

3 Low-qualified workers in North Rhine-Westphalia and their career guidance options

NRW's share of low-qualified adults is comparatively high and while most of them are in employment, many are struggling with low job quality. The state-wide publicly funded career guidance network of private providers is open to workers and unemployed adults. Additional specialised services target vulnerable population groups such as those affected by the substantive structural changes in NRW or individuals with a migration background. The chapter i) examines the labour market situation of low-qualified workers in NRW; ii) gives an overview of the career guidance offers available to them; and iii) presents the characteristics of adults using career guidance as well as the main reasons for using these services.

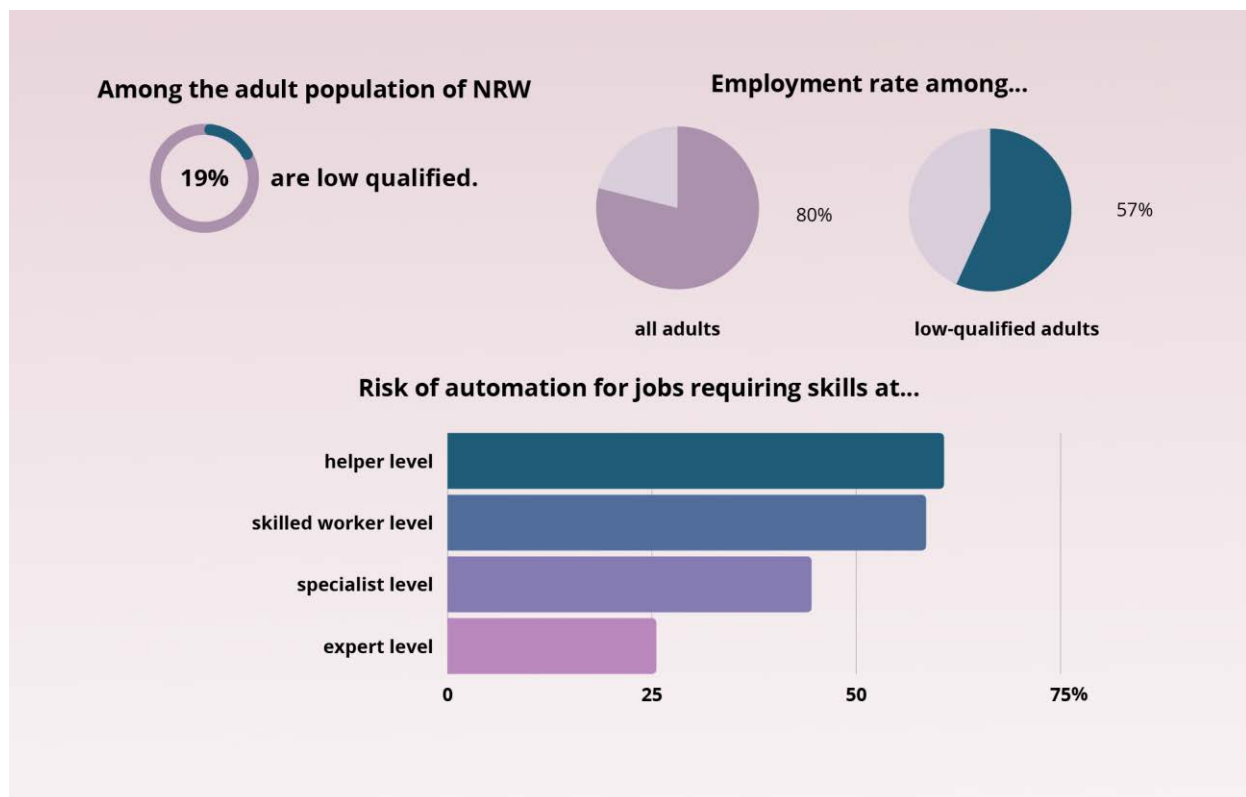
Introduction

As the most populated federal state in Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is highly diverse in terms of local labour market performance. The city in Germany with the highest unemployment rate at 15% is in NRW while other cities have among the lowest rates, close to 3%. NRW's labour market is also diverse in terms of the sectoral composition of employment. The economy is still shaped by the dominant energy and manufacturing (*Verarbeitendes Gewerbe*) industries (DIE, 2019^[1]). However, environmental and societal pressures are increasingly threatening these sectors, leading to changes in skill demand. In parallel, the service sector has been expanding to employ in total almost 74% of the workers in 2021.

NRW's labour market is slowly recovering from the COVID-19 crisis and for some population groups the recovery is particularly difficult. While many labour market indicators are approaching pre-crisis levels for the general population, the latest available figures on unemployment among low-qualified adults and long-term-unemployed remain above pre-crisis levels. As it is the case in Berlin, helper jobs generally held by low-qualified adults are still affected by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As described previously, workers without or with low qualifications are particularly vulnerable to changes like those affecting NRW. The provision of career guidance and advice would be crucial to support their retraining and job search.

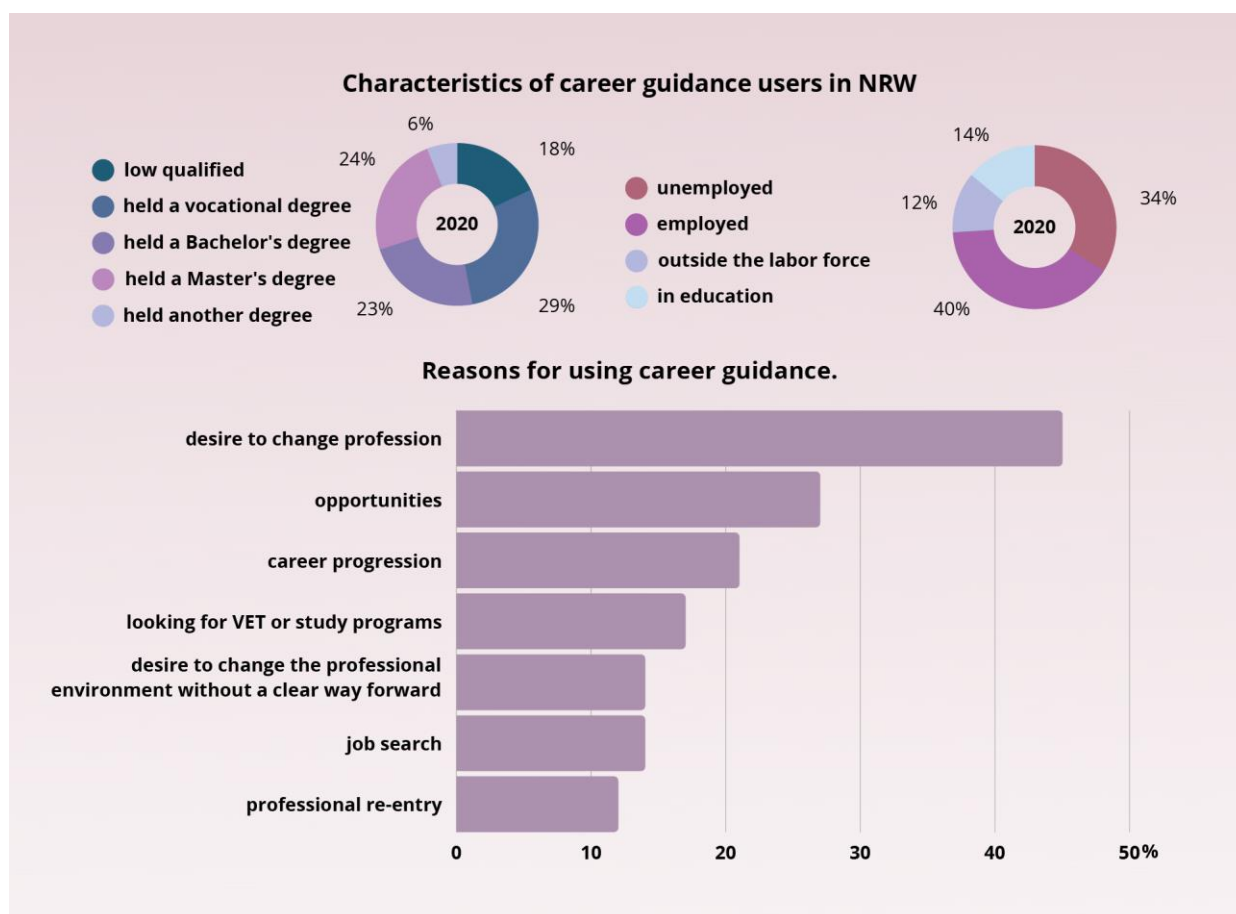
Infographic 3.1. NRW's low-qualified adults



Note: The share of low-qualified in the adult population refers to 2020. Employment rate refers to 2018. Potential for automation refers to 2019, the use of career guidance indicators refer to 2020.

Source: Eurostat (2020^[2]), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat_lfse_04/default/table?lang=en; MAGS (2020^[3]), *Sozialbericht NRW 2020*, www.sozialberichte.nrw.de/sozialberichterstattung_nrw/aktuelle_berichte/SB2020.pdf; IAB (2019^[4]), *Substituierbarkeitspotenziale in Nordrhein-Westfalen 2019 – Ausgewählte Ergebnisse*; G.I.B. (2021^[5]).

Infographic 3.2. Career guidance use in NRW



Note: Some figures may not add up due to rounding.

Source: G.I.B. (2021^[5]), *Tabellenband 01.01.2020 bis 31.12.2020, BBE/FBA*, www.gib.nrw.de/service/downloaddatenbank/beratung-zur-beruflichen-entwicklung-fachberatung-erkennung-bbe-fba-tabellenband-3-2020-januar-bis-dezember-2019.

A picture of the low-qualified workers in NRW

Low-qualified individuals make up almost a fifth of NRW's adult population, and 13% of employees¹ in NRW were low qualified compared to 10% in Germany on average (BA, 2020^[6]). While NRW's labour market seems to absorb the large share of low-qualified adults, the future remains uncertain as the share of low-skilled jobs is likely to fall as a result of structural changes. Notably, occupations such as truck drivers and workers in warehouses and other logistics facilities or food preparation assistants are projected to decline in the near future and eventually disappear. Workers in these occupations form a substantial part of NRW's low-qualified adults. This shift underscores the need for better career guidance provision.

Low qualified workers face a multitude of disadvantages in the labour market such as low wages and poor working conditions. Poor job quality for this group provides further incentives to reskill and transition to emerging, more sustainable, occupations.

The following sections describe the composition of the NRW workforce and present an overview of the low-qualified adults' labour market conditions compared to adults with higher qualifications. As described in Annex A, the main data sources are: (i) the micro census conducted in 2018 by the federation and all federal states; and (ii) the employment statistics of the BA from between 2018 and 2021, depending on the indicator.

Most low-qualified adults have a migrant background

At 19%, the share of low-qualified adults among NRW's adult population was 4 percentage points higher than the national average (14%) and also above Berlin's share of 13% in 2020 (Eurostat, 2020_[2]). This share is almost the same as ten years ago. The latest available data show that a large share of low-qualified adults in NRW had a migration background (58%),² compared to less than a third (30%) among all adults in the same age group in NRW (MAGS, 2020_[3]).

Low-qualified adults are more likely to live in families with children than the average adult in NRW and women with a low qualification are more likely to be single mothers. A high and growing share of low-qualified individuals had a partner with an equally low qualification level (MAGS, 2020_[3]). The risk of falling into poverty is above average for the low qualified. About one in three of them was at risk of poverty in 2018 (33%). This increased risk is not only due to higher unemployment rates among the low qualified, but also a consequence of very low pay (see below).

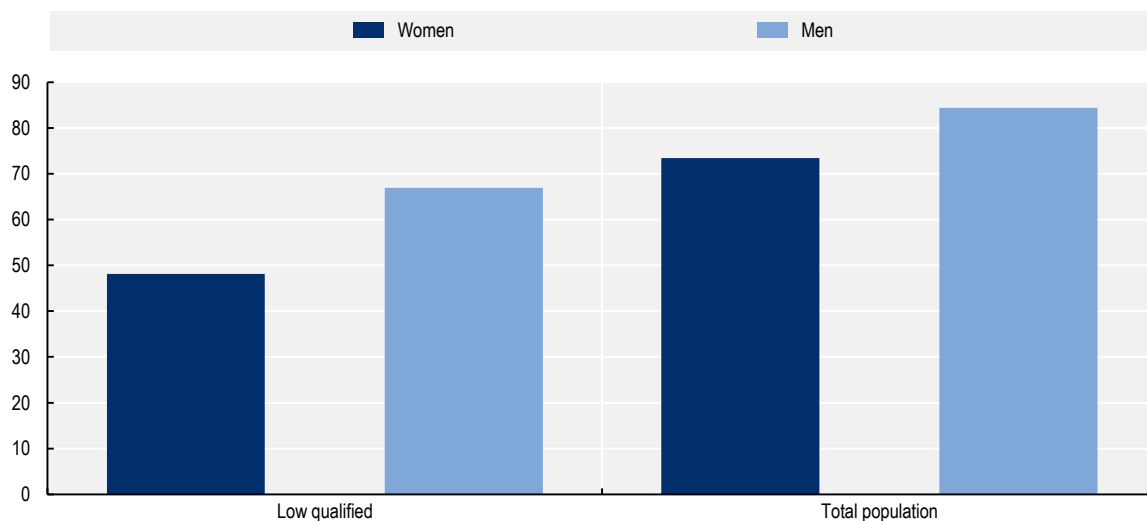
A small part of the low-qualified adults lacks the basic skills needed to acquire higher qualifications. The LEO study conducted in 2018 found that 1.36 million adults have very low literacy (*funktionale Analphabeten*) in NRW (RP Online, 2019_[7]).³

Many low-qualified are in work but their labour market outcomes and outlook are poor

The employment rate⁴ of low-qualified adults is at 57% in 2018, significantly below the average employment rate for this age group of almost 80% (MAGS, 2020_[3]). Particularly striking is the large gap between the employment rate of men and women. While it is already sizeable in the general population (11 percentage point), it is as large as 19 percentage points among low-qualified adults (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. The employment rate of low-qualified women is particularly low

Employment rate of low-qualified adults by gender in NRW, 2018, percentage



Source: IT.NRW, Mikrozensus 2018, MAGS (2020_[3]), *Sozialbericht NRW 2020*, www.sozialberichte.nrw.de/sozialberichterstattung_nrw/aktuelle_berichte/SB2020.pdf.

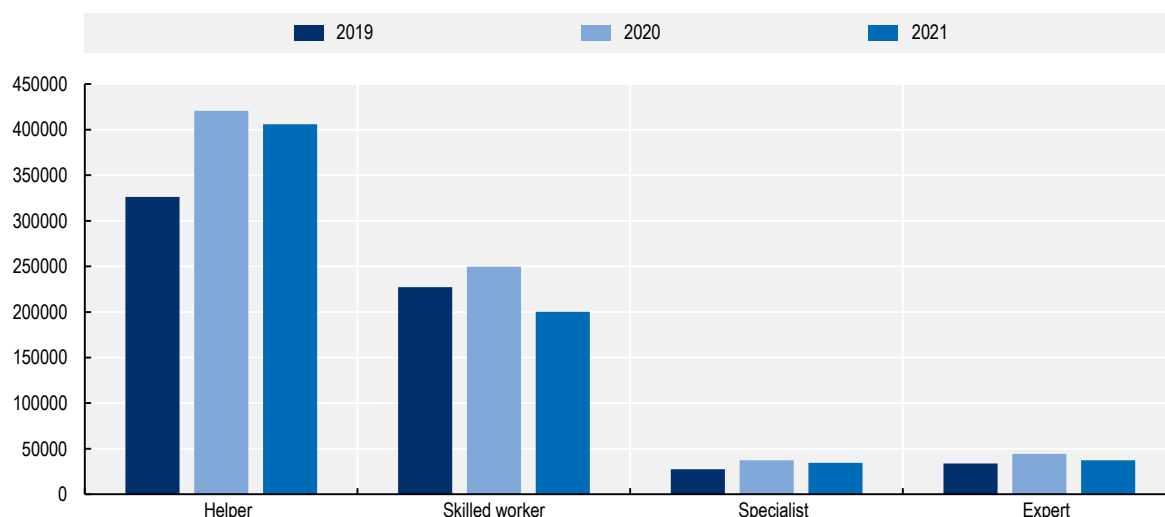
Low-qualified adults are more likely to be unemployed than their counterparts with a formal qualification. In NRW, their unemployment rate was 24% in 2020, above the national average of 21% (BA, 2020^[8]) and above the unemployment rate of adults who have completed a vocational degree (4%) and adults holding an academic degree (3%).

The vulnerability of low-qualified workers to unemployment was underscored by the COVID-19 crisis. Figure 3.2 shows that increases in unemployment varied strongly by skill level. Unemployment among adults working in helper jobs increased by 29%. Although similar increases occurred for specialists and experts, the unemployment rate of helpers is taking longer to return to pre-crisis levels.

Several other indicators confirm the difficulties that low-qualified adults face in NRW's labour market, such as the incidence of fixed-term contracts, low pay, employment in the low-wage-sector. In 2018, 57% of low-qualified workers in NRW were on fixed-term contracts, compared to 50% among those with an academic degree and 39% among those holding a vocational qualification (G.I.B., 2020^[9]) and 44% of all low-qualified employed adults in NRW earned a low wage (DGB NRW, 2019^[10]).

Figure 3.2. Low-skilled adults were more vulnerable to unemployment during the COVID-19 crisis

Number of unemployed adults by skill requirement level, 2019, 2020, 2021



Note: The requirement level reflects the degree of complexity of the activity to be performed: Helper jobs involve assisting and semi-skilled activities (simple, less complex (routine) activities; usually no formal vocational qualification); Skilled jobs involve specialist-oriented activities (well-founded specialist knowledge and skills required; two to three years of vocational training); Specialist jobs involve complex specialist activities (special knowledge and skills, planning and management tasks, master craftsman or technician training, bachelor's degree); Expert jobs involve highly complex activities (expert knowledge, performance and management tasks, at least four years of higher education).

Source: Statistics of the Federal Employment Agency; Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2019, 2020, 2021), https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche_Formular.html?nn=20894&topic_f=berufe-heft-kldb2010.

Almost 74% of the employees in NRW worked in the service sector in 2021, significantly fewer than the 87% in Berlin where the decline of manufacturing industries is more advanced. Most low-qualified adults in NRW work in transport, logistics (except driving); sales; and business organisation, such as secretarial work (BA, 2021^[11]).

Labour supply strongly exceeds demand in many of the sectors that employ large shares of low-qualified adults, notably transport, logistics, protection and security (7.5 unemployed per vacancy) as well as in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, horticulture (ratio of 6.2), but also in commercial services, trade,

distribution, tourism (5.8) (BA, 2021^[12]). Transport, logistics, protection and security and commercial services, trade, distribution, tourism are among the occupations with the highest unemployment and the lowest labour demand.

Automation potential in NRW is above the German average

Recent research shows that across almost all occupations and skill-requirement levels, the automation potential (*Substituierbarkeitspotenzial*) has increased in Germany overall, including in North Rhine-Westphalia. In 2019, the share of employees working in jobs with a high potential for automation was relatively high in NRW, affecting 35.1% of all employees. This is slightly above the German average of 33.9% but for example almost twice as high as in Berlin (15% in 2016). Within NRW strong differences persist, with rates of automation risk ranging from 28% to 48%. The potential for automation is particularly high in South Westphalia, in the Bergisches Land region and in Gütersloh (IAB, 2018^[13]).⁵As discussed in Chapter 2, automation risk is high for those working in manufacturing as well as low-skilled service jobs with a high-routine component – notably, helper jobs where low-qualified adults are over-represented.

Career guidance offers in NRW

In the context of the changes described above and the particular vulnerability of low-qualified adults, public support to providing career guidance has a central role to play in smoothing transitions and maintaining or increasing employability for low-qualified workers. Career guidance can accompany individuals throughout their (working) lives and prepare them in due time for upcoming changes.

Similar to Berlin, NRW has set up a publicly funded network of private providers that offers career guidance, the Guidance for Career Development (*Beratung zur beruflichen Entwicklung*, BBE). This core network is complemented by other programmes and providers with more specialised offers, including literacy initiatives, such as the NRW-wide Alphanet (*Alphanetz*) and the temporary programmes listed in Table 3.1 and support for companies, especially SMEs (see below). In addition, many small-scale projects are conducted in different regions in NRW every year, some of which focus on low-qualified adults who are already in employment (Table 3.2). In a context of severe shortage of skilled workers in the metal industry or the care sector alongside a large pool of unskilled adults, upskilling initiatives have often proven successful.

The BBE network, along with programmes by VHS, social partners, BA (LBBiE) and some smaller programmes can be found on a NRW-wide centralised career guidance platform. Apart from the search engine, the platform offers online guidance, information regarding available programmes and financial incentives as well as seminars and training courses.

Table 3.1. Temporary literacy programmes

Original name	English name	Financing bodies	Years	Region	Objective	Link
Gruwe	Gruwe	ESF, MAGS	2015-18	NRW	Strengthen work-oriented basic education for employees in SMEs	https://www.gruwe-nrw.de/
Sozialpartner gemeinsam für arbeitsorientierte Grundbildung in NRW	Social partners together for work-oriented basic education in NRW	MAGS	2020-22	NRW	Social partners support management & employee representatives in the implementation of basic education measures in companies	https://grundbildung-nrw.de
Verbundprojekt SESAM	Network project SESAM	BMBF	2012-15	NRW	Sensitise and motivate companies and their employees to implement workplace-oriented basic education programmes and support them in the implementation	www.sesam-nrw.de
Grundbildung mit Erwerbserfahrung	Basic education with work experience	ESF, MAGS, MKW	2007-16	NRW	Improve basic education of disadvantaged (young) adults	www.mags.nrw/sites/default/files/asset/document/esf_evaluation_grundbildung_mit_erwerbserfahrung.pdf

Table 3.2. Selected small scale projects for low-qualified employees

Original name	English name	Financing bodies	Years	Region	Objective	Link
Nächste Station Facharbeiter	Next station skilled worker	ESF	2017-19	Region East-Westphalia-Lippe	Accompany long standing low-qualified employees on their way to pass the official skilled labour examination in the metal industry	https://www.fachkraefteinitiative-nrw.de/einzelregionen/ostwestfalen-lippe/projekte-nachstation-facharbeiter-al-2019-09-17.pdf
Zukunft Pflege NiederRhein – Fachkräfte-sicherung in der Altenpflege	Future Care LowerRhine – Securing skilled workers in geriatric care	ESF	2012/13	Region Lower Rhine	Coaching during 10 qualification modules for employees, their representatives and management	https://www.fachkraefteinitiative-nrw.de/einzelregionen/niederrhein/niederrhein-innowise-2012-06-04.pdf
Interkulturelles Coaching für Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund	Intercultural coaching for individuals with a migration background	ESF	2012	Region Westphalian Ruhr Area	Individual coaching for adults during the preparation for the official examination to become a certified educator; networking and placement support after completion	https://www.fachkraefteinitiative-nrw.de/einzelregionen/westfaelisches-ruhrgebiet/grieseler.pdf

The services of the Guidance for career development are being reviewed with an emphasis on improving quality

In NRW, the career guidance network has been set up via the ESF-funded programme Guidance for Career Development (*Beratung zur beruflichen Entwicklung*, BBE). The career guidance services they provide are open to all adults, including, but not specifically targeted at, low-qualified adults. The political discussion has revolved around the need to reskill and upskill adult workers who are particularly at risk due to structural changes, but so far, no programmes are planned for this specific target group.

NRW is sub-divided into 16 labour market regions (*Arbeitsmarktregionen*), each of which has a regional agency that is responsible for co-ordinating the BBE career guidance offices in their labour market region. Currently, 125 offices are distributed across the regions to ensure easy face-to-face access to career guidance everywhere in NRW. The regional agencies can be located at offices of different actors in a region, such as the commune, the county (*Landkreis*) or a CET provider's facilities. Equally financed via ESF funds, they implement the labour policies in the regions and inform the ministry about developments on site.

The co-ordination of these regional agencies is under the responsibility of the Gesellschaft für innovative Beschäftigungsförderung mbH, G.I.B., a subsidiary owned by the state government. G.I.B. generally supports the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, (*Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales*, MAGS), in implementing the labour policy, one part of which is CET and career guidance. G.I.B. regularly meets with the 16 regional agencies to co-ordinate the provision of career guidance in NRW and offer exchanges on common issues.

The G.I.B. set quality standards according to which it runs monitoring schemes for internal information. These quality standards are useful within NRW, but they are not co-ordinated to the quality of providers in neighbouring federal states, such as Rhineland-Palatinate or Lower Saxony or the rest of Germany. In the effort to maintain high quality provision, the G.I.B. also offers training for career guidance counsellors. Each counsellor must complete a three-day basic training course when taking up duties and other courses are offered on demand, such as courses on digital tools and the provision of remote career guidance services or on the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad.

The MAGS fully funds the career guidance services provided by the BBE offices. Currently an office receives a fixed amount of EUR 55 for every hour of career guidance it provides. The offices can use their existing staff, hire new staff or freelancers. The service must be provided free of charge to the user.

Career guidance services include counselling on topics such as:

- Professional reorientation.
- Professional improvement.
- CET.
- Obtain general and vocational formal degrees in the form of second chance education (*Nachholen eines (Berufs-)Abschlusses*).
- Return to work (after a family career break).
- Competence assessment using various procedures (to determine formally and informally acquired competences).
- The recognition of foreign qualifications (possibly referral to the specialised counselling centre, see below).

BBE also provides guidance on NRW's education and training leave as well as on the various financial incentives available in NRW.

With the start of the ESF funding period 2021-27, the G.I.B. launched a new call for tenders to select service providers. With the objective of improving the quality of the services, the new offices will have to comply with revised quality criteria and the hourly allowance will increase from EUR 55 to EUR 68. Increased emphasis will also be given to the provision of integrated services as a selection criterion of the new tender procedure. The call for tender specifies that, preferably, the new BBE offices should be well connected with providers of other guidance services, such as debt counselling, psychosocial counselling, housing counselling, neighbourhood counselling etc., so that career guidance users can easily be redirected to the appropriate service.

Some of the BBE counselling centres have specialised on the recognition of foreign qualifications (*Fachberatung zur Anerkennung ausländischer Berufsqualifikationen*, FBA). Counsellors help with doubts about whether a qualification can be recognised, whether a recognition would improve the employment possibilities and they also help directly with the application for recognition and with financing it as well as with finding CET options in the case of partial recognition.

The BBE does not currently run any outreach activities. Several outreach pilots have been tested in the past few years but all were discontinued, partly due to high administrative costs. On the other hand, significant outreach efforts accompany the career guidance activities run by the Counselling Centres Work (*Beratungsstellen Arbeit*), launched at the beginning of 2021 (MAGS, 2021^[14]). The focus is placed on adults looking for work, but support is also offered to workers in precarious employment e.g. in the meat and agriculture industry or in logistics centres, who are often (formally) low qualified.

Centralised access to career guidance services available in the state is facilitated by an online platform

Online career guidance programmes can be found through the career guidance platform Continuing Education and Training Guidance in North Rhine-Westphalia (*Weiterbildungsberatung in Nordrhein-Westfalen*). Similar to the Berlin model, the portal lists and provides access to most career guidance opportunities. It advertises offers by the BBE's sub-contracted private providers including those specialised on counselling on the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad and the offices providing counselling on specific financial incentives, such as the NRW education cheque (*Bildungsscheck*) or the federal education grant (*Bildungsprämie*).

Apart from the core BBE network, the website also includes programmes by a range of other providers. LBBiE can now be found on the website (see Box 3.1), as well as education and counselling centres by social partners and the VHS. The German Trade Union Federation (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, DGB) and the chamber of skilled crafts (*Handwerkskammer*), for example, run education centres in Düsseldorf. Some business associations are also part of the network such as the business association Essen (EUV). Equally, the Work and Life programme by DGB and VHS is based at a local office that can be found via the website. Smaller programmes, such as the further training support for inland navigation operators (*Fortbildungsförderung für Binnenschiffer*), appear too. In total, more than 250 counselling offices offer their services on the platform.

The most obvious difference compared to the online platform run by the career guidance network in Berlin is that the individuals looking for career guidance need to have a certain prior knowledge of their needs, as well as on the topic they need career guidance on. The users can choose to browse the career guidance offers based on either the topic they are interested in, such as returning to work (*Berufsrückkehr*), guidance concerning foreign educational qualifications or based on the administrative instrument they expect to use, such as the education cheque (*Bildungsscheck NRW*), the nationwide education grant (*Bildungsprämie*) or vocational upskilling (*Aufstiegs-BAföG*).

Box 3.1. Integration of LBBiE in NRW

As in most federal states, the provision of LBBiE in NRW has started in 2021, in parallel to the existing career guidance programmes provided by the BBE and the integration is ongoing. Both BBE and LBBiE focus on guidance for individuals' professional development and the guidance sessions are not geared towards a specific objective (as e.g. a rapid integration into the labour market). The design of the BA's LBBiE was initially inspired by the BBE in NRW, which is why the two programmes are very similar. The NRW BBE is ESF funded and since ESF funding can only be used for programmes that do not exist yet in a given country or region, its long-term future is uncertain. In the short term, BBE has been prolonged for another two years until 2023.

Advice for companies to encourage the skill development of employees is provided through targeted programmes and networks

As in Berlin, SMEs have access to support on adult learning (*Qualifizierungsberatung*). In NRW, it is part of the ESF-financed Potential Counselling (*Potentialberatung*) unless the company chooses to use the federal programme “*unternehmensWert: Mensch*” described in Chapter 1. Potential Counselling includes a broad range of topics including adult learning but also work organisation, digitalisation and health and safety. The programme is offered by around 100 private and social partner-run counselling centres that can be found via a dedicated search engine.⁶ Companies can request financial support for up to ten counselling days where half of the counsellor’s daily rate is to be paid by the company and the other half is covered by the programme.⁷ As in Berlin, the counsellors help to assess the competences of employees and to build sustainable in-company CET and knowledge management. The objective is to complement the company’s innovation goals with developing a consistent training strategy.

In the context of the federal programme for the development of CET networks (*Bundesprogramm zum Aufbau von Weiterbildungsverbänden*) described in Chapter 1, six networks have been set up in NRW to provide support to employers in selected sectors or regions. The following table gives an overview of the networks:

Table 3.3. CET networks under the federal programme in NRW

Original name	English name	Actors involved	Focus
geWiN (gemeinsam Weiterbilden im Netzwerk)	geWiN (training jointly in the network)	proPerson Transfergesellschaft; KIST e.V.	-
KoWeMi – Koordinierungsstelle zur Weiterbildung in der Mikrotechnik	KoWeMi – Co-ordination Office for CET in Micro-technology	PROSPEKTIV – Gesellschaft für betriebliche Zukunftsgestaltungen mbH; IVAM Fachverband für Mikrotechnik	Micro- and nano-technology
PEaP 4.0 – Weiterbildungsverbund Personalentwicklung 4.0 ambulante Pflege	PEaP 4.0 – CET Network HR Development 4.0 outpatient care	Bildungsinstitut im Gesundheitswesen gGmbH; maxQ in bwf Unternehmen für Bildung; Tutoolio GmbH; MedEcon Ruhr	Outpatient care
proWeiterbildung PLUS – systematisch, regional, vernetzt	proCET PLUS – systematic, regional, networked	Wirtschaftsförderung für den Kreis Unna mbH; Netzwerk Industrie RuhrOst e.V.	-
Weiterbildungsplattform für Industrie 4.0 –Technologies	CETplattform for the industry 4.0 – Technologies	Universität Duisburg-Essen; Digital Campus Zollverein e.V.; EWG mbH; neusta software development west; TÜV Nord Bildungs GmbH NRW; GSI – Gesellschaft für Schweißtechnik mbH	Technologies
Weiterbildungsverbund für Digitalisierung und KI in Ostwestfalen-Lippe (OWL)	CET Network for Digitalisation and AI in OWL	Initiative für Beschäftigung OWL e.V.; ELHA Maschinenbau Liemke KG; gpdm GmbH	Digitalisation and AI
Weiterbildungsverbund.Ruhr	CETnetwork.Ruhr	VHS Witten Wetter Herdecke; VHS Bochum; Gesellschaft für Beschäftigung Herne; Bildungsinstitut Vogel	-

Note: Since all networks are approved but most are still being implemented, information on specific foci may not always be available.

Structural programmes to guide transitions

Some regions within NRW are particularly affected by structural changes. One of them is the **Rhenish Mining Area (*Rheinisches Revier*)**, where the lignite-fired power plants (*Braunkohlekraftwerke*) are located. An economic and structural programme has been set up to manage the structural change in this district, as well as in three more in other parts of Germany (IRR - Innovationsregion Rheinisches Revier GmbH, 2021^[15]).

In the Rhenish Mining Area, priorities are divided in seven district knots (*Revierknoten*), committees composed of experts on the respective topic, which have been set up jointly by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the State Ministry of Economy, Innovation, Digitalisation and Energy (MWIDE) in 2019 and the roll-out is still ongoing. The so-called Future Agency for the Rhenish Mining Area is responsible for the implementation of the strategic goals in each knot with a budget of almost EUR 15 billion.

The programme aims at facilitating access to the existing CET structures and to network these structures better. It supports the setup of a “Learning Factory” that provides career guidance for individuals and support for employers as well as learning possibilities and equipment, all at the same facility.

A region that has undergone similar challenges is the **Ruhr area (*Ruhrgebiet*)** where structural changes have been ongoing for several decades already. In the 1950s, the Ruhr region had a bustling economy driven by coal mining and heavy industries. Over the following decades, however, employment in the production sector dropped sharply, pushing the entire region into a crisis. Several development programmes were adopted but only when unemployment was already high and when people’s contexts had changed while their skills had not. The approach used in the Rhenish District is expected to include lessons from this period and follow a preventive concept, rather than a reactive one, including career guidance to motivate adults working in mining to retrain.

Integrating career guidance, validation and partial qualifications

The OECD report on Continuing Education and Training in Germany emphasised the need to better integrate the areas of career guidance, validation and partial qualifications in Germany. At the regional level, NRW has some initiatives in place that use this approach of integrated offers.

One example is the Cologne Education Model (*Kölner Bildungsmodell*).⁸ The Municipal Alliance for Jobs in Cologne started this initiative with the aim to help meet demand for skilled workers in the Cologne region as well as to enable young adults to acquire a vocational qualification and to integrate them into the labour market in a sustainable way. To achieve these two goals, the Cologne Education Model offers modular qualification to adults of 25 years old and above. Before starting a qualification module, an individual takes part in a profiling phase, where a potential analysis (*Potenzialanalyse*) containing several kinds of tests and a matching between the individuals interests and an occupation is used as an initial assessment of suitability. This profiling phase is followed by 4-week long period during which the individual can try out different work environments. Once the individual has completed all the modules, the Model also supports with the preparation for the final exam to acquire the formal qualification.

Over the entire period, coaches support the participating individuals. These coaches are considered a vital factor in the success of the Model. They support the participants in all steps of the qualification from planning their learning activities to the preparation for the final exam. They intervene e.g. in case of adjustment difficulties during internships and help with personal problems. Coaching participants over time through spells of employment or unemployment, as long as participation in the Cologne Education Model continues.

A recent pilot took place at NRW level that also included career guidance, partial qualification and the preparation for the final exams to obtain a formal qualification, accompanied by coaches throughout. Financed by the federal state of NRW, ESF and the Job Centres, it did, however, target only unemployed adults and job seekers who cannot or do not want to commit to a two- or three-years-long formal qualification.

Use of career guidance in NRW

In NRW, the G.I.B. collects and publishes data on the use of career guidance. The data cover the provision of the BBE programme and the Advice on the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications programme, FBA. Data are collected on the number of career guidance sessions that have been held and the number of individuals using guidance for the first time in a given year. Data are also available on their socio-economic background, the advertisement channel through which they found the career guidance offer and their reasons for using guidance as well as the outcomes and consequences of the guidance processes. The latest data refer to 2020, data for the first half of 2021 confirm the trends.

Counsellors held a total of 13 279 career guidance sessions in 2020 (Statistik der G.I.B. mbH, 2021^[5]). This compares to almost 19 000 sessions held in 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the sessions held in 2020, 8 728 took place within the framework of the BBE programme (66%), 3 220 within the FBA programme (24%), 585 as a combination of the two programmes and 746 without allocation to a specific programme. By far most BBE counselling sessions took place in the region of Cologne, while most FBA sessions took place in the Westphalian Ruhr Area (*Westfälisches Ruhrgebiet*).

Women, migrants and refugees are the most frequent users of career guidance services

More detailed data on the users of BBE and FBA are available for the group of new entrants into counselling in 2020. In total these were 5 256, 62% of which used BBE. Unlike in Berlin, the majority of users in both programmes were female. Overall, most users were between 25 and 49 years old, with more adults aged 50+ using BBE than those 24 or younger. Forty-seven percent of BBE users had a migrant background. Seventy-four percent of FBA users held a nationality from a non-EU country and 46% had a refugee background. Eighteen percent of all users were low qualified, in line with the proportion of low-qualified adults in NRW (19%). Given their disproportional need for support, there is however room for expanding the share of this group. The users' employment status differed strongly depending on the career guidance programme. Almost 50% of the adults using BBE guidance were in employment, 27% unemployed and 12% outside the labour market. In the FBA programme, only 15% were in employment while more than 50% were unemployed.

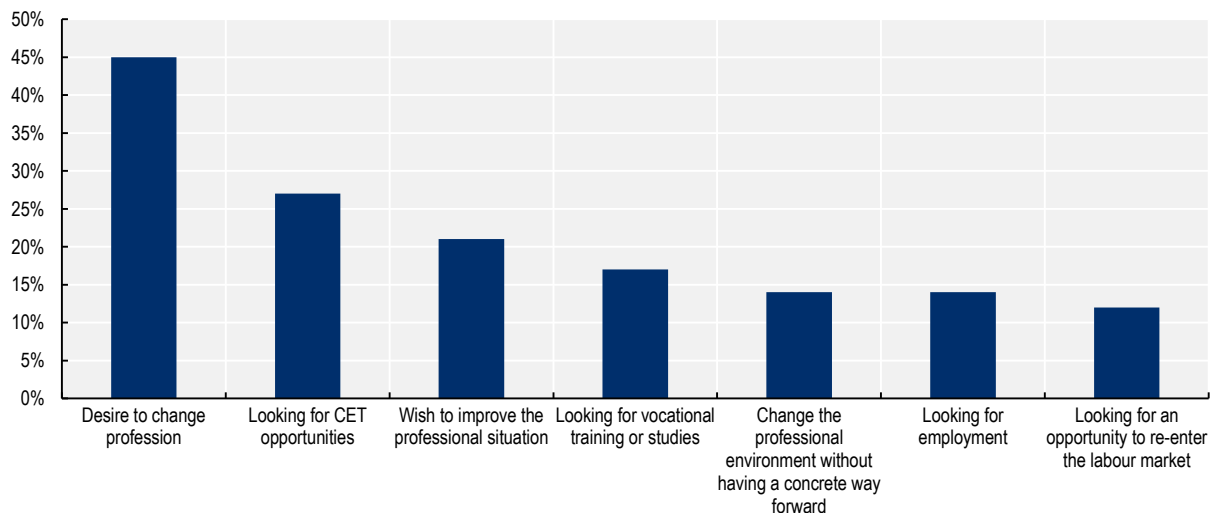
The most common field of work that the employed users worked in or that the unemployed used to work in is commercial services, trade of goods, distribution and hotel and tourism (29%). Almost as many (26%) came from health, social affairs, teaching and education occupations. For comparison, only 7% of the users worked in raw material extraction, production and manufacturing despite the significant changes that these sectors are undergoing.

The majority of BBE users are in employment, thus the main motivation for seeking career guidance is the desire to change profession (45%) rather than looking for an opportunity to re-enter the labour market (12%) (Figure 3.3). Another 14% reported the wish of changing something in their professional environment without having a concrete way forward, others wished to improve their professional situation. A significant share also accessed career guidance for support in identifying CET opportunities (27%) and vocational training or studies (17%). Most career guidance sessions lead to job and internship searches, or training participation, although it is not known whether training ultimately leads to an occupational/sectoral change. FBA guidance, which has the recognition of foreign professional qualifications as objective, led in 52% of the cases to an application for recognition or assessment of professional qualifications acquired abroad to the competent body. Users started qualification measures in 14% of the cases.

Just as in Berlin, adults learned about the BBE programme mostly via colleagues, friends, acquaintances and family (35%). The second most used channel was the internet followed by the two BA centres: Jobcentres and employment agencies (13%). Also, 12% of users were directed to career guidance by CET providers.

Figure 3.3. Most adults use career guidance for their professional development

New admissions to the BBE by central reason for using career guidance, 2020, percentage



Note: Several answers possible; question is only asked for the BBE programme.
Source: G.I.B. (2021^[5]), *Tabellenband 01.01.2020 bis 31.12.2020, BBE/FBA*.

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Notes

¹ Employees subject to compulsory social insurance (Sozialversicherungspflichtig Beschäftigte).

² In 2017, a new micro census law (MZG 2017) was introduced, implementing the collection of data on an individual's extended migration background: Individuals with a migration background include all persons living in Germany without German citizenship and also persons who either do not themselves have German citizenship by birth or have at least one parent to whom this applies and who immigrated or were born after 1949 (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 2019: 4). Foreigners are therefore a subgroup of individuals with a migration background.

³ For more information on literacy in Germany see OECD (2021_[16]).

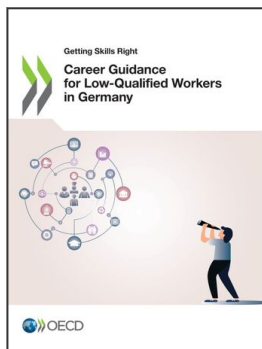
⁴ *Erwerbstätigenquote*, according to the definition of the Micro census.

⁵ Update sent by IAB via e-mail for 2019.

⁶ www.gib.nrw.de/themen/arbeitsgestaltung-und-sicherung/potentialberatung/beraterdatenbank.

⁷ up to a maximum of EUR 500 per counselling day.

⁸ www.koelner-bildungsmodell.de.



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