Helena Sabbagh | Moritz Ansmann

Quality initiatives of intermediary institutions – the provision of the Chambers

A status quo survey of initiatives by the Chambers of Industry and Commerce and Chambers of Crafts to support the assurance and development of the quality of company-based training

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DEQA-VET
German Reference Point
for Quality Assurance in VET

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Imprint

Table of Contents

List of figures and tables

Figures

Tables

Index of abbreviations

AEVO	Ausbilder-Eignungsverordnung – Ordinance on Trainer Aptitude
BBiG	Berufsbildungsgesetz – Vocational Training Act
BIBB	Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – Federal Ministry of Education and Research
DEQA-VET	Deutsche Referenzstelle für Qualitätssicherung in der beruflichen Bildung – German National Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Training
DIHK	Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag e. V. – Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce
EU	European Union
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
HWK	Handwerkskammern – Chambers of Crafts
HwO	Handwerksordnung –Crafts and Trades Regulation Code
IHK	Industrie- und Handelskammern – Chambers of Industry and Commerce
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
ZDH	Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks – German Confederation of Skilled Crafts

1   Introduction

The attractiveness of vocational education and training needs to be strengthened against the background of the shortage of qualified skilled workers in an ageing society, increasing academisation of educational pathways and sector-related and occupationally-specific problems in filling training places. The issue of the quality of company-based training plays a major role in this regard and is thus a permanent point of reference on the vocational education and training policy agenda. Young people will only be confident about starting dual VET and subsequently go on to become highly qualified skilled workers if we succeed in securing and in continuing to develop the quality level of school-based and company-based training practice.

Quality assurance in VET thus takes on a key role with regard to the issue of the sustainability of the German dual training system. This is a cross-sectional task which encompasses all levels of vocational education and training (BIBB 2017, pp. 36 ff.). In Germany, it is primarily driven from the systemic level via the statutory foundations and by the ongoing (further) development of training standards. Cross-cutting standards are enshrined within the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) for this purpose. These refer to aspects such as suitability of training venues and of training staff, training contents and the regulation of examinations (§§ 27 ff. BBiG). Although these standards fundamentally define the leeway afforded to VET at provider level, state regulatory competence does not extend any further into specific company-based training practice. Companies thus enjoy comparatively broad margins for manoeuvre in terms of the structuring of training. This is intentional given the differing company sizes and sectoral affiliations and the wide range of organisational variance. Such an approach is in line with the premise that every company must be able to provide appropriate training corresponding to the opportunities available to it as long as the underlying minimum standards are observed. As a result, companies sometimes exhibit major differences in implementation practice in respect of the relevant commitment, respective expertise and existing resources that are needed to ensure further development of company-based training practice (Ebbinghaus/Krekel 2006, p. 11; cf. Reglin 2015).

For this reason, attention has for some considerable time been focused on the quality assurance practice of the companies and institutions providing training (cf. Scheib et al. 2008; Ebbinghaus 2007b; Ebbinghaus 2009a; Hemkes/Schemme 2013; Schröder et al. 2015; BIBB 2017; Sabbagh 2020). Within this context, the intermediary level in Germany is ascribed a crucial role in the quality assurance of company-based training (BIBB 2017, pp. 36 ff.). A wide range of institutions – including chamber organisations, employers, sectoral associations and trade unions – are involved in permanently ensuring the quality of company-based training. These institutions take on an intermediary role between standardisations that need to be drawn up at the regulatory policy level and the practical implementation of these at the provider level. At the intermediary level, companies receive particular support from the chamber organisations in the implementation of training standards. The tasks assigned to them in legislation regarding the provision of guidance to companies and trainees, monitoring the implementation of vocational education and training and organisation of the examinations mean that the Chambers occupy a key position at this level for quality assurance of vocational education and training.

Although laws and ordinances set out mandatory minimum standards for training practice, they leave sufficient scope for additional company endeavours in respect of quality assurance and quality development. The BIBB pilot project programme "Quality development and

assurance in company-based training" (2010–2014)[1] has shown that systematic and continuing quality development is by no means a guaranteed success. In the case of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), there is frequently a requirement for external support and guidance. As the series of pilot projects also revealed (Schemme/Pfaffe 2016, p. 40), the relevant impetuses for this purpose may in particular emanate from institutions located at the intermediary level (chamber organisations, sectoral or professional associations, trade unions etc.).

The interest of companies in external support and consultancy services has risen over the past years because of the difficulties of finding trainees in some regions and occupations. This applies even more to SMEs which, unlike large companies, do not usually possess quality management systems that are specifically aligned to the area of training (cf. Scheib/Spöttl/Windelband 2008, p. 38; Eder et al. 2011, p. 16; Schröder/Weber/Häfner-Wernet 2015, p. 9). In order to address these company needs and to support the companies in the task of quality assurance and quality development, a wide range of individual initiatives has been instigated over the past few years, especially at this intermediary level which liaises between the system and provider levels. The Chambers have led the way in devising and implementing multifarious additional special activities within the field of quality assurance. These take place alongside and in support of the regulatory activities defined in the BBiG.

Information box 1 – regulatory activities of the Chambers

The Chambers play a central role in the quality assurance of vocational education and training by fulfilling official tasks assigned to them by the state. These include the provision of guidance to companies and trainees, ascertaining the training suitability of the company and training staff, monitoring the implementation of VET and the organisation of the examinations. In their capacity as competent bodies, they also decide whether the duration of training is shortened or extended. All these tasks are part of the statutorily stipulated regulatory activities of the Chambers and will not be addressed in further detail in the present study. The focus of the investigation is much more on measures and initiatives relating to quality of training which the Chambers offer in addition to their basic provision.

The quality initiatives examined thus constitute special activities undertaken by the IHKs and HWKs which supplement the regulatory tasks set out in the BBiG (see 3.1).

The Chambers have instigated a multitude of "mark of quality" schemes, prizes and competitions which recognise companies and their training staff for the quality of training whilst also raising awareness for the task of quality assurance and supporting its implementation. The companies in turn are able to use the relevant certificates as a marketing instrument to position themselves successfully in the competition to recruit trainees. Many further measures exist in addition, including various guidance and workshop formats, seminars and courses on the topic of quality of training. The aspects which these "quality initiatives" have in common are that they extend beyond their stipulated regulatory tasks to provide special activities, they aim to secure and foster the quality of company-based training, and their foremost purpose is to provide companies with support. The multitude and diversity of these initiatives quintessentially underline the great commitment and creative ideas of intermediary institutions with regard to supporting company-based training quality via project-related measures. But how widespread are these initiatives? How have they come about, and how are they structured? And what are the objectives of such provision?

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1   See the website of the pilot project main funding focus at: https://www.bibb.de/de/4944.php (status: 22/03/2021)

Virtually no secure findings are available thus far. Even though the topic of quality assurance of vocational education and training has long since gained a broad presence in VET research (LINTEN 2015), relatively few publications deal with the role of intermediary institutions in relation to VET quality assurance (BIBB 2017, pp. 57 ff.). Literature initially addressed the introduction of quality management system in VET institutions (cf. GONON 2020). More studies and analyses on quality assurance at the company level did not follow until later (cf. LINTEN 2015). Against this background and acting in its capacity as the German National Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Training, DEQA-VET implemented an Erasmus+ funded project entitled "Quality initiatives of intermediary institutions and voluntary certification provision for small and medium-sized companies providing training in the dual system" (April 2019 to March 2021, project number: 78191), an initial inventory and investigation of projects and measures aimed at the encouragement and recognition of the quality of company-based training which took the Chambers of Industry and Commerce (IHK) and the Chambers of Crafts (HWK) as an example.[2] Our report presents the core results of this project. On the basis of a multi-phase and multi-methodological examination, which encompassed both comprehensive online research and a standardised online questionnaire, the associated investigation seeks to conduct a systematic status quo analysis of the activities of the IHKs and HWKs at the intermediary level. This study provides an initial overview of the multitude and diversity of quality initiatives undertaken by the Chambers to foster company-based training. The results of the investigation offer responses to questions relating to the dissemination, origin and structure of the initiatives and thus deliver new fundamental findings regarding quality assurance approaches at the intermediary level.

The study is structured as follows. Firstly, there is an introduction to the topic of quality assurance of company-based training. The quality assurance endeavours of the chamber organisations are conceptually categorised within this framework (Chapter 2). Project objectives and investigation questions are then presented and set out in greater detail as part of a consideration of the status of research. Once the methodological approach has been presented and the object of investigation has been delineated within this context (Chapter 3), Chapter 4 goes on to depict the main results of the investigation. This includes findings with regard to the dissemination, origin, topics and aims of the quality initiatives. Secondly, this stage further encompasses the presentation of findings relating to formats or types and finally also to the sphere of influence of the initiatives recorded. The presentation of results concludes with a special evaluation of the type of award initiatives (Chapter 4.7). The report ends with a summary of the results and a final categorisation (Chapter 5).

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2   In the interests of easier readability, this publication simply refers to Chambers even though the study is restricted to quality initiatives by the 132 IHKs and HWKs.

2   Basic conceptual principles and research goals

The demands created by digitalisation, the realignment of the economy and of society to renewable energies, the demographic shift, and the trend towards higher-level educational qualifications (academisation of education and training pathways) are all factors leading to major challenges for the dual system. In light of the fact that companies in some regions and sectors are consequently having difficulties in finding and retaining trainees, recent years have seen an intensification of discussions on approaches to permanently securing and fostering the attractiveness of VET within the dual system. Assurance and development of the quality of training are especially viewed as one possible route to ensuring and increasing the appeal of dual training. But what constitutes good quality of training in the first place? How is the system for VET quality assurance fundamentally structured in Germany? And what role do the quality initiatives of the Chambers play? These questions will be briefly answered below. The research goals of the present investigation will be specified more precisely by way of an introduction to the topic of quality assurance of company-based training.

2.1   Quality of company-based training – the challenges of definition

The stakeholders involved in vocational education and training essentially find it easy to agree that quality assurance constitutes a core objective of VET policy and that focused efforts are required in this respect. Nevertheless, varying views and notions exist with regard to the question of what precisely constitutes training quality. Different aspects are emphasised depending on the respective stakeholder group and its related perspectives and interests (cf. e.g. Harvey/Green 2000). Quality expectations differ according to point of view. The aspirations of trainees towards training and towards learning at the company, for example, may be fundamentally different to those of their trainers and even of the company itself. The employer associations, the trade unions and the state naturally deviate in terms of the way in which they understand and assess quality. There is therefore no uniform terminological understanding of quality of company-based training. Views as to which criteria should serve as the basis for evaluating quality are equally diverse. Determining the content of quality thus presents a great challenge. And yet, what is meant when mention is made of the "quality of company-based training"?

Although interpretation of the term is highly heterogeneous, there is fundamental agreement that company training quality exhibits several dimensions (cf. Reinemund 2018; Wittwer 2017; Ebbinghaus 2009b). The common approach is to draw a distinction between input quality (equipment at the training venue, qualification of training staff, training plans etc.), process quality (learning methods, training support, supervision etc.) and outcome quality (transfer of what has been learned, utilisation of the qualification etc.).

The factors which may exert a positive impact on quality and quality development are therefore diverse, too. They relate to aspects such as statutory or minimum standards, qualification of the vocational training staff, the linking of theoretical and practical learning elements, equipment and cooperation of learning venues, didactic planning and methodological implementation of the teaching/learning processes etc. The main focus of statutorily stipulated minimum standards is on the input and output dimensions of quality. The above serve as a vehicle for standardisation of both the prerequisites for and the results of successful training. Companies providing training are afforded considerable leeway in respect of the training process. They make widely varying use of this.

The reform of the BBiG in 2005 underlined the relevance of the topic of training quality and, at least since this time, quantity of training places has no longer been the sole premise under which discussion of the question of quality has been conducted (cf. KREKEL/BALLI 2006, pp. 20–21). This development underwent a dynamic reinforcement in the following years as the training market changed into a provider market. As a result of this, the question as to how the quality of training can be reliably secured whilst also being continuously improved gained increasing relevance in conjunction with the issue of the attractiveness of the dual system.

2.2 Quality assurance and quality development of company-based training in the dual system

At the superordinate level, the understanding of quality assurance of company-based training is mainly governed by three principles. These are (1) the dual principle, (2) the principle of the regulated occupation, and (3) the principle of consensus. Briefly, this means the following. Whereas the dual process links work-based learning with learning at the vocational school, the principle of the regulated occupation facilitates the exercise of a multitude of occupations on the basis of binding and recognised certificates. By way of contrast, the principle of consensus guarantees proximity to the labour market and transparency and acceptance of training occupations via the involvement of the social partners, the Federal Government and the federal states in the development of national training standards (cf. BIBB 2017). Both the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and the Craft and Trades Regulation Code (HwO) stipulate mechanisms for quality assurance. These regulate both the development of training regulations and the execution of the training and its monitoring by the Chambers.

In this context, the term quality assurance refers to the guaranteeing and securing of a stipulated level of quality or of defined quality requirements via ongoing monitoring and constant controls. Quality development, on the other hand, comprises the further and targeted supporting of general structural conditions (input quality) and of processes conducive to the further development of quality. During a long period in the past, the focus was on the effectiveness of the standard-setting system level and of the learning venues (meso level). However, quality aspects of the teaching/learning processes (micro level) have been coming increasingly to the fore over the past ten years (cf. FISCHER et al. 2014). The professional and pedagogical competencies of teachers are no longer the main issue. Learning outcomes are understood to be the result of a "co-production" between teachers and learners (ibid.; GONON 2020, pp. 616 ff.).

A multitude of stakeholders at various levels of VET are involved in securing and developing the quality of company-based training in Germany. Training quality is essentially steered via the system-level definition and stipulation of guidelines for implementation at the provider level in the form of training standards. Consideration is accorded to the various company realities, and a conscious effort is made to leave leeway for further quality assurance instruments and procedures which can be tailored to the differing general conditions and circumstances at the companies. Company-based training practice is in turn guided and supported by institutions at the intermediary level – mainly by the Chambers – both in terms of compliance with the statutorily stipulated minimum standards and with regard to company-specific issues relating to quality assurance and quality development. This makes the Chambers a key stakeholder in the quality assurance of company-based training and means that they take on an intermediary and liaising role between the system and provider levels (BIBB 2017, pp. 57 ff.).

Figure 1: The multi-level system – quality assurance in company-based training
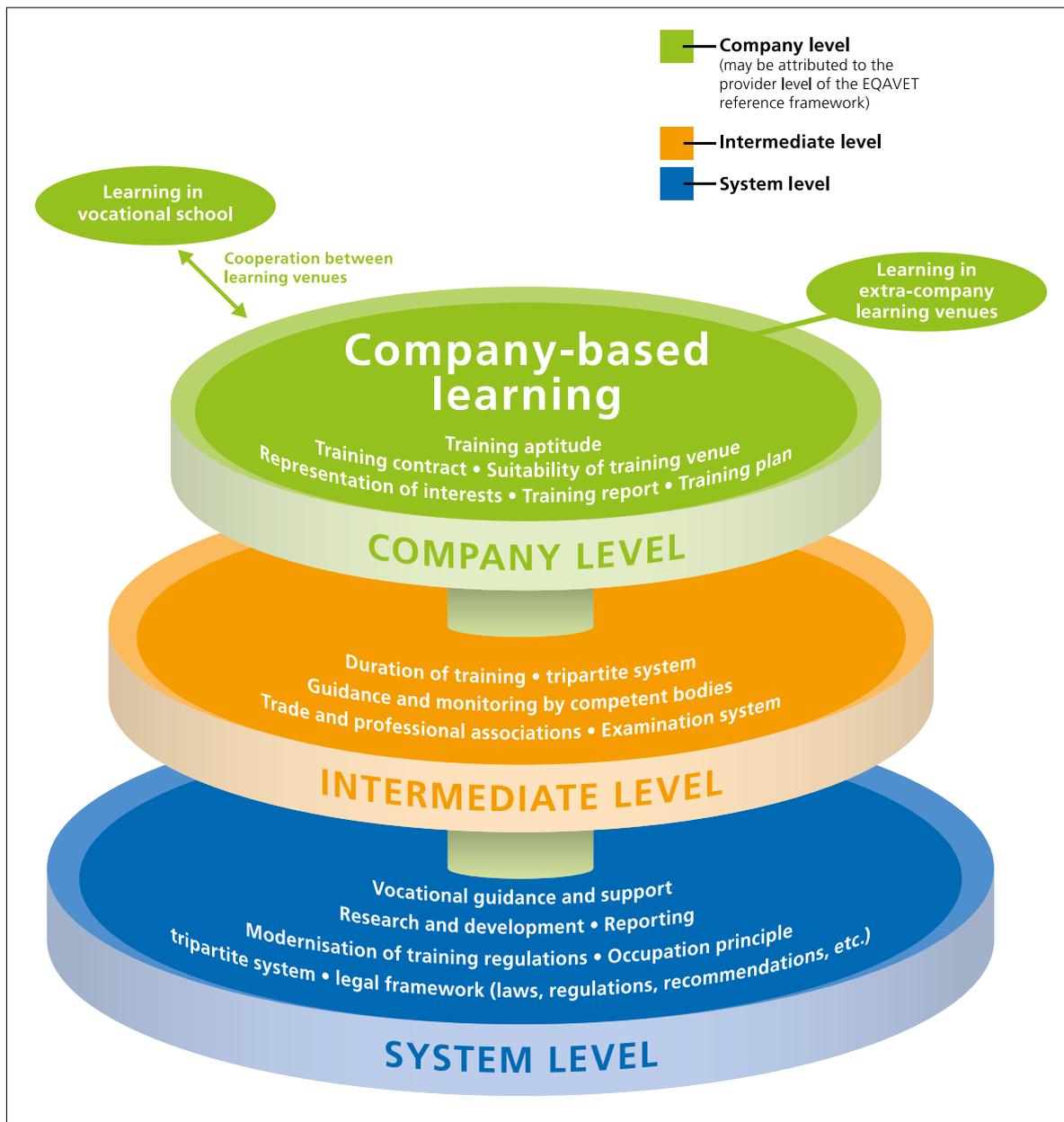
Source: BIBB 2017, p. 37

Quality assurance of company-based training thus takes place at all three institutional levels of vocational education and training. Training quality is in particular ensured via the interplay between the levels (BIBB 2017, pp. 36 ff.). At least since 2009, the debate surrounding quality assurance and quality development in vocational education and training needs to be considered within a European context via which both sides have been able to benefit from mutual impetuses. The representation concept of the multi-level system (see Figure 1) thus depicts a national further development of the EQAVET Framework (Sabbagh/Hemkes 2016; BIBB 2017).

2.3 Quality assurance of company-based training in a European context

At a European level, the topic of VET quality assurance has been an object of consideration in various institutional forms for more than a decade. This has its basis in a Recommendation originally adopted by the EU Parliament and Council in June 2009, which was replaced by

a wider Recommendation in November 2020 (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2020). As well as committing to the establishment of national reference points, the European states also agreed within this framework on the use and further development of the "European Reference Framework for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training" (EQAVET Reference Framework). This provides the member states with a reference instrument which aims to support them in using joint European values as a vehicle for promoting and monitoring the continuous improvement of their vocational education and training systems.

A glance at the EQAVET Framework shows that its core component is a quality cycle containing four phases – planning, implementation, evaluation and review. This cycle also corresponds to the Deming cycle, an established instrument in quality management that comprises the four phases Plan – Do – Check – Act (PDCA). The framework encompasses both a provider and a system level, and also includes quality criteria and descriptors. In addition to this, the participating countries have drawn up ten quality indicators in order to facilitate conclusions regarding the quality level of vocational education and training (ibid.).

Agreement on the EQAVET Reference Framework does not, therefore, represent the stipulation of a specific quality assurance system for all member states. Against the background of the heterogeneity of vocational education and training systems in Europe, the emphasis of the framework is much more on affording the European countries a wide degree of scope with regard to the question of how each respective national pathway to quality assurance in VET should be structured. However, all national approaches should have their foundations in the concept of circular planning, implementation, evaluation and testing.

Table 1: EQAVET reference indicators

No.	Indicator
1	Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers
2	Investment in training of teachers and trainers
3	Participation rate in VET programmes
4	Completion rate in VET programmes
5	Placement rate in VET programmes
6	Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace
7	Unemployment rate according to individual criteria
8	Prevalence of vulnerable groups
9	Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
10	Schemes used to promote better access to VET and provide guidance to (potential) VET learners

Source: own representation on the basis of Council of the European Union 2020

2.4   Quality assurance action areas at the company level

Systematic and continuous quality development is not self-evident. A planned approach and focused endeavours are required on the part of all participants in training. This is an area in which the actions of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) have included the funding of a BIBB pilot project entitled "Quality development and assurance in compa-

ny-based training" (2010–2014).[3] Innovative concepts and quality assurance instruments were developed and tested in company practice across a total of ten pilot projects which took place in close collaboration with the companies and with the support of academic research evaluation. The programme resulted in the development of many innovative and practical measures and guides, and certain training-related structural areas were also identified as being particularly central to the securing and further development of the quality of company-based training (cf. HEMKES/SCHEMME 2013). These action areas represent starting points for company quality endeavours which will exert a crucial influence on quality of training. In order to foster the quality of training in an effective manner, efforts should primarily focus on these five core areas (HEMKES/SCHEMME 2013, pp. 21 ff.).

(1) Promotion of a culture of quality development and quality assurance

The development of a shared quality awareness and quality culture is both a prerequisite and a goal in terms of initiating sustainable quality development processes at the company. Quality development thus requires a joint effort on the part of all those involved in training. A wide range of support measures are available in order to encourage participants to embrace the principle of quality development.

(2) Training of staff providing training

Training staff network directly with trainees and supervise them in daily training practice. It is thus incontrovertible that trainers have a huge and crucial impact on the quality of training. Their skills and knowledge play a decisive role. Alongside training competency, these include professional, organisational and didactic skills. The focus must be on using suitable pedagogical training concepts to develop and foster these competencies and skills.

(3) Structuring of the training process

The training process is the lynchpin for quality development in training. Even small changes and modifications in the planning and execution of the training process exert an impact on the teaching/learning process and may therefore bring about crucial improvements. The structuring of the training process represents a particularly key action area for quality development as well as offering numerous starting points for specific improvement measures.

(4) Evaluation of learning outcomes as a pedagogical process

Mutual reflection upon learning outcomes between trainees and trainers is highly conducive to learning and for this reason should be a regular component of training. Trainees are able to receive feedback on their learning progress in appraisal meetings. This also creates an opportunity to discuss the learning itself as well as any relevant problems and objectives, and to tackle learning deficits in a targeted way. Various tools can support a properly planned evaluation of learning outcomes.

(5) Promoting cooperation between learning venues

Training takes place at more than one learning venue. Because the company and the vocational school have different responsibilities and tasks, coordination and agreement of training measures between these two learning venues are vital in terms of achieving the joint training goal and therefore also good quality of training.

The instruments originated within the scope of the pilot project programme include both action and reflection guides and essentially relate back to these central action areas of quality

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3   See the website (in German) of the pilot project main funding focus at: https://www.bibb.de/de/4944. php (status: 22/03/2021).

assurance (cf. HEMKES/SCHEMME 2013). The action areas themselves are in turn backed up by respective individual quality requirements (cf. GAYLOR et al. 2015). As far as the present study is concerned, this differentiation of main action areas of quality assurance and quality development represents an important reflective film, against the background of which the multifarious initiatives of the chamber organisations are categorised, sorted and analysed (cf. in particular Chapter 4.7.8).

Figure 2: Quality assurance and quality development action areas at the company level

Source: own representation

Even though key levers of quality assurance and quality development were identified, the results and experiences of the pilot projects also clearly showed that many companies have an ongoing need for support and guidance in order to develop and implement effective instruments in the individual action areas of quality assurance. This particularly applies to quality improvement measures, which extend beyond the stipulated implementation of minimum standards at the systemic level. The focus of the pilot projects also made it apparent that "the effectiveness of quality endeavours […] is increased when intermediary institutions integrate relevant quality improvement concepts or instruments into their own range of services" (SCHEMME/PFAFFE 2016, p. 33). The impetus for the development of company-based training quality can therefore be initiated at the intermediary level and emanate from intermediary institutions such as the chamber organisations in particular.

Endeavours on the part of the Chambers in this thematic area have indeed increased over recent years, and this is reflected in the instigation of a large number of highly varied activities and measures. Workshops, events and guidance provision tailored thematically to the topic of training quality have, for example, been initialised. Relevant work materials have also been prepared and disseminated amongst the companies. Last but not least, a range of "mark of quality" schemes, prize awards and competitions have been launched in order to reward companies and their training staff for the quality of training and to promote the task of quality assurance. Chamber activities of this nature, which are directed towards the securing, development or recognition of the quality of company-based training and which are primarily aimed at companies providing training and their training staff will be referred to below as "quality initiatives". With regard to the provision and service portfolio of the Chambers, this addresses initiatives which extend beyond the statutorily stipulated regulatory tasks of the chamber organisations and to this extent constitute "special activities" (see Chapter 3.1 on delineation of the object of investigation).

Information box 2 – low threshold complaints management – an initiative by the DIHK, ZDH and DGB

Apart from the commitment shown by the IHKs and HWKs investigated in the present study, there are also further stakeholders at the intermediary level seeking to bring about improvement in the quality of company-based training. These include the business, professional and sectoral associations.

The umbrella chamber bodies the "Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce" (DIHK) and the "German Confederation of Skilled Crafts" (ZDH) have, for example, joined forces with the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) to agree and implement the piloting of a low threshold complaints management system. The idea behind this initiative is to provide young people experiencing training quality problems with better support and thus avoid training dropouts.

The aim of low threshold complaints management is to resolve problems and conflicts between trainees and the company providing training as early and as simply as possible without prematurely unleashing an escalation spiral which heads in the direction of statutorily stipulated measures. Such an approach seeks to improve the individual situation of trainees at the company whilst also taking account of the company perspective.

The development of early warning systems is one of the outcomes of this joint project. Mention should be made of the "AppZubi2.0", which features an SOS button and is offered by all HWKs, and of a contact button which is integrated into a holistic online report book to facilitate rapid and direct communication with the respective competent body. Anonymous enquiry and guidance instruments were also developed (including an Internet form created by the IHK Düsseldorf). These are supplemented by improved public relations measures.

2.5   Research goals and questions

As we have shown, quality assurance of vocational education and training takes place via the use of a wide range of instruments at all three levels of the training system (BIBB 2017, p. 37). In the debate surrounding VET quality, the focus is frequently placed on the system level and the company level. No investigations are yet known which provide information on the dissemination, relevance and structuring of initiatives and provision at the intermediary level, which are aimed at SMEs and which pursue the objective of supporting company endeavours in the area of quality assurance and quality development. In this light, the primary and overarching goal of this study is to offer an initial descriptive overview of the multitude and diversity of quality initiatives undertaken by the Chambers to foster company-based training. Several interconnected sub-goals are involved. The primary objective is to use an empirical investi-

gation to find responses to fundamental questions relating to the dissemination, origin and structuring of initiatives. The intention is that a broad empirical foundation will lead to the acquisition of new fundamental findings regarding quality assurance approaches and practices at the intermediary level which can then inform the debate centring on quality assurance of company-based training.

Alongside this research-related goal of undertaking a thorough surveying of the quality initiatives with regard to their central characteristics and framework data, the study also pursues practically related and educational policy purposes. The study also intends to create greater visibility of the multifarious commitment to and creative ideas for the ensuring and fostering of company-based training quality displayed by intermediary stakeholders, in this case the Chambers. The aim here is to promote appreciation for the relevant endeavours being undertaken at the intermediary level. At the same time, it would be desirable for the project results to encourage the mutual exchange of experiences and ideas between institutions and perhaps also give rise to opportunities for learning.

In order to address the research objectives, the investigation and data material was reviewed with regard to the following individual questions.

▶ In which contexts have quality initiatives originated and how widespread are they? (See Chapter 4.1 and Chapter 4.2)
▶ What goals do they pursue and what topics are addressed? (See Chapter 4.3 and Chapter 4.4)
▶ How are quality initiatives structured? Which formats and types of quality initiatives can be differentiated? (See Chapter 4.5, Chapter 4.6, Chapter 4.7)
▶ What understanding do quality initiatives have of the quality of company-based training? In accordance with which criteria is quality evaluated, secured and developed? To what extent are the action areas of quality assurance or of the EQAVET quality indicators addressed in this regard? (See in particular Chapter 4.7.8)

In order to take account of the complexity of the research questions, a comprehensive multi-methodological research design was developed. This is outlined below.

3   Methodological approach

The overarching objective of the project was a descriptive status quo survey and analysis of activities and measures for the fostering or recognition of the quality of company-based training at the intermediary level ("quality initiatives"). Due to the fact that virtually no secured prior knowledge existed regarding the object of investigation, the project has largely tended to adopt an exploratory and investigative approach.

The initial aim was to obtain an overview of all quality initiatives at the intermediary level. The intention was for the survey and investigation of the Chambers to form the starting point and main focus, because in their capacity as competent bodies the Chambers occupy a central and statutorily enshrined role in the quality assurance of VET at the intermediary level (BIBB 2017, pp. 57 ff.). The plan was then to follow this up with a supplementary identification and analysis of the quality initiatives of sectoral associations, employer associations and trade unions. During the course of the project, however, it was shown that it would no longer be possible to expand the field of investigation in this way given the fact that a sample size of approximately 200 HWK and IHK initiatives had been identified and that these would need to be examined both quantitatively and qualitatively, and in the light of delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus of the present study is accordingly restricted to the diversity of the initiatives conducted by the HWKs and IHKs.

Adopting such a context involved more than merely documenting the individual initiatives. Various individual issues also became part of the investigation (see Chapter 2.5) In order to take account of the associated multi-layered nature and complexity of the main investigative focuses, a multi-methodological research design was developed and applied. This means that several survey and evaluation methods were deployed as part of a multi-stage process. This enabled the object of research to be observed and analysed from various angles and allowed several data sources to be included. Such a research strategy, which makes use of different types of sources, promises greater analytical differentiation and an "expansion of possible findings" (FLICK 2011, p. 19; also GLÄSER/LAUDEL 2010, p. 104). The combination of different sorts of data provides a means whereby the respective specific strengths of the individual methods can be used to compensate for the weaknesses of other methods (cf. KELLE 2008). Mainly, however, the choice of this methodological strategy was a result of the double objective of examining both the quantity and dissemination of quality initiatives and their qualitative or content characteristics. Several methods of data collection were used following preparatory literature research complete with online research, a telephone survey and a standardised online questionnaire.

The pool of different datasets and data created has been evaluated qualitatively and/or quantitatively depending on the issue. Results from the individual investigations were reciprocally related to one another in various places and subjected to comparative examination. This approach permitted empirical saturation to be achieved. This facilitated the sorting, compaction and finally a summary of the individual findings which form the foundation of the present report.

Figure 3: Summary of the methodological approach
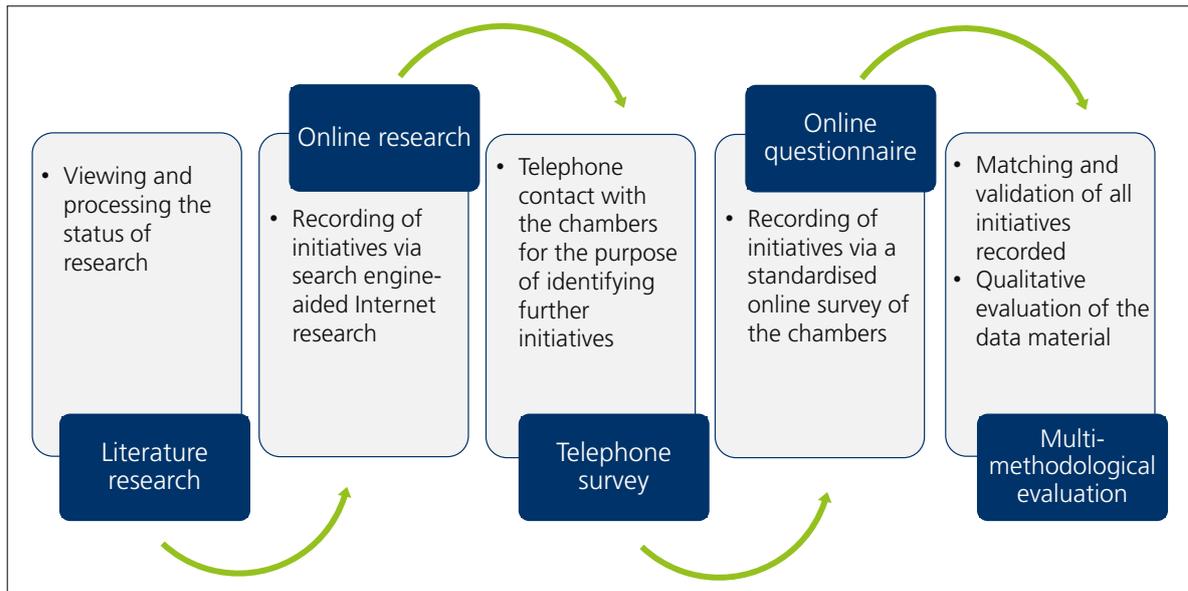
Source: own representation

3.1 Delineation of the object of investigation

The project initially commenced by viewing and processing the status of research and the general status of findings relating to quality initiatives of intermediary institutions. This confirmed the assumption that no investigation of the types, structuring and relevance of such quality initiatives had previously been carried out in Germany. Secondly, it was possible to arrive at a heuristic definition of quality initiatives with regard to surveying chamber initiatives within this context. This served the purpose of delineation of the object of research and precise specification of the research project.

> Quality initiatives are activities, measures and projects which aim to ensure, develop or recognise the quality of company-based training and which are primarily directed at companies providing training and their training staff. A further prerequisite is that quality initiatives represent "special activities" by dint of the fact that they extend beyond the statutorily stipulated regulatory tasks of the chamber organisations. Such initiatives may be just getting off the ground. Equally, they may be well established or else have been concluded during the past five years.

One critical remark would be that there is not always complete terminological clarity in this regard. It may, for example, be open to debate whether the guidance elements of some quality initiatives do not in fact constitute a continuation of statutory chamber tasks. However, because of the complexity of this provision and its integration into independent projects, we have opted to apply the categorisation of "special activities" in such cases.

In fundamental terms, therefore, the stated definition of quality initiatives encompasses all "mark of quality" schemes and competitions for the recognition of company-based training quality and further extends, for example, to include thematically relevant series of workshops, guidance provision for training staff, and the creation and furnishing of information and work materials relating to the topic of training quality. The selected definition does not therefore cover activities and measures primarily aimed at trainees rather than companies and which deal with aspects such as occupational information. The same applies to projects which are

mainly aimed at vocational schools and therefore address (vocational) school-based teaching and learning.

Selection of cases followed this definitional delineation of the object of investigation. Because of the prominent status of VET quality assurance, something which is also reflected in the large sample size of quality initiatives, the decision was taken to focus the investigation on provision by both the HWKs and the IHKs. This particular role has its roots in the circumstance that the state has transferred sovereign tasks to the Chambers. These include the provision of guidance to companies and trainees, monitoring the implementation of vocational education and training, and organisation of the examinations. In their capacity as competent bodies, the Chambers also decide whether the duration of training is shortened or extended and contribute to the training of VET staff by organising specific advanced training programmes (BIBB 2017, p. 57). This means that they act as key stakeholders at the intermediary level with regard to quality assurance of company-based training. Whereas the essential focus at the system level is on laws and ordinances governing minimum standards which are then implemented at the company level, the Chambers monitor and evaluate training quality in their capacity as competent bodies. In order to fulfil the objective of fully recording the quality initiatives, the investigation was directed at all HWKs and IHKs in Germany.

The focus from then on was on the process of identifying the relevant initiatives, and the data collection phase subsequently commenced in January 2020.

3.2   Collection of data

Two methods of data collection were used. These comprised online research on the basis of a review of the relevant literature and an online questionnaire followed by a telephone survey. The aims were to obtain information on the quality initiatives of the chamber organisations and to answer the main research questions.

3.2.1   Online research

In order to gain an initial overview of the dissemination and diversity of the quality initiatives, implementation of the project began with systematic online research of the websites of the Chambers (both HWKs and IHKs). Preparatory support took place in the form of a review of existing investigation results and literature research. This confirmed the finding that no publicly accessible summaries or analyses as of yet exist regarding the endeavours of intermediary institutions to strengthen the quality of company-based training via the vehicle of quality initiatives. Neither had any such investigations been conducted by the Chambers.

Search engine-based keyword research (Google search) and systematic research of HWK and IHK websites enabled us to identify a multitude of relevant quality initiatives and their points of contact. These initiatives were documented together with their general framework data and the self-descriptions on the chamber websites.

Although this enabled an initial picture of the object of investigation to emerge, it was revealed that the differing nature of the content descriptions of the initiatives on the respective websites in itself hindered the standardised recording of the data necessary in order to respond to all of the research questions. At the same time, we had to assume that not all initiatives can be recorded via online research. Ultimately, very recent initiatives or initiatives which have run their course do not always have an Internet presence. Further stages of data collection were thus required in order to achieve the goal of creating an informative overall view of the status quo of quality initiatives that was as complete as possible.

3.2.2 Telephone survey

For this reason, a supplementary telephone survey was devised and implemented. As described above, this also concentrated on the core investigation group – the HWKs and IHKs.

In order to generate investigation results which were as valid as possible, consultations initially took place with the umbrella associations of the chamber organisation – the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts – to seek out suitable points of contact at the Chambers for the pending online questionnaire. On the basis of the online research, the obvious assumption is that there are Chambers which conduct more than one quality initiative. In order to avoid multiple responses because of overlapping areas of responsibility, the objective was to find one main point of contact who had an overview of the various chamber initiatives in the thematic area and who could then further be supplied with necessary information from the project side.

These points of contact were usually heads of professional or business divisions with responsibility for training or VET. In a few cases, the Chambers themselves nominated contact persons who agreed during the telephone calls to pass on relevant information to the right specialist departments once the online questionnaire had started and to make sure that only one form per initiative was completed.

A further aim of the telephone survey was to raise the chamber organisations' awareness of the DEQA-VET project and in particular to provide information on the final component of the data collection process – the online questionnaire. Participants' attention was drawn to the upcoming online questionnaire at an early stage during the telephone call. They were personally invited and encouraged to take part. The objective here was to lay the foundation for a satisfactory response rate and thus for meaningful data.

Establishing telephone contact with all the HWKs and IHKs enabled the identification of suitable points of contact and also permitted the findings from the online research to be verified. Standardised recording of the initiatives and a uniform methodological approach within the team were achieved via the use of a support methodological manual. The telephone survey began in February 2020. Because the COVID-19 pandemic took effect a short time later, the survey needed to be interrupted periodically and was not completely concluded until June 2020.

3.2.3 Online questionnaire

The aim of the online questionnaire, which was designed as a full survey aimed at all HWKs and IHKs, was to provide a conclusive overview of the diversity of the initiatives which had been conducted in the five years preceding the time of the survey. The intention was that both completed and present initiatives should be stated. The interest of the investigation centres on the scope, dissemination and structuring of the various quality initiatives rather than merely on fundamental framework data. A questionnaire on the topic of company-based training quality assurance was developed on the basis of the conceptual preliminary work and of the findings that emerged from the online and telephone research. This questionnaire was divided into various topic areas and comprised a total of 30 individual questions. Its aim was to record quality initiatives and was designed so as to survey the diverse structuring of such initiatives and to collect their basic framework data (see Annex 1). It encompassed question blocks on the dissemination and origin, formats and main thematic focuses, objectives, and scope of the quality initiatives offered by the respective Chambers in the area of vocational education and training. Respondents were also asked to provide the website address and a brief description of the relevant initiative and any other information if possible. The questionnaire was designed so that each use of the form recorded a single "quality initiative". If an institution offered more

than one initiative, respondents were requested to fill in the questionnaire the appropriate number of times. This was the only way of guaranteeing complete and comprehensive recording.

For data protection reasons, respondents were of course afforded the option to retain their anonymity or just state the name of their institution. Other provisions under data protection law were checked and taken into consideration beforehand.

The questionnaire form was agreed with the chamber umbrella associations, the DIHK and the ZDH, within the scope of several technical and content-based pre-tests, some of which involved an IHK. Manageability, comprehensibility and clarity were checked, and an online questionnaire was programmed using the LimeSurvey online survey software. A list of points of contact within the Chambers was compiled on the basis of the online research and prior telephone contact with the chamber organisations. These persons subsequently received an email inviting them to participate in the questionnaire (see Annex 1). The questionnaire started in July 2020 and extended until the end of September in the same year because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The end of this questionnaire also signalled the conclusion of the data collection phase. This fulfilled the prerequisites for the development and application of analytical criteria. Over the further course of the project, these were used to investigate and process the quality initiatives collected by using the various data collection methods.

3.3   Data evaluation

The online research, the telephone survey and the online questionnaire permitted the collection of a surprisingly large amount of both quantitative and qualitative data on quality initiatives undertaken by all Chambers and by further intermediary institutions such as professional and sectoral associations etc. For this reason, the focus during the further course of the project was on the HWKs and the IHKs. The wealth of data and in particular the variety of data types and the diversity of the individual focuses of investigation rendered it necessary to apply a complex evaluation strategy which comprised both quantitative and qualitative stages of data evaluation. Whereas investigation of the dissemination of the quality initiatives necessitated quantification of the initiatives recorded via the various data sources, qualitative methods needed to be deployed for detailed analysis of the contents of the provision. The evaluation strategy pursued for this purpose stipulated the choice of specifically suitable methods in each case in order to respond to the sub-questions.

Nevertheless, before evaluation of the data material could commence, a preparatory analytical run had to be performed to scrutinise once more whether the initiatives recorded could actually be deemed quality initiatives in accordance with the established definition (see Chapter 3.1). Insofar as this was not the case, the respective initiative was removed and excluded from the body of the analysis together with all corresponding data material. We were able to incorporate a total of 192 quality initiatives into the investigation (see Annex 2). 28 initiatives identified via the online questionnaire were removed from the further investigation at this stage. In all, 18 initiatives were rejected because no usable information on them was available. Their titles were unknown, and there were no brief website descriptions. No follow-up research was possible in these instances due to the fact that respondents or the relevant Chambers had remained anonymous. A further ten initiatives had to be rejected because examination of the website or brief description revealed that they were not categorisable as quality initiatives pursuant to the established definition. This affected individual cases of initiatives which made no express reference to the topic of training quality, which were not primarily directed at companies, or which were classed as measures from the area of regulatory tasks and thus did not

constitute special activities. In cases of doubt as to whether examination of the existing information produced no clear result because of the problem of arriving at a clear delineation (Chapter 3.1), the decision was taken to retain the initiative within the investigation material. However, this concerned only a small number of exceptional cases.

3.3.1 Quantitative data evaluation

Quantitative data evaluation relates primarily to analysis of data from the standardised questionnaire. This was concluded in September 2020. Once the field phase had ended, data export took place so as to make the data available for further statistical processing using Excel and SPSS. In order to form a reliable and robust dataset, mandatory data cleansing was performed to remove or correct erroneous datasets and data entries. Datasets were also checked for completeness, plausibility and consistency. Statistical data evaluation then commenced. Descriptive statistical procedures were mainly used. These ranged from absolute and relative frequency counts of the responses to calculations of mean values and comparisons.

153 forms had been fully completed and sent by the time the questionnaire period came to an end (Chambers often completed more than one form). 84 partially completed forms were also in our possession. The latter were not included in the investigation. 84.1 percent (111) out of a total of 132 Chambers invited to take part completed at least one questionnaire in full. This meant that 83.0 percent (44) of all 53 HWKs and 84.8 percent (67) of all 79 IHKs had participated. Although it did not prove possible to secure the involvement of all Chambers and achieve the goal of fully recording all initiatives, the response rate was generally high. This means that we can assume a representative survey with meaningful results.

Table 2: Summary of responses

Type of chamber	Statistical population (number of all chambers)	Survey sample (number of participating chambers)	Survey sample (in percent)
Chambers of Crafts	53	44	83.0
Chambers of Industry and Commerce	79	67	84.8
Total	**132**	**111**	**84.1**

Source: own representation

Figure 4: Responses by chambers (number)
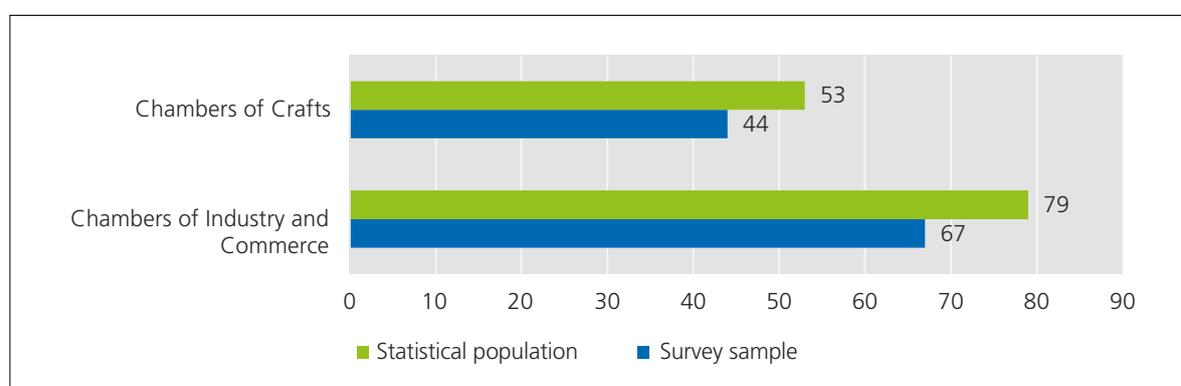
Source: own representation

Representativity of the survey data is indicated by a high response rate and also if there are no significant distortions in the questionnaire sample. A further investigation of the sample was undertaken in order to ascertain this. We identified that response rate by types of chamber was virtually identically high (83.0 percent of HWKs compared to 84.8 percent of IHKs) and also looked at regional distribution of the chamber head offices. The comparison between the statistical population and the survey sample (see Figure 5) showed that, with very few exceptions (Hessen, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania), there are no distorting under or over representations.

Figure 5: Characterisation of the survey sample (IHK and HWK) by regional distribution (number)
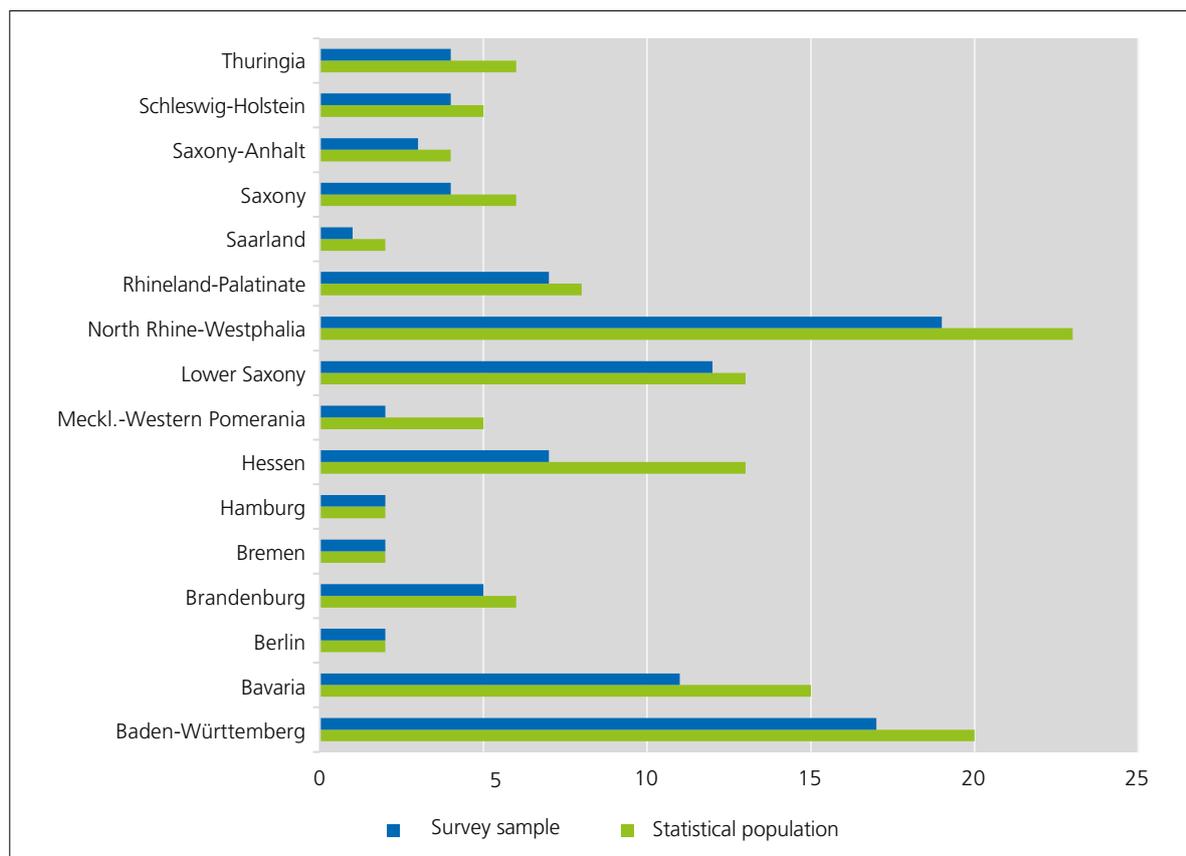
Source: own representation

The responses of the Chambers provide diverse findings and information regarding the dissemination, origin, formats, main thematic focuses, objectives and scope of the quality initiatives in the area of company-based training. It should nevertheless be pointed out that the information from the HWKs and IHKs on these topics gathered by means of an online questionnaire do not in actual fact relate to all real existing quality initiatives. Ultimately, the online research permitted a multitude of further initiatives to be identified.

Nevertheless, the statistical evaluation of this information certainly permits us to arrive at generalised findings for the population of all Chambers and of all their quality initiatives. The survey sample of 84 percent at the chamber level accounts for a very considerable proportion of the statistical population and, as expected, deviates very little from it. Also, deviations in respect of characteristics identified via the online questionnaire and the online research are negligible. These deviations only slightly affect the distribution of the types of quality initiatives respectively recorded. They do not, however, relate to their fundamental structuring or general characteristics. To this extent, the statistical evaluation of the online questionnaire and

the resultant findings are of representative significance to the totality of quality initiatives by the HWKs and IHKs.

3.3.2 Qualitative data evaluation

Qualitative data was recorded both within the scope of the online research and by using the standardised online questionnaire. As part of the online research, the information texts and materials relating to the respective quality initiatives listed on the chamber websites were extracted, saved and processed as "profiles". These profiles were completed with brief descriptions on the individual initiatives which had been provided by respondents during the online questionnaire. This was followed by an evaluation in accordance with a qualitative and content-based documentary analysis. The examination was driven by several research questions. Some of these related to the pre-stipulated main investigative focuses and thus resulted from the objective defined in advance of achieving a fundamental inventory of the quality initiatives. On the other hand, however, special issues also emerged against the background of the results of the online questionnaire. These were then likewise pursued within the scope of the qualitative data evaluation.

Following compilation of the data material (see Annex 2), the individual quality initiatives were allocated to a main type in accordance with deductively and inductively defined categories so that below, for example, award initiatives can be investigated separately from training initiatives. This made it possible to examine the individual formats in a much more clearly delineated way. Although the general question of the structuring of the quality initiatives concerns all initiatives and all formats, such an approach made it considerably easier to process the characteristics and typicalness of individual initiatives in *intra* format comparison terms. At the same time, the format-specific characteristics and properties emerged much more clearly and continued to gain contour in the subsequent *inter* format comparison.

An analysis grid aligned to the specific questions and which served the purpose of internal project documentation of the analytical results was developed with the aim of achieving inter-subjective verifiability. Individual investigation categories of relevance in terms of responding to the research questions were developed. These categories were used to conduct an interpretative analysis of the processed text segments relating to the individual initiatives. Some main contents were cited word for word or paraphrased and were then captured in summarised form. Abstraction of the individual initiatives on this basis ultimately allowed for generalised conclusions regarding fundamental cross-cutting case characteristics for the individual formats.

4   Results

The main results of the investigation are set out below. Presentation of the results encompasses findings in respect of dissemination (4.1), origin (4.2), topics (4.3) and objectives (4.4) of chamber quality initiatives. Findings relating to the areas of formats or types (4.5) and scope of and demand for (4.6) the initiatives recorded are also presented. Both the quantitative results of the online questionnaire and the findings from the qualitative investigations are aligned to these individual main focuses accordingly and then compared with one another. The results report concludes with a special evaluation of type of award initiatives (4.7).

4.1   Dissemination of the quality initiatives

The aim of the investigation was to record all HWK and IHK quality initiatives if possible, and this objective was pursued via the means of literature and online research, a telephone survey and the online questionnaire. The results of the individual investigations were then checked, matched and correlated with one another in order to ensure a valid overall result in respect of the dissemination of quality initiatives, which also took account of the provision offered by the Chambers that had not taken part in the online questionnaire. Initiatives identified both via the online questionnaire and in the online research were, of course, recorded only once.

The online questionnaire enabled the recording of a total of 102 individual quality initiatives distributed across 62 different Chambers in all. 55.9 percent of the 111 out of 132 Chambers (84%) that participated in the questionnaire therefore have at least one quality initiative in place. According to the results of the online questionnaire, the maximum number of quality initiatives of any one chamber is eight. This figure is, however, an outlier. This indicates a methodological problem. A small number of Chambers stand out in that they have either conflated several individual initiatives into one overall initiative or else, as in this special case, have reported individual activities as separate initiatives. Since only isolated cases are involved, this does not call the validity of the overall result into question. The online research permitted the recording of an additional 90 initiatives. This means that, once the results of the online questionnaire had been checked and matched against the results from both sub-surveys, a total of 192 different quality initiatives were registered.

Table 3: Overall view of the number of HWK and IHK quality initiatives recorded

Method	Number of quality initiatives before examination and matching	Final number of quality initiatives after examination and matching
Online questionnaire	130	102
Online research	90	90
Total (after matching)	**220**	**192**

Source: Online questionnaire and online research

The initiatives are distributed across 100 of the 132 chamber organisations. According to the status of the completed investigation, 75.8 percent of Chambers thus have at least one quality initiative in place. 36.4 percent have even more than one (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Number of quality initiatives per chamber (proportions in %)
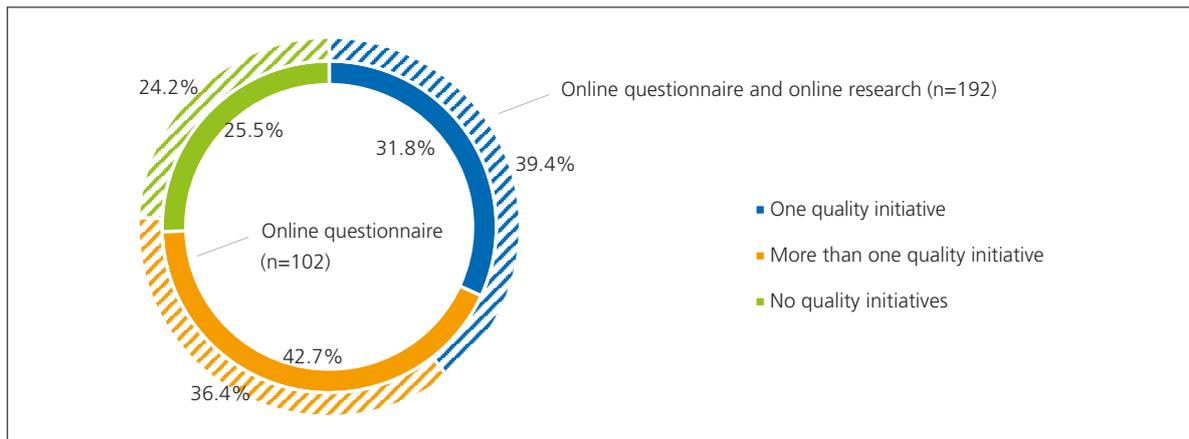
Source: Online questionnaire and online research, IHK and HwK

The quality initiatives recorded are spread across all federal states. The states which account for most initiatives are Baden-Württemberg (32), Lower Saxony (30), and North Rhine-West-phalia (20). This closely correlates with the different number of Chambers per federal state. In order to analyse this more precisely, the number of initiatives per federal state was related against the number of Chambers per federal state. The result shows that the highest number of initiatives in comparative terms was recorded in Berlin (Ø 2.5), Bremen (Ø 2.5), and Lower Saxony (Ø 2.31). The average number of initiatives per chamber across all federal states is 1.45 (see Table 4).

Table 4: Quality initiatives of the chambers by federal state

Federal State	Number of chambers (IHK and HWK)	Number of quality initiatives	Number of initiatives per chamber (IHK and HWK)
Baden-Württemberg	20	32	1.6
Bavaria	15	17	1.13
Berlin	2	5	2.5
Brandenburg	6	10	1.67
Bremen	2	5	2.5
Hamburg	2	3	1.5
Hessen	13	17	1.31
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	5	6	1.2
Lower Saxony	13	30	2.31
North Rhine-Westphalia	23	20	0.87
Rhineland Palatinate	8	15	1.75
Saarland	2	2	1
Saxony	6	6	1
Saxony-Anhalt	4	7	1.75
Schleswig-Holstein	5	11	2.2
Thuringia	6	6	1
Total	**132**	**192**	**Ø 1.45**

Source: Online questionnaire and online research

However, the summarised results of the sub-investigations also therefore show that not all Chambers conduct quality initiatives. In the case of 24.2 percent of all Chambers, no such initiative could be identified via the online questionnaire or via the online research. The reasons why the surveys show that some Chambers do not offer any activities which can be characterised as quality initiatives are multifarious. In order to investigate this in greater detail, the Chambers that had stated in the questionnaire that they had no relevant initiative in place were requested to provide the underlying reasons for this. The conclusion indicated by their responses is that lack of resources (Ø 4,81) and in particular concentration on the task of company-based training quality assurance within the scope of the regulatory tasks of the Chambers (Ø 5.08) are key factors inhibiting the introduction of special measures within the area of company-based training quality assurance (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Reasons for the absence of quality initiatives (mean values, n =24)
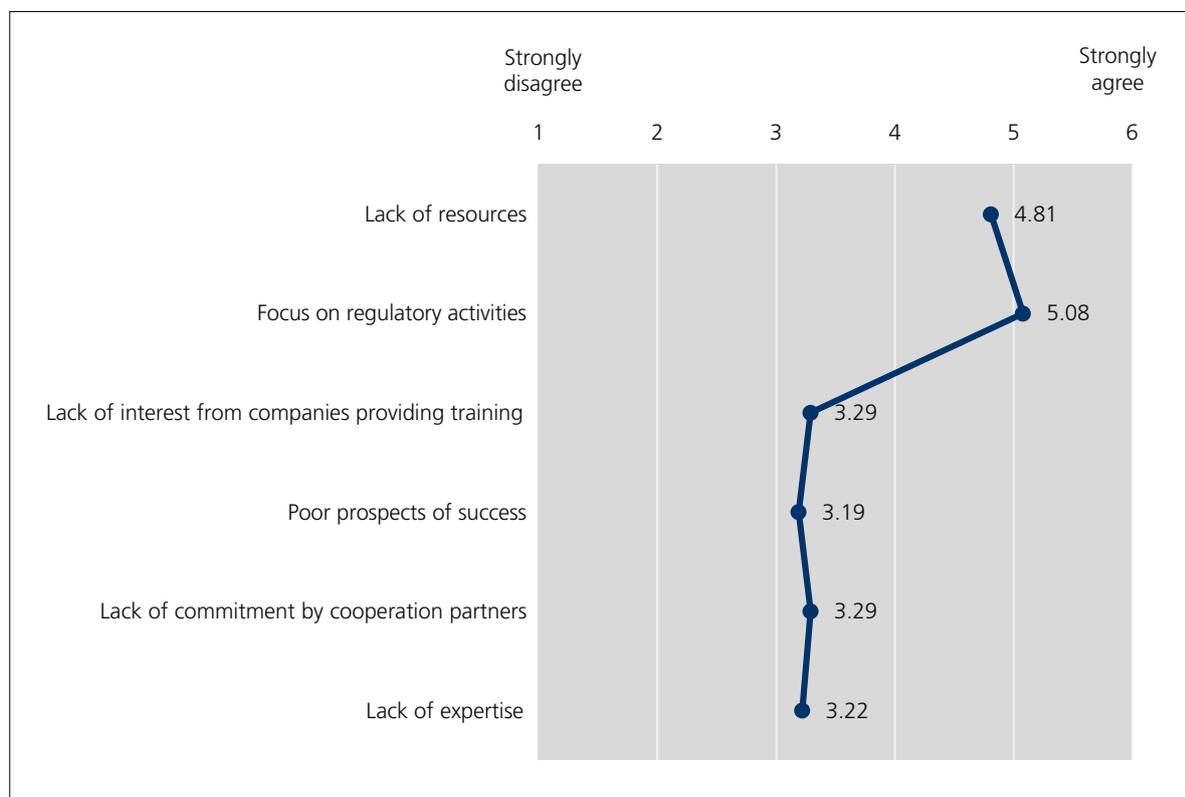
Source: Online questionnaire

The Chambers ultimately and primarily tackle the task of quality assurance and quality development of company-based training within the scope of stipulated regulatory activities in the areas of training guidance, supervision and implementation of examinations (BIBB 2017, pp. 57 ff.). As part of regular training guidance, they support companies with regard to the structuring of training and monitor the training venues. Quality initiatives, on the other hand, constitute special activities extending beyond this framework and that sometimes tend to be conducted via a project-related approach or on an ad hoc basis. An investigation of the question as to whether and to what extent a chamber initiates quality initiatives that go beyond the activities they perform as part of their regulatory tasks does not, if considered in isolated terms, permit any kind of conclusions regarding the general quality assurance and quality development endeavours of the chamber in the field of company-based vocational education and training. We should also stress that this was not an objective of the investigations in any way. Nevertheless, the high number of quality initiatives fundamentally documents the great

commitment of the HWKs and IHKs to be actively involved in the area of quality assurance and quality development of company-based training, including via such new formats as are represented by the quality initiatives.

However, just under a third (30.8%) of the Chambers that stated in the online questionnaire that they had not offered any quality initiative over the past five years indicate that they intend to instigate such an initiative in the future (see Figure 8). It remains to be seen whether these plans will be influenced or even thwarted by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 8: Plans of the chambers to introduce a quality initiative in the future (proportions in %, n = 26)
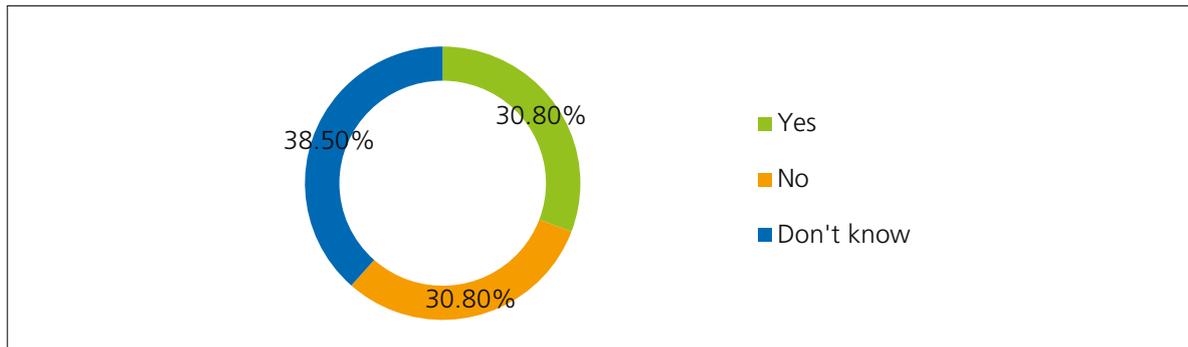
Source: Online questionnaire, IHK and HwK

4.2   Origin of the quality initiatives

The reform of the BBiG in 2005 underlined the relevance of the topic of training quality, and, since then, quantity of training places has no longer been the sole premise under which discussion of the question of quality of training has been conducted (cf. Krekel/Balli 2006). This development underwent a dynamic reinforcement in the following years as the training market changed into a provider market. Companies in more and more sectors, occupations and regions are experiencing greater problems in acquiring trainees and thus in recruiting their future skilled workers. The fact that this period in particular has seen the origin of numerous initiatives aimed at ensuring and developing the quality of VET supports the general finding that quality debates in the field of vocational education and training are usually provoked by crisis (cf. Lipsmeier 2014; Baethge 2014).

The responses of the Chambers with regard to the founding date of their respective quality initiatives indicate that the Chambers have been offering relevant support formats on a one-off basis since the 1990s but that the number of quality initiatives has been growing since the mid-2000s (see Figure 9). This development reached an initial peak in 2010. The rise coincides with the stated critical developments on the training market during the years in which more and more sectors, occupations and regions in the training market turned into a provider market. Since this time, SMEs in particular have sometimes had to compete for trainees in the same way that trainees apply to companies. Because good training and evidence of good training is a key means of enhancing the attractiveness of a company providing training, this context clearly led to a requirement on the part of companies for relevant external low-threshold guidance and support services. In establishing quality initiatives, the Chambers – according to the self-description of the initiatives – sought to address these needs. Against this background, it appears that the superordinate objective of the initiatives is to provide companies with active assistance in training marketing, in the recruitment of trainees and therefore ultimately in securing a supply of skilled workers. The premise is to increase attractiveness of dual training by improving both training quality and evidence of training quality.

Growth figures settled down again between 2011 and 2014, before the largest increase in initiatives, 17 in number, was recorded in 2015 (see Figure 9). Although a slight fall was observed in subsequent years, the annual rise stabilised at a high level. This course of events does not deliver any indications that saturation of growth has already been reached. However, the extent to which the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be reflected in the work of the Chambers, in company-based training and ultimately in the initiation of new quality initiatives as well as in the implementation of existing schemes remains to be seen.

Figure 9: Years in which the quality initiatives were established (number, n = 96)
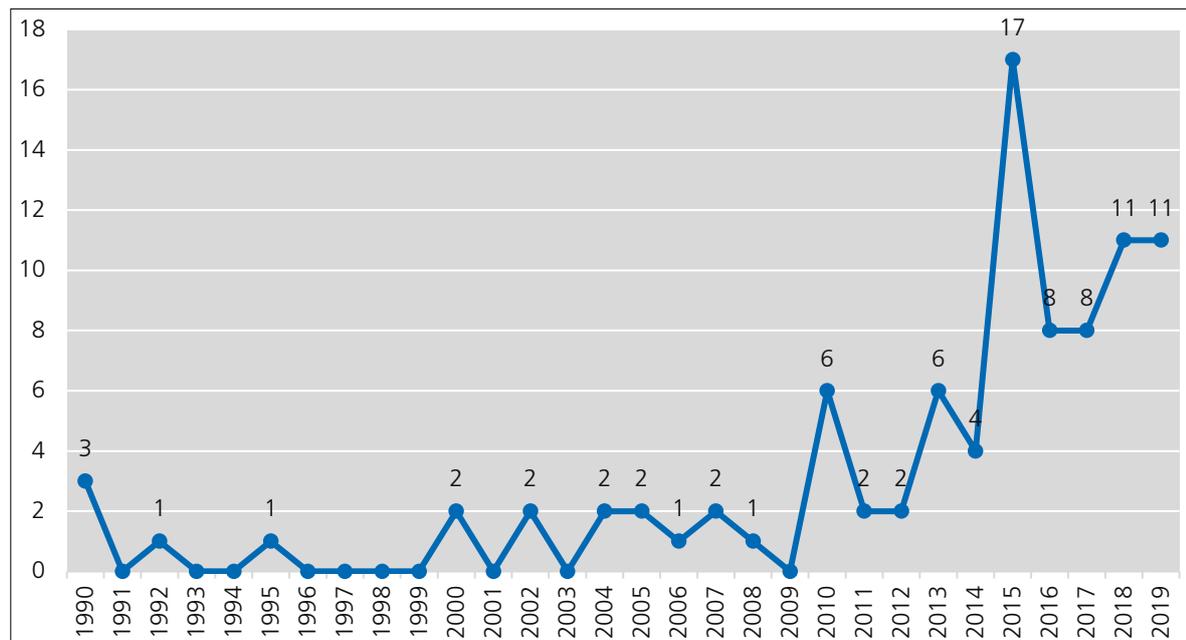
Source: Online questionnaire

In order to investigate the origin and development of the quality initiatives more precisely, the online questionnaire asked about the genesis and date of foundation of the quality initiatives. In many cases, it was revealed that the initiatives came about as a result of creative ideas and the commitment of individual Chambers to secure or foster the quality of training. The resultant approaches and formats were sometimes copied or adapted by other Chambers. There are also initiatives that were initiated at the very outset via cooperation between several Chambers, the federal state chamber associations or by companies forming part of the chamber umbrella associations.

The information provided by the Chambers makes it clear that over half of the initiatives recorded via the questionnaire were instigated by individual Chambers themselves (53.3%), whereas just under a quarter of provision originated or was further developed on the basis of ideas from other institutions. A further 19.8 percent of the initiatives came into being as a result of specific collaboration with other institutions. A very small number of respondents state that their chamber itself was not involved at all in the development of the quality initiative (4.0%) (see Figure 10). This involves instances of participation in Federal Government-federal states programmes as well as in genuine bottom-up projects instigated by companies or company alliances, in which the Chambers take on much more of a coordinating role rather than acting as initiators.

Figure 10: Genesis of quality initiatives (proportions in %, n = 101)

- Developed independently
- Developed in conjunction with another institution
- Idea adopted and adapted from another institution
- Not involved in the development

4.0%
22.8%
53.5%
19.8%
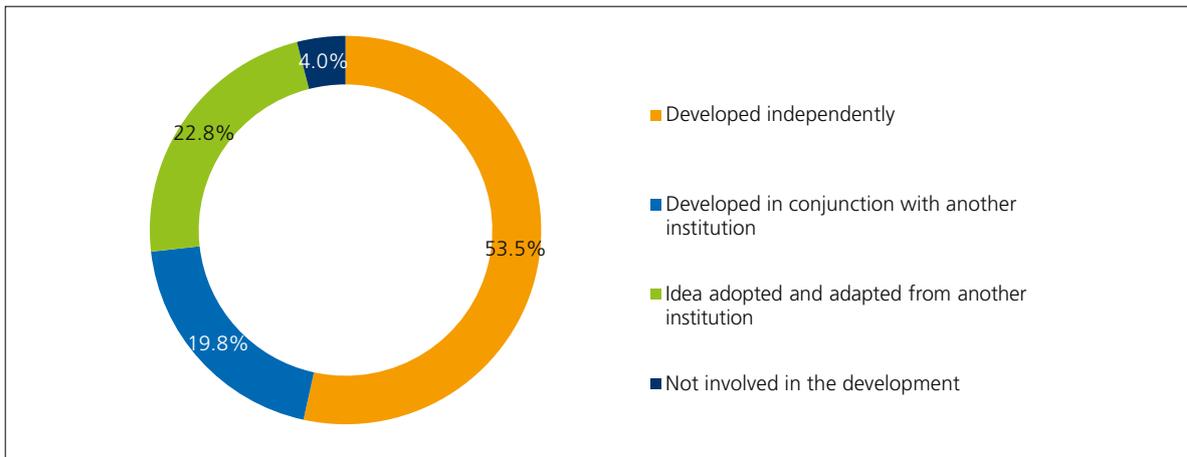
Source: Online questionnaire

A detailed analysis of the questionnaire data also reveals a (slight) statistical correlation that smaller Chambers, measured by the number of member companies, are more likely to assume the ideas and approaches of other Chambers, whereas larger Chambers are comparatively more likely to have developed their initiatives autonomously (see Figure 11). The presumed reason for this would be that smaller Chambers tend to lack the resources to take the lead in establishing quality initiatives independently.

Figure 11: Number of member companies of the chambers by genesis of quality initiatives (mean value, n = 101)

66,584 — Developed

44,245 — Idea adopted and adapted from another institution
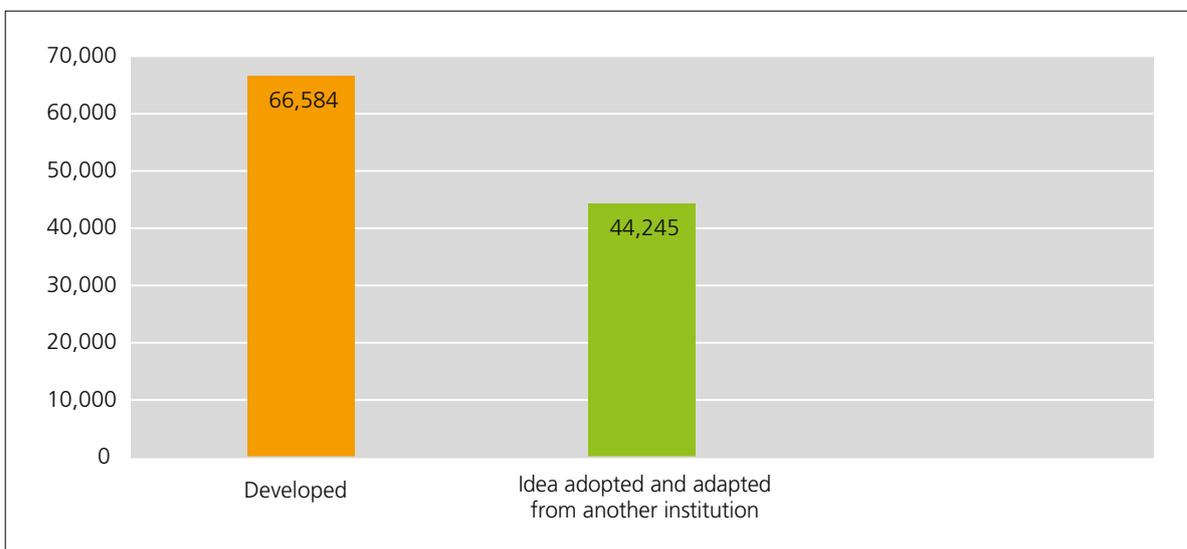
Source: Online questionnaire

4.3   Topics of the quality initiatives

Quality initiatives either address the topic of "quality of training" in a comprehensive manner by referring to a multitude of aspects and dimensions of VET quality or else set out selected content focuses. Against the background of the migration crisis, for example, recent years have seen the initiation of quality initiatives that specifically deal with the issue of integration of refugees into the training system and with the particular resultant challenges (OR 94, OR 97,

OR 103, ID 398).[4] Alongside this, the topic of inclusion is a further example of how the training system is not immune to overall societal developments and trends and of how such developments and trends indirectly act as a starting point for the quality assurance of company-based training (OR 92). The question of whether and of the extent to which companies will succeed in recruiting trainees with special support needs has thus (also) long since become a quality-related topic and an issue various special quality assurance and quality development measures are seeking to tackle. The same applies to the topic of digitalisation and to the demands this makes of companies in terms of exploiting the areas of potential offered by digitalisation in the way in which they structure training and, for example, with regard to the deployment of appropriately qualified VET staff (ID 449, ID 500, ID 140). In many cases, the chamber organisations are providing support in this respect and in respect of other main topic focuses within the framework of their quality initiatives.

The results of the online questionnaire show that as many as just under a fifth of the quality initiatives recorded via this means are (also) directed at the topic of digitalisation (see Figure 12), although the early point in time at which the investigation was undertaken did not yet even accord due consideration to digitalisation initiatives which may have originated as a reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. The expectation is, therefore, that the topic of digitalisation will gain even greater prominence in the future. Other thematic focuses taken up and addressed by quality initiatives are integration of refugees (16.7%), integration of higher education dropouts into company-based training (13.7%), learning venue cooperation between companies and schools (17.7%), and sustainability of vocational education and training (18.6%) (OR 94, ID 716, OR 64, ID 359).

Figure 12: Main thematic focuses of the quality initiatives (proportions in %, multiple responses, n = 102)
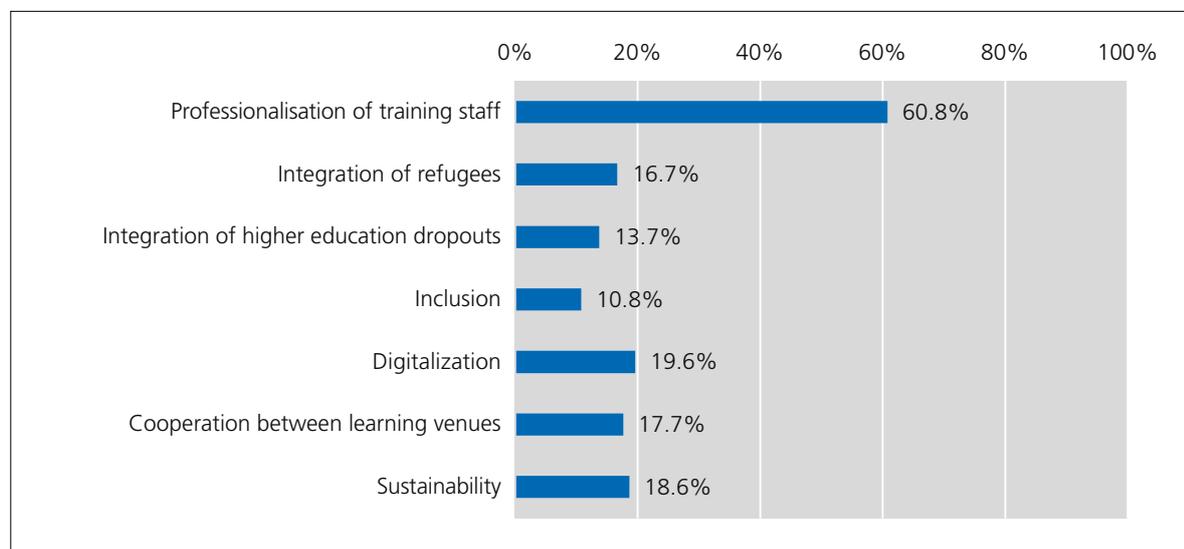
Source: Online questionnaire

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4   Explanation The notation "ID XX" always refers to a specific quality initiative recorded via the online questionnaire. The notation "OR XX" indicates the specific case of an initiative which was only identified via the online research. Individual sources are stated for the purpose of internal quality assurance of the approach and therefore also for the purpose of inter-subjective verifiability of findings.

However, the majority of the initiatives (60.8%) are mainly directed at another main thematic focus – the professionalisation of training staff. This clearly illustrates the Chambers' belief that the training and continuing training of training staff is the main point of approach in company-based training quality assurance. This aspect is accorded a particular role because training staff are in direct contact with trainees and are known to exert a material influence on quality of training within the scope of teaching/learning processes (cf. ECKERT/MÜLLER/SCHRÖTER 2011). The Chambers are seeking to refresh and professionalise the pedagogical and organisational competencies of trainers via formats such as training courses, advanced training courses and workshops in particular (see Chapter 4.5.2). Nevertheless, a third of respondents (31.4%) stated that the quality initiative in question did not have any specific main thematic focus. The presumption would be that these initiatives tend to tackle the topic of quality in general or comprehensive terms.

4.4   Aims of the quality initiatives

The fundamental objective of the chamber initiatives is to support companies in the securing and development of training quality. As the information materials on the individual provision shows, this usually takes place under the assumption that raising the attractiveness of training by enhancing quality and improving evidence of quality will help secure a supply of qualified skilled workers. Within the scope of the quality initiatives, however, this goal is pursued via different pathways and by means of various partial objectives.

The respondents' answers regarding the aims of the initiatives thus show that the quality initiatives very often follow a whole series of individual targets at the same time (see Figure 13). Agreement rates in respect of the items forming the object of enquiry are thus relatively high across all objectives. Alongside the promotion of training quality, which was deemed to be the most urgent objective of the initiatives (Ø 5.88), dissemination of standards for good training (Ø 5.58) was also categorised in overall terms as a further key aim of quality initiatives. By way of contrast, a lesser role is played by diagnosis of the problems of training (Ø 4.27) and by monitoring of training quality (Ø 4.19). There is a significant drop in agreement rates with regard to these two objectives. The intention of quality initiatives is to support companies in developing a quality structure by encouraging them to continuously and systematically address the issue of quality of training. On the other hand, control and monitoring of the structuring of training is evidently not considered to be a determining means of choice. The same applies to the intention of recognising good training performance by, for example, making public reference to it (Ø 4.6). This objective is only of outstanding significance to "mark of quality" schemes (see Chapter 4.5, Figure 18). It is thus clear that the objectives respectively pursued differ in accordance with the format and type of the quality initiative (see Chapter 4.5). It is, however, fundamentally revealed that quality initiatives address the task of quality assurance by disseminating standards for better training and also fulfil a quality development role by promoting quality of training.

Figure 13: Aims of the quality initiatives (mean values, n = 101)
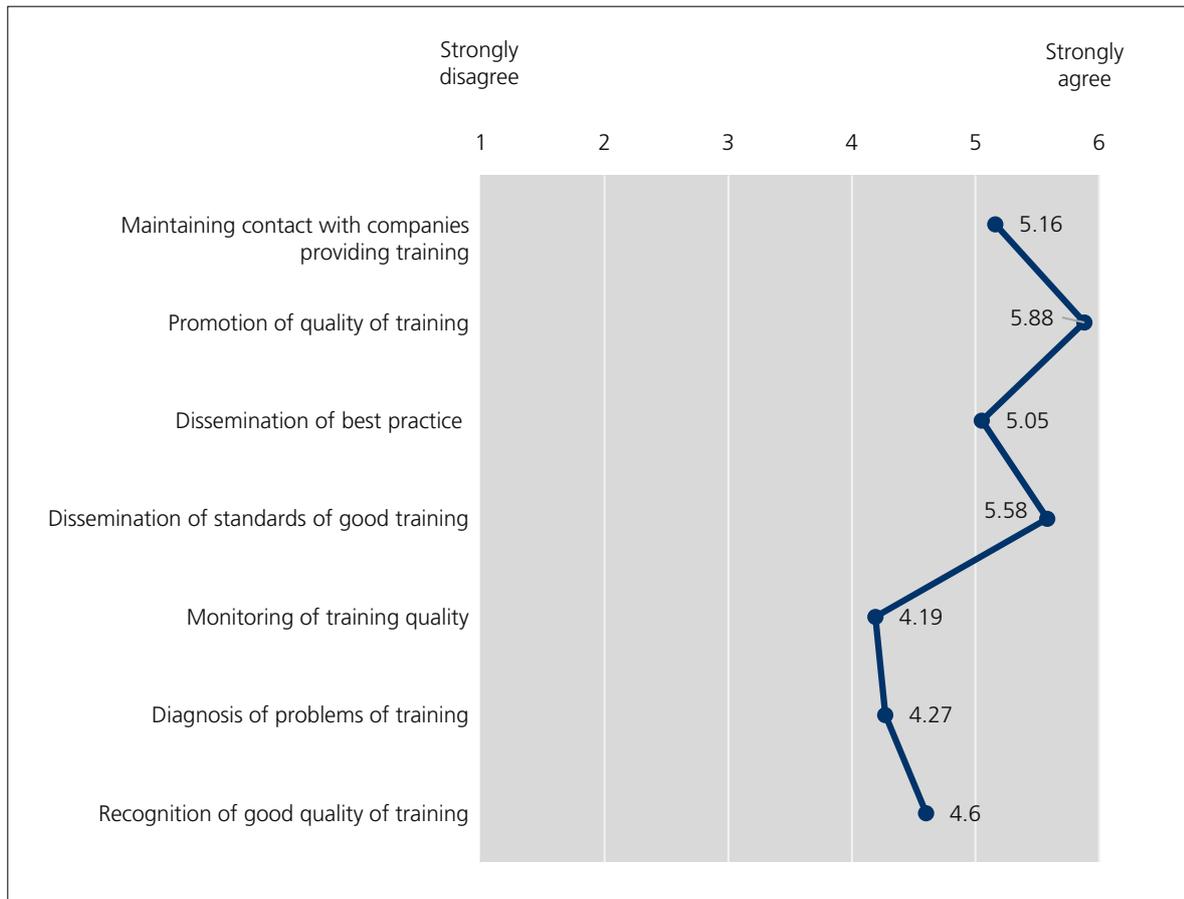
Source: *Online questionnaire*

4.5   Different formats and types of quality initiatives

Quality initiatives are deemed to be all special activities, measures and projects that aim to secure, develop or recognise the quality of company-based training and are primarily directed at companies providing training and their VET staff. Taking this broad understanding as a basis, a wide range of formats of quality initiatives can be identified. Quality initiatives may, for example, be a "mark of quality" or certificate schemes. They may, however, also take the form of a competition or ranking system via which companies are recognised for the quality of their vocational education and training. Events or series of events can also be designated as quality initiatives as long as their main focus is on the topic of quality of training.

In order to obtain an overview of the distribution of the various individual formats, respondents were asked to state the formats in which the individual quality initiatives are offered. Events make up a proportion of just under fifty percent (50%) and are the most common format stated which meet the characteristics of quality initiatives (see Figure 14). The next two positions are occupied by recognition of companies within the scope of "mark of quality" schemes (34.3%) and information supplied by the Chambers relating to the topic of training quality material (34.3%). Ranking lists (3.9%), competitions (7.8%) and certification of companies providing training (10.8%) play only a subordinate role by comparison. Just under a quarter of respondents (22.5%) availed themselves of the opportunity to state a different format under the category of "Other". Particular mention was made in this context of the formats of "Seminars", "Workshops" and "Guidance". The results further indicate that quality initia-

tives are not usually exclusively assigned to a single format. They frequently exhibit references to more than one format, and this is why the total of percentage figures far exceeds 100.

Figure 14: Formats of the quality initiatives (proportions in %, multiple responses, n = 102)
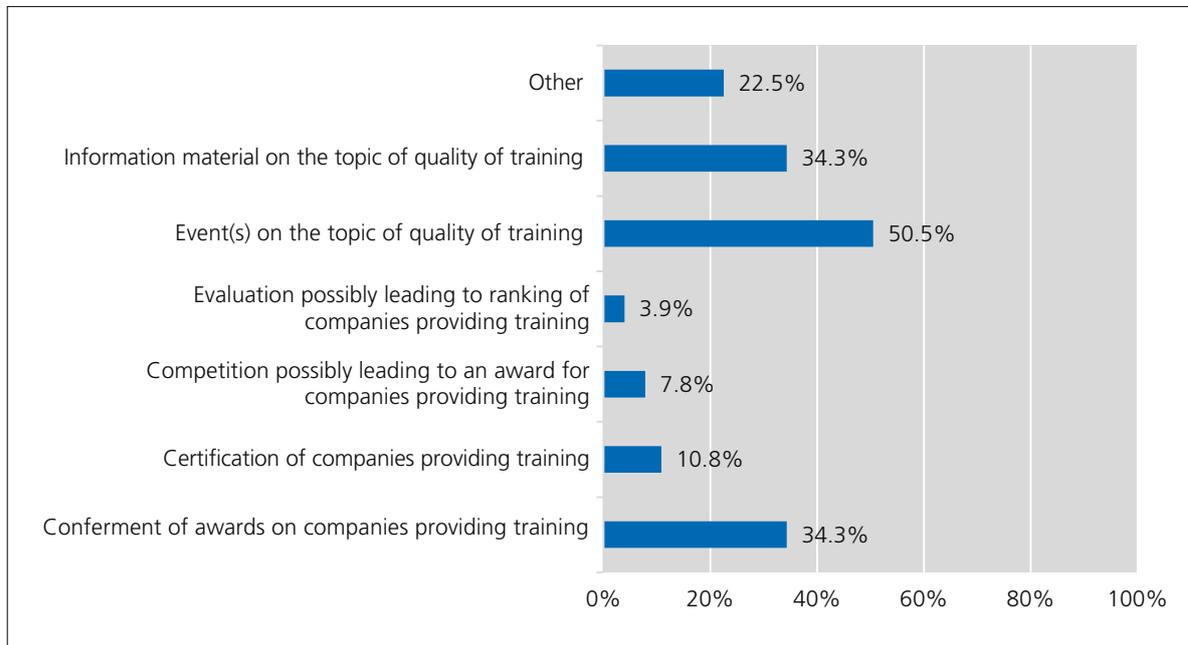
Source: Online questionnaire

Conversely, the detailed qualitative analysis of the formats underlying these initiatives showed that the format "Events" is ascribed to a wide range of different provision. Mark of quality schemes, workshops, training courses and guidance events are all cases in point. We also ascertained that respondents frequently subsumed the format of certification of companies providing training into the format of recognition of companies providing training.[5] To this extent, differentiation of formats on the basis of the quantitative results of the questionnaire proved merely to be an initial analytical step in actually identifying the essential nature of the individual quality initiatives. For this very reason, we developed a more viable and more meaningful typology of quality initiatives when considering the qualitative data material generated by the online research. Taking as a starting point the question as to which format the companies perceive the provision to be, the qualitative investigation provides a basis via which the following five main types of quality initiatives can be identified and differentiated from one another in analytical terms.

(1) Award initiatives, (2) training initiatives, (3) guidance initiatives, (4) networking initiatives and (5) tools.

(1) Award initiatives
This type of initiatives is characterised by the fact that companies receive recognition for their endeavours in respect of the securing or further development of their quality of training. This category includes, for example, the conferment of prizes and placements in ranking lists. The main focus, however, is on "mark of quality" schemes or certification programmes. Within the scope of these, participating companies are required to document their training practice and to comply with

5 One difference between an award and a certification is that the validity of an award is not restricted beyond a formal expiry date. A certification will usually expire.

defined quality criteria for "good training". The companies in turn are able to use the relevant marks of quality etc. as a marketing instrument to position themselves successfully in the competition to recruit trainees.

(2) Training initiatives

Training initiatives encompass teaching/learning provision which aims to impart specialist knowledge, methods and competencies. They may involve lectures, seminars, trainer academies, courses and workshops via which contents and competencies relating to every aspect of the topic of quality are taught in a didactically prepared way. The main target group usually comprises the companies or their heads of training.

(3) Guidance initiatives

This type of initiative is characterised by the fact that companies receive guidance on the securing or further development of their quality of training. Unlike in training initiatives, the emphasis is on the specific objectives and practical challenges faced by individual companies. The idea is to enter into dialogue to work out specific areas of potential action and practical possible solutions which training managers can then use to inform company-based training practice.

(4) Networking initiatives

The aim of networking initiatives is to facilitate communication between various stakeholders with responsibility for VET quality in order to ensure that training is perceived, coordinated and structured as a common task. Networking initiatives in the form of networks, working groups, trainer forums and round tables allow the creation of knowledge transfer between colleagues on content-related, didactic and organisational questions related to structuring training in a high-quality way.

(5) Tools involve the development of work materials and aids

These are then made available to the company for use in everyday training practice. The aim is to support company efforts in the area of quality assurance and quality development in a practically related way. The emphasis here may be on tools and instruments that are capable of functional use, but this type of quality initiative may also be characterised by the development and dissemination of information materials or guides relating to the topic of quality of training.

It should be stressed that the types of quality initiative listed are to be understood as ideal types which have emerged during the course of analysis of the qualitative data and which can first and foremost be differentiated conceptually. At the same time, this means that not all individual quality initiatives can be precisely and exclusively aligned to one type. A "mark of quality" scheme may, for example, have an award initiative at its core, but the process of recognition will also often involve guidance or transfer of work materials. Very extensive and elaborate initiatives are particularly likely to move empirically within the space of more than one format. Although a quality initiative can thus sometimes encapsulate several formats, it is usually ascribable to one primary type.

In accordance with this typological differentiation, we were able to align the initiatives recorded to these types within the scope of the qualitative analysis, the online questionnaire and the online research (see Figure 15). Such an alignment was not possible in only a small number of individual cases (9 initiatives) because of a lack of information regarding the structure of the relevant provision. Also, 22 of the remaining 183 initiatives exhibited references to more than

one type in equal proportions and could not be ascribed to a primary type. These were mostly very extensive programmes which incorporate both guidance and training formats and usually also practically applicable tools for companies (ID 428, ID 470, ID 119). Taking all of this into account, award initiatives account for the largest proportion of quality initiatives, making up a share of over one third (37.7%). Guidance and training initiatives represent 18.0 percent and 13.1 percent respectively of the initiatives recorded. They are followed by tools (9.8%) and networking initiatives (9.3%). 12.0 percent of initiatives exhibit references to at least two types and were accordingly marked as "multi-format" (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Quality initiatives by type (proportions in %, n = 183)
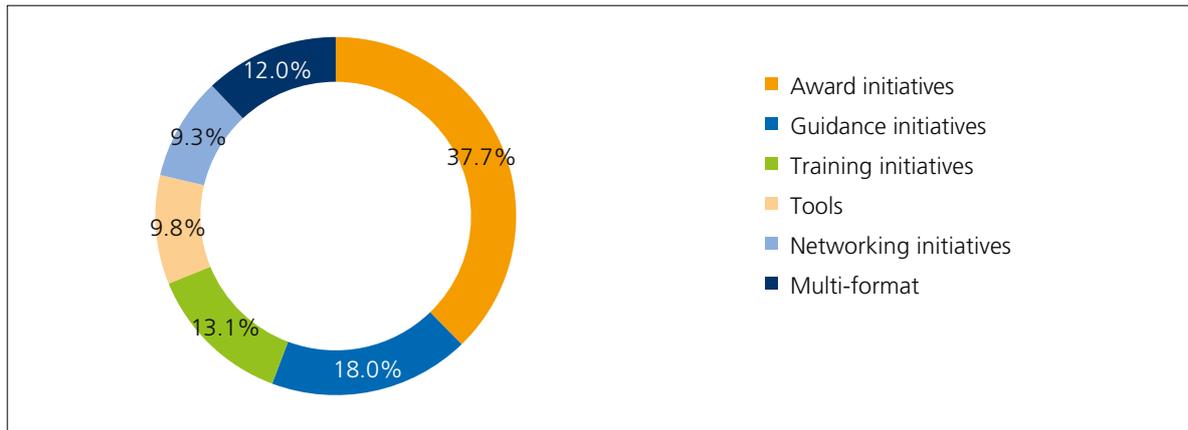
Source: Online questionnaire and online research

Typisation of the quality initiatives also facilitated further detailed statistical evaluations. This in turn allowed deeper findings regarding the commonalities and differences of the types to be obtained. These provide indications that the types sometimes vary in terms of the respective topics to be tackled and with regard to their objectives. This ultimately permitted the typology as such to be validated insofar as the findings are plausible and compatible with the results of the qualitative content analyses (see Chapter 4.5.1–4.5.5).

The results of the questionnaire show that the thematic points of reference of the quality initiatives vary in line with these different types (see Figure 16 and Figure 17). Award initiatives are characterised by the fact that they are comparatively likely not to pursue any particular main thematic focus (53.8%). They thus tend to address the topic of quality of training generally and comprehensively (cf. Chapter 4.7) but deal less closely with professionalisation of training staff. By way of contrast, significantly more than 90 percent of training initiatives have this aspect as their main focus. The fact that they are also fundamentally topic-related in their alignment comes as no surprise, and this is borne out by the qualitative findings (see Chapter 4.5.2). Training formats are therefore mainly directed at training for company-based trainers. From a thematic point of view, the possibilities afforded by digitalisation and its impacts on the structuring of training (37.5%) and the topic of cooperation between learning venues (25.0%) both seem to have an important role to play. In comparison to this, guidance initiatives are characterised by much more frequent thematic openness (33.3%). This is explained by the fact that this type of quality initiative in particular is closely related to the different specific guidance needs of the companies and therefore always needs to be structured in a topic-inclusive way (cf. Chapter 4.5.3). Networking initiatives, on the other hand, also tend to focus on individual main topics such as the challenge of integrating refugees into vocational education and training or cooperation between learning venues (27.3% in each case) and allow collaboration between relevant stakeholders for this purpose (cf. Chapter 4.5.4).

Figure 16: Individual main thematic focus by types of initiative
(proportions in %, multiple responses possible, n = 101)
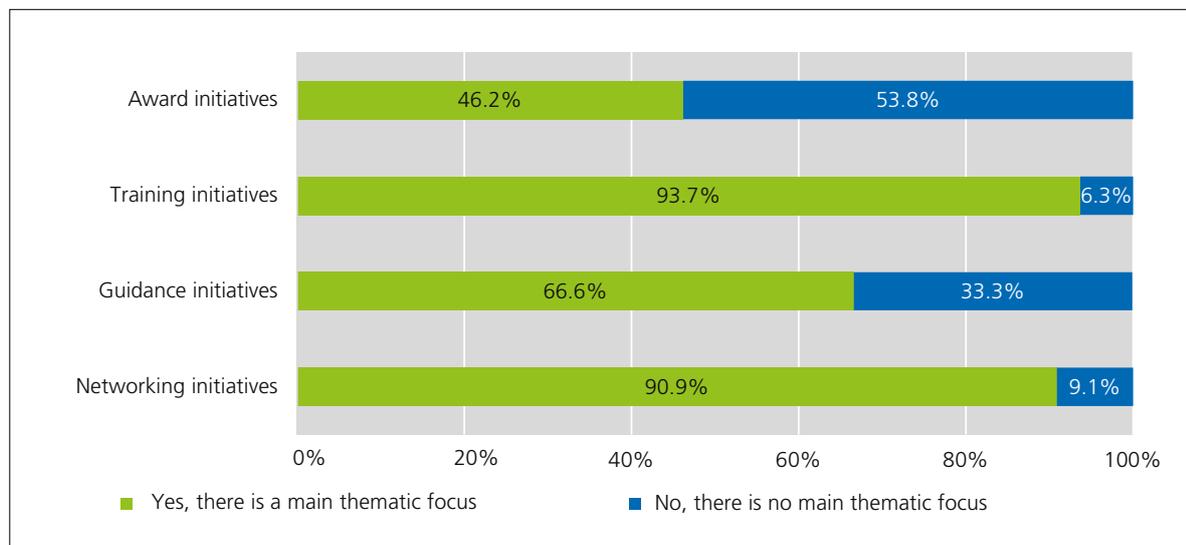
Source: Online questionnaire

Figure 17: Main thematic focus by types of initiative
(proportions in %, multiple responses possible, n = 101)
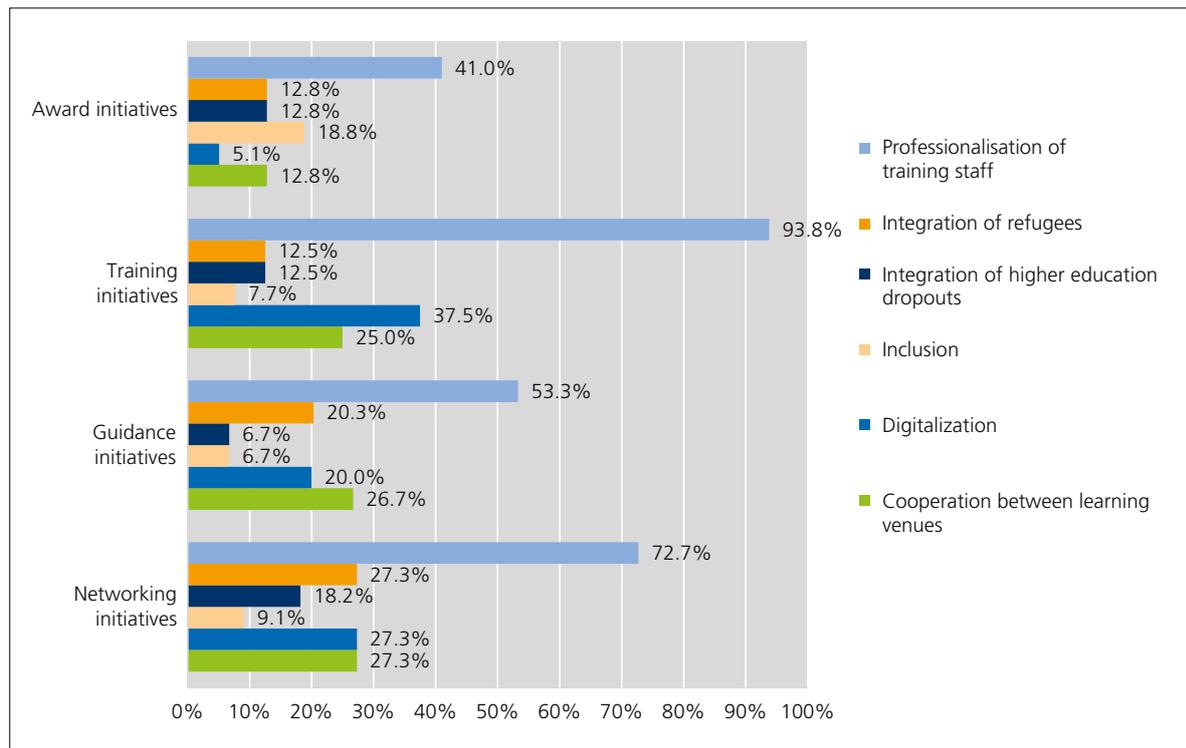
Source: Online questionnaire

Naturally enough, the main thematic emphases are not the only things which differ. There is also a variance in the objectives which the chamber organisations pursue via the individual quality initiatives depending on type or – vice versa – the Chambers may offer different types of quality initiative in accordance with their objective (see Figure 18). The intentions behind award initiatives are sometimes different from those driving guidance initiatives. This is significantly reflected in the results of the online questionnaire. The pattern of responses shows,

for example, that award initiatives are most likely, by some distance, to be aimed at the recognition of good training quality (Ø 6.0). This objective constitutes the essential core of the award initiatives and thus reflects their primary goal (cf. Chapters 4.5.1 and 4.7). At the same time, however, the associated appreciation of showpiece companies is ultimately also an effective means of disseminating instances of best practice (Ø 5.5) and standards of good training (Ø 5.7). In the case of the guidance initiatives, the focus is comparatively less likely to be on the diagnosis of problems of training (Ø 5.2) or monitoring of training quality (Ø 4.5) (cf. Chapter 4.5.3). By way of contrast, training initiatives fulfil a control function to a significantly lesser degree (Ø 3.3). It is instead much more probable that their emphasis will be placed on the dissemination of standards of good training (Ø 5.6) (cf. Chapter 4.5.2). In the estimation of respondents, networking initiatives are less likely to pursue the objective of monitoring and control of training quality (Ø 3.3). It is less surprising that they should be mainly characterised by a focus on seeking to maintain contact with companies (Ø 5.8) (cf. Chapter 4.5.4).

Figure 18: Aims of quality initiatives by comparison of types (mean values, n = 101)
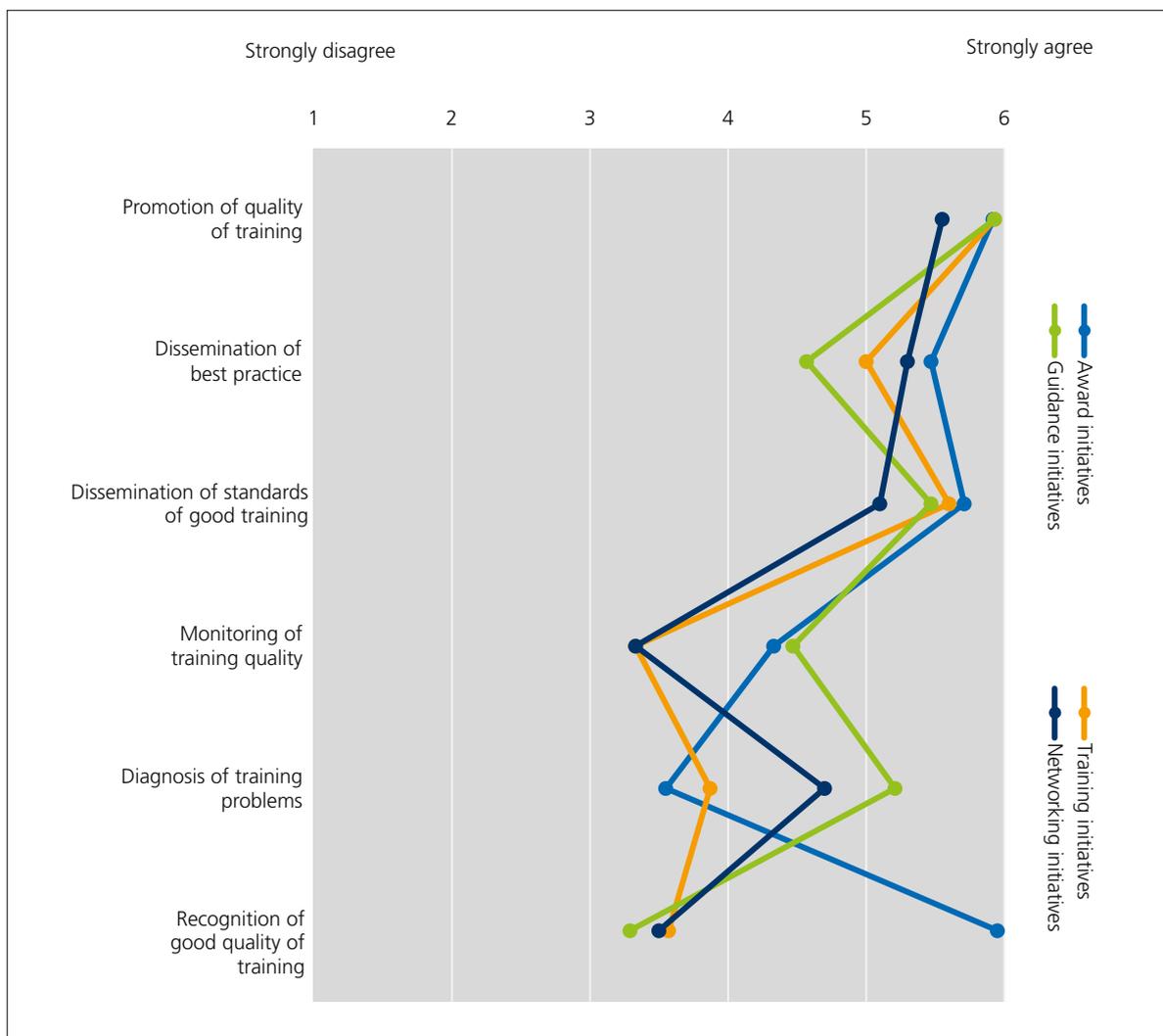
Source: Online questionnaire

These results clearly show that the aim of securing a supply of skilled workers and the encouragement of quality of training necessary for this purpose is definitely pursued via different pathways depending on the type of quality initiative. This includes diagnosing problems in training, monitoring training, and disseminating standards of good training or instances of

"best practice". The securing, monitoring and further development of training quality are not sufficient to fulfil the goal of increasing the attractiveness of training. In the latter case, there needs to be a second stage during which the relevant progress and successes are documented in a publicly effective way. For this purpose, both quality initiatives and award initiatives embrace formats that address this task in a targeted manner (cf. Chapter 4.7). In overall terms, therefore, the initiatives embrace objectives relating to quality assurance and quality development and also to the depiction of quality.

All in all, these are intuitively comprehensible findings which are also supported by the qualitative detailed analysis of the individual types set out below. As well as concentrating on how formats and types of quality initiatives are distributed in quantitative terms, the main focus of the further course of the investigation was placed on the question of which individual activities and measures lie behind these types. In order to respond, the qualitative information from the online research and the brief self-descriptions of the initiatives collected within the scope of the questionnaire were consulted and subjected to content analysis evaluation. The individual types of quality initiatives are presented in more detail and with reference to the results of this analysis below.

4.5.1 Award initiatives

The fundamental common feature of award initiatives is that they evaluate company training successes and recognise these in a publicly effective way. This enables companies to illustrate the high degree of importance they attach to training and to gain a vehicle for the acquisition of trainees. Mark of quality schemes or certification programmes thus constitute quality initiatives that generally exert a major external effect, and raise public awareness of the topic of the company-based training quality. At the same time, these initiatives provide the companies with an opportunity to reflect on the quality and problems of in-company training and, if necessary, to enter into dialogue with the chamber organisations to develop possible improvements. Across the different sorts of awards, this takes place at greatly varying levels of intensity and via a whole range of different pathways. Because of their dissemination and relevance, this sort of provision, which is in addition usually very elaborate, will be examined more closely within the scope of a special evaluation. For a detailed presentation of the results on this specific type of quality initiative, see Chapter 4.7

4.5.2 Training initiatives

Training initiatives encompass teaching/learning provision that aims to impart specialist knowledge, methods abilities and to this extent primarily pursue an educational function. The Chambers offer a diverse range of different formats including lectures, seminars, trainer academies, courses and workshops via which contents and competencies relating to every aspect of the topic of quality are taught in a didactically prepared way. The principal target groups addressed are companies, company-based training managers and others at the companies who are involved in the delivery of training. The focus across the initiatives is on the endeavour to propagate the relevance of the task of quality assurance and to raise awareness for the general challenges of quality development whilst at the same time also providing information on both tried-and-tested and new and innovative quality assurance procedures and methods. Training initiatives thus supplement other training programmes based on the Ordinance on Trainer Aptitude (AEVO) to provide a central vehicle for the continuing training of VET staff and thus support successful teaching/learning processes.

The content analysis evaluation of the investigation material on the individual training initiatives shows that the didactic way of imparting knowledge varies between less and more interactive forms of teaching/learning depending on the format. Whereas lectures merely seek

to pass on knowledge, the knowledge to be learned within the framework of workshops firstly needs to be jointly developed. At the same time, individual provision differs in terms of time arrangements. Training initiatives include both one-off events such as single lectures and workshops as well as recurring seminar series and course concepts in which knowledge is imparted in stages or modularly and perhaps cumulatively (ID 197). By way of contrast, trainer academies represent another more institutionalised special format which is offered to the companies via the Chambers (OR 77, OR 67, ID 179, ID 197). They involve proper training concepts in the form of certification programmes that trainers can use to pursue, test and seek recognition for their continuing training on a systematic and ongoing basis. Company-based VET staff are usually able to access training provision free of charge. Participant fees may be incurred in some exceptional cases (ID 197, ID 230).

As far as the thematic or professional content design of the training is concerned, evaluation of the initiatives recorded shows that – depending on the format – either the broad process of training becomes the content of training and the content-related, pedagogical, social and organisational competencies of the training staff are addressed in an all-embracing manner, or else only individual special topics are broached, such as digitalisation of training, conflict management and managing and dealing with trainees. Information brochures for seminars and workshops indicate that the topics of refugee integration and inclusion have entered training initiatives. To this extent, consideration is also accorded to the prevalence of groups in particular need of protection. The fundamental finding is, however, that the topics offered by the Chambers within the scope of training initiatives extend far beyond the contents of the Ordinance on Trainer Aptitude (ID 116). This is revealed by training courses relating to the topic of digitalisation alone (ID 500, ID 140). In overall terms, the entirety of the professionalisation provision that is made available addresses the technical, legal, and in particular the pedagogical, didactic and communicative competency facets of the training staff. Those interested in pursuing the training are therefore able to assemble their own content in a modular style. Provision is thus usually designed for vocational education and training staff in all sectors. Training titles such as "The trainer as a coach", "Professional communication and professional feedback", "Everyone learns differently" and "Difficult conversations with trainees" show that creating training which is both of high technical and professional and legally compliant is not considered sufficient to deliver successful training practice. In fact, the perceived requirement for training staff today is that they will also take on much more of a learning support and learning guidance role (ID 395, ID 197, ID 728). For this reason, many programmes afford trainers the opportunity to acquire pedagogical and communicative skills and to expand their competencies in these training areas. Some courses therefore also place a focus on the recruitment phase and in this way address the challenge companies have in finding suitable trainees and in motivating them to enter training (OR 42).

In 2020, many training initiatives were not able to take place to their usual extent because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, research shows that many programmes were held in an online format instead (ID 386) and that this also led to the emergence of new teaching formats. One example that should be stressed within this context is an offering by DIHK-Bildungs-GmbH, which used the format of a series of podcasts to address trainers and thus facilitated their further training, even during times of social distancing.[6]

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6 See the website of DIHK-Bildungs GmbH: https://www.dihk-bildungs-gmbh.de/podcast/ (status: 24/02/2021). This initiative does not form part of the sample investigated in the project because initiatives by umbrella chamber bodies were not examined.

4.5.3 Guidance initiatives

This type of initiative is characterised by the fact that companies receive guidance on the securing or further development of their quality of training. Unlike in training initiatives, the emphasis is on the specific objectives and practical challenges of the quality assurance of individual companies. The central object of interest is to identify and develop specific areas of potential action and practical possible solutions which training managers can then use to inform company-based training practice. The guidance service takes place either on a one-off basis or as part of an ongoing support process. It is usually provided by full-time training consultants, although also with the support of volunteers and part-time training experts in individual cases (ID 758). Within the scope of this guidance provision, the Chambers assist with the continuing training of the training staff and therefore also contribute to the further development of the quality of company-based training.

With regard to the evaluation results, a differentiation may be drawn between fundamental and specific guidance provision. Whereas the former addresses basic questions of quality assurance, the latter particularly serve the objective of reflecting upon distinct problem situations and of developing practical solutions which relate to such circumstances (e.g. ID 170, ID 527 ID 182, ID 248, ID 254). The information material on the individual initiatives states a broad portfolio of topics. Guidance, for example, may relate to the question of which specific quality approaches are suitable for the respective company, to how company training competence can be raised and also, on an individual case basis, to how preventative action can be taken against an impending training drop-out or to how other concrete training problems can be countered. The challenge of successfully competing for young workers on the training market may also be a topic of the guidance (ID 476, ID 773). Generally speaking, however, the characteristic features of the guidance initiatives is that they are very broadly structured thematically and that they fulfil guidance wishes in respect of a multitude of different objectives relating to various aspects of the topic of quality of training.

Companies wishing to avail themselves of guidance services can take the initiative by approaching the Chambers with a request. In a small number of cases, however, the Chambers proactively intervene in the interests of crisis prevention by contacting individual companies with a guidance offer or by seeking dialogue with such companies against the background of an analysis of examination marks, contract dissolution rates or trainee complaints (e.g. ID 170, ID 527, ID 674, ID 254). At this point, it becomes obvious that the delineation between guidance initiatives and basic provision of training consultancy does not emerge clearly in every single individual case. Indeed, the boundaries may frequently be blurred. Nevertheless, the recorded guidance initiatives constitute special measures to the extent that they are generally aligned to the topic of quality of training in terms of their content and that they are available to all chamber member companies without the need for any particular reason. The fulcrum of interest is thus fundamentally on quality development, i.e. the intention to improve the existing quality of training. However, because Chambers enter into direct dialogue with companies within the scope of guidance initiatives, these initiatives do not merely fulfil a reflection function and represent an instrument of quality development. They also serve the purposes of quality assurance and quality monitoring. The questionnaire revealed that guidance provision put in place by the Chambers is also used to diagnose problems and deficits in training and to observe the quality of company-based training (see Figure 18). This is an area where the controlling function of the Chambers becomes visible. They are required to check that companies are in compliance with the statutory minimum standards whilst according due consideration to any specific facts and circumstances and must also instigate interventions if necessary. Ultimately and to a large extent, the companies act autonomously within the statutory stipulations. Clarification of the degree to which the framework conditions imposed at the system level are actually realised in company-based training practice is thus a legitimate ancillary objective of the guidance formats.

The guidance initiatives are generally closely linked with the areas providing training consultancy and are normally (co)initiated by the training advisors responsible. With the exception of isolated examples of provision specifically directed at the hospitality industry (e.g. ID 758), the guidance initiatives recorded are not specific to any one branch or sector. Even though an individual case focus is characteristic of guidance initiatives and individual consultancy is offered in a majority of cases accordingly, there are also a few formats such as group coaching sessions which afford space for the provision of guidance to more than one trainer from different companies (e.g. OR 39).

In a certain way, guidance initiatives can take advantage of the leeway that arises by dint of the fact that the formal stipulations contained within the Vocational Training Act and the training regulations set out the fundamental general conditions governing training but intentionally only take relatively undifferentiated account of the specific structuring of training at the individual companies. As is well known, practical deployment of training methodologies and didactics is only fundamentally a matter of free choice as long as due consideration is accorded to the respective prevailing conditions at the company (EBBINGHAUS/KREKEL 2006, p. 9). Whereas training courses primarily impart general concepts and solutions, guidance formats are able to take targeted account of the specific company reality and allow individual precisely tailored proposals to be drawn up.

4.5.4 Networking initiatives

The quality of company-based training is the result of planned cooperation between a multitude of stakeholders. It is crucially dependent on whether and on the extent to which the aims, strategies and resources of the stakeholders responsible for training can be coordinated. This core insight stems from the fact that various learning venues, teachers, associations and guilds participate in vocational education and training at the provider and intermediary levels. In some cases, such as in inter-company training, several companies are also involved. Coordination and networking between the stakeholders concerned thus assume a significant role with regard to quality assurance and quality development of training. Because the Chambers offer a central point of contact and service in respect of all practical issues relating to the topic of quality, both for the companies as well as for further institutions with VET connections, they are able to adopt a key interface function in this regard and can also provide important impetuses for quality assurance.

Some chamber initiatives therefore expressly place a primary emphasis on networking between the stakeholders who are responsible for the quality of training. Networking initiatives in the form of network meetings, working groups, trainer forums and round tables allow the creation of scope for dialogue and knowledge transfer in respect of content-related, didactic and organisational questions related to structuring training in a high-quality way. The qualitative analysis of the quality initiatives shows a particular focus on networking between colleagues on experiences relating to dealing with training problems in a practical way as part of a peer learning approach (ID 392, OR 61). The aim is to work collectively to draw up and share ideas for the resolution of specific company difficulties relating to the acquisition of trainees and the planning and implementation of training, the goal being for trainers to learn from and inspire one another (ID 176). Further objectives are to raise problem awareness in the area of quality of training and to lay the foundations for a shared understanding of training/quality assurance of training (ID 461). At the same time, integration into such a quality circle ensures a certain degree of commitment and also creates synergy effects between the involved companies providing training.

At their heart, networking activities seek to take account of the realisation that many individual stakeholders are in charge of and responsible for the achievement of training goals, but that the attainment of these goals requires in turn the participation and collaboration of all

stakeholders (Fischer et al. 2016). Accordingly, their primary aim is to improve communication and cooperation between the relevant stakeholder and vested interest groups. Professional networking is only a secondary objective. Individual networking initiatives may be differentiated by the degree of institutionalisation of the networking activities and by the composition of the network participants. Whereas so-called "trainer breakfasts" and "round tables" tend to be low-threshold events which exhibit a low level of institutionalisation and are therefore frequented by a changing circle of participants (OR 54, ID 221), individual and strongly institutionalised initiatives featuring fixed participant groups also exist in the form of proper network associations and formalised cooperation agreements (OR 90, OR 108, ID 461, ID 176). The activities of some of these associations extend far beyond the discussion format. Network partners may, for example, work together to draw up training and quality concepts to which they then commit themselves (OR 90). This has formed the origin of certification programmes in some individual cases (ID 461). Such associations and cooperation agreements normally comprise inter-company network structures which are, however, also branch centred. They focus on the training problems experienced in certain specific sectors (particularly hotels and hospitality) (ID 461, ID 164, OR 108). A certain control function of the networking initiatives is also brought to bear within this context. In this case, however, this is exercised at a colleague level between trainers who are "peers" rather than via the Chambers and is executed on the basis of self-commitments (OR 90).

Strengthening arrangements and funding and fostering participation constitute a central paradigm of the quality assurance and quality development of vocational education and training (cf. Fischer et al. 2016). Within this context, the main service of the Chambers and of other intermediary institutions is that they have co-initiated or at least supported the foundation of these network associations. In some cases, they assume a coordinating function or act as a platform or address for external enquiries and link the network partners with employment agencies or company associations. In this way, they ensure the establishment and reinforcement of regional and local training partnerships. Especially with regard to the task of integrating refugees into the training market, the impression given is that the Chambers have conducted strong networking activities in this regard (e.g. OR 73, OR 51). One point that should definitely be emphasised is that the Chambers arrange for companies to avail themselves of support provision from other institutions. This reveals that the Chambers exercise an important mediating function. Learning venue cooperation between companies and schools can also relate to cooperation structures that have been instigated by the Chambers. We recorded one initiative which developed continuing arrangements for a learning venue cooperation network between schools and trade and industry in the form of so-called "learning partnerships", via which pupils are able to obtain an insight into the respective participating companies. Numerous companies from a wide range of sectors and vocational and general schools have all been integrated (ID 716).

4.5.5 Tools

Tools involve the provision of aids and work materials which are then available to the companies for use in everyday training practice. The aim is to support company efforts in the area of quality assurance and quality development at the micro level of teaching/learning processes and in a practically related way. This may involve tools capable of deployment during the everyday training routine which can be used to diagnose quality of training, to professionalise training planning, and/or to support evaluation of and reflection upon teaching/learning outcomes.[7]

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7   Such tools were a key outcome of the pilot project programme "Quality development and assurance in company-based vocational education and training". See https://www.deqa-vet.de/de/daqa-vet_91366.php (status: 12/03/2021).

However, this category of quality initiatives also encompasses information or teaching materials in the form of manuals or guides which, for example, help with the drawing up of quality principles or present quality assurance instruments. The essential aim of the tools is to serve the purpose of professionalisation of cooperation between the stakeholders who are responsible for training. Ultimately, as various empirical investigations have also shown, particularly small firms and companies in the smallest size class frequently lack the instruments and tools they need to structure training planning in a professional way (FISCHER et al. 2016, p. 30).

Self-diagnosis tools

Firstly, there are many tools which primarily serve the purpose of allowing companies to undertake a self-assessment or a self-evaluation of the quality of their own training. They have names such as "Diagnosis sheet", "Analysis instrument", "Check list", "Attractiveness check" or "Quality check" (OR 34, OR 35, OR 95, OR 102). The aim is that these instruments, which usually come in the format of check lists or questionnaires, will help companies determine the status of the quality of their internal training. The basic intention is that pre-defined quality indicators will instigate a procedure of self-reflection, via which quality deficits in the training process can be recognised, subsequently prioritised and then remedied.

Although the assessment catalogues generally relate to the fundamental formal stipulations of the Vocational Training Act, they also contain many additional quality indicators. These usually mainly map input values such as the general conditions governing training, including the qualification of VET staff. Consideration is also accorded to process indicators such as cooperation between learning venues or the securing and communication of learning outcomes. Input and outcome factors of training quality are, however, comparatively thin on the ground. This methodological constriction comes as no surprise, since the main aim of this instrument is to sound out what sort of training structures a company has in place. As would be expected for a "quick check", the diagnosis sheets do not generally feature a very detailed design.

One of the aims of the self-diagnosis instruments is to enhance the significance of quality development in the company, i.e. to strengthen the culture of quality at companies and to raise awareness of the trainers. A second objective is to provide a vehicle for the initiation of a targeted and continuous process of quality development. The examination of diagnosis sheets permits identification of elements which are considered to be relevant to high-quality training and of elements in which improvement is required. In this way, specific action areas for change processes and concrete starting points for improvement measures become visible. All of this takes place without any external justification pressure. Because the results of the self-evaluation are not (automatically) transmitted to the chamber organisation, it is possible to deal with quality deficits in a way which is both internally open and honest.

Self-diagnosis instruments sometimes emerge as part of stand-alone initiatives, but they are frequently an initial component of award initiatives, too (cf. Chapter 4.7). In this context, they are also linked with guidance initiatives to serve as a communication impetus. Training managers and training consultants are then able to take account of the results of the diagnoses to develop and initiate tailored action strategies and to reflect upon the ensuing process.

Training tables

There are further tools which pursue the primary objective of designing training planning in a more professional way and of shaping the training process more efficiently. For this purpose, they are directed at the structuring of training. In order to facilitate transparent and well-planned training design, some Chambers offer training tables for selected occupations. These visualise training contents in accordance with the general training plans and aim to make the

imparting of the contents during the training process both transparent and verifiable for trainers and trainees via the means of regular documentation (ID 119, ID 437, ID 161). In this way, both parties always know where they stand. They can see what has been achieved and what still needs to be done. To this extent, training tables may be viewed as a tool which supplements training plans or monitors compliance with them. They also constitute a planning aid for the management of training which can also be used as a basis for ongoing feedback discussion on learning progress. The idea of structured tables was originally developed within the scope of the main funding focus "Quality development and quality assurance in vocational education and training", which was implemented by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) in the period from 2010 to 2013 and funded various pilot projects to look at the practice of quality assurance. The fact that the instrument of training tables has been picked up by a number of Chambers can also be assessed as a positive indication of the sustainable transfer of results from pilot projects.

Training report

Training reports represent a binding quality assurance instrument in company-based vocational education and training. The purpose of a training report is to document the content scope and time sequence of training and thus portray which contents, knowledge and skills have been imparted over the course of training. Trainees have a duty to keep a report of their training, a stipulation which is imposed by the Vocational Training Act (§ 13 Clause 7) and in the respective training regulations. Trainers are responsible for ensuring that this commitment is fulfilled. By way of contrast, chamber organisations have initiatives in place which are seeking to develop the training report into an important quality assurance instrument by focusing greater attention on achieving an improvement in the process quality of training. The first example which should be mentioned in this regard is the so-called "holistic record of training", which was also designed within the scope of the main funding focus "Quality development and quality assurance in vocational education and training" with the involvement of a Chamber of Industry and Commerce and subsequently brought into use (cf. KLECK 2013). This provision is publicised by several chamber organisations. In order to ensure the lawfulness and proper planning of training, similar analogue and digital report books are being made available via various other initiatives, the aim being that these will support planning of and reflection on training processes (ID 332, ID 734, OR 69).

Information and learning material

As well as making tools available, many Chambers provide various information and learning materials in order to offer companies and their VET staff a fundamental introduction to the topic of quality and to create awareness of key quality criteria, quality standards and quality assurance approaches. In many cases, companies are able to source this material, which comes in the form of folders, workbooks, brochures, guides and manual, either free of charge or at cost price (ID 326, OR 41, OR 52, OR 63, OR 32, OR 33).

Training staff are able to use the information material to learn more about issues relating to quality of training and to gain greater awareness of the task of quality assurance and quality development. Documents differ in terms of scope, thematic focus and degree of elaboration and are frequently promoted in connection with other quality initiatives. Several individual workbooks on relevant problems and on all stages of training are frequently offered (OR 33, ID 263, ID 665). These contain professional and well-founded conceptual explanations on the securing and fostering of quality of training and also particularly include practical recommendations which companies can use to approach issues of quality in a systematic and ongoing manner. These recommendations centre, for example, on the question of how companies can

agree joint quality goals. They present methodological instructions for the implementation of quality assurance procedures and encompass tips and indications for the management of and communication with trainees. Contents are normally structured along the lines of the different phases of training and encompass all aspects from acquisition of trainees to training planning to preparation for the examination.

The underlying intention is to encourage training practice to make use of tried-and-tested approaches and quality development instruments in vocational education and training. For the Chambers, the provision of such documents represents a comparatively direct way of establishing broadly based company practice for quality assurance concepts, tools, procedures and guides which they have either designed themselves or acquired from other institutions or umbrella associations. Whereas clarification takes place within the scope of the stipulations at the system level of VET as to which minimum standards need to be complied with, initiatives of this type particularly serve as a tool with regard to making instruments available to imbue these goals with life at the micro level. They are primarily directed towards training managers at the companies and appeal to their self-learning competence. In order to ensure that trainers actually address this information material in their work, it is frequently introduced as back-up documentation for workshops. In this regard, the role of the individual Chambers was either to develop the relevant tools and materials themselves and then make them available or else use or draw attention to concepts and instruments from other institutions. Whereas basic information materials are usually publicly accessible, workbooks and associated materials are often only available on request or reserved exclusively for member companies in some cases.

4.5.6 Summary: Formats and types of quality initiatives

The minimum standards stipulated at the system level are fundamental to quality assurance of company-based training. The social partners are involved in drawing these up, and they exert a regulatory effect in the form of laws, ordinances and recommendations. Against the background of the variety of company sizes and sectors, these permit the wide leeway intended in terms of structuring the training process at a company level. As shown, the quality initiatives of the Chambers address this freedom of action in accordance with their various types and in a very diverse and above all practically related way. Whereas award initiatives attempt to support companies via the evaluation of training quality and also by means of the vehicle of training marketing whilst also at the same time instigating quality improvements with regard to the structuring of training, training initiatives are directed towards training the training staff and thus fulfil an educational function. The primary purpose of training initiatives is to impart general quality assurance and quality development concepts and methods. Guidance initiatives, on the other hand, offer space for reflection on such concepts and methods and for their transfer to the respective specific company contexts. In turn, networking initiatives facilitate the cross-cutting exchange of experiences between companies and thus allow transfer of knowledge of content-related, didactic and organisational issues relating to high-quality structuring of training. By way of contrast, tools offer companies practical support for professional structuring of training in the form of instruments which can be deployed during the everyday training routine and in the form of information and learning materials.

Although the various types of quality initiative are very different in respect of the approaches and methodologies adopted, one thing they have in common is that they usually involve low-threshold and inclusive provision which appeals to a wide range of companies. They are characterised by the fact that they take the commitment and intrinsic motivation of the companies and of their training staff as their main starting point. To this extent, the quality initiatives launched by the Chambers represent a means of fostering quality of training in order to supplement their regulatory activities, which tend to be of a more supervisory nature. Above all,

however, quality initiatives which provide practically related information, guidance and work materials offer companies highly specific and easily manageable initial approaches towards quality assurance and quality development. This means that the provision of the Chambers is particularly also directed at the support needs and operational realities of small firms and of the smallest class of company. Whereas quality assurance measures at the systemic level mostly impact on the input dimension of quality, the various quality initiatives are also increasingly focusing on process quality of training at the provider level. To this extent, many of the aspects of the initiatives are aimed at professionalising the process of structuring training.

Table 5: Summary: Types of quality initiatives

Type	Formats	Objectives	Role of the chambers
Award initiatives	Mark of quality schemes, certification programmes, competitions, prizes, rankings	Dissemination of standards and best practices of good training via recognition of flagship companies (also quality assurance support for companies depending on type of initiative)	Evaluation and recognition
Training initiatives	Workshops, trainer academies, seminars, courses, presentations	Imparting of knowledge of general concepts, methods and challenges of quality development and dissemination of solutions to problems	Teaching
Guidance initiatives	Individual case-based guidance, individual or group coaching	Reflection upon and development of company-specific problem situations and solutions against the background of general quality development concepts	Guidance
Networking initiatives	Trainer networks, company networks, "round tables", "trainer breakfast"	Exchange of experiences regarding dealing with challenges in a practical way and application of solutions to problems	Coordination and networking
Tools	Self-diagnosis tools, workbooks/guides, training tables, report or evaluation books, general training plans	Dissemination of quality assurance/ quality development tools capable of practical deployment in day-to-day training	Information and dissemination

4.6   Scope of application of and demand for quality initiatives

Quality initiatives are only able to unfurl their intended effect if they reach their respective target groups. In this regard, the initiatives differ in terms of how inclusively they are designed. Do they focus solely on individual sectors or branches, or are they aimed at companies in more than one sector or branch or indeed at all sectors and branches? What is the geographical scope of the initiatives? Are they solely directed at local companies, or is their coverage transregional? Are fees charged for involvement and participation in the respective activities, or is the provision free of charge?

In respect of scope, the responses show that 70 percent of the quality initiatives are directed at companies in the region or within the chamber area (see Figure 19). The remainder is made up approximately equally of local or transregional provision (13.9% and 15.8% respectively). Whereas, by dint of their nature, the transregional initiatives mainly represent joint activities

undertaken by more than one chamber, the local and regional measures have their origins in a sole initiative from the relevant individual Chambers.

Figure 19: Quality initiatives by scope (proportions in %, n = 101)
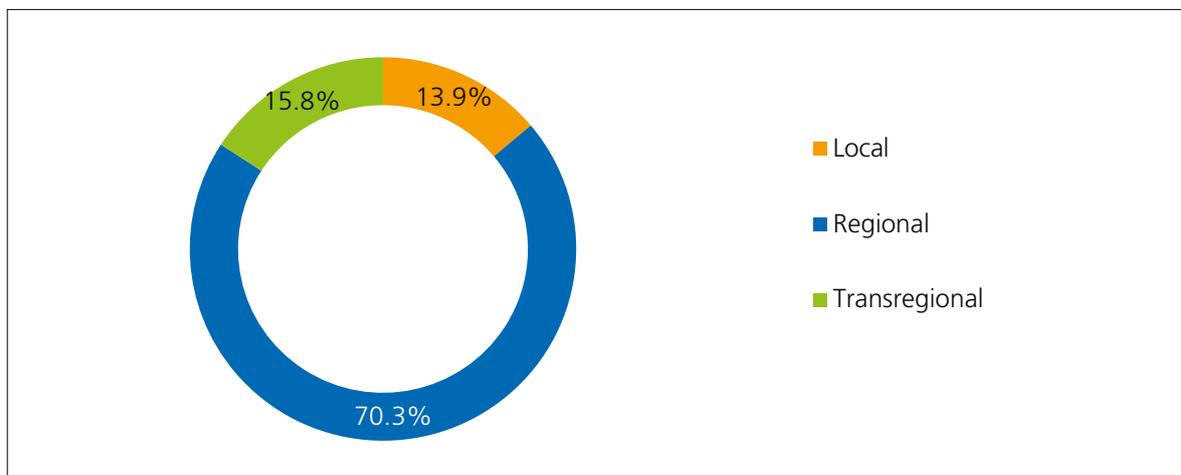
Source: Online questionnaire

In some cases, the problems and challenges faced in the area of company-based training differ sharply in accordance with the various sectors. By way of contrast, one result that certainly comes as a surprise is the fact that the overwhelming majority of chamber initiatives (88%) are aligned in a cross-cutting way across sectors (see Figure 20). Quality initiatives targeted towards specific challenges within individual sectors are very much in the minority (12%). The latter mainly comprise networking and award initiatives which are directed at training at companies in the hospitality and hotels sector.

Figure 20: Sector relevance of the quality initiatives (proportions in %, multiple responses, n = 100)
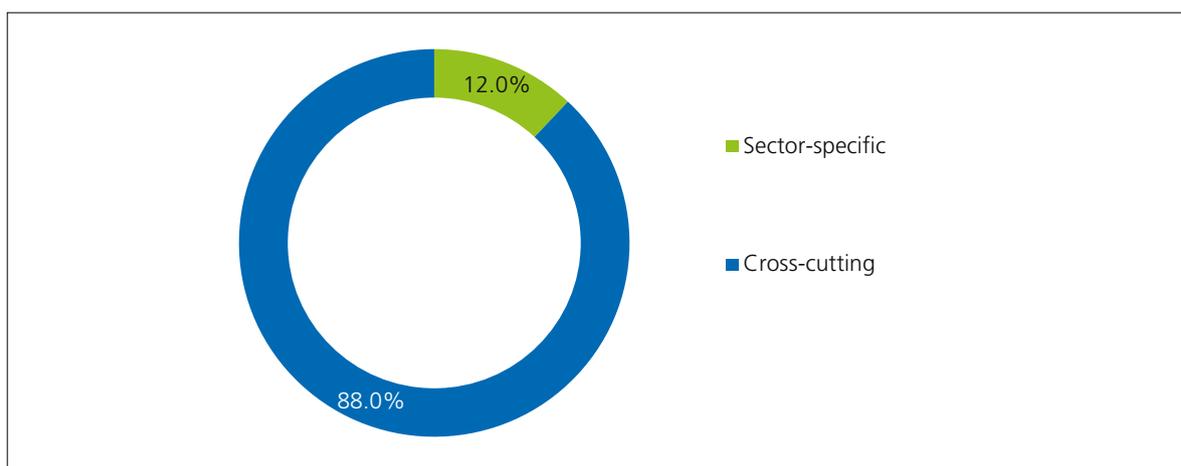
Source: Online questionnaire

The implementation of initiatives sometimes necessitates considerable expenditure of staff, time and resources on the part of the Chambers. This gives rise to the question of whether and to what extent the Chambers require payment of fees in exchange for involvement and participation in quality initiatives. The result of the survey is clear in this regard. Companies do not incur fees in the majority of cases. A total of 80 percent of the initiatives are free of charge for the companies. 13 percent of the initiatives are subject to fees in part, and only seven percent of all provisions are fully chargeable (see Figure 21). The detailed evaluation shows that fees

are particularly likely to be imposed for registration for training courses (60% of the training initiatives incur a charge, at least in part). Guidance initiatives, on the other hand, are offered on a no-fees basis. Award initiatives, too, are frequently subject to a fee, at least to the extent to which they include auditing (see Chapter 4.7).

Figure 21: Participation fees of the quality initiatives for the companies (proportions in %, n = 100)
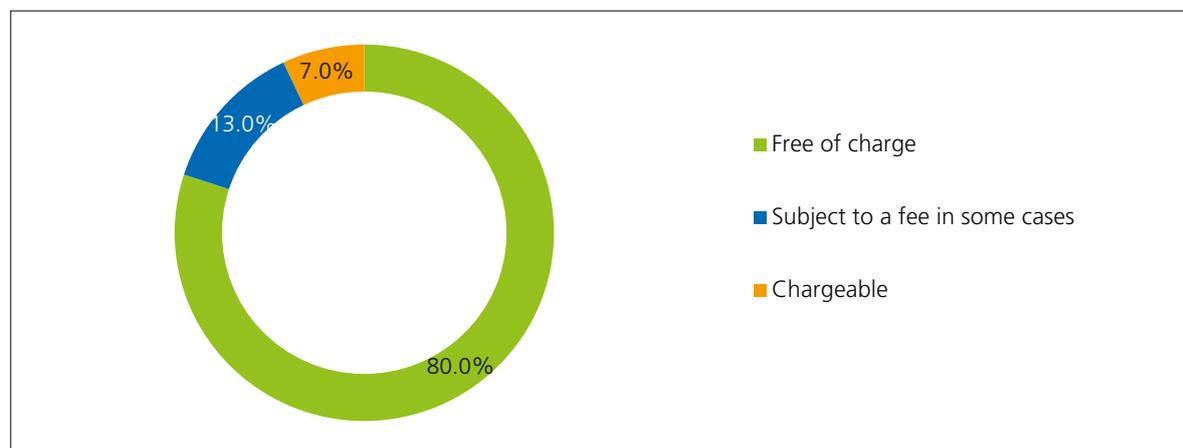
Source: Online questionnaire

In overall terms, we may conclude that the vast majority of the quality initiatives of the chamber organisations are structured in an inclusive way and that access is subject to a very low threshold. No participation fees are required in most cases, and nor do the initiatives exclude individual sectors. The fact that the individual Chambers primarily direct the coverage of their initiatives towards their own scope of application reflects both the regional distribution structure of the chamber organisations and the SME target group.

Against this background, the question which arises in respect of all types of quality initiative is whether and to what extent this invitation for participation and involvement is actually taken up by the companies. Quality initiatives are fundamentally only able to unfurl their quality assurance or quality development effect if they attract the interest of the companies at which they are aimed. In this regard, the respondents indicate that the average degree of interest displayed by the companies in the individual initiatives is almost always quite high or very high. In only just under ten percent of the quality initiatives is interest stated to be quite low (see Figure 22). This suggests that the multifarious provision of the Chambers is in line with the needs of company-based training. Significant differences between the various types of quality initiative cannot be discerned in this regard, even though the average level of interest in guidance initiatives is assessed as being slightly lower. This may possibly be due to the fact that the companies are already satisfied with the basic provision of training guidance. Methodological criticism may be levelled at this point, the fundamental argument being that only the estimations of the Chambers were sought and that validation via the company perspective is absent. Against this background, a follow-up study on reception and impact of the quality initiatives at the companies would be highly desirable.

Figure 22: Interest of companies in the quality initiatives (proportions in %, n = 93)
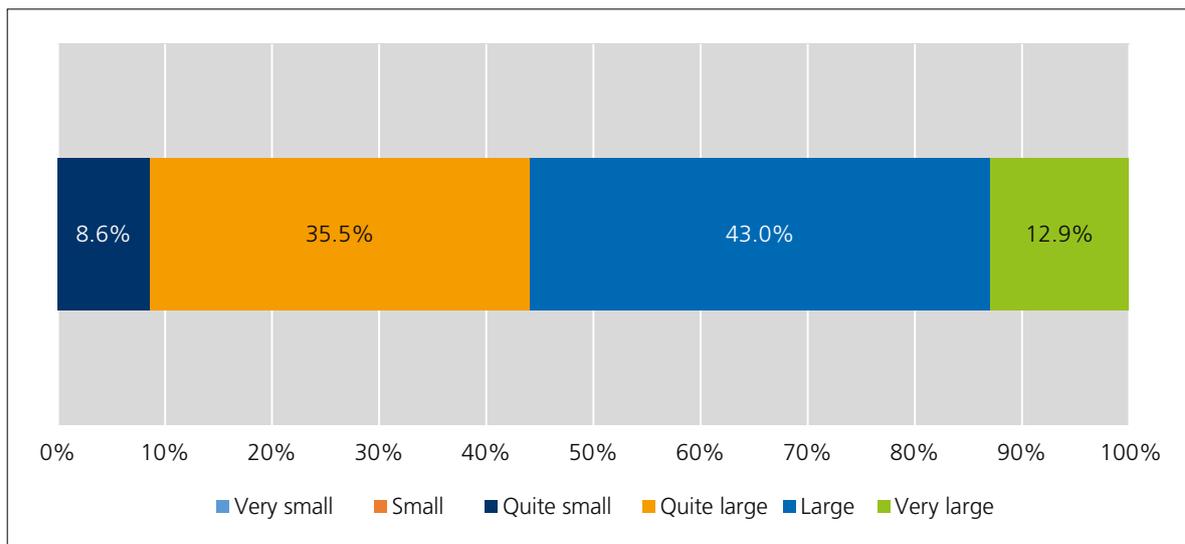
Source: Online questionnaire

4.7 Special evaluation of award initiatives

"Mark of quality" schemes or certification programmes are derived from the tradition of quality management systems. These have their origins in industry and have been adopted in the area of education and vocational education and training since the 1990s (GONON 2020, p. 613). The fundamental idea is that companies should systematise and document their own endeavours to achieve quality improvements and ultimately allow these to be certified via an external monitoring procedure. The aim is that the degree of trust in the capabilities of an institution placed in an institution by persons interested in training and by customers will be enhanced by externally visible proof of audit in the form of logos, seals of quality etc.

Companies providing training have been making greater use of the concept of certification for a number of years in order to provide an external representation of quality of training performance. Within the scope of the survey of quality initiatives, it is revealed that award initiatives – a category which includes "mark of quality" schemes, certificate programmes, competitions and prizes – constitute just over a third of initiatives offered by the Chambers. This is the largest group (see Chapter 4.5). These programmes also occupy a special status amongst the quality initiatives because they raise public awareness of the topic of company-based training quality by dint of the fact that they frequently exhibit a high degree of elaboration and have a comparatively large external impact. In order to accord due consideration to this, the present study separately examines initiatives of the award type. The focus here is on the following research questions in particular.

▶ What were the backgrounds and reasons for the development of the award initiatives? Which objectives are the providers pursuing via the initiatives?
▶ How are the initiatives structured or designed? Which stakeholders assume which tasks?
▶ How is the award or certification process shaped? Which quality assessment criteria are deployed?

The survey form used for the online questionnaire contained a set of questions which specifically related to the identification, structuring and use of award initiatives. These allowed for additional detailed information on the award initiatives to be recorded. This approach extend-

ed the remit beyond the mere surveying of quantitative data to facilitate the collection of qualitatively evaluable information and materials in respect of the individual initiatives. Our text analysis work ultimately also incorporated the chamber award initiatives which were recorded via the online and literature research.

4.7.1 Dissemination of the award initiatives

A total of 41 of the 102 quality initiatives recorded via the online questionnaire were aligned to the category of award initiative. The qualitative analysis allowed a further 29 of the 90 initiatives identified by means of the online research to be recorded as award initiatives. 70 of the 192 quality initiatives are thus allocated to the award initiative type. This represents a proportion of 36.5 percent, an amount which can be assessed as a significant value (see Chapter 4.5).

The award initiatives operate under the following descriptions.

▶ Certification campaign for companies providing training, Mark of quality/mark of training quality, Best/exemplary/outstanding/excellent/premium company providing training, Honouring of the best, Best/commendable companies providing training, Mark of (excellent) training quality, Training quality mark, Training company 2020/of the year, Training innovation prize, Training prize, Ahead in training, Dualis, Established training company and many more besides.
▶ TOP training/companies providing training, TOP training company competition, "TOP TRAINING" "mark of quality", TOP training company award, IHK TOP TRAINING "mark of quality" for companies providing training.

The above listing is characterised by very frequent use of title prefixes such as "Top", "Best", "Exemplary" and "Outstanding" (In German: "Top", "Beste", "Vorbildlicher", "Hervorragender"). This underlines the award nature of the initiatives.[8]

4.7.2 Origin of the award initiatives

The training market has changed over recent years due to demographic development and an increasing propensity among young people to enter higher education. This has made it more difficult for companies to find trainees in some regions and in certain training sectors. This development seemed to trigger the initiation of many quality initiatives and therefore also of award initiatives (see Chapter 4.2). In the case of older training initiatives, which came into being at a time when high numbers of unplaced young people meant that debate was mainly focused on the acquisition of training places,[9] appreciation tended to be given to the scope and

8   The most frequent component of the designations is "TOP" (which features in 18 of the 70 award initiatives). From a conceptual perspective, the award initiatives using a description that includes the word "TOP" do not constitute a homogeneous group. However, they certainly exhibit considerable affinities in terms of content and structure in some cases. This enabled two groups with core similarities to be identified. These correspond to an open basic type and two variants of this (see Chapter 4.7.4). 8 of the 18 "TOP" initiatives form a group which offer a three-stage auditing procedure. These frequently use questionnaires, explanation and concepts which are virtually identical. Something similar applies in respect of the ten further initiatives. This group of "TOP" award initiatives also exhibits documents and concepts which resemble one another. They are based on self-commitment on the part of the companies and on a jury decision. In addition, it must be noted here that this group also encompasses other initiatives which do not include the attribute "TOP" in their name. More detailed investigations into the historical genesis of the "TOP" quality initiatives could only be conducted in a rudimentary way within the scope of the project.
9   The AEVO was even suspended for a period in order to acquire more companies to provide training.

continuity of company-based training performance rather than to the nature of the recruit-
ment of trainees or to the implementation of training.[10]

> **Information box 3 – The Lower Saxony IHK "TOP Training" mark of quality**
>
> One example of the dynamic and continued development of quality initiatives may be found in
> Lower Saxony, where various IHKs had been offering award initiatives with various contents and
> titles since 2015 until, following impetuses from trade and industry, all seven Chambers agreed to
> adopt a uniform approach. From 2019, all IHK member companies in Lower Saxony were given the
> opportunity to use the "TOP Training" mark of quality to showcase their training performance to the
> public and therefore also to potential trainees. The process to be completed is divided into several
> stages. Companies are able to begin by using a catalogue of criteria to gain insights into the quality
> of their training. This is followed by an evaluation undertaken within the scope of a company audit
> by three independent training experts. If required, companies may also avail themselves of prior
> individual guidance from the IHK responsible. The final step is certification with a three-year term.
> The Lower Saxony "TOP Training" quality initiative thus belongs to the group of open award initia-
> tives with guidance support and an optional audit (see Chapter 4.7.4).
>
> Further supplementary innovations are being planned. From 2022, the aim is for companies which
> have received the award to be invited to networking events. These will be organised both region-
> ally and across the federal state in order to create good general conditions for networking between
> companies providing training.

The case of the TOP initiatives highlights the question of the origin of award initiatives and
of their various concepts. The online questionnaire also enquired about the development of
award initiatives (see Figure 23). The Chambers stated in equal measure (37.5% in each case)
that they had developed the initiative independently or that they had adopted and adapted
the idea from a different institution. A further 21.9 percent had developed the initiative in
conjunction with other institutions, and only four percent had not been involved with the de-
velopment themselves. This indicates that the dynamic dissemination and differentiation of
the award initiatives are characterised by a proactive approach as well as by mutual inspiration
and collaboration.

Figure 23: Development of quality initiatives (proportions in %, n = 32)
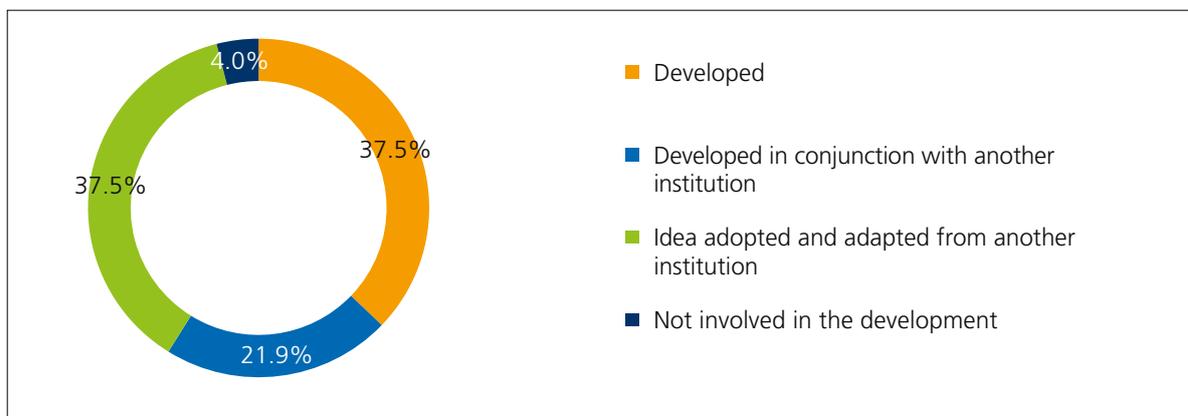
Source: Online questionnaire

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10 See, for example, a 2008 press report on the "Established training company" award, in which esteem
   was primarily attached to the training performance of companies, this being ascertained by the number
   and continuous provision of training places and by examination success (https://www.hwk-leipzig.de/
   artikel/bewaehrter-ausbildungsbetrieb-im-handwerk-3,0,691.html (status: 25/10/2021)).

4.7.3 Goals of the award initiatives

Against this background, the dominant objective of many award initiatives is, by definition, to strengthen the companies providing training in their search for trainees and in the "competition for skilled workers" (ID 464, ID 161, ID 29). The motivation of company endeavours to create effective external visibility of a high quality of training in order to be better positioned in the competition for trainees runs like a common thread through the breadth of the initiatives. The issuing of an award is propagated as an effective marketing measure. "Turn your good training into a brand (ID 29)" or "The 'mark of quality' can and should be used by participating companies as a quality characteristic in the area of trainee marketing […] (ID 53)".

As well as seeking to visualise existing quality of training, many award initiatives also aim to make dual training more attractive by improving quality of training internally. The website of one initiative, for example, states: "School leavers are no longer focused on simply finding a training place. Young people are paying increasing attention to the opportunities which companies offer trainees" (ID 485, OR 15 is similar in this regard). Many explanations published in connection with the respective programmes show that the objective is to motivate companies to achieve an improved quality in training rather than merely aspire to promotionally effective external labelling. "High quality of training is the best advertising in order to acquire young people and ensure a good final outcome" (ID 161). The development of a culture of quality is explicitly fostered within this context. "The high number of training dropouts and the causes identified in studies are particular indicators of quality defects. For this reason, we need a culture of quality assurance in vocational education and training" (ID 440).

The results of the qualitative evaluation are in accordance with those of the quantitative analysis. The response "Promotion of training quality" was accorded a value of Ø 5.9 in the online questionnaire, the highest level recorded, and was closely followed by "Dissemination of standards for good training" (Ø 5.6). In some cases, the benefits of award initiatives that pursue the objective of improving quality of training are set out extensively. The view is that that the companies' capacity to provide training will improve but also that parents and advisors will also gain knowledge of the initiatives and will thus obtain guidance. There is also a feeling that the number of training dropouts will fall and that the commitment and motivation of trainees will increase because they are satisfied. Companies will be able to retain good skilled workers more easily, and the occupational and personal opportunities available to the young people will also become more positive. At the level of staff delivering training, the effects will be a strengthening of competencies (through workshops, tools and other guidance provision) and an appreciation of the work they do. This would support acceptance of dual training both generally and within the respective region (ID 380, cf. ID 458).

There is also a perception that good quality training will be viewed as an opportunity to reach a broader spectrum of potential trainees. Good quality of training is thus also seen as being necessary "to enable disadvantaged young people to achieve success" (ID 440). Elsewhere, respondents point out that participation in certification programmes could help to "make more attractive provision available to lower ability applicants" (ID 53). The underlying consideration here is that the requirement for skilled workers can be secured if companies make increasing and greater efforts to obtain a more heterogeneous field of applicants. These include young people who need greater support as well as potential trainees with a higher education entrance qualification or higher education study dropouts.

In summary, it may be stated that the aim is for award initiatives to serve as a vehicle to enhance the attractiveness of dual training in order to support companies with the recruitment of trainees and with securing a supply of qualified skilled workers. This objective is addressed via the following two sub-goals.

▶ Award initiatives should act in the same way as marketing to communicate good quality of training externally and thus make it more transparent and more visible (visualisation of the quality of training).

▶ Award initiatives should instigate processes which result in an increase in the quality of company-based training (increase in training quality).

4.7.4 Types of award initiatives

With regard to the structuring of the award programmes, there are various varieties which each feature typical characteristics. The programmes identified may be broadly split into the following two basic types.

▶ Open award programmes
The principle here is that companies providing training may apply to take part themselves. Participation/applications are approved if stipulated access prerequisites are met.

▶ Closed award programmes
Participation by companies providing training depends on a vote by others. These may be chamber staff (e.g. training advisors) or a committee or similar body entitled to make proposals. Sometimes the certification decisions of such committees are based on an evaluation by a further body such as an examination board.

Of the 70 award initiatives investigated, 45 were allocated to the open type of initiative and 19 to the closed type.[11] The variance in award initiatives is large, and this means that there are a small number of programmes that do not fully fit this scheme. There are open programmes for which companies can apply themselves but for which they can additionally be proposed by a guild or district craft trades association or by the VET committee (OR 2, OR 8). In one case of a closed programme, supplementary consideration may also be given to applications submitted by companies (via establishment of contact and company presentations) (OR 24).

Variants of the basic types

Both basic types can be divided into further sub-groups/varieties which exhibit specific commonalities. Initially, these are schematically listed as follows.

Sub-groups to the open award programmes

(1) Award programmes with guidance support and optional audit, also designated as external measurement/audit procedure (ID 161, ID 380 is similar in this regard). In the case of this type of variant, companies providing training undergo a process with the aim of using back-up guidance support to scrutinise its own training quality in greater detail and to bring about successive improvement via the introduction of measures. Finally, there is the option to launch an audit procedure, which is often costly.

(2) Award programme on the basis of self-commitment and a jury decision
This variety is characterised by the fact that the companies apply for an award via documented self-information and commitments. The certification decision rests with a committee, which is frequently referred to as a jury.

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11 Poor data status meant that alignment was not possible in the case of six out of the total of 70 award initiatives.

Sub-groups to the closed award programmes

An award based on

(1) proven output criteria (usually results of final examinations).

Within the scope of some quality initiatives, companies providing training receive an award if their trainees achieve a certain number of points in the final examination (ID 740) or if they are amongst the best of the cohort (ID 113). In one case (ID 35), the basis for the award is "good fulfilment of minimum standards". This arises from the regular examination activity of the Chambers. Companies whose training has received no complaints from the Chambers or from other parties involved receive the award.

(2) a jury decision.

This also includes cases in which the award committee is not explicitly designated as a "jury".

4.7.5   Stakeholders and organisational structures of the award initiatives

In the sample investigated, the Chambers are not always the sole initiators and organisers of the award initiatives. Occasionally, the initiatives are supported by foundations (OR 2) or via the concept of patronage (OR 7, OR 10, OR 11). Alliances of stakeholders from business, industry, the trade unions, the Federal Employment Agency and federal state governments are also stated as being initiators of the award programmes (OR 7).

Because the cases forming the object of investigation are chamber initiatives, responsibility for implementation also predominantly rests with representatives of the Chambers. The organisational core segment is made up of various types of bodies bearing different names (jury, selection committee etc.). The integration of further stakeholders with regard to team and committee formation can be ascertained. Auditor teams frequently comprise external VET experts who are assisted and supported by chamber staff (e.g. ID 161, ID 485). Juries may include voluntary representatives of companies, staff from the regional employment agency (ID 509), and also the serving mayor and the head of the local education authority (ID 359). Some juries are made up of VET committee members, i.e. representatives of the social partners and of vocational school teachers (ID 53, ID 359 and ID 617 are similar in this regard). These are all examples of the integration of key stakeholders from intermediary institutions, primarily the social partners, and from the vocational school side. This is a characteristic element of the whole of the quality assurance system in vocational education and training. In the case of award initiatives with involvement from representatives of federal state ministries of economic affairs, both the intermediary and system levels are integrated (BIBB 2017, pp. 13 and 36 ff.).

However, organisational structures remain unclear in most of the cases investigated within the scope of the present project. These structures are neither addressed nor explained on the relevant sites providing information about the initiatives. We were thus very much kept in the dark as to who decides for or against a certification and which authority. The supposition would be that this task is performed by chamber staff who belong to an internal selection committee formed for the purpose of decisions regarding certification.

4.7.6   Inherent quality understandings of open and closed award initiatives

According to the work of Harvey and Green, various interpretations exist of "quality", the term which underlies the quality initiatives, and which is associated in each case with methodological stipulations (cf. Harvey/Green 2000).

Quality as excellence

In a series of initiatives, recognition of quality of training is based on an understanding which defines quality as "excellence". This may, for example, be ascertained via the use of explicit "excellence criteria" (ID 215). In such instances, quality is understood to be an "exception" (Harvey/Green 2000, pp. 18ff.) which is not irrefutably proclaimed. Instead, the components of excellence are depicted in the form of very difficult standards which can only be met via best performance yet are in principle achievable.

With regard to the award initiatives that embrace this understanding of "quality as excellence", the idea is that only the best companies providing training will receive recognition and become a focus of perception so that they can act as role models to inspire other companies to emulate them or to intensify their own endeavours in the area of quality of training. The aim is to use this as a vehicle to instigate a widespread impact so that vocational education and training can be "sustainably improved in the region" (ID 608). The concept of exclusivity is pursued by award programmes which are designed not to permit application by the companies and which assume that outstanding performance in the field of quality of training will in effect develop an appeal strong enough to attract external attention. From the point of view of the companies, an award which follows this concept is difficult if not impossible to control and therefore scarcely achievable. Excellence is also underlined by the fact that very few companies receive the award. In some cases, processes do not take place in accordance with a fixed rhythm in order to avoid any potential levelling of the standards (OR 24, OR 27).

A softer form of "quality as an exception" is reflected in award initiatives that see themselves as a "competition" (OR 29) in which companies can take part if they wish (see Table 6). This provides companies with more direct opportunities to work towards their award. A similar situation appertains in respect of award initiatives which promote compliance with "excellence/TOP criteria" yet make these criteria transparent. All companies providing training which meet the criteria are also presented with the prospect that they will be able to join the group of excellence (ID 515, ID 680, OR 20). The principle is that this happens regardless of the total number of companies which apply. The consequence of this is, depending on how many companies participate, that quality can no longer emerge as an exception (see Table 6). In this sense, the aspect of "outstanding" is diluted to a certain extent in order to afford a broad range of companies providing training a greater prospect of award success. This in turn may increase motivation to participate.

Quality as transformation

In other cases of award initiatives, the primary goal is not to reward excellence. Instead, the focus is much more on a particular commitment by individual companies which relates to the whole of the training process. This is expressed in the following text relating to an award initiative.

> "Many craft trade companies […] train apprentices year after year and support them along a training pathway which may sometimes be rocky […]. We would also like to use this prize […] to show particular appreciation for the people at the companies who work behind the scenes" (ID 425).

An understanding of quality as transformation, also as defined by Harvey/Green (2000, pp. 31 ff.) comes into effect here. A transformative quality understanding focuses on the qualitative increase achieved by the end of a training course as compared to a consideration of the initial situation. The indication contained in the quotation above that training can also be like a "rocky road" points in this direction. The implicit thought here is that providing training to

refugees or lower secondary school leavers, for example, requires a much higher degree of motivation, pedagogical competency and deployment of resources than would be the case for a clientèle from an educated and stable background in terms of family and economic circumstances. Firstly, it is easy for this increased commitment to training to remain hidden "behind the scenes", and the aim is for an award to change this situation. Secondly, the comparatively wide extent of changes and developments (the transformation) which trainees facing more a more difficult starting position may achieve via their training also remains obscure. The objective of award initiatives embracing this view of quality is to place the emphasis on such a "growth in quality" with regard to the acquisition of occupational skills, knowledge and competencies.

Award initiatives set out relevant quality criteria for this purpose. The aim is to assist with the mapping of these transformation achievements (e.g. number of trainees from a migrant background or with a disability or proportion of such trainees taken on permanently following training, support in the event of private/family challenges or difficulties at vocational school, see Chapter 4.7.8).

Achievability of awards

In principle, all award initiatives offer every company providing training the prospect of certification as long as the underlying quality criteria are fulfilled. The initiatives differ, however, in respect of how probable and achievable they are for the individual company and in terms of the nature and alignment of the quality of training to be recognised. The respective understanding of quality plays a key role in this process (see Table 6).

Closed formats, which are already based on proven performance-related output criteria (e.g. final examination results of trainees) for certification decisions (= strict interpretation of excellence), thus exhibit a lower level of award accessibility for companies because the latter are dependent on excellent training performances from their trainees and also need their company to be chosen by the respective selection committee.

Certification becomes more predictable for companies if clearly defined quality criteria are applied via self-commitment in open formats and if as many companies as possible receive the award. Here there is a fluent transition to an understanding of quality which increasingly views quality as the rule rather than as the exception. The degree of exclusivity of quality recognised (= excellence) may rise or fall depending on the following parameters.

▸ Level of requirements (the more extensive and the more elaborate the quality criteria to be met, the more exclusive the award will be).
▸ Number of award recipients (the lower the absolute number of award recipients and the more frequent the procedures, the more exclusive the award will be).

In reality, it is revealed that many award initiatives constitute mixed forms. An initiative which focuses on training for young people with increased support needs (= quality of transformation) may, for example, also exhibit aspects of an excellence model if it is designed as a closed format and if the intention is that only a few companies will receive the award.

In overall terms, it is possible to discern correlations between the structure and alignment of award initiatives and the understandings of quality underlying them. The degree of exclusivity of the various types and varieties of award initiatives is inversely proportional to award achievability from the point of view of the companies (see Table 6). Interpretations may be applied more or less strictly, and this means that there are many variants. Transitions from a strict interpretation of the excellence understanding of "quality as an exception" to a less rigid judgement ("quality as the rule") are fluent.

Award initiatives featuring a high level of exclusivity deploy the concept of the role model function. Companies which receive the award are deemed to be "beacons" other companies should seek to emulate. If exclusivity is lower, the essential aim is for many companies to be encouraged to take part in an award initiative in order to set development momentum in train via the respective requirements the companies must fulfil.

Further methodological stipulations are implied depending on the basic type or variety of award initiative. Whereas all award initiatives share the objective of certifying "good quality" in accordance with their respective understanding of quality, differences are revealed with regard to which type of quality is designated and evaluated. The certification that takes place in closed programmes focuses attention on quality of training which companies have already achieved and that has frequently been externally demonstrated via output criteria (summative evaluation).

Table 6: Definitions of quality and the structuring of award initiatives

Understanding of quality (as per Harvey/Green)	Type/variety of award initiative	Description of the concept and intention of example award initiatives
Excellence (quality as an exception – very strict interpretation)	Type: closed format Variety: on the basis of a jury decision	A jury selects only a small number of companies (maximum of 3) per cohort. The frequency at which the programme is conducted is not stipulated so that the performance level does not have to be reduced. Intention: only the best should be recognised. The idea is thus that an award constitutes an absolute exception. Companies on which an award is conferred should act as "beacons".
Excellence (quality as an exception – very strict interpretation)	Type: closed format Variety: featuring performance-related output criteria	Awards are conferred on companies whose trainees achieve leading positions in VET competitions or obtain the highest number of points in their occupations in final examinations. Intention: only the best trainees and their companies should be recognised after already having undergone external evaluation. The aim is for them to act as "beacons".
Excellence (quality as an exception, medium/ soft interpretation)	Type: open format Variety: with guidance support and an optional audit	Companies are recognised if ▶ they have been admitted because they have fulfilled all minimum (mostly statutorily regulated) standards; ▶ they have analysed quality across all phases of training and made any necessary improvements with the support of materials, tools and aids with which they have been supplied (catalogues of criteria, diagnosis sheets, continuing training provision etc.); ▶ if they have permitted the process to be monitored via face-to-face guidance from external experts; ▶ are ultimately able to demonstrate evaluation of the results by means of a paid audit. Intention: an extensive examination of the status of the company's own quality of training and of its further development via a procedure governed by process stages. A further objective is to create external visibility of quality of training.

Understanding of quality (as per Harvey/Green)	Type/variety of award initiative	Description of the concept and intention of example award initiatives
Excellence (quality as an exception – soft interpretation) ↓ fluid transition to quality as the rule	Type: open format Variety: on the basis of self-commitment and a jury decision	Companies commit to providing information which demonstrates that the quality of their training meets the standards stipulated. Surveys of trainees and trainers may be required. Usually, the jury will arrive at a paper-based decision. Further external investigations are not usually stipulated. Intention: companies should undertake a detailed examination of their own training quality and training development. The emphasis is placed on awareness building. Companies are left to decide for themselves how they will meet the criteria set out. The main focus is not on providing evidence that the topic of quality has been tackled. The aim is to mobilise a large number of companies to participate and thus achieve a widespread impact.
Transformation (quality as development – with a significant overlap to **excellence**, quality as an exception)	Type: closed format, Variety: on the basis of a jury decision	Companies which have shown particular commitment and achieved success in catering to trainees experiencing difficult initial conditions (e.g. refugees or other groups with increased support needs) are made visible as "beacons". Intention of the award: ▸ the company should be accorded recognition for performance which would otherwise be very unlikely to become visible externally via measurable achievements (e.g. participation in competitions); ▸ the focus should be placed on the comparatively large degree of development achieved by trainees compared with their starting point; ▸ awareness of good practice should be created in order to motivate other companies to pursue similar pathways.
Transformation (quality as development)	Type: open format (all varieties), based on quality criteria which, for example, address the integration of applicant groups with increased support needs.	Companies are required to demonstrate their endeavours to achieve improved quality of training via quality criteria based on a transformation understanding of quality. Intention: companies should examine their own training quality and training development and be motivated, for example, to acquire young people with a high need for support.

Open formats, on the other hand, place the emphasis on the process which must be completed en route to improved training quality. This is then assessed at the end (formative evaluation). In the case of the latter approach, the quality endeavours of the company are supported in an active and process-related way via the initiative. The nature and intensity of the support services will differ according to the variety of the initiative. Whereas formats based on self-commitment and jury decisions essentially use catalogues of criteria and similar self-study materials to impart knowledge about the further development of quality of training, the formats which feature guidance support and optional audits also offer forms of in-house consultancy/coaching sessions. Within the scope of these initiatives, companies receive assistance from external experts over a longer period of time and are supported with the deployment of various instruments in training practice.

4.7.7 Evaluation processes and methods of award initiatives

The available material allowed fundamental structural characteristics of award initiatives to be uncovered. The aim now was to undertake a more detailed consideration of the respective selection and evaluation processes of the award initiatives.

It was revealed that the data situation regarding the open award initiatives is generally far better presented than that of the closed formats. The questionnaires needed for the open award initiatives are, for example, freely accessible online (ID 380, ID 608, ID 719, cf. also ID 680). Initially, such self-assessment materials essentially ask about the fulfilment of statutorily prescribed training standards and of further quality criteria (see Chapter 4.7.8).[12] But there are also restrictions with regard to the open initiatives. The predominant rule is that participating companies do not receive the main working materials until they have been admitted to the procedure. Further documentation such as catalogues of criteria, thematic support brochures and similar materials are only available on the Internet in very rare cases, and then only extracts are normally provided. Sometimes internal materials have also been made available for the project.[13]

Evaluation and award processes

Below we attempt to provide a schematic representation of the various processes in accordance with the division into open and closed award initiatives (see Figures 24–26). It should be pointed-ed out that there are always variants which do not fully match the scheme. Nevertheless, apart from a small number of exceptions, it proved possible to allocate all of the quality initiatives identified in the study to one of the three procedure models.

The open award initiatives (see Figure 24 and Figure 25) often feature a two or three-stage procedure, even though examples of single-stage procedures also exist in the case of formats involving self-commitment and jury decisions.[14] In most cases, the processes for both basic types begin with applications from companies which are interested. These companies are asked to use freely accessible application forms provided online to state basic data regarding their company size and duration and scope of their training activities. In addition to this, enquiries of varying extents and different levels of content detail are made in respect of initial quality standards in relation to the training activity. These are frequently in line with the statutorily stipulated minimum standards. After scrutiny of the application by the respective chamber, procedures in the open award initiatives vary in accordance with whether they are conceptually based on the notion of self-commitment and jury decisions (see Figure 24) or whether they belong to the variety of guidance support with optional audit (see Figure 25). One common aspect is that both types fundamentally permit recertification.

One aspect that must be stated regarding the closed award initiatives is that the database permitted only scant indications on the structuring of the selection and evaluation processes. Secondly, depending on the variety, these were also less complex. There are, for instance, initiatives in which companies are identified and certified as worthy of recognition on the basis of

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12 Some of the questionnaires seem to have borrowed from the "European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships", which was adopted in 2018 and sets out 14 key criteria.

13 In one case, the project implementers were given access to the catalogue of criteria that approved companies receive as well as to a version for internal use that sets out the weighting of the various criteria.

14 Also included here are award initiatives that are directly launched by full completion of application documentation by the companies (OR 58). In one example, virtually no content stipulations are made and the application is formalised only to a slight degree. Companies may submit an application in the form of a statement extending over no more than three pages or as a video containing a company profile (OR 4).

existing examination results (ID 89, ID 113). In another case, a decision regarding certification requires a successful regular inspection by the training advisors (ID 35). In a further variety, the decision to recognise companies is made by a jury. In this case, the processes via which identification of relevant companies and the ultimate decision to issue an award came about remained largely obscure because they predominantly appear to involve internal procedures (see Figure 26). Because the Chambers or the juries they appoint seek out the companies to be recognised, there is also no recertification option in the closed type of award initiative.

Figure 24: Award initiatives (open format) on the basis of self-commitment and a jury decision
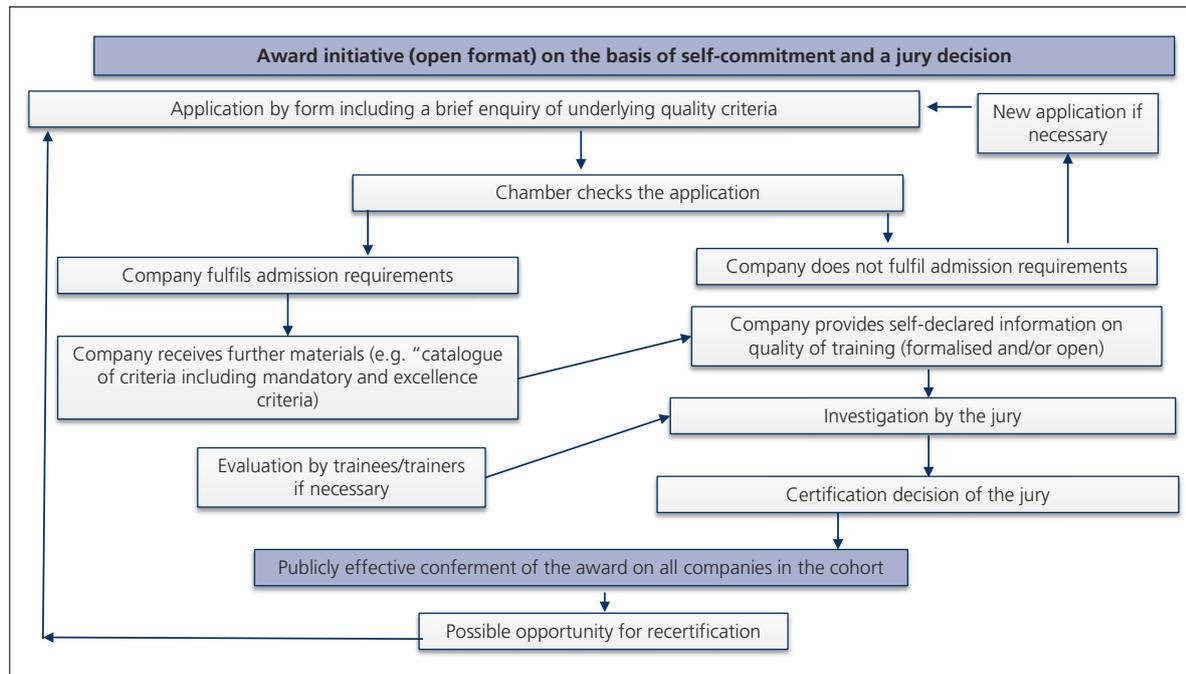
Figure 25: Award initiatives (open format) with guidance support and an optional audit
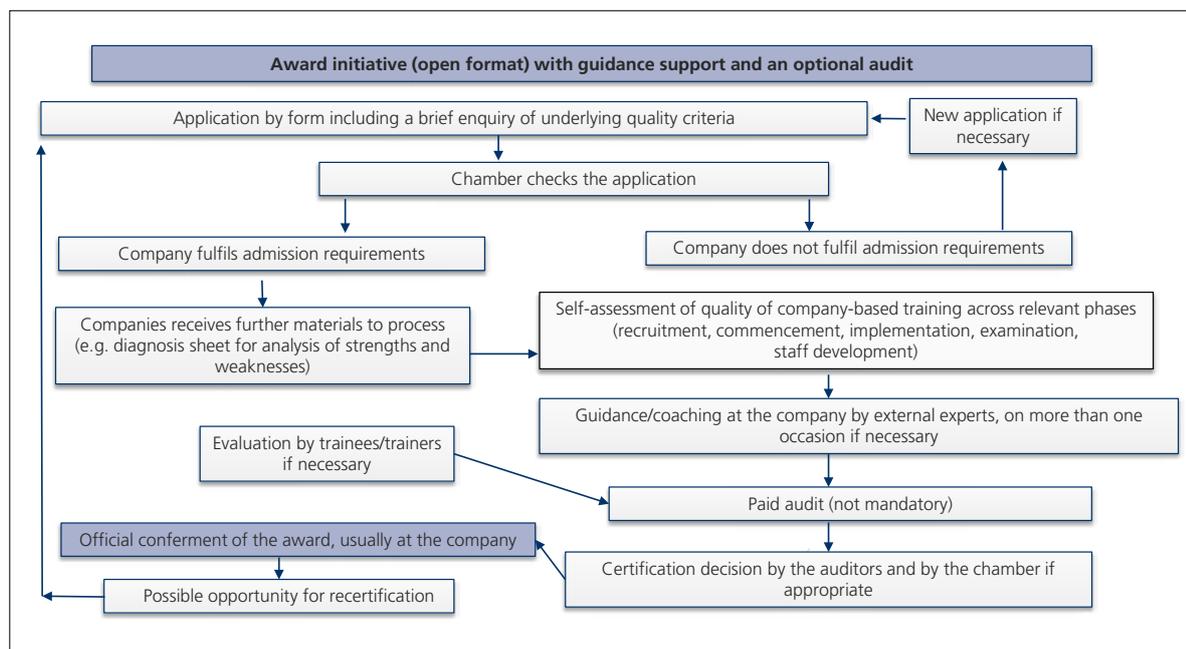
Figure 26: Award initiatives (closed format)
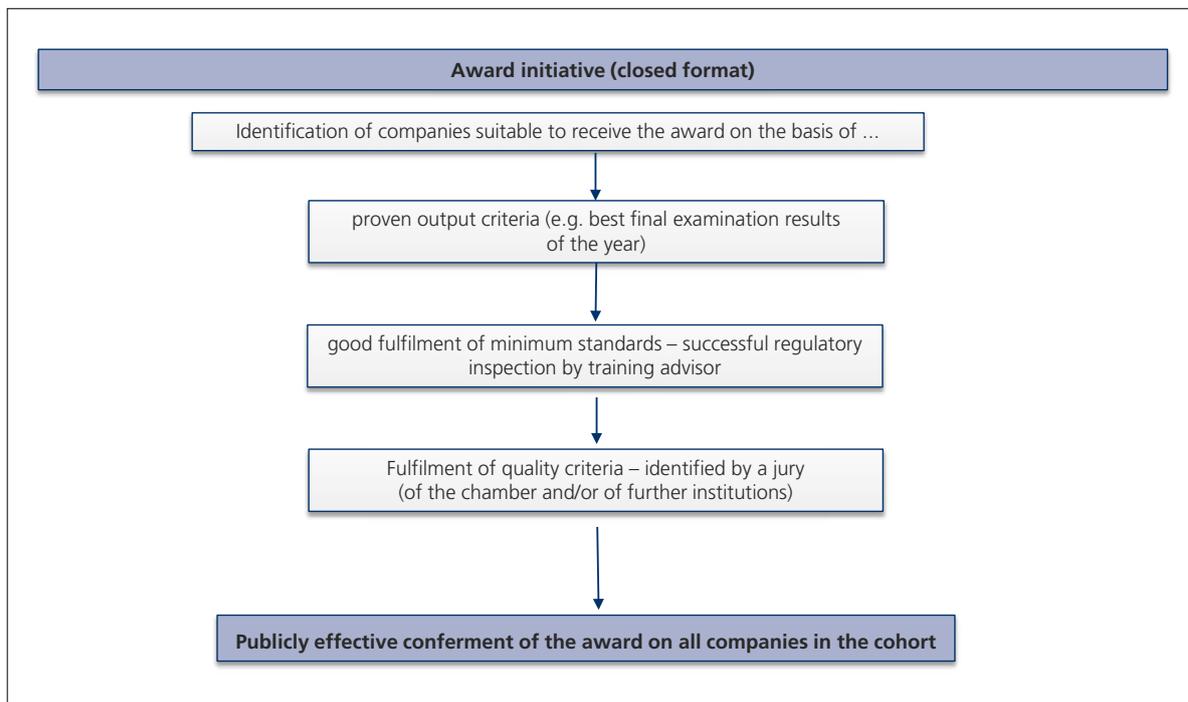
Up until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all award initiatives that resulted in a positive certification decision essentially culminated in a promotionally effective ceremonial and formal event. Because the format involving guidance and an audit option makes it virtually impossible to predict in organisational terms when the respective companies will have completed the whole process, award events are staged on an individual basis, e.g. at the company providing training and – as long as the company has not expressed a contrary wish – in the presence of the regional press. In the case of the other award initiatives, the usual approach is for all companies in the same cohort set to receive an award to convene for a major event so that effective press communication can take place.

Methods

With regard to the question as to which methods are deployed within the scope of the certification programmes, the questionnaire (see Figure 27) shows that almost two thirds of the "mark of quality" schemes and certification programmes rely in part on self-disclosure by the companies (63%). The instrument of external evaluation, on the other hand, is used comparatively frequently, being deployed in 36 percent of cases. Companies also receive supporting guidance in the form of an audit in almost half (46%) of the initiatives identified. One interesting aspect is that a survey of trainees, so to speak the "customers" of the training provision, is also conceptually included in as many as 23 percent of cases. By way of contrast, self-evaluation is a tool which is mentioned much more rarely (9%).

The findings listed correspond to the results of the qualitative evaluations in terms of content. In overall terms, it is possible to ascertain that scrutiny and control do not appear to be the dominant goal of the certification provision, even though relevant elements such as audits and evaluations are used. The focus is placed much more on aspects such as self-disclosure by the companies, which tend to localise responsibility for processes and contents at the company. The guidance services, too, which frequently resemble coaching, are arranged to be supportive and thus point in the same direction.

Figure 27: Use of methods (proportions in %, multiple responses, n = 32)
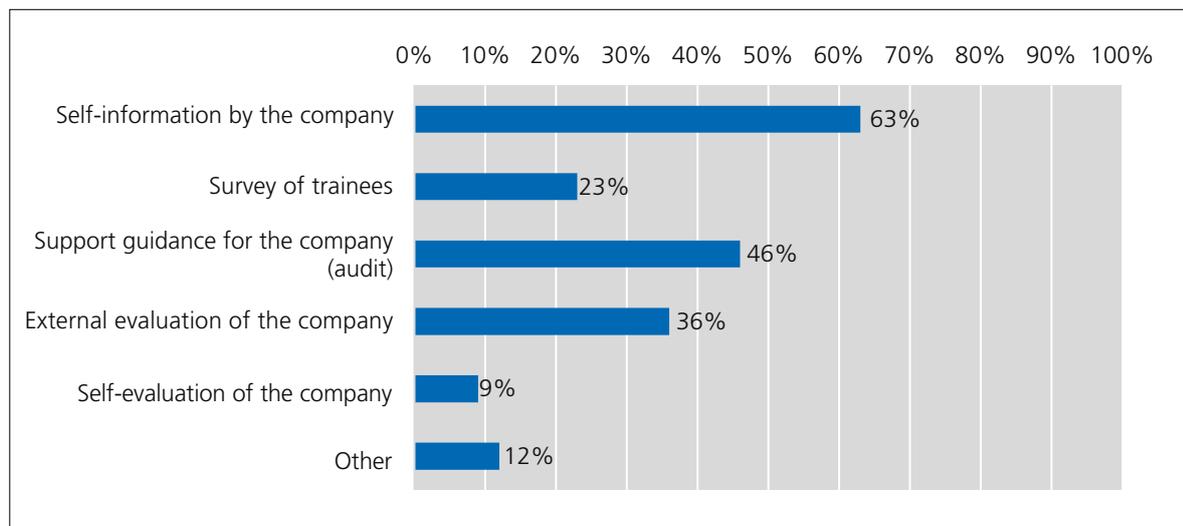
Source: Online questionnaire

4.7.8 Quality criteria of the award initiatives

One of the goals of the present investigation is to find out the basis on which certification decisions are taken within the scope of the award initiatives forming the object of examination. Information material relating to the award initiatives, such as portal contents, application forms and catalogues of criteria, were qualitatively evaluated for this purpose. This permitted the extraction of criteria which serve as an evaluation basis for quality of training at the companies.

As stated above, material capable of qualitative evaluation was not equally accessible across all award initiatives. The data situation is better for the open formats than for the closed formats. Grounds for evaluation remained particularly obscure in the case of award initiatives with jury decisions. Nevertheless, press reports and the like contain descriptions of company measures which justify certification from the perspective of the awarding organisations. This permitted indirect inferences to be made regarding underlying criteria such as the qualification of staff providing training (OR 47).

In the case of the open award initiatives, application documentation is freely available online. Free availability on the Internet mostly only ceases at the start of the second stage of the procedure (see Figures 24–26). Companies interested in participating will not usually receive this until they have successfully completed the first stage of the application.

However, the online survey and the Internet and telephone research produced a sufficient overall number of lists and catalogues of criteria and check lists (e.g. ID 464, ID 680) to allow the conducting of an empirical investigation into the question of the underlying quality criteria. This assessment is supported by the emergence of a satiation of findings during the work carried out, i.e. it was virtually impossible to identify any more new criteria once about half of the available material had been viewed.

Evaluation of the material initially led to a list comprising 101 quality criteria. The thematic breadth of the quality criteria identified is impressive. It ranges from "hard criteria" such as the quantitatively measurable requirements regarding the training experience of a company to criteria which tended to be "softer" in nature. The latter include holistic criteria with a health-oriented objective, such as the availability of "fit programmes" to combat stress and help with good nutrition and release of young people from work duties to take part in sports sessions as a means of health prophylaxis (ID 284).

It is important to state that, apart from in a small number of exceptional cases, compliance with the prescribed minimum standards for company-based initial training within the dual system is not sufficient for an award (ID 35). More than the statutory minimum is expected from the companies in the vast majority of cases. This is shown by frequent indications that expectations in the participating companies extend "significantly beyond the requirements of the BBiG" (ID 107, ID 218, ID 284, ID 464 are similar in this regard). The criteria originally identified were paraphrased and summarised wherever possible.

Indicators and descriptors

A more detailed analysis of the quality criteria showed that there are quantifiable criteria which can be categorised as statistically recordable indicators and values which are only capable of operationalisation to a limited degree and which thus can be designated as descriptors. The group of descriptors predominates, making up 80 of 101 quality criteria (79.2%) as compared to 21 indicators (20.8%).

With regard to the indicators, it should be noted that quality criteria that are quantifiable in principle, such as "training experience", are judged by different benchmarks depending on the award initiative. One usual provision stipulated for award initiatives is that the company should have at least one active training contract in place at the time an application is submitted or a recommendation is made by third parties (ID 215). This criterion becomes stricter if "training of a consistently very good quality over the last five years" is required (ID 107) or if companies providing training have to be able to demonstrate ten years of training experience (ID 575). It is not uncommon for the frequent demand for five years of training to be combined with further quality indicators. One initiative, for example, sets a maximum of 30 percent of training dropouts following the probationary period and also stipulates that there must have been no filed complaints (ID 425). Another case moves in a similar direction by requiring that the company providing training must have at least five active training contracts in place and must also be able to demonstrate a pass rate of 80 percent (ID 485).

One example of the low level of transparency of the basis of assessment of quality criteria that are usually categorised as descriptors is an innovation prize that sought out companies providing training which had instigated "exemplary initiatives to enhance quality and attractiveness" (ID 308, ID 419 is similar in this regard). A similar situation applies when "uniqueness and degree of innovation" are evaluated with regard to company measures in the field of training quality without specifying this in any greater detail (ID 359). Such criteria were not taken into account for the allocations. It is rare for the weighting which the Chambers apply to the different quality criteria to result directly from the materials for the companies, such as when the fulfilment is demanded of a certain number of criteria to which a points score is attached (OR 28). It should also be noted here that the questionnaire forms frequently contain open-ended questions which suggest a desire for reciprocal communication with the companies. These are not used to inform the evaluation.[15] This leads to the conclusion that the Chambers are likely to be open to new or adapted criteria.

These were sorted and clustered in various different ways in order to obtain further findings with regard to the alignment and emphasis of the quality criteria. Table 7 shows an attempt to list the collected quality criteria along the lines of meta topics. Reference is firstly made to the following five action areas drawn up within the scope of the pilot programme on training quality (see Chapter 2).

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15 Open-ended questions may ask about a company's experience in dealing with digitalisation or COVID-19 pandemic requirements within the context of training without any intention of these responses being included in the evaluation.

(1) Promotion of a culture of quality development and quality assurance
(2) Training of staff providing training
(3) Structuring of the training process
(4) Evaluation of learning outcomes as a pedagogical process
(5) Promoting cooperation between learning venues

The most elaborate catalogues and lists of award initiatives identified frequently structure their criteria in accordance with the following five phases of the training process.

▶ Recruitment
▶ Commencement
▶ Implementation
▶ Qualification
▶ Employment upon completion of training.

This thought was embraced to the extent that action area 3 "Structuring of the training process" has been sub-divided accordingly (see Table 7). In methodological terms, no completely clear-cut alignment to the various action areas and phases of training can be consistently realised. In cases of doubt, the respective textual context of the material evaluated was considered and interpreted with regard to a certain quality criterion. In addition to this, endeavours were made to undertake a primary alignment, i.e. if a quality criterion strongly corresponded to a category, then this category was selected even if alignment to further categories would also make sense. Multiple alignments were chosen in the event that such prioritisation was not possible.

In quantitative terms, it is conspicuous that 78.8 percent of all criteria allocations, including multiple alignments in some cases, relate to at least one phase of the action area "Structuring of the training process". The main sub-categories are the phases of Implementation (45.5%) and Recruitment (33.7%). This is in line with the main objectives of award initiatives as presented above. Their purpose is to help companies with the recruitment of trainees by offering guidance and support to enhance the attractiveness of company-based training via the vehicle of improved quality of training (in this case quality of implementation). It therefore comes as no surprise that these superordinate goals inform the quality criteria.

A closer consideration of the quality criteria subsumed under the category of "Implementation" reveals that a large number of the criteria relate to reflection on planning documentation and on communicative networking in this regard. Typical examples of criteria are "a positive feedback culture", "regular networking on planning and monitoring documentation", "evaluation by trainees" and "reflection on learning concepts". These are in accordance with the views expressed within the academic research debate that teaching/learning relationships are a key factor in successful training (cf. HATTIE 2009) and that their quality is in turn based on participation by the parties involved. By way of example, Brater (2014, p. 244) writes that teaching/learning processes are a joint structuring task of teachers and learners and that their quality evolves from interaction between both parties.

Most quality criteria in the area of recruitment relate to one of the two following sub-goals, although here, too, full delineation cannot be achieved.

(1) Easier access to company-based training (e.g. via participation in vocational orientation activities, establishment of high-value practical placements and holiday jobs for school pupils).

(2) Appeal to heterogeneous applicant groups (part-time training for young parents, funding for participation in performance competitions, individual assistance for trainees with support needs).

The quality criteria set out therefore enable us to see that companies are being called upon to be as open as possible for large numbers of potential trainees if the questionnaires enquire about aspects such as the opportunity to spend periods of training abroad, additional qualifications, "trainee projects" and so-called "career management" (ID 218, ID 464, ID 302, ID 458 are similar in this regard). The aim here is to raise the attractiveness of training in the dual system by introducing additional provision so that high-ability young people interested in pursuing a career can be addressed, acquired and retained. Other criteria are aimed at assisting young adults with increased support needs (establishment of introductory training places, part-time training, training places for refugees). Gender aspects in the training system are also addressed. The criterion "Promotion of training places in atypical female occupations" is also included in order to encourage companies to appeal to as many young people as possible.

The "Commencement" of the training phase comes in third position in the action area of "Structuring the training process" with eleven quality criteria. This accounts for 10.9% of all identified quality criteria. Typical examples of this phase include the criteria "Sufficient induction phase", "Dedicated point of contact for trainees at the start of training" and the quantitative indicator "Drop-out rate after probationary period". Here, too, the focus is on showing companies means and pathways via which trainee recruitment that has been initially successful is not destroyed by avoidable dropouts. The criteria in the area of the training phase of "Employment upon completion of training" move in a similar direction. Various measures, such as early highlighting of continuing training opportunities at the company, are instigated in an attempt to retain trainees as skilled workers. The "Examination" phase is largely characterised by indicators which focus on the quantification of examination success.

The action area "Evaluation of learning outcomes as a pedagogical process" also accounts for 10.9 percent of quality criteria and occupies second place amongst the total of five fields. In this case, most criteria are also allocated to one of the training phases in the action area of "Structuring the training process" because primary alignment was not possible. This comes as no surprise since the assessment of learning outcomes needs to be regarded as an inherent part of the training process. Inevitably, therefore, the categorisation selected reaches its limits. The remaining three action areas "Culture of quality" (1), "Cooperation between learning venues" (5) and "Training of staff providing training" (2) achieve only low alignment numbers. Especially with regard to the last-named area, the number of quality criteria tends to be low if we visualise their thematic relevance within the discourse (see Table 7).

One explanation for this is that the item "Training of staff providing training" plays only a subordinate role within the context of the award initiatives because quality initiatives of the "training" type already cover this aspect.

The methodological starting position offers a further possible explanation. Because material for only a selection of award initiatives was evaluated in varying degrees of detail for the purpose of extracting quality initiatives, no statements can be made regarding the frequency and therefore also the weighting of quality criteria. For this reason, it is possible that only a small number of quality criteria is to be found in this action area but that these exhibit a very high level of frequency, i.e. they occur in nearly all award initiatives. This is at least in line with the experience that varieties of the quality criterion "Regular and qualified continuing training of staff involved with training" are found either frequently or always in the more detailed documentation.

Table 7: Distribution of quality criteria across the five quality assurance action areas (multiple responses)

Five action areas of quality assurance	(1) Promotion of a culture of quality development and quality assurance	(2) Training of staff providing training	(3) Structuring of the training process					(4) Evaluation of learning outcomes results as a pedagogical process	(5) Promoting cooperation between learning venues
			Recruitment	Commencement	Implementation	Examination	Employment upon completion of training		
Examples	▲ "Availability of a quality mission statement" ▲ "Evaluation by trainees"	▲ "Regular and qualified continuing training for those involved with training" ▲ "Number of trainers with AEVO"	▲ "Implementation of one day of training" ▲ "Commitment of the company to vocational orientation"	▲ "Sufficient induction phase" ▲ "Defined point of contact for trainees at the commencement of training"	▲ "Regular networking on planning and monitoring documentation" ▲ "Reflection on learning concepts/ Teaching methods"	▲ "Pass rate" ▲ "Individual examination preparation"	▲ "Appraisal meeting before completion of training" ▲ "Proportion of trainees taken on permanently following training"	▲ "Regular agreement and monitoring of learning objectives" ▲ "Evaluation of the intermediate examination with the trainees"	▲ "Practical company placements for vocational school teachers" ▲ "Regular contact with the vocational schools"
Number	5 (5.0%)	5 (5.0%)	34 (33.7%)	11 (10.9%)	46 (45.5%)	6 (5.9%)	7 (6.9%)	11 (10.9%)	4 (3.9%)

Sorting by reference levels (micro, meso, macro level) and by quality dimensions (input, process, output and outcome)

A sorting of the quality criteria by micro, meso and macro level was also undertaken (cf. Chapter 2). The micro level relates to teaching/learning processes, the meso level to the provider organisation (company providing training), and the macro level to the state or system. No quality criteria could be aligned to the last of these categories apart from a few individual cases, and for this reason it is not taken into account in the summaries. The explanation for this is that quality of training is addressed within the scope of the award initiatives. This means that quality criteria for the system level would make very little sense within this context.

As Table 8 shows, a large majority of quality criteria, 74 percent, relates to the meso level, i.e. to the company providing training. About a quarter (26 percent) relate to the micro level, or to teaching/learning relationships between trainees and staff providing training. Criteria which extended beyond the training quality of the company as a unit were rarely found. This was the case, for example, when the question was posed as to whether a company providing training "makes itself available to other companies as a cooperative partner". Because such readiness is initially and primarily to the benefit of other companies providing training, this criterion aims to honour a willingness to support and strengthen the functionality of the training system as a whole and thus enhance the attractiveness of the dual system rather than merely of an individual company. A further example of this occurs in varieties of the enquiry as to whether "Staff are released from their work duties whilst still being paid in order to take part in committee work (examination boards, working groups, VET committee etc.)". The aim here is for the services of the Chambers, which play a key role in quality assurance in the dual system at an intermediary level, to be supported and secured by the companies.[16]

A further stage was undertaken to align the quality criteria identified to the established quality dimensions of input, process, output and outcome (KLOTZ et al. 2017, p. 3). Input incorporates the organisational characteristics of the company as a learning venue, and process refers to "activities […] which affect the learning process over the course of training" (ibid., p. 4). Output relates to learning outcomes and Outcome to the long-term utilisation of these. The result of the sorting was that less than half of all quality criteria relate to the process dimension (45%), closely followed by input quality (43%). Output criteria account for only just under eleven percent of the total. The role played by outcome criteria, which represent a share of one percent of all quality criteria (criteria relating to the proportion of trainees taken on permanently following training) is insignificant. As Table 8 demonstrates, the meso input level is the strongest category, followed by the meso process and micro process levels, respectively. This result supports the results of clustering by action areas and is in line with the target direction of most of the award initiatives, which seek to use specific assistance aids to illustrate to companies how they can improve the quality of their training. It appears logical that these initiatives, for which, as shown above, there is the largest amount of usable material, should also focus on categories which address the commencement and course of training (input and process dimension at the meso and micro level) rather than on the end phases (output and outcome), in which the results of a training programme have already occurred and there are virtually no further opportunities to exert an influence.

16 See the multilevel model, BIBB 2017, pp. 36 ff. Cf. also page 14 in the present publication.

Table 8: Quality criteria of the award initiatives by levels and quality dimensions

Level	Input quality	Process quality	Output quality	Outcome quality	Total
Micro level	6 (6%)	21 (19%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1%)	28 (26%)
Meso level	40 (37%)	28 (26%)	12 (11%)	0 (0 %)	80 (74%)
Total	**46 (43%)**	**49 (45%)**	**12 (11%)**	**1 (1%)**	**108 (100%)**

4.7.9 Issuing of awards

Type of certification

A common aspect of all award initiatives is that participating companies are issued with a form of concrete authentication once they have been admitted to the award or to the certification by the decision-making bodies. Most objects issued in this context are written instruments which are usually referred to as "certificates". These are often combined with graphic symbols that act as recognisable trademarks and often bear the designation "logo" or "mark of quality". In one case, the word "signet" is also used ("1st trainee trained here", ID 229). In some instances, graphically designed objects made from different materials are handed out. These resemble the cups ("trophies") and medals used in sporting competitions. Logos are also issued in the form of three-dimensional design objects rather than merely as templates on paper. Personalised gifts are also presented in some individual cases, such as a star featuring the name of the award holder (ID 113).

In addition to these artefacts, which tend to be of symbolic importance only, it is also common to confer further prizes which have some use value. These include the following.

▶ Advertising materials (logos as print templates or as files for further digital use, pre-prepared letterheads, wall signs, plaques, stickers etc.) and documents containing marketing tips. In some individual cases, videos are also made about the award-winning companies and their training work. These are then made available for further use. In one instance, the company receiving the award enjoyed the approved use of an electric car for one year. The logo of the certification programme and of the company was attached to the bodywork of the vehicle (ID 425).

▶ Further promotional measures such as articles on the award-winning companies in chamber publications or highlighted entries in apprenticeship exchanges. It is common for the award to be accompanied by an event to which media representatives are invited. These events may feature different levels of ceremony and can also attract high-profile attendees. In one case, for example, the Federal Minister of Education and Research Anja Karliczek was present (ID 359).

▶ Literature or training documentation relating to the topic of quality of training. Occasionally, final audit or audit procedure reports appear in a printed version to provide the company with specially tailored recommendations (ID 440).

▶ Prize monies. These range from 500 to 3,000 EUR.[17] Cash prizes are financed by partners from trade and industry such as banks, savings banks, insurance companies (OR 11) or, for example, by the European Social Fund (OR 7).

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17 In one case, a total of nine companies providing training won prizes in three categories. The first placed firms each received 3,000 EUR, whilst the six runners up were awarded 500 EUR (OR 11). In another example, three companies in three categories enjoyed prize money of 2,500 EUR (OR 2). In a further instance, prize money of 1,000 EUR is paid out in ten categories (OR 7).

Frequency of awards

The issuing of marks of quality or certificates within the scope of awards programmes may represent a one-off event or be repeated at irregular or regular intervals. One of the aims of the online survey was to obtain more detailed information on this topic. When asked about the frequency of the awarding of marks of quality or certificates, the responses showed that awards take place annually in more than half of the initiatives. A quarter (28.6%) even issue awards several times a year (see Figure 28). Certification is conferred every two years in 14.3% of the cases. Only 3.6 percent of initiatives have award intervals which are longer. It can therefore be stated that the predominantly customary practice is to award marks of quality or similar recognition at least once a year or more frequently within the context of this type of programme. The qualitative investigation has also shown that open award initiatives which offer companies guidance of a coaching sort and an optional audit may not exhibit any fixed award rhythm. This is connected with the fact that companies are very largely free to decide when they will apply to the Chambers for participation and are also able to determine the speed at which the guidance process is conducted and concluded. If a company opts for an audit which incurs a fee, the award of the "mark of quality" or similar certification takes place soon afterwards. Depending on participant interest, this approach may also lead to repeated procedures and awards per year.

In open and closed formats of the award initiative type which operate with a decision-making body on the part of the Chambers (jury or similar), the award of prizes or marks of quality usually occurs at fixed times or at least in batches on the dates set by the respective chamber. The supposition would be that there are practical and organisational reasons for this. Committees are able to convene at easily predictable times. The staging of official or public events to accompany the conferment of awards can also be more effectively planned and implemented (see Chapter 4.7.7).

Figure 28: Frequency of the award of marks of quality or certificates (proportions in %, n = 28)
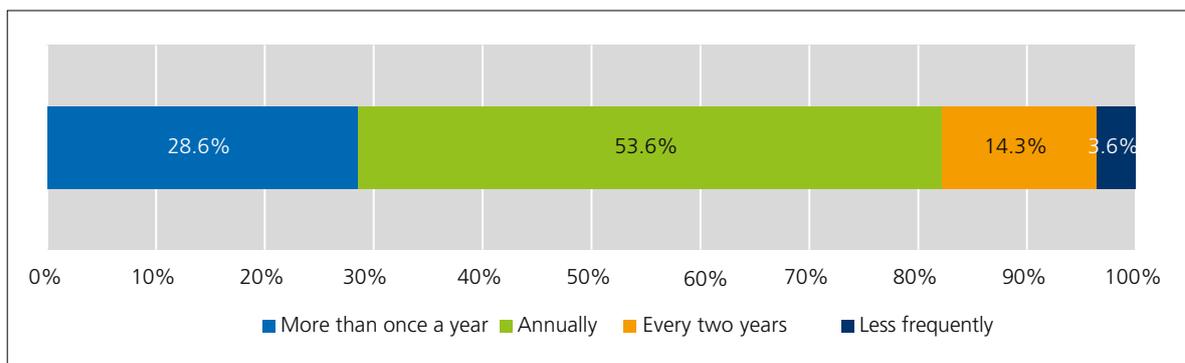
Source: Online questionnaire

Number of companies receiving an award per cohort

Within the context of the online questionnaire, further enquiry was made as to how many companies were certified per cohort in order to gain a picture of the overall scope in this regard. Here it must be stated that responses were very mixed and that no clear pattern is discernible (see Figure 29). Nevertheless, it emerged that awards made to cohorts consisting of fewer than five companies providing training are comparatively rare. These made up only 6.9 percent of cases. 44.8 percent confer awards on cohorts of between five and ten companies. 27.6 percent issue recognition to more than 20 companies in parallel, and 20.7 percent have a group of between eleven and 20 companies.

Figure 29: Number of companies receiving an award or certification per cohort (proportions in %, n = 29)
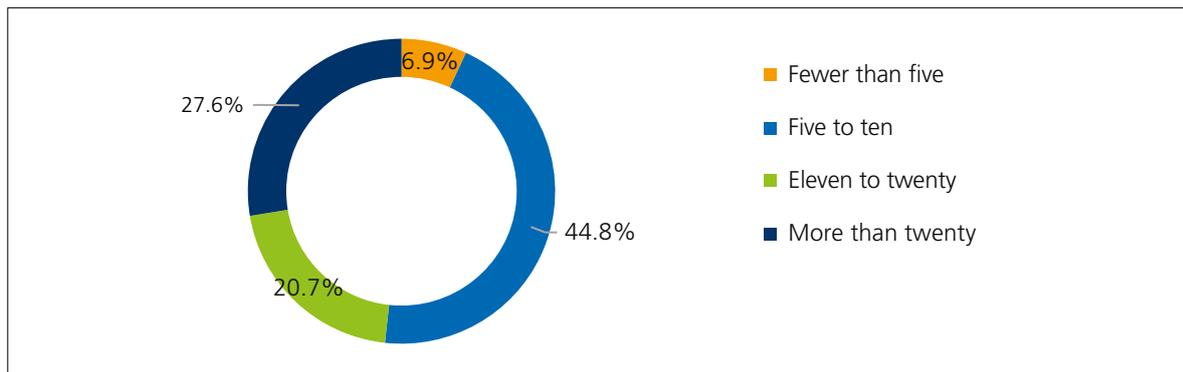
Source: Online questionnaire

As is borne out by the qualitative investigation of the entire sample of award initiatives (n = 70), a broad variance can be identified in respect of this issue. On the one hand, there were highly exclusive open and closed programmes which only dealt, for example, with three companies per cohort (OR 27). On the other hand, we also found programmes which facilitated award procedures to a very large number of companies providing training. One chamber stated that it had recognised 83 companies providing training in 2020 alone and had conferred awards on 866 such companies over a period of 13 years (OR 28).[18]

Costs of the award initiatives

Although there are exceptions, companies do not incur any costs for participation in award programmes in the vast majority of cases. This picture emerges from the analysis of the award initiatives identified and is supported by the online questionnaire. 75 percent of respondents stated that the award initiatives offered by their chamber were free of charge. A further 15.6 percent categorised their own programmes as being "subject to a fee in some cases", and only 9.4 percent responded that these were "chargeable".

The qualitative evaluation showed that award programmes featuring an optional audit are the mostly likely to involve costs for companies. Nevertheless, the Chambers mostly do not charge any fees until the companies providing training progress to the auditing/certification phase, and this is also not a mandatory part of the programme. However, if a company providing training wishes to undergo a final audit, then staggered fees are usually charged in accordance with company size or number of trainees employed. Costs for each procedure vary from 150 to 3,000 EUR(OR 19, OR 15, ID 380). Costs may also be incurred if supplementary courses in the form of workshops etc. are attended at the Chambers with the aim of professionalising trainers. A similar situation occurs if materials are used for which the Chambers make a charge. These are, however, frequently supplied at cost price (ID 161).

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18 Source: https://www.rostock.ihk24.de/servicemarken/presse/medieninformationen/top-ausbildungsbetrie-
    be-qualitaet-in-der-ausbildung-schafft-vorsprung-im-wettbewerb-um-fachkraefte-nachwuchs-4828308
    (status: 01/02/2021).

Figure 30: Quality initiatives by cost structure (proportions in %, n = 32)

9.4%

15.6%

75.0%

■ Free of charge

■ Subject to a fee in some cases

■ Chargeable
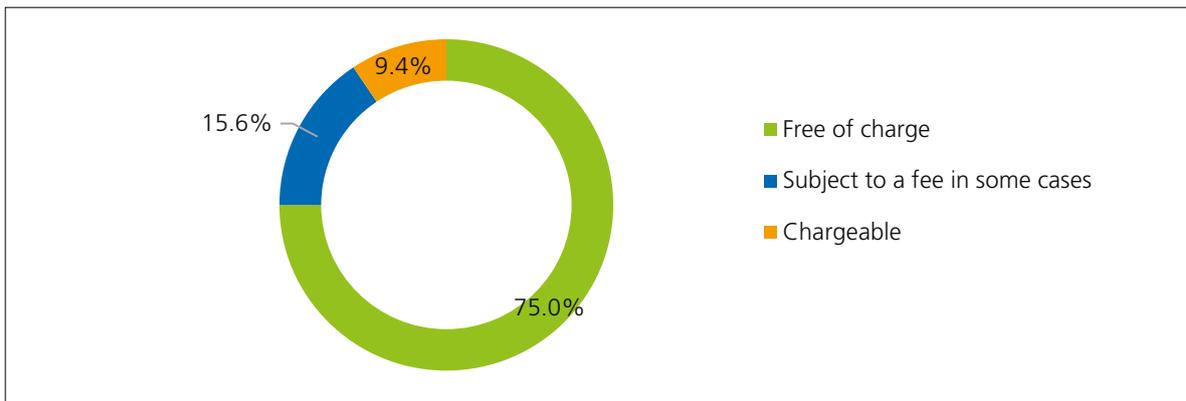
Source: Online questionnaire

Period of validity of certification and recertification

The online questionnaire further enquires which "mark of quality" and certification pro- grammes offer the participating companies an opportunity for recertification. The responses of the Chambers indicate that this applies to 80 percent of the relevant initiatives. In these cases, further monitoring is conducted in accordance with relevant stipulations so that the validity of the "mark of quality" award or certificate can be extended (see Figure 31). The qualitative evaluations for the entire sample reveal that a certificate validity period of three years usually applies in respect of the audit programmes. Recertification can follow after this time. This also attracts a fee, although a lower charge is sometimes applied for renewal of the certificate than for the first procedure (ID 380).

Figure 31: Option for recertification (proportions in %, n = 30)

20%

80%

■ Yes ■ No
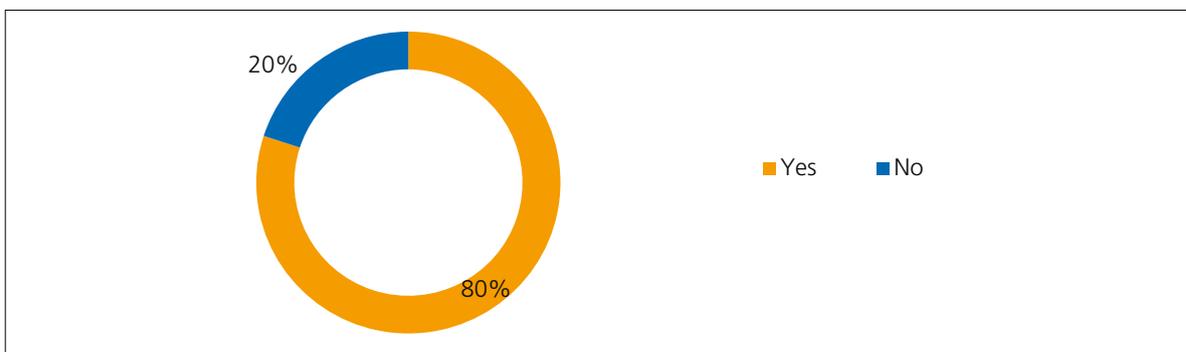
Source: Online questionnaire

By way of contrast, an annual schedule is more common for award programmes based on self-commitment and a jury decision. Interestingly, the validity of these awards is often not formally stipulated. Companies are at liberty to decide how long they wish to use the award for promotional purposes. Nevertheless, the certification year is usually included on the cer- tificate. One feature of recertification provision is that companies are able to submit a new ap- plication for each procedure so that they can receive the award once more. This is an approach which is explicitly welcomed on the part of the Chambers (OR 28). This means that the identi- cal process must be repeated in each respective case. In one example of the open type of initia-

tive on the basis of self-commitment and a jury decision, a higher award level is achieved when the same company receives several awards. Special recognition is then accorded (OR 29).[19]

4.7.10 Summary of the special evaluation of award initiatives

Award initiatives account for 70 out of a total of 192 cases. This represents a share of almost a third, the largest group in the sample of quality initiatives forming the object of investigation. The origin and dissemination of the initiatives are driven by dynamic processes characterised by mutual inspiration and cooperation of the Chambers. Two basic types of award initiatives have emerged. Firstly, there are closed programmes which came into being at an earlier time and which do not stipulate application on the part of companies providing training. Secondly, we have open programmes, in which active application by companies providing training is part of the scheme.

The stated objective of most initiatives is to foster the attractiveness of dual training. Depending on the basic type and variety, different sub-goals can be identified. These are reflected in methodologically differing programme structures and in fundamental understandings of quality.

The group of open award programmes, which occur more than twice as frequently as closed programmes in the sample studied, is essentially aligned to two sub-goals. Both of these aim to facilitate trainee recruitment. Firstly, the intention is that the awarding of marks of quality or similar will create visibility in respect of the quality of training certified via the award programmes (training marketing). The second goal is to use the award programmes as a vehicle to encourage companies both to make the quality of training more transparent and to enhance quality. Depending on the type of programme, the Chambers put support services and monitoring procedures of differing depth of detail in place. This is why the degrees of dissemination achieved by the programmes vary in turn. In the case of the open programme variety on the basis of self-commitment and a jury decision, companies are able to pursue further development by undertaking their own examination of the catalogues of criteria or questions as these relate to quality of training. There are no systematised external checks of the self-assessments documented by the companies. Instead, the principle followed is much more geared to self-commitment and self-monitoring by the companies. This variety makes it possible for more companies to undergo the stipulated processes and achieve certification than is the case with the open type of programme including guidance support and an optional audit. The reason for this lies in the differing amounts of expenditure involved. In the latter type of programme, documentation which has been methodologically and didactically prepared is offered for the purpose of self-study and self-assessment. Also, depending on requirements, such programmes may stipulate multi-layered in-house guidance from external experts. An official audit procedure can ensue once this phase has been concluded. Certification may then be awarded at the end of the audit.

Both varieties of open award initiatives support companies in examining the issue of how they could improve their own quality of training via the materials made available and via individualised guidance which may be provided. This does not apply to the closed award programmes in the same way.

The purpose of these schemes is to confer awards which will make companies stand out as beacons in order to encourage imitation by other firms. Such initiatives do not primarily focus on how or via which means an enhanced quality of training can be achieved. The older closed award initiatives identified within the scope of the present project also originated at a time

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19 In this case, the company receives a metal shield which is larger than the standard award plaque. The shield states that the "TOP" award in question has been conferred for the tenth time.

when large numbers of young people were competing for too few training places. These award initiatives thus sought to recognise companies which reliably offered as many good-quality training places as possible.

A detailed examination of the award initiatives identified shows that the award formats have their basis in varying understandings of quality (quality as excellence, quality as transformation) which are then interpreted with differing degrees of strictness. It is clear that the more exclusive an award is, the lower the chances will be that other companies will achieve it. This high level of exclusivity has its foundation in a definition of quality which sees quality as excellence or as an exception. It is primarily to be found in the closed formats. Open award programmes, on the other hand, are achievable for all companies by dint of their very nature. They offer the opportunity of application and tend to interpret excellence less stringently.

We may conclude that the bulk of programmes seek to raise awareness amongst companies providing training and to *empower* them by offering incentives and frequently also support for them to undertake a systematic examination of the quality of their own training. Many award initiatives adopt the view that it is necessary to pursue quality endeavours which extend beyond the minimum standards statutorily enshrined in the BBiG in order to tackle current problems. An inspection of the quality criteria underlying the quality initiatives surveyed served to clarify the quality understanding of the Chambers. The action area "Structuring of the training process" is the aspect which the identified quality criteria address most frequently. There is also a particular emphasis on the phases of "Recruitment" and "Implementation". From the point of view of the Chambers, therefore, these topics represent the most urgent starting points for companies providing training in terms of improving their own training quality. The analysis reveals that, with regard to implementation of training, the main focuses are on reflection upon planning documentation, on systematised communicative networking and on the evaluation of learning outcomes. With reference to the phase of trainee recruitment, the quality initiatives aim to use a variety of measures at the level of the company in order to actively facilitate points of access to training. The relevant quality criteria pursue the objective of addressing heterogeneous applicant groups, the aim being that the approach should be proactive and involve various measures. This is in line with the declared goal of the award initiatives to support companies in the recruitment of trainees. In overall terms, the study shows that the award initiatives of the Chambers urgently seek to accord serious consideration to all phases of the training process (recruitment, commencement, implementation, examination and employment upon completion of training) and to this extent to provide quality assurance regulations, activities and concepts.

The analysis of the quality criteria reveals a significant concentration at the company level (meso level, 79.2%). The remaining criteria relate to teaching/learning relationships (micro level). There are only a very small number of criteria which go beyond the level of the company with the aim of strengthening the functionality of the training system as a whole (macro level).

As can be read in Fischer et al. (2014, p. 154), teaching/learning processes are precisely the aspect which the statutory stipulations do not set out in precise detail. They are therefore able to elude direct state regulations. The award initiatives in particular take these areas of leeway as their starting point and also focus accordingly on the training relationship between trainers and trainees.

Training initiatives of the open type are especially likely to borrow from quality management systems. This is fundamentally expressed in the objective that the topic of quality should be addressed in a systematised way via comprehensible documentation. Award initiatives with an audit option are most closely related to quality management systems because endeavours to achieve enhanced quality are both documented as well as being evaluated and ultimately certi-

fied via accredited audit teams. All open award initiatives have, however, set themselves apart from their established quality management models in respect of the following points. They …

> … are lower threshold in respect of costs incurred and expenditure of time and human resources, something which is essential for the smallest category of companies and for small companies in particular.

> … are already specifically aligned to the quality-assured planning and implementation of training both thematically and in terms of content. Close attention is paid to process quality, with teaching/learning processes particularly at the fore.

> … reduce the burden on companies further by offering quality goals that are already specific and adaptable via the vehicle of underlying sets of quality criteria.

> … may include tools for specific deployment in day-to-day training practice and further support provision (individual guidance), particularly in the case of audit programmes.

In the instance of the audit procedures, the goal of broad appeal to companies is restricted in favour of individualised support for firms because of the limiting factor of resources. This also affects the point of participation costs. Whereas other award initiatives operate in a low-threshold manner by dint of the fact that they are largely offered free of charge, the high amount of resources needed for the audit programmes means that Chambers charge fees which may have a deterrent effect in some cases.[20]

Award initiatives thus embrace the essential structural characteristics of quality management systems via the idea of (re)certification of quality of training and via the fact that marks of quality etc. are awarded periodically. Most award initiatives therefore offer an opportunity for recertification. This supports the view that quality is a never-ending and continuous task and is reflected in the basic principles of well-known quality management systems in the form of the Deming cycle.[21]

We may conclude that the successful dissemination of award initiatives represents a requirement of the SMEs addressed to publicise the quality of their training via the initiatives offered.[22] The significant prevalence of award initiatives is also evidence of increased demand on the part of the companies over recent years for externally visible evaluation of company-based training quality and capacity. To this extent, the award initiatives supplement admission to training by the Chambers which, governed by the BBiG, represents the statutorily relevant "certification" of training competency of companies.

A historical consideration indicates that award initiatives have evolved into elaborated quality assurance concepts from an initial starting point of seeking to honour the best companies. The closed formats, which originated at an earlier point in time, seek to use identification of role models as a means of creating impetuses for endeavours to achieve good quality of training. The open award initiatives, which came along later, tend, on the other hand, to pursue a formative approach that places the emphasis on quality assurance throughout the whole of

20 Fees can add up, especially for SMEs with several branches.
21 In 2009, this principle of the continuity of quality endeavours was also recorded at a European level via the EQAVET Reference Framework, which was confirmed in a modified form in 2020 (see Council of the European Union 2020).
22 In informal discussions, one person in charge of a chamber award programme reported that chains operating at a national level would not take part because they perceived the scope of application of the award to be too small.

the training process and to direct participants towards an intensive examination of the quality of company-based training on the basis of self-evaluation. Not the least of the areas in which the innovation content of the quality initiatives is manifested is in the successful balancing act between the high level of thematic differentiation between the open award programmes in particular. Some of this is associated with the considerable demands placed on the companies and with the objectives of offering low-threshold programmes which are tailored towards the needs and resources situations of SMEs.

5   Conclusion

A high degree of importance is fundamentally attached to dual vocational education and training in Germany because of the good quality of training at the companies and because rapid progression to the labour market is thus facilitated following the conclusion of training. However, in light of demographic developments, continuing academisation of education and training pathways and other further challenges, there is no doubt that the quality level of company-based training programmes must continue to be ensured in a reliable manner and that constant ongoing development also needs to take place. This is the only way young people can continue to be persuaded of the merits of VET going forwards. It is also the sole means via which companies can permanently meet their needs for highly qualified workers with the requisite employability skills.

Quality assurance and quality development of training in Germany is a cross-sectional task that encompasses all levels of vocational education and training (BIBB 2017, pp. 36 ff.). This task definitely involves all relevant stakeholders, such as the social partners. It is regulated at the system level and implemented in training practice at the provider level. The intermediary level which lies between is of key significance. Given their statutory remit to monitor and ensure the proper execution of training (organisation of examinations, guidance and monitoring of companies providing training etc.), the chamber organisations in particular take on a key role in training quality.

As well as performing these regulatory activities relating to quality assurance, the Chambers have instigated numerous initiatives over recent years with the aim of achieving additional assurance and development of training quality at the company level. This provision, which addresses the topic of quality of training via formats such as „mark of quality" schemes, certificate programmes, training programmes and events, pursue the particular objective of fostering the attractiveness of dual training. For this reason, they are directed at companies providing training. Their emergence may be viewed as a reaction to changes on the training market, which are creating increasing challenges for SMEs in particular. The idea of quality assurance for education and training programmes which operate along the same lines of quality management systems had been generally "in the air" since the 1990s. But the quality management systems broadly introduced in other educational sectors (vocational schools, continuing training institutions) often proved inadequate for the needs of SMEs especially. Where such systems were deployed, they were found to be insufficiently specifically aligned to the area of training (SCHEIB/SPÖTTL/WINDELBAND 2008, p. 38; SCHRÖDER/WEBER/HÄFNER-WERNET 2015, p. 9). This circumstance and the changes on the training market provided the starting point and the occasion for the sorts of special initiatives which the Chambers offer companies in order to offer additional support for quality assurance.

The German National Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Training (DE-QA-VET) has undertaken the present study in order to create the first systematic inventory of such "quality initiatives" pursued by the chamber organisations. The overarching objective of the investigation was to obtain an overview of the multitude and diversity of the initiatives. The interest of the investigation was particularly directed towards the dissemination and origins of relevant provision and towards its topics, aims and structures. Because it quickly emerged at the start of the project that it would be possible to identify a sufficiently large number of quality initiatives, the decision was made to concentrate on HWK and IHK provision.

In order to take account of the extensive nature of the project, a multi-stage multi-methodological approach was selected which took literature research as its starting point and further

encompassed online research, a telephone survey and a standardised online questionnaire. This enabled the object of research to be observed and analysed from various angles and allowed several data sources to be included. The pool of datasets thus obtained was, depending on the issue at hand, subjected to qualitative and/or quantitative evaluation. It proved possible to reciprocally relate results from the individual stages of the investigation. The course of the investigation indicated at an early stage that award initiatives represent the most frequent, the most externally visible and the most elaborate form of quality initiative. For this reason, this type was subjected to a special evaluation. This permitted more detailed insights into this format and also produced superordinate findings since the relevant award programmes often also integrate training and guidance provision and tools for training practice.

On the basis of the large number of quality initiatives identified in overall terms and due to the multiple individual focuses, questions and methods used, the investigation succeeded in using the surveys to obtain numerous individual findings on the quality initiatives of the Chambers. In summary, these findings can be compacted to form the following conclusions.

▶ The quality initiatives, which extend beyond the regulatory activities of the Chambers enshrined in the BBiG, have now reached a significant degree of dissemination. This is shown by the fact that the total of 192 individual initiatives identified are spread across 100 of the 132 HWKs and IHKs and across all federal states (Ø 1.45 initiatives per chamber). The multitude of initiatives documents that the Chambers display considerable commitment beyond their statutorily stipulated tasks in the area of quality assurance and quality development of company-based training.

▶ The surveys show that the Chambers have been offering relevant support formats on an individual case basis since the 1990s. Most quality initiatives have, however, come into being since the 2010s, a period during which more and more sectors, occupations and areas in the training market turned into a provider market. Against this background, the superordinate objective of the initiatives is to provide companies with active assistance in the recruitment of trainees and therefore ultimately in securing a supply of skilled workers. The premise is to increase attractiveness of dual training by improving both training quality and evidence of training quality. To this extent, the growth in the dissemination of training initiatives down to the present day is also a development which has been provoked by crisis.

▶ The genesis of the quality initiatives is historically embedded in the rise of quality management systems in the area of vocational education and training. Whereas these have been extensively implemented in (vocational) schools and continuing training institutions, their deployment in the learning venue has been limited. Small companies in particular find quality management systems to be too resource-heavy and therefore lacking in practicability. Against the background that quality management systems are also not sufficiently aligned to the specific needs of training quality assurance at SMEs, the quality initiatives represent an alternative to quality management systems. Many of these initiatives fundamentally borrow from the principles and structural elements of quality management systems. This is expressed in the objective of examining the topic of quality of training in a systematised and structured way in line with a continuous improvement process (Deming cycle). Some initiatives also include a formalised auditing and certification procedure. Many, however, also expressly set themselves apart from their established role models in order to address the specific requirements of SMEs in a tailored way. They are designed to be low threshold (usually free of charge). They integrate guidance provision and practical tools and are also specifically aligned to requirements in the area of training. Unlike more formal quality management systems, many of the quality initiatives use predefined quality criteria and evaluation benchmarks to impart quality standards for training practice which are already concrete and have elaborated content. This makes it easier for companies to transfer the quality as-

surance concepts to company-based training practices and also facilitates implementation of the relevant measures and instruments.

▶ Despite the various natures of the formats, activities and provision which could be categorised as quality initiatives on the basis of the underlying definition, it proved possible to identify five main types of initiative, each of which offers different approaches towards quality assurance and quality development. These should be viewed as ideal types which can primarily be differentiated from one another in conceptual terms, and which are not clearly empirically delineable in every regard.

(1) Award initiatives

Award initiatives characterised by the circumstance that companies are recognised for their endeavours in the area of quality of training. This takes the form of the awarding of prizes or placement in ranking lists. Primarily, however, it involves the conferment of marks of quality. The range includes everything from initiatives aimed at making the efforts of companies providing training more visible externally and which therefore should be primarily localised at the level of marketing (summative quality assurance) to elaborate initiatives which also provide companies with support in the improvement of their training processes (formative quality assurance). The significant prevalence of award initiatives is also evidence of increased demand on the part of the companies over recent years for externally visible evaluation of company-based training quality and capacity. To this extent, the award initiatives supplement admission to training by the Chambers which, governed by the BBiG, represents the statutorily relevant "certification" of training competency of companies.

A historical consideration allows an evolution of award initiatives to be identified. Award initiatives have evolved into elaborated quality assurance concepts from an initial starting point of seeking to honour the best companies. The closed formats, which originated at an earlier point in time (a small number of companies being sought out), seek to use identification of role models as a means of creating impetuses for endeavours to achieve good quality of training. By way of contrast, the open award initiatives, which came along later (companies apply actively), seek to appeal to a broad range of companies via a direct route. They place the emphasis on quality assurance of the training process and guide participants towards an intensive examination of the quality of company-based training on the basis of self-evaluation. The certification processes pursued by "mark of quality" programmes with an optional audit orient themselves most clearly towards the logics of quality management but set themselves apart from their role models in respect of a number of key points in order to take account of the specific requirements of SMEs.

The time-limited validity of certificates and the resultant recertification option reflect the basic notion of a quality development cycle and are thus in accordance with the maxim of endeavouring to achieve continuous quality improvement (pursuant to the Deming cycle). This principle is also applied at a European level in the EQAVET Reference Framework. Further correlations with European requirements can be found with regard to the use of quality criteria, which in many cases can be aligned to EQAVET indicators.

(2) Training initiatives

Training initiatives encompass teaching/learning provision that aims to impart specialist knowledge, methods and competencies and to this extent primarily pursue an educational function. They may involve lectures, seminars, trainer academies, courses and workshops via which contents and methods relating to every aspect of the topic of quality are taught in a didactically prepared way. Training initiatives thus constitute a central vehicle for the training of VET staff and support successful teaching/learning processes.

(3) Guidance initiatives

Within the scope of guidance initiatives, companies receive guidance and support with regard to their endeavours to develop the quality of their training further. Unlike in training initiatives, the emphasis is on the specific objectives of individual companies. The idea is to enter into dialogue with training managers to work out specific areas of potential action and possible practical solutions which can then be used to inform respective company-based training practice. At the same time, guidance initiatives also represent a means of quality control.

(4) Networking initiatives

The aim of networking initiatives is to facilitate communication between various stakeholders with responsibility for VET quality in order to ensure that training is perceived, coordinated and structured as a common task. Networks, working groups, trainer forums and round tables create a platform for knowledge transfer on content-related, didactic and organisational questions related to structuring training in a high-quality way. There is a particular focus on networking between colleagues on experiences relating to dealing with training problems in a practical manner within the scope of a *peer learning* approach. Within this context, the Chambers mostly assume a coordinating function.

(5) Tools

Initiatives of this type involve the development of work materials and aids suitable for use in everyday training practice which are then made available to the company. The aim is to provide practice-related support to companies with their efforts in the area of quality assurance and quality development. This may involve instruments which can be used to diagnose quality of training, to professionalise training planning and to support evaluation of and reflection upon teaching/learning outcomes. This type of quality initiative further encompasses the development and dissemination of guides on the topic of quality of training.

▶ Despite all the differences in approach and methodology, one common feature of the various types of quality initiative is that they seek to encourage awareness on the part of companies of the relevance of the topic of quality of training. Most initiatives also offer support to enable a continuous and systematic examination of training quality to take place. The formats used for this purpose may be set out comprehensively in terms of content, but they can also focus on specific main topics. Although challenges such as the integration of refugees or digitalisation are addressed, the core emphasis is placed on the training of staff who provide training. This shows that the Chambers believe that the professionalisation and continuing training of training staff is the central action area in quality assurance of company-based training.

▶ Most of the minimum standards for quality assurance of company-based training stipulated at the system level relate to the input and output dimensions of quality and permit wide leeway for the structuring of training processes against the background of different company sizes and sectors. The quality initiatives address precisely these areas by placing particular emphasis on process quality of training, thus according consideration to the specific company realities of SMEs. To this extent, the initiatives aim to cover the whole process of the structuring of training from the point of view of quality assurance aspects. The relevant quality criteria provide numerous suggestions for approaching heterogeneous groups of trainees in a proactive way, for example, or for the conducting of feedback procedures (see Chapter 4.7.8). The realisation that the vast majority of the criteria consists of qualitative descriptors rather than of quantifiable indicators reinforces the finding that the aspect of control and of external evaluation is secondary to the goals of awareness building and of fostering self-empowerment.

▶ The quality initiatives instigated by the Chambers thus constitute a supplementary, innovative and diverse set of instruments to promote quality of training which they can use to support SMEs with the development of a culture of quality. The Chambers do not primarily opt for means of external control and monitoring for this purpose. Instead, the emphasis is placed much more on the notion of "empowerment", i.e. focusing on the ability and intrinsic motivation of the companies for self-evaluation and self-improvement. Not the least of the areas in which the innovation content of the quality initiatives is manifested is in the evidently successful balancing act between the high level of thematic differentiation between many of the programmes, some of which is associated with the considerable demands placed on the companies, and, on the other hand, the objective of offering low-threshold programmes which are tailored towards the needs and resources situations of SMEs.

The plethora and various structures of the quality initiatives recorded document the considerable commitment and creative ideas which the chamber organisations bring to bear in order to provide additional support for the quality of company-based training. In thematic terms, the vast majority of provision extends beyond the statutorily regulated minimum standards and thus addresses the leeway afforded to companies in the way they structure training. Quality initiatives therefore offer support for successful training practice. Given the challenge of developing and securing a supply of motivated skilled workers, this is a particularly key aspect for SMEs. It is not uncommon for the initiatives to link in with the instruments and measures developed in the "Quality development and assurance in company-based vocational education and training" pilot project (cf. SCHEMME/PFAFFE 2016) and for them to be compatible with the recommendations derived. This may also be viewed as a positive indication of sustainable transfer of the results of pilot projects.

   The overarching goal of the present investigation was to use a systematic inventory of quality initiatives to produce an initial descriptive survey of the dissemination and structuring and therefore also of the relevance of the quality initiatives instigated by the Chambers. Even though we did not succeed in demonstrably fulfilling the objective of fully recording all quality initiatives, the representative results achieved enable basic empirical and analytical knowledge on the topic to be presented for the first time. This knowledge can be propagated and can also be used as a starting point for subsequent studies. The present investigation has supplied new and fundamental findings regarding the diversity of quality assurance approaches and instruments at the intermediary level. Nevertheless, the crucial question of the impacts, effectiveness and effects of the relevant initiatives remains open. This study has only permitted the derivation of a small number of findings and conclusions in respect of the extent to and the conditions under which the endeavours and commitment reflected in the many quality initiatives actually make a demonstrable contribution to the individual factors of action areas of quality of

training (training of the training staff etc.). A further question which arises within this context is whether the quality initiatives represent a top-down phenomenon seen from the intermediary level or whether it is more likely that their genesis should be localised as *bottom-up*, i.e. ultimately initiated by the companies providing training. Further research projects could take this as a starting point. The project implementers would also be pleased if the present study encourages the dissemination in company-based training of the quality assurance approaches they have investigated. In this way, our investigation would be able to help support the further development of such approaches. A further desire would be for the project results to encourage mutual inspiration and the exchange of experiences and ideas between providers.

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Annex

Annex 1: Online questionnaire

Welcome!

We are delighted to receive your assistance with the project "Quality initiatives of intermediary institutions in the dual system".

The Chambers support companies providing training in many different ways and thus make an indispensable contribution towards ensuring and fostering the quality of training. As well as performing their general regulatory activities in the area of quality assurance (training guidance, organisation of examinations), many Chambers have instigated special activities over recent years – information campaigns and workshops on the topic of training quality, competitions, certificate programmes, marks of quality schemes etc.

We would like to use this questionnaire to learn more about the diversity and dissemination of such "quality initiatives". Our aim is to create greater visibility of the considerable commitment and creative ideas of the Chambers in the area of company-based training. Although we are placing the focus on quality initiatives, we are, of course, also interested within this context in your general quality assurance endeavours within the scope of the usual regulatory activities.

Each time the questionnaire is completed, a single "quality initiative" will be recorded. If an institution offers more than one initiative, please fill in the questionnaire the appropriate number of times. This is the only way to guarantee complete and comprehensive recording. You will be provided with further notifications regarding this once the questionnaire has been completed for the first time. It should take around 10-15 minutes to complete each time. The survey period ends on 21 August 2020.

You may interrupt the questionnaire at any point and return later. To ensure that your information is saved, please click on the "Continue later" button located top right.

You can begin the questionnaire by clicking on "Next" once you have provided your consent to our privacy policy.

Further information on the project is available here.

Thank you!

Helena Sabbagh (Project Head) and Moritz Ansmann (academic researcher)

If you have any queries or experience any technical problems, please contact the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) // DEQA-VET

Tel.: 0228/107-1528, Email: qualitaetsinitiativen@bibb.de

Please click here to accept the privacy policy.

Show privacy policy   **Next**

About quality initiatives for company-based training

Important information

Your institution supports companies in the implementation of training in many different ways. Our initial interest below is in any "quality initiatives" your organisation has instigated which extend beyond general regulatory activities.

For the purpose of the following questionnaire, "quality initiatives" are deemed to be all measures, projects, programmes and provision that...

- aim to foster or recognise the quality of company-based training;
- are primarily directed towards companies providing training and their training staff and only towards trainees in the second instance;
- represent "special activities" by dint of the fact that they extend beyond the statutorily stipulated regulatory tasks of the Chambers.

These can be initiatives that are only just beginning or well established.

1* **Has your institution conducted a quality initiative in the area of company-based training during the past five years?**

- ◯ Yes, one quality initiative
- ◯ Yes, more than one quality initiative
- ◯ No

When providing your answer, please take account of both quality initiatives which have concluded and of quality initiatives which are still ongoing.

If you are unsure as to whether an initiative constitutes a quality initiative within the terms of the definition given above, please begin by categorising it as a quality initiative to begin with. We will check your response and contact you if necessary.

Please note

Please include only one quality initiative each time you complete the questionnaire. The final page contains a link which allows you to return to the start.

2 What were the reasons why your institution has not conducted a quality initiative in the past five years?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Some-what agree	Some-what disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Lack of resources	○	○	○	○	○	○
Focus on regulatory activities	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of interest from companies providing training	○	○	○	○	○	○
Poor prospects of success	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of commitment by cooperation partners	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of expertise	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other reasons	○	○	○	○	○	○

3 You selected "other reasons". Please take the opportunity to set these out in greater detail.

> [ ]

A response in the form of bullet points is sufficient.

4 Does your institution intend to introduce a quality initiative in the future?

- ◯   Yes
- ◯   No
- ◯   Don't know

5 What will be the main thematic focus of this quality initiative?

- ☐   No main focus
- ☐   Professionalisation of training staff
- ☐   Integration of refugees
- ☐   Integration of higher education dropouts
- ☐   Encouragement of participation by people with special support needs (inclusion)
- ☐   Digitalisation
- ☐   Cooperation between the learning venues of the school and the company
- ☐   Sustainability
- ☐   Other: [ ]

Please select all responses that apply.

About the specific quality initiative

Important information

Please answer the following questions for one individual quality initiative instigated by your institution.

6 In which year was the quality initiative launched?

Please state in year format (e.g. "2020").

7 Who developed the initiative?

○ We as an institution (e.g. VET committee) developed the initiative ourselves.

○ We developed the initiative in conjunction with one or more other institutions.

○ We adopted and adapted the idea for the initiative from a different institution.

○ We were not involved in the development ourselves.

○ Other

8 What is/was the form of your initiative?

☐ Award of a mark of quality to companies providing training

☐ Certification of companies providing training

☐ Competition possibly leading to an award for companies providing training

☐ Evaluation possibly leading to ranking of companies providing training

☐ Events relating to the topic of quality of training (e.g. workshops)

☐ Information material on the topic of quality of training (e.g. brochures, work materials)

☐   Other:

Please select all responses that apply.

9 What is/was the main thematic focus of the quality initiative?

☐   Digitalisation

☐   Professionalisation of training staff

☐   Integration of refugees

☐   Integration of higher education dropouts

☐   Encouragement of participation by people with special support needs (inclusion)

☐   Securing of good training

☐   Cooperation between the learning venues of the school and the company

☐   Sustainability

☐   Other:

Please select all responses that apply.

10 Are/were the companies providing training required to pay a fee for the provision?

○   Chargeable

○   Subject to a fee in some cases

○   Free of charge

11 Which methods are/were deployed?

☐   Self-information from the companies

☐   Survey of trainees

☐   Support guidance for the company (audit)

☐   External evaluation of the company

☐   Self-evaluation of the company

☐   Other:

Please select all responses that apply.

12 How often is/was the mark of quality or certificate awarded?

○ More than once a year

○ Annually

○ Every two years

○ Less frequently

○ Other: _____

13 How many companies providing training are/were awarded the mark of quality/certificate per cohort?

[ ]

An approximate answer is sufficient.

14 Do/did the companies providing training have a recertification option?

○ Yes

○ No

15 What type of quality initiative is it/was it?

○ Sector-specific quality initiative   ○ Cross-cutting quality initiative

16 What is/was the scope of the quality initiative?

○ Local scope

○ Regional scope

○ Transregional coverage

17 **In your estimation, what degree of interest is/was displayed in the quality initiative on the part of the companies providing training?**

○ Very large
○ Large
○ Quite large
○ Quite small
○ Small
○ Very small

Please take the opportunity to comment on your assessment.

18 Which of these goals does/did your institution associate with the quality initiative?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Some-what agree	Some-what agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Securing a supply of skilled workers	○	○	○	○	○	○
Maintaining contact with companies providing training	○	○	○	○	○	○
Promotion of quality of training	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dissemination of best practice	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dissemination of standards of good training	○	○	○	○	○	○
Monitoring of training quality	○	○	○	○	○	○
Diagnosis of problems of training	○	○	○	○	○	○
Recognition of good quality of training	○	○	○	○	○	○

About general endeavours in the area of quality assurance of company-based training

19 In which areas of general regulatory activities has your institution redoubled its efforts over the past five years in order to foster the quality of training?

☐ Guidance for companies

☐ Scrutiny of training suitability of companies

☐ Organisation and implementation of examinations

☐ Other

Please select all responses that apply.

20 Please set out which quality improvement measures have been instigated.

>

An answer in the form of bullet points is sufficient. You may leave this field blank if you have already answered this question whilst completing a previous questionnaire.

About your institution

21* On behalf of which type of institution are you

○ Chamber of Industry and Commerce

○ Chamber of Crafts

22 How many companies providing training are currently registered as members of your institution?

An approximate answer is sufficient.

23 In which federal state is your institution located?

- ○ Baden-Württemberg
- ○ Bavaria
- ○ Berlin
- ○ Brandenburg
- ○ Bremen
- ○ Hamburg
- ○ Hessen
- ○ Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
- ○ Lower Saxony
- ○ North Rhine-Westphalia
- ○ Rhineland-Palatinate
- ○ Saarland
- ○ Saxony
- ○ Saxony-Anhalt
- ○ Schleswig-Holstein
- ○ Thuringia

Information material on the quality initiative

All the information you have provided thus far will be evaluated in a completely anonymised form. Neither your institution nor you personally will be identifiable. Your responses to the following questions, however, will enable the project team to align answers to an institution internally.

Background
information

The objective of DEQA-VET is to create visibility of the diversity of the various quality initiatives of all institutions and thus facilitate networking between training partners. For this reason, we are planning to publish an overview of all initiatives on our website. This listing will include the name and a brief description of the initiative and perhaps also information material, a link to the

website of the initiative and the details of a point of contact. In the summary list, the names of the Chambers will not be stated and will also not be aligned to the quality initiatives.

We are reliant on your cooperation in this regard. We would therefore be very pleased if you could make the following information available to us and authorise its publication.

24 What is the name of the quality initiative?

25 What is the name of your institution?

Please state the name of your institution here. The name will not, of course, be published without your explicit consent.

26 May we include your quality initiative in the summary?

○ Yes
○ Yes if I am contacted beforehand
○ No

27 Please add a brief description of the quality initiative here.

Please take the opportunity to present your quality initiative in your own words (maximum of 1,000 characters). Alternatively, you may wish to send us a brief description by e-mail (qualitaetsinitiativen@bibb.de), including the name of the initiative.

28 What is the address of the website of the quality initiative?

Please state the URL of the website on which interested parties can obtain further information on the quality initiative.

29 It would help us greatly if you could provide us with information material about the quality initiative. You may add links to relevant files here.
Alternatively, you may wish to send us information material by email to qualitaetsinitiative@bibb.de , including the name of the initiative.

30 May we upload the information material provided to our website and provide a link to it?

○ Yes

○ Yes if I am contacted beforehand

○ No.

Finally

31 Is there anything else you wish to tell us? Please take the opportunity to do so here.

You have reached the end of the questionnaire. Please click on "Send" to submit your responses.

Send

You have completed the questionnaire, and your answers have been saved. Please click here to go back to the start of the questionnaire if you would like to provide information on a further quality initiative.

>> To the start of the questionnaire <

Thank you very much for taking part!

We will notify you by email of the project results in due course.

You may also view the latest status of progress at any time by visiting the project website.

Any queries should be directed to: DEQA-

VET

Deutsche Referenzstelle für Qualitätssicherung in

der beruflichen Bildung – German National

Reference Point for Quality Assurance in

Vocational Training

Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung

[*Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training]* (BIBB)

Division 4.2 – Innovations in Continuing Training,

Permeability,

Pilot Projects

Tel.: 0228/107-1528

Email: qualitaetsinitiativen@bibb.de

Annex 2: List of quality initiatives

Results of the online questionnaire*

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format**	Chamber type	Website
1	Trainer working groups	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-lahndill.de/bildung/ausbildungsberatung/informationen-fuer-ausbildungs-betriebe/uebersicht-der-ausbilde-rarbeitskreise-3667362
2	TOP training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.osnabrueck.ihk24.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/ausbildung/ausbildungsbe-triebe/ihk-top-ausbildungsbe-trieb-2778060
3	Certification campaign for companies providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
4	Together for training	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
5	Craft trade sector talking and remaining attractive (higher education dropouts, Kausa service agency, avoidance of training dropouts, transition from school to work)	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
6	Exemplary companies providing training in the IHK region (publication in the IHK magazine and regional press)	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
7	South Westphalia Mark of Quality	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.ihk-siegen.de
8	Trainer forum, exemplary company providing training	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	
9	TOP company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.neubrandenburg.ihk.de/TOP-Ausbildungsbetrieb
10	IHK honours the best	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www. neubrandenburg.ihk.de
11	Training courses for trainers – "Tips and tricks for attractive companies providing training"	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www. neubrandenburg.ihk.de
12	Quality in training	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-luebeck.de/aus-bildung/fuer-ausbildungsbetriebe/qualitaet-in-der-ausbildung.html
13	House of training	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
14	Training quality at craft trade companies	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	www.hwk-flensburg.de

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format**	Chamber type	Website
15	primAQ Training quality in the craft trades	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-hannover.de/primaq
16	Alliance for quality and attractiveness of training in the hospitality sector	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
17	Qualioffensive	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
18	Making effective use of practical placements	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
19	IHK network of company-based trainers	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.ihkrt.de/nw-ausbilder
20	Trainer academy	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.reutlingen.ihk.de/weiterbildung/ihk-aus-bilder-akademie/
21	"Successful training – securing the quality of training"	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.erfolgreich-ausgebil-det.de/
22	Employability skills in company-based training	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
23	Annual award procedure for conferment of the title "Best company providing training" in the chamber district	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
24	Award of the Cottbus Chamber of Crafts training prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-cottbus.de/artikel/ausbildungspre-is-der-handwerkskam-mer-cottbus-2020-7,0,5346.html
25	"Apprentice of the month" award	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-cottbus.de/artikel/unsere-besten-lehrlinge-7,883,734.html
26	IHK mark of quality for excellent quality of training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-berlin.de/aus-bildung/infos-fuer-ausbildungs-betriebe/ihk-siegel-fuer-ausbil-dungsexzellenz
27	Berlin's best companies providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://beste-ausbildungsbetriebe.berlin/
28	Trainer breakfasts	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
29	IHK day seminars "Up to speed for VET" for both trainees and companies	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
30	"Trainer workshop"	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.ihk-berlin.de/ausbilderw-erkstatt

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format**	Chamber type	Website
31	QiA – Quality in company-based training	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://hwk-do.de/artikel/qual-itaetsinitiative-in-der-ausbil-dung-37,38,76.html
32	Quality assurance in vocational education and training	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-nuernberg.de/de/IHK-Magazin-WiM/WiM-Archiv/WIM-Daten/2018-07/business/qualitaetsarbeit
33	Quality assurance in vocational education and training	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-nuernberg.de/de/Geschaeftsbereiche/Berufsbil-dung/Ausbildung/schwierigkeit-en-in-der-ausbildung/
34	Quality assurance in vocational education and training	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
35	Quality assurance in vocational education and training	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-nuernberg.de/de/Geschaeftsbereiche/Berufsbil-dung/Ausbildung/schwierigkeit-en-in-der-ausbildung/
36	Quality in training "QidA"	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-oldenburg.de/ausbildung/infos-fuer-betrie-be#c8dd95207-2e28-4162-b2bc-ce27d69dbd5a
37	Foundation layer	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
38	Quality campaign "The trainer promise" in conjunction with the Baden-Württemberg branch of the German Hotel and Restaurant Association (DEHOGA)	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.dehogabw.de/ser-vicecenter/servicecenter-details/ausbilderversprechen.html
39	Jobstarter project "Q-net Handwerk – quality for compa-nies providing training"	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-ufr.de/ar-tikel/q-net-handwerk-qual-itaet-fuer-ausbildende-be-triebe-78,0,5418.html
40	Competition TOP company pro-viding training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.halle.ihk.de/bildung/veranstaltungen/auszeichnungen/bewerbung-top-ausbildungsbe-trieb-2018-4128010
41	primAQ	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	www.hwkhalle.de/primaq
42	Exemplary companies provid-ing training of the Halle (Saale) Chamber of Crafts	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
43	Training innovation prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
44	Quality in training folder	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	www.hwk.de/Ausbildung
45	Training mark of quality, net-working on hotel and restaurant occupations	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format**	Chamber type	Website
46	Training service portal/digital report book	Tool	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://ausbildung-weiterdenken.ihk.de/
47	Preventative guidance and workshops to increase training quality and for the purpose of employer branding/trainee marketing	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
48	Trainer working groups, meet-up for new companies/trainers providing training, IHK training conference	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
49	Company providing training 2019/2020	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
50	Empowering people – strengthening trade and industry prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
51	Champion award	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
52	"TOP TRAINING" mark of quality	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-oldenburg.de/geschaeftsfelder/ausbildungweiterbildung/ausbildung/informationen-fuer-ausbildungsbetriebe/top-ausbildung-4081026
53	Trainer practice workshops	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.darmstadt.ihk.de/produktmarken/aus-und-weiter-bildung-channel/ausbilder-prax-is-workshops/4366972
54	Training network	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.darmstadt.ihk.de/servicemarken/ausbilder-und-azubis/netzwerk-ausbildung-4445928
55	"Presentation and workshop provision" and "Trainer training camp"	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-oldenburg.de/system/veranstaltungssuche/suche/4095976
56	"Training 1+2"	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-oldenburg.de/geschaeftsfelder/ausbildung-weiterbildung/fluechtlinge-in-tegrieren/projekt-ausbil-dung-1-2--4514266
57	TOP training company award	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.gera.ihk.de/ausbil-dung-weiterbildung/ausbildung/top-ausbildungsunternehmen/top-ausbildungsunternehmen-os-tthueringen-4387144

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format**	Chamber type	Website
58	Project: Successful training – securing/fostering the quality of training conducted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Baden-Württemberg	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.erfolgreich-ausgebil-det.de/
59	Training prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-stuttgart.de/artikel/ausbildungspreis-anerken-nung-fuer-besonderes-engage-ment-67,63,636.html
60	Trainer day/trainer breakfast and brochures and check lists for companies	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	
61	Quality in training	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	
62	Top company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-heilbronn.de/artikel/qualitaetssiegel-top-aus-bildungsbetrieb-62,0,5842.html
63	Quality development in company-based vocational education and training	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.weingarten.ihk.de
64	2020 "Outstanding company providing training" award in the hotel and restaurant sector	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://hervorragend.ihk-trier.de/
65	HOGANEXT	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.hoganext.de
66	Excellent company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-trier.de
67	Quality in company-based training	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	
68	Company-based training – from planning to success	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
69	Together for training (GemA)	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-pfalz.de/artikel/gemeinsam-fuer-ausbildung-er-folgreich-ausbilden-51,0,3242.html
70	TOP TRAINING – IHK mark of quality for companies providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.hannover.ihk.de/top-aus-bildung
71	Certificate system	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
72	Outstanding company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.erfurt.ihk.de/bildung/ausbildung/informa-tionen-fuer-ausbildungsbetriebe/hevorragender-ausbildungsbe-trieb-390060

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format**	Chamber type	Website
73	IHK mark of quality for excellent quality of training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
74	Trainer networking	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.handelskammer-bremen.de/
75	Audit of examination results – report by retraining providers	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
76	Practical placement coach	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	www.hwk-trier.de/praktikums-coach
77	Successful training – securing the quality of training	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	www.erfolgreich-ausgebildet.de
78	Training quality	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
79	Exemplary company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
80	Exemplary company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
81	TOP training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.ihk-lueneburg.de/topausbildung
82	TOP company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
83	IHKLW training network	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-lueneburg.de/produkte/aus-und-weiterbildung/ausbildung/ausbildernetzwerktreffen-3913460
84	TOP company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
85	"Quality in training"	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	
86	Securing the quality of training	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	www.ulm.ihk24.de
87	Low-threshold complaints management	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.stmas.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/stmas_internet/berufsbildung/20161207_anlage5.pdf
88	IHK mark of quality for excellent quality of training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-ostbrandenburg.de/produktmarken/aus-weiterbildung/weitere-informationen/ihk-siegel-fuer-exzellente-ausbildungsqualitaet-3133400

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format**	Chamber type	Website
89	Hoga next/excellent company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
90	MOVE! for higher education study dropouts, cooperation network between schools and trade and industry in the Mettmann district, Welcome guides (BMWI project for refuges) and further untitled internal measures	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
91	TOP training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.stade.ihk24.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/berufsorientierung/infos-fuer-unternehmen/allgemeine-infos/top-ausbildungsbetrieb-4441794
92	Quality improvement in training in the hospitality sector	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
93	Quality partnership with selected companies	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
94	Workshops and seminars for trainers and trainees	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.stade.ihk24.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/weiterbildung/fuer-ausbilder-und-dozenten/ausbilderarbeitskreise-workshops-3314102
95	Training service portal	Tool	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.stade.ihk24.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/ausbildung/ihk-serviceportal-bildung2-4851562
96	Implementation of an annual award for best trainees and best companies providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
97	Trainee speed dating	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.stade.ihk24.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/berufs-orientierung/infos-fuer-unternehmen/termine-aktionen/azubi-speeddating-1703942
98	IHK training ambassadors	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.stade.ihk24.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/berufsorientierung/infos-fuer-schulen/ausbildungsbotschafter-1701012
99	HoGa Quality campaign	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
100	Increasing quality of training	Multi-format	Chamber of Crafts	www.hwk-hamburg.de
101	JOBSTARTER plus project "More training quality in the craft trades sector in Hamburg (MAQIH)"	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	www.hwk-hamburg.de/maqih

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format**	Chamber type	Website
102	Training of apprentice wardens	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	

Apart from the "Format" column, the information contained in the "Online questionnaire" table is based on the statements made by participants during the online survey, which ran from July until the end of September 2020. The same applies in respect of missing information.

** Most quality initiatives can be aligned to more than one format. The designation "multi-format" was only used if no primary allocation was possible.*

Results of the online research***

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format ****	Chamber type	Website*****
103	Company providing training of the year	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-swf.de/artikel/ausbildungsbe-trieb-des-jahres-38,99,46.html
104	1 plus 3	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.coburg.ihk.de/778-0-1plus3.html
105	Attractiveness check	Tool	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.dortmund.ihk24.de/bildung/ausbildung/attraktivi-taetscheck-testen-sie-ihren-be-trieb-305362
106	Welcome guides	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.duesseldorf.ihk.de/produktmarken/ausbildung/fluechtlinge-und-auslaen-dische-arbeitnehmer/initia-tive-willkommenslotse-3470784
107	Quality initiative hospitality training	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Qualitätsinitiative gastgewerbliche Ausbildung – IHK Schleswig-Hol-stein (ihk-schleswig-holstein.de)
108	Welcome guides	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Willkommenslotsen Flüchtling-skoordinatoren – IHK Schle-swig-Holstein (ihk-schleswig-hol-stein.de)
109	Quality initiative hospitality training	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Qualitätsinitiative gastgewerbliche Ausbildung – IHK Schleswig-Hol-stein (ihk-schleswig-holstein.de)
110	Good hosts. Responsible hos-pitality	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-schleswig-hol-stein.de/servicemarken/presse/specials/nachhaltiger-touris-mus/ausbildung-gastgewer-be-1363100
111	Top company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-koeln.de/artikel/handwerkskam-mer-ehrt-top-ausbildungsbe-triebe-2018-32,0,1730.html
112	Welcome guides	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Willkommenslotsen Flüchtling-skoordinatoren – IHK Schle-swig-Holstein (ihk-schleswig-hol-stein.de)

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format ****	Chamber type	Website*****
113	MeinAzubiOldenburg	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-oldenburg.de/geschaeftsfelder/ausbildungweiterbildung/ausbildung/fachkrafteberatung/projekt-meinazubioldenburg--4504052
114	Mark of quality TOP training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Qualitätssiegel »TOP Ausbildung« – Exzellenz sichtbar machen
115	Exemplary company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.chemnitz.ihk24.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/ausbildungsbetrieb/vorbildlicher-ausbildungsbetrieb-4675822
116	Premium company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.frankfurt-main.ihk.de/imperia/md/content/pdf/berufsbildung/ausbildung/gastropaten/bewerbungsbogen_premium-ausbildungsbetrieb.pdf
117	TOP TRAINING	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-emden.de/produktmarken/bildung/ausbildung/ihk-qualitaetssiegel-top-ausbildung-kopie-4460206
118	IHK training prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.magdeburg.ihk.de/bildung/ausbildung-2-/fuer-ausbilderinnen/bildungspreis-2016-3328258
119	Best company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-krefeld.de/de/bildung/veranstaltungen/ihk-bestenehrung2/Beste-Ausbildungsbetriebe.html#
120	1A Excellent company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.nordschwarzwald.ihk24.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/ausbildung/informationen-fuer-schueler-und-eltern/ausgezeichnete-ausbildungsbetriebe-2967542
121	Training prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-aachen.de/ausbildungspreis.html
122	IHK mark of quality for excellent quality of training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-ostbrandenburg.de/produktmarken/aus-weiterbildung/weitere-informationen/ihk-siegel-fuer-exzellente-ausbildungsqualitaet-3133400
123	TOP company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-potsdam.de/servicemarken/presse/startseitenbeitraege/neuer-inhalt170418-top-ausbilder-gesucht-3711412

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format ****	Chamber type	Website*****
124	Excellent company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-trier.de/p/Leyendecker_HolzLand_ist_Ausgezeichneter_Ausbildungsbetrieb-7-18278.html
125	Outstanding company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-koblenz.de/bildung/ausbildung/auszeichnung-hervorragender-ausbildungsbetrieb-der-hotellerie-u-1487902
126	TOP company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-schleswig-holstein.de/servicemarken/presse/pressemitteilungen/pressemeldungen-lue/pressemeldungen-hl-0705/ihk-hl-ausbildungsaward-edeka-scandlines-4432228
127	TOP company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.rostock.ihk24.de/aus_und_weiterbildung/TOP_Ausbildungsbetrieb
128	TOP company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihkzuschwerin.de/bildung/Top_Ausbildungsbetrieb/top-ausbildungsbetrieb2/4397874
129	Walter Hartwig Prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-chemnitz.de/ausbildung/waehrend-der-ausbildung/walter-hartwig-preis/#:~:text=Mit%20dem%20Walter%2DHartwig%2DPreis,Walter%2DHartwig%2DPreis%20gew%C3%BCrdigt
130	Successful training brochure	Tool	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-lahndill.de/blueprint/servlet/resource/blob/4043042/7f3a8cdd4b-6f7f0b6637482d54d39f8b/erfolgreich-ausbilden-data.pdf
131	Assisted training	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.handelskammer-bremen.de/ausbildung-und-weiterbildung/berufliche-ausbildung/ausbildungsbetriebe/assistierte-ausbildung-2637112
132	Handbook on improving quality in training	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-bls.de/artikel/qualitaet-in-der-ausbildung-verbessern-22,0,411.html
133	Workbooks	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-cottbus.de/artikel/mit-qualitaet-ausbilden-das-beste-argument-fuer-die-nachwuchsgewinnung-7,0,1321.html

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format ****	Chamber type	Website*****
134	Quality quick check for companies providing training	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-pfalz.de/artikel/qualitaets-quick-check-fuer-ausbildungsbetriebe-51,0,2458.html
135	QEK analysis instrument	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-dresden.de/Ausbildung/Duale-Ausbildung/Ausbildungsqualität
136	Training quality guide	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	http://www.gute-ausbildung-handwerk.de/www/guteausbildung/
137	Workshop series for companies on the topic of "Quality in training"	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-ufr.de/artikel/ausbildung-lohnt-sich-78,2290,3015.html
138	Federal state programme "Future opportunity of assisted training"	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://hwkhalle.de/zaa/
139	Mark of training quality	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-do.de/de/ausbildung/siegel-fuer-ausbildungsqualitaet
140	BeAm – external training management in line with needs (Jobstarter+)	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-hildesheim.de/artikel/dem-fachkraeftemangel-aktiv-begegnen-24,631,1613.html
141	Information and work material on "Quality in training"	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-hildesheim.de/artikel/dem-fachkraeftemangel-aktiv-begegnen-24,631,1613.html
142	Securing the quality of training	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-karlsruhe.de/downloads/flyer-ausbildungsqualitaet-sichern-2019-63,646.pdf
143	"Development of quality standards in company-based training"	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://hwk-koblenz.de/downloads/ausbildung-begleiten-abbrueche-vermeiden-flyer-52,668.pdf
144	Graswurzel QES pilot project	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-konstanz.de/artikel/analysieren-ueberpruefen-anpassen-64,628,274.html
145	Series of events "Securing quality of training"	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	
146	VORAUS	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-konstanz.de/artikel/so-funktioniert-das-neue-zertifikat-fuer-vorbildliche-ausbildungsbetriebe-64,0,1024.html
147	"Tried and tested company providing training"	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-leipzig.de/artikel/bewaehrter-ausbildungsbetrieb-im-handwerk-3,0,691.html

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format ****	Chamber type	Website*****
148	Quick check training quality	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-luebeck.de/ausbildung/fuer-ausbildungsbe-triebe/qualitaet-in-der-ausbil-dung.html
149	Federal state programme "Future opportunity of assisted training"	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-magde-burg.de/artikel/fuer-be-triebe-16,1143,3496.html
150	Award "Exemplary company providing training"	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-dresden.de/Service/Veranstaltungen-Ehrun-gen-und-Betriebsjubiläen/Ver-anstaltungsrückblick/2014/-Vor-bildliche-Ausbildungsbe-triebe-2014-ausgezeichnet
151	Training guidance dialogue	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-mannheim.de/artikel/ausbildungsber-atung-im-dialog-65,0,5042.html
152	Company meeting	Networking initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-mannheim.de/artikel/unternehmertreff-en-65,0,4767.html
153	Work material for companies on "Quality of training" based on the ZWH Handbook	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	
154	"MACHEN" project (Jobstarter+)	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwkno.de/artikel/machen-mit-ausbildung-chan-cen-im-handwerk-ergreifen-und-nutzen-76,3705,11210.html
155	Trainer breakfast	Networking initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-oldenburg.de/artikel-termine-und-veran-staltungen/qualifizierte-gesell-innen-und-gesellen
156	Qualified journeymen	Training initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-oldenburg.de/artikel-termine-und-veran-staltungen/qualifizierte-gesell-innen-und-gesellen
157	Rhinehessen Foundation Craft Trade Prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk.de/stiftung-rheinhessischer-handw-erkspreis/
158	STIFT Training Prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-suedthuerin-gen.de/artikel/ausbildungspre-is-stift-2019-6,0,266.html
159	Award "Exemplary company providing training"	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-erfurt.de/ar-tikel/vorbildliche-ausbildungsbe-triebe-ausgezeichnet-4,308,483.html
160	Training experience group	Networking initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-ulm.de/2018-02-10-zusammenarbe-it-fuer-eine-erfolgreiche-nach-wuchskraeftegewinnung/

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format ****	Chamber type	Website*****
161	Successful training – securing the quality of training	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-ulm.de/20171214-pm-damit-die-ausbildung-glueckt/
162	Work material on quality in training	Tool	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-koeln.de/downloads/bestellbogen-fuer-den-ordner-qualitaet-in-der-ausbildung-32,1501.pdf
163	Strong for training	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.aachen.ihk.de/bildung/initiativen/stark-fuer-ausbildung-3323760#titleInText2
164	Making it in Germany – supporting integration together	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.darmstadt.ihk.de/produktmarken/aus-und-weiterbildung-channel/ausbildung-channel/ausbildung-fluechtlinge-integrieren-2746498
165	Good training – quality at small companies	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.darmstadt.ihk.de/produktmarken/aus-und-weiterbildung-channel/weiterbildung/foerderung/foerderung-der-systeme-3603190
166	Trainer academy	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.saarland.ihk.de/p/Die_Ausbilderakademie__Ein_Angebot_der_IHK_Saarland-2036.html
167	Excellent trainers	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.frankfurt-main.ihk.de/berufsbildung/marktplatz/projekte/exzellenteausbilder/index.html
168	"3x6" packages of measures	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.frankfurt-main.ihk.de/berufsbildung/ausbildung/3x-6massnahmenpaket/ausbildungsqualitaet/index.html
169	Brandenburg Training Prize	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.azubi-ostbrandenburg.de/2019/11/21/brandenburgischer-ausbildungspreis-2019/
170	Quality platform in company-based training	Tool	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.frankfurt-main.ihk.de/berufsbildung/ausbildung/plattform_qualitaet/index.html
171	Good training in the hospitality sector	Tool	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-emden.de/blueprint/servlet/resource/blob/2354978/45b00edca3626ce91b957d8dc5cc05db/gut-ausbilden-im-gastgewerbe-4--data.pdf
172	Practical placements, introductory training and training for refugees	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.rheinhessen.ihk24.de/aus-weiterbildung/ausbildungsberatung/fluechtlinge/aktionsplan-ihk-integriert-3767468

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format ****	Chamber type	Website*****
173	Learning from the best	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.giessen-fried-berg.ihk.de/service/medien/presse-portal/pressemeldungen/neuer-inhalt119-lernen-von-den-besten-4575348
174	Quality initiative for training in the hotel and hospitality sector	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.hannover.ihk.de/ausbildung-weiterbildung/fachkraefte/fachkraefte-projekte/ausbildung-in-hotell-erie-und-gastronomie-qualitaetsinitiative-startet-in-hannover.html
175	Dualis	Award initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://heilbronn.ihk.de/infothek/ihkhnberufsbildungdualis.aspx
176	Academy for trainers	Training initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.konstanz.ihk.de/berufliche-bildung/ausbildung/beratung/akademie-ausbilder/lehren-lernen-1676698
177	Creating a welcoming culture – fostering integration	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.karlsruhe.ihk.de/ausbildung-und-weiterbildung/ausbildung/integration-durch-ausbildung3/unser-angebot-fuer-unternehmen-3301486
178	Employment of refugees	Tool	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-lueneburg.de/produkte/beratung-und-service/fachkraeftesicherung/mitarbeiter-finden/beschaeftigung-von-fluechtlingen2-2486366
179	Exemplary company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.bbz-bildung.de/artikel/vorbildliche-ausbildungsbetriebe-gesucht-16,0,4324.html
180	Training dialogue	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-lueneburg.de/produkte/aus-und-weiterbildung/ausbildung/ausbildernetzwerktreffen-3913460
181	Provision for refugees	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-krefeld.de/de/bildung/fluechtlinge/angebote-der-ihk.html
182	Integrating refugees via training	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.ihk-nuernberg.de/de/Geschaeftsbereiche/Berufsbildung/Ausbildung/fluechtlinge-durch-ausbildung-integrieren/
183	Welcome Integration center	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Getting refugees into work – WIN Service-Center – IHK Potsdam (ihk-potsdam.de)

No.	Title of the initiative (freely translated from the German)	Format ****	Chamber type	Website*****
184	Excellent company providing training	Award initiative	Chamber of Crafts	https://www.hwk-schwerin.de/downloads/ausbildungssiegel-bewerbungsbogen-19,287.pdf
185	Trainer promise in the retail sector	Networking initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.stuttgart.ihk24.de/fuer-unternehmen/fachkraefte-und-ausbildung/ausbilderversprechen/ausbilderversprechen-einzelhandel-3010254
186	Project "Integration through training – perspectives for refugees"	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.reutlingen.ihk.de/beratung/integration/
187	Improving inclusion	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
188	Refugees and training	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.rhein-neckar.ihk24.de/ausbildung-weiterbildung/ausbildung/unternehmen/auszubildende-finden/fluechtlinge-ausbildung-3338606
189	Quality check for trainers	Tool	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.schwaben.ihk.de/blueprint/servlet/resource/blob/546868/6bad7dba6c41b-1466f7957691c6a11cb/qualitaet-scheck-fuer-ausbilder-data.pdf
190	Annual trainees survey on training quality >> 10 tips for good training	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	
191	Integration through training – perspectives for immigrants	Guidance initiative	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.suedlicher-ober-rhein.ihk.de/standortpolitik/fluechtlinge/bei-anruf-info-2960994
192	Trade and industry integrates	Multi-format	Chamber of Industry and Commerce	https://www.wuerzburg.ihk.de/einstieg.html

*** The information presented in the "Online research" table is based on the online research conducted during the course of the project. This was carried out during the period from January to February 2020 (see Chapter 3.2.1).

**** Most quality initiatives can be aligned to more than one format. The designation "multi-format" was only used if no primary allocation was possible.

***** The Internet addresses were last accessed in February 2020. For this reason, not all links may still be functioning.

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Abstract

The chambers play a central role in ensuring the quality of in-company training. According to the BBiG, their tasks include organising examinations, advising companies and trainees, and monitoring the implementation of in-company training.

In addition to these legally defined tasks, the chambers have expanded their quality assurance services for training companies in recent years in order to support them even better in providing good training. This has resulted in a wide variety of innovative approaches throughout Germany that address the promotion, safeguarding and awarding of in-company training quality.

A multi-stage, multi-method approach was used to focus on these "quality initiatives" so that this overview study offers the first systematic stocktaking of this commitment of intermediate institutions using the example of the Chambers of Skilled Crafts and the Chambers of Industry and Commerce.

The study was prepared by DEQA-VET as part of the project "Quality initiatives of intermediary institutions and voluntary certification offers for small and medium-sized training companies in the dual system" (duration 2019 to 2021), which was funded by the EU Erasmus+ programme.

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