Bonn, September 14, 2026

Greetings to the 2026 BBNE World Excellence Network Conference

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants of the BBNE World Excellence Network Conference,

I am very pleased to extend warm greetings from the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training on the occasion of your conference.

The sustainable transformation of the economy and the world of work is placing new demands on vocational skills—and thus on vocational education and training. The main theme of your conference—"Hydrogen: A Topic for the Future in Excellence in Vocational Education and Training for Sustainable Development"—highlights this connection. Green hydrogen can play an important role in the energy transition. However, to harness its potential, technological developments must be integrated into vocational education and training at an early stage. This is because we need qualified professionals who can competently implement changes and actively help shape them.

For many years, the BIBB has been committed to further develop and consolidate the BBNE with this very goal in mind. A key component is the ESF Plus federal program "Sustainable in the Workplace—Future-Oriented Training," which we implement on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education, Family, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth. The program supports practical approaches to developing the competencies of in-company training staff, as well as innovative concepts for qualifying specialists and managers for the sustainable transformation.

This topic also gains importance in vocational training regulations. With the standard occupational profile item "Environmental Protection and Sustainability," sustainability is firmly anchored in the dual vocational training system. After all, sustainable professional practice is not limited to individual "green professions" but is relevant across all occupational fields—and this is the only way to achieve the transformation.

To bring this vision to life, we need dialogue across professions, institutions, and national borders. That is why I particularly welcome the international networking spirit of your conference.

Especially when it comes to a future-oriented topic like hydrogen, international exchange offers the opportunity to bring together different approaches to qualification, learning arrangements, and practical experiences in education. The fact that partners from numerous European and non-European countries are coming together in Uelzen is an encouraging sign.

I would like to thank the Vocational Schools I in Uelzen and all partners in the Excellence Network for their tremendous dedication. I wish all of you stimulating discussions, new collaborations, and a successful "BBNE 2026 World Excellence Network Conference."

With warm regards,

On behalf of

Barbara Hemkes

Head of Division 4.2: Innovative Continuing Education, Accessibility, and Pilot Projects