

Partial qualifications to support the low-qualified and unskilled

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 GERMANY

Timeline

2017 Implementation 2018 Implementation 2019 Implementation

2020 Implementation 2021 Implementation 2022 Implementation

2023 Implementation 2024 Implementation

ID number 28122

Background

In 2012, the shortage of skilled workers was already noticeable in many regions and sectors and was supposed to exacerbate by the challenges of the coming years. Therefore, it is important to address target groups that have been less in focus so far. Access to the labour market for people without a vocational qualification was usually difficult, yet these people brought with them professional potential that often remained unused.

The number of low-skilled and unskilled adults on the labour market increased partly due to new immigration waves in the last decades. Partial qualifications were developed first by employers to support the upskilling of their unskilled employees alongside work.

Objectives

Partial qualifications can be a subsequent path to a qualification for the target group of low-skilled adults (older than 25 years) and thus a perspective for qualified employment.

Description

Partial qualifications (*Teilqualifikationen, TQ*) are educational offers, which allow learners to gain vocational qualifications through systematic, successive qualifications based on the dual training regulations. Once the total of the partial qualifications is completed, the learner can take an examination for external candidates. The work on procedures for certifications and the development of training modules is continuing. There are several current projects on TQ, including:

- (a) the employer initiative partial qualification *One TQ better!*, setting up a seal of quality for partial qualification (since 2013: 2 700 participants);
- (b) the BMBF-funded TQ project ETAPP (2019-21), aiming to develop nationwide standardised partial qualifications together with the employer associations (BDA and ADBW);
- (c) the chambers of industry and commerce (DIHK) initiative, *USE OPPORTUNITIES! with partial qualifications towards recognised vocational qualification* (2017-22), also

aiming to develop nationwide standardised partial qualifications. The project started in October 2017 for 3 years. This initiative aims at developing standardised framework conditions for the qualification of low-skilled and unskilled adults aged over 25. The emphasis is on developing training modules geared to regional needs and certification of partial qualifications to give low-skilled and unskilled adults the opportunity to acquire a complete vocational qualification or at least an upgradable qualification. The project includes the establishment of a coordination office for the control, quality assurance and monitoring of activities, the development of guidance and support structures, and cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) for the development of the training modules. The project budget is EUR 583 000 from 2017 to 2019.

In 2018, 55% of IHKs were active in the context of certification of partial qualifications; a further 22% were planning an offer. Partial qualifications modules for the specialist for metal technology, the industrial electrician and the specialist for courier, express and postal services were developed. The catering modules for restaurant and hotel specialists, chefs and clerks working for the office management were submitted to BIBB for external validation.

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

In 2019, the participation of IHKs in the TQ project was expanded almost country-wide. Work was carried out on procedures for the certification of partial qualifications. New training modules were developed, particularly in cooperation with the education institutions of the commercial sector. Partial qualification modules are now offered by most IHKs and in many occupations.

2020 Implementation

In 2020, the USE OPPORTUNITIES! (TQ) project of the chambers (IHKs) was extended until September 2022 with an additional BMBF funding amounting to EUR 375 000.

Central objectives of the new funding phase:

- (a) networking of stakeholders: jointly promoting TQ and further developing it nationwide;
- (b) information transfer: support IHKs in promoting quality and national standards;
- (c) raising awareness: disseminating best practices and making success factors more visible.

In 2020, work was done on the development of new partial qualifications and their standardisation. There was also a focus on creating uniform structures, contributing to improving the data situation, and looking at interfaces to other instruments of post-qualification.

Three videos were published illustrating best practices in three companies enabling their staff without vocational qualification to obtain such a certification through partial qualifications alongside work.

2021 Implementation

Both the DIHK project USE OPPORTUNITIES! (TQ) and the ETAPP partner project were continued in 2021 as agreed. In 2021, the DIHK project on partial qualifications published an interactive brochure on the standardisation and implementation of partial qualifications. The brochure presents background and results of the first term of the project, successful implementation of TQs in practice, recommendations and an outlook on the coming project phase.

The Employers' initiative for partial qualification (AGi TQ) has developed a quality seal

that ensures a nationwide standardised offer of TQs by the participating German employers' associations and business-related education institutions. All offers that bear this seal of quality contain a promise of quality - both for the graduates of a TQ and for their (potential) employers and companies in all sectors in Germany.

2022 Implementation

Based on their initiative, *USE OPPORTUNITIES! with partial qualifications towards recognised vocational qualification*, the chambers of industry and commerce (DIHK) developed in 2022 a digital competence assessment for partial qualifications (written part).

The flyer *Five reasons for partial qualifications* was updated in January 2022. Since only one in four companies is aware of the funding opportunities offered by the Federal Employment Agency and only one in ten uses these opportunities, it is important to disseminate such information amongst companies, for example by distributing the new flyer or by organising information events.

On 29 June 2022, the DIHK TQ project organised such an event on partial qualifications and their implementation in practice. The outcomes of the event are presented online. Another example of dissemination is the nationwide TQ Action Day held on 4 May 2022 by the employers' initiative for partial qualification (AGI TQ), with various activities at the participating locations to draw attention to the topic.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, BMBF funded four partial qualifications TQ projects (*Chancen Nutzen!*, ETAPP, TQHW, BIBB-TQ). By 2023, principles for deriving partial qualifications from the respective dual reference occupation and a procedural proposal were developed as the basis for a nationwide standardisation process for partial qualifications and coordinated between the *Chancen Nutzen!*, ETAPP and BIBB-TQ projects. Further, flagship regions among the chambers of commerce and industry were identified and analysed. After a final event in June 2023, the projects were relaunched with a new focus on TQ in transformation areas by 2026. The development and implementation of partial qualifications in the skilled trades sector is coordinated by the TQHW project.

The cooperating TQ initiatives (by employers / chambers / BMBF-BIBB) worked on procedures for certifications (such as digital competence assessment), developed new training modules (for occupations such as electronics technician for industrial engineering, IT specialist, cook, specialist in the hotel business) and disseminated them among companies and employees (using media in various languages and regional action day with events in June 2023 or a new video with best practice of partial qualification in a company).

In July 2023, the Act to promote initial and further training was passed, supporting particularly SMEs. With the introduction of the qualification allowance in April 2024, the law makes partial qualification and continuing vocational training more accessible. Fixed funding rates make CVET funding more transparent and will be accessible to all companies. Employment agencies pay companies the qualification allowance for their employees, who are threatened with losing their jobs as a result of structural change, but for whom further training can enable them to find future-proof employment in the same company. The allowance will be paid instead of remuneration during training.

A working group on partial qualifications was adopted by the BIBB Board in December 2023. The working group is drawing a recommendation for the development and application of standardised nationwide partial qualifications for the dual reference occupations, based on the findings of the TQ projects. The compatibility of TQs with other instruments of post-qualification and professional recognition in terms of the design of subsequent educational pathways is being considered.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, TQ projects focused on further developing standardised structural principles

and supporting opportunities for partial qualification provided to employees and jobseekers in transformation areas, e.g. with regional action days in June 2024 or with short films explaining TQs and a new video on TQ best practice in a small fishing enterprise.

In the Magdeburg area, TQ stakeholders have joined forces in 2024 and form a TQ alliance. Such regional TQ alliances consist of chambers of industry and commerce, employment agencies, job centres, training providers and companies that have a common understanding of the implementation of and cooperation on partial qualifications. Another example of TQ provision in 2024: Some chambers of industry and commerce work together with prisons to offer inmates partial qualifications as a training opportunity.

Bodies responsible

- Chambers of industry and commerce (IHKs)
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
- Federal Employment Agency (BA)
- Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA)
- Association of the Educational Organisations of German Business (ADBW)
- Central Office for Further Education in Skilled Crafts (ZWH e.V.)

Target group

Learners

Adult learners

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Entities providing VET

Companies

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[DIHK-TQ website \(chambers of commerce and industry\)](#)

[ETAPP website \(employer association\)](#)

[TKHW-TQ website \(chambers of skilled crafts\)](#)

[BIBB-TQ project \(Federal institute for VET\)](#)

[Employer initiative on partial qualification, AGI TQ](#)

[Website of the Federal Employment Agency on qualification allowance](#)

[Videos on partial qualifications \(in 5 languages\)](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

Integrating migrants and refugees in VET and work

Since 2015, in line with the federal ESF integration guideline, the IvAF integration programme (Integration of asylum seekers and refugees) has contributed to the sustainable integration of asylum seekers, asylum applicants and refugees in training and employment through comprehensive counselling

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

National Skills Strategy

In November 2018, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) launched a committee to develop a National continuing education strategy (*Nationale Weiterbildungsstrategie*).

 GERMANY

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Implementation

Expanding financial support for CVET and advanced vocational qualifications

In 2016, the legislation promoting further training (AWStG) was amended.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Implementation

Validation and recognition

The ValiKom project aims to promote the validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills in Germany and was initiated by the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (DHKT) and the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), together with the Federal Ministry for Education and Research

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Modernising VET qualifications

The regulated qualifications of apprenticeships and advanced training occupations are based on examinations with nationwide uniform examination regulations.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28122>