

# The dual system of vocational training in Germany

The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy wants to provide information, insights and ideas on the dual system of vocational training in order to help interested countries to develop national solutions. It should particularly be noted that the success of the dual system in Germany – and in countries like Switzerland, Austria and Denmark – is linked to the historic roots of the scheme. The support of the relevant stakeholders for the "National Pact to Promote Training and Young Skilled Workers" reflects this broad social acceptance.

### 1. Practice-relevant and theory-based training

The core concept of the dual system of vocational training is training that takes place both at a company and at a vocational school in tandem. The company provides trainees with the practical part of the training for 3-4 days a week, while the vocational school delivers the theoretical part for the other 1-2 days. Specialists from the companies play the greatest part in the trainees' process of "learning on the job". They are heavily involved in the design of training regulations – defining the technical content of the training course at the company and setting examination requirements. This plays a major part in ensuring that these regulations are accepted by the companies.

### 2. Standardised course content and examinations across the whole of Germany

The training at the company is governed by training regulations that set out uniform, nation-wide standards for training content, the training timetable, and examinations. The nation-wide standards and the nationally recognised qualifications act as a quality benchmark for employers and serve as a basis for recruitment. This helps employees to find a new job more quickly. The broad applicability of the training ensures that employees trained within the dual system remain mobile. This is a

major factor for the high level of acceptance of the system within the business community.

## 3. Continuous updating of the training in response to technical advances and changing business practices

The vocational training regulations are revised in accordance with technical progress, developments in professional practice and economic and social change. This involves modernising current regulations or creating new ones to meet the needs of business. The availability of employees who have been trained in line with the latest technical developments has a positive impact on companies' innovation and therefore on their competitiveness. There are vocational training qualifications for all areas of business and administration; depending on the breadth and depth of the course content, training lasts for between two years and three and a half years.

#### 4. Collaboration between employers and trade unions

When the content of a training course needs to be brought in line with changes in professional practice or technical progress, or if a new occupation is created, the initiative is normally taken by organisations linked to the employers. Once all the parties involved – especially the trade unions - have been heard, the relevant minister (normally the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy) meets together with the "federal states" (Länder), which are responsible for the vocational schools, to decide whether or not the initiative should be implemented. If the decision is positive, the training qualification is modernised, or a new qualification created. This takes place in collaboration with the experts from the employers' side and the trade unions. This procedure ensures that developments in vocational qualifications meet the needs of business.

#### 5. Co-ordination of practical and educational components of the curriculum

The experts who compile the content of the practical training work together with those responsible for the curricula at the vocational schools. Whenever a new qualification is modernised or created, the curriculum taught at the vocational schools is revised accordingly. The theoretical foundations are developed by the vocational school on the basis of the content of the practical training. In this way, practical and educational training are designed to dovetail.

Local companies work with the vocational school responsible for their trainees in order to produce the best possible programme of training for the companies and the region. This is a key aspect of quality assurance.

## 6. "Inter-company" training to supplement the instruction provided at specialised companies

Some companies are too specialised to be able to deliver all of the training content stipulated in the training regulations. In such cases, the trainees can receive extra training at chambers of crafts to cover the rest of the course content. By supplementing the practical training given at the company, this service enables more companies to offer vocational training and boosts the number of vocational training places. This system of "inter-company" training receives considerable funding from the Federal Economics Ministry.

#### 7. Training the instructors

In order to train young people properly, the people doing the teaching must fulfil statutory requirements relating to both specialist knowledge and personal aptitude. This not only includes professional skills but also the necessary teaching skills, which must be verified by means of an independent test. These requirements not only guarantee that the content of the training course is taught correctly, but also that the planning and conducting of the training courses is in line with legal requirements and the needs of the trainees in terms of both methodology and teaching.

### 8. Ensuring the ability of companies to provide training through professional associations

The self-regulatory bodies (the chambers) advise the companies providing training, monitor the training, determine the suitability of companies and instructors, register training contracts and conduct nationwide examinations. This serves to ensure a high level of quality.