Jan Henner Putzier, Member of the State Parliament of Lower Saxony

"Vocational Schools as Centers of Vocational Excellence – Why Lower Saxony Must Be a European Leader in this VESD Area"

Ladies and gentlemen,

Colleagues,

Distinguished guests,

When we talk about the future of Lower Saxony, we are talking about skilled workers, innovation, and sustainability—and thus about vocational education and training. Today we're addressing a question that is crucial for our state:

Why must our vocational schools develop into centers of vocational excellence in Europe?

And: What does that mean specifically for Lower Saxony?

1. Excellent Vocational Schools = Economic Engine

Lower Saxony is an industrial hub with a promising future—from wind energy to the automotive supply industry to green logistics. But the success of these industries depends on one thing: a skilled workforce.

Excellent vocational schools are the key to:

- Tackling the shortage of skilled workers—through practical, attractive vocational training programs.
- Driving innovation—by training skilled workers in future technologies such as hydrogen, the circular economy, and digital production.
- Convincing investors—because anyone investing in Lower Saxony wants to know: Are there enough skilled workers here?

Example: Vocational schools that implement BBNE (Vocational Education for Sustainable Development) train exactly the experts our economy needs to achieve climate neutrality by 2040.

2. Excellent Vocational Schools = Opportunities for Young People

Dual vocational training is a success story—but it must be modern, digital, and sustainable to inspire young people.

Excellent vocational schools offer:

- Equal opportunity—regardless of origin or social background.
- An attractive training program—through modern teaching methods, digital tools, and practical relevance.
- Career prospects—because those with excellent training find jobs more easily and can continue to develop their careers.

Quote: "The best education is one that not only imparts knowledge but also the ability to apply that knowledge—for a sustainable future."

3. Excellent Vocational Schools = A Contribution to Sustainability

Lower Saxony has set ambitious climate goals. But we can only achieve these goals if we get people on board—specifically through vocational education.

VESD—Vocational Education and Training for Sustainable Development—is not a luxury, but a necessity:

- It trains skilled workers who are proficient in climate-neutral technologies.
- It promotes the circular economy, energy efficiency, and social responsibility.
- It makes our economy future-proof.

Example: Vocational schools that collaborate with companies to teach sustainable production methods are a win-win—for the environment and for the business community.

4. Excellent Vocational Schools = European Influence

Europe needs strong vocational education systems—and Lower Saxony can play a pioneering role here.

Why?

- EU funding flows to where excellence is evident.
- International partnerships strengthen our economy and our educational institutions.
- Lower Saxony as a role model—for other German states and for Europe.

Our goal must be:

To establish Lower Saxony as a model region for excellent vocational education and training in Europe—with vocational schools that are innovative, sustainable, and internationally connected.

5. What Needs to Be Done Now—Our Next Steps

Excellence does not happen on its own. To achieve it, we need:

1. Investments in infrastructure—modern workshops, digital teaching materials, sustainable buildings.
2. More flexibility for teachers—so they can focus on ESD and innovative teaching formats.
3. Strong partnerships—between schools, businesses, local governments, and academia.
4. European networking—to learn from best practices and secure funding.

And most importantly:

We need political will—because excellent vocational education is an investment in our state's future.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

Ladies and gentlemen,

the question is not whether we need excellent vocational schools—but how quickly we can make them a reality.

Lower Saxony has everything it needs:

- Strong businesses
- Dedicated teachers
- Motivated students
- A government that views education as a priority

Let’s seize this opportunity!

Let’s turn vocational schools into centers of excellence—for a strong economy, a sustainable future, and a region worth living in.

Because one thing is clear:

Investing in excellent vocational education today ensures Lower Saxony’s prosperity and innovative strength tomorrow.

Thank you very much.