



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 55/13

18 April 2013

NIAR 278-13

Michael Potter

Skills Shortages in Germany

1 Introduction

The Briefing Note is written in response to a question raised in the Committee for Employment and Learning with regard to the nature of skills shortages in Germany, in particular, whether there is a shortage of chemists, doctors and lawyers, and whether this is attributed to the apprenticeship system in that country¹. Skills shortages in Germany are briefly outlined².

2 Skills Shortages

The German Government has been working to address skills shortages in the country through the recruitment of appropriately skilled people from abroad³. The skills areas currently being encouraged into Germany are⁴:

- Health – doctors for hospitals, clinics and community practice
- Engineering – particularly specialists in machine and vehicle manufacture, electronics and construction technology

¹ Committee for Employment and Learning meeting 17 April 2013.

² This paper augments information in Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 22/13 *Apprenticeships in Germany*, 30 January 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2013/employment_learning/2213.pdf.

³ Daniela Kolodziej (2011), *Fachkräftemangel in Deutschland: Statistiken, Studien und Strategien*, Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag.

⁴ 'Welche Berufe Befragt Sind', from the Make it in Germany website, accessed 18 April 2013: <http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/arbeiten/welche-berufe-gefragt-sind/>.

- Science, technology and IT⁵ – skills needed broadly across computer programming, mathematics and other scientific professions relating to vehicle, machine and facility manufacture, bio- and nano-technology, pharmaceuticals and financial services
- Skilled labour – technical trades, such as mechanics, technology and installation, and care workers, especially for older people, and health workers

Official figures give the occupations with the highest skills shortages as restaurateurs, butchers, shop workers, hospitality workers, plumbers, cleaners, cooks and bakers⁶.

In terms of future skills shortages, predictions suggest that there will be shortfalls in transport and security occupations, catering and cleaning, office and service occupations, business and teaching by 2025⁷.

Skills shortages are reflected in a record high of unfilled apprenticeship places, the primary reasons for which have been suggested as a lack of suitably qualified young people and student choices⁸. Migrant labour has so far not been able to fill skills gaps, suggested reasons being the high qualification requirements in Germany, difficulties in relation to transparency in international recruitment processes and language barriers⁹.

A shortage of qualified doctors has drawn much concern in Germany¹⁰, despite the fact that more doctors are being trained than before¹¹. The reason for the shortfall has been suggested as the change in EU legislation restricting doctors' hours, leading to a lag in training suitably qualified doctors to cover the hours of work needed¹².

3 Summary

The main skills shortages in Germany are in skilled work for industry and services and in the health sector. Doctors are particularly needed, chemists are mentioned in terms of industrial technical skills needs, but suggestions of a shortfall in lawyers are not apparent.

The apprenticeship system itself has not been regarded as a specific cause of skills shortfalls in the literature and media sources reviewed.

⁵ The German equivalent of STEM is MINT (Mathematik, Informatik, Naturwissenschaft und Technik).

⁶ Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2012), *Berufsbildungsbericht 2012*, Berlin: BfBF, p.34.

⁷ Projekt QUBE (2010), *16 Fragen zum Fachkräftmangel in Deutschland*, Bonn: BIBB, p.3.

⁸ 'Erst Abi, dann Azubi', *Der Spiegel* 13 February 2013; 'So wenige Azubis in Deutschland wie nie', *Manager Magazin*, 11 April 2013.

⁹ 'Deutsche Firmen Werben Kaum um Zuwanderer', *Der Spiegel* 4 February 2013.

¹⁰ 'Fehlende Nachwuchs Gefährdet Grundversorgung', *Der Spiegel* 18 March 2013.

¹¹ Bundesärztekammer (2011), *Ergebnisse der Ärztestatistik zum 31. Dezember 2011: Kein Widerspruch - Ärztemangel trotz steigender Arztzahlen*, Berlin: Bundesärztekammer.

¹² Karl Baum and Sabine Löffert (2010), *Ärztemangel im Krankenhaus – Ausmaß, Ursachen, Gegenmaßnahmen*, Düsseldorf: Deutsches Krankenhausinstitut, p.40.