

MIGRATION PATHWAYS

German–China Geriatric Nursing Pilot Program

Overview

Between 2013 and 2014, 150 nurses in China were trained in German language and intercultural skills before being brought to Germany to work in the geriatric nursing care sector. Although the pilot was not continued, it led to extensive cooperation between the two countries in eldercare.

Why was it started?

Like many high-income countries, Germany is suffering from a nursing shortage. The sector is projected to need 150,000 new nurses by 2025, and the need is expected to grow, given Germany's aging population. To care for the elderly alone Germany is projected to need more than 200,000 additional nursing staff by 2030, including almost 100,000 geriatric nurses.

The World Health Organization (WHO) largely prohibits the recruiting of nurses from low- and middle-income countries without a government-to-government agreement. To meet its need without violating WHO rules, Germany negotiated an agreement with China to train geriatric care nurses as a way to increase the stock of skilled nurses in German care homes.

How does it work?

The program recruited 150 Chinese nursing professionals who had bachelor's degrees and had completed one-year nursing internships in China. It provided them with eight months of intercultural and language training (up to the B1 level) at the Shandong International Nurse Training Center in China before bring them to Germany to work in in-patient care facilities. Initially, program participants worked as nursing assistants; after six months and approval, they worked as geriatric nursing specialists.



Country of Destination
GERMANY

Country of Origin
CHINA

Skill
HEALTH CARE (GERIATRIC NURSING) 

Skill Level
MID-LEVEL

Timeline
2013–14

Beneficiaries
150

Countries all around the world utilize migration pathways to train and bring over workers with needed skills. The CGD Migration Pathways database documents these pathways to promote innovation in this space. To explore the database, visit GSP.cgdev.org.

The project was a collaboration by the Federal Association of German Employers' Associations (BDA), the German Care Employers Association (*Arbeitgeberverband Pflege*), the German Federal Employment Agency's International Placement Service (ZAV), and the Chinese International Contractors Association (CHINCA).

What impact has it had?

The nurses earned €2,400 a month before taxes—many times the €500–€1,000 they would earn in China. A spokesperson for the program noted that the nurses were widely praised for their job professionalism and ability to empathize. They also encountered language and cultural difficulties, however. Demand from employers was high (as a result of it, the pilot program was opened to all care-sector employers), but little evidence is available regarding the impact the program had on employers.

Although the project was not continued, there is ongoing engagement between China and Germany. In 2018, the Sino-German Eldercare Project was launched. It aims to develop a dual training curriculum for training eldercare nurses in China in which some nurses would be trained and remain in China while others would move to Germany.

Further readings

Fuu-Sachsen. 2019. "Sino-German-Eldercare-Project." <https://fuu-sachsen.international/dual-training-of-geriatric-care-in-china>

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Renatus, A. 2013. "Pilot project with nurses from China now across all providers." *Arbeitgeberverband Pflege*, May 28. <https://arbeitgeberverband-pflege.de/das-haben-wir-zu-sagen/pilotprojekt-mit-pflegfachkraeften-aus-china-nun-traegeruebergreifend/>

Wa, Z., and Y. Wanli. 2014. "Chinese nurses acclaimed for empathetic care abroad." *China Daily*, October 10. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014livisitgrl/2014-10/10/content_18716419.htm



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