

Name or title of the recognition tool/practice:**Certificates International (Nachweise Internationale)****Developed by:**

IJAB – International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany

Short description:

The Certificates International is a 3-part certification system for individual achievements and competencies developed in international youth work projects. Currently the certification system allows three different forms/levels of certification with optional possibilities to document one's participation, engagement or competences shown in an international encounter and exchange project. It has been developed by associations, initiatives and organisations active in international youth work, who have agreed on a use of uniformed certificates, aiming at a synergetic effect towards better social recognition of the educational value of international youth work by the wider public in Germany.

Type of the tool/practice:

Self-assessment tool, Assessment tool, Certificate/Attestation, Website/Platform/Blog

Recognition dimensions addressed by the tool/practices:

Self-recognition, Social recognition

Level of influence of your tool/practice:

Organisational, Local/Regional, National, International

Target group(s) for the tool/practice:

Young people taking part as participants in international youth work projects (e.g. youth exchanges, youth work camps, etc.), team members (youth workers and youth leaders) organizing international youth work activities, as well as project coordinators.

Background and the context of development of the tool/practice:

The Certificates International was developed in order to document the learning experiences and voluntary engagement of young people in international youth work activities and support better social recognition of the value of international youth work by the wider public in Germany.

Development process:

Certificates International was developed between 2004 and 2006 by associations, initiatives and organisations active in international youth work in Germany. Certificates International is based on the four-step certification procedure of the Cultural Competence Certificate (KNK) of the Federal Children and Youth Education Cultural Association (BKJ) from which it was adapted to the needs and requirements of international youth work. The result was a multi-part system of certification which documents the participation and engagement of young people as well as the competences shown by young people in international encounters and exchange projects. Accordingly, the certification system allows the issuing of three different forms/levels of certificate: participation certificate, engagement certificate and competence certificate.

The main steps in its development were:

- adapting the 4-step-certification procedure of the 'KNK' for the context of international youth work activities
- developing a competence model for international youth work (based on DeSeCo-OECD)
- development of the training course for the KNI-Coaches
- setting up a website with the possibility to create certificates online
- development of the two other certificates: participation and engagement certificates as low-level access for youth organisations
- evaluation conducted (2009)
- re-launching of Certificates International, incorporating the main results of the evaluation in (2010-2012)

A number of organisations and institutions took part in the process of the certification system development, these included: Working Group for the Lutheran Protestant Youth in the Federal Republic of Germany (aej), Federal Ministry for the Family, Elderly People, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), Federal Children and Youth Education Cultural Association (BKJ), ConAct – Coordination Centre for German-Israeli Youth Exchange, German Federal Youth Council (DBJR), Franco-German Youth Council (DFJW), German Sports Youth in the German Olympic Sports Confederation (dsj), European Youth Education and Youth Meeting Place Weimar (EJBW), International Youth Community Services (IJGD).

The whole process was facilitated by Mirtan Teichmüller (culturteam.de, kompetenznachweis.net) and Judith Egger (Bildung hochdrei). The overall coordination was done by IJAB – International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Objectives:

There are two main objectives of Certificates International – they support a young person's awareness of their own strengths, achievements and competences gained in international youth work and assist in documenting these in an attractive way.

Moreover the certification system aims at boosting international youth work in Germany and contributing to its better recognition. Through mutually agreed upon uniformed certificates, the image perceived of international youth work in Germany also profits. The organizers of international youth work activities can mutually strengthen each other and can gain a wider publicity and social recognition for international youth work.

Description of the tool:

Certificates International is a system of certification made up of several parts. They consist of a certificate of participation, of engagement and of competence. They document the participation, the individual engagement and the competences shown by participants and team members (youth workers and youth leaders) in an international youth work activity.

- Participation certificate:

This certificate can be issued to a young person who has participated in an international project. Since it does not go into detail on personal aspects, it can be issued to a whole group of participants without a lot of effort. It contains a short description of the project organizer, a brief explanation of the field of activities in the international youth work, as well as a description of the project and its educational objectives. The project organizer has the possibility to insert its own logo and to print out the certificate itself.

- *Engagement certificate:*

Version One for active participation in a project:

This certificate is intended for participants and team members of an international project. It contains all information on the certificate of participation. In addition, engagement demonstrated individually by the young person as well as her/his active contributions can be described here.

Version Two for active participation in several projects:

This certificate is intended for team/workers of international projects, who have engaged themselves over a longer period of time and who should now receive a certificate for all their activities.

- *Competence certificate:*

The Certificate of Competence is an education and training passport. It gives testimony in detailed form of individually demonstrated competences, which have been identified in a specially developed procedure of verification that is facilitated by a certified KNI-coach. The verification procedure for the Certificate of Competence consists of four steps. These are carried out in an international encounter-related project by the KNI-coach together with the young person in the following sequence:

Step 1: Competence-Oriented Project Analysis

Detailed description of the demands the project places on the participants/the young team members.

Step 2: Observation

Observation of the project-processes by the KNI-coach and the young people participating. The KNI-Coach has to be present in order to be able to observe the behaviour of the young person in various situations.

Step 3: Dialogue

Discussion between the young people and the KNI-coach about the observations made.

Step 4: Verification Text

A description of the competences observed for the Certificate of Competence International is made jointly by the coach and the young person.

The Certificate of Competence International is based on the definition of competences developed by the OECD. It was developed in the context of a six-year interdisciplinary study of basic competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning democratic society under the name 'Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations' (DeSeCo study). The DeSeCo study defines three different areas of key competences, where a variety of individual competencies are enumerated: 1. Autonomous action (self-competence), 2. Interacting in socially heterogeneous groups (social competence), 3. Interactive use of media and means (methodological skills). Since the main aim of the Certificate of Competence is to show the specific learning potential of international youth work, a fourth area was added to the original concept: intercultural competences. The framework serves as a tool for the preparation and implementation of the verification procedure.

The certificates of participation and engagement can be issued in English. However, the Certificate of Competence International is available in German only. Being able to apply the procedure requires from those wishing to be a KNI-coach, participation in a qualification training-course held in German. The Certificate of Competence International evaluates through describing. However it does not make an evaluation in the sense of classifying different levels or steps. The Certificate of Competence International is

not an instrument of assessment. It follows a strength-oriented approach and points out what individual young people can do well.

Outcomes, results and impact:

The evaluation conducted by IKO-Institute in 2009 showed that:

- Certificates International allow a consistent appearance of different organizations active in international youth work in Germany, therefore contributing to better social recognition of international youth work
- The tool/certificate is used by young people, especially for job applications
- The certificate of competence international is seen as well-founded, skill-building, transparent, and equitable
- There are Positive reactions by employers, when they see the certificate in the applications. This is particularly valid for the Certificate of competence

At the time of writing, there are 56 organizations and 91 users who have registered in the Certificates International website. Since February 2011, there have been 4087 certificates issued. The number of certificates issued rises continuously. The increase is especially evident for the Certificates of participation and engagement.