

**Information Service
of the Federal Institute
for Vocational
Education and Training
August 2008
W. Bertelsmann Verlag
ISSN 1615-4355**

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■ **Situation with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Germany**

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is seen as a central approach to promoting lifelong learning. To encourage an international exchange and learning process, the OECD launched a project in 2006 to create more transparency and clarity in the framework conditions under which recognition constitutes added value. The goal is to provide political decision-makers with support for the (further) development of systems for recognising non-formal and informal learning. The Federal Republic of Germany is one of more than 20 countries which are taking part.

In contrast to other countries like the United Kingdom and France, the distinguishing feature of the situation in Germany is that it does not have a system with uniform regulations and responsibilities but diverse approaches which are not normally regulated by law. One reason for this is thought to be the comparatively high degree of formalisation of education and training processes in Germany. Many of the approaches, therefore, aim to identify rather than recognise non-formal and informal learning.

This article examines various approaches to the recognition of non-formal and

informal learning in Germany. One example of recognition is the external examination pursuant to the Vocational Training Act or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code by means of which a qualification in a recognised training occupation can be obtained via relevant work experience without that person having had to go through the dual training that is normally required. In this scenario, an individual will be allowed to take the final examination if he has engaged in a relevant activity for a period which is at least one and a half times the length of the prescribed training period. According to the participants, this means better career advancement opportunities as well as more flexibility and mobility on the labour market. Another example of recognition is university access for people who have obtained a vocational training qualification. This is also called the third educational pathway. Here it is possible for

Impressum

BIBBnews

Year 9, Issue 3/2008 August 2008

Published by
Federal Institute for Vocational Education
and Training (BIBB)
D-53142 Bonn

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W. Bertelsmann Verlag GmbH & Co. KG
P.O. Box 10 06 33, 33506 Bielefeld
Tel.: 0049-521-911 01-11,
Fax: 0049-521-911 01-19
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The editorial team welcomes comments,
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of immigration (100,000 per annum), then in 2050 Germany would have a population of just 67 million.

The demographic development has a direct impact on the supply of employed persons. Given the low proportion of women and older people in gainful employment in Germany compared with other countries, there will be a massive drop in employed persons after 2020. This already takes into account the steps taken to extend working life up to the age of 67.

The population and, by extension, employed persons are growing old

The population forecasts assume that in 2030 around 28% of the population will be over the age of 65. In 2005 this percentage was just 19% of the population. Compared with this, the proportion of under 20-year-olds (20%) in 2005 will have fallen to 16.6% by 2030.

Even if the current family measures were to take effect and the birthrate could be raised from just under 1.3 to 1.6 children per woman of childbearing age, the impact would be minimal. Instead of the 39.1 million people aged between 20 and 65 projected for 2050, there would be approximately 40.5 million people. This would only just compensate for the accelerating decline in the population and faster aging identified between the current population forecast from 2006 and the forecast from 2003.

The gap left by people retiring from working life can no longer be filled by the influx of new workers. To replace the workers from the baby boom years, around 1.3 million births in 1965, who will retire between 2020 and 2030 (depending on retirement age), there will be, in purely arithmetic terms, a replacement supply of approximately 672,000 people from 2006 (because this replacement supply would already have to be born now if they were to start work aged 20 in 2026).

Action options

In order to cover the future demand for workers, women and older people must participate to a greater degree in the gainfully employed population. Furthermore, immigrants with the appropriate qualifications could help to ward off the imminent shortage of skilled labour. However, alternative calculations show that these measures are not enough.

For instance, the forecasts of the Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA) assume, in conjunction with the development in supply, the arrival of 200,000 immigrants per annum, a level which Germany has not in fact reached since 2002. At the present time (2006) the immigration surplus is just under 22,000. Of course, these figures do not take into account the qualifications of the immigrants who arrive on the German labour market.

Population

Migration between Germany and abroad from 1991 up to 2004

| Year | Arrivals | Departures | Balance |
|------|-----------|------------|---------|
| 2006 | 661,855 | 639,064 | 22,791 |
| 2005 | 707,352 | 628,399 | 78,953 |
| 2004 | 780,175 | 697,632 | 82,543 |
| 2003 | 768,975 | 626,330 | 142,645 |
| 2002 | 842,543 | 623,255 | 219,288 |
| 2001 | 879,217 | 606,494 | 272,723 |
| 2000 | 841,158 | 674,038 | 167,120 |
| 1999 | 874,023 | 672,048 | 201,975 |
| 1998 | 802,456 | 755,358 | 47,098 |
| 1997 | 840,633 | 746,969 | 93,664 |
| 1996 | 959,691 | 677,494 | 282,197 |
| 1995 | 1,096,050 | 698,113 | 397,935 |
| 1994 | 1,082,550 | 767,555 | 314,998 |
| 1993 | 1,277,410 | 815,312 | 462,096 |
| 1992 | 1,502,200 | 720,127 | 782,071 |
| 1991 | 1,198,980 | 596,455 | 602,523 |

Source: Federal Statistics Office

Changes in the length of working life and the female activity rate have similar effects.

Whereas the zero variant in the case of the immigration balance dramatically increases the drop in the labour supply, prolonging working life (raising the retirement age) as well as increasing the female activity rate by 10 percentage points (assumption) does dampen the drop in employed persons but only to a very limited degree.

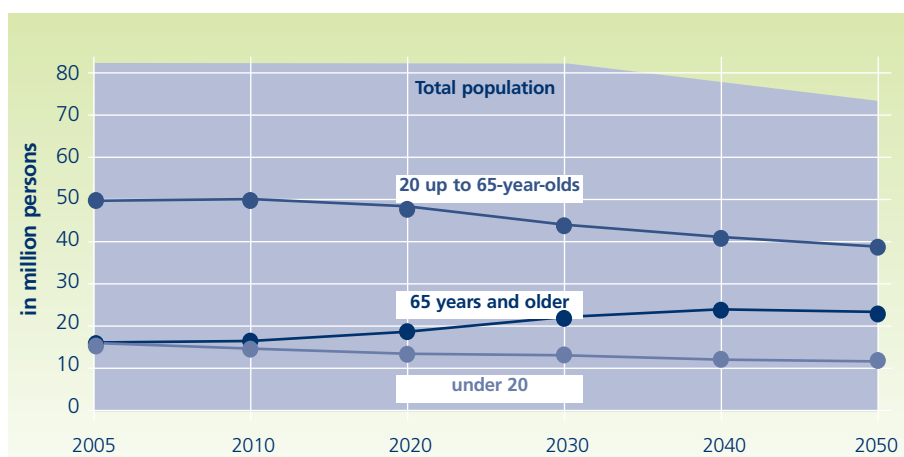
Consequence

The dwindling and ageing German population presents the future labour market with major problems. It is not just that future demand cannot be met but there is also a risk that innovations which have emerged from the training and employment system will no longer be able to come to fruition via this pathway. Other transfer pathways will have to be found.

Furthermore, the demand for goods will change. Products and offerings (above all personal care services) for older people will become increasingly important.

Targeted immigration and prolonging working life will only have a limited impact.

Graph 2: Demographic development overall and by age groups in million persons, Germany, 2005–2050



Data sources: Federal Statistics Office, 11 co-ordinated population forecasts, 2006, own calculations with variant "middle population"

