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## COUNSELLING PROVIDER “EMPLOYER COUNSELLING” WITHIN THE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (PES) IN GERMANY

### Abstract

The Public Employment Service (PES) in Germany provides a counselling offer “employer counselling” especially for employers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). This offer is established in 2013 and available nationwide in every employment agency. This offer comprises “labour market counselling” and “qualification counselling”. The latter is presented in this document in more detail.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Employer oriented counselling and placement is the official mandate of the German employment service since decades (nearly unchanged). Employer oriented counselling is responsible to make offers of counselling, put counselling into practice and make offers of placement. With the new “Law of qualification chances” (Qualifizierungschancengesetz)<sup>1</sup> from 1.1.2019 the mandate has been expanded. Thereby is connected the concrete duty of qualification counselling and the concrete duty to support enterprises with their needs to qualify workers.

Qualification counselling which is assigned to the employer counselling service within the German public employment service, was already introduced in 2013 and is so far regional implemented in different intensity. It gets considerable importance and will be a duty of the German public employment service (BA 2020, S. 10).

One of the most important strategies to secure the availability of a skilled workforce is the active use of potentials of individual employees regarding their development at the workplace. However, there are many companies who do not take care of personnel development, neither on a systematic basis nor with a prospective motivation. Even where personnel development takes place as envisaged, the potential of individuals in the different employee groups is not always taken into account. It is in particularly the older employees, the less skilled and those working part-time who are often overlooked, which means that these groups are under-represented in development activities.

Here qualification counselling begins. Qualification counselling sensitizes especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) for the necessity of a strategic forward-looking planning and development of staff and strengthens the action competence for a sustainable covering of the need

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<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Labour, <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Gesetze/qualifizierungschancengesetz.html> (2020-06-14).

of skilled workers. (BA 2020, p. 1). Qualification counselling has a guiding character of a „help for self-help“. The employer gets support with respect to questions of a methodical realization and the development of individual solutions. Decisions of implementation and efforts of a practical realization are in the responsibility of the enterprise. The counselling offer is free of costs for the employer (BA 2019, p. 12).

## 2. PROCESS OF THE QUALIFICATION COUNSELLING

The offer of qualification counselling has a modular design and is flexible in its application. The qualification counselling contains five parts of the process (see figure 1): It is the first counselling, the analysis of the staff structure and demography, the analysis of the need of education, the planning of qualification and the monitoring of the effect of qualification measures. Depending on the needs of the employer single modules or the whole process of counselling can be used. In accordance with the enterprise necessary steps of counselling can be identified and obligatory determined.

**Figure 1: Process map of qualification counselling**

First Counselling	Analysis of the structure of staff and demography	Analysis of the need of education	Planning of Qualification	Monitoring of the effect of qualification measures
<b>Main aim questions for the particular steps of the process</b>				
Which concrete needs of counselling does the employer have?	How is the structure of the organization in the enterprise?	Which competences do employees have?	Which employees should be qualified?	How can the success of the qualification be measured?
Which steps of the process are necessary to satisfy the needs?	Which job profiles /fields of activity actual exist?	Which competences are required in the enterprise in the future?	Which forms of learning are most suitable?	Was the intended effect of the qualification gained?
	How does the age distribution of the staff look like?	Which concrete needs of qualification can be derived?	Which training providers are adequate?	Was the aim of the enterprise achieved by using the qualification?
	How does the number of staff develop all in all?	How can the requirements be satisfied?	Where should the qualification take place?	When not: why?
	How does the number of staff develop with respect to fields	Is it reasonable to implement the qualification in	Who can support the implementation?	

	of activity, levels of hierarchy, departments etc.	a network with other employers?		
			Does the employer need financial support?	
<b>Helpful instruments/working tools</b>				
Early-warning system – diagnosis of latent need of education (quick check)  Different INQA-checks (with topics like “good SME”, “HRM”),  INQA potential analysis “in-company training/workplace learning”)	INQA – analysis tool of age distribution  Quick check demography  Starter set “strategic personnel planning with far-sightedness”  INQA-check “company with awareness of diversity”	Instrument of competence inventory  INQA check “knowledge and competences”	Internet portal “kursnet”	Different questionnaires

The counsellor supports the employer as a driving force, by looking from outside on the staff structure and the needs of staff qualifications in the enterprise. Common with the employer he identifies in-plant needs of actions. When situations of counselling arise, which overstep the professional competences or the legal mandate of the counsellor he can consult other counselling experts to clarify the counselling concerns in a holistic way. The counsellor is committed to be neutral. This means that it is not allowed to prefer certain providers of further training by making recommendations. But the counsellor can mention criteria to support decisions of the employer.

### 3. EXEMPLARY DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRST PHASE OF QUALIFICATION COUNSELLING

The essential goal of first-stage counselling is to find out the needs of employer for activities connected with in-company personnel development, to specify the need for support and to submit a demand-based offer for the subsequent processes. With regards to the structure of the counselling process counsellors may make use of the following steps (BA 2020, S. 27 ff.).

- The first step starts with an "opening statement", which sets up the aim of counselling and its benefits as well as requesting consent from the employer.
- In a second step, pieces of information are collected. They should refer to the situation of the workforce in the company (e. g. age structure, new employees from in-company training or current personnel shortages or fluctuations). Also, current approaches for securing the demand for employees become a topic (e. g. recruitment strategies, measures for binding employees to the company). Moreover, the exchange of information should contain expected or planned developments or changes in the company as such and their impact on tasks and work profiles of employees (e. g. due to new technologies, re-structuring, build-up of new branches of the company portfolio, or international cooperation). Finally, consequences for personnel planning should be discussed.
- A third step comes up with describing possible support activities, e. g. by describing the portfolio of the qualification counselling. Hereby, the focus should lie on the concrete (supposed) demand of the employer.
- A fourth step comprises the concrete demand of the customer. In some cases, employers are not able to express their support demands. Therefore, it is necessary to listen to the employer actively and lead him by using appropriate question techniques. In due course, however, it is advisable to agree on a common concrete description of the concern of the company. This means that the counsellor picks up the self-articulated wish of the employer and harmonizes it with suppositions made beforehand. On this basis, the counsellor should offer suggestions for an individualized demand-oriented support of the employer. Also, it is important to make roles and responsibilities transparent and also to point to the limitations of qualification counselling. Moreover, at this stage, concrete operative steps have to be fixed with respect to the subsequent counselling processes.

In the phase of the first counselling special tools can be used, e. g. the quick check "early-warning system – diagnosis of latent need of education (see figure 1). This is an instrument that supports the counsellor to analyse latent qualification needs of the employer. The quick check contains questions to relevant indicators of the enterprise.

## REFERENCES

1. Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2020): Handbuch der Qualifizierungsberatung für Arbeitgeber. Bundesagentur für Arbeit, Zentrale AM 32, Nürnberg. Verfügbar unter: <https://www.baintranet.de/004/001/Documents/Handbuch-Qualifizierungsberatung.pdf> (19.4.2021)
2. Bundesagentur für Arbeit BA (2019): Arbeitsmarktberatung. Arbeitshilfe für den (gemeinsamen) Arbeitgeber-Service. Bundesagentur für Arbeit. Zentrale. Internes Dokument. Nürnberg (verfügbar unter: [https://www.baintranet.de/004/001/Documents/Arbeitsmarktberatung\\_Arbeitshilfe\\_fuer\\_den\\_gemeinsamen\\_AG-S.pdf](https://www.baintranet.de/004/001/Documents/Arbeitsmarktberatung_Arbeitshilfe_fuer_den_gemeinsamen_AG-S.pdf)) (19.04.2021)