



United Nations  
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UNEVOC

International Centre  
for Technical and Vocational  
Education and Training



PROMISING  
PRACTICES



## Recognition in Germany

UNESCO-UNEVOC Promising Practice in Focus 2019

## Context

### Integration means becoming part of society

Germany is a country of rapidly changing demographics, with a population that has been shaped through immigration. Over 19 million people living in Germany, more than one in five<sup>1</sup> have a migrant background, and immigration to Germany is on the rise, particularly from other EU countries. However, among residents with migrant roots, the unemployment rate is about double that of the general population.<sup>2</sup> As a countermeasure, the promotion of the integration of immigrants was specified as a governmental task in the Immigration Law of 2005.

### Avoiding “brain waste” helps both immigrants and the German economy

Before the Recognition Act came into force in 2012, “brain waste” constituted a major challenge in Germany. Many migrants with valuable professional qualifications and university degrees worked in low-paid jobs because their credentials and certificates were not recognised. Even with the Recognition Act, the German labour market still faces skills shortages in a number of understaffed professions, such as teaching and engineering. Many companies have had to depend on skilled workers from abroad to fill massive gaps in the labour market and to ensure the growth of their businesses. To overcome this labour shortage, Germany is currently setting out a new immigration law for professionals, due to be enacted in February 2020, to attract skilled immigrants and make it easier for them to gain access to the labour market.

## The initiative and its impact

### Goal of the initiative

The 2012 Recognition Act, which forms part of the recent integration policy, acknowledges the life achievements of immigrants and aims at making the recognition system more transparent and uniformed. State recognition of foreign professional qualifications promotes the integration of immigrants into German society and is an important element in securing the supply of skilled workers, whilst ensuring that they do not work beneath their qualification levels. The goal of the portal “Recognition in Germany” is to inform applicants about obtaining recognition of their qualifications in order to allow them to work in the occupation for which they are trained.

## Overview

**Implemented by:** the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

**Where:** Germany

**Themes:** Adapting qualifications and developing pathways; Promoting inclusion in TVET

**Funding:** Government-funded

**Status:** Active since 04/2012

In 2012, the German Federal Government launched the “Recognition in Germany” portal to improve labour market access for people from migrant backgrounds. The multilingual portal provides users with information about the procedures for recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside of Germany.

A pathway towards professional recognition is beneficial both for immigrants in their job searches and for the German economy which continues to face skills shortages. The portal also supports the staff of recognition counselling services, job centres and employment agencies in their daily work.

Between 2012 and 2017, more than **67,500** qualifications acquired abroad were certified as being

**fully equivalent**

to the relevant German reference qualifications. Only around **3,100** applications were rejected.



1 BMBF Report on Vocational Education and Training 2018, [https://www.bmbf.de/upload\\_filestore/pub/Berufsbildungsbericht\\_2018\\_englisch.pdf](https://www.bmbf.de/upload_filestore/pub/Berufsbildungsbericht_2018_englisch.pdf)

2 The Network “Integration through Qualification (IQ)”, <https://www.netzwerk-iq.de/network-iq-start-page/network-iq/programme-description.html>

## Description of the initiative

The Recognition Act entitles immigrants, regardless of their residence status, to have their qualifications verified within three to four months. However, it only applies for professions regulated on a federal level, which includes around 600 occupations. The 16 states have their own recognition laws in place for professions regulated at a federal state level. Even though certain occupations such as doctors and teachers require an official Certificate of Recognition, gaining recognition in other professions can enhance applicants' opportunities on the labour market. Professional experience is also taken into account.

The portal "Recognition in Germany" provides information about the Recognition Act and the possibilities of having foreign professional or vocational certificates recognised in Germany. Thanks to a unique feature of the website, the "Recognition Finder", those seeking advice can locate the authorities responsible for the profession in question. In case the applicant only receives partial recognition, the respective recognition authority provides advice on what steps to take in order to gain full recognition.



*Jigar Hasso is a trained cook who fled to Germany from Syria in 2013. In 2015, he obtained recognition of his vocational qualification via a skills analysis. © BIBB*

"Recognition in Germany" also provides an online forum for the staff of recognition counselling services to enable them to discuss difficult cases or new regulations online.

Since 2016, "Recognition in Germany" has also been the national contact point in Germany for questions relating to the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications at an EU level. In this capacity, it provides EU citizens and assistance centres in other member states with information on the recognition of their qualifications in Germany.

## Impact of the initiative

The number of new recognition applications in Germany is rising each year and currently about every tenth application is submitted from abroad.<sup>3</sup> In 2017, more than 19,000 recognition applications for regulated professions and nearly 6,000 for non-regulated occupations were made.<sup>4</sup>

Since its launch on 1st April 2012, the information portal has had more than 11 million visitors and 49 million page views. Approximately half of the users access the information from abroad.<sup>5</sup> The online forum for staff of recognition counselling services has more than 500 registered members and the number of inquiries by recognition seekers reaching "Recognition in Germany" is increasing continuously.

## Insights

### Reaching the main target group

It is necessary to campaign inside and outside of Germany to ensure that users visit the portal. Since the Recognition Act came into force, applications for recognition can be submitted from abroad. Moreover, the telephone hotline "Working and Living in Germany" of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) offers advice on recognition of qualifications for individuals.



*In Poland, Margareta Marek was a trained environmental protection engineer. In Germany, she was a single mother with no training and without a job. Today, the 34-year-old is once again working in her profession thanks to the Recognition Act. © BIBB*

### Providing guidance on the relevant authorities

The Recognition Act does not apply to all professions and is not implemented uniformly throughout Germany. Certain jobs are regulated at the federal level; others lie within the responsibilities of the federal states or the chambers who have

<sup>3</sup> Anerkennung ausländischer Berufsqualifikationen, <https://www.bmbf.de/de/erkennung-auslaendischer-berufsqualifikationen-1091.html>

<sup>4</sup> Important results of the Recognition Monitoring Project, <https://www.erkennung-in-deutschland.de/images/content/Medien/2018-factsheet-erkennungsgesetz-en.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Anerkennung ausländischer Berufsqualifikationen <https://www.bmbf.de/de/erkennung-auslaendischer-berufsqualifikationen-1091.html>

their own laws and regulations in place. The "Recognition Finder" tool on the portal points applicants towards the respective authority responsible for their occupation and (desired) place of work or residence.

### Availability of financial support

During recognition procedures, costs may arise which need to be borne by the applicants themselves (for example, fees for translations and certifications or costs for participation in training measures). The Employment Agencies or Job Centres will meet these costs if certain conditions are fulfilled. Individuals with insufficient income and, in particular, employees working below the level of their completed qualification, can benefit from the recognition grant, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

### Collaboration with other federal ministries

"Recognition in Germany" is an initiative of the BMBF. The portal is closely linked with the "Integration through qualification (IQ)" project, which is funded by the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The Federal Employment Agency (BA) and Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) are also strategic partners.

### Understanding the bureaucratic process

A practical problem lies at the bureaucratic and administrative level. Immigrants from outside the EU often have long waiting times for appointments in Germany's Foreign Citizen Offices or in consulates abroad. If the process takes too long, it deters many skilled people from coming to Germany. Given the rise in migration, German authorities are currently struggling to keep pace with the volume of work. The immigration law aims to solve this with a new fast-track feature for professionals.

## Looking to the Future

Thanks to successful recognition of their qualifications, 9 out of 10 migrant workers found jobs in their professions. However, there is still some room for improvement in the standardization and transparency of the recognition system. In order to make the entire recognition procedure more comprehensible for applicants, the aim is to enhance coordination among federal states.

The planned immigration law will allow anyone with a recognized qualification and a work contract to move to Germany. In addition, skilled workers will be allowed to live in Germany for six months as job seekers or freelancers if they can support themselves and speak German.

"Recognition in Germany" is currently relaunching. After a usability analysis and live testings of the website, a face lift and new features will be introduced in 2020. There is also ongoing collaboration with representatives from the federal states in order to improve the provision of information.

## Learn more

**Ms. Julia Lubjuhn**, Coordinator, International Affairs, "Recognition in Germany" ("Anerkennung in Deutschland"), helped to compile this document. For more information about "Recognition in Germany", please contact her at [lubjuhn@bibb.de](mailto:lubjuhn@bibb.de). You can access the portal directly at <https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/index.php>. The portal is run by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), a UNEVOC Centre.

## Discover other promising practices

The UNESCO-UNEVOC Promising Practices database presents inspiring projects tackling key themes in TVET, such as Gender equality, Youth employment, Greening, Digitalization and more.

Learn more on our website at:

<http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/promisingpractices>

Questions or suggestions? Contact our team at:

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## Further References

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