

BQ-Portal – The Information Portal for Foreign Professional Qualifications

Submitted by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

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Size of organisation

500-5000;
people directly involved: 1-5

Type of sector

Employment, labour-related affairs and gender equality

Key words of the project

Recognition, qualified professionals, foreign professional qualifications, vocational training, integration

Germany is faced with demographic challenges: its potential workforce is dwindling and many sectors are already having to cope with a shortage of skilled labour. This is why international qualified professionals are playing an increasingly important role in the German economy. But so far they have been prevented from realising their full potential because there has not been access to reliable information on foreign professional qualifications. The BQ-Portal was designed to change this.

Its main purpose is to support the “competent organisations” in charge of assessing and recognising foreign professional qualifications in Germany, which notably include the Chambers of Skilled Crafts, the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, and chambers for the various liberal professions in Germany.

The online platform provides them with detailed and scientifically verified information regarding foreign vocational training systems, the substance and duration of individual vocational training programmes and the legal basis on which these are offered. This information is compiled and then organised and published online in a way that makes it useful for the competent organisations.

This approach makes the BQ-Portal something entirely unique: it is the first online work and knowledge sharing platform to pool all of the relevant information on foreign professional qualifications.

The way in which the information is gathered and organised now follows a collaborative approach: besides educational researchers, the staff of the competent organisations, i.e. the practitioners actually using the database, are also involved. The information added by them notably includes details about specific occupations and the outcomes of the relevant equivalence procedures. In addition to this, the portal also offers registered users information on the legal situation, the procedures and methods used in the assessment of foreign qualifications as well as guidelines and practical examples.

The information portal is a “learning system” that helps to build up knowledge and information and thereby complements the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act. Thanks to its knowledge and information management capabilities, equivalence procedures in Germany have become significantly more effective and efficient. Moreover, the BQ-Portal ensures that all of the competent organisations draw on the same database. This both fosters consistency between the decisions made by the various chambers across the Federal Republic and renders the entire process more transparent.

For people who have obtained professional qualifications abroad, this means not only that they receive more likely a document providing proof of their qualifications, but also that this information is much more detailed than it would otherwise have been. In this way, the portal also benefits (potential) employers who can now gain a better understanding of what a particular set of foreign professional qualifications actually entails. This renders candidates who have obtained their qualifications outside Germany more attractive for employers in Germany and makes it more likely that they will be hired and find it easier to integrate into the German society. At the same time, the BQ-Portal also helps to reduce the skills shortage in Germany.

By setting up the BQ-Portal, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy has followed a new approach to delivering administrative services. The portal supports the competent organisations in their complex task of assessing foreign qualifications. It thereby strengthens the bodies that ensure self-regulation by industry.