

A bridging course for international social workers in Germany

Advanced study: International bridging course for social work in Bavaria¹ (Germany)

Since 2014 the Katholische Stiftungsfachhochschule (KSFH) – University of Applied Sciences – in Munich supplies an advanced study for international social workers, who want to work in Bavaria and get a state recognition. Without a state recognition the migrants have almost no chance for getting a job as social worker and so they have to work in lower qualified and low-paid professions.

Concerning the Directive 2004/38/EC on the right to move and reside freely within the EU and the Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications many questions came up:

- Which differences are there in the professional education of the countries?
- What parts of the education are similar to our system and can be recognized?
- What parts are missing and have to catch up?

In Bavaria we developed an unique system that guaranteed on the one hand a high-level qualification for international social workers on the basis of their external degree as a bridging course for the German social sector and on the other hand the opportunity to get a state recognition. This system is tripartite:

1) Application

First the immigrants file an application for state recognition of their professional qualification as social workers. In the majority of the cases the applicants get a partly-positive decision that means: The professional qualification is equal to the German degree, but there are some differences, which have to be compensated.

2) Bridging course

The plainest way for compensating the differences is to take part on the international bridging course for social work in Bavaria at the KSFH. The study is modular, the students can exactly study that part, which is needed for compensating their individual differences. It takes 2 semesters, means one year and there are 30 places per course. Beside that the study is extra occupational and the seminars occur at Fridays and Saturdays. The students choose between 5 modules:

- Module 1: Practical seminar incl. supervision (12 days) and a 100-day, social pedagogical and accompanied practical work in a social organization.
- Module 2: Discipline, profession and professional ethics in a national context.
- Module 3: Knowledge of the important laws (in Germany) and knowledge of the administration.
- Module 4: Social management and institutional circumstances of the German social work.
- Module 5: Disciplines in reference to the Social Work (e.g.: medicine, pedagogic, sociology)

The project is funded by ESF and the Federal Government.

3) Receipt the state recognition

If the students pass all tests, they get a certificate. The governmental agency accepts this certificate from our University and confers the state recognition.

Since 2014 already 58 alumni got a state recognition as social worker. Currently 66 students from over 20 nations are taking part at the bridging course.

¹ The education system in Germany is decentralized and a task of the federate states. Therefore the bridging course is developed for Bavaria but the state recognition is nationwide approved.