



PRESS RELEASE

What needs to change so that more young newcomers can embark on vocational education and training? Results of a comparative study of selected EU Member States

Many young newcomers have a hard time negotiating the maze of courses, entry requirements and necessary proof of qualification in their target countries before they embark on vocational education and training (VET) – or give up. That serves neither their host societies nor the newcomers themselves. The Research Unit of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) carried out a study to investigate which structures and practices hinder young newcomers in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain on their path to VET and which smooth that path. The study recommends that newcomers be provided with continuous guidance, that preparatory courses and training structures be made more flexible and that staff in public authorities, educational establishments and advisory centres be supported in their roles.

Berlin, 3 December 2020. More than five million adolescents and young adults have fled or immigrated to the European Union (EU), or have moved across EU borders, in the period since 2014. A training position or a job forms part of social participation. Young people who complete a course of VET not only increase their own chances on the labour market, they also help secure the supply of skilled labour. The SVR's Research Unit evaluated primary and secondary legislation concerning access to VET at the national, regional and local level in the selected EU Member States as well as how that legislation is applied in practice. A total of 122 expert interviews were also analysed.

The study shows that in all four of the countries studied the path to VET often resembles a maze. Those whose residence permit does not allow them to work, those who cannot present the necessary certificates or are too old to attend school often have to navigate longer paths before they can begin VET. All four of the countries studied offer language courses, sometimes even subject-related preparatory courses, but the range of courses on offer is often complex and confusing (as in Austria and Germany) or is not sufficient to meet newcomers' needs (as in Slovenia and Spain). Furthermore, potential participants have to fulfil numerous requirements to get a place on these courses – and these are often the same as for the VET itself. Financial constraints, lack of language skills, a heavy workload in terms of the language and subject-related learning they need to do, and, in some cases, mental, social and housing difficulties or discrimination are additional burdens which young newcomers face.

Lena Rother, Researcher in the SVR's Research Unit and co-author of the study entitled "Out of the maze. Easing the path to vocational education and training for young newcomers in Europe" says that "staff at municipal level – for instance in advisory centres, educational establishments and public authorities – have a degree of discretion when it comes to shaping and granting access to VET. They can make it easier or harder for young newcomers to find their way through the maze, depending on how they interpret that degree of discretion. Their commitment often goes beyond their actual job remit." According to the study, three factors have a decisive influence on staff members' decision-making: perceived legal uncertainty, scarce resources and individual convictions. The latter are influenced by, among other things, how much contact staff actually have with newcomers.

"To shorten the path to VET, language and preparatory courses should, first, be expanded and VET should be made more flexible," says Dr Cornelia Schu, Director of the SVR's Research Unit. "Second, those who support young newcomers on their path to VET, that is staff at the municipal level, need



supportive structures to be able to provide 'one-stop' training preparation. Educational networks have proved their worth here. Best practice examples of supportive structures include the 'New Families in Barcelona' (*Noves famílies a Barcelona*) project, which supports newcomers along the path to family reunification, the 'Viennese Educational Hub' (*Wiener Bildungsdrehscheibe*), which gives newcomers access to advisory services at an early stage, and the vocational integration classes which are available in Bavaria, Germany.

Winfried Kneip, Executive Director at Stiftung Mercator, highlights the scope of the study results and the importance of VET: "Vocational education and training opens up opportunities for skilled employment – and thus for social participation. If the EU Member States can smooth the paths to VET and improve educational equity, that will lead to a win-win situation for both newcomers and receiving societies."

The study "Out of the maze. Easing the path to vocational education and training for young newcomers in Europe" was funded by Stiftung Mercator.

The study is available to download here: <https://www.svr-migration.de/en/publications/access-vocational-education-europe/>.

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About the Expert Council's Research Unit

The Expert Council's Research Unit conducts independent, practice-oriented research projects in the field of integration and migration. The project-based studies are dedicated to emerging trends and issues and focus mainly on the fields of education and refugees/asylum. The Research Unit complements the work of the Expert Council. The core funding is provided by Stiftung Mercator.

The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration is based on an initiative of Stiftung Mercator and the Volkswagen Foundation. The initiative further includes: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Freudenberg Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stifterverband and Vodafone Foundation Germany. The Expert Council is an independent nonprofit, monitoring, evaluating and advisory committee on integration and migration policy issues that provides action-oriented policy recommendations.

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