



The BPW trainees witnessed a lively debate on Germany's dual work-study system between teachers, business people and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce.

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## BPW trainees host political discussion – education system in need of reform

- Digitisation must be underpinned by a long-term vision for Germany
- BPW trainees discuss quality of dual work-study system with teachers, business people and Chamber of Commerce
- Evening debate concludes political education programme

**Wiehl, 04.10.2017 --- Is Germany's dual work-study system a flagship or a rust bucket? This was the question posed by education and business experts in Engelskirchen on 14 September. The trainees of BPW Bergische Achsen KG in Wiehl hosted the evening with presentations and a series of short video interviews conducted among themselves. At the end of the panel discussion they asked questions of their own. The event marked the end of their political education programme, which BPW initiated for its trainees as a pilot project in 2016.**

Political education is not necessarily dull, as demonstrated in the BPW training centre by a talk show based on the current affairs TV series "Fair aber Hart", followed by a piece of improvised theatre. An audience of around 100 guests witnessed a lively debate on the quality of the dual work-study system. It was moderated in light-hearted mood by Annekatrin Michler. Alongside the initiator of the programme and chairman of the BPW board Michael Pfeiffer, the panel consisted of Christopher Meier (head of training at Cologne Chamber of Commerce), Michael Sallmann (head of the Oberberg office of Cologne Chamber of Commerce), Uwe Ufer (leader of the social welfare organisation Diakonie Michaelshofen and former mayor of Hückeswagen), and Klaus Bleiweiss (deputy principal of Oberberg-Dieringhausen vocational school).

Both the critical statement formulated by the trainees and the experiences reported by the business representatives Michael Pfeiffer and Uwe Ufer highlighted the challenges facing policy makers. They pointed to the poor structural condition of some institutions, lesson cancellations, and the fundamental need for a reform of the education system to make it fit not only for the present, but also for the future. It was generally agreed that the burgeoning process of digitisation in particular calls for a policy rethink in order to provide scope for more individual and modern teaching methods. Politicians, school leaders and training establishments need to adopt a long-term vision for a Germany in which numerous traditional jobs will no longer exist. In the future, people will be doing work that has not even been imagined yet.

Rainer Butting, who heads the training centre, and Gabriele Ley, a commercial trainee, expressed their satisfaction with the evening's proceedings, despite a power cut that temporarily interrupted the discussion. In a joint statement, they commented, "The aim of the programme was to

create an awareness of political activity among trainees, bring the culture of political debate to life, and contribute to the shaping of political opinion.” This target was clearly met, as evidenced by the audience survey that was conducted after the event. Several trainees acknowledged that they had overcome an indifference to political issues, or even developed the desire and confidence to engage in politics and political debate.

Apart from conveying technical knowledge, for many years BPW has been actively fostering trainees’ personal development. The training syllabus therefore includes modules on preventive healthcare, political education, etiquette, and a Christmas market project. Trainees who spend time abroad can also attend courses to improve their language skills and enhance their intercultural competence.

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### **About BPW Bergische Achsen KG**

*BPW Bergische Achsen KG is the parent company of the BPW Group. With more than 1,600 employees, including around 120 trainees, the family-run company has been developing and producing complete running gear systems for truck trailers and semi-trailers at its headquarters in Wiehl since 1898. BPW’s technologies include axle systems, brake technology, suspension and bearings. BPW’s trailer axles and running gear systems are in use in millions of vehicles around the world. An extensive range of services also provides vehicle manufacturers and vehicle operators with the opportunity to increase economic efficiency in their production and transport processes. [www.bpw.de/en](http://www.bpw.de/en)*

### **About BPW Group**

*BPW Group, based in Wiehl, Germany, is a dependable international mobility and system partner for the transport industry, serving as a one-stop shop for innovative solutions. Its portfolio embraces axles, suspension systems and brake technologies (BPW), locking systems and bodywork technology (Hestal), lighting systems (Ermax), composite technologies (HBN-Teknik), and user-friendly telematics applications for trucks and trailers (idem telematics). BPW Group’s technologies and services support manufacturers’ cost-effective workflows and enable vehicle operators to manage their fleets efficiently by maximising the transparency of loading and transport processes. The owner-managed BPW Group encompasses 70 companies worldwide and employs around 7,000 people. [www.wethinktransport.com](http://www.wethinktransport.com)*

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