WELCOMING CULTURE

Guidelines for companies on how to deal with foreign workers
Welcoming culture – what does it mean and what purpose does it serve?

The competitiveness of the German economy heavily depends on well-qualified workers. Requirements in terms of workforce qualifications are increasing as a result of technological innovations, changes in how work is organised, the growing value placed on information and knowledge in everyday working life and, above all, globalisation. A shortage of skilled workers is already clearly felt in certain sectors and regions. These existing skills shortages are not a cyclical problem that will eventually rectify itself but largely structural. Demographic change is further exacerbating this trend. If annual net immigration were to fall back to below 100,000 persons, the level prior to the financial crisis, the Federal Statistical Office forecasts that the number of people of working age would shrink from just under 50 million now to a scant 44 million as early as 2030. For this particular reason and without appropriate preventive measures, the deficit of qualified workers will by 2035 swell by about four million, including just under 1.5 million graduate positions (Prognos 2015). As of March 2016, there is already a shortage of around 161,000 workers in the so-called STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) with around one third needing an academic and two thirds a vocational diploma. Whereas deficits in academic STEM qualifications are likely to be manageable thanks to successes in increasing student numbers, shortages of vocationally qualified STEM workers are threatening to halt growth.

In addition, skills shortages are already evident in the healthcare sector.

To ensure a qualified workforce in the medium to long term, a determined and balanced overall strategy is necessary. Such a strategy should encompass sustainable education and training activities, urgently needed reforms for quality improvements in the education system to secure the next generation and the best possible utilisation of domestic labour market potential through a further increase in labour participation, especially among women, older people and people with disabilities, as well as people with a migration background who already live in Germany. Yet even optimal exploitation of these action options to better utilize existing skilled worker potential will not suffice. Not only because of the dramatic demographic change, but also to close existing skilled worker gaps in the short term is it indispensable to activate additional skilled worker potential. A recent favourable development is that, at the insistence of the business community, the German labour market has been opened to more targeted skilled migration from other countries, therefore increasing the attractiveness of Germany for skilled workers we need from around the world. Targeted and managed immigration should not be ranked below making the most of domestic potential but rather should parallel this effort.
Alongside targeted immigration, ever more people are seeking protection in Germany from political persecution and war. Many recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and tolerated residents remain in Germany for an extended period or indefinitely. These groups also include people with good qualifications and work experience who fulfil demands of the labour market and who should therefore be better used in the current employment situation. Nevertheless, it must be clear that this cannot be a substitute for carefully targeted immigration of qualified workers. Similarly, a person’s right to asylum is and must continue to be independent of any qualifications he or she has to offer. In addition, it must be absolutely clear that immigration of foreign workers must not lead to increased unemployment among domestic workers or to their marginalisation in the labour market. Foreign skilled workers do not enter the labour market instead of but in addition to people already living in Germany and they generate additional jobs for domestic workers. When properly utilized, immigration makes an important contribution to increased innovation, expanding growth and higher prosperity.

Global competition for the best and brightest is growing. More highly skilled workers are now coming to Germany for employment, but around two thirds of these immigrants come from Europe. There is still room for improvement in immigration from countries outside the European Union; we should therefore concentrate on fostering an interest in working in Germany among well qualified people from those countries. Germany has for too long sent out the signal that immigrants are wanted only as “gap-fillers”, if at all. The paradigm change made in immigration law from a categorisation culture to a comprehensive welcoming culture needs to be further developed, embraced and disseminated to the outside world. A true welcoming culture is indispensable in further enhancing Germany’s attractiveness as a business location and to draw highly qualified people from all over the world. People with the most diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds constitute an important economic resource. Especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, it is of greatest interest to increase the attractiveness of their business for foreign skilled workers. In this regard, successfully integrated migrants are important multipliers and help to bring in further potential employees, in particular those with a similar cultural background who already live in Germany.
Welcoming culture – what does it mean and what purpose does it serve?

Even today, many companies are crucially dependent on skilled workers from abroad. While other companies still manage to fill open positions with skilled workers already living in Germany, this sometimes results in long vacant periods or turning down orders. Therefore, some companies may not yet turn to other countries when they need to fill a position, and may be especially dissuaded by very complicated and opaque immigration legislation and further bureaucratic hurdles associated with recruiting a foreign worker that remain despite some recent improvements. Recruiting abroad is nevertheless inevitable. It therefore makes good business sense to address at an early stage how a company can develop its own internal welcoming culture and also to contribute to a country-wide welcoming culture within Germany. Success in this endeavour will have positive effects outside of enabling foreign workers to fill open positions. For instance, foreign skilled workers do not only contribute their professional know-how, but also have a wide range of language skills and knowledge about cultural and religious particularities. Companies can use this potential to expand to new markets, acquire different customer groups at home and abroad, discover new supply sources and build up international networks. For a globalised economy, workers with intercultural competences are indispensable.

A genuine welcoming culture can help to ...

- facilitate inclusion of colleagues in the work process.
- acquire new markets and customer groups at home and abroad.
- secure advantages in the competition for qualified employees.
- enhance long-term employee commitment to the organisation.
- influence the business climate and employees’ work methods in a positive way.
- increase the organisation’s image and public standing.
Alongside targeted immigration, it is important to use the potential of the almost sixteen million people with a migration background who already live in Germany today. Companies already demonstrate a broad commitment by running many programs to achieve this. In addition to the support possibilities offered by the German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) and others, there are number of effective examples of initiatives for integration of fellow citizens with a migration background. Further links to examples of good and workable practice are given in the appendix. Many companies know about the useful and diverse advantages that a welcoming culture offers in its wake.

This brochure seeks to make such business commitment better known, to facilitate the exchange of good practice examples and to support the development of new strategies for a company’s personnel policy.

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**Foreign workers enrich companies through ...**

- language skills – especially those not often learned by Germans but which are important in the globalised world, e.g. Arabic, Chinese and Eastern European languages.
- cultural competences – based on their own experience, they have intercultural skills and sensitivity in contacts with others.
- “fresh air” in the business (new markets, new products, new perspectives).
- mobility, resilience, courage and adventurous spirit.
Welcoming culture – what does it mean and what purpose does it serve?
At Gegenbauer, diversity has been a cornerstone of the company’s culture for years. “Acceptance of differences, space for individuality as well as opportunities for all employees is written in large letters in our company. As a signatory of the ‘Diversity Charter’, we are convinced that cultural diversity also enriches us and strengthens our competitive position. Accordingly, we follow a structured approach to promote a preference-oriented management culture which values differences, in particular by emphasising vis-à-vis our skilled workers and managers the value of diversity and how to use it productively. By offering our employees language courses, we support their rapid integration in working life and in society. We promote projects for young people whose talents may not be immediately apparent but who show a willingness to do something and need support. And lastly we enable an early vocational orientation for young people with the support of the ‘futOUR’ summer camp project created by Gegenbauer in 2005 and in which Berlin school students acquire important skills for their subsequent working life.”

Further information can be found at www.gegenbauer.de
DEUTSCHE TELEKOM AG
A WELCOMING CULTURE IN ACTION

For Deutsche Telekom AG, cultural diversity is an indispensable aspect of the composition of our workforce, and one which is becoming progressively more important. In the first place, the global orientation of the group presupposes well-functioning cooperation between business operations at home and abroad. Secondly, each operation – from customer service or product development through to in-house service units – benefits from the wide variety of ideas and perspectives which employees from different cultures and nations bring to the table. Among other things, Deutsche Telekom makes use of interactive service offers to welcome and properly integrate new colleagues. Wikis, blogs and the “Telekom Social Network” promote exchanges and invite one and all to publish and consult content and welcoming offers. For instance, employees can use this platform to offer to be “buddies” with new international colleagues. Welcoming events such as the “Welcome@Telekom Event” offer useful information about integrating in the group and facilitate the creation of a personal network. Not only new colleagues but the entire workforce are the focus of events for intercultural awareness-raising: during “Intercultural Week”, typical national dishes from the various countries where the business has a presence are served in the canteen, and on “International Day” or during “International Round Tables” colleagues from different origins get to know each other. In so-called “Business Culture Guides” and via training courses, provided where necessary, every member of the event can find information about culture-specific ways of working and behaviours in different countries on a completely individual basis, tailored to personal interests.

Further information can be found at www.telekom.com
“It’s difficult without guidance” – this is the unanimous message of the “recognition ambassadors” who communicate on their personal success stories on the “Recognition in Germany” portal. Thanks to the help and support of guidance bodies that specialise in the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications, thousands of people have already been helped in Germany. A total of four recognition information and guidance points (German acronym: IBAT) have also been successfully established in the Thuringia region. Since 2012 more than 1,800 people have been advised through this fixed component of the Thuringia regional network, part of the national IQ promotion programme. A hasty conclusion on labor market shortages is that workers with a migration history can easily help offset the growing shortages. Unfortunately, in reality this process is far from simple and successful recognition involves a successful navigation through bureaucratic red tape. But it is worth the effort. Companies primarily benefit from recognition guidance, because with recognition documentation, it is easier to evaluate skills and specialist know-how of foreign applicants. A classification is made with respect to the relevant German reference professions and information about training and learning content also forms part of the documentation.

Further information can be found at www.iq-thueringen.de and www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de
How can a welcoming culture be successfully established in the organisation?

A durable welcoming culture should be understood in a broad sense. All players (management, workforce and migrants) must be collectively convinced of the good sense of integration and agree to participate in the on-going process it requires. What is needed is an open attitude fostering mutual respect, acceptance, openness and friendliness. At the same time, raising awareness serves to highlight limits which have to be respected. Teamwork is essential in the integration process.

A sustainable welcoming culture must also be anchored structurally in the company’s strategy and become a part of the business culture. In addition, sustainability can be achieved through adjusting human resources policy (inclusion of intercultural competences in job descriptions, job tender notices and agreements on objectives, extension of human resources development to include intercultural competences and much more). A corresponding adjustment in management positioning sends a signal both internally and externally.

Identification and implementation of measures in practice is well-tried in the framework of project work or with the help of diversity working groups. The diversity of the workforce should also be reflected in this area.

Following the motto “do the right thing and talk about it”, companies can enhance the external image of the business by making their activities public (e.g. on their homepage) while also advocating opening society.
What strategies do other companies follow?

There are a wide range of possibilities for implementing a welcoming culture in a company. Below we show how companies of differing sizes and from diverse sectors shape their welcoming culture.

3.1 Organisation and promotion of language courses

Development of language skills is an important condition for successful integration of migrants in a society, but also is critical in integrating in business communities and work processes. A basic knowledge of the German language is of fundamental importance for a rapid “arrival”, even if English is the prevailing working language in an increasing number of internationally organised companies, which makes it easier to recruit foreign skilled workers. Language skills are necessary not only to meet professional requirements, but also in everyday situations, from to dealing with administrative procedures to establishing social contacts and thus contributing to a feeling of belonging in Germany. However, companies which from the outset place unduly high requirements on the German language skills of foreign applicants risk shifting the focus away from fostering professional and social skills. Therefore companies should act as a facilitator in the area of language skills, a practice in which many companies have already enjoyed success.

The service offer of language schools and language courses is very large and, in Germany, is clearly demanded by migrants. It is important for companies to take their time and seek advice when choosing a suitable service offer. Alongside traditional language courses, e-learning, blended learning or mobile learning offers (apps) should be considered, depending on requirements. These tools enable an acquisition of initial knowledge of German while still in the home country. For instance, broadcaster Deutsche Welle offers online German courses free of charge. The Goethe Institute also provide popular language services abroad. The usefulness of these language courses at and beyond everyday use at the workplace should be highlighted.

Progress in language skills can be promoted in everyday working life through mixed assignment or project teams. A particularly effective way of promoting language skills is through in-tandem learning. Two language-learners are placed together to learn the language of the tandem partner. This flexible and cost-effective variant of learning a language brings benefits for both sides. Social contacts are encouraged and linguistic
and cultural competences are widened. Companies can also support migrants by allocating a proportion of working time for language training.

Inadequate knowledge of the German language is detrimental to successful integration in companies and in society. In some cases, the Migrant Authority may require the foreign employee to complete an integration course depending on the requirements within individual cases, and the integration course can also be used for targeted learning of the German language. The goal of such a course is to foster basic knowledge of the German language and to teach the participant useful information about society, culture and legal order in orientation modules. The course ends with a final test. A basic knowledge of the German language may be a condition for family unification in Germany for accompanying or subsequently arriving family members, in particular spouses. In this situation, German language skills must have been acquired abroad. Work-related language courses with state support are offered by the ESF-BAMF programme of the German Federal Office for Migrants and Refugees. These courses combine German lessons, vocational qualification and practical knowledge. The German Federal Office for Migrants and Refugees provides further information on integration courses and on the ESF-BAMF programme on its homepage: [www.bamf.de > welcome to Germany > learn German](http://www.bamf.de)

Young people and young skilled workers from Europe can obtain additional support for language courses, among other things, in the home country, via the “MobiPro-EU” programme. More detailed information is accessible at: [www.thejobofmylife.de](http://www.thejobofmylife.de)

### 3.2 Promotion of cultural exchange in the company

Employees who form close-knit networks rely on the knowledge of other members. This process facilitates rapid integration, a short settling-in period and creates social contacts. Many companies already support such networks or offer online platforms. Meetings such as “cook-your-culture” events can aid in the formation of these networks through experiencing diverse culinary traditions and providing a platform for friendly conversation and connection between culturally diverse employees. Another form of intercultural exchange is the reading circle. Literary classics, read in a shared language like English, can produce an appreciation of the culture and understanding of the other country.
What strategies do other companies follow?

BUSINESS TRAINING ACADEMY WITH ST JOHANNES KRANKENHAUS GMBH
PRACTICAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO FACILITATE ENTRY

Language skills and specialised skills are success factors for integration in work. The “Business Training Academy” (German acronym: FAW) promotes both skill types by offering special training course alongside language and integration courses. These courses build on the vocational qualifications and experience which migrants acquired in their home country. An indispensable component in this process is internships in companies.

For instance, in July 2013 a trained nurse who immigrated into Germany from Kosovo entered into an FAW practical training course and was able to widen her professional knowledge and adapt to local requirements. Her objective was to gain recognition as a healthcare provider in order to be qualified in a skilled worker profession in Germany. During the subsequent six-month practical phase as a healthcare provider in the St Johannes Krankenhaus hospital in Troisdorf-Sieglar, she was able to apply and further develop her professional and language skills. On conclusion of the recognition procedure, she was taken on by the St Johannes Krankenhaus hospital as a healthcare provider and is still employed there.

Further information can be found at www.faw.de
SAP AG

NETWORKS AS A COMPONENT OF DIVERSITY STRATEGY

“As a global business, we draw enormous benefit from the diversity of our employees. Diversity is important for the success, innovation capacity and creativity of SAP. We foster a work environment that welcomes diversity and takes into account the individual capabilities, experience and needs of our employees – wherever they come from, whatever their culture or religion, whatever their gender, whether or not they have a disability. Over 74,000 employees from more than 150 countries contribute to SAP’s success. Employee networks are a central component of our comprehensive diversity strategy and company-wide best practice. They form a forum for the exchange of information and ideas with other SAP employees and the entire SAP ecosystem. In our ‘Business Women’s Network’, female employees exchange, provide mutual support and describe to SAP their contribution to business success. Cultures@-SAP offers space for events around the theme of diversity and cultures among the workforce, whereas HomoSAPiens@SAP sets out to raise awareness and understanding of the problems of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people in the day-to-day world of work.”

Further information can be found at www.sap.com
What strategies do other companies follow?

3.3 Strengthening intercultural competences in the core workforce

Since the interplay between all players is indispensable for a successful welcoming culture, it is important to ask how intercultural abilities can be strengthened in the core workforce. The goal cannot be reached with a one-off action – an on-going process is necessary.

It is particularly vital that managers become behavioural models. They represent the company level with their guidelines on the one hand, and they are responsible for operational implementation of the welcoming culture on the other hand. Managers must therefore take conscious steps in presenting themselves as individuals models of welcoming culture.

Employees can enhance intercultural skills through competence training courses, also known as sensitivity courses. The presentation of teaching material in modular can improve processing and application. Individuals may also find certain themes such as possible uncertainties in everyday contact with foreign colleagues and intercultural communication helpful. Cultural differences in facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, etc., can lead to misunderstandings which can be cleared up easily with understanding of different cultural backgrounds. Visits to open information events can also serve as an alternative to training courses. This cost-effective option is especially suitable for small businesses. The Federal Employment Agency and federations and associations committed to a diverse society are possible service providers.

Another variant for building intercultural competences is learning by doing. Whether through heterogeneous team compositions or employee exchanges with locations abroad, active promotion of diversity brings lasting successes.
Diversity in companies and a welcoming culture for employees with a migration history is increasingly relevant for employers in the federal state of Thuringia in Germany. A service point ("Vielfalt_unternehmen" – making diversity work) was established at the start of 2015 in order to provide companies with specific guidance and support service offers. The service point is part of the Thuringia regional network of the national “integration through qualification (IQ)” promotion programme and is coordinated by “Bildungswerk der Thüringer Wirtschaft e.V.”.

The service point focuses on shaping diversity and valuing differences within businesses, integral aspects of a successful welcoming culture. The project is implemented by "Institut der Wirtschaft Thüringens – IWT" in Erfurt. Through strong links to the Thuringia business association and long-standing cooperation in IQ, stable networks have evolved through which the service point negotiates. A concrete work priority is providing suitable internship places for participants with a migration background for work as part of a STEM qualification measure. Not only are places found for trainees but participating companies are also assisted and advised in identifying the right skilled worker.

Further information can be found at www.iq-thueringen.de and www.iw-thueringen.de
What strategies do other companies follow?
3.4 Human resources recruitment – raising awareness and networks

For companies that want to search for foreign skilled workers and to establish a durable welcoming culture, it is helpful to examine their own behaviour when selecting personnel. Is conscious attention being paid to heterogeneity when teams are assembled? Are additional language skills or cultural competences given positive consideration and deployed in a targeted way when choices are made? Is there any unconscious bias with regard to behaviour, tradition, role clichés qualification and skills of different nationalities? Unconscious offenses can lurk in initial conversations with potential future workers. Raising awareness of largely unconscious bias is therefore a critical factor for successful employee recruitment and ultimately for the development of the business.

Establish durable networks and welcoming culture

- The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy has compiled strategies, information and pointers on this topic for small and medium-sized enterprises at www.kofa.de
- A comprehensive overview of regional networks covering various themes has been made available by the Federal Employment Agency in its labour market monitor at www.arbeitsmarktmonitor.arbeitsagentur.de
- The “Diversity Charter” has assembled further information and publications on diversity themes such as unconscious bias at www.charta-der-vielfalt.de
What strategies do other companies follow?

REGIONAL NETWORK IQ THURINGIA TOGETHER WITH BILDUNGWERK DER THÜRINGER WIRTSCHAFT E.V.

JOB MENTOR PROJECT

The job mentor project in the regional network “IQ Thüringen”, coordinated by “Bildungswerk der Thüringer Wirtschaft e.V.”, pursues the objective of a welcoming culture. Individualized advice and support is often needed to enable new immigrants to gain a foothold in the German labour market. Voluntary job mentors can help with this process. Job mentors and those seeking advice are guided by the project team in Jena. The focus is not on work placement but rather on giving those seeking advice direction and confidence to search and apply for jobs themselves.

The commitment of job mentors has already resulted in many successes. Recent examples include: a female scientist from Iran obtaining a university research position; a female immigrant from Russia gaining employment with the Federal Volunteer Service, and a Syrian man commencing with a social assistant training course.

In addition, job mentors and the project team target efforts towards identifying suitable positions and providing assistance vis-à-vis authorities. Ongoing motivation and helping migrants to help themselves are important components in the project and give specific support to those seeking advice in obtaining a job in Germany.

Further information can be found at www.iq-thueringen.de and www.bwtw.de
CET (Center for European Trainees), part of the Baden-Württemberg business community’s educational institute, provides service on the themes of internationalisation of vocational education and training of young people from Southern Europe. The service is provided free of charge and covers all sectors. Guidance on welcoming culture and financial support options is given to small businesses as well as medium-sized enterprises and big players. CET acts as a binding agent between companies and potential employees. Furthermore, with “GiveME5, Baden-Württemberg!” CET has created an initiative for young people from Southern Europe who already reside in Baden-Württemberg. Participating companies are able to get to know candidates for training courses during a five-day period that introduces the candidates and the business. The Center for European Trainees is supported by Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH with co-financing from the Baden-Württemberg employer association.

Further information can be found at www.cet-eu.com
3.5 Strategies for targeted searches for foreign skilled workers

If the business has established awareness about promoting a diversity strategy realizes that it needs to acquire foreign skilled workers, the business must ask how to succeed in finding foreign skilled workers. Depending on the personnel and financial resources available, several possibilities provide an answer. The new BDA brochure “Attracting non-Euro pean skilled workers into the labour market” offers extensive information about recruitment from abroad.

In many regions and districts, there are existing initiatives to make the local business location more attractive for foreign skilled workers. Collaborations between corporate involvement in networks that seek to secure skilled jobs can draw even more workers to the region. The Federal Employment Agency describes regional networks for securing skilled workers in its “Labour market monitor”, which offers an effective platform for bringing together the most important players in network structures.

Strategies for finding foreign skilled workers

- job announcements (in the target group’s language) on the company’s homepage
- job announcements in foreign media
- use of the local employer service and German Federal Labour Agency’s central foreign and professional placement service (ZAV) ([www.arbeitsagentur.de > Über uns > Weitere Dienststellen > Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung])
- use of the European Job Mobility Portal (EURES), ([www.ec.europa.eu > Europäische Kommission > Beschäftigung, Soziales und Integration > EURES])
- use of the European portal for the support of young Europeans looking for training courses and internships ([www.youth-con.eu/de])
- use of human resources placement services
- participation in specialist or job fairs at home and abroad
- establish contacts with foreign universities (offer of internships, targeted university marketing, etc.)
- establish contacts with German schools abroad
- use of the information portal ([www.makeitingermany.de])
- Cooperation with foreign universities to recruit degree-holding alumnae
BAVARIAN INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (V BW)
INTEGRATION THROUGH TRAINING AND WORK (IDA 1.000)

The IdA 1.000 project, the Bavarian business association vbw, Bavarian State Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Family and Integration, and the Bavarian regional executive of Bundesagentur für Arbeit join to promote labour market integration of asylum seekers and other immigrants in Bavaria. The project targets asylum seekers with a high probability of remaining in Germany and a basic education along with companies which would like to employ refugees. The project covers all sectors and is broken down into two stages. Participants first complete a two-month language course, followed by a profession-related integration course which provides internships and trial work periods to facilitate integration in the labour market and deepen language skills. Skills tests are concurrently carried out as the basis for formulating skill profiles for the participants. Throughout the project, participants have access to coaches as partners who can provide practical tips.

The project began in February 2016 with language courses, and the internship phase began in April 2016. The project is being implemented in all Bavarian administrative districts. A total of 1,000 places are available.

With the project, vbw offers companies support in the search for potential employees from the target group and therefore contributes to integration of refugees in the labour market. The project forms part of IdA programme of measures seeking to promote integration through training and work which vbw has set up jointly with the Bavarian State Government and the Bavarian regional executive of Bundesagentur für Arbeit. The project is being implemented by bbw, Educational Association of the Bavarian Economy.

Further information can be found at www.vbw-bayern.de and www.vbw-bayern.de/SCFLI
What strategies do other companies follow?

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE IN LOWER SAXONY (BNW)
FIT FOR TRAINING

With the “Fit for training” project, Educational Institute of Industry and Commerce in Lower Saxony (BNW) jointly with the Zukunft.Inc network and the Hannover regional government have been bringing companies and trainees together since 2012 and ensuring the fit is right. BNW supports companies in the Zukunft.Inc network in their search for and selection of suitable applicants, and guides young people on their route towards employment. For the upcoming phase of the project, the companies involved are currently targeting their resources to facilitate young asylum seekers’ access to the labour market. This emphasis stems from the potential of this specific target group in countering increasing labour shortages in small and medium-sized enterprises. The placement process involves an initial “speed-dating” in which companies and applicants meet for the first time. BNW then prepares prospective skilled workers for jobs in the business during a three-day coaching session. The contract is preceded by a practical test, and participants complete an internship for several months during which they are given targeted language training. In this context, they are guided and supported by employees of BNW on day-to-day work practice and other matters.

Further information can be found at www.bnw.de
BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG BUSINESS COMMUNITY’S EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE
CAREER-IN-BW

Cooperation in networks is supported in particular by employer associations. For instance, the Baden-Württemberg business community’s educational institute helps with the recruitment, selection and appointment of international skilled workers. Companies can register and publicise their vacancies on the www.career-in-bw.de internet platform. Applicant profiles received are evaluated against the requirement profiles of vacancies in a matching process. The appropriate candidates are identified in a multi-phase selection procedure from a wide range of applicants. A broad offering of support services can be requested, in line with individual requirements, for the entire process of obtaining human resources. For example, the entry of new skilled workers into the German life and work environment must occur in tandem with efforts in the work world, such as welcome offers and starter grants. Objectives include seamless integration in the workforce and building a long-term relationship with new skilled workers. career-in-bw is networked at European and international level, and offers companies in the Baden-Württemberg region direct access to skilled workers from a range of sectors and countries.

Further information can be found at www.biwe-apontis.de and www.career-in-bw.de
BAVARIAN EMPLOYERS’ ASSOCIATIONS FOR THE METALWORKING AND ELECTRICAL INDUSTRIES BAYME VBM JOINTLY WITH BAVARIAN INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION VBW

CAREER(ME) & CAREER(BY)

Bavarian Employers’ Associations for the Metalworking and Electrical Industries bayme vbm and Bavarian Industry Association vbw initiated the model projects career(me) und career(BY) for in January 2013. Member companies of bayme vbm from the M+E sector across Bavaria can take part in the career(me) project, while all companies and sectors in the participating municipalities can take part in the career(BY) project. The municipalities Cham, Deggendorf and Traunstein are participating in what will be the fourth action for the upcoming training, set to start in September 2016.

The "MobiPro-EU” programme promote professional mobility of young Europeans who are interested in receiving training is being implemented through specific concrete and is intertwined with a comprehensive integration concept. The aim of both projects is to attract young people from Europe, in particular from Spain and Bulgaria, into dual training in Bavaria.

For the business organisations, it is of central importance that a contact partner ("project chaser") is available for young people and companies in the event of day-to-day problems or difficulties in the training firm. With bbw (Educational Association of the Bavarian Economy) as a long-standing cooperation partner, a tried and tested supporter has been found for this activity.

Further information can be found at www.vbw-bayern.de and www.baymevbm.de as well as www.career-by.de and www.career-me.de/azubis
3.6 Respecting cultural/religious particularities in everyday working life

Respecting cultural and religious differences in everyday working life is an important component of creating a comfortable working environment for migrants. Strategies and guidelines are useless if respect in everyday contacts is lacking. The approach of a welcoming culture goes beyond statutory obligations concerning equal treatment. It involves active promotion of feeling comfortable and at home in the company, which can often be achieved with small details.

A possibility for promoting a dialogue between religions in the company is joint celebration of an “Abraham day”. Since Abraham is a faith model for Jewry, Christianity and Islam alike, his name suggests itself for a day on which tolerant and open contact is made a reality through joint learning and celebrating each other’s religions.

Gearing the canteen menu toward different eating requirements and food customs (including a broad, and varied offer of dishes, a wide choice of drinks or longer opening times) can achieve a similar result. Firm holiday periods should also take account of the different requirements.

At the same time, companies should assure that the measures implemented do not upset balance in the company. Whereas the German equal treatment act (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz – AGG) does allow objectively justified inequalities of treatment among employees, the promotion of new workers should not lead to dissatisfaction in the core workforce.

3.7 Mentoring programmes

Companies traditionally offer mentoring programmes. Experienced employees accompany and support newcomers in the early phase, providing guidance ranging from advice on work themes, to strengthening motivation, to coaching for vocational progress. This assistance can also be extended to include areas outside the business (such as administrative procedures or finding accommodation).

Mentoring programmes are particularly suitable to support foreign employees. Newcomers often lack access to formal and informal networks. Mentors can be both experienced employees and full-time diversity managers. Mentoring produces benefits not only for new employees and staff, but also provides mentors with the opportunity to widen their horizons. It is a good idea to track both new employees and their mentors during this period by the human resources department; this can secure and strengthen the success of the mentoring programme for all concerned. The company will also benefit from the supporting and steering of the professional career can be supported and steered above all, and the mentor can turn to his contact person in the event of problems.
RENNERT BAUUNTERNEHMUNG GMBH
SPECIAL LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

“We have special leave arrangements which are available to all employees, with or without a migration background. For example, leave requests from Islamic employees for the period of Ramadan are honoured. These arrangements generate benefits both for employees and for the company, even though the productivity of employees obviously reduces during this period. In addition, we have in-house arrangements for the summer period when business is brisk. Rather than the standard two weeks, foreign employees are allowed to take up to six weeks of leave in order to return to their home countries. To do this, they make up the corresponding time by working overtime, working during weekends or working nights” explains Thilko Gerke, Managing Director of the Kassel-based construction company.

Further information can be found at www.rennert-kassel.de
BASF SE
MENTORING PROGRAMME AND BASF BUDDIES

BASF has a welcoming programme for all new employees in order to ensure a successful start. From the first day, they are given the support they need in order to assimilate rapidly at BASF. They are given various opportunities to get to know the company and to develop their strengths, their ideas and their knowledge in full and to establish a network with other colleagues. From the outset all new employees have a BASF buddy, a colleague who offers support during the first weeks. In addition, there are concrete offers for further vocational development which new employees can discuss individually with their managers.

Special seminars are offered to strengthen intercultural skills if BASF hires employees with international backgrounds. We offer our delegates country-specific preparation for foreign assignments, including any accompanying partners and children. Non-German delegates from the international BASF group take part in a German culture seminar. Managers and employees who work together in teams spread around the globe participate in workshops in order to raise awareness of how cooperation operates in culturally mixed teams.

Further information can be found at www.basf.com
ALBERT KOCH MASCHINEN- UND VORRICHTUNGSBAU GMBH JOINTLY WITH VERBAND DER METALL- UND ELEKTRO-UNTERNEHMEN IN NORDHESSEN
TRAINING A WAR REFUGEE

A refugee from Afghanistan was intensively coached and guided by “Verband der Metall- und Elektro-Unternehmen in Nordhessen” with the support of a senior expert from “Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit” (German business foundation for international cooperation – SES), and had earned his secondary school diploma with good marks. Despite many internships with above-average assessments and a good knowledge of German, he encountered difficulty in finding a training position.

The committed entrepreneur Stefan Koch gave the young man a chance: since 1 September 2015 the refugee been training to become an industrial mechanical engineer with “Albert Koch Maschinen- und Vorrichtungsbau GmbH” in Baunatal, a member firm of M+E. The entrepreneur has offered disadvantaged young people a chance for employment in his family business for many years and has many more trainees than his company needs. His training quota is particularly noteworthy in the Hessen region: out of a workforce of 60, nine are trainees. The entrepreneur emphasises, “If a young person is willing, ready and capable, he or she is welcome in our firm, wherever he or she comes from.” The entrepreneur hopes that other Mittelstand firms will follow his example and give young people an opportunity to enter a profession.

Further information can be found at [www.arbeitgeber-nordhessen.de](http://www.arbeitgeber-nordhessen.de) and [www.ses-bonn.de](http://www.ses-bonn.de)
3.8 Work-life balance

Guaranteed childcare is an important factor for the immigration decision of highly qualified skilled workers from abroad. A months-long waiting period for a childcare place in Germany, which is sometimes necessary, can have a negative influence on a decision to immigrate to Germany. Even though extension of the childcare infrastructure is first and foremost a state task, the commitment of companies can help to improve the situation. For many companies, it is not worth opening their own in-house childcare due to their small size or limited demand from employees. However, many child day-care institutions provide the possibility to acquire care contingents from companies, allowing companies to secure places in care institutions for the children of their employees.

Companies can also become involved where progress towards full-day schools is not yet advanced. Especially in rural areas, it is often difficult to organise afternoon care for schoolchildren. The parents must work part-time because there is no alternative. Proportionately lower pay resulting in part-time work reduces the chances that companies with a dire need for foreign skilled workers will be successful in convincing foreign skilled workers to immigrate. One potential solution is providing childcare options in conjunction with other companies on an hourly basis, combining efforts to ensure success.

A successful work-life balance increases motivation among new employees and the core workforce alike. They are more productive, help to reduce costs, remain longer within the company and thus create competitive advantages.

A further theme that has gained in importance in recent years and will continue to do so is intercultural care. Firstly, migrants and locals alike must organise care for family members. Secondly, they themselves may need professional support in their later years. Particularly when it comes to care of the old and ill with a different cultural background, language skills and knowledge of cultural and religious particularities help to ensure good care. Clinics increasingly offer their employees additional training on intercultural care. Many outpatient care services have geared themselves to the growing needs of migrants with a service that provides intercultural care. In addition, the EU-funded project “INTRANT” seeks to attract more young migrants into care professions. Further information is offered by the forum for culture-sensitive care of the old at www.kultursensible-altenhilfe.de.

A successful work-life balance increases motivation among new employees and the core workforce alike. They are more productive, help to reduce costs, remain longer within the company and thus create competitive advantages.
3.9 Preparation of welcome packages

Valuable and accessible information can facilitate the new start in Germany. In the first days, newcomers normally not only have a huge need for information but are also exposed to a glut of information. The flood of impressions and knowledge is so high for foreign employees that there is a danger that important information will be lost. To counter this, an information package should be provided that can be studied or reread at leisure. Once properly prepared, hardly any adjustments to the content of this package are necessary for new employees.

At the same time, such an information package symbolises a committed welcoming culture. The package should therefore serve for orientation in the new elective home and contain information about the company, first steps to be taken locally (residence registry, banks and savings institutions, family benefit services, driving licence office of the competent regional authority, etc.) and life in the region (accommodation search, childcare, medical care, etc.). In this regard, foreigner authorities, work agencies, municipalities, etc. can and should provide essential support to help companies assemble a package that communicates important information. Some towns and municipalities already offer general welcome packages or even welcome packages compiled specially for foreigners.
Content of a welcome package

1. About the company

You can give a short presentation here and add an organigram, company guidelines and other information important to a successful start. Attention should also be drawn to existing networks at this point.

2. First steps locally

a) Residence registry

The foreign worker must register within one week with the residence registry and indicate his or her valid address. This also applies to any accompanying family members. Information packages could give the address and opening hours of the competent registry and include a blank registration form. If forms should be downloaded, the corresponding link should be included. The documentation needed varies but can often be ascertained from the websites of the competent civil registry. The following documentation is normally provided:

- completed and signed registration form
- valid passport
- where applicable, marriage/birth certificates
- lease

NOTE: A hotel address is not always accepted as a registered address.
b) Migrant Authority
Employees who have entered Germany with a visa must apply to the Migrant Authority for a residence-cum-work permit before the visa expires. It is advisable to organise a meeting with the Migrant Authority well before the visa expires (at least four to six weeks). Issue of the electronic residence permit (eAT) introduced on 1 September 2011 can take several weeks because the eAT is produced centrally by the German Federal Print Works.

There is a visa exemption for EU citizens and for nationals of “privileged countries” (Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, South Korea, New Zealand and United States). Employees from the privileged countries do not therefore need an entry visa but they do need a residence-cum-work permit in order to work. This is issued by the Migrant Authority. EU citizens and nationals of the EEA states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) do not need a residence-cum-work permit thanks to their right of free movement as workers. Thus, they can enter Germany if they have a valid identity card or passport. Since 29 January 2013, EU citizens and nationals of EEA states no longer need a free movement certificate proving their right of residence. Proof is henceforth provided by the official registration certificate. However, the Migrant Authority can require that the conditions for the free movement right are substantiated.

Since biometric data is stored on the eAT, a personal interview with the Migrant Authority is necessary. A fee is charged for a residence permit. The contact details of the local foreigner authority should also be included in the welcome package, along with application forms and pre-printed documents which can often be downloaded directly from the competent Migrant Authority.

As a rule, the Migrant Authority requires the following documentation:

- valid passport
- registration certificate of population registry
- lease to prove adequate living space
- certificate from sickness insurance fund to prove protective coverage against illness
- proof of purpose of residence (work contract)
- proof of adequate financial means
- biometric passport photographs
c) **Bank/savings institution**
A German bank or savings account is necessary to allow rapid access to the salary. It is advisable to agree upon either a face-to-face or telephone appointment to open an account with the bank or savings institution. In smaller towns or municipalities, it may be a good idea to include the contact details of local banks and savings institutions. As a rule, you need the following to open an account:

- registration certificate from population registry
- residence permit
- valid passport/identity card
- in some cases, wage confirmation provided by the employer

d) **Social and other insurance**
Many foreign workers will not be familiar with the German social security system. For instance, they may be unaware of the possibilities offered by statutory and, where applicable, private sickness insurance. Corresponding information about the German social security system and on further necessary or desirable insurance policies can be downloaded from www.make-it-in-germany.com/leben/ratgeber-leben-indeutschland/versicherungen/.
e) **Family benefit service**
Foreigners living in Germany can receive child allowance on the condition that they have a valid establishment permit or another residence permit that entitles the individual to child allowance. Further information on this topic is provided by the Federal Employment Agency’s local family support fund. Under the right of free movement of workers, citizens of the EU, of the European Economic Area and of Switzerland are entitled to child benefit under the same conditions as Germans. The entitlement begins during the month when the applicant and his or her children gain residency in Germany. On the basis of bilateral agreements, workers from Turkey, Algeria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Morocco and Tunisia also have a reduced entitlement to child benefit under certain conditions. Further information can be downloaded from [www.kinder geld.org > kindergeld-fuer-auslaender](http://www.kinder geld.org > kindergeld-fuer-auslaender). Contact data as well as a blank form should be added to the application. Requesting the following documentation is necessary:

- completed and signed application
- birth certificate
- written declaration of the child’s membership of the household
- confirmation of the child’s school enrolment, training or study
- where applicable, child’s income certificate

f) **Driving licence**
Persons from third countries and states, according to annex 11 § 31 driving licence decree (FeV), may drive vehicles in Germany with their driving licence for up to six months after establishing their ordinary residence in Germany, § 29 (1) 4th sentence FeV. An extension of the six-month period is possible if the driving licence holder can demonstrate that he will not be ordinarily resident in Germany for more than twelve months. After that period, a German driving licence is necessary. Normally, persons from third countries must pass a theoretical and practical test for conversion of their foreign driving licence. However, driving licences from states listed in annex 11 § 31 FeV are completely or partially exempt from the test. The German driving licence is issued only with the surrender of the foreign driving licence. Valid driving licences from states in the European Economic Area (all EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) do not have to be converted into a German driving licence, but can be converted on a voluntary basis. Further information is available from the competent driving licence authority. The corresponding address and opening hours could be added to the welcome package.
g) **Miscellaneous**
Inclusion of a mobile phone prepaid card, public transport tickets as well as a street plan or map of the district and, especially in large cities, a public transport overview.

3. **Life in the region**

a) **Accommodation search**
If no long-term accommodation is available, it is useful to add contact details of local housing intermediaries. In addition, new employees could be aided in finding a suitable neighbourhood likely to encourage a long-term sense of well-being.

b) **Childcare**
As a rule, preschools and school enrolment are determined by the residence location. Since school types differ regionally and the kindergarten care system is highly variable, it is advisable to support the new employee in navigating these differences. Companies can advise on the local care situation, supply contact data of possible institutions and help with applications for child day care and after-school care.

c) **Medical care**
The contact details of local doctors and pharmacies can also be added, along with emergency telephone numbers. Information packages can make reference to the competent sickness insurance fund for questions about the German health care system (chip card, appointment charge, transfer form, prescriptions, etc.).

d) **Culture, leisure and more**
Information can be added here on gastronomy, cultural events, cinemas, theatres, sports clubs, recreation facilities, local religious communities and much more. Vouchers could also be included.
Employer federations and their members help companies to establish a welcoming culture in many ways. They make tools such as guidelines available and formulate demands to policymakers. For instance, they campaign for a further reform of immigration law in order to create legal framework conditions which clearly communicate abroad that foreign skilled workers are welcome and needed. Furthermore, they emphasize that, alongside a welcoming culture in companies and society, a similar change of mentality within the relevant administration and authorities that deal with immigrants is necessary.

In addition, employer associations call for stronger cooperation between universities and companies, primarily in order to better realize international potential. An example of this cooperation is found in the brochure “Internationales Potenzial für Deutschlands Zukunft nutzen – Kompetenzen für Wissenschaft und Wirtschaft gewinnen,” which was published in July 2014 jointly with the Conference of University Principals (German acronym: HRK).

Employer federations support the “Diversity Charter”. They work for sustainable diversity management in companies and see themselves as multipliers. So far around 2,300 companies and public institutions have signed the Charter, including BDA, which signed the Charter in 2014. In addition, the association “Charta der Vielfalt e.V.” has organised an annual German Diversity Day since 2011 under the heading of “Making diversity work!” and has pushed the theme of diversity even more strongly into the public focus through national and individual actions by companies and organisations.

Employer associations launch their own initiatives and are actively involved in the initiatives of others. They have actively supported the “With diversity to success” business competition started in June 2015 by the Economic Affairs Ministry as a jury member, which recognize six small and medium-sized enterprises for their outstanding performance in the recruitment and integration of international skilled workers and trainees. In October 2015 employer associations, the Confederation of German Industry (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie – BDI) and the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA) launched an initiative promoting business initiatives for refugee integration. To support this project, a joint task force has been established comprising of company representatives, a best practice platform has been set up at www.arbeitsmarktmonitor.de and a brochure with practical examples and information about integration of refugees has been published.
Appendix

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES

Projects to promote integration of migrants living in Germany:

- Siemens Stiftung, “ENCOURAGE. empowering people” initiative  
  [www.siemens-stiftung.org]

- Deutsche Bank Stiftung, “Start” initiatives  
  [www.deutsche-bank-stiftung.de]

- Deutsche Bahn, “Chance Plus” initiative  
  [www.karriere.deutschebahn.com]

- Bertelsmann Stiftung, “Zukunft der Integration” programme priority  
  [www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de]

- Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft, “Unternehmen: Jugend” and “Studienkompass” initiatives  
  [www.sdw.org]

AT A GLANCE

Information and tools about “Living and working in Germany”

Important information is available for download from the websites of the competent foreigner authority. Further information can be found here:

- BDA’s online platform www.career-in-germany-net is designed to promote the exchange of successful real-life examples and facilitate access to information. The multiple offers of various players are summarised and referenced with links. The online platform seeks to guide companies through the almost-impenetrable maze of online information on promotion, information and support services.  
  [www.career-in-germany.net]

- The central information portal www.make-it-in-germany.com offers comprehensive information for workers from abroad. Information offers for companies should be expanded.  
  [www.make-it-in-germany.com]
The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has assembled information on its homepage around the theme “Immigration into Germany”. The new employee can also find the address of the competent migration advisory point here. www.bamf.de

Alongside federal central information portals, individual German regions also offer detailed information. For instance, the Free State of Saxony publishes detailed information on working in Germany on its homepage. The Bavarian regional government also has a portal with detailed information. www.sachsen.de www.work-in-bavaria.de

The German Federal Ministry of the Interior provides general information on the theme of immigration at: www.zuwanderung.de

The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy’s Centre for Tackling the Skills Gap (Kompetenzzentrum Fachkräftesicherung – KOFA) provides comprehensive support and information on dealing with skills shortages and attracting foreign skilled workers. www.kofa.de

The German Federal Foreign Office’s homepage contains information on studying and working in Germany as well as on visa requirements www.auswaertiges-amt.de and gives an overview of German culture and life on the “Discover Germany!” page www.entdecke-deutschland.diplo.de

The European Commission informs companies about the status quo of worker free movement. www.ec.europa.eu/youreurope > Unternehmen > Geschäftsführung > Personal

The Federal Employment Agency’s central foreign and professional placement service (ZAV) offers, among other things, comprehensive information and downloads on life and work in Germany as well as the relevant legal provisions individuals without worker free movement must navigate in taking a job in Germany. www.arbeitsagentur.de > Über uns > Weitere Dienststellen > Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung