



## Study

### Discrimination on the Training Market

#### Extent, Causes and Recommended Actions

#### Executive Summary

Vocational training is considered an important pillar for ensuring the pool of skilled workers in Germany: for around one-third of all high school graduates, vocational training is the ticket to the job market. Employers, however, often complain that there aren't enough suitable applicants. At the same time, several tens of thousands of high school graduates are left without a training position every year – with a disproportionately high number of young people with a migration background. This isn't just because they don't tend to do as well as young people without a migration background in terms of marks and school leaving certificates. They do not have equal access to training from the very outset: with an otherwise completely level playing field, pupils with Turkish names, are much less likely to be asked to an interview than pupils with German names. They are thus already subject to discrimination in the first application phase. Evidence of this is provided by the results of a national quantitative correspondence test in companies conducted by the Expert Council's Research Unit for this study.

In the correspondence test, two applications of male pupils with German citizenship and above-average qualifications were sent to a total of 1,794 companies that had at least one open training position for an automotive mechatronics specialist or an office administrator. Both applicants had the same characteristics and qualifications; the only difference was that one applicant had a Turkish name and the other a German name. The response rate of the companies was measured. Around 30 per cent of applications went unanswered. The companies responded to around 70 per cent of all applications, i. e. the applicants were either invited to an interview or they received a rejection or another kind of response. The responses, however, were unequally distributed: overall, applicants with a German name received responses to their applications much more often than those with a Turkish name. In addition, young people with Turkish names were not as likely to be invited to an interview as applicants with German names and were more likely to receive an immediate rejection.



This discrimination is expressed in the following numbers: to be invited to an interview, candidates with a German name have to submit an average of five applications while a fellow applicant with a Turkish name has to send seven. Discrimination is more pronounced for training as an automotive mechatronics specialist: an applicant with a Turkish name has to submit around 1.5 times as many applications to be invited to an interview than his fellow applicants with German names. To train as an office administrator, he has to apply 1.3 times as often to be asked to an interview. The size of the company plays an important role: the discrimination rate among small companies with fewer than six employees is much higher than at medium-sized and large companies.

The reasons that applicants with Turkish names are discriminated against are multifaceted. An analysis of company selection processes that takes socio-psychological findings into account shows that unequal treatment is frequently the result of unconscious associations, stereotypes or preferential treatment of one's own reference group. It is also caused by expectations and risk assessments which are based in part on reservations – e.g. an HR manager may be afraid that a trainee with a Turkish name would not be accepted by customers or staff. In line with this, company surveys and discrimination research results show that, in addition to clear performance-related and formal requirements, the socio-cultural origin is also a relevant criterion, e. g. the cultural background, native language or religious affiliation, when an individual is chosen for a job or training position.

This discrimination has serious consequences: when qualified candidates are not invited to an interview only because their name sounds foreign, the strained training market has lost valuable potential. Over the medium term, this jeopardises the pool of skilled workers; at the same time, Germany's highly competitive economy is extremely dependent on the potential of young generations. For the individual, the experience of repeated rejection can cause prospective young trainees to feel resigned and withdraw. This would be problematic for cohesion in the immigration society – because equal opportunity is a basic building block for successful integration, particularly in education and the job market.

To prevent discrimination in the future and come closer to the goal of equal opportunity on the training market, the Expert Council's Research Unit has identified a number of recommended actions in different areas. They are oriented around the key research findings in vocational training, biases and discrimination. They are also supported by key findings from two focus



groups with HR managers in German companies that were created for this study, and take into account proven practical approaches. The recommendations are primarily geared towards companies, the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Chamber of Handicrafts but also schools, civil society and policymakers. The actors responsible should get involved much more in these five areas in the future:

**(1) Raise awareness: confront biases and build company capacity to deal with diversity,** e.g. by expanding the module Cross-Cultural Skills in the professional qualification for trainers and involve more company employees with their own migration experience in selecting and supporting trainees.

**(2) Make the application process anonymous: create efficient and low-cost services,** e.g. by developing a software application that medium-sized and small companies can use to easily accept applications anonymously.

**(3) Increase professionalism: optimise the search and selection process,** e.g. companies should be given practical instructions to help them find suitable candidates for their training positions and avoid discriminating selection mechanisms. Especially small companies can expand their recruiting and search channels to reach, in particular, young people with a migration background more effectively.

**(4) Mobilise: get young people more involved and increase their chances,** e.g. through more cooperation between schools and companies to offer more practical training days and short internships. This will make it possible for young people to network better with local companies right from the very start.

**(5) Set the agenda: equal opportunity on the training market as a political, economic and civil society issue,** e.g. the partners of the future "Alliance for Training and Continuing Education" give new impetus and develop effective measures to combat discrimination in access to training in addition to providing a training guarantee. The federal government and *Länder* should, in addition to strengthening the institutions for equality and anti-discrimination, anchor the issue of training market equality in integration policy over the long run.