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## Editorial: Vocational education and training – new challenges

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Dear readers,

This special English edition of BIBB's German-language journal "Berufsbildung in Wissenschaft und Praxis" (Vocational Training in Research and Practice), generally referred to as BWP, highlights some of the recent challenges to be discussed within the professional community and by the interested public at large. The articles compiled in this special edition have been well chosen and published in English in the hope of giving you an insight into current trends and developments within the German system of vocational education and training (VET).

Currently, the challenging situation in regard to high youth unemployment in Europe – constantly reflected by the monthly Eurostat figures – and in many countries turns a spotlight on Germany's dual VET system that combines work-based learning with part-time schooling and leads to quite good employment rates after finishing initial training and receiving a nationally recognised certificate as a skilled worker. According to the latest figures published in our annual data report, each year the majority of young people in Germany still opt for a career start in the VET system that is epitomised by joint responsibility and stake-holding between government, companies and social partners.

And yet, in order to keep our VET system attractive in terms of employability and career opportunities, continuous efforts are needed to maintain and foster its efficiency and competitiveness. However, there is always potential for improvement. Some of these challenges are raised by the focal topics of this special edition, referring as it does to the issues of inclusive education to support VET for disadvantaged young people, or of integrating digital media for learning in the process of work and training. Moreover, in April 2012 a new federal law came into existence supporting the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in Germany. The implementation of this law requires not only excellent knowledge of VET systems in other countries and their respective certificates but also transparency regarding the

qualifications and learning outcomes to be certified. Particularly concerning the validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences, the stakeholders in Germany still have a good part of the work ahead of them. However, this kind of transparency is needed to support mobility in vocational education and training as well as to further develop our national qualifications framework. Thanks to a number of joint efforts in the last few years, Germany has raised the percentage of trainees spending some weeks of their apprenticeship abroad to 4 %, although this is still a long way from the envisaged national benchmark of 10 %.

We point out these examples to encourage our respected readers to further improve vocational education and training. In times of shortages of skilled workers and middle management employees, the dual system of VET offers an option for reforms towards work-based learning and employability. In this respect, the BIBB – Germany's Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training – assumes responsibility for disseminating the main principles of the dual VET system internationally. While taking part in relevant discussions at national, European and international levels, we exchange arguments, continuously update our state-of-the-art knowledge and gain experience in international advisory services. Henceforth, all this will be beneficial to us in complying with the government's objective of establishing the central office for international VET cooperation in Germany within our institute.

Enjoy your reading!