

Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Announcement

Regulations Governing Funding for Research on the Internationalization of Vocational Education and Training (VET)

of 30 June 2017

1 Aim and purpose of funding

Many countries have expressed a growing interest in recent years in high-quality, -in company based initial and continuing vocational training. The German dual vocational education and training system enjoys a strong reputation worldwide. For many countries the German system is a point of reference in their reform efforts to strengthen the practical orientation of their vocational education and training (VET) systems and to develop these systems in cooperation with partners representing both employers and employees. The BMBF is currently cooperating on VET issues with partner ministries in 17 countries. The main objectives of these cooperation activities are to support our partner countries in their efforts to modernize their VET systems and to support German companies in the partner countries in training skilled workers.

The Federal Education Ministry's VET cooperation activities are based on five core elements:

- Cooperation between employers and trade unions, industry organizations and government,
- Learning within the work process,
- Acceptance of national standards,
- Qualified vocational education and training staff, and
- Institutionalized vocational training research and vocational training advice.

These funding regulations are aimed at strengthening and expanding institutional research on vocational education and training, the fifth core element of bilateral VET cooperation, for international collaboration. German academic expertise in the area of VET research and training of vocational school teachers will be shared with international partners to support their efforts to reform their national VET systems.

The establishment of an inter- and transdisciplinary research network on international cooperation in VET will be pursued as a cross-cutting objective. A support measure will be announced for this purpose in addition to these funding regulations.

2 Object of funding

Under this call for proposals, funding will be provided for projects which focus on one of the following priorities

Priority a) Current issues in VET research in the context of VET cooperation.

Funding will be provided for projects which address relevant priority topics in the area of VET research (e.g. empirical VET research, business education, subject didactics) in bilateral cooperation with the partner country.

Priority b) Research on the prerequisites for successful VET cooperation in countries with existing BMBF cooperation in VET and in other countries and regions.

Funding will be provided for projects which conduct research on the prerequisites for successful international VET cooperation. Funded projects will carry out research on the factors that determine successful VET cooperation but also develop best practices for its effectiveness. The projects should be able to provide research-based findings and recommendations for action in international VET cooperation.

Priority c) Development of joint pilot measures for capacity building in VET research in the BMBF's partner countries.

Funding will be provided for pilot measures which support reform efforts in the relevant partner country to adjust the country's VET system to labour market needs (e.g. establishment of chairs at partner universities to train teachers and administrative staff at vocational schools and/or vocational training institutions, as well as at institutions for VET research, and for the establishment of research management and expert communication between VET practitioners, researchers and political decision-makers). The projects should also provide impetus for reform measures.

3 Funding recipients

Applications may be submitted by universities, non-university research institutions and other institutions contributing to research as well as commercial companies – particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which fulfil the funding purpose and requirements (SMEs as defined by the European Commission at http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition/index_en.htm). Research institutions which receive basic funding from the Federal Government and/or the Länder can only be granted project funding to cover additional project-related expenditure or costs under certain preconditions.

4 Special prerequisites for funding

A prerequisite for funding is that projects include the participation of at least one German research institution/university as well as one research institution/university from the relevant partner country. Foreign partners cannot apply for funding under these funding regulations; they are expected to cover their own expenses. However, it is possible to apply for funding for research assistants from the partner country to be employed by the German institution (for example as doctoral students) as a form of capacity building under priority topics a) and b).

Under these regulations, funding will be provided for international cooperation in the framework of a collaborative project. This requires secured third-party funding for scientific project work in Germany and abroad. Hence applicants must provide a letter of intent, along with the project proposal, in which the foreign partners declare their interest in cooperation, document their home institution's approval of the cooperation project and confirm that funding for scientific work on the ground is secured.

Both individual and collaborative projects are eligible for funding under these regulations. Collaborative projects require the joint application of the interested parties, including a project description and a work plan drafted by the interested parties as well as a joint financial plan that clearly shows the respective contributions of the individual collaboration partners. The terms of cooperation between the partners in a collaborative project must be set out in a written cooperation agreement.

Projects funded under another program by the Federal Government, the Länder or the European Union are not eligible for funding. In general, the project period is of three years maximum or – in the case of projects addressing priority topic c) – four years. Funding recipients are obliged to participate in possible evaluation measures, provide any information needed to assess the success of the funding measure and participate in initiatives for the exchange of knowledge and experience.

This translation is for information. Only the official German version, published on September 25th 2017 has binding character.