

# Germany: New alliance for vocational training and further employment

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*A new alliance for vocational and further training was announced by the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) at the end of 2014. It marks a break from the Pact on Apprenticeship, which the DGB refused to join. The new alliance, which runs from 2015 to 2018, unites all the relevant actors.*

## New training alliance

The new alliance was formed on 12 December 2014 and includes the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB). The DGB had refused to join the previous alliance, the Pact on Apprenticeship, claiming it failed to tackle important issues. The DGB also said the previous pact's partners painted an unrealistically positive picture of the apprenticeship market. The pact was renewed in 2010 and the DGB again refused to join, criticising the relaxation of employment protection for young workers, and the demand of employers for only two years of training.

The new alliance is also supported by the pact's former partners, including organisations such as the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA), the Confederation of German Industry (BDI), the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), the German Association of Skilled Crafts (ZDH), and the German Federal Association of Liberal Professions (BFB). The alliance has also been joined by federal government representatives, the Federal Employment Agency, the federal government's Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK). This pact is valid from 2015 to 2018.

## Goals of the new alliance

The new alliance seeks to enhance the German vocational training system, encourage young people to take up apprenticeships and thus increase the number of apprentices. The alliance partners agree that apprenticeships are an ideal way for teenagers to move from school to working life and also to protect themselves from unemployment. In Germany, apprentices' training consists of both theoretical learning and on-the-job training.

The alliance's goals (in German, 8.67 MB PDF) include:

- improving the quality and attractiveness of the vocational training system;
- providing every youngster who is interested in an apprenticeship position with a pathway to a vocational qualification (as part of the Youth Guarantee);
- reducing the number of school leavers without a school leaving certificate or without sufficient qualifications to begin an apprenticeship;
- increasing the number of apprenticeship positions and of companies training youngsters (on the basis of data derived from an improved statistical system);
- enhancing advanced training and to make transfers between vocational training and academic education easier.

The employers have agreed to provide 20,000 more apprenticeship positions in 2015 than were registered with the Federal Employment Agency (BA) in 2014. This level will serve as a benchmark for the coming years.

Each year, every young person seeking an apprenticeship who has not signed an apprenticeship contract by 30 September will be guaranteed three apprenticeship offers.

### About

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The employers have also agreed to provide 20,000 entry qualification positions (*Einstiegsqualifizierung*) each year for those youngsters lacking the necessary skills to take up an apprenticeship. Further measures for the years 2016–2018 will be discussed in mid-2015.

The federal states have agreed to improve career guidance in schools by giving teachers further training. The Federal Employment Agency will extend its counselling services for school students to give them advice on their second- or third-choice occupations and to inform them about public grants for mobility to help them access apprenticeships that are available in other regions of Germany.

Employers are also to provide 500,000 work experience places every year for school students, and employers, unions and the federal states will develop common quality standards for these programmes.

All alliance partners will stage different events or organise a range of activities during an Apprenticeship Week, to be held at the beginning of each year. (The first was held in 2015 on 16 March). This event promotes the advantages of the dual vocational training system and is intended to recruit more youngsters. While the alliance partners hope to interest more able youngsters in becoming apprentices, they also want to support those with disabilities or who have migrant backgrounds. The alliance partners have also agreed to support a new measure – assisted vocational training (in German) – to be implemented by the BA. This will provide up to 10,000 assisted training positions for 2015–2016 for young people who need support during their apprenticeships. Small and medium-sized companies taking on such young people will receive help with the administrative burden this creates and will be offered advice on matters such as how to draft and implement a training plan.

## Social partners' position

In a joint press statement put out by the DGB on 12 December 2014, the social partners welcomed the latest developments (in German). Eric Schweitzer, President of DIHK, stressed that vocational training was a good way to start a career. He said vocational qualifications were the backbone of the German economy and skilled labour was in high demand.

DGB Chair Reiner Hoffmann highlighted the plight of the 260,000 young people stuck in preparatory courses for vocational training without, in his view, any prospect of eventually completing an apprenticeship. He suggested that the new alliance was an opportunity to offer assisted training, helping young people complete a training course and obtain vocational qualifications.