



EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH DECENT WORK AND VET

The European Year of Youth 2022
in times of transformation and crisis

Conference report
Berlin, 30 September 2022



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Senate Department
for Integration, Labour
and Social Services

BERLIN



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SURVEY

FROM WHICH LOCATION ARE YOU FOLLOWING THE CONFERENCE?



The conference participants took part in the survey
“From which location are you following the conference?”.

PROGRAMME

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH DECENT WORK AND VET

The European Year of Youth 2022
in times of transformation and crisis

ORGANISER	Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Services, Berlin (SenIAS)
VENUE	VKU Forum, Invalidenstraße 91, 10115 Berlin hybrid, with livestream
MODERATOR	Dr Julia Kropf
CO-MODERATOR	Martin Hoffmann

<p>09.00 am</p>	<p>CHECK-IN PARTICIPANTS</p>
<p>09.30 am</p>	<p>Warm-up with live band Welcome by the moderators Dr Julia Kropf and Martin Hoffmann Greetings of the Governing Major of Berlin - Franziska Giffey</p>
<p>10.00 am</p>	<p>Welcome and Introduction - Katja Kipping, Senator for Integration, Labour and Social Services, Berlin</p>
<p>10.15-11.00 am</p>	<p>HOW CAN WE GUARANTEE DECENT WORK AND GOOD VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE?</p> <p>VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE regarding the European Year of Youth (Video)</p> <p>KEYNOTE SPEECH: The European Year of Youth 2022 and the reinforced Youth Guarantee – Dr Nicolas Schmit, EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights</p> <p>MODERATED TALK – Dr Nicolas Schmit, EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights – Katja Kipping, Senator for Integration, Labour and Social Services, Berlin</p>
<p>11.00-11.30 am</p>	<p>COFFEE BREAK</p>
<p>11.30 am-12.30 pm</p>	<p>EMPLOYMENT AND VET - WHAT PROSPECTS DO YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE IN TIMES OF TRANSFORMATION AND CRISIS?</p> <p>IMPULSE: Statements of young people from Europe (live)</p> <p>PANEL DISCUSSION: – Vera de Man, Youth Committee of the European Trade Union – Prof Dr Bettina Kohlrausch, WSI/Hans Böckler Foundation – Timea Neumann, Junior Chamber International (JCI) Germany – Tim Schreiber, Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Referat Vocational Education and Training, CEDEFOP of the EU-Commission</p>
<p>12.30-1.30 pm</p>	<p>LUNCH BREAK</p>

1.30-2.30 pm

MATCHING: HOW DO WE BRING COMPANIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER?
PART I**TALK 1:** How do we bring companies and young people together?

- **Antonio Ranieri**, Head of Department for VET and Skills at CEDEFOP

TALK 2: The dual educational system against the backdrop of transformation and crisis

- **Prof Dr Friedrich Hubert Esser**, Federal Institute for Vocational Training, Germany (BIBB)

TALK 3: Good practice from Berlin

- Youth Employment Agency Berlin
- **Christin Richter**, Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Services, Berlin
- **Ralf Jahnke**, Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family, Berlin
- Apprenticeship levy in Berlin
- **Kirsten Bagusch-Sauermann**, Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Services, Berlin

2.30-2.45 pm

COFFEE BREAK

2.45-3.45 pm

MATCHING: HOW DO WE BRING COMPANIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER?
PART II

PANEL DISCUSSION:

- **Petra Draxl**, Austrian Labour Market Service
- **PhD Peter Koudahl**, Associate Professor Malmö University
- **Christoph Möller**, Federal Employment Agency Germany, Berlin Nord
- **Dr Sher Singh Verick**, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- **Margrit Zauner**, Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Services, Berlin

3.45-4.00 pm

COFFEE BREAK

4.00-5.00 pm

HOW DO WE SUPPORT YOUNG REFUGEES INTEGRATING IN VET AND IN THE
LABOUR MARKET? - EXAMPLES OF BERLIN**TALK 1:** Analysis of risks, challenges, and approaches to labour market integration of young refugees

- **Dr Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann**, Minor-Project Office for Education and Research, Berlin

TALK 2: Integration in employment and VET from a company perspective

- **Nicolas Bartels**, NETWORK Companies integrate refugees

TALK 3: Ukrainian refugees in Berlin – experiences and approaches to training and labour market integration in Berlin

- **Margrit Zauner**, Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Services, Berlin

Joint final discussion

CLOSING REMARKS by **Margrit Zauner**, Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Services, Berlin

ABSTRACT

BERLIN IS TAKING PART IN THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH 2022.

At the conference, we want to focus our attention on, how young people can be supported in the transition to vocational training and into decent work and how this transition must be designed so that all young people can develop according to their interests and abilities and see good prospects for themselves, because Europe needs all young people.

Senator Katja Kipping, host of the conference: “In the face of ecological, digital and demographic change, the aim is to open up new perspectives and opportunities for young people.”

For Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights of the European Commission, the strengthening of the Youth Guarantee plays an important role in this. It is an EU instrument for combating youth unemployment, which is still widespread in the European Union – with strong national and regional variations. In October 2020, all member states of the European Union committed themselves to providing young people between the ages of 18 and 30 with a high-quality offer of employment, training, apprenticeships or internships within four months.

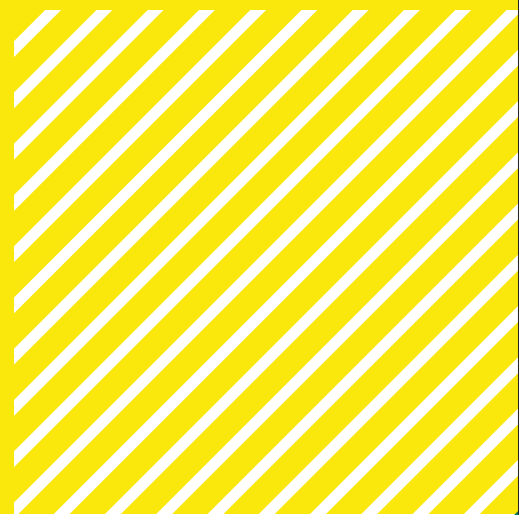
Young people themselves will also have their say at the conference. Making their voice heard, their participation, and their will to shape the future are essential for taking advantage of their opportunities in the education and labour market.

For today’s young generation in particular, the many crisis and transformation processes of our time – the climate crisis, the Covid pandemic and its effects, the war in Ukraine, the current energy crisis and high inflation, combined with income losses and (imminent) poverty for many, including young people, as well as the digital and demographic change – play a major role and will be considered at the conference.

The contributions to the conference will be made from a European, national and urban perspective. Political frameworks and approaches, scientific contributions and reports on experiences will be discussed. In the last section of our conference, we will also look at the special situation of young refugees.

“Our mission is to ensure that every young person has good prospects for the future, so they feel empowered and can thrive in life.” **Dr Nicolas Schmit**

Examples of good practice from Berlin and other cities will be presented and exchanged in order to inspire us, to show us ways of solving problems and to promote mutual learning.



STATEMENTS

FROM THE VIDEO: VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE



HASSAN ABEL, 20, FROM MARSEILLE IN FRANCE.

He is about to take the aptitude test to become a police officer after having had previously started studying medicine. For him, it is important to be able to devote himself to both: his education and his family.

MELINA DROUVI, 28, FROM LARISA IN GREECE.

She trained as a mountain guide. "Do what you love" - is her motto. She would like to see more women in male-dominated professions like her as an outdoor guide. Because there, too, the energy of women is important!



DOMINIK KUC, 22, WARSAW, STUDIES IN AMSTERDAM.

He studies Bachelor of Science, Economics and Business Economics. „A young person's financial situation should not determine whether she/he decides whether or not she/he can afford to study, but only her/his personal abilities and interests!

JOSH LABAHN NEVES, 18, FROM BERLIN-PANKOW.

He is currently training to become a hotel clerk. It was important to him to find an apprenticeship that is diversified and allows him to work in many different areas. And it should also be fun!



ALINA VAKOLIUK, 27 YEARS OLD, UPPSALA IN SWEDEN.

She emigrated from Ukraine to Sweden in 2018. At Folkuniversitetet Uppsala she works as a project manager. It is important to her that young people are involved in the political decision making so that real change can happen.

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH DECENT WORK AND VET



WELCOME ADDRESS

Franziska Giffey

Governing Mayor of Berlin

Young people's prospects on the labour market is an important issue and good vocational education and training provides the "foundations for a successful life", especially in times of transformation and crisis, says the Governing Mayor as she opens the conference.

Many young people proactively contribute to climate action. As an example of the high demand for young skilled workers, she mentions climate and energy professions in which young people could become "professional climate protectors". High-quality training and working conditions are crucial for this. With its European approach and because young people themselves are given room to speak, the symposium makes an important contribution to the topic. After all, "decent education and decent work for all young people is what concerns all of us across Europe".

The event offers the opportunity to learn from each other within a European framework. Berlin has a lot to offer in this respect, such as the Berlin Youth Employment Agency or Berlin's experience in helping refugees access the labour market. Mayor Giffey wishes the conference every success and thanks all participants for their attendance and involvement.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE CONFERENCE

Katja Kipping

Senator for Integration, Labour and Social Services in Berlin

Senator Katja Kipping begins by thanking the organisers for preparing the conference so professionally and “with great attention to detail”, then dives straight into the European dimension of the event:

She is concerned about the new government in Italy and in general by developments across the whole EU: to the east, north, south and west, right-wing populists are on the rise everywhere. This contrasts with earlier, progressive European ideas such as a European constitution or even a European republic, ideas which she herself supported at the time.

She believes that the social dimension of the EU should have been reinforced much earlier, but member states considered this a loss of sovereignty. Then came the age of austerity, which tended to discourage young people and led, among other things, to high youth unemployment in Europe. Fortunately, the “spectre of austerity” is now in retreat.

Katja Kipping recalls the words of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who described precariousness as a form of domination. Insecure life and work lead to all energy being invested into surviving “today” with no energy left for shaping “tomorrow”.

All age groups are affected by the current crises, but the climate crisis will be felt for a particularly long time by younger people, the Senator continued. The coronavirus is hindering young people at crucial stages of their professional and personal development and the war in Ukraine is triggering refugee movements. Young people and minors – many of them



refugees – are particularly affected. Overall, this means that “the crisis of social cohesion affects young people in particular”. In order to cope in times of such transformation, we need pooled skills in Europe and especially those of the younger generation.

The Senator regards the European “Youth Guarantee”, i.e. to make a job, training or internship offer to young people within four months as “a good thing”, a strong promise. But how do we implement this? How does the EU implement this? The promise must be backed up with specific measures. The fact that representatives from countries such as Austria and Denmark are taking part in this conference is therefore a good thing, because in the end it is the member states that have to deliver these tools.

The Senator goes on to talk about approaches specific to Berlin, which will be elaborated on over the course of the conference, such as:

- the Jugendberufsagentur Berlin (Youth Employment Agency Berlin) as a contact point with twelve locations in each district,
- the Berlin Programm zur vertiefenden Berufsorientierung (“Programme for In-depth Vocational Orientation”) with which thousands of young people were and continue to be reached despite the coronavirus,
- the Berlin Ausbildungsplatzprogramm (“Training Place Programme”) for young people who have not yet found a training place on the regular market or
- the Berlin “Mentoring Programme” to prevent training dropouts.
- The Queraufstieg advisory network in Berlin is aimed at dropouts, for those who want to „change lanes“.
- The Ausbildung in Sicht (“Training in Sight”) programme is aimed at young people with a history of migration and fleeing intolerable circumstances.

The apprenticeship levy, which was included in the coalition agreement of the governing parties, is being discussed intensively in Berlin. This is because only 11 % of all companies in Berlin offer apprenticeships. For there to be a choice, there would have to be more training places than people looking for a training place. In Berlin it is the other way round. What’s more, some companies pursue unjust practices: Some trained, while others “skimmed off the top” and took those who had been trained by other companies. That’s unfair. It is therefore important to strengthen those who train and to create incentives for the others.

What makes Europe vibrant is learning from each other and sharing good practice. In this spirit, Senator Kipping wishes the conference every success.

VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE (VIDEO)

HOW CAN WE GUARANTEE DECENT WORK AND GOOD VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE?

FIVE YOUNG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN 18 AND 28 FROM THE FIVE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES GERMANY, FRANCE, GREECE, POLAND AND SWEDEN GIVE AN INSIGHT INTO THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THIS VIDEO.

Josh Labahn Neves from Berlin is in his second year of training as a hotel manager. Hassan Abel, who dropped out of medical school, is now preparing for a career as a police officer with the support of a career guidance centre in Marseille. Dominik Kuc from Warsaw is involved with a mental health NGO alongside his studies in Amsterdam. Following work experience during her studies, Alina Vakoliuk recently started her first job as a project manager at the Folkuniversitetet Uppsala (People's University of Uppsala). Last but not least, Melina Drouvi from Larissa has found her dream job as a mountain and outdoor guide after a few years of trials and tribulations - without having completed a degree or a classic multi-year VET course.

Yet the young people not only give an insight into their current professional situations in this video message. They also share the life stories that have significantly shaped their professional development.

Alina wants to help young people be heard more and grow together as much as possible in European projects so as to bring about real change in society regarding the

pressing issues of our times. This requires courage and flexibility, she says. Originally from Ukraine, she is very appreciative of the opportunities Swedish society offers her.

It is important for Dominik to pursue meaningful work. He decided to study social sciences and economics for this reason. Parallel to his studies, he is involved in an NGO that looks after the mental health of students and employees. He has learnt about the workings and field of activity of an NGO himself. He regrets that Polish schools do not also provide information about such institutions in career counselling.

Hassan started his professional career by studying medicine. Since such studies are very time-consuming and demanding, he could no longer fulfil his family obligations to the extent he wanted. After a period of uncertainty, he reconsidered his other career aspirations with the support of an independent career guidance agency and is currently preparing for the aptitude test to become a police officer. This orientation process helped him expand his horizons and open up more to other people. He is very grateful for this and could not have done without this experience.

Josh got an apprenticeship as a hotel manager in one of the two training hotels supported by the State of Berlin, which were set up during the coronavirus pandemic to create apprenticeships. He continued his education there after losing his first apprenticeship at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

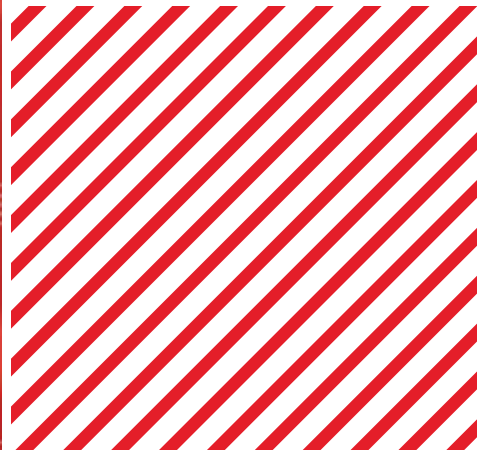
He is very happy to be trained in many different areas. However, dual training, i.e. learning at the vocational school and at the company, also involves its fair share of challenges, such as the strict alternation between school weeks and work phases.

Melina's career choice was more by chance, without having any guidance to fall back on. Now that, thanks to various further education and training courses, she is permitted to exercise the profession of mountain guide and officially call herself one, she describes herself as the "happiest person she knows". She would still like to see more women working in male-dominated professions.

What these young people all have in common is that their educational and professional path was characterised by big question marks, doubts and challenges from the beginning. Eventually, however, they either found the profession that suited them or decided to study. In this way, they are an example for many young people across Europe – at the transition between school and working life or training and working life.



Melina Drouvi
and Dominik Kuc



KEYNOTE SPEECH

THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH 2022 AND THE REINFORCED YOUTH GUARANTEE

Dr Nicolas Schmit
EU Commissioner
for Employment and
Social Rights



The future prospects of young people are particularly close to the heart of the EU Commission as a whole and especially to Dr Nicolas Schmit as the responsible Commissioner.

2022 has been declared the “European Year of Youth” by the Commission, under the leadership of President Ursula von der Leyen. It should provide an occasion to strengthen existing initiatives and start new ones, including against the background of the current crises. The coronavirus crisis has had an impact on the mental and social well-being of young people, on their economic situation and on educational pathways. For many young people, the world has become even more uncertain due to the war in Ukraine, coronavirus and the energy crisis. Add to that the increased cost of living, and the budget young people have to make do with is tight, says Commissioner Schmit.

Unemployment in the EU fell to 6 % in July 2022, which is positive news – and youth unemployment is also lower compared to previous months. Nevertheless, young people’s situation in the labour market remains difficult with youth unemployment at 14 %, more than double the general unemployment rate. 8.6 million young people in the EU are not in employment, education or training. The so-called NEET rate is 12.1 %. NEET means: Not in Employment, Education or Training. These 8.6 million young people correspond to the size of a medium-sized member state. The Commissioner is therefore very concerned: “We cannot leave 8.6 million young people behind”.

During the pandemic, many young people worked in industries that were most affected by the pandemic. Europe cannot afford a “Lost Generation”, of which there was already talk during the economic and financial crisis ten years ago. The EU therefore wants to do everything possible to prevent massive unemployment and to

open up prospects for young people – especially in view of the pandemic. It is a question of transformation and transitions. In this context, the European “Green Deal” plays an important role in shaping the transformation of the economy and society against the backdrop of the climate crisis. Digitalisation also represents a big challenge for young people. While it generates new jobs, it also requires new skills.

In 2020, the Commission adopted a package of initiatives entitled “Youth Employment Support – a bridge to jobs for the next generation”. Part of this is the “reinforced Youth Guarantee”, which Senator Kipping already mentioned as a promise and strong commitment on the part of the member states, the regions and the cities. The idea is that people under the age of 30 receive a high-quality offer of employment, education, an apprenticeship or training within four months. This idea is to consider not only economic and social but also psychological consequences for young people.

An active policy is necessary, especially during the crisis. The necessary means should be mobilised to help young people gain a foothold in the labour market. The emphasis, according to Commissioner Schmit, is on quality training and jobs. Placements should not be precarious, instead they should offer strong prospects for the future and real security. The Youth Guarantee is already showing the first signs of success. Every year, 3.5 million young people in Europe receive an offer.

The European Union is also investing in youth employment with the European Social Fund (ESF Plus) – at least €22 billion over the next seven years. This is an investment both in the future of every individual and in the European economy.

Berlin also makes use of the European Social Fund, and invests 50 % of the available funding in education. According to the Commissioner, this is the right way to support the transition from VET to the labour market. The ESF in Berlin ensures that the transition to training is facilitated for pupils who could not previously be reached. Another series of measures aims to avoid dropouts and create alternatives at the same time. This approach must be pursued further. The crisis in particular calls on us to implement more Youth Guarantees and equip these with the necessary financial resources.

An important European Social Fund project is the ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) programme, an initiative aimed at improving the social participation of disadvantaged young people aged 18–29 who are out of work, out of school and out of vocational training (NEETs). The initiative helps young people find an apprenticeship abroad or gain experience in another European country, which also boosts self-confidence.

The JUVENTUS programme, which will start in October 2022, is the German contribution to the implementation of ALMA – a cross-border mobility programme (successor programme to Integration through Exchange, IdA). It funds the implementation of stays abroad with in-company training for disadvantaged

young people, helping them find an apprenticeship or employment in another European member state .

“We look back on 35 years of ERASMUS +”: Since 1987, more than 10 million young Europeans have studied abroad. That the Commission, but above all the member states, do even more to make it easier for trainees to also take part in Erasmus is one of Commissioner Schmit’s primary concerns. This involves further upgrading vocational training and the question as to “how we can get young people to complete a training course”. Although vocational education and training is otherwise very prevalent and established in Germany, the lack of respect generally accorded to training remains a problem. Improving the image of vocational education and training is crucial.

Overall, VET is a subject area to which the Commission, together with the member states, pays particular attention. Vocational education and training is an excellent way to provide access to the labour market and to promote social and societal participation, the Commissioner says.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) unites different and various stakeholders to create more, better quality apprenticeships across Europe. One million apprenticeship places have been generated through this network in the last nine years, with the aim also being to improve the image of VET across Europe.

According to the President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, strengthening solidarity between the generations is also vital. For 2023, the Commission is planning the “European Year of Skills”, a key priority in times of global change. This also means more investment in vocational education and training.

Finally, the Commissioner emphasises that the Commission, together with the cities and social partners in Europe, wants to create future prospects for young people that meet their needs.

MODERATED TALK

THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH 2022 AND THE REINFORCED YOUTH GUARANTEE

Dr Nicolas Schmit
EU Commissioner for
Employment and Social Rights

Katja Kipping
Senator for Integration,
Labour and Social Services
in Berlin



From the “Voices of Young People” video, two points stuck with the Senator. Apart from pay, the young people are mainly interested in meaningful work and having their voices heard. Regarding the latter, Senator Kipping says that young people should not wait to be heard and should themselves ensure that their concerns cannot be ignored, as exemplified by “Fridays for Future”.

Commissioner Schmit takes a similar view. He understands that today’s generation is one that speaks up. Without Fridays for Future, we would not have achieved the awareness of the climate catastrophe that we have as a society today. The young generation wants meaningful employment and a good work-life balance. Europe is leading the way in this respect, but this matter must be substantially underpinned by laws and practised by companies.



Senator Katja Kipping emphasises that this conference would not have come about without the “European Year of Youth”. She says that Europe is a tailwind for Berlin’s policy. The Senate Department is continuously engaged in European exchange with other countries; most recently, for example, the Berlin “Youth Employment Agency” was presented in Finland. The European Social Fund is also helpful. But the main responsibility for training lies with companies, “because they need the skilled workers”, which is why they also have to be held accountable.

Commissioner Nicolas Schmit refers to the joint European responsibility of the member states. The financial and economic crisis resulted in a large increase in youth unemployment, which is why he believes the “Youth Guarantee” at the European level was the right response. Dual VET is now also recognised in other member states, and Spain, for example, is very committed to vocational education and training. Europe actively shapes European policy and supports member states (and the different European levels) in learning from each other’s good experiences.

Senator Kipping’s policy is to “get the best out of it” for young people. She points to the Ausbildungshotel (training hotel) as a good example, a model project in Berlin where young people complete apprenticeships in gastronomy and the hotel industry. “These young people are now in great demand”. Furthermore, Berlin is also currently preparing for a “winter of energy poverty” and is planning a relief package as well as a local “network of warmth”.

Finally, Senator Kipping is keen to emphasise what governments should refrain from in times of crisis: austerity politics and social cuts. “We have to put the brakes on debt in times of crisis”. This is the only way necessary investments can be made.

When asked about his expectations for the “European Year of Youth”, Commissioner Schmit refers to many other initiatives, such as the one in Berlin, which provide specific impulses. He says that the Year of Youth does not end on 31 December, and that youth must remain a central priority in the years to come.



PANEL DISCUSSION

EMPLOYMENT AND VET

WHAT PROSPECTS DO YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE IN TIMES OF TRANSFORMATION AND CRISIS?

Vera de Man
Youth Committee of the
European Trade Union
Confederation

Prof Dr Bettina Kohlrausch
Institute of Economic and
Social Research -
Hans Böckler Foundation

Timea Neumann
Wirtschaftsjunioren Deutschland
(part of Junior Chamber Inter-
national, JCI), Federal Executive
Board, Department of Work,
Education and the Future

Tim Schreiber
Directorate-General for
Employment, Social Affairs
and Inclusion, Vocational
Education and Training
Department, CEDEFOP of
the European Commission

together with Melina Drouvi
and Dominik Kuc

IMPULSE: STATEMENTS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE

It is important for Melina Drouvi (Greece) and Dominik Kuc (Poland) to be financially secure and able to lead a sustainable lifestyle. They see this as an important basis for developing their own personalities and as factors that influenced their choice of profession. Furthermore, they attach great importance to finding meaning in their work or to doing work that contributes to society. In their opinion, employers also have a responsibility in this respect. Young people today believe it is important for companies to take their social responsibility towards their employees seriously. This includes a good communication culture, non-discrimination - and equal treatment - and the prevention of bullying.

TOPIC BLOCK 1 CAREER CHOICE AND ORIENTATION

Viewed in a European context, there are very large differences between the European member states. Melina Drouvi (Greece) and Dominik Kuc (Poland) believe that career guidance and advice should be accessible to everyone and tailored to the individual. For them, the problem is that many fields of work are not even known to young people as potential career paths. The possibility of working in an NGO, for example, is not addressed in official career guidance. When career guidance takes place, the focus is usually on traditional professions, such as lawyer and doctor. This means that there are major information gaps and young people are uncertain when it comes to deciding on the next steps in their education.

They suggest a way of addressing these gaps. “Career fairs” on a small and large scale should be organised so that young people can get a detailed insight into possible professions.

Professor Dr Bettina Kohlrausch explains how the German education system divides children early or even too early. Children having to decide on an educational path at the age of ten leads, among other things, to the formation of marginalised groups that do not get the support and developmental options they need. This early choice of educational path often leads to lower qualifications, such as the Hauptschulabschluss (secondary school qualification), and these children and young people then being at risk of exclusion and discrimination. However, so that they know what career choices exist in the first place, career guidance is also important for children and young people with higher-level qualifications. The preparation of children and young people for the vocational training system at school is not ideal, which means that many only succeed with difficulty in entering the labour market or not at all.

The experts on the panel agree that good and early career guidance at schools is an essential prerequisite for successful decisions regarding career choice and starting training.

Timea Neumann points out that career guidance in Germany is very diverse and well structured. There are career fairs, training speed dates with companies, and nationwide advisory services that function beyond the schools. Everything that Melina and Dominik want. In their opinion, however, it is important that young people are also acquainted with the offers or told about them, which is often not the case. It should also be possible to gain more practical experience while still at school. This could be done, for example, via several work experience placements or through formats such as Ein Tag Azubi (“A day as an apprentice”) by the Wirtschaftsuni, which focuses on helping participants identify their own talents and strengths. Another idea she mentions is to include volunteer opportunities in all-day school programmes to identify talent. It would be relatively easy to embed this in the school and learning system.

Tim Schreiber directs the focus to the green or ecological transformation, which also has an impact on education. For example, the European Green Deal would be implemented in all areas of work in the EU and would thus naturally also have an impact on vocational education and training. It is not always possible to clearly delineate which skills prospective professionals have and via which training path they can obtain these skills. In addition, the green transformation would further expose the already existing shortage of skilled workers. It is an undisputed fact, for example, that more and more people are needed who have the technical skills required in climate professions. This is the kind of competence that technicians are traditionally taught in vocational education and training. However, professionals with horizontal or transversal skills (i.e. skills such as problem solving, communication, collaboration or client orientation) are needed. In addition, everyone should learn how to work ecologically by firmly anchoring sustainable

thinking in training professions and apprenticeships. To this end, specific occupational fields must be strengthened overall and made more attractive.

What is a mark of attractiveness in vocational education and training?

The attractiveness of decent work and decent education also includes a decent income. Vera de Man thus addresses one of Melina and Dominik’s demands. How can this be achieved? Uniform rules would have to be firmly established. For example, there are still too many unpaid internships.

Decent education is always based on whether there is a successful degree at the end, explains Professor Dr Bettina Kohlrausch. Good working conditions and flexible options are important. She is expressly against the modularisation of school-based and vocational education and training. There are already numerous possibilities for integrating vocational preparation in schools, i.e. “trying things out” is already possible.

How should career guidance and advice change?

Melina emphasises the individual approach, which she believes enables the development of “creative minds”, i.e. being aware of one’s strengths and developing self-confidence. Dominik is in favour of tests that help young people to better assess themselves and their abilities. Internships also contribute to this. These should be part of the curriculum in school education.

TOPIC BLOCK 2 CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Work-life balance and mental health are very pertinent issues for the young generation. A balance between work and free time is important, and everyone has to find this for themselves. Companies should offer measures that specifically take care of their employees’ mental health. This is not only in the interest of the employees, but also of the employers, as employees work better and more effectively when they are well, say Melina and Dominik. Not addressed as intensively by previous generations, mental health is an important issue for today’s young generation. Good mental health makes it possible to survive longer in the world of work, especially since today’s young people will probably have to work longer. Good strategies are still rare. There is a need for an exchange of “good practice” examples. Being constantly available, for example, is something that contradicts the work-life balance.

From the trade unions’ point of view, represented by Vera de Man, the main issue is access to vocational education and training and thus the acquisition of skills. It must be possible to make decisions according to individual interest, e.g. for a “green job”. Vera de Mann raises the issue of sustainability as an important asset. Above all, however, the “desire to learn”



should be systematically embedded in all systems of education. Young people organised in trade unions also receive an overview of their workers' rights and are thus better protected against exploitation.

How must vocational education and training change to be future-proof?

In training, it is not just teaching subject-specific skills that is important, notes Tim Schreiber. Learning cross-cutting, general competences would enable skills to be used in both the learned profession and in others. Today's technical skills will be more or less obsolete in 20 years.

The focus should be on internalising a new culture of lifelong learning, and learning to learn. This also means imparting the ability in training on how to further educate oneself. For this, offers and time must be made available - also by employers - which ultimately contribute to an improvement of work-life balance.

The digital transformation, demographic change and ecological transformation all represent challenges in this respect. Professor Dr Bettina Kohlrausch introduces the so-called "Future Skills" in this context. These include procedural skills, i.e. being able to recognise, understand and deal with processes. It also involves "digital skills". Applying them is essential, as is understanding the logic behind them and constantly expanding one's own thinking.

TOPIC BLOCK 3 A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Melina is very optimistic about the future. She once again appeals for more women in traditionally male-dominated professions, in her case in the outdoor world (she is a mountain guide, see above). In her profession, for example, aside from physical strength, being able to deal well with children, people with disabilities and generally very different people are required, and this is a skill for which women have a certain energy.

Dominik wants employment which contributes to society. Right now, he is proud to be working in a field where he is helping people. Coming from Warsaw, he has experienced the integration of Ukrainian refugees first hand and has been involved in related programmes. He also takes a look at Generation Z, which, according to various studies, changes jobs an average of seven times.

Tim Schreiber addresses the shortage of skilled workers. The importance of this topic becomes visible in the European Commission's considerations to declare 2023 the European Year of Skills. The attractiveness of VET and the skilled crafts must be strengthened. This also requires career guidance at secondary schools that informs students about the possibilities and perspectives of training, not least to prevent dropping out and delayed starts to training.



The topic of gender-specific career choices is still relevant. How can we ensure that we depart from traditional associations?

Timea Neumann emphasises the positive effects of role models. There are already formats for this, such as Girls' Day or Boys' Day. Vocational orientation should be organised more comprehensively and in a more contemporary way and should be an important part of schooling. Vocational orientation must also become more open, with no limits and it needs to consider all directions of possible activities. To connote dropping out positively – in the sense of a deliberate personality development – would also be a desirable development. After all, “it doesn't matter which path you take, it can always be great!” For Germany specifically, this means that there should be a choice at all school levels between studying and dual training, along with knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of each choice.

For Vera de Man, social dialogue is at the heart of the transition processes, as the current changes also include the opportunity to overcome traditional career choices. She emphasises the importance of access to decent vocational education and training, which should be accessible to all, regardless of gender, origin and whether someone is employed or not.

Professor Dr Bettina Kohlrausch concludes by arguing that despite the rigidity of the VET system, we should not forgo the requirement to achieve formal qualifications. A successful, formal degree brings many advantages, “not least because of

this we have very low youth unemployment in Germany”. She is against lowering the level of training but believes that many more support services could be integrated into the training system. In addition, the strict separation between academic and vocational training should be overcome or made more permeable, especially since there are already many mixed forms, such as the bachelor's degree or VET with a very high theoretical component. Communicating the education system in a more comprehensible way is also the order of the day.

PART I

HOW DO WE BRING COMPANIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Antonio Ranieri
Head of Department
for VET and Skills at
CEDEFOP



TALK 1

HOW DO WE BRING COMPANIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER?

There is no magic formula for good matching. But with its dual system of education and training Germany is a good European example of success from which other countries can learn. Across Europe, Ranieri says, it is important that schools, the labour market and businesses work well together to promote good “matching”.

Antonio Ranieri refers to “matching problems”. Across Europe, employers increasingly complain that they are not able to find the right workers, and not only skilled workers – people with medium and low qualifications are also lacking. This discrepancy exists both between supply and demand and between the expectations of employers and jobseekers.

As far as the young people are concerned “Generation Z” is clearly different from previous generations, including the “millennials”. This generation is the most technologically advanced group, which influences their behaviour and interests. It is the first global generation not bound to a specific place. While these young people are perhaps more individualistic than previous generations, they are also more pragmatic and attentive.

This generation also faces much uncertainty because nobody knows how jobs will develop. Today’s jobs could be obsolete tomorrow. In the past, there were clearer working structures and long-term contracts, explains Antonio Ranieri. Today, the priority is independence, work autonomy, work-life balance, and flexibility when it comes to working hours and location. Young people are interested in finding personal satisfaction in their work, not just in earning money. However, many people’s

work expectations are too high and diminish over time. “With the current generation, however, we see a big discrepancy between expectations and real possibilities”.

We cannot leave the companies alone in this, says Antonio Ranieri when asked about the company side. The companies bear responsibility, but they are not alone. According to Ranieri, synergies need to be created between all policy levels, and financial incentives and other types of support need to be implemented to promote professional development. Mentors are also important. Companies are faced with the decision of whether to train skilled workers themselves or look for skilled workers on the labour market. “We should do a better job of supporting companies to invest in young people directly”. In Germany this is already happening, with a very structured and standardised approach (the dual system of education and training). However, there is no systemic approach to better support young people in setting realistic and sustainable expectations, important not only for young people but for society as a whole.

TALK 2

THE DUAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF TRANSFORMATION AND CRISIS

When asked about the greatest challenges in the VET system, Professor Dr Esser first names the high demand for skilled workers, which is becoming even more acute in light of demographic developments. From roofers to IT specialists, there is a lack of skilled workers in purely quantitative terms. The second major challenge for the VET system is the current educational trend towards study, i.e. the preference for academic pathways rather than vocational education and training. There is a lack of young people in technical and craft professions in particular. The dual system must be made more attractive.

According to Professor Esser, studies confirm that young people tend to delay making decisions until their 30s. This refers to Hurrelmann’s so-called “EGO tacticians”. Academic education is supposedly far more in line with this attitude than training. In reality, however, this is by no means the case.

Young people know too little about possibilities offered by training. For example, many training occupations are relevant to ongoing transformations in society. In the field of renewable energies, such occupations include electrical engineers, plant technicians, roofers and the 14 green professions, such as the „farm of the future“, which today works completely differently – more digitally – than in the past. These are all jobs of the future. People can change to other professions after the final examination or rake up studies after training. This knowledge needs to be more widely disseminated, says Professor Esser, “we need to do much more to inform young people”.

Vocational orientation, which has developed strongly in Germany, must also be further improved. How can we better prepare young people for decision-making situations? Germany is pursuing the “education chain approach” here. This means that a career potential analysis is already possible in the at the start of the secondary school phase: What do I want?, What can I do?, Where do my interests and talents lie? Targeted internships are then offered based on this analysis. This brings young people and companies into contact, which is important for “matching”. But even better use of the school years could be made to provide insights into the economy and the future. There are two possibilities: Strengthen and consolidate career guidance up to

Prof Dr Friedrich
Hubert Esser
President of the Federal
Institute for Vocational
Education and Training,
BIBB





the end of secondary education or establish an orientation year for training or study after general education so that young people get a taste of different professions. This would give young people time to make a sensible decision.

Professor Esser contradicts this morning's analysis that there are too few training places. There are currently more than 60,000 vacant apprenticeship positions in Germany. "We are talking about an employee or apprentice market", although there are admittedly regional differences. The mobility of young people thus plays a major role, which could be supported with a "trainee ticket" or with "trainee housing" (similar to student dormitories). However, according to Professor Esser, we are facing bad economic times, which could again change the positive assessment made above in terms of the opportunities for apprentices and trainees.

With regard to Europe, it would be highly desirable to Europeanise apprenticeships, so that it becomes possible to complete part of the training in one country and the other part in another country. This already exists with the European initiative EASY VET, a credit point system for vocational qualifications. ERASMUS+ also allows up to nine months training in another European country. However, these are mostly pilot projects with few participants, "small plants that need to be watered in order to be widely implemented".

TALK 3

GOOD PRACTICE FROM BERLIN

Christin Richter:

The Youth Employment Agency is an alliance of many cooperation partners, not only the administrations, who all have one thing in common. "We want young people to have a place to go, that no one gets lost and that everyone finds a training placement". The target group is 15 to 16-year-olds with an intermediate school leaving certificate, as well as secondary school students, i.e. all young people who want to do an apprenticeship in the State of Berlin. The vocational orientation concept in Berlin starts in the first year of secondary school, "already in primary school actually". Hands-on work using machinery, at the scanner checkout in the retail trade or trying out work in geriatric care shows young people very vividly where their interests and abilities lie. In-company work experience, offered in Berlin during the last three

Youth Employment
Agency Berlin

Christin Richter
Senate Department for
Integration, Labour and
Social Services, Berlin

Ralf Jahnke
Senate Department for
Education, Youth and
Family, Berlin

Apprenticeship levy in
Berlin

Kirsten Bagusch-
Sauer mann
Senate Department for
Integration, Labour and
Social Services, Berlin

secondary school years is important. A company orientation year would be desirable, as Professor Esser explained, to also determine “what you don’t want to do”.

Ralf Jahnke:

There are vacancies on the training market, but these are often not the professions that young people want to take up. The butcher’s trade, for example. There is a great need for skilled workers in the city, including in the field of education and health professions. But there is not enough time to work intensively with individual young people on their interests and wishes. Advisers at the Youth Employment Agency have seen that advisory processes take a long time, are more work-intensive than before, and do not lead to immediate results. The time factor and the social acceptance of occupational profiles are important variables in vocational orientation and training placement. The training market in Berlin has certain structural weaknesses. In some professions, for example, the demands of employers have “sharply increased”. According to Mr Jahnke, 36 % to 38 % of the trainees are high school graduates, which is not surprising considering the requirements. In addition, many young people have expectations that do not match their abilities.

In the last school year, moreover, the dominance of exams is so pronounced that many young people do not have the time for career orientation or to complete work experience placements

in addition to exams and exam preparation. All of this takes time, which means the average age of starting an apprenticeship in Berlin is around 21.

Regarding the evaluation of the Youth Employment Agency in Berlin, Christin Richter explains that it has been evaluated since 2015. Of course, there was a desire here for quick results, for high advisory session numbers, and successful placements. But first of all, “especially during the pandemic”, the main issue was reaching young people. Staff surveys also played an important role in the evaluation in order to capture the overall picture, says Christin Richter.

Kirsten Bagusch-Sauermann:

As Senator Kipping already explained in the morning, there are not sufficient training places in Berlin to meet the demand, says Ms Bagusch-Sauermann.

In any case, there is a disproportion of unfilled applicants to unfilled positions in Berlin of 2:1, i.e. concretely: 1,500 unfilled training places and approx. 3,000 unfilled applicants. This means that politics must take action based on a principle of solidarity: on the one hand for young people in the sense of “decent education” and on the other hand for companies that need skilled workers. The whole of society benefits from the levy – we all wait a long time for a tradesman. More and good quality apprenticeships open up more choices for young people.



In response to the question of how the apprenticeship levy would be structured in concrete terms, Kirsten Bagusch-Sauermann explained that the companies would pay into a training fund, with the amount being calculated as a percentage of the sum of their gross salaries. From this fund, training companies are reimbursed for part of their training costs. This financial incentive is intended to motivate companies to provide training. The problem of “matching” would certainly not be solved by the levy, but more training places would also lead to more tailored solutions.

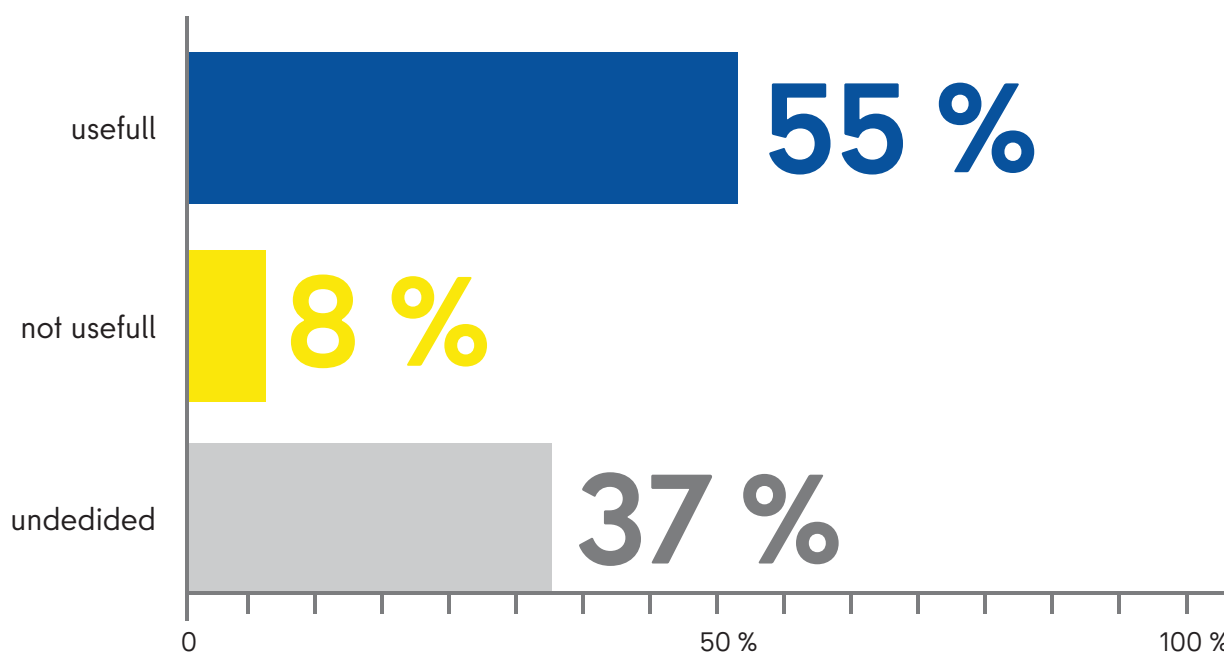
As far as matching is concerned, Ms Bagusch-Sauermann appeals to the responsibility of companies to give young people a chance even if they do not meet all the requirements.

The apprenticeship levy is part of the current government’s coalition agreement. However, the sector-based training levy planned in the coalition agreement soon proved ineffective, Ms Bagusch-Sauermann continued, so that a general solution is now being sought, which should take into account sector specifics.

Since the beginning of the year, the Senate Department has received many suggestions from the Regional Directorate Berlin-Brandenburg, from various experts in this field, from trade unions and employers as well as from guilds, e.g. the chimney sweep guild, in whose areas there are already pay-as-you-go systems in place to control training.

SURVEY

HOW DO YOU LIKE THE IDEA OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION LEVY?



The conference participants took part in the survey „How do you like the idea of vocational education levy?“.

PART II

HOW DO WE BRING COMPANIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Petra Draxl

Austrian Labour Market Service

Dr Peter Koudahl

Aarhus University/
Malmö University

Christoph Möller

Federal Employment Agency,
Berlin Nord

Dr Sher Singh Verick

International Labour
Organization (ILO)

Margrit Zauner

Senate Department for
Integration, Labour and
Social Services, Berlin

PANEL DISKUSSION

From the previous discussions and contributions at the conference, it is clear that people need flexibility in order to achieve a work-life balance and, consequently, to do their job well. It was also emphasised that promoting decent working conditions includes taking mental health into account.

Petra Draxl confirms the topicality and relevance of these statements and demands. However, she currently sees a matter of urgency elsewhere. In times of crisis, higher priority must be given to protection against poverty.

Margrit Zauner emphasises the importance of meaningful work. Yet she also asks who can even afford to have discussions about it. The voice of many precariously employed people is often not represented in discussions. Following on from Senator Kipping, she emphasises that the issues of equal opportunities and distribution should be addressed.

Christoph Möller notes that public discourse has an influence on the labour market by shaping career aspirations and perspectives. Therefore, it is important to create a fundamental desire for a professional future.

Dr Peter Koudahl links the individual perspective with the needs of the labour market and calls for an integrated, individual approach. Qualification and vocational education and training are essential and independent of the chosen profession.

Dr Sher Singh Verick speaks about a period of change. Digital platforms open up opportunities as well as challenges with regard to the quality of work. To shape this change, expectations need to be better understood and incorporated into policy decisions.



A look at European examples of practice will identify success factors that, in the spirit of the conference title, “empower young people through decent work and VET”. Petra Draxl presents the state vocational training guarantee in Austria and Dr Peter Koudahl the training levy from Denmark.

In Austria, young people up to 25 years of age who were unsuccessful in their search for a regular dual training placement have been able to complete an apprenticeship outside of a company since 2017. This is implemented by providers with the aim of quickly (re)integrating young people into companies. The training can also be completed at an inter-company level. While inter-company training serves as a safety net, it is still considered to be of equal value. After a two-year implementation phase, a database was created that shows the people for whom the search was unsuccessful.

In 2021, for example, 3,000 young people did not fulfil the compulsory education requirement, which also led to penalties of €500 per year for about 150-200 people. There are regional matching problems: For example, there is a lack of apprenticeship places in Vienna and there are not enough apprentice dormitories due to mutually inappropriate expectations and

insufficient language skills. According to Petra Draxl, it is important that concepts such as the training guarantee are mutually recognised within Europe. In general, a European idea on the future of vocational education and training is needed alongside the advancing tertiarisation.

In Denmark, with a population of six million, vocational education and training has traditionally been based on cooperation between employers’ and workers’ organisations; companies and trade unions jointly manage the system. The understanding of VET is labour market-oriented and not as an educational mission. With regard to the financing of the training system, a joint responsibility applies. The legal basis for financing consists of an employer-reimbursement system, according to which every company is obliged to pay a contribution. This finances companies’ expenses for the provision of apprenticeship places, as well as support for young people who cannot find an apprenticeship place.

Dr Sher Singh Verick emphasises that beyond the examples described, many good practices from high-quality education systems can be found in Europe. The transfer of good approaches to other countries is the challenge, among other



things because civil society must be involved, and financial and human resources must be used in a targeted manner. It also raises the question of how VET systems can be adapted to current labour market processes such as digitalisation, demographic change, or the concentration of young people in certain occupational fields. Furthermore, he refers to established formats and funding programmes for European exchange during vocational education and training. However, these would have to evolve in nature and, for example, take young refugees into more consideration. European networks for people with disabilities are also needed. They would have to be consulted in order to clarify what support is required.

Margrit Zauner reports on the lack of training places in Berlin. There are still too many young people who have not completed VET and there is long-term unemployment. In addition, employers and young people have different expectations and unrealistic ideas. In order to counter this, Berlin is spending a lot of money, running a youth employment agency, using mentoring programmes, offering career guidance, and promoting practical work experience. Although these measures are time-consuming, support and funding are vital in terms of strengthening democracy and providing skilled labour.

The apprenticeship levy is a good example of companies being made responsible for meeting these challenges. Companies must also recognise the diversity of living conditions and offer young people with health impairments or young refugees equal career prospects. In addition, schools are called on to make young people aware of available opportunities. There are over 300 training occupations in Germany. Even if there are career breaks later on, an apprenticeship is a good start. Young people should get a real insight into practice based on their strengths and interests. People must be given the chance to find their professional path. In view of the fact that education systems reinforce inequalities, work must be done not to leave people behind. This is also in the interest of the economy, which depends on using all talents.

We need to ensure participation opportunities for all young people, especially young people with disabilities, such as, for example, in the Annedore-Leber-Berufsbildungswerk Berlin (ALBBW), which is one of Berlin's largest training centres for young people with disabilities and complex support needs. Employers looking for well-trained specialists will also find what they are looking for there. In most cases, training costs are covered by the Federal Employment Agency.



Christoph Möller points out that there is almost parity between training places and applicants nationwide. For parity to be actually achieved, the offer and the interests of companies and young people would have to be congruent. Since this is not the case, there is matching problem, which arises from the freedom of occupational choice. It reaffirms the relevance of bench learning, i.e. the exchange of good approaches within Europe. It also supports early career orientation so that young people find out where their interests and strengths lie early on. No part of society can tackle these tasks alone, which means companies, schools, parents, etc. must work together in solidarity. Financing requires clear roles for all stakeholders and, despite data protection challenges, inter-agency cooperation. A training (place) guarantee could also serve the purpose of an inclusive VET system. The task of society as a whole is to ensure that everyone participates and that everyone is given the opportunities to do so.

Dr Peter Koudahl agrees with the importance and opportunities of European exchange within VET. However, this exchange has to be organised on an individual basis.

HOW DO WE SUPPORT YOUNG REFUGEES INTEGRATING IN VET AND IN THE LABOUR MARKET?

EXAMPLES FROM BERLIN

Dr Christian
Pfeffer-Hoffmann
Minor-Project Office for
Education and Research,
Berlin



TALK 1

ANALYSIS OF RISKS, CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES TO LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF YOUNG REFUGEES

At the moment, it is not possible to really comment on the labour market integration of refugees from Ukraine; otherwise, according to long-term experience, a good half will be in work after five years, with progress having been made since 2015/2016 compared to earlier periods. Since refugee movements are unpredictable, it is important to build flexible structures and systems to optimise labour market opportunities. This requires changes to legislation, which have also taken place in recent years and under the new federal government, although these are mostly laws at the federal level. One of the main questions is who is and is not allowed to participate in integration courses.

In 2021, approximately 21,000 refugees from the eight most common countries of refugee origin, such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, etc., were in employment, a positive development according to Dr Pfeffer-Hoffmann. The unemployment rate within this group was around 40 %.

To the question of whether five years is not a very long time, Dr Pfeffer-Hoffman answers with the following thought experiment: “Imagine you are forced to flee from Germany to Japan, arrive there and want to work as a facilitator or sociologist, and then you are advised to take a job in elderly care. In addition, you may have had traumatic experiences while fleeing, you may not know the language and have to learn it first, and you may not have wanted to come to this country at all. You have to find housing, possibly find childcare, complete an integration course, get to know

and understand the culture of the country. How long would your integration into the labour market take under these circumstances?” This scenario makes it clear which issues are involved in the field of “integration” and that how much time is needed is very relative and should be assessed individually.

As far as young refugees are concerned, Berlin has achieved a lot in recent years. Almost 1,900 young people who have fled their countries of origin to seek asylum here are currently in VET. It must be remembered that refugees are a very diverse and not a homogeneous group. Career orientation has to start very early. Many young people who come here are integrated into a patriarchal system, in that there is a lot of pre-planning, pre-determination and expectation, which leads to a prevailing “professional pragmatism”: “If someone is wanted in elderly care, then I’ll work in elderly care”. Such labour market integration often leads to quick dropping out.

Successful approaches to action are characterised by multiple stakeholders working well together. When it comes to the integration of refugees into training and the labour market, more partners are needed beyond the usual stakeholders (school, company and parents), to facilitate language learning, for example. Conflicts in the cooperation between civil society and administration must be resolved. Currently, and with regard to refugees from Ukraine, this is working much better than in previous years, “we have learned something new”.

There must be a “political awareness and an administrative awareness” of open, flexible structures and the understanding that one is dependent on the other.

Eight years ago, surveys showed that refugees do not primarily obtain information about their labour market integration from the Federal Employment Agency (BA) or advice centres, but from family, friends, acquaintances, social media and the internet in general. The idea of “Digital Street Work” builds on this: There are Facebook and Instagram groups with hundreds of thousands of refugees, e.g. from Syria, who organise themselves. You have to go in and listen and then make offers. The project “Digital Street Work” does just that and now offers services in 20 languages.

The BA has also learned from the experience. When Ukrainians arrived here in large numbers, the BA realised that the refugees were no longer being automatically assigned. Instead, they were able to choose where they lived. The BA then set up a project, listened to what Ukrainians were saying and advising on the internet, and developed its services for refugees based on this.

It is important not to expect refugees to do all the work, for example by creating a homepage and waiting for people to come, but rather to anticipate their needs instead.



TALK 2

INTEGRATION IN EMPLOYMENT AND VET FROM A COMPANY PERSPECTIVE

Nicolas Bartels
 NETWORK Companies
 integrate refugees, Berlin

Due to the long-standing shortage of skilled workers, certain sectors, such as care, catering and the skilled trades, are already experienced when it comes to integrating refugees into work and VET. The sectors have often found their own approach. However, companies are generally rethinking their strategies, especially since the refugees from Ukraine arrived in Germany. This triggered a new awareness and a wave of solidarity. Some companies also have experience with skilled immigration, because they recruit entire training cohorts abroad, for example. However, skilled immigration is tied to even more bureaucratic requirements than the recruitment of refugees, which is why many are hesitant.

Mr Bartels also considers five years until integration into work or VET to be realistic, because in his experience those who came in 2016 have now settled into work or VET. The state and companies are now “reaping the rewards” from the experience of the last five to six years. Companies have also learned that an approach should not only be made through traditional channels. Instead they attend welcome classes, preparatory courses or accommodation facilities in order to recruit directly at these locations.

The Federal Employment Agency (BA) and the job centres are important cooperation partners for companies, not only because of placement, but above all because of funding opportunities, e.g. for language acquisition and labour market skills or knowledge of the German education system. Furthermore, relationships with vocational schools are important, because if things do not go so well in the training, this usually concerns the school-based part of the training rather than the company-based part. The immigration authorities are another important partner, for example when it comes to extending residence permits. Finally, networks, “such as ours”, play a role as cooperation partners for companies.

Factors for success are a strategic and long-term approach as opposed to “knee-jerk actions” that usually achieve little. Integration must be a matter for the boss; the topic must be carried into the company by the management and practised in an exemplary manner, and employees must be involved. The point is to take the questions and concerns of employees seriously in advance and, if possible, to dispel them. Because integration is easier with a “we-feeling” in a positive atmosphere. Another success factor is the holistic support of trainees, i.e. support that includes both the professional and private spheres. Companies that make the effort, for example, to help people find accommodation, accompany them to the immigration office, provide assistance in opening a bank account or in the recognition of certificates, are more successful.

Companies that see the integration of refugees as too much of an extra expense that they feel they cannot afford are less successful. They do not recognise the opportunity that arises when a company opens itself to the refugee group in the long term. It is worthwhile for companies to adapt their recruiting and onboarding process, e.g. with a specialised dictionary.

The initial extra effort pays off later, as such companies become more attractive employers.



Margrit Zauner
Department Head
“Work and Vocational
Education and
Training”, Senate
Department for Inte-
gration, Labour and
Social Services, Berlin



TALK 3

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN BERLIN - EXPERIENCES AND APPROACHES TO TRAINING AND LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION IN BERLIN

Management and the entire Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Services changed gears very quickly and got very involved “when thousands of people from Ukraine suddenly came to us”. For example, colleagues from the crisis team acquired 1,000 additional overnight accommodation places per day for a month and organised cooperation with volunteers at Berlin’s main railway station. New administrative structures and a new kind of helpfulness emerged. However, these were based on many years of experience with the integration of refugees, especially from the 2015/2016 refugee movement, but also further back. Berlin is home to people from 160 nations and can look back on centuries of refugee movement.

Berlin was also able to build on existing structures in the integration of refugees, such as the system of independent educational advice, which could then be expanded to include the specific requirements and tasks for refugees. Experience in outreach work was also already available and was expanded to include multilingual advisory services. The ARRIVO project, for example, offers practical ways to integrate into work and to make contact with companies.

The refugees from Ukraine, predominantly women and children, brought new skill sets with them: e.g. digitalisation is clearly very advanced in Ukraine, “many well-qualified people came (and are coming) to us”.

According to Margrit Zauner, we can draw on Berlin’s evolved culture of cooperation for successful integration. This resulted in, for example, a task force and a telephone hotline for recognition in Ukrainian, Turkish and English. The idea was born in June and has already been implemented; “administrative action can also go fast sometimes”. The BA, the IHK and others were involved. The core challenge that becomes clear from such examples is the “ability to solve problems quickly and collaboratively”.

Since 2015, the Senate Department has increasingly learned from its experiences with refugees, new forms of cooperation have emerged, and joint structures have been established. The State of Berlin has also often boldly gone ahead while other federal states hesitated - taking action is what it’s all about!

But cities are also particularly well equipped for this, as they are often the result of migration and have centuries of experience with refugees.

Ms Zauner concludes: “When the refugees who came to us in 2015 now help Ukrainians, that is what makes a good urban society.”

JOINT FINAL DISCUSSION

Nicolas Bartels
 NETWORK Companies
 integrate refugees, Berlin

**Dr Christian
 Pfeffer-Hoffmann**
 Minor-Project Office for
 Education and Research,
 Berlin

Margrit Zauner
 Senate Department for
 Integration, Labour and
 Social Services, Berlin

Nicolas Bartels

„The “NETWORK Companies integrate refugees” receives positive feedback about the integration of Ukrainians. Language acquisition goes hand in hand with employment. Contrary to popular belief, it is possible to start early with labour market integration. The initial reluctance to see refugees as professionals and not only as seekers of protection has quickly faded.

In Berlin, the rapid issuance of work permits contributed to this. This was not the case in other parts of Germany, which led companies to call for uniform regulations.

There was occasional feedback from companies that this was not the case with people from Afghanistan, for example, who were to be hired. However, companies need pragmatic solutions – all over Germany. There is still a lot of potential here!

Dr Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann

Migration is and will always be a fact of life. The number of refugees from all parts of the world is currently increasing. Since the crises and flow of refugees are not going to stop, structures must be adapted and made more flexible. Multilingualism and digitalisation play a role here. No employment service institution is at present able to offer online advice in several languages.

We cannot continue to insist that all refugees adapt to our (VET) system. We must take a closer look at what people bring with them instead, says Dr Pfeffer-Hoffmann. We must also be aware of the fact that German is one of the four most difficult languages in the world. It is therefore important to break away from the status quo and build bridges.

Margrit Zauner

Especially when looking at the labour market integration of people with a migration background, it is important to question the weighting of the various responsible ministries. The Home Affairs department has more weight than the Labour department. This should be reversed, as the deportation of well-trained care workers demonstrates.

Overall, we need to become more flexible in order to better balance a good mix between the humanitarian approach of providing protection to people after they have fled on the one hand and labour market integration on the other. Both sides must be appreciated and valued. That in itself would be a great achievement.

CLOSING REMARKS

Margrit Zauner
Department Head
“Work and Vocational
Education and Training”,
Senate Department for
Integration, Labour and
Social Services, Berlin

Margrit Zauner summarises the four stations of today’s “journey” during the conference:

1. HOW CAN WE GUARANTEE DECENT WORK AND GOOD VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE?
2. EMPLOYMENT AND VET - WHAT PROSPECTS DO YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE IN TIMES OF TRANSFORMATION AND CRISIS?
3. HOW DO WE BRING COMPANIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER?
4. HOW DO WE SUPPORT YOUNG REFUGEES INTEGRATING IN VET AND IN THE LABOUR MARKET?

There were many very interesting and stimulating contributions, starting with the keynote speech by EU Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, who sent strong signals from the EU Commission with his comment that no generation should be lost and his remarks on the strengthened Youth Guarantee.

The European Year of Youth was the common thread of this conference. Next year, the European Commission will declare the „European Year of Skills“ and youth will again play a major role.

Margrit Zauner emphasises the significance of such conferences for the State of Berlin. On the one hand, these give Berlin a platform to present approaches and instruments in the European framework and, on the other hand, to learn from others in terms of how they deal with similar issues and challenges. “There were many opportunities for exchange and mutual learning today”.



It was also important to talk to young people, not just about them.

- The European Youth Guarantee is an important tool that should be discussed even more in expert circles and implemented in even more European states and regions.
- Joint action in Europe, with multi-level governance as a guiding principle, is of great importance.
- This means that a better dovetailing of the EU, national, regional and local levels would be desirable.
- Both the voices of the social partners and greater involvement of youth organisations are needed for the issues raised.
- We need decent work, collective labour relations, minimum training wages, more representation and the resources to do it.
- Flexible and easily adaptable programmes and tools that offer support to young people before, during and after VET are important.
- The empowerment of young people through good, targeted and approachable career guidance as 1:1 advice, on-site and online, especially also in crisis situations, is of central importance.

- The solidarity-based approaches to improve training we heard about today, the apprenticeship levy in Denmark and the training guarantee in Austria were very inspiring.

Margrit Zauner hopes that the conference was stimulating and enabled mutual learning for all those who participated on site or via livestream.

Finally, she thanks the speakers, the participants and all those who contributed to the success of the conference and reminds everyone that a conference report will be available later.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE







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Senate Department
for Integration, Labour
and Social Services

BERLIN



Oranienstraße 106
10969 Berlin
Tel. (030) 9028-0
www.berlin.de/sen/ias/
pressestelle@senias.berlin.de

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