

Description of an example of successful national/local VET programmes for learners with SEN in Germany

1) Short abstract

1.5 million students follow the 'Dual System' each year in Germany. This form of studying consists of periods of learning in both a vocational school (35% of the time) and a company (65% of the time). There are 500,000 companies currently providing apprenticeships under this system. The time in school is made up of 4 general subject areas and 8 specific subjects. Students can follow either a regular or a reduced curriculum depending on a statement provided by a job centre on their leaving grammar school. There are three different degrees available, two of which are 2 year courses where the student ultimately obtains a 'helper' certificate (e.g. as a construction worker) or a 3 year course of studies, following which the student receives a professional certificate for a particular trade (e.g. as a bricklayer). The student's assessment at the end of the dual system is carried out jointly by the VET school and the apprenticeship company.

August-Horch-Schule is a vocational education and training school in Andernach that provides technical education for 1800 students, 1200 of whom are enrolled in the dual system and 600 are in full-time schooling. One student has a hearing impairment but lip-reads and does not require any additional assistive or technical devices because one of his peers supports him where needed. This hearing-impaired student attends school 1.5 days per week, with the remaining 3.5 days spent working at an electronics company. There have previously been two other physically disabled students at the school who used sign language interpreters or required adaptations for examinations etc.

The school provides one year pre-vocational training courses that have a particular focus on wood or metal work but also cover general subjects such as German, Mathematics, Sport and Ethics. Students also carry out an eight week internship in a company. Students taking these courses typically show symptoms of ADHD or have behavioural problems due to difficulties at home and in their social lives generally. Some students express a wish to continue studying after they complete the course.

Vocational Training Centre Rommersdorf of Heinrich Haus in Neuwied offers pre-vocational and vocational education across its three schools. Many of the 920 students have motor, learning, sensory or psychological disabilities. Students can study administration, metal work, electronics, wood technology, interior design, housekeeping or agriculture. The centre also provides therapy, sheltered workshops for people with disabilities, day care centres, an integration service, supported employment, diagnostics with regard to a student's ability to work, as well as a residence for persons with motor or multiple disabilities.

As an increasing number of students with autism are joining the school, six special school teachers are currently acting as advisors. The school also frequently conducts roundtable meetings with a view to making appropriate provision for a particular student. The meeting also involves relevant persons such as the student's

parents and teachers, autism advisors, a personal support person, the head teacher, representatives of autism associations etc.

The following organisations introduced themselves in Rommersdorf: Autismus WEMI - a regional autism association; Bethesda-St. Martin foundation, which provides, among other things, support services to people with special needs in their transition from school to work (a form of job-coaching); Lebenshilfe Koblenz e.V., which supports children, young people and adults with disabilities in school and accompanies them in the workplace. The experts were also able to speak with a student with Asperger syndrome, who shared his experiences.

2) Highlights / Uniqueness

The strong collaboration between the different stakeholders (organisations, associations and parents) is a highlight of the Vocational Training Centre Heinrich Haus. The roundtable meetings, in which stakeholders have a focused discussion on a particular pupil with autism, are also much appreciated by those involved. The state of Rhineland-Palatinate has legislated for the involvement of parents in the process; however this is not always the case in practice. The law also provides for the cooperation of schools with labour agencies.

The existence of pre-vocational classes as a standard part of the VET system recognises that not all young people leave school at the same level. The possibility of completing a 'reduced' level of apprenticeship, based upon a report by the previous school and an assessment by a job centre, offers learners a suitable framework for his/her studies. Students also have the right to a support person/school companion where necessary, co-ordinated by the social agency. In the 'Chamber of Crafts', students are permitted additional aids or adaptations when sitting examinations, if required.

The link between the labour market and the VET system is strong; the apprentice usually has a contract with a company. In the dual system, the scheme consists of 3.5 days in a company and 1.5 days at school. As part of full-time schooling, students carry out internships in companies. The so-called 'rehab-classes' (offered only in Rhineland-Palatinate) are attended by students who were not successful in finding an apprenticeship. The Chamber provides internships in such cases.

3) Availability of evaluation data

In Andernach, there was a perceived lack of data and insufficient use of existing data for the school to evaluate its own processes, the quality of teaching and the link between the school and the labour market. Nevertheless, it was said that approximately one third to half of the students in pre-vocational school continue on to standard schooling, with a view to ultimately receiving a certificate. Very few internal and external evaluations in respect of drop-outs and school completion are carried out in the schools.