

Dear Professor Hartz, dear guests from abroad, dear participants of this conference,

Please allow me to introduce myself: My name is Jutta Schmid, and I am the deputy head of the International Office at this university.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome on behalf of the leadership of our university to you all. Especially to those of you who came here today from different places – from another Bundesland /federal state in the case of the colleagues from Saarbrücken, Lüneburg, Berlin, Nürnberg, and to the representatives of the EU project partners from Lithuania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, and Spain. I know that many of the European guests have been here before, as you are longstanding partners within the EU project work of Dr. Kröll at the Institute of Work Science. Welcome to all of you, and thank you for coming!

The topic you will be discussing today and tomorrow is a crucial one for the future of Europe: How to fight against the unemployment of young people. How to help young people make the most out of their talents and be active creators of their own careers. All this will be done in an international way of cooperating and learning from each other's experience.

I think that this university is a good place for a discussion like yours: We have over 5000 international students from more than 100 countries on our campus, as well as hundreds of international scientists working here. Around 600 students gain experience abroad within our exchange programs each year. From our collaboration with partner universities around the world in many different kind of exchanges and in research we know that listening to each other and learning from each other is a promising way: See what works out in which context, adapt it, try different ways of thinking, enriching each other's view. This fruitful kind of exchange of ideas gives you the flexibility necessary to succeed. The new slogan of this university is: *Creating Knowledge Networks*. The job developer project is already such a network, and you will certainly create more knowledge during the next two days.

Bochum and the Ruhr area are a good place for your meeting also for the history: The Ruhr-University was founded 53 years ago in a region dominated by coal and steel, this year the last coal mine of the area will close its doors. The since its founding times ongoing structural change and with it the challenge of creating new jobs and educating the young people in a different way has always been an important topic for this university. The region has also

been a “melting pot” for work immigration for about 150 years. From 1860 onwards there was large-scale migration from Poland to the Ruhr. In the 20th century, Turkish, Italian, Spanish and Greek immigrants came to work in the area which already in the late 19th century had become the largest industrial region of Europe. Until the founding of the Ruhr-University in 1965, there was no university at all in the whole Ruhr area. Today, our university is the largest employer in the city of Bochum, something unthinkable 50 years ago. Together with our partners in the University Alliance Ruhr – the TU Dortmund and University of Duisburg-Essen – we currently educate around 100000 students. So the history of university education is a history of astonishing change here, and has of course a lot to do with developing talent and job creation. Until now, the percentage of first generation students among the Ruhr area’s student population is higher than in traditional universities, and the percentage of students who work besides their studies, too.

This said – and I don’t want to be too long here and prevent you from working on your important topics - I want to stress that we are proud to have such a successful European project as the Job Developer here at RUB. I want to thank Dr. Kröll for his efforts, he is putting a lot of work in securing the EU funding for this cooperation.

I also would like to thank you, Professor Hartz, for coming today and share with us some of your ideas concerning ongoing labour market reforms. I think it is a privilege to have someone with your knowledge and experience here as keynote speaker, and I look forward to your remarks.

I wish you all two very productive and fruitful days, and that many young people may profit from the ideas you are developing here.

Welcome again, and all the best!

Ms Jutta Schmid

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