

Validation and recognition

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 GERMANY

Timeline

2015 Implementation	2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation
2018 Implementation	2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation
2021 Implementation	2022 Implementation	2023 Implementation
2024 Implementation		

ID number 28119

Background

In 2014, there was no systematic and standardised approach for validation in place, though elements of a national strategy are under development. Therefore, a working group has been convened by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) on validation of non-formal and informal competences.

The recognition of foreign vocational qualifications has been regulated in the Vocational Qualifications Recognition Act (BQFG) since 2012, which is monitored with an annual report. The Act provides individuals with the right to have their foreign qualifications matched to a German qualification by an appropriate authority. Depending on the sector, assessment and recognition of foreign occupational qualifications is carried out by IHK Fosa or lead chambers (*Leitkammern*). Recognition bodies are supported by a range of information sources and channels including the portal Recognition in Germany, the network Integration through Qualification, the portal Make it in Germany, and the project Prototyping transfer (since 2019: NetQA).

Objectives

The objective of validation and recognition are:

- (a) to promote the validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills for people without (recognised) vocational qualification and expand any necessary adaptation qualifications, thus increasing skills visibility and opportunities for applicants on the job market;
- (b) ultimately, to set up a nationwide uniform validation system;
- (c) to simplify and accelerate the recognition of foreign formal vocational qualifications.

Description

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 (BMBF). ValiKom is considered a reference project for setting up a validation system in Germany. It addresses adults who acquired skills and competences through work but lack a formal qualification, including those who wish to access further training. The approach refers to the prevailing training regulations and occupational profiles and leads to certificates (*Gleichwertigkeitsfeststellung*) expressing the extent to which the skills demonstrated are equivalent to those gained under the Vocational Training Act. The participating chambers of industry, commerce and trade started trials in April 2017. Interim results were presented to the broad public at a conference in Berlin in December 2017. The final results of the Valikom project were published in a report that described the process, admission criteria, instruments, certificate of validation and recommendations at the end of 2018. The follow-up project, ValiKom Transfer (2018-21), intends to extend the validation procedure developed to 30 chambers throughout Germany (11 chambers of crafts, 17 chambers of industry and commerce and two chambers of agriculture). Procedures to credit non-formal and informal learning were developed and tested in the past in the *Transitions from VET to higher education* initiative (*Übergänge von der beruflichen in die hochschulische Bildung - ANKOM*), which led to the legislation for validation of non-formal and informal learning in VET currently in effect.

In 2017, the Vocational Qualifications Recognition Act (BQFG) was monitored and documented and the June 2017 report evaluated its first five years. Also, since 2017, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) and the national organisations of German chambers (DIHK and ZDH) have been carrying out the *Enterprise professional recognition communication* campaign (*Unternehmen Berufsankennung*), on the advantages of recognising foreign qualifications. A travelling exhibition provides nationwide companies with information. A *We for recognition* prize was awarded for the first time in 2017 by the BMBF, DIHK and ZDH, honouring exemplary corporate practice and good ideas in the field of recognition of foreign qualifications in companies. The language options of the portal Recognition in Germany were expanded to French and Russian, in addition to the previous nine languages, including Arabic.

2015 Implementation

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

Valikom

In 2019, the project *ValiKom Transfer* (2018-21), continued its implementation, extending the validation procedure to 30 chambers throughout Germany: 11 chambers of crafts, 17 chambers of industry and commerce and 2 chambers of agriculture.

Vocational Qualifications Recognition Act (BQFG)

In 2019, there was a major innovation with regard to data collection: for the first time, the report presented the data from the Federal Government, the Federal States and the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB) together.

Recognition of professional qualifications by way of qualification analysis

On 1 January 2019, the *Network Qualification analysis* project (NetQA, *Netzwerk Qualificiationsanalyse*) was launched as a joint project with several partners from the IHK and HWK sectors. NetQA aims to support the industry, trade and crafts chambers in the recognition process in establishing a regional expertise and network structure for qualification analyses (QA). The project promotes the networking of the chambers in all matters relating to QA, from the initial consultation with those seeking recognition to the decision on the equivalence of the professional qualification. By offering appropriate exchange and support services, the project aims to ensure by 2022 that QAs are conducted in an efficient and quality-assured manner nationwide.

NetQA builds on previous projects. The QA instrument was developed in the *Prototyping* project (2011-14) coordinated by the West German Association of Chambers of Skilled Crafts (WHKT) and scientifically accompanied by the Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training in the Skilled Crafts at the University of Cologne (FBH) and established in the recognition procedure from 2015 to 2018 in the Prototyping transfer project coordinated by BIBB.

2020 Implementation

Valikom-transfer

In January 2020, a new video on Valikom transfer was produced by WHKT, explaining the validation procedure to potential beneficiaries.

The annual report on the Recognition Act 2019 was published in February 2020. The fifth report of the BMBF provides important information on current developments in the field of professional recognition, both at policy level and in practice.

The measure 'Establishment of competence centres for the implementation of validation procedures for dual occupations' (ValiKom-Transfer; budget: ca. 10 million EUR) aims to expand and broadly transfer the standardised procedure for recording, reviewing, assessing and certifying informally and non-formally acquired vocational competences developed and tested in ValiKom for selected occupations for people without vocational qualifications and for qualified career changers.

By the end of November 2020, 702 validation procedures had been carried out by the 30 chambers participating in Valikom transfer.

Vocational Qualifications Recognition Act (BQFG)

On 26 August 2020, the Federal Statistical Office announced the new figures for official statistics on recognition procedures in 2019 (§17 BQFG). The recognition monitoring team in BIBB published an initial overview with results on occupations under federal law.

Recognition of professional qualifications by way of qualification analysis

In 2020, the network on skills analysis NetQA published a flyer on skills analysis in 15 languages as well as an article on a best practice in skills analysis, with experts supporting each other across Federal State borders.

The new application procedure for funding, from the skills analyses special fund, started in July 2020. Those involved in a recognition procedure for a dual training occupation or master craftsperson qualification, and who are seeking recognition via a skills analysis, may apply, under certain circumstances, to the relevant competent authority for funding from the skills analyses special fund. The IHK Foreign Skills Approval (IHK FOSA), the national competence centre of the German chambers of industry and commerce for the evaluation and recognition of foreign vocational qualifications, now also accepts funding notices, in addition to the WHKT. The funding notices are forwarded to BIBB.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, a summary of the results of the accompanying scientific research in the *ValiKom Transfer* project was published. It provides a comprehensive insight into the information collected on the individual procedural steps of the validation, as well as the knowledge gained about the participants in the validation procedure. Based on this, an assessment of the benefits of the validation from the perspective of the participants and the company has been provided.

The validation process under the *ValiKom Transfer* project is open to all adults, nationals and migrants, over the age of 25 who have relevant work experience. It provides the possibility of having competences acquired outside formal education validated in the course of an external assessment by the competent bodies, i.e. the

chambers. Missing competences can be acquired in a targeted manner to finally obtain full equivalence referenced through the issuing of a validation certificate.

As part of the NetQA project, the networking of the participating chambers in all matters relating to the recognition of foreign qualifications on the basis of qualification analysis (QA) was continued in 2021. The project published a brochure in April 2021 with answers to the most common questions, e.g. on the QA procedure or on financial support.

2022 Implementation

Validation of non-formally acquired skills

In 2022, the follow-up project *ValiKom Transfer* was extended until October 2024: further chamber locations are being set up at which validation procedures are to be carried out. In addition to 13 chambers of skilled trades (including 2 new chambers) and 17 chambers of industry and commerce, 2 chambers of agriculture are also involved in the project. Thus, a nationwide offer was established so that people who are interested in the validation of their professional competences in dual professions can find a chamber as a responsible validation centre within a reasonable distance. The aim is to prepare and offer validation procedures for a total of 40 occupations in industry, trade, crafts and agriculture.

In the form of a pilot project, closer cooperation between employment agencies, job centres and *ValiKom* project chambers is being tested at six selected locations since April 2022. The aim of the project is to gather findings on how a targeted cooperation between chambers and employment agencies or job centres can be established to increase the labour market opportunities of unemployed people and enable more targeted further development. The pilot project is being accompanied scientifically.

Information events to increase the awareness of *ValiKom Transfer* were carried out. For example, on 4 May 2022, the Stuttgart Region Chamber of Skilled Crafts (HWK) and the Stuttgart Region Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) jointly held an online multiplier event on the topic of *Making professional skills visible - with the ValiKom transfer certificate*. To increase visibility, three short films accompany protagonists on their way through the validation process. The three series on the occupations of warehouse logistics specialist, electronics technician and gardener and landscaper are available on Youtube.

Recognition of foreign formal qualifications

BIBB conducted a survey amongst skilled workers with foreign professional qualifications to collect experiences with recognition, which is part of the continuous BIBB recognition monitoring project.

BIBB published in December 2022 an updated Discussion Paper on *How long does the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications take? Analyses of the duration of procedures based on official statistics for the years 2017 to 2021; results of the BIBB recognition monitoring*. This discussion paper also points out the challenges surrounding the goal of acceleration as well as possible levers.

On 30 November 2022, the Federal Government adopted key points for reforming the immigration of skilled workers from third countries. One aim is to simplify and accelerate the recognition of foreign professional qualifications.

BIBB published in June 2022 a Discussion Paper on *Recognition of Ukrainian vocational qualifications - Exploiting potential, improving processes: Results of BIBB's Recognition Monitoring*.

In 2022, the project NetQA continued to promote the networking of the chambers in all questions concerning qualification analysis (QA) - from the first counselling interview with those seeking recognition to the decision on the equivalence of the professional qualification. Through appropriate exchange and support services, the aim is to achieve a quality-assured and efficient process of QAs nationwide by 2023. A flyer with

information on qualification analyses was published in 15 languages.

2023 Implementation

Validation of non-formally acquired skills

The project *ValiKom Transfer* continued to implement validation procedures in further chamber locations (chambers of skilled trades, chambers of industry and commerce, chambers of agriculture). Valikom Transfer cooperated in 2023 with the nationwide project 'TalentPASS - identifying, validating and upskilling' aimed at people with a recognised severe disability who are employed and have no formal recognition for their current job. Among other things, the TalentPASS project offered this target group the opportunity to have their professional skills assessed and certified by a chamber using the Valikom validation procedure.

Recognition of foreign formal qualifications

The 'Recognition in Germany' portal is the central information platform for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications. The portal recorded around 3.9 million visits in 2023, the majority of which (53%) were from abroad. The Recognition Finder provides specific information on the recognition procedure and the body responsible for recognition. The portal is also enabling access to online applications in more and more professions.

The ESF Plus funding programme 'IQ - Integration through Qualification' has been relaunched in 2023 for the funding period 2023 to 2028. There are 60 recognition and qualification advice centres nationwide for people seeking advice on foreign qualifications. In 2023, 63 489 people were advised by IQ Recognition and Qualification Counselling Centres.

The BQ-Portal supports the implementation of recognition procedures for foreign professional qualifications through a knowledge management system: In 2023, the portal contains 105 country profiles with information on foreign vocational education and training systems and 5 780 occupational profiles. The internal area for the professional chambers contains 2 855 results of recognition procedures.

Since 2023, the recognition team at BIBB (on behalf of the BMBF and in coordination with the federal states) has developed nationwide templates (so-called sample notices) for the competent bodies of the recognition procedures - starting with the profession 'nursery school teacher'. With a clear structure and simple language, the model notices ensure improved readability and greater uniformity - for the skilled workers applying, advice centres, training providers and employers.

The Service Centre for Professional Recognition (ZSBA) has been offering advice to skilled workers living abroad for obtaining recognition for their qualifications since 2020. In January 2023, BIBB submitted its report on the evaluation of the ZSBA. It documents that the ZSBA has supported just under 10 000 persons during this period. Most are from third countries and have frequently completed training in healthcare or technical occupations.

The Skills Analysis Network (NetQA) was a joint project from 2019 with partners from the chambers of crafts and trades (HWK) and from the chambers of industry and commerce (IHK) with the aim to have a quality-assured and efficient process for the skills analysis in place across Germany by 2023. Where documentation of the acquired qualification is missing or incomplete, a skills analysis can help to demonstrate professional competences in a practical way (via a work sample, a work test at a company or an interview).

The new Skilled Immigration Act (FEG) was passed in July 2023 and makes it easier for skilled workers with vocational training and individuals with practical knowledge to immigrate to Germany. Improvements were made in the area of migration for education purposes to ensure that more third-country nationals come to Germany to train or study and subsequently work as skilled workers in Germany. For example, opportunities for part-time and trial employment were extended for those seeking a

training place, the duration of the residence permit issued for the purpose of finding a training place will be aligned with that for seeking a university place at nine months and the age limit for this application will be raised from 25 to 35 years.

2024 Implementation

Validation of non-formally acquired skills

Participation in the ValiKom Transfer project is no longer possible, as the project ends on 31 October 2024. In July 2024, the Vocational training validation and digitisation act (BVaDiG) passed, stating that from 1 January 2025, professional skills can be assessed by the competent chamber using the new legally regulated assessment procedure. For the first time, people (25 and older) without a formal vocational qualification will then be entitled to have their vocational skills assessed and certified against the standards of a dual training occupation.

Recognition of foreign formal qualifications

The implementation of the Recognition Act BQFG is monitored and documented in reports published regularly. The 2023 report was published in February 2024.

Information and guidance are essential to success in the recognition process. The federal government has established a range of comprehensive services, such as the 'Recognition in Germany' website, the counselling network of the Integration through qualification (IQ) programme and the 'Working and living in Germany' telephone hotline. Since 2024, the Recognition portal is developing a database of local contact persons and qualification programmes. The counsellors will help, for example, with the selection of the qualification measure, the search for a suitable company or they will accompany the applicant during the entire qualification process.

The digitalisation of application for recognition was fully rolled out at the beginning of 2024. The funding period of the BQ-Portal was extended from April 2024 to December 2026. The portal supports the implementation of recognition procedures through a knowledge management system (country and occupation profiles).

An article on 'Recognition of Ukrainian professional qualifications - Findings from official statistics and practice' was published in 2024.

Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)
- Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK)
- German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH)
- German Confederation of Chambers of Skilled Crafts (DHKT)
- West German Association of Chambers of Skilled Crafts (WHKT)
- IHK Foreign Skills Approval (IHK FOSA)

Target group

Learners

Adult learners

Thematic categories

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Valikom website \(English version\)](#)

[Vocational training validation and digitisation act \(BVaDiG, 2024\)](#)

[Portal on recognition of foreign professional qualifications](#)

[2023 Report on the Recognition Act \(English version, 2024\)](#)

[IHK FOSA website \(English version\)](#)

[BQ-Portal for foreign professional qualifications](#)

[Network IQ \(Integration through Qualification\)](#)

[NetQA - Recognition of professional qualifications by way of qualification analysis](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

Skilled Immigration Act

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs BMAS has drafted the Skills Immigration Act in December 2018, in the context of its Strategy to secure skilled labour. The Act features the following:

 GERMANY

Type of development

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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

Partial qualifications to support the low-qualified and unskilled

Partial qualifications (*Teilqualifikationen, TQ*) are educational offers, which allow learners to gain vocational qualifications through systematic, successive qualifications based on the dual training regulations.

 GERMANY

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

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

“ … ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). Validation and recognition: Germany. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28119>