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Raising the potential of skilled workers for Germany: Federal Employment Agency and German Rectors' Conference emphasise joint responsibility of education sectors

The current significant shortage of skilled workers in Germany can only be effectively combated through appropriate political measures and cooperation between the education sectors.

Andrea Nahles, Chair of the Federal Employment Agency (BA), and Professor Dr Peter-André Alt, President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), were convinced of this during their talks last Tuesday in Berlin.

The shortage of skilled workers and its consequences are visible in all occupational areas, such as engineering, the climate trade, childcare and teaching. The lack of qualified staff confronts those responsible with the joint task of enabling as many people as possible to receive education and to develop their potential. In the opinion of the BA and HRK, it does not matter which educational path is followed individually. However, it is important that all paths are recognised and that the change from one education sector to another is well supported.

"Vocational and academic education are different in their goals and prerequisites, but equal in their importance for the economy and society in Germany," said Alt. "In the years ahead it will therefore be even more important to prevent the abandonment of careers that require training, including higher education. Universities and their student advisory services have been active here for a long time with a variety of measures. And the successes show that this commitment is worthwhile. However, this also means that universities, together with their local partners, such as local employment agencies, professional bodies and craft enterprises, should focus on those who want to switch from one education sector to another. There are already some excellent examples of cooperation nationwide for the targeted support of this change of sector."

The BA and HRK are very concerned about the growing number of people who are currently neither in education, employment nor training. BA Chair Andrea Nahles said: "In 2021, there were about 630,000 people in the population group of 15- to 24-year-olds who were outside the education system and the labour market and at risk of being permanently lost to both. We cannot afford that as a society and we must not accept it. It is the responsibility of all counselling and educational institutions to show the opportunities offered by Germany's diverse and high-quality education system through open and proactive advisory services." The representatives of the BA and HRK also agreed that schools have a special role to play here. Nahles continues: "Strengthening the career choice competence of young people is of central importance. This goes beyond mere career orientation." From the point of view of the HRK and the BA, the federal states and school authorities are called upon to consistently focus on this issue. Otherwise, there is a risk of losing skilled workers in the long run, with far-reaching consequences for individuals and society as a whole.