

Anrede

[I. Introduction: Present situation]

The situation in the German labour market is still very positive.

We have overcome the crisis and in November employment reaches a record high with over 43 million people in work.

But we are also facing major challenges.

Our population is ageing and by 2030 we expect a decline of the total labour force in the millions, if

we do not start the right measures today.

[II. Securing the supply of skilled labour]

Therefore, the topic of securing the supply of skilled labour remains high on our political agenda. The skills of our workforce are a decisive factor of our economic strength. This is a knowledge by the social partners – employers and trade unions – and thus we are pursuing our skills agenda together with them.

There are already some regional labour shortages in Germany:

These shortages do not exist nationwide; however, they are relevant to specific occupations – like technical engineers or even train drivers, to some industries and regions like – industrial south of Germany.

We need both short term action and long term strategies to secure our skilled labour basis.

And we have to utilize the full potential of all persons living in Germany as well as of those coming into the country.

Therefore, integration and qualified immigration – also from countries outside the European Union – are important elements of the Federal Government's Skilled Labour Concept.

[III. Programmes, instruments and legal framework conditions of German migration and integration policies]

If we want to establish a sustainable immigration system, we have to bear in mind the needs of the people coming to us.

This includes – apart from the legal framework – a positive mindset on immigration. A culture of openness – of employers, co-workers, in our education system and our local communities.

This has to be part of our approval to build a long-term immigration system which meets the needs of the people coming to us, but also the challenges that our labour market and our social security system have to face.

We have started some years ago to turn open up our immigration system.

It is characterized by essential legal simplifications regarding access to the labour market and by a variety of instruments and programmes aimed at facilitating integration into the labour market and into society.

Let me briefly sketch some of the central elements:

[Skilled labour from third countries]

Immigration is controlled by the demand on the labour market and by the immigrants' skills.

University graduates are allowed to work in Germany provided their degree corresponds to a domestic degree and if they earn a predefined minimum income.

Skilled workers who do not have a university degree, may immigrate to Germany if their occupation is listed on the so-called whitelist of bottleneck occupations and provided their qualification is recognized and their employment conditions correspond to those of German nationals.

In this demand-based system it is always a prerequisite that the immigrant has already found a job. In addition, university graduates are allowed to come to Germany as job-seekers.

But still the majority of migrants coming to Germany are not formal labour-migrants, but come for humanitarian reasons or because their family already lives in Germany.

[Recognition of foreign qualifications]

For people who have obtained their qualifications abroad, the Federal Government adopted the Federal Recognition Act in 2012.

It introduced the legal entitlement to have one's qualifications checked in a regulated procedure to notify their equivalence to German qualification standards.

[Integration by qualification]

Our federal funding programme "Integration through Qualification", which we started in 2005, led to a well-functioning network with about 240 projects aiming at a sustainable improvement of the labour market integration of adult migrants.

The network's structure and competence help to support the implementation of the Federal Recognition Act nationwide, e.g. by adaptive skill development courses for immigrants so as to reach equivalence between the original qualifications from abroad and the corresponding German qualifications.

[Integration courses and language skills]

The integration courses which we introduced also in 2005 are the most important and comprehensive integration measures.

As good German language skills are a central precondition for a successful integration into society and the labour market or to make use of educational opportunities, the focus of these courses is on language tuition.

In addition there are course units that provide knowledge about the German state, history and social system.

Language tuition in these courses of which different types exist, according to the special educational needs, includes between 600 and 1,200 teaching units.

Moreover we offer additional courses in order to improve job-related language skills; together with job-qualification.

[IV. Outlook]

These were just a few spotlights on our efforts to shape German migration and integration policies actively and make them sustainable.

Immigration will be a major asset for our economy, the labour market and our social security system – but only if a genuine integration of migrants into our society is successful.