



## Continuing Vocational Education



### Learning during working life

#### Continuing vocational education secures jobs

The economy and the world of work are changing rapidly. Knowledge and skills acquired in school, during vocational training or higher education are therefore no longer sufficient for the whole of one's working life. This is a challenge that confronts all of us, because in order to be able to meet the requirements of the workplace in the future, too we must go on learning on a continuous basis. Government, too, is called upon to support citizens in their efforts.

#### Continuing vocational education – what is it about?

First of all, of course, further qualification is necessary. Only if we stay up-to-date are we able to keep pace and develop professionally.

It is also important to acquire those skills which are gaining increasing significance everywhere in the working world. These include soft skills such as team skills, the ability to handle conflicts, the ability to solve problems creatively, or media skills.

And, finally, support must be given to people with less fortunate backgrounds who need special assistance.

#### Lifelong learning

Having completed school or vocational training or having earned a degree is reason indeed to be proud. But nobody should make the mistake of believing that as a result he or she is equipped with all the skills they need for the rest of their lives. What is wanted is **lifelong learning**. Lifelong learning means engaging in learning again and again and in many different settings.

There are many different forms of continuing vocational education: lectures, courses, seminars, workshops, etc. These are offered by a large variety of continuing education providers, e.g., chambers, adult education centers, unions, as well as nonprofit and private institutions. This plurality of providers guarantees diversity and thus meets the different needs of different participants in continuing education.

However, learning takes place not only in formal learning settings but – as general experience shows – also during work itself. Developing workers' qualifications therefore also means improving learning opportunities at the workplace. Work organization must always include learning organization.

Seizing learning opportunities also means strengthening **self-organized learning**, e.g., media-based learning at the workplace, systematization of experiential vocational knowledge and more.

## The Federal Ministry of Education and Research encourages and supports continuing vocational education.

### ■ Acquiring additional qualifications during training

Young people have the opportunity to acquire additional qualifications during or immediately following training, thereby improving their starting position. The *AusbildungPlus* database provides information, e.g., on additional qualifications for apprentices and on programs and providers in various cities and regions.

<http://www.ausbildung-plus.de>

The specific steps that are taken to provide additional qualifications, sample projects and their contracts, as well as extensive literature on the topic, are available from the

#### Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung

Hermann-Ehlers-Strasse 10, 53113 Bonn,  
Tel.: +49-228/107-0, Fax: +49-228-107-2977.

<http://www.bibb.de>

### ■ Organized continuing education during working life

Organized continuing education can take many forms depending on participants' needs and goals. It ranges from the acquisition of individual abilities and skills to recognized certificates; it can be pursued full-time or during work; it can provide further training in one's own profession; be a prerequisite for professional advancement or lead to different types of professional activity.

Information and assistance is provided by the chambers (e.g., Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Chamber of Crafts) and by the employment offices with their local job information centers. Comprehensive information on possibilities of continuing vocational training is also offered by the employment offices via their online database KURS.

<http://www.arbeitsamt.de>

### ■ Distance learning

Distance learning is a special form of continuing education in which teachers and learners are – exclusively or predominantly – in different places, while learning success is supervised by the teachers. Distance learning offers the same opportunities as regular continuing education, from individual seminars to degree courses, or retraining. Distance learning offers a special chance to all those who do not have the time to take part in regular courses requiring learner attendance or who wish to organize their own learning time, e.g., single parents. The *Fernunterrichtsschutzgesetz* (Law on the Protection of Participants in Distance Learning) provides for quality assurance and consumer protection.

[http://www.bmbf.de/gesetz\\_1935.html](http://www.bmbf.de/gesetz_1935.html)

In specific cases, participants in distance learning are eligible for training assistance under the BAföG funding scheme.  
[www.das-neue-bafoeg.de/gesetze\\_bafoeg\\_kap02\\_02.htm](http://www.das-neue-bafoeg.de/gesetze_bafoeg_kap02_02.htm)  
Information on courses and providers, as well as on distance learning framework conditions can be obtained from:

#### Staatliche Zentralstelle für Fernunterricht (ZFU),

Peter-Welter-Platz 2, 50676 Cologne,  
Tel.: +49-221-92-1207-0, Fax: +49-221-92-1207-20

<http://www.zfu.de>

#### Deutscher Fernschulverband e.V.,

Doberaner Weg 20, 22143 Hamburg,  
Tel.: +49-180-5-3376-72, Fax: +49-180-5-3376-71

<http://www.fernschulen.de>

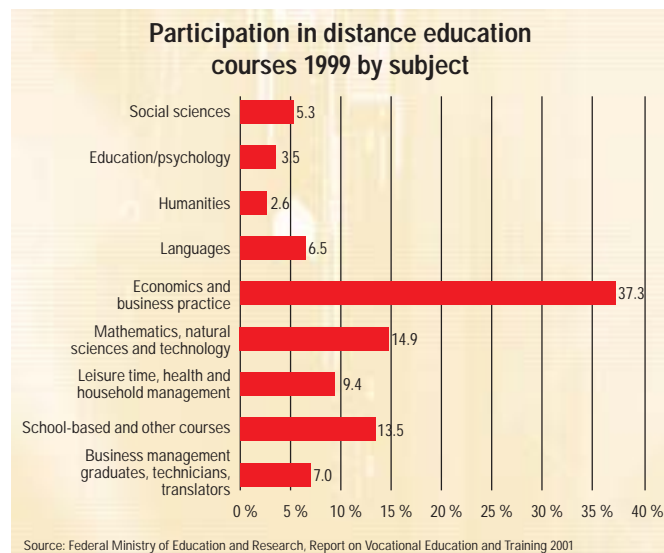
## Lifelong Learning Initiative for All

The BMBF's initiative entitled "Lifelong Learning for All" is to prepare us for the learning society. Important project goals for continuing vocational education under the program are:

### ■ Making better use of regional opportunities

With its measures, the BMBF wants to motivate more people to take part in continuing education. To this end, it is necessary to ensure that participants know about existing programs and get an opportunity to participate in them. With the aid of the program "Learning Regions – Support for Networks", providers and potential participants (e.g., individuals and companies) are to be brought together and provision in the regions is to be improved.

Further details on projects and regional contacts for this program can be found on the Internet at [www.dlr.de/PT](http://www.dlr.de/PT). Further valuable information is also contained in the brochure *Lernfeste: Brücken*



*in neue Lernwelten* (Learning festivals: bridges into new learning worlds), which can be obtained from the BMBF (order no.: 29688, German version).

#### ■ **Quality and transparency in continuing education – finding the right program**

The great variety of continuing vocational education and training programs is puzzling: which is the right program for me? Which one is good? The Federal Ministry of Education and Research's Quality in Continuing Education campaign has been created in order to assist in the selection and assessment of educational programs; thus, programs are to be made more transparent for users, and certificates are to be awarded for vocational skills, also for those acquired on the side, as it were, during the work process. All the same, it is the responsibility of each individual to check the quality of vocational education programmes. Various quality grades can be helpful (information on existing certification associations can be obtained from the chambers), as can a **checklist on the quality of continuing vocational training programs**, like the one made available, e.g., by the **Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB)** on its homepage or via the above BIBB address.

<http://www.bibb.de/forum/checkliste/checkliste.pdf>

#### ■ **Skill development – on-the-job-learning**

Continuing vocational education cannot always take place in planned courses. Innovations in the work process require workers and executives to develop their skills on a continuous basis. Modern work therefore includes self-organized learning at the workplace, during and within the work process.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research's Learning Culture for Skill Development program develops ways and strategies for this continual learning process at the workplace. Furthermore, it is necessary to find ways of documenting and assessing these informally acquired qualifications. This is the only way in which workers can gain recognition for these informally acquired qualifications on the labor market and in their own continuing education in the future.

Information on the results of individual projects under this program can be obtained from the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V.*,  
Storkower Strasse 158, 10402 Berlin.

<http://www.abwf.de>

### **Financial support – a career based on an apprenticeship**

#### ■ **Vocational training program for the highly talented**

Under this program, support can be given to young skilled personnel who have been awarded better than "good" in their final vocational examination and wish to continue learning. Also, support can be given to those who have been particularly successful

in supraregional vocational competitions or who have been named by a company or a vocational school for a grant. In general, funding must commence before candidates have turned 26. The funds for the program are provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, while the chambers are, as a rule, in charge of program implementation. National responsibility for the program is with the

#### **Stiftung Begabtenförderungswerk berufliche Bildung**,

Adenauerallee 148,

53113 Bonn,

Tel. +49-228-1044-100, Fax +49-228-1044-107.

Various providers offer a large number of qualifications, from which candidates can choose their own continuing education programmes. Examples of such continuing education programs and further information on funding can be found on the homepage of the *Stiftung Begabtenförderungswerk berufliche Bildung*, under

<http://www.begabtenfoerderung.de>

#### ■ **Support for upgrading training**

Support under the Upgrading Training Assistance Act (AFBG) is in special cases given to all those who wish to take part in further vocational training to become master tradesmen (*Handwerksmeister*), master tradesmen in industry (*Industriemeister*) or middle-level commercial clerks (*Fachwirt*), or to take part in government-recognized further training in the health or caring professions or at complementary schools (this is called the *Meister BAföG*). Support is awarded partly as a grant and partly as a low-interest bank loan and is cofunded by the Federal Government and the *Länder*. Funding also benefits single parents, who can, e.g., apply for a monthly allowance towards the cost of childcare. As a rule, the local offices for training assistance give advice and accept applications. As a result of the amendment of the AFBG as of January 1, 2002, the terms and conditions of support for upgrading training have been considerably improved, thereby further increasing incentives to engage in further vocational qualification or to take the first step towards self-employment.

[http://www.bmbf.de/557\\_708.html](http://www.bmbf.de/557_708.html)

### **Continuing education – women should seize their opportunities**

Women often have their own specific problems in working life. Thus, re-entry into the labor force after spending time at home with family is made difficult by the rapid pace of development in the working world. This is where continuing education can help women to acquire the necessary qualifications. All programs supporting continuing vocational education expressly include women.

Programs such as distance learning are an attractive option for mothers with family responsibilities who wish to lay the foundation

for re-entry into the labor force later on. Many funding programs, e.g., BAföG or AFBG, provide special support and benefits for parents. Information can be obtained from local BAföG offices. Support for single parents of course includes mothers as well as fathers.

<http://www.das-neue-bafoeg.de>

<http://www.meister-bafoeg.info>

## Continuing vocational education for all

### ■ JUMP – continuing vocational education for young people with or without previous training

“JUMP – Jugend mit Perspektive,” an initiative by the Federal Government to reduce youth unemployment, is a service for young people who have not yet found a training place or are out of work. JUMP helps young people to improve their chances of finding secure employment with a variety of training, qualification and continuing education opportunities. Every year, more than € 1 billion go into JUMP, and more than 330,000 young people have seized this opportunity so far. Contacts are the local employment offices.

**Free telephone hotline +49-8000-10001**

<http://www.sofortprogramm.de>

### ■ Help in particularly difficult situations

A person who is unemployed, or is threatened with unemployment, or has not completed vocational training can, under the Social Code III – Labor Promotion, get support from the labor administration in the form of funding for continuing vocational training. This can be material support, but also includes the provision of information in the job information centers of the employment offices as well as advice and placement. In addition to this general support, disabled persons can claim special benefits in specific cases. Contacts for funding and advice are the local employment offices.

<http://www.arbeitsamt.de>

## Further information

A great variety of information, brochures and pdf files for download on all aspects of continuing education, as well as contact addresses of project management agencies for individual measures can be obtained from the

**Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung**

53170 Bonn

Tel.: +49-1888-57-0

Fax: +49-1888-57-3601

[bmbf@bmbf.bund.de](mailto:bmbf@bmbf.bund.de)

<http://www.bmbf.de>



**Published by**  
Federal Ministry of  
Education and Research (BMBF)  
Public Relations Division  
53170 Bonn

**Orders**  
In writing to the publisher  
Postfach 30 02 35  
53182 Bonn

Or by  
Phone: +49-1888-BMBF02 or  
+49-1888-262302  
Fax: +49-1888-BMBF03 or  
+49-1888-262303  
€ 0.12/min.

E-mail: [books@bmbf.bund.de](mailto:books@bmbf.bund.de)  
Internet: <http://www.bmbf.de>

**Layout**  
Weber Shandwick Munich

**Photo credits**  
Corbis Stock Market

**Printed by**  
Baumann, Munich

**Content as of**  
December 2001

Printed on recycled paper

This publication is made available free of charge as part of the public relations work of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It is not to be sold on a commercial basis. It may not be used by political parties or candidates or electoral helpers during an election for the purposes of campaigning. This applies to all elections at local, Land and federal level and also to elections to the European Parliament. Misuse shall in particular be constituted by distribution at electoral rallies, at information stands of parties, overprinting or attaching of information or campaign material for a particular party. It is also forbidden to hand this document to a third party for use in election campaigns. Regardless of when, how and in what number this publication reached the recipient in the form of printed matter or on-line, it may not be used, even outside an election campaign, in a way that could be misunderstood as support by the German Federal Government for individual political groups.