

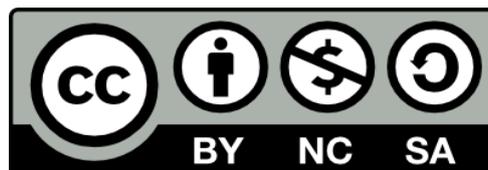


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# Erasmus + project European Standards for Peer Support Workers in Mental Health

## **Guide** **for the national implementation** **of the further training concept for** **peer support workers in Germany,** **(EQF) levels 4 and 5**



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## **Content**

<b>I. Description of the VET system in Germany.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. Description of the German qualification framework.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III. Implementation of levels 4 and 5 for the training of peer support workers in Germany.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IV. Outlook for implementation.....</b>	<b>17</b>

# I. Description of the vocational training system in Germany

## I.1 German system of vocational education and training

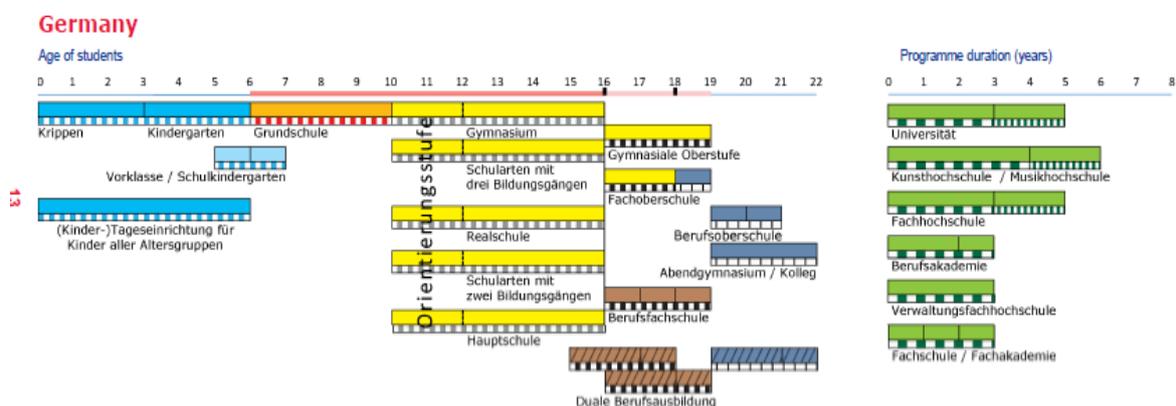
The system of general education in Germany is largely the responsibility of the individual federal states (including culture, so-called superiority of the culture of the Länder).

As a result, the educational systems of individual federal states in some parts differ from each other a lot. In order to ensure at least a minimum of uniformity in the education systems of all federal states, the Standing Conference of Ministers of Culture (in German: Kultusministerkonferenz) was established.<sup>1</sup> The Conference sit three or four times a year and establishes a common framework and trends. In the area of vocational education and training the government has powers to coordinate apprenticeship in companies, whereas the federal states have the competence for vocational training in schools, and thus they are the governing body of vocational schools.

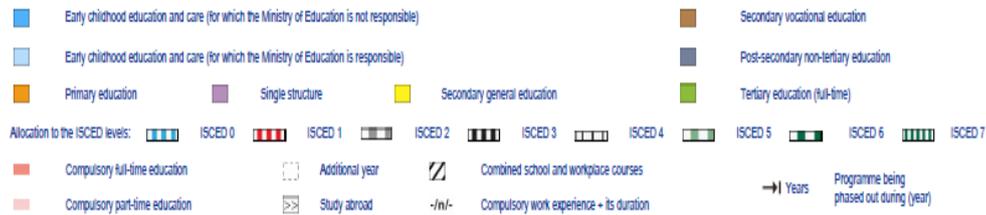
Education in Germany is compulsory is from the age of 6 years up to the age of 18 years in mainstream schools or in the dual system of vocational training. Continuing of education is optional after young people turn 18. The German education system can be divided into four stages:

- 1) Primary, ISCED 1
- 2) Secondary I and II, ISCED 2 and 3
- 3) Postsecondary, ISCED 4
- 4) Tertiary I, ISCED 5 and research programmes ISCED 6

**Chart:** German education system (source: [www.eurydice.org.pl](http://www.eurydice.org.pl))



<sup>1</sup> The abbreviation for the German term “Kultusministerkonferenz” is KMK. KMK was established in 1948 and involves the creation of a common policy of all the federal states on education, education, science and culture. The provisions of the KMK, which are not a Germany-wide law, shall come into force in the individual federal states only after the decision by the government of the Land.



Education systems are uniform in all federal states on ISCED level, but they differ slightly depending on the type of school and the possibility of obtaining ISCED levels of education. For example, Saxony decided not to keep separate the “major schools” (Hauptschule) and “real schools” (Realschule) at the expense of secondary schools, so-called. Mittelschule, which conducts classes for all levels of education. The education system of Lower Saxony is basically a reflection of the classic system “Hauptschule-Realschule” Gymnasium. The novelty of the system is the introduction of so-called. integrated comprehensive school, offering education at each level from grade 5 to 13, and further conducting intensive remedial classes for students with disabilities, for example with language disability. This type of school is ideal for regions with a high percentage of the immigrant population and it gives children of migrants the chances of getting at least the minimum of general education that allows to take learning in the dual system (Hauptschulabschluss after 9 or 10 years of study).

## I.2. The dual vocational education and training system in Germany

67% of all people entering for the first time the work is those who after completing school education received in the dual system profession recognized by the state. Currently, the list of professions which can be gained in the dual system contains about 360 professions. Possibility of study in this system is not conditioned by the fact of completion of a particular type of school, but it is generally open to all. Dual system is characterized by two features in particular: two apprenticeship places: in the workplace or other authorized institutions (Bildungsträger, Trainingszenter) and vocational school.

A learner is a student of the profession in a certain enterprise or office and is seconded to attend school recognized as a vocational school, so at the same time he or she is a student of the vocational school. The student signs a contract personally with the company working on the practical workshops, then is recruited to the selected schools at different levels of education, but in terms of content the school is associated with practical job training. Education in the workplace is guided by specially trained instructors.

Young people from the age of 16 can participate in practical vocational training. There is no upper limit of the apprenticeship, though limitation may be in the difficulty in finding the company which can give practical vocational training for an elderly person.

While within a framework of vocational education and training in enterprises, primarily practical professional skills and the necessary amount of professional experience are provided, learning in a vocational school focuses on the transmission of theoretical content

on the industry of a given profession and on the deepening and intensifying study of general subjects. The training period lasts from 2 to 4 years depending on the profession chosen by student and on student's initial school skills.

## **II. Description of the German qualification framework**

The German Qualification Framework (GQF) is an instrument for classifying qualifications in the German education system. On the one hand, it is intended to facilitate orientation in the German education system and, on the other hand, to contribute to the comparability of German qualifications in Europe. In order to make more transparent which competences are acquired in the German education system, it defines eight levels that correspond to the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The EQF serves as a translation tool that helps make national qualifications easier to understand across Europe. As a national implementation of the EQF, the GQF takes into account the particularities of the German education system and contributes to the appropriate evaluation and comparability of German qualifications in Europe.

### **II.1 GQF-Level**

The GQF describes eight competence levels to which the qualifications of the German education system can be assigned. Each level is preceded by a short text that describes the structure of requirements for the respective level. This "level indicator" describes in general the requirements that must be met when a qualification of the corresponding level has been acquired. The main focus is on the degree to which the graduates are able to deal with complexity and unpredictable changes, and the degree of independence with which they can operate in a professional field or in a scientific subject.

In the area of professional competence, it is a question of the depth of knowledge and the extent of the skills which the graduates have acquired. This means the ability to use and develop instruments and methods. This also includes the ability to assess work results.

Personal competence includes social aspects: teamwork and leadership skills, the ability to help shape one's own learning or work environment, and communication skills. In addition, there is independence and responsibility, the ability to reflect and to learn.

The GQF defines 8 levels for a general description of the competencies that can be acquired in the German education system:

**Level 1** - describes competencies for fulfilling simple requirements in a clearly structured and stable learning or work area. The tasks are carried out under supervision.

**Level 2** - describes competencies for the professional fulfillment of basic requirements in a clearly and stably structured learning or work area. Most of the tasks are carried out under supervision.

**Level 3** - describes competencies for the independent realization of technical requirements in a still manageable and partly openly structured learning area or professional field of activity.

**Level 4** - describes competencies for the independent planning and processing of technical tasks in a comprehensive, changing field of learning or professional activity.

**Level 5** - describes competencies for the independent planning and processing of comprehensive technical tasks in a complex, specialized, changing field of learning or professional activity.

**Level 6** - describes competencies for planning, processing and evaluating comprehensive technical tasks and problems as well as for the independent control of processes in sub-areas of a scientific subject or in a professional field of activity. The structure of requirements is characterized by complexity and frequent changes.

**Level 7** - describes competencies for handling new, complex tasks and problems as well as for the independent control of processes in a scientific subject or in a strategy-oriented professional field of activity. The structure of requirements is characterized by frequent and unpredictable changes.

**Level 8** - describes competencies for gaining research knowledge in a scientific subject or for developing innovative solutions and processes in a professional field of work. The structure of requirements is characterized by novel and unclear problem areas.

The following table describes **levels 4 and 5**, in which, according to the project, the implementation of the curriculum for peer support workers is focused and developed.

	Professional competence		Personal competence	
Level	Knowledge	Skills	Social competence	Self-reliance
<b>Level 4</b>	To have in-depth general knowledge or specialist theoretical knowledge in a learning area or professional work environment.	To have a broad spectrum of cognitive and practical skills that enable independent task processing and problem solving as well as the assessment of work results and processes, including alternative courses of action and interactions with neighboring areas.  To provide transfer services.	To help shape the work in a group and its learning or work environment and offer continuous support. Justify processes and results. Communicate comprehensively about facts	To set learning and work goals, reflect on them, realize them and take responsibility.

<b>Level 5</b>	To have integrated specialist knowledge in a learning area or integrated professional knowledge in a field of activity. This also includes in-depth specialist theoretical knowledge, knowing the scope and limits of the field of study or professional field of activity.	To have a very wide range of specialized cognitive and practical skills. Plan work processes across the board and evaluate them with comprehensive inclusion of alternative courses of action and interactions with neighboring areas. Provide comprehensive transfer services.	To plan and design work processes cooperatively, even in heterogeneous groups, instruct others and support them with well-founded learning advice. Preparing complex issues across disciplines in a structured, target-oriented manner.	Reflect on, evaluate, pursue and take responsibility for your own and externally set learning and work goals and draw conclusions for the work processes in the team
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## II.2 Assignment procedure

The assignment of the formal qualifications, i.e., the federally or regionally regulated state qualifications, was carried out according to the principle of consensus in the GQF working group. The qualifications that have not yet been assigned, in particular those of regulated advanced training, are currently still being discussed and decided.

Formal qualifications are assigned according to a procedure described in the GQF manual. The state or sovereign public-law institution responsible for a qualification and its legal basis (e.g., examination regulations, training regulations, curriculum) submits an allocation proposal to the Federal-State Coordination Office GQF. The coordination office checks the assignment with the participation of the GQF working group with regard to the consistency of the overall structure.

An assignment proposal for a formal qualification can be submitted by a state or sovereign public-law institution that is responsible for a qualification and its legal basis.

According to the "Handbook on the German Qualifications Framework", the following documents must be submitted:

- a. Completed template for submitting the assignment proposal (including a fully completed GQF matrix).
- b. The following documents must be attached to the completed assignment form:
  - Legal basis (s) of the qualification (e.g., examination regulations, training regulations, curriculum),
  - Curriculum (s),
  - Examination regulations,
  - Other relevant documents, if applicable.

**Chart: German Qualifications Framework**



### **III. Implementation of level 4 and 5 for the training of peer support workers in Germany**

#### **III.1 Development and history**

1) 2005-2007 – Implementation of the EU project Leonardo da Vinci for people who had received mental health care/ psychiatric treatment as service users. Development of a 12-month educational program for the qualification of (ex) service users in order to support recovery of others. The curriculum was adopted nationwide as the basis for the qualification.

2) 2007-2008 – Pilot courses in Bremen and Hamburg based on the 12-month EU curriculum.

- 3) 2008-2009 – Training of trainers with participants from Berlin, Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Schleswig-Holstein, Switzerland and Sweden; Provider in Germany: FOKUS Bremen and the University Hospital in Hamburg. Granting of trainer licenses to course participants.
- 4) 2010 - Founding of LebensART Münster.
- 5) 2010 - Creation of further locations in Germany and in Bern / Switzerland (DAS course).
- 6) 2011 - Foundation of the EX-IN (Experienced Involvement) Germany association for further networking nationwide and to ensure the quality of qualifications. The 36 locations (as of 2021) that have applied for sponsorship for EX-IN qualification courses from the EX-IN Germany Association have committed themselves to complying with the quality standards that apply here. The LebensArt education provider with its locations in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia follows its own quality standards.
- 7) 2013-2014 - Development and implementation of the standards for Peer Support Workers by EX-IN Germany.
- 8) 2013 - LebensART decides to focus on the educational mandate, qualification and placement in work. For this purpose, the training provider and the EX-IN peer support worker were certified according to AZAV.<sup>2</sup>
- 9) 2015 - LebensART increases the duration of the compulsory internship to 120 hours per semester and includes self-study of a total of 200 lessons.

## **III.2 Previous qualification offers, programs and models**

The organizers of EX-IN courses were and are very diverse in Germany as well as in the entire German-speaking area.

The most important course providers in Germany are the non-profit association EX-IN Germany with several locations and members as well as LebensART.

Both qualification models correspond to level 2 and 3 of the European Qualification Framework.

### **III.2.1 Qualification EX-IN Germany**

The qualification to become a peer support worker at EX-IN Germany takes one year and takes place in 12 weekend blocks, so-called modules. It also includes the completion of 2 internships, a final presentation and an individual portfolio. The participants deal intensively with their own recovery history and learn methods of how they can share their own experiences and use them in a helpful way for people, who are equally affected.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> AZAV is the abbreviation of the German term “Akkreditierungs- und Zulassungsverordnung Arbeitsförderung” (English term: Accreditation and Admission Ordinance on Employment Promotion).

<sup>3</sup> Quelle: [www.ex-in.de](http://www.ex-in.de)

The basis of the EX-IN courses is the curriculum. The methods, contents and goals developed and / or described therein are binding for the trainers, as are the quality standards.

<b>Basic modules</b>	<b>Advanced modules</b>
1. Health promoting attitudes (salutogenesis) 2. Empowerment in theory and practice 3. Experience and participation 4. Perspectives and experience of recovery 5. Trialogue	6. Self-exploration 7. Intercession 8. Assessment (Holistic inventory) 9. Accompany and support 10. Crisis intervention 11. Teaching and learning 12. Final module

The trainer teams are equally staffed with at least one EX-IN peer support worker and at least one person with specialist training and experience as an employee in the field of psychiatry. Both have successfully completed the EX-IN trainer course and are teaching the course together.

The graduates at EX-IN Germany certified locations have received a central certificate since 2014.

EX-IN Germany also trains EX-IN trainers nationwide. Participation in a coaching course is possible under the following conditions:

**For experts through experience:**

- Completion of an EX-IN course recognized by EX-IN Germany
- Practical experience with the (voluntary or paid) activity as an expert through experience (preferably also practical experience in supporting other people/ service users in their recovery process e.g., as a peer support worker, advocate, peer advisor or through activities in self-help or lobbying)
- Own crisis management skills, which are enriched during the course as openly accessible empirical knowledge for others
- Awareness of role model function for course participants and reflective handling of this role.

**For experts through training:**

- Completed specialist training or completed studies as a psychiatric specialist
- Several years of professional experience in dealing with people with mental health challenges

- Experience with EX-IN Peer Support Work
- Membership in EX-IN Germany
- Comprehensive system knowledge in the areas of inpatient and outpatient psychiatry (institutions, hierarchies, job profiles, etc.)
- Own crisis management skills, which are enriched during the course as openly accessible empirical knowledge for others
- Abilities to design and organize group processes
- Reflecting on personal experience with the involvement of people with experience in psychiatry
- Experiences in dialogue
- Readiness for critical self-reflection in the sense of EX-IN self-exploration.

**The curriculum for trainer qualification consists of 8 modules:**

- Teamwork
- Methodology
- Portfolio
- Working with empirical knowledge
- Group development
- Crisis intervention
- Teaching and Learning
- Diploma

In addition, the participants are required to sit in on an EX-IN course, create a portfolio and make a final presentation.

### **III.2.2 Qualification by LebensART**

The following are excerpts from the leaflet from LebensART on the qualification measure:

**“EX-IN Involvement of (ex/former) service users:** The curriculum for training (ex/former) service users in order to become EX-IN peer support workers was developed from 2005 to 2007 by Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, English, Slovenian and German partners Developed as part of a European Leonardo da Vinci pilot project. The concept assumes that knowledge from personal experience is an enrichment in psychiatric work, teaching and research.”

**“EX-IN peer support worker** is an apprenticeship certified by LebensART according to AZAV guidelines. We have thus created a binding basis for financing through the education voucher from the employment agencies and job centers. Based on the experience of numerous rounds of EX-IN training with continuous module support as a course leader, we have adapted and further developed the training to regional requirements, the needs of the participants and the future employers. The main aim of the training is to make the

participants more professional. At the same time, the focus remains on the individuality of the participants and their support needs. LebensART conducts the training with various cooperation partners who are actors in the psychiatric context, and thus also promotes the creation of jobs. The way of working and the content of the training correspond to the EX-IN EU curriculum. At the end of the course, the graduates receive a certificate from the LebensART.”

During the course, the participants complete two internships of 120 hours each and write a report for each internship. They will develop a portfolio that is a compilation of their qualifications from training and experience, the reflection of what they have learned, their personal and professional development during the training year and their personal plans for the future. A well-founded portfolio and a meaningful personal professional profile are visible / verifiable results of the training. In addition to the 12 modules, 4 days are offered to reflect on the internship and offer support in working on the portfolio. The training also includes accompanied self-study amounting to approx. 200 hours of instruction. A learning platform for sharing the results of self-study is made available to the participants. Internship reflection and portfolio days take place quarterly at LebensART.

The trainers: The team of trainers in the module consists of at least two certified EX-IN trainers. They are trainers with psychiatry experience who have completed a convalescent training and trainer training - as well as - professionals with specialist training, many years of experience in the field of psychiatry and an EX-IN trainer training. By mixing different perspectives, the participants learn how to work in a team. The team of trainers also creates networking and supports the participation of the peer support workers in the work areas.

### **What does one achieve through the EX-IN training?**

EX-IN improves the status of those with experience in psychiatry through qualifications and income. The hiring modalities for you as an EX-IN peer support worker are based on your area of responsibility, your commitment and your personal resilience, as well as your previous work experience. Most jobs are created through a successfully completed internship.

### **Requirements:**

- Experiences with severe emotional shocks and how to cope with them
- No acute crisis, no acute addiction
- As much previous experience as possible in self-help or dialogue
- Willingness to talk about personal experiences in the group
- Willingness to get involved in group processes
- Social network that offers you guidance and support during the course
- Willingness to take care of oneself
- Participation in a current information event at LebensART.

### **How does qualification work?**

The first semester is used to research and reflect on the participants own crisis and recovery history. It is made clear which coping strategies the participants have developed. The participants learn from and with one another how they have become empowered again, have empowered themselves and how ways of recovery were developed. Looking back, the causes and meaning of mental crises become recognizable.

In the second semester, the participants develop their own role as experienced professionals in the team. They design and create their personal professional profile. They try out tools for supporting recovery. They get to know counseling techniques and apply them. They will develop opportunities for advocacy and support in crises. They create and try out teaching units, lectures and group concepts. They will practice how to act appropriately as a translator and link in the field of work. It works according to the principle "from I-knowledge to we-knowledge". The experience of the participants is consistently the focus of the qualification measure and is regularly compiled as a learning effect.

### **Duration and type of degree**

In general, the qualification measure lasts one year - some locations extend the qualification measure. At LebensART, the participants graduate within one year, which is mandatory due to the AZAV certification. The total workload for the participants is approx. 15 hours per week for 48 weeks.

The graduates of the EX-IN training at LebensART receive an internal certificate on which the services provided are certified in detail.

### **Is the measure / training / seminar already grouped in Germany?**

The Ver.di union develops tariff proposals together with the umbrella association for community psychiatry and EX-IN Germany.

### **The situation in Switzerland**

In Switzerland, the courses are offered by EX-IN further education, as well as with the European EX-IN curriculum. However, a few adjustments have been made.

The "Independent advocacy" module has been modified because there is no formalized "independent advocacy" in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, therefore, the module "Psychiatry and Rights" is trained and the providers focus on Swiss adult protection law and the rights (and obligations) of service users. The institute "person of trust / representative" is also viewed as a possible activity for those supporting recovery.

Since the beginning of the courses there have been 2 internships totaling 190 hours, 2 internship support days, 3 small group supervision and two specialist exchanges.

Written reflection tasks are also worked on after each module.

Learning groups are a mandatory part of further training and must be documented.

The personal professional profile is formally regarded as a test.

The portfolio has to be created and will also receive feedback (in part).

In Switzerland there were 6 courses, starting in 2010, carried out under the umbrella of EX-IN Switzerland, two of which were courses at the Bern University of Applied Sciences. With an additional semester there was the opportunity to acquire a “Diploma of advanced studies”. Additionally, the Pro Mente Sana Foundation offered 5 courses in cooperation with EX-IN Switzerland.

The first 5 courses from EX-IN were carried out with constantly changing trainer tandem and accompanied by a person responsible for further training (without training as a trainer). We gradually moved away from this system towards more consistency and continuity with the coaches. All 6 courses from EX-IN Switzerland (Bern) have been / are scientifically evaluated by the University of Psychiatric Services in Bern.

In Switzerland, the focus is on enabling participants to work in the primary labor market. For this reason and due to the great demand, an extensive and demanding application process is carried out.

In French-speaking Switzerland, there was an educational program for people with experience of emotional distress and recovery according to a different curriculum.

### **III.2.3 Comparing of EX-IN training courses - their scope, components and workload as criteria for comprehensible objective standards: EX-IN peer support worker at LebensART with certification according to AZAV**

Extent of further training EX-IN peer support worker at LebensART. A learning platform has existed since 2013, now a Moodle platform with data protection-compliant online meeting options for all participants has been developed.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Salutogenesis</li> <li>➤ Empowerment</li> <li>➤ Experience and participation</li> <li>➤ Recovery</li> <li>➤ Trialogue</li> <li>➤ Self-exploration</li> </ul> <p>per module: 22 teaching units on three days about once a month.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assessment</li> <li>➤ Advice and support</li> <li>➤ Advocacy</li> <li>➤ Crisis support</li> <li>➤ learning, teaching (research)</li> <li>➤ Portfolio, Personal professional profile</li> </ul> <p>per module: 22 teaching units.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Company internships</li> <li>➤ First: 120 hours</li> <li>➤ Second: 120 hours</li> <li>➤ Portfolio and internship reflection days (at LebensART 28 additional teaching units)</li> </ul> <p>Written elaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Accompanied self-study (with LebensART approx. 200 teaching units)</li> <li>➤ Portfolio with a personal professional profile</li> </ul>

Current description of the usual EX-IN Germany certified course scope in the Si 03/2021

- The course consists of twelve three-day modules, one module comprises approx. 22 lessons. The modules are spread over twelve months.
- 264 (22 x 12) lessons or teaching units
- In addition to the course, 2 internships are also completed.

The 1st internship should last at least 40 hours and take place during the five basic modules. In this "try-out"-internship, the role change is to be tested - from the person affected to the peer support worker.

The second internship lasts at least 80 hours and takes place during the seven advanced modules. This internship is about practically testing new qualities and methods that have been learned.

### **III.3 Recognition procedure for educational measures in Germany**

#### **III.3.1 Recognition of the measure as an apprenticeship**

The recognition of training measures as apprenticeships that can be taught in Germany in the dual training system is based on the document "Recommendation regarding criteria and procedures for the recognition and abolition of apprenticeships" from October 25, 1974:

##### **I. Preamble**

According to § 25 of the Vocational Training Act (VTA), apprenticeships are officially recognized by the responsible ministers in agreement with the Federal Minister of Education and Science by ordinance, or approvals are revoked and training regulations are issued for apprenticeships. As part of its task, the Federal Institute for Vocational Training Research has to determine the content and objectives of vocational training, to create the material basis for the recognition and abolition of training occupations and the issuing of training regulations. Applicants' preliminary work in this regard must be examined and taken into account. Applications for the recognition or abolition of apprenticeships can be submitted to the responsible federal ministries: Federal Committee for Vocational Training, entrepreneurial or trade union specialist organizations and their respective associations, responsible bodies in accordance with the VTA and their umbrella organizations. When recognizing or abolishing a training occupation, educational, economic and labor market policy as well as vocational educational aspects must be taken into account. In order to enable the applicant to reflect accordingly, the criteria set out below should be published by the federal government.

##### **II. Criteria**

Criteria for the recognition and retention of recognized training occupations are:

- Sufficient need for appropriate qualifications, which is unlimited in time and independent of the individual company
- Training for qualified, independent activities in as broad a field as possible

- Investment in permanent, age-independent professional activity
- broad-based basic vocational training
- possibility of an organized training course
- sufficient demarcation from other training occupations
- operational feasibility of the training goals
- duration of training between two and three years
- basis for further training and professional advancement
- Acquisition of the ability to think and act independently in the application of skills and knowledge.

### **III. Proceedings**

When examining applications and preparing initiatives by the responsible federal ministries for the recognition or abolition of training occupations, the top organizations of entrepreneurs and trade unions and the Federal Institute for Vocational Training Research must be involved in good time. This applies accordingly to the issuing of training regulations. If the examination reveals particular problems for which the catalog of criteria is not sufficient to solve them, the Federal Committee for Vocational Education and Training is to be heard from the responsible federal ministries. The examination of whether new regulatory measures are necessary should be completed no later than one year after the application has been submitted.

#### **III.3.2 Entry of qualifications in the German qualification framework**

The aim of the GQF is to make the German qualifications system more transparent, to support reliability, permeability and quality assurance and to increase the comparability of qualifications. It is intended to serve as a translation tool for the education and employment sector, making it possible to classify qualifications better and to make it easier for qualifications acquired in Germany to be recognized in Europe. The GQF is used to relate the qualifications of the German education system to the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in order to make them easier to understand in Europe. This makes it easier for citizens to go to another country to study and to work according to their qualifications or to undertake further educational steps. However, the GQF also pursues goals that relate to the further development of the German education system. The transparent description of learning outcomes can promote mutual understanding between educational areas, express equivalence between vocational and higher education and support permeability. It is intended to promote the orientation of qualifications to competencies (“outcome orientation”), that is, to help one in Germany come closer to the principle: What is important is what someone can do and not where it was learned. In this way, the GQF can also help identify options for the recognition and crediting of results of informal learning, e.g., in the process of work, to improve and to strengthen lifelong learning as a whole.

The GQF describes qualifications in terms of the competencies that participants obtain when acquiring these qualifications. In this sense, the DQR defines minimum standards. It

describes what the participants know, can and are able to do once they have completed a course of study. Ensuring that these standards are achieved is the task of the quality assurance procedures practiced in the various educational areas, as described in the German EQF referencing report.

In principle, the GQF should enable the allocation of all qualifications that can be acquired in Germany. First, formal qualifications in vocational training, higher education and general education were described in accordance with the categories of the GQF and assigned to its competence levels. In addition, the prerequisites should be created to take informally acquired competencies into account in the GQF.

In future, it will be up to the regulatory authorities responsible for a qualification to link new or changed qualifications with a GQF level. It is the task of the federal-state coordination office to check whether the assignments are correct in cooperation with the GQF working crisis.

### **III.3.3 AZAV certification**

AZAV (*abbreviation of the German term “Akkreditierungs- und Zulassungsverordnung Arbeitsförderung”*) stands for “Accreditation and Admission Ordinance on Employment Promotion”. This is a regulation under the Third Book of the Social Code (SGB III), which regulates the admission of training providers and measures for further education and training by means of a training voucher by the Employment Agency.

This certification is a seal of quality in the sector of further education. The aim of the label is to create more competition and improved transparency and quality.

In order to obtain the AZAV certificate, an educational institution must meet certain basic requirements of the Social Code. However, the Federal Employment Agency has handed over the verification itself to private sector certification bodies and only controls central approval and registration.

The training provider does not necessarily need an AZAV certification to promote your desired initial and continuing education after time spend serving in the Bundeswehr.

In 2013, LebensART was certified as an independent further training provider according to AZAV and was also the first organizer nationwide to achieve this certification for the product EX-IN (Experienced Involvement) peer support worker. This certification has the advantage for the participants that it represents a legal basis for funding by the employment agencies and job centers.

Since the beginning of the first qualification measures (2010), the course has been concluded with an internal certificate on which the work performed is verifiable. Both the training provider and the measure are checked and recertified annually by an independent expert body, provided that the legal requirements are complied with.

### **III.3.4 Certification by EX-IN Deutschland e.V. (does not apply to EX-IN courses at LebensART)**

A certificate issued centrally by EX-IN Germany for a fee is available for courses that started on August 1, 2014.

## **IV. Outlook for implementation**

### **IV.1. Position of the most important parties in the field of EX-IN qualification from Germany**

The position of EX-IN Germany regarding the introduction of EU-wide standards or classifications/classifications is that “there should be no EU-wide regulation and that the ‘professional profile’ of a peer support worker should not be established by law. Should it be more advantageous for one of the project members/project countries to aim for a low ranking (e. g. because the supply landscape does not allow otherwise), this should not be passed on to all other project members/project countries.

After all, it would not be beneficial if it were possible to apply a higher classification in more developed health systems, precisely because more demanding fields of activity can be established with the recruitment of peer support workers”.<sup>4</sup>

According to LebensART Münster and EX-IN Switzerland, the work of peer support workers does not require EU-wide standards that are as high as possible, but still and in some places at all a basic qualification that is feasible for as many as possible and can be used as a general basis. This is basically due to the different products that have emerged from the EU da Vinci project Experienced Involvement in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

In order to be able to introduce a curriculum at level 5 in Germany, according to LebensART Münster, the following steps have to be taken or the following questions have to be answered:

- First of all, the curriculum should be tested for the ability of transfer of competencies
- From we-knowledge to the application of knowledge
- More practice-oriented tasks
- More socially oriented tasks
- Does the EU curriculum have more potential that is not used?
- How do we get back to more practical relevance, as it was intended in the original curriculum?
- Example: From a test-internship (40 hours) to a long-term internship to test the willingness to collaborate
- (How) do we solve the apparent contradiction of being able to reflect freely and unintentionally to the demands to be made?
- Is there perhaps a need for different levels of graduation?
- The foundation, the EX-IN curriculum or others should include and pursue tasks and competence objectives at least at EQF levels 4 and 5.
- The build-up modules should be designed on level 5.

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<sup>4</sup> Excerpt from a statement by EX-IN Germany from December 2021

Within the Advisory Board for the German-speaking countries, however, it is felt that the existing successful further training courses, EX-IN certified according to EX-IN Germany as well as EX-IN at LebensArt should be recognized as a basis for European standards for peer support workers.

Despite all the differences, the two advanced training courses for peer support work, which are certified by EX-IN Germany and EX-IN at LebensART, are comparable. The original curriculum with different European authors has been used, shortened, modified and has been further developed in different ways.

The institutions represented on the Advisory Board have agreed to consult the peer support workers directly to determine whether they can define some further training needs. The survey indicated that there should be a deepening or expansion or specialisation.

The training needs mentioned are:

- In depth discussion of module topics based on the curriculum
- (Training courses that can be booked elsewhere, e. g. Open Dialogue)
- Joint training with colleagues, specialized in the field of interest
- Fields of work – specialisation in different fields of work e. g. forensics
- (Further training in the fields of work of specialized colleagues)
- Reflection possibilities in the form of intervision, supervision, collegial advice etc.
- Role security – the value of experience – recognition
- Individual topics e. g. suicide, stigma, resilience, development of group services.

In cooperation with EX-IN Germany, EX-IN Switzerland, parties from Austria and LebensART, three additional modules were developed and tested:

- Curriculum development (subtopic: resilience) / of LebensART
- Suicidality / of EX-IN Germany and EX-IN Switzerland
- Role security/from EX-IN Germany and representatives of the “Networking Platform of Experts from their own experience – For Mental Health from Austria.

## **IV. 2 Outlook and considerations on professional recognition by LebensART Münster:**

- Recognition of professions takes place on a national level.
- The level of training to date is insufficient for official recognition.
- Therefore, within the “Erasmus+ project (EU-project) different variations are considered, e.g., to develop a curriculum and to interpret the learning content for about 2 years of training.
- But building blocks for professional recognition would also be possible.
- Recognition of the professional experience and the tasks and related competences of peer support workers at level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework.
- In any case, the training courses for EX-IN peer support work conducted in Germany, Austria and Switzerland on the basis of the same curriculum should be a prerequisite, including those conducted by LebensART (If agreed upon).

- It is not possible to obtain professional recognition for vocational training which is actually a qualification measure. Accordingly, it is actually a matter of further education. However, as a vocational training, the profession would be given greater recognition, which is why it is always referred to as training.

### **IV. 3 Qualification opportunities through partial qualifications**

**Partial qualification** is a form of qualification resulting in the **partial qualification** of the person concerned.

Partial qualifications are uniformly structured units that lead to standardised certificates below the official skilled worker certificate; they are aligned to typical company work and business processes. Partial qualifications are modular building blocks of a complete state-recognized vocational training.

The partial qualifications in Germany are aimed at adults over 25 years of age who have not completed vocational training or have completed obsolete vocational training. Although they are currently primarily aimed at the labour market integration of the unemployed and those at risk of unemployment, they could serve as a training pattern for other target groups with no specific skills.

As part of the partial qualifications, interested EX-IN participants would complete individual modules optionally. After obtaining the necessary certificates for the partial qualifications, the EX-IN participants would then be able to take an external examination equivalent to a professional qualification.

The building blocks would be designed according to the key competencies described in the project's IO3 product. The basis for admission to examinations would be basic training according to the basic curriculum used up to now (as with EX-IN Germany and LebensART Münster). A corresponding matrix of recognition of competences should also take into account the experience gained from peer work (e.g., the number of hours spent working as a peer support worker).

The advantage of the partial qualification model compared to the usually school-based, targeted preparation for external examination in the form of courses is that by summing up partial qualification, specific occupational knowledge, skills and abilities can be individually examined and certified.