

Learning – developing – improving together

Dear readers,

In times of globalisation and worldwide mobility, the sharing of knowledge, exchange of experience and cooperation on an international level are matters of general concern. This is particularly true in vocational education and training, where international exchange among practitioners and scholars has been greatly enhanced over the past few decades. Around the world, vocational education systems are faced with the challenge of offering qualifications tailored to the needs of the labour market and meeting the requirements of trade and industry for skilled workers. Due to demographic developments, meeting the increased demand for skilled labour has become of the utmost importance. Thus, there is barely any vocational education system that is not undergoing reform efforts in order to improve quality and outcomes, to make qualifications more employment-oriented and more closely aligned with the world of work.

In light of these ongoing processes of reforming and adapting VET systems, exchange, networking and international cooperation are matters of particular concern and interest to the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). Founded more than 40 years ago, the BIBB is a governmental institution under legal supervision of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF). It is well established as a national centre of competence for policy, research, and practice in the field of initial and continuing vocational education and training in Germany. Within its core activities, BIBB offers advice on the development and modernisation of vocational education and training on a national and international level. BIBB's annual data report represents a key publication for monitoring the German VET system. The Institute initiates and maintains networks with partner institutes in more than 30 countries abroad. It hosts high-ranking international delegations, thus offering a forum for exchange between researchers, education practitioners and policymakers.

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Throughout the world, the German system of vocational education and training has an excellent reputation. Germany's dual system is even recognised as setting an international benchmark in work-based learning, acceptance of national training and quality standards, and cooperation between state, private sector and social partners. Yet it takes continuous efforts to foster its efficiency and competitiveness. While looking for the best and most suitable solutions to our challenges in German VET, such as securing skills or facilitating permeability, international cooperation and collaboration also offer the chance to discover new ideas and perspectives. Discussion and exchange advance knowledge transfer and promote innovation, providing benefits for all partners involved, and for this reason, opportunities for dialogue and joint learning are crucial.

Accordingly, BIBB's German language journal "Berufsbildung in Wissenschaft und Praxis" (Vocational Training in Research and Practice), in general referred to as BWP, constitutes a periodical for exchange between scholars and practitioners in vocational education and training. As such, it is meant to spread news, experiences, research findings and relevant results of pilot projects within the professional and academic community.

The articles compiled in this special edition, all of which were published in BWP in recent months, offer an overview of current trends and developments within the German system of vocational education and training, with a particular focus on questions of skills shortage, permeability and monitoring VET. By making them available in English, we wish to foster the exchange of ideas and experiences about VET on an international level in order to give new impulses for the discussion and development of vocational education and training.

Enjoy the reading!