2017
Report on the Recognition Act
Resolution of the Federal Cabinet of 7 June 2017

Important results of the Recognition Monitoring Project

The IQ initial counselling centres, the ALiD Hotline and the chambers dealt with over 233,000 guidance cases between 2012 and 2016, providing information on the prerequisites for the recognition procedure or offering support with the procurement of documents.

From 2012 to 2015, 63,400 applications for recognition were made in professions governed by federal law alone.

Between 2012 and 2016, the highest professional or vocational qualification of around 70 percent of those receiving guidance from the IQ initial counselling centres and from the ALiD Hotline was one or more higher education degrees. Around 30 percent were in possession of one or more training qualifications.

Just over 71 percent of persons seeking guidance from the IQ initial counselling centres between 2012 and 2016 were unemployed. Almost 76 percent of these were in receipt of (supplementary) benefits under the provisions of Social Security Code II/III or pursuant to the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act. The most frequent target professions for which guidance was provided were teacher, engineer, registered general nurse and doctor.

In 2015 and 2016, over 16,300 persons received guidance within the scope of the IQ main action focus “ESF training within the context of the Recognition Act”. More than 8,000 persons took part in training measures.

The proportion of refugees and asylum seekers amongst persons receiving guidance at the IQ initial counselling centres rose from 20 percent in the period from June 2015 to over 41 percent in 2016. Syrians accounted for almost two thirds of these, by far the largest group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non-regulated occupations</th>
<th>Regulated professions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>8,775</td>
<td>2,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>12,057</td>
<td>3,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>13,485</td>
<td>4,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>14,388</td>
<td>5,001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant increase in the number of new applications for professional or occupational recognition*
Application figures 2012–2015 by nationalities (Europe)*

- Germany: 8,715
- Poland: 4,854
- Italy: 1,548
- Spain: 2,337
- Russian Federation: 2,421
- Ukraine: 1,506
- Romania: 5,376
- Hungary: 2,511
- Greece: 2,076
- Turkey: 1,707
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2,895
- Croatia: 2,100
- Cyprus: 75
- Slovenia: 270
- Albania: 378
- Bulgaria: 1,596
- Switzerland: 306
- Czech Republic: 1,044
- Austria: 1,659
- Lithuania: 480
- Latvia: 426
- Estonia: 60
- Finland: 45
- Norway: 12
- Sweden: 54
- Belgium: 168
- The Netherlands: 822
- Denmark: 27
- Iceland: 9
- Ireland: 36
- United Kingdom: 174

Application figures 2012–2015 by world regions*

- Europe (continent): 50,913
- Asia: 8,010
- Africa: 2,835
- South America: 804
- North/Central America/Caribbean: 530
- Australia and Oceania: 81

Most applications resulted in full equivalence*

Between 2012 and 2015, more than 40,700 qualifications acquired abroad were certified as being fully equivalent to the relevant German reference qualifications. Only around 1,900 applications were rejected.

* For data protection reasons, all figures in the official statistics (absolute values) are in each case rounded to a multiple of 3. The overall value may therefore deviate from the total of the individual values. Percentage figures were calculated on the basis of the non-rounded values. 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 further information, please visit www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/daten-und-berichte (only available in German).
Important results of the evaluation**

Survey on the impact of recognition

Over 88 percent of respondents who had successfully completed professional or occupational recognition were in employment, just over 30 percentage points higher than when application was made. There was a sharp increase in the proportion of persons in full-time employment.

80 percent of those who had submitted their application from abroad agreed with the statement that recognition had been an important factor in making the decision to migrate to Germany.

72 percent of respondents thought that their personal work situation was better than it had been at the time of application and also believed that this was the result of recognition of their foreign qualification.

What has been the impact of recognition?

Career entry or advancement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree completely</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>Tend to disagree</th>
<th>Disagree completely</th>
<th>No information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment in line with qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree completely</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>Tend to disagree</th>
<th>Disagree completely</th>
<th>No information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average monthly income was around €1,000 higher than at the time of application. This represented a rise of around 40 percent.

Average increase in monthly gross remuneration, differentiated by time since recognition:

- +€698.34 (up to 6 months)
- +€757.19 (0.5 to 1.5 years)
- +€1,207.61 (1.5 to 2.5 years)
- +€1,421.40 (2.5 to 3.5 years)
- +€1,445.05 (3.5 to 4.5 years)

** Results are based on a standardised survey (812 persons whose recognition procedure led to a positive decision between 2012 and 2016) conducted within the scope of the evaluation of the Recognition Act (time of survey: summer 2016). The evaluation was carried out by InterVal GmbH and the Institute for Business, Work and Culture (IWAK). Further information is available in German at: www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/evaluation
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Preface

Qualified skilled workers are essential to the success of our economy and crucial for the performance of our science and innovation system. Many sectors today are in desperate search of trainees and experienced workers. This means that Germany is reliant both on effective initial and continuing training and on the immigration of qualified skilled workers.

The good life and work prospects offered in Germany attract many people from other countries. In order for these new arrivals to be successfully integrated into our society and labour market, children need to be rapidly incorporated into the educational system and adults must be given the opportunity to enter initial and continuing training and to find a job.

The benefits for everyone involved may be considerable if we are able to tap into and foster the potential provided by these people, identify existing competences at the earliest possible stage and then make the right use of the skills on offer. For this reason, the Federal Government has significantly expanded investment in training and training provision itself. There has been a particular focus in this regard on strengthening initial and continuing training, on extending language learning and labour market integration measures and on improving recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications.

Five years ago, the Federal Government passed the Federal Recognition Act with the aims of delivering successful integration and enabling skilled workers and companies to be matched up. The overall objective was to create better prospects by simplifying and extending structures and procedures for the recognition of professional and vocational qualifications acquired abroad. The present report marks the fifth anniversary of the law and reveals that success has been achieved right across the board. Efficient administrative structures have been established alongside comprehensive information and guidance services, which constantly attract a high level of demand. The number of new recognition applications is also continuing to rise.

All of this will deliver great benefits in terms of future employment opportunities. Three quarters of all recognition notices certified full equivalence between foreign and German qualifications. The results of the external evaluation confirm that professional or occupational recognition is improving people’s life circumstances. There has been a sharp increase of over 50 percent in the immigrant employment rate. Nine in ten skilled workers with a foreign qualification have been able to find work following successful completion of a recognition procedure. Monthly income grows by an average of €1,000. Professional or occupational recognition is an important element in terms of combating shortages on the labour market, especially in professions and occupations that have a high demand for skilled staff, such as nursing and the electrical sector.

This positive impact produced by the Recognition Act has its foundations in the highly effective work of a multitude of stakeholders at the guidance institutions, at the competent bodies run by the chambers or government offices and at the companies themselves. This reveals the effectiveness of cooperating on a basis of trust within regional networks.

Recognition is working! Evidence of this is readily available in the form of the successes achieved here in Germany and is also reflected in the high degree of international interest in the German recognition system. For all these reasons, we will continue to expand pathways to recognition in the future.

Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka
Federal Minister of Education and Research
Part I: Five years of the Recognition Act – conclusions and new perspectives
Recognition is working

The “Law to improve the assessment and recognition of professional and vocational education and training qualifications acquired abroad” (Federal Recognition Act) entered into force on 1 April 2012. The new recognition regulations are today creating a framework that enables more and more companies to employ staff with foreign professional and vocational qualifications. The recognition procedure is delivering transparency in respect of existing qualifications for skilled workers and companies alike and is helping to close possible skills gaps.

The present report confirms that the new recognition regulations have been successfully introduced and that there is considerable interest in professional and occupational recognition. The results of an impact analysis of evaluation and monitoring with regard to the implementation of the Recognition Act supplies proof that the legislative goals have been achieved.

Five years after the introduction of the Recognition Act, integration benefits and positive employment effects for an extended group of persons are being revealed in the form of significantly improved opportunities for accessing a recognition procedure and in enhanced support structures. Evaluators have arrived at the conclusion that recognition both provides a vehicle for better integration into employment and demonstrably fulfils an important function as an instrument for managed integration in education, training and employment.

Based on the experiences gleaned over five years, the “2017 Report on the Recognition Act” reviews its progress so far and looks ahead to future challenges. This part of the report classifies the main lines of development and results of the evaluation from the point of view of the Federal Government. The second section presents the highlights of the Monitoring Project conducted by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) over the past few years. Part III
provides a brief summary of the results of an evaluation, which BIBB commissioned InterVal GmbH and the Institute for Business, Work and Culture (IWAK) to carry out in the autumn of 2015 following an invitation to tender. In line with the stipulations contained within the Professional Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG), the focus of the evaluation is on the take-up and effect of the Recognition Act. Analyses of the implementation of new regulations (relating to aspects such as information and guidance services or administrative implementation) will take place within the scope of the ongoing Monitoring Project being undertaken by BIBB.

Recognition regulations are meeting with a high level of demand

The evaluation results show that the Recognition Act has brought about the most positive changes for nationals who have acquired their professional or vocational qualification in a third country and for persons with foreign qualifications that correspond to non-regulated occupations in Germany. Three quarters of applications were submitted by persons who previously had no access to the procedure or who are benefiting from improved procedural rules. Data from the official statistics accordingly shows a strong growth in the take-up of the new recognition regulations. More than 63,000 applications for recognition in professions governed by federal law were made between 2012 and the end of 2015 alone. In addition, there are recognition procedures in professions governed by federal state law. Coordinated federal state statistics for these are expected to be in place for the first time in 2018.

More recent figures from 2016 relating to existing information and guidance provision once again show a significant increase in interest. Figures for visits to the internet portal “Recognition in Germany” rose continuously, and the mark of 5 million visits in total was passed in December 2016. Also in 2016, the initial counselling centres as part of the “Integration through Training (IQ)” funding programme and the Hotline “Working and Living in Germany” (ALiD-Hotline) recorded a joint growth of around 30 percent compared to the previous year. Together with the chambers, they conducted a total of over 230,000 recognition consultations during the period from 2012 to 31 December 2016.

Full equivalence was certified in three quarters of notices issued as a result of recognition applications, more than half of which came from the EU. In 2015, the
rejection rate was 2.6 percent so it was even lower than in the previous years. The proportion of applications for non-regulated reference occupations has also been rising over the years, from only 20 percent in 2002 to around 26 percent in 2015.

**Effective for labour market integration and immigration**

The results of the evaluation represent for the first time a comprehensive impact analysis of recognition. The evaluation itself was based on a broad methodological mix comprising a quantitative survey (812 persons whose recognition procedure led to a positive decision between 2012 and 2016) and sample qualitative occupational case studies. It arrived at the conclusion that the effects of the Recognition Act have been extremely positive.

A before and after comparison revealed that the quality of labour market integration improves considerably following the recognition procedure. At the time when the survey was carried out in the summer of 2016, 88 percent of respondents were in employment. The corresponding proportion at the time when application for recognition was made was only nearly 58 percent. The proportion of persons in employment but working for only a small number of hours per month was 3 percent, considerably lower than at the time of application for recognition (13 percent). Finally, following recognition, 73 percent of those in work viewed their employment as being commensurate with their qualification. The corresponding figure at the time of application for recognition was only 59 percent.

Recognition is shown to pay off. Workers achieved higher mean incomes than prior to recognition. Average monthly gross income received by persons in work was around €1,000 higher than at the time of application. This represented a rise of 40 percent. Three quarters of those surveyed also believed that their personal work situation was better than at the time of application for recognition. Respondents accorded a particularly high rating to the contribution made by recognition in terms of career entry and advancement (receiving an agreement rate of more than 85 percent). Successful professional and occupational recognition thus creates employment that is in line with a person’s qualification. The “investment” made in a recognition procedure facilitates individual transition to employment subject to mandatory social insurance, leads to a significant increase in income and opens up new work perspectives.

The case studies conducted as part of the evaluation also show that companies enjoy a clear added value by using the instrument of recognition. Recognition provides a particular benefit for companies in branches where there is a shortage of skilled workers (for example, in the healthcare and electrical sectors). In these areas, recognition of foreign qualifications held by staff is used for purposes such as sending out a signal of quality to clients and customers in situations where branch-specific requirements are in place. Recognition is also used as a means for creating company loyalty amongst employees. All of this reinforces the joint approach adopted by the Federal Government in conjunction with trade and industry and the social partners to make the added value delivered by professional and occupational recognition more transparent for companies.

In addition, recognition facilitates immigration because in some cases it is a prerequisite for the issuing of a residence permit. The occupational case studies conducted within the evaluation demonstrate that companies are starting to make use of the opportunities afforded by the Recognition Act to cover their skilled worker requirements by recruiting from abroad.

The number of recognition applications submitted from abroad has risen constantly and these now account for one in ten of all applications. This possibility did not exist before the Recognition Act entered into force. The evaluation reveals that a majority of respondents who made an application from abroad received recognition in a regulated profession and that this recognition of their professional qualification was significant in terms of making the decision to migrate (over 80 percent agreement).

**Further development of the legal foundations**

When stating examples of good practice, international comparative reports (OECD, ILO) regularly mention the transparency of recognition regulations and the support structures and measures established or expanded in the law. This is also illustrated by the fact that other countries have a high degree of interest in the German recognition system. There is also good ‘recognition’ internationally of the regulations contained within the German Recognition Act and of the way in which these are implemented.
The Recognition Act is the first instrument to establish a general legal right to a recognition procedure. In addition, the recognition regulations that were already in place prior to the Recognition Act have been comprehensively expanded. This extension includes aspects such as clear statutory stipulations regarding duration of the procedure and the regulation that occupational experience should be taken into account in the equivalence assessment.

The recognition regulations have also been further developed after the Recognition Act came into force in 2012. The need for statutory amendment arose in particular in the wake of the Act for the Promotion of Electronic Government (E-Government Act) of July 2013 and as a result of the updating of the EU Professional Qualifications Directive in January 2014. The far-reaching changes that have been introduced are aimed at simplifying procedures and increasing occupational mobility within the European Single Market by facilitating more efficient and more transparent recognition of professional and vocational qualifications.

Positive developments have also occurred in the way in which immigration law and recognition law work together. The new version of the Employment Ordinance (BeschV), which entered into force in July 2013, opened up the labour market to third-country nationals who have completed VET abroad. For the first time, this also makes it possible for requirements-based immigration to take place in certain training occupations where there is a shortage of skilled workers. § 17a of the German Residence Act (AufenthG), which was introduced in August 2015, further extends possibilities for the immigration of skilled workers (immigration for the purpose of training measures within the context of professional and occupational recognition). From the time of its entry into force until December 2016, around 600 residence permits were issued pursuant to § 17a AufenthG. This is an area in which considerable opportunities for further development are believed to lie. Irrespective of the large numbers of refugees who have arrived in Germany and, in the light of worldwide competition to secure the services of the best talent, immigration of qualified skilled workers is and will remain an important building block in terms of securing a supply of skilled workers in Germany.

**Information and guidance successfully established**

One important success factor in the broad effectiveness of the Recognition Act is the amount of awareness it enjoys. Associated with this is the availability of information and the provision of guidance services. “Recognition in Germany” is the official Federal Government information portal for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. The portal’s unique selling point is the Recognition Finder, which enables searches to be conducted by the relevant German reference profession or occupation, by the occupation-specific recognition procedure, and by the competent body responsible. Almost one in two visits to the site are from abroad.

The BQ-Portal, which assists competent bodies in the chamber area by providing information and specialist support, and the anabin database operated by the federal states, which mainly contains extensive details of foreign higher education qualifications, provide comprehensive information on the recognition of qualifications from abroad online.

Since 2012, a diverse range of free-to-use multilingual guidance services has also been created. These connected within effectively functioning networks and thus offer persons interested in seeking recognition the opportunity to obtain personal guidance and support from the initial orientation phase to the submission of the actual application itself. Post-procedural assistance is also available.

Between 2012 and 2016, there was a continuous increase in the numbers of persons receiving guidance from the IQ initial counselling centres and the Hotline “Working and Living in Germany” (ALiD-Hotline). These provided a total of over 160,000 first consultations. In the case of the IQ initial counselling centres, the largest group was formed by Polish nationals in 2014 and by Syrians from 2015 onwards.

The chambers, in particular the chambers of crafts and trades (HWK) and the chambers of commerce and industry (IHK), also provide initial guidance free of charge to persons with vocational qualifications obtained abroad to help prepare for the recognition procedure. During the period from 2012 to 2016, the chambers conducted a total of more than 72,400 initial consultations. The chambers also assist in facilitating
labour market integration in a manner that is in line with a person’s qualifications and interests by highlighting alternatives to the recognition procedure. These possible alternatives are not the least of the reasons why not every consultation does lead to a recognition application.

**Recognition opportunities made visible**

The Federal Government is continuing to expand its information and guidance provision in order to enhance the visibility of the recognition regulations still further and thus increase opportunities. Its Recognition Portal aimed at skilled workers with a foreign vocational qualification is expanding the concept of multilingual provision. Nine different language versions are currently available, and Russian and French are set to follow in the second half of 2017.

Guidance services have also been established abroad with a view to offering better support to persons from abroad interested in seeking recognition with regard to the decision to migrate to Germany. The pilot project “ProRecognition – Professional & Vocational Qualifications for Germany”, which is funded by the Federal Government, has for the first time set up guidance and contact centres at eight German Chambers of Commerce and Abroad and trade delegations (AHK) located in Egypt, China, India, Iran, Italy, Morocco, Poland and Vietnam. These centres have already provided guidance to more than 600 persons and have succeeded in establishing themselves as main, locally based contact partners for the topic of professional and occupational recognition. Foreign skilled workers are also able to obtain general information on living and working in Germany from the central “Make it in Germany” welcome portal. This site encompasses recognition as one of its four main thematic areas via the ALiD-Hotline.

In addition, two federally funded projects have been launched to place a greater emphasis on recognition from the perspective of companies. The project “Anerkannt” from the Educational Institute of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB-Bildungswerk) is aimed at the workers’ and staff council members who transport the topic of professional recognition into firms. The project “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung” was launched in 2016 by the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry e. V. (DIHK) and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts e. V. (ZDH). This project has begun a communication campaign to provide information on the chances and possibilities offered by recognition, with the aim of raising companies’ awareness of the concept and spurring them into action.

**Overcoming the challenges of administrative implementation**

Since the entry into force of the Recognition Act in 2012, everyone has enjoyed the right to a recognition procedure in Germany irrespective of nationality, country of training or place of residence. In order to fulfil this right, various models for the implementation of the Recognition Act have been selected in the different areas of responsibility. At the end of 2016, there were over 1,500 competent bodies. Around 800 of these deal with qualifications governed by federal law, of which there are approximately 600. In order to enable them to quickly and reliably identify the right recognition body, persons interested in seeking recognition can use the Recognition Finder on the portal to access all relevant information regarding the establishment of contact with the respective body responsible.

Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel (left) and Federal Minister of Education Prof. Dr. Johanna Wanka (right) visited the IHK FOSA on 16 April 2015. The IHK FOSA is chaired by Dirk von Vopelius (rear), President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Commerce of Nuremberg and Central Franconia.
From the very outset, the chambers of crafts and trades and the chambers of commerce and industry particularly viewed the new challenges brought about by the expansion of the legal right to include the area of non-regulated occupations as an opportunity to secure a supply of skilled workers and accordingly reacted quickly to implement the recognition regulations in a practical manner. The lead chamber system operated by the chambers of crafts and trades and the centralised IHK FOSA helped things get off to a good start, and the positive trend in terms of demand for recognition of qualifications for non-regulated occupations persists.

The chambers are also heavily involved with the “other suitable procedures”. If applicants are unable to produce documentary evidence through no fault of their own or if such documentation is incomplete, § 14 of the BQFG as well as § 50b Paragraph 4 of the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO) afford the opportunity to identify professional and occupational competences for all dual training, advanced training and master craftsman occupations via a form of skills analysis. The relevant procedure was developed between 2011 and 2014 via the “Prototyping” project, which focused mainly on the craft trades. The aim is that wider dissemination will take place via the follow-up project “Prototyping Transfer”. Between 2012 and 2015, the official statistics recorded nearly 360 skills analyses.

Within the scope of the planned evaluation of the pilot phase, it will be necessary to monitor whether the goals pursued via the establishment of the GfG can be achieved with the given design of the body or if expansion is required, regarding the limitation of 3,000 assessments per year and the fact that the agency restricts itself to comparing training without evaluating occupational experience in particular.

In overall terms, administrative practice and, in some cases, low levels of staffing at government authorities and at the competent bodies of the federal states continue to represent a major challenge. The number of applications received from Germany and abroad has risen constantly over recent years and the expectation is that migration of refugees will cause a further increase. This means a great challenge for the enforcement authorities, in terms of both subject and content as well as on a personal level, particularly in the case of incomplete and unclear documents. As committed to at the Asylum Summit in September 2015, the federal states have provided 16 additional positions at the ZAB. Furthermore, although the federal states gave an assurance at the Asylum Summit that recognition bodies would be adequately staffed to deal with the increasing requirements brought about by the immigration of refugees, it appears that no comprehensive implementation of this commitment has taken place as of yet.
Compensation via training measures and language provision

Not all recognition procedures end at the initial stage with full recognition. For this reason, training provision within the recognition context is offered by educational establishments of the competent bodies, via the IQ funding programme and by numerous other stakeholders. A new main action focus entitled “ESF training within the context of the Recognition Act” was added to the IQ funding programme with effect from 1 January 2015. By the end of 2016, a total of just over 8,000 persons had taken part in an IQ training programme.

Many chambers of crafts and trades and chambers of commerce and industry offer training provision via their educational establishments or else refer participants to providers and companies in the region. Projects to raise companies’ awareness and offer them more information on the topic of recognition (such as “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung” or the BQ-Portal) help to further increase willingness to offer company-based adaptation measures. The Federal Government considers company-based practical phases that form part of training measures within the context of the Recognition Act to be mandatory placements. They are, therefore, fundamentally excluded from the obligation to pay the minimum wage.

In the case of the IQ training courses offered, occupation-related language learning was, alongside specialist theoretical and practical contents, a central component of nearly one third of measures delivered in the form of courses and individual training programmes. Even though knowledge of German does not constitute a formal prerequisite for a recognition procedure, the possession of (occupation-related) language skills plays an important role on the German labour market. In addition, authorisation to practise in the regulated sector depends on sufficient language skills. The agreement of the Conference of Ministers of Health (GMK) on standardised minimum requirements of a uniform language test at level C1 for medical professions has also increased the need for occupation-related language courses. The Federal Government has massively extended language provision for newly arrived immigrants, in particular via a new ordinance on support for occupation-related German language learning, which was enshrined in law as a regulatory instrument for labour market integration with effect from 1 July 2016, and by expanding the provision of integration courses.

Nationwide development of language course provision in the healthcare sector continues to be hampered by the differing ways in which language requirements are implemented in the federal states. Further uniformity or strict application on the part of the federal state authorities of language requirements that have already been standardised is needed in this area.

The updated Professional Qualifications Directive reinforces the priority of checking qualifications over language skills. For this reason, statutory regulations relating to the healthcare professions especially make it clear that an application for equivalence assessment should be considered prior to demonstration of the necessary language skills.

Financial hurdles in the recognition procedure have been reduced

Financing possibilities for recognition have been further developed and supplemented. Based on the experiences on funding provision made available in Hamburg, 2016 saw the Federal Government and the federal states of Baden-Württemberg and Berlin
initiate new funding instruments specifically aimed at persons excluded from receipt of benefits pursuant to the German Social Security Code (SGB) II and III.

A new Recognition Grant introduced by the Federal Government is also aimed at reducing financial burdens en route to recognition. Assistance is given to persons with a low level of income who receive no other form of support. There is considerable interest in the Recognition Grant. Several hundred applications for funding were submitted within a few months of the launch of the programme. Regular support provided in accordance with SGB II/II via the Job Centres or employment agencies is unaffected by the introduction of these new secondary funding instruments.

In addition, the Federal Government is also supporting the establishment of training and support measures within the scope of the ESF-funded IQ funding programme “Integration through Training (IQ)”. This also encompasses the financing of further necessary costs, such as travel or childcare.

Considerable interest amongst refugees
A glance at the nationality of applicants in the official statistics makes it clear that application numbers from the main countries of origin of refugees have grown. In 2015, 1,437 applications were received from nationals of these main countries of origin (including Syria, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan). This represents a significant rise of more than 25 percent compared to the previous year. Nearly 70 percent of all procedures ended in full equivalence. This shows that recognition also provides an effective instrument for rapid integration into the German labour market for refugees with foreign professional and vocational qualifications.

The provision of Arabic information pages on the Recognition Portal and the introduction of a multilingual recognition app in 2016 have also made it easier for refugees to use the services available.

In the case of recognition procedures for refugees with formal professional and vocational qualifications, the fact that documentary evidence is frequently difficult to procure means that skills analyses are likely to play a greater role in future. Work carried out within the “Prototyping Transfer” project is providing the competent bodies with valuable support for the execution of skills analyses.

The significance of refugees as a target group has also clearly increased with regard to the guidance services provided by the IQ initial counselling centres. Between June 2015 and December 2016, around 20,000 refugees took part in a recognition consultation. During this period, the number of refugees as a proportion of persons receiving guidance doubled from about 20 percent in 2015 to just over 40 percent in 2016. Eight out of every ten refugees in IQ training measures are able to demonstrate possession of a higher education qualification. Just over one in five is seeking recognition as a doctor, whilst one in ten is an engineer. This gives rise to the supposition that the number of applications for recognition in this target group will continue to grow.

Forecast – continuing to expand the German recognition system
The evaluation confirms that the recognition of foreign qualifications facilitates entry to the labour market, produces integration benefits and positive employment effects, and fulfils an important function as an instrument for the managed immigration of skilled workers. In overall terms, a look back at five years of the Recognition Act shows the high degree of effectiveness of the provisions contained within the law and of the support structures for the recognition of professional and vocational qualifications acquired abroad. Networks between all stakeholders and institutions (from guidance to financing to training) secure the success of the recognition process. The recognition procedure is an important lever within the labour market promotion toolbox and opens up new development perspectives, such as access to certain upgrading training programmes.

In terms of achieving a further increase in the take-up of these good framework conditions, the evaluators emphasise the high significance of funding provision, such as the Recognition Grant newly introduced by the Federal Government. The evaluation report also recommends expanding measures aimed at raising awareness with regard to the transparency of the benefits and drawbacks of recognition. Companies with a requirement for skilled workers, especially in the non-regulated sector, are an important group that should receive more comprehensive and more differentiated information on the chances offered by recognition.

The Federal Government is already addressing this challenge with a view to enhancing the visibility of
The app offered by the “Recognition in Germany” portal is available in five major languages spoken by refugees as well as in English and German.

The recognition regulations still further and thus increase opportunities. An example of this is the project “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung”, sponsored by the DIHK and the ZDH, which aims to involve firms even more closely in promoting company-based recognition. New forms of contact will be offered within the scope of this project, such as an interactive travelling exhibition as of the summer of 2017. The Federal Government has continued to award the “Wir für Anerkennung” (“We for Recognition”) Prize, which acknowledges good practice and ideas for the use of recognition in companies. Finally, the internet services aimed at persons interested in seeking recognition and advisors are being expanded on an ongoing basis and with a particular emphasis on social media. The aim is to enhance prospective opportunities for company-based continuing training and adaptation training.

In order to achieve further development of funding provision, it will be essential for the Federal Government and federal states to use the BQFG as a basis for effective data recording and evaluation. For this purpose, the Federal Government will support a pilot project aimed at creating coordinated statistics for professions governed by federal state law. Producing effective statistics in the federal states for occupations governed by federal law remains a challenge with regard to achieving uniform standards for the collection and evaluation of data.

The establishment of the GfG represents a milestone in terms of standardised implementation by the federal states. However, considering the increasing take-up of recognition regulations by the federal states, a higher degree of priority needs to be accorded to provide the recognition bodies responsible with adequate human resources. In addition, further standardisations must be addressed with regard to administrative practice and the bundling of competences and regulations. This would also be helpful for immigration procedures for international skilled workers.

The recognition regulations have demonstrated a high level of practical effectiveness. The systematic approach adopted towards recognition of formal professional and vocational competences is of assistance to the development of comparable assessment procedures for general occupational competences. Via mediums such as experiences gained within the field of skills analysis (“Prototyping Transfer” project), recognition can serve as a blueprint for informing the validation on informal and non-formal qualifications. Valuable experiences in this area are currently being gleaned within the “ValiKom” project, which is being conducted in conjunction with partners from the chamber organisations.

The Federal Government has adopted additional initiatives with a view to achieving a further strengthening of the visibility and effectiveness of the German recognition system. These will be further developed in future. One particular focus is on stronger transportation of recognition into the companies. The joint objective of the Federal Government, the federal states and the social partners is to make the value of foreign professional and vocational qualifications transparent in order to enable recognition to produce the future employment prospects demonstrated by the evaluation.

The evaluation results and the ongoing Monitoring Project confirm the effectiveness of the Recognition Act. Systematic observation of recognition procedures will be required in future to develop rules and general conditions further and thus secure the success of the recognition regulations in practice. Ongoing reporting on findings that emerge with regard to implementation and on the effectiveness of the Recognition Act should therefore continue over the following years.
Part II:
Highlights of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project
The timeline sets out selected milestones within the five-year history of the Recognition Act. In order to implement the law, supporting information and guidance services were created alongside existing provision. These include the “Recognition in Germany” portal, the Hotline “Working and Living in Germany” (ALiD-Hotline), the BQ-Portal and recognition guidance services right across the country as part of the “Integration through Training (IQ)” funding programme (cf. Chapter 2). The competent bodies have opted for various models for the bundling of responsibilities (cf. Information Box 4). Whereas the craft trades sector operates a system in which expertise can be obtained from lead chambers during the equivalence assessment process, the centralised IHK FOSA decides on applications at 76 of the 79 chambers of commerce and industry (cf. Chapter 3). Training measures within the context of recognition have been offered via the IQ funding programme since 2015 (cf. Chapter 4). Legal changes have also taken place. One gap in residency law has, for example, been closed by the introduction of a residence permit that allows participation in training courses (§ 17a AufenthG, cf. Chapter 1). Funding for projects such as “Anerkannt” and “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung” (cf. Chapter 2) is integrating companies more closely into recognition procedures. Three federal states have existing scholarship programmes to help finance the costs of such a procedure. Since December 2016, the Recognition Grant has been providing assistance at a national level (cf. Chapter 5).

On behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) has been conducting an ongoing project to monitor the implementation of the Federal Recognition Act since the end of 2012 (BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project). The aims are to achieve transparency with regard to the implementation of the Recognition Act and its accompanying processes and to make a contribution towards quality assurance. 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 include information and guidance and training programmes within the context of the law. BIBB provides information on the results of the analyses via annual reporting to the BMBF and publishes these in the Report on the Recognition Act.1

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Nelson Safaissou from Cameroon studied medicine in Madagascar. Since gaining recognition (licence to practise), he has been working as a registrar at an obstetrics and gynaecology clinic.
Figure 1 Milestones in the implementation of the Recognition Act

2012
- “Scholarship programme for the recognition of foreign qualifications” in Hamburg (since 2010)
- Immigration in shortage occupations for which academic qualifications are not required, § 6 BeschV + white list (July 2013)
- Establishement of IHK FOSA (spring 2012)

2013
- Updating of the EU Professional Recognition Directive 2013/55/EU (January 2014)
- BQFG of the Federal Government amended via EGovG (August 2013)
- “Prototyping” project (since 2011): presentation of standards for skills analyses (autumn 2013)
- BMBF/BIBB conference “5 years of the Recognition Act – once learnt, never forgotten” (June 2017)

2014
- Launch of the project “Anerkannt” by the Educational Institute of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (January 2014)
- All federal states BQFGs have entered into force (by July 2014)
- Hotline expanded to become the Hotline “Working and Living in Germany” (ALiD, December 2014)
- Launch of the project “Anerkannt” by the Educational Institute of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (January 2014)

2015
- IQ agency “Guidance and Training” established at the f-bbb (January 2015)
- Project launch of “Prototyping Transfer” (January 2015)
- Possibility of staying in Germany for the purpose of training, § 17a AufenthG (August 2015)
- Beginning of the evaluation of the Recognition Act (October 2015)

2016
- BQFG Amendment Act to implement the EU Directive (January 2016)
- Project launch of “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung”, DIHK/ZDH (January 2016)
- “Recognition in Germany” available in 9 languages + app for refugees (April 2016)
- Law for the implementation of Directive 2013/55/EU in the healthcare professions (April 2016)

2017
- Over 80 country profiles and 2,600 occupational profiles in BQ Portal (March 2017)
- Launch of company prize “Win für Anerkennung” (“We for Recognition”) (March 2017)
- Evaluation results (June 2017)
- BMBF/BIBB conference “5 years of the Recognition Act – once learnt, never forgotten” (June 2017)
### PART II: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BIBB RECOGNITION MONITORING PROJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Assessment Agency for Health-care Professions (GfG)</strong></td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>starts work</td>
<td>(September)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 million visits to <em>Recognition in Germany</em></td>
<td>(December)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition Act</td>
<td>(April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>“Recognition in Germany” goes online</em></td>
<td>(April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial guidance via the BAMF Recognition Hotline</td>
<td>(since April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project</td>
<td>(December)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Recognition in Germany</em> foreign campaign (2014–2016)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The “ProRecognition” project launches at 8 German Chambers of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Commerce Abroad all over the world (October)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Berlin Hardship Fund for Recognition”</td>
<td>(June)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further development of IQ instruments for refugees (autumn 2015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Professional Recognition in Baden-Württemberg” scholarship</td>
<td>(July)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programme (2016)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10,000th recognition notice issued by IHK FOSA (summer 2016)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Assessment Agency for Health-care Professions (GfG)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>commences work</td>
<td>(September)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Government Recognition Grant</td>
<td>(December)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Recognition in Germany” available in Russian and French</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of electronic provision of information for e-government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at a national level (FIM/Leika) (ongoing)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Representation by BIBB.
The recognition regulations have also been further developed after the entry into force of the Recognition Act in 2012. The need for statutory amendment arose in particular in the wake of the Act for the Promotion of Electronic Government (E-Government Act) of July 2013 and as a result of the updating of the EU Professional Qualifications Directive in January 2014. Opportunities for immigration within the context of professional and occupational recognition have also been crucially improved.

### 1.1 Updating of the EU Directive

Although Directive 2005/36/EC (Professional Qualifications Directive) created a consolidated European system of mutual recognition in the area of regulated professions as long ago as September 2005, its amendment in the form of Directive 2013/55/EU aimed to reduce the administrative expense of recognition procedures. The implementation of these stipulations

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set out in European law took place via the Professional Qualifications Assessment Act (BQFG) and in the laws governing the professions in 2016 and 2017. The far-reaching changes that have been introduced are aimed at simplifying procedures and increasing occupational mobility within the European Single Market by facilitating more efficient and more transparent recognition of professional and vocational qualifications. The updated Professional Qualifications Directive also expressly prioritises the separation of checking qualifications and language skills. This means that an application for equivalence assessment is considered prior to demonstration of the necessary language skills. The Directive also sets out precise stipulations with regard to the main criterion for equivalence assessment – the existence of ‘substantial differences’ between training in the member country of origin and training in the host member country. Only deviations in training contents are relevant in terms of the identification of substantial differences. Duration of training can no longer be used as a separate criterion.

In overall terms, however, the BQFG has meant that the German recognition system has extended beyond the scope of the EU Directive since 2012. It expands the legal right to an equivalence assessment in two regards. Firstly, vocational qualifications from the non-regulated area are included. Secondly, the system also covers qualifications from what are known as third countries (see Report on the Evaluation of the Recognition Act).

**Partial access to a profession may help reduce barriers**

Applicants with qualifications that enable them to fully exercise a profession in their country of origin but whose training only covers part of the profile of the profession in the host country may now gain access to this part of the profession in the host country. This partial access to a profession is intended to apply when differences in training can only be eliminated via a compensation measure that would be in accordance with the whole of the duration of training in the host country. In Germany, partial access to a profession was already included in the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code. It does not apply to healthcare professions whose training contents are already harmonised at European level (dispensing chemist, doctor, dentist, midwife/midwifery assistant and registered general nurse), but is now – in line with Directive 2013/55/EU – for some federally regulated healthcare professions.

**Protection via an alert mechanism**

The updated EU Directive also introduces an alert mechanism via the Internal Market Information System ("IMI Regulation"). This serves the interests of patient, user or youth protection. In the case of recognition procedures, authorities are required to notify one another of any professional bans ordered by an official authority or court, or restrictions on professional practice. Use of falsified qualifications as established by law leads to the recording of an alert in the IMI, which is reported for all professions.

**1.2 Electronic applications**

EU Directive 2013/55/EU also regulates the submission of applications for recognition procedures in electronic form, both to the competent body and to the national contact points (EA). The aim here is to make the general procedure easier. Applicants from the EU, the European Economic Area (EEA) and the countries made equivalent by means of a treaty (Switzerland, for example) can submit their documentation (recognition application, examination certificates, evidence of competence etc.) to the national contact point of a federal state electronically for forwarding to the competent body. Some federal states also offer this possibility to third-country nationals. Full information on the process and the national contact points of the federal states is available on the “Recognition in Germany” portal, on the 16 federal state portals and on the portals of the national contact points.

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3 According to this, the partial entry to the profession also applies to psychological psychotherapists, child and youth therapists, and technical medical assistants as regulated in law (MTA law).

4 The national contact point was introduced as long ago as 2006 via the EU Services in the Internal Market Directive 2006/123/EC and was implemented into national law in Germany in spring 2009. It provides information on the lawful commencement of a service activity and now also accepts application for recognition.
European Professional Card
Finally, the EU Directive 2013/55/EU also introduced a new European Professional Card (EPC) for the occupations of nurse, pharmacist, physiotherapist, mountain guide and real estate agent. The EPC is an electronic certificate. In order to obtain it, applicants must submit the required evidence for the recognition for scrutiny by the relevant authority in their home member state. Once the documents have been checked, confirmed documentary evidence is forwarded to the competent body in the host state, which then verifies the equivalent of the professional qualification. As long as the results of the test do not demand any compensation measures to be imposed, the latter will issue the EPC.

The aims of the system are to create greater transparency and legal certainty for the members of the relevant professions and to increase their mobility. Extension of the EPC procedure to further professions is under consideration.

Since the introduction of the EPC on 18 January 2016, a total of 2,100 applications have been received from within the EU as a whole. Just over a third of these (703) have been approved thus far. 234 applications were submitted from Germany (of which 53 percent have been approved), and 131 Europeans have applied for an EPC to work in Germany. Applicants who submit an EPC application in Germany very frequently have the goal of working in Austria, France and Italy (66 percent)

5 As the profession of real estate agent is currently a non-regulated occupation in Germany, it is possible to work in this field without an EPC.

6 Last updated: 31 December 2016.
in total). Applicants from Poland and Italy make up the majority of those wishing to exercise their profession in Germany (47 percent in total). Measured against the number of all applications, more than half are accounted for by the two occupational profiles of physiotherapist and nurse.

1.3 § 17a German Residence Act

The new version of the Employment Ordinance (BeschV), which entered into force in July 2013, opened up the labour market to third-country nationals who have completed VET abroad. This also makes it possible for requirements-based immigration to take place in training occupations. § 17a of the German Residence Act (AufenthG), which was introduced on 1 August 2015, further extends possibilities for the immigration of skilled workers. It creates a legal framework for foreign skilled workers to attend suitable training courses for the purpose of compensating for qualification differences identified in the recognition procedure. Foreign nationals may obtain a residence permit of up to 18 months for participation in an adaptation or training course. Such a course must be suitable to compensate for any professional, practical and/or language deficits that have been identified. If a job offer is in place, a residence permit for the completion of a test within the scope of the recognition procedure may also be granted. Following recognition of the foreign qualification, a further stay of twelve months is guaranteed for the purpose of seeking a job using the professional qualification for which recognition has been acquired. In order to finance living costs during the measure, any employment in an area closely related to the profession for which recognition is being sought is permitted. The prerequisite for this is that a job offer for later employment is already in place within the profession for which recognition is being sought. Employment in an area not related to the training measure is otherwise permitted for a period of up to ten hours a week. In the training measures run by the “Integration through Training (IQ)” Network, the number of participants holding a residence permit pursuant to § 17 AufenthG is constantly increasing (1507, predominantly healthcare professions). Between entry into force and December 2016, 591 residence permits have been issued in accordance with § 17a AufenthG.

Information Box 1
Access to the labour market via § 17a of the German Residence Act

- Attendance of training measures for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications (for example adaptation courses, preparatory courses for the knowledge test, occupation-related language courses)
- Completion of a test for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications (for example a knowledge test)
- Employment in an area closely related to the profession for which recognition is being sought is possible and enables basic living costs to be covered.
- Employment is otherwise permitted up to ten hours per week.
- Permission to seek work for a period of up to one year once recognition has been successfully obtained.

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7 This figure relates to persons commencing a training measure between 1 December 2016 and 31 December 2016.

2. Information and guidance

One important success factor in the broad effectiveness of the Recognition Act is the amount of awareness it enjoys. Associated with this is the availability of information and the provision of guidance services. Since 2012, a comprehensive range of information and guidance services has been put in place and a series of measures and projects to support the law has been launched. The focus has been on raising awareness and on reaching various target groups with different needs.

### Figure 3 Information and guidance volume for selected institutions 2012 to 2016 (absolute terms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information provision</th>
<th>First consultation</th>
<th>Initial guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>anabin database</strong></td>
<td><strong>IQ initial counselling centres</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chambers of crafts and trades</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total visitor numbers</td>
<td>Total guidance cases</td>
<td>Total guidance cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7,011,380</strong></td>
<td><strong>103,581</strong></td>
<td><strong>49,986</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AID Portal</strong></td>
<td><strong>ALiD-Hotline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chambers of commerce and industry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total visitor numbers</td>
<td>Total guidance cases</td>
<td>Total guidance cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5,115,578</strong></td>
<td><strong>57,708</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,337</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BQ-Portal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total visitor numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>496,410</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In millions
* In thousands
* In thousands

Source and explanation: Number of visits to the Portal “Recognition in Germany” (AID) (period: 14 March 2012 to 31 December 2016), anabin database (period: 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016), BQ-Portal (period: 14 March 2012 to 31 December 2016). As the methods deployed by web analysis tools vary in some cases, the numbers of visits to the portals stated are not fully comparable.

IQ consultation data (period: 1 August 2012 to 31 December 2016) and Hotline guidance data (period: 1 April 2012 to 31 December 2016).

* HWKs (chambers of crafts and trades): BIBB/ZDH surveys of the chambers of crafts and trades (period: 1 April 2012 to 31 December 2016). As guidance volume for the years 2012 to 2014 cannot be precisely delineated as to year, average values have been calculated for these years.

** IHKs (chambers of commerce and industry): special evaluations using the data management tool of the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) (period: 1 April 2012 to 31 December 2016). Not all chambers of commerce and industry use this tool. The special evaluations do not permit precisely delineated identification of the amount of initial consultations. The DIHK estimates that around 80 percent of cases relate to initial guidance. Since 2015, reporting has only taken this proportion into account. Until that point, all consultations (except referral consultations and consultations relating to the Federal Expellees Act) were included in Reports on the Recognition Act. Representation by BIBB on the basis of the data sources stated above.

9 Numerous measures aimed at providing information and guidance on the topic of recognition, including the “Recognition in Germany” portal, are mentioned as examples of good practice in an international study conducted by Ecorys (cf. Donlevy et al. 2016, pp. 106ff.).
• Persons living in Germany or abroad who are interested in seeking professional recognition and wish to access information on the topic autonomously or avail themselves of specialist guidance
• Recognition advisors and competent bodies requiring thematic-specific pools of knowledge for their daily work
• Companies that in their capacity as employers hold a key position in terms of the usefulness of qualifications that have been recognised

Account has been taken of the challenges that have arisen. Three internet platforms now form the central basis for the provision of virtual information on the topic of recognition (cf. Chapter 2.1). Persons interested in seeking recognition have various opportunities to obtain guidance before, during and subsequent to a recognition procedure (cf. Chapter 2.2). Alignment to an international audience has been driven forward by multilingual presentation of services and guidance centres abroad (cf. Chapter 2.3). Two further projects are raising awareness of the topic of recognition within the company context (cf. Chapter 2.4).

The rising numbers of users and consultations show that provision is being well received (cf. Figure 3).

2.1 Provision of information via “Recognition in Germany”, the BQ-Portal and anabin

Everything at a glance – the Federal Recognition Portal for persons interested in seeking recognition and advisors

“Recognition in Germany” is the official Federal Government information portal for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications. Since its launch in April 2012, it has collated all relevant occupation-specific information relating to the recognition regulations of the Federal Government and the federal states, and has made this information available free of charge in multilingual form. The portal is operated by BIBB, which since January 2016 has also been home to the German assistance centre for questions relating to the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications at the EU level.

Since the Recognition Act came into force in April 2012, figures for visits to the portal have risen continuously (cf. Figure 3). The mark of 5 million visits in total was passed in December 2016. Around 48 percent of the total of 5.1 million visits up until the end of 2016 were from abroad, in particular from Italy, Turkey and the Russian Federation. The Recognition Finder accounts for just over half of almost 26 million page visits. This is the portal’s USP and enables searches to be conducted by the relevant German reference profession or occupation, by the occupation-specific recognition procedure and by the competent body responsible. The high number of visits received shows that the portal and the Recognition Finder in particular are of assistance both to persons interested in seeking recognition and to recognition advisors.

The portal is being further developed on an ongoing basis. Since 2012, information pages have been designed in multilingual form (cf. Chapter 2.3). Skilled workers with a whole range of different foreign professional and vocational qualifications have provided field reports in which they describe their own personal progress to recognition. Since March 2013, the portal has included an “Advanced Filter” to provide specialist advisory staff with a more sophisticated search function for occupations. An Advisor Forum, which was introduced to the portal in 2014, also provides advisors with a password-protected area in which they can exchange knowledge.

The portal has been pursuing its aim of making easily understandable information available to both persons interested in seeking recognition and to advisors since 2012. Comprehensibility of the complex information provided was further improved in 2016 when simple language was systematically implemented for the preparation of portal contents.

10 See www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de. The portal is run by BIBB on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which also provides funding.


12 In 2016, a pool of expertise and knowledge was added for the BMBF project “Prototyping Transfer”. This contains information, tools, guides and templates that may be of assistance in the conducting of a skills analysis. This pool is also located in the password-protected area of the site and is only available to competent bodies.
Information for competent bodies in the chamber area and for companies – the BQ-Portal

The main aim of the BQ-Portal is to support the competent bodies in the chamber area by providing information on and specialist assistance with recognition procedures.13

The portal went online in autumn 2011. As well as offering an information platform, it has also served as a knowledge network and management system for competent bodies since March 201214. The portal is expanded on an ongoing basis via the involvement of the competent bodies. This has enabled comprehensive information on foreign professional and vocational qualifications and descriptions of VET systems to be made available in the public area of the site. At the end of 2016, this contained 2,575 occupational profiles and 79 country profiles. In 2015, the BQ-Portal received the European Public Sector Award for this collaborative approach and for its innovative and efficient administrative practices. The chambers are also able to document the results of equivalence assessments that have been conducted in a password-protected area and thus help to achieve nationally standardised evaluation practice. At the end of 2016, 902 evaluation results from recognition procedures had been uploaded.15

The BQ-Portal has also seen a constant increase in the numbers of persons visiting the site since 2012 (cf. Figure 3). A total of almost 500,000 visits have been recorded thus far. The service is also used from abroad. Just over a third of visits in 2016 (around 165,000) were received from other countries, mainly from Austria, Switzerland and the Russian Federation.

Over the last 18 months, there has been a significant rise in interest in occupational and system-specific information on the countries of origin of refugees to Germany, especially Syria. The BQ-Portal reacted by putting further provision in place. Brief descriptions on the main countries from which refugees originate were uploaded in 2016. Full descriptions of the VET systems of these main countries of origin have also been available since November 2016.

The second target group of the BQ-Portal, the companies, are provided with orientation guides and practical examples, which give information on how they can support recognition procedures and how the companies themselves can benefit from the process.

Provision on information on foreign educational qualifications – anabin

Established in 2000, the anabin database provides comprehensive information on foreign educational qualifications. It contains information on the evaluation of school qualifications, higher education qualifications vocational qualifications, and foreign educational institutions in the higher education sector.

By the end of 2016, information and evaluations were available on 26,276 higher education qualifications, 30,473 educational institutions, 1,077 school qualifications and 5,486 vocational qualifications. The list is being expanded on an ongoing basis.

30,941 sample assessments on various recognition aims were also accessible in a password-protected area. One important new development with regard to achieving standardisation of recognition procedures in the healthcare sector is the fact that results from the Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (GfG) have been documented since September 2016 (see Information Box 3).

Provision is intended to help government authorities, employers, educational institutions (especially institutes of higher education) and persons interested in seeking recognition in categorising the foreign qualifications in the German educational system. The fact that the number of visits to the site rose from just over 900,000 in 2012 to 1.7 million in 2016 shows that services are being increasingly used.16

13 See www.bq-portal.de. The Cologne Institute for Economic Research (IW Köln) is responsible for the operation and further development of the portal. The BQ-Portal is financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi).
14 In March 2016 BMWi, ZDH, VLK and the BFB confirmed their intention to continue to support the BQ-Portal by issuing a declaration entitled: “Joint action for the support of recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications in the area of the dual occupations (in accordance with the Vocational Training Act and the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code)” (https://www.bq-portal.de/sites/default/files/gemeinsame_erklaerung_zdh-bfb-vlk-bmwि_2016-2018.pdf).
15 The IHK FOSA does not use the services of the BQ-Portal.
16 See http://anabin.kmk.org. anabin is embedded in the internet presence of the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB), which is also responsible for its operation. Funding is provided by the federal states.
PART II: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BIBB RECOGNITION MONITORING PROJECT

17 The hotline existed in the form of the “Recognition Hotline of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-Hotline) until 30 November 2014. With effect from 1 December 2014, it was extended to become the Hotline “Working and Living in Germany” (ALiD-Hotline). This central information hotline forms part of the demographic strategy of the Federal Government. It is jointly operated by the BAMF and the BA within the scope of a cross-departmental cooperation agreement between the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWI), Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Employment Agency (BA). Since this time, the hotline has been providing advice on the topics of recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications, looking for a job, work and occupations, entry and residency and learning German. The abbreviation BAMF-Hotline, which was used in previous reports, will be replaced from this report onwards with the term ALiD-Hotline.

18 IQ initial counselling centres also offer guidance and support during the procedure itself.

Further relevant stakeholders such as the employment agencies, the Job Centres and adult migrant guidance centres (MBE), have also incorporated the topic into their guidance portfolios. In many cases, they are networked with the IQ initial counselling centres.

Initial guidance: Initial guidance is offered by the competent bodies and takes the form of individual advice on preparing for the procedure. Persons interested in seeking recognition receive all necessary information regarding statutory foundations and the recognition procedure itself. The competent bodies provide clarification on matters such as documentation to be submitted, the procedural process and costs involved. They also inspect the documents to be submitted. The German reference profession or occupation is also stipulated. Alongside this, alternative procedures to recognition such as retraining or an external examination are taken into consideration. Initial guidance may also progress to the provision of guidance and support during the procedure.

Training guidance: Since not all recognition procedures end at the first stage with full recognition, persons interested in seeking recognition are afforded the opportunity to receive training guidance and information on relevant measures. The aim here is the completion of compensation measures imposed in the case of regulated professions or adaptation training in the case of non-regulated occupations. For the 2015 to 2018 funding period, the “Integration through Training (IQ)” Programme has been extended by adding a main action focus entitled “ESF training within the context of the Recognition Act” (cf. Chapter 4.1). The chambers of commerce and industry and the chambers of crafts and trades also offer this form of guidance.

### 2.2 Guidance services for persons interested in seeking recognition

Since 2012, a diverse range of free-to-use multilingual guidance services has been created. These offer persons interested in seeking recognition the opportunity to obtain personal guidance and support from the initial orientation phase to the submission of the actual application itself. Post-procedural assistance is also available (cf. Information Box 2).

Over 160,000 first consultations provided by the Hotline “Working and Living in Germany” and the IQ initial counselling centres

A total of over 160,000 first consultations were conducted between 2012 and 2016. Of these, around 103,500 were provided by IQ initial counselling centres whilst 57,700 took place via the ALiD-Hotline (cf. Fig-
The number of persons receiving a consultation has risen nearly every year. In 2016, the two agencies providing first consultations recorded a growth of about 29 percent compared to the previous year.20 Persons receiving guidance from the ALiD-Hotline and the IQ initial counselling centres can be described as a predominantly homogeneous group. Most persons seeking an initial consultation, above 60 percent in each case, were younger than 35 at the time when the consultation took place and highly qualified. Around 70 percent were in possession of at least a higher education qualification21. The age structure of persons receiving guidance has become slightly younger since 2012, and there has been a rise in the proportion of those aged between 25 and 34 in particular.

87 percent, almost 71,000 persons, of those receiving a consultation from the IQ initial counselling centres stated that they spoke German as a second language (cf. Figure 4). Just over 71 percent of them were in possession of a language certificate. Nearly half, 47 percent, held a certificate at B1 level. 17 percent had a B2 level certificate. Only one in ten persons stated that they had no knowledge of German.

In the first two years after the Recognition Act came into force, German nationals made up an average of 14 percent of persons receiving a consultation and thus constituted the largest group. Although the tendency declined slightly, this trend continued until 2016 in the case of the ALiD-Hotline. For the IQ initial counselling centres, the largest group was formed by Polish nationals in 2014 and by Syrians from 2015 onwards. This development reflected the rising numbers of asylum seekers migrating from Syria (see also the section on “Refugees receiving first consultations at IQ initial counselling centres”).

Consultations are provided both to those resident in Germany and to persons interested in seeking recognition who live abroad. The latter group made particular use of the ALiD-Hotline. Between 2012 and 2016, 34 percent stated that their place of residence was abroad. Of these, 10 percent lived in the EU/EEA/Switzerland and 24 percent in a third country. As it is a telephone service, the hotline is easier to use from

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20 Unless otherwise stated, all percentage and absolute values stated in this chapter relate to valid information only. For further evaluations, see also Billand, Deuschle and Vockentanz 2017.
21 This refers to vocational qualifications that have been acquired via academic routes in the respective country of training. It does not necessarily imply that the German reference profession or occupation is also an academic qualification.
abroad. There was a particular rise in the proportion of persons interested in seeking recognition who were resident in a third country. This figure increased from just over 8 percent in 2012 to almost 29 percent in 2016.

The most frequent areas in which persons interested in recognition sought guidance were engineer and teacher qualifications. These were followed by the professions of registered general nurse and doctor (cf. Table 1). Almost 60 percent of persons who received a consultation were at least 25 years old, and 87.1 percent of persons were interested in obtaining their qualification in German as a foreign language. Almost 60 percent of persons received a consultation in the first year after entry to Germany.

Source and explanation: IQ consultation data (period 1 August 2012 to 31 December 2016).
All percentages relate to valid values only.
Characteristic of nationality: not included = stateless persons, Palestinian Territories, other.
Characteristic of employment status: not included = other.
Calculations by BIBB and by the “Guidance and Training” agency of the IQ funding programme. Representation by BIBB.
consultation from IQ initial counselling centres had experience in at least one of the possible reference professions or occupations. This experience had mostly been acquired abroad.

Refugees receiving first consultations at IQ initial counselling centres

The IQ initial counselling centres have been recording the residency status of persons receiving consultations since 1 June 2015. This has made it possible to obtain information on the target group of refugees. Between June 2015 and December 2016, 19,678 refugees took part in a recognition consultation. During this period, the number of refugees as a proportion of persons receiving this form of guidance doubled from about 20 percent in 2015 to just over 41 percent in 2016. In some cases, the first consultation took place shortly after arrival in Germany. Around 15 percent sought guidance in their year of arrival and 65 percent did so during the following year. The most frequent visitors to IQ initial counselling centres by far were Syrian nationals. They accounted for almost two thirds of refugees receiving a consultation, followed by Iranians and Afghans. The latter made up about 7 percent and just over 5 percent respectively.

Around 57 percent were aged between 25 and 34. In overall terms, almost 70 percent were younger than 35. Almost three quarters of the refugees had obtained at least a higher education qualification. This high proportion of academic qualifications is also reflected in the reference professions or occupations. The most common professions for which a consultation was provided were engineer, teacher and doctor. Dual training occupations accounted for 17 percent of the consultations.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Qualification</th>
<th>ALID-Hotline absolute</th>
<th>ALID-Hotline %</th>
<th>IQ initial counselling centres absolute</th>
<th>IQ initial counselling centres %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>5,215</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>10,426</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>4,204</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>9,876</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered general nurse</td>
<td>4,198</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>3,493</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3,702</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business economist</td>
<td>1,786</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3,106</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery school teacher</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2,518</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology specialist</td>
<td>1,167</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2,209</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>1,053</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1,577</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 10 overall</td>
<td>25,160</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>42,115</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further reference professions or occupations</td>
<td>29,700</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>50,485</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54,860</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>102,600</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source and explanation: IQ consultation data (period: 1 August 2012 to 31 December 2016; n = 103,581) and hotline consultation data (period: 1 April 2012 to 31 December 2016, n = 57,708). Multiple responses possible. All percentages relate to valid values only. Calculations by the “Guidance and Training” agency of the IQ funding programme.

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22 This includes persons who stated during the first consultation that their residency status in Germany was based on leave to remain (pursuant to § 55 Paragraph 1 of the Asylum Procedure Law, AsylVfG) or special leave to remain (pursuant to § 60a Paragraph 4 AufenthG) or that they were in Germany according to international law or for humanitarian or political reasons (§ 22 to 26, 104a, 104b AufenthG).

23 If nothing to the contrary is stated, the survey period for the data presented here and below for the IQ initial counselling centres is the period from 1 June 2015 to 31 December 2016. Unless otherwise stated, all percentage and absolute values stated in this chapter relate to valid information only.

24 The total number of persons on whom the percentage information provided here is based encompasses all those receiving an initial consultation at IQ initial counselling centres regardless of whether they stated they were in possession of a residence permit or not.
Just over 15,500 of refugees receiving an IQ consultation stated that they spoke German as a second language. Around 61 percent were also in possession of a language certificate, usually at the levels B1 (41 percent), A2 (just over 25 percent) and A1 (almost 24 percent).

In December 2016, a total of 164,066 persons were registered as refugees at the BA. Of these, 6,762 stated that they had completed company or school-based training. 11,572 were in possession of an academic qualification. The BA statistics do not reveal whether a qualification was obtained abroad. The figures also do not provide any information as to how many persons availed themselves of a recognition consultation at the IQ initial counselling centres. Nevertheless, just over 90 percent of the 19,678 refugees and asylum seekers to whom the IQ initial counselling centres provided a first consultation were unemployed. This suggests a certain overlap. This supposition is supported by the fact that half of the refugees not in employment came to the IQ initial counselling centres via the BA or the Job Centres.

Over 72,000 initial consultations at the chambers
Both the chambers of crafts and trades and the local chambers of commerce and industry help potential applicants to prepare for the recognition procedure by providing initial guidance free of charge on professional and vocational qualifications that fall within their area of responsibility.

Since commencing their guidance activities in 2012, both chambers have recorded constantly rising figures (cf. Figure 3). In 2016, the chambers of crafts and trades provided guidance in just over 12,480 cases. The corresponding figure for the chambers of commerce and industry was about 4,700. During the period from 2012 to 2016, the chambers conducted a total of more than 72,400 initial consultations.

Provision extended – training guidance at the IQ initial counselling centres
Since 2015, IQ initial counselling centres have been offering training guidance alongside their recognition consultations. They have advised 16,351 interested parties thus far, 10,975 of these in the year 2016. This means that annual guidance volume has more than doubled within two years.

Half of those seeking such guidance wish to work in a regulated profession. Around 15 percent sought information on training opportunities for dual training occupations. As was the case with recognition guidance, the most frequent reference professions or occupations were engineer, doctor and teacher.

25 The term “initial guidance” has not been defined in binding terms. For this reason, it may not always be applied conterminously in different chamber areas. Guidance figures from the chambers of crafts and trades are collected by BIBB in close conjunction with the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH). All 53 chambers of crafts and trades provided feedback on initial guidance. In the trade and industry sector, guidance volume is recorded using the data management tool of the DIHK. This is not used by all chambers of commerce and industry. The data management tool records the referral consultations that occur if it emerges during the initial meeting that a different body is responsible for recognition. These, however, are not listed here. For this reason, data from the area of the chambers of industry and commerce should be interpreted as a minimum figure. Survey period for the chamber of crafts and trades and chamber of commerce and industry data: 1 April 2012 to 31 December 2016.

26 The chambers make sufficient human resources available for their guidance provision.
At the time when training guidance took place, 2,342 persons had already received a notice of equivalence. A compensation measure had been imposed in nearly half of these cases. Just over 22 percent had received partial equivalence and full equivalence had been accorded to not quite 20 percent. It is possible that persons whose foreign qualification had received full recognition wished to obtain information as to how they could further enhance their opportunities on the labour market.

2.3 International alignment of information and guidance provision

“Recognition in Germany” – internationally active and available in multilingual form

One of the goals of the Recognition Act is to acquire skilled workers from abroad. International alignment of information and guidance services is indispensable in this regard. For this reason, the Portal “Recognition in Germany” also directed its provision towards an international target group from the very outset. The information pages on the site and the Recognition Finder were available in English shortly after the law entered into force. Further expansion of the information pages took place in accordance with the languages spoken in the countries of origin of most applicants. Spanish, Italian, Polish, Romanian and Turkish were introduced in 2014, followed by Greek in 2015. In 2016, services also became accessible to a large proportion of refugees when the information pages began to be provided in Arabic. Nine different language versions are currently available. Russian and French are set to follow in 2017.

The multilingual concept is proving effective. Alongside English, which attracted over 1.7 million page views, the language versions most frequently used thus far have been Spanish, Italian and Turkish. The Arabic version has been the third most popular language clicked on by visitors to the site since July 2016 despite having only launched in April of the same year (accessed more than 175,000 times between April and December 2016). Since April 2016, the portal has also offered a multilingual recognition app (Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Tigrinya, Pashto, German and English), which has been specially designed for refugees and asylum seekers.

In 2014 and 2015, “Recognition in Germany” joined forces with local multipliers abroad such as foreign missions, German Chambers of Commerce Abroad, Goethe Institutes and language schools to launch an international information campaign aimed at those interested in migration. This campaign took place on the ground in Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain and Turkey, and (also) online in other countries. It enabled target groups to be approached and provided with information in a focused manner.

“ProRecognition” – guidance provision abroad

To continue to encourage the rise in the number of applications received from abroad, a further aim was to establish guidance services in other countries. The pilot project “ProRecognition – Professional & Vocational Qualifications for Germany”, which launched in October 2015, has for the first time set up guidance and contact centres at eight German Chambers of Commerce and Trade Delegations Abroad (AHK) in Egypt, China, India, Iran, Italy, Morocco, Poland and
PART II: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BIBB RECOGNITION MONITORING PROJECT

**nition** advised around 600 persons in 2016. A significant increase in guidance volume was recorded in the fourth quarter of the year in particular. The majority of persons interested had completed academic training. Even though the main focus of the guidance services provided by “ProRecognition” lies within the field of recognition, the enquiries made by those receiving advice sometimes extended beyond this area. 55 percent wished to receive advice on the recognition procedure specifically, but over 40 percent (also) had questions regarding residency law, or wanted general information about living and working in Germany.

Within the scope of its support and individual assistance modules, “ProRecognition” provides help with the application and backing, both during and following the procedure. Within this context, the AHKs are also prepared to mediate between applicants and the competent bodies in Germany if necessary. In about 100 cases, the AHKs have either recommended an application or an application has already been submitted so far.

**2.4 Informing companies and raising awareness**

Over recent years, a number of projects have been launched to take on the task of raising awareness of the recognition topic amongst a further target group – companies. Companies are key to the successful integration into the German labour market of skilled workers with foreign qualifications and make decisions on the acceptance of a (recognised) foreign qualification. In addition, companies are able to support their employees in a recognition procedure. They are also a significant stakeholder in the recognition process with regard to training measures, which, in some cases, applicants complete directly within the company itself. From the companies’ point of view, recognition may serve as an instrument of staff development and recruitment. Results from the 2014 BIBB company survey showed that over one third of companies questioned

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28 This does not necessarily imply that the German reference profession or occupation is also an academic qualification.

29 Although the AHKs provide initial information in these cases, they usually refer persons on to specialised locally based stakeholders such as visa agencies, embassies or the Central Foreign and Specialist Placement Agency (ZAV).
had heard of the Recognition Act at the time and that about 6 percent had had closer dealings with it or even had experience of using it in the human resources recruitment process.

“Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung” project
Since the beginning of 2016, the BMBF has been providing financial support to a three-year project entitled “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung”. This project was initiated by the DIHK and the ZDH and aims to strengthen the presence of the topic with regard to human resources development and recruitment strategies. A communication campaign run in collaboration with a consortium of 16 chambers provides companies with information on the opportunities offered by the Recognition Act. A multi-stage telephone campaign has been ongoing since September 2016 in order to familiarise as many companies as possible with the topic and to explore further requirements for information and guidance. Contact has already been established with over 4,34030 companies from various sectors. About 20 percent of these are wholesale companies, almost 16 percent operate in the retail trade, while just over 11 percent are involved in the metalworking and electrical industries. Further information discussions were conducted with about two thirds of the companies contacted. A travelling exhibition is also currently being developed. “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung” offers networking events and publishes target group-specific information brochures and guides. The company prize “Wir für Anerkennung” is also awarded within the scope of the project to reward exemplary company practice and good ideas within the area of professional and occupational recognition.31 The award will take place as part of the programme of events at the BMBF conference “5 years of the Recognition Act – once learnt, never forgotten” to be hosted in Berlin on 21 June 2017.

The “Anerkannt” project
The project “Anerkannt”32, which was initiated at the start of 2014 by the Educational Institute of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB-Bildungswerk) and is also funded by the BMBF, focuses on employee representative bodies. Workers’ and staff council members are informed about the Recognition Act and subsequently transport the topic into companies at all levels. The long-term aim is to establish a culture of recognition within companies. Extensive public relations work is conducted to this end and there have also been information events that have attracted over 580 participants thus far.33 Within the scope of a 5-day advanced course leading to certification as a company recognition specialist, 46 persons have already been trained to act as multipliers within the context of employee representative bodies. The current phase of the project is focusing on developing a more detailed concept for specialist training and on intensifying networking with the individual trade unions.

31 See www.anerkennungspreis.de.
32 “Anerkannt” (“Recognised”) is an abbreviation of the full project title, which translates as “Promoting recognition of qualifications acquired abroad within the world of work via employee representative bodies”
33 Cut-off date for the figures relating to the “Anerkannt” project: 31 December 2016.
3. Take-up and implementation of the recognition procedures

Since the entry into force of the Recognition Act in 2012, everyone has enjoyed the legal right to a recognition procedure in Germany, irrespective of nationality, country of training or place of residence. The prerequisite for submitting an application is the possession of a professional or vocational qualification acquired abroad. Data from the official statistics shows that take-up of the procedures is increasing from year to year. At the same time, there has also been a rise in the number of applications received from persons not resident in Germany when the application is made.

Alongside further expansion of information and guidance provision (see Chapter 2) and establishment or extension of financing programmes (see Chapter 5), measures have also been instigated with a view to structuring administrative implementation in a more standardised and efficient way. These include the establishment of the Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (GfG) (see Chapter 3.3). With regard to the implementation of the Recognition Act, various models have been selected in the different areas of responsibility (see Information Box 3).

3.1 Number of applications is rising constantly

Data from the official statistics shows that opportunities to gain recognition are being very well received. From April 2012 to the end of 2015 alone, 63,486 applications were submitted for an equivalence assessment of a qualification obtained abroad against a reference profession or occupation governed by federal law. From 10,989 applications in 2012, the figure rose constantly to reach 19,389 in 2015. As Figure 5 shows, more than three quarters of applications related to recognition in a regulated reference profession. The reason for this is likely to be that recognition is an essential precondition for the exercising of regulated professions in Germany. Nevertheless, the proportion of applications for non-regulated reference occupations has also been rising over the years, from only 20.2 percent in 2012 to around 25.8 percent in 2015.

Between 2012 and 2015, more than three quarters of all recognition applications were submitted in the area of the medical healthcare professions. As Figure 5 makes clear, the most frequent reference professions or occupations by far were doctor (as part of the process leading to a licence to practise) and registered general nurse. These two professions together accounted for more than 60 percent of all applications.

From 2012 to 2015, the largest group of applicants were German nationals. This group submitted more than 13 percent of applications, followed by Romanian and Polish nationals (more than 8 percent and more than 7 percent respectively). Bosnia-Herzegovina is fourth (with more than 4 percent of applications), the first state of origin outside the EU to appear on the list. In overall terms between 2012 and 2015, over 60 percent

34 Data is collected pursuant to § 17 BQFG or in accordance with the articles contained within specific legislation governing the professions that make reference to the former.
35 For the purpose of anonymisation, the absolute values from the official statistics referred to in this report are in each case rounded to a multiple of three. 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 figures were calculated on the basis of the non-rounded values.
36 According to information from the statistical offices of the federal states, more than 8,300 recognition procedures were conducted for professions governed by federal state law in 2015. The application figures for evaluation of foreign non-regulated higher education qualifications by the ZAB also reflect a high degree of interest. The number of applications in this case rose from 5,233 in 2012 to 16,500 in 2016.
37 Account needs to be taken of the fact that the law did not enter into force until April 2012. Data for 2012 therefore only relates to a nine-month period. However, an increase is still revealed if a monthly average is calculated.
38 No data is available for Bremen for the year 2015. For this reason, information from 2014 has been used for this particular federal state. Detailed information on the survey for 2015 is contained in Schmitz and Wünsche 2016.
39 This refers to the main occupational group of the medical healthcare professions as defined in the Classification of Occupations.
Information Box 3  Competent bodies – from decentralised responsibility to bundling at national level

A recognition procedure is generally conducted by the body that is responsible for vocational education in the area (for example the chambers of crafts and trades for occupations governed by the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code). In the case of a regulated profession, the process is carried out by the body in charge of licences to exercise the profession in question (for example the federal state authority that issues licences to practise to doctors). As of the end of 2016, there were over 1,500 competent bodies. Around 800 of these deal with approximately 600 qualifications governed by federal law.40

Various implementation models have been developed since the law came into force. The assumption is that this will have repercussions for the national uniformity of procedures, for costs, knowledge management and efficiency, and not least for information and guidance. A detailed consideration reveals numerous variations. However, these are clustered around four models.

- **Model 1**: Responsibility is assigned to a body that assumes central authority at a national level for recognition procedures in the occupational field.41 This applies, for example, in the cases of the IHK FOSA (foreign skills approval), the Berlin Chamber of Public Accountants and the Lower Saxony Chamber of Tax Consultants42. Since February 2014, the federal states have been accorded the opportunity to transfer their responsibility for non-regulated, school-based initial and continuing training qualification to the ZAB. Berlin, Brandenburg and Lower Saxony have availed themselves of this possibility thus far. It is also the case that not all chambers participate in the IHK FOSA. The chambers of commerce and industry in Hanover and Wuppertal-Solingen-Remscheid have decided to retain their responsibility, and the Braunschweig Chamber of Commerce and Industry has transferred its authority to the chamber in Hanover.

- **Model 2**: One (or more) competent bodies assume a national supporting function for competent bodies within the procedure without actual transfer of responsibility. The Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (GfG), for example, (see Information Box 4) takes responsibility for checking the authenticity of documents and/or for the equivalence assessment of the formal qualification itself at the request of the competent body. In the craft trades sector, a lead chamber system has been put in place that now covers 40 countries of origin. Lead chambers possess particular expertise in the VET system of a certain country or of several countries of origin. They take responsibility for the equivalence assessment upon application from other chambers of crafts and trades. Subsequently, they upload the relevant information on the foreign VET to the public area of the information portal for foreign professional qualifications (BQ-Portal, see Chapter 2.1). The result of their evaluation of the foreign qualification is made available in the area of the BQ-Portal that is only accessible to chambers of crafts and trades. The 53 chambers of crafts and trades that exercise responsibility have committed themselves to always involving the lead chamber if such a chamber has been allocated to the country of training in question and an evaluation result has not already been documented in the BQ-Portal.

- **Model 3**: Larger states concentrate responsibility within the state on a single federal state authority. Since 1 September 2016, for example, North Rhine-Westphalia has focused its responsibility for recognition in the three nursing professions at the State Examination Office for Medicine, Pharmacy and Psychotherapy housed at Düsseldorf District Government. Previously, three district governments were involved. Another example is the Government of Upper Bavaria, which is responsible for the recognition of doctors from third countries and acts on behalf of all Bavarian government districts in this regard.

- **Model 4**: In some individual professions, decentralised responsibility is still assumed without bundling or the involvement of supra-regional institutions. In Bavaria, for example, the seven government districts retain responsibility for the specialist healthcare professions. In some federal states (for example Lower Saxony and Bavaria), the competent bodies for the recognition of driving instructors are located at district level.

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40 Some bodies are responsible both for professions within their own federal state and for professions that fall within the remit of the Federal Government. The National Index of all competent bodies in Germany is managed by BIBB (cf. Recognition Finder in Chapter 2.1).

41 This possibility is stipulated in § 8 Paragraph 5 of the BQFG.

42 With the exception of South Baden, all chambers of tax consultants have transferred their responsibility for an initial term until 31 March 2017. Several have now opted for permanent transfer of authority to the Lower Saxony Chamber of Tax Consultants.
Only instances where a final notice has been issued and new applications are represented. In the case of regulated professions, the competent bodies also report cases in which a compensation measure was imposed during the course of the 2015 reporting year but had not been completed by 31 December. Full equivalence can be certified once this compensation measure has been successfully concluded. 2,532 such cases were reported for the year 2015.

43 Only instances where a final notice has been issued and new applications are represented. In the case of regulated professions, the competent bodies also report cases in which a compensation measure was imposed during the course of the 2015 reporting year but had not been completed by 31 December. Full equivalence can be certified once this compensation measure has been successfully concluded. 2,532 such cases were reported for the year 2015.
of applications were received from nationals of an EU/EEA state or of Switzerland. 39 percent, on the other hand, held the nationality of a third country at the time when the application was made.

An examination of the countries of training shows that Romania is leading the way with a share of almost 10 percent (cf. Figure 5). In total, 53 percent of applicants acquired the qualification for which they were seeking recognition in an EU/EEA state or in Switzerland. 46 percent had obtained the qualification in a third country.

Table 2 Applicants’ countries of training 2012 to 2015 by world regions (absolute terms and in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World region</th>
<th>Absolute</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU/EEA/Switzerland</td>
<td>33,897</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Europe</td>
<td>15,783</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>8,475</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>3,144</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>South America</td>
<td>1,032</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North/Central America/Caribbean</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia and Oceania</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source and explanation: Data from the official statistics from 2012 to 2015. Calculations and representation by BIBB. Not included = unknown country of training, country of training not clarified and no information provided.

Overall, one in ten applications were submitted from abroad. This figure rose from 531 in 2012 to 2,517 in 2015.

3.2 High number of qualifications accorded full recognition

Between 2012 and 2015, 40,731 qualifications acquired abroad were certified as being fully equivalent to the relevant German reference qualifications. Identification of full equivalence in the case of regulated reference professions took place on different bases. Automatic recognition was reported for more than 45 percent of the 33,465 positive notices issued for regulated professions. In a further 38 percent of cases, recognition took place following scrutiny of documentation without imposition of a compensation measure. 15 percent of applicants were granted recognition following successful completion of a compensation measure.

Partial equivalence with a non-regulated reference occupation was certified in the case of 3,531 qualifications. In such cases, applicants can use the notice issued directly on the labour market or opt to undertake adaptation training (see Chapter 4) to compensate for the substantial differences and achieve full equivalence.

No full or partial equivalence of the qualification was ultimately identified in 1,971 procedures.

One important new aspect of the Recognition Act is that both occupational experience and evidence of competence acquired via non-formal learning (such as continuing training certificates) must be taken into account for compensation purposes if scrutiny of the formal qualification reveals substantial differences. In the case of the dual training occupations, for example, occupational practice is able to compensate for the practical elements of training that are frequently absent. During the period from 2012 to 2015, existing occupational experience was used to help make a

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44 The remaining percentages are distributed across persons categorised as “stateless”, “nationality not clarified” or “no foreign nationality stated”.
45 Unlike other nationalities, Germany cannot appear under the category of countries of training because the focus is on professional or vocational qualifications that have been acquired abroad. Nevertheless, states that no longer exist, such as the Soviet Union, may still be reported.
46 Croatia counts as an EU member from 2013.
47 Including limited access to the profession in the case of regulated professions governed by the HwO.
48 Equivalence of the professional qualification of six professions governed by federal law (doctor, dentist, veterinary surgeon, dispensing chemist, registered general nurse and midwife/midwifery assistant) and for one profession governed by federal state law (architect) is automatically recognised pursuant to the provisions of the Professional Qualifications Directive (Title III, Chapter III) or of the respective implementation in specific legislation.
49 This refers to notices that are appealable in law and can be contested. A notice becomes legally binding once it is no longer contestable (expiry of the deadline for claims). This aspect is, however, not recorded in the official statistics.
50 For non-regulated occupations, this also includes reports of “impossibility of clarification of facts and circumstances”, which means that the equivalence of the vocational qualification cannot be accessed in the given situation, and decisions made without undertaking further investigation of the facts and circumstances of a case because of a lack of cooperation on the part of applicants.
PART II: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BIBB RECOGNITION MONITORING PROJECT

Decision in 6,723 procedures\(^52\). Full equivalence was accorded in more than 89 percent of these cases\(^53\) (without imposition of a compensation measure). In a further 4 percent of cases, full equivalence was certified following completion of a compensation measure.

### 3.3 Procedures where documentation is missing or incomplete

If applicants are unable to produce documentary evidence through no fault of their own or if such documentation is incomplete, § 14 of the BQFG and § 50b Paragraph 4 of the HvO provide the opportunity to identify and evaluate professional and occupational competences against the German reference qualification for all dual training, advanced training and master craftsman occupations via a skills analysis. This may, for example, take the form of a specialist oral examination or work sample. Between 2012 and 2015, the official statistics recorded 357 skills analyses.\(^54\) On this basis, full equivalence with the reference qualification was certified in 189 cases, and partial equivalence was identified in 120 cases. A compensation measure was imposed on applicants in 15 cases. In 33 cases, the skills analysis revealed neither full nor partial equivalence to the German reference qualification. Increasing use is being made of the instrument of the skills analysis. In 2012, 60 skills analyses were conducted. By 2015, this figure had increased to 129. One of the aims of the BMBF-funded “Prototyping Transfer”\(^55\) project is to create greater awareness amongst companies and competent bodies of this opportunity for competence assessment via vehicles such as decentralised training courses and tools from a pool of expertise and knowledge.\(^56\)

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\(^52\) Only final notices have been taken into account here in order to avoid double counting. In addition, cases reporting consideration of occupational experience and automatic recognition have been excluded by reason of implausibility.

\(^53\) Including limited access to the profession in the case of regulated professions governed by the HvO.

\(^54\) The majority of skills analyses have been conducted within the area of responsibility of the chambers of crafts and trades.

\(^55\) Participating chambers of crafts and trades and the chambers of commerce and industry conducted 82 skills analyses within the scope of the “Prototyping Transfer” project. 21 of the persons involved had refugee status (as of January 2017).

\(^56\) Cf. also Böse, Tursarinow and Wünsche 2016, pp. 20ff.

In other regulated reference professions, the approach to be adopted in the absence of documentation is stipulated in the respective laws governing the professions. The relevant recognition regulations for the medical professions, in which academic qualifications are required, stipulate a knowledge test. In healthcare professions, in which academic qualifications are not required, the provision is that a knowledge test or an adaptation course should take place (cf. § 3 Paragraph 3 Clause 4 of the Federal Medical Code (BÄO), § 2 Paragraph 3 Clause 5 of the Nursing Act (KrPfBG)).
3.4 Recognition Act can also be used by refugees

The BQFG places particular emphasis on the securing and recruitment of skilled workers. It is also proving to be an important instrument for the integration of refugees into the German labour market. For this reason, a high degree of significance is attached to the assessment and recognition of qualifications that have been acquired. However, because residency status is not recorded, the official statistics on the BQFG only make it possible to arrive at approximate statements regarding refugees and asylum seekers who have availed

Figure 6  Outcome of the equivalence assessment for nationals of refugees’ main countries of origin from 2012 to 2015 (in percent)

Source and explanation: data from the official statistics 2012–2015. Syrian (n = 1,995 notices), Iranian (n = 756 notices), Kosovan (n = 468 notices), Albanian (n = 309 notices), Iraqi (n = 222 notices) and Afghan (n = 72 notices). For data protection reasons, all figures (absolute values) are rounded to a multiple of 3 in each case. Percentage figures were calculated on the basis of the non-rounded values. No data is available for Bremen for the year 2015. For this reason, information from 2014 has been used for this particular federal state.

Representation by BIBB.

57 For more detailed information on the topic of the Recognition Act and refugees, see OECD 2017, pp 52ff.
themselves of a recognition procedure. A glance at the nationality of applicants makes it clear that application numbers from the main countries of origin of refugees have grown. Since 2012, applications for recognition of a professional or vocational qualification under the Federal Recognition Act have been submitted by a total of 2,019 Syrians, 849 Iranians, 609 Kosovans, 378 Albanians, 261 Iraqis and 111 Afghans. In 2015, 1,437 applications were received from nationals of these main countries of origin. This represents a significant rise of more than 25 percent compared to the previous year.

It is clear that a large number of persons could be issued with a positive notice (cf. Figure 6). Whereas over 55 percent of applications received from Afghan nationals resulted in full equivalence of their professional or vocational qualification, the corresponding figure for Syrians was over 75 percent.

3.5 Challenges of administrative implementation

Implementation via the chambers
From the very outset, the chambers of crafts and trades and the chambers of commerce and industry particularly viewed the new challenges brought about by the expansion of the legal right to include the area of non-regulated occupations as an opportunity to secure a supply of skilled workers and accordingly reacted quickly to implement the recognition regulations in a practical manner. The chambers opted for different models with regard to the bundling of administrative implementation (see Information Box 3). Extensive measures to standardise the procedure were initiated within the respective implementation models.

In the craft trades sector, for example, the umbrella association provided support in developing standardised reference profiles from German vocational qualifications for use in the equivalence assessment. These were then made available to the chambers of crafts and trades. Sample forms for applications and notices and comprehensive process descriptions for internal administrative processes, particularly for those taking place between the local and lead chambers, were also drawn up.

The lead chamber system and the IHK FOSA were established as early as the spring of 2012 and provided structures that significantly helped in terms of getting off to a positive start. In the area of the chambers of commerce and industry, a central body was created in the form of the IHK FOSA with the aim of achieving a nationally uniform and efficient procedure. This objective is being achieved via the bundling of expert knowledge. Processes and templates have been developed to ensure that decisions are aligned in the same direction. The IHK FOSA has also succeeded in establishing internal knowledge management of countries of origin, expertise in occupations and procedures. Internal quality assurance was implemented from the outset. The high degree of language competence that staff members are able to offer facilitates a uniform decision-making process, particularly in the case of countries of origin from which large amounts of applications are received.

Owing to the positive effects of recognition on the quality of labour market integration of migrants, the aim is to continue the trend towards more recognition procedures for non-regulated occupations. In order to tap into the areas of potential offered in terms of securing a supply of skilled workers, an ongoing and targeted process will need to be conducted to raise awareness amongst companies of the opportunities afforded by recognition. These challenges have been taken on board and the project “Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung” has accordingly placed the target group of companies at the centre of its endeavours (see detailed information in Chapter 2.4).

Federal state implementation in the healthcare professions
Standardisation of implementation of recognition procedures in the healthcare professions has been a major challenge since the entry into force of the Recognition Act.

One important step in this direction was a legal ordinance enacted by the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG) on the implementation and content of adaptation measures and on the issuing of temporary authorisa-

58 Cf. SVR 2013.
59 For more information on problems in the healthcare sector, see also Böse and Wünsche 2016, pp. 6f. and Böse and Wünsche 2015, pp. 31ff.
tions to practise. This came into force in 2014 and includes uniform stipulations regarding the contents of knowledge tests in the respective professions and on the content of recognition notices.

Incentives for further standardisation have also emerged from the networking workshops for the competent bodies organised by BIBB in conjunction with the ZAB and the GfG. The problems revealed in these workshops formed an object of further discussion within the scope of the “Healthcare Professions Working Group” of the Supreme Healthcare Authorities of the Federal States (AOLG), in which both the BMG and the BMBF are represented. Agreements were reached in principle regarding specific points.

One major challenge of administrative implementation remains the question of local responsibility for applications received from abroad. In some cases, the federal state authorities require applicants to hold a job offer in the federal state in question. This represents a hurdle that is difficult to overcome and is not something that is legally stipulated in the Recognition Act. It is also proving to be a barrier to the issuing of visas pursuant to § 17a AufenthG to persons interested in seeking recognition, who wish to take part in a training measure in Germany for the purpose of recognition.

In a meeting of the “Healthcare Professions Working Group” held on 2 and 3 February 2017, the Supreme Healthcare Authorities of the Federal States adopted a resolution, which once again confirms that the authorities are not entitled to require a job offer in order to justify their local responsibility. The federal states also agreed that the local responsibility of an authority can be established in the case of planned participation in a training measure pursuant to § 17a AufenthG. Despite this, high requirements for the establishment of local responsibility are still being imposed in some cases (for example submission of a letter inviting the applicant to a job interview, the stipulation that several job applications must be made). The main objective of these is to prevent multiple applications in different federal states.

Scarcity of human resources is also a major implementation problem at many authorities. This issue was reported by representatives of the federal states within the scope of a survey conducted by the BMG for the Federal Government Report on Recognition Procedures in Healthcare Professions governed by federal law of 10 March 2017 (Parliament Printed Paper 18/11513). It has also been mentioned in working

60 For more detailed information, see Federal Government Report on Recognition Procedures in Healthcare Professions governed by Federal Law, Parliament Printed Paper 18/11513, pp. 10 and 23.
The number of applications has risen constantly over recent years.

**Establishment of the Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions**

The establishment of the Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (GfG) at the ZAB by the federal states has provided an engine for further standardisation of recognition procedures. The GfG commenced initial operations on 1 January 2016 and has been accepting applications since 1 September 2016. This bundling of competences at a cross-federal state assessment body is driving forward the long-needed standardisation of the equivalence assessment process for professional qualifications in the healthcare sector and is helping to support the competent bodies in their work.

In order to assess equivalence, technical and content instruments have been developed (see Information Box 4). These represent a uniform basis of assessment for healthcare sector qualifications acquired abroad. These instruments are adopted by the "Healthcare Professions Working Group" of the Supreme Healthcare Authorities of the Federal States following piloting by the competent bodies and subsequently form a standardised foundation for the equivalence assessments conducted by the competent bodies or for the work of the GfG. This means that occupation-specific uniform yardsticks for assessment are now available at a national level.

The federal states have also launched an initiative to help achieve greater standardisation of administrative practice in the area of language. On 26 and 27 June 2014, a benchmark paper issued by the Conference of Ministers of Health (GMK) adopted a resolution calling for uniform stipulations regarding language and specialist language levels for healthcare professions in which academic qualifications are required. The implementation of this benchmark paper meant that significant progress towards procedural standardisation had been achieved by the end of 2016. In the vast majority of federal states, responsibility for the necessary specialist language tests has now been transferred to the respective healthcare profession chambers. By the end of 2016, 8,893 specialist language tests had been conducted in accordance with the stipulations contained within the benchmark paper in the area of the federal state medical councils alone. Endeavours to standardise language requirements are also being undertaken in the area of the specialist healthcare professions. On the basis of the self-same resolution adopted by the GMK, a joint cross-federal GMK working group and the Conference of the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs (ASMK) are joining forces to draw up a benchmark paper with a view to stipulating which levels of language skills are required for the individual specialist healthcare professions and how these should be tested.

**Duration of procedures**

The deadline for the recognition procedure does not commence until all application documentation has been received. The deadline may be suspended in certain circumstances, such as if follow-up documents are requested. The date that the complete documentation was submitted is therefore to be registered as the day of application in the official statistics. All of this means that the statistics map the administrative action involved in the procedure, but not its actual duration. They especially do not reflect the subjective experience of applicants, most of whom have already gone through a lengthy period of information, guidance and procurement of documents prior to the point at which an application is submitted (cf. Erbe 2017). Evaluations conducted thus far on the duration of the procedure show that overall compliance with the statutory deadline for processing applications is achieved in average terms but that duration may vary depending on profession or occupation, country of training and nationality (BMBF 2015, pp. 79ff. and BMBF 2016, p. 32).

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61 Cf. BMBF 2015 and 2016.
62 In order to apply for a licence to practise in a healthcare profession where academic qualifications are required, candidates are required to demonstrate a general language level of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) B2 and specialist language skills within the specific professional context at level C1. In the case of the professions of psychotherapist and psychotherapist for children and young people, the requirement is to demonstrate specialist language skills at CEFR-C2.
Owing to non-standard procedural practice in the equivalence assessment of healthcare and medical professions, the federal states decided as long ago as June 2012 that a cross-federal state assessment agency should be established at the ZAB. Since 1 September 2016, the competent bodies for 21 reference professions have been able to task the GfG with checking the authenticity of qualifications evidence submitted, determining the German reference qualification and drawing up a detailed assessment of equivalence.

The focus of the work carried out by the GfG is on the drafting of equivalence assessments for the formal qualifications, which are then used to provide the competent bodies with a recommended decision regarding the equivalence of a foreign professional qualification. The basis of evaluation for assessors is a set of technical and content instruments agreed with the federal states. This has been developed – or is currently being developed – by the GfG for each occupational profile of every healthcare profession governed by federal law. Even in cases where the competent bodies do not avail themselves of the services of the GfG, these sets of instruments form a uniform yardstick, both for themselves and for external experts, i.e. they constitute the basis of assessment. The technical and content instruments for the profession of doctor are already available and are proving themselves in practice. The sets of instruments for the professions of dispensing chemist, registered general nurse and physiotherapist are still at the pilot stage. Within the process, the GfG restricts itself to the identification of substantial differences in the formal qualifications. Decisions regarding the consideration of professional experience to compensate for any substantial differences that may exist remain incumbent upon the competent bodies.

Assessments, decisions and indications on how to evaluate the authenticity of certificates and other documentary evidence are made available to all competent bodies in the anabin database (for further information on anabin, see Chapter 2.1). Plans are also in place to add a central register to the database to check for the existence of duplicate applications. This will avoid having to process parallel and multiple applications for equivalence assessments or for authorisation to practise.

During its three-year pilot phase, the aim is for the GfG to process 3,000 applications a year from the federal state healthcare authorities. After having received start-up funding from the healthcare departments of the federal state during its first year, the intention is that the GfG will begin to finance itself by charging fees for the preparation of the various assessments. Within this process, the costs of drawing up an assessment will need to be viewed as procedural costs (see Chapter 6) for persons submitting an application. Financing may be structured in various ways, irrespective of federal state legislation. It is possible for costs to be apportioned to several applicants or for all costs to be paid by the federal state.

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63 The 21 reference professions include five medical professions for which academic qualifications are required (doctor, dentist, dispensing chemist, psychotherapist, psychotherapist for children and young people) and 16 specialist healthcare professions (geriatric nurse, dietary assistant, occupational therapist, midwife/midwifery assistant, registered general nurse, registered children’s nurse, speech therapist, masseur and medically qualified lifeguard, orthoptist, physiotherapist, podiatrist, pharmaceutical assistant, paramedic/ emergency paramedic, medical laboratory assistant in function diagnosis, medical and technical laboratory assistant, medical laboratory assistant in radiology).
4. Training within the recognition context

Not all recognition procedures end at the initial stage with full recognition. Training provision within the context of recognition is offered by a number of competent bodies themselves via their own education and training establishments, especially in the areas of the chambers of commerce and industry as well as the chambers of crafts and trades, and is also available via the IQ funding programme and from further stakeholders.

Since the enactment of the Recognition Act, the number of notices certifying partial equivalence in non-regulated occupations has risen each year, from 72 in 2012 to 1,461 in 2015. The notice is required to present the substantial differences between the professional or vocational qualification abroad and the German reference profession or occupation (§ 7 Paragraph 2 BQFG) so that this can form the basis for the drawing up of a training plan by the respective training institution. This also includes transfer of the substantial differences into specific learning goals relating to the relevant training regulations for the German reference profession or occupation.

A questionnaire carried out as part of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project in 2014 revealed that 91 percent of adult migrant guidance centres (MBE) and three quarters of Job Centres surveyed had already gained experience of recognition notices. In the case of partial recognition in a non-regulated occupation, three quarters of Job Centres surveyed recommended subsequent completion of adaptation training so as to be able to acquire full recognition.

4.1 IQ training measures – doubling the number of participants

Since the introduction of the new main action focus “ESF training within the context of the Recognition Act” on 1 January 2015, the IQ funding programme has been able to offer training guidance (cf. Information Box 2 and Chapter 2.2) and training measures alongside first consultations. Of around 16,300 persons who received guidance on training, 7,241 were referred on to internal IQ training whilst a further 4,049 were placed in external training provision.

In 2016, the 16 IQ federal state networks and the IQ “Guidance and Training” agency offered 331 training measures\(^64\), which were attended by 5,367 persons.\(^65\)

\(^64\) The KURSNET database operated by the Federal Employment Agency includes training measures for the recognition of foreign qualifications. Training provision offered within the scope of the IQ funding programme can be filtered out by visiting http:// kursnet-finden.arbeitsagentur.de/kurs/portal/bildungssuchende/ migrationshintergrund.de.

\(^65\) If nothing to the contrary is stated, the survey period for the data presented here and below is the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016. Unless otherwise stated, all percentage and absolute values stated in this chapter relate to valid information only.
This represents a growth of 98 percent compared to the previous year. Nearly two thirds of persons underwent training, which took the form of a formal course, whilst one third took part in individual training. Of those who participated in a course, about half attended training for regulated professions. One in five participated in a bridging measure for persons with academic qualifications. Of persons who took part in individual programmes, one third pursued training for regulated professions. Nearly one in five attended training for dual occupations or a bridging measure for persons with academic qualifications.

Just over half of participants in 2016 were male. The average age was 34. As in the previous year, Syrian, Polish and Russian nationals formed the largest group, followed by Iranian and German nationals. Participants were seeking recognition in a total of 233 different reference professions or occupations. As in the previous year, the most popular were the professions of doctor and registered general nurse.

1,617 took part in training that had concluded by 31 December 2016. 86 percent had already achieved full equivalence or are likely to do so.

As in the previous year, participants entering training already displayed good language skills. 80 percent were in possession of a language certificate, of whom 82 percent were able to demonstrate level B1 or B2. One in ten held a certificate at level C1 or C2.

Even though knowledge of German does not constitute a formal prerequisite for a recognition procedure, the acquisition of (occupation-related) language skills plays an important role within the scope of training. The same is true in respect of the training programmes offered by the IQ network. In each case, nearly one third of participants respectively attended a course or individual training that offered occupation-specific language learning alongside theoretical and practical specialist content. The 2016 Continuing Training Survey (wbmonitor) shows that language elements also formed part of courses attended by persons intending to seek recognition. 31 percent were pure language courses (for example occupation-related German) and 20 percent of courses featured both a language and specialist professional or occupational alignment.

Refugees in IQ training
Between January 2015 and December 2016, 1,982 refugees took part in IQ training programmes. Their proportion almost doubled from 16 percent in 2015 to

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66 All results cf. Hoffmann and Kirchner 2017.
67 In the case of regulated professions, knowledge of German is one of several prerequisites for authorisation to practise.
68 As each programme covers more than one area of learning content, multiple responses are possible (cf. Hoffmann and Kirchner 2017).
69 In 2013, 2014 and 2016, the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project included questions on the topic of recognition in the Continuing Training Survey. The Continuing Training Survey (wbmonitor) is a cooperation project between BIBB and the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE). It represents the largest survey of continuing training providers regularly conducted at a national level in Germany. Cf. https://wbmonitor.de/index.php. Both extrapolated and weighted data is displayed.
70 This includes persons who stated prior to entering training that their residency status in Germany was based on leave to remain (pursuant to § 55 Paragraph 2 of AsylVfG) or special leave to remain (pursuant to § 60a Paragraph 4 AufenthG) or that they were in Germany according to international law or for humanitarian or political reasons (§ 22 to 26, 104a, 104b AufenthG).
29 percent in 2016. Just over half of the refugees were from Syria. 80 percent were male. The average age was 32, and around 54 percent were aged between 25 and 34. 84 percent of refugees had achieved a higher education qualification. Just over one in five were seeking recognition as a doctor, whilst one in ten were engineers. 918 refugees taking part in IQ training programmes were in possession of a language certificate, predominantly at levels B1 (55 percent) and B2 (24 percent).

4.2 Training provision offered by the competent bodies and other stakeholders

The competent bodies also offer training via their own education and training establishments. A survey of chambers of crafts and trades as well as chambers of commerce and industry conducted in 2014 as part of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project showed that many chambers offer provision themselves and/ or are able to state providers in the region. In order to offer these services, the chambers make use of existing structures and cooperate with local stakeholders. Adaptation training, for example, may be implemented via attendance at vocational school, company-based practical placements or inter-company apprentice training. In addition, a series of further potential training providers exists, including education and training agencies, companies, migrant organisations, welfare associations, institutes of higher education, trade and technical schools and vocational schools. The 2016 Continuing Training Survey (wbmonitor) shows that 11 percent of continuing training providers offered training (adaptation training, compensation measures, preparatory courses for the knowledge test) to persons who required such provision as part of the recognition procedure. 69 percent of providers covered such training via their regular provision. Nearly 28 percent of providers developed their training services in conjunction with at least one competent body.

The Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF) all consider company-based practical phases that form part of training measures within the context of the Recognition Act to be mandatory placements. They are, therefore, fundamentally excluded from the obligation to pay the minimum wage. The prerequisite for this is that the training measures are necessary on the basis of a notice issued by the competent body in order to obtain full recognition of a foreign qualification. This applies both to adaptation training in occupations within the dual system pursuant to the BQFG and to adaptation courses in regulated professions on the basis of the specific legislation governing these professions. Practical placements completed within the context of preparatory courses offered by training providers for a knowledge test leading to achievement of full recognition are also exempt from minimum wage regulations, although only up to a duration of three months.

71 The total number of persons on whom the percentage information provided here is based encompasses all participants in IQ training programmes, regardless of whether they stated they were in possession of a residence permit or not.

72 Mandatory practical placements within the meaning of § 22 Paragraph 1 Clause 1 of the German Minimum Wage Act (MiLoG).

73 The joint interpretation regarding the application of the Minimum Wage Act was published as an Information Paper in April 2017, see https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/qualifizierungsangebote.php/ informationspapier.

74 Pursuant to § 22 Paragraph 1 Clause 3 MiLoG.
5. Costs and financing

The recognition procedure causes individual costs to be incurred. The investigations carried out as part of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project have shown that these costs may constitute a hurdle\textsuperscript{75} for persons with foreign professional or vocational qualifications.\textsuperscript{76} In order to reduce these burdens, financing opportunities have been further developed and supplemented. Based on the experiences gained from recognition funding in Hamburg, the Federal Government and the federal states of Baden-Württemberg and Berlin instigated new funding instruments in the year 2016, which are specifically aimed at persons excluded from receipt of benefits pursuant to German Social Security Code II and III.

5.1 Composition of costs

The overall costs of a recognition procedure are made up of the procedural fees of the competent bodies and further (possible) partial costs such as translations, certifications and training measures. The amount of costs varies depending on the individual case and on the reference profession or occupation of the foreign qualification. Investigations into overall costs are only available for individual areas. According to the survey of doctors carried out as part of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project in 2014, expenditure on procurement of documentation accounts for the largest portion of costs incurred within the recognition procedure for this professional group. Doctors also particularly face additional expenditure on language courses in order to achieve the necessary language level to gain access to the profession.\textsuperscript{77}

5.2 National financing instruments

The most important national instruments for the financing of procedural costs remain the funding mechanisms of employment support funding (SGB III) and provision of basic benefits to job seekers (SGB II). During the period from 2012 to 2016, nearly 72 percent of persons seeking guidance from the IQ initial counselling centres were not in employment (cf. Chapter 2.2). Of these, almost 76 percent were in receipt of (supplementary) benefits pursuant to SGB II and/or SGB III as well as in accordance with the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (AsylbLG).

In certain cases, educational financing may be used to assist with training measures. The relevant provision in this regard consists of the Federal Education and Training Assistance Act (BAföG)\textsuperscript{78}, the Continuing Education Grant (Bildungsprämie)\textsuperscript{79} and the Upgrading Training Assistance Act (Aufstiegs-BAföG)\textsuperscript{80}.

The programme “Continuing Training of Low Skilled Workers and Employed Older Persons in Companies” (WeGebAU) enables employers to obtain a grant to supplement the pay of employees who are absent within the scope of qualifications-related measures aimed at acquiring full equivalence.\textsuperscript{81}

In order to offer financial support opportunities outside the scope of receipt of benefits pursuant to German Social Security Code and individual educational financing, existing instruments have been supplemented by new Federal Government and federal state provision since the entry into force of the Recognition Act (cf. Figure 7).

\textsuperscript{75} Other reasons for not making an application include inadequate knowledge of German, commencement of employment and seeking to pursue alternative procedures (cf. BMBF 2015, pp. 133 and 162).
\textsuperscript{76} Cf. BMBF 2014 and 2015.
\textsuperscript{77} Cf. BMBF 2016.

\textsuperscript{78} BAföG is only applicable to adaptation training in certain circumstances, such as when duration of training abroad was less than three years.
\textsuperscript{79} For further information on persons on low incomes, see BMBF 2014, p. 129f.
\textsuperscript{80} Funding for further training for professional advancement in the non-academic sector, such as master craftsman courses in the craft trades. On 1 August 2016, Meister-BAföG became Aufstiegs-BAföG (Upgrading Training Assistance Act).
\textsuperscript{81} The WeGebAU programme is directed at companies with fewer than 250 employees. It supports such firms in providing continuing training to low skilled workers whilst wages continue to be paid.
This new provision includes the Recognition Grant (see Chapter 5.3) and a stipulation pursuant to § 131 SGB III, introduced on a temporary basis until 2018, which gives asylum seekers with good prospects of being able to remain in Germany an earlier opportunity to avail themselves of labour market integration measures (for example funding of the costs of the recognition procedure).

The Federal Government is also supporting the expansion of training and support programmes. Since 2015, financial support has also been available for training measures within the scope of the ESF-funded “Network IQ” programme for the purpose of gaining full professional or occupational recognition and thus entry to the labour market. The financing of further necessary costs, such as travel or childcare, is also possible. Over 331 training measures within the scope of the IQ fund-
Support is being provided for the implementation of skills analysis via the “Special Skills Analysis Fund”, which was set up in 2015 and forms part of the “Prototyping Transfer” project\(^\text{82}\). This special fund enables the costs of procedures to be covered, some of which are expensive and adapted to individual needs. Funding is available to those who do not have the means to meet the costs incurred and who do not receive any financing via the employment agency, Job Centre or other institution. Applications can be submitted to the West German Association of Chambers of Crafts and Trades (WHKT).

### 5.3 The Recognition Grant – new funding provision from the Federal Government

Despite the funding opportunities previously put in place, financing of the recognition procedure continued to constitute a major challenge for persons outside the scope of receipt of benefits (pursuant to SGB III and SGB II). This particularly affected those who were not employed in line with their qualifications whilst also having limited financial means at their disposal. The launch of the Recognition Grant on 1 December 2016 now offers this target group an additional financing opportunity right across the country.\(^\text{83}\) This is namely a three-year pilot project in which the structures of the German-wide financing of recognition costs will be developed and tested.

Alongside the costs of translations, certifications, assessments and other evidence required, funding can also be provided for the fees of the recognition procedure itself. In addition, financing is available for skills analyses and travel costs incurred within Germany as part of the application process. The maximum grant is €600 per person.\(^\text{84}\) Funding is secondary to that provided via the regular instruments of the Federal Government and via federal state programmes. Initial results show that interest is high. Several hundred applications for funding were submitted within a few months of the launch of the programme.

### 5.4 Expansion of the federal state programmes

Alongside the “Hamburg Scholarship Programme”\(^\text{85}\), which was introduced in 2010, two further financing instruments that apply in individual federal states were created in 2016 in the form of the scholarship programme “Professional Recognition in Baden-Württemberg”\(^\text{86}\) and the “Berlin Hardship Fund for Professional Recognition”\(^\text{87}\).

Like the Federal Government, the federal states are seeking to assist those who do not have the personal means to meet the costs of a recognition procedure and do not receive any other funding, particularly via the regular instruments of the Federal Government. The aim of closing this financial gap is to make it possible for more persons to avail themselves of the opportunities afforded by professional or occupational recognition.

In Hamburg and Berlin, persons must have had their main residence in the respective federal state for a minimum of three months to be eligible to apply. Baden-Württemberg accepts applications from persons who do not live in the federal state but who aim to find employment there. Furthermore, applicants need to hold either German citizenship or be a national of an EU member state or else be able to demonstrate possession

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82 Cf. Chapter 3.4.
83 See funding guidelines at www.nerkennungszuschuss.de.
84 Adaptation training, living costs, support costs and costs and fees for authorisation to practise (licence to practise, authorisation to use a professional title) are not eligible for funding.
86 More information on the programme is available at www.foerderdatenbank.de/Navigation/foerderrecherche/inhaltsverzeichnis.html?get=028d105ee799ea314e72e1410a2a86c;views;document&doc=13107&typ=RL.
of a residence permit or leave to remain pursuant to § 55 AsylVfG. Persons with special leave to remain are also eligible to apply in Baden-Württemberg and Berlin.

In the case of the Recognition Grant, which is funded by the Federal Government, funding is granted irrespective of nationality, residency status or the country in which training was completed. Nevertheless, a place of residence or usual residence in Germany for a period of at least three months is a prerequisite.

Since 2012, the financing opportunities for recognition procedures have been expanded on an ongoing basis and have been opened up to a wider group of persons. It remains to be seen just how the Federal Recognition Grant and the newly established scholarship programmes in Baden-Württemberg and Berlin in particular are accepted by the target group.

88 The funding guidelines were adjusted with effect from 1 January 2017. Since this time, the maximum one-off grant for which application may be made is €4,000 per person. This sum may also be enhanced via an interest-free loan of a maximum of €10,000. This means that the maximum funding per person is €14,000. See http://www.luewu.de/anzeiger/docs/2313.pdf.

The “Berlin Hardship Fund for Professional Recognition” has been in place since mid-2016. It has been established for a limited term of two years and provides non-repayable, one-off grants with a maximum funding amount of €10,000 per person. Total funding volume is €200,000 per year. Areas that are eligible for funding are fees and expenses for a recognition procedure, costs of translations and interpreting services, and costs incurred within the scope of compensation measures or other training programmes. These costs may, however, also encompass travel expenses, learning materials and childcare. Unlike Hamburg and Baden-Württemberg, Berlin does not fund living costs.

“Professional Recognition in Baden-Württemberg” is a three-year pilot project launched by the Baden-Württemberg Foundation, which provides total possible grant funding of up to €1.6 million. Payments may either be made in the form of a maximum monthly scholarship of €1,000 for a period of between two and ten months or take place in the form of a one-off grant of a maximum of €1,000 per person. This funding can be used to finance the fees and expenses of a recognition procedure, certificate evaluations by the ZAB, adaptation training, preparatory courses for knowledge and aptitude tests, language courses and bridging measures for persons with academic qualifications in non-regulated occupations.

The “Hamburg Scholarship Programme” provides grants to meet living costs for the duration of a compensation measure or adaptation training. 50 percent is made available as a grant and 50 percent as an interest-free loan. Application may also be made for a non-repayable, one-off grant to cover costs incurred within the scope of the recognition procedure, such as translations, fees and other expenditure on compensation measures and adaptation training for which a charge may be made. Until the end of 2016, the maximum amount payable under the Hamburg Scholarship Programme was €12,000 per person. 280 persons received funding within the framework of the Hamburg Scholarship Programme during 2016. A total of 298 one-off grants and 17 scholarships to finance living costs were awarded. Funding volume for 2016 reached approximately €605,000.

Information Box 6 Funding instruments of the federal states

Doinita Grosu from Romania has received recognition as a social education worker. During her adaptation training she was able to obtain funding from the Hamburg Scholarship Programme.
Part III
Summary presentation of the evaluation results on the Recognition Act
1. Background, tasks and approach of the evaluation

1.1 Background to the evaluation

The “Law to improve the assessment and recognition of professional and vocational education and training qualifications acquired abroad” (Federal Recognition Act) had a double objective when it came into effect on 1 April 2012. One aim of the legislation was to help secure a supply of skilled workers and increase the attractiveness of Germany for qualified immigrants. A second intention was that the law should foster the (labour market) integration of migrants already living in the country.

There is a requirement for the application and impact of the law to be assessed four years after entry into force (§ 18 BQFG). The ministry responsible, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), commissioned the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) to issue an invitation to tender for the evaluation of the Recognition Act and to provide technical support for the evaluation process. In the autumn of 2015, the task of evaluating the Recognition Act was assigned to InterVal GmbH and the Institute for Business, Work and Culture (IWAK).

Margareta Marek trained as an environmental technician in Poland. In order to achieve full recognition as a sewage engineering technician, she completed a practical placement with the public utility company of the town of Nortorf. The company subsequently offered Margareta a job.
This brief summary provides information on the most important results of the evaluation. A detailed representation is provided in the final report.\textsuperscript{89}

1.2 Summary of the tasks of the evaluation and of the approach adopted

The main focus of the evaluation was to investigate the application and impact of the Recognition Act. The first step was to undertake a retrospective analysis of take-up thus far of the opportunities for recognition afforded by the law. Secondly, an investigation was conducted into the effect of recognitions achieved by means of the act on the labour market integration of successful applicants.

The foundations for the surveys and analyses were provided by an impact model. This was drawn up on the basis of specialist expertise, relevant literature and theoretical considerations. It represents the supposed correlations between individual backgrounds, context factors and the consequences of successful recognition on the quality of labour market integration. Figure 8 below illustrates these sequences from the perspective of a person living in Germany at the time when the application was made.\textsuperscript{90}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8.png}
\caption{Impact of professional recognition on the quality of labour market integration of persons already living in Germany}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{90} In the case of applications from abroad, the issue of the role played by recognition for migration to Germany is also of relevance alongside the question of labour market integration. In these cases, not all of the factors listed in Figure 8 would be of significance (e.g. financing provision linked to residency status).

\textsuperscript{89} Cf. Ekert et al. 2017.
The methodological core of the evaluation was made up of InterVal’s and IWAK’s own surveys and analyses of current recognition cases. These included a standardised questionnaire of successful applicants, more detailed qualitative interviews and case studies on selected professions and occupations. An analysis of secondary data was also used to undertake a supplementary consideration of the potential target group of the law prior to 2012. This data was also utilised to investigate whether recognition was exerting an impact on labour market integration before 2012. A legal analysis of recognition regulations in place before the law entered into force showed which persons particularly benefit from the Recognition Act and provided the basis for a more detailed evaluation of the official statistics.

Information Box 7
Delineation of monitoring and evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to provide a comprehensive impact analysis of the law. Investigations into the implementation of the new regulations (administrative implementation, supplementary information and guidance provision) took place within the scope of the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project. For this reason, they did not form an object of the evaluation. The evaluation also did not analyse whether and why recognition procedures might not be used.

Faisal Hamdo fled from Syria and, thanks to recognition, now works at a university clinic as a physiotherapist, the profession in which he trained.
2. Legal analysis and application of the law

2.1 What does (international) literature have to say about the Recognition Act?

The specialist literature examined within the scope of the evaluation, which also helped in areas such as the development of the impact model, was already able to provide indications regarding the relevance of the Recognition Act. International reports\textsuperscript{91} make positive mention of the German recognition regulations and of the support structures, which are either based on the law or have been expanded in its wake (including the IQ Network, “Recognition in Germany”, BQ-Portal and “Prototyping Transfer”). The results of the 2014 BIBB Company Survey\textsuperscript{92} also indicate that many companies are fundamentally willing to support the recognition process.

2.2 Which groups have particularly benefited from the Recognition Act?

The Recognition Act is the first instrument to establish a general legal right to a recognition procedure. Comprehensive regulations have also been introduced for the implementation of the procedure and these now apply in all cases. These include stipulations regarding the duration of the procedure and the provision that professional or occupational experience should be taken into account in the equivalence assessment.

A comparison with the legal position in 2012 shows that how much has been changed by the Recognition Act in each individual case depends on aspects such as nationality, country of training and the reference profession or occupation.

Nationals of EU member states who had acquired qualifications in regulated professions in these countries, for example, already enjoyed extensive opportunities for recognition prior to 2012 on the basis of the EU Recognition Directive. For this group, the Recognition Act tended to bring about a lesser degree of change. For other groups, the law provides for the first time a legally secured possibility to seek assessment of their foreign qualification for equivalence with a German reference profession or occupation. Some cases, for which recognition regulations were already in place prior to 2012, are also benefiting from the procedural changes stated above.

One opportunity that has only existed for all groups since 2012 is the ability to submit an application from abroad.

In overall terms, those who are profiting the most from the Recognition Act are third-country nationals who have obtained their qualifications in their home state and persons with a vocational qualification in an occupation that is not regulated in Germany.

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\textsuperscript{91} Cf. e.g. ILO 2016, OECD 2017 and Donlevy et al. 2016.

\textsuperscript{92} Cf. BMBF 2015.
2.3 How many applications could not have been submitted if the Recognition Act had not been in place?

Findings from the legal analysis and data from the official statistics were used to estimate how many recognition cases between 2012 and 2015 were only made possible because of the Recognition Act.93

The analysis shows that an estimated amount of around 46 percent of applications since 2012 were submitted by persons who had no legal right to a procedure prior to the entry into force of the Recognition Act.94 All these cases are a direct result of the Recognition Act.

The remaining applications were made by persons who already enjoyed the right to a recognition procedure prior to 2012, even if this right was less extensive in some cases. Applications from persons who had less wide-ranging opportunities for recognition before 2012 have made up around 31 percent of all new applications since 2012.

There are two reasons for believing that some of these new applications are indirectly attributable to the Recognition Act. Firstly, the expectation is that some people submitted an application because legal changes such as consideration of professional or occupational experience meant that chances of achieving recognition were greater. Secondly, it is fair to assume that some applicants were motivated to make an application in the wake of the reporting and public relations work accompanying the Recognition Act and because of the expanded information and guidance structures. It is not possible to define the precise extent of this proportion of applications indirectly brought about by the Recognition Act.

10 percent of all new applications since 2012 have been from abroad and in this form are also attributable to the Recognition Act.

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93 The official statistics were also evaluated in order to supplement the BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project by tracing developments in the recognition system (cf. Ekert et al. 2017).

94 These statements relate to over 90 percent of all new applications (a total of 63,486 between 2012 and 2015). In some individual cases and in certain circumstances, recognition procedures were also conducted before 2012 by dint of special regulations or because of the implementation practice adopted by the competent bodies. Nevertheless, the supposition is that this proportion is low. For this reason, no statements can be made in respect of the other cases because a detailed analysis of the general legal conditions in every profession and occupation was not carried out within the scope of the evaluation.
3. Analysis of the starting situation in Germany

Secondary data was analysed in order to identify the labour market integration of persons with a foreign qualification living in Germany prior to the entry into force of the Recognition Act. Evaluation of this data also informed the investigation as to the impact of recognition procedure before 2012.

3.1 How well integrated into the labour market were persons with a foreign qualification?

Data from the Microcensus (for the year 2013) and the sample migration survey carried out by the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) (2013) were used to identify the quality of labour market integration of persons with a foreign qualification living in Germany. The comparison group comprised persons with a German qualification. This analysis produced the following findings.

In terms of socio-demographic composition, migrants with a foreign professional or vocational qualification living in Germany differed only slightly from persons with a German qualification. It is even the case that they were more likely to be in possession of an academic qualification. However, their level of participation in working life remained significantly below that of persons educated in Germany, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Although persons with foreign qualifications were more likely to be in possession of an academic qualification than their German counterparts, they were also more likely to be in fixed-term contracts of employment, in employment in jobs in which only a small number of hours is worked each month and which are subject to flat-rate deductions, in shift work and in part-time work against their wishes.

3.2 What findings are available thus far regarding the impact of recognition procedures?

The sample migration survey carried out by the IAB and the SOEP (2013) helped to investigate the extent to which recognition procedures exerted an effect on labour market integration prior to entry into force of the Recognition Act. For this purpose, the labour market integration of persons with recognised foreign qualifications was studied and compared with that of persons without recognition (reference group).

Comparison with the control group shows that recognition procedures exerted positive effects on labour market integration before 2012. Even prior to entry into force of the Recognition Act, recognition provided approximately a fourfold increase in the chance that a person with a foreign qualification was able to work in the profession or occupation in which he or she had trained. Recognition that took place in the past also led to a significant rise of over 20 percent in the salary of persons working in regulated professions.

95 For a detailed description of these datasets, cf. Ekert et al. 2017.
4. Development of the labour market integration of successful applicants after 2012

The expectation was that recognition procedures would continue to deliver a positive impact on labour market integration after the entry into force of the Recognition Act in 2012. The evaluation was based on the assumption that these effects were further disseminated and strengthened by opening up access to the procedure and by modifications to the process.

In order to investigate this, an extensive standardised survey of persons who had successfully completed the recognition procedure was conducted in the summer of 2016. The focus of the survey was on how labour market integration had developed subsequent to recognition as opposed to the situation beforehand (before and after comparison). Access to former applicants took place via competent bodies (IHK FOSA, chambers of crafts and trades, medical councils, federal state healthcare offices and others). The survey was multilingual. It was carried out online and by telephone in some cases. Survey participants comprised a total of 812 persons whose professional or vocational qualification acquired abroad had been accorded full or partial recognition after 1 April 2012.96

4.1 What are the important sources of information for applicants?

The main sources of initial information for respondents were personal networks (i.e. friends and family members) and the internet. Over half (around 55 percent) had first discovered via one of these two routes that it was possible for a professional or vocational qualification acquired abroad to be recognised in Germany. The internet served as a particular source of information for persons making an application from abroad. For applicants living in Germany, friends and family were the main source.

The competent bodies responsible for recognition and the guidance centres (such as the IQ initial counselling centres) did not assume relevant significance as sources of more detailed information until later in the process. Around 34 percent of respondents, for example, received further information on recognition from a competent body.

4.2 What are the main reasons and motivations for making an application?

There were four main reasons why respondents were motivated to submit an application (multiple responses possible). The most frequent reason stated was a specific

96 A total of 306 competent bodies were written to and asked to help with the evaluation. 49 of these supported the evaluation in the summer of 2016 by forwarding invitations to take part to the target group. The assumption is that about 6,100 persons from the survey target group received an invitation. The survey did not include applicants who had withdrawn their application, applicants whose procedure had been rejected or applicants whose procedure had not yet been decided. In order to compensate for structural differences between the sample and the statistical population, data was weighted according to the characteristics of country of training and reference profession or occupation. The remaining differences are marginal (cf. Ekert et al. 2017). Weighted data is presented below.

Azem Ceka (see also cover picture) is a car varnisher from Macedonia. He initially worked as an employee before starting up his own firm but was forced to employ a master craftsman in order to do so as prescribed by German law. The recognition process eventually enabled him to acquire a master craftsman qualification himself.
job offer in Germany (47 percent), followed by the desire to work in a regulated profession (26 percent) and the hope that recognition would improve the chances of career entry or advancement (24 percent). The fourth most common reason given was access to continuing training opportunities (14 percent). Applicants in non-regulated occupations were more likely to cite this motivation than those in regulated professions.

4.3 What is the impact of recognition procedures with regard to labour market integration?

The labour market integration of the persons surveyed improved considerably following the recognition procedure. In the summer of 2016 (when the survey took place), the former applicants were more likely to be in employment, more likely to be working for more hours and more likely to be employed more closely in line with their qualifications than was the case at the time when their application was submitted. The benchmark data on employment status and structure of employment presented in Figure 9 shows the change between the two points in time.97

In addition, respondents received higher average incomes following recognition. Average gross work income per month of those in employment at the respective points in time was around €1,000 higher in the summer of 2016 than at the time of application. In cross-sectional comparison terms, this represents a rise of around 40 percent.98 This increase consists of three components. Around 5 percentage points are due to general wage development in Germany99 and

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97 Occupational integration of applicants was further favoured by the generally positive development of the labour market in recent years. For example, the 2016 unemployment rate (year average of 6.1 percent) represents a slight fall compared to the rate for 2012 (year average of 6.8 percent) (cf. BA 2017, p. 118).

98 If a longitudinal comparison is undertaken of the persons who were in employment at both points in time, a rise in gross income of over €1,000 per month is also revealed. Owing to a higher starting level, this represents a slightly smaller rise of 37 percent.

the higher weekly working time of respondents in the summer of 2016 accounts for 9 percentage points. The remaining 26 percentage points of increased income are consequences of occupational and professional advancement and better quality and more highly paid jobs.

Information Box 8
Qualitative detail – benefit of recognition for doctors

The profession of doctor has accounted for the largest group of all applicants since 2012 and was therefore selected for a more detailed analysis. Although this is a regulated profession, it may be exercised without recognition – for a limited period and with restrictions – if persons are in possession of temporary authorisation to practise. A total of 15 interviews were conducted with foreign doctors who had achieved recognition.

The analysis revealed that a particular effect of recognition for several of the doctors interviewed was that it brought more professional freedoms and reduced dependency on their current employer. Alongside the opportunity to access continuing training to become a specialist doctor, another important aspect for some was that acquisition of a licence to practise gave them the option of opening their own surgery. The increased security of planning that recognition directly provided to the respondents (secure employment, planning of personal life, secure residency status) was a further factor that was emphasised and viewed positively in many of the interviews.

4.4 How do the respondents evaluate their work situation subjectively?

72 percent of respondents thought that their work situation in the summer of 2016 was better than it had been at the time of application and also believed that this was the result of recognition of their foreign qualification.

From the point of view of respondents, recognition was of particular relevance to career entry or advancement (85 percent agreement) and to growth in income (81 percent agreement). 73 percent also felt that recognition of their qualification had led to better acceptance and respect from employers.
4.5 What other effects does recognition have?

In addition to the effects that had already taken place, the former applicants also took a very positive view of the new opportunities opened up by recognition. For example, 47 percent of all respondents stated that recognition put them in a better position than before to be able to apply for new jobs. 34 percent thought that recognition delivered added value in terms of access to adaptation training and continuing training opportunities.

4.6 How is the cost-benefit ratio of recognition evaluated?

In evaluating the benefits of recognition, consideration also needs to be accorded to the associated expenditure. Alongside the costs of the application process itself, this also includes aspects such as procurement and translation of documents and the possible requirement to complete compensation measures.

In their own personal assessments, a total of around 54 percent of respondents viewed the cost-benefit ratio of their recognition procedure as positive. 41 percent even considered that benefits significantly outweighed costs (cf. Figure 10). On the other hand, 13 percent were of the opinion that costs were greater than benefits. From their point of view, recognition had not yet been worthwhile by the summer of 2016. A further 30 percent thought that costs and benefits were about equal.

4.7 When does the impact of successful recognition take effect?

There is some delay before the changes shown in quality of participation in the labour market take effect (cf. Table 3). This can be seen, for example, in the proportion of persons not in employment. This proportion remained comparatively high (14 percent) amongst respondents whose qualification had not been recognised until shortly before the survey took place. However, the longer the period of time that had elapsed since recognition, the smaller this proportion was likely to be. Between three and a half and four and a half years after recognition, it had fallen to only 3 percent. Average gross monthly income also continues to rise as time goes by (for example rising by over €1,200 between 18 months and two and a half years after recognition).

In light of these results, it comes as no surprise that respondents take a more positive view of the ratio between the costs and benefits of recognition as time since recognition continues to go by.

Figure 10  The costs-benefits ratio of the recognition procedure mostly positively evaluated (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The benefit is much higher than the expenditure.</th>
<th>The benefit is somewhat higher than the expenditure.</th>
<th>Costs and benefits are about equal.</th>
<th>The expenditure is somewhat higher than the benefit.</th>
<th>The expenditure is much higher than the benefit.</th>
<th>No information</th>
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<td>40.8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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4.8 Are any differences revealed between regulated professions and non-regulated occupations with regard to the impact of recognition procedures?

Within the scope of the data analysis, a comparison was made between development of labour market integration for persons with recognition in a regulated profession and those with recognition in a non-regulated occupation.

It was revealed that both groups benefited from their recognition. In regulated professions, improvements with regard to the quality of labour market integration were somewhat greater. One of the reasons for this is the fact that recognition is a prerequisite for the full and unrestricted exercising of these professions. However, as the evaluation showed, differences between branches and occupational groups in respect of skilled worker requirements and salary structures also played a role.

Nevertheless, respondents who had achieved recognition in a non-regulated occupation took just as positive a view of the cost-benefit ratio of recognition as persons who had acquired recognition in a regulated profession. Both groups also believed that the improvement in their work situation compared to the point in time when application was made was due to recognition.

4.9 What role does recognition play in migration in the case of an application from abroad?

18 percent of those surveyed were living abroad when they submitted their application for professional or occupational recognition. Over 80 percent of these respondents “tended to agree” or “fully agreed” with the statement that recognition was important for their decision to migrate to Germany.
5. Findings on recognition procedures in non-regulated occupations

In order to undertake a more detailed consideration of the non-regulated sector, sample qualitative occupational case studies were conducted for the two occupations with the highest application numbers (electronics technician and office manager). Selected results are presented below.

5.1 Which factors and vested interests of companies and skilled workers can provide the motivation to seek recognition as an electronics technician?

With regard to the five recognised electronics technicians interviewed within the scope of the case study, the decision to seek recognition was also driven in each case by company interests. An existing shortage of skilled workers was the reason that motivated the four companies forming the object of investigation to obtain the assistance of the chambers to instigate recognition procedures themselves or else to provide employees with active support in the process. The companies used the recognition procedure both for the systematic recruitment of skilled workers from abroad and as a means of securing staff loyalty. In the second case, the recognition procedure served as an instrument for the development of human resources. Recognition procedures also showed themselves to be necessary or helpful to companies in their dealings with third parties in terms of fulfilling the branch-specific conditions of public sector contractors or sending out a signal of quality to customers.

5.2 Which factors and vested interests of companies and skilled workers can provide the motivation to seek recognition as an office manager?

In the three cases of recognised (female) office managers analysed, recognition was solely driven by the interests of the skilled workers. All of the women conducted the procedures without company support. The case of the sample company surveyed showed that one of the reasons for this was the fact that sufficient skilled workers were already available on the regional labour market. In all cases, the skilled workers were mainly motivated to seek recognition because of access to adaptation training and opportunities for advanced training that would enable them to work in the occupation in which they had trained. Information, guidance and support from employment agencies and chambers also played an important part in the process.

101 Five foreign electronics technician and five management, HR and works council representatives from four companies were interviewed for this case study.

102 One company representative and three office managers were interviewed for this case study.
6. Conclusions

The results of the evaluation show that both objectives of the Recognition Act have been achieved. These were to increase the attractiveness of Germany for qualified immigrants and to improve the economic integration of skilled workers with foreign qualifications already living in the country.

6.1 What contribution does the law make to qualified immigration?

The official statistics show that about one in ten applications were submitted from abroad. This possibility did not exist before the Recognition Act entered into force. The standardised survey of applicants also reveals that recognition plays an important role in their decision to migrate. Many of these persons were still working in Germany in the summer of 2016 and are thus also making a longer term contribution towards securing a supply of skilled workers. As the case studies demonstrate, companies are also taking the initiative in terms of availing themselves of the opportunities afforded by the Recognition Act to cover their requirements by recruiting skilled workers from abroad. In overall terms, these findings indicate that the Recognition Act is making an important contribution to qualified migration but that associated potential has probably not yet been fully exploited.

6.2 What contribution is the Recognition Act making towards fostering the labour market integration of skilled workers with foreign qualifications?

Both the analyses of secondary data and the primary data obtained within the scope of the evaluation indicate that recognition procedures are delivering an economic impact. It has become clear that recognition of professional and vocational qualifications significantly improves the extent and quality of labour market integration by persons with foreign qualifications. The differentiation between regulated professions and non-regulated occupations shows that recognition procedures in both areas have a positive impact on labour market integration.

The Recognition Act itself exerts a direct and indirect effect on the number of applications and resultant recognition notices issued. Nearly half of applications submitted since 2012 are directly attributable to the Recognition Act. These applications have been made by persons who did not acquire the right to a recognition procedure until the Recognition Act entered into force. It is not possible to define in precise terms how many of the other recognition cases were indirectly prompted by the Recognition Act via such vehicles as changes to procedural regulations, support structures and increased public relations work. It may be the case that up to a third of new applications are attributable to the law in this way.
7. Perspectives

The evaluation provides indications that it may be worthwhile to expand measures aimed at increasing levels of awareness and also at providing information on the benefits of recognition to companies within the context of developing and securing a supply of skilled workers.

As the results of the standardised survey show, the target group accords a particularly important role to social networks for the procurement of information. Although dissemination of information on the benefits and drawbacks of recognition via these channels is to be welcomed, it is on the other hand by no means certain that such information is passed on in a sufficiently differentiated way and in a manner that is positive in overall terms. The results of the survey also reveal that there is a delay before the impact of recognition takes effect. By way of contrast, expenditure and costs are incurred directly at the time when the application is made. This carries the risk of distorted reporting in social networks if information is disseminated by former applicants directly after a recognition procedure. For this reason, particular account should be taken of social media in developing an approach that is appropriate to the target audience.

The findings that have emerged from the case studies further demonstrate that comprehensive and differentiated information on the opportunities afforded by the Recognition Act (and other strategies aimed at developing or securing a supply of skilled workers) should be provided to companies in particular. Another especially important aspect is support for branches in which the shortage of skilled workers is not as yet sufficiently serious so as to act as the sole incentive for companies to seize the initiative.

It is also revealed that financial support can play an important role in the recognition procedure. Although it is not possible for the evaluation to determine the extent to which financial expenditure deters persons from making an application, the interviews with successful applicants strongly suggest that procedural costs may constitute a barrier in many other cases. It is welcomed that, alongside the regular Federal Government instruments and other financial support measures, a national facility to provide grants for recognition procedure has been in place since December 2016. Especially in light of the fact that the costs and benefits of recognition do not coincide, this funding measure may help to bridge hurdles.
Mohammed Alkaflawy is a recognised engineer from Iraq. After taking part in the IQ bridging measure Be.Ing! he now works for Hamburg Water in the profession in which he trained.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>AHK</td>
<td>Auslandshandelskammer und Delegation der deutschen Wirtschaft - German Chamber of Commerce Abroad and Trade Delegations</td>
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<td>Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge – Federal Office for Migration and Refugees</td>
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<td>Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMF</td>
<td>Bundesministerium der Finanzen – Federal Ministry of Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI</td>
<td>Bundesministerium des Innern – Federal Ministry of the Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMWi</td>
<td>Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie – Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BQ-Portal</td>
<td>Information portal for foreign professional qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BQFG</td>
<td>Berufsspezifikationsfeststellungsgesetz – “Law on the assessment of the equivalence of vocational qualifications” (Professional Qualifications Assessment Act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIHK</td>
<td>Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag e. V. – Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry e. V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Einheitlicher Ansprechpartner – National contact point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>Europäischer Wirtschaftsraum – European Economic Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPC</td>
<td>Europäischer Berufsausweise – European Professional Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF</td>
<td>Europäischer Sozialfonds – European Social Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f-bb</td>
<td>Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung – Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER-B2</td>
<td>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), level B2 (ability to express oneself on a range of topics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER-C1</td>
<td>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), level C1 (effective operational proficiency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GfG</td>
<td>Gutachtenstelle für Gesundheitsberufe (bei der ZAB) – Central Assessment Agency for Healthcare Professions (housed at the ZAB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMK</td>
<td>Gesundheitsministerkonferenz der Länder – Conference of Ministers of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWK</td>
<td>Handwerkskammer – Chamber of Crafts and Trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HwO</td>
<td>Handwerksordnung – Crafts and Trades Regulation Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAB-SOEP</td>
<td>Household survey carried out by the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHK</td>
<td>Industrie- und Handelskammer – Chamber of Commerce and Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHK FOSA</td>
<td>Foreign Skills Approval Competence Centre of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, a consortium under public law of 76 of the 79 chambers of commerce and industry to act as a central decision-making body in respect of applications for the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>Förderprogramm “Integration durch Qualifizierung (IQ)” – The “Integration through Training (IQ)” funding programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IW Köln</td>
<td>Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln – Cologne Institute for Economic Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IWAK</td>
<td>Institut für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Kultur – Institute for Business, Work and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiLoG</td>
<td>Mindestlohngesetz – German Minimum Wage Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBE</td>
<td>Migrationsberatung für erwachsene Zuwanderer – adult migrant guidance centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGB</td>
<td>Sozialgesetzbuch – German Social Security Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>vocational education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAB</td>
<td>Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen (im Sekretariat der KMK) – Central Office for Foreign Education (at the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, KMK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZDH</td>
<td>Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks e. V. – German Confederation of Skilled Crafts e. V.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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