European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014

Country report Germany

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Contents

1   Introduction

There is currently no overall national approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning in Germany, but good progress has been made during the last three years. Within the formal system of education, which already contains elements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, bottom-up and top-down approaches complement each other.

The **External students' examination**, described in the 2007 and 2010 Inventory updates, remains in operation and has been the subject of a research project[1]. The legislative provision for **access to higher education for qualified workers** has also been extended further[2],e.g. all over Germany there is now open access for master craftsmen and people, who successfully completed an equivalent continuing vocational education. In addition there is the ANKOM-initiative[3], which developed validation approaches in order to raise the permeability between vocational and higher education. At the moment ANKOM focuses on the practical implementation of these approaches in higher education institutions. In the third stage of this initiative, 20 projects are currently identifying and demonstrating ways of improving the basic conditions for qualified workers starting academic studies. This involves analysis of the organisation of learning and teaching methods, counselling, coaching and further education. Most of the **measures below legislative level** noted in the 2010 Country Report are still in place and have been extended.

A new approach is the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law** (*Gesetz über die Feststellung der Gleichwertigkeit von Berufsqualifikationen* [*Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz* – BQFG]), in short, the Federal Recognition Act[4]. Since 1 April 2012, qualified migrants have had the legal right for equal verification of their qualifications. German qualifications are used as a reference standard for the verification. The purpose of the law is better use of foreign qualifications for the German labour market (see BQFG § 1). Although the law aims to achieve a comparison of formal qualifications, it is described here because appropriate work experience can be used for recognition where formal certificates are missing (see BQFG § 3 section 1).

The implementation of the **German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (DQR)[5]** on 1 May 2013 is another measure which might support the greater use of validation. Being developed as a comprehensive framework, the DQR is open to encompass not only formal qualifications but also non-formally and informally acquired competences. In a first step formal qualifications have been aligned to the DQR. Currently, criteria and procedures for the alignment of non-formally acquired qualifications are being discussed in the DQR working group based on recommendations of an expert group. As validation is considered to be a prerequisite for the inclusion of informally acquired competences into the DQR, the DQR also can be seen as a catalyst promoting validation. Also the common definition of the term 'competence' within the DQR that is becoming more and more important as a national approach could be used as a basis for validation processes.

Besides these operational approaches, there are other **'conceptual preliminary studies'** for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In 2013, a working group on validation was set up by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It aims at identifying topics and options for activities, as well as agreements for practical steps. For example, part of the work is to compile a compendium of studies in the field of competence development and informal learning for the purpose of spreading knowledge across Germany.

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[1] see http://www.bibb.de/de/wlk52121.htm

[2] see http://www.kmk.org/wissenschaft-hochschule/studium-und-pruefung/hochschulzugang-beruflich-qualifizierter-ohne-schulische-hochschulzugangsberechtigung.html

[3] see http://ankom.his.de/

[4] see http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de

[5] see http://www.deutscherqualifikationsrahmen.de/

2   National perspective on validation

There is no legal framework and no standardised system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Germany. Due to the allocation of responsibilities within the complex educational system, there is still a variety of approaches, particularly below the legislative level.

As discussed in the Country Update for 2010, legislative provisions are already in place for validation in the field of vocational education and training. This includes the External students' examination under § 45 (2) of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and § 37 (2) of the Crafts Code (HwO), which is targeted at people with vocational experience and legitimises admission to the final examination in a recognised occupation that normally requires formal training in the dual system. Therefore the External students' examination leads to the award of a full qualification (there is no difference between this qualification and a regularly acquired qualification) in a recognised apprenticeship trade.

Up to now, there are two corresponding decisions of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany which determine the framework for recognition by universities[6]. These relate to providing credit for competences acquired at work (2002, extended 2008) and granting access to HE for qualified workers (2009). According to these decisions, knowledge and skills acquired outside the higher education system can be recognised up to a maximum of 50% if content and level are equal to the equivalent formal qualifications.

Access to higher education for qualified workers, under the decision of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German Länder, enables people with vocational qualifications but without an appropriate entrance qualification from school to be admitted to higher education. Both lead to entitlements in the formal system. Access to a higher education course can be granted through the access for qualified workers route.

The ANKOM-initiative[17], which is described in detail in the 2010 update, aims to facilitate permeability between vocational education and higher education. This initiative, funded by government, has developed and also tested approaches for crediting vocational experience to enable access and accreditation to higher education. Today, the ANKOM III-initiative focuses on the implementation of validation approaches at higher education institutions which took part in earlier stages of the initiative. This focus was chosen due to the need to develop sustainable solutions, which will last beyond the period of financial funding of the respective projects.

The ProfilPASS system is also still in place. ProfilPASS aims to review, document and assess informally acquired competences, regardless of where they were acquired or their field of learning. It is based on user self-assessment supported by professional guidance. The ProfilPASS takes into account all learning settings in which learners may acquire competences during the course of their lives. The assumption is that many individuals can only be guided towards knowledge of their competences and the value of them through critical reflection on their biography. At the moment the intention is not yet the validation of competences but the further development regarding the individual's aims – no matter if they are professional or private.

Since 2010, there have been two new developments in legislative provisions relating to validation:

■   The Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG) and the
■   German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (DQR)

The focus of the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law** (BQFG) is on professions based on federal law. A difference is made between non-regularised and regularised professions; in order to practice regularised professions, the individual must have specific

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[6] see Country Report 2010 and http://ankom.his.de/beschluesse

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vocational qualifications that need to be recognised, whereas the practice of non-regularised professions is not dependent on compulsory qualifications. Vocational qualifications can be proved by training certificates, certificates of capability and appropriate vocational work experience in foreign countries or in Germany (see § 3 BQFG section 1). All persons that possess a qualification acquired in a foreign country have a legal right to have the equality of their qualifications verified by a competent authority within three months. The applicant must be informed of the result by an administrative decision. Recognition of professions that are responsibility of the Länder is carried out autonomously by the Länder[7]. In general the recognition of work experience is possible. Besides foreign formal certificates which are compared to the relevant standards/requirements in Germany relevant work experience or other documented learning experiences (e.g. further educational measures)[8]. It is probable that by the time the next Inventory update is carried out, more detailed information will be available about the recognition of work experience under the BQFG.

With the **German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (DQR)** an eight level matrix has been developed that can generally be used for the classification of professional and personal competences acquired in all educational sectors. Within the DQR, the term 'competence' is understood to refer to an individual's knowledge and skills, their personal, social and methodical abilities, and their disposition for individual and social responsibility. In this sense, competence is to be understood as a broad competence of behaviour (see AK DQR, 2011). The benefit of the DQR for validation is the focus on competences, which means it focuses on what a person can do, rather than on learning inputs.

In contrast to other European countries, many German approaches are ongoing that have been established below legislative level. With support from public funds, many different approaches at regional and national level have been developed in recent years for different target groups. In reference to the four stages of validation, these aim at the stages of identification and documentation, but without formal assessment and certification.

Overall, validation in Germany can still be described as a colourful mosaic of local, regional, and national approaches. The DQR has established an overall framework for learning outcomes but adjusting all these approaches in line with the DQR needs time, especially below the legislative level.

To build on the Country Report for Germany in 2010, the Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law and the DQR are described in detail below. Furthermore, new developments and findings concerning the examples described in the 2010 Country report are described, .i.e. the External Students' Examination, access to higher education for qualified workers, and ProfilPASS.

2.1   National legal framework, system or policy on validation

Two key developments have taken place at the legislative level since 2010. The first is the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG),** which is a new system and procedure introduced in April 2012. It offers individuals a guaranteed right to the verification of the equality of qualifications acquired in foreign countries by a competent authority. Although the law focuses on the comparison of formal qualifications, it is described in this report because appropriate work experience can be used for recognition where formal certificates are missing (see BQFG § 3 section 1).

Secondly, the **DQR** aims to promote validation through its learning outcomes approach. Based on the recommendation of the Council on the validation of non-formal and informal learning of 20 December 2012, a working group concerning validation has been set up in 2013 by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

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[7] see http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/laenderregelungen.php

[8] see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2014), p. 107ff.

2.2   Skills audits

Currently projects and initiatives directed towards auditing individual competence profiles in order to define a career project or plan a professional reorientation or training are mostly initiated below legislative level. In a very broader sense the consulting offers of the German employment service can also be seen as a kind of skills audit.

Skills audits within the HE sector take a relatively individualised approach, due to the autonomous nature of this sector. In the vocational education sector, there is a more standardised approach. A project called 'Recognition of vocational competences using the example of the accreditation for the final examination within the frame of the external students' examination[9], which took place between 2009 and 2011, has brought deeper insight into the process of admission and the necessary proofs and assessment criteria for the **External students' examination.** Accordingly, to support an application an individual can:

- Provide evidence of vocational practice in the profession concerned of one and a half times the duration of the vocational training;
- Provide evidence of work experience in other appropriate professions;
- Demonstrate that vocational skills and competences have been acquired.

As mentioned before, in practice evidence is mostly provided by the time of work experience. Furthermore, verification of the skills and competences can be by practical performance or, more widely used, by documentation (see Schreiber/Gutschow/Weber-Höller/Gei, 2012, p 34). Besides 'standard evidence' such as applications and CVs, formal evidence such as job references, attestations of employers, work contracts, trade applications and statutory declarations can be used. Alternative evidence includes references from customers, examples of work, information about former practice by the applicant him/herself, documents about a vocational or academic training that has been cut short, module-examinations in higher education and certificates of attendance or further education certificates (see Schreiber/Gutschow/Moraal/Rothe/Weber-Höller, 2010, p 18). The first step of the validation process is counselling the external applicant followed by the classification and assessment of the presented documents (see Schreiber/Gutschow/Weber-Höller/Gei, 2012, p. 27).

With regard to **permeability between educational and higher education** either so-called 'individual' or 'global' procedures can be employed, or a combination of both. Individual procedures are based on proof provided by applicants that are compared to the contents of a degree programme. Global procedures are based on a comparison of vocational curricula and curricula of higher education programmes to identify global equivalences that can be recognised (see Stamm-Riemer/Loroff/Hartmann, 2011). However, only degrees that result from formal further training are relevant to this. Since special work experience is a precondition for the acquisition of these degrees, the approach may also be regarded as recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Applications for recognition under the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)** follow a procedure which consists of four steps:

(1) advice,

(2) finding the competent authority[10],

(3) submitting the application and

(4) receiving the assessment notice.

The first stage, (advice) is conducted by 16 regional networks in different parts of Germany, coordinated by the project 'Integration by qualification' (*Integration durch Qualifizierung (IQ)*). It aims at finding the appropriate competent authority for the individual concerned. Furthermore, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) has a telephone hotline, which answers questions concerning recognition. Overall IHK-FOSA (Foreign Skills

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[9] see http://www.bibb.de/de/wlk52121.htm

[10] This can be e. g. a chamber of industry and commerce or a chamber of crafts.

Approval) is the German-wide competence centre of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce for the confirmation of equivalence in Nuremberg[11]. At a regional level the single local chambers of industry and commerce are responsible for the individual consulting. Other than this in the area of handicraft the chambers on a regional level are responsible for consulting as well as for the confirmation of equivalences. Consulting is also offered by the employment agencies and counselling institutions for migrants. Regarding most of the occupations in the health sector it has to be stated that the respective authorities in the Länder are responsible. Within the application form the individual has to choose the German reference occupation and provide information about in particular their foreign education, work experience, and certificates acquired[12].

In the skilled crafts sector there is a joint research project called Prototyping[13], which aims at the development of adequate standards and methods for assessing vocational competences within the framework of the Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG). It also covers the design of the procedure for the first-stage. At the same time, a basis for a consistent procedure and more transparency for applicants, enterprises and employers should be achieved as far as possible (prototyping of procedures).

2.3 Relationship with qualifications framework and credit systems, and information on standards used for validation.

Qualifications framework

The German Qualifications framework (DQR) is expected to support the shift towards the learning outcomes principle, i.e. that it is important what someone knows, understands and can do, not where he or she has learned it. Based on descriptors for learning outcomes, the DQR in general is open for the alignment of learning outcomes of all education sectors and is expected to support the permeability of the entire education system as well as the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Credit systems

There is no credit system in vocational training that would facilitate the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Germany. Furthermore, there is neither a unit-based nor a modularised system. However, '**training modules'** (*Ausbildungsbausteine*) in vocational education[14], developed for a small number of training profiles in a pilot initiative financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, can be considered as a step in this direction. The content of the ',Ausbildungsbausteine' is structured by work- and business processes into relevant fields of vocational activities that could be used as units.

A final report of the **DECVET**-initiative[15] (a pilot initiative to test the national implementation of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET))[16] was published at the end of 2012. The report contains projects with different identified and tested approaches for recognition in the context of transition concerning the dual system. For example, the project 'ECVET-Chemie' aimed at the development and testing of approaches for recognition between vocational training and further education. Some of its findings include a complex model for the measurement of competences, rules for the performance of examinations and demands on examiners.

The **ProfilPASS-system** includes quality standards concerning instrument and method, guidance and documentation. Up to now, no link has been created between the DQR and the ProfilPASS-system.

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[11] see http://www.ihk-fosa.de/

[12] The application form as well as an overwiew of the necessary documents can be downloaded on the following homepage: http://www.ihk-fosa.de/fuer-antragsteller/antragstellung/.

[13] see http://www.handwerk-nrw.de/aus-und-weiterbildung/initiativen-des-whkt/prototyping.html

[14] Source: Annen, S. and Bretschneider, M., European Inventory Country Update for Germany, 2010. Furthermore see http://www.jobstarter.de/de/1217.php .

[15] see http://www.decvet.net/

[16] see http://www.decvet.net/files.php?dl_mg_id=904&file=dl_mg_1357721272.pdf

Standards

In Germany, there are no consistent standards for validation. The aforementioned Vocational Training Act (BBiG) determines different possibilities of access to the regular examinations for non-apprentices, which is the **External students' examination** in vocational education. Nevertheless, there are concrete standards only for the most common used ground for admission to the examination. A current research project carried out by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (*Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung*, BIBB) has examined the criteria used for the authorisation of the external examination (see chapter 2.2). In the meantime, as a contribution towards a more standardised process also for the pathways that have so far only rarely been used, general supporting documents for the assessing institutions have been developed[17]. These documents are e.g. 'qualification-passes' with clear registers of acquired knowledge and skills or certificates of educational institutions. Application documents are verified by profiles of vocational skills and competences as well as training framework plans.

The bases for the equivalence check of foreign qualifications in the context of the Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG) are curricula of comparable qualifications of the German educational system.

2.4 National institutional framework

Due to the lack of a legal framework and standardised system for validation, there is neither a central institution nor a standardised institutional framework. Responsibility for the various approaches to validation is held by different organisations, as described in the 2010 update and summarised below.

'Competent authorities' are responsible under § 71 of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) for the admission to the External students' examination. Competent authorities are mainly the Chambers of Crafts, Chambers of industry and commerce and Chambers of farming – the responsibility depends on the recognised occupation requiring occupational training.

For access to higher education, the German Rectors' Conference has defined the framework for validation (see 1 and 2). Concrete regulations and procedures are established by the respective university.

To establish the ProfilPASS-system, a national service-centre was set-up in 2005. Currently it supports 55 local dialogue-centres. The ProfilPASS validation procedure is built up by 'multipliers' (*Multiplikatoren)* who qualify counsellors to use the ProfilPASS-system in practice. The counsellors work in educational institutions or free-lance.

2.5 Governance and allocation of responsibilities

2.5.1 Please describe the allocation of responsibilities (at national, regional, local, social partner, provider level) according to the different aspects of validation

In the case of the **External students' examination,** all the different aspects from designing the procedure/approach to evaluation and review are the responsibility of the competent authority. Similarly, universities are responsible for the aforementioned individual or global procedures concerning **access to higher education for qualified workers.**

The **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)** encompasses several different areas of responsibility. Information, promotion and raising awareness are the duty of public authorities. Custom-fit counselling and guidance to applicants is the mission of 16 regional networks across Germany. A competent authority does the equivalence check, while in the cases of regularised professions the responsibility depends on particular professional regulations of the Länder. In the field of industry and commerce, applications are given to IHK FOSA (see Section 2.2); in handicrafts there is a system of main chambers to guarantee

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[17]see http://www.perspektive-berufsabschluss.de/downloads/Downloads_Begleitung_Nachqualifizierung/ZWH_Handreichung_Nachqualifizierung.pdf

an efficient and consistent practice of assessment. Certain chambers develop experience regarding certain countries of origin. Other local chambers can contact them and ask for an evaluation and if possible confirmation of equivalences[18]. Furthermore, appropriate procedures are to be developed by the aforementioned 'Integration by qualification' project (see Section 2.2). The implementation of the Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG) is monitored[19] by BIBB.

2.5.2 Explain more specifically the role of different stakeholders

The whole German educational system is based on the principle of pluralism. This is reflected also in the various validation approaches. Because there is no national system of validation in place, the role of the stakeholders can only be described from a general point of view differentiated by the sub-sectors of the educational system:

Vocational education: Concerning the development of curricula and examinations of training regulations (that are used as a reference for the **External students' examination** as well as for the equivalence check for foreign qualifications), the social partners (employers' associations and trade unions), the federal level and the Länder are equal partners. They decide about training regulations together by consensus.

Higher education: Parameters for the **access to higher education for qualified workers** are defined by the Länder; the procedures and requirements are defined by the universities.

Very different constellations of stakeholders can be seen **below the legislative level**. There are Länder-initiatives, (sectoral) initiatives of employers and trade unions, or initiatives which bring both of these partners together. To guarantee a wide acceptance, linking all relevant stakeholders is part of the approach.

2.5.3 Coordination between stakeholders

So far there is no overall coordination of the different validation approaches and systems. In fact there are different stakeholders involved in every single system depending on their responsibilities. Within all validation processes directed towards formal qualifications the responsible stakeholders that can award these qualifications and respective certificates use their formal standard as a reference.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) have made efforts to embed all relevant stakeholders (e.g. institutions of higher education and vocational education, social partners and experts from science and practice) in the development of the **DQR**[20], mainly through working groups and expert workshops.

Within **vocational education and training** the competent authorities are in charge of coordinating the validation process.

In **HE** the KMK provides the legal basis and the coordination of the various validation processes is under the responsibility of the universities which are autonomous. The **ANKOM**-Initiative was financially supported by the BMBF; the task of scientific supervision is to establish a dialogue between the relevant stakeholders, such as social partners, vocational training institutions, students-unions, universities and the scientific community.

2.6 Examples of national regional, local or EU funded initiatives

Most of the examples and instruments described in the Country Report 2010 are still running[21]. Results and publications are available on the internet. Whereas Berufswahlpass,

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[18] see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2014), p. 32f

[19] see http://www.bmbf.de/pub/bericht_anerkennungsgesetz_2014.pdf

[20] see http://www.deutscherqualifikationsrahmen.de/de/der_dqr_akteure_und_gremien/arbeitskreis-deutscher-qualifikationsrahmen_fkntjrwc.html

[21] see http://www.migranet.org/; http://www.dji.de/bibs/KN_LisU_Abschlussbericht.pdf; http://www.dji.de/bibs/33_633komp.pdf; http://www.kompetenznachweiskultur.de/; http://www.innovision-concepts.de/de/bildungsmanagement-und-laufbahnberatung/kompetenzenpanorama

Kompetenzenpanorama für Migrantinnen und Migranten, Kompetenznachweis Kultur, Qualipass and Youthpass are used within an institutional setting, Kompetenznachweis Ehrenamt and Kompetenzbilanz für Berufsrückkehrerinnen seem to be detached from such a setting, because the instruments are available as a download without a single institution overseeing implementation.

Berufswahlpass[22] is an instrument for the preparation of career choice used particularly in schools. Recently, this approach has been connected with the ProfilPASS-system.

A new approach is the project **Recognition of informal acquired competences (AIKO)**[23]. Its objective is to identify the demand for recognition of informally acquired competences in the metal and electric industries. Social partners, the German Federal Labour Market Authority, competent authorities and vocational training experts assess interviews with employees returning to work after parental leave, jobseekers, staff managers, specialists, and executive staff. It aims at developing recommendations for establishing instruments for the recognition of informal learning.

Another initiative is 'Nachweise International' for documenting the participation (Certificate of Participation International), the engagement (Certificate of Engagement International) and the competences (Certificate of Competence International) acquired in international youth work projects[24]. The Certificate of Participation International contains a short description of the sponsor, a brief explanation of the work field international youth work, as well as a characterisation of the project and its educational goals. The Certificate of Engagement International contains all information on the Certificate of participation. In addition, engagement demonstrated individually by the young person as well as her/his active contributions are described. The Certificate of Competence International gives testimony in detailed form to individually demonstrated competences, which have been worked out in an especially developed procedure of certification. It can only be issued by certified KNI-coaches and consists of the four steps competence-based analysis of a project, surveillance, dialogue, text of evidence[25] . Target groups are the participants of international youth work projects.

The European CV is used occasionally for job applications. In Germany about 300,000 European CVs had been completed in 2012 and about 23,000 Europass Mobility had been requested.

2.7 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

2.7.1 Funding

It is not possible to provide data on a 'total budget' for validation efforts in Germany, since an overall and standardised funding framework does not exist. Funding can come from public authorities as well as the private and the third sector. Periods of funding vary. Measures funded by the public sector are required to develop and realise strategies for sustainability.

Measures below legislative level tend to receive funding mainly from public institutions, e.g. the Federal Government or the Länder. This funding is limited for a transitory period and means that there can be problems to sustain measures in the long term. The ProfilPASS-system is an example of an initiative which has been sustained through a public-private-partnership.

2.7.2 Distribution of costs

Competent authorities and universities undertake the procedures of access and recognition from their available financial budget and without further funding. The check of the External students' examination is mostly free of charge for the applicant, some competent

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[22] see http://www.berufswahlpass.de[23] see http://www.ibp.kit.edu/berufspaedagogik/993.php

[23] see http://www.ibp.kit.edu/berufspaedagogik/993.php

[24] see http://www.nachweise-international.de/en/which-certificates-are-there.html

[25] see http://www.nachweise-international.de/welche-gibt-es/kompetenznachweis.html

authorities charge for the admission process. Costs arise from examination fees, preparatory courses and travel costs. Actual costs of participants varied from EUR 1,871 to EUR 4,461 depending on costs for course fees, admission fees, examination fees, travelling and accommodation (see Schreiber/Gutschow/Weber-Höller/Gei, 2012, p. 42). Sometimes candidates are released from their companies to take part in the examination. Costs for access to higher education for qualified workers can found on the internet sites of the individual institutions (for example, at the high school of Heilbronn[26] or the university of Stuttgart[27], where applicants contribute EUR 80 for the assessment).

The delivery of the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)** is the task of the competent authorities. In the skilled crafts sector the costs for 'equivalence check' vary from EUR 100 to EUR 600 and the average costs are 420 EUR[28]. The overall costs depend on the profession, the Federal Land, whether the competent authority can perform the assessment on its own or additional expertise is necessary, and whether an additional assessment of knowledge is necessary. Moreover, more costs can arise when the statement of equivalency is connected with a need for further qualification measures.

2.7.3 Data on flows of beneficiaries

Data on beneficiaries is not readily available.

The data report to accompany the annual report on vocational education and training contains an overview of the number of candidates completing an **external examination** (34 674 in 2011 of which about 78.9 % passed the exam[29], differentiated by trade and industry, public service, agriculture, independent professions and home economics). The total number of candidates in 2011 was 492.978 (ibidem, p. 198).

According to statements of the Federal Statistical Office the percentage of **qualified workers** among first-year HE students has quadrupled from nearly 0.5 % in 2001 to 1.9 % in 2010.

Meanwhile, first data about the usage of the **BQFG** equivalence check are available[30]. Between 1 April 2012 and 28 February 2013, there were 8 635 applications for the medical practitioner sector; 3 123 applications for the nursing sector; and 3 909 applications for non-regularised professions. In the fields of industry and commerce and in the skilled crafts sector, jobs are mainly sought in trade, metal and electrics, and car-mechatronics. (At this current stage, these figures relate to prior formal qualifications and no data is available about work experience).

Since 2006, the **ProfilPASS** has been used by more than 150 000 people, of which half were adults (74 000) and the other half young people (79 000). More than 7 500 persons have been qualified as counsellors and there are 36 'multipliers' (*Multiplikatoren*) and more than 40 dialogue centres.

2.7.4 Evidence of benefits to individuals

No studies on the benefits of the various validation procedures in place in Germany have been identified for this report.

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[26] see http://www.hs-heilbronn.de/3309401/03_Hochschulzugang_fuer_beruflich_Qualifizierte

[27] see http://www.uni-stuttgart.de/studieren/bewerbung/ohneabi/

[28] see http://www.netzwerk-iq-bw.de/assets/files/Praesentationen_Fachtag_010612_Stuttgart_neu.pdf , chart 35.
For more detailed information see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2014), p. 121ff

[29] see http://datenreport.bibb.de/media2013/BIBB_Datenreport_2013.pdf, p. 200

[30] see http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/daten_anerkennungsverfahren.php and
Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2014), p. 44ff

3   Information, advice and guidance

3.1   Awareness-raising and recruitment

Awareness-raising is improving in the context of projects which are delivered below legislative level. It is also improving in the context of demographic change and the implementation of the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)**, which shows the strong political commitment to this issue[31]. Still, many people do not know about the validation opportunities which are available in Germany. The research project about the **External students' examination** stated that 54 % of interviewed persons had found information about it 'by accident', while only 46 % searched purposefully for information on the initiative (see Schreiber/Gutschow/Weber-Höller/Gei, 2012, p. 21). A lack of transparency concerning existing procedures was also identified by interviewees. Internet, meetings and written information are typical channels of information. In many cases, content is presented to a target-group in a specific manner.

3.2   Role of information, advice and guidance networks / institutions

There is no overall network of counselling, but the **National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment** serves as an independent network. It is a platform for all stakeholders to exchange knowledge and experience, to discuss common matters of interest and projects[32]. It does not however provide information about validation opportunities.

There are supporting documents which can be used for the **External students' examination** (see Section 2.3).

The first step in the procedure for **access to higher education** for qualified workers is the provision of counselling (see Stamm-Riemer/Loroff/Hartmann, 2011, p. 61). Guidelines are also provided, such as user guides, application forms and information material (ibid. p. 62).

The **IQ-network** provides first-stage advice for applicants for an equivalence check in the context of the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)**. Based on the individual initial situation, applicants are transferred precisely to the appropriate institution that carries out the equivalence check and supports the applicant to arrange the necessary documents. In the field of industry and commerce, the IHK-FOSA has been created, and in the skilled crafts sector there is a main chamber in each of the Länder (see chapter 2.2). Furthermore, a first-stage advice procedure is to be developed in the project Prototyping.

As outlined in the 2010 update, a specific counselling concept has been developed for the ProfilPASS system. Apart from the ProfilPASS-counsellors, there are 55 ProfilPASS-dialogue-centres which promote the ProfilPASS-system in their region. They employ field workers which cooperate in networks with the counsellors. At the start of the ProfilPASS-process, the users receive information about informal learning, recognition and the ProfilPASS-approach. During the approach, the identification of competences takes place before the personal and individual educational planning is carried out. The provider is responsible for the counselling; that is why the range of counselling is tailored to the target group of the providers. The consultation is always centred on the individual, since the ProfilPASS is an individual and personal tool. An electronic version of the **ProfilPASS**, the eProfilPASS, was introduced in 2012[33].

3.3   Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners

Measures to enhance awareness are informative meetings about the approaches and procedures. Often they are combined with exchange of experience amongst counsellors.

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[31] For more information see http://www.bmbf.de/press/3589.php

[32] see http://www.forum-beratung.de/

[33] see http://www.profilpass-online.de/

Meetings are organized by the umbrella organisations. The **IQ-network** as well as the **ProfilPASS-system** are supported by internet-based forums for interactive communication about practical problems and to exchange information.

4 Quality assurance and evaluation

4.1 Quality Assurance Framework

In Germany, there is no overall quality framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Instead concrete quality standards (usually based on the Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning) have been developed in the context of the different measures. These quality assurance approaches are being developed by projects themselves and they are partly mooted by relevant stakeholder groups that are involved in the developments such as educational practitioners, policy makers and researchers. Interviewees suggested that all approaches basically take into consideration the European Guidelines for Validating non formal and informal learning.

4.2 Quality assurance systems / procedures

For the **External students' assessment** there is no explicit quality assurance system. It is the responsibility of the competent authority to verify the procedure. The BIBB research project on "Recognition of vocational competences using the example of the accreditation for the final examination within the frame of the external students' examination" may provide a first insight into the verification procedure (See chapter 2.2). Moreover, there are assistance documents to support the procedure.

The appropriate university is responsible for the quality of the individual procedure for **access to higher education for qualified workers**.

In the context of the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)** there is a specialist centre for recognition (*Fachstelle Anerkennung*) within the IQ-network that is currently developing basic material for counselling. Within the Prototyping project a guideline has been developed which is frequently used by the counsellors in the chambers[34]. The **National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment** register contributions of the IQ-network about quality in the context of counselling and competence assessment for migrants[35].

ProfilPASS counsellors are granted a high degree of advisory freedom in order to react flexibly to the different basic conditions in which they work. The ProfilPASS quality concept guarantees the necessary freedom of action to counsellors and preserves the interests of the users by implementing agreed standards. Processes within the ProfilPASS organisation are disclosed and responsibilities are defined on different levels, e.g. a qualification and (re-) certification system controls counsellors' access to the ProfilPASS counselling and the quality of their work. Apart from that, an explicit standard has been formulated for the input, process and output dimension of the work. A feedback system grants users and stakeholders the possibility to provide feedback. A periodical evaluation of the entire system will enable further development of the ProfilPASS-system[36]. Furthermore, a low-threshold evaluation is an integral part of the system. These evaluations can address different levels, and be used as a kind of monitoring system. The counselling process is evaluated from the user perspective. The qualifications of counsellors are evaluated, the support by dialogue-centres is evaluated from the perspective of the counsellors, and the support by the national service-centre from the perspective of the dialogue-centres.

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[34] see Westdeutscher Handwerkskammertag (2012)

[35] see http://www.forum-beratung.de/wissenswertes/zielgruppen/iq-netzwerk-materialien.html

[36] see http://www.ProfilPASS-online.de//files/endfassung_korrektur_januar_2006.pdf

4.3   Evaluation framework

There are only evaluations in the context of the different measures, rather than an overall evaluation framework. The **External students' examination** has not been evaluated but, as mentioned above, a BIBB research project delivers insights into the procedures and general set-up of the system. Part of the **ANKOM-project** is a formative evaluation of developments and implementation of the financed projects. The implementation of the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)** is monitored by the BIBB under the coordination of the BMBF. Four years after the implementation the evaluation of the BQFG is regulated by law (§18) and will be prepared by the BIBB.

5   Validation methods

5.1   Methods used and the validation process

For the admission to the **External students' examination,** besides 'standard evidence' such as applications and CVs, formal evidence such as qualified job references, attestations of employers, working contracts, trade applications and statutory declarations can be used. Alternative evidence includes references from customers, examples of work, information about former practice by the applicant him/herself, documents about a vocational or academic training that has been cut short, module-examinations in higher education and certificates of attendance or further education certificates

For the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)**, an equivalence check using appropriate evidence has to be arranged.[37]

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Debate	X		X
Declarative methods	X		
Interview	X		X
Observation	X		X
Portfolio method	X	X	X
Presentation			X
Simulation and evidence extracted from work			X
Tests and examinations			X
Other (e.g. e-learning methods) – please specify	e-portfolios, so called "Qualifikationsanalyse" (BQFG)	e-portfolios, statutory declaration (BQFG)	

6   Validation practitioners

6.1   Profile of validation practitioners

Staff of the competent authorities decide about the admission to the **External students' examination**. Under § 37 of the Crafts Code the chair of the examination board is responsible. A specific profile for the chair of the board does not exist - of course the chair

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[37] For more detailed information see Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2014), p. 110ff

(like all members of the examination board) has to be competent in all relevant fields of examination.

Academic staff decide on validation procedures for **access to higher education**. The specific profile is the respective professional background. The majority of lecturers in higher education take their decisions regarding the validation and recognition of students' learning outcomes informally on the basis of their professional competence. Within the areas "health and care" as well as "economics" decisions are often taken systematically with regard to standardised approaches (cf. Völkl 2011, p. 182 f.). The qualification of the academic staff regarding validation and recognition procedures varies between higher educational institutions.

First-stage advice for the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)** equivalence check is delivered by professional counsellors. The equivalence check itself is operated by staff of the competent authority. There is no specified profile.

The condition for becoming a **ProfilPASS** counsellor is either a formal qualification in the field of counselling or vocational experience connected with further education in the field of counselling.

6.2   Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

In **higher education** as well as for the **External students' examination** and the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG)** equivalence check, no detailed information concerning training and support for practitioners is available.

Within the **ProfilPASS-system**, counsellors undertake training over at least two days. The qualification consists of the development and philosophy of ProfilASS-system, recording and developing competences and developing course scenarios. A formal qualification in the field of counselling or vocational experience and further education in the field of counselling is the condition for admission. Furthermore there are continuous information meetings for the exchange of experiences with a thematic focus on local, regional or national levels offered by dialogue-centres and the national service-centre.

6.3   Qualifications requirements

There are no mandatory qualification requirements for validation practitioners. Institutions pay attention to the professional competences by considering initial qualifications of applicants and ensuring further education regarding the appropriate institutional standards.

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7.1   Organisations consulted

Representatives of Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB), Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung - Leibniz-Zentrum für Lebenslanges Lernen (DIE), Hochschul-Informations-System GmbH (HIS) and Institut für Entwicklungsplanung und Strukturforschung GmbH an der Universität Hannover (IES) were interviewed for this country update.