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Well-positioned in Terms of Personnel?

In the 2015/2016 winter term, the number of mechanical engineering students in Germany peaked at over 120,000. Since then, the number has fallen continuously to less than three quarters (winter semester 22/23 was the last survey). A more detailed look at the specialization in automotive or drive technology reveals an even more dramatic situation, with student numbers at zero in individual lectures.

Why is this and what are the consequences? Does “mechanical engineering” sound too old-fashioned and is a degree program with the suffix digital or sustainable supposedly more promising for the next generation of engineers? For me, the situation culminated in two of my students on the Master’s program (sic!) asking whether they were still studying the right courses.

Uncertainty in society since Dieselgate has been accompanied by the remarkable work of German legislation since 2021, both in terms of content and workmanship. Which energy source is available for mobile as well as stationary applications due to political regulation? And why are CO₂ saving potentials sometimes withheld from the population? The difficult approval of the fuel HVO 100 is just one of many examples of the possible improvement of the pollutant balance ad hoc and in existing vehicles.

One thing is certain: The need for mobility will not be reduced globally. The European vehicle industry offers mobility solutions, from motorbikes and cars to commercial vehi-

cles, which have long been in demand far beyond the domestic market. In economic terms, this means tax revenue for the state and a contribution to social prosperity.

It is also clear that this went hand in hand with adequate engineering education. Today, however, high-quality vehicles or vehicles that fulfil market requirements well can be developed and built almost globally - often with vehicle and engine technology specialists trained in Germany who have also experienced here in management or science.

We can still educate and research at this level thanks to well-equipped institutes, depending on federal science policy and personal commitment.

The WKM Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft Kraftfahrzeug- und Motorentechnik (Scientific Society for Automotive and Engine Technology) is the established circle of the German-speaking technical expert panel, which is committed to the transfer of knowledge. The WKM Symposium, which offers all interested parties from science and industry insights into our work from basic to contract research, also stands for an intensive exchange of experience. The next opportunity to participate in the results will be on November 12 and 13, 2024 during the WKM Symposium in Magdeburg (Germany) (<https://www.wkm-ev.de/symposium.html>). Only a lively dialogue between industry and science can ensure the training and promotion of our young talent and strengthen the basis for an industry that remains important.