning. Therefore, skills development guidance can represent a key building block for ensuring that companies are future-proof.

Due to the significance of advisory services in the CET process, the National Skills Strategy implementation phase included an innovation lab on the topic. In focus was the need for stronger regional networking among the various institutions with advisory services. Further, the participants examined how to establish accessible relevant programmes to enable more people and companies to benefit from CET or skills development guidance.

The continuation of support for KOFA (Kompetenzzentrum für Fachkräftesicherung), the centre of excellence for securing skilled labour funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, ensures a particular focus on SMEs with regard to communication and support and the continued rollout of best practices. KOFA provides comprehensive information for SMEs as support for the selection, planning and implementation of tailored measures for human resources work. CET plays a key role – due to digitalisation in particular.

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WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

In order to systematise and optimise advisory service availability, the existing guidance structures must be more strongly interconnected. In the innovation lab on this topic, the partners committed to establishing and advancing networking at the regional level. The advisory services of the various stakeholders should not compete, but instead complement each other and interlink efficiently. ‘Conditions for success’ for implementing local partnerships were drawn up during the innovation lab.

The Federal Employment Agency and the Länder established a joint process in which an inventory of regional partnerships was initiated. It will be subsequently used as a basis for more effective knowledge transfer. The process also includes the development of recommendations for any regional activities that are required and if necessary, the expansion of partnerships.

The implementation of Lebensbegleitende Berufsberatung, its lifelong career guidance programme, signified a milestone in the development of CET advisory services for the Federal Employment Agency. It provides comprehensive advisory services for the unemployed and employees in order to support them with decisions related to their employment path and retention of employability.

In parallel, the Federal Employment Agency developed the New Plan online self-assessment tool for professional/vocational re-orientation or initial guidance, particularly for those who do not yet have a specific aim in mind. The tool takes previous occupational experience and personal circumstances into consideration. Since December 2020, New Plan has been accessible to users as a pilot version and will be continuously developed until autumn 2022.

With regard to guidance for companies, the Federal Employment Agency has undertaken a conceptual revision of the guidance on employee qualifications provided by its Arbeitgeber-Service (service for employers). The Spezialisten für Arbeitsmarktberatung (specialists for labour market guidance) pilot project is aiming for comprehensive, preventive advisory services for employers to safeguard their personnel needs for the long term.
The social partners view strengthening the Federal Employment Agency’s advisory services as part of *Lebensbegleitende Berufsberatung* and the qualification guidance of the *Arbeitgeber­Service* as opportunities to enable accessible CET for employees and companies; also in close interplay with company partners.

The letter of intent between the Federal Employment Agency and chemical industry social partner, ‘*Zusammenarbeit bei der Weiterbildungs­ und Qualifizierungsberatung von Unterneh­men und Beschäftigten in der Chemischen Industrie*’ (collaboration in CET and skills development guidance among companies and employees in the chemical industry), presents an option for raising the profile of the Federal Employment Agency’s advisory and guidance services and achieving close cooperation among local employment agencies. A needs-oriented advisory service will be developed in three pilot regions. If it is successful, it will be rolled out nationwide.

The Chambers of Commerce and Industry organisation has modernised and advanced its CET guidance programmes and services. It commissioned the creation of easy-to-understand explanatory videos on CET guidance, conducted internal training and exchanges of experience and initiated pilot co­operations for lifelong career guidance between its regional organisations (e.g. Dusseldorf, Leipzig, Regensburg) and regional employment agencies.

The in­company CET mentors established in projects by the unions *IG Metall, Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft (ver.di), Gewerkschaft Nahrung­Genuss­Gaststätte (NGG)* and *IG Bergbau, Chemie, Energie (IG BCE)* have created a new approach to direct communication with employees to raise their awareness of CET and increase their motivation to participate. If a need for in­depth guidance arises, potential CET participants are referred to the Federal Employment Agency’s individual advisory services or one of the other available services, depending on the specific aim. Similar projects exist in individual Länder in collaboration with partners at the regional level.

**OUTLOOK**

- The significance and expansion of face­to­face guidance was named a high priority by the partners as part of the innovation lab. From the viewpoint of all participants, more effort must be made to improve advisory service take­up by low­skilled persons. To do so, it is necessary to improve advisory service accessibility.

- Outreach work presents an opportunity to point out the benefits and advantages of CET advice to more people. That is why outreach guidance must be more the focus when revising existing concepts or designing new ones. The expansion of the CET mentor approach and similar programmes can play a key role in raising the levels of employee awareness and motivation.

- As a supplement to individual communication and in­person individual guidance, online advisory services could contribute to motivating more people to use CET advice overall. Providing advice via digital channels can be considered a supplement to other guidance formats. In the innovation lab, the participants determined a need for further research and development on the opportunities and challenges of online advisory services.
In line with a user-focussed multi-channel strategy, classical face-to-face CET guidance should be strengthened alongside new information paths and assessment formats. For example, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research will expand its Infotelefon Weiterbildungsberatung (CET hotline) to become a nationwide citizen’s service called ‘Guidance on lifelong learning’. In this context, the NOW! entry portal will contribute to interlinking the various services available. The projects from the INVITE competition will contribute new digital solutions.
KEY PRIORITY AREA 4

Strengthening the responsibility of the social partners

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

The social partners play a key role in the successful design of the transformation at the company and sector levels. Alongside practice-oriented in-company skills development measures and the competent, needs-oriented shaping of training and CET regulations as part of regulatory processes, companies’ strategic, proactive personnel planning is becoming increasingly important. It helps to safeguard individual employability in companies and counteract a scarcity of skilled workers in existing or new fields of business while ensuring that companies are future-proof.

To strengthen the social partners’ role, the partners have agreed on various measures. They encompass the continuation and further development of the proven ESF Social Partner Guidelines on CET and equal opportunity in a changing world of work, and the collection of best-practice examples of company and collectively-agreed measures of continuing vocational education and training. In addition, collective bargaining parties such as those in the chemical industry have concluded industry-specific agreements.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

Given the ongoing digital transformation, the chemical industry social partners aim to pursue collective bargaining agreements specifically with reference to skills development as part of the National Skills Strategy and negotiated a skills development campaign within the framework of the last collective bargaining agreement (November 2019). Alongside an industry-specific CET
advisory service (pilot phase launch in spring 2021) and the chemical industry-specific adapta-
tion of the PYTHIA qualification analysis tool (publication in spring 2021) developed under the
umbrella of the New Quality of Work Initiative (INQA), the campaign contains an innovative,
AI-supported trend analysis tool focussing on the skills relevant to the industry.44 The metal
and electrical industries have concluded company collective bargaining agreements that con-
tain binding regulations for managing structural change. These ‘collective agreements for the
future’ aim to secure sustainable prospects (safeguarding of employment and location, invest-
ments, etc.), innovative skills development pathways, binding skills development processes and
tools for the participation of works councils (steering committees, for example).

In the metal and electrical industries’ 2021 collective bargaining round, the social partners also
adopted framework regulations for future collective agreements. The company and collective
bargaining parties were able to agree upon regulations for managing the transformation tai-
lored to individual companies. Based on analysis of the company situation, agreements around
such areas as personnel and skills development planning and employment protection can be
made.

As a follow-up, the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs is funding an industry-specific
adaptation of the PYTHIA qualification analysis tool for the automotive sector in order to sup-
port smaller companies with strategic personnel planning and consequently, individual skills
development plans. This was resolved as part of the National Platform Future of Mobility.45

Among the partners, there is no consensus on the question of options for the improved par-
ticipation of works councils in CET. In order to improve the general right of initiative for works
councils with regard to CET, the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs examined a va-
riety of starting points.

Together with the social partners and the relevant federal government departments and with
involvement of the Länder, the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs further developed
the ESF Social Partner Guidelines for reissue as part of the ESF Plus 2021 to 2027 funding peri-
od. The aim is to strengthen the social partnership-oriented shaping of the change in the world
of work through promoting concepts and measures in four key areas:

1. promoting CET in times of transformation
2. shaping equal opportunity
3. regional networks for strengthening CET and equal opportunity in SMEs
4. modelling innovative approaches to strengthen CET and equal opportunity.

The programme launch is planned for winter 2021/2022.

44 German Federation of Chemical Employers’ Associations (BAVC), Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau, Chemie, Energie (IG BCE) and HR
Forecast (pub.) (2021): An analysis of the skills requirements of the future. The Future Skills Report Chemistry. BAVC, IG BCE, HR Forecast,
45 NationalPlatform Future of Mobility (2020): Working group 4. Securing Germany as a place for mobility, production, battery cell
production, primary materials and recycling, training and qualification. Focus Group Strategic Personnel Planning and Development. 1st
Interim Report on Strategic Human Resources Planning and Development in the Mobility Sector (German language report) in: National
Platform Future of Mobility Berlin. URL: platform-zukunft-mobilitaet.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/NPM-AG-4-1-Zwischenbericht-
zu-Strategischen-Personalplanung-und-Entwicklung-im-Mobilitaetssektor.pdf
The Federal Ministry of Education and Research and trade unions have agreed to establish a new approach to the activation of employee CET activities by means of in-company CET mentors. Initially, funding projects were launched to qualify works and personnel councils and union workplace representatives as CET mentors in order to reach employees through personal communication and individual mentoring in skills development. The launched projects were in the metal, electrical, automotive and mechanical engineering, healthcare, energy supply and waste disposal industries, insurance, public administration, the food & beverage industry, the hospitality sector and the catering industry.

OUTLOOK

To improve the transparency of innovative approaches to company and collectively-agreed continuing vocational education and training, the partners have compiled practical examples based on their experiences with the ESF Social Partner Guidelines and the New Quality of Work Initiative. The following approaches in the info box are presented as examples.

There is a need for advancement regarding the development of tools for the determination of personnel development and CET needs, in particular in the SME area. The PYTHIA project represents a first step that should be used as a basis for advancement.

**PROJECT 1:**

**GALA-Q: SOCIAL PARTNER-BASED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING**

**Pillar I (systematic CET):** A CET initiative for long-term employees was developed with the aim of retaining skilled workers. Based on three member company surveys on the need for skills development, training plans leading to the GaLa-Q certificate in gardening and landscaping were developed in collaboration with industry experts. They cover a variety of areas (vegetation area care, leadership and communication in gardening and landscaping, etc.) and target groups (landscape gardeners and skilled workers, for example).

**Pillar II (retention of employee ability to work/occupational health management):** Three step-by-step project approaches on occupational health in gardening and landscaping encompass activities such as a mobile, interactive exhibition format, the development of measures in a follow-up company workshop and an online course on systematic health.

**Safeguarding sustainability:** The establishment of systematic, needs-based CET activity was tested in the project and will be implemented based on the findings of the social partners’ evaluation. The securing of the ‘GaLa-Q’ logo, creation of a certificate and the corresponding examination regulations and a transparent product transfer (education plans) laid the foundation for the industry to carry on the GaLa-Q approach.
Section 2B: Findings from the ten key priority areas

Project sponsor: Internationales Institut für Empirische Sozialökonomie (inifes)

The project was funded by the ESF and the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs within the framework of the ESF social partner guidelines ‘Securing the skilled labour base: vocational training and education (CVET) and gender equality’.

For detailed information, see (in German): galabaucamp.de/projekte/gala-q/

PROJECT 2: ARBEIT UND INNOVATION: KOMPETENZEN STÄRKEN, ZUKUNFT GESTALTEN (A+I)

The IG Metall project ‘Arbeit+Innovation: Kompetenzen stärken, Zukunft gestalten’ (Work + innovation: Strengthen skills, design the future) aims to tackle the challenges named in the title. In the first central focus of activity, employees’ skills were developed to qualify them as ‘work 4.0 experts’. This entailed a five-part skills development series with modules of three days per skill. In close collaboration with the Centre of Cooperation RUB (Ruhr University Bochum)/IGM (IG Metall) and the Chair of Production Systems (LPS) at RUB, it was possible to develop the didactic concept of a work-orientated learning factory in the course of the project. The LPS Learning Factory has become a fixed component of skills development. Another focus was the processing of a company implementation project aimed at supporting the establishment of sustainable personnel development structures. The participating implementation projects received support from an external network of experts.

A number of regional network meetings and practitioner-scientist dialogues have complemented the accompanying support programmes. Since the project launch in February 2016, more than 100 pilot companies nationwide have participated – from medium-sized machine builders to final manufacturers in the automotive sector. Almost 20 training series with well over 300 participants have taken place.

Project sponsor: IG Metall Executive Board

The project was funded by the ESF and the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs within the framework of the ESF Social Partner Guidelines ‘Securing the skilled labour base: vocational training and education (CVET) and gender equality’.

For detailed information (in German), see: https://www.igmetall.de/innovation
PROJECT 3: INTERNATIONAL DAY CARE

In the past ten years, the proportion of children under five with a migration history has significantly increased. Day care attendance plays a key role in achieving the aim of furthering equal opportunities for all children with regard to education and participation. Given this aim, the scarcity of skilled workers in the industry presents a serious challenge, as educational specialists are a major influence in ensuring the inclusive nature of day care centres. Therefore, one project aim is to absorb the high stress-overload and support skilled workers through personnel development.

As skilled workers are in scarce supply, it is necessary to support educational specialists with personnel development before the demands on them become a burden. Personnel development also increases the attractiveness of the employment field. The project supports and develops young talent and improves successful communication to skilled workers through the implementation of support systems.

A particular project focus is safeguarding sustainability: practical concepts, recommendations for action and best practice examples are shared via the social partners. Cross-hierarchical skills development and the in-depth training of multipliers ensure the establishment of a peer support system that extends beyond the conclusion of the project. The establishment of a peer support system also ensures sustainability.

Project sponsor: Bildungswerk ver.di in Niedersachsen e.V.

The project was funded by the ESF and the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs within the framework of the ESF Social Partner Guidelines ‘Securing the skilled labour base: vocational training and education (CVET) and gender equality’.

For detailed information (in German), see: esf-projekte.de/projekte/projektarchiv/kita-international/
KEY PRIORITY AREA 5

Reviewing and enhancing the quality and quality assessment of CET programmes and products

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

Quality assurance tools are just as diverse as the CET programmes and opportunities they serve. While publicly funded CET is, as a rule, linked to accreditation and certification regulations, quality assurance in regulated further vocational training takes place either on the basis of the further training regulations negotiated between the federal government and the private sector and social partners or is governed by the legislation of the Länder. In turn, there are hardly any requirements for programmes in the free market, although there are a series of well-established, voluntary quality assurance procedures. For example, according to figures from Weiterbildungsmonitor (CET monitor), the coordination platform for the exchange of information for and about the heterogeneous continuing education and training landscape, around 80 per cent of CET providers in 2017 had at least one quality management system available. As a result of the diversity of CET programmes and courses and the complexity of the CET market, potential CET participants may have difficulty finding a CET course that is suitable and fits their individual needs.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

To achieve the set objectives, the partners followed various approaches aimed at strengthening the quality and quality assessment of CET programmes.

In order to make the quality of the CET available in the free market more visible and transparent for users, the partners took stock of the established approaches to quality assurance as part of an innovation lab. They discussed with representatives of education associations...
Section 2B: Findings from the ten key priority areas

whether and which (additional) tools could contribute towards an improvement in the current situation. Their discussions and analyses in the course of four meetings yielded recommendations for making quality visible at the structural, provider and demand levels. (For detailed findings, see the accompanying publication on the innovation labs: 4 Quality Assurance).

The quality of CET measures in the area of social benefit support and activation measures in accordance with Books II and III of the Social Code is assured by the Regulation on the Accreditation and Approval for Employment Promotion (Akkreditierungs- und Zulassungsverfahren Arbeitsförderung). An evaluation of the procedure in 2019 determined the existence of a quality-promoting effect but also saw the need for adaptation and further development. In view of the findings and with inclusion of the social partners and numerous associations, key improvements were implemented with the adoption of the Gesetz zur Förderung der beruflichen Weiterbildung im Strukturwandel und zur Weiterentwicklung der Ausbildungsförderung (law on the promotion of further training in times of structural change and further development of the promotion of initial vocational training – see ‘Work of Tomorrow Act’) in summer 2020. For example, the reimbursable unit costs for CET measures were significantly increased and made more flexible. In particular, this included an across-the-board increase in the national average unit costs of 20 per cent on 1 July 2020. Further, if special expenses exist, higher unit costs of up to 25 per cent (e.g. for improvements in accessibility) can be recognised by certification agencies.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CHANGES IN THE REGULATORY STRUCTURE OF THE REGULATION ON THE ACCREDITATION AND APPROVAL FOR EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION THROUGH THE ‘WORK OF TOMORROW ACT’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>01 July 2020</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• one-off 20 per cent increase in the national average unit costs for CET measures.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>01 October 2020</strong></td>
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<td>• biennial (instead of annual) determination and publication of the national average unit costs (from 2022)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Federal Employment Agency can take the general price or wage trend into consideration when determining the national average unit costs in the field of vocational adult education in future</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘excess range’ of 25 per cent for national average unit costs upon approval by the competent body. Greater than 25 per cent cost approval by the Federal Employment Agency still required. Any necessary and extraordinary expenditures must be traceable and accounted for in cases of an overrun of the national average unit costs</td>
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<td>• basic group size of 12 participants.</td>
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Info box 3: ‘Work of Tomorrow Act’
The quality of CET qualifications issued by vocational schools is ensured by the quality management and quality development systems established in the Länder. These systems are permanently and successively adapted and expanded. The Ländervereinbarung über die gemeinsame Grundstruktur des Schulwesens und die gesamtstaatliche Verantwortung der Länder in zentralen bildungspolitischen Fragen, an agreement about the common basic structure of the school system and the overall responsibility of the Länder with regard to primary education policy issues, was concluded on 15 October 2020. In the context of this political project, the Länder agreed to develop a comprehensive quality standard in the field of vocational education that would certify that vocational schools comply with high quality standards. It encompasses technical college degrees and supplementary programmes around higher, further and CET qualifications.

The implementation of provider evaluation in the context of CET voucher-based measures by the Federal Employment Agency aims for greater transparency with regard to the quality of education providers in the area of support for CET. The rating tool focuses on creating incentives for education providers to increase the quality of their measures. It can contribute to enabling potential participants to compare the education programmes of different providers.

With regard to provider management obtained through procurement, assessment of contract execution by the purchaser of labour market services (the Employment Agency or jobcentres) has been and will continue to be integrated into the procurement decision for all rated standard products. In 2021, the measures for activation and job integration at a provider in accordance with Section 45 Book III of the Social Code and Section 16 Paragraph 1 Book II of the Social Code in conjunction with Section 45 Book III of the Social Code will be a particular focus.

OUTLOOK

- The experts in the National Skills Strategy innovation lab recommended the creation of an overview of quality-assuring structures, the development of a digital checklist and the analysis of existing quality assurance tools for digital education programmes and, based on this, the development of additional, necessary quality indicators as required, among other recommendations.

- In order to improve the transparency of the quality-assuring procedure for users, the development of digital and responsive checklists that can lead to decision-making should be supported along with other measures.

- As part of quality development in CET, digitalisation and the use of new teaching/learning technologies are key tasks with regard to resources, teaching design and instructor competency.

- Future developments or further developments of platforms or databases must take the aspects of information processing and transparency from the user perspective into consideration. Aspects such as learning prerequisites, learning conditions, new teaching/learning technologies and formats and valid learning achievement documentation play important roles here.

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KEY PRIORITY AREA 6

Increasing the visibility of and recognising the skills acquired by workers through vocational education and training

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

In Germany, more than three million members of the workforce in employment subject to social insurance contributions are not in possession of a vocational education qualification. The job-related skills they have acquired while employed and through non-formal CET measures are insufficiently documented, as a rule. This makes occupational advancement and participation in society more difficult for them. Likewise, skilled and unskilled workers with a migration history may have difficulties finding employment if they have occupational skills that were acquired outside the German vocational training system, thus lacking the formal vocational qualification required in Germany. The procedure for vocational qualification recognition in accordance with the Act on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungs­gesetz) or the relevant sectoral laws is not open to such persons either. There is the possibility of participating in a final training examination (‘external examination’) – even without previous training. No other tools for assessing and certifying informally or non-formally acquired vocational skills in accordance with a uniform nationwide procedure are embedded in the regulatory framework.

To enable fair opportunities for participation and, at the same time, meet the demand for skilled workers, the National Skills Strategy has set itself the target of improving the visibility and usability of informal vocational learning through standardised validation procedures, without the replacement or weakening of established training systems. This includes the related opportunities for expanding vocational skills and CET. It further aspires to roll out proven validation procedures and establish centres of excellence.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

The ValiKom-Transfer initiative developed a standardised validation procedure (‘ValiKom’ stands for the qualification-related validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills). To implement the ValiKom procedure, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and its partners, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses and the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, have established centres of excellence at the chambers of commerce and trades where qualification-related validation procedures can be carried out for selected vocations. By October 2021, 11 chambers of trade, 17 chambers of industry and commerce and two chambers of agriculture will offer validation procedures for over 30 vocations in the dual system of occupational training.

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The Federal Employment Agency’s ‘MYSKILLS – Berufliche Kompetenzen erkennen’ pilot procedure identifies practical vocational knowledge in 30 selected vocations in a video- and image-supported procedure. The procedure is primarily targeted at Federal Employment Agency clients with the aim of making non-formally and informally acquired knowledge visible in job-specific situations and to consider it in the further employment guidance process. In order to support employment guidance, job placement, activation and CET measures provided by employment agencies and job centres, MYSKILLS is now available in 12 languages and thus also accessible to people with migration histories and low German proficiency – two groups significantly overrepresented in underemployment and low-skilled employment.

Figure 1: Top 10 vocations based on 787 validation procedures completed as part of ValiKom between November 2018 and February 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocation</th>
<th>Procedures (787)</th>
<th>ValiKom (787)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office manager</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled worker in warehouse logistics</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled worker in metal technology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse clerk</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine and plant operator</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics technician</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales assistant</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter and varnisher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

West German Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (2021): Projectcoordination ValiKom-Transfer.
Federal Ministry of Education and Research.
OUTLOOK

- Based on findings from ValiKom and ValiKom-Transfer, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is examining the options and opportunities of codifying the validation procedure nationwide on a binding basis, and as a next step has held initial exploratory talks with the social partners, Länder and two umbrella associations: the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses. Irrespective of the question of whether or not to write this into law, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research intends to continue on with the previously established structures and is currently examining options for funding the existing ValiKom-Transfer network beyond October 2021.

- The prerequisites for the implementation of a legal basis for the validation of informally and non-formally acquired job-specific skills of persons with work experience should be clarified in the German Bundestag’s next legislative period.

- Together, the federal government, Länder, social partners, Federal Employment Agency and chamber organisations must ensure that parallel structures to existing and established qualifications-related vocational training systems are not created (considering the validation processes that are likely to be established on a nationwide basis in future).

- In this respect, whether and how additional vocational and sectoral areas [above and beyond the vocations regulated by the Vocational Training Act or Crafts Code (Handwerksordnung)] could be included in a uniform framework should also be examined.

- The Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has agreed to the implementation of a research project by the Institute for Employment Research (period: 2021 to 2024) on the use and need for skills determination procedures in the labour administration (jobcentres and employment agencies).

- Cross-reference: From the perspective of people without usable formal vocational qualification or without any at all, a process description should be developed in which a pathway to external examination and therefore, a second chance to acquire a vocational qualification can also be opened up. It should be based on advisory services and validation of informally and non-formally acquired vocational skills, as well as supplementary skills development qualifications if necessary – in the form of partial qualifications or adjustment training measures. Supplementary skills development qualifications and courses should be implemented nationwide, in particular for persons who, after a validation procedure, have still not achieved full comparability with recognised qualifications.

- Cross-reference: The partners should discuss how relationships between validation, recognition procedures for foreign qualifications, CET advisory services and skills development qualifications (second-chance, updating, compensatory and supplementary) can be identified and how a consistent framework can be developed in the interest of users.
KEY PRIORITY AREA 7

Advancing further training qualifications and CET programmes

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

The increasing digitalisation of the world of work and structural change are altering many job profiles and skills requirements. One aim of the National Skills Strategy is to support the advancement of further training and CET programmes to reflect changing skills requirements.

As part of this objective, the partners will continue the needs-based development of uniform, nationwide skills profiles in line with their respective areas of responsibility and systematically advance the opportunities for qualification-related skills development programmes. This could be in the form of partial qualification or further adjustment training measures and qualifications, for example. Companies’ need for qualified skilled workers and employees’ individual career development indicate the direction the development should take.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

The amendment of the Vocational Training Act that took effect on 1 January 2020 established the use of the new qualification designations ‘Master Professional’, ‘Bachelor Professional’ and ‘Certified Professional Specialist’. These further training levels enshrined in law were created with the aim of increasing the transparency of vocational career and development opportunities. With the ‘Master Professional Business Administrator’ and ‘Master Professional Restorer in the Trades’ designations in accordance with the German Vocational Training Act, the first business-related and trades-related/technical master professional qualifications were respectively introduced. At the same time, seven bachelor professional qualifications were established, including ‘Bachelor Professional in Procurement’. Since 1 January 2020, the chambers of trade have presented a master craftsman certificate to more than 20,000 master craftsmen and women. They and all the other graduates who obtained a qualification as master craftsman in the past are now permitted to use the supplementary designation of bachelor professional for the relevant trade. Existing further training qualifications in accordance with the Vocational Training Act are not included in the retroactive effect.

With a focus on the changing world of work, the responsible federal ministries are collaborating with the private sector and social partners to verify that further training certificates and master examination regulations are up to date and amended accordingly. The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training or the Forschungsinstitut für Berufsbildung im Handwerk research institute at the University of Cologne will monitor the process. Examples of the sectors with modernised qualifications that went into effect in 2019 and 2020 include the media and event sector (Bachelor Professional in Media, Bachelor Professional Industrial Master with a specialty in print media, Bachelor Professional in Event Technology), further training to become a Master Professional Restorer in the Trades and the bachelor professional certificates in the crafts of building brass instruments, bodywork and automotive construction, or laying parquet flooring.

Structural change and the increasing digitalisation of the world of work are altering many job profiles and skills requirements.
IG Metall, the Federation of German Employers’ Associations in the Metal and Electrical Engineering Industries, VDMA – the voice of mechanical engineering in Germany and Europe, the German Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers’ Association and others have created successful qualification standards for ‘Industry 4.0’ via the agreed social partner monitoring system and are currently designing a career development concept for higher qualifying vocational education in the industry.

The Standing Conference of Education Ministers (KMK) is driving the innovative adaptation and advancement of CET at technical colleges with the development of a uniform, nationwide qualification profile. It addresses the skills needs and changes in work, business and production process that have emerged with digitalisation. Tailored integration into the respective disciplines and their areas of concentration occurs at various levels. Relevant qualification profiles have been published for the ‘Industry 4.0’ and ‘Business 4.0’ subject areas. A current focus of examination is which specialisms (e.g. agriculture and design) require additional qualification profiles and whether or not these can be implemented.

Figure 2: The Standing Conference of Education Ministers qualification profile for ‘Business 4.0’

Integrative competencies

- Digital business strategies
- Digital business processes
- Digital collaboration, cooperation and management
- Digital information and data management

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With the aim of increasing the appeal, quality and equivalence of vocational education, since autumn 2020 structural concepts have been developed as part of InnoVET, a nationwide competition supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. In ‘innovation clusters’ that map an interplay of regional and industry-specific stakeholders, 17 cooperative projects are working to create appealing skills development programmes for young people to pursue vocational training or further training. For example, the occupational profiles of the agricultural and construction machine sector were modernised with a revised career concept and ongoing career monitoring as part of the LBT (LandBauTechnik) Forward project.50

In partnership with the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is funding the quality-assured development of partial qualifications for second-chance qualifications. The aim is to implement them in high-demand professions while applying nationwide standards. The previous development work of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the Federal Employment Agency also serve as a basis which will be continued and supplemented according to need. The aim of partial qualification programmes is to support persons with low formal qualifications, including employees without a vocational qualification but with professional work experience, by way of attaining a second-chance vocational qualification step by step. Younger persons (up to age 25) will remain the target group for dual vocational training. Individual partners have examined various measures and initiated projects that are still in the implementation phase. In the projects ‘Chancen Nutzen! Mit Teil­qualifikationen Richtung Berufsabschluss’ (Seize the opportunity! Partial qualifications leading to vocational qualification) (Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce) and ‘ETAPP – mit Teilqualifizierung zum Berufsabschluss’ (ETAPP – with partial qualification to vocational qualification) (Confederation of German Employers’ Associations), standardised, quality-assured bases for second-chance vocational qualification through partial qualifications are being developed in partnership with the ‘BIBB-TQ’ (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training-Partial qualifications) (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training) project.

The Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has continuously expanded the individual financial support and activation measures for CET-related formal vocational qualifications, which also benefit participants in partial qualification programmes. For example, the Federal Employment Agency can support the acquisition of basic skills as part of a formal qualification degree. To strengthen their motivation and stamina, participants receive a CET bonus of €1,500 if they successfully complete the external examination after completing partial qualification programmes. Further, in 2020 a basic right to receive funding for a CET-related formal qualification was added to the employment promotion measures for low-skilled persons.

OUTLOOK

• The social partners are advancing the metal, electrical and mechatronics industrial master further training programmes to form a career concept based on higher qualifying vocational education. Further training certificates at the professional specialist, bachelor professional and master professional levels are being developed. A career concept is also being initiated for the industry-orientated commercial field.

• Support for second-chance qualification in the form of partial qualification programmes should be closely tied to the aim of acquiring a formal CET qualification. In the labour market, a formal qualification is a key prerequisite for long-term employment.

• The aim is to develop a uniform, nationwide, standardised structure for the needs-based development of partial qualifications based on training regulations. As part of the ‘ETAPP – mit Teilqualifizierung zum Berufsabschluss’ project, which has collaborated with the ‘Chancen Nutzen!’ (DIHK Service GmbH) and ‘BIBB-TQ’ (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training) projects funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research on a cross-project basis since December 2020, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research will further the process through the joint Advisory Council, whose membership includes partners of the National Skills Strategy. The aim is to create greater flexibility in terms of time and space with transparent partial qualification programmes that include the option of vocational qualification.

• Identification and, where necessary, removal of obstacles to obtaining recognised vocational qualification through certified partial qualification with the involvement of Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training Board’s recommendations.

• The Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs will examine whether additional financial incentives for second-chance vocational qualification (as part of funding for CET overall) can be enabled under funding law. The aim remains to increase the motivation and stamina of particularly relevant participant groups.

• The Federal Employment Agency will intensify its activities in the areas of financial support and the provision of guidance to low-skilled persons with a focus on the attainment of a second-chance formal qualification and, with regard to the participants in partial qualification, improve its orientation towards the objective of acquiring a formal qualification.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 8

Strategically advancing educational institutions as centres of excellence for CET

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

In Germany, CET is diverse and often organised at the regional level. Companies, public and private institutions and other responsible bodies offer a wide range of programmes. At the same time, there are many funding tools orientated to different target groups. This makes it possible to provide CET programmes for persons in different life circumstances and react flexibly to changing requirements. To continue to increase the system’s permeability and strengthen synergies, vocational and general education should be further developed together and, to the extent possible, the various CET programmes should be coordinated and interlinked even...
Figure 3: Funded projects for places of learning partnerships as part of the federal programme establishing CET networks (Version: May 2021)
more closely. To accomplish this, networks among the CET stakeholders must become stronger. With models of partnerships between places of learning and regional CET networks, large and smaller companies can collaborate even more closely as a means of creating synergies in the organisation and implementation of CET measures together.

**WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?**

In some Länder, a successful system of skills development networks has been established. Beyond that, with the ‘Aufbau von Weiterbildungsverbünden’ (development of CET networks) federal programme, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is implementing one of its commitments in the National Skills Strategy. With the help of regional coordination offices, the programme will establish partnership and networking structures between companies and educational and advisory organisations in order to increase the CET participation of employees (particularly in SME) and strengthen regional economic and innovation networks, among other aims. Due to high demand, around 40 projects instead of the initially planned 10 will be funded as part of the programme. The first two CET networks started in Berlin and Thuringia in December 2020. A second funding guideline to enable support for additional CET networks and a coordination office is also being prepared for publication. Based on a resolution of Concerted Action Mobility in November 2020, there should be a stronger focus on a concept of transformation that takes the qualification of automotive industry employees in other industries and sectors into consideration.

Central public or publicly-funded institutions such as the Federal Employment Agency, inter-company training centres and vocational schools and adult education centres exercise an important coordination function at the regional level. With regard to support for digitalisation in vocational education, the special programmes of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy for inter-company training centre digitalisation are particularly significant.

As part of the Digitale Ausstattung (digital equipment) special programme designed to benefit medium-sized further training and CET institutions in Germany, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy has funded the procurement of state-of-the-art equipment since 2019. With 90 per cent funding and an individual contribution of only ten per cent, the funding rate here is so high that all educational institutions are able to procure the (sometimes very expensive) equipment.

**OUTLOOK**

With the implementation of the National Skills Strategy, additional activities around strengthening education providers were initiated. The factors of stakeholder networking and collaboration have increasingly gained importance.

- As part of the establishment of new regional networks, good interplay among publicly-funded initiatives must be ensured.
- Cross-reference: The more efficient interlinking of CET programmes among companies could be pursued in order to leverage synergies and experience. Small companies could benefit from closer collaboration with larger companies.
KEY PRIORITY AREA 9

Strengthening CET personnel and equipping them with the skills required for the digital transformation

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

Digitalisation processes are leading to new job descriptions and needs for skills and skilled workers in industries and companies. At the same time, they present growing challenges to education providers and institutions and their personnel. Teaching and learning processes should be designed with the help of modern information and communication technologies, and suitable CET programmes must be developed, tested and offered. Therefore, the National Skills Strategy is pursuing the aim of supporting personnel in CET as they cope with these requirements. In this context, the partners examined the working and employment conditions of CET personnel in publicly-financed vocational CET and made recommendations with a focus on requirements-based skills development in particular.
WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

In collaboration with the social partners, a working group from the federal government and Länder examined the working and employment conditions of personnel in publicly funded vocational CET. The following focal areas were specified in the process:

- stocktaking/transparency of the working and employment conditions of personnel in publicly-funded vocational CET
- stocktaking of measures/programmes and activities for skills development and qualification of CET personnel

The partners are tracking the following measures in order to continue improving the employment conditions of CET personnel and create new skills development programmes.

With its Qualifizierungsinitiative Digitaler Wandel – Q 4.0 skills development initiative around the digital transformation, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is funding the development and testing of CET concepts for vocational education personnel in the digital age in collaboration with the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and industry partners – initially, until the end of 2022. In the process, digital learning management systems that simplify the nationwide transfer of skills development formats are being established. In MIKA (media and IT competency for training personnel) seminars, participants learn and test how they can use digital media efficiently and profitably in intra-company teaching and learning processes. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is funding the nationwide Netzwerk Q 4.0 network that focusses on skills development to adapt training to the digital transformation. In collaboration with the German Economic Institute and businesses’ educational organisations, industry- and region-specific CET modules are being developed and tested. The initial findings of the Netzwerk Q 4.0 project work are to be presented to the expert public in June 2021 as part of a mid-term conference.

Skills development for instructors is a key point. Under the direction of the Länder, a working group from the Advisory Board of the AlphaDekade submitted new ‘recommendations for action for the training and continuing education of instructors in literacy and basic education’. The Standing Conference of Education Ministers and Advisory Board adopted them. They formulate non-binding, cross-Länder criteria for the future training and continuing education of instructors. CET will be organised for instructors in almost all Länder. There is strong demand for online further training (webinars) for instructors offered by basic education centres or state-run CET organisations.

With the aim of strengthening sustainable management through CET and skills development for skilled workers and trainers (also in the context of digitalisation), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research drafted the BBNE-Transfer 2020-2022 funding guidelines in spring 2020 (BBNE = vocational education for sustainable development). The guidelines contribute to the dissemination and consolidation of successful, sustainability-related further training concepts for in-company training personnel that were developed in the BBNE 2015–2019 funding focal area, which focused on sustainable skills development with the aim of shaping changing work processes. Since November 2020, the sustainability-related further education of in-company training personnel has been funded in the form of seven pilot projects.
OUTLOOK

- Given the insufficiency of the data available as determined by the participants, the National Skills Strategy working group welcomed the iWBB project on integrated CET reporting (‘Integrierte Weiterbildungsberichterstattung – Aufbau einer systematischen Berichterstattung zur beruflichen Weiterbildung’) organised by the German Institute for Adult Education in cooperation with the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

- The working group recommended taking stock of the CET measures funded by the Federation and the Länder with a focus on the issue of which tools are considered when assessing the qualification of the personnel when making funding, eligibility or award decisions.

- The working group recommended increasing transparency, discussion and stakeholder communication in the area of labour market policy measures as formulated in point seven of the Advisory Council statement in accordance with Section 182 Book III of the Social Code (AZAV Advisory Council, AZAV = Regulation on the Accreditation and Approval for Employment Promotion) on the evaluation of the procedure for accrediting competent bodies and the approval of providers and measures for employment promotion in accordance with Book III of the Social Code. That would contribute to more effective leveraging of the existing scope of action in the area of working and employment conditions as part of the accreditation process with regard to activation measures.

- The Standing Conference of Education Ministers of the Länder is examining the creation of recommendations for action aimed at strengthening the digital skills of personnel in publicly funded CET.

- The Länder are working to enable basic education centres to offer online-supported further training for instructors, among other goals. The ‘recommendations for action for the training and continuing education of instructors in literacy and basic education’ adopted together with the Advisory Board of the AlphaDekade are an important basis that will be monitored by the institutions, their sponsors, CET associations and the Länder. The aim is to satisfy quality requirements that prove challenging in light of the high degree of course heterogeneity.

- It has become obvious that a tool is needed in order to identify good practice with regard to digital skills in the teaching and learning context, discuss it and create transparency. Further, it was deemed necessary to continue the discussion process in whatever form possible. This should also include the lessons learned from dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

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KEY PRIORITY AREA 10

Strengthening strategic forecasting and optimising CET statistics

CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVE

Under the influence of megatrends in the labour market that affect regions and industries differently and bring changes in occupational profiles and competency requirements with them, the need for CET guidance for various target groups is growing.

The identification and analysis of occupational and qualification profiles in a changing world of work is essential for developing and providing the proactive, precautionary qualification of employees and job seekers for future skills needs. In the strategy paper published in 2019, the partners stated the goals of improving statistical reporting, further developing tools for strategic forecasting and improving information paths – in particular, those directed towards SMEs.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

To tackle the key priority area’s aims, a participatory process was initiated as part of the innovation lab. A broad alliance of partners and other institutions formed to engage with the aims.

With regard to the findings’ practical usability, the following higher-level question was identified: Which tools are appropriate for which target groups and what purposes? The prerequisite for offering target-orientated, relevant CET programmes is the identification of suitable tools for the analysis and identification of existing skills and those needed in future. The tools must be suitable for further development as required. The participants agreed on the following milestones:

- stocktaking of existing research and analytical tools in order to establish transparency
- systematisation and use of synergies among the numerous projects
- improvement of information paths (enhancement of their target group/user orientation), in particular those directed towards SMEs.

The following findings were compiled: Stocktaking in the group of partners showed that the examples of strategic forecasting and analytical tools at different levels of abstraction are an important basis for the orientation of CET in Germany. For the creation of tailored programmes and support options, the target groups’ specific orientation and need for information with regard to qualification and skills must be determined. Examples were identified for the main target groups: federal and Länder authorities, private sector and social partners, company human resource managers, works councils, CET/service providers and individuals (employees/job seekers).
One of the basic challenges is to improve the information channels between researchers and practitioners: each target group has specific needs to be met. To make the findings usable in practice for the target groups, the information channels must be systematised. Exemplary target group-specific formats and products for reaching individual targets groups were developed. Further, the following cross-target group recommendations were identified.

- The analytical tools should be embedded in the existing ecosystem. In this way, the link to existing regional and industry-specific network and advisory structures or those in the process of being established, such as regional CET networks, ‘centres for the future’ and in-company mentoring programmes or CET advice services, would be strengthened. Specific needs should be reflected back to the researchers.

- For SMEs and (interested) individuals in particular, products and formats with low-threshold access are needed. In conjunction, the tools’ benefits for the target group should also be made more visible. For example, information campaigns with success stories could be developed as a support function and more incentive mechanisms regarding the use of the information could be created.

- In line with improving guidance and providing a clear overview of the tools, there will be an assessment around the possible creation of a ‘one-stop shopping’ website on which the findings will be target group-compatible. In the process, a connection to other online programmes should be considered.

To better assess CET trends, the German Institute for Adult Education is funding a joint project by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the German Institute for Adult Education for the development of integrated CET statistics. The project will be implemented in close coordination with the Länder and other relevant statistical stakeholders. The first expert discussion took place in January 2021.
OUTLOOK

- The partners are working to improve the communication of information from researchers to practitioners and vice versa in order to support better usability and use of the findings for various target groups and in particular for SMEs. In line with this, their recommendation was to continue the discussion on how the findings of the analytical tools can be prepared for target group-specific use. The solution should be based on established exchange structures. In this context, the diverse existing partnerships among scientific institutions were highlighted.

- The participants recommended the continued, more intensive use of innovative methods (artificial intelligence, data mining and big data) in the development of analytical tools.

- Accordingly, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will further develop the skilled labour monitoring tool and continue to improve the surveying of future skills need in the context of the ‘Skills Compass’ research project.

- The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training is assessing the option of developing a systematic monitoring process with reference to the changes relevant to the regulatory issues of vocational education (through the closer interlinking of relevant tools), as well as the continuation and advancement of relevant research projects and initiatives.

- The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training is also testing the further interlinking of the analytical tools with the relevant accessible information and data sources, as well as the systematic preparation and presentation of occupational skills requirements and job matching options in the German labour market.

- The chemical industry social partners have developed an AI-supported trend analysis of skills that are particularly relevant for the industry. They are also adapting the PYTHIA qualification analysis tool created as part of New Quality of Work Initiative to the specific needs of the chemical industry (publication in early summer 2021). After the two tools have been provided, a social partner-based communication strategy will be pursued to ensure that the findings are used and analytical tools are applied in companies.

53 17 German Federation of Chemical Employers’ Associations, IG Bergbau, Chemie, Energie. HR Forecast (2021).
54 View the tool at https://personal-pythia.de/
Section 2B: Findings from the ten key priority areas
IN FOCUS

Contributions to digitalisation in CET

The primary point of departure for the National Skills Strategy in 2019 was the ongoing digital transformation of our world of work, which has also fundamentally changed the general conditions for skills development and CET. The COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges it continues to pose provided the final impetus for making the digitalisation of CET a key priority area. As a cross-cutting topic, it plays a key role in the National Skills Strategy’s various formats of exchange and in the supervisory Federation-Länder Committee as well. The topic was discussed in a separate workshop with a diverse group of experts and practitioners.

One of the partners’ important goals is to simplify and systematise navigation around the CET market for potential CET participants, employees and human resources managers, bringing clarity to the diversity of CET programmes and advisory services. In future, dismantling barriers in the area of digital CET and developing an inclusive digital educational space will be primary tasks for the continued implementation of the joint strategy.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AS A DRIVER

The digitalisation of CET encompasses everything from the digital tools for information and skills development measures that are carried out in a digital or hybrid setting to digitally-certified qualifications and their storage. Great expectations and scope for potential surround digital CET measures and digital tools for information and documentation. Companies hope to integrate employee skills development more easily into workflows through digital learning programmes and create more options for self-managed learning.55 Technology can enable learning to be integrated into everyday work routines in an individualised and flexible manner. Further, the flexibility of digital programmes with regard to place and time can make it easier for employees to balance learning with other obligations, or to pursue part-time learning.

In the context of occupational CET, Figure 4 reflects the findings from a survey on the digital innovation that will be significant in future from the perspective of CET providers.

Before the pandemic, companies and their employees generally viewed CET positively. Among education providers, a large majority (80 per cent) already used digital media in their work. However, this was primarily for purposes of classroom training. Only one in 20 education providers primarily relied on virtual formats, and in 2018 only four per cent of all educational activities for adults took place in a purely online format.

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58 Christ, J. et al. (2020)
At the height of the pandemic, most on-site CET activities had to be postponed. As a result, many providers attempted to digitalise their programmes at short notice. Overall, CET experienced a wave of digitalisation. In the area of funded CET, a simplified procedure was implemented as part of certification in the framework of the Regulation on the Accreditation and Approval for Employment Promotion (Akkreditierungs- und Zulassungsverordnung Arbeitsförderung) to enable classroom-based activation measures to be carried out digitally on short notice. The number of companies that systematically invested in digital CET was almost 25 per cent higher in 2020 than two years previously. During the pandemic, larger companies also benefited from the fact that they had already established extensive internal digital personnel development and CET platforms.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The pandemic has served as a magnifying glass pointed towards the digitalisation of CET, making the opportunities – and challenges – that existed before the pandemic and ensuing crisis clearly visible. It also highlighted the potential of digital tools and programmes. According to a current survey, providers of in-company CET see major opportunities in measures such as smaller learning modules that users can access or download as needed (micro learning) and personalised CET programmes and learning pathways (see Fig 4). It has also become obvious that digitally-supported learning is still experienced in vastly different ways. Further, the relevant technical and spatial prerequisites are not available everywhere in sufficient quantity.

The digital learning infrastructure plays a key role in enabling digital access to lifelong learning. It must be ensured that the psychological barriers to accessing vocational CET perceived by persons with low CET participation are not reinforced by digitalisation. Alongside basic digital skills and a fundamentally open attitude, instructors require additional knowledge of digital didactics to be able to digitally supervise learning processes. Overall, instructor requirements and qualification needs are growing and changing significantly.

Education providers require both the relevant know-how and investment resources for developing digital programmes. This poses challenges to some providers. Other providers benefit from the investment they have already made in this area. According to a Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training study, many observers predict a reduction here in the number of companies in the CET market due to bankruptcy or takeovers.
Section 2C: What have we achieved so far?

There are also many overarching questions from a practical viewpoint, including those regarding documentation and where appropriate, the recognition of digital learning results. The related open issues surround quality assurance, the eligibility of digital CET programmes for funding, data privacy protection and the use of accrued and available (learning) data. They must be clarified in order to ensure reliability and create trust.

The key to higher acceptance and learning success of digital teaching/learning technologies is their thorough integration into the learning process and meaningful connection to didactic concepts. Experience shows that playful approaches (e.g. gamification) in the teaching/learning process can contribute to significantly increasing or maintaining motivation to learn.66 The same applies to the documentation of individual learning results – by means of badges or in the form of the micro or nano degrees increasingly used in the area of IT skills in particular. If use is made of these options for low-threshold learning programmes, persons with negative learning experiences or formally low-skilled persons and those who are out of practice could benefit greatly.67 Companies that have established appealing digital learning portals to support their CET culture have noted a significant increase in willingness to learn.68


OUTLOOK

Subsequent to the implementation of the *National Skills Strategy*, various measures have been agreed and implemented to support digitalisation in CET.

- The INVITE innovation competition is funding projects that are creating the basis for an innovative, inclusive digital CET space and developing AI-supported individualised and personalised digital programmes.

- The development of a central online entry portal for vocational CET is being tested for feasibility (project definition phase).

- *Qualifizierungsinitiative Digitaler Wandel – Q 4.0*, a skills development initiative, is developing and testing an innovative skills development format for vocational education personnel.

- The Regulation on the Accreditation and Approval for Employment Promotion has been developed further as part of the law on promotion of further training in times of structural change and further development of the promotion of initial vocational training (‘Work of Tomorrow Act’) with the aim of making digital learning formats eligible for funding.

- German educational institutions participated in the pilot initiative for the first prototype of the infrastructure for the issuance of digital skills documentation (EDCI Issuer, EDCI = Europass digital credential infrastructure), which was released with the publication of the new EUROPASS portal. The lessons learned will be integrated into follow-up activities on digital credentials, for example, in INVITE subprojects.

The development of a digital CET space will be of special significance in future. In the way of a mission statement, the term ‘digital education space’ represents a digital architecture in the CET field that designs access to CET with as low a threshold as possible and presents programmes that are tailored to individual needs in terms of content, format and scope. It aims to make it as easy as possible for people to further educate and train themselves on an ongoing basis.

In this context, a discussion about which overarching digital standards are required for the implementation of, for example, activation measures, documentation of skills or for regional partnerships and what company concepts could look like in detail must be held. Another topic of discussion should be which digital skills are required and which ‘non-digital’ skills could generally be taught with digital means.

For the realisation and sustainable design of a user-orientated digital space for vocational CET, a discussion and participation format to be held at regular intervals should also be planned as part of the *National Skills Strategy*.

With the launching of the federal government’s *Initiative Digitale Bildung* (digital education initiative), the prerequisites for linking existing and new digital education platforms on a cross-educational basis to create a compatible platform ecosystem are being created. In 2021, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research will fund the development of several prototypes in the first step towards establishing the platform.

The strengthening of education in the digital world is a challenge to society as a whole. The conditions for CET in the digital world must be continuously improved in an integrated manner. The creation of a digital CET space requires the committed participation of all relevant partners.
What remains to be done?
Section 2 presented the contributions of the National Skills Strategy partners and documented the findings of the innovation labs. The majority of the agreed measures from the strategy paper of the National Skills Strategy have been or are being implemented. In the wake of the recent acceleration of digitalisation in continuing education and training (CET), topics that require more attention, such as literacy, basic education, guidance and quality assurance, were advanced in innovation labs and workshops. Given the momentum for international integration, the OECD country report for Germany derives recommendations which, from the organisation’s viewpoint, provide possible points of reference for the advancement of a national CET strategy for each country. The report focused on targeting the way low-skilled persons with low participation in CET are reached and supported, increasing coherence among existing funding programmes and overall, increasing investment in CET.69

The National Skills Strategy implementation process has established a new culture of partnership among the participating decision-makers and other stakeholders from the realms of research and practice. In order to sustainably strengthen Germany’s CET culture, the topics highlighted in the key priority areas must be developed further. Through systematic stocktaking processes and developing specific recommendations for action, the National Skills Strategy innovation labs and working group have laid an important foundation that provides points of reference for the work ahead.

Above and beyond key priority areas and innovation labs, the partners have highlighted four primary cross-cutting topics for the further implementation process of the National Skills Strategy:

- **simplifying access** to advisory and guidance services, funding and CET programmes while taking financial conditions and time constraints into account
- **intensifying partnerships** in regions and industries
- **advancing concepts** for the skills of the future, in-company skills development planning and collective bargaining approaches to strengthening CET
- **strengthening digital CET** through greater transparency and innovative learning programmes.

In the following, an overview of the main conclusions from the completed implementation phase will be presented topic by topic. The solutions and next steps that can be taken to strengthen vocational CET in Germany in the identified areas will also be described.

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MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Points of connection: A process description should be developed to pave the way towards second-chance vocational qualification for persons without any usable formal vocational qualification. The process should range from guidance and advisory services and the validation of informally and non-formally acquired vocational skills to supplementary skills development programmes. In this way, it will become possible to develop skilled workers and enlarge individual career development prospects.

Advice and guidance: In the realm of CET guidance, collaboration and networking among advisory institutions should be expanded and improved – also through support from the national CET platform. Another stipulation is that CET guidance, such as that provided by CET mentors, should be designed with the target group in mind. In particular, the use of advisory services by groups of persons with lower CET participation, such as migrants, must be increased. The existing quality assurance tools must be examined with regard to their suitability for application in digital education programmes. Further, a digital checklist should be developed.

Literacy and basic education: Public funding and the structural conditions for the work-oriented literacy and basic education of adults should continue to be strengthened. Based on practical experience, a working group that involves the social partners should examine which course models might be effective and how projects for literacy and basic education and the Federal Employment Agency’s existing tools can be meaningfully applied in this context. The Länder are pursuing the aim of needs-based, sustainable development of the regulatory structures for adult literacy and basic education. This includes support for learning programmes via adult education centres and other CET institutions, courses or where applicable, basic education centres. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs aims to enable – for a limited time – the acquisition of basic skills in the context of CET programmes that do not lead to any formal qualification and simplify return-to-learn opportunities to obtain a secondary school-level qualification as part of promoting vocational CET. The Federal Employment Agency will work to ensure that the existing financial support opportunities are used to greater effect in order to motivate persons with low literacy in particular to begin a CET course.

Funding programmes and assistance: Financial assistance for employees has been significantly expanded and company support for in-company CET has been intensified. However, all partners must work together to increase awareness and take-up. Further, given the ongoing digital and ecological structural transformation for all stakeholders in vocational CET, the need for advancing tools for support and funding must be examined on an ongoing basis. In the area of individual CET as well, further efforts should be examined with the aim of more strongly supporting employment pathways in all income and skills categories and irrespective of gender during the structural change.
Networking: Central public or publicly-funded institutions such as the Federal Employment Agency, inter-company training centres, vocational schools and adult education centres exercise an important coordination function in the regions. With the establishment of new regional networks, an important contribution to networking could be created if all relevant stakeholders are involved. The steps taken in this direction should be expanded. The stronger interlinking of CET programmes among companies as aimed for in the Aufbau von Weiterbildungsverbünden federal programme, for example, should also be a goal. A second call for funding in this area was launched in August 2021.

Federal government and the Länder: To intensify their collaboration in the CET field and strengthen the coherence of the support programmes, the federal government and Länder are working towards a coordinated procedure, where appropriate in the context of ‘CET chains’ (sequences of complementary CET courses).

Personnel in CET: Satisfying work and continuous skills development for CET personnel are prerequisites for stabilising and advancing the quality and appeal of CET measures. With a focus on strengthening the digital skills of CET personnel, a Standing Conference of Education Ministers initiative on the harmonisation of recommendations for action for instructor CET will be examined.

Strategic outlook: The assessment of future needs for skills and CET must be improved. To further this aim, products and formats with low-threshold access for small and medium-sized enterprises and employees are required alongside the further development of innovative research approaches. Tools for evaluating personnel development and CET needs must still be developed.

Digitalisation of CET: The strengthening of education in the digital world is a challenge to society as a whole. The conditions for CET in the digital space must be systematically and continuously improved – from the infrastructure, information provision and digital and hybrid measures to digitally-certified certificates of qualification. The creation of a digital CET space requires the committed participation of all relevant partners. The INVITE innovation competition aims to increase the user-orientation of digital CET platforms and the transparency of CET programmes and expand the array of digital, individualised CET programmes. The design of the national online CET platform (NOW!), jointly discussed as part of the National Skills Strategy, will be further developed in close coordination with the Länder and social partners. As part of the federal government’s Initiative Digitale Bildung, a national education platform will be created to interconnect existing and new platforms and learning programmes with the aim of making it easier to find educational programmes, making them available in a manner that can be adjusted to specific contexts and individual needs. In the process, common open standards and existing contexts – in particular, the Online Access Act (Onlinezugangsgesetz) – will be used and developed further. The complementary projects and their synergies should retain a strong reference to each other.
What happens next?
The National Skills Strategy is the successful culmination of a long-term, overarching partnership-orientated discussion process around continuing education and training (CET) policy. The process was conceived as an interministerial approach and several federal ministries share the responsibility for it. At the same time, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the necessity of a CET strategy orientated towards the accelerated transformation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again made it clear that CET is a top priority in strengthening the resilience of persons and organisations in extraordinary times. Consequently, CET has become a decisive issue of the future for economic stability and a more cohesive society. A broad political and social dialogue and the joint search for forward-looking, sustainable solutions are required in order to examine CET and skills development. The National Skills Strategy has an outstandingly high degree of reliability and systematic connection between strategy development and the implementation processes, which in turn have led to fresh momentum and many steps forward.

From the very beginning, open, co-creative formats for policy creation have been integrated into the strategy paper’s development process. Specific contributions and agreements from all the partners to the strategy paper generated a high level of commitment for the implementation process, which extends beyond the current legislative period. In its country report on Germany, concomitant with that of the National Skills Strategy, the OECD praised the cooperation among the national stakeholders and recommended that the participatory structures be advanced and intensified.70

The 17 partners proposed the consistent continuation of the initiated activities and the National Skills Strategy guidance and discussion process. The culture of cooperation that was created in the National Skills Strategy and proven institutional formats of exchange such as the National Skills Strategy Board and the Federation-Länder Committee accompanying the National Skills Strategy can be built upon further.

With a focus on pending implementation steps and the new challenges posed by the pandemic, the work and cooperation structure should be systematically advanced. This approach is already embedded in the strategy paper of the National Skills Strategy as follows: ‘In 2021, a joint report will be produced reviewing the National Skills Strategy’s state of implementation and key objectives, and potentially further developing them’.

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70 OECD (2021).
For a future strategic approach based on the past work in the National Skills Strategy innovation labs, the organisational form and content in which the key priority areas should be further developed must be examined. Moreover, new relevant thematic focal areas could be discussed, or existing focal areas intensified: for example, in response to the ecological transformation. As already intermittently tested in the process of formulating the National Skills Strategy, agile working methods should be applied in the coming years. The further integration of expertise from the realms of practice and research should also be examined. The existing approaches to tracking key milestones and the progress of implementation should be systematically continued.

The continuation of the National Skills Strategy will benefit if the partners systematically form networks and coordinate their work outside of the official body. In this spirit, the Federation-Länder Committee will be continued as a meaningful tool for coordination between the federal government and the Länder.

Concerning the international perspective, the partners view the advancement of the National Skills Strategy as a specific contribution and ‘good practice’ for the implementation of the updated Skills Agenda of the European Commission and the Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training adopted during the German EU Council Presidency in November 2020. Both initiatives highlight the importance of national skills development strategies for high-quality, inclusive lifelong learning. At the same time, Germany is providing decisive momentum for vocational education in Europe with its National Skills Strategy.
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