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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

GERMANY

School year 2007/08

As a general rule, education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 6 and 15 (exceptions in some *Länder*). Following four to six years of primary education *(Primarschule)* children move on to secondary education *(Sekundarbereich I)* which is characterised by a division into various educational pathways (*Gymnasium, Hauptschule* or *Realschule*). The decision as to the choice of pathway is the responsibility of parents or schools (or the responsible authorities). Early school leavers who do not finish their full-time compulsory education must complete a full-time vocational preparation year *(Berufsvorbereitungsjahr)* or three years of part-time vocational education (up to age 18).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

In 1971 and again in 2004, the Federal Employment Agency and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education *(Kultusministerkonferenz)* passed a framework agreement on the cooperation between schools and vocational guidance agencies to facilitate a successful transition for young people from school to vocational training, higher education or working life. Supplementary agreements are passed at the level of the *Länder* and detailed agreements are negotiated each year at local level between the local Labour Office *(Arbeitsamt)* and the schools.

In 2005, the Federal Government and the business associations entered into the National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development in Germany *(Nationaler Pakt für Ausbildung und Fachkräftenachwuchs in Deutschland)*. The training pact aims at offering vocational training positions to all school leavers who are willing and able to receive vocational training. Through comprehensive quality development measures, the *Länder* contribute to improving the qualifications of school leavers and to facilitating the beginning of their career. The educational standards adopted by the Standing Conference in 2003 and 2004 form an important basis for this.

The Länder in Germany are also responsible for providing comprehensive and nation-wide school (career) guidance and study guidance. The Federal Employment Agency (BA) offers nation-wide careers guidance, job placement and counselling services for the unemployed and for people threatened with unemployment. The labour administration's careers counselling monopoly was abolished in 1998. The BA has withdrawn from the field of supporting and providing counselling on continuing vocational education and training faster than the OECD experts expected. Training vouchers and counselling based on quick placement and high placement rates characterise the BA's change of attitude towards training and employment guidance with the result that the labour administration in Germany

– like in many other EU countries – is concentrating on its core task, namely of ending unemployment and dependence on benefits as quickly as possible by reintegrating people in the labour market.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The public service for information, vocational guidance and employment is provided under the responsibility of the Federal Employment Agency and its regional offices. The role of the Ministry of Labour is limited to the legal supervision of these activities.

This function adds to the responsibilities of schools in terms of vocational guidance within the framework of the curriculum and traineeships, as well as in terms of educational guidance at school.

A large number of institutions in Germany provide counselling in the fields of education, vocations and employment on the basis of various legal regulations.

In addition to the Federal Employment Agency (SGB III) and providers which are responsible for granting a basic income (SGB II) as well as schools, institutions of higher education and local authorities, educational and vocational counselling is also provided by a large number of different (education) providers and institutions – sometimes for specific target groups (i.e. women, migrants, people with a disablement) and increasingly also by private providers.

Youth welfare agencies and independent welfare agencies also provide educational and vocational counselling services on the basis of SGB VIII (Child and Youth Services Act), depending on the type of problems involved and the details of the individual case. The nation-wide expansion of the Federal Ministry of Youth's Competence Agencies, which also offer counselling for certain target groups in the context of case management, is an example of the dynamism in this field.

The majority of counselling services to date have concentrated on certain decisive or transitional situations, particularly the transition between school, vocational training, job-hunting and unemployment.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

An introduction to the professional and working world is a compulsory component of all courses of education at lower secondary level. The instruction is given either as a separate subject (*Arbeitslehre*, or pre-vocational studies) or as part of the material covered in other subjects such as social science, economics or technology studies. This teaching is often provided during the last two years of compulsory education but may also begin earlier. It is provided less often in schools offering general education *(Gymnasium)* than in other types of school *(Hauptschule* or *Realschule)*. The average amount of time devoted to vocational guidance in the 16 *Länder* is two hours per week.

The objective of this subject is to develop the skills and maturity required in order to choose an educational and professional pathway. The emphasis is placed on understanding working life and its requirements.

Pupils who are not felt to be ready to begin upper secondary education, often for reasons such as their disadvantaged background, difficulties at school or the need for assistance with the German language (migrants), may begin a vocational preparation year *(Berufsvorbereitungsjahr)*.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

Two or three long traineeships, usually following classroom preparation, are offered in almost all the *Länder* (in cooperation with companies, chambers of commerce and schools). Some *Länder* have published complete teaching manuals and have prepared teaching material to support the work placements.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

Work experience placements, usually following classroom preparation, aim to provide first-hand insight into the working world and guidance in choosing an occupation.

The visits are organised mainly within the framework of subjects related to the initiation to working life as well as other subjects such as chemistry, physics, German or geography.

Guidance services at school

The professional counsellors of the Federal Employment Agency visit schools to give vocational guidance courses to each class during the next-to-last year of compulsory education. During these courses, pupils receive personal counselling and are informed about events such as fairs or seminars related to employment and about possible careers, and learn how to apply for a job, prepare their CV, etc. Counsellors are also available for complementary courses, guidance workshops for small groups or short discussions. Pupils may then go to a career information centre (BIZ) of the Federal Employment Agency for more in-depth discussions.

Guidance services outside school

The offices of the Federal Employment Agency offer individual counselling to young adults that generally helps to determine needs and future strategies, or which involves interventions in the case of critical situations such as school drop-out. Counselling is provided directly or from a distance (for example via telephone or email). The ‘online’ service via the Internet is also used.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research’s 'Learning Regions – Support for Networks' programme *(Lernende Regionen – Förderung von Netzwerken)* has dealt with the topic of vocational counselling in particular in 25 learning regions. These projects have developed and tested holistic model solutions for the establishment and expansion of regional educational guidance agencies which meet the demands of individual situations and take into account the biography of their clients. The networks of the Learning Regions, in which all regionally relevant stakeholders in the fields of education, industry and the local environment work together, enable comprehensive vocational counselling involving all areas

of education and education providers and fall back on the whole range of counselling services in the interest of the people seeking advice.

In addition, the collaborative project entitled 'Professionalization of Regional Vocational Counselling in Germany' has developed a framework curriculum for vocational counsellors based on the specific needs of the Learning Regions. The focus is on guidance involving the whole educational spectrum, counselling in networks, and at regional level in the centre. Based on this curriculum, qualifications are now meanwhile being offered at nine regional Qualifications Centres (RQZ), complemented by special additional modules (e.g. on the topic of vocational counselling in companies). The target groups for these qualification measures are staff in the educational guidance agencies in the Learning Regions as well as members of staff also performing advisory tasks inter alia in continuing training institutions, in schools, institutions of higher education, local authorities, chambers of commerce and educational projects.

Additional activities

In order to convey basic knowledge about the world of business and commerce, model businesses *(Schülerfirmen)* are set up by pupils. Pupils also visit fairs, talk to professionals and are encouraged to attend classes in vocational school.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

Depending on the subject, teacher training, especially the Preparatory Service *(Vorbereitungsdinst)*, includes vocational guidance education *(Arbeitslehre)*. Teachers also often work together closely with school social workers, graduate youth and community workers *(Sozialpädagogen)*, psychologists, parents and scientists in order to identify pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses early.

In other guidance services

A study which is to be published soon on the topic of quality and professionalism in educational and vocational guidance (*Qualität und Professionalität in der Bildungs- und Berufsberatung*, Schiersmann et al., 2008) has discovered ten courses of study, nine academic/university programmes and ten courses of continuing training whose titles include the word guidance.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The counsellors of the Federal Employment Agency often organise (in cooperation with schools) information days or evenings for parents, and participate in the organisation of other events such as employment forums. Parents are also invited to accompany their children during visits to the offices of the Federal Agency.

Employers are represented in the administrative bodies of the Federal Employment Agency offices and participate in the management of their policies.

Companies participate in school projects, provide sponsorship, organise work placements, etc.

The national Guidance Forum for Education, Career and Employment should also be mentioned in this context. This is an independent network in which all institutions and organisations relevant to research training for guidance practitioners, governmental authorities and non-governmental agencies dealing with, offering or financing guidance and counselling as well as guidance user and consumer organisations can collaborate. The Guidance Forum deals with guidance provided for individuals in the education, vocational training and employment sectors. The Guidance Forum sees itself as a platform for all stakeholders and actors in this area and provides an opportunity for an exchange of knowledge and experience across all institutional sectors, for discussions on common concerns and projects, and for the achievement of common aims.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The Federal Employment Agency provides free information (magazines, guides, brochures, CD-ROMs and information online) to all pupils and to teachers in charge of *Arbeitslehre*. It currently has separate databases on the content of trades (BerufeNet), training offered (KURS), available apprenticeships and traineeships (ASIS), and employment offers (SIS). These databases are separate from a career selection programme (MACHT'S RICHTIG) and other self-exploration programmes.

The Ministries of Education of the *Länder* publish their curricula, which also include subjects providing vocational guidance education.

The *Länder* offer a variety of information about the cooperation between schools and companies.

There is also a vast private market for books, magazines, CD-ROMs, etc.

Information quality control is ensured, for example, via the participation of representatives of employers and staff in the media supervisory council or via complementary research conducted by companies and industry associations.

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