HIDDEN TALENTS
SHOW YOUR VOCATIONAL SKILLS!

Validating non-formally and informally acquired skills
A joint project of Chambers of Skilled Crafts and Chambers of Commerce and Industry
Claudia Müller is 38 and never finished her training to be a medical assistant, because she had three children to care for at home. In order to supplement the family income, she’d worked as a part-time shop assistant in a supermarket bakery section as well as in a bakery in her home town for the last six years. She likes the work and customers and colleagues like her. Her current boss values her work and would be happy to qualify her for branch manager, but they are both unsure about her lack of formal qualifications. Does Claudia have the necessary skills to take on trainees and manage fellow employees? Will her “untrained” status lead to legal issues? Does she have to pass a test in order to be considered genuinely qualified?

Markus Schmidt is 29 and married. After leaving school he began regularly assisting event technicians, setting up and dismantling equipment for music concerts and other events in the area. He enjoyed the work and could make a bit of money from it, too. Markus had not done especially well in school, and back then he thought he didn’t need any professional training for his work. What he had to know, he learned from others or taught himself. But now he’s facing some major life changes — his wife has been offered a promising job with a company in Hamburg, quite a distance from where they live now. Markus definitely plans to come along with her, but he doesn’t know anyone in his line of work in Hamburg. He’s worried that he won’t find suitable work there without having completed formal training as a “qualified event technician”.
WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION?

Two different life stories with the same problem: people without recognised vocational qualifications don’t have an easy time of it in working world. They lack formal recognition of their professional skills. And if they become unemployed, this can be an especially tangible problem, because they’ll be easily overlooked or undervalued on the jobs market.

Previous attempts to altering the situation were unsuccessful. The Federal German Government has therefore responded to the need for action and so the coalition government has undertaken the following:

“For people who acquired informal competences which cannot be documented through certificates, we want to develop new procedures and try to manage them with transparency and recognition.”

(Coalition agreement between CDU, CSU and SPD from December 2013, p. 32)

The EU Council as well recommends:

“The Member States should have arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in place, no later than 2018, in accordance with national circumstances and specificities, and as they deem appropriate.”

(EU Council Recommendation 2012/C 398/01 from 20 December 2012)

Many refugees currently in Germany could also profit from this. According to estimates, over 70% have not completed a formal vocational training. However, many of them have solid vocational skills, which – in light of a growing shortage of skilled workers in many vocations in trades, industry and commerce – are worth formalising.

In order to promote the validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills in Germany, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (DHKT) and the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) have initiated the ValiKom Project, together with the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF). Until now there have been no generally accepted procedural standards or quality criteria to assess the results of “on-the-job training”.

The project members (Chambers of Skilled Crafts and Chambers of Commerce and Industry) of the ValiKom Project will develop a procedure, which enables identifying and assessing non-formally and informally acquired skills. Vocational experts will examine the assessment based on the standards of recognised vocational qualifications. The chambers aim to develop and test a reliable and practical procedure for issuing certificates, which are accepted on the jobs market.
HOW IS THE PROJECT SET UP?

The project runs in three phases:

1. In the exploration phase, various procedures for determination and assessment of vocational skills are analysed and evaluated for their potential applicability for ValiKom. Target groups shall be identified which are relevant for the procedure.

2. In the developmental and testing phase, standards will be developed for the evaluation of skills and access criteria for the process. The main goal here will be the development of a model with methods for third-party assessments of individually acquired learning outcomes. The validation procedure will be tested with 160 persons.

3. In the handover phase, the results shall be collected in guidelines, together with descriptions of the methods and procedural standards used, and distributed for future use in the chambers.

WHAT ARE THE PROJECT GOALS?

The ValiKom Project aims to develop a standardized and quality assured validation process, which:

- carries out third-party assessments of non-formally and informally learned skills,
- is based on the standards of recognised vocational qualifications,
- is designed to be applicable and comparable in the various chambers and
- is available to people who have vocational experience.

The procedure is based on the four phases for the validation of skills (identification, documentation, assessment and certification) from the EU Council Recommendations on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Linking the process to the chambers shall prevent the establishment of a parallel vocational training system.
WHAT ARE THE CONCRETE RESULTS?

By the end of the project, there will be a “chamber proved” concept for validating non-formally and informally acquired vocational skills. The intended project results are:

- A proven concept for a validation procedure which adheres to regulations
- Consulting guidelines
- Practical guidelines with methods, criteria and standards for the chambers and assessors for the implementation of validation procedures
- A concept for training the assessors
- Standardised templates for validation certificates
- Publications of project results, e.g. via flyers and the project’s website (www.validierungsverfahren.de)
HOW IS THE PROJECT ORGANISED?

The BMBF funded project is supported and monitored through scientists as well as by a broadly represented project advisory board made up of stakeholders in education policy.
THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

**Project management**
Westdeutscher Handwerkskammertag
(www.whkt.de)

**Participating chambers**
Handwerkskammer Dresden
(www.hwk-dresden.de)
Handwerkskammer Hannover
(www.hwk-hannover.de)
Handwerkskammer für München und Oberbayern
(www.hwk-muenchen.de)
Handwerkskammer Münster
(www.hwk-muenster.de)
Industrie- und Handelskammer Halle-Dessau
(www.halle.ihk.de)
Industrie- und Handelskammer zu Köln
(www.ihk-koeln.de)
Industrie- und Handelskammer für München und Oberbayern
(www.muenchen.ihk.de)
Industrie- und Handelskammer Region Stuttgart
(www.stuttgart.ihk.de)

**Scientific monitoring and consulting**
Forschungsinstitut für Berufsbildung
im Handwerk an der Universität zu Köln
(www.fbh.uni-koeln.de)

**Strategic management and communication**
Deutscher Handwerkskammertag
(www.zdh.de)
Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag
(www.dihk.de)

**Number of tests**
The procedure will be tested with 160 persons

**Duration**
01.11.2015 – 31.10.2018

**Funding**
Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)

Further information:
www.validierungsverfahren.de

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