

## PRESENTATION

### Ing. Renate SCHEICHELBAUER - SCHUSTER

Chairwoman of study group SME

My name is Renate Scheichelbauer and I own an enterprise offering electrical installations in a small town in Lower Austria. We have 28 employees and my father founded the company 55 years ago. Throughout these years we trained more than 200 apprentices and we have made excellent experiences training our employees in our own enterprise. Many of our apprentices remain with us after having accomplished the years of their apprenticeship and it's these people who are our best investment and the biggest asset for our enterprise.

Within the Austrian Economic Chamber I lobby the interests of the crafts and trades entrepreneurs as a functionary and I am responsible for educational policies. Currently, there are 130.000 apprentices altogether in Austrian enterprises, half of them alone are being trained by craft and trade companies. I am talking about 70.000 apprentices alone within the crafts and trades sector. In comparison the retail sector only trains 19.000 apprentices and the industry sector educates 15.000 young future skilled workers. The crafts and trades sector is THE leading branch of the Austrian economy training the highest number of apprentices. Therefore, we also have a huge responsibility concerning the future of our enterprises.

In Austria we apply the so called dual vocational system. That means: Throughout the years we train our apprentices on the job and 10 weeks each year they attend classes in a specific vocational school. Our young people usually start their apprenticeship after 9 years of school, being 15 years old. The vocational training takes between 2 to 4 years, depending on the profession. Our apprenticeship training is regulated by law. Therefore, the apprentice has insurance from day 1 and receives remuneration. After 2-4 years of training and after having passed the final apprenticeship exam, our apprentices become skilled workers and craftsmen and women.

The competent skilled workers are on high demand, enjoy high salaries and face excellent career options as well as best advanced training. As such the examination for the master craftsman's

diploma, is the highest rank for skilled workers. With this exam and being a so-called MASTER (of craft) you can move on and start your own company.

In Austria we have certain flexibility within our educational system. This means: A skilled worker having passed his final apprenticeship exam only has to pass an additional vocational matriculation examination in order to attend University or an advanced technical college if they wish to do so. This option is extremely important considering the image of an apprenticeship. In Austria, if a child performs well at school, parents tend to send their children to secondary higher level education rather than fostering an apprenticeship. However, sometimes they are not considering the excellent future perspectives their child might have with an apprenticeship in a craft enterprise. In addition, children suffer when they struggle at school or when they have to leave secondary school due to mediocre performance. It is a lot harder to integrate dropouts into our professional world because sometimes they are highly frustrated considering their experiences of failing at school. This frustration caused by failing and receiving bad grades never reaches such a high level in an apprenticeship because our youngsters can already enjoy experiences of success at the very beginning of their professional life through the results of their work.

Our enterprises are extremely interested in training qualified and motivated young people. However, it is very difficult for them to find the right youngsters for the right profession and we are facing the demographical challenge with less young people being available at the labour market. Hence, our entrepreneurs are in direct competition with secondary and higher level schools. In addition, not all young people wanting to undergo an apprenticeship are qualified and suitable to do so. We require what we call a "*Lehrvertragsreife*", meaning that our apprentices need mathematical knowledge as well as dominate the German language and show basic communication skills. Sometimes we are confronted with deficits in logical thinking and considering basic soft skills like proper behavior, responsibility, being a team player etc.

An apprenticeship after 9 years of school is the first possible entry into a professional life and an opportunity to be successful if the selected profession is the right choice for a youngster. Basically, our young people can seize the best chances for their future when they are suitable for the chosen profession, when they show enough personal interest and when

they comply with all the requirements. As the representing body of our entrepreneurs we are highly engaged in helping young people to choose the right career path. We offer a lot of information on many different professions, eg by approaching schools, giving presentations on

educational fairs - we also provide information on our professions to the mass media, on internet platforms and we offer screening tests for ongoing apprentices as well as advanced education for teachers. We also organize one-day internships or a whole week in an enterprise for interested young people in order to get a first taste of their possible future profession.

It is also very important for us to present in public the high achievements of our apprentices as well as the achievements of the enterprises that train them in order to improve the image of our professions. Hence, it is very important to participate in the world-skills competition, perform outstandingly and then make these achievements public. The world champions have to be honored as what they are: Role-models for many other young people.

Let me express a big „thank you“ and my sincerest gratitude to all of you for your dedication to world-skills as an international high-level competition, showing the great potential of all these young people participating from various countries. Enjoy an ongoing interesting conference, have a nice stay in Vienna and all the best for your future.