



FEANI policy paper

engineerING card

An instrument for promoting
the International Mobility of
Engineers

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Introduction

The European Union is dedicated to removing existing obstacles when changing jobs between Member States and promoting professional mobility. To achieve this, the process for recognising professional qualifications must be significantly sped up and simplified for engineers in particular.

The engineerING card, a professional card for engineers, can make a decisive contribution to this process. It documents educational and professional qualifications according to internationally recognised standards. As a result, it also improves transparency on the European job market for engineers, thereby making it easier for companies to select suitable qualified employees from abroad.

FEANI is calling on the political world to establish a suitable framework for the Europe-wide implementation of the engineerING card in the course of the upcoming revision of the EU Professional Qualifications Directive, thereby contributing significantly to the urgently needed simplification of the recognition of qualifications and to facilitating the mobility of engineers.

Growing importance of international mobility

With the advance of globalisation, the importance of international mobility is also increasing for engineers. Industrial enterprises, even small and medium-sized ones, are taking an increasingly active role on foreign markets. Engineering service providers and engineering offices are also becoming increasingly involved in international projects. This increases the demand for engineers who can be deployed flexibly on an international basis.

The demand for internationally mobile engineers will also grow because of the differences in the availability of engineers across national borders. In Germany, for example, it has not been possible to cover the demand for qualified engineers in full for many years already. Demographic developments will only make this problem worse. To meet their needs for engineers, German firms for instance, will in future increasingly have to recruit qualified employees from abroad as well.

For engineers, the trend towards cross-border mobility presents new challenges. It is becoming increasingly important to acquire initial practical experience abroad in the early stages of one's career, thereby qualifying oneself for employment in international firms and on international projects. This challenge is also offset by opportunities: For internationally mobile engineers, companies based abroad will become increasingly important as potential employers.

Cross-border recognition of professional qualifications

Despite the obvious increase in demand for internationally mobile engineers, there remain considerable obstacles to mobility even within the EU, in the form of complicated processes for recognising professional and educational qualifications.

It is still very expensive for engineers to have qualifications obtained in one Member State recognised in another. In Germany, responsibility for recognising engineering qualifications obtained abroad lies with the Regional Councils or Chambers of Engineers, depending on the state. In other EU Member States this can be different. In any event, recognition demands a series of documents, each of which has to be certified and translated. The processes often last up to six months and cost several hundred euros, plus the not insignificant cost of translations and authentications. In other EU Member States, the processes are currently even more expensive. The lengthy and costly recognition procedures therefore make it more difficult for engineers to exercise the fundamental European rights of the free movement of workers and the freedom to provide services.

EU Professional Qualifications Directive and professional cards

The European Professional Qualifications Directive from 2005 (2005/36/EC) is designed to remove these obstacles when recognising professional and educational qualifications. The aim of the Directive is to make it much easier to take up and exercise professional activities within the EU. The Directive consolidates and simplifies the 15 EU directives that previously governed the recognition of professional qualifications.

As far as implementation in the Member States is concerned, in principle, the Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC) leaves the following paths open: automatic recognition, the creation of a common platform, the introduction of professional cards. The system of “Automatic Recognition” would mean that professional qualifications obtained in an EU country would automatically be recognised throughout Europe. For example, anyone who obtains authorisation for particular activities in Germany, e.g. producing static designs for public buildings, could then automatically carry on this activity across the whole of Europe. However, because of the highly heterogeneous country-specific requirements placed on professional qualifications, this system is not an option for engineers. Recent efforts to introduce a common platform for engineers have failed for the same reason. Such a platform would require Europe-wide uniform qualification standards to be defined to carry out individual engineering activities. This system is also defeated by the heterogeneous country-specific requirements placed on professional qualifications.

For professional engineers, the professional card appears to be the only promising way to facilitate the recognition of professional and educational qualifications. The professional card means qualifications are reliably tested and clearly documented by competent bodies. The professional card therefore provides those organisations responsible for recognition in the EU Member States with crucial aid in searching for information and making decisions and as a result can make the recognition process considerably simpler.

The professional card for engineers has already started to be introduced. Meanwhile, European professional cards issued by federations and other professional organisations are also preferred in numerous other professional groups over the alternatives of Automatic Recognition and the Common Platform. The EU Commission is also looking to the introduction of professional cards to implement EU Directive 2005/36/EC. It has therefore explicitly called on the competent federations and other professional organisations to develop appropriate formats.

engineerING card: purpose and objectives

FEANI developed a professional card for engineers in the form of the engineerING card. The engineerING card is characterised by the following five features, which are key to the success and its acceptance as a professional card:

1. Completeness: the information contained on the engineerING card is comprehensive, i.e. it provides a complete overview of the academic education, professional experience and further training of the card holder.
2. Standardisation based on European standards: the professional card provides information on academic education, professional experience and further training according to the European standards defined under the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The EUR-ACE criteria, the accreditation criteria for engineering studies adopted across Europe, also apply to academic education.
3. Independent testing and recognition: the information on the professional card is reliable. The qualifications are tested and recognised in the country of origin by an independent register commission. The register commission is made up of experts from universities, relevant engineers' organisations and industry. This ensures that the engineerING card is widely recognised.
4. Flexibility through decentralised administration: The professional card is introduced and administered decentrally, i.e. in each individual EU Member State. This means that qualifications obtained in the card holder's country of origin are documented. In addition to the standardised entries, country-specific additions in line with national requirements are also possible.
5. Voluntariness: possession of the engineerING card is voluntary, i.e. engineers are not obliged to carry the professional card. Rather, the card represents a service for all those engineers who want to be mobile within the EU. This ensures that the engineerING card offers a needs-based solution and that unnecessary costs and bureaucracy are avoided.

Engineers' organisations from 31 European countries that are members of FEANI are convinced that the engineerING card can make a significant contribution towards facilitating the cross-border recognition of engineers in Europe. Multiple FEANI members will introduce the concept of the engineerING card in their countries in 2011 already. The FEANI member organisations in other EU Member States would like to introduce the professional card as soon as it is guaranteed that the national and/or local agencies responsible for recognition, acknowledge the card across Europe.

Support from the political world

FEANI is calling on the political world to create a suitable framework for the introduction and application of the professional card for engineers through the upcoming revision of Directive 2005/36/EC. In so doing, the following points should be taken into consideration:

In the course of revising the Directive, professional cards should be recognised as a way of simplifying cross-border employment and mobility. In particular, it must be ensured that the qualifications recorded on a professional card are recognised by the competent national bodies and are given due

consideration when testing permission to work. It should be possible for the professional cards to be developed differently for the individual professional groups, so that job-related particularities are taken into account as much as possible and so that the Europe-wide uniform creation of profiles for individual professions, which is extremely important for the further unification of Europe's job market, is supported. For engineers, the engineerING card should be explicitly acknowledged as a professional card in the Directive.

The engineerING card should be issued by the competent professional organisations in each individual country. These are the member organisations of FEANI. These professional organisations are best placed to ensure that applicants' qualifications are adequately tested. European umbrella organisations should be responsible for monitoring this decentralised system. For engineers, this is FEANI.

The professional card for engineers should not be introduced obligatorily, but should be issued on a voluntary basis. Only in this way can professional cards be understood as a service for engineers who want mobility and unnecessary bureaucracy to be avoided.

As a European professional card for engineers, the engineerING card can make a significant contribution to simplifying the cross-border employment and mobility of engineers within the EU. By documenting internationally recognised standards, it also promotes transparency on the engineering job market, thereby making it easier for companies to select suitable qualified employees from abroad. By creating a suitable framework for the Europe-wide implementation of the engineerING card in connection with the revision of the EU Professional Qualifications Directive, a significant and urgently needed contribution would be made towards a simpler recognition of qualifications and towards facilitating the mobility of engineers.



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