



Brief summary of key points

Although initial dual vocational education and training continues to enjoy a high degree of importance in Germany, it is becoming increasingly difficult for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to pursue this traditional route towards securing a supply of skilled workers. Firstly, toughening competition is associated with an increasing degree of specialisation on the part of many SMEs. Because of their both restricted and highly-specialised spectrum of services, these firms are scarcely any longer in a position to independently impart all required contents of the respective training regulations. Secondly, falling demand for dual training provision is being recorded due to demographic developments and the trend towards higher educational qualifications. Because the application behaviour of young people who are (still) interested in dual VET tends at the same time to be directed towards large companies, SMEs in particular are experiencing major difficulties in filling their training places at all. The longer such recruitment problems persist, the greater will be the risk that these companies either partially or completely withdraw from training.

One approach to stabilising training participation by smaller and medium-sized companies whilst at the same time increasing the attractiveness of the training they offer to interested young people could be to persuade these companies to deliver training in cooperation with one or more other firms and/or training providers.

Although forays in this direction have been ongoing since as long ago as the 1970s, the primary focus up until now has been on compensating for deficits in the training possibilities of individual companies or on acquiring additional training places for unplaced young people. Over the past few decades, two to three percent of training places have been continuously subsidised under the heading of “cooperative training”.

By way of contrast, issues regarding the potential of training conducted by one company in conjunction with partners has scarcely formed an object of discussion and investigation up until now. Alongside economic and qualifications aspects, this also relates to the question of the extent to which SMEs can make use of training partnerships in order to position themselves more forcefully and more successfully on the training market.

From this starting point, the project will aim to undertake a thorough assessment in order to be able to perform a differentiated evaluation of the opportunities and risks of SME training partnerships for both firms and trainees. The initial objective is to identify the forms of company training partnerships currently in existence and being practised and to collate and systematise the scattered findings on the topic in previous research literature. In addition to this, there are plans for occupationally-related case studies within individual cooperation modules which take all cooperation partners into account and for supplementary surveys to categorise the findings identified. In overall terms, the idea of the project is to sound out which areas of potential for increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and training in SMEs can be uncovered from company training partnerships.