



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

2023 Report on the Recognition Act



Preface

A shortage of skilled workers is one of the greatest challenges we face. We urgently need more bright minds and willing helping hands in order to secure growth and prosperity in Germany. As well as tapping into domestic potential, we are also seeking to recruit skilled workers from abroad.

We are competing internationally with other countries in this regard. In order to acquire skilled workers from other parts of the world, Germany needs to be an attractive place to work and live and must also offer good career and development opportunities. Professional recognition has a crucial part to play in this process. It allows skilled workers with foreign professional and vocational qualifications to integrate their competencies into the German labour market in a targeted manner. Professional recognition also creates transparency for employers in respect of existing qualifications. It therefore makes an important contribution to sustainable integration and helps with quality assurance in the regulated professions, such as in the healthcare sector.

The Recognition Act has been in force since 1 April 2012. 365,000 applications for equivalence of foreign professional and vocational qualifications had already been submitted to the competent bodies by the end of 2022. In addition to this, 229,000 applications were made to the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) for certificate evaluation of higher education qualifications acquired abroad.

Decisions were reached for a total of 54,261 recognition procedures in the year 2022 alone. This is an unprecedented annual number. Our healthcare system is a particular beneficiary – over the entire period (since 2012), medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law have accounted for around 75 percent of all recognition applications. This shows the enormous need within the sector as well as demonstrating the successful deployment of foreign skilled workers.

Germany as an economic location needs this dynamic development. For this reason, the Federal Government has brought about a significant improvement in general conditions via the Skilled Immigration Act (FEG), which has undergone comprehensive reform and has been gradually entering into force since November 2023. This act creates new opportunities for the immigration of skilled workers and further simplifies recognition.

The important thing for us is that skilled workers from abroad are able to take up work quickly and easily in Germany and that they can bring their potential to bear. The prerequisite in this regard is that we recognise existing competencies and qualifications and remove unnecessary barriers to commencement of employment.

This is why we are working in close conjunction with the federal states to standardise and accelerate procedures. We believe that entirely digital recognition procedures will bring particular opportunities. We have made a great deal of progress in this respect. The focus must now be on removing the final hurdles.

The 2023 Report on the Recognition Act provides you with information on current developments. It reveals the successes and the remaining challenges faced with regard to acquiring the further foreign skilled workers whom our country needs. We will be delighted to see cooperation on the part of all those involved. We would also like to offer my thanks for the previous commitment shown to the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. This gratitude extends to the guidance services, the competent bodies, the support projects and the companies. The work they are doing is supporting international talent with professional and personal integration in Germany and is thus helping to secure our competitiveness, growth and prosperity.

Your Federal Ministry of Education and Research

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At a glance –
the recognition process

In Germany, skilled workers¹ with foreign professional and vocational qualifications have a legal right to a procedure for the recognition of such qualifications. This right exists both for regulated professions² and for unregulated occupations and applies irrespective of country of training, nationality, place of residence and residence status. The prerequisite is a formal professional or vocational qualification that needs to be recognised in the country of training itself, and which also must be comparable with a German reference occupation. In addition, further individual learning outcomes (for example continuing training programmes) and professional experience may also be taken into account in the recognition procedure in order to compensate for substantial differences. In the case of higher education qualifications, application may be made for a certificate evaluation if the intention is to pursue employment in the non-regulated sector (→ [Information box 3](#)).

Various stakeholders are involved in the recognition process. They conduct the procedures themselves, provide guidance to persons interested in seeking recognition or offer compensation measures or refresher training. Employers also play an important role (→ [Figure 1](#)). The competent bodies are responsible for the execution of the recognition procedure. These are usually federal state authorities or chambers. According to the Professional and Vocational Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG), responsibility for non-regulated occupations governed by federal law³ rests with the chambers (chambers of crafts and trades, chambers, representing the liberal professions, agricultural chambers etc.). In the trade and industry sector, the recognition procedure is implemented by the Foreign Skills Approval Competence Centre (IHK FOSA) and by the chambers of commerce and industry (IHK) in Wuppertal-Solingen-Remscheid and Hanover.⁴ In

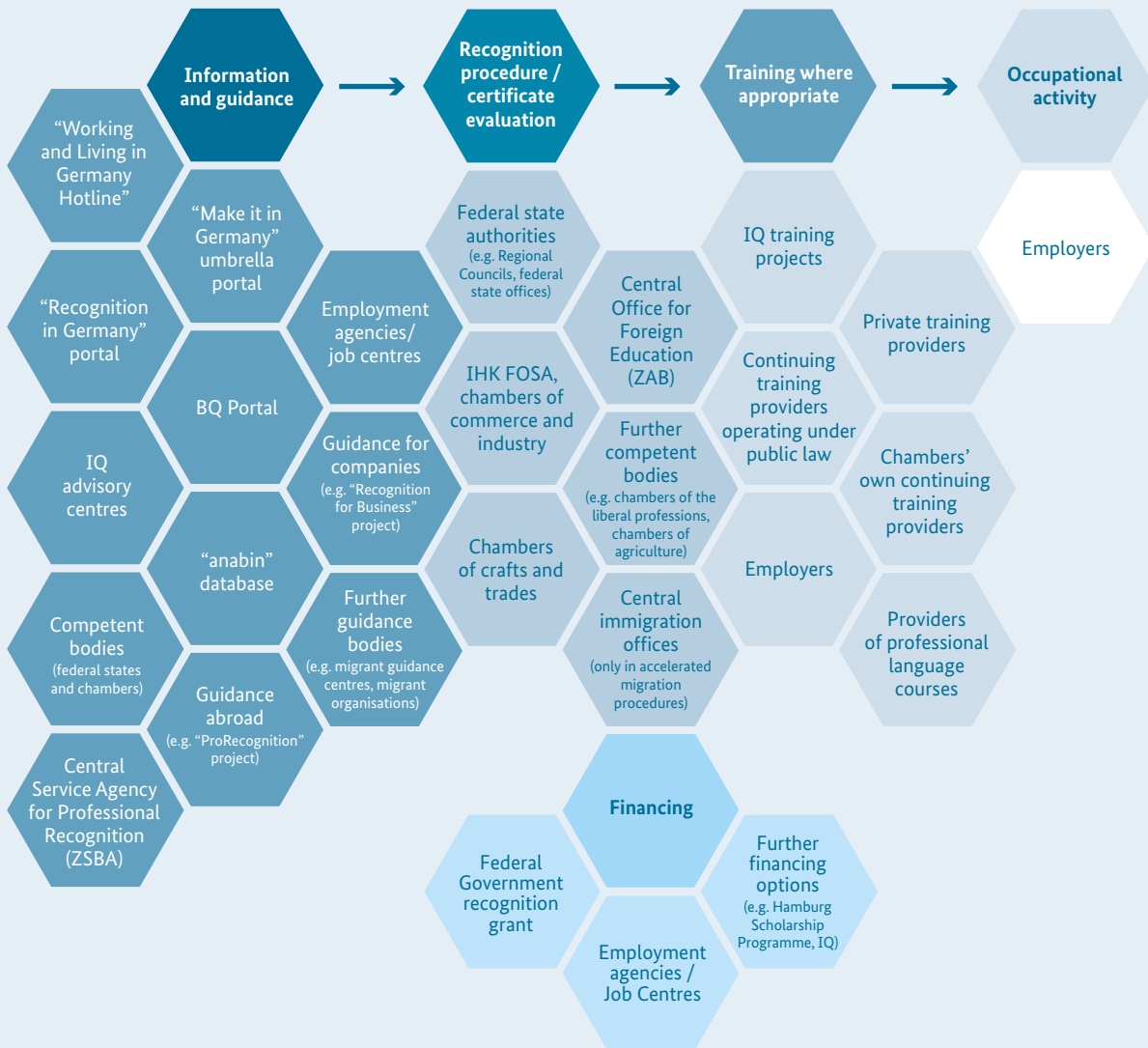


the case of the regulated professions, responsibility is based on the respective specific legislation and the implementation provisions of the federal states.⁵ Competent bodies are usually federal state authorities (e.g. regional councils, state offices). The chambers of crafts and trades (HWK) are responsible for occupations regulated in the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code. Professions and occupations governed by federal state law are the responsibility of the federal states.

The laws prescribe a processing deadline of either three or four months once full documentation is available.⁶ Thomas Eikenberg from the Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Stade Chamber of Crafts and Trades explains precisely what happens during this period. (→ [QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH ..., p. 103](#)).

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- 1 In line with specialist and public discourse, the term “skilled worker” is interpreted more widely than, for example, in the Residence Act (AufenthG). Here, it includes all persons who have completed qualified vocational education and training abroad or a foreign higher education qualification. According to the Residence Act, such persons are not skilled workers until their qualification has been deemed equivalent to or, in the case of higher education qualifications, judged to be comparable with a German qualification (cf. § 18 Paragraph 3 AufenthG).
- 2 The exercising of regulated professions (for example doctor) is governed by legal or administrative provisions requiring proof of possession of specific qualifications. For a summary of regulated professions, cf. Deutscher Bundestag 2019.
- 3 These are occupations which fall within the legislative remit of the Federal Government. Cf. Glossary.
- 4 The IHK FOSA acts on behalf of 76 of 79 of the chambers of commerce and industry by carrying out equivalence assessments for occupations which are governed by the Vocational Training Act (BbIG). The Braunschweig Chamber of Commerce and Industry has formally transferred its tasks pursuant to the BQFG to the Hanover Chamber of Commerce and Industry (cf. BMBF 2014, p. 32).
- 5 The official designation in German for a federal state is “Land”. No reference to other countries is being made.
- 6 The deadline varies according to profession or occupation. For information on the duration of procedures, see (→ [Chapter 2.2](#)).

Figure 1: Stakeholders in the area of recognition



Field report

Shorn Carter – electronics technician for motors and drive technology

Shorn Carter comes from St. Vincent in the Caribbean. He went to England after joining the British military and completed training in the field of electronics there in 2001. In 2008, he underwent further training in the area of engineering. Shorn Carter's work took him to Germany on several occasions, and he went on to meet his future wife here. In 2013, he moved from England to Buchholz in der Nordheide to join his wife and their two daughters. "At some point, I was no longer able to cope with living so far away from my children," explained Shorn Carter. "I had been in Germany frequently during my time in the military and I had always liked it here."

Shorn Carter worked as a fitness trainer when he initially arrived in Germany, but he knew: "I'm an electronics technician. That's the area I trained in. I have a lot of professional experience in the field. Both Germany and I can benefit from this." In 2019, a friend told him about the possibility of obtaining recognition in Germany for his training. She advised him to go to the Hamburg Chamber of Crafts and Trades. Shorn Carter had an initial consultation there in July 2019. He and the HWK worked together to identify which German reference occupation was the closest match for his training. The result was that his training and professional experience corresponded to the German occupation of "electronics technician for motors and drive technology", which is governed by the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO) and is a non-regulated occupation in Germany. This meant that recognition was not mandatory. Nevertheless, Shorn Carter learned that recognition would create professional opportunities and that even training leading to a master craftsman qualification would be possible at a later date.

The HWK placed him in the IQ project "Bridge to the craft trades", which supports craft trade companies with the recruitment and employment of immigrants. A Hamburg-based company was impressed by his skills



and offered him a job at below journeyman level. Shorn Carter accepted the offer and worked for the company for six months. During this time, he prepared his recognition application, which he submitted to the HWK at the beginning of March 2020. He received a notice attesting partial recognition as early as the end of April. He was still lacking knowledge of German regulations and ordinances in the area of electronics. He was able to catch up on this by completing company-based refresher training with his employer. Shorn Carter submitted his follow-up application at the start of February 2021. Two weeks later, he received a notice attesting full recognition.

Having achieved full recognition, Shorn Carter can now be deployed as a skilled technician by his employer. He can operate and maintain electrical plants independently. "I am totally happy. I have a good life and a super job. Recognition has brought me many more opportunities on the labour market, and I'm earning significantly more money. I would like to remain in Germany and complete my master craftsman qualification at some point."

The interview with Shorn Carter was conducted in September 2022.

Recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications

Facts and figures*

A total of around 600,000 applications for recognition and certificate evaluation

Recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal law

279,000

39,312
Applications
2022



Applications
2012–2022

Recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal state law

86,000

10,152
Applications
2022

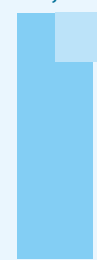


Applications
2012–2022

Certificate evaluation
(via the Central Office for Foreign Education, ZAB)

229,000

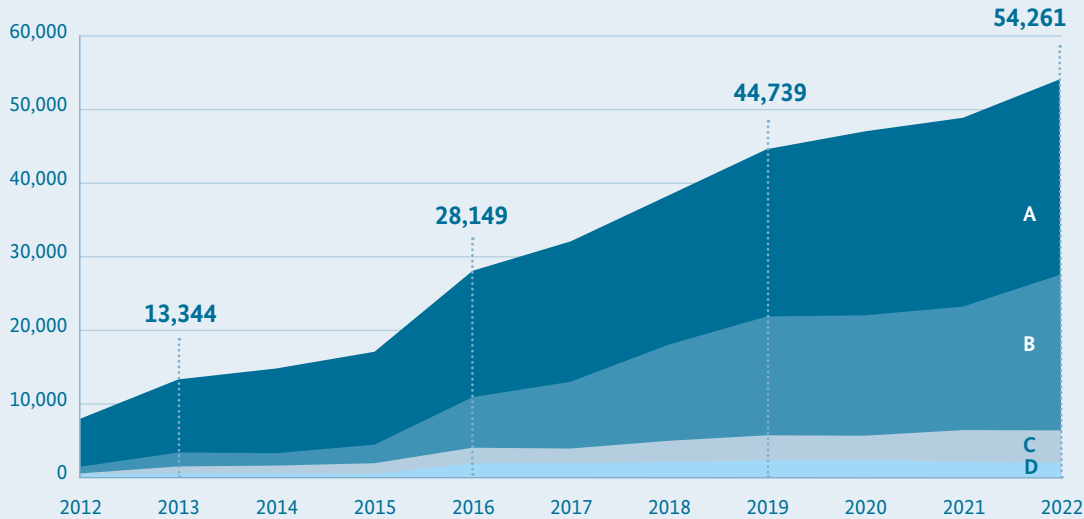
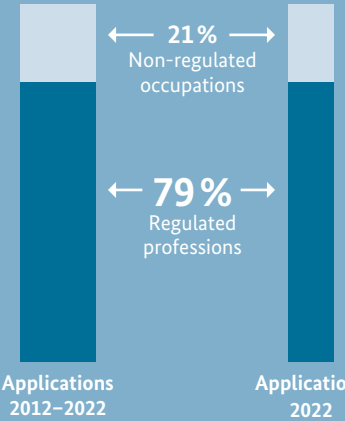
45,253
Applications
2022



Applications
2012–2022

A recognition procedure is conducted in accordance with federal or federal state law depending on the profession. In accordance with the Lisbon Convention, there is also a certificate evaluation for non-regulated higher education qualifications.

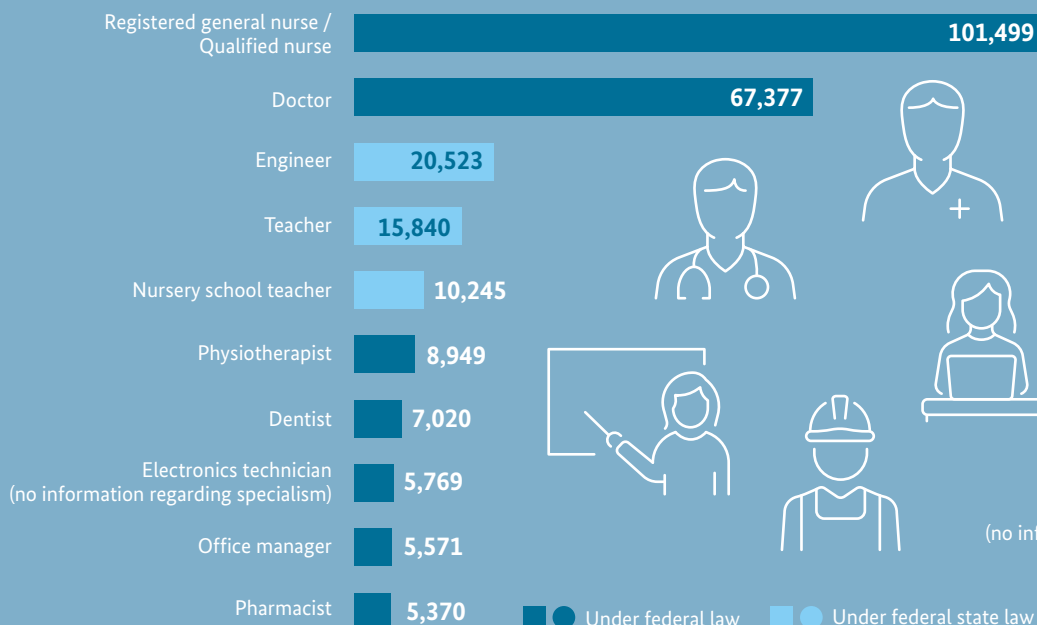
Predominantly applications relating to regulated professions



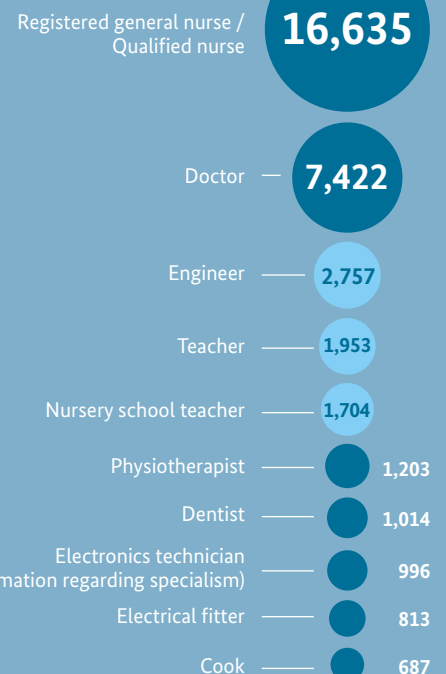
Number of recognition notices has constantly increased

The 10 reference occupations with the most applications

Applications 2012–2022

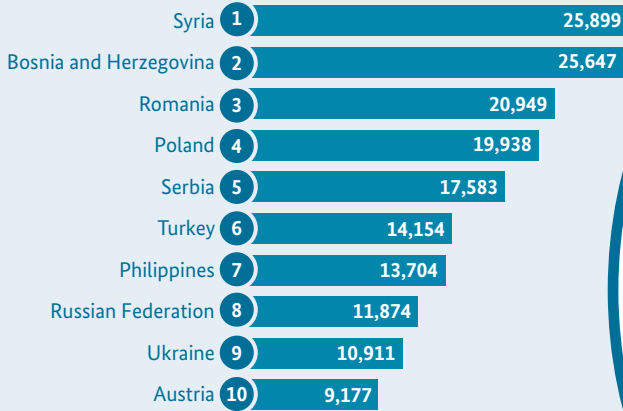


Applications 2022

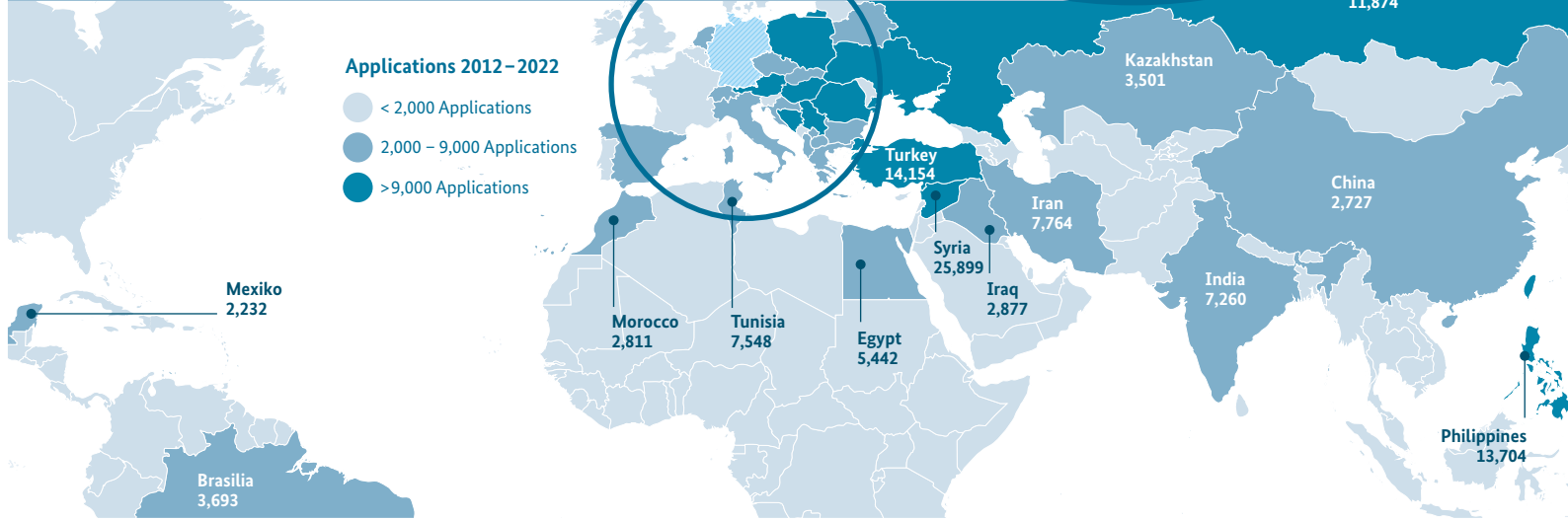
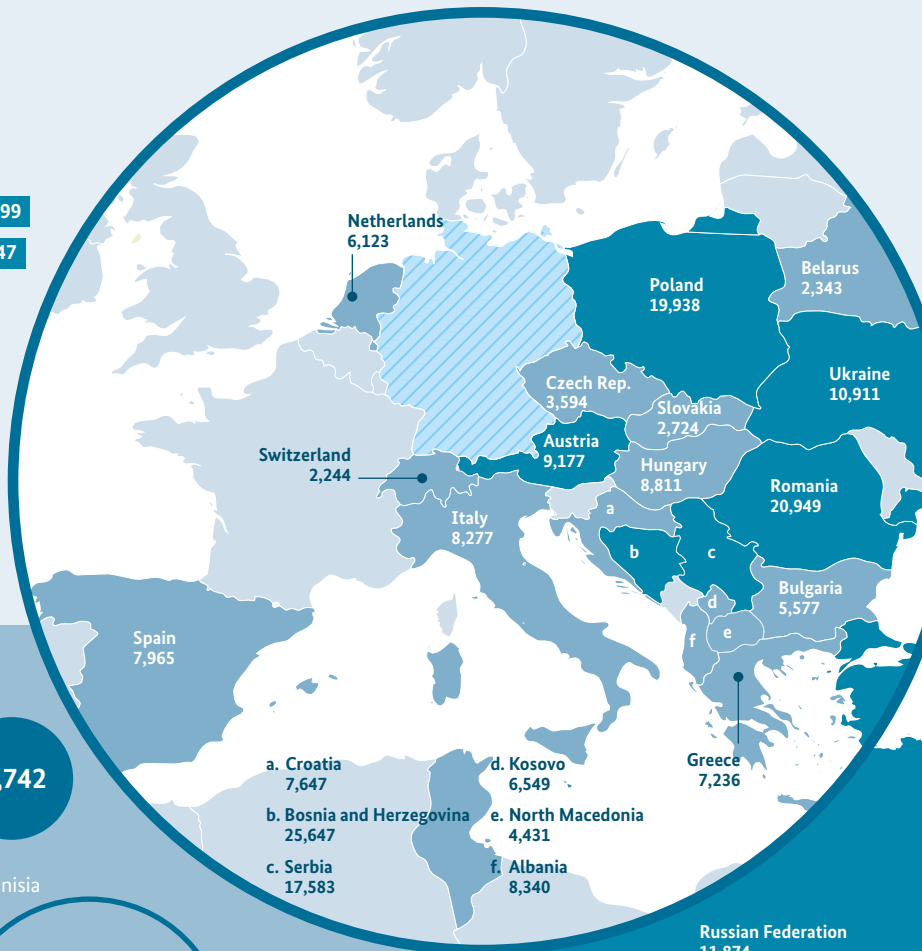
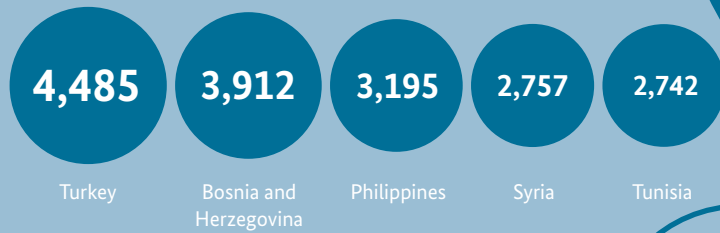


Applications for professional and vocational qualifications from the whole world

TOP 10 countries of training applications 2012–2022

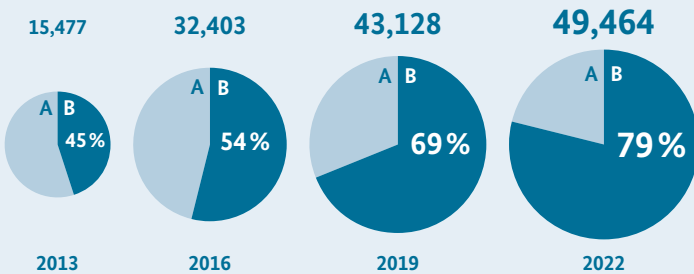


TOP 5 countries of training applications 2022



More applications for professional and vocational qualifications from third countries

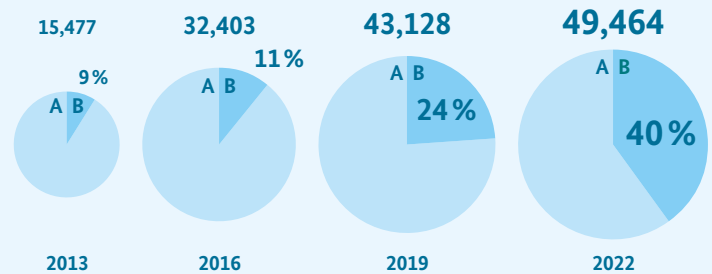
Applications



Country of training A EU/EEA/Switzerland B Third country

Increasing numbers of applications directly from abroad

Applications



Place of residence A Germany B Abroad

* Insofar as nothing to the contrary is stated, all figures relate to recognition of professions and occupations governed by federal law (from 2012) and to recognition of professions and occupations governed by federal state law (from 2016). Source: a) official statistics pursuant to § 17 of the Federal Professional Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG) or pursuant to the respective federal state laws governing the professions which make reference to § 17 BQFG. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office and BIBB. Anonymised values; b) Statistics of the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB). Calculations by the ZAB and BIBB. For further information, see Annex.

Part I

Perspectives of recognition





1 A look at the momentum of the recognition system

The Recognition Act of 1 April 2012 created a legal right to the assessment of foreign professional and vocational qualifications regardless of nationality and qualification origin. The Recognition Act has also set out a framework for nationally uniform recognition procedures. Official categorisation and confirmation of the professional or vocational qualification in accordance with German standards lie at the heart of the recognition procedures.

The Recognition Act pursues two key objectives. First, to help people with foreign professional and vocational qualifications who are living in Germany to make better use of their skills on the German labour market by creating transparency in respect of the professional competencies they hold. Second, to make Germany more attractive to much-needed skilled workers.

Historically speaking, this second aspect has become increasingly significant.

German trade and industry is facing major challenges in the light of demographic changes. Many sectors and occupations are being affected by the shortage of skilled workers. Filling vacancies is becoming increasingly difficult in the craft trades, in the medical and healthcare professions, and in IT alike. Germany, however, is not the only country to be suffering from such a shortage. This has long since been a European problem. Results of a November 2023 Eurobarometer Survey of SMEs published by the European Commission show that 54 percent of the 19,000 companies that responded report that seeking staff with the right skills is one of the most difficult problems they experience.⁷ An “international competition for the brightest minds” has already emerged.

Exploitation of domestic potential will not be sufficient to cover the skilled worker requirement. There is a need to tap into the additional potential offered by people who have completed their professional or vocational qualification abroad. For this reason, Germany must be an attractive place for international talent to live and work. Education, training and continuing training all constitute an essential foundation for Germany’s competitiveness. The recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications leads to integration benefits and to positive employment effects. Ultimately, every successful recognition procedure represents recognition of a personal life achievement, and even partial recognition of a professional or vocational qualification can signal the start of a successful career. This may in turn exert a positive influence on a person’s prospects of being able to remain in Germany

2 Current developments with regard to recognition procedures

The growing significance of recognition procedures is also reflected in the dynamic development of application numbers. The overall number of applications is rising constantly. Applications received per year for recognition of a profession or occupation governed by federal or federal state law has increased by around 15 percent since 2019. The total of 49,464 applications submitted in the year 2022 set a new record once more (2019: 43,125).

In professions and occupations governed by federal law alone, application numbers rose by approximately 19 percent from 2019 to reach 39,312 in 2022. The number of applications for recognition in a profession or occupation governed by federal state law has remained relatively constant over recent years. The figure for 2022 was 10,152 applications. This meant that around 49,464 applications for recognition of a foreign professional or vocational qualification were recorded in the year 2022.

⁷ SMEs and skills shortages – November 2023 – Eurobarometer survey. Cf. europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2961.



Ana Poli from Greece has been working in Germany since her professional qualification as a registered general nurse was recognised.

This figure contrasts with 54,260, the approximate number of recognition procedures in which a decision was reached⁸ in 2022. This represents a growth of 11 percent compared to the previous year (2021: a decision was reached in approximately 49,020 procedures). Double-digit growth rates were thus again achieved in 2022. During the full period following the entry into force of the Recognition Act from 1 April 2012 to 31 December 2022 (the cut-off date for the official recognition statistics), competent bodies reported a total of almost 365,000 applications for recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal or federal state law. Compared to the last Report on the Recognition Act in 2019 (187,000), this constitutes an increase of 95 percent (rise of 178,000 in the number of applications; data cut-off point in the 2019 Report on the Recognition Act: 31 December 2018). In addition to this, around 229,000 applications were submitted by private persons to the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) for certificate evaluation of a higher education qualification acquired abroad. The corresponding figure in the 2019 Report on the Recognition Act was a total of 93,000 applications. It is already apparent that this dynamic

development will also be reflected in the statistical figures for the year 2023.

Over the entire period of recording pursuant to the Recognition Act, the application process has affected around 500 professions and occupations governed by federal law and around 350 professions and occupations governed by federal state law. The momentum of applications is particularly visible in the case of the profession of registered general nurse or qualified nurse. In this case, the annual number of applications rose by almost 90 percent from around 8,800 in 2017 to reach a figure of approximately 16,600 applications in 2022.

In overall terms, the healthcare sector continues to play the largest part in the recognition system. Over the entire period (since 2012), medical and healthcare professions have accounted for around 75 percent of all recognition applications. In 2022, as many as 80 percent of all procedures in professions and occupations governed by federal law concerned the healthcare sector.

⁸ DeStatis, Spreadsheet 21231-01: cf. [destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Berufliche-Bildung/Publikationen/Downloads-Berufliche-Bildung/statistischer-bericht-auslaendische-berufsqualifikation-5212301227005.xlsx?__blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Berufliche-Bildung/Publikationen/Downloads-Berufliche-Bildung/statistischer-bericht-auslaendische-berufsqualifikation-5212301227005.xlsx?__blob=publicationFile).



The second highest proportion of applications since commencement of statistical recording has been received in non-regulated mechatronics, energy and electrical occupations (7 percent). Although recognition is not a requirement for the exercising of these occupations, it may be a prerequisite for immigration.

Regulated professions governed by federal law and non-regulated occupations governed by federal law accounted for 76 percent and 24 percent respectively of approximately 39,300 applications made in 2022 for recognition of professions and occupations governed by federal law. In the area of professions and occupations governed by federal state law, as many as 91 percent of applications have related to regulated professions since 2016.

The number of applications submitted from abroad in professions and occupations governed by federal state law is discernibly continuing to increase. This figure has tripled since the last Report on the Recognition Act in 2019 and now amounts to 48 percent. There has been a particularly significant rise in the number of applications relating to professional and vocational qualifications acquired in third countries.

Professional and vocational qualifications from third countries in professions and occupations governed by federal state law accounted for a new statistical record of 68 percent in 2022. The same applies in the area of professions and occupations governed by federal

law (82 percent). By way of contrast, there has been a slight decline in the number of applications relating to European qualifications. The likelihood is that this correlates with the shortage of skilled workers that has occurred in other European member states for demographic reasons. In the case of professions and occupations governed by federal state law, their proportion fell from 40 percent in 2019 to 32 percent in 2022. With regard to professions and occupations governed by federal law, the 6,894 applications in 2022 represented only 18 percent (2019: 9,324, 28 percent).

The results of the official statistics permit the conclusion that greater use has been made of recognition procedures to fulfil the prerequisites set out in the Skilled Immigration Act (FEG), which entered into force on 1 March 2020. This act facilitates immigration options for qualified skilled workers from third countries. Recognition of the foreign professional or vocational qualification is usually a prerequisite for immigration, and this effectively makes recognition an instrument for entry to Germany by skilled workers. After 2020, there was also a rise in the number of applications for recognition in non-regulated occupations in circumstances where applicants were still living in a third country at the time when the application was submitted.

In 2022, 58 percent of applications in professions and occupations governed by federal law were concentrated on 10 countries of training, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Philippines, Tunisia and Syria. In overall terms, the Western Balkan states account for a total of around 20 percent of all applications in professions and occupations governed by federal law. In the case of professions and occupations governed by federal state law, the countries of training from which most applications were received in 2022 were Turkey, Ukraine, Syria, Poland and the Russian Federation. Here too, 53 percent of applications were focused on ten countries of training.

The increase in the number of applications based on a qualification from a third country also led to a rise in the number of applications in which full equivalence with the German reference training occupation could not be immediately ascertained. In 2022, 17,682 applicants with professional and vocational qualifications acquired in third countries initially had to successfully complete a compensation measure in order to gain full

recognition. This figure also tops the previous record recorded in 2021 (13,218). At the same time, however, the number of procedures in which no equivalence could be confirmed has remained constant at around two to three percent since 2016. In 2022, 47 percent of procedures in professions and occupations governed by federal law ended with confirmation of full equivalence. 41 percent concluded with identification of the necessity for a compensation measure, and 10 percent led to partial equivalence (two percent: no equivalence).

However, the results also reveal that consideration of professional experience permitted substantial differences to be offset in non-regulated occupations in many cases.

The reason for this may be found in the particular characteristics of the German vocational education and training system, which differs from the systems operating in most of the countries of the world mainly by dint of the fact that it offers a combination of practical (company-based) and theoretical (vocational school) learning. In many recognition cases, existing occupational practice was able to compensate for the absence of practical elements in training completed abroad.

Consideration of this individual evidence, however, frequently leads to particular challenges both for the skilled workers and for the competent bodies. Detailed work references of the type found in Germany are not common in many other countries. Applicants must therefore routinely request such documentation from their employers and arrange for this to be translated. For their part, the competent bodies are required to scrutinise this evidence and use it to inform the individual equivalence assessment. Even though this process takes more time, the effort is worthwhile. Full recognition of professional and vocational qualifications has been much more likely to involve consideration of professional experience.

3 Duration of procedural processes

The statutory deadlines for the procedures are between two and four months. In 2022, a result regarding equivalence was reached within this prescribed deadline in 76 percent of around 36,400 procedures pursuant to federal law in which a decision was made for the first time. In the accelerated

procedure for skilled workers in accordance with § 81a of the Residence Act (AufenthG), an outcome within the two-month statutory deadline was achieved in 82 percent of cases.

Transgression of the decision-making time limits does not necessarily constitute a breach of the deadline. Competent bodies are permitted to delay deadlines or to instigate a one-off extension if, for example, additional pertinent information is still required from the applicant in order to arrive at a well-founded decision regarding equivalence.

In 2022, the average time that elapsed between submission of a complete application and the issuing of a first notice appealable in law was 85 days, i.e., less than three months. The corresponding figure in 2017 was 111 days.

These results show that recognition procedures have become faster over recent years, even though the volume of applications has risen significantly and the number of negative notices has remained constantly low. Applications in professions and occupations governed by federal law increased from 24,987 in 2017 to 39,300 in 2022, a rise of 57 percent.



It is not uncommon for the whole process to take some time. This is because recognition often involves further stages such as the gathering of information, preparation for the application, preliminary recognition guidance, the application itself and possibly the need to compensate for contents until full recognition is achieved and, particularly in the case of regulated professions such as in the healthcare sector, the acquisition of foreign language skills.

4 The number of competent bodies

Public debate surrounding recognition procedures regularly describes the enormous number of competent bodies as being too high. Indeed, the 2017 Report on the Recognition Act mentioned a figure of 1,500. It is, however, likely that this state of affairs is crucially influenced by the circumstance that responsibility for the occupation of driving instructor rests with the municipalities and districts.

In practice, the number of recognition bodies can be identified as being significantly smaller.

In 2022, 48 competent bodies nationwide accounted for 95 percent of 39,300 applications submitted in professions and occupations governed by federal law.

In addition to this, central structures began to be put in place as soon as the Recognition Act was launched. When the federal states took charge of implementing the recognition procedures, they tended to transfer responsibility for these to central recognition bodies. This particularly took place in medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law, which attracted large numbers of applications. The aims were to pool specialist expertise and language competence, to ensure uniform administrative execution and create transparent regulations regarding authority. The intention was to continue to pursue this objective in an efficient manner and to explore opportunities for cooperation arrangements across federal states. Examples of where these have been established include the Foreign Skills Approval Competence Centre (IHK FOSA) for occupations regulated by the chambers of commerce and industry and the lead chamber system in the craft trades sector.

5 Support structures as central pillars on the route to recognition

Specialised guidance and training provision is an essential main pillar on the route to recognition. These support structures require long-term strengthening, including in light of rising demand.

One relevant area in this regard is recognition guidance within Germany, e.g., via the chambers or via the “IQ Funding Programme” (known up until 2022 as “Integration through Qualification” and from 2023 as “IQ – Integration through Qualification” and referred to below as simply “IQ”), which is financed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the European Social Fund Plus. In the new funding period since the start of 2023, a total of 60 advisory centres have been financed in order to pursue the further development of virtual recognition and training guidance. The second relevant area in this regard comprises digital or location-independent services for applicants, guidance institutes or competent bodies such as the central information portal “Recognition in Germany”, the “Working and Living in Germany” Hotline, the BQ Portal and the Service Center for Professional Recognition (ZSBA) at the Federal Employment Agency.

A special position is occupied by direct guidance for skilled workers abroad, such as that which takes place on a face-to-face basis via the “ProRecognition” project at various German chambers of commerce abroad. In a survey conducted as part of the evaluation research for the project, around 90 percent of persons who had received guidance stated that they had submitted an application for recognition of their professional or vocational qualification or otherwise intended to do so.

Last but not least, attention should continue to be drawn to the migrant organisations, which are able to act as a first port of call for skilled workers seeking advice thanks to the easily accessible information options they provide.

6 The future, opportunities

Immigration of skilled workers is currently undergoing a process of change that will have implications for professional recognition. The “Law on the further development of skilled worker immigration” now means that recognition is not a mandatory prerequisite for entry and residence in many cases. The process of immigration onto the German labour market is being accelerated by waiving the recognition procedure or by downstream staggering of the process, especially in circumstances where skilled workers and employers have already entered into arrangements.

This is making recognition an option in many areas. Nevertheless, recognition retains its importance as an instrument of transparency and can help with sustainable labour market integration.

Despite this, the assumption must be that the number of applications for recognition procedures will go up if acquisition of skilled workers from abroad also increases. Currently, about four in five recognition applications are directed towards regulated professions. The skilled worker requirement in the healthcare sector alone gives rise to the expectation that the number of procedures will continue to increase in this area at least.

Digitalisation of application procedures and even AI-aided processing will be a vital key to countering this challenge, as will the further pooling and expansion of human resources capacities.



Part II

Results of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring

The BIBB Recognition Monitoring – our remit

The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) carries out recognition monitoring on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in order to observe implementation of the recognition laws, of the supporting processes and of general policy conditions. For this reason, the project focuses on the processes that take place before and after the actual recognition procedure as well as on administrative execution. These aspects include information and guidance, training measures and usability of the recognition notice on the labour market. The BIBB Recognition Monitoring also evaluates federal statistics on recognition procedures on an ongoing basis, identifies action areas and produces reports on these. Since 2015, the BIBB Recognition Monitoring has been coordinating networking formats with competent bodies of the federal states. The results of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring appear in the Reports on the Recognition Act and in further publications



bibb.de/en/anerkenntnismonitoring





1 Introduction – significance of recognition for economic migration and for integration into the labour market

Comprehensive legal foundations for the formal recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications have been in place since 2012 in the form of the recognition acts of the Federal Government and federal states (→ [Information box 1](#)) Recognition is an important factor for skilled workers in possession of a foreign professional or vocational qualification wishing to exercise appropriate employment in Germany.

According to joint prognoses by BIBB, the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the Institute of Economic Structural Research (GWS), existing shortages of skilled workers in Germany will continue to exacerbate, especially in healthcare and IT professions, in a number of technical occupations, in nursery teaching and teaching professions, and in the construction sector.⁹ Recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications can help secure a supply of skilled workers in many regards. Firstly, the potential of persons with foreign qualifications living in Germany can be identified and exploited better on the labour market. A second aspect falls within the scope of the

immigration of skilled workers. According to the legal position that applies to the end of February 2024, immigration from third countries for the purpose of commencement of employment is linked in all cases to recognition of the foreign qualification. In 2023, a law and an ordinance were adopted for the further development of the immigration of skilled workers. This chapter will present the significance of these updates for recognition within the context of skilled worker immigration (→ [Chapter 1.1](#)). The available research results will then serve as a basis for presenting the added value that recognition is able to deliver on the German labour market – for the foreign skilled workers, for employers, and for society as a whole (→ [Chapter 1.2](#)).

Information box 1

Recognition laws of the Federal Government and the federal states

The Recognition Act of the Federal Government – the “Law to improve the assessment and recognition of vocational education and training qualifications acquired abroad” entered into force on 1 April 2012. The federal states passed their own recognition laws on the basis of the federal act between August 2012 and July 2014. These laws are referred to as omnibus or umbrella acts. They each contain the newly introduced Professional and Vocational Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG) as well as amendments to existing specific legislation (for example the Federal Medical Code or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code).

The Federal Recognition Act applies to professions and occupations governed by federal law. These include the training occupations in the dual system, advanced training occupations, and also the regulated (medical and other) healthcare professions,* such as doctor and registered nurse. Examples of professions governed by federal state law are assistant and auxiliary occupations in nursing, nursery school teacher and teacher.**

* All medical and healthcare professions have protected professional titles. This means that a licence or permit is needed to use professional titles in the medical and healthcare professions for which academic qualifications are required and in specialist healthcare professions. Any breach of this provision constitutes a criminal act or misdemeanour.

** Cf. BMBF 2012.

1.1 Recognition in the context of skilled worker immigration

Whereas a right to freedom of movement of labour exists for member states of the European Union (EU), for countries that are party to the European Economic Area Treaty (EEA), and for Switzerland, immigration to Germany by skilled workers from other “third countries”¹⁰ was long restricted by provisions in residence law. Access to qualified positions on the German labour market is frequently linked with formal education qualifications. While this especially applies to regulated professions, it is also in some cases true for the exercising of unregulated occupations for which recognition is not a mandatory prerequisite. Opportunities for obtaining recognition in Germany for a foreign professional or vocational qualification were, however, restricted over a long period of time.

Following ratification of the Lisbon Convention in 2007, certificate evaluation became established as a procedure for the stand-alone assessment of higher education qualifications. In 2012, the recognition acts of the Federal Government and federal states (→ [Information box 1](#)) introduced a comprehensive legal right to procedures for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications (→ [Information box 2](#) and [Information box 3](#)). The objectives were to foster the labour market integration of skilled workers from abroad in possession of foreign qualifications and to enhance the attractiveness of Germany for qualified skilled workers. The option of launching a recognition procedure from abroad was in place at the very outset to also fulfil requirements under residence law for the immigration of skilled workers. The Recognition Act was welcomed as an integration policy instrument by trade and industry and by the trade unions and was seen as a suitable measure in terms of making Germany more attractive to skilled workers from abroad.¹¹

Information box 2 Recognition procedure

In a recognition procedure (“equivalence assessment procedure”), the competent body compares the contents of the foreign professional or vocational qualification with a German professional or vocational qualification, referred to as the reference occupation. Professional experience or other evidence of competency, such as continuing training, may be taken into account in this process (→ [Chapter 2.2.4](#)). The competent body issues an assessment notice (referred to below as a “Notice”). This sets out the outcome of this comparison.

Full equivalence is certified if no substantial differences are identified between the foreign and the domestic qualification. This very largely accords applicants the same legal status as persons in possession of a corresponding German professional or vocational qualification. In regulated professions, applicants may have to fulfil further prerequisites in order to achieve this.

Partial equivalence may be certified in the case of non-regulated occupations if there are substantial differences for which relevant professional experience or other evidence of competency cannot compensate. If substantial differences are identified in regulated professions, a notice “imposing” a compensation measure is issued. Full equivalence is attested once this has been completed. No equivalence is established if there are no commonalities (→ [At a glance – the recognition process](#)).

¹⁰ Countries not in the EU or the EEA and Switzerland.

¹¹ Cf. SVR 2013, p. 151.

Since this time, the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications has developed into an important element for securing a supply of skilled workers. According to data from the official statistics, around 365,000 applications were submitted for recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal and federal state law between 2012 and the end of 2022. Many of these were received directly from abroad, a tendency which is rising. In addition to this, approximately 229,000 applications for a certificate evaluation of non-regulated higher education qualifications were made from 2012 to the end of 2022 (→ Chapter 2.1).

According to the legal position that has applied hitherto, immigration as a skilled worker is, aside from a small number of exceptions, always tied to recognition of the foreign professional or vocational qualification. Against the background of the rising shortage of skilled workers and the desire of trade and industry for unburdened immigration processes, this linkage has also meant that the general conditions governing recognition have been increasingly perceived as an obstacle.¹² Because of the necessity for an individual matching of proven competencies against the skills required under German laws regarding professions, the recognition process may be time-consuming and expensive. The prospects of success are difficult to assess or predict since every recognition procedure is highly individualised and different federal state regulations can apply for certain professions and occupations. In some cases, applicants and employers find the decisions made regarding equivalence to be difficult to understand.¹³ When applications are made from abroad, particular challenges are also posed in respect of financing, clarification of local responsibility, and the transmission and acceptance of documentation.¹⁴ For this reason, the recommendation is that immigration should be made easier in non-regulated occupations at least and that recognition procedures should be accelerated.¹⁵ There has been political acknowledgement of the need to develop immigration law further and to reduce barriers

Information box 3

Certificate evaluation for foreign higher education qualifications

A certificate evaluation of higher education qualifications may be carried out by the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) on the basis of Article III.1 of the Lisbon Convention. The Statement of Comparability issued following a certificate evaluation represents an official document that describes the foreign higher education qualification in formal terms and attests the professional and academic uses to which it may be put. A Statement of Comparability is a comparative categorisation of the academic level. Within the area of skilled worker immigration, it facilitates access to the German labour market in non-regulated occupations. If a regulated profession such as doctor or teacher is involved, then the certificate evaluation does not replace the necessary professional recognition.

to recognition.¹⁶ A benchmark paper issued by the Federal Government in 2022 set out a specific framework in this regard,¹⁷ and a reaction at legislative level took place in the form of a law and an ordinance for the further development of the immigration of skilled workers.

Law on the further development of skilled worker immigration

The current reform of skilled worker immigration is bringing about a further opening up of the labour market for skilled and other workers via various measures. Some of the amendments to the law and ordinances have already entered into force, and the remainder will take effect over the course of 2024.

¹² Cf. Fachkommission Integrationsfähigkeit 2020, p. 140.

¹³ Cf. Erbe 2020, pp. 106 ff.; Annen 2019, p. 48.

¹⁴ Cf. Best u. a. 2019, S. 24 ff. The Service Center for Professional Recognition (ZSBA) has been supporting applicants with clarification of local responsibility since February 2020 (→ Chapter 3.1.3 of the present report).

¹⁵ Cf. SVR 2021, p. 10; NKR 2022, p. 4.

¹⁶ Cf. Coalition Agreement 2021–2025 (SPD/ BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN/ FDP 2021).

¹⁷ Cf. Federal Government 2022 at [bmbf.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/de/2022/221130-eckpunkte-feg.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1](https://www.bmbf.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/de/2022/221130-eckpunkte-feg.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1).

In future, skilled worker immigration will rest on three pillars – skilled workers, experience and potential.

The aim is for the skilled worker pillar, which provides for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications, to continue to represent the main pathway. One new aspect is that a skilled worker with a recognised qualification will be entitled in future to pursue any qualified employment as long as the laws governing professions and occupations permit this. This will bring about a significant expansion in employment opportunities and create greater flexibility for workers and employers.¹⁸ The salary thresholds for receipt of the EU Blue Card¹⁹ are being lowered.²⁰ Skilled workers who have completed certain qualified vocational education and training programmes will also be able to apply for an EU Blue Card in future.²¹ In the IT sector, this will even be possible without a formal qualification if evidence of certain professional experience can be provided.²²

In addition, conditions relating to entry to Germany and employment in the case of partial equivalence or the imposition of compensation measures pursuant to § 16d of the Residence Act (AufenthG) are being eased. Opportunities for secondary employment are being extended, and the maximum period of residency for receipt of full recognition is being raised to three years (→ Information box 4). Restrictions with regard to switching to other residence purposes are being lifted.²³



Within the scope of a recognition partnership (§ 16d Paragraph 3 updated AufenthG), entry to Germany and employment to support the recognition procedure is permitted if the employer and employee commit to the initiation and implementation of a recognition procedure in Germany in parallel to the employment.²⁴

In future, entry for the purpose of conducting a skills analysis²⁵ will be permitted for a period of up to six months if important documents for a recognition procedure are missing or if the submission of such documents is not possible without inappropriate expenditure of time and material cost for reasons that are not the fault of the skilled worker.²⁶

18 Cf. Federal Government 2023b, pp. 3 ff.

19 The EU Blue Card is intended for persons with a higher education qualification. It facilitates earlier receipt of a permanent settlement permit and makes family reunification easier. Cf. bamf.de/DE/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/Migrathek/BlaueKarteEU/blauekarteeu-node.html.

20 The minimum salary is 50 percent of the general pension contribution assessment ceiling or 45.3 percent in certain shortage occupations and for career entrants. The figures in 2023 were gross annual earnings of €43,800 and €39,683 respectively.

21 This applies to tertiary education which are equivalent to level 6 of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) or to reference level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework. Master craftsman training programmes, training at trade and technical schools and trade and technical academies and training institutes for nursery school teachers are, for example, all included. Cf. datenportal.bmbf.de/portal/de/G293.html.

22 Cf. Federal Government 2023b, pp. 71 ff.

23 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 42.

24 Under the laws governing the professions and occupations, commencement of work in non-regulated occupations is possible at any time. In some regulated professions, this may take place via temporary permission to practise. Further prerequisites are completion of a vocational qualification following training of at least two years' duration or a higher education qualification that is state-recognised in the country of training, a specific job offer with an employer which is suitable to provide second chance training, language skills at level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and consent from the Federal Employment Agency (BA). Cf. Federal Government 2023, pp. 91 ff.

25 Within the scope of the BQFG, the skills analysis offers an opportunity to provide practical evidence of occupational competencies, in particular via work samples and specialist discussions. It is used in cases where applicants are unable to submit any or some of the documents required through no fault of their own or where doubts as to the genuineness or correctness of documents cannot be excluded (§ 14 BQFG or § 50b Paragraph 4 Crafts and Trades Regulation Code, HwO).

26 Cf. Federal Government 2023b, pp. 95 ff.

Information box 4

Planned amendments to the residence permit for measures relating to the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications (§ 16d updated AufenthG)

Amendment with regard to...	Up until now	In future
Secondary employment (irrespective of the training measure or of the qualification to be recognised)	Up to 10 hours per week	Up to 20 hours per week (§ 16d Paragraphs 1, 3 and 4 AufenthG)
Time-unlimited employment (if the requirements are connected with the specialist professional knowledge called for in later employment)	Only with a specific job offer for subsequent employment in the profession or occupation to be recognised	Possible without a specific job offer for subsequent employment (§ 16d Paragraph 2 updated AufenthG)
Implementation of the recognition procedure after entry to Germany with the supporting exercising of qualified employment	Only within the scope of placement agreements	Within the scope of a recognition partnership irrespective of placement agreements – for a maximum period of 3 years (§ 16d Paragraph 3 updated AufenthG)
Duration of residence permit in the event of execution of a training measure	18 months up to a maximum of 2 years	2 years up to a maximum of 3 years (§ 16d Paragraph 1 updated AufenthG)
Duration of residence permit in the event of implementation of a recognition procedure with the supporting exercising of qualified employment	2 years	Up to a maximum of 3 years (§ 16d Paragraph 3 updated AufenthG)
Entry for the purpose of conducting a skills analysis	Not permitted	Up to 6 months (§ 16 Paragraph 6 updated AufenthG)

The experience pillar makes economic immigration in non-regulated occupations possible even if no recognition is in place. The prerequisites for this are as follows.

- Completion of a vocational qualification following training of at least two years' duration or of a higher education qualification, each of which is state-recognised in the country of training, or a foreign qualification from a German chamber of commerce and industry abroad (AHK).²⁷
- Proven professional experience of at least two years within the last five years in the profession or occupation intended to be exercised in Germany
- In the case of employers not bound by a collective wage agreement, a salary of at least 45 percent of the general pension contribution assessment ceiling²⁸

²⁷ The prerequisite is that this training, by dint of its content, duration and nature, meets the requirements of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and is suitable for imparting the necessary employability skills in a training occupation pursuant to the BBiG or Crafts and Trades Regulation Code. Evidence of fulfilment of the prerequisites must be provided in the form of a confirmation from BIBB (cf. BMAS/BMI 2023, pp. 53 ff.).

²⁸ The general pension contribution assessment ceiling for 2023 is €87,600. This means that the minimum gross salary for 2023 is €39,420 per year.



The salary threshold for IT specialists who have already been able to come to Germany without a qualification within the scope of the special regulation set out in § 19c Paragraph 2 AufenthG in conjunction with § 6 of the Ordinance on the Employment of Foreigners (BeschV) is reduced from 60 to 45 percent of the general pension contribution assessment ceiling, and there is also no longer any requirement for such workers to demonstrate knowledge of German.²⁹

Finally, the potential pillar introduces a new opportunity card (§ 20a updated AufenthG), which makes it easier to enter Germany to search for employment or compensation measures within the scope of recognition. This card is issued for up to a year. Trial employment on a full-time or part-time basis (for a maximum of two weeks) and secondary employment for up to 20 hours weekly are permitted during this period. Opportunity cards may be obtained by recognised skilled workers and by persons who are in possession of a foreign state-recognised vocational qualification (minimum duration of training two years), a higher education qualification or a

qualification from a German chamber of commerce and industry abroad (AHK)³⁰ and who achieve a score of at least six points on the basis of a new system introduced pursuant to § 20b updated AufenthG.³¹ The points criteria include qualifications, knowledge of German and English, professional experience, relationship to Germany and age. Persons with a professional or vocational qualification that is recognised in Germany do not need to demonstrate any further points. Partial recognition provides four of the six points needed.³²

Recognition will continue to play a role

The current reform of immigration law seeks to counter the increasing shortage of skilled and other workers via means such as expanded opportunities to enter Germany without recognition. In some cases, recognition may take place after entry (recognition partnership). In other instances, it remains completely optional (experience pillar). This reduces the burden on foreign skilled and other workers, on employers and on administrative bodies.

²⁹ Cf. BMAS/BMI 2023, p. 28.

³⁰ In line with the requirements of the experience pillar, see footnote 27.

³¹ The minimum requirement, however, is basic knowledge of German or English at level B2 of the CEFR. The individuals concerned must also be able to meet their living costs.

³² Cf. Federal Government 2023b, pp. 109 ff.

However, professional recognition will continue to play an important role in the immigration of skilled workers and in their subsequent integration into the labour market (→ Information box 5).³³ This particularly applies to recognised professions, in which a recognised professional qualification is required in order to obtain employment commensurate with qualifications or to exercise a profession fully. But recognition will continue to be necessary for qualified immigration from third countries in non-regulated occupations too if the prerequisites for the experience pillar are not fulfilled, for example, because of failure to reach the minimum salary or to demonstrate sufficient professional experience. Within the scope of a recognition partnership, however, it will be possible in future for recognition to take place after entry to Germany. A skills analysis conducted within the scope of the recognition procedure (§ 14 BQFG) offers the only opportunity for economic migration to Germany for persons who are unable to submit certain documents to prove their professional or vocational qualification for reasons which are not their fault.

Persons entering Germany via the experience or potential pillar will no longer need recognition in non-regulated occupations. Nevertheless, they will need to have acquired a state-recognised vocational qualification involving a minimum period of training of two years and professional experience in their country of origin. On the basis of these prerequisites, a recognition procedure may be conducted optionally after entry even if this is no longer necessary for residence law reasons.

Nevertheless, there are important incentives why this group of persons should seek recognition. Firstly, optional recognition brings benefits under residence law for skilled workers since:

- it may permit the issuing of an EU Blue Card³⁴ and thus enable an unlimited settlement permit to be obtained after 33 months (or even after 21 months in the case of knowledge of German) as well as facilitating easier family reunification;

Information box 5

Brief presentation of the necessity of recognition after the 2023 reform of the Skilled Immigration Act (FEG)

Recognition continues to remain necessary for qualified immigration and for the qualified exercising of a profession or occupation in Germany:

- in regulated professions;
- in non-regulated occupations if the requirement regarding minimum salary or other prerequisites pursuant to § 6 of the Ordinance on the Employment of Foreigners (BeschV) are not met (for example career entrants).

In addition to this, it will be possible in future for recognition to take place after entry to Germany if employers and employees enter into a recognition partnership (§ 16d Paragraph 3 updated AufenthaltG) and commit to the initiation and implementation of a recognition procedure in Germany in parallel to the employment.*

* For information on the recognition partnership see footnote 24.

- allows a settlement permit to be obtained more quickly (three years instead of four);
- makes it easier to obtain an opportunity card – partial equivalence awards four of the six points required, and no further points need to be proven in the case of full equivalence;
- provides an entitlement to exercise any qualified employment without any checking of specialist correlation with the respective training;
- permits consent-free labour market access after three years of preliminary residence or two years of preliminary employment and thus creates more flexibility and independence from specific employers.

33 Cf. Bushanska et al. 2023.

34 The prerequisites for the EU Blue Card are a qualification at ISCED level 6 and a minimum salary (cf. footnote 19).

Secondly, recognition has been shown to exert positive effects on the labour market integration of persons with professional or vocational qualifications acquired abroad (→ Chapter 1.2).

Support measures for the further development of skilled worker immigration are important for the take-up of recognition

The opportunity to enter Germany without recognition represents a considerable easing of the situation for many foreign skilled workers and their employers. However, in the interests of long-term labour market integration, it is important to highlight the route to recognition to skilled workers and employers and to structure it in as straightforward a way as possible even if such an avenue is not mandatory under residence law and under the law governing non-regulated occupations. This is the only way in which skilled workers, employers and the whole of society generally can derive a benefit from the positive impacts of recognition (→ Chapter 1.2).

Support measures have been in place to foster, simplify and improve the implementation of recognition processes ever since the recognition laws entered into effect (→ Chapter 3). Further statutory (for example an act to strengthen nursing training) and sub-statutory measures aimed at optimising professional recognition have been included in the benchmark plans of the Federal Government in order to back up amendments to the law governing the immigration of skilled workers. These measures are helping to use recognition as a vehicle to exploit the potential offered by persons with foreign professional and vocational qualifications. Special emphasis is being placed on standardising documentary requirements, on improving recognition notices, on further extending knowledge management, on digitalising the application procedure, and on expanding training measures (→ Information box 6).

Current studies indicate how important these support measures are in terms of ensuring the long-term labour market integration of immigrants. According to the IAB-SOEP sample migration survey, only 36 percent of all immigrants with a foreign vocational or professional qualification have submitted an application for recognition thus far.³⁵ The likely reason for this is that immigrants do not believe

Information box 6

Sub-statutory measures contained in the benchmark paper for the law on the further development of skilled worker immigration

The benchmark paper* sets out the following sub-statutory measures in the area of “training and recognition”:

- Optimisation and simplification of recognition procedures
- Standardisation of requirements, documents and notices
- Digitalisation of the recognition procedures
- Expansion of the financing of recognition procedures
- Extension of training measures
- Continuation and firm establishment of the existing validation procedure**

* Cf. Federal Government 2022, pp. 13 ff.

** This is a standardised procedure for the validation of professional and occupational competencies acquired by informal and non-formal means which is being implemented between 2015 and 2024 by chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of crafts and trades and chambers of agriculture as part of the BMBF-funded “ValiKom” or “ValiKom Transfer” project.

³⁵ The IAB-SOEP sample migration survey is a panel household survey jointly carried out by the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) located at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) in Berlin. The first seven waves were conducted between 2013 and 2019. Sample sizes varied between just under 3,000 and almost 5,000 persons.



A successful recognition procedure encompasses good guidance, uniform and timely scrutiny and rapid training where required. In order for this to be achieved, all participants need to collaborate in the most effective manner possible. The BMBF offers support via guidance provision from the Service Center for Professional Recognition, via the Recognition for Business and ProRecognition projects and via networking workshops for competent bodies. Financial assistance is also available in the form of the recognition grant.

Kathleen Adler, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Head of Department 316 “Recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications”

that the expected benefits justify the expense of the procedure, especially if employment is already being exercised.³⁶ However, in overall general terms, persons with foreign professional and vocational qualifications find themselves in a worse situation on the labour market than those with domestic qualifications. The former have poorer employment and recruitment chances³⁷ and are less likely to be working in regulated professions or else tend to be performing tasks with a low requirements level. They also earn less overall and have fewer opportunities to secure employment that is commensurate with their qualifications.³⁸ 36 percent of those who were in a skilled worker job prior to immigration are now only performing an unskilled or semi-skilled task. In the case of persons from a refugee background, this figure is as high as 50 percent.³⁹ In this light, easily comprehensible information, readily accessible guidance provision, and support within the recognition process are important for the skilled workers with regard to identifying the benefits of recognition and to pursuing the procedure. Persons who already live in Germany and for whom recognition

is not mandatory state their main motivations for submitting an application as being: access to continuing training possibilities, the prospect of better career opportunities and the chance of advancement within the company.⁴⁰ There needs to be a focus on raising awareness still further of these and of further advantages of recognition (→ [Chapter 1.2](#)).



36 Cf. Brücker et al. 2021, pp. 9 ff.

37 Cf. Mergener 2018, pp. 152 ff.

38 Cf. Rohrbach-Schmidt 2022, pp. 417 ff.; Santiago Vela 2018, pp. 47 ff.

39 This proportion rises in line with a longer period of residence but never returns to the same level. Cf. Schuß 2022, p. 410.

40 Cf. Ekert et al. 2017, pp. 71 ff.

1.2 Recognition of foreign qualifications on the German labour market

Whereas the statutory amendments are opening up new opportunities for economic migration without recognition, recognition continues to remain relevant for sustainable labour market integration in both regulated professions and non-regulated occupations. Numerous studies indicate positive impacts of recognition on the labour market, both for skilled workers with foreign qualifications and for their employers.

Significance of recognition for skilled workers

Recognition mainly facilitates entry to the labour market for skilled workers. Representative studies demonstrate that skilled workers with (partial) recognition of foreign professional or vocational qualifications are more likely to be invited to job interviews than those without recognition.⁴¹ Full recognition increases the probability of employment by 17 percent within twelve months. Three years after receipt of a positive recognition notice, probability of employment for skilled workers in possession of such recognition is already 25 percent higher than for migrants without a recognised qualification.⁴² Full recognition also exerts a positive effect on the likelihood of obtaining employment that is commensurate with qualifications.⁴³ Recognition thus offers protection against deskilling and atypical working arrangements. In overall terms, it plays a key role for positioning on the labour market.⁴⁴

Recognition is also worthwhile economically for those who are already in employment. In the case of full-time employees, earnings three years after full recognition are around 20 percent higher than the earnings of immigrants without recognition.⁴⁵ The positive effects of recognition are exhibited more strongly in regulated professions than in non-regulated occupations since the full exercising of the former is only possible with a recognised qualification. Recognition also leads to a significant increase in likelihood of employment and in earnings within the area of responsibility of the chambers of commerce and industry and the chambers of crafts and trades.⁴⁶ In certain occupational fields, recognition results in a higher pay scale classification⁴⁷ and to better negotiating positions on the part of skilled workers with regard to wages or a change of employers.

Recognition also facilitates access to advanced vocational training programmes, for example, master craftsman. Skilled workers with recognition generally report better advancement opportunities and greater esteem from employers.⁴⁸ This aspect of perceived respect is of particular significance to the sustainable and fair integration of skilled workers.

Recognition may also be a prerequisite for self-employment if a licensed craft trade is involved or if freelance activity is subject to chamber membership.⁴⁹

41 Cf. Damelang, Ebensperger and Stumpf 2020.

42 Cf. Brücker et al. 2021, p. 5.

43 Cf. Gächter and Loeffelholz 2018, p. 63.

44 Cf. Loschert, Kolb and Schork 2023, p. 40.

45 Cf. Brücker et al. 2021, p. 6.

46 Cf. *ibid.*

47 Cf. for the pedagogical area: George 2021, pp. 14 ff.

48 Cf. Ekert et al. 2017, pp. 87 ff.

49 These cases refer to regulated tasks.



These positive effects may increase the likelihood that foreign skilled workers will remain in Germany. Migrants, both from the EU and from third countries, stay in Germany for significantly longer if they are employed as skilled rather than as unskilled workers.⁵⁰

Significance of recognition for employers

Firstly, recognition can be an important instrument for employers in terms of securing a supply of skilled workers and with regard to human resources development. It is mandatory for the deployment of skilled workers with foreign qualifications in regulated professions. In the non-regulated sector, recognition was previously compulsory for the recruitment of skilled workers from third countries. It will be optional in this regard in future (→ [Chapter 1.1](#)).

On the other hand, however, recognition may be worthwhile for employers regardless of the requirements set out in the laws governing the professions and occupations and in residence law. An equivalence notice creates transparency for foreign qualifications, both in regulated professions and in non-regulated occupations. It can help companies to arrive at a better evaluation of the contents and quality of the foreign qualification and reduce any uncertainties at the recruitment stage.⁵¹ In a representative survey,

more than two thirds of German companies state that they have difficulty in filling vacancies. Around half of these difficulties are caused by factors such as assessing the competencies of applicants. For smaller companies in particular, it is important that employees are able to offer competencies in all operational areas of deployment within an occupation.⁵² A recognition notice either ascertains full equivalence with a German reference occupation or creates visibility of the individual needs of employees for targeted continuing training.

An employer-supported recognition procedure may reinforce employee loyalty in the long term. Commitment to recognition and training on the part of the employer can be viewed as personal appreciation vis-à-vis the employee. In addition, recognition permits further development and often facilitates professional advancement within the company for the skilled workers. Employers are thus able to secure long-term loyalty to the company from employees who have a particular wealth of experience. Many companies that have supported their employees with recognition emphasise the extensive experience and innovative capacity of the foreign skilled workers, something which has allowed the requirements of the market or customer needs to be better fulfilled and, in some cases, has also improved work processes (→ [Information box 7](#)).

⁵⁰ Cf. Boockmann et al. 2022, p. 83.

⁵¹ Cf. OECD 2018, p. 102.

⁵² Cf. Fischer, Hecker and Wittig 2020, pp. 42 ff.

Recognition may be a quality characteristic that offers a benefit in the competition to acquire customers. In some instances, this is also a prerequisite in order to meet the conditions for certain orders.⁵³

Companies that have been awarded the “We support recognition” quality mark represent examples of employers which have provided their employees with

active support for recognition and for any training measures that may be necessary.

Employers can also receive assistance from various bodies such as the German Agency for International Healthcare Professionals (DeFa) from the chambers and from projects including “Recognition for Business (UBA)” in dual occupations (→ Chapter 3.1.4).

Information box 7

Employer voices – holders of the “We support recognition” quality mark*

Why did you decide to support employees with professional recognition?

“The shortage of skilled workers is ubiquitous and is having a considerable determining impact on the labour market. In certain areas, especially in our case in the IT sector but also in the fields of design and marketing, acquiring the expertise of international specialists is essential in order to be able to develop the best possible products.” (GameDuell GmbH, Berlin)

“The primary focus is always on people, on employees who wish to develop themselves further and achieve more in life. For us, therefore, supporting employees with professional recognition is a tried and tested HR development instrument. We also benefit as a company. Such cooperation fosters employee loyalty and has a positive influence on corporate culture. The fact that we take our social responsibility seriously becomes visible too. All of these are small but important building blocks for our employer branding. For us as a technology company, evidence of the qualification of our employees is a success factor and a tangible sales argument in the competitive environment.” (GCD-PRINTLAYOUT GmbH, Erlangen)

To what extent have the new skilled workers enriched your company personally or professionally?

“The nurses we have been able to recruit over the past two years come from the Philippines and Tunisia and have a qualified professional qualification in the form of a Bachelor of Nursing. Many of these employees have already gained diverse experience abroad in the USA, in the United Kingdom and in highly developed Arab countries. Their academic nursing know-how and professional experience and expertise help bolster cooperation with our existing staff. This is extremely enriching.” (Kliniken der Stadt Köln gGmbH)

“The diversity of our patients is as great as that of our staff. For this reason, the new skilled workers are also able to break down language barriers and guarantee a better understanding of the patients in our care and of their family members.” (Klinik- und Rehabilitationszentrum Lippoldsberg GmbH, Wesertal)

* The “We support recognition” quality mark is awarded to companies that have made an outstanding contribution to assisting their employees with recognition. It is awarded by the Recognition for Business (UBA) project, which was initiated by the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH) and is funded by the BMBF. Cf. “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung” 2020; 2021 and unternehmen-berufsanerkennung.de/angebote/arbeitgebersiegel.

Significance of recognition for society as a whole

Recognition also plays an important overall economic role by helping to cover the acute shortage of skilled workers that exists in many places. Increasing employment opportunities and rising earnings may be associated with positive productivity effects, from which companies and the economy as a whole benefit.⁵⁴ Consumer protection and product safety are also strengthened by the use of qualified skilled workers. The most important thing, however, is that recognition contributes to the long-term securing of a supply of skilled workers and to the adequate deployment of the skilled workers. A current study by the IAB, for example, shows that the introduction of the Recognition Act has led to an increased likelihood that migrants living in Germany will be employed and has also made a major contribution towards aiding the transition to employment that is commensurate with qualifications, particularly in the regulated professions.⁵⁵ It creates good prerequisites for sustainable integration into the German labour market in line with qualifications held, something which can increase the likelihood that foreign skilled workers will remain in Germany.⁵⁶ In this way, the attractiveness of Germany for further skilled workers interested in immigrating can also be enhanced.

Conclusion

The recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications is an important element in securing a supply of skilled workers, both in terms of leveraging areas of potential available within Germany and with regard to the immigration of qualified staff. Against the background of the growing shortage of skilled workers, the current reform to immigration law is opening up new opportunities to enter the country without recognition. Nevertheless, recognition remains highly significant for long-term integration into the labour market. It increases the chances that skilled workers will obtain employment that is commensurate with their qualifications, that they will receive appropriate remuneration and that they will achieve advancement within the company. It also supports employers in securing a supply of skilled workers and in human resources development that thus also plays a major role in overall societal terms. However, in order for the positive impacts of recognition to bear fruit for the skilled workers, for the employers and for society, it is important to structure the route to recognition in as straightforward a way as possible. For this purpose, statutory adjustments in immigration law are being backed up by further statutory and sub-statutory measures aimed at optimising professional recognition. Special emphasis is being placed on standardisation of documentary requirements, on an improvement of recognition notices, on the further extension of knowledge management, on the digitalisation of the application procedure, and on the expansion of training measures.

54 Cf. Brücker et al. 2021, p. 11.

55 Cf. Anger, Bassetto and Sandner 2022.

56 Cf. Boockmann et al. 2022, p. 11; Maier et al. 2021, p. 14.



2 An insight into the official statistics on recognition – facts and trends up to the end of 2022

Official statistics are kept on recognition procedures relating to professions and occupations governed by federal and federal state law (→ [Information box 8](#)). This data permits an overview to be obtained into take-up of recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications and also allows more detailed analyses of selected issues. The official statistics thus constitute an important database for observing the recognition system and for identifying possible adjustment and research needs in the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications.

This chapter highlights the results of the official statistics relating to professions and occupations governed by federal and federal state law. These are supplemented by the ZAB statistics relating to certificate evaluations of higher education

qualifications, which do not lead to a regulated profession (→ [Chapter 2.1](#)). A focus is also placed on selected topics relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law (→ [Chapter 2.2](#)). Further and more detailed evaluations on specific occupational areas can be found in [Chapter 3](#).

Information box 8

Official statistics for recognition procedures in professions and occupations governed by federal law and by federal state law

National official statistics on recognition procedures in professions and occupations governed by federal law have been recorded since the entry into force of the Federal Recognition Act on 1 April 2012. The legal basis in this regard is provided by § 17 of the Professional Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG), by specific legislation covering individual professions and by ordinances that make reference to this norm.

In the same way, official statistics have been kept on recognition procedures in professions and occupations governed by federal state law since entry into force of the recognition acts of the federal states (between 2012 and 2014). In legal terms, these are enshrined within the BQFGs of the individual federal states or in relevant references contained within the legislation covering individual professions and within the ordinances. From the 2016 reporting year onwards, data for the individual federal states was collated into an overall statistic by the Federal Statistical Office. Previous to this time, such data had only been available separately.

The Federal Statistical Office and the statistical offices of the federal states are responsible for the collection of data. The cut-off point for the official statistics in the respective reporting year is 31 December. BIBB is granted access to the aggregated data records of statistics on professions and occupations governed by federal law pursuant to § 17 Paragraph 7 BQFG.

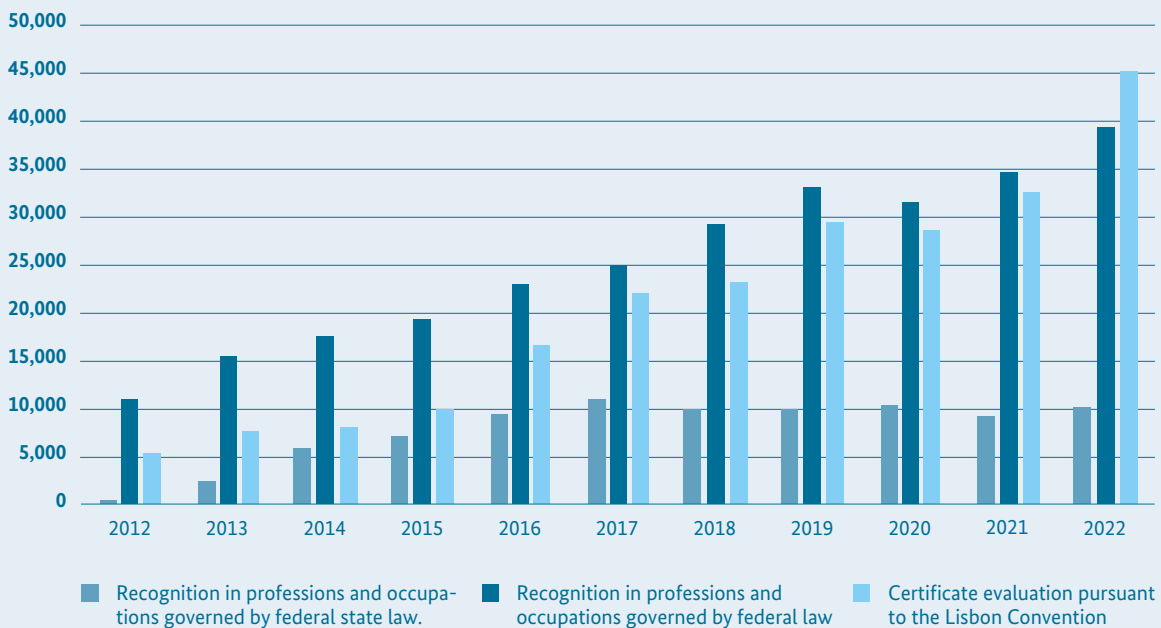
Further information is provided in the section “[Methodological notes on data sources](#)” in the Annex to the present Report.

2.1 Overall view – applications for recognition and certificate evaluations

Three areas may be differentiated in respect of aligning foreign professional and vocational qualifications to the German education or VET system. These are recognition of foreign qualifications for professions and occupations governed by federal law, recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal state law, and certificate evaluations pursuant to the Lisbon Convention for higher education qualifications which lead to a non-regulated occupation (→ Chapter 1.1). All three areas together exhibit a total of around 594,000 applications for the period from 2012 to 2022. This figure comprises about 279,000 applications for professions and occupations governed by federal law, approximately 86,000 applications for

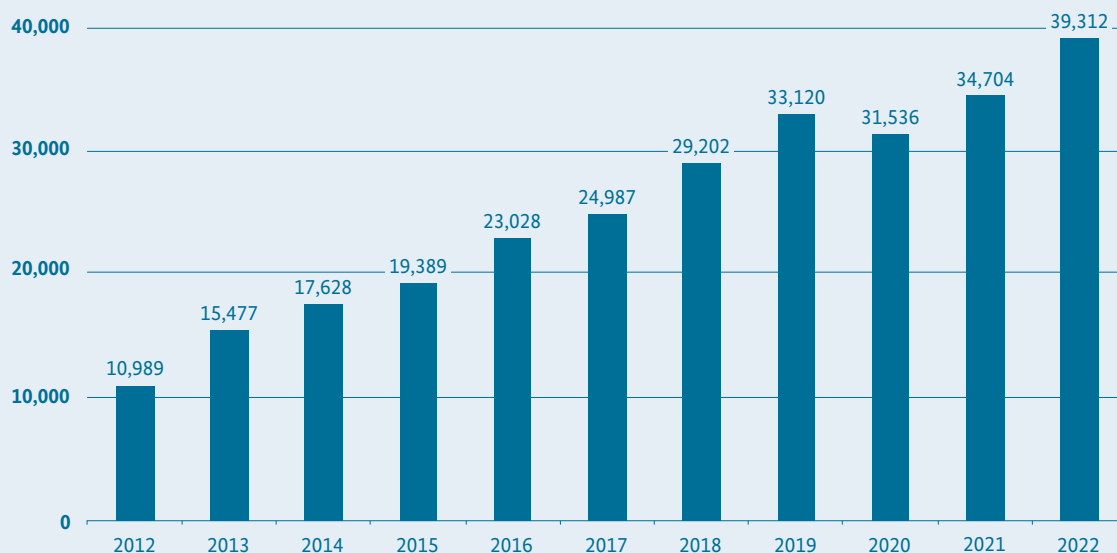
professions and occupations governed by federal state law, and some 229,000 certificate evaluations. Applications for recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal law and for certificate evaluations have seen a particular rise over recent years. New records for annual volume in both cases were reached in 2022, when there were around 39,300 (professions and occupations governed by federal law) and around 45,300 (certificate evaluations) applications respectively. In the case of professions and occupations governed by federal state law, a consistent volume of approximately 10,000 applications per year has been recorded in the past few years (→ Figure 2).

Figure 2: Applications for recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal law and applications for certificate evaluations for non-regulated higher education qualifications pursuant to the Lisbon Convention (2012 to 2022, absolute terms)



Sources: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations by BIBB. Official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal state law 2012–2022; calculations by the statistical offices of the federal states and by BIBB 2012–2015, calculations by the Federal Statistical Office 2016–2022. Data anonymised. ZAB statistics on the certificate evaluation of non-regulated higher education qualifications 2012–2022; calculations by the ZAB. Presentation by BIBB. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 3: Applications for recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal law (2012 to 2022, absolute terms)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

2.1.1 Professions and occupations governed by federal law

Official statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal law have been recorded since the entry into force of the Federal Recognition Act in April 2012 (→ [Information box 8](#)).

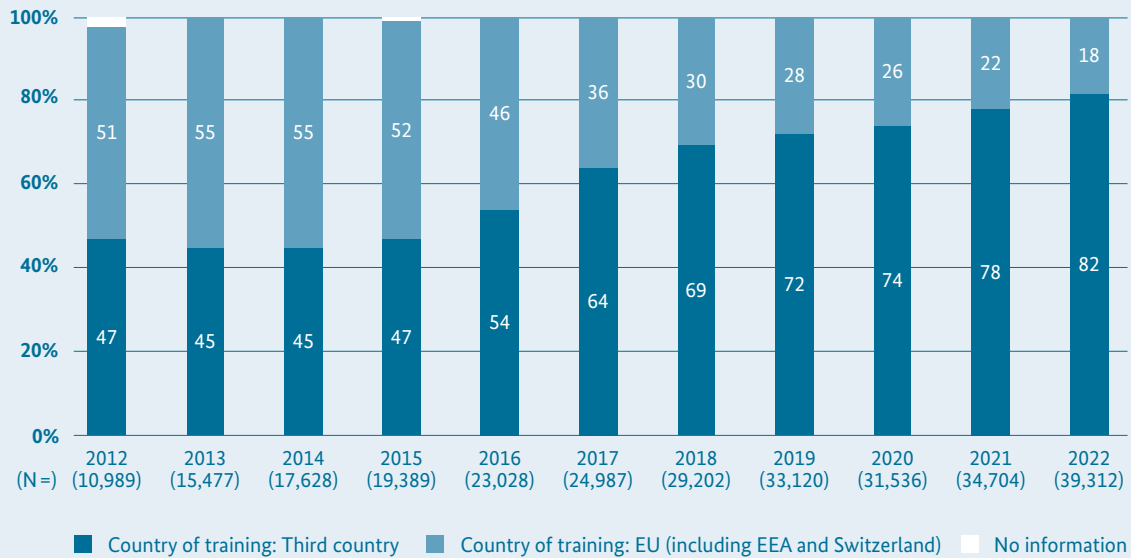
Professions and occupations governed by federal law – development in volume of applications

The official statistics have shown increasing numbers of applications virtually continuously from year to year since the entry into force of the Federal Recognition Act. In 2019, for example, the competent bodies reported that the volume of applications had doubled since 2013. A new record was reached in 2022, when around 39,300 new applications (referred to below simply as applications) were received (→ [Figure 3](#)). The year 2020, when the number of applications remained slightly below that of the previous year, formed one exception in this regard. The assumption here would be that restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic exerted a subduing impact on the application process.

From 2021 onwards, development reassumed the same pattern as in the years preceding 2020. The application process was then possibly partially determined by pandemic-related catch-up effects. In addition to this, the Skilled Immigration Act (FEG) entered into force on 1 March 2020. This strengthened opportunities for economic migration from third countries, especially for persons in possession of vocational qualifications. The results of the official statistics indicate an impact on the recognition system. From 2020, there was a rise in the number of applications for recognition in non-regulated occupations in cases where applicants were living in a third country at the time the application was made. → [Chapter 2.2.2](#) looks at this in greater detail.

2,349 of the total of around 39,300 applications in 2022 concerned recognition of a foreign qualification within the scope of the accelerated procedure for skilled workers in accordance with § 81a of the Residence Act (AufenthG). These applications accounted for a proportion of six percent of the volume of applications in 2022. The three most popular reference occupations pursuant

Figure 4: Applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law by countries of training (2012 to 2022, in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

to § 81a AufenthG were registered general nurse or qualified nurse (1,539 applications), cook (192 applications) and physiotherapist (54 applications).⁵⁷

Professions and occupations governed by federal law – countries of training of foreign professional and vocational qualifications

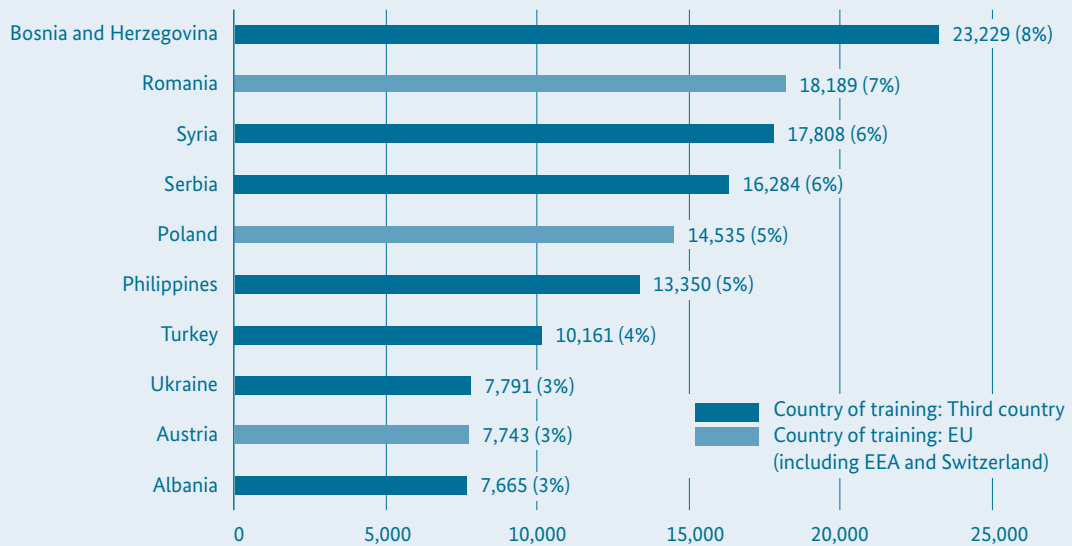
Recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal law is characterised by the fact that increasing numbers of applications relate to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries. At the same time, the proportion of applications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland) is declining both proportionally and in absolute terms. Since 2016, applications for professional and vocational qualifications obtained in a third country have predominated. Such applications accounted for 54 percent of volume in 2016. By 2022, their annual proportion had risen to 82 percent (→ Figure 4).

In respect of the entire period from 2012 to 2022, the official statistics now show applications for recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications from virtually every country in the world. Nevertheless, there are concentrations of volume from certain states and regions. The group of the Western Balkan states is one of these.⁵⁸ Western Balkan states accounted for just over a fifth (21 percent) of around 279,000 applications submitted over the entire period. Most commonly, these concerned applications regarding professional and vocational qualifications from Bosnia and Herzegovina (8 percent), followed by Serbia (6 percent) and Albania (3 percent). These three states were also amongst the most common countries of training for applications in overall terms. The most prevalent countries of training from the European Union for which recognition applications were submitted in respect of professional and vocational qualifications acquired there were Romania

57 Cf. Böse et al. 2023.

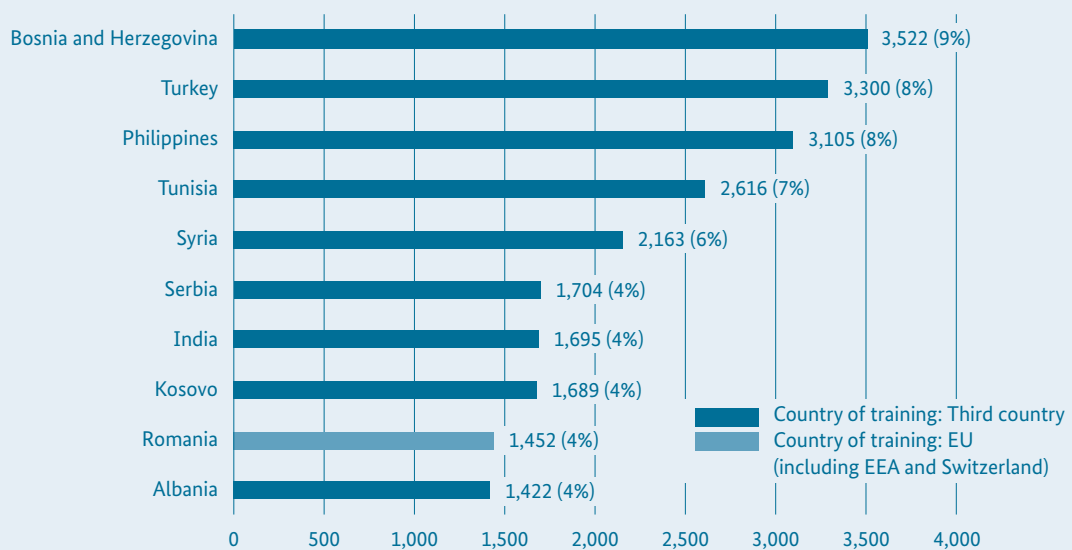
58 The Western Balkan states comprise Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

Figure 5: Top 10 countries of training for applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law (2012 to 2022 overall, in absolute terms and in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 6: Top 10 countries of training for applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law (2022, in absolute terms and in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

(7 percent), Poland (5 percent) and Austria (3 percent). Syria (6 percent), the Philippines (5 percent), Turkey (4 percent) and Ukraine (3 percent) also made up large numbers of applications (→ Figure 5). Professional and vocational qualifications from the ten countries of training mentioned above accounted for just under half (49 percent) of the total number of around 279,000 made over the entire period.

Most of these states were also amongst the most common countries of training in respect of applications made for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications in 2022. 9 percent of the applications submitted, around 39,300 in total, related to professional and vocational qualifications from Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed in second and third place by qualifications from Turkey (8 percent) and the Philippines (8 percent). Applications for professional and vocational qualifications from Syria (6 percent) and Serbia (4 percent) occupied fifth and sixth positions respectively. The only EU member state amongst the top ten most common countries of training for applications was Romania (4 percent). Many applications also related to professional and vocational qualifications from Tunisia (7 percent), India (4 percent) and Kosovo (4 percent). Although these states were not prevalent over the entire period, they were amongst the most common countries of training for applications in 2022 (→ Figure 6). The crucial factor is that numbers of applications relating to professional and vocational qualifications from these three countries of training have risen noticeably over recent years.⁵⁹ The ten most common countries of training accounted for 58 percent of the total of around 39,300 applications received in 2022.

Developments in the application system are also revealed in respect of other countries of training of the professional and vocational qualifications. → [Chapter 2.2.1](#) looks at this in greater detail and uses a selection of the most frequent countries of origin to present the development in applications and the reference occupations to which applications related.

Professions and occupations governed by federal law – German reference occupations

The application system for professions and occupations governed by federal law encompasses around 500 different reference occupations during the whole of the period from 2012 to 2022. Nevertheless, there was a clear concentration on certain occupational groups from the very outset. Medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law have predominated throughout. These accounted for just over 75 percent of around 279,000 applications submitted over the entire period. The two occupations that were particularly frequently involved were registered general nurse or qualified nurse (36 percent) and doctor (24 percent). These were the most prevalent reference occupations by some distance, both in overall terms as well as within the medical and healthcare professions. Physiotherapist (3 percent), dentist (3 percent), pharmacist (2 percent) and midwife (1 percent) are all medical and healthcare professions that are amongst the ten professions and occupations attracting the highest numbers of applications (→ Figure 7).

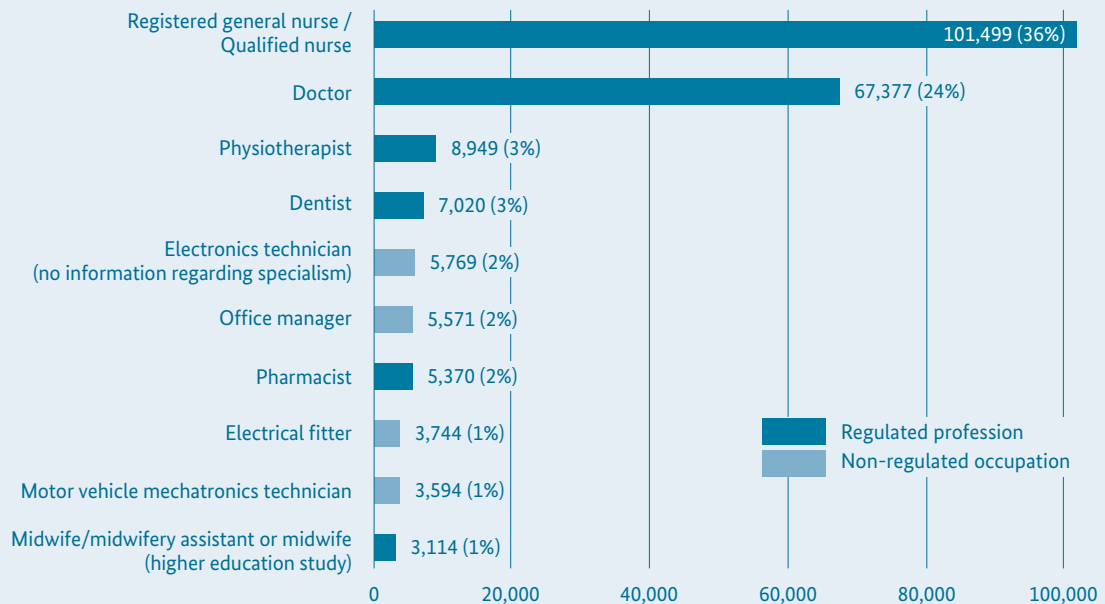
Mechatronics, energy and electrical occupations were a further group which accounted for the second most (7 percent) of around 279,000 applications received over the entire period.⁶⁰ This category includes electronics technician (2 percent) and electrical fitter (1 percent), both of which formed part of the top ten reference occupations with the most applications. In addition to this, the occupations of office manager (2 percent) and motor vehicle mechatronics technician (1 percent) received comparatively large numbers of applications (→ Figure 7). The top ten reference occupations accounted for just over three quarters (76 percent) of around 279,000 applications received.

All medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law are regulated professions. Equivalence of the foreign qualification with the German reference occupation is a prerequisite for unrestricted authorisation to practise. Many other occupations are unregulated, most of which are dual occupations. Recognition of the foreign qualification is not a requirement for being permitted to work in unregulated

⁵⁹ In comparison with Figure 6 (2022), application numbers for 2019 were: country of training Tunisia around 900 applications; country of training India around 900 applications; country of training Kosovo around 550 applications.

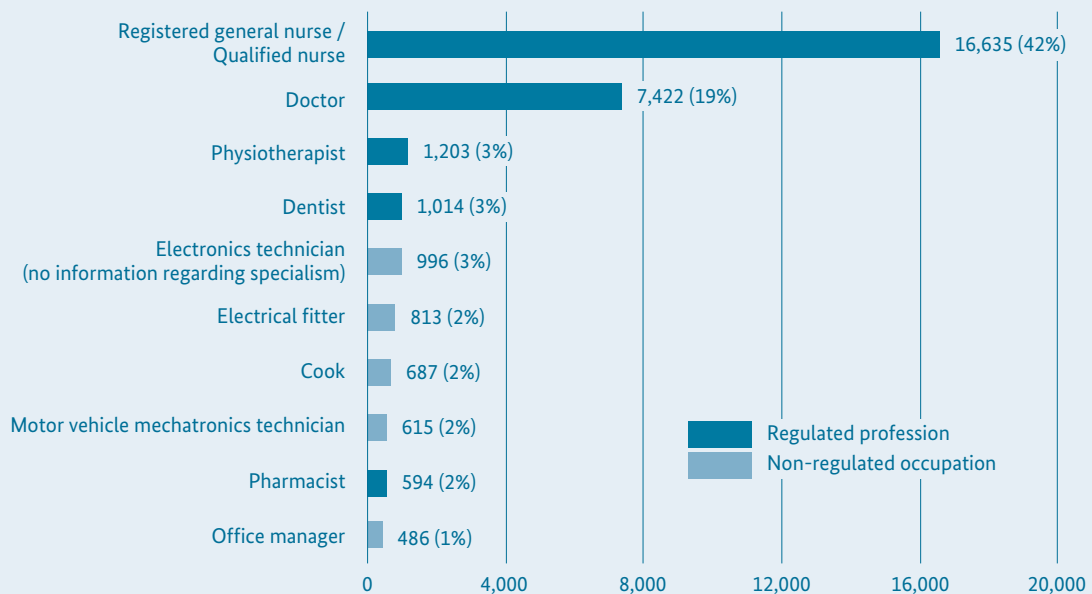
⁶⁰ Main occupational group 26 according to the 2010 Classification of Occupations (KldB 2010).

Figure 7: Top 10 reference occupations for applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law (2012 to 2022 overall, in absolute terms and in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 8: Top 10 reference occupations for professions and occupations governed by federal law (2022, in absolute terms and in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

occupations. Regulated professions accounted for 76 percent of around 279,000 applications submitted across the entire period. The corresponding proportion for non-regulated occupations was 24 percent.

With the exception of the profession of midwife, the ten reference occupations attracting the most applications over the entire period are the same as the ten most prevalent reference occupations for 2022. Once again, procedures were dominated by the medical and healthcare professions. Registered general nurse or qualified nurse made up 42 percent of around 39,300 applications submitted. 19 percent of applications related to the profession of doctor (→ Chapter 3.2.2). Non-regulated occupations were also amongst the ten occupations for which most applications were received. Electronics technician (3 percent) and electrical fitter (2 percent) occupied positions five and six. The occupation of chef (2 percent) was amongst the most prevalent reference occupations for 2022, although it does not appear in the top ten across the period as a whole (→ Figure 8). The ten most common reference occupations made up 77 percent of applications in 2022.

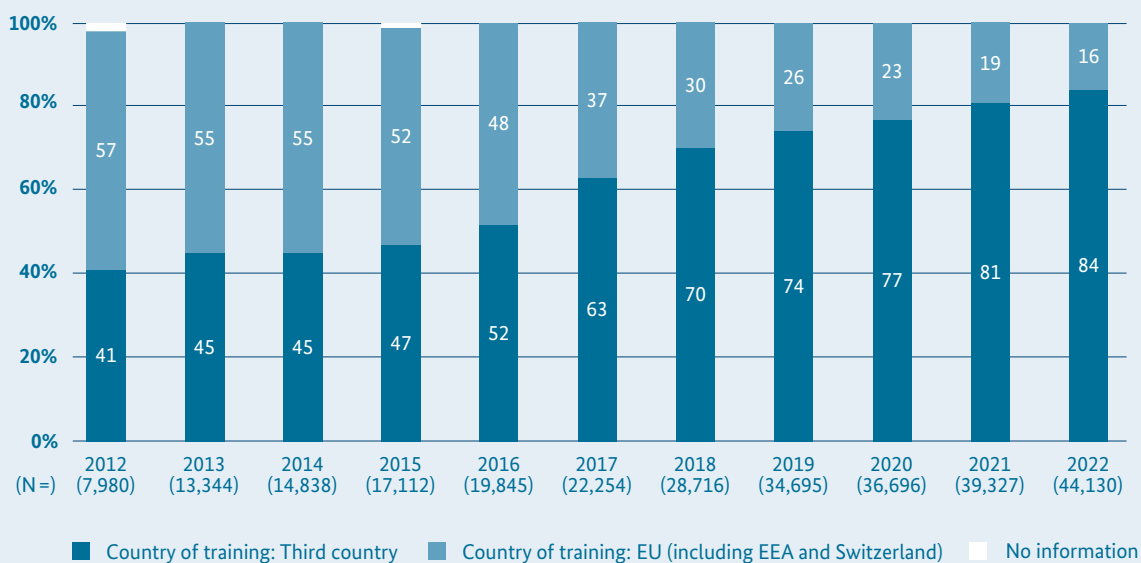
In 2022, regulated professions accounted for 76 percent of around 39,300 applications received. The corresponding proportion for non-regulated occupations was 24 percent.

Professions and occupations governed by federal law – outcome of procedures in which a decision was reached

The number of annual decisions with regard to equivalence has increased over the years in line with rising numbers of applications. This has also particularly encompassed procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications acquired in third countries. For the year 2022, the official statistics showed a total of around 44,100 procedures in that a decision had been reached. This represents a record since the entry into force of the Federal Recognition Acts (→ Figure 9).

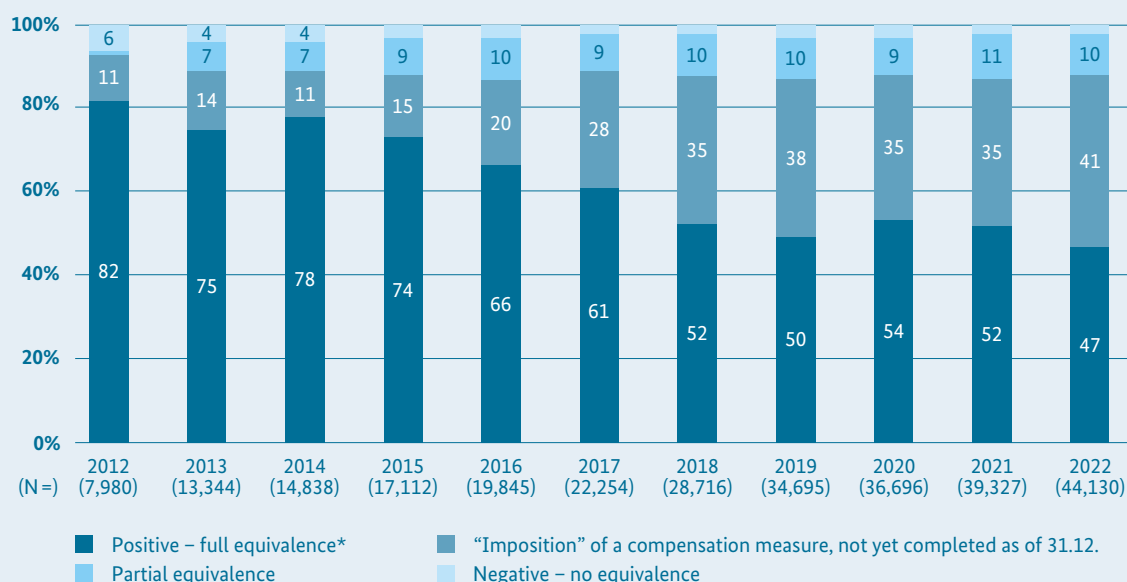
In most cases over the years, the foreign professional and vocational qualifications were completely or at least partially equivalent to the relevant German reference occupation. This is revealed by the low proportion of procedures that ended in a negative

Figure 9: Procedures in which a decision was reached relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law by countries of training (2012 to 2022, in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 10: Outcome of procedures relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law in which a decision was reached (2012 to 2022, in percent)



* Including partial access to the profession in the case of regulated professions governed by the HwO and partial access. Full equivalence may have been preceded by successful completion of a compensation measure imposed.

Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

decision and by the high rates of recognition procedures which led to full equivalence, to partial equivalence (in the case of non-regulated occupations) or to the “imposition”⁶¹ of a compensation measure (for regulated professions) (→ Figure 10). Almost half (47 percent) of around 44,100 procedures in which a decision was reached in 2022 resulted in full equivalence. In a further 51 percent of the procedures, the foreign professional and vocational qualifications exhibited partial equivalence with the German reference occupations (41 percent “imposition” of a compensation measure, 10 percent partial equivalence).

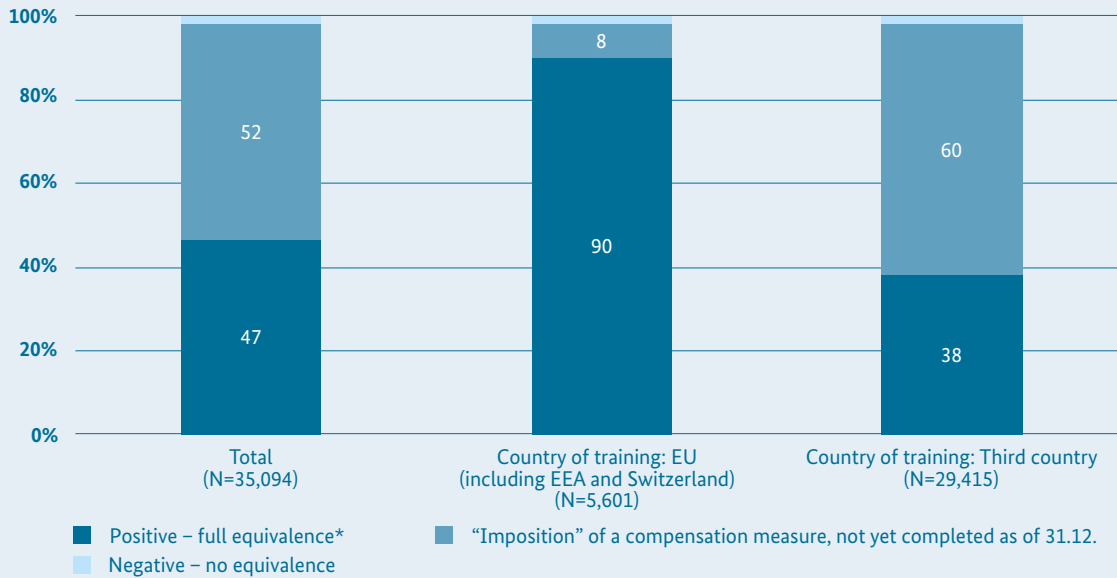
When looking at the outcome of the recognition procedures, it is useful to undertake a differentiated consideration in accordance with the regulation of

the reference occupation and in accordance with the country of training of the foreign professional or vocational qualification. This is because there is a variance in the results of procedures relating to qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland) as opposed to those from third countries.

This particularly applies in the case of regulated professions, for which a high recognition rate (full recognition) was exhibited in respect of procedures relating to professional qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland). As in previous years, this rate was approximately 90 percent in 2022 (→ Figure 11). This is primarily attributable to automatic recognition pursuant to EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications,

61 “Imposition” has been placed in inverted commas because this does not constitute an ancillary provision to an administration act pursuant to § 36 of the Administrative Procedure Act.

Figure 11: Outcome of procedures relating to regulated professions in which a decision was reached in overall terms and by country of training in professions and occupations governed by federal law (2022, in percent)



* Including partial access to the profession in the case of regulated professions governed by the HwO and partial access. Full equivalence may have been preceded by successful completion of a compensation measure imposed.

Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

which in 2022 was used in 81 percent of the procedures culminating in full equivalence. This figure represents 4,100 of a total of around 5,100 procedures leading to full recognition.

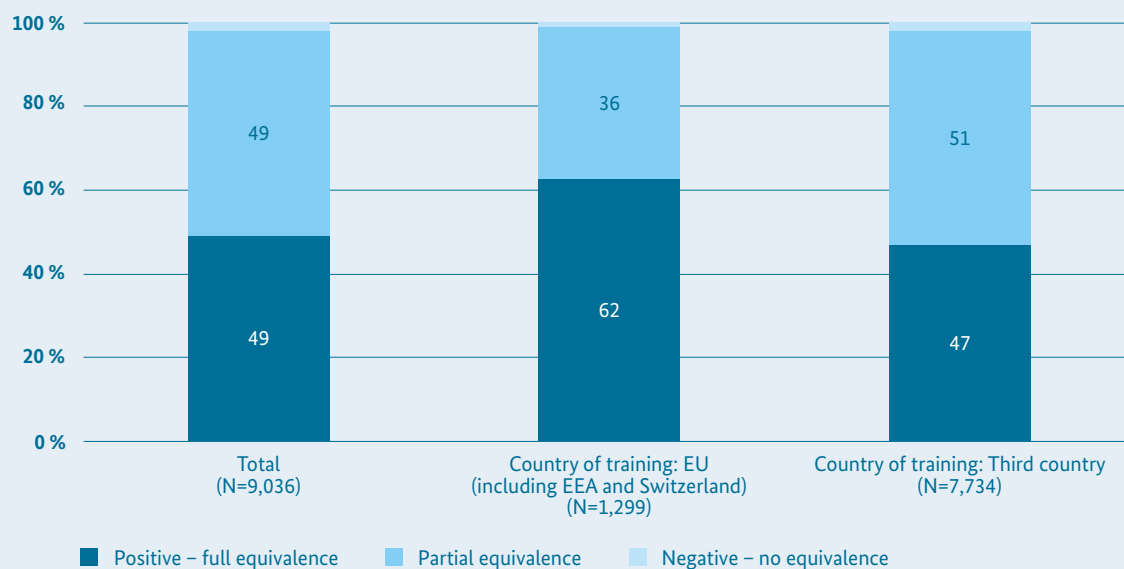
By way of contrast, the recognition rate has been significantly lower for procedures resulting in full recognition that were conducted for professional and vocational qualifications from third countries. Over recent years, the competent bodies have arrived at this decision in fewer than half of cases. In 2022, the proportion was 38 percent of a total of around 29,400 procedures in which a decision was reached. Many applicants with professional or vocational qualifications acquired in third countries must first successfully complete a compensation measure in order to obtain full recognition. In 2022, 60 percent of procedures relating to third country professional and vocational qualifications in which a decision was reached culminated in the “imposition” of a compensation measure

in respect of which completion was still outstanding as of 31 December 2022 (→ Figure 11).

As had been the case in previous years, the proportion of procedures with a negative outcome, i.e., which ended without equivalence, was once again in low single figures in percentage terms (2 percent). This was true both for professional and vocational qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland) and for professional and vocational qualifications from third countries.

In order to obtain authorisation to practise in a regulated profession, the foreign professional qualification must be recognised as being fully equivalent to the German reference occupation. Possible routes to full equivalence depend on the origin of the professional qualification and on the reference occupation aspired to. → Chapter 2.2.3 addresses this topic in more detail.

Figure 12: Outcome of procedures relating to non-regulated occupations in which a decision was reached in overall terms and by country of training in professions and occupations governed by federal law (2022, in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

In the case of non-regulated occupations, differences – albeit less considerable – are also shown in outcomes of procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland) as opposed to outcomes for professional and vocational qualifications from third countries. Over the past few years, more than half of recognition procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland) have resulted in full equivalence. In 2022, this applied to 62 percent of 1,300 procedures in which a decision was reached. In the case of professional and vocational qualifications from third countries, however, less than half of procedures in which a decision was reached culminated in full equivalence. In 2022, this outcome was recorded for 47 percent of around 7,700 procedures in which a decision was reached (→ Figure 12).

In recent years, recognition procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries have largely led to partial equivalence. In 2022, this was true of half (51 percent) of procedures in which a decision was reached. Proportions were lower

in the case of professional and vocational qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland). The figure for 2022 was 36 percent.

In the case of the regulated professions, the proportion of procedures which ended negatively, i.e. without equivalence, was also in low single percentage figures in overall terms (2 percent).

The establishment of full equivalence of the foreign professional or vocational qualification with the German reference occupation is not mandatory for the exercising of a non-regulated occupation. Nevertheless, in this case too, foreign skilled workers have an opportunity to undergo refresher training in order to progress from partial to full recognition of their qualification. However, the official statistics do not provide any information on how many recognition procedures result in a notice attesting full equivalence following successful completion of refresher training.

Because the training regulations for dual VET programmes in Germany prescribe a large practical

component compared to training programmes abroad, consideration of professional experience during the equivalence assessment is an important aspect in the area of the non-regulated occupations in terms of compensating for the absence of practical elements of training. This is examined in more detail in → [Chapter 2.2.4](#).

2.1.2 Professions and occupations governed by federal state law

Official statistics have been kept on professions and occupations governed by federal state law since the entry into force of the recognition acts of the federal states (→ [Information box 8](#)). However, these statistics have only been available in consolidated form across all federal states since the 2016 reporting year. For this reason, the information presented below relates to the period from 2016 to 2022.

Professions and occupations governed by federal state law – development in volume of applications

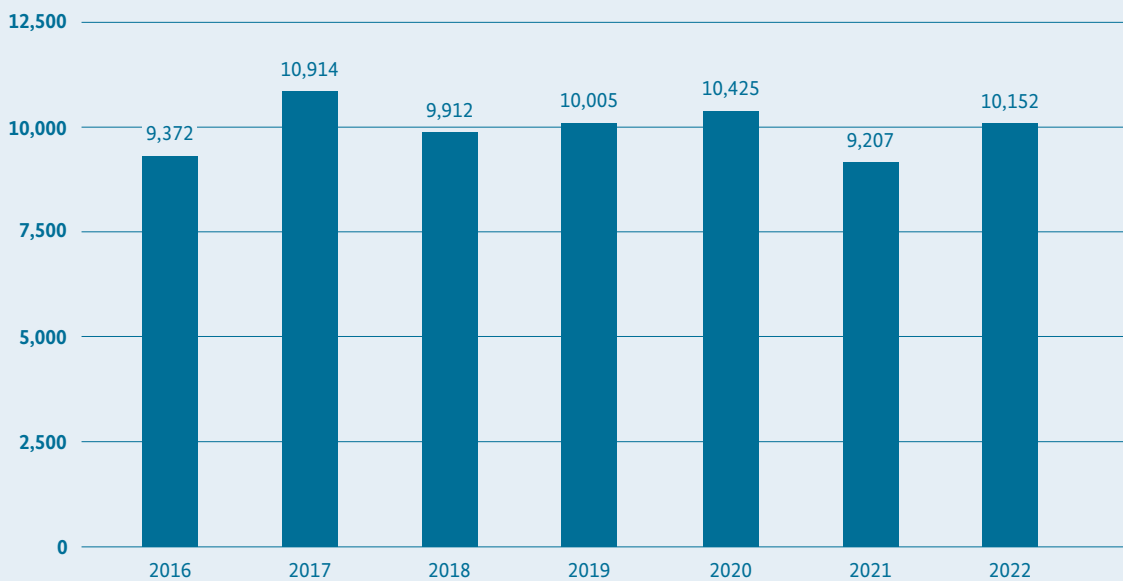
Professions and occupations governed by federal state law were the object of around 70,000 applications

during the entire period from 2016 to 2022. Application volumes remained quite constant over this time and have fluctuated between approximately 9,200 and 11,000 applications per year. The competent bodies reported almost 10,200 applications for 2022 (→ [Figure 13](#)). Unlike in the professions and occupations governed by federal state law, volume of applications did not decline in the year 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Nevertheless, volume subsequently fell to a record low in 2021. Subduing effects caused by the pandemic may have exerted a time-delayed effect here.

Professions and occupations governed by federal state law – countries of training of the professional and vocational qualifications

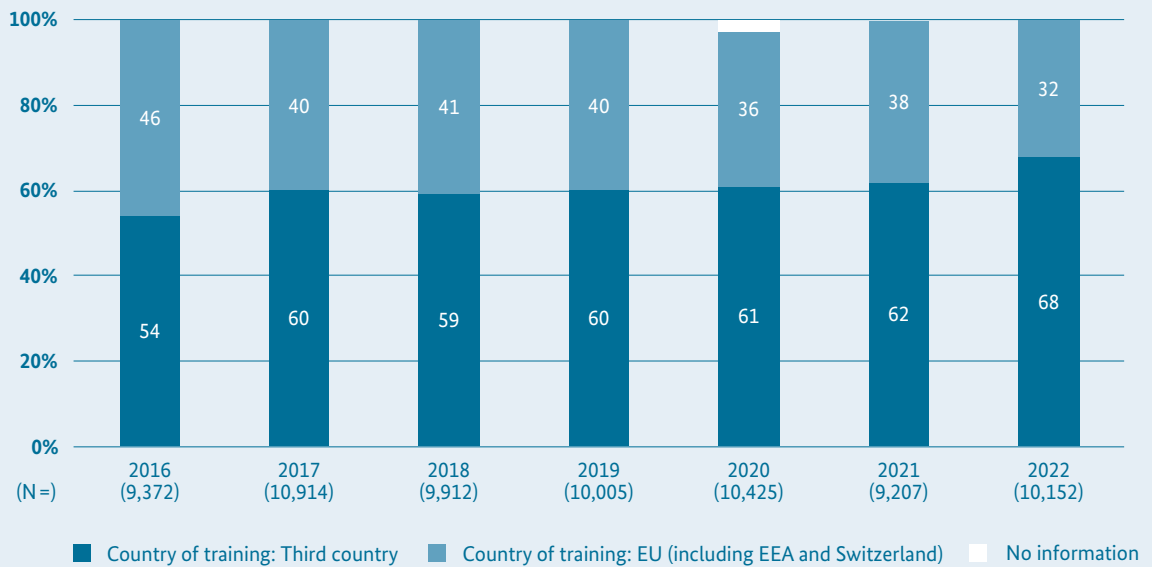
Over the entire period from 2016 to 2022, 61 percent of around 70,000 applications related to the recognition of professional and vocational qualifications from third countries. 39 percent concerned professional and vocational qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland). Professions and occupations governed by federal state law are typified by the fact that the shares of application volume accounted for by these two groups have remained largely constant over the

Figure 13: Applications for recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal law (2016 to 2022, in absolute terms)



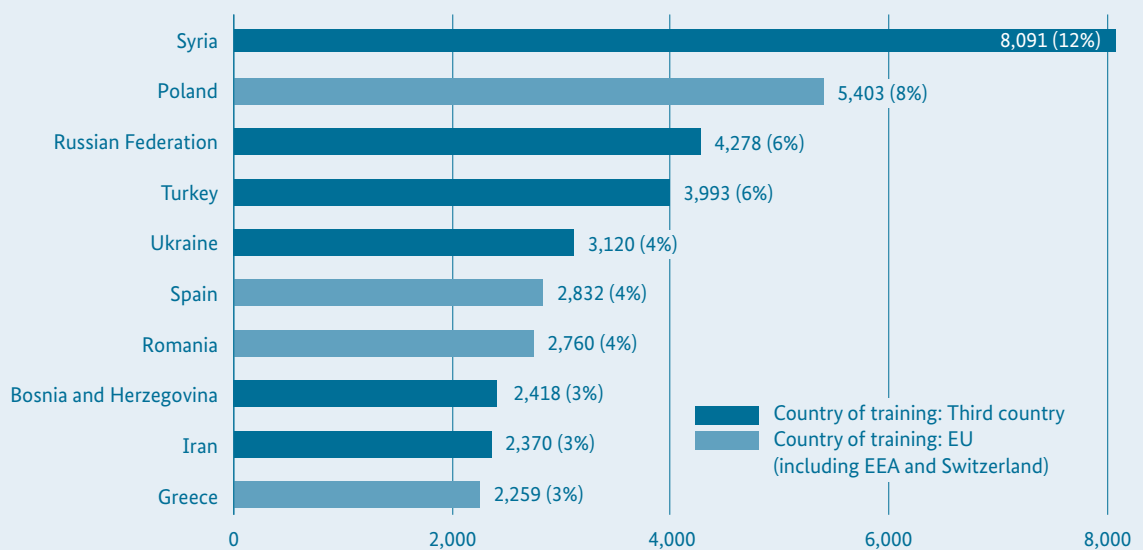
Source: official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal law 2016–2022. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office, presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 14: Applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law by countries of training (2016 to 2022, in percent)



Source: official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal state law 2016–2022. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office and by BIBB, presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 15: Top 10 countries of training for applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law (2016 to 2022 overall, in absolute terms and in percent)



Source: official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal state law 2016–2022. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office and by BIBB, presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

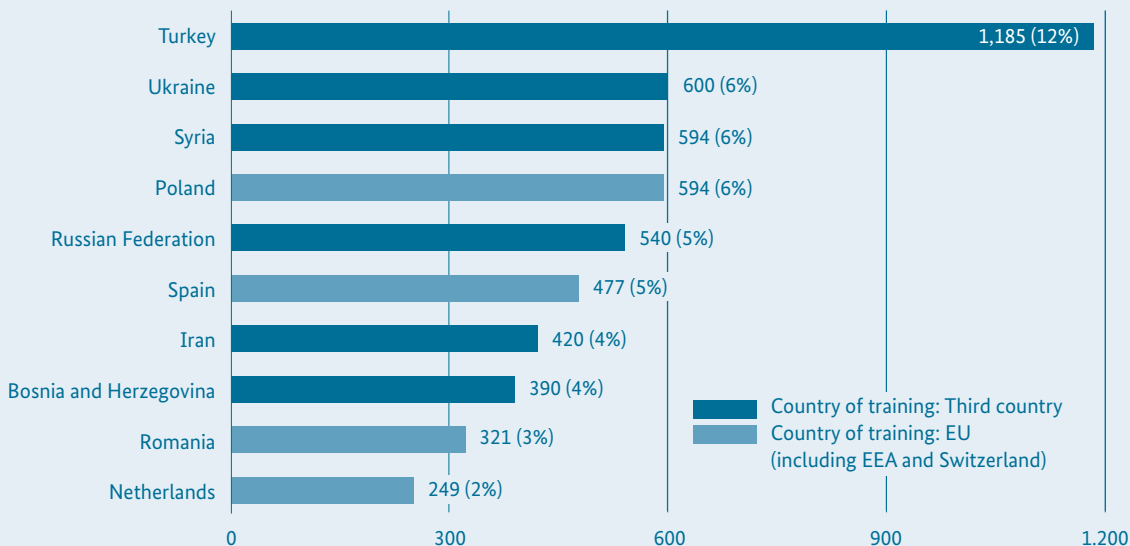


Born in Kazakhstan, Olga Gotjur has been working as a teacher in Germany since her foreign professional qualifications were recognised.

course of the years. However, around 6,900 applications in 2022 (68 percent) related to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries. This is the highest such volume recorded thus far (→ Figure 14).

A specific consideration of the countries of training shows that the most common country in which applicants acquired their professional or vocational qualification was Syria. This country of training accounted for 12 percent of around 70,000 applications submitted over the entire period. The EU member states amongst the countries of training for which most applications were received for recognition of professional and vocational qualifications were Poland (8 percent), Spain (4 percent), Romania (4 percent) and Greece (3 percent). There was also a prevalent demand for recognition of professional and vocational qualifications from Russia (6 percent), Turkey (6 percent), Ukraine (4 percent) and Iran (3 percent). These countries were also in the top ten most common countries of training for applications. Many applications also related to professional and vocational qualifications from Bosnia and Herzegovina (3 percent), which was the only Western Balkans state to feature amongst the top ten most common countries of training for applications (→ Figure 15).⁶² Professional and vocational

Figure 16: Top 10 countries of training for applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law (2022, in absolute terms and in percent)



Source: official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal state law 2022. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office and by BIBB, presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

⁶² All of the Western Balkan states together (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) accounted for 8 percent of applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law during the whole of the period from 2016 to 2022.

qualifications from the top ten most common countries of training for application accounted for just over half (54 percent) of the total number of around 70,000 applications made over the entire period.

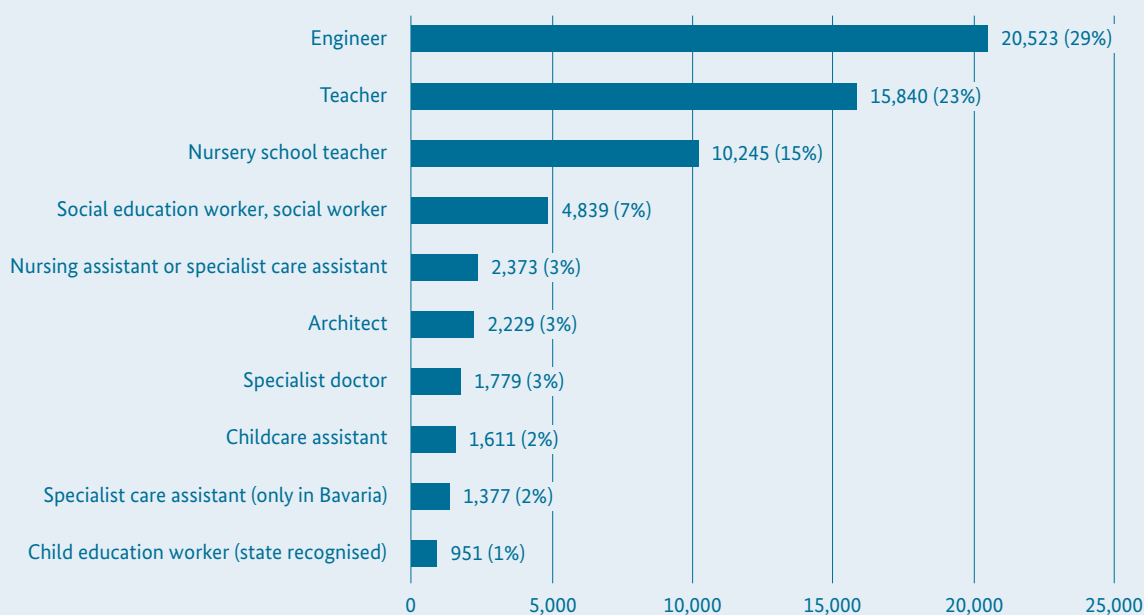
Nearly all of the top ten most common countries of training for applications relating to recognition of professional and vocational qualifications over the entire period were also included in the 2022 ranking of the most common countries of training for applications, albeit in a significantly different order. The most prevalent country in this regard was Turkey, to which almost 10,200 applications for recognition of professional and vocational qualifications (12 percent) related. It was followed by applications in respect of professional and vocational qualifications from Ukraine (6 percent), Syria (6 percent), Poland (6 percent) and the Russian Federation (5 percent) (→ Figure 16). Together, the ten most common countries of training for applications accounted for 53 percent of applications in 2022.

Professions and occupations governed by federal state law – German reference occupations

Applications relating to around 350 different reference occupations governed by federal state law were recorded over the entire period from 2016 to 2022. Significant concentrations were revealed. The preponderant share of around 70,000 applications submitted concerned the professions of engineer (29 percent), teacher (23 percent) and nursery school teacher (15 percent). These three formed the most common reference occupations by some distance (→ Figure 17).

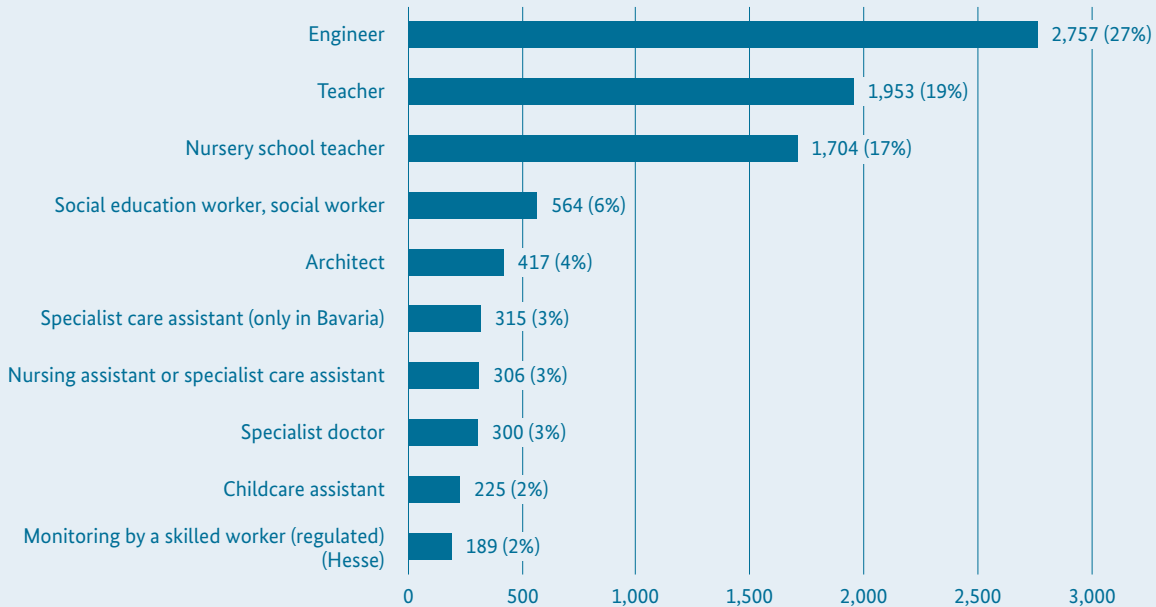
The healthcare sector also includes professions that are governed by federal state law. The most prevalent of these in terms of numbers of applications received were registered general nurse and nursing assistant (3 percent), doctor (3 percent) and specialist care assistant (Bavaria only) (2 percent) (→ Figure 17).

Figure 17: Top 10 reference occupations for applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law (2016 to 2022 overall, in absolute terms and in percent)



Source: official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal state law 2016–2022. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office and by BIBB, presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 18: Top 10 reference occupations for applications in professions and occupations governed by federal state law (2022, in absolute terms and in percent)



Source: official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal state law 2022. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office and by BIBB, presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see "Methodological notes on data sources" in the Annex.

Taken together, all medical healthcare professions governed by federal state law⁶³ comprised 9 percent of applications.

The further reference occupations attracting most applications were social worker and social education worker (7 percent), architect (3 percent), childcare assistant (2 percent) and child education worker (state recognised) (1 percent) (→ Figure 17). The ten most common reference occupations made up 88 percent of applications.

Most applications in professions and occupations governed by federal state law related to the recognition of regulated professions. These accounted for 91 percent of around 70,000 applications submitted. 9 percent related to non-regulated occupations.

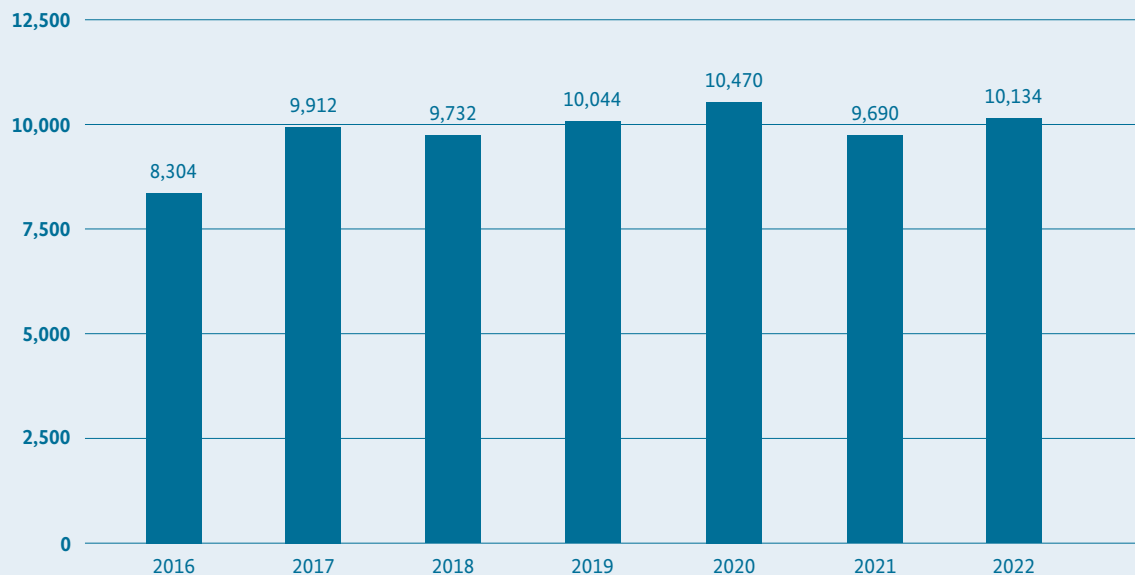
Almost all the ten occupations that recorded the most applications over the entire period were amongst the ten most common reference occupations in 2022. 27 percent of applications related to the profession of engineer. Teacher and nursery school teacher accounted for 19 and 17 percent of applications respectively. Social worker and social education worker (6 percent) and architect (4 percent) followed some distance behind in positions four and five respectively (→ Figure 18).

Professions and occupations governed by federal state law – outcome of procedures in which a decision was reached

Over the entire period from 2016 to 2022, the number of procedures relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law in which a decision was reached fluctuated between 8,300 and around 10,500.

⁶³ The reference is to professions governed by federal state law which are allocated to main occupational group 81 "medical healthcare professions" as defined in the 2010 Classification of Occupations (KldB 2010).

Figure 19: Procedures relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law in which a decision was reached (2016 to 2022, in absolute terms)



Source: official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal state law 2016–2022. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office, presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

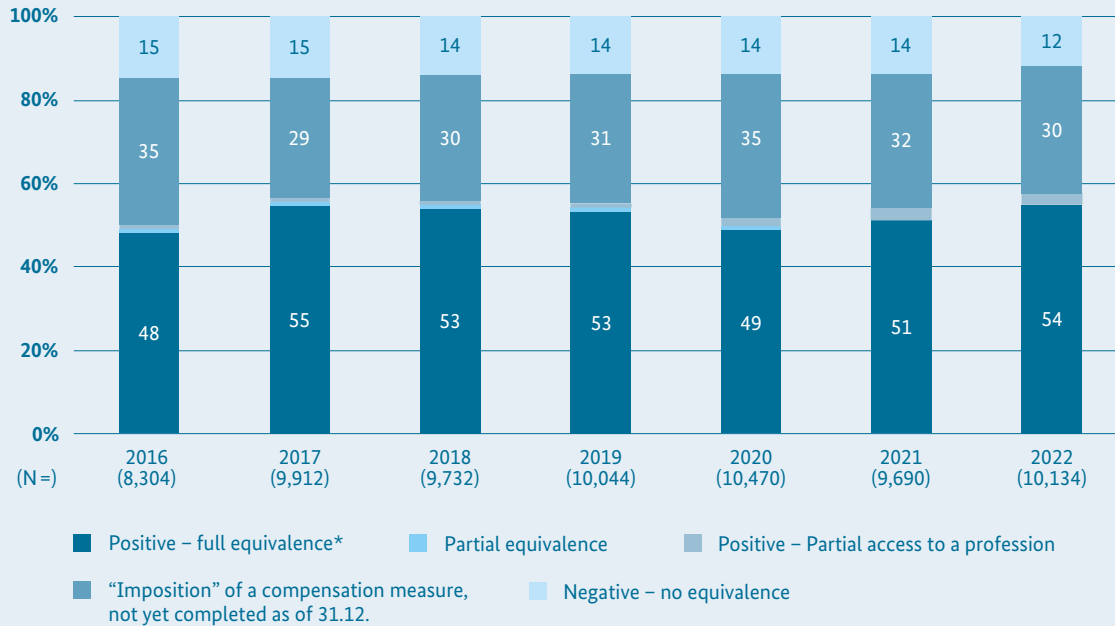
In 2022, the competent bodies arrived at a decision in around 10,100 procedures (→ [Figure 19](#)).

Over the course of the years, full equivalence was the outcome of around half of procedures conducted annually and relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law in which a decision was reached. A compensation measure was “imposed” following one third of the procedures. In a small number of cases, the competent bodies attested partial equivalence in non-regulated occupations and partial access to regulated professions in accordance with EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications. The foreign professional and vocational qualifications were thus predominantly deemed to be capable of recognition in full or at least partially. Nevertheless, the proportion of procedures that ended negatively, i.e., without recognition, was over 10 percent (→ [Figure 20](#)). Data from the official statistics shows comparatively high rates of negative outcomes to procedures in teaching and education professions. → [Chapter 3.2.4](#) addresses this in more detail.



Fadi Shanan came to Germany from Egypt in 2018. His Bachelor's degree in Biomedical Engineering was certified as comparable to a German degree as part of a Statement of Comparability for Foreign Higher Education Qualifications.

Figure 20: Outcome of procedures relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law (2016 to 2022, in percent)



* Full equivalence may have been preceded by successful completion of a compensation measure imposed.

Source: official recognition statistics for professions and occupations governed by federal state law 2016–2022. Calculations by the Federal Statistical Office and by BIBB, presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Conclusion

The number of applications pursuant to federal law has risen over the years, whereas the number of applications relating to federal state law has remained at the same level. The increase in the case of professions and occupations governed by federal law was accompanied by a rise in applications from third countries. Both procedures relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law and procedures relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law were dominated by applications relating to regulated professions. In the area of federal law, the professions that were the most frequent object of applications were registered general nurse or qualified nurse and doctor. In the area governed by federal state law, applications relating to the professions of engineer, teacher and nursery school teacher were by far the most prevalent. Full or partial equivalence to the German reference occupations was attested in the vast majority of instances. In the case of professions and occupations governed by federal law, increasing numbers of procedures in the regulated sector have ended with the “imposition” of a compensation measure in recent years. This particularly occurred in respect of applications with their basis in training in a third country. By way of contrast, there has been virtually no change in the outcome of procedures relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law. The rates of procedures resulting in a negative outcome was comparatively high in the case of teaching and education professions in particular.

2.2 Focus: Selected facts and trends relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law

Selected topics regarding the professional recognition of foreign qualifications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law will be examined in detail below.

- Numbers of applications concerning professional and vocational qualifications acquired in third countries have increased significantly over recent years. → Chapter 2.2.1 shows which countries of training are involved and emphasises certain developments.
- Applications for recognition have been submitted from abroad with increasing frequency over the years. This development in applications is examined more closely in → Chapter 2.2.2.
- Applicants with professional or vocational qualifications obtained abroad are more and more likely to have to complete compensation measures in order to achieve full recognition. → Chapter 2.2.3 considers the relevance of the different pathways that have led to full recognition.
- Professional experience can be used in the equivalence assessment in order to offset substantial differences between the foreign and the German qualification. → Chapter 2.2.4 illustrates that this opportunity plays an important role in the non-regulated sector in particular.
- The official statistics do not cover the duration of the whole recognition process, which usually begins long before submission of the application. For this reason, → Chapter 2.2.5 looks at the periods within the recognition process. These can be mapped via the statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG.
- → Chapter 2.2.6 examines the recognition system structurally on the basis of competent bodies and shows that a small number of competent bodies accounted for the vast majority of applications in 2022.

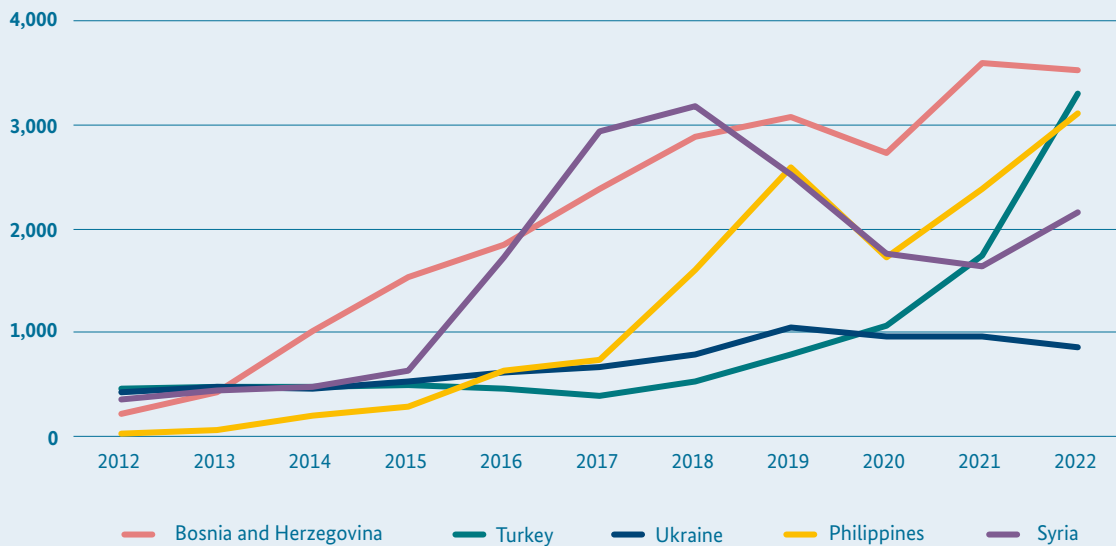


2.2.1 Focus: Applications relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries in the case of professions and occupations governed by federal state law

The results of the statistics show that recognition of professional and vocational qualifications from third countries now make up a considerable proportion of the recognition system. In 2022, 82 percent of around 39,300 applications related to professional and vocational qualifications for which the country of training was a third country (→ Chapter 2.1.1). A selection of these countries of training will be considered in more detail below.

The most prevalent country of training for applications over the entire period from 2012 to 2022 is Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was the object of around 23,200 applications for recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. The development shows that the annual volume of applications increased virtually continuously (→ Figure. 21). From 2013 onwards, Bosnia and Herzegovina was consistently in first or second position in the ranking of countries of training for foreign professional and vocational qualifications for which an application for

Figure 21: Development of applications relating to recognition of professional and vocational qualifications from individual third countries in the case of professions and occupations governed by federal law (2012 to 2022, in absolute terms)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

recognition had been submitted. The reference occupation of registered general nurse or qualified nurse accounted for just above half (56 percent) of around 23,200 applications. Other professions and occupations for which comparatively large numbers of applications were made included electronics technician (7 percent), electrical fitter (4 percent) and doctor (3 percent).

The application system revealed a different structure with regard to the Philippines. In this case, the volume of applications rose comparatively drastically from 2018 onwards (→ Figure 21). Around 13,400 applications relating to Philippine professional and vocational qualifications were received over the entire period from 2012 to 2022. This meant that the Philippines were the sixth most prevalent country of training for applications. It is notable that virtually all applications (97 percent) related to the reference occupation of registered general nurse or qualified nurse. This also applied to the year 2022, when this profession accounted for 98 percent of a total of around 3,100 applications. In 2022, the Philippines were thus the most

prevalent country of training with regard to applications relating to the profession of nursing.

Syria was the third most common country of training for applications over the entire period from 2012 to 2022, during which time around 17,800 applications were submitted. The number of applications for recognition of Syrian professional and vocational qualifications noticeably increased from 2016. This development initially continued, and Syria became the most prevalent country of training for applications in 2017 and 2018. Numbers of applications began to decline in the subsequent years. 2022 was the first year since this time that the number of applications exceeded the volume received in the previous year (→ Figure 21). The profession of doctor related to just over a third (37 percent) of applications relating to Syrian professional and vocational qualifications received over the entire period. Recognition was also in demand for a multitude of other professions and occupations including dentist (8 percent), office manager (7 percent) and pharmacist (7 percent).

One remarkable development was the emergence of Turkey as the seventh most common country of training in overall terms over the entirety of the period from 2012 to 2022. Around 10,200 applications were recorded, half of which were submitted in the two most recent years of observation. The number of applications relating to Turkish professional and vocational qualifications rose comparatively moderately after 2019, but a sharper rise took place from 2021 onwards (→ Figure 21). This growth was primarily driven by applications for recognition of Turkish professional and vocational qualifications submitted from abroad (virtually exclusively from Turkey itself). Around 10,200 applications were received over the total period relating to a multitude of reference occupations. The most frequent of these were doctor (19 percent), registered general nurse and qualified nurse (14 percent) and hairdresser (5 percent).

Particular emphasis has been placed on the recognition of Ukrainian professional and vocational qualifications since the outbreak of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine in February 2022 and in the wake of the forced migration this has caused. Ukraine was the eighth most prevalent country of training for applications over the entire period from 2012 to 2022, during which time around 7,800 applications were submitted. The number of applications relating to professional and vocational qualifications from Ukraine rose moderately until 2021 and remained at this level until 2021. The volume of applications declined slightly in 2022 (→ Figure 21).⁶⁴

The official statistics on the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications do not include any information that permits identification of the causes for the development of the volume of applications from individual countries. The same applies to the composition of the reference occupations to which the applications relate. It is definitely possible that the following facts and circumstances relating to the countries of training presented in this chapter are also exerting an influence on the application system alongside the

endeavours of the Federal Government to acquire more skilled workers from third countries in overall terms.

The Philippines and Bosnia and Herzegovina are two of the states in which qualified nurses are being acquired for the German labour market via the “Triple Win” programme being conducted by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Federal Employment Agency (BA) (→ Chapter 3.1.4). Private placement agencies are also recruiting skilled nurses in these countries. There is likely to be a correlation between the high proportions of applications relating to the professions of registered general nurse and qualified nurse and these activities.⁶⁵ With regard to the development in applications relating to the recognition of Syrian professional and vocational qualifications from 2016 onwards, the supposition is that effects from the high volume of forced migration to Germany by Syrian nationals in 2015 have been revealed. In respect of applications relating to Turkish professional and vocational qualifications, it remains to be seen whether these are possibly a reflection of rising endeavours to migrate to Germany from Turkey because of the current overall political and economic situation in the latter country. In the case of Ukraine as a country of training, many refugees may yet not have decided to embark upon a recognition procedure for their professional or vocational qualification during the period of observation, one of the considerations here being whether they intend to remain in Germany.

2.2.2 Focus: Submission of applications from abroad for professions and occupations governed by federal state law

An application for recognition of a foreign professional or vocational qualification may always be submitted irrespective of the applicant’s place of residence. This means that persons interested in seeking recognition

⁶⁴ In the case of professions and occupations governed by federal state law, data from the official statistics relating to the number of applications for recognition of Ukrainian professional and vocational qualifications shows an increase from 300 applications (2021) to 600 applications (2022). From the summer of 2022 onwards, the ZAB recorded a continuous rise in applications for a certificate evaluation of Ukrainian higher education qualifications from 235 applications in June 2022 to around 700 applications in December 2022 (cf. Federal Government 2023a).

⁶⁵ According to the BA, a total of just under 800 trained nurses with a professional qualification from Bosnia and Herzegovina and almost 2,100 nurses with a qualification from the Philippines entered Germany via the “Triple Win” scheme between 2013 and 2022. Regular networking workshops with competent bodies for the medical and healthcare professions are staged as part of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring, and these constantly indicate the increasing role being assumed by private placement agencies.



We use our local guidance services to give skilled workers a greater understanding of the many benefits of recognition of their professional or vocational qualification.

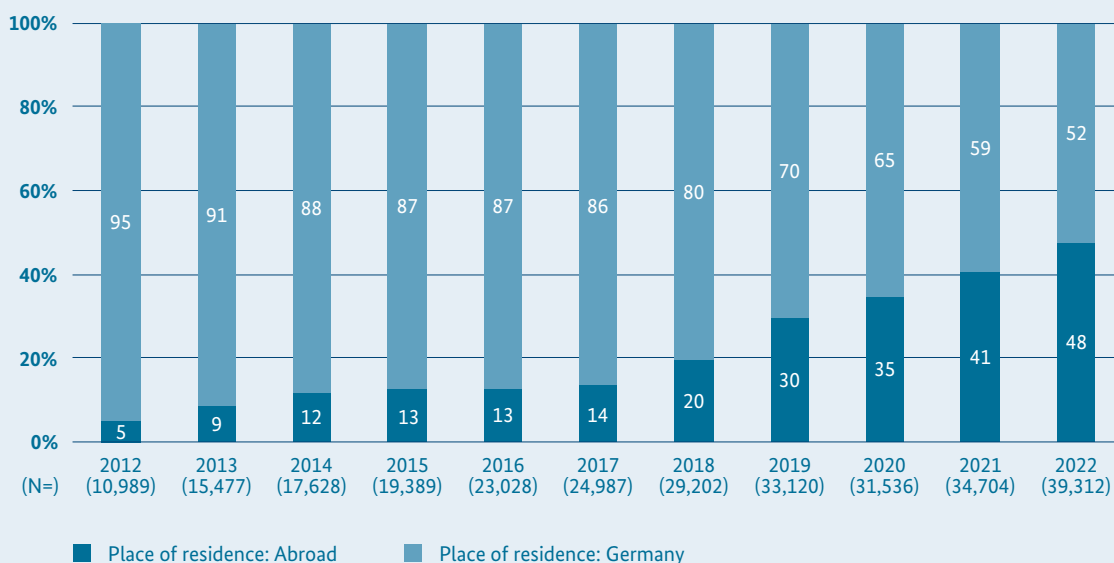
Nadjib Belaggoune, German-Algerian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, “ProRecognition” project manager

may be living either in Germany or abroad at the time when the application is made. According to the legal position that will pertain up until March 2024, skilled workers who are nationals of a third country and who wish to migrate to Germany for employment purposes are usually required to prove recognition of their foreign professional or vocational qualification in order for a relevant residence permit to be issued. This applies equally to the exercising of a regulated profession or a non-regulated occupation. By way of contrast, a right to freedom of movement of labour exists for nationals from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland). This means that recognition of the foreign

professional or vocational qualification is required for those practising a regulated profession. Recognition is not, however, necessary for non-regulated occupations or for the immigration process itself.

There has been a rise over the course of the years in the number of applications for recognition of professional and vocational qualifications submitted by applicants whose place of residence is abroad. These “foreign applications” initially assumed a subordinate role during the first few years of the Recognition Act. However, they increasingly gained in relevance after 2018 and reached a new record level in 2022,

Figure 22: Development of foreign applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law (2012 to 2022, in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2012–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

when they accounted for 48 percent of the volume of applications (→ Figure 22). This growth was the result of increased demand from persons living in third countries. In 2022, 92 percent of around 18,800 foreign applications were submitted from third countries.

The growth in foreign applications extended both to regulated professions and to non-regulated occupations. In the case of the regulated professions, the proportion of foreign applications has risen comparatively continuously over recent years. By 2022,

Figure 23: Proportion of foreign applications by regulatory area for professions and occupations governed by federal law (2017 to 2022, in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2017–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

it accounted for 47 percent of all applications in this area. A more drastic development has been revealed in the case of non-regulated occupations. In this area, the proportion of foreign applications increased from 11 percent of all applications in 2019 to 28 percent in 2020, and further rose to 49 percent in 2022. 2022 thus represented the first occasion when more applications for recognition of non-regulated occupations than for recognition of regulated professions were made by persons living abroad at the time when the application was submitted. Up until and including 2021, the proportion of foreign applications relating to regulated professions was always higher in comparative terms (→ Figure 23).

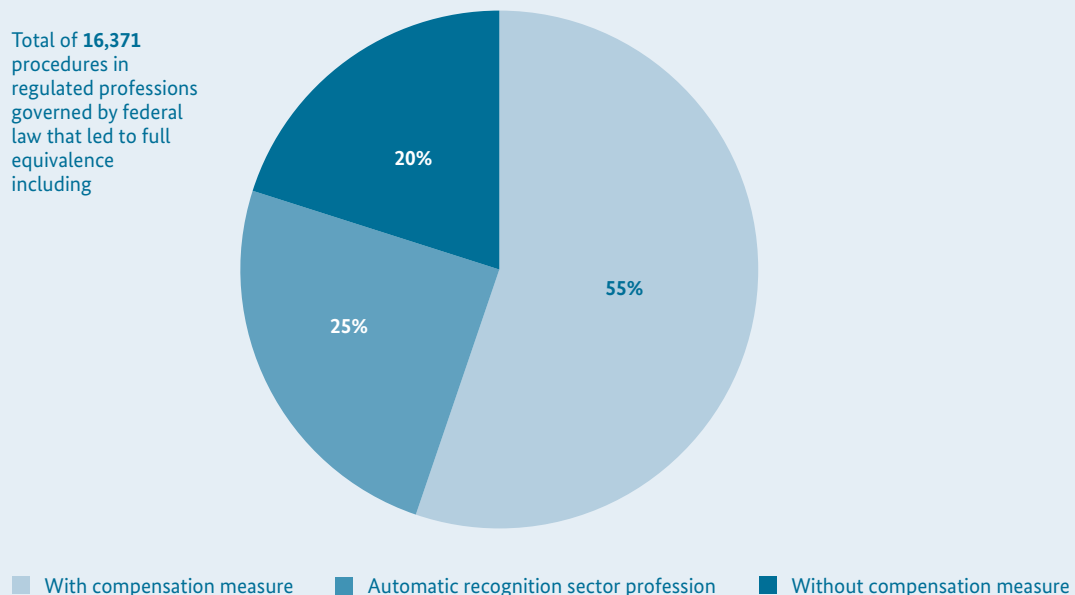
In addition to this, foreign applications relating to non-regulated occupations accounted for a broader span of German reference occupations. In 2019, foreign applications relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries were distributed across 86 different reference occupations.

The corresponding figures for 2020 and for 2022 were 146 and 159 respectively. The supposition would be that this clear increase is linked with the effects of the Skilled Immigration Act (FEG). Following its introduction in 2020, immigration opportunities for employment purposes have been expanded for skilled workers from third countries with vocational, non-academic training. This expansion also included the removal of the restriction to shortage occupations in the area of non-academic qualifications.

2.2.3 Focus: Routes to full recognition for regulated professions governed by federal law

Around 16,400 recognition procedures in regulated professions resulted in full equivalence in 2022. This figure represented 47 percent of around 35,100 procedures

Figure 24: Routes to full equivalence for regulated professions governed by federal law (2022, in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

relating to regulated professions in which a decision was reached in 2022 (→ Figure 11). Three different routes⁶⁶ lead to full recognition in the case of recognition procedures regarding regulated professions. → Figure 24 highlights these pathways for the year 2022 in more precise terms:

- Full equivalence may be achieved via automatic recognition in certain instances. In so-called sector professions, a qualification from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland) is automatically recognised if it is listed in the annex to the EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications.⁶⁷ This Directive sets out defined EU-wide standards for professional training, and there is therefore no need for individual scrutiny of training contents. Full equivalence is usually granted directly. Automatic recognition of full equivalence took place in 25 percent of procedures relating to recognised professions in 2022.
- The document-based equivalence assessment usually occurs in all other recognition procedures. Even the first stage of the process may result in full equivalence. In 2022, this was the case in 20 percent of procedures relating to regulated professions in which a decision of full equivalence was reached.
- However, if the competent bodies identify substantial differences between the foreign qualification and the German reference occupation for which relevant professional experience or other evidence of continuing training cannot compensate then they will issue a notice “imposing” participation in a compensation measure. In such cases, applicants must successfully complete the compensation measure in order to obtain full equivalence. Depending on the profession and country of training, this may involve an aptitude test, a knowledge test or adaptation period. In 55 percent of procedures relating to regulated professions in which a decision of full equivalence was reached in 2022, recognition took place once a compensation measure had been successfully completed.



Pelşin Bars studied medicine in Turkey. One year after coming to Germany, she received her approbation to practise medicine. You can read her field report on p. 60.

In 2022, around 5,050 of around 16,400 procedures relating to regulated professions in which a decision of full equivalence was reached related to qualifications acquired in the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland). Around 11,300 of such procedures related to qualifications from a third country. A differentiated view shows the following.

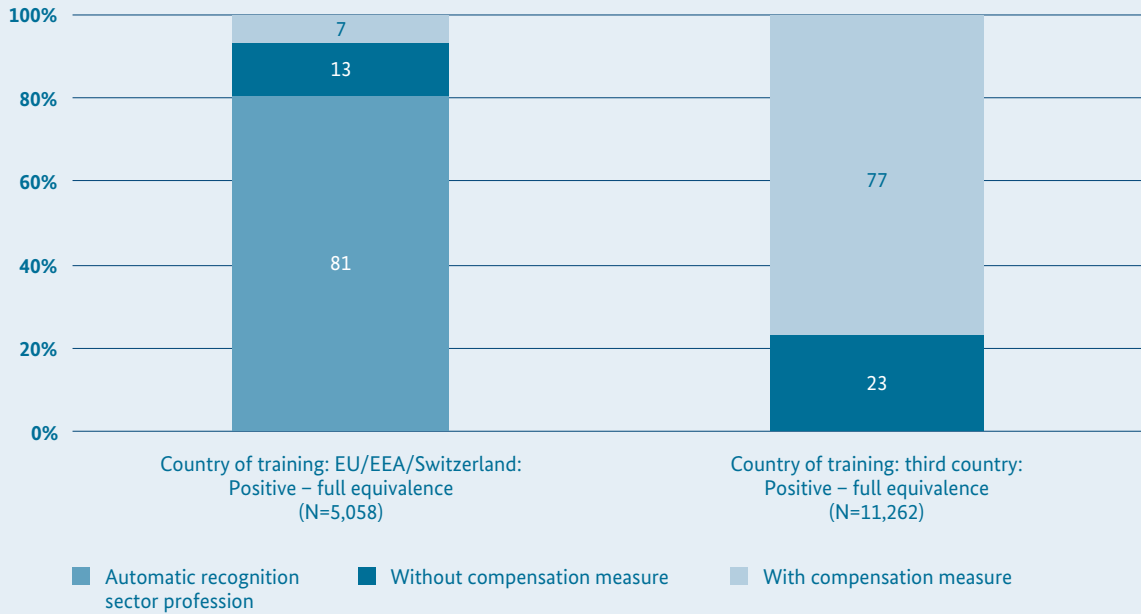
In the case of professional qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland), virtually all procedures resulted in full recognition without compensation measures. Automatic recognition took place in 81 percent of these instances. In 13 percent of cases, recognition followed a document-based equivalence assessment. Completion of a compensation measure en route to full equivalence was only necessary in a small number of cases (7 percent). Compensation measures thus played a subordinate role with regard to professional qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland).

However, the contrary applied in respect of professional qualifications acquired in third countries. Compensation measures played a significantly larger part here. In 77 percent of procedures relating to regulated professions in which a decision of full equivalence was reached, applicants did not achieve full recognition until they had successfully completed a compensation measure (→ Figure 25). This occurred in about 8,600 procedures.

⁶⁶ Since December 2023, there has been a fourth route for the recognition of qualified nurses: applicants can choose between the equivalence assessment and going directly to the compensation measure (see PfIBG Section 40 (3a)) (→ Chapter 3.2.2). However, the years 2023 and 2024 are not the subject of the considerations in this publication, as no data is yet available.

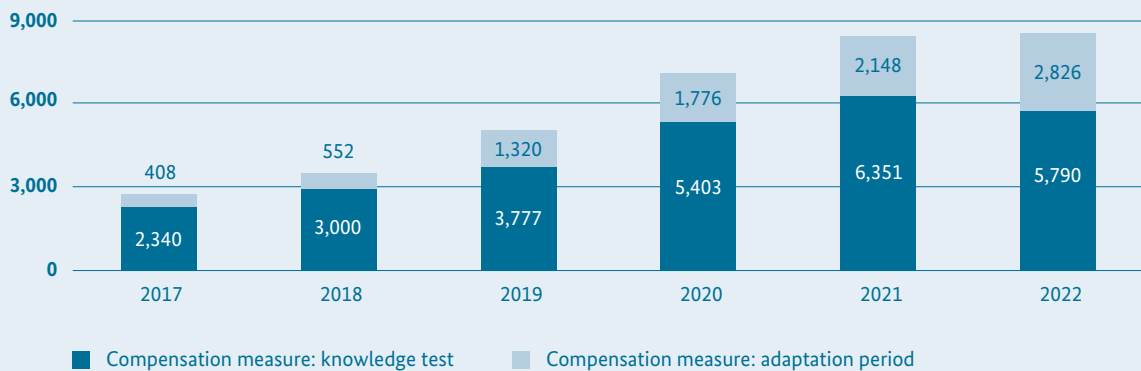
⁶⁷ The so-called sector professions are doctor, dentist, veterinarian, pharmacist, nurse, midwife and architect.

Figure 25: Routes to full equivalence for regulated professions governed by federal law by country of training (2022, in percent)



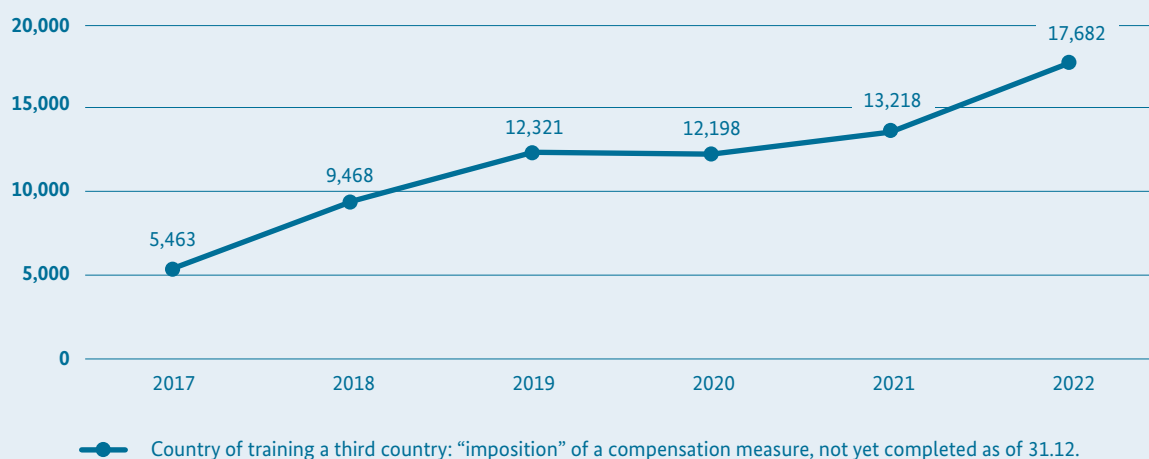
Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 26: Routes to full equivalence for professional and vocational qualifications from third countries relating to regulated professions (2017 to 2022, in absolute terms)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2017–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

Figure 27: Development in notices “imposing” a compensation measure in the case of procedures for professional and vocational qualifications from third countries relating to regulated professions governed by federal law (2017 to 2022, in absolute terms)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2017–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

For persons with professional qualifications from third countries seeking recognition in a regulated profession, the type of compensation measure usually consists of a knowledge test⁶⁸ or an adaptation period depending on the profession. Whereas, for example, nurses are able to choose between a knowledge test and an adaptation period, the sole compensation measure possible for doctors is a knowledge test (→ Chapter. 3.2.2).

Around 8,600 procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries resulted in full equivalence following successful completion of a compensation measure. Of these, around 5,800, or two thirds (67 percent), involved a compensation measure in the form of a knowledge test in 2022. Around 2,800 procedures (33%) involved an adaptation period (→ Figure 26).

Developments over the past few years show a continuous increase in the number of adaptation periods and knowledge tests that have been successfully completed.

The year 2022, when the number of knowledge tests was below the volume recorded in the previous year for the first time, constituted an exception in this regard. Even though the majority of compensation measures successfully completed in recent years has involved knowledge tests, the proportion of adaptation periods has also risen significantly from 15 percent in 2017 to 33 percent in 2022 (→ Figure 26).

Compensation measures are thus an issue that mainly affect recognition procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries. This is further underlined by a significant increase over recent years in the number of notices including the “imposition” of a compensation measure. In 2017, the competent bodies reported around 5,500 of these procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries. By 2021 and 2022, these figures had reached around 13,200 and around 17,700 procedures respectively (→ Figure 27). The figures state how many procedures in the respective year led to a notice “imposing” a compensation

⁶⁸ § 11 BQFG stipulates an aptitude test (rather than a knowledge test) or an adaptation period as the compensation measure for regulated professions that are recognised pursuant to the BQFG. These particularly include regulated master craftsman professions. The official statistics only show data from individual procedures (which are subsumed under the categorisation of knowledge test here).

measure that had not been completed by the cut-off date of 31 December. For 2022, for example, this means the following. In around 17,700 procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third

countries, applicants are still required to complete a compensation measure in order to receive full equivalence. This is the highest such figure recorded since the entry into force of the Federal Recognition Act.⁶⁹

Field report

Pelşin Bars – doctor

Pelşin Bars arrived in Berlin from Turkey in 2016 without ever having visited Germany before. Having completed her medical studies in Turkey, she wished to specialise in dermatology but had found that there was insufficient training provision. “I then found out that this is possible in Germany. So I resigned from my job, gathered all my savings and came to Berlin.”

Once in Berlin, she spent six months learning German and went on to pass a language test at level B2 in December 2016. An acquaintance made her aware of the guidance services being offered by the Berlin-Brandenburg Turkish Alliance (TBB), a sub-project in the IQ Network Berlin. The advisor informed her about the documents needed in order to obtain authorisation to practise as a doctor and about the recognition grant available from BMBF. She later used this grant to have her documents translated and to be able to pay the medical licence application costs. Pelşin Bars submitted her documentation to the Berlin Federal State Office for Health and Social Affairs (LAGeSo) in early 2017. She was notified that she could prove her medical knowledge either by applying for an equivalence assessment of her documents by LAGeSo or directly by means of a practical and oral knowledge test. Pelşin Bars opted for the knowledge test, for which she revised extensively. Her efforts paid off, and she passed the test. She also sat a specialist language test at the Medical Council to provide evidence of her sufficient knowledge of German in the medical field. Pelşin Bars was issued with a licence to practise medicine.



Since the start of 2018, this has enabled her to work in the area in which she studied. She began as an assistant physician at a dermatological clinic and later joined a doctor's surgery. Pelşin Bars also completed a doctorate at the Berliner Charité whilst working at the same time. Now that her qualifying period as an assistant physician is over, she can proceed to sit the examination leading to qualification as a specialist doctor in the field of dermatology. “Thanks to recognition, I can now fulfil my wish to become a dermatologist in Germany,” says Pelşin Bars. “I’m now doing the work I always dreamed of.”

The interview with Pelşin Bars was conducted in April 2022.

⁶⁹ Nevertheless, there are also procedures in respect of which, for example, a decision of full equivalence is reached within the course of a single year following “imposition” of a compensation measure. This is because the compensation measure has been completed before the end of the year in question. Such cases are recorded in the statistics as “positive – full equivalence” and are therefore not included in the information presented here.

2.2.4 Focus: Relevance of professional experience for recognition procedures in professions and occupations governed by federal law

In the recognition of foreign qualifications, further learning outcomes may be relevant to the equivalence assessment alongside the foreign professional or vocational qualification itself. If substantial differences between the professional or vocational qualification obtained abroad and the German reference occupation are ascertained when evidence of training is examined, the competent body undertakes a second stage of scrutiny to determine whether these differences can be offset via professional experience (informal learning) or by other evidence of competency such as continuing training courses (non-formal learning) (→ [Figure 28](#)). Evidence usually follows in the form of relevant documents such as work references.

The official statistics provide information as to whether the decision reached by the competent bodies at the end of the equivalence assessment has considered professional experience or other evidence of competency (both are referred to below as professional experience) or not.

Non-regulated occupations

The results reveal that consideration of professional experience permitted substantial differences to be offset in non-regulated occupations in many cases.



In 2022, the competent bodies took professional experience into account in arriving at a decision in 69 percent of around 4,400 procedures that resulted in full equivalence (→ [Figure 29](#)). In the previous year, the figure was as high as 77 percent of around 3,900 procedures resulting in full equivalence.

Consideration of professional experience plays a significant role in full recognition of occupations in the trade and industry sector in particular (for example office manager or cook). In 2022, the competent bodies included professional experience in 80 percent of such procedures when arriving at a decision of full equivalence. In the case of craft trade occupations (such as electronics technician or motor vehicle mechatronics technician), the decision of the competent bodies to award full equivalence was informed by

Figure 28: Consideration of various learning outcomes with regard to the German reference occupation

	Type of learning outcomes	Method
Examination of evidence of training (completed professional or vocational qualification)	Outcomes of formal learning	Document check
Examination of further evidence (professional experience and lifelong learning)	Outcomes of informal or non-formal learning	Document check

Source: Böse et al. 2014.

Figure 29: Consideration of professional experience in non-regulated occupations governed by federal law by outcome of the procedures in which a decision was reached (2022, in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

existing professional experience in about half (47 percent) of procedures in 2022.

In the case of recognition procedures leading to partial equivalence, however, all competent bodies together were unable to take account of professional experience in most cases in 2022 (88 percent) (→ Figure 29). The official statistics do not offer any information as to whether such professional experience was not available in the first place or as to whether existing professional experience was insufficient to compensate for differences.

In 2022, differences were also revealed with regard to occupational areas. In the case of the craft trade occupations, the competent bodies included professional experience to offset substantial differences in 26 percent of procedures leading to partial equivalence. By way of contrast, the corresponding proportion for

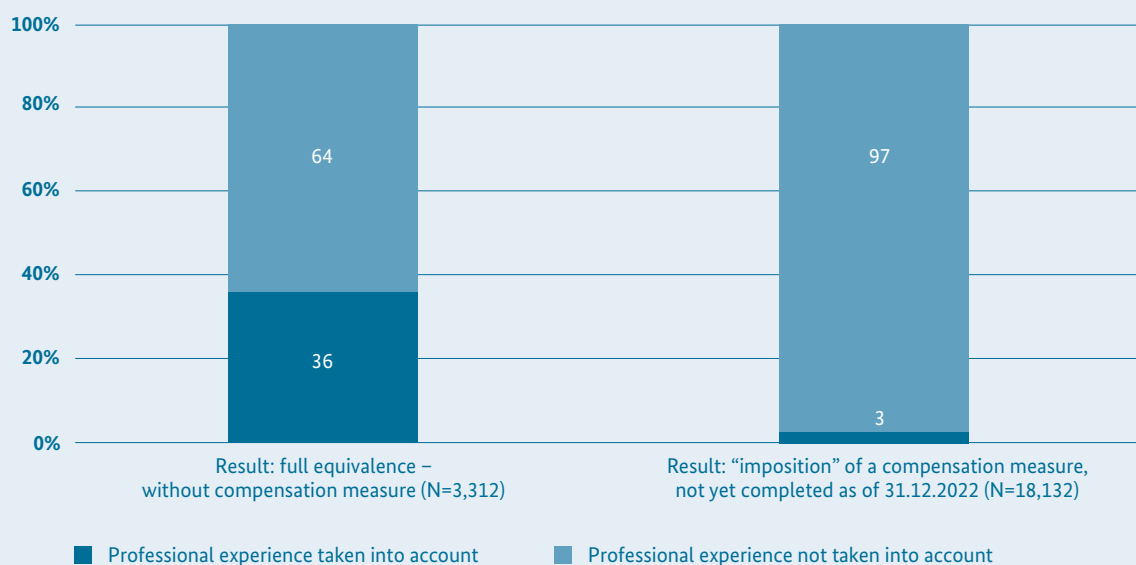
procedures relating to occupations in the area of trade and industry was recorded as being under one percent. Even if professional experience is clearly insufficient to offset all substantial differences in many cases relating to craft trade occupations, it can still be taken into account in arriving at a decision of partial equivalence and is thus able at least to reduce the substantial differences between the qualifications. This provides a means whereby the scope of refresher training along the route to full equivalence can be decreased.

Regulated professions

In the case of the regulated professions (amongst which are around three quarters of medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law, → Chapter 3.2.1), professional experience plays a significantly lesser role than in the non-regulated occupations.⁷⁰ But here too, the results indicate that existing professional experience can offset substantial differences. In around

⁷⁰ The Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (GfG) has been involved in including professional experience in the equivalence assessment since August 2022 because the correct evaluation of such experience had been creating problems for some competent bodies. The extent to which this will exert an effect on the role of professional experience in the recognition of regulated professions remains to be seen (→ Chapter 3.2.2).

Figure 30: Outcome of procedures relating to regulated professions governed by federal law in which the decision reached took professional experience into account (2022, in percent)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

3,300 procedures in 2022, the competent bodies used document-based equivalence assessments to arrive at a decision of full equivalence.⁷¹ Their decision was partially informed by professional experience in 36 percent of these cases. If, on the other hand, the procedure ended with the “imposition” of a compensation measure, the competent bodies were far less likely to take account of professional experience in 2022. This was the case in only three percent of a total of around 18,100 procedures in which this decision was reached. Account needs to be taken of the fact that the “imposition” of a compensation measure may be the result of a document-based equivalence assessment. Secondly, a compensation measure may be imposed even if a document-based equivalence assessment is waived (→ Figure 30).

In many cases, professional experience is thus able to play a role in compensating for substantial differences between the training acquired abroad and the German reference occupation. This occurs significantly

more frequently in the non-regulated sector as opposed to the regulated sector.

The reason for this can definitely be found in the particular characteristics of the German vocational education and training system, which differs from the systems operating in most of the countries of the world mainly by dint of the fact that it offers a combination of practical (company-based) and theoretical (vocational school) learning. The presented results indicate that, in many recognition cases, existing professional experience is unable to compensate for the absence of practical elements in training completed abroad.

Consideration of individual evidence, such as professional experience, is known often to be associated with challenges for both sides. Applicants usually need to arrange for translation of the documents they submit, and the competent bodies are required to

⁷¹ Procedures in which automatic recognition was applied are not included here (→ Chapter 2.2.3).



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH ...

Carola Dörfler

Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB), Head of the “Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (GfG)”

The GfG has been including professional experience in its preparation of equivalence assessment reports since August 2022. How has this changed recognition?

Consideration of professional experience and of lifelong learning within the scope of equivalence assessment was already mandatorily stipulated in all specific individual laws governing the professions. However, correct evaluation created considerable problems for the recognition authorities because the necessary expertise is not available at most of these bodies. The GfG is now able to offer useful support and can produce reports to evaluate basic training plus professional experience. This speeds up the process. As was the case with the evaluation of basic training, assessment criteria to ensure that execution is as uniform as possible were also developed.

The GfG draws up sample assessments in the field of the nursing professions on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG). What role can these play in the design of refresher training?

The sample assessments show the substantial differences between foreign training and German nursing training. The adaptation periods, which ascertain whether a person is in possession of the nursing competencies required in Germany, can then be specifically deployed in the areas in which substantial differences have been identified. Because the recommendations contained in the assessments are aligned to the competency areas stated in law, adaptation periods can be related to these in a modular manner and be compiled for a multitude of applicants in accordance with the identified differences.

What areas of potential do you see for sample assessments in further professions?

The objectives achieved via the sample assessments in the area of nursing training can fundamentally be transferred to all professions, particularly to those which attract large numbers of applications. The sample assessments provide the recognition authorities with a basis for the evaluation of foreign qualifications and may also serve as a foundation for subsequent stipulation of the contents of adaptation periods. Applicants also save on the costs for translation of training plans, which may often be very high. The recognition authorities are therefore increasingly asking whether it

would be possible to draw up sample assessments for other professions. Even though the GfG is not supporting any particular project in this respect, it is currently developing more anonymised assessments that have been prepared within the scope of regular assignments.

Where do you think that there is potential for the recognition process to be accelerated or simplified?

As the law stands, recognition procedures are structured as individual examinations of the equivalence of foreign qualifications. Every training programme and every professional experience must be individually scrutinised, and the subsequent notice and any refresher training needs to be precisely aligned to the individual case.

There is no doubt that this individual tailoring is very important to applicants. In practice, however, this takes up considerable resources. Nevertheless, there are ways of achieving greater standardisation of the recognition procedure without creating drawbacks for individual applicants. To this extent, we welcome all planned legal amendments that expressly emphasise the inclusion of sample assessments and accord extensive leeway to practical guidance with regard to competence assessment within the scope of the adaptation periods with a view to shortening measures where possible.

It is also useful to create a legal possibility for the waiving of the equivalence assessment in the specific individual laws governing the professions, such as currently applies in the case of the Act to strengthen nursing training (PflStudStG). If existing findings or assessments clearly indicate that an examination will not result in full equivalence, proceeding directly to an adaptation period will save money (translation and assessment costs) and especially time.

All specific individual laws governing the professions should continue to set out clearly which documents need to be submitted and in which form.

scrutinise this individual evidence and include it in the equivalence assessment.⁷²

A look at the data shows that these efforts are worthwhile. Professional experience was significantly more likely to be included in the case of fully recognised professional and vocational qualifications than in procedures where different decisions are reached. It can obviously be used to offset substantial differences.

If applicants are not able to prove professional experience to a sufficient extent by means of documents, for example, because work references do not describe specific tasks, recognition procedures for dual training occupations or master craftsman occupations offer additional opportunities to demonstrate this experience within the scope of a skills analysis⁷³ (→ Chapter 1.1).

2.2.5 Focus: Duration of recognition procedures in professions and occupations governed by federal law

Duration between receipt of fully completed application and issuing of a first notice appealable in law

Legislation has stipulated deadlines for recognition procedures within which the competent bodies are required to arrive at a decision regarding equivalence of the foreign professional or vocational qualification to the German reference occupation. The deadline commences as soon as the application for recognition has been formally received by the competent body in complete form. The duration of the statutory decision-making deadline is between two and four months.⁷⁴

In 2022, the competent bodies were able to arrive at a decision regarding equivalence within the stipulated deadline in 76 percent of around 36,400 procedures in which a decision was made for the first time. If we consider only procedures for recognition of a foreign qualification within the scope of the accelerated procedure for skilled workers in accordance with § 81a of the Residence Act (AufenthG), which numbered

around 2,300 in 2022, it is revealed that the competent bodies arrived at a decision regarding equivalence within the statutorily prescribed two-month deadline in 82 percent of these cases.

Transgression of the decision-making time limits does not necessarily constitute a breach of the deadline. Competent bodies are permitted to delay deadlines or to instigate a one-off extension if, for example, additional information is still required from the applicant in order to be able to arrive at a well-founded decision regarding equivalence.

In 2022, the average duration between formal receipt of a fully completed application and issuing of a first notice appealable in law was 85 days, or less than three months. This average value was slightly shorter at 83 days in 2021 as compared to 111 days in the year 2017.

The development of this duration will be examined in a differentiated way below in accordance with regulation of professions and occupations.

Procedures for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications for non-regulated occupations were decided more speedily in recent years (→ Figure 31). In 2017, the average duration between formal receipt of a completed application and an initial decision was 133 days. This period had been shortened to 61 days by 2021. The average for 2022 was 69 days.

Shorter durations can also be observed in the area of the regulated professions. In the case of recognition procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries, an average of 129 days elapsed in 2017 between formal receipt of a completed application and an initial decision. This period decreased to 101 days in 2021 and fell further to an average of 97 days in 2022. In the case of professional and vocational qualifications acquired in the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland), duration of procedures has remained at a comparatively low level throughout the years. The average for 2017 was 65 days, whereas the figures for 2021 and 2022 were 59 and 60 days respectively (→ Figure 31).

72 Cf. BMBF 2014.

73 Cf. § 14 BQFG and § 50b Paragraph 4 Crafts and Trades Regulation Code.

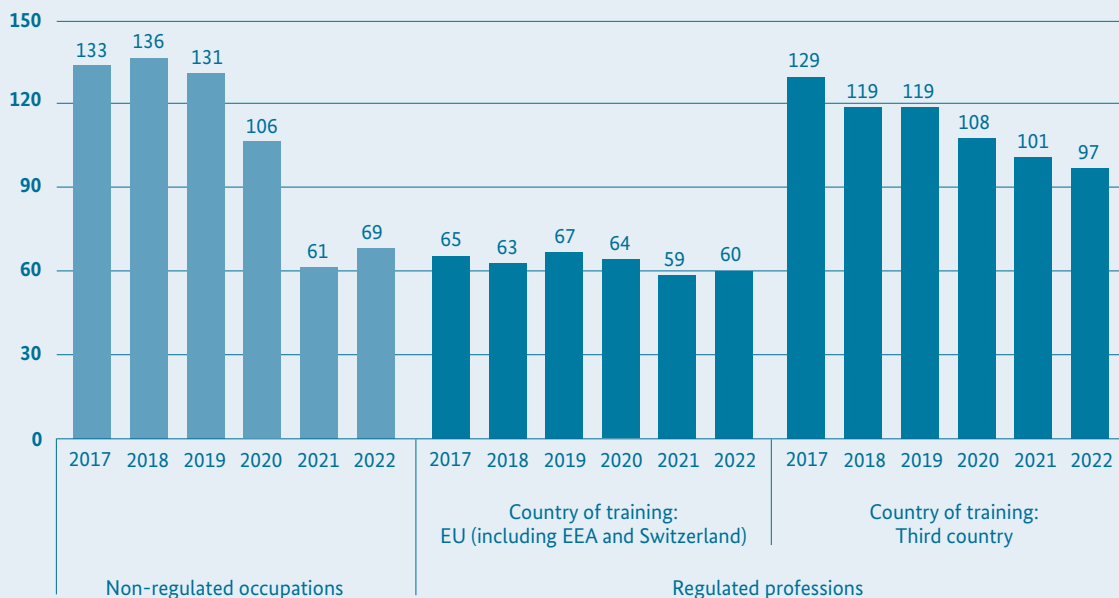
74 Cf. Böse and Schmitz 2022.

The reason for the relatively short duration of procedures for professional and vocational qualifications acquired in the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland) is the fact that many applications relate to professions that can be recognised automatically. This applies, for example, to procedures in professions that are the most frequent objects of application, such as registered general nurse, qualified nurse and doctor.

The results of the official statistics thus show a shortening over the years of the duration between formal receipt of a fully completed application and issuing of a first notice appealable in law. However, the duration of recognition procedures is often sweepingly criticised as being “too long” in the debate surrounding endeavours to accelerate the process further. The following needs to be borne in mind. Data from the official statistics cannot provide a full answer to the question regarding the overall duration of the recognition procedure. The reason for this is that

an application for recognition is only mandatorily included in the statistics when it has been formally received in completed form by the competent body. Applicants will frequently already have undertaken a number of steps prior to this point, some of which will have been time-consuming. No information is available as to the duration of these stages, and they may be of highly varying lengths depending on the individual case. These process stages may encompass the following. Those interested in seeking recognition have obtained information and/or guidance on their foreign professional or vocational qualification. They have ascertained the relevant reference occupation and therefore also identified the right competent body. They have clarified the costs and financing of their recognition procedure. They have also compiled the necessary documentation, which they have possibly arranged to have translated, and have then transmitted this to the competent body. The competent body has already examined the submission for

Figure 31: Duration between receipt of fully completed application and issuing of a first notice in professions and occupations governed by federal law in days (2017 to 2022, precise average in days)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2017–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

completeness and may have requested missing paperwork that the applicant has subsequently supplied.⁷⁵

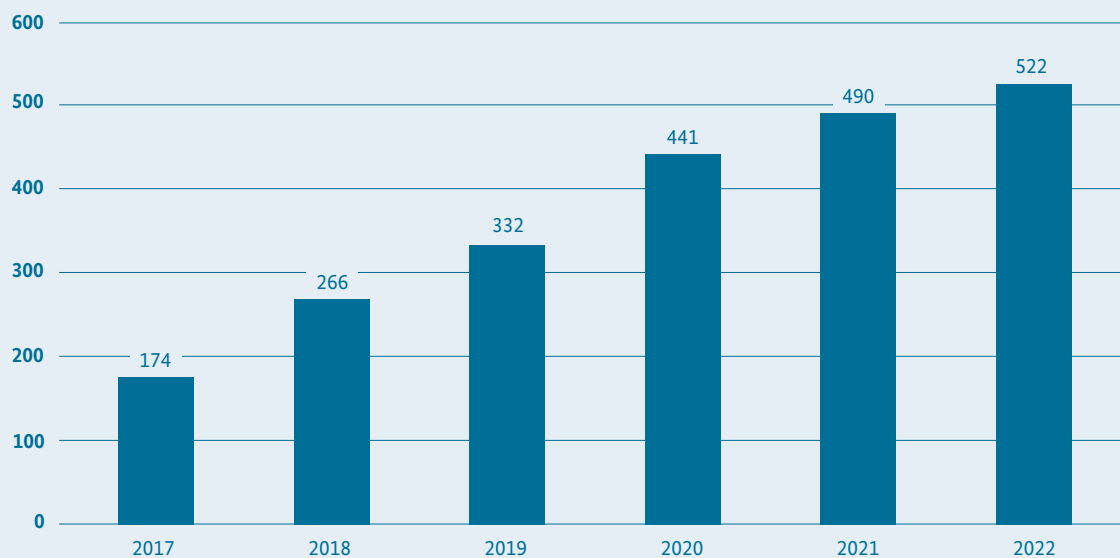
Duration between the “imposition” of a compensation measure and the final notice

In the regulated professions, applicants with professional and vocational qualifications from third countries in particular are frequently required to complete a compensation measure along the pathway to full equivalence (→ Chapter 2.2.3). In these cases, the “imposition” of a compensation measure constitutes the first notice appealable in law. The competent body will issue a final notice once the applicants have completed the compensation measure. The official statistics provide information on the time that elapses between the “imposition” of a compensation measure and the final notice. A look at the development shows that the period of time between the first notice “imposing” a compensation measure and the final

notice has increased constantly over recent years (→ Figure 32). Up until and including 2019, less than a year elapsed on average between the issuing of a notice “imposing” a compensation measure and a final decision in the procedure. From 2020, this period began to exceed one year, a tendency that is rising. The average duration for procedures concluded in 2021 following completion of a compensation measure was 490 days. The corresponding figure for 2022 was 522 days.

One cause of the increasingly protracted period between the issuing of a notice “imposing” a compensation measure and a final decision in the procedure could be the significant rise in the number of procedures relating to professional and vocational qualifications from third countries (→ Chapter 2.2.1) and the associated higher number of notices “imposing” a compensation measure. This may lead to bottlenecks in training measures and test dates (→ Chapter 3.2.1). The statistics do not,

Figure 32: Duration between “imposition” of a compensation measure and final notice in professions and occupations governed by federal law in days (2017 to 2022, precise average in days)



Source: official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG (federal law) 2017–2022; calculations and presentation by BIBB. Data anonymised. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

⁷⁵ The official statistics have also recorded the date of confirmation of receipt of the recognition application since 2021. The legislation requires the competent bodies to confirm receipt of the application and to provide a notification as to whether it is complete or to indicate which documents are missing. The new data characteristic should help to facilitate further statements regarding duration of the recognition procedure. The introduction of the new data characteristic has not changed the relevant statistical population of the procedure. As before, procedures do not need to be reported until application documentation has been received in full. This date dictates the commencement of the deadline with regard to equivalence.

however, provide any information as to whether the compensation measures themselves took up so much time or whether the recognition process was interrupted intermittently for various reasons.⁷⁶

2.2.6 Focus: Competent bodies in the case of professions and occupations governed by federal state law

The competent bodies responsible for recognition were partially stipulated when the Federal Recognition Act was introduced. Because the recognition procedure is aligned to the technical standards and to the areas of responsibility of the German VET system, the institutions determined as competent bodies were frequently those which already held relevant responsibilities for domestic training. In accordance with the Vocational Training Act (BBlG) and the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO) therefore, § 8 BQFG stipulated that bodies such as chambers of crafts and trades, chambers of commerce and industry and chambers of agriculture should act as competent bodies for the recognition of professional and vocational qualifications. In the case of reference occupations that are governed by specific legislation rather than by the BBlG or HwO, determination of competent bodies took place pursuant to this specific legislation and in accordance with the implementation provisions of the individual federal states. In this way, regional councils and state offices, for example, became responsible for the recognition of professional and vocational qualifications. In 2022,

a total of 148 competent bodies recorded one or more applications for recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. Significant concentrations were, however, revealed. 48 bodies accounted for 95 percent of around 39,300 applications made in 2022 with regard to professions and occupations governed by federal law. A further 100 competent bodies accounted for the remaining 5 percent.

The constant complaint levelled within the debate on optimising the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications is that the number of competent bodies is too high. As soon as the Recognition Act was launched, central structures began to be put in place with the aims of pooling specialist expertise, ensuring uniform administrative execution and reducing the number of competent bodies responsible for recognition. These structures included the IHK FOSA and the “lead chamber system” in the craft trades sector from the very outset. The federal states have been gradually focusing responsibility on state-wide central recognition bodies, particularly in the medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law, which attract large numbers of applications (→ [Chapter 3.2.2](#)).

The Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (GfG), which was established by the federal states, has also been pooling specialist recognition competency in the healthcare sector since 2016. Notwithstanding this, implementation of the statutory task of recognition continues to rest with the individual competent bodies. They are able to rely on the specialist assessments produced by the GfG (→ [Chapter 3.2.2](#)).

Conclusion

Over recent years, there has been a particularly significant rise in the number of applications relating to professional and vocational qualifications acquired in third countries. More applications have been submitted from abroad. A consideration of the various pathways to equivalence makes it clear that applicants with professional and vocational qualifications from third countries are particularly likely to have to complete compensation measures before gaining full equivalence. It is further revealed that professional experience is used to offset substantial differences between foreign and German qualifications, especially in the non-regulated sector. The ratio of recognition procedures processed within the statutorily stipulated decision deadlines has grown over the years despite increasing numbers of applications. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the overall duration of the recognition process cannot be described on the basis of the statistics alone. Finally and running contrary to the current public debate on the number of competent bodies, it should be pointed out that the vast majority of applications is concentrated on a comparatively small number of competent bodies.

⁷⁶ Cf. Atanassov et al. 2023.



3 Improving the recognition process further – challenges and developments



Numerous supporting measures have been in place to assist with the implementation of recognition processes since the Federal Recognition Act and the recognition acts of the federal states entered into force. From the very outset, these measures included the establishment and expansion of information, guidance and funding structures such as the advisory centres, and recognition and training guidance available via the “Integration through Qualification” (IQ) Funding Programme, the “Recognition in Germany” information portal and the Federal Government recognition grant. Guidance for persons interested in recognition who are living abroad was, for example, supported by the establishment of advisory provision at German chambers of commerce abroad (“ProRecognition”) and via the “Service Center for Professional Recognition”(ZSBA) at the Federal Employment Agency (BA). There were also guidance and support services for interested companies (such as “Recognition for Business”, UBA) and various projects relating to training within the scope of recognition procedures (including the IQ Funding Programme or the INGA Pflege or INGA 3.0 adaptation periods for nurses). Bodies such as the GfG were set up and expanded to support competent bodies in the federal states and to accelerate procedures in the area of the medical and healthcare professions. The “BQ Portal” became established as a

central instrument of knowledge management for the professional chambers, especially in the craft trade and agricultural sectors and in the liberal professions.

At the same time, the last few years have been marked by different global and national developments. Travel restrictions implemented from 2020 onwards as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic inhibited individual migration decisions. On the other hand, new digital guidance and training provision was put in place. Many guidance institutions and competent bodies reported a sharp increase in enquiries in the wake of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and a subsequent rapid increase in the number of war refugees as of 2022.⁷⁷

The shortage of skilled workers is continuing to exacerbate in many areas. Skilled workers from abroad are highly significant in terms of countering this. The Skilled Immigration Act entered into force in 2020 in order to expand immigration opportunities for skilled workers from third countries. This is now being supplemented by the new skilled worker immigration reform, which aims to offer further options and measures (→ [Chapter 1](#)).

Selected challenges and developments over recent years relating to both support structures (→ [Chapter 3.1](#)) and to the implementation of the procedures in the various occupational areas (→ [Chapter 3.2](#)) will be presented below. Many of the measures and projects listed link in directly with the benchmark paper for skilled worker immigration from third countries (→ [Chapter 1.1](#)).

⁷⁷ Results from the BIBB Recognition Monitoring: anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/pro/aus-der-praxis-scholz-anerkenntnismonitoring.php and the IQ Funding Programme: netzwerk-iq.de/foerderprogramm-iq/fachstellen/fachstelle-anerkennung-und-qualifizierung/ukraine-in-der-beratung.

3.1 Central support structure – current developments with regard to information, guidance and financing

The provision of information, guidance structures and financing options for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications is of key significance in terms of access to the recognition procedure and also with regard to successful completion of the process. The IQ advisory centres for recognition and training guidance, the “Working and Living in Germany” hotline, the chambers, the ZSBA and “ProRecognition”⁷⁸ all conduct numerous consultations. The federal states also make various advisory services available (→ Chapter 3.1.2). Rising numbers of visits to the information portals reflect the high level of demand too. It is clear that the need for information and guidance is great. Events such as the entry into force of the FEG in 2020 and the increasing prevalence of refugees from Ukraine since 2022 have brought about an even further rise. Good quality guidance content for applicants leads in turn to applications that are better prepared and more complete. This reduces the pressure on the competent bodies of the federal states in their core recognition work. In order to respond to the shortage of skilled workers, the goal needs to be rapid labour market integration commensurate with qualifications. Easily accessible, efficient and constantly growing guidance provision from the Federal Government and federal states is necessary to achieve this objective.

Recognition of a foreign professional or vocational qualification often poses financial hurdles for skilled workers who have migrated to Germany. On the route to recognition, further costs are frequently incurred alongside the actual procedural costs for aspects such as certifications, necessary language courses or training measures.

Solutions and new options have been developed in order to address the above challenges and to meet increasing requirements for information and guidance. These will be set out below. Guidance structures for persons interested in seeking recognition and the

ways that these have been adapted to meet growing needs will be presented alongside new developments in respect of the information portals. A particular focus will be placed on support provision for employers. Existing funding opportunities for applicants will also be showcased.

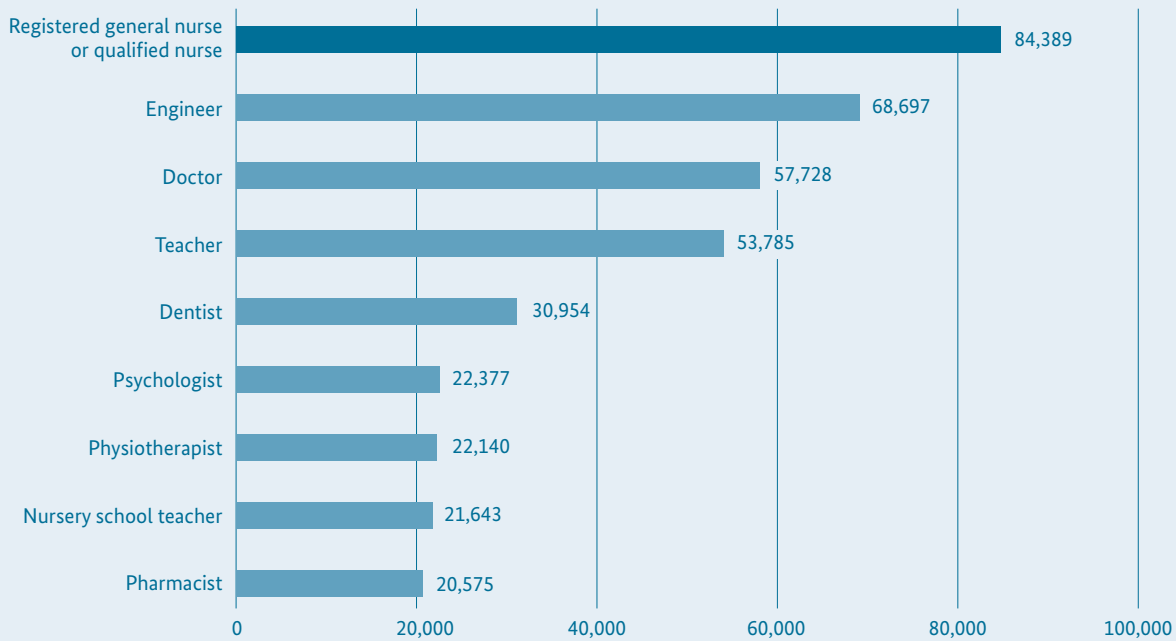
3.1.1 News on the information portals

When the Recognition Act entered into force, three main portals were established to provide information to foreign skilled workers and to support other stakeholders. These have been updated and expanded on an ongoing basis ever since. The sites in question are the “Recognition in Germany” information portal, the BQ Portal, and the “anabin” information portal. While each of the portals offers a different alignment, together they make an essential contribution to the procurement of information in the process of professional recognition.

“Recognition in Germany” portal

The “Recognition in Germany” portal is operated by BIBB on behalf of BMBF and is the Federal Government’s main information platform for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. It provides global information that is primarily aimed at skilled workers and at advisors in the area of recognition. “Recognition in Germany” also makes information available to employers. The portal collates both general and occupationally specific information. The aim is to present a complex topic to a variety of stakeholders in a user-friendly, comprehensible and accessible manner. The portal’s main service is a “Recognition Finder” which is particularly directed at persons interested in seeking recognition. A question-based click tool enables the latter to obtain all available information and to learn about the requirements for the specific procedure in the relevant reference occupation. They can also

⁷⁸ Consultations are also conducted by other institutions and stakeholders involved in the recognition system. These include the competent bodies and migrant organisations, for example.

Figure 33: The ten professions and occupations most of interest in 2022

Source: Visitor numbers for the “Recognition in Germany” portal 2022 (total of all page views in 2022, recorded via Matomo). Presentation by BIBB.

explore guidance services and find the relevant competent recognition body.

Annual visitor numbers to the “Recognition in Germany” portal have, thanks in part to marketing, risen continuously since 2012 (the only exception being in 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic). A total of around 22.3 million visits to the site were registered between the entry into force of the Recognition Act and the end of 2022.⁷⁹ The portal recorded 3.2 million visits in 2022, 12.5 percent more than prior to the pandemic in 2019.⁸⁰ The “Recognition Finder” (including the “Advanced Filter”)⁸¹ demonstrated its importance as a tool for skilled workers and as a foundation for the work of advisors by accounting for just under half (49 percent) of page views.

In 2022, more than three quarters (77 percent) of visits to the portal were made by skilled workers. Both the “Recognition Finder” and the topic of immigration (37 percent of page views) attracted a particularly high degree of interest.

Information directed at the specialist target group (“professionals” such as advisors) made up a further 16 percent of portal visits. The main areas in which information was being sought were the recognition grant (40 percent of page views on the professional section of the site) and the ZSBA (24 percent of page views by professional users, since 2024 this section of the site is called “for advisors”).

The information pages are now available in eleven languages. In 2022, German (54 percent) was the most

⁷⁹ The cut-off date for all data stated in this chapter is 31.12.2022.

⁸⁰ Visitor numbers remained at a high level in 2023. Around 1.6 million visits were recorded in the first half of 2023.

⁸¹ The “Advanced Filter” database is aimed at specialists in the area of recognition. It offers a rapid overview of reference occupations, regulations and competent bodies.

used language version followed by English (19 percent) and Turkish (13 percent).

The professions and occupations for which there was the greatest interest in obtaining information were registered general nurse or qualified nurse,⁸² engineer and doctor (→ [Figure 33](#)). This reflects the reference occupations which are in most demand in recognition guidance (→ [Figure 35](#) and [Figure 36](#)) and is also in line with the volume of applications for recognition in professions and occupations governed by federal and federal state law (→ [Chapter 2.1](#)).

In October 2021, “Recognition in Germany” added a LinkedIn presence to its existing page on Facebook in order to expand its coverage on social media. Interest has been considerable. The number of followers is growing steadily and reached just under 4,500 by the end of 2022.⁸³

In the wake of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and the major refugee movement this has caused, the Federal Government is endeavouring to offer rapid prospects on the German labour market to people fleeing Ukraine. Implementation of a Ukrainian language version of the portal in the spring of 2022 made an important contribution in this regard.

Another new feature that has arisen as a result of the Online Access Act is the possibility to launch a digital application directly from the “Recognition Finder”. This enables persons interested in seeking recognition to receive support via a single portal throughout every stage of the process from procurement of information to the submission of the application (→ [Chapter 3.2.1](#)).

Two contact forms on the portal are also used to receive enquiries from persons interested in seeking recognition which are then processed via the “Working and Living in Germany Hotline” (→ [Chapter 3.1.2](#)). The number of incoming enquiries has risen steadily over recent years and reached a total of around 18,500 at the end of 2022. 2023 is seeing a sharp increase in enquiries.

Within the EU, BIBB also acts via the “Recognition in Germany” portal as the German assistance centre for questions relating to the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications in accordance with Article 57b of EU Directive 2005/36/EC.

BQ Portal

The BQ Portal is financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) and operated by the German Institute for Business Research (IW). It has been designed as a comprehensive knowledge management system for decision-making practice by competent bodies in the chamber area. It also assists employers with the assessment and evaluation of foreign VET systems and professional and vocational qualifications by providing relevant information. At the end of 2022, 101 countries and 5,108 occupational profiles were available. These figures are rising constantly. Country profiles for Venezuela and Benin were new additions in 2021. Gambia and Nepal were included in 2022. The most accessed occupational profile was bodywork fitter (1980–1988)⁸⁴ from Hungary, which attracted just under 460 page views in 2022. The portal also has an internal section, where competent bodies can find further information on the evaluation of professional and vocational qualifications.

Although the number of visitors to the BQ Portal has declined somewhat in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the figure of around 193,000 recorded for 2022 was once again beginning to approach the level of just over 206,000 visits seen in 2019. The total number of visits to the site made since 2012 is around 1.6 million. Just over a quarter of visitors accessed the portal from abroad in 2022. In 2022, competent bodies directed over 1,000 enquiries requesting research to the BQ Portal. Over the past two years, these enquiries have related to Turkey in particular. Both the visitor figures and numbers of enquiries underline the considerable added value the portal delivers for the various stakeholders in the recognition system.

82 The occupational titles of “registered general nurse” and “qualified nurse” will continue to exist in parallel for recognition procedures until the end of 2024. Both can be accessed via the “Recognition Finder”. There were 56,422 page visits for registered general nurse in 2022. The corresponding figure for qualified nurse was 27,967.

83 There were around 5,800 followers at the end of the first half of 2023.

84 The year dates given for the occupational profiles relate in each case to the period during which it is definitely known that the relevant training regulations were in force.

Table 1 Top 3 most frequently accessed country profiles in the BQ Portal in 2022

Country profile	Page views
Ukraine	18,764
Turkey	14,974
Syria	13,211

Source: Access figures for the BQ Portal 2022. Presentation by BIBB.

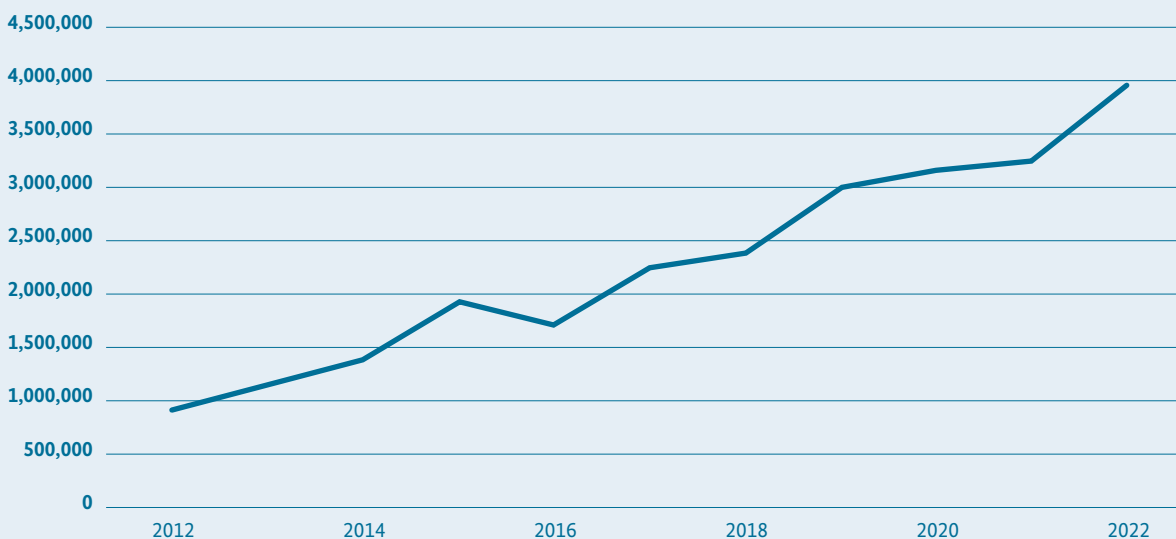
The BQ Portal also adapts its content on an ongoing basis to meet the current needs of recognition stakeholders. In 2022, specific measures involving the publication of 136 new Ukrainian occupational profiles were instigated to support the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees. These profiles also contain a German translation of the curricula. They bring the total number of Ukrainian occupational profiles to 252.

“anabin” information portal

The Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) has been using the “anabin” portal (“anabin” is a German language acronym for “Recognition and Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications”) to provide information on the evaluation of foreign higher education, vocational and school qualifications and of foreign educational establishments since as long ago as the year 2000. The portal’s user group is highly heterogeneous. Government authorities, educational institutions, skilled workers and employers can all access the database to find essential information about foreign qualifications. This makes it easier to categorise such qualifications in terms of the German education system.

The database recorded a new peak of almost four million hits in 2022. This represented a growth of 18 percent compared to the previous year (→ [Figure 34](#)). A total of around 24.8 million visits have been recorded since 2012.⁸⁵

Figure 34: Development of visits to the “anabin” information portal since 2012



Source: Access figures for the “anabin” database 2012-2022. Presentation by BIBB.

85 Total number of visits from 2012 until 31.12.2022.

Information box 9

Information portals in the recognition system – good examples and ideas for further development

Existing knowledge of the competent bodies on the recognition of foreign qualifications is collated on the BQ Portal working and knowledge platform and made available for use by stakeholders within the recognition process in an internal section of the site. The same applies to the “anabin” information portal, via which information held by ZAB is made available for use (→ [Chapter 3.1](#)). Both systems store important information on foreign professional and vocational qualifications, results of equivalence assessments including the reference occupation and sample assessments.

The GfG has made information on duration and contents of training, information on the completeness of the qualification and information on the title of the German reference occupation freely accessible for around 684 foreign healthcare professions. This figure is continuing to rise. The BQ Portal has already published 5,000 profiles on foreign initial and advanced training occupations complete with training regulations and including duration of training. This information has been made freely accessible. Vocational qualifications are labelled in the country profiles.*

In addition, the aim in future is for information and guidance services to be constantly expanded and adapted to current needs so as to create a higher degree of transparency in respect of foreign qualifications for persons interested in seeking recognition, for employers and for employment agencies. Specific foreign professional and vocational qualifications may, for example, provide a basis for placing even greater emphasis on information about application prerequisites and on information regarding the German reference occupation. Insofar as possible, information on the prospective success of a recognition procedure in respect to the equivalence assessment could even be made public.**

* Here is an example from Algeria: bq-portal.de/sites/default/files/2021-12/0060_LB-Berufsbildungssystem-Algerien-2007_0.pdf.

** Cf. Bushanska et al. 2023.

At the end of 2022, information and evaluations were available for 189 education systems, 32,600 educational institutions and 32,200 higher education qualifications. The “anabin” database also contains sample assessments of individual educational biographies. These numbered 27,200 by the end of 2022 and may be viewed by competent bodies in a password-protected area of the site.

3.1.2 High demand for recognition guidance within Germany

Multilingual guidance services provided free of charge and personal support before and during the recognition procedure play a key role in a successful recognition procedure, both for skilled workers and employers and for further professional recognition

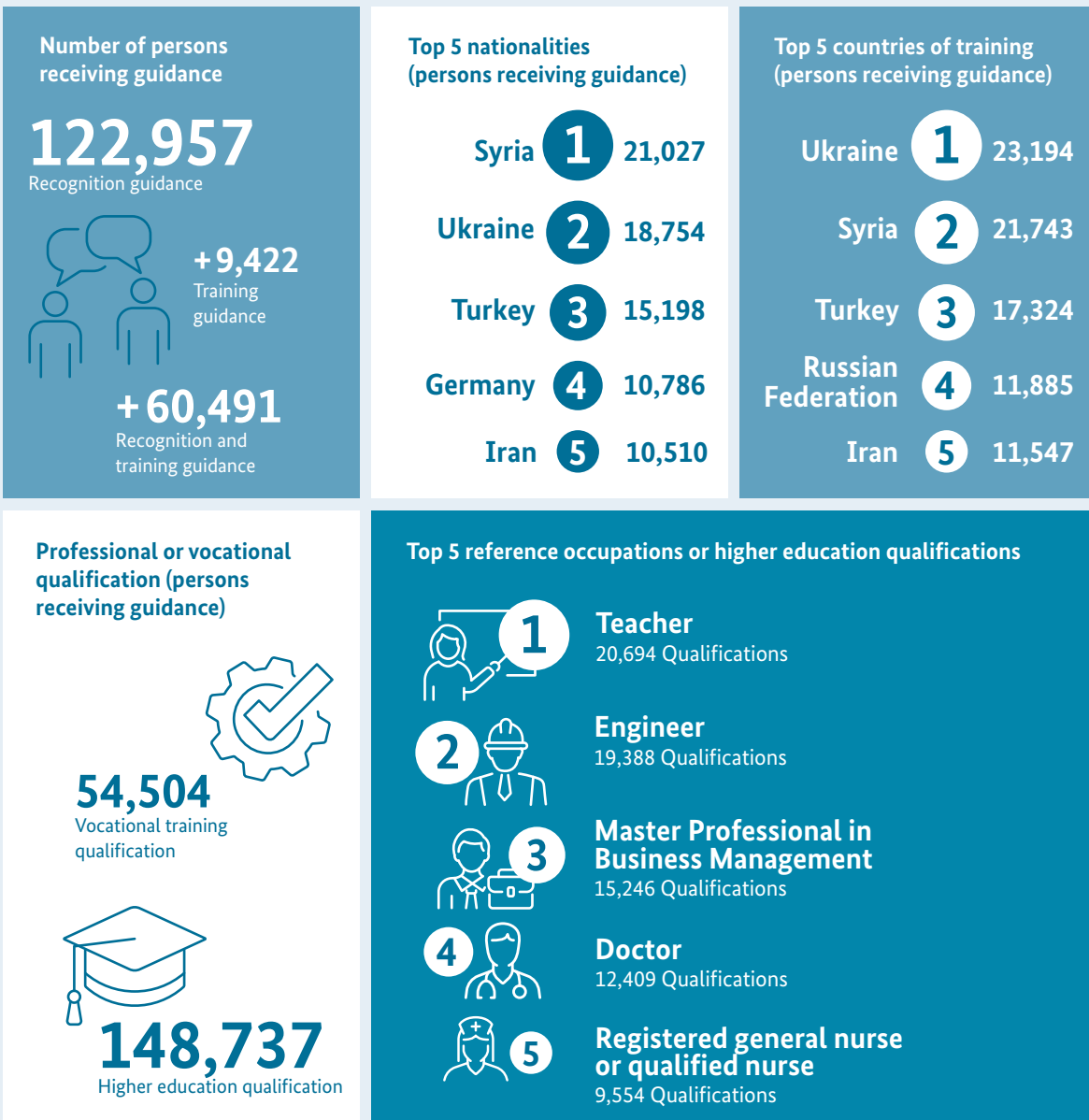
stakeholders. Advisory centres offer information on requirements regarding documents to be submitted, on specific compensation procedures and on costs that will be incurred. Especially when compensation measures need to be completed, some of which need to take place across federal states, coordination in terms of scheduling and content with all stakeholders involved in the procedure is not always feasible independently for applicants. A growing need for guidance associated with rising application numbers (→ [Chapter 2.1](#)) can be identified here.

Start of the new funding period of the ESF Plus programme IQ – Integration through Qualification

The advisory centres of the IQ Funding Programme⁸⁶ offer free personal initial and follow-up consultations

on recognition in a decentralised way right across Germany. IQ concentrates on supporting persons through the procedures in an individualised manner. For this reason, there is little group provision. Usually,

Figure 35: IQ recognition guidance – selected characteristics of the 2019–2022 funding round



Source: NIQ database 2019–2022. Made available by the Recognition and Training Competence Centre of the “Integration through Qualification” (IQ) Network. Presentation by BIBB.

⁸⁶ The IQ Funding Programme was first established by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) in 2005. During the 2021–2027 funding period, it is being financed by BMAS and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus).

an individual training plan needs to be drawn up for each person with a foreign professional or vocational qualification. The high consultation figures from the last funding period show the need for personal guidance. A total of around 416,000 consultations were realised within IQ between January 2019 and December 2022. Just over 195,000 of these were first consultations, and 221,000 were follow-up consultations. Just under 123,000 of the 195,000 persons receiving advice availed themselves of recognition guidance only. 9,400 sought training guidance only, and 60,500 took both recognition and training guidance. Syrian nationals were the most likely recipients of advice, followed by persons of Ukrainian and Turkish nationality interested in seeking recognition. Ukraine even topped the list in terms of country of training of persons receiving advice⁸⁷ (→ Figure 35). Professions and occupations governed by federal state law made up the largest group of reference occupations. As had been the case in the previous round of funding, the regulated professions of teacher and engineer were also the most popular subjects of guidance between 2019 and 2022. They were followed in third place by persons seeking equivalence with the qualification of Master Professional in Business Management.

The IQ Funding Programme entered a new ESF Plus funding period (2021 to 2027) at the start of 2023. The programme will now place particular emphasis on new digital consultation formats.

The IQ pilot projects based in all federal states enhance their own state's provision by providing individual and group consultations. Refresher training largely takes place on an individual basis. For immigrants, such training is aimed at the requirements of the respective competent body.

The programme term will end on 31 December 2028 after two further rounds of funding. In accordance with the funding guidelines, the financing of the pilot development of recognition and training guidance is occurring for the final time. Because the intention is to move to stabilisation from 2029, a further focus is being directed towards a transition to permanent structures.

Information box 10

IQ Funding Programme – structure in the 2023–2025 round of funding

- 60 fixed advisory centres for recognition and training
- 16 advisory centres for “fair integration”
- 23 regional integration networks
 - Training and support provision for people of foreign origin
 - Provision for labour market stakeholders
- Three thematic competence centres
- A networking project

The main content focuses of the first round of funding to run until the end of 2025 include guidance services for professional recognition in conjunction with any relevant training that may be necessary (recognition and training guidance), guidance provision relating to issues faced by third country nationals under labour and employment law (“fair integration”), the development and piloting of training provision en route to full equivalence, and provision for stakeholders who are active in these thematic areas (→ Information box 10). The aim is to improve the sustainable labour market integration of persons of foreign origin living in Germany and to enable them to find employment that appropriately reflects their level of education and training. An additional objective is that foreign professional and vocational qualifications located outside formal recognition procedures and competencies that have been acquired by non-formal and/or informal means should be rendered visible and usable. The number of advisory centres for recognition and fair integration fell compared to the previous funding period whilst overall expenditure remained the same. This is because the individual advisory centres have been operating on a larger scale. Due to the significant reduction in EU co-financing rates, total expenditure for pilot projects

⁸⁷ One possible explanation as to why Ukraine heads the rankings with regard to country of training but not in respect of the characteristic of nationality could be that some of the persons fleeing Ukraine were not Ukrainian nationals. The number of foreign students completing a qualification in Ukraine was not insignificant. Nevertheless, account needs to be taken of the fact that the two characteristics of nationality and country of training relate to different statistical populations in the data survey. For the whole of the IQ funding round, country of training has about 6,000 more indications than nationality.

have contained 10 with funding from the providers themselves since the beginning of 2023.⁸⁸

“Working and Living in Germany” Hotline

The “Working and Living in Germany” Hotline is a central information and advisory service for foreign



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH...

Ulrike Benzer

Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (f-bb), academic researcher at the Recognition and Training Competence Centre of the “Integration through Qualification” (IQ) Network

The IQ Funding Programme offers recognition and training guidance in all federal states. The new and final phase of the funding programme is now beginning. What kinds of new services will there be this time round?

The main focus of this funding period is on virtual further development of recognition and training guidance. As well as using digital consultation channels and seeking to engage the target group via social media, we are also piloting how digital applications can provide even better and even more efficient support to persons seeking recognition.

In terms of legal funding, IQ recognition advisory centres have been operating independently since 2023 and are no longer tied to the IQ coordination agencies that exist in the individual federal states. Particular efforts are being made to ramp up cooperation with the departments of the Federal Employment Agency. The target group has been expanded by removing the requirement for a formal qualification. Recognition remains the goal, but a further aim is to allow people to progress onto the labour market and to find employment that appropriately reflects their level of education and training. Guidance services are now also being directed at people from a migrant background who have acquired competencies and skills that are not deemed to be formal qualifications in the strictest sense of the term. The objective is also to assist these people in utilising their competencies and in finding appropriate employment on the German labour market.

To what extent have the needs of the recipients of guidance changed?

The target group of IQ recognition and training guidance remains heterogeneous. The main differences exhibited by

those seeking advice are how long they have been living in Germany, how well they speak German and, above all, which specific qualifications they possess. Depending on occupational area and personal situation, requirements and challenges within the recognition process are different. This means that individual guidance needs will also vary.

Particularly large numbers of refugees from Ukraine have been seeking to access IQ recognition and training guidance since the spring of 2022. Especially at the beginning, a significant role was also played by issues relating to general orientation in Germany and to associated topics such as learning the language and (in the case of refugees who were not Ukrainian nationals) residence. The main focus of this group of persons has now shifted to specific questions regarding recognition or certificate evaluation.

How are the IQ guidance services facing up to the increasing need for consultations?

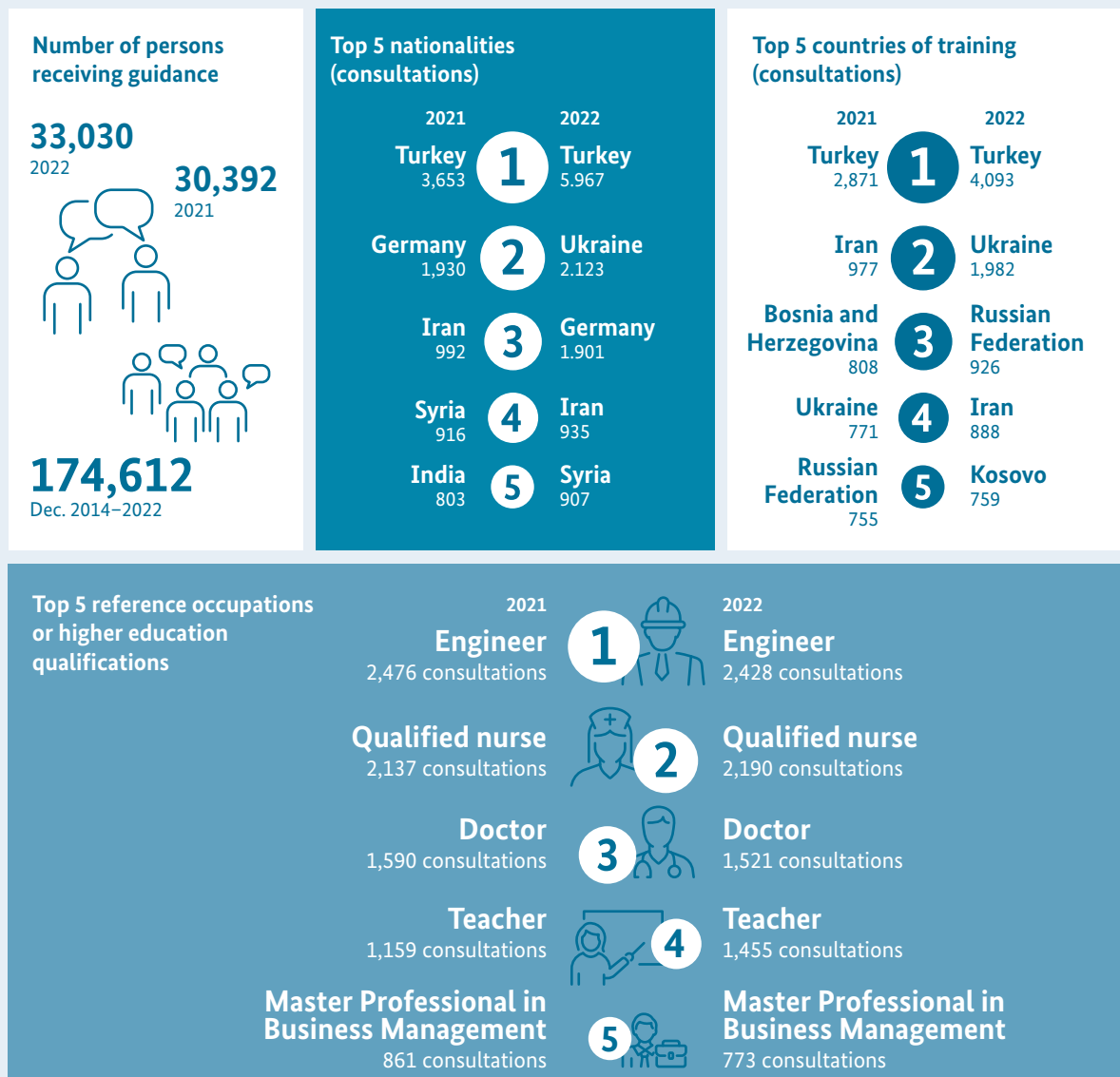
Online applications for the arrangement of appointments are one example of the ways in which the high level of demand for guidance services is being countered. Relevant key data is collected prior to the initial consultation so that a more targeted approach can be adopted in the actual consultation. Virtual or face-to-face information events are also offered in order to impart fundamental advice on professional recognition. Some advisory centres stage these sessions in conjunction with job centres. Of course, individual consultations mostly continue to be necessary afterwards. However, these are then able to focus on the specific details of the individual case.

⁸⁸ In the 2019–2022 IQ funding round, there were 75 fixed (and 100 mobile) advisory centres for recognition and training across Germany. There were also 31 advisory centres for “fair integration”. The plan for the 2023–2025 round of funding is for there to be 60 advisory centres for recognition and training and 16 advisory centres for “fair integration” (→ Information box 10).

skilled workers, students and trainees and for companies and government authorities. It also provides guidance on the topic of professional recognition.⁸⁹ Persons interested in seeking recognition are able to obtain information in German and English on job seeking and occupations in Germany, on the

recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications, on entry to and residence in Germany, and on language courses. Those looking for advice may contact the hotline by telephone or via email. The hotline directs enquiries to the ZSBA where necessary.

Figure 36: “Working and Living in Germany” Hotline – development of selected characteristics 2021 and 2022



Source: Guidance data from the “Working and Living in Germany Hotline” 2021–2022 Presentation by BIBB.

⁸⁹ The hotline was instigated as part of the demographic strategy of the Federal Government. Since 2014, it has been jointly operated by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the Federal Employment Agency (BA) within the scope of a cross-departmental cooperation agreement between the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWK), the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI), the BMBF and the BA. From 2012 to 2014, it was in existence as the “Recognition Hotline of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees”.

A total of around 175,000 consultations on the topic of recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications have been conducted since 2014. Over 33,000 consultations took place in 2022, a growth of more than 8 percent compared to the previous year (→ [Figure 36](#)).

In 2020, Turkey occupied first position amongst nationalities by accounting for around 2,300 consultations. The number of enquiries for consultations received from Turkish nationals has risen considerably since this time (→ [Figure 36](#)).⁹⁰ The nationalities in second and third places in 2021 were German and Iraqi. In 2022, Ukrainian and German occupied second and third positions.

In line with distribution by nationalities, consultations on Turkish qualifications were in most frequent demand over the past two years. Consultations on Ukrainian qualifications followed in second place in 2022. In 2021, second position had been occupied by Iranian qualifications. Bosnia and Herzegovina was in third place amongst countries of training in most frequent demand in 2021. In 2022, this position was occupied by the Russian Federation.

Seven of the ten professions and occupations on which the hotline most frequently advised were regulated professions. Engineer was the most popular subject of consultation in both 2021 and 2022, followed by qualified nurse and doctor.

Guidance provision of the federal states

The federal states offer their own advisory services alongside the established guidance structures of the Federal Government. In Baden-Württemberg, for example, four advisory centres on the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications have been in place since 2012 in Freiburg, Mannheim, Stuttgart and Ulm. The state also has a specialist agency for integration into work of refugees interested in seeking recognition throughout the entirety of the recognition process. Amongst other tasks, staff help to clarify the reference occupation, demonstrate financing opportunities and provide information on refresher

training measures. Local guidance institutions and employers can also seek advice. The advisory centres are run as projects by the League of Independent Welfare Care Trusts (Liga der freien Wohlfahrtspflege) in Baden-Württemberg and funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Integration.⁹¹ The Counselling Centre for Recognition of Qualifications (ZAA), which offers advice on all matters relating to professional recognition, was established in Hamburg back in 2010. The services of the ZAA were put on a permanent footing in 2015, and it now forms a fixed part of the “Hamburg Welcome Center”.⁹² In these two federal states, for example, skilled workers who wish to seek recognition for professional and vocational qualifications obtained abroad also have a right to guidance that is enshrined in law. Especially against the background of a shifting guidance system and in light of the expectation that the numbers of persons seeking advice will increase, for instance in the wake of the reform to the FEG, easily accessible guidance structures are of key significance to successful recognition. The services described above are merely examples and do not fully reflect the endeavours being undertaken by many federal states to establish advisory bodies under their own steam and to consolidate the presence of such provision wherever possible.⁹³

Initial guidance at the chambers of crafts and trades and the chambers of commerce and industry

The chambers of crafts and trades (HWKs) and the chambers of commerce and industry (IHKs) offer individual initial consultations at a local level for their respective area of responsibility. They clarify important questions relating to the procedural process, determine the reference occupation and provide assistance with preparation of the application documents. If the prospects of a successful recognition procedure are slight, alternatives such as an external examination or retraining are discussed where applicable with the persons interested in seeking recognition. The chambers provide recognition advice both to the skilled workers and to the companies themselves.

⁹⁰ Turkey has been represented amongst the top 3 nationalities since as long ago as 2017.

⁹¹ Cf. [diakonie-freiburg.de/angebote/flucht-und-migration/anerkennungsberatung/](https://www.diakonie-freiburg.de/angebote/flucht-und-migration/anerkennungsberatung/).

⁹² Cf. [hamburg.de/integration/2970318/anerkennung-auslaendischer-abschluesse/](https://www.hamburg.de/integration/2970318/anerkennung-auslaendischer-abschluesse/).

⁹³ The guidance provision described does not constitute a final summary of all advisory services in the federal states.



Migrant organisations are a first port of call for migrants. Recognition plays a role in guidance since it is a building block for societal participation.

Dr Elizabeth Beloe, Federal Association of Networks of Migrant Organisations (NeMO)

The two chamber areas together have carried out almost 172,600 initial consultations since the entry into force of the Federal Recognition Act in 2012.⁹⁴ The chambers of crafts and trades reported around 16,900 initial consultations for the year 2022 alone.⁹⁵ The number of initial consultations in the craft trades has risen continuously over recent years, particularly since the FEG's entry into force in 2020.

It is fundamentally the case that the 2020 FEG has especially expanded opportunities for economic migration by persons holding vocational qualifications in the field of the dual initial and advanced training occupations. This has meant that the chambers and other advisory bodies have become even more important in terms of providing individual guidance to those interested in seeking recognition. In addition to this, they also play a significant role for employers wishing to find out about opportunities for skilled worker recruitment and to explore related issues regarding professional recognition.

Migrant organisations as important guidance stakeholders

Migrant organisations (MOs) also operate alongside the portals, hotlines and guidance institutions mentioned to provide information and advice on the topic of recognition. They are an important building block in terms of establishing contact with migrants in Germany and abroad and are seen as bridge builders to institutions working in the area of professional recognition (→ [Information box 11](#)). One particular

reason for this is their cultural and linguistic proximity to those interested in seeking recognition, and this ensures low-threshold access.

In the wake of the National Integration Action Plan (NAP-I), the BMBF instigated the “Professional Recognition Round Table” with the support of BIBB in 2021. The aims of this networking format are to add the expertise of MOs to a discourse with social partners, advisory bodies and the federal and federal state authorities responsible, and to incorporate their experiences in a more systematic way.

An inaugural digital event took place in 2021 to look at the key issue of how the target group of persons interested in seeking recognition can be reached even more effectively and at the role that MOs can play in this regard. One key outcome of the event was that MOs should be included more closely in the development of funding and programme structures as equal partners and should be integrated more deeply at the interface between migration and recognition guidance. The MOs view the “Professional Recognition Round Table” as a helpful instrument for networking and for the further development of recognition guidance on an equal basis.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Because no binding definition is attached to the term initial guidance, it is possibly interpreted differently by the chamber areas. There is therefore not necessarily any comparability between the volume of initial consultations at HWKs and IHKs. Because the chambers of crafts and trades are directly responsible for the procedures, guidance during the process forms part of their statutory remit.

⁹⁵ Data from the HWK survey conducted by BIBB and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZdH) 2012 to 2022. For further information, see “Methodological notes on data sources” in the Annex.

⁹⁶ Cf. anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/assets/content/Medien_Dokumente-Fachpublikum/20210715_Bericht_Runder_Tisch_Berufsanerkennung_Final.pdf. Note: The Professional Recognition Round Table was also hosted in 2023. anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/pro/runder-tisch-berufsanerkennung-2023.php.

Information box 11

IQ NRW sub-project: Support structure for migrant organisations on professional and occupational integration, recognition and securing a supply of skilled workers

41 volunteers from 26 different MOs took part in a training programme for “skilled worker supporters” during the period from 2019 to the end of 2022. The aims included closer involvement and networking of MOs with local and regional labour market integration stakeholders. The topics of training included the legal foundations of the FEG, characteristics of the labour market in Germany and in selected countries of origin, and aspects of securing a supply of skilled workers.

The skilled worker supporters enjoy access to and the trust of skilled workers in their communities because of their multilingualism and MO membership. The 26 MOs provided information and labour market integration support to over 700 foreign skilled workers. The project was conducted by the IQ sub-project provider MOZAIK gGmbH and financed by the IQ Funding Programme of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)*

* Cf. fachkraeftesicherung-nrw.de/de/ziele-teilprojekt and mozaik.de/de/projekte/archiv.

3.1.3 Recognition guidance abroad expanded

The opportunities newly created by the FEG in 2020 have led to a discernible increase in economic migration to Germany. In the case of third country nationals, a recognised professional or vocational qualification is a prerequisite to enter Germany for the purposes of employment pursuant to the 2020 FEG. This has resulted in a growing need for guidance on professional recognition for skilled workers abroad.

The number of actual applications received from abroad rose for a further year in succession. In 2022, there was a new record of around 18,800 applications relating to professions and occupations governed by federal law. This corresponds to a share of 48 percent of all applications in the year 2022 (→ [Figure 22](#)). Around 92 percent of applications received from abroad originated from third countries (→ [Chapter 2.2.2](#)). The ZSBA was established as a support measure to the FEG as one way of meeting the increased requirement for guidance and information abroad. Secondly, the “ProRecognition” project enabled guidance from German chambers of commerce abroad to be expanded further.

Service Center for Professional Recognition (ZSBA)

The ZSBA⁹⁷ has existed since 1 February 2020. It acts as a national central point of contact for skilled workers abroad and supports them through the recognition procedure and through the process up until entry to Germany. A legal basis for this has been created in the form of § 421b German Social Security Code III (SGB III). The ZSBA advises on a possible place of employment in Germany, provides support in collating the documentation for professional recognition, communicates with the competent bodies, and assists in the search for training measures in the event that only partial recognition is granted. The aim is for this central point of contact to make the recognition procedure more transparent and more efficient in overall terms for persons interested in seeking recognition. Another objective is to reduce the pressure on the competent bodies with regard to providing extensive guidance and making subsequent requests for documentation.

The ZSBA conducted around 38,700 initial and follow-up consultations between February 2020 and the end of 2022. In 2022 alone, just over 7,400 persons received guidance for the first time as new customers.

⁹⁷ The ZSBA received funding from BMBF during an initial period up until 31 December 2023 whilst undergoing a pilot phase in conjunction with BMAS under the lead responsibility of the BA. This pilot phase will continue until the end of 2026 and will continue to be financed by BMBF. Cf. arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/zav/working-living-in-germany/zsba.



As a central contact point for applicants from abroad, the ZSBA is filling a gap in the system of professional recognition. I am delighted that this joint project between BMBF, BMAS and BA is being continued until the end of 2026.

Dr Rudolf Bünthe, Federal Employment Agency, Head of the “Migration Coordination Agency”

Around 5,300 persons were being supported by the ZSBA as of 31 December 2022. 94 percent of these were from a third country and around 60 percent of persons receiving guidance were members of medical healthcare professions. There was, however, also representation from technical occupations such as in the field of electrical engineering and vehicle technology. Around 700 persons receiving guidance who were still being supported by the ZSBA at the end of 2022 had already achieved partial recognition or a notice “imposing” a compensation measure. About 200 had been granted full recognition.⁹⁸

Within the scope of the evaluation of the ZSBA,⁹⁹ a majority of the competent bodies surveyed also confirmed that the ZSBA had reduced the burden on them, mostly because of location guidance¹⁰⁰ and the possibility of referring persons with a poor command of German to the ZSBA. The ZSBA achieved high satisfaction values amongst the customers surveyed. 80 percent of respondents also stated that the ZSBA had enabled them to better understand the procedure.

The ZSBA will continue to be financed by the BMBF until the end of 2026.

ProRecognition

The “ProRecognition” project has been funded by the BMBF and implemented by DIHK Service GmbH and by the chambers of commerce abroad since October 2015. In 2020, three new guidance locations were established at the German chambers of commerce abroad (AHKs) and delegations of German trade and industry. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil and Columbia. This meant there were a total of ten locations (the others being Algeria, Egypt, India, Iran, Italy, Poland and Vietnam) where foreign skilled workers are able to obtain information about the recognition procedure, advice regarding their own opportunities and support with submitting their application whilst still in their home country.¹⁰¹

“ProRecognition” conducted a total of around 24,700 consultations between the start of the project in October 2015 and December 2022.¹⁰² Over 6,200 persons submitted an application for recognition. More than 3,900 received a positive notice, and 1,500 skilled workers are now working in Germany.¹⁰³

98 BA data 2020–2022. Persons already deregistered as German residents are not included here. Various information contained within the data gives rise to the conclusion that at least 37 of all those receiving guidance had submitted an application. Cf. Erbe, Zorner and Bushanska 2023. This should be regarded as a minimum figure because in some cases only individual services of the ZSBA such as location guidance or continuing support were surveyed.

99 In the evaluation of the ZSBA, BIBB investigated the extent to which the service agency had achieved its goals after around two and a half years of activity. The evaluation encompassed qualitative and quantitative surveys and an assessment of statistical data relating to take-up of the ZSBA’s services. Account was taken of the perspectives of the skilled workers receiving guidance and of various stakeholders at the interfaces to the ZSBA. Cf. Erbe, Zorner and Bushanska 2023.

100 Insofar as not yet clarified for the persons interested in seeking recognition, the ZSBA advises on the federal state in which they wish to work and submit their application.

101 The following locations will be funded in the new funding period from 2024: Algeria, Brazil, Columbia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Morocco, the Philippines and Turkey.

102 Source: Data of the “ProRecognition” project 2015–2022.

103 These are minimum figures since traceability is not always possible. The positive notices include partial equivalence and positive certificate evaluations in some cases.



According to the survey¹⁰⁴ carried out within the scope of evaluation research for “ProRecognition”, the number of persons still intending to submit an application is significantly higher. Around 90 per cent of those receiving guidance stated that they had submitted an application or intended to do so. The difference between the number of persons receiving guidance and the number of applications submitted is

thus largely due to the fact that immigration can take up a considerable period of time when an application is submitted from abroad. This highlights the important role played by support for skilled workers in the recognition and immigration process. Respondents reported that particular challenges were associated with looking for work in Germany. Willingness to go to Germany without the security of an employer tends to be low. Further challenges were associated with the visa procedures, language requirements, the costs of the procedure, the procurement of documentation and communication with the recognition authorities. The project is instigating various measures to counter these challenges. 450 persons with recognition were, for example, referred to the Central Foreign and Specialist Placement Agency (ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency (BA) for work placement.

BIBB offers online training on recognition in order to support multipliers abroad in providing guidance to persons interested in seeking recognition (→ [Information box 12](#)).

Information box 12

Good practice: online training on recognition for advisors abroad

The “Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications” Division at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) offers German-language online training on the topic of “professional recognition” for multipliers abroad. In 2021 and 2022, virtual training took place with participants from the regions of the Western Balkans, North Africa, South-East Asia, Latin America and South Asia. The interactive modules offered the participants an opportunity to understand the recognition process from the point of view of the applicants and to find out about the guidance and information provision that is available. Guest presentations provided valuable insights into recognition guidance at a local level, and networking was also facilitated on experiences with the recognition of professional and vocational qualifications from third countries.

In 2022 and 2023, the Division also cooperated with the GIZ programme “Migration & Diaspora” to hold further digital training sessions on the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. The target group in this case included advisory centres in several countries that are being operated by the GIZ in conjunction with local labour administration authorities. These advisory centres also provide skilled workers with guidance on the possibility of economic migration to Germany. The training enabled the partner institutions of the GIZ to receive support in informing skilled workers of the recognition procedure and of further guidance provision at an early stage.

¹⁰⁴ The survey was conducted by BIBB during the period from July until the start of September 2022. The survey involved persons who had received guidance from one of the present ten “ProRecognition” locations between January 2017 and the time when the survey took place and who had been recommended to pursue recognition or a certificate evaluation. There were 1,523 respondents.

3.1.4 Focus on projects for employers

Employers play a key role in successful recognition. Further support structures were put in place, especially in the areas of the medical and healthcare professions and the dual occupations, in order to back up the introduction of the 2020 FEG in particular. The main emphasis is often on the recruitment of skilled workers. Supporting employers and foreign skilled workers through the recognition procedure is, however, crucial to the successful acquisition of staff in many cases. For this reason, it also forms part of the projects. The advisory centres of the IQ Funding Programme and the chambers also provide employers with guidance on professional recognition.

German Agency for International Healthcare Professionals (DeFa)

In the area of the medical and healthcare professions, provision for employers particularly focuses on support services for recruiting skilled workers from third countries. Employers in the field of nursing (hospitals, care institutions, recruitment agencies) have been able to turn to the DeFa since October 2019. The DeFa, which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), supports newly recruited skilled workers through the recognition procedure and assists them with entry to Germany and admission to the labour market on behalf of the employers.

German Competence Centre for International Skilled Workers in the Health and Nursing Professions (DKF)

The German Competence Centre for International Skilled Workers in the Health and Nursing Professions (DKF), which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), has developed the “Fair Recruitment Healthcare Germany” seal of quality in order to structure the nursing recruitment process in a reliable and transparent way in accordance with an ethically responsible standard both for nurses and for employers. The “Fair Recruitment Healthcare Germany” seal of quality is awarded as a nationally recognised RAL Quality Mark by the Association for the Recruitment and Placement of Nursing Staff from Abroad. This association is made up of active recruitment agencies, healthcare and nursing institutions and other bodies with a legitimate interest in ensuring quality.

The seal of quality has been in place since 2021. It offers a voluntary monitoring and award process to self-organised employers seeking to recruit and to human resources services providers in the interests of fair placement practice for nursing staff from third countries. Evidence needs to be provided that certain requirements have been fulfilled. Prerequisites for receipt of the seal of quality include aspects such as guaranteeing transparency in the placement process and ensuring that the recruitment process is free of charge for nurses. Alongside the compensation measure INGA Pflege 3.0 and the development of the quality seal, the DKF also offers the “Welcoming Culture & Integration” toolbox for nursing institutions in order to support them in the implementation of successful integration management and thus further foster a welcoming culture at such institutions. The toolbox contains advice, tips, links and best practice examples relating to various topics. The idea is that these will serve as a guide for institutions in drawing up a company integration management concept. The aim is to assist institutions to think about consequences, objectives, measures, processes and areas of responsibility before pursuing the route of international recruitment so as to help with the sustainable integration of their new colleagues.

“Triple Win”

“Triple Win” is a cooperation programme between GIZ and the BA that has been in place since 2013. It is aimed at employers and sources nursing staff from third countries who are well prepared professionally and in terms of language skills. As is the case with the work of the DKF, “Triple Win” places great emphasis on structuring the placement and work integration process in a sustainable way.¹⁰⁵

“Specialized!”

Doctors are also in urgent demand, particularly in rural areas. The BA instigated the “Specialized!” programme in 2017 in order to counter this shortage of skilled workers. It assists medical institutions in their search for suitable skilled workers and supports doctors from Mexico, Columbia and Jordan in finding a job, professional recognition and training in Germany. A further aim of the programme is continuing training of the recruited skilled workers so that they

¹⁰⁵ Cf. arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/zav/projects-programs/health-and-care/triple-win.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH...

Rieke Albrecht, project head, and

Verena Maisch, project manager for “Recognition for Business”, at the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK)

The BMBF-funded project “Recognition for Business” launched the “UBAconnect” matching service in order to bring skilled workers with a notice attesting partial recognition together with companies. What is special about “UBAconnect”?

“UBAconnect” allows companies seeking skilled workers in the industrial, commercial or craft trade sectors to sign up to a database* Registration is non-binding. They will be contacted by their respective chamber if there are suitable skilled workers for them. They can then get to know these workers.

The particular feature of “UBAconnect” is that all skilled workers have already gone through the professional recognition procedure. They have therefore completed an important stage. Their foreign qualification has been deemed partially rather than fully equivalent. For this reason, they need an employer to support them with refresher training initially.

* Cf. unternehmen-berufsanerkennung.de/uba-connect.

** Cf. youtube.com/watch?v=mYKpwvHPCXA.

What positive experiences have emerged from practice, and what are the success factors from your point of view?

Our cooperation arrangements with the Federal Employment Agency, which started in 2022, and the “ProRecognition” locations at ten German chambers of commerce abroad are both making a major contribution to the success of “UBAconnect”. This has enabled the first matches to be achieved. The video portrait** for the first “UBAconnect” match shows that “UBAconnect” is an attractive recruitment opportunity for companies. Firstly, registration and all services in respect of “UBAconnect” are offered free of charge. Secondly, the company and the skilled worker can get to know each other over a fixed period to begin with. The person is often already deployed as a skilled worker (depending on individual training needs) during the qualifying time and can be trained appropriately for the company’s task areas. This is a good basis for continuing collaboration.

can become specialist doctors. The programme can be offered nationwide in the case of regional interest.¹⁰⁶

Information for employers on the BQ Portal

Support structures for employers are also being expanded in the dual sector. The BQ Portal, for example, provides information particularly aimed at employers and relates to areas of recognition potential¹⁰⁷ in selected focus countries where recruitment takes place. This comprises brief profiles in German and English on 16 focus countries¹⁰⁸ in which potential for recruitment of skilled workers is high. Each of the profiles contains

information on the economy and society of these countries, on the most important aspects of their respective VET systems and on current immigration to and integration into Germany. The BQ Portal also publishes articles by companies that illustrate the specific process sequence of recognition procedures and underline the added value that formal recognition of a professional or vocational qualification can deliver. These company contributions were updated in 2022 in order to show interested employers the long-term opportunities that may emerge for their companies as a result of recognition.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/zav/projects-programs/health-and-care/specialized.

¹⁰⁷ Evaluation of potential for recognition relates to the types of formal qualification in the country concerned (duration, learning venue, localisation in the system).

¹⁰⁸ Selection of the focus countries takes place on the basis of certain criteria, such as whether it is a third country, whether a differentiated and formal education system is in place, whether key indicators relating to the economy, society and (vocational) education are available, and whether there is an overlap with countries that are being considered within the scope of an analysis of potential conducted by the BA to identify focus countries for the recruitment of skilled workers from third countries.



Shadi Hajjo fled Syria with his family in 2015. Thanks to a skills analysis, his professional skills were recognised. Today, he works as an electronics technician for information and telecommunications technology.

“Recognition for Business”

Recognition for Business” (UBA) is an umbrella brand for the implementation of two BMBF-funded projects (UBA IHK and UBA HWK), each of which provides specific support provision for companies operating in the area of IHKs or in the area of HWKs. This support relates to the topic of the employment of foreign skilled workers and to the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications in particular. The project acts as a signpost and as a point of contact for companies. Its website offers a tool for the posing of individual questions. The “UBAconnect” matching service enables companies that are interested to get to know skilled workers from third countries whose professional or vocational qualification has already been partially recognised. These international skilled workers are looking for an employer in Germany to support them with refresher training (→ Chapter 3.2.3).

Further to this, the project uses the “We support recognition” quality mark to showcase IHK and HWK companies which show particular commitment to assisting their employees obtain recognition for their professional or vocational qualification. This mark has been awarded to 68 companies thus far. The craft trade sector is also offered a “toolbox” containing specific guidance during the recognition process and refresher training. Special “company pilots” from the project support and advise craft trade companies all the way from a first consultation to completion of any

refresher training that may be necessary. The production of best practice and explanatory films is a further main focus of the project.

“Craft trades offer a future”

Small and medium-sized companies often find it challenging to recruit skilled workers from abroad by dint of their own efforts. The “Craft trades offer a future” project (HabiZu), which is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), has developed pilot projects to bring together German craft trade companies and skilled workers. The project launched in 2020 and is being jointly implemented by the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH), the Federal Employment Agency (BA) and sequa gGmbH in conjunction with the Bosnia and Herzegovina labour administration authorities. Skilled workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are selected and placed with craft trade companies in Germany on the basis of specific job offers in the electrical and metal working sectors and for the occupation of plant mechanic for sanitary, heating and air conditioning systems. Both the employers and the foreign skilled workers received support with applications, recognition, entry to Germany and integration into the German labour market throughout the project term to the end of 2023.

“Hand in Hand for International Talents”

“Hand in Hand for International Talents” is a joint pilot project of the BA and DIHK Service GmbH,

which is being run in conjunction with selected IHKs and AHKs with funding from the BMWK. Since 2020, it has been testing out ideal-typical immigration processes for foreign skilled workers with its partner countries of Brazil, Vietnam and India. Skilled workers in IHK occupations are placed with companies in selected IHK regions in the IT, electrical and hospitality sectors. The project supports both the German companies and the foreign skilled workers in the contacting and acquisition of applicants, in the further processing of the procedure, and in company and societal integration in Germany.¹⁰⁹

“THAMM”

The “THAMM” project aims at the fair and sustainable acquisition of trainees and skilled workers from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia and has existed since 2019. It is being implemented on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is co-financed by the EU. The GIZ and the ZAV at the BA cooperate in activities for the selection and placement of applicants in Germany. Migration is designed in a way that enables all parties to benefit (triple-win approach) – the participating trainees and skilled workers, the countries of origin and employers in Germany.

The project is delivering findings as to how regular economic migration from North Africa to Europe can be structured in a sustainable way.

3.1.5 Recognition funding

Alongside the varying fees for the recognition procedure, applicants frequently incur additional expenses for aspects such as translations, certifications and travel. Further costs may also arise for language courses or for participation in compensation measures and refresher training. In order to support skilled workers with the financing of costs incurred, further individual funding opportunities have been established over recent years to accompany the main regulatory instruments pursuant to the German Social Security Code (SGB) II and III. These new possibilities will be presented below. The benchmark paper of the Federal Government on the immigration of skilled workers from third countries indicates endeavours to expand previous financing instruments by examining the existing instructions of the BA and revising or supplementing these as necessary. The aim is to be able to make robust use of available regulatory instruments for funding recognition procedures.¹¹⁰

Federal Government recognition grant

Skilled workers can use the recognition grant to help fund recognition of their foreign professional, vocational or higher education qualification. The recognition grant is funded by the BMBF and is being piloted by the Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (f-bb).

It has been extended, meaning that applications may be submitted until 30 June 2024. The aim then is to establish the funding on a permanent basis. The maximum funding amount per person is €600. Areas which are eligible for funding are fees and expenses for a recognition procedure, certificate evaluations by the ZAB, translations, certification of references and qualifications and reports. In addition to this, the recognition grant will be supplemented from 2023 to cover costs incurred within the scope of a skills analysis for the purpose of ascertaining occupational competencies (→ Chapter 3.2.3). A maximum of €1,200 may be made available in this regard with regard to the costs of specialist oral examinations, work samples at the company, materials, workshops or experts. Grants

109 Cf. dihk-service-gmbh.de/resource/blob/31164/a29264cca93254e64f67a1d657c9a3a4/hih-factsheet-download-data.pdf.

110 Cf. Federal Government 2022.



of up to €3,000 are available for training within the scope of the recognition procedure (training funding). Areas that are eligible for funding in this case include costs for participation in a training measure and travel and overnight accommodation costs.

A total of 16,383 applications were submitted between the launch of the recognition grant in 2016 and 31 December 2022. Around 90 percent of decisions regarding funding were positive.

The average sum of funding per person up until the end of 2022 was €400. One major reason for this is the fact that the average sum paid out to grant recipients for ZAB certificate evaluations¹¹¹ was significantly lower than the average grants awarded to persons involved in recognition procedures (around €304 as opposed to €423). The proportion of applicants seeking funding of certificate evaluations also rose slightly over the course of time. The number of funding applications received is rising sharply in overall terms. A new record of 3,078 applications was recorded in 2022. This represented an increase of just under 12 percent compared to the previous year.

Hamburg Scholarship Programme for the recognition of foreign qualifications

The Hamburg Scholarship Programme is aimed at skilled workers who intend to seek recognition of the professional or vocational qualification they have acquired abroad and who wish to work in Hamburg. The programme permits a grant application to be submitted for costs in a maximum amount of €4,000 that are incurred within the scope of recognition, e.g., procedural fees or necessary courses and examinations. A monthly scholarship may also be granted for the duration of an adaptation period. The amount of the scholarship is guided by the standard rates for grants and loans under the Federal Education and Training Assistance Act (BAföG) without taking parental income into account. The precise sum payable depends on income, assets and family status. Half of the amount must be paid back later on an interest-free basis. The other half is a grant and does not need to be repaid.¹¹²

Just under 94 percent of almost 3,100 applications received between the end of 2011 and the end of 2022 were approved. Around 180 applications were submitted in 2022, virtually all of which (98 percent) were approved. Sharp fluctuations have been observed in some cases over the past three years (2020-2022) both

¹¹¹ Funding for certificate evaluations has been granted since the entry into force of the "Second announcement on the funding of persons interested in seeking recognition of professional and vocational qualifications acquired abroad" in October 2019.

¹¹² Cf hamburg.de/wirtschaft/anerennung-abschluesse/.

in respect of the total funding sum and with regard to scholarships to cover living costs. The funding sum was around €269,000 in 2020, a figure which rose by just over 15 percent in 2021. Scholarships also leaped by 45 percent in 2021 from a figure of just over €30,800 in 2020. The reasons for this were re-started procedures and training measures that were cancelled in 2021 because of the pandemic. In 2022, the vast majority of persons seeking guidance were Ukrainian refugees who were eligible for receipt of benefits pursuant to the SGB. This meant that application for a major part of the costs could be made via the job centres and employment agencies. The result was a drop in the total funding sum (€285,300) and a drastic fall in the scholarship amount to only €1,740 in 2022.

Further financing instruments

Further funding opportunities are in place alongside specific financing programmes. These mainly relate to procedural costs and to participation in refresher training or in compensation measures that have been imposed. They particularly include regulatory instruments for employment support funding (SGB III) and funding for the provision of basic benefits for job seekers (SGB II). These are used first in preference to other funding programmes and mainly cover course-based measures for which the job centres or employment agencies issue training vouchers.¹¹³ Procedural costs including any examination fees or translation costs may be funded via the placement budget pursuant to § 44 SGB III if the funding prerequisites are met. According to the benchmark paper on the immigration of skilled workers from third countries, the intention is to make more robust use of these regulatory instruments.¹¹⁴ Free participation in IQ-funded training provision is a further possibility. But employers may also bear some of the costs of the training measures.

Conclusion

Information and guidance structures have changed over recent years. New projects and approaches have been added. The establishment of the ZSBA, the development towards more digital guidance provision, training for multipliers, the expansion of recognition guidance abroad, and increased provision of information and networking opportunities to employers are all good examples of this. The advisory centres of the IQ Funding Programme are in their lasting funding period, and the intention is for them to be put on a permanent footing. The guidance services of the employment agencies, the job centres and the federal states are set to assume a greater role. In order to offer information and guidance that is target group-appropriate and easily accessible, this existing provision now needs to be adapted to growing needs and formats must be developed further. The opportunities offered by digitalisation should be used in a way that delivers benefits. Support provision, ideally multilingual services which do not involve long waiting times, should be available to skilled workers prior to or at the outset of the procedure and during and after the submission of an application. Further emphasis should be placed on advising persons interested in seeking recognition about financing opportunities at an early stage and on supporting them in making an application.

¹¹³ Cf. Atanassov, et al. 2022.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Federal Government 2022, p 16.

3.2 Current developments in the implementation of recognition procedures and training

Recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications should be further simplified and accelerated in order to counter the shortage of skilled workers. Numerous projects and measures in the area of the medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law, in the area of the non-regulated initial and advanced training occupations and in respect of selected professions and occupations governed by federal state law have been initiated in the past few years. These will be presented below.

3.2.1 Digitalisation in professional recognition

Digitalisation is an important lever in terms of accelerating the recognition process. Various steps have already been undertaken in recent years. The services of numerous IQ advisory centres have, for example, been digitalised and now frequently also take place in the form of video guidance. Various tools have been introduced for this purpose, and these allow for the digital registration and submission of documents. In addition to this, parts of training measures are frequently conducted virtually. Database solutions (for example the “anabin” information portal and the BQ Portal) have been developed for more rapid processing of applications. These serve the purpose of knowledge management and are being expanded on an ongoing basis.

The Online Access Act requires the Federal Government and the federal states to also offer their administrative services electronically via portals.¹¹⁵ Skilled workers therefore need to be able to submit their application for recognition online. Because the “Recognition Finder” on the BIBB “Recognition in Germany” portal is the central online source of information for professional recognition nationally, it must be possible for applications to be submitted from this site. This takes place via an interface to the relevant online service, the “Recognition Application Service”. This application service was developed in 2022 and 2023 as part of a joint Federal Government and federal states implementation project funded by the Federal Government. The project is under the lead management of North-Rhine Westphalia and can be used by all federal states. The BMBF and BIBB are providing support for the technical processes involved in the project. Application routes for over 500 professions have been completed. Doctors with a foreign qualification, for example, can now submit an online application for a licence to practise in Brandenburg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland Palatinate, Saarland, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein. Nurses, pharmacists, midwives and nursery school teachers are also already able to use the application service in some federal states. The federal states are currently dynamically driving forward the linking of their competent bodies. 14 federal states are seeking to use this infrastructure in the future.



More than 130 persons from the Federal Government, the federal states and the chambers were involved in the technical development of the application routes. These specialist arrangements are a considerable success for recognition.

Heike Kögel, Head of Digitalisation at the MAGS NRW, Head of the digitalisation project “Recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications”

¹¹⁵ The Online Access Act requires the Federal Government and the federal states to provide all administrative services digitally via relevant portals. The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (MAGS NRW) is coordinating the project “Recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications” with the aim of making the infrastructure that has been created accessible to the other federal states.



In 2023, I was particularly pleased to see more and more competent bodies sign up for the federal states' joint online application service. This means that an application is just a click away from the 'Recognition in Germany' portal for international skilled workers.

Claudia Moravek, Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, BIBB, Head of Division 3.3 "Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications".

The aim of the online application process is to make the administrative service of "professional recognition" more convenient and quicker to use. One example of an important practical impact of the central application service is standardisation in respect of documents to be submitted. In numerous procedures, it has been possible to arrive at a consensus with the competent bodies of the federal states without losing sight of the particular characteristics of the requirements under federal state law. The application service transfers structured and electronically readable data to the specialist procedures. End-to-end digitalisation of this administrative service thus offers particular potential in terms of accelerating the procedure and making it easier. The integration of software processes to support execution of the administrative procedure can help achieve consistent digitalisation from the submission of the application to the issuing of the notice.

Even after implementation of digital applications, the intention is that the requirements regarding the documents to be submitted should continue to be scrutinised, simplified and standardised. The aim is for application requirements agreed in the wake of digitalisation to apply nationwide. In addition to this, there is still a need in some areas for improved networking between the competent bodies themselves on professional and vocational qualifications that have already been assessed. An occupationally specific, central and digital management system could deliver a valuable contribution here.

In January 2023, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) and the State of Berlin, represented by the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) at the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) concluded a cooperation agreement to digitalise the evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications (certificate evaluation). The aim is to fully digitalise the whole process of issuing certificate evaluations via an information and communication platform. This digitalisation will mainly be of assistance to the growing number of applicants who submit their applications from abroad, who up until now have been required to send in all documents for the certificate evaluation in paper form. A further intention is that it will help accelerate the issuing of certificate evaluations within the ZAB.

3.2.2 Much momentum in the area of medical and healthcare professions

Recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications is particularly relevant in the area of medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law. This is because the need for skilled workers is especially high, and full equivalence is required in order to be able to exercise such professions. These profiles were also in most demand for recognition in 2022, accounting for 76 of around 39,300 applications received¹¹⁶ (→ Chapter 2). Generally speaking, medical

¹¹⁶ A full list of the medical and healthcare professions may be found on the website of the BMG at [bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/themen/gesundheitswesen/gesundheitsberufe/gesundheitsberufe-allgemein.html](https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/themen/gesundheitswesen/gesundheitsberufe/gesundheitsberufe-allgemein.html).



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH...

Carolin Ziegaus

Bavarian State Office of Nursing, Head of Department 1 “Recognition Procedures”

What expectations do you associate with the process of digitalising recognition procedures in the field of nursing?

The aim of procedural digitalisation must be a simple and straightforward application process for those seeking recognition. Documents can be submitted as a scan or photographed using a smart phone. This will remove the need for the protracted, time-consuming and costly dispatch of application documents across Germany or from abroad. Documents sent in electronically can be processed completely digitally at the Bavarian State Office of Nursing. Such an approach accelerates the procedures and reduces the amount of bureaucracy involved. This creates transparency and resources for all involved.

You have removed the need for certifications when documents are submitted for the recognition procedure. What have been your experiences in this regard?

Reducing formal requirements in this way has proven positive for us. Our experience shows that waiving the requirement for officially certified documents makes things enormously easier for applicants, particularly for those who are still abroad or living in a third country. The procedure is sped up and simplified, especially with regard to requests for supplementary documentation to be submitted. Of course, patient safety is important to us. For this reason, our staff check the documents submitted for plausibility and make follow-up requests in the event of any inconsistencies or doubts. In our experience, wrongly issued qualifications would not be recognised even if they are officially certified.

and healthcare professions can be divided into specialist healthcare professions and medical professions for which academic qualifications are required.¹¹⁷ In 2022, most applications (16,635) related to the specialist healthcare profession of registered general nurse or qualified nurse. The profession of doctor, for which an academic qualification is required, followed in second position (7,422 applications). Some way behind were applications relating to the professions of physiotherapist (1,203) and dentist (1,014). In overall terms during the entire existence of the recognition system from 2012 to 2022, the two professions of registered general nurse (including qualified nurse) (around 101,500 applications) and doctor (almost 67,400 applications) have accounted for around 60 percent of applications submitted. For this reason, the further remarks below will relate to developments regarding these two professions.

In 2022, the most frequent country of training regarding professional qualifications in the reference occupation of doctor was Syria (1,047 applications). It was followed by Romania (531 applications) and Turkey (390 applications). 65 percent of applications in the reference occupation of doctor in 2022 related to qualifications from third countries. A decision was reached in a total of 8,592 procedures in the profession of doctor in 2022. 69 percent of these related to professional qualifications from third countries, and 31 percent concerned qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland). 5,511 procedures in which a decision was reached (64 percent) resulted in full equivalence. This outcome may be reached via various routes (→ Chapter 2.2.3). Automatic recognition ensued in 46 percent of cases. Recognition was attested following successful completion of a compensation measure on 33 percent of occasions. 21 percent of applicants

¹¹⁷ Permission to use a professional title is necessary for the unrestricted exercising of a specialist healthcare profession. A licence to practise is needed in a medical profession for which academic qualifications are required. The term academic healthcare profession will be used below to denote medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law that can only be exercised in unrestricted fashion by those with a licence to practise. The term “specialist healthcare profession” will be used for professions in which qualifications may be obtained via a vocational or higher education route (for example qualified nurse).

were awarded full equivalence solely on the basis of a document check. In 2022, one percent of procedures in which a decision was reached ended negatively, i.e. without equivalence. The outcome in a further 3,039 (35 percent) procedures in which a decision was reached was the “imposition” of a compensation measure that was still outstanding as of 31 December. Almost all of these related to qualifications from third countries. In such cases, the stipulated compensation measure is a knowledge test.

In 2022, the largest number of applications in the reference occupation of registered general nurse or qualified nurse related to professional qualifications from the Philippines (3,039 applications). This was followed by applications relating to Tunisia (1,902) and to India (1,395). 87 percent of applications concerned qualifications from third countries, a significantly higher proportion than with regard to applications in the reference occupation of doctor. A decision was reached in a total of 20,652 procedures in the two nursing professions in 2022. 93 percent of these related to professional qualifications from third countries, and 7 percent concerned qualifications from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland). This figure included 8,145 procedures (39 percent) in which the outcome was full equivalence. Automatic recognition ensued in 11 percent of cases. Recognition was attested following successful completion of a compensation measure on 73 percent of occasions. 16 percent of applicants were awarded full equivalence solely on the basis of a document check. In 2022, two percent of procedures in which a decision was reached ended negatively, i.e. without equivalence. The outcome in a further 12,168 (59 percent) procedures in which a decision was reached was the “imposition” of a compensation measure which was still outstanding as of 31 December 2022. Virtually all of these related to qualifications from third countries. With regard to the compensation measure, applicants in this case have a free choice between a knowledge test and an adaptation period.

Over the past few years, various recognition stakeholders at federal and federal state level, including the competent bodies and the GfG, have instigated measures or expanded services in order to structure procedural practice and the whole of the recognition process in a more efficient way. The area of medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law was also characterised by different statutory changes and updates that all exerted impacts on the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications.

Assistant and auxiliary occupations in nursing governed by federal state law also exist alongside the medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law (→ [Information box 17](#)).

Standardisation via statutory amendments on the basis of the examples of the Nursing Professions Act and the Act to strengthen nursing training

Over recent years, a high degree of momentum has occurred in the medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law regarding various amendments to specific legislation for the professions and the adoption of new laws and ordinances. These also affect the recognition of relevant professional and vocational qualifications.¹¹⁸ The entry into force of the Nursing Professions Act (PflBG) on 1 January 2020, for example, impacted the recognition of qualified nurses. Previously, training programmes had been regulated separately in the Nursing and Long-Term Care Act (AltPflG) and in the Nursing Act (KrPflG). The PflBG meant that nursing training in Germany is now generalistically aligned.¹¹⁹ In future, automatic recognition for qualifications from EU member states pursuant to EU Directive 2005/36/EC will occur for the reference occupation of qualified nurse. § 66a Paragraph 1 PflBG stipulates that applications for recognition relating to qualifications from a third country may also still be decided on the basis of the KrPflG or the AltPflG until the end of 2024. Whereas

118 The Midwifery Act (HebG) and the Psychotherapy Act (PsychThG) were also amended alongside the PflBG discussed below. The German Dental Licensing Ordinance was updated too. On 1 January 2021, standardised training regulations in the occupations of anaesthesia assistant and operating theatre technician were introduced across Germany for the first time. A new law governing occupations in medical technology (MTBG) and a new law regulating the occupation of technical pharmaceutical assistant (PTAG) both entered into force on 1 January 2023. Each contained transitional provisions for recognition procedures.

119 Entry into force of the PflBG abrogated the previous specific legislation – the Nursing Act (KrPflG) and the Long-Term Care Act (AltPflG) – and paved the way to the new professional qualification of qualified nurse. The PflBG stipulates a period of generalistically aligned training of three years. During the last third of their training, trainees have the right to choose whether to continue with the generalist training or to specialise as a geriatric nurse or paediatric nurse if this has been agreed in their training contract. This option is being piloted until the end of 2025.

some federal states have already fully switched their procedures relating to third country qualifications for recognition as a qualified nurse, others still base recognition on the transitional provision. There is a third group of federal states in which an individual submitting an application can, at least on an interim basis, choose the legal basis on which the recognition procedure is to be conducted.

Further far-reaching positive impacts for the recognition of nursing may be expected from the Act to strengthen nursing training (PflStudStG),¹²⁰ which was announced in the Federal Law Gazette on 15 December 2023. The parts of the law affecting recognition entered into force on 16 December 2023. In particular, on the basis of the relevant provision contained in the BQFG, documents to be submitted were nationally stipulated in the nursing training and examination regulations (PflAPrV) and thus, for example, standardised in a similar way to in the training and examination regulations relating to the occupations of anaesthesia assistant and operating theatre technician (ATA-OTA-APrV) and to the training and examination regulations for occupations in medical technology (MTAPrV). Digital submission was also designated as the standard approach. In addition to this, the possibility of acceptance of documents in English or translations was also introduced. The need for translations may also be waived if a person at the competent body is cognisant of the language in question. One essential new feature in the PflStudStG is that applicants in nursing are able to forgo an equivalence assessment definitively and thus proceed directly to a knowledge test or to completion of an adaptation period. Further aims are greater standardisation of application requirements and further enshrinement in law of the use of the GfG's sample assessments (→ [Information box 13](#)). Simplification and standardisation of the structure of knowledge tests are also being planned.

GfG strengthens further standardisation in the implementation of recognition procedures

The GfG was permanently established at the ZAB in 2018. Its significance in the standardisation of recognition procedures in the medical and healthcare professions has grown still further in recent years. In its capacity as a service agency for the competent bodies of the federal states, which are responsible for recognition in medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law, the GfG acts on behalf of the government authorities in drawing up reports on the content equivalence of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. It also scrutinises the relevant reference qualifications and conducts genuineness checks on the documents that applicants submit to the competent bodies within the scope of the equivalence assessment. Transmission of a digital document is usually sufficient in this regard because the checks essentially relate to the plausibility of documents submitted. The tasks of the GfG continue to include the development of uniform bases of assessment for the foreign professional and vocational qualifications (so-called technical and content instruments) and population of the GfG-specific section of the "anabin" information portal with sample assessments and descriptions of the respective qualifications. Within the scope of the Concerted Campaign for the Recruitment of Nurses (KAP), the GfG has been commissioned by the BMG to develop sample assessments,¹²¹ which contain both content evaluations of the qualifications and competency-related recommendations for refresher training (→ [Information box 13](#)). Feedback on the sample assessments from the competent bodies has been positive.

Since August 2022, the GfG has also been offering evaluation of professional experience and of lifelong learning for all countries where required. It had already been previously performing this task for NRW within the scope of a special agreement. For the purpose of evaluation, the GfG has drawn up guidelines which have been made available to the competent bodies as a standardised and transparent basis of assessment.

120 As a so-called composite act, the PflStudStG updates existing laws and ordinances. The benchmark paper of the Federal Government on the immigration of skilled workers from third countries accordingly sets out amendments to the PflBG, to the nursing training and examination regulations (PflAPrV) and to the Ordinance on the financing of training in the nursing professions (PflAFinV). The PflStudStG also contains amendments to the Midwifery Act (HebG), to the Ordinance on the training and examination of midwives (HebStPrV), to the Law governing occupations in medical technology (MTBG) and to the Ordinance on training and examinations in medical technology occupations (MTAPrV).

121 As part of this cooperation, the GfG has drawn up numerous country reports and sample assessments on nursing qualifications from 38 countries thus far, including the current focus countries of Brazil, Mexico, India and the Philippines.

Information box 13

Sample assessments in the medical and healthcare professions

The Federal Government ascribes a key role to the sample assessments of the GfG in terms of accelerating and standardising the implementation of recognition procedures in the federal states. Its benchmark paper on the immigration of skilled workers from third countries drawn up in November 2022 declared an intention to work with the federal states to continue to drive forward the use and availability of sample assessments. The PflStudStG links in with this by stipulating a firmer statutory basis for the consideration of sample assessments in nursing. Sample assessments compare the training contents of professional and vocational qualifications acquired abroad with those of the German reference occupation and list the substantial differences or adaptation requirements in a prototypical way. Ascertainment of the differences makes it easier to identify the follow-up training needs of applicants. If the substantial differences cannot be offset by professional experience, a compensation measure must be completed in order to achieve full equivalence of the professional or vocational qualification. In the assessments, the GfG also particularly provides recommendations for competency assessment within the scope of the compensation measure. The aim is to support the development of modular adaptation periods that are suitable for a multitude of underlying training. As part of the cooperation arrangements between the BMG and the GfG, which have been extended until the end of 2025, the sample assessments will be expanded by adding specific recommendations for competency acquisition in line with the PflBG. The sample assessments thus provide a uniform basis of evaluation, meaning that the competent bodies are able to process similar cases independently. The GfG manages the sample assessments in a protected part of the “anabin” information portal, to which the competent bodies have access. The competent bodies are regularly notified of newly uploaded sample assessments by the GfG.

Further standardisation and acceleration of the procedures

Various changes to the processing of recognition procedures have also occurred at the competent bodies. Against the background of the skilled worker shortage in the healthcare sector, further federal states have pooled areas of responsibility in order to increase efficiency. In NRW, for example, the Münster District Government has been responsible for the central processing and coordination of recognition procedures and associated tasks in the medical and healthcare professions since the start of 2020. Prior to this point, these activities were conducted in a decentralised way by the five district governments and at the State Examination Office for Medicine, Pharmacy and Psychotherapy in Düsseldorf.¹²² Further decentralisation of areas of responsibility occurred most recently in Bavaria, where a newly established State Office of Nursing has taken charge of the processing of recognition procedures for nurses since July 2023. Responsibility had previously rested with Bavaria’s seven district governments.¹²³

The acceptance of English language documents is also viewed as an opportunity to simplify the recognition procedures further. Documents in English can already be submitted to some competent bodies, thus saving applicants both money and time. In its 2022 benchmark paper on the immigration of skilled workers from third countries, the Federal Government set out that it is seeking to work in conjunction with the federal states to reinforce this approach and increase acceptance of documents in the original language. Nevertheless, this will require specialist staff with the right multiple language skills to be recruited.

The BMBF commissioned BIBB to carry out regular cross-federal state networking formats for the stakeholders responsible, one of the aims of this being to lend further support to the process of standardisation of execution. Activities conducted in these formats include work to develop national standards for requirements relating to documents within the scope of the relevant regulations (→ [Information box 18](#)).

¹²² Cf. [land.nrw/pressemitteilung/nordrhein-westfalen-buendelt-und-beschleunigt-berufliche-erkennungungsverfahren-im](https://www.land.nrw/pressemitteilung/nordrhein-westfalen-buendelt-und-beschleunigt-berufliche-erkennungungsverfahren-im).

¹²³ Cf. [lfp.bayern.de/erkennung/](https://www.lfp.bayern.de/erkennung/).

Compensation measures are continuing to gain in significance – meeting challenges

Compensation measures within the scope of recognition of medical and healthcare professions are crucial in terms of offsetting substantial differences with the German reference occupation. They are also used in circumstances where no documentation or only insufficient documentation can be submitted for reasons that are not the fault of the applicant.¹²⁴ Most applications submitted both in medicine and nursing relate to qualifications from third countries. Substantial differences are identified in the majority of these applications. In medicine, such substantial differences can only be offset by a knowledge test. In nursing, a choice may be made between a knowledge test and an adaptation period. In practice, some applicants also proceed directly to a knowledge test without having undergone an equivalence assessment.¹²⁵ The Pfl-StudStG creates a legal basis for this approach in the nursing professions. Applicants from third countries are able to complete a knowledge test or an adaptation period without having to wait for the outcome of a prior equivalence assessment.

This means that there is a high level of demand for compensation measures and for courses to prepare for the knowledge test both in medicine and in nursing. According to the BIBB publication “Routes to equivalence: recognition-related training in medical and healthcare professions and in dual occupations. Results of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring,¹²⁶ which looked at the organisation of knowledge tests and preparatory courses in medicine and nursing, there is a shortage of provision in some regions of Germany. For those interested in seeking recognition this may, for example, mean a longer distance of travel to a preparatory course. Longer waiting times for a medical knowledge test appointment may also occur. Various federal states have already made adjustments to the organisation of the knowledge test in order to counter this problem (→ [Information box 16](#)).



Edchel Grace Cortez came to Germany from the Philippines in 2020. After successfully passing the knowledge test, her professional qualification was recognised and she has been working as a registered general nurse ever since.

A further particular circumstance revealed is that acquisition of foreign nurses is characterised by a high degree of activity on the part of human resources services providers and employers. Many persons with a foreign professional or vocational qualification thus complete the preparatory courses and tests in organised groups. A similar situation applies to the courses that employers offer at their own schools attached to clinics and hospitals. Results of the study indicate that this group character may in turn mean that knowledge tests are in some cases harder to access for skilled workers who do not have ties with human resources services providers or employers.

(Specialist) language courses for access to a profession

Alongside the compensation measures, there is also a need in the medical and healthcare professions for (specialist) language courses in order to obtain the language certificates necessary for access to the profession (→ [Information box 14](#)).

124 Cf. BMBF 2020.

125 Cf. *ibid.*

126 Cf. Atanassov u. a. 2022.

Various institutions offer courses for this purpose. In the case of doctors, these are courses that provide preparation for a specialist language test at level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This is a requirement for the issuing of a licence to practise. Since the introduction of the Ordinance on support for occupationally related German language learning (DeuFöV) on 1 July 2016, many of these courses have been offered as a standard regulatory instrument by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). Entitlement to participate is issued by the BAMF. Participation is free of charge if certain prerequisites are met. The same applies in respect of course provision for the necessary language level that nurses need to attain.¹²⁷ Some of the findings that emerged from projects conducted during the last funding period of the IQ Programme were able to help inform the further development of new types of professional language courses. A number of adaptation periods for regulated professions featuring integrated learning of German were also financed as projects by the IQ Funding Programme. Following the permanent establishment of language learning in the DeuFöV, the current IQ funding period contains only individual approaches towards language coaching in the workplace. The BMG-funded INGA Pflege adaptation period and its further development INGA 3.0 represent a good example of the interlinking of professional and language learning. This strengthens both communicative professional skills and the long-term integration of qualified nurses (→ Information box 15).¹²⁸

Various providers offer courses to prepare both doctors and nurses for the knowledge test. Many of these courses relating to both professions are certified in accordance with the Ordinance regarding the conditions and procedure for the accreditation of professional bodies and the admission of employment support providers (AZAV). This means that the BA is able to finance participation in such provision via the issuing of training vouchers as long as the other prerequisites are met. Funding via IQ plays a major role in circumstances where applicants are not

Information box 14

Implementation of the specialist language test in the medical and healthcare professions

Although demonstration of knowledge of German is not a component of the recognition procedure, it is a prerequisite for subsequent receipt of a licence to practice or unrestricted authorisation to practise in medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law. For this reason, it is closely connected with the recognition process. Sufficient (specialist) language skills are essential in the medical and healthcare professions in order to ensure patient safety. Back in 2015, the 87th Conference of Ministers of Health (GMK) adopted “Benchmarks for assessment of the knowledge of German necessary for exercising a medical profession where academic qualifications are required”. At the 92nd GMK in June 2019, “Benchmarks relating to monitoring the knowledge of German necessary to exercise the specialist healthcare professions” were also adopted. Given that a specialist language test has already been established in medical professions for which academic qualifications are required, the aim now is for knowledge of German to be demonstrated on the same basis in the healthcare professions via a specialist language to be gradually implemented in the federal states. In order to introduce this specialist language test, the federal states of Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony have, for example, drawn up a joint implementation concept in the area of nursing. This has been put into effect on a stage-by-stage basis on behalf of these federal states by the North German Centre for the Further Development of Nursing (NDZ) since September 2022.* It remains to be seen how the specialist language test will be introduced and implemented, including in the other federal states.

* Cf. pflege-ndz.de/projekt-detailseite/entwicklung-und-erprobung-der-fachsprachpruefung-b2-pflege.html.

¹²⁷ Cf. bamf.de/DE/Themen/Integration/ZugewanderteTeilnehmende/DeutschBeruf/deutsch-beruf.html.

¹²⁸ So-called professional language courses are divided into basic and special courses. Whereas the basic courses impart a general knowledge of German for the world of work, the special courses focus on different areas and are, for example, aimed at persons involved in recognition procedures for medical and healthcare professions in which academic qualifications are required or at those who require technically specific knowledge of German in the engineering or retail sectors. More information is available at: bamf.de/DE/Themen/Integration/ZugewanderteTeilnehmende/DeutschBeruf/deutsch-beruf-node.html. The BAMF is currently developing a concept for early years education professions.

Information box 15

INGA Pflege – a respectful and efficient adaptation period for sustainable integration within the company

INGA Pflege (“INGA Nursing”) is a modern compensation measure developed by the “Societal Integration and Migration” (GIM) Research and Transfer Agency on behalf of the BMG in order to provide qualified nurses recruited from abroad with the necessary training to exercise their profession in Germany. It is an occupationally integrated adaptation period that is currently being piloted in its further developed form of INGA 3.0 (for several countries of origin). INGA 3.0 supports nurses with foreign qualifications to progress towards recognition of their qualification and towards long-term integration in Germany. As well as seeking recognition of the professional or vocational qualification, the measure also aims to foster communicative employability skills on the part of the nurses recruited. The adaptation period has a modular structure and is of a duration between six and a half or 12 months depending on compensation need. This modular approach facilitates the addressing of individual training requirements. The adaptation period has been designed in a company-related way, and this favours the subsequent professional integration of participants. During the measure, they complete deployments at healthcare and nursing institutions where they familiarise themselves with work procedures and staff. The adaptation period interlinks professional and language contents via team teaching and is also supported by specific language training. This means that it also provides preparation for the (specialist) language test that must be passed in order to obtain authorisation to practise. The adaptation period has been conducted in Saxony, Brandenburg and Hamburg thus far and is designed for nurses from the Philippines. The concept is being developed further for other countries of origin and has already been successfully used as a basis for adaptation periods for skilled workers who have fled Ukraine.*

* Cf. dkf-kda.de/inga-pflege/.

entitled to receive benefits. In the 2019–2022 round of IQ funding, 2,142 persons entered training measures for doctors.¹²⁹ 1,648 persons took part in corresponding courses for nurses.¹³⁰ In the new IQ funding period from 2023, preparatory courses for the knowledge test will only be funded in exceptional cases where no standard provision is available. Within the scope of the Recognition Act, it has also been possible since 2020 for costs of training measures leading to full equivalence to be funded (→ [Chapter 3.1.5](#)).

Sufficient and suitable provision of compensation measures and of preparatory courses that are available in a timely manner is necessary in order to allow persons with foreign professional and vocational qualifications to proceed along the pathway to full equivalence following “imposition” of a compensation measure. Access to such courses should be promoted by making them easier to find. In Hesse, for example, a Nursing Training Centre (PQZ Hessen) has been set up at the instigation of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration of the State of Hesse (HMSI), which provides state-wide structures for the (further) training of international nurses. The PQZ Hessen supports employers across all sectors and international nursing and specialist healthcare workers with recruitment, recognition, employment and integration. It also coordinates supply and demand in respect of adaptation periods, preparatory courses and occupationally

129 Source: NIQ database 2019–2022, made available by the IQ Recognition and Training Competence Centre.

130 This was followed by 427 entries to training measures for pharmacists, 314 entries to training measures for psychological psychotherapists and 258 entries to training measures for psychotherapist (source: NIQ database 2019–2022, made available by the IQ Recognition and Training Competence Centre).



The INGA Pflege adaptation period and its expansion INGA 3.0 take place on an in-service basis and foster company-related, respectful and language communication employability skills. It thus contributes to sustainable integration.

Dr Sarina Strumpfen, German Society for the Aged (KDA), Project Head “DKF”

related language programmes and creates relevant provision. For this purpose, the PQZ Hessen works in close conjunction with the competent body in order to network employers and nursing schools / training institutions and thus implement individual measures for all participants.¹³¹

The PQZ has a new online platform called AnKA Hessen that provides a practice-related tool to support the securing of a supply of skilled workers in Hesse. AnKA makes it easier for skilled workers and their employers to seek out suitable courses and advanced training provision. The platform offers a rapid overview of existing regional opportunities in Hesse.



Anđelina Budimir from Croatia received full recognition as a physiotherapist in 2016.

Information box 16

Good Practice – organisation of the knowledge test in medicine by the Medical Council of Westfalen-Lippe

An ordinance to amend areas of responsibility issued by the MAGS entered into force in NRW on 5 February 2021. Since this time, the Medical Council of Westfalen-Lippe (ÄKWL) has been in charge of conducting the knowledge and aptitude test, appointing the examiners and inviting the candidates. For the purposes of procedural standardisation and quality assurance, the tests are organised on the basis of a structural concept that has been agreed with the Ministry of Health and with the Central Recognition Body for Licensed Medical and Healthcare Professions (ZAG-aH) at Münster District Government. The same case templates with identical screen presentations for medical imaging, findings and further charts and trained actor patients are used by all examinations boards for tests that take place on the same day. This restructuring has not merely led to a significant increase in test provision. The waiting times for the knowledge test that previously existed have been practically abolished. Candidates are able to sit their knowledge test in their preferred month or in the subsequent month at the latest. The ÄKWL has conducted 1,477 knowledge and aptitude tests thus far (as of October 2023).

¹³¹ Cf. pqz-hessen.de.

Information box 17

Recognition of assistant and auxiliary occupations in nursing

Whereas the profession of qualified nurse is governed pursuant to federal law by the PflBG, assistant and auxiliary occupations in nursing are subject to respective federal state law. They are regulated professions in most federal states. 27 different training programmes with a total of eight different occupational titles exist across Germany* Because of this considerable heterogeneity, the Conference of Ministers of Health (GMK) and the Conference of the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs (ASMK) formulated “Benchmarks for training programmes in assistant and auxiliary occupations in nursing for which the federal states have responsibility” in 2012 and 2013 respectively.** In line with the different training programmes and occupational titles, the details of the recognition procedure are structured differently depending on the federal state or occupational title. Another factor is that the occupational titles of state-certified nursing assistant and specialist care assistant (in old age and nursing care) are not regulated. Skilled workers with qualifications acquired abroad are in increasing demand in the assistant and auxiliary occupations in nursing because of the acute shortage of qualified nurses.

* For a full summary of the regulation and occupational titles of nursing auxiliaries and nursing assistants cf. Jürgensen 2023.

** Cf. Jürgensen 2023.

3.2.3 Developments in the area of non-regulated initial and advanced training occupations

Since the entry into force of the Federal Recognition Act, 66,303 applications for recognition of a foreign professional or vocational qualification have related to non-regulated occupations (24 percent of around 279,000 applications submitted over the entire period from 2012 to 2022). In 2022, non-regulated occupations accounted for 9,351 or 24 percent of applications in professions and occupations governed by federal law. Applicants had acquired their professional or vocational qualification in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey and Kosovo in particular. The largest volumes in 2022 were recorded in the occupations of electronics technician (996 applications) and electrical fitter (813 applications). These are reference occupations that fall within the remit of the HWKs (electronics technician) and the IHKs (electrical fitter). These two areas of responsibility are key stakeholders in the recognition of professional and vocational qualifications for non-regulated occupations. They accounted

for 96 percent of the 9,351 applications in 2022 (5,295 applications relating to the IHK area and 3,888 to the HWK). In the case of non-regulated occupations, consideration of professional experience also plays a major role along the pathway to full recognition (→ Chapter 2.2.4).

New bilateral agreement

Germany had already concluded bilateral agreements on the mutual recognition of vocational qualifications with Switzerland, Austria and France prior to 2012. In 2021, the agreement with Switzerland was replaced by a modern agreement.¹³² The agreement has its basis in the similar dual training systems and comparatively high training standards that are in place in both countries. On the German side, this simplifies recognition for initial and advanced training occupations that are governed by federal law pursuant to the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO). It stipulates joint informal working instruments in the form of lists of training and advanced training occupations that are updated on an ongoing basis. The current lists contain over 200 qualifications and serve as a recommendation for the

¹³² Law on the Agreement of 10 February 2021 between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Swiss Federal Council on the mutual assessment of equivalence of vocational qualifications: [bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBl&jumpTo=bgbl221s0919.pdf#_bgbl_%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl221s0919.pdf%27%5D__1710856481617](https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBl&jumpTo=bgbl221s0919.pdf#_bgbl_%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl221s0919.pdf%27%5D__1710856481617). It replaces the previous agreement on mutual recognition of examinations in the craft trades and expands the scope of application.

assessment of equivalence. The competent bodies are generally able to make decisions on equivalence based on the lists without further scrutiny of equivalence.¹³³

Models for implementation of the recognition procedures and knowledge management systems

Two models have become established for implementing the recognition procedures in the IHK and HWK areas. In the HWK area, the local chambers assume responsibility for all tasks within the scope of the recognition procedure, i.e., procedural guidance, the equivalence assessment and training guidance where necessary. The lead chamber system is an instrument that has been created amongst all the chambers of crafts and trades in order to ensure that decision-making practice is as uniform as possible. Chambers of crafts and trades taking on a lead chamber function specialise in professional and vocational qualifications from certain countries of origin and make assessment reports on qualifications from the respective country available to other chambers of crafts and trades on request. The lead chambers are also actively involved themselves in the expansion of the BQ Portal by working with the academic research team from the German Institute for Business Research to collect and systematise information on the VET systems and qualifications of certain countries. The assessment decisions made by the lead chambers on the formal qualifications are documented in the BQ Portal and thus made available to all other chambers of crafts and trades. In this way, the BQ Portal is undergoing continuous further development as a knowledge management system and is thus able to facilitate a rapid, quality-assured and uniform assessment of foreign qualifications. Information is constantly updated and expanded (→ [Information box 9](#) and [Chapter 3.1](#)). In the IHK area, a national competent body in the form of the IHK FOSA has been created in order to conduct the equivalence assessment. An internal knowledge management system has been put in place to cover aspects such as countries of origin, expertise in occupations and procedures. The regional IHKs advise persons interested in seeking recognition and companies at a local level on the process of the recognition procedure.

The general assumption would be that a growth in knowledge about qualifications may lead to faster processing of the recognition procedures.¹³⁴ For this reason, knowledge management is crucial in terms of accelerating and standardising the processing of applications and with regard to securing a high level of quality.

Professional recognition as an opportunity

Because of the freedom of movement of labour that exists in the EU, persons with a foreign qualification who are in Germany legally are able to access the labour market and employment in dual training occupations without a recognition procedure. The provisions under immigration law governing economic migration that have applied up until now stipulate that persons seeking to enter Germany from third countries will generally need to have obtained at least partial recognition of their professional or vocational qualification. However, professional recognition may offer an opportunity to skilled workers and employers even if it is not statutorily required. Even partial recognition can help provide a good entry to the labour market. In 2022, 4,452 recognition procedures (49 percent of procedures relating to non-regulated occupations in which a decision was reached) resulted in partial equivalence. In such cases too, it is possible to achieve full recognition by completing refresher training.

Challenges and success factors for refresher training

A study carried out as part of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring identified positive impacts of company-based refresher training both for foreign skilled workers and for their employers. Company-based refresher training provides a vehicle via which skilled workers can gain professional experience in Germany and thus further improve their chances on the labour market. Refresher training offers companies an opportunity to prepare foreign skilled workers for company practice in a targeted way and to secure their longer-term loyalty. The need for training measures is high overall.

¹³³ Further information on the structuring and contents of the agreements (including current links to lists of occupations): bibb.de/de/143856.php.

¹³⁴ Cf. Böse and Schmitz 2022.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH...

Thomas Eikenberg

Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Stade Chamber of Crafts and Trades, “Examination system and recognition procedures”

What exactly is checked in a recognition procedure?

Firstly, we examine whether the entry prerequisites for a recognition procedure have been fulfilled. According to the BQFG, a person needs to have completed state-regulated training that is comparable with a German training occupation in terms of content and duration. If this requirement is met, we check the application for completeness and request further documentation where necessary. We use the documents submitted to compare the qualification obtained abroad with a German reference occupation and determine the degree of equivalence. The outcome may be full equivalence, partial equivalence or no equivalence. Professional experience and other evidence of skills may also be taken into consideration in the recognition procedure. Foreign training plans are often not as detailed as those with which we are familiar in Germany, and this constitutes a challenge. Contents frequently appear under different titles, or the translation may be imprecise. Most time is, however, taken up by the subsequent submission of documents that need to be obtained from abroad and then translated.

How do the chambers network on recognition procedures, and what role is played by the BQ Portal?

The BQ Portal is our most important work instrument. It stores all the key information on different professions and occupations in various countries. We use this information so that we can process applications quickly. We also take account of decisions already made by other chambers so that outcomes are uniform.

In addition to this, lively networking takes place with other chambers. Working groups organised by the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH) are used for this purpose. Loose networking also occurs between chamber colleagues, for example, when applicants move house and a follow-up notice needs to be issued.

How can the recognition process be sped up further?

Advisory centres outside the chambers are very important for fast procedures. They are generally under a great deal of pressure. As competent bodies, we are only able to offset some of these deficits. Comprehensive initial and follow-up guidance is, however, vital in order to arrive at the best solution, both within the recognition procedure and for the applicants themselves.

What approach do you take if not all documents can be produced, for instance, currently in the case of refugees from Ukraine?

We provide assistance in terms of where documentation can be sourced. We can obtain curricula via the BQ Portal, for example. There is also recourse to the instrument of a skills analysis if documents cannot be presented. This involves an extensive work sample in order to ascertain professional competencies. Such an analysis does not replace existing documents.

Provision of course-based refresher training in non-regulated occupations varies by region. The existence of financial project support is usually crucial to provision. The diversity of the occupations, professional experience and countries of training of the applicants leads to different training requirements. Course-based training is thus more difficult to implement in this area. Training measures offered by companies also need to be individually designed and organised. Practical training at the

company is frequently supplemented by theoretical instructions from training providers. The chambers and advisory centres assist skilled workers and employers in the organisation of refresher training. Projects of the IQ Funding Programme offer free training guidance and support and training measures. They also contact companies to encourage them to release the practical instructors who are necessary for successful training from their normal work duties. They also subsequently support the participants



Gabriel-Adrian Bococ came to Germany from Romania. Since his professional qualification was recognised in 2021, he has again been working as a mechatronics engineer for refrigeration technology.

during the training. The companies also have an important role to play.¹³⁵ In 2021, the “UBAconnect” measure was launched as part of the BMBF-funded project UBA in order to bring together unemployed skilled workers with a partial recognition notice or skilled workers unable to implement refresher training with their employer, with companies in IHK and craft trade occupations seeking potential skilled workers.¹³⁶ “UBAconnect” matches a skilled worker with a company for the purpose of refresher training. “UBAconnect” is being implemented by DIHK Service GmbH. Since 2023, craft trade companies have also been able to take advantage of the offer via the Central Agency for Continuing Vocational Education and Training in the Skilled Crafts (ZWH). As is the case with nearly all in-service refresher training, the skilled worker is employed at the company for the duration of the refresher training within the scope of “UBAconnect” too. The company takes responsibility for the practical part of the training and releases the skilled worker for external training courses. The company thus supports the skilled worker along the pathway to full recognition and is at the same time able to acquire a new skilled worker if a long-term employment relationship is established after training.

Skills analysis as a possibility in the event of missing documents

In order to evaluate a foreign professional or vocational qualification, written evidence is required as to its acquisition and in respect of the contents and duration of the underlying training. However, the Federal Professional Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG) states that “other suitable procedures” may be used if applicants are unable to submit all necessary written evidence. Shortly after the entry into force of the Recognition Act, so-called skills analyses were developed in the chamber area within the scope of the BMBF-funded “Prototyping” project as an implementation model for the “other procedures” stipulated in the law. In the case of missing or incomplete documentation, employability skills can be ascertained via a skills analysis, for example, by means of a work sample, and a supplementary specialist oral examination. Data from the official statistics indicates that 1,491 skills analyses were conducted between 2012 and 2022. In future, economic migrants who are seeking to obtain recognition of their professional or vocational qualification from abroad will have the possibility under residence law to enter Germany for up to six months for the purpose of carrying out a skills analysis (→ [Chapter 1](#)).

The BMBF-funded project “Skills Analysis Network” (NetQA)¹³⁷ and its predecessor project “Prototyping Transfer” have established awareness of the skills analysis within the chamber system and have made support and networking provision available to competent bodies in this area. The guides developed during the project will remain available to the chambers responsible after the end of the project. The established networks can also continue to be used in future.

¹³⁵ Cf. Atanassov et al. 2022.

¹³⁶ Cf. unternehmen-berufsanerkennung.de/uba-connect.

¹³⁷ This was a cooperative project with partners from the IHK and HWK areas which was lead-managed by BIBB and the West German Association of Chambers of Crafts and Trades (WHKT). It was launched in 2019 and ended in 2022.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH...

Margarete Horn-Andaç from the Hesse Ministry of Science and Art, and **Christian Roth** from the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Integration (representatives of the Chair of the Working Group of the Coordinating Departments of the Federal States at an operational level)

What potential for acceleration and simplification do the pooling and concentration of competencies in the recognition procedure have?

Potential for simplification is essentially limited to the fact that it is easier to identify the competent body, if indeed there is a competent body. The effects that can be achieved for the competent bodies themselves as a result of pooling are far more important. More cases mean more experience, a greater establishment of competency, more opportunities for comparison, and sometimes the feasibility of networking between colleagues in the first place. All of this can ultimately help to speed up recognition procedures. But it is important to grasp that acceleration, simplification and pooling are not individually an end in themselves. The overarching goal is always the quality of the decisions, especially also in the interests of applicants.

What potential do you see in assimilating recognition rules in specific federal state legislation governing the professions to the respective Professional Qualifications Assessment Act of the federal state, particularly with regard to application documentation?

The BQFGs are specialist recognition laws that implement Directive 2005/36/EC and stipulate a uniform core of procedural standards for the Federal Government and the federal states. In specific legislation governing the professions, the recognition of foreign qualifications only ever represents a secondary aspect, and this can constantly lead to major expense and to the risk of further deviations from the procedure in the case of every individual amendment to the provisions. All of this would be avoidable via standard application of the BQFGs. From our point of view, by the way, this applies to at least the same extent to specific legislation under federal law as it does to specific legislation under federal state law.

3.2.4 Countering heterogeneity – development in the area of professions and occupations governed by federal state law

Between 2016¹³⁸ and 2022, the official statistics recorded a total of around 70,000 applications for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications in professions and occupations governed by federal state law. Almost 10,200 applications were received in 2022. Just under 90 percent of these related to regulated professions, and just over 10 percent concerned non-regulated occupations. Engineer, teacher and nursery school teacher were the most

frequent reference occupations. In 2022, engineering professions accounted for 2,757 applications (27 percent). The corresponding figures for teaching and nursery teaching were 1,953 (19 percent) and 1,704 (17 percent) respectively (cf. Chapter 2.1.2). Whereas the reference occupation of engineer showed a recognition rate of 95 percent of the procedures in which a decision was reached in 2022, a different picture emerged with regard to the professions of nursery teacher and teacher. The foreign qualifications were not or not directly capable of recognition in many cases. This means that skilled workers holding a foreign qualification frequently have no opportunity to enter their profession straightaway.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Official statistics have been kept on professions and occupations governed by federal state law since the entry into force of the recognition acts of the federal states. However these statistics have only been available in consolidated form across all federal states since the 2016 reporting year. For this reason, the information presented relates to the period from 2016 to 2022.

¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the federal states have developed various alternative access routes over the past few years in order to permit work in a related profession without the need for recognition. In some federal states (for example Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Rhineland Palatinate), it is possible to work as a pedagogical specialist for certain age groups if an appropriate qualification is held (cf. Benzer and Roser 2022, p. 16).

Focus: Professional recognition for nursery school teachers

There is a significant national shortage of early years education professionals.¹⁴⁰ For this reason, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) has joined forces with the federal states under the lead management of the former to develop an “Overall strategy to secure a supply of skilled workers at child daycare centres”. The aim is to work with stakeholders from various areas of responsibility to draw up specific recommendations by the spring of 2024 as to how the recruitment of skilled workers in these professions can be driven forward. The acquisition of foreign skilled workers is also seen as offering great potential. The establishment of contact, guidance, recognition and the training of persons from abroad all constitute important aspects in this regard. The fostering of language competencies via language courses and a standardised approach to the recognition of language levels and qualifications are also particularly seen as significant building blocks. The creation of more training provision and a better overview of existing services are also highly significant.

The situation analysis “Professional recognition of early-years education professionals with a qualification acquired abroad”, which was conducted by the IQ Competence Centre for Counselling and Job Training of Migrants, makes it clear that the heterogeneity with which we are familiar also exists amongst nursery school teachers.¹⁴¹ In order to promote networking between competent bodies and thus standardise execution, the BMBF has commissioned BIBB to coordinate regular networking formats and to formulate national recommendations (→ Information box 18). The aim is that the results will also be used to inform the overall strategy.

The official statistics show that, compared to other professions, a high proportion of negative procedural outcomes is recorded in the recognition of nursery school teachers. Decisions were reached in a total of 1,986 procedures relating to this profession in 2022. The proportion of procedures ending with a negative outcome was 24 percent. 27 percent of procedures led to full equivalence. A further 47 percent resulted

Information box 18

Networking formats to improve recognition procedures including in professions and occupations governed by federal state law

Networking between the competent bodies that are responsible for recognition play a major role in the efficient implementation of the recognition laws of the Federal Government and the federal states. The BIBB Recognition Monitoring has been conducting networking formats for the recognition of foreign qualifications in the medical and healthcare professions on behalf of the BMBF since as long ago as 2015.

In 2023, the networking formats were expanded in a project-based manner to encompass the area of nursery school teaching professions in which training takes place at a school. Expansion to cover further selected professions is planned.

The formats pursue the objective of structuring procedures in a more standardised way right across the country, both for professions and occupations governed by federal law and for professions and occupations governed by federal state law. The focus is on the transfer of examples of good practice and on the drawing up of specific recommendations for certain stages of the process (e.g. recognition notices, requirements in respect of documents to be submitted). The formats continue to serve the purpose of occupationally specific networking between the competent bodies and networking on current challenges in the implementation of recognition procedures.

The design of the formats takes place in collaboration with the relevant Federal Government and federal state departments, which are also integrated into the transfer of results.

in the “imposition” of a compensation measure. A positive outcome leading to partial access to the profession of nursery school teacher is also possible. This

¹⁴⁰ Early years education professionals include nursery school teachers, child education workers, childcare assistants, social assistants and socio-pedagogical support workers. The focus below is on the profession of nursery school teacher. Up until now, this has been by some distance the profession for which the most applications for recognition of a foreign qualification have been submitted.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Benzer and Roser 2022.

occurred in 3 percent of the procedures. The reasons for this distribution of outcomes could be difficulties with delineation of the reference occupation within the early years education professions as well as substantial differences in training in some cases. Training in Germany is aligned to a comparatively wide age range (0–27 years) and also has large proportions of practical elements. By way of contrast, qualifications acquired abroad in this professional field are often concentrated on smaller age cohorts and have been designed to include a greater proportion of theory.¹⁴²

Because the profession of nursery school teacher is regulated, a compensation measure is obligatory in order to gain access to the profession if substantial differences are identified. In the majority of cases, persons interested in seeking recognition complete adaptation periods for this purpose. Provision varies by federal state and is not always sufficient. In the last round of funding of the IQ Funding Programme (2019–2022), 739 nursery school teachers completed a measure that was free of charge for them en route to full recognition. Adaptation periods were also offered independently of IQ in several federal states. Against the background of growing requirements, the permanent establishment of project-based measures in fixed structures needs must continue to be encouraged (→ Information box 19). Both course-based and individually organised measures can generally be found. Holistic, in-service, digital and modular training provision is viewed as having the potential to improve the recognition process.¹⁴³

Article 4f of Directive 2005/36/EC also provides for the possibility of partial access to a profession. This limits access to clearly delineable task areas, such as in the areas of pre-nursery school, nursery school or after-school care. In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Thuringia, persons with foreign teaching qualifications are also able to obtain partial access to the profession of nursery school teacher.¹⁴⁴ In overall terms, however, partial access has only been granted very rarely up until now because the access criteria are

Information box 19

Good practice: permanent establishment of the adaptation period for nursery school teachers in Baden-Württemberg

Responsibility for the IQ project “Adaptation period for nursery school teachers” was passed over to Stuttgart Youth Welfare Services at the turn of the year in 2022/2023. This continuation means that an 18-month course is now being offered, which can accommodate up to 20 participants every year.

Stuttgart Youth Welfare Services had been a cooperation partner in the IQ Funding Programme since the spring of 2020. Since this time, it has succeeded in recruiting 54 foreign skilled workers to participate in this in-service refresher training. Participants work at a children’s daycare institution under the terms of a normal contract of employment. In addition to this, they attend specialist teaching every week and also take part in occupationally related language courses. Many elements are also offered as e-learning modules. The skilled workers receive integration support during the training measure. They enter into a permanent contract of employment once their pedagogical qualifications have been fully recognised. The aim now is for the continuation of this successful pilot project in Baden-Württemberg to serve as a role model and provide a multiplier function for further providers of children’s daycare institutions in the federal state.

very narrowly defined.¹⁴⁵ There are also opportunities to work in a way that is limited to certain providers or age groups, even without (partial) recognition. Cases are frequently examined on an individual basis in these circumstances. Such exceptional approvals are then limited to the specific federal state.¹⁴⁶

142 Cf. Benzer and Roser 2022, S. 12.

143 Cf. Benzer and Roser 2022, pp. 39 ff, p. 4.

144 Cf. Benzer and Roser 2022, pp. 26 ff.

145 Cf. Weizsäcker 2021, p. 12.

146 Cf. Weizsäcker 2021, p. 13.



Focus: Professional recognition for teachers

There are also serious shortages of trained teachers, which vary according to qualification, subject and region.¹⁴⁷ Foreign teaching staff could fill these gaps to some extent, and for this reason there are endeavours to further simplify recognition procedures in this area too. Recognition rates have been very low thus far, and compensation measures are necessary in many cases. A decision was reached in 1,992 procedures relating to the profession of teacher in 2022. The proportion of procedures resulting in full equivalence was 14 percent. 13 percent of procedures ended negatively, i.e., without equivalence. In 62 percent of procedures, the decision was reached that a compensation measure should be “imposed”. Partial access to the profession was granted in a further 10 percent of cases.

Full recognition is generally required in order to obtain a full teaching certificate (state authorisation to practise the profession). Differences can be observed in the regulations and in the implementation of the recognition procedures in this profession too. In Bavaria, for example, recognition is not possible at all for persons

with a professional qualification from a third country. The regulations relating to third country and EU qualifications are essentially the same in all other federal states.¹⁴⁸ Training in two subjects is necessary for full professional recognition in most federal states. In international terms, this tends to be a particularly German characteristic. Training usually only takes place in one subject in other countries. For this reason, many skilled workers often need to study a second subject in order to obtain full recognition. Such studies may be extensive in some cases, and a place is not always available. Special programmes for foreign skilled workers are rare (exceptions → e.g. [Information box 20](#)).¹⁴⁹

One solution for acquiring more persons with foreign professional qualifications is to award a teaching certificate for one subject only. This is already being practised in some federal states such as Bremen, Hamburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia.¹⁵⁰

Generally speaking, substantial differences between foreign qualifications and the German reference occupation of teacher need to be offset by means of an aptitude test or an adaptation period.

The language requirements for the profession are also high (generally C2 CEFR). There is a lack of widespread provision of occupationally related language courses. Training measures with integrated language acquisition may be a solution in this regard, and these are already being offered in some federal states.¹⁵¹ Many of the IQ training measures conducted from 2019–2022 also included this. 1,449 teachers were trained via this route.¹⁵² Provision is also available from other institutions, such as the University of Potsdam (→ [Information box 20](#)) and the University of Vechta.¹⁵³

147 Cf. George 2021.

148 Cf. Vockentanz 2019.

149 Cf. BMBF 2019, pp. 54 ff.; Hoffmann and Roser 2019; George 2021.

150 Cf. ebb 2020, p. 6.

151 Cf. George 2021, Hoffmann and Roser 2019, pp. 8 ff.

152 Source: NIQ database 2019–2022, made available by the IQ Recognition and Training Competence Centre.

153 Cf. uni-vechta.de/international-office/wege-an-die-uni-vechta/back-to-school-anpassungslehrgang-fuer-lehrerinnen-und-lehrer.

Field report

Carolina Andrea Pérez González, teacher

After 13 years as a teacher in Chile, Carolina Andrea Pérez González was seeking a new professional challenge. She was familiar with Germany because she had spent time as an exchange student in Bavaria. She had also worked as an exchange teacher near Marburg as part of a programme organised by the Pedagogical Exchange Service (PAD). She applied for a visa from Chile and for a study place in Kiel. Carolina Andrea Pérez González arrived in Hamburg in April 2019 and began an in-service master's programme in "School management and quality development" in Kiel. Alongside her studies, she worked as a teaching assistant at a grammar school in Hamburg. The head teacher told her about the possibility of obtaining recognition in Germany for her teaching degree from Chile. In order to achieve professional recognition, Carolina Andrea Pérez González needed to provide evidence of knowledge of German at level C2. She attended a free language course for migrant teachers, which prepared her for the C2 certificate awarded by the Goethe Institute. In November 2019, she submitted the documents necessary for the recognition procedure to the competent body. In February 2020, she received a notice "imposing" a compensation measure. Carolina Andrea Pérez González was able to choose between an adaptation period and an aptitude test. She opted for the adaptation period, which comprised a practical and a theoretical element.

The time of the adaptation period was a challenge. "I had to take care of a lot of things at the same time. Teachers here work much more independently than in my home country," said Carolina Andrea Pérez González. "Fortunately, I had great colleagues at the school. And I had a mentor. I received really good support at this time." She was able to complete the adaptation period successfully and received recognition as a teacher. Carolina Andrea Pérez González has now



been teaching German at a grammar school in Hamburg since August 2022. Professional recognition secures her the same rights as the other teaching staff. It has also improved her salary and opened up the possibility of supplementary study that will enable her to teach a second subject in the future.

Carolina Andrea Pérez González has established herself. "I would like to stay in Germany. I enjoy my work here. The school system is friendlier than in Chile. And the quality of life is better. The teaching profession is held in much higher regard in Germany than in my home country. That's important to me."

The interview with Carolina Andrea Pérez González took place in September 2022.

Alternatively, persons with foreign qualifications as (primary school) teachers who do not meet the prerequisite for full recognition can seek to achieve (partial) recognition in early years education in some federal states.¹⁵⁴ According to the experiences of the IQ Network, recognition as a nursery school teacher is generally not possible for foreign teachers in Bavaria, Hesse and Saxony.¹⁵⁵

The federal states network regularly within the framework of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) in order to harmonise administrative practice with regard to recognition procedures for teaching qualifications acquired abroad. The contact partners of the federal states who are responsible for the recognition of international teaching qualifications meet annually to discuss specialist and technical procedural issues within the context of the recognition procedure and with regard to the structuring of compensation measures. These yearly meetings also enable networking to take place with the ZAB, which provides information on current developments in teacher training in individual countries.

Focus: Professional recognition for engineers

There is a shortage of skilled workers in many sectors of engineering. The labour market integration of foreign skilled workers is part of the solution. Engineers from abroad can work in their profession in Germany without formal recognition. Recognition is, however, necessary in order to use the professional title “engineer”. This also makes it possible, for example, to be entered into the lists of engineers authorised to submit planning documents or lists of consulting engineers that are maintained by the engineering chambers of the federal states. Further associated benefits include higher pay scale classifications. However, the IQ Network reports that employers are often uncertain when dealing with a recognised qualification. The notice is not viewed as an adequate transparency instrument, and contracts of employment are not concluded as a result. An investigation needs to take place as to whether there are gaps in the information available to employers or whether other reasons are involved.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Benzer and Roser 2022, pp. 26 ff.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Benzer and Roser 2022, p. 26.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Bleher and Drummer 2022.

¹⁵⁷ Source: NIQ database 2019–2022, made available by the IQ Recognition and Training Competence Centre.

Information box 20

Good practice: Refugee Teachers Programme

A training programme launched at the University of Potsdam* in April 2021 is aimed at refugee or migrant teachers who have completed a professional qualification and have also been able to gain professional experience at foreign schools. The programme supports those interested in seeking recognition in obtaining professional recognition and in becoming permanently integrated into the school system in Brandenburg.

The programme runs across three stages. Firstly, teachers spend two years (four semesters) in further language, pedagogical and specialist training at the University of Potsdam. The German course includes professionally related components and individual language learning guidance. It ends with a C1 CEFR test. Participants also receive an examination certificate for a second subject and a pedagogical certificate. A one-year practical placement at a school then follows. The teachers receive a teaching practice salary and continue to take part in a German course at the same time. The third part of the programme consists of the adaptation period.

Cf. uni-potsdam.de/de/zelb/forschung-und-entwicklung/rtp.

Chances of full recognition are generally high. Decisions were reached in 2,463 recognition procedures for the profession of engineer in 2022. 2,340, or 95 percent of these, ended in full equivalence. A further 5 percent ended negatively without equivalence. The official statistics did not record any procedures that resulted in the “imposition” of a compensation measure that was still outstanding as of 31 December 2022. Nevertheless, engineers formed the largest group in IQ training measures during the last round of funding (2019–2022) when there were 1,456 participants from the profession.¹⁵⁷ Provision is often offered in the



In 2016, Samar Ismail from Syria (person in the centre) and her family started a new life in Germany. Thanks to her recognition, she can now work as an engineer in the profession she has learnt (see photo on p. 18).

form of bridging measures. Recognition support is given, and knowledge relevant to the labour market is imparted. Pilot projects for this professional group are also being implemented in the new IQ funding period.

Conclusion

Implementation of the recognition laws in the various professional and occupational areas is continuing with momentum. Many stakeholders are committed and constantly searching for improvements to the processes and structures. Although challenges remain, many improvements have been achieved in recent years. In future, measures that have been successfully initiated should be transferred into regulatory structures and expanded and developed further if necessary. Further to this, good examples and findings that have already been identified should be widely disseminated and established so as to optimise the process.



4 Summary

The recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications is an important element in securing a supply of skilled workers, both in terms of leveraging areas of potential available within Germany and with regard to the immigration of qualified staff. Against the background of the growing shortage of skilled workers, the current reform to immigration law is opening up new opportunities to enter the country without prior recognition. In non-regulated occupations, recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications will even become entirely optional when entering Germany for employment purposes if certain conditions are met.

Nevertheless, recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications remains highly significant for long-term integration into the labour market. It increases the chances that skilled workers will obtain employment and remuneration that is commensurate with their qualifications and that they will achieve career advancement. It also creates transparency in respect of foreign qualifications and thus supports employers in securing a skilled workforce and in human resources development. In order for the positive impacts of recognition to bear fruit for the skilled workers, for the employers and for society as a whole, the route to recognition must be structured in as straightforward a way as possible. In order to encourage immigration of skilled workers, statutory and sub-statutory measures aimed at further optimising professional recognition should be initiated. Special emphasis is being placed on standardisation of documentary requirements, on an improvement of recognition notices, on the further extension of knowledge management, on the digitalisation of the application procedure, and on the expansion of training measures. There is a reciprocal effect between the aim of “simple recognition” on the one hand and the federal VET system and areas of responsibility under constitutional law on the other. For this reason, it is important for all stakeholders involved to work together. This is taking place in relevant formats at a policymaking and specialist level.

Between 2012 and 2022, the official statistics record a total of around 365,000 applications for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications in professions and occupations governed by federal and federal state law. The annual volume of applications has constantly increased over

the years. Applications related in particular to the reference occupations of registered general nurse or qualified nurse, doctor, engineer and teacher. Over recent years, there has been a significant rise in the number of applications relating to professional and vocational qualifications acquired in third countries. Applications for recognition are also being submitted directly from abroad with increasing frequency (40 percent in 2022). This underlines Germany’s growing importance as a country of immigration. Generally speaking and despite all the challenges, it is also possible to ascertain that the proportion of recognition applications processed within the statutorily stipulated decision-making deadline has increased continuously over the years. However, the procurement of documents by persons seeking recognition and shortages in the provision of compensation measures can delay the recognition process in particular.

Many support structures to optimise the recognition process have already been put in place since 2012 in order to counter these challenges. Existing information and guidance structures and financing options have changed over recent years. The guidance system is currently undergoing upheaval, and this needs to be managed. In future, provision must continue to be expanded and adapted in line with the growing requirements. Support, ideally multilingual services that do not involve long waiting times, should be available to skilled workers prior to, during and after the submission of an application. Persons interested in seeking recognition should be advised on opportunities for financial assistance in a timely manner and should be supported in applying for this. Currently, the implementation of provisions under recognition law in the different areas shows increasing momentum regarding harmonisation, standardisation and acceleration. Many stakeholders are committed and are improving processes and structures on an ongoing basis. Measures that have been successfully initiated should in future be transferred into regulatory structures and expanded and developed further if necessary. The opportunities afforded by digitalisation should also be used in a way that delivers benefits, such as via digital guidance provision or the waiving of physical application documents. Further to this, good examples and findings that have already been identified should be widely disseminated and permanently established so as to optimise the process.



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Methodological notes on data sources

Official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG and recognition statistics relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law

The official statistics are implemented by the statistical offices of the federal states and the Federal Statistical Office. The statistics comprise reporting data of the competent bodies responsible for recognition as of the cut-off point of 31 December of the respective reporting year. Provision of information is mandatory. Applications do not need to be reported until application documentation has been received in full by the competent body. This date dictates the commencement of the statutory deadline with regard to equivalence assessment.

Absolute values published are in each case rounded to a multiple of 3 for the purpose of anonymisation. Overall values may deviate from the total of the individual values by dint of the fact that totals are formed on the basis of real values prior to being anonymised. Percentage values in the present report are stated without decimal places.

Official statistics pursuant to § 17 BQFG (federal law) or pursuant to specific legislation covering individual professions and ordinances that make reference to § 17 BQFG

As far as the first reporting year of 2012 was concerned, the competent bodies responsible for recognition were only determined within the course of the reporting year in some cases and had to set up their reporting systems from scratch. For this reason, reporting was possibly not complete in all instances. In

2013, the reports made by a number of agencies were incomplete and erroneous. No data is available for Bremen for the year 2015. For this reason, information from 2014 has been used for this particular federal state. For the federal states of Hamburg (2015 and 2016 reporting years) and Schleswig-Holstein (2016 reporting year), the area of the medical healthcare professions is likely to have been under reported by a figure in the low hundreds. Midwives and midwifery assistants are likely to have been under reported by a high double-digit figure in Hesse for the 2021 reporting year. A cyber-attack on an IHK reporting office at the end of 2022 means that 125 statistically relevant procedures are presumed to be missing nationally for the 2022 reporting year. To this extent, the federal result should be viewed as a minimum figure.

Reporting of the characteristic “place of residence of the applicant”, which is used to identify the number of applications made from abroad, has only been compulsory since 2013. In some cases during the initial years, a c/o address in Germany was, for example, erroneously reported instead of the applicant’s actual place of residence. For this reason, the assumption is that there is an under-reporting of foreign applications for which no precise figure can be stated. In 2019, the competent bodies were reminded accordingly to report the actual place of residence of applicants. Attention should also be drawn to the fact that the official statistics do not contain any information on the final migration decision of applicants in cases where an application is submitted from abroad. Although the time commitment and costs usually associated with a recognition procedure give rise to assumption of the existence of a migration or labour market interest, no statement can be made on the basis of the official statistics as to whether applicants have actually migrated to Germany or entered the German labour market after completion of the recognition procedure. In addition to this, the figures do not reflect the total number of migrations to Germany. The latter is significantly higher. Neither does the quantity of applications submitted from abroad thus far readily permit any conclusion in respect of the fundamental amount of potential offered by skilled workers living abroad.

With regard to duration of the recognition procedures, the choice was made to limit results to the period from 2017 to 2022 because the characteristic “date of final decision” was not included in the official

statistics until 2016. Only from this point onwards was an adequate opportunity afforded in respect of data characteristics to report recognition procedures that end with the issuing of a second notice rather than with a first notice appealable in law. The introduction of this characteristic was crucial in terms of facilitating meaningful analyses of the duration of all recognition procedures in the first place. 2017 was determined to be the first year of the observation period because the new characteristics was not yet in full use in 2016. The statistics are complex by dint of the fact that they pool a multitude of different professions and occupations and reporting offices. The data thus supplies individual results that are conspicuous in terms of content despite not exhibiting any logical plausibility error. Results relating to the duration of recognition procedures fall into this category. This particularly affects the 2017 and 2018 reporting years (cf. Böse und Schmitz 2022). However, anomalies also occur in other reporting years. The assumption must be that results relating to the duration of recognition procedures are sometimes subject to distortion and are only robust to a limited extent. Nevertheless, the precise scope of distortion is difficult to identify.

Particular notes on the official recognition statistics relating to professions and occupations governed by federal state law

Some professions and occupations in the federal states bear different titles. In order to provide a better understanding, the Federal Statistical Office collates selected professions and occupations under an overarching title. This affects various titles relating to the professions of nursery school teacher, teacher, nursing assistant, specialist care assistant and childcare assistant. The Federal Statistical Office also collects the different specialist doctor and engineering professions under overall titles. The present report uses the results of the overarching titles. The Statistical Report of the Federal Statistical Office contains a detailed overview (cf. Federal Statistical Office 2023).

Data relating to initial guidance at the chambers of crafts and trades

Guidance figures from the chambers of crafts and trades are collected twice a year by BIBB in close conjunction with the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH). The cut-off dates are 30 June and 31 December respectively. All 53 chambers of crafts and trades provide feedback on initial guidance.

Index of abbreviations

Abbreviation Meaning

AufenthG	Aufenthaltsgesetz – Act on the residence, economic activity and integration of foreigners in the federal territory (referred to in abbreviated form as “Residence Act”)
BA	Bundesagentur für Arbeit – Federal Employment Agency
BAMF	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge – Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
BBiG	Berufsbildungsgesetz – Vocational Training Act
BeschV	Beschäftigungsverordnung – Employment Ordinance
BIBB	Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
BMAS	Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales – Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – Federal Ministry of Education and Research
BMFSFJ	Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend – Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
BMG	Bundesministerium für Gesundheit – Federal Ministry of Health
BMI	Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat – Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community
BMWK	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz – Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung – Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BQFG	Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz – Law on the assessment of the equivalence of vocational qualifications (Professional Qualifications Assessment Act)
Chap.	Chapter
DeFa	Deutsche Fachkräfteagentur für Gesundheits- und Pflegeberufe – German Agency for International Healthcare Professionals
DeuFöV	Verordnung über die berufsbezogene Deutschsprachförderung – Ordinance on support for occupationally-related German language learning
DIHK	Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag – Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry
EU	Europäische Union – European Union
A2 GER	Level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (basic user)
B2 GER	Level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (independent user)
C1 GER	Level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (proficient user)
C2 GER	Level C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (near-native speaker level user)
f-bb	Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung – Research Institutes for Vocational Education and Training
FDP	Freie Demokraten
FEG	Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz – Skilled Immigration Act
GfG	Gutachtenstelle für Gesundheitsberufe – Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (housed at the ZAB)
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH – German Agency for International Cooperation
GMK	Gesundheitsministerkonferenz der Länder – Conference of the Ministers of Health
HWK	Handwerkskammer – Chamber of Crafts and Trades
HwO	Handwerksordnung – Crafts and Trades Regulation Code
IAB	Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung – Institute for Employment Research
IHK	Industrie- und Handelskammer – Chamber of Commerce and Industry
IQ	Förderprogramm „Integration durch Qualifizierung (IQ)“ – “Integration through Qualification” (IQ) Funding Programme”

ISCED 2011	Internationale Standardklassifikation im Bildungswesen – International standard classification in the educational system
KDA	Kuratorium Deutsche Altershilfe – German Society for the Aged
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz – Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs
MAGS	Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen – Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia
MO	Migrantinnen- und Migrantenorganisation – migrant organisations
NAP-I	Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration – National Integration Action Plan
NKR	North Rhine-Westphalia
NRW	Nordrhein-Westfalen
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PQZ	Pflegequalifizierungszentrum – Nursing Training Centre
SGB	Sozialgesetzbuch – German Social Security Code
SOEP	Sozio-oekonomisches Panel – Socio-Economic Panel
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – Social Democratic Party of Germany (political party)
SVR	Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration gGmbH – Research Council of German Foundations for Integration and Migration
UBA	Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung – Recognition for Business
ZAA	Zentrale Anlaufstelle Anerkennung – Counselling Centre for Recognition of Qualifications
ZAB	Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen (im Sekretariat der Kultusministerkonferenz) – Central Office for Foreign Education (at the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, KMK)
ZAV	Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung – Central Foreign and Specialist Placement Agency
ZDH	Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks – German Confederation of Skilled Crafts
ZSBA	Zentrale Servicestelle Berufsanerkennung – Service Center for Professional Recognition

Glossary

*	These explanations are taken directly from the “Recognition in Germany” glossary but have been abridged or amended where necessary. ¹⁵⁸
anabin	“anabin” is the official portal of the federal states for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. It is operated by the ZAB. “anabin” provides information on the evaluation of foreign qualifications, educational institutions and certificates for over 180 countries. The portal features an official section for competent bodies and a public information area. ¹⁵⁹
Anerkennung – recognition	Assessment of the equivalence of a foreign professional or vocational qualification with a German reference occupation in accordance with the recognition acts of the Federal Government or of the federal states (Professional Qualifications Assessment Acts) or pursuant to the relevant specific legislation (e.g. the Federal Medical Code or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code).

¹⁵⁸ Cf. anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/service/glossary.php.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. anabin.kmk.org.

- Anerkennungsbescheid – recognition notice** A recognition notice (also referred to as an assessment notice) is a document from the competent authority relating to an application for recognition. It contains the result of the recognition procedure. A recognition notice takes on definitive status. If full recognition is attested, a recognition notice may serve as permission to work in a profession or occupation (but further prerequisites will need to be met in the medical and healthcare professions, for example). Such further prerequisites include a licence to practise medicine (and some other related professions), permission to practise, permission to use a professional title or a certificate of state recognition.*
- Anerkennungsgesetz – Recognition Act** The “Recognition Act” is the unofficial abbreviated title of the “Law to improve the assessment and recognition of professional and vocational education and training qualifications acquired abroad”, which entered into force on 1 April 2012. The Recognition Act governs the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications in professions and occupations for which the Federal Government is responsible. It is a so-called composite act that encompasses the Federal Professional Qualifications Act (BQFG) and amendments and adaptations to specific legislation governing the professions and to ordinances. Individual recognition acts passed by the 16 federal states exist alongside the Federal Recognition Act.
- Anerkennungspartnerschaft – recognition partnership** Previously, except in cases where placement arrangements had been made in advance, any application for recognition needed to be made prior to entry to Germany. The new residence permit for a recognition partnership (§ 16d Paragraph 3 updated AufenthG) means that the recognition procedure can begin after arrival in the country. Employees and employers commit to initiating and executing the recognition procedure rapidly. In return for this, skilled workers are able to cover their living costs by taking up employment on their first day in Germany
- Anerkennungportal – Recognition Portal** “Recognition in Germany” is the central Federal Government information portal for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. It is operated by BIBB on behalf of the BMBF. The portal provides information for skilled workers, recognition specialists and employers in German, English, Greek, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, French, Turkish, Russian, Arabic and Ukrainian. Those interested in seeking recognition can use the “Recognition Finder” to localise the reference occupation and to determine the relevant competent body.¹⁶⁰
- Anerkennungsverfahren – recognition procedure** During the recognition procedure (also known as an equivalence procedure), the competent authority in Germany scrutinises the professional or vocational qualification. The competent authority checks the following. Is the foreign professional or vocational qualification equivalent to the German reference occupation? For the recognition procedure, the competent authority requires certificates and other documents relating to the content and duration of the professional or vocational qualification. Certificates and other documents relating to professional experience are also important.*
- Anerkennungszuschuss des Bundes – Federal Government recognition grant** The Federal Government recognition grant provides assistance with the costs of a recognition procedure for foreign professional and vocational qualifications. Costs incurred within the scope of the application, especially fees and translation costs, are eligible for funding up to a maximum amount of €600 per person. Support can also be accessed for costs that arise within the scope of a skills analysis (up to €1,200) or for training that takes place as part of the recognition procedure (up to €3,000).

160 Cf. anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/service/about-us.php.

Anpassungslehrgang – adaptation period	An adaptation period is a compensation measure for regulated professions. Successful participation enables the person to offset substantial differences to the German reference occupation and to obtain full recognition of their foreign professional qualification. The individual concerned works in the relevant regulated profession during the adaptation period. They are supervised by a person qualified in this profession, for example, by someone who is a registered general nurse in a hospital. An adaptation period lasts for a maximum of three years. The duration depends on which differences are specified in the recognition notice and on what the individual still has to learn.*
Anpassungsqualifizierung – refresher training	Refresher training allows individuals in non-regulated occupations to compensate for substantial differences between their foreign professional or vocational qualification and the German reference occupation. They are then still able to receive full recognition of their foreign professional or vocational qualification. They must, however, first submit a follow-up application to the competent body. In the non-regulated occupations, completion of refresher training is not a mandatory prerequisite for the exercising of the occupation. Such occupations may also be pursued without an equivalence notice.*
Approbation – licence to practise medicine and some other related professions in Germany	A licence to practise constitutes official state authorisation to practise. After they have attained a licence to practise, individuals are permitted to work in Germany permanently and without restriction. The professions in which a licence to practise must be obtained are doctor, pharmacist, psychotherapist, veterinary surgeon and dentist.*
Ausbildungsstaat – country of training	Country in which the qualification forming the intended object / object of recognition was acquired.
Ausgleichsmaßnahme – compensation measure	A compensation measure allows individuals in a regulated profession to compensate for substantial differences between a foreign professional qualification and a German reference occupation. After successful participation or passing the tests, these individuals then receive full recognition of their foreign professional qualification. Depending on the profession concerned and the legal regulation, the compensation measure may be an adaptation period or an examination (aptitude test or, in the case of third country qualifications, a knowledge test).*
automatische Anerkennung – automatic recognition	<p>Some regulated professions are automatically recognised within the EU. This is because, in the EU, uniform standards exist in the vocational qualification in these professions. Individuals in these professions are therefore permitted to work in all countries of the EU. They must, however, have completed the training in a country that is part of the EU. Automatic recognition applies to the following professions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical practitioner • Dentist • Veterinarian • Pharmacist • Nurse • Midwife • Architect <p>These professions are listed in the Annex to the EU Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (2005/36/EG). An application for recognition must also be made to the competent authority for automatic recognition. However, no assessment of equivalence subsequently takes place in the recognition procedure.*</p>

Beitragsbemessungsgrenze der allgemeinen Rentenversicherung – general pension contribution assessment ceiling	The general pension contribution assessment ceiling (BBG) is the highest amount of work income taken into account for calculation of the pension contribution. It is determined annually at the end of each year via statutory instrument for the next year. The general pension contribution assessment ceiling is used to calculate and announce minimum salary thresholds in residence law. This ensures that the minimum salary threshold is regularly adjusted to the development in salaries. From 1 January 2023, the BBG is €85,200 per year in the federal states of East Germany. The corresponding figure for the federal states of West Germany is €87,600 per year. ¹⁶¹
Berufserlaubnis – permission to practise a profession	Permission to practise is required in order to start working in regulated professions. Permission to practise may initially be granted in regulated medical and healthcare professions for which a licence to practise is needed. Unlike a licence to practise, permission to practise is temporarily granted for a fixed term and is usually subject to further restrictions.*
Berufsqualifikationen – Professional and vocational qualifications	Professional and vocational qualifications are qualifications for which evidence of training is provided by means of evidence of formal qualifications or qualification certificates. These lead to a clearly defined profession or occupation. Evidence of a professional or vocational qualification may also be provided by professional experience gained in Germany or abroad. Further examples of professional or vocational qualifications include an advanced training qualification, a licence or permission to practise or permission to use a professional title.*
Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz – Professional Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG)	The Act concerning the Assessment of Equivalence of Professional Qualifications (BQFG – Article 1 of the Recognition Act) is a federal law that has been in force since 1 April 2012. It governs procedures and criteria for the assessment of equivalence of a qualification acquired abroad with the German reference occupation. Its main area of application is for equivalence assessment procedures within the area of the dual training occupations. Relevant acts in the 16 federal states also exist alongside the BQFG.
Berufszulassung – authorisation to practise a profession	Authorisation to practice a profession is permission from one of the official competent authorities to work in a profession or authorisation from an official competent authority permitting use of a specific designation of occupation. Application must be made to the competent body for authorisation to practice. A licence to practise or permission to practise for doctors and the use of professional titles by qualified nurses are examples of authorisation to practise. Authorisation to practise a profession may also encompass inclusion in the Register of Licensed Crafts and Trades. This applies in circumstances where a licence and possession of a master craftsman qualification are required in order to operate a company.*
Beschleunigtes Fachkräfteverfahren nach § 81a AufenthG – accelerated procedure pursuant to § 81a AufenthG	Companies may apply for an accelerated procedure for the entry to Germany of skilled workers from third countries. In such a case, the company concludes an agreement on behalf of the skilled worker with the immigration office responsible. The immigration office responsible then applies for the recognition procedure and acts as the central point of contact both for the company and the competent body. Certain prerequisites are necessary for an accelerated procedure. An accelerated procedure can mean that the duration of the recognition process is shortened to two months. Coordination by the Central Immigration Office means that the visa procedure can also be accelerated. ^{162*}

161 Cf. deutsche-rentenversicherung.de/DRV/DE/Experten/Arbeitgeber-und-Steuerberater/summa-summarum/Lexikon/B/beitragsbemessungsgrenze.html.

162 Cf. make-it-in-germany.com/de/unternehmen/einreise/das-beschleunigte-fachkraefteverfahren.

Blaue Karte EU – EU Blue Card	The EU Blue Card (§ 18g updated AufenthG) is a residence permit for higher education graduates that aims to facilitate and promote permanent migration to Germany by highly qualified persons from non-EU countries. It simplifies family reunification and makes it easier to obtain a permanent settlement permit more rapidly. ¹⁶³
BQ Portal	The BQ Portal supports competent bodies and employers in the evaluation of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. It is operated by the German Institute for Business Research. The BQ Portal currently contains 103 published country profiles and more than 5,390 foreign occupational profiles. ¹⁶⁴
Brückenmaßnahmen – bridging measures	Bridging measures are primarily aimed at persons with academic qualifications not working in a regulated profession. They enable participants to acquire competencies that are relevant for an occupation. These include, for example, learning a specialist language or preparation for integration into the German world of work.
bundesrechtlich geregelte Berufe – professions and occupations governed by federal law	These are occupations that fall within the legislative remit of the Federal Government. The Federal Recognition Act only covers professions and occupations that are governed by federal law. This applies to a large number of occupations governed by the Vocational Training Act (BbIG) and the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO), i.e., the training occupations included in the so-called dual system, as well as to a series of further professions listed in the law (in particular including medical and healthcare professions such as doctor and registered general nurse). The equivalence notices appealable in law issued on the basis of federal law are valid nationwide. The federal states have enacted their own recognition acts for professions and occupations governed by federal state law.
Chancenkarte – opportunity card	The opportunity card (§ 20a updated AufenthG) is a residence permit for the purpose of looking for work (in certain circumstances also for the purpose of seeking measures for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications) that is aimed at persons who have completed a foreign vocational qualification of at least two years' duration, a higher education qualification or a qualification from a chamber of commerce abroad (AHK). It is issued on the basis of a points system to some extent. Selection criteria include qualification, language knowledge, professional experience and relationship to Germany. The opportunity card facilitates chances to try out work on a part-time basis and allows a transfer to a residence permit for employment and education purposes.
Drittstaat – third country	The European Union (EU) defines all states outside the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA) to be third countries with the exception of Switzerland (see also EU/EEA/Switzerland).

163 Cf. bamf.de/DE/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/Migrathek/BlaueKarteEU/blauekarteeu-node.html.

164 Cf. bq-portal.de/%C3%9Cber-das-Portal/Hintergrund-und-Ziele.

**Eignungsprüfung –
aptitude test**

An aptitude test is a compensation measure for individuals involved in a recognition procedure. An aptitude test allows individuals in a regulated profession to compensate for substantial differences between a foreign professional qualification and a German reference occupation.

The test focuses on knowledge and skills that are important in the German reference occupation, and for which no evidence is provided by documents. An aptitude test is not a new final examination. In an aptitude test, only those areas are tested in which substantial differences have been established.*

The term “deficit test” is sometimes used. This should, however, be avoided in the interests of bringing about a shift in attitudes.¹⁶⁵

**Einstiegberatung –
initial guidance**

Initial guidance is provided by the competent bodies. They inform those interested in seeking recognition of the legal foundations and of the recognition procedure in overall terms (documentation to be submitted, costs, etc.). They carry out a preliminary assessment by working with the person interested in seeking recognition to identify the German reference occupation. Professional and occupational goals and ideas are also explored, and the existence of alternative procedures (such as the external examination or retraining) is indicated.

**Engpassberufe –
shortage occupations**

Shortage occupations are occupations in which there is a lack of skilled workers. Shortages of skilled workers occur when the demand for skilled workers outstrips supply in the short term in a region or in an occupation.

A shortage of skilled workers analysis is conducted every year in the statistics of the Federal Employment Agency.¹⁶⁶

**Erfahrungssäule –
experience pillar**

According to the law and the Ordinance on the further development of skilled worker immigration, economic migration is based on three pillars – skilled workers, experience and potential. The experience pillar permits the immigration of skilled workers even if their professional or vocational qualification has not been recognised beforehand. The prerequisite is a contract of employment in a non-regulated occupation. They also need a vocational qualification and at least two years of professional experience. They must reach a certain earnings level, or else a collective wage agreement must apply. Those who have a foreign qualification but do not reach the necessary salary threshold may commence work in Germany within the scope of a recognition partnership and complete the recognition procedure in parallel.¹⁶⁷

**Erstberatung –
first consultation**

First consultations generally comprise information on the respective relevant legal foundations and procedures, prior clarification of the reference occupation and referral (see referral guidance) to the competent body responsible for the equivalence assessment (see equivalence assessment procedure). First consultations are offered by various Federal Government and federal state stakeholders, including the advisory centres of the IQ Network (see IQ Funding Programme), by the “Working and Living in Germany” hotline and by further guidance institutions. The regional chambers also frequently refer to the guidance they provide as a first consultation.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Benchmark paper on the immigration of skilled workers from third countries, p. 15.

¹⁶⁶ This is published regularly under the following link: statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche_Formular.html?n=20626&topic_f=fachkraefte-engpassanalyse.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/fachkraefteeinwanderungsgesetz-2146480.

EU/EEA/Switzerland	States of the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland. The EU member states are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. EEA states are all EU member states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Switzerland participates with the EU in the European professional and vocational recognition system on the basis of bilateral agreements with the EU.*
EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications	Recognition of professional qualifications for regulated professions between countries of the European Union (EU) is governed by Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications (EU Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications). The term “substantial differences” is introduced in the Directive as a criterion for assessing the equivalence of professional qualifications. The Directive stipulates that the recognition authorities must take account of relevant professional experience that can compensate for substantial differences between the training requirements. Finally, the Directive also stipulates that so-called compensation measures should take place where substantial differences have been identified. The Directive entered into force on 15 October 2005 and was reformed by Directive 2013/55/EU. The Directive has been fully implemented in Germany.*
Externenprüfung – external examination	The so-called external examination permits persons who have not completed dual training to take part in the regular final vocational training examination. In order to be admitted, relevant occupational experience or other learning achievements in the occupation in question need to be demonstrated. The admission procedure is conducted by the competent bodies, usually the chambers. The external examination is regulated in the Vocational Training Act (§ 45 Paragraph 2 BBiG) and in the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code accordingly (§ 37 Paragraph 2 HwO). Under certain individual circumstances, an external examination may be possible instead of the recognition procedure for persons who have acquired a vocational qualification abroad. ¹⁶⁸
Fachkraft – skilled worker	In this report, the term “skilled worker” includes all persons who have completed qualified vocational education and training abroad or a foreign higher education qualification. In line with specialist and public discourse, the term ‘skilled worker’ is thus interpreted more widely than in the Residence Act (AufenthG). According to the Residence Act, such persons are not skilled workers until their qualification has been deemed equivalent to or, in the case of higher education qualifications, judged to be comparable with a German qualification (cf. § 18 Paragraph 3 AufenthG).
Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz – Skilled Immigration Act	The Skilled Immigration Act is a composite act that amends the Residence Act and other legal bases to create a new statutory framework for the targeted and increased immigration of qualified skilled workers to Germany. It entered into force on 1 March 2020. The act in particular makes it easier for skilled workers who have completed qualified vocational education and training to migrate to Germany. The previous restriction to professions and occupations included on the BA’s white list ceases to apply. In 2023, the Law on the further development of skilled worker immigration reformed the Skilled Immigration Act once more.

168 Cf. BMBF 2014, S. 73.

Gleichwertigkeitsfeststellungsverfahren – equivalence assessment procedure	See recognition procedure
Gutachtenstelle für Gesundheitsberufe (GfG) – Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions	The GfG is a cross-federal state agency that is housed at the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB). Competent bodies may commission it with the task of checking the genuineness of qualifications evidence submitted, determining the German reference qualification and drawing up a detailed assessment of equivalence for 24 reference occupations in the healthcare sector. The GfG also supplies a specific part of the “anabin” portal with information on foreign professional qualifications in the area of healthcare and with relevant sample assessments.
Hamburger Stipendienprogramm – Hamburg Scholarship Programme	The Hamburg Scholarship Programme is aimed at skilled workers who intend to seek recognition of the professional or vocational qualification and who wish to work in Hamburg. The programme permits a grant application to be submitted for costs in a maximum amount of €12,000 that are incurred within the scope of recognition such as procedural fees or necessary courses and examinations. A monthly scholarship may also be granted for the duration of an adaptation period. ¹⁶⁹
Hotline Arbeiten und Leben in Deutschland – Working and Living in Germany hotline	The central “Working and Living in Germany” hotline has been in operation since 1 December 2014. It provides individual telephone-based first consultations on the topics of recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications, entry and residency, looking for a job and learning German. ¹⁷⁰
IHK FOSA	The IHK FOSA (Foreign Skills Approval) is a central competent body created in the spring of 2012. It is responsible for administrative implementation within the scope of the BQFG in the trade and industry sector. The IHK FOSA was set up as an independent body under public law by 76 of the 79 chambers of commerce and industry (IHKs). The chambers of Wuppertal-Solingen-Remscheid, Hanover and Braunschweig are the only ones not to participate. The Braunschweig IHK has formally handed over its tasks pursuant to the BQFG to the IHK. Local chambers take responsibility for providing initial and training guidance within the scope of the recognition process.
Integration durch Qualifizierung (IQ) – Integration through Qualification (IQ)	The labour market programme “Integration through Qualification (IQ)” is financed by the BMAS and the European Social Fund Plus. The aim is to integrate persons of foreign origin into qualified employment that appropriately reflects their level of education and training. In the first round of funding (2023 to the end of 2025), a total of around 60 advisory centres are being established to continue with the development of virtual recognition and training guidance. There will also be 16 fair integration advisory centres to help third country nationals with issues under labour and employment law. At the heart of the policy lie 23 regional integration networks offering training services for the progression of persons of foreign origin in a way that appropriately reflects their level of education and training and services for labour market stakeholders.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. hamburg.de/wirtschaft/erkennung-abschluss.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. bamf.de/DE/Service/ServiceCenter/ThemenHotlines/ArbeitenUndLeben/arbeitenundleben.html.

Kenntnisprüfung – knowledge test	A knowledge test is a compensation measure for individuals from third countries who are completing the recognition procedure for medical and healthcare professions governed by federal law. Persons in a medical and healthcare profession can use the knowledge test to demonstrate the equivalence of their status of knowledge. The knowledge test is conducted by the competent body. The knowledge test relates to the content of a German state final examination. All the content of such a final examination may be tested. However it is not essential that the whole of the content is examined.*
Landesrechtlich geregelte Berufe – professions and occupations governed by federal state law	Professions and occupations that lie within the remit of the federal states, and for which the federal states have enacted their own recognition acts (e.g. teacher, nursery school teacher). ¹⁷¹
Make it in Germany	“Make it in Germany” is the Federal Government's multilingual portal for skilled workers from abroad. It informs persons interested in migrating to Germany how they can structure their route into the country in a successful way. It provides extensive information on entry and visa procedures, on searching for a job and on everyday life in Germany. Opportunities for training or higher education study in Germany are also illustrated. Employers can also find out about options for the acquisition and integration of international skilled workers. “Make it in Germany” is supplemented by the personal guidance on offer from the Working and Living in Germany” hotline. ¹⁷²
Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration (NAP-I) – National Integration Action Plan (NAP-I)	The NAP-I is a Federal Government action plan divided into five phases. It's aims are the pooling, supplementation, further development and management of existing integration provision. The phases relate to the time preceding immigration, during which language courses should take place, to the imparting of societal values after arrival in Germany and to integration into the labour market and civil society. Political participation is also covered.
nicht reglementierte Berufe – non-regulated occupations	There are no state regulations in terms of authorisation to practise for non-regulated occupations. Such an occupation can therefore be pursued without state authorisation. This applies in particular to the training occupations in the dual system. If an occupation is not state regulated in Germany, holders of a foreign professional or vocational qualification can directly apply for jobs on the labour market or enter self-employment. In such a case, recognition creates transparency in respect of knowledge and skills – both for the individual and for potential employers.
Partieller Berufszugang – partial access to a profession	<p>Sometimes the difference between a foreign and a German professional qualification is too great to permit recognition. However, the competent authority may be able to approve so-called partial access to a profession if certain prerequisites are met. These prerequisites are as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person holds a professional qualification from an EU/EEA state or Switzerland and is permitted to work in this profession in the country of training without any restriction. • The substantial differences to the German reference occupation are so great that a compensation measure will not encompass the whole of the German training. <p>A person in possession of such authorisation may work in Germany. They may, however, only perform certain tasks and must use the professional title of the country of training.*</p>

171 Cf. anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/pro/federal-state-laws.php.

172 Cf. make-it-in-germany.com.

Potenzialsäule – potential pillar	The potential pillar is one of the three skilled worker immigration pillars pursuant to the Ordinance on the further development of skilled worker immigration. It is aimed at persons who have not yet secured a contract of employment in Germany. The core of the potential pillar is the introduction of an opportunity card for the purpose of seeking a job. Potential for sustainable labour market integration is determined on the basis of a points system to some extent. Criteria include qualifications, language knowledge, professional experience, relationship to Germany and age. ¹⁷³
ProRecognition	The “ProRecognition” project, which is funded by the BMBF and implemented by DIHK Service GmbH, offers information and recognition guidance whilst applicants are still living outside Germany. Until the end of 2023, advice was provided in conjunction with ten project partners in the EU states of Poland and Italy and in the third countries of Egypt, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Columbia, India, Iran and Vietnam. The following locations will be funded in the new funding period from 2024: Algeria, Brazil, Columbia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Morocco, the Philippines and Turkey.
Qualifizierte Beschäftigung – qualified employment	Qualified employment pursuant to the Residence Act (AufenthG) is deemed to be in place if skills, knowledge and competencies acquired via a course of higher education study or via a qualified programme of vocational education and training are necessary for the exercising of such employment (see § 2 Paragraph 12b AufenthG).
Qualifikationsanalyse – skills analysis	Within the scope of application of the BQFG, professional and vocational competencies can also be established by means of a skills analysis. Such a skills analysis is used in cases where applicants are unable to submit any or some of the documents required for reasons that are not their fault or where doubts as to the genuineness or correctness of documents cannot be excluded (§ 14 BQFG or § 50b Paragraph 4 HwO). Vocational knowledge and skills are practically demonstrated in a skills analysis. This may, for example, take place by means of a work sample, a specialist oral examination or a company-based work test.*
Qualifizierungsber- atung – training guidance	Guidance on training opportunities (including funding options) within the context of recognition. This includes compensation measures to offset substantial differences in regulated professions, refresher training in non-regulated occupations, bridging measures for academic professions and possibilities of completing an external examination. Agencies offering training guidance include IQ and the competent bodies.
Referenzberuf oder Referenzqualifikation – reference occupation or reference qualification	In the recognition procedure, the foreign professional or vocational qualification is compared with the (training) contents of a German qualification or with a German occupation, the “reference occupation”. Stipulation of a reference occupation is necessary in order to identify the competent body and to conduct the procedure.
reglementierte Berufe – regulated professions	Professional activities the commencement or exercising of which is governed by legal or administrative provisions requiring proof of specific professional qualifications (for example medical and healthcare professions, lawyer, teacher).

173 Cf. [bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/fachkraefteeinwanderungsgesetz-2146480](https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/fachkraefteeinwanderungsgesetz-2146480).

Sektorenberuf – sector profession	In the so-called sector professions, a qualification from the EU (including the EEA and Switzerland) is automatically recognised if it is listed in the annex to the EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications. In such cases, the uniform EU-wide standards for professional training mean that there is no need for individual scrutiny of training contents. Full equivalence is usually granted directly. The sector professions comprise doctor, dentist, veterinarian, pharmacist, nurse, midwife and architect.
Teilweise Anerkennung – partial recognition	A foreign professional or vocational qualification is only partially equivalent to the German reference occupation if there are substantial differences between the foreign professional or vocational qualification and the German professional or vocational qualification. Full recognition may be achieved via successful participation in refresher training or in a compensation measure.*
Unternehmen Berufs- anerkennung – Recognition for Business	Two projects are represented under the umbrella brand of “Recognition for Business” (UBA IHK and UBA: HWK), which offer specific provision for chambers of crafts and trades and chambers of commerce and industry respectively. They inform the companies on the topic of recognition and provide specific assistance with implementation practice. The “Recognition for Business” project was initiated by the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH). The project is funded by the BMBF. ¹⁷⁴
Verweisberatung – Referral guidance	The term referral guidance is used when persons interested in seeking recognition a) are referred to a specialised guidance institution by a general guidance institution; b) are referred to a competent body by specialised guidance institution; c) are referred to the right competent body by another competent body that is not responsible in the particular case.
Volle Anerkennung – full recognition	A foreign professional or vocational qualification is legally equivalent to the German reference occupation.
Westbalkanregelung – West Balkans Regulation	The Federal Government has used the West Balkans Regulation to create privileged access to the German labour market for nationals of the six states in the region. Pursuant to § 26 Paragraph 2 of the Employment Ordinance, the BA may consent to the exercising of any employment in Germany under certain conditions for nationals of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia irrespective of proof of vocational education and training or of knowledge of German. The prerequisites are a binding offer of a job and fulfilment of requirements under residence law.
Zentrale Ausländer- behörden – central immigration offices	Pursuant to the Skilled Immigration Act and § 71 Paragraph 1 Clause 5 Residence Act (AufenthG), the federal states are each required to establish at least one central immigration office for the entry of foreign skilled workers and for the initial issuing of a resident permit to said foreign skilled workers and to family members who may have travelled with them.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. zav.de/unternehmen-berufsanerkennung.de/.

Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung der BA – Central Foreign and Specialist Placement Agency (ZAV) at the Federal Employment Agency (BA)

The ZAV is an institution of the BA. Its tasks include the recruitment and placement of skilled workers from abroad for employers in Germany. It is responsible for authorising foreign workers to enter the German labour market.¹⁷⁵

Zentrale Servicestelle Berufsanerkennung (ZSBA) – Service Center for Professional Recognition (ZSBA)

The Service Center for Skilled Workers Abroad Seeking Recognition, referred to in abbreviated form as the Central Service Center for Professional Recognition, has been created to provide a uniform contact partner for persons interested in seeking recognition who are still living abroad. It advises on individual issues relating to immigration and recognition law with the aim of reducing the burden on the competent bodies.¹⁷⁶

Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen (ZAB) – Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB)

The ZAB is housed at the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) and is the centre of excellence of the federal states for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. Its core tasks are the monitoring, analysis and evaluation of foreign educational systems and the documentation and publication of this information on the Internet portal “anabin” for the use of government authorities and private persons.¹⁷⁷ The ZAB prepares reports for the evaluation of foreign educational qualifications for government authorities and issues private persons with certificate evaluations for international foreign higher education qualifications in accordance with the Lisbon Agreement.

Zeugnisbewertung – certificate evaluation

A certificate evaluation is an official document issued by the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) that describes a foreign higher education qualification and certifies how such a qualification may be utilised professionally and academically. Recognition procedures are only for higher education qualifications that lead to a regulated profession. Certificate evaluation applies to higher education qualifications that do not lead to a regulated profession. A certificate evaluation states the level of the German education qualification with which the foreign higher education qualification is comparable. The assessment of higher education certificates gives information about the vocational and academic opportunities provided by the qualification.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/zav/startseite.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. arbeitsagentur.de/vor-ort/zav/working-living-in-germany/zsba.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. anabin.kmk.org.

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Cover

Carolina Andrea Pérez González (see also p. 116) has been working as a teacher of German as a foreign language at a high school in Hamburg since 2022. Want to find out more about Carolina's route to recognition? Read her and other stories in various languages at anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/en.

