

# DIVERSE

Diversity Improvement as a Viable Enrichment Resource for Society and Economy



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## Policy Brief Karlsruhe, Germany - English version

### 1. About the Project

The **participation of the so called Third Country Nationals (TCNs)** in the societies of the European Community is one of the big challenges of the contemporary migrational and integration-policy. The **participation at the labour market** is usually taken as a fundament for the integration. A satisfactory job and a regular income mutually influence and serve as a basis for integration in other social spheres: housing, education, health, political and not at least social participation. Besides, there is a demand for concepts for a better inclusion of Third Country Nationals due to a **skills shortage in certain professions** in many countries of the European Community. Besides, also **non-governmental organizations and other voluntary associations** have a problem winning new volunteers. This is crucial as these organizations can be seen as an important column for welfare and social cohesion. Accordingly, concepts for a **better participation of Third Country Nationals in voluntary work** are demanded.

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The EU-Funded research project **DIVERSE (Diversity Improvement as a Viable Enrichment Resource for Society and Economy)** is dedicated to these topics. It is carried out in parallel in ten European countries. The overall duration of the project is from December 2013 through April 2015. The present policy brief describes the activities that have been deployed from January to September 2014:

1. **Improvement of the recognition practice** of formal, non-formal and informal skills, knowledge and competences of Third Country Nationals.
2. Investigation of **Diversity-Management-Practices** in enterprises and organisations regarding the participation of Third-Country-Nationals.
3. Identification of promoting and hindering factors for migrant organisations and for **migrant volunteering and civic involvement**.

The DIVERSE-Project is funded by the European Integration Fund (EIF) and carried out by universities and non-profit organisations at 10 locations: Milano (Italy), **Karlsruhe (Germany)**, Huelva (Spain), Lisbon (Portugal), Nijmegen (Netherlands), Waasa (Finland), Umea (Sweden), Lodz (Poland), Tartu (Estonia), and Budapest (Hungary).

**WWELL Research Centre at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan in Italy** is in charge of the overall coordination of the DIVERSE project. The Karlsruhochschule International University is the only **German** partner in this network.

## 2. Data and Analysis

### 2.1 The Acknowledgement of Qualifications

**This part of the project sounds the potential and possibility of improving the recognition practice of formal, non-formal and informal skills, knowledges and competences of Third Country Nationals.**

In the scope of the DIVERSE-Project **two workshops** were held at Karlsruhochschule International University between April and June 2014, with the participation of the relevant local stakeholders for the topic of recognition of formal, non-formal and informal skills, knowledge and competences of Third Country Nationals (TCN). In addition, **nine expert interviews** were conducted and a vast **literature research** was carried out.

The research project met a fertile atmosphere in Germany. On the one hand, the recently ratified “**Act to Improve the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications**” (German: Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz - BQFG) and the corresponding Acts on a States Level imply a new legislative frame which offers innovative steps for a better recognition of formal qualifications from Third Countries. At the same time, a growing **appreciation of non-formal and informal competences** can be noted.

In the scope of the DIVERSE research project the five following suggestions were developed at Karlsruhochschule International University. They are meant to stimulate the improvement of the existent recognition procedure for formal, non-formal and informal competences. The entire research report will be available for free from the homepage of Karlsruhochschule International University:

**1<sup>st</sup>) Re-Think the cost repartition:** A serious obstacle for the use of the recognition procedure is the meaningful expenses the procedure causes. Thus, the Karlsruhochschule International University suggests that the development of a system of **subsequent payment** according to the **achieved income level** should be developed. This would mean that applicants need not contrib-

ute their cost share before the years following the recognition procedure and according to the level of their income. Thus, high earners – who are the biggest beneficiaries of the procedure – are more highly charged. By this, the cost-intensive procedure should not fail due to the financial preconditions of the applicants.

**2<sup>nd</sup>) Retrench bureaucracy in favor of flexibility:** Standardized procedures are, of course, necessary to a certain extent in order to have an applicable, objective and transparent recognition system. Anyway, there are some bureaucratic elements in the recognition procedure which complicate the application not only for the Third Country Nationals but even for the competent authorities, and therefore hinder the labor market entrance of potential and qualified workers. For example, it is to reconsider if the multitude of several foreign documents must really be submitted, translated and attested. More possibilities to retrench bureaucracy for the sake of all participants could be elaborated in successive working groups as far as there is a political will to do so.

**3<sup>rd</sup>) Estimate non- and informal learning results in the public discourse:** The reserve of German authorities on the recognition of **skills, knowledges and competencies (hereinafter: SKC)** obtained through non- and informal learning cannot be ignored. Thus, it is important to increase the respect for non- and informal learning achievements. This is a simple need due to a skills shortage we are confronted with in Germany in several professions. It is not just the TCN workers who benefit from the recognition of non- and informal SKC, but all work-seekers and not at least the enterprises on hunt of capable employees.

**4<sup>th</sup>) Improve the assessment procedures for non- and informal SKC:** Until now, most of the non- and informal assessment procedures have confined themselves to the **registration** of SKC but do not make them **measurable** or do even **formalize** them. Besides, experts and literature complain about a lack of scientifically (empirically) based validation-tools. Another desideratum is the creation of minimum standards for good consultancy in an intercultural setting.

**5<sup>th</sup>) Base assessment on European-wide learning units:** In order to make non- and informal SKC visible and comparable, the focus should be on learning outcomes. The attraction of the learning units lies in their fading out educational pathways and especially their focus on practical working processes needed for a certain occupation. What matters is what somebody knows or can do, rather than where, when and how the learning took place. Furthermore, learning units are valid and usable for Pan-European contexts.

With reference to the cited suggestions a detailed elaborated procedure (**Audit-Scheme**) for the use of Learning Units in order to assess and validate non- and informal SKC has been developed by the project group at Karlshochschule International University. This suggestion will soon be available free of charge on the website of Karlshochschule.

The procedure is characterized by four phases:

- 1. Registration of SKC**
- 2. Assessment**
- 3. Validation**
- 4. (Final) Consultancy**

The suggested phase of **Validation** is essential because it leads to a generally accepted formalization (certification) of so far non-formal SKC. The rating is based upon European-wide developed learning outcomes and learning outcome units which were compiled, for example, in the ECVET-project (ECVET = “European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training”; cf. [www.ecvet-projects.eu](http://www.ecvet-projects.eu)).

## 2.2 Diversity Management

**In this part of the project we compile the currently applied diversity management activities; these activities are evaluated especially in relation to the Third Country Nationals and their participation in the organisations and their access to the labour market.**

Diversity management is one of the newer measures that are used in order to guarantee the right of **equal opportunities** in the economy and business world. In the DIVERSE project in Karlsruhe (Karlsruhochschule International University) we first collected data from recently published **studies and research projects** on diversity management. These activities were taking place in the months between May and October 2014. During the same period of time, we were in contact with several companies and organizations in the region of Karlsruhe in order to enrich and complement the data that we gathered from existing studies. The contact led to the conducting of **interviews**. Among the companies and organizations were SAP Germany, DM drugstore markets (retail in cosmetics etc.), EnBW (energy provider), the University of Karlsruhe (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology) and others. In these talks we first focused on diversity management activities in general; later on, the Third Country Nationals were paid special attention to.

Summarizing our experiences, **two major findings** can be formulated:

- 1) Only few companies and non-for-profit-organisations have organisational units that would represent diversity management in the sense of a **managerial function** (such as marketing, procurement, sales etc.). Several organisations offer the position of a diversity manager or a person in charge (equal opportunities officer, central staff function). Regularly, however, this function is under-represented or is completely lacking up to now. It seems that especially **small and medium enterprises (henceforth: SME)** do renounce to install the appropriate positions and measures up to now. If an engagement that belongs to diversity management in its mere sense can be identified, then it is regularly related to the HR department in the organisation (e.g. German language courses, regulations of equal treatment in recruitment processes, and so on). These kinds of activities can be found quite often; we can even say that the fact that the workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, is an ubiquitous phenomenon and part of the daily work. But, as **the organisations are lacking clear functional units** that would tackle the related issues, and as the principles of diversity management are not implemented consequently enough **from the top strategic level of the organisations to the lower levels**, the fulfilment of an effective diversity management can hardly be found in any of the observed and analysed cases.

**No evidence could be shown by empirical studies until now that diversity is related to economic success.** This might be due to the fact, that change normally has to be accompanied by a more general move of the company's culture as well. Only little evidence was shown in empirical data that diversity management activities led to cultural change in organizations. It seems to be a rule of thumb: For an effective diversity management, **strategy building comes first**; cultural change may follow. Moreover, managerial activities that are related to a diverse workforce do regularly (or even automatically) neglect or do even completely oversee the cognitive biases related to this dimension. Companies are still not open enough to tackle the diversity challenge.

- 2) The category of **Third Country Nationals (hereinafter: TCNs)**, although being a crucial political term of a determined significance in nowadays European societies and politics, did hardly show any empirical evidence on the observational level of the data. The category which is paid most attention to is “gender”, and, related to the demographic change in Germany, “age”. Two more, “ethnic diversity” and “disabilities” became fruitful categories for introducing diversity management activities as well, but with less intensity and frequency. On a descriptive level, TCNs are sort of “invisible” in the companies as far as their nationality is concerned. The reasons for which they are recruited range from linguistic expertise, to knowledge about a specific region, up to a specific know-how about a certain subject (e.g. engineering and IT experts from India). A reason can be, as well and with growing importance, the mere availability of the person on the labour market.

From our point of view, some **proposals** can be formulated in order to improve the situation and to optimize the usage of the potentials of a diverse workforce. At this point, we do coincide partly with some of the suggestions that have been proposed by Petra Köppel (synergy consult, 2014):

- 1) **The potentials and the usefulness of diversity management should be defined and described more clearly.** The relation that diversity management has with some of the managerial functions (positions in the value chain, departments) as well as with the culture of the organization should be made transparent.
- 2) A **synopsis and a comparison of the global strategic position** and the potential of diversity management should clearly show what the state of the art is; the boards should get involved.
- 3) Everybody who is involved in decision-making processes should be made aware of experiences and anxieties related to the topic – **the “unconscious bias” has to be overcome** in order to gain results from the potentials of diversity. This has to be done by a rational and by an emotional approach.
- 4) A long term project management should be set up in order to seek a long lasting, **sustainable implementation** of diversity management measures.
- 5) The measures are still not flexible enough to meet the needs of **different industries and different types of organisations**. They have to be developed further and they have to be diversified.
- 6) Especially the **SME** need to be assessed and guided to the first steps of an implementation of diversity management measures in a systematic way.

Additionally, a reduction of the political complexity, a leaner legal framework for integrating actions, and an overcome of ethnocentric approaches on the national and the European scale would be helpful.

### **2.3 Volunteering and Civic Participation**

**This part of the project focuses on the promoting and the hindering factors for migrant organisations and on the foundations of the participation of migrants (especially Third Country Nationals) in volunteering activities and civic participation.**

Voluntary work enjoys a major importance in Germany. It is to underline that the German public authorities allot the voluntary work a significant role within the framework of **welfare and social cohesion**. Recently, this has also included migrant organisations, which in the past were

charged of being segregatory. Migrants' voluntary participation is beneficial for society in a double sense: On the one hand due to the **social improvement** caused by their commitment (e.g. in the emergency management, the childhood care or refugee work). On the other hand, it is beneficial for the volunteers themselves due to their **inclusion in social groups**, networks and the access to knowledge.

Although the esteem for migrant volunteering is taken up in support programmes, (not only migrant) voluntary organisations are facing existential difficulties.

In the scope of the DIVERSE research project eight interviews with local experts for migrant participation in voluntary work were carried out at Karlsruhochschule International University (Karlsruhe). They were flanked by the research of corresponding literature. The later on presented results have been achieved.

**1<sup>st</sup>) State of research is incomplete:** Especially, the incidence of non-formal volunteering (like ad-hoc engagement or neighbourly help) should be considered stronger, as the concept of formal commitment in a voluntary organization is a rather Western-European approach and not necessarily common amongst migrants. This fact explains why statistically migrants are less engaged than autochthonous Germans.

**2<sup>nd</sup>) Main features of migrant voluntary work:** The commitment of migrants in voluntary work is basically similar to the commitment of the all-over German group, tracing foremost activities in sports and motion, school and nursery and in religious organizations. Voluntary work does rather correlate with age, social and educational milieu and gender than with migrational background. However, in some areas persons with migrational background are stronger involved: In organizations which promote the preservation of culture and (not only Islamic) religion. In contrast, according to the expert interviews and the literature review, migrants are considerably underrepresented in the commitment for the environment, for homosexuals and for handicapped persons and the commitment in emergency management and in traditional charity associations.

**3<sup>rd</sup>) Hindering factors for migrant volunteering:** The following factors are obstructive to migrant participation in voluntary work:

- Limited resident permit status
- Missing electoral franchise
- Missing recognition of foreign qualifications
- Special restrictions for refugees

**4<sup>th</sup>) Promoting factors for migrant volunteering:** The under point 3 presented factors are beneficiary in the reverse case. Besides, the following factors promote the migrants' participation in voluntary work:

- Integration in other areas (e.g. labour market)
- Positive appraisal of volunteering by the environment and publicity
- Temporal and financial resources
- Openness of voluntary organizations to persons with migrational background

**5<sup>th</sup>) Difficulties for migrant organizations:** Although, migrant organizations are facing similar difficulties to all voluntary organizations, they are sometimes even more affected by obstacles:

- Problems in funding
- Problems in obtaining proper facilities and qualification in order to develop professionally
- Problems in taking part in vital networks
- Problems in winning new members

**6<sup>th</sup>) Improvement levers:** With reference to a research project carried out by INBAS-Sozialforschung GmbH under leadership of Susanne Huth (2006) the following improvement levers were suggested to the European Union:

1. Financing and knowledge transfer for migrant organizations.
2. Support of cooperation, networking and exchange between organizations.
3. Intercultural opening of traditional organizations.
4. Compiling and dissemination of information about voluntary work.
5. Improvement of appreciation (e.g. by allowances, appraisals or medial impact).
6. Promotion of scientific research.

### **3. The Authors**

At Karlshochschule International University, the following persons are engaged in carrying out the research activities that are related to the DIVERSE project:

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