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Germany is exporting its vocational training system

Kamil Frymark, Niemcy eksportują system kształcenia zawodowego

The Central Office for International Vocational Education and Training Co-operation was launched as part of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training on 12 September. The office has the goal of assisting in the presentation of a coherent policy in promoting vocational education and training and in coordinating the policies of the following German ministries: for Education and Research, Economic Co-operation and Development, Economy and Technology, and Foreign Affairs. The key German partners supporting the promotion of the education system abroad are the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, trade unions, the German Society for International Co-operation and the state-owned bank KfW.

What is special about the German system is its use of the traditional model of combining school education with apprenticeships at specifically defined companies. This in many cases leads to former apprentices being employed upon graduation from the three-year school. In 2013, approximately 60% of young Germans decided to choose this form of education after primary school. The German government has appealed for the introduction of the German vocational education and training system in EU member states on numerous occasions, such as the meetings of the European Council in June this year and the meeting of the heads of EU member states and the European Commission in July this year in Berlin. Examples of co-operation in this area so far include the memoranda signed by Germany with Spain and Portugal in July and November 2012, as part of which Germany offered consulting, teacher training in Germany and student exchanges.

Commentary

- While promoting its vocational education system, Germany points to the possibility of solving the problem of unemployment among young EU citizens. This is also presented as a way of overcoming the eurozone crisis. This rhetoric is yet another example of the German government promoting their national solutions to improve the operation of the eurozone. Before that, similar arguments were used for carrying out labour market reforms, setting up the 'budget anchor' and the consolidation of public finances by the indebted eurozone member states.

- The introduction of the German vocational training system is aimed primarily at training staff for German industry, which has its subsidiaries in the countries interested in the

new solutions. Furthermore, well-trained workers are expected to make up (each time following diploma validation) for the shortfalls in qualified workers in Germany, since the projects already in place which encourage foreigners (also those from outside the EU) to seek employment in Germany have failed to bring the expected results. German corporations have played an important role in introducing German solutions. Examples are: Siemens, which has been implementing vocational training projects since 2006 in the USA, South Africa, India, Malaysia and the United Kingdom; and Volkswagen, which supports Seat, and has been training employees this way in Spain since September 2012.

- The popularisation of the German vocational education model is part of Berlin's foreign policy, and is an example of the emerging powers strategy, which has been applied since 2012. The Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development which, along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of strategy implementation, is running vocational education and training projects in 80 countries, has allocated 90 million euros (in 2012) for this purpose, and has granted loan guarantees worth 140 million euros (in 2012) via KfW bank.