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## EDITORIAL

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### **Keep all occupations within the system – including healthcare!**

Dear readers,

The “Educational Republic of Germany” is evolving into a reality. After years of stagnation in the education and training sector, Germany is back in a phase of educational expansion. By way of evidence, participation in education and training is higher than average, and university entrants in the year 2010 made up 45 per cent of their age cohort. This means that the share of young people working towards an academic qualification has risen by more than ten percentage points within ten years. In the long term a university entrant ratio of just under 50 per cent can be assumed, which would be approximately double the 1995 level. Nevertheless, vigilance is essential.

### **Future shortages at the intermediate qualification level**

While first-semester students are currently filling university lecture rooms to overflowing, the number of newly concluded training contracts is falling. Assuming that the same trends persist into the future, the university intake will rise not only as a share of the age-cohort but also in absolute terms. Meanwhile numbers at the intermediate qualification level will decline. BIBB/IAB studies show that in the next few years there will be a gradually rising oversupply of skilled workers with academic qualifications. But there will still be skilled-worker shortages, according to the BIBB/IAB forecasts, particularly at the intermediate qualification level. Owing to demographic effects and rising university entrant ratios, employees with these qualifications will become a shrinking segment of the junior workforce. Depending on immigration patterns, they may fall short of demand even before 2020, and by 2025 at the latest. In terms of job-qualification matching, a demand surplus emerges for health occupations in particular up to the year 2030.

Against this backdrop, the EU Commission’s proposal to demand certification of twelve years of school-based education as an entry requirement for nursing training is puzzling, considering that such a rule would further exacerbate the skilled-worker shortage in the health sector.

## **Take advantage of the dual system!**

In this broad context, there seem to be two very significant messages from the viewpoint of vocational education and training:

**1. Educational expansion must not bypass the dual system!** As desirable as high university entrant ratios may be, if they result in a slump in Germany's intermediate skilled-worker level and perhaps a rising student drop-out rate, then it serves nobody any good. There is no other country in Europe in which industry and the skilled crafts are so significant for economic productivity as in Germany. For example, German industry's share of value creation is around 26 per cent as opposed to an EU average of closer to 19.5 per cent. Prompt implementation of the German national qualifications framework (DQR) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is urged, because it is a way of making clear that more advanced, and hence better, education and training is not a question of the type of qualification but the competence level acquired in the course of training, whether at university or in the vocational sector. For the further expansion of education and training in Germany, more people are needed with qualifications at DQR/EQF levels 5, 6, 7 or 8 – but not necessarily more students at universities; qualifications at this high level can be gained in the vocational education and training sector, too!

**2. Create appropriate career-progression models to counteract the bias towards academic occupational qualifications!** Higher standards in the world of work do not necessarily imply that training for certain occupations must be academic. Scope can be found for the kind of curriculum revision required if qualification requirements in the health occupations are elaborated within a framework of new career-progression models. Within these models, initial and advanced vocational education are systematically interlinked, and achievement of the second upgrading training level enables transition onto relevant degree programmes. And all occupations are kept within the system. Far from clinging to old structures, the point of this is to continue taking advantage of the dual system, which benefits Germany's economy and society in a way that is unique in the world!

Translation: Deborah Shannon, Academic Text and Translation, Norwich