SUCCESS AROUND THE WORLD WITH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE DUAL SYSTEM

Best practices from eleven countries
Welcome | The VETnet Project

Vocational education and training (VET) geared to the requirements of modern production processes boosts innovation and competitiveness in companies, and enables its graduates to kick-start their career. The continued international interest in our model of vocational education and training in the dual system highlights the benefits of work-based learning. German companies abroad are also increasingly turning to the dual system of vocational education and training and agreeing to take on some responsibility. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) supports this development on a political level through advisory and cooperation offers, and on a practical level through the initiation and promotion of pilot projects to organise work-based training at German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs).

In 2013 the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) launched the strategy project “VETnet – German Chambers worldwide network for cooperative, work-based Vocational Education and Training”. I am delighted that, in its second phase, this project has now been expanding pilot projects in partner countries of the BMBF cooperation in vocational education and training, thereby demonstrating that VET in the dual system can function under real conditions and closely aligned to the demand of the economy. In recent years many examples have evolved into action-guiding models to which partner governments look to re-orient their VET structures.

We are pleased that we have been able to build up this example and support function together with the DIHK and the AHKs, and wish you an interesting read and inspiring impetus for the further development of workplace-oriented teaching and learning.

Dr. Oliver Heikaus,
Managing Director
Continuing Vocational Training, Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Vocational education and training in the dual system is not only a key factor in securing the leading position of German companies in the global competition. It also offers young people promising prospects for the future, which is evidenced not least by the low youth unemployment in Germany. It therefore comes as no surprise that this successful concept has met with broad interest across Europe and around the world.

Many German companies have branches abroad and wish to rely on qualified skilled workers located there. This is why numerous Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs) have expanded their vocational training provision in recent years.

As a showcase for ‘Made in Germany’ vocational education and training, they may also provide stimulus for national vocational training reforms in the respective countries.

The strategy project VETnet, in which BMBF and DIHK have been cooperating for five years, also helps to write success stories for vocational education and training abroad. In the eleven partner countries, in which the BMBF promotes the AHKs within the framework of the project, it becomes apparent that key elements of VET can also work abroad – from the training commitment of companies to the qualification of in-company trainers and quality-assured examinations.

With around 800 participating companies and 7,400 apprentices, the project has also produced numerous ambassadors. This brochure gives an insight into eleven ‘shop windows’ of vocational education and training in the dual system abroad and is a striking demonstration of what has been achieved within the scope of VETnet. A solid basis for further success stories!

Susanne Burger,
Director for European Affairs, Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Dr. Oliver Heikaus,
Managing Director
Continuing Vocational Training, Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry
The VETnet project
Success around the world with vocational education and training in the dual system

VETnet highlights

Clustering
Best practice USA

Training regulation
Best practice Russia

Vocational education and training as a service
Best practice Italy

Examiner training and examination committees
Best practice Thailand

'Train the Trainer' training (AdA)
Best practice India

Image of VET in the dual system
Best practice Portugal

IHK-AHK partnerships
Best practice Slovakia

Pilot projects
Best practice Greece

Examinations and certification
Best practice Mexico

Platform for partners
Best practice China

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The VETnet project | Success around the world with vocational training

THE VETnet PROJECT

SUCCESS AROUND THE WORLD WITH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE DUAL SYSTEM

The faces behind the project: The VETnet colleagues in the eleven AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce in their countries are prepared to answer any questions about vocational education and training in the dual system based on the German model.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has supported the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) project “VETnet – German Chambers worldwide network for cooperative, work-based Vocational Education and Training” since October 2013. The coordination is provided by DIHK Service GmbH. VETnet is a strategy project of international cooperation in vocational education and training, based on bilateral agreements for in-depth cooperation in vocational education and training between the Federal German Government and the governments of eleven partner countries. VETnet also engages in a close exchange with other partners in international VET cooperation.

ELEVEN PARTNER COUNTRIES

The project is being implemented by the Chambers of Commerce abroad (AHKs) and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce in eleven countries: China, Greece, India, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Thailand and the USA. The AHKs fulfill their role as foreign trade promoters by securing the skilled labour demand of (German) industry locally through demand- and business-oriented offers for vocational education and training in the dual system. In so doing, the AHKs use the extensive experience of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (IHKs) and the DIHK.

AIMS

As part of the VETnet project, the eleven AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce create pilot projects with local companies to implement vocational education and training in the dual system in practice. Thus, VETnet demonstrates a practical example of the benefits of vocational training in the dual system, and creates awareness of these benefits. The practice demonstrated is intended to encourage emulation and to make it tangible as an idea for educational policy and structural changes in the countries.

Through the dissemination of expertise within the network of German industry and, above all, through partnerships between AHKs and IHKs, the ‘Made in Germany’ quality assurance of vocational training in the dual system will be a local success: For example, in-company trainers and examiners will be trained locally and examinations are carried out based on German standards.

Last but not least, German foreign trade will be sustainably promoted by VETnet. VETnet will help companies to train their own specialists abroad. This also contributes to reducing youth unemployment, especially in EU countries.

FIVE YEARS OF VETNET – LOOKING BACK

This publication looks back on five years of intensive project work. There are success stories in every country. Basically, vocational education and training in the dual system abroad is not an exact replication of the German dual model, as all locations bring country-specific features and challenges with them. The paths leading the AHKs to their success stories are therefore individual. This publication presents examples of VETnet success stories based on eleven possible systemic elements of the vocational education and training in the dual system abroad.

Source: AHK Slovakia
Most occupations are found in the trade and technical areas. However, in recent years there has been a growing diversity of occupations. For example, the IT and logistics sectors are currently also offering vocational education and training in the dual system with VETnet AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce.

The demand for skilled workers is highest in industry, which is why most apprentices are trained here. But less well-known professions, such as shoemaker and retail trade occupations are also part of the repertoire abroad.

A solid, growing stock of companies is training in the dual system within the framework of VETnet along with the AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce. Companies that get on board also remain! And the success spreads: often, the suppliers of large companies join the vocational training in the dual system shortly afterwards.

Apprentices are the best ambassadors for the dual system of vocational education and training. VETnet has 7,400 of them! They are living examples that VET in the dual system is a good start to a professional career – and without oil-smeared hands, too.
Examinations based on the German model are conducted in an action-and practice-oriented manner. The focus is on the skills required in the profession, which the apprentice should have acquired by the end of his/her VET in the dual system. A successful AHK-DHK certification of the examination passed serves for quality assurance.

It is often the case abroad that only the vocational school teachers act as examiners. VETnet embodies the concept of voluntary examiners from companies and vocational schools. Trained examiners ensure the quality of the 'Made in Germany' VET in the dual system and accept employment-oriented examinations.

Many countries are unfamiliar with the role of in-company trainers. Train the Trainer training (AdA International) at the AHKs helps to pilot the role of a learning facilitator based on the German model.

They offer solutions for success and dual VET services. Basically, VET in the dual system abroad is not an exact copy of the German model, but a regional concept of success. The AHKs are partners working side by side with the (German) companies locally.
TRAINING CLUSTER AS A WAY TO SECURE A WORKFORCE

By Nicole Heimann

In the current ‘German American Business Outlook 2018’, more than 90% of companies surveyed state that the skilled workforce shortage is the biggest challenge for their business development in the USA. This is especially true for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are also the backbone of the economy in the USA and make up the majority of GACC South member companies.

This is where VET in the dual system can help. The first major corporations, such as Volkswagen Group of America Chattanooga Operations, LLC, Tennessee, for example, launched apprenticeship programs based on the German model back in 2011, together with GACC South. For SMEs, access to these programmes was difficult initially due to their limited financial and human resources.

GACC IN PILOT FUNCTION

Since 2013, GACC South has been forming regional apprenticeship clusters that have yielded benefits for SMEs, in particular. Companies of all sizes and disciplines interested in apprenticeship programs or training based on the German model have organized themselves under the umbrella of the GACC, which assumes a pilot function. It guides the companies involved through all the necessary steps, such as identifying the appropriate profession, translating and adapting the respective Ordinance of Vocational Training Mentors, and providing support in the practical implementation of the apprenticeship system. These apprenticeship clusters offer further added value for companies by allowing those that are unable to map the full content to utilize network partners.

The GACC South is currently operating and coordinating several successful apprenticeship-clusters nationwide. The fastest growing cluster is the Georgia Consortium for Advanced Technical Training (GA CATT), founded in 2016.

APPRENTICESHIP CLUSTERS BRING BENEFITS FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED

Political leaders are also convinced of the success of the GACC training clusters. “In partnership with the German American Chamber of Commerce, we have developed and implemented the Georgia Consortium for Advanced Technical Training (GA CATT) program, an innovative and industry-focused approach to education and workforce development that is the first of its kind in our nation. We are experiencing great economic successes in our communities where industries cluster together to model apprenticeships after Germany’s dual education system - redefining the role of public education and creating a highly-skilled and robust workforce that is second to none,” said Casey Cagle, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Georgia and one of the co-founders of the GACATT apprenticeship consortium.

GACC’s apprenticeship clusters are garnering attention across the US and six participating companies have been awarded top prizes for innovative training programs. Grenzebach Corporation being awarded as ‘Georgia Manufacturer of the Year 2017’, is an additional motivation for Pleyer: “This is the best way to secure our business and competitiveness while providing great career opportunities. There is no better way for manufacturing companies to come by a skilled workforce.”

BEST PRACTICE FOR A TRAINING CLUSTER: GA CATT

Martin Pleyer, COO of Grenzebach Corporation in Newnan, Georgia, saw an urgent need for action due to the lack of skilled workforce in his company. The average age in production was 48 years. “Our employees run very specialist machines, so this situation was very critical for our company. We urgently needed a solution to train our own skilled workers to secure our business capacity. Germany has shown that VET in the dual system is excellently suited for this purpose. It took us a year to launch our apprenticeship program for Advanced Manufacturing Technicians, and it is a great asset to our company. Our older and experienced employees have adapted to the new idea very well and appreciate our apprentices and their commitment.

Our apprentices have developed splendidly and we will definitely be keeping them on when they pass the final examination. It is very inspiring for all of us to follow the development of young adults. At the beginning of their apprenticeship they are shy and uncertain, initially, and after only a year, we observe how they have developed into confident employees, who can support us with their acquired skills as they take on their first small tasks in the operating process,” explains Pleyer.

The company Grenzebach, headquartered in Bavaria, opened its US subsidiary in Newnan, Georgia in 1988. The company designs, builds and delivers production facilities as well as individual components for the production and processing of flat glass, construction components and solar devices, and it also offers intra-logistics solutions, for example.
TEAM WORK PAVES THE WAY FOR A TRAINING REGULATION

By Julia Beskorsaya

VET in the dual system is the combination of theory and practice, and means not only learning, but also handling and experiencing. For this reason, within the framework of VETnet, the Information Center of the German Industry (IZDW) at AHK Russia decided to supervise the creation of a training regulation in a process-oriented way through a workshop. In it, the challenges of organising vocational training in the dual system in Russia were discussed and the standards of a training regulation in Germany were explained. Through the workshop, participants (companies as well as representatives of the vocational schools and the ministry) were given the opportunity to create training regulations, including a school curriculum based on the German model.

In Germany, such training regulations set the uniform standards nationwide for in-company training within the scope of VET in the dual system. They regulate the factual and temporal structure of the training, followed by the framework curriculum for the vocational schools. The question was: Is such a process also possible in Russia, where the curricula have always been determined by the vocational schools? The answer: Yes, if we are prepared to rethink and integrate public-private partnership as an integral part, because the needs of the economy form the basis for future VET in the dual system. But how do companies and vocational schools work together to create an action-oriented training system that is geared to the needs of the local economy in Russia? How do you bring all the stakeholders together?

DUAL – TOW DOMAINS, ONE TRAINING

Based on practical examples, the two training occupations cook and mechatronics fitter, content that was essential and could be taught in most companies was defined in a workshop. The companies had to consider everyday issues: do individual meats need to be mentioned or is a generic term sufficient? Why should mechatronics fitters learn the basics of metalwork? Does a training company have time to talk about the nutritional value of potatoes, or could this be done better at the vocational school? The result was a very lively and constructive discussion about which aspects or points the respective training regulations should contain. It allowed the workshop participants to easily understand and internalise the mechanism of creating a training regulation. This now forms the basis for the development and review of training programmes for vocational training in the dual system with IZDW in Russia.

EXPERIENCE TAKES CENTRE STAGE

In the future, representatives from Russian state institutions also want to focus on the practice-oriented approach. It makes it possible to increase the congruence between specialised training and the requirements of the economy. In a process-oriented implementation of VET in the dual system, in which all education actors are involved, there is the opportunity to train highly skilled workers for the economy and even tailor-made to individual companies. At the same time, a standard is being developed that can be accepted and implemented by all stakeholders.

VE net – INNOVATION DRIVER OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN THE DUAL SYSTEM IN RUSSIA

Russia is strengthening its domestic production to become less dependent on the world market. This is why ever more German companies are opening up modern, high-tech production sites there. With the modernisation of the economy, innovation in vocational training is also necessary. At the same time, AHK Russia is an innovation driver with its pilot projects in VET in the dual system based on the German model.

WE HAVE VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN THE DUAL SYSTEM TO THANK FOR SKILLED WORKERS

There is often a shortage of suitably skilled workers in Russia, especially in occupations such as mechatronics fitters and industrial mechanics. In addition to the lack of skilled workers in general, companies also criticise the lack of practice-oriented training of Russian graduates. This is where the BMBF-funded project VETnet comes into play, through which the IZDW in Russia supports companies with vocational training projects in the dual system. A first step in this direction was the newly established Vocational Education and Training Committee, which acts as the central decision-making body for the activities of VET in the dual system within the IZDW. Among other things, the committee decides on the dual training programmes which are then applied in companies and vocational schools in selected regions of Russia.
When did the Executive Board of AHK Italy decide to set up Dual.Concept and for what reasons?

The need for an extension of Italy’s training provision had been apparent to the AHK for many years. Accordingly, there were also various initiatives to better prepare young people for their working life through practical experience in vocational training. In the Executive Board, we discussed for a very long time the need for a more structured approach, and at the same time the opportunity for a new range of services, and after a test phase that began in 2014, we were finally convinced in 2015 to invest in our own business unit. Above all, we want to use this to bring in elements that are not sufficiently available to companies in Italy and where we, as AHK, can gain expertise, from Germany also.

What contribution does the Executive Board make to supporting the expansion of Dual.Concept?

Firstly, of course, we must fulfil our supervisory role and ensure the economic stability of the Chamber and its subsidiaries. However, we are also required to act entrepreneurially and to recognise and promote possible development opportunities for the Chamber. But, more important to me is our external view, as an entrepreneur, on the Chamber and its services. Only the services that we regard as interesting for our companies really have a chance of success. In the end, if our companies use these services as well, we, the Executive Board, have made the right contribution.

What is your success story that you experienced at AHK with vocational education and training in Italy?

For me, building this business unit is a matter of the heart. As a member of the examination board of a German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I personally gained my first practical experience in VET in the dual system and am aware of the special features and added value of this system.

We have already set important milestones on the way there. The first step was to implement job-oriented internships (alternanza scuola/lavoro) many years ago together with the Deutsche Schule Milan, which were eventually institutionalised with the concept of ‘la buona scuola’ by the Italian government. The decision to establish Dual.Concept was a second important milestone, which is now the basis for allowing young Italian people to receive equivalent certification like in Germany in the future. If we succeed in handing over such a certificate to the first young people trained in Italy, we can then speak of a success story.

What hurdles did you have to overcome in the decision-making process?

Although education system in Italy follows national legislation, its implementation is the responsibility of the regions. It is difficult to propose overarching innovative approaches under these conditions and to obtain the necessary support for rapid implementation. The challenge was therefore to find a way to be able to offer services in the existing setting and in continuing vocational education and training, and to define unique selling points that made market success likely.

Why is VET a sustainable future topic for an AHK?

The work done so far by Dual.Concept makes it clear how large the field of possible activities is and how extensive the necessary outlays are for a successful completion of the training. The needs and interests of the Italian economy are great in the face of technological challenges. In addition, vocational training has long ceased to be a one-time investment; technological change and our steadily increasing working life require the continuous education and further training of all working people.
VOLUNTARY EXAMINERS

AN UNEXPLORED TERRITORY FOR THAILAND

By Panuwat Jaitham

If VET in the dual system were a chain, qualified examiners would probably be the lock that holds everything together in the end. Independent, action- and practice-oriented examinations performed by trained examiners ensure well-trained skilled workers. The system is an established process in Germany: Voluntary examiners work together faithfully in examination committees. For the AHK, the question arose: How can such structures and processes be introduced in a country like Thailand?

GTDEE – OWN VOCATIONAL TRAINING BRAND

With the support of the BMBF-funded project VETnet, AHK Thailand founded the local vocational training brand ‘German-Thai Dual Excellence Education’ (GTDEE). Among other things, GTDEE organises German-style examinations to ensure quality in VET in the dual system.

Together with trainers, teachers and university lecturers, qualification measures were designed for prospective examiners. Because final examinations based on the German model are not snapshots of the theoretical knowledge of the apprentices, but rather their professional capacity is examined. The early involvement of the future examiners in developing and implementing new action- and practice-oriented examination procedures is particularly important in order to make the examination practice adaptable. Therefore, nine occupations are offered by the AHK Thailand to date.

EXAMINER TRAINING IN THAILAND = EXAMINER TRAINING IN GERMANY

Examiner training includes the explanation of the examination regulations, the interim and the various final examinations, establishing and assessing examinations, distributing scores, the procedures for dealing with cheating, and different examination methods. Action-oriented situation tasks are given as examples and underpinned with exercises. The training courses at AHK Thailand have the same content as training courses in Germany while it has been slightly adapted to the specific country. And the vocational training staff of the AHK are pleased about the positive feedback, which shows that the concept and the type of training were very well received by participants, and brought a lot of increased knowledge.

A special highlight is the ‘Examiner Guide’ developed together with the participants. This serves as a comprehensive reference work for newly trained and future examiners.

VOLUNTEERING REQUIRES A LOT OF DEDICATION AND BRINGS PROFIT

In Thailand, as in Germany, AHK examiners are volunteers. While volunteering as such is generally known in Thailand, it is by no means a common educational model. The AHK is thus pioneering with the development of “honorary examiner post”. Initially, members of committee of examiners have been appointed for two years, they receive paid leave from their employers for the examinations and, at the end of the examiner training, a certificate of appointment, solemnly awarded by the German ambassador and the AHK Executive Director.

But even with such incentives and support, volunteering is still volunteering. And as such, not much time can be taken for training. AHK Thailand is therefore faced with the particular challenge of making training courses concise and usually completing them within one day. This is only possible because the participants have prior knowledge and many already work as trainers in the company.

THE NEED FOR INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS IS GROWING

AHK Thailand has already appointed and trained over 50 examiners. Particularly in the trade and industrial technical areas, for example, in occupations such as automotive mechatronics, the examination effort is high due to the split final examination. It also requires specialist knowledge of highly complex processes. Independent examiners with training based on the German model will be urgently needed in Thailand in the future as well. The 50 examiners will probably look after many more candidates in order to complete the AHK Thailand’s mission of the Thai vocational training expertise “Made in Germany”.

KEY DATA ON THE EXAMINATIONS:

- 9 occupations
- 10 companies
- 239 examinees
- 91% successful examinations
- 50 trained examiners, of which 4 women in the occupational fields automotive mechatronics, agriculture and agricultural machinery mechanics
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

IS ABOUT BEING ALLOWED TO MAKE MISTAKES

By Judith Evers

An engine needs good oil in order to function reliably for a long time: the oil for VET in the dual system based on the German model are the skilled in-company trainers. However, these are often not available in many countries or their role is understood completely different. In-company trainers today are learning companions, not people who are only proficient in teaching, training and instructing. This is where the qualification concept Train the Trainer training (AdA International) began, which is used by many AHKs. Following the example of AdA in Germany, the trainers are trained vocationally and pedagogically.

In India, the qualification of trainers is a challenge for many companies, as a pedagogical trainer qualification is unknown in India within the framework of state-recognised vocational training. The training of VET staff is largely seen as a task for the state, and the result is that there are only a few companies with trainers and structured training processes. However, successful trainer training is an essential part of VET in the dual system based on the German model. Many local companies active in VET in the dual system therefore rely on AHK India as a competent partner – also for the training of their training staff.

»Train the Trainer training (AdA-International) was particularly helpful in creating and understanding the structure of a training regulation. We were taught that content can be adapted to different types of learning and which methods and techniques can be used in different training areas. It has been a very enriching experience that has given me a great deal of added value in my day-to-day work.«

Lokesh Kumar, Trainer at Volkswagen and participant in the first AdA International training in India

FIRST TRAINING IN INDIA WITH GERMAN SUPPORT

The AHK decided to pilot the first AdA training in India as part of VEITnet. With the help of the IHK-AHK-DIHK network, AHK India was able to recruit an AdA trainer from IHK Berlin to conduct the AdA International training in Pune, India. The curriculum was adopted from Germany by DIHK-Bildungs-GmbH and translated into English. The German legal section, containing laws relating to vocational training, has been adapted to the Indian legal situation.

It was ready in summer 2017. The AdA seminar started in the premises of the AHK in Pune. The eleven participants came from different regions of India. Most of them already had a role as trainers within their company, while others worked as trainers in inter-company training centres. During the training they learned how to create an in-company training plan, the four-step method and learning objectives test, among other things, in other words, exactly what makes up this kind of seminar in Germany. It was new to many of the trainers that by preference, apprentices are not only instructed, but should even be allowed to make mistakes.

MASTERING THE TRAINER’S DAY SUCCESSFULLY

Following the two-week training, an examination organised by AHK India was held. All participants were able to master these successfully and are now qualified for vocational education pedagogy as trainers. They received a certificate with DIHK and AHK India quality seals.

More important than the certificate, however, were the experience and impressions, as well as the newly gained self-confidence of the participants. They now dare to tackle the manifold challenges in the trainer’s everyday life more successfully. As such, the trainer of PSG College in Coimbatore, Ramalingam Kalavan, was asked by his supervisor to pass on his newly acquired knowledge to his colleagues in an internal training session, following the AdA training. The trainer at Volkswagen, Lokesh Kumar, also put his newly acquired knowledge into practice – he completely revised his existing company training plan.
In many countries, VET in the dual system still has a bad image. Dirty ‘blue-collar work’, low skill, poor pay, lesser alternative to studying; these are just a few of the stereotypes they hold. Dual, AHK Portugal’s vocational training brand, has been involved in VET in the dual system for more than 30 years and has done pioneering work, especially in challenging the common image.

Mr Franco, tell us about your professional career. Why did you opt for VET in the dual system at the time and to what extent has this decision shaped your professional career?

After graduating from the Deutsche Schule in Porto (Colégio Alemao do Porto), it was important for me to gain practical experience in a company. At school I learned about the possibility of vocational training in the dual system through AHK Portugal. During my two-year training at Schmitt + Sohn Portugal, I worked in all the departments of an industrial company. I continuously acquired new knowledge through ‘learning by doing’. Many doors were opened and new tasks transferred to me. At 18, it was fascinating for me to enter the corporate world along this path. My experiences strengthened my desire to continue work in a company in the future. After the training I was taken on directly. I have been working in this company for 30 years now. The experience I gained in the training was invaluable to me, also for my later business administration and electrical engineering studies.

What image did VET in the dual system have 30 years ago and what image does it have today? Has the perception of vocational training changed?

The perception has changed a lot. The state vocational schools, which existed up until what is known as the Carnation Revolution in 1974, were closed, and with them the reputation and the approaches of VET in the dual system began to disappear. Therefore, as apprentices in the dual system, we were still pioneers - or rather, we have become pioneers again. A small number of German companies began training in the dual system with the AHK. The close connection between the training and the companies brought with it the transfer of German know-how, which was a decisive advantage for us. At that time, hardly anyone in Portugal was aware of the importance of VET in the dual system, and this educational path was perceived as rather negative. Fortunately, this has changed a lot over the last 30 years. Nowadays, it is understood that young people can learn a profession through sound VET in the dual system and therefore have a very good chance of finding a permanent job. The work of Dual has also enabled more and more Portuguese companies participate in vocational education and training. For example, VETnet helped Dual open up the fields of occupation in the tourism industry for VET in the dual system in Portugal, and also to establish initial training opportunities there. The success of VET in the dual system is also reflected in the high take-up rate of AHK apprentices.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot to be done in society and on the part of state institutions to further improve the image of vocational education and training. Even today steering young people into the higher education sector is still often considered a goal.

Over the years, Schmitt + Sohn Portugal has trained many young people in various fields. How do you manage to recruit the best apprentices?

The best ambassadors for the training are former apprentices, who are in employment today – the majority of apprentices will be taken on by us at the end of the training. These are the ones who tell their friends about it and whose parents see that it worked. Sharing one’s own experience is the most efficient way to increase the reputation of vocational education and training, and thus inspire other young people to pursue VET.

What would you recommend to young people who are still undecided as to whether they should start their careers with VET in the dual system?

Young people go to university, vocational schools or to Dual very young. When they are in training, they can learn to take responsibility early. Young people who are undecided have the opportunity to see if training is what they really want. If they are good, then they can start working straight away. On other educational paths, it would not be so easy to begin working straight away. In a subsequent study, young people rated sound professional knowledge as an advantage, alongside having a better understanding of what they would like to study. And for those who already know what they want to do but do not want to study, this path is definitely the right one.

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HOW DO YOU DO...?
NEW PATHS, STRONG PARTNERS

By Željka Šenkovic

VET in the dual system is at the heart of the German education system. Combined learning in the company and at the vocational school gives young apprentices the skills for the job market. The network of IHKs is the quality assurance of the system and a link to the requirements of the labour market. An IHK looks after a company along the entire road of qualifying the next generation of skilled workers – the tasks were firmly anchored decades ago by the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) in the everyday work of the IHKs.

In AHK Slovakia, however, vocational education and training is new territory.

STRONG DEMAND FOR VET SERVICES
For some years, member companies have been increasingly turning to the AHK with the request to support them in training specialists in Slovakia based on the German model. ‘Made in Germany’ VET in the dual system is also an export hit here.

At the start of the VETnet project, AHK Slovakia was beginning to collaborate with two large German companies. The focal points of this collaboration were the quality assurance of training in the dual system based on the German model and completing on-site examinations. All of this posed a major challenge for an AHK with no previous experience in the field. At the very moment, a long-standing fruitful and successful partnership was established between AHK Slovakia and IHK Koblenz.

INTENSIVE PARTNERSHIP
The aim of this collaboration was initially to build up the service portfolio successfully and to clarify a fundamental question: What are the duties of an AHK in vocational training? At first, each AHK answers this question for itself, while the duties of an IHK in Germany, on the other hand, are clearly defined, including by law. AHK Slovakia wanted to gain expertise in exactly these aspects from an IHK. After all, who could better answer questions such as: What are the most important tasks in the quality assurance of VET in the dual system? What does an examination look like? What should be taken into account in order to be able to implement this? Who can be an examiner? How will they be trained? What do the examination papers look like and where do you obtain them? The list of questions was endless. All these questions could be answered as part of a one-week study trip to IHK Koblenz, which was also the beginning of an intense IHK-AHK partnership.

ADVANTAGES FOR BOTH SIDES
Since then, AHK Slovakia’s services in the field of VET in the dual system have been in great demand, but of course new questions arise over time as you gain a deeper insight into vocational training. A reliable and sustainable exchange with IHKs helps immensely.

AHK Slovakia maintains a long-standing partnership with IHK Koblenz and others. For new occupations, such as shoemaker, a partnership with the IHK for the Palatinate (IHK Pfalz) was established, which acts as the leading chamber for this occupation in Germany.

However, the lack of experience and the lack of tradition of VET in the dual system also offer opportunities. The AHK sees VET in the dual system with fresh eyes: Which activities make sense? Which processes are efficient? Often you have to improvise and try things out. Without collegial flexibility and a strong customer service orientation, the work would not be possible. Experiencing first-hand how a dual training system takes its first steps is a unique experience even for experienced VET experts from Germany. A lot can be learned from apprentice acquisition – which is a central topic both in Germany and in Slovakia. Through these win-win situations, the AHK is confident that further IHK-AHK partnerships will emerge.

VET IN THE DUAL SYSTEM IN SLOVAKIA – THE BEST PROSPECT FOR A SUCCESS STORY
And the first positive experiences in Slovakia have great potential to become a sustainable success story. In 2015, the country issued a legal basis for VET in the dual system. What is decisive for long-term success is now that the quality of the training is right and that young professionals become the most compelling ambassadors of the newly introduced dual VET system.

POSSIBLE CONTENT OF AN IHK-AHK PARTNERSHIP:
• Examination documentation
• Examination organisation
• Examiner training
• ‘Train the trainer’ training (AdA)
• Suitability of the training companies
• Adaptation of the training regulations and curricula
• Assistance with examinations in Slovakia from examiners from Germany
• Practical experience at an IHK in Germany
INNOVATIVE PILOT PROJECTS AGAINST SKILLED LABOUR SHORTAGE IN COMPANIES

According to the needs of the company and its requirements, three job profiles have been identified: motor vehicles mechatronics technicians, application technicians and electronics technicians for devices and systems. The AHK has coordinated the process, developed training programmes and supported it with German VET expertise.

Due to the sovereign debt crisis in Greece and the associated difficult political and economic situation in recent years, the launch of the pilot project was delayed due to a lack of a ministerial order. However, in March 2017, the pilot project was finally able to begin. The training places were very popular, because in times of high youth unemployment, the training in the dual system promised a secure employment prospect. Forty-eight young apprentices started their two-year training at EESSTY-ROSCO in Athens – 24 apprentices as motor vehicles mechatronics technicians and 24 apprentices as electronics technicians for devices and systems. The educational part of the training takes place in the Greek railway vocational school (OSE). Since gaining state recognition in October 2017, the state vocational school OSE has supported the vocational school OSE with teachers.

What started successfully in Athens was extended to Thessaloniki: the first 48 apprentices were followed half a year later by further application technician apprentices in the areas of vehicle mechatronics and motor vehicle mechatronics technicians. The AHK, EESSTY-ROSCO, OSE and the OAED also work together here. In total, more than 130 young people are now being trained in VET in the dual system based on the German model. Many more will follow, and not just in the trade and technical occupations: retail companies and even breweries in Greece are now interested in providing quality assured dual vocational training in line with their needs.

THE FIRST VETNET PILOT PROJECT GIVES THE STARTING SIGNAL FOR FURTHER VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN THE DUAL SYSTEM

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Of course, vocational training in the dual system on the German model is also associated with a great commitment for companies. Participation in the training programmes requires an investment of time, as company training plans have to be prepared, for example. The financial contribution of the companies is not a small one, either. But VET in the dual system is a lived experience of a public-private partnership that ultimately pays off for the companies.

Participating companies immediately see the added value of vocational training because they secure skilled workers through their own training. At the same time, young people gain employment and future prospects. Especially in countries with high youth unemployment, the approach of VET in the dual system creates clear advantages for both companies and employers.

PILOT PROJECTS SHOW WHAT VET IN THE DUAL SYSTEM CAN DO

For AHK Greece, the BMBF-funded project VETnet is thus a unique opportunity to initiate innovative pilot projects for VET in the dual system. These establish vivid and lasting dual vocational training elements on the ground and demonstrate what VET in the dual system can achieve.

EXPERIENCE TAKES CENTRE STAGE

“This kind of training is perfect for me. The trainers and employees of the company make me feel like I am part of the company. They explain the individual steps to us. We are also allowed to try a lot of things out for ourselves, which makes me feel like I am learning better. I especially like getting to know many different departments and the fact that I can ‘try out’ the work there. At the moment I am in the engine department – I like it very much there! The knowledge I gain during my training will hopefully make it easier to find a job later.”

-Petros Spiliotakopoulos, apprentice as an electronics technician for devices and systems

“I’ve always been interested in everything to do with electronics. I found out about the training opportunity as an electronics technician for devices and systems from acquaintances and at the vocational school, so I registered straight away. I particularly like the fact that the dual training system is practical. I have the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge to practice, and I can easily envisage working for EESSTY-ROSCO later on.”

-Monas Argyrosiotits, apprentice as an electronics technician for devices and systems
By Andreas Müller

For many apprentices the examination time is a particular challenge. Experience shows that the days before the tests go by much too quickly. What is an exceptional situation for the apprentices has long been routine for the vocational AHK Mexico training staff – in 2017 alone, they organised examinations for more than 250 participants.

As part of the BMBF-funded project VETnet, AHK Mexico has been able to expand its examination and certification system, above all. For the first time ever, it was possible to test an entire generation of apprentices in the states of Nuevo León and Coahuila.

The initiative for VET in the dual system based on the German model came from the local economy; German automotive suppliers had approached the AHK. They joined with other companies to find a training cluster. At the same time, other German companies expressed an interest in examination and certification based on the German model for their apprentices. The added value for companies is clear: being able to train skilled workers according to the dual training standard based on the German model abroad. In the meantime, the AHK tests and certifies three quality assurers, two of them together with the DIHK.

THE AHK AS A GUIDE TO POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN MEXICO

Since 2013, the AHK has been advising the Mexican economy and the local Ministry of Education on the implementation of a Mexican dual training model. VET in the dual system has meanwhile been recognised by the state. The insight into the ‘examinations according to the German model’ is also a winner: in the coming years, the AHK is to develop the examination and certification system for the Mexican model in an advisory capacity.

There is already a labour examination system organised by the Mexican Ministry of Education, which provides for the conduct of examinations by professional test centres. But there is also still room for improvement. At the moment, one single examiner is responsible for the compilation and evaluation of examination documents and results. In the future, the aim is to extend the scheme based on the German model to an examination board made up of representatives from the education and business sectors in order to increase acceptance of certificates and to ensure independent examinations.

CHALLENGES ARE PART AND PARCEL OF IT

Spreading VET in the dual system and examination systems across all regions of Mexico is a mammoth task, geographically, given the size of the country and the fragmentation of the Mexican economy. Extensive itineraries for examiners and different time zones, making it difficult to perform examinations at the same time, are just some of the challenges facing AHK Mexico.

In addition, there is a lack of qualified examiners who have experience with examinations based on the German model. This is especially true for high-tech occupations, such as tool mechanics and mechatronics fitters. But with help from a pool of examiners and exchanges between experienced and new examiners, this challenge will be mastered.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

In 2017, collaboration between AHK Mexico, the examination and educational development centre (PAL) of the IHK Region Stuttgart and the Mexican National Council for the Standardization and Certification of Labor Competences (CONOCER) was launched with a Memorandum of Understanding. Uniform, action-oriented examinations based on the German model are to be disseminated and quality standards set; another important step in the right direction.

BEST PRACTICE: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE TRANSLATION OF EXAMINATIONS

There is a particular challenge regarding the translation of German examinations into Mexican Spanish. AHK Mexico has taken four quality assurance measures to address this:

1. The examinations are translated by a specialised translation agency.
2. The quality of the translation is checked thoroughly by bilingual staff.
3. Each translation is controlled by training practitioners. Care is taken that representatives do not control the examinations of their ‘own’ apprentices. The entire procedure adheres to strict secrecy regulations.
4. In the future, German textbooks will be translated to use generally known vocabulary in the national examinations.

Source: Volkswagen Group Academy Mexico
GERMAN VET IN THE DUAL SYSTEM IS A SEAL OF APPROVAL FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS

By Britta Buschfeld

From vocational training in the dual system that lasts several years to specific continuing vocational education and training, from trade and technical areas to elderly care - VET has many facets. The need for these different forms of VET is enormous in the People’s Republic of China. In particular, the transfer of German VET in the dual system is in high demand, both from German companies based in China and from the Chinese side. It is considered a seal of approval and an important element for the economic development of the country.

Challenges have been encountered in recent years for all stakeholders and interested parties on both the German and Chinese sides: the search for suitable implementation partners, sustainable project implementation and the quality assurance of VET. And this parallel to the content and intercultural aspects that had to be addressed.

The German Industry and Commerce Shanghai Branch (GIC) recognised the demand and development of VET in the dual system in China at an early stage and in 2007 it supported the establishment of a first training centre in Taicang/Jiangsu. In the following years, a large number of training initiatives and major vocational training projects quickly followed throughout the People’s Republic, largely due to the initiative of the resident German companies and regional Chinese authorities.

FaCILITATORS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS – PLATFORM FOR PARTNERS

GIC Shanghai has been recognised from the beginning of its activities for acting as a platform for all parties involved. Funding by the BMBF within the scope of the VETnet project has contributed to strengthening this function as a platform – also for political partners. If a company is looking for a reliable vocational school partner at its location in China, which is also supported and promoted by the Chinese authorities, to achieve long-term and sustainable cooperation, then GIC is its point of contact and facilitator. If the Chinese side is looking for competent German partners, such as specialised educational companies, partner schools, relevant education players and companies, the GIC will actively promote and support foreign trade through direct contact, company search, delegations and a variety of events.

The iMOVE office at GIC Shanghai was officially founded in the summer of 2017 to be able to better implement the issue of the platform function in the interests of all stakeholders. Together with colleagues from iMOVE in Bonn, the inquiries, projects and interests of the German educational companies will be even more strongly supported here locally in the future. The GIC’s close teamwork and exchange on joint vocational training meetings and events between the GIC and the German Embassy in Beijing and the Consulate-General in Shanghai, Shenyang, Canton and Chengdu help present a coherent interface in the German economy. In addition, there is close cooperation with a large number of German education actors: at federal level with ministries, the Federal Government’s Centre for International Vocational Training Cooperation (GOVET) and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) at the state level with the Ministries of Education of individual federal states, foundations, associations and trade unions, and within the scope of provincial and town training agreements with the partners involved.

GIC Shanghai is a quality assurance provider in vocational training based on the German model. It is recognised as a VET provider in China through global networking within the overall organisation (DIHK, IHKs and AHKs active in VET). In recent years, GIC has become an important player in the People’s Republic of China and a valued contact for German and Chinese organisations, in short – it is a central platform.

The Chinese WeChat channel, which is run by GIC Shanghai, provides information specifically for the Chinese education community on topics all around the German-Chinese educational cooperation. In addition to presentations of new collaboration and projects, there are in cooperation with iMOVE opportunities to publish both partner applications and offers as well as specialist contributions and event offers. The WeChat channel is freely accessible to everyone and is frequently used and tracked by well over 1,000 institutions and individuals.

Within the scope of an iMOVE workshop in Bonn in 2016, the cooperation with Cognos AG, which had an interest in Chinese partners in the field of vocational training and further education of elderly care and rehabilitation, intensified. Cognos AG organised the market entry as well as the first successful cooperation from its Office-in-Office at GIC Shanghai, flanked by the GIC vocational training team.

In November 2017, GIC Shanghai organised and implemented a delegation tour on ‘Innovation in Production and Service – Qualification 4.0’ in close cooperation with and on the behalf of GOVET. The participating representatives of research and educational institutions and trade unions received exciting information as well as the opportunity for further network building and project development.
How has the cooperation between Germany and Latvia developed in the area of vocational education and training in recent years?

In 2013, the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia began discussing a possible reform of vocational education. We knew that there were good vocational training systems in German-speaking countries. We wanted to fall back on these experiences, Latvia and Germany have a good mutual understanding of and for each other. The German Embassy in Latvia therefore initiated cooperation between the two countries in the field of vocational education and training. It was already clear at the beginning that an exact copy of the German vocational training system could not be made. Our aim was to learn from German experience and to see exactly what elements could be adopted in Latvia, taking into account the educational tradition and the economic situation.

A visit from the then Federal President Joachim Gauck to Latvia then gave the go-ahead for the official cooperation. On 8 July, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education of Latvia and the BMBF in Germany was signed. At this time, six Latvian vocational schools began pilot projects for practice-oriented education. Thanks to their close cooperation with AHK Baltic States within the scope of the VETnet project, they received a further impetus. The study trip to Dortmund in the autumn of the following year was a good example of the project’s aim of experiencing German VET in the dual system in practice. It offered the opportunity to see VET in the dual system in companies and schools and to benefit from the expertise of IHK Dortmund.

Which elements of the German dual VET system were piloted in Latvia with the aid of VETnet, what impetus did this provide? And what impact did this have on VET reform?

We know how important it is to involve industry in the educational process in practice-oriented education, not just in examinations, but in the initial stages of developing the training system, and also in terms of vocational orientation. VETnet has been able to extend this existing knowledge with additional elements; this is how the first integrated training in Latvia was initiated. In close cooperation, three companies and the vocational school in Valmiera have trained machine and plant operators. This is a good example of a consistently strong cooperation between all education actors from the beginning to the end of the training. Another pilot project for freight forwarding employees promoted the involvement of companies in the training process, so that they not only collaborated on the content of the training programme but were also actively involved in career guidance and jobseeker acquisition. Likewise, a new key element was the first examiner training in Latvia. Examiners were trained to create tasks in such a way that examinations can be carried out in an action- and practice-oriented way, among other things. Furthermore, the qualification of trainers was initiated by VETnet. The AHK has carried out initial training to prepare trainers in companies for in-company training. Such training is now a legal requirement for all Latvian training companies. In particular, the AHK examiner and trainer training were exemplary for the vocational training reform.

How could the current Latvian vocational training model evolve?

Latvia is developing its own approach, and we continue to rely on Germany’s experience, especially for involving employers in educational processes. Without them, it is not possible to train skilled workers in a business-oriented way. Latvia is working to strengthen the role and status of businesses in order to promote the acquisition of professional skills. There is special focus on topics such as teacher training and continuing professional development, Industry 4.0 and the motivation of Latvian young people.

How do you see the future of German-Latvian cooperation within the remit of vocational education?

Projects such as the VETnet-initiated AHK vocational training award or the training programme for freight forwarding agents set the cornerstones from which we would like to continue working. The Best Practice for Business-to-Business Cooperation awarded at the Vocational Training Awards show how we can improve the image of VET. The first freight forwarding agents taken over by their training companies are an important success for us, because they show that we have made good progress on VET in the dual system in recent years and that young people are getting into the job market in a sustainable way.
VETnet stands for “German Chambers worldwide network for cooperative, work-based Vocational Education and Training” and promotes sustainable pilot projects at eleven locations of Chambers of Commerce abroad (AHKs) and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce in the area of VET in the dual system. Since 2013 the project has been funded by the BMBF. VET in the dual system is presented in a practical way by means of pilot projects with companies. The advantages of the training system become clear in the direct implementation. They encourage mimicking and transport ideas for educational policy and structural changes. Action- and practice-oriented examinations based on the German model and their certification by the AHKs and delegations of German industry ensure the ‘Made in Germany’ quality. In addition, the AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce secure the demand for skilled labour of the (German) local economy by means of demand- and business-oriented vocational training offerings and thus fulfil their role as foreign trade promoters. The AHKs use the extensive experience of the IHKs and the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK).

2. IN WHICH COUNTRIES DOES VETnet EXIST?

The project is being implemented by AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce in eleven countries: China, Greece, India, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Thailand and the USA. The German Federal Government maintains cooperations in vocational education and training with all these countries.

The DIHK supports the AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce with its expertise in VET in the dual system abroad. DIHK Service GmbH as a project company of DIHK coordinates the project VETnet in close alignment with DIHK.

4. DOES VET IN THE DUAL SYSTEM EXIST ABROAD, AS IN GERMANY?

Each country has different prerequisites, including education and training. Even though there are examples of German VET in the dual system abroad in which the ‘German model’ is replicated precisely, this is by no means desirable or required in all cases. The AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce, together with local partners, are seeking suitable ways of introducing elements of VET in the dual system. These should be based on the country-specific conditions and specifically meet the needs of the local economy. Locally adapted, demand-oriented occupational profiles with elements of the German VET in the dual system are the desired goal locally.

5. HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN VETnet AS A GERMAN COMPANY AND ARE THERE ALSO VOCATIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN NON-VETnet COUNTRIES?

If you want to train in one of the VETnet countries alone or jointly with partners, you should contact the DIHK, your local IHK or the AHK where you are. There you will be given background information and ways to participate in VET in the dual system. AHKs help companies worldwide to train their skilled workers. This task is not limited to the VETnet project countries. The DIHK coordinates AHK activities worldwide and is available for information and support.

6. WHOM CAN I CONTACT WITH ANY QUERIES REGARDING VETnet?

You may get in touch with the contact person at the AHKs and Delegations of German Industry and Commerce in the respective countries (see enclosed poster) with any queries. The VETnet team at the DIHK will be happy to answer your questions.

5. WHAT DOES THE VET SERVICE AT THE AHKs INCLUDE?

Depending on the location, AHK vocational education and training services are geared to the needs of local businesses. The services include:

- Advice on VET in the dual system and country-specific implementation requirements.
- Organising and moderating training processes.
- Networking and coordinating partners involved in training – apprentices, training companies, vocational schools, inter-company training centres and others.
- Conducting training and examination of in-company training staff with the global training concept Train the Trainer (AFA International).
- Advising, supervising or assisting companies in all aspects of training for the recognition of qualifications in the target country.
- Organising and conducting valid and quality-assured final examinations.
- Awarding participants with an AHK (DIHK) certificate after passing the examination.
- Honouring training companies with the AHK-DIHK ‘Excellent Training Company certificate.

In addition to existing broad service portfolios, the AHKs and delegations of German industry are always looking for further individual solutions with interested local partners.

As at: February 2018