

The DVS President in discussions on the subjects of the promotion of young welders and the lack of specialists

DVS, as a large technical-scientific society which efficiently represents the interests of its members and joining technology at the national and international levels, has, in addition to other aims, recognised the promotion of young welders as well as the combatting of the lack of specialists in companies dealing with welding and joining technology as priority objectives and is now pursuing these consistently.

On November 12, 2008, the DVS President Prof. Heinrich Flegel, Mrs. Helga Linnenbaum and Prof. Carolin Radscheit met up in order to discuss these subjects.

First of all, Prof. Flegel surprised Mrs. Linnenbaum, who successfully completed her training as a welder at the DVS Course Centre in Rheine at the start of this year, with the offer of one year's free DVS membership. Mrs. Linnenbaum was happy to accept the offer and was given the DVS membership card as well as a small present by Prof. Flegel.

Prof. Radscheit, who works as a professor for the Mechatronics and Mechanical Engineering Faculty at the Technical College in Bochum and, at the same time, also as the Chairwoman for Technology, Science and Research in the DVS district branch on an honorary basis, received the Welding Technology Yearbook 2009 from Prof. Flegel.



Flegel: Mrs. Radscheit, a Student Meeting was held for the first time in Basel last year. Around 80 students from various universities and colleges concerned with joining technology took part in the event and presented contributions from their study papers and dissertations. Because of the positive response, this Student Meeting was extended further this year and we were able to stage it successfully in Dresden as a Student Congress with around 190 students. You experienced it live in Dresden. What are your impressions of the Student Congress and how do you estimate the current situation with regard to the young academic specialists in joining technology?

Radscheit:

As every year, I very much enjoyed the Annual Welding Conference. In comparison with the last conference in Basel, a very large number of young participants were also involved for the first time this year in Dresden. Students delivered many interesting lectures on their dissertations. Doctoral dissertations with very interesting subjects were presented too. Viewed all in all, the Annual Welding Conference in Dresden was very successful.

Flegel: Mrs. Linnenbaum, one particular development to which especially all companies from industry, commerce and the skilled trades must adjust is the increasing lack of specialists in companies dealing with joining technology. Was this background a criterion for you as well to choose the welder's occupation?

Linnenbaum:

Yes, this background was, in addition to other criteria, also one important aspect for my choice of occupation. It was frequently reported in the media that welders are sought-after employees at the moment. In the past, my employer repeatedly looked for welders. Therefore, I spoke with my bosses about a job in this field. At first, I worked as a welder on a trial basis and, after passing the welder qualification test, was then deployed in this field permanently.

Flegel: In order to reduce the lack of specialists, DVS has also set itself the goal of increasing women's interest in welding technology. Women are still substantially underrepresented in occupations relating to welding and joining technology. This may be attributed to the prejudice which still exists frequently that occupations in welding technology are very physically strenuous, dirty and dangerous too. For this reason, many women shrink back from activities in the field of welding technology. From your viewpoint, what can you say about these prejudices?



Linnenbaum:

These prejudices do exist and are justified in part too. The work is often dirty and sometimes heavy as well. In any case, it must also be said that, if the necessary tools are made available by the employer, the work can be performed very well at all times.

Flegel: Mrs. Radscheit, you are planning a survey on the subject of women in welding technology. Can you report anything about the background to this survey to us?

Radscheit:

As a lecturer at the Technical College in Bochum, I have noticed time and again that, although there are a large number of female engineering students at the technical college, these are as good as not represented in the fields of both welding and laser technology. I would now like to examine this more precisely with the planned survey. With my survey, I would like to find out whether the reasons for this are related to the image of welding technology and what reasons women have for not choosing an occupation in welding and joining technology.

I have conducted a small survey on the subject of welding and joining technology amongst my students. What was particularly astonishing to me in this respect was that the picture of the daily occupational routine in welding technology was totally unclear. The statements range from "It is warm", "It is filthy" and "It is very strenuous" right up to "Very experimental".

Therefore, it is urgently necessary to work on an improvement in the image and on an unambiguous occupational profile.

Flegel: As we have already established, there is a need for action particularly with regard to improving the image of welding and joining technology. Especially young people tend to associate negative terms with welding and joining technology. DVS is counteracting this (unfortunately widespread) belief in a targeted way with the campaign called "Joining is cool, clean & clever".

Mrs. Linnenbaum and Mrs. Radscheit, what do you associate with the terms cool, clever & clean?

Linnenbaum:

As I have already said, the activities as a welder may also be dirty. Here, I think that it is very important to focus on health even more in future.

Radscheit:

I must admit that I have some problems with the motto "cool, clean & clever". For me, the term "cool" does not represent the contents of welding technology. In welding technology, you deal with elements and elemental forces. And that is not "cool" in my view. As far as the term "clean" is concerned, I must say that welding technology is not clean in most cases but I do not find it bad to do a job in which your hands get dirty. However, welding technology is definitely "clever"! Occupations in welding technology are very varied. In my opinion, the campaign should therefore also concentrate on the term "clever" in particular.

Flegel: The DVS Year of Joining Technology represents another factor in order to improve the image of welding and joining technology. It started in September 2008 with the conference called THE JOINING SPECIALISTS 2008 in Dresden. As already mentioned, the Student Congress took place here. In spring 2009, the Young Professionals (students as well as young engineers and scientists) will accompany the regional Young Welders competitions as particular highlights. The results of the study entitled "Value added and jobs resulting from joining technology in Germany and Europe" will be presented in August 2009. The international WELDING & CUTTING trade fair, THE JOINING SPECIALISTS 2009 as well as the national

"Young Welders" competition in Essen in September 2009 will constitute the climax of the DVS Year of Joining Technology. The Year of Joining Technology will end in Essen but the campaign will, of course, be continued.

Mrs. Radscheit, what else do you think could be done in order to improve the image of welding and joining technology?

Radscheit:

The occupational profile of welding technology is, as already said, very varied. That extends across training, production, research and society work too. In my opinion, precisely this should be imparted more strongly. Welding and joining are very multifaceted and something interesting can be found in each occupational field. What I would wish for in addition: No distinction should be made between female and male welders but the working results should instead constitute the decisive factor.

Flegel: I thank you for the discussions and for your very informative and instructive remarks.

