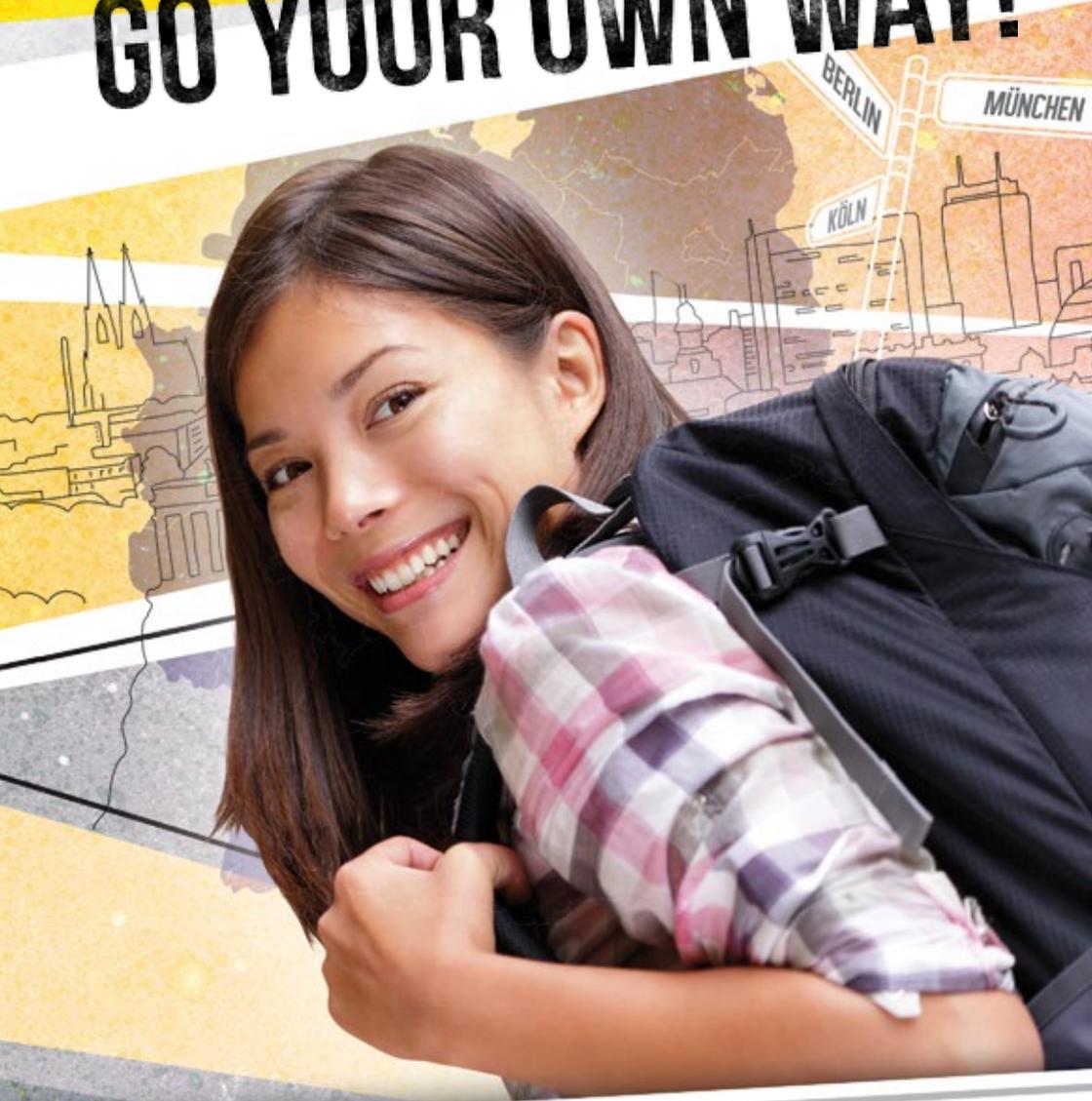


# TRAINING IN GERMANY

# GO YOUR OWN WAY!



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**Bundesagentur für Arbeit**  
Zentrale Auslands-  
und Fachvermittlung (ZAV)

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## Note on the legibility of the text

To make the text more legible, only the male form is usually used. However, the statements apply equally to women and men.

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# Germany, the land of education and training

With a population of over 500 million, the European Economic Area (EEA) is the biggest employment market in the world. People are free to move over the borders between states: employees from an EU state can work in all other member states (with a few exceptions) and may not be disadvantaged in comparison with employees from the host country.



Freedom of movement also applies for EU citizens who want to have vocational training in another EU state. In this booklet we will provide you with an overview of the German education system. We will show you what opportunities for training are available to you in Germany, and what requirements you have to satisfy for this. This booklet will support you in the practical planning of your training in Germany, and gives the names of contact partners and further sources of information.

## **GERMANY – TRAINING WITH A PERSPECTIVE**

In Germany, you train for an occupation not just in school. On the contrary, you are given a training contract with a company. Here you will learn in practice what specialist skills you will need for your future career. Depending on the occupation, this dual training takes between two and three years. If you do not want to complete the whole of your training in Germany, you can also acquire a part or supplementary qualification, for example, in the framework of an exchange programme for apprentices.

Vocational training is a model for success in Germany, wide-ranging and oriented to practical requirements. Individual training courses are adapted permanently to technological and social developments and offer many career opportunities.

Training in Germany offers interesting occupational perspectives. There is an urgent demand for skilled workers on the German employment market, and in the technical and health sectors in particular there are very good long term chances. The situation on the training market has developed very positively in the last few years. Companies are continuing to increase their training range. This development is reflected in Germany's youth unemployment rate, which at present is the lowest in Europe.

In order to counteract the shortage of skilled workers, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology and the Federal Employment Agency have initiated a skilled worker offensive. However, the campaign is not intended only to provide information on the shortage of skilled workers, but at the same time to mobilise potential both in Germany and abroad.

#### The Job of my Life

### THE SUPPORT PROGRAMME MOBIPRO-EU

The special programme on support for the occupational mobility of young persons interested in training and young unemployed skilled workers from Europe (Mobi-Pro-EU) was initiated in 2013. With this programme, the federal government is supporting the following target groups in Europe outside Germany:

- Young persons who would like to take part in training in Germany
- Young skilled workers who would like to take up qualified employment in Germany

**Information on the possibilities for support and the requirements:**

[www.thejobofmylife.de](http://www.thejobofmylife.de)

## The German education system

In Germany, education has traditionally been held in very high regard. The education system is the responsibility of the individual federal länder, it is organised publically and independently, financed by the state and is largely free of charge. Studying, vocational training and further training are accessible to everyone, provided they have the necessary school-leaving qualifications and educational certificates.

### GENERAL EDUCATION

About 96 per cent of all 5-year-olds attend kindergarten as the first stage in schooling.

Children in Germany have to go to school from the age of six, whereby several federal länder have already brought full-time compulsory education forward by one or two years. With the exception of Berlin and Brandenburg (six years), all children attend primary school for four years. At the end of primary school, a recommendation is made concerning secondary school.

#### Secondary school types

Depending on pupils' achievements, there are three types of secondary school available for selection: lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*), intermediate secondary school (*Realschule*) or upper secondary school (*Gymnasium*). As an alternative there are comprehensive schools,

which bring two or three types of secondary school under one roof, and orientation stages (first two years of secondary school), which are independent of the school type.

The eight-year period of compulsory education is covered by each school type. Special-needs schools are available for children with disabilities or special needs.



### Lower and intermediate secondary school

#### *(Hauptschule/Realschule)*

Lower secondary school usually ends after Year 9 with the lower secondary school-leaving certificate; however, in some federal länder a qualified or extended lower secondary school-leaving certificate is possible. This improves the chances of access to all further school and vocational training courses. Lower secondary schools teach the general foundations, such as spelling, articulateness, basic knowledge of a foreign language, maths and natural sciences that are necessary for practical vocational training.

The goal of the intermediate secondary school is to create the requirements for higher training occupations with the successful conclusion of Year 10. These include challenging technical or commercial occupations, as well as administrative duties in the middle grades of the civil service.

### Upper secondary school (*Gymnasium*)

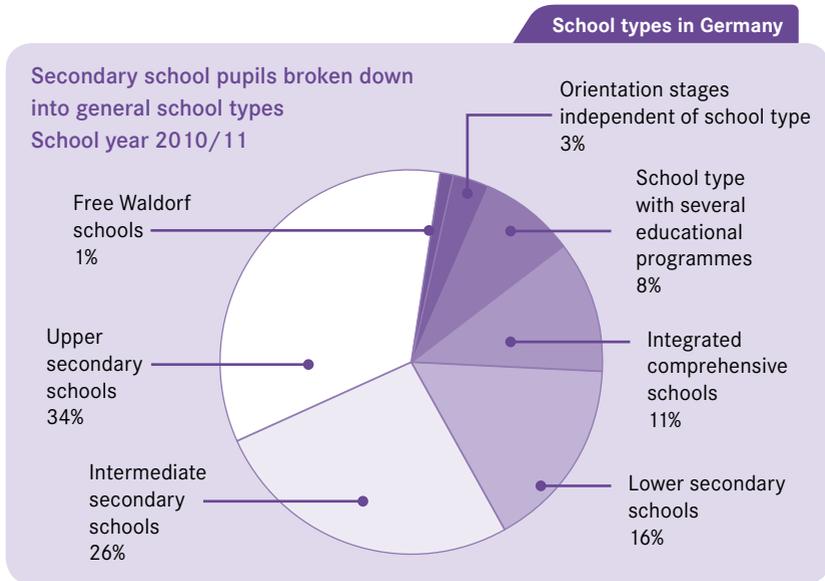
Most pupils attend a higher secondary school. This has two or three additional school years and ends with the certificate of aptitude for higher education. Following the reforms that led to the eight-year upper secondary school (G8), in most federal länder the certificate of aptitude for higher education is issued after 12 years of schooling. Some federal länder still maintain Year 13 for those sitting the examinations for the certificate of aptitude for higher education. Possession of this certificate is an open door into working life: studying or vocational training, whereby studying offers the formally highest vocational qualification.

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Pupils at intermediate and lower secondary schools are designated for vocational training, but can obtain further qualifications in the course of their working lives.

There are two alternatives for vocational training: dual training at vocational school and in a training company, or training at a technical college. You will find more detailed information on this in the chapter "Vocational training in Germany".

For more information on the German education system: [www.bildungsbericht.de](http://www.bildungsbericht.de)



Source: Federal Statistical Office, [www.destatis.de](http://www.destatis.de), 2012

## Vocational training in Germany

About two thirds of school-leavers in a year apply for vocational training in a school or a company, one third attend a tertiary institution. Even pupils with certificates of aptitude for higher education often decide on vocational training. One reason for this is the good reputation of the German vocational training system. Many occupations that require a degree in other countries are learned in Germany through vocational training.

In Germany, a vocational qualification is regarded as the foundation stone for a successful working life. Even if, later on, people no longer work in the occupation they originally learned, the training is decisive for their further chances on the employment market. Because it is also regarded as proof of the intellectual and social skills that are necessary for survival in working life.

### About 350 training occupations

Training is always coupled to a specific occupation: there are about 350 recognised training occupations. New occupations come into being every year, or old training regulations are updated. In recent years, many new occupations have been created in particular in the fields of information technology, media and services. Most school-leavers decide on in-company or dual training. It is called „dual“ because it takes place at two locations: apprentices learn the practical foundations in a company, and the theory in vocational school. The Vocational Train-

ing Act regulates the rights and obligations that the company providing the training and apprentices both have.

### Training at technical colleges

Along with the dual system, there is also vocational schooling at special technical colleges. In this case, contents are mediated in instruction periods, supplemented by longer practical phases. Social and caring occupations, for example child care workers, or geriatric and healthcare assistants, are taught at technical colleges, but training in technical occupations as well, for informatics assistants or medical technical assistants, for example, is also provided in these colleges.



## DUAL TRAINING

Apprentices play a joint role in the dual system: they are students and employees at the same time. They conclude an apprenticeship contract with the company. Here they learn the practical side of the occupation by working in the company under the supervision of experienced colleagues. On the other hand, they attend vocational school for one or two days each week, where they learn the theoretical foundations. One third of the curriculum consists of general subjects, such as German, English or social studies. Two thirds of the curriculum is tailored to the occupation.

Vocational training takes two to three and a half years, depending on the occupation. With appropriate preparatory training, or particularly good achievements, the duration can be shortened in consultation with the company providing the training and the vocational school.

Apprentices sit the final examinations before the chamber that is responsible for their occupational group. Trade associations in craft-based occupations, and in industry and commerce, call themselves chambers. They award occupational permits and have a say in vocational training and examination standards. The content and course of examinations are regulated nationally on a uniform basis.

### Early access to the world of employment

One great advantage of the dual training system is its closeness to the employment market. The aim is to train qualified skilled workers who bring with them the necessary competences and qualifications for a changing world of employment. The high proportion of practical training ensures that the acquired skills are actually in demand in the world of work.

For many, vocational training pay plays an important role, because the thought of being financially independent of parents - at least partially - is appealing.

Payment increases with each training year, and on average amounts to about one third of the starting pay for a trained skilled worker. Actual earnings depend in particular on collective wage agreements. These are negotiated by employee and employer associations and regulate working hours and pay. Wages differ depending on the occupation or region.

### School-leaving certificate decides on chances

In principle, the dual training system is open to all. Formally, a school-leaving certificate is not required at all. However, in practice, the situation on the training market looks different. Although there has been a clear increase in the number of training places in the last four to five years, school-leavers with higher leaving certificates still have better chances of getting the training place that they want. Pupils at lower secondary school have the fewest opportunities for choice on the training market, but can score with good grades.

School-leaving certificates acquired abroad can be classed with a German school-leaving certificate under certain conditions. The certificate accreditation offices of the länder decide on equalisation with the German lower school-leaving certificate, an intermediate school-leaving certificate (from a „*Realschule*“), and the general or subject-related higher education entrance qualification for occupational purposes (e.g. for starting vocational training). For further information you can visit the website of the Conference of Education Ministers at [www.kmk.org](http://www.kmk.org) (> Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen > Anerkennung im Schulbereich > Gleichstellung mit deutschen Schulabschlüssen). The competent offices can be requested via the Anabin database (<http://anabin.kmk.org> > Anerkennungs- und Beratungstellen in Deutschland). The universities themselves are responsible for the decision on access to university of German, foreign or stateless applicants with foreign university entrance qualifications.

Banks, insurance companies and tax consultants recruit well over half of their trainees from applicants with university entrance qualifications. These qualifications are usually also required for demanding technical occupations in informatics. And in occupations that young people favour as well, for example, in events technology or media design, the majority of trainees have university entrance qualifications. Apprenticeships in the commercial and electrical sectors are most frequently given to applicants with intermediate school-leaving certificates. Baker, hairdresser, or painter and decorator, are occupations in which applicants with lower secondary school-leaving certificates have good chances. You can find offers on the choice of occupation here: [www.planet-beruf.de](http://www.planet-beruf.de) and [www.berufswahl.de](http://www.berufswahl.de).

### Requirements are oriented to the company

Just as the training places that are offered differ greatly, the requirements and the application procedure vary a great deal as well. Larger companies test their candidates in assessment centres, while selection in small craft-based companies is often determined by the personal impression that the applicant makes. Nearly all employers want their apprentices and trainees to have good marks in German and maths at school. A command of English is important in the commercial sector, or with contacts with international customers.

**Training interview**

**Andreas Baumann**, trainer at EURONICS XXL in Bayreuth

*Can you just explain briefly what is understood by inter-company training?*

Inter-company training in the chamber of craft trades is intended to intensify and supplement practical in-company training. In inter-company training courses master craftsmen simulate, for example, repairs that cannot be carried out in the training company. In addition, apprentices can repeat and practise operations that they have already learned.

*What do you think are the advantages of vocational training in Germany?*

The dual training system means that young people receive training with a practical orientation. Apprentices have the opportunity permanently to apply their theoretical knowledge practically. With a German vocational training certificate under their belts, foreign apprentices as well have good chances on their home employment market.

*How is vocational training organised in your company?*

Apprentices in the electronics division run through all departments in the company in a three to four week cycle – from field service, via the workshop, antenna construction, to the stores. During their time in a department they are supervised by a trained worker or foreman, who looks after them and trains them. Apprentices keep logbooks on the activities they have carried out each week – including in the weeks in vocational school or the inter-company course phases.

After two years, the apprentices sit the intermediate examination. This is intended to “determine the training attainments”. In this way, we, as the training company, find out whether the apprentice has a chance of successfully completing the apprenticeship, and the apprentice knows what his level of knowledge is.



## IN-SCHOOL TRAINING

Some occupations in the social, care, commercial or technical sectors are learned at technical colleges. These occupations include commercial assistants, occupational therapists, dietary assistants or foreign language secretaries. Apprentices usually attend a single college for two to three years. In most cases, obligatory practical periods in companies are integrated into the syllabus. The contents and scope may vary in some occupations in different federal länder, but the final examinations at the end of the apprenticeship are all equal.

**What can you earn as an apprentice? Selected occupations 2012**

Training occupation (In-plant)	Length of training (months)	Average pay in western federal länderr	Average pay in eastern federal länder
Office management assistant (trade and industry)	36	EUR 841	EUR 763
Nurse	36	EUR 950	EUR 950
Electronics technician – operating technology	42	EUR 904	EUR 852
Industrial management assistant	36	EUR 875	EUR 802
Hotel clerk	36	EUR 638	EUR 505
Chef	36	EUR 638	EUR 505
Bricklayer	36	EUR 968	EUR 772
Mechatronic technician	42	EUR 909	EUR 885
Medical specialist	36	EUR 653	EUR 653
Cutting machine operator	36	EUR 913	EUR 886

Source: Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, Tarifliche Ausbildungsvergütungen 2012 und Tarifvertrag für Auszubildende des öffentlichen Dienstes (TVAöD) – Besonderer Teil Pflege

**Technical colleges**

Technical colleges offer a broad range of courses: for example, they provide full-time educational training in industry or administration. In addition, technical colleges enable graduates to study through the university of applied science entrance qualification.

**PLANNING YOUR TRAINING**

Before you decide on vocational training in Germany, you should clarify the following questions:

**What requirements do I have to have?**

The advantage of the German dual training system is that it does not have any formal access conditions. In the competition with other applicants a good school-leaving certificate counts above all. School-leaving certificates are required for purely educational training. The certificate explanations provided by **europass** are a useful instrument for translating your own school certificates for German employers and institutions. **europass** is to date the most important instrument for documenting occupational experience and making it comprehensible abroad. You can find information on it in many languages on the Internet at <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>.

In addition, good to very good knowledge of German is necessary for the successful conclusion of training, because in-plant training, training at vocational schools and technical schools is given in German – and this applies to the examinations as well.

### How do I apply?

Most training starts on 1 August or 1 September. Larger companies and banks often advertise their vacancies a whole year before the start of training. Those interested are expected to provide a complete written application. In Germany, this includes an accompanying letter, a CV in table form with a photo, the last school report and, where available, an employment reference as well. Certificates from practical experience or other evidence, for example of language or computer skills, are an advantage.

### How can I find an in-plant apprentice position?

The precondition for the search for an apprentice position is your own initiative. The Internet can help with further research. The following are the most important Internet addresses at which you can find help in your search for an apprentice position:

- [www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de) and [jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de](http://jobboerse.arbeitsagentur.de): the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit -BA) is the central contact point for people looking for an apprentice position or employment, as well as for employers wishing to fill vacancies. The BA's JOBBÖRSE is Germany's largest online job portal.
- [www.zav.de](http://www.zav.de): the ZAV will accompany you step-by-step in your search for an in-plant apprentice position.
- [www.planet-beruf.de](http://www.planet-beruf.de): the BA's Internet portal for pupils in secondary level I presents vocational training and occupations and provides information on choosing an occupation and applying.
- [ec.europa.eu/eures](http://ec.europa.eu/eures): EURES is the multilanguage portal on occupational mobility in Europe. It contains a great deal of information on Germany.
- [www.ihk-lehrstellenboerse.de](http://www.ihk-lehrstellenboerse.de): the chambers of industry and commerce in Germany provide a national apprenticeship exchange for training in the dual system.

Larger companies often advertise their training vacancies on their own websites. It's worth looking here as well.

## Occupational and Training Regulations

### OCCUPATIONS AND TRAINING ON THE MOVE

Many occupations have changed through technical innovations in recent years. The teaching contents for vocational training have had to be adapted according to the **requirements of the employment market**.

The **Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB)** analyses occupational practice and derives changes to job profiles from this. In this way, new training occupations have been created in recent years, in particular in the services sector. Traditional occupations have been modernised: for example, printers have now become media technologists printing.

**Training Regulations** govern contents and job designations and thus ensure that training is uniform throughout Germany.

The legal framework for all this is the **Vocational Training Act**.

For more information: [www.bibb.de](http://www.bibb.de)



### How can I find an educational training place?

You can search for educational training places in the BA's KURSNET portal for training and further training ([kursnet-finden.arbeitsagentur.de](http://kursnet-finden.arbeitsagentur.de)). It is best first of all to research the exact name of your desired occupation in BERUFENET, which is the BA's A-Z network of occupations ([berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de](http://berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de)). In the menu item "Vacancy and applicant searches" BERUFENET

then provides a link to KURSNET, where schools are displayed to match the selected occupation sorted according to regions. Trade associations can also help you in your search for training institutions. BERUFENET displays these for the selected occupation under the menu item „Information sources“.

### What will vocational training cost me?

Training in the dual system is free of charge; in fact, employers pay wages. However, some technical colleges demand fees. You should research these costs exactly together with the requirements. Those who have obtained an apprenticeship position in Germany through the EU's LEONARDO DA VINCI support programme, or are taking a part of their training in Germany, receive an allowance towards travel costs and living expenses.

## Europe-wide exchange network

### LEONARDO DA VINCI – MOBILITY OPENS UP OPPORTUNITIES

Thirty-one countries have come together in the EU's LEONARDO DA VINCI programme to encourage occupational mobility internationally as well. The project supports the exchange of apprentices, employees and teachers in vocational training. The EU awards grants for this purpose. These grants cannot be applied for individually. You will need a referee, for example, a company, an association, a school or a chamber. The competent National Agencies can provide information on current projects.

You can find a list at

<http://ec.europa.eu> > Policies > Culture, education and youth > Education and training programmes > Leonardo da Vinci.

### Will my home country recognise German training?

Up to now, the international recognition of occupational partial performances has proved to be difficult. In the long term, this problem is intended to be solved by ECVET, the European credit points system, but this is still being developed. This system is intended to help people to start vocational training in one country and to continue it in another. This is why, in practice, applicants from abroad usually apply for a short-term period of job experience, or they complete the whole training in Germany in the first place. Skills acquired from job experience can be documented in the **europass** (see p. 10). The forms are completed by the company or institution in the home country that is responsible for the exchange. Those who complete their full training in Germany are given a recognised certificate the same as all German apprentices.

#### Training portrait

**Jonas Wandtke**, in his first year of an apprenticeship as communication technical of appliance and systems technology

#### Everyday work is shaped by customer contact

Jonas Wandtke has always been interested in technology and appliances, so it was obvious that he would decide on a training occupation in the industrial-technical sector. His present employer came to his school and made a lasting impression. After Jonas had sent off his application, he was invited to take a recruitment test. In this test he was able to show his craftsmanship and his general knowledge along with other applicants. Jonas prevailed against the competition and is now in his first year of apprenticeship.



Customer service is the part of his work that he particularly enjoys: “I have a lot to do with people. I like contacting customers and I enjoy solving technical problems with customers.”

Following the morning discussion, the jobs are handed out. The necessary tools are then packed in the vehicles and off they go. Once at the customer’s, the apprentice installs new TVs, or dishwashers, for example, with his colleagues, and explains the new electrical appliances.

Jonas attends vocational school in addition to his in-company training. The two-week practical periods in the company alternate with block instruction in vocational school. “My class is very pleasant and lessons are not too difficult, because we are mainly dealing with foundations. But as time goes on, the contents of lessons will become more demanding”, as the apprentice is aware.

### Who organises exchange programmes?

There are many small regional exchange projects that facilitate the step across the border. It is worth asking vocational schools, trade associations, or even at the town hall, whether there are any partnerships abroad.

Many projects receive funding from the EU's LEONARDO DA VINCI programme (see the information below). This is why it is also possible to ask the National Agencies in home countries about the programmes in the region.

Larger organisations that arrange exchanges in vocational education are the German-French Secretariat for Exchanges in Vocational Education ([www.dfs-sfa.org](http://www.dfs-sfa.org)) or the German Society for International Collaboration (GIZ) ([www.giz.de](http://www.giz.de)). This is responsible, for example for programmes between Germany and the Netherlands (programme: Band) or Norway (programme: Gjör Det).

## Information and guidance

### Information Centre of the Central Placement Office (ZAV)

If you have any questions on the subject of working and learning in Germany you can contact the ZAV's information centre directly. The number of the hotline is +49 (0) 228 713-1313. The team is there for you from Mondays to Fridays from 8.00 to 18.00, and will be pleased



to send you information leaflets, or, where necessary, can give you the name of a personal contact partner for further guidance (email: [zav-auslandsvermittlung@arbeitsagentur.de](mailto:zav-auslandsvermittlung@arbeitsagentur.de)).

### Euroguidance

Euroguidance is the European network for vocational guidance and supports occupational and educational mobility within the European Union. There are one or more Euroguidance centres in each EU/EEA member state, and in Turkey and Switzerland, that are funded by the EU and the respective national authorities in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme. In Germany, the Central Placement Office (ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency, based in Bonn, is the national Euroguidance centre. You can find information at [www.euroguidance.net](http://www.euroguidance.net).

### PLOTEUS – the portal on learning opportunities throughout the European space

The aim of PLOTEUS is to help pupils, students, job seekers, employees, parents, vocational guidance counsellors and teachers in the search for training and further training opportunities in Europe. You can find information at <http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus>.

### Programme for Lifelong Learning

The European Commission has brought together various initiatives in the field of general and vocational education into a single programme, the Programme for Lifelong Learning. You can find information at <http://ec.europa.eu/education> > Programm für Lebenslanges Lernen.

### National Agency Education for Europe at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA at the BIBB)

The National Agency is concerned with all questions on vocational education and training and further training. It is responsible for the EU's support programmes LEONARDO DA VINCI and GRUNDTVIG, as well as for the *europass*. Phone: +49 (0) 228 107-1608, Internet: [www.na-bibb.de](http://www.na-bibb.de), [www.europass-info.de](http://www.europass-info.de)

### Central Association of German Skilled Crafts (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks e.V. - ZDH)

The Association provides information on training and further training in craft occupations and puts you in contact with the competent skilled crafts chambers and guilds. Phone: +49 (0) 30 206 19-0, Internet: [www.zdh.de](http://www.zdh.de)

### Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry | DIHK | Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag e.V.

The umbrella organisation puts you in contact with the chambers of commerce and industry in the regions that provide training guidance. Phone: +49 (0) 30 203 08-0, Internet: [www.dihk.de](http://www.dihk.de)

# Educational locations and learning worlds in Germany

