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„Recognition Act is off to a good start“

Federal Minister Schavan and DIHK President Driftmann see positive results after the first six months

Six months after the entry into force of the Recognition Act, Federal Minister of Education Annette Schavan and the President of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) Hans-Heinrich Driftmann see positive results. "There is a great interest in the new procedure, as proven by the hits on the 'Recognition in Germany' online portal", Schavan stated.

Since it was launched on 1 April, the Federal Government's portal on recognition has had over 180,000 visitors and about 1.5 million page accesses; 43 per cent of the users accessed the site from abroad. The information pages on the different occupations had more than 80,000 hits. "This is an indication of a specific interest in the recognition of vocational qualifications obtained outside Germany", Schavan said.

The portal user data as well as the newly established telephone hotline at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees demonstrate a particular interest in regulated occupations such as those of doctors and nurses. However, detailed numbers of initiated procedures are not yet available for these occupations for which the *Länder* are responsible for implementing the federal law.

The Federal and *Länder* Statistical Offices will conduct a first survey on the implementation of the Act in early 2013. Initial figures for training occupations regulated by the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, however, are already available. These procedures are just part of all those covered by the Recognition Act. Nevertheless about 1,500 applications for

recognition were already submitted for training occupations, and almost 270 positive recognition notifications were issued. "Almost two-thirds of the evaluations conducted to date have resulted in full equivalence. This is proof that the new recognition procedure is working", Driftmann explained.

A new central office was established for the launch of the Recognition Act: IHK FOSA (Foreign Skills Approval). This office reviews foreign qualifications for their equivalence to corresponding German qualifications in commercial and industrial/technical occupations. The statistics of IHK FOSA show that the Act has mainly benefited people who are younger and have been residents in Germany for a only a short time: For the training occupations assessed by the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, 41 per cent of all potential applicants are between 32 and 41 years old, of whom about half have been residents in Germany for no longer than five years.

"People are very interested in the evaluation of foreign qualifications, but they do not always submit applications", Driftmann sums up with a view to internal surveys on applications submitted with the Chambers of Industry and Commerce: Many people can be assisted by counselling provided by the Chambers and by other measures, such as further qualifications. "It is important that a recognition procedure also pays off if full equivalence cannot be established in the end – simply because employers and companies find it easier to understand the existing qualifications even with partial equivalence", said Driftmann. "This increases opportunities on the labour market."

Schavan stressed: "The Recognition Act is a means of demonstrating respect for a person's qualification. The new procedure provides new vocational prospects in Germany for skilled labour from abroad – which is good for these people and for our economy." Schavan and Driftmann agreed: "The Recognition Act is an important element in our concept to procure skilled labour." Immigration regulations would now have to be made more flexible – in particular for all those who do not have a higher education qualification but are urgently needed on the German labour market.

Further information is available at www.recognition-in-germany.de

and <http://www.bmbf.de/de/15644.php>