



# Professional recognition for children and youth educators– becoming a skilled worker

 Network "Integration through Qualification (IQ)"

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**There is a shortage of children and youth educators in Germany. The expansion in care for under threes and rising birth rates mean that in children's day-care facilities alone the number of employees has risen by more than 300,000 over the past 10 years. The prospects for working in Germany with a qualification as a children and youth educator are therefore very good.**

There has been an increasing shortage of children and youth educators in Germany for many years\*. The reasons for this are the expansion in care for under threes as well as care provision in open all-day primary schools which is to be gradually introduced from 2026. Further reasons for the shortage are that approximately one third of employees are over 50 and that birth rates are rising.

Various calculations predict that by 2030 there will be a shortage of 250,000 children and youth educators in western Germany alone\*\*. The Federal Employment Agency reported that, in the year 2021\*\*, 61% of children and youth educators were unemployed for less than 6 months. The prospects for children and youth educators of finding a job quickly are therefore very good. The unemployment rate for this specific profession in 2021 was just 1.5 %. The Federal Employment Agency classifies this rate as full employment. The prospects of finding an adequate position are assessed as high\*\*.

Vacancies cannot be filled entirely by children and youth educators from Germany and by those abroad who are already working in Germany, and for this reason increased demand must therefore be anticipated for individuals who acquired the professional qualification abroad. Anybody interested and still living abroad can find out more at [www.make-it-in-germany.de](http://www.make-it-in-germany.de). Advice can also be obtained via email, telephone or online chat from the **Working and Living in Germany hotline**.

The hotline refers those interested in recognition on to the Central Office for Foreign Education (ZSBA) for more in-depth advice and support with the procedure.

An important source of information for those seeking advice in Germany is also the relevant **occupational profile on Recognition Finder ([anerkennung-in-deutschland.de](http://anerkennung-in-deutschland.de))** which provides you with key information concerning the recognition of your professional qualification. For example, it will take you to an advice centre and also to the competent authority for the recognition application. Just search for “nursery school teacher”.

Individuals with foreign professional qualifications already living in Germany can contact the regional **IQ advice centres** for information about the options for recognition.

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\*<https://www.bildungsserver.de/daten-zu-personal-und-kindern-in-kindertagesbetreuung-1996-de.html>

\*\*[https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Statischer-Content/Statistiken/Themen-im-Fokus/Berufe/Generische-Publikationen/AM-kompakt-Kinderbetreuung-erziehung.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/DE/Statischer-Content/Statistiken/Themen-im-Fokus/Berufe/Generische-Publikationen/AM-kompakt-Kinderbetreuung-erziehung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6)



## How is training and recognition for children and youth educators regulated in Germany?



- The profession of children and youth educator is regulated by the state. This means that, in order to enter the profession, qualifications acquired abroad must be recognised. The individual federal states are responsible for the recognition. This also means that in some cases the legal regulations differ depending on where you want to live or work.



- The training is also regulated at federal-state level. You can train for the profession of children and youth educator in school-based initial and continuing education and training which culminates in a state final examination. In most federal states the training takes three years. For two of these years you attend a vocational school. You then complete a one-year professional placement in an educational institution. Part-time school-based, work-based and practice-integrated forms of training are also available in all federal states in addition to full-time school-based training.\*\*\* The knowledge provided in the children and youth educator training qualifies you to care for and support children, young people and young adults up to the age of 27. State-recognised children and youth educators are also able to take on management roles in care facilities.



- If substantial differences are identified between your training and the German training, then you must compensate for these accordingly. Foreign training for example is frequently focused on specific age groups. Differences in the training can be compensated for by participating in an adaptation period or by taking an aptitude test.



- In order to enter the profession you also require further evidence such as proof of personal suitability and medical fitness ( e.g. a certificate of good conduct and a doctor's certificate). You must also provide evidence of the necessary language skills. When this is specified, the language level ranges between B2 and C1. \*\*\* This differs in the individual federal states.

If your qualification is identified as equivalent to the German training, you are able to work throughout Germany in all educational institutions as a children and youth educator with children, young people and young adults up to the age of 27.



- Network IQ provides training offers in different towns and cities in Germany for children and youth educators from abroad. The IQ advice centre is able to help you find the right offer for your professional recognition.

\*\*\* [https://www.netzwerk-iq.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Downloads/Fachstelle\\_Beratung\\_und\\_Qualifizierung/FSBQ\\_Situationsanalyse\\_Fruehpaedagogik.pdf](https://www.netzwerk-iq.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Downloads/Fachstelle_Beratung_und_Qualifizierung/FSBQ_Situationsanalyse_Fruehpaedagogik.pdf)

\*\*\*\* [https://www.netzwerk-iq.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Downloads/Fachstelle\\_Beratung\\_und\\_Qualifizierung/FSBQ\\_Rechtsexpertise\\_fruehpaed\\_Fachkraefte.pdf](https://www.netzwerk-iq.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Downloads/Fachstelle_Beratung_und_Qualifizierung/FSBQ_Rechtsexpertise_fruehpaed_Fachkraefte.pdf)

## Is my professional qualification likely to be recognised in Germany?

To be able to work in Germany as a children and youth educator, you must have your foreign qualification recognised. Anybody who has a relevant formal professional qualification from abroad and who would like to work in Germany – regardless of nationality, residency status and place of residence – is entitled to apply. They must submit the relevant documents to the competent authority in order to initiate the recognition procedure. Besides the actual application the following, for example, must also be submitted: proof of identity, CV, evidence of the professional qualification and, where necessary, of professional experience. Persons from third countries must in most cases also provide proof that they want to work in Germany as a children and youth educator. This might be communication with a potential employer, for example. The individual recognition procedure checks whether your training is equivalent to the German training or whether there are substantial differences.

You can find out precisely what recognition involves from the IQ advice centre. Advisers will help you to prepare for and begin the recognition procedure. They will advise you regarding the options available near you for adaptation periods or aptitude tests if substantial differences compared to the German training are specified in your assessment notice. The adaptation period lasts for a maximum of three years. It is concluded with a professional discussion on the content learned. In terms of content, the adaptation period and the aptitude test relate to the substantial differences identified in the assessment notice.

Across Germany, from 2016 up to the end of 2021, there were over 8,500 applications for recognition of foreign children and youth educators. According to statistics, approximately half of procedures through to the end of 2021 ended with full or partial equivalence or with the requirement for a compensation measure. From January 2019 to September 2022, IQ recognition advisers provided over 3,400 advisory sessions on the recognition of professional children and youth educator qualifications from abroad. Over this period, more than 500 participants completed training for education occupations in Network IQ.



### **Worth knowing: Early years teachers; childhood educators**

In Germany there is also the profession of early years teacher/ childhood educator. This is an academic training. Early years teachers/childhood educators are trained for early years research and to care for children. They often undertake similar tasks to children and youth educators. Using the IQ advice service, you can clarify for which of the two professions it would be sensible for you to apply for recognition.

## What pathways are available for working in Germany as a children and youth educator?



1

### Seek advice

In order to work as a children and youth educator, you need recognition of your professional qualification. The Network IQ advisers will discuss with you how you might gain this recognition. For example, they will help you to find the right recognition centre for your place of residence and occupation.



2

### Submit an application

Network IQ can help you prepare the documentation to apply for recognition of your qualification as a children and youth educator. As a rule you have to submit, for example, documentation of your work experience and qualifications translated into German and your CV to the recognition centre. The procedure involves a fee. In some cases, the German state may provide financial assistance. IQ is also able to inform you regarding these options for financial support.



3

### The recognition authority checks your documents

The competent recognition authority in your federal state checks your application and determines whether your foreign qualification is equivalent to all parts of the training in Germany. This involves checking whether substantial differences exist between your training and the German children and youth educator training. Once all necessary documents have been submitted, this check must be completed within four months.



4

### You receive your assessment notice

If no substantial differences are identified, the competent authority certifies the equivalence. If you fulfil all further criteria for authorisation to practise the profession (such as German language skills B2 and C1 and personal suitability and medical fitness), you will receive authorisation to use the professional title of “state-recognised children and youth educator”. This places you on an equal legal footing with those who completed the German children and youth educator qualification.



5

### Compensation measures

If substantial differences are identified between your training and the German training, then you must compensate for these in order to receive recognition. You can compensate for the differences identified either by means of an adaptation period or an aptitude test. If you pass the adaptation period or aptitude test and if you meet the further requirements for the authorisation to practise the profession, you then receive authorisation to use the professional title of “children and youth educator”. Your IQ advice centre can help you find appropriate training or tests to compensate for the identified differences.



6

### Alternative

In most federal states there is the alternative option of entering the profession via so-called provider recognition. For this, the educational institution must submit an application to the supervisory authority. Provider recognition, however, generally applies only to a specific position (for example in Bavaria and Thuringia) or only to the respective federal state (for example in Hesse or Saarland). Provider recognition must be applied for again if you move house or change position.



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**Shih-Yen Bayer: “For me, recognition means a good experience which has not only benefited me professionally.”**

© Photo: Linda Hoff/IQ Network Bremen



Taiwanese-born Shih-Yen Bayer came to Germany because of love in 2014, bringing with her a master’s in Family Pedagogy and Early Childhood Education. She had already gained professional experience as a children and youth educator in her home country. This led her to assume that she would also be able to find a job in her chosen occupation in Germany. “I sent off applications to nursery schools, but was successful because I didn’t have any experience in Germany.” Until this point, she had also been aware that she would not be permitted to work as children and youth care education in Germany without acquiring recognition. Shih-Yen was initially extremely disappointed.

However, the 28-year-old displayed great persistence by studying hard to learn German and completing two practical placements in nursery schools. Her husband was then able to provide a crucial piece of advice. He had found out via the Internet that his wife needed to undergo a recognition procedure for the relevant professional qualification as a state-recognised children and youth educator. Before Shih-Yen Bayer submitted her application to the appropriate competent body, she sought support from the Recognition Guidance Service of the State of Bremen (Senate Office for Economic Affairs, Labour and Ports). Financed by the “Integration through Qualification – (IQ)” funding programme, the advisory service helped her to gather the necessary documents. Shih-Yen had already had her documents translated. The competent authority in question, the Senate Office for Children and Education, was then able to deal with everything very quickly. “I only visited once and submitted all my documents.”



Success

Her excellent preparation paid off. Shih-Yen Bayer received the result just three months later, when she learned that her master's qualification had been recognised. However, she was still missing the practical element of the relevant vocational education and training which she needed to practice the profession. In order to demonstrate this, she needed to complete an adaptation period. Shih-Yen Bayer showed initiative by carrying out her own online research and soon came across the childcare centre run by the Paris of St. Thomas in Bremen... she visited the centre for a brief period of observation before going on to complete her adaptation period there. During this time, she received specialist and language support from the Technical School of Social Pedagogy and Special Education, a state-recognised private institution which comes under the auspices of the Bremen Joint Educational Institute. Shih-Yen attended additional theoretical modules at the school twice a week and was finally able to overcome the greatest hurdle that faced her – the oral and written final examination. "I found the language difficult. I had to do a lot of talking, and it was really demanding and stressful. But my teacher encouraged me, and told me that I would gain experience by making mistakes." In the end, everything worked out. Although this was not an easy time for Shih-Yen Bayer, she found it to be highly instructive. "The adaptation period was a good experience for me. I didn't just gain professional knowledge, I now also have a much better understanding of the German culture and way of life."

Shih-Yen Bayer is now working as a nursery school teacher at a kindergarten in Kehl and is also continuing with her studies of German. She sums up the whole experience with some degree of pride. "There were times when I wasn't sure whether I would make it. But there were always people there to back me up. That gave me the strength to carry on. I'm really happy here and enjoy working with the children, my colleagues and the parents."

*The interview with Shih-Yen Bayer took place in September 2017. During the recognition procedure, she received advice and support from the Recognition Guidance Service of the State of Bremen (in conjunction with the Chamber of Employees and the Bremerhaven Initial and Advanced Training Centre) and from the Bremen Joint Educational Institute. Both of these institutions are sub-projects within the scope of the "Integration through Qualification" funding programme (IQ)*

*The text is a success story from "Recognition in Germany"*



[https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/success-stories\\_nursery\\_school\\_teacher\\_bayer.php](https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/success-stories_nursery_school_teacher_bayer.php)

**Angela Minniti: “For me, recognition means being able to fully perform my role and having responsibility.”**

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Good things come those who wait. This also applies to Angela Minniti and finding her way to achieve professional recognition. The Italian waited for three years to be able to work as a specialist in day care facilities for children. Angela Minniti arrived in Germany in 2016 in order to move in with her partner. She already had a degree in educational science and several years’ professional experience as a children and youth educator.

“It was really difficult to start with,” remembers the 30-year-old. “All I could say was hello and goodbye.” To improve her German language skills, she attended a B1 German course at Groß-Gerau adult education centre in 2016. Just a few metres away, a children’s day care facility was looking for a placement student. Angela Minniti seized the opportunity and applied successfully. Over 18 months, she gained practical experience and achieved language level B2.

The placement turned into a position as an assistant at the start of 2019. Angela Minniti felt very much at home from the start. However, without recognition of her qualification, she was unable to take on any tasks in the nursery involving responsibility. “I would have been able to have a part-time contract as a specialist in August 2019, but didn’t yet have the recognition. But I wanted to do my job here in Germany.”

In April 2019 she came across the mobile recognition guidance service (MoAB) from IN-BAS in Network IQ Hesse. She had already submitted an application for recognition here as a state-recognised social worker. When being advised, it became clear that Angela’s goals and career aspirations meant she was better suited to becoming a specialist in day care facilities for children. MoAB helped her to withdraw the old application and submit a new application for recognition as a specialist to the Frankfurt University of Applied

Sciences. Angela Minniti: "My advisor was my link with the competent authority. She helped me a lot."

IQ recognition advice supported the Italian in the remainder of the recognition process. They helped her to evaluate the recognition notice and supported her in reducing the length of the adaptation period. This was successful. Eight months became 15 weeks. Her experience as a placement student and assistant were taken into account. The adaptation period took the form of a placement and for this, among other things, she had to provide evidence of working in groups and of writing education plans. "I was able to do all of that where I worked," explains Angela with delight.

In March 2020 the time had finally arrived. "I received my recognition during the coronavirus pandemic. It was something really wonderful for me at such a stressful time. Our preschool was closed and we were at home. I saw this letter in my mailbox and I was so happy. I screamed out loud!" Angela has been working ever since as an educational specialist in the same children's day care facility. Recognition meant that her work situation also changed: "I am now able to lead a group, have conversations with parents, and take responsibility. And I'm also paid more. For me, recognition means finally being able to perform my role in full."

Looking back, Angela can see that access to good quality advice and the right information about recognition was particularly important. Her advice for others seeking recognition is to always keep going to achieve your goal. And, more than anything, never give up hope.

Angela has already set herself new targets. She would like to further improve her German, complete continuing education and training, and at some point run a children's day care facility herself. "I hope that I'm able to continue working in my preschool. This is somewhere I simply feel at home and am able to continue developing. I found a way through for myself"

*The conversation with Angela Minniti took place in November 2020. In the recognition procedure she was supported by the Mobile Recognition Guidance Service (MoAB) from INBAS. MoAB advises and supports those seeking recognition throughout Hesse on their path to recognition. Guidance is provided in job centre premises at various locations.*

*The text is an edited version of the original text from "Recognition in Germany" by Nadine Ebling (Network IQ Hesse coordination office, INBAS GmbH).*

## IQ Network Brandenburg: training for recognition for children and youth educators in Fontanestadt Neuruppin

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Since April 2021, children and youth educators with an education qualification acquired abroad have been able to complete training to the level of full state recognition in the subproject “Qualifizierung zur Anerkennung für Erzieher\*innen” (Training for recognition for children and youth educators) run by the IQ Network Brandenburg.

The concept was agreed with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and with the Cottbus State Education Authority in order to ensure that the training enables participants to acquire the relevant content. The six-month training course is a great opportunity for children and youth educators to quickly gain full recognition and in doing so gain employment appropriate to the level of their qualification.

The training content comprises a basic module on child and youth welfare, two compulsory optional modules on support for education and on youth work and social services for young people, as well as 200 hours of practical training. The training can be completed alongside work. The seminar days take place on Thursdays and Fridays in person and on Saturday online at the Neuruppin vocational schools with 304 hours of teaching in total. The vocational schools are part of the “Anerkannten Schulgesellschaft mbH (ASG)” – a state-recognised non-profit organisation running general education and vocational



schools in Germany. The hours of practical training must be completed within the training period and evidence of this must be provided.

**In order to participate, the following are required.**

- **Evidence of a professional social education qualification or of a qualification (university degree) enabling the holder to practise a profession. In both cases the qualifications must be from a state outside Germany**
- **One year of professional experience in a relevant field of work comparable with child and youth welfare.**
- **Assessment notice of partial recognition from Cottbus State Education Authority as part of the recognition procedure**
- **Evidence of a language certificate to at least level B1. Evidence of B2 is necessary for subsequent state recognition.**

From 2023, the Neuruppin vocational schools will be offering the refresher training course on a regular basis as a measure certified under the German Regulation on the Accreditation and Approval for Employment Promotion (ASAV). This means that funding also becomes possible using an education voucher. Those interested can already apply to start the course in 2023.

**Contact:**

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## Adaptation period for children and youth educators and social education specialists in Berlin

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Education specialists who have gained their qualification abroad are able to participate in the adaptation period. You need a notice of assessment from the Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family in order to acquire state recognition as a children and youth educator. A further requirement is the successful B2 language examination certification.

Successful participation in an adaptation period enables participants to fulfil the practical requirements from the competent authority's assessment notice and to achieve state recognition.

The adaptation period includes theoretical teaching units such as basic legal and institutional principles, education and learning, language and interculturality, inclusion, parental participation and the practical phase. This teaching is mandatory for all participants. Participants are also able to choose between the compulsory optional modules of working with children or working with young people. It is also possible to attend the course alongside work.

### Contact:

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**Foundation SPI Vocational Schools**, Qualification & Professionalisation, Hallesches Ufer 32-38 | 10963 Berlin | [www.stiftung-spi.de/service/projekte/detail/anpassungslehrgang](http://www.stiftung-spi.de/service/projekte/detail/anpassungslehrgang)

Financing has been provided since 1 January 2021 via funding under the Act on the Further Development of Quality and the Improvement of Participation in Day Care Facilities and in Child Day Care (KiQuTG) by the Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family.

**Further information:**

[www.netzwerk-iq.de](http://www.netzwerk-iq.de)

[www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de](http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de)

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