

Madam Minister of State,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The participants at our 6th BIBB Vocational Training Congress which was held here in Berlin in September under the motto "Developing competences – Opening up opportunities" all agreed that our task in the future will be to open up and develop existing potential and guide each individual to the highest level of education possible for them.

This also formulates a very ambitious vision for vocational education and training in the year 2020! Achieving this will not be so much a matter of inventing new ideas or concepts – that was the focus of the last decade.

In the years until 2020 our focus must be on systematically implementing the good ideas and concepts that we already have – such as those from the German government's National Action Plan or the new agreements reached as part of the National Pact to Promote Training and Young Skilled Workers – and on implementing them in ways that are geared to sustainability.

In this connection, we are – seen from a vocational training policy standpoint – going beyond the question of how we can improve integration and participation and tying into the problems posed by the current demographic trend along with the question of suitable strategies for securing a sufficient pool of skilled labour

This is important because Germany will have approximately one million fewer school leavers by the year 2020 and some four million fewer gainfully-employed persons by the year 2025!

At the same time, demographic change means not only that there will be fewer and fewer youths and that society will consequently become older on average. Demographic change also means that our society will become more 'colourful' in terms of the descent of its members and the educational background, attitudes and abilities young people offer nowadays.

For example, in 2008 approximately 20% of all 30-to-54-year-olds in Germany had an immigrant background. This figure was nearly 31% for persons under the age of 15.

Moreover, the share of persons with an immigrant background has risen sharply in urban conglomerations. Today more than half of all children and youths under the age of 15 in some cities in Germany's western states have an immigrant background. In some cities, such as Frankfurt am Main, the share of children under the age of three who have an immigrant background already exceeds 70%.

Given these figures it is quite clear that we must have an intrinsic interest in ensuring the successful integration of our fellow citizens – without constantly separating them, something we in fact always do in analyses.

This is because the call to develop all potential is not limited just to persons with an immigrant background. We principally have to direct our attention to all young people who, due to their educational background, attitudes, abilities and/or unfavourable conditions, fail to meet the demands placed on them on their path to adulthood and the working world without difficulty. And these young people are usually young people from a 'milieu' where education is not important. In other words, from families whose parents in many cases have not completed their secondary schooling or have not earned formal vocational qualification. However, in this group of persons who are at risk of failure, young people with an immigrant background continue to be over-represented.

### **The problem and the facts**

A look at the level of participation in education shows that small children with an immigrant background are found less often in day-care centres than small children who do not have an immigrant background. Upon reaching kindergarten age, the vast majority of all children with an immigrant background – namely, 85% – attend kindergarten. This figure is 95% among children who do not have an immigrant background.

The low socio-economic status of the individual's family which often goes hand-in-hand with an immigrant background also plays a role in the transition to primary school. An above-average proportion of children from such families is held back.

These differences continue to be observed in the transition to secondary school. For example, the share of 15-year-old pupils who go on to attend upper secondary school is much larger among those who do not have an immigrant background – namely 37% – compared to just 22% of those pupils who have at least one parent who was born abroad.

Furthermore, pupils with an immigrant background are more than twice as likely to attend a lower secondary school than pupils who do not have an immigrant background. In this connection we have measured shares of 36% and 16% respectively.

Correspondingly, at the end of their secondary schooling, a larger proportion of youths with an immigrant background holds a school leaving certificate from a lower secondary school and a smaller proportion has earned qualification to attend a university of applied sciences than youths who do not have an immigrant background.

Based on this, it is also absolutely possible to formulate the argument that our school system is not sufficiently successful in resolving social disparities and consequently immigration-related disparities in education.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The findings from the current Shell study tally with the findings from the BIBB Transition Study, namely that upon leaving secondary school young people in Germany – regardless of whether they have an immigrant background – are very interested in "undergoing qualified vocational training and being successful in one's occupation". They also differ only slightly in terms of their education preferences. Some 60% of school leavers – with or without an immigrant background – aim for in-company vocational training. One out of every ten wants to start training at a full-time vocational school.

Most school leavers – both with and without an immigrant background – who do not have qualification to enter university want in fact to start vocational training directly after completing their secondary schooling. However, a great number of them do not achieve this. The most important reasons for this are, firstly, a lack of training places and, secondly, the fact that many youths seeking a training place do not have the fundamental knowledge and attitudes required for successful vocational training.

However, here as well, youths who have an immigrant background and have not earned qualification to enrol in a university have special problems making the transition to vocational training, as the BIBB Transition Study documents. According to the findings from this study, fewer of these youths start in-company vocational training in the first two years after leaving secondary school than their counterparts who do not have an immigrant background. In the case of youths who hold a school leaving certificate from an intermediate secondary school and have an immigrant background, the share of individuals in this group who start in-company vocational training soon after their secondary schooling is 30%. By contrast, 45% of youths who do not have an immigrant background begin vocational training within a short time – in other words, a markedly larger share!

When we look at Germany's 'transition system', we find that 39% of the school leavers from lower secondary schools who have an immigrant background enter the transition system compared to 36% of their counterparts who do not have an immigrant background. In this case, the difference is smaller.

These differences are however considerably larger among youths with a school leaving certificate from an intermediate secondary school. Here only 16% of those who do not have an immigrant background attend training measures offered through the 'transition system' compared to 27% of those who have an immigrant background, a markedly larger share.

Even though the term 'transition system' generally evokes negative connotations here in Germany, I would also like to point out the positive effects of measures aimed at facilitating the transition at the 'first threshold' in the education system.

For example, youths with an immigrant background use transition measures just as often non-immigrants to earn school-leaving qualification or a higher level of school-leaving qualification. A total of 29% of youths with an immigrant background and 28% without an immigrant background succeed in this.

Still, after completing a programme offered through the 'transition system', a smaller share of youths with an immigrant background end up undergoing vocational training.

Within 12 months of completing a training measure offered through the 'transition system', only 44% of youths with an immigrant background start a training programme that leads to full vocational qualification. By comparison, this figure is 63% for young people without an immigrant background.

So it is also no surprise that in the group of young adults who have not earned formal vocational qualification, young people with an immigrant background are markedly over-represented – with slightly more than 50%.

### **Causes / Background**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Only part of the differences in the level of participation in education can be explained by the often poorer performance in school or the less favourable social circumstances of people with an immigrant background. Even when their educational and social circumstances are the same and the conditions on the local training place market are the same, young people with an immigrant background in Germany have poorer prospects for undergoing vocational training that leads to full vocational qualification than do young people who do not have an immigrant background.

Further, research indicates that the attitude enterprises have toward the issues of integration and immigration can also have a negative impact on the chances young people with an immigrant background have of undergoing vocational training.

### **Consequences**

Irrespective of the degree to which personal or structural factors are operative, the diversity of these factors shows that, in order to be effective, countermeasures must focus on a variety of points. This is because the previously-mentioned difficulties facing young people with an immigrant background exist even when conditions on the training market have eased, as is currently the situation.

The BA/BIBB 2010/2011 Applicant Survey shows that applicants with an immigrant background who have the fundamental knowledge and attitudes necessary for successful vocational training and who have completed intermediate secondary school are less likely to end up undergoing in-company vocational training than other applicants who offer the same educational prerequisites but do not have an immigrant background.

This means first of all that we all must work – as a task for all of society, so to speak – on opening ourselves up more to people with an immigrant background and, in the process, dismantle prejudices which still exist to a greater or lesser degree.

In this connection, intercultural competence is **the** key qualification for today's knowledge society – a qualification which we must promote from the ground up in all levels of the education system, starting in pre-school and continuing through vocational training and higher education.

When this fundamental condition has been fulfilled, we need – in keeping with our guiding principle of 'prevent rather than fix' – effective forms of assistance and need-based support right from the start, namely through low-threshold offerings beginning already in the preschool field.

This also means that kindergartens, schools and educational facilities must involve parents on a targeted basis, that the transparency of education and vocational training paths must be improved and that good support must be provided for the transition from one level to the next.

Secondary schools must ensure that their graduates have the prerequisites necessary for undergoing vocational training and must therefore commence transition management at an early point in time, working together with partners in trade and industry.

Here I strongly urge implementing the German government's Education Chains programme which will be backed up correspondingly by the Vocational Orientation Programme that is being managed by BIBB.

Implementing this programme is important because if we want to 'shape transitions', this will require favourable conditions – namely, regional structures which help young people make a systematic start in an occupation. In other words, structures in which the different offerings from various stakeholders in the school system, trade, industry and local governments 'on the ground' are coordinated with one another based on actual need, if necessary by a competent authority.

The tasks to be carried out by these structures include not only establishing transparency in regional education and training options but also drawing up a systematic 'balance sheet' to determine their effectiveness.

Network structures have to be set up and progressively developed in Germany's various regions. We are talking here about regional education networks, in other words, a form of networking which is based on continuity, relies on cooperation and takes place between equals.

These networks should benefit everyone involved: "Create a win-win situation" as the saying goes – but this is easier said than done.

When we recall that each of the educational institutions involved fulfils its own educational mandate and must do so on the basis of different laws and regulations, this doesn't sound like an easy task. In light of this, we need more linkage between the people in charge on the ground and less separation. What we certainly do not need is a ban on cooperation on the ground!

Joint transition management is called for. In the individual regions, it should be organised with the aim of having the 'transition system' become smaller and smaller!

Three steps constitute the main levers in the transition system:

1. An analysis of potential in pupils in year seven of school to identify aptitude, inclinations and talents, with a view to the individuals' possible occupational interests.
2. Tying into this: the provision of systematic vocational guidance services, incorporating other learning environments in the respective region, particularly the training centres operated by trade and industry. At these facilities, occupations can be presented on a hands-on basis, making vocational guidance a very concrete matter without forcing youths to commit themselves at an early point in time. This would make it possible to prepare training decisions on a longer-term basis.
3. The use of volunteer mentors and paid full-time mentors to provide youths additional assistance. Youths will be able to establish contact with a company at an earlier point in time. Since mentors are training professionals and are consequently well-accepted by enterprises, their involvement also makes the contact between the individual company and pupil more binding. Teachers are included in these activities and also have a coordinating function.

Furthermore the special educational and socialising setting that enterprises offer is particularly important for a successful start to vocational training and working life, particularly for young people with an immigrant background.

For precisely this reason, it is good that the partners in Germany's National Pact for Training and Young Skilled Workers have set themselves the goal of getting more youths with an immigrant background into vocational training.

Likewise, convincing more enterprises which are owned by persons with an immigrant background to provide in-company vocational training must also be a task for each and every one of us.

Important impetus when recruiting such companies could be provided by, for example, the AEVO [Ordinance on Trainer Aptitude] courses which are geared to the special learning needs of foreign employers or aspiring trainers, and which some chambers already offer.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
A final thought:

The process of guiding youths to vocational training and the actual provision of vocational training can also be understood and organised as a means of fostering talent.

Advancing individuals with talent begins – and not only in the field of sport – with tapping existing potential! The reason for this is that not every talent is easily recognised or makes itself noticed without an external inducement.

Some talents are waiting to be discovered and some people need to be made aware of their talent.

If we could succeed in developing and expanding vocational orientation services and vocational training into talent factories throughout the country this would be good for our shared aim and would be particularly good for youths with an immigrant background.

Thank you for your attention.

The data used in this report was taken from the following sources:

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- *Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung [Ed.]*  
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