



## PRESS RELEASE

### Panel discussion on the fifth anniversary of CHANCEN eG

Berlin, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Although the actual anniversary of the founding of CHANCEN eG was several months ago, it was not celebrated until September. As part of the fifth anniversary of CHANCEN eG, a panel discussion on the topic of educational justice and equal opportunities took place on September 17<sup>th</sup>. Representatives from politics, academia and science took part, and the discussion was moderated by freelance journalist Birgit Kolkmann.

#### What is the current state of education in Germany?

**Prof. Marcel Fratzscher**, President of the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), began by pointing out the personal responsibility of each individual: being able to decide for yourself about your own life is very important. This also applies to equal opportunities. The best investment for a strong economy is in people's minds. **Dr. Dietlind Tiemann** (CDU), a member of German Parliament, expressed a similar view: The country's only raw material is knowledge. The funding of education through private initiatives should not really be necessary - education is a task of the state. Member of the Bundestag **Cansel Kiziltepe** (SPD) emphasized this aspect from another side: She pointed out the importance and necessity of free education from kindergarten to vocational qualifications. BAFöG is based on a good principle, but is nowadays poorly accessible and hardly helpful, said member of German Parliament **Dr. Jens Brandenburg** (FDP). **Joschka Knuth**, member of State Parliament in Kiel (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) emphasized the lack of experience of the mostly academically educated politicians. More working-class children are needed in parliaments. Ultimately, no one is aware of the full extent of educational inequality, said **Dr. Konrad Schily** (co-founder and long-time president of the University of Witten/Herdecke).

#### How can change happen?

The fact that education policy needs to be changed was not a question at all - on the contrary, all participants spoke of this necessity. Even the money is - actually - not a problem: it is there, it just has to be distributed differently.

Unfortunately, the model of the Income Share Agreement (ISA) is too unknown to many tax advisors and tax offices, reported Knuth, who himself had financed his studies with an ISA. Prof. Fratzscher spoke out against tuition fees in principle - unless there was complete state financing of tertiary education as an alternative. Dr. Schily quoted John F. Kennedy "*There is only one thing in the long run more expensive than education: no education*" and criticized the overly complex application process for BAFöG. The only thing that should be relevant, he said, is whether or not a person is enrolled at a further education institution; nothing else, especially not the parents' income or the social environment. Joschka Knuth added that a BAFöG independent of parents would lead to less emotional strain and lower bureaucratic costs.



## Is the Abitur the right entry criterion for a degree program?

In the opinion of Cansel Kiziltepe, the pressure to educate and the focus on excellence is not conducive to achieving goals. Dr. Dietlind Tiemann argued in a similar direction: the Abitur grade alone should not be the decisive factor, but should be supplemented by personal factors. Furthermore, in Dr. Schily's view, university access should be separated from the Abitur. This would enable significantly more than the current 1% of students to complete a course of study without a university entrance qualification.

Prof. Fratzscher pointed out that the state itself would also benefit from the advantages of an education accessible to all: more well-educated citizens would achieve higher added value, earn more and thus also pay more taxes. In addition, the interest in changing the existing conditions is distributed differently: it is strongly pronounced in educationally weak states and hardly present in the educationally strong states. This was supported by Jens Brandenburg: According to the OECD, Germany has a comparatively high social dependence concerning education; on average, being less invested in education, in comparison to other countries.

But how can the problem of educational inequality have existed for so long and yet be new? Knuth called for more voter participation and also political commitment. In a democracy, majorities are needed for change: This is especially true for the major challenges of our time: climate change, educational equality and digitalization.

A [recording of the panel discussion](#) in the German language can be found on our Youtube channel.

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### About CHANCEN eG

Since its founding in 2016, CHANCEN eG has made it its mission to enable young people to study exactly what they want at a non-state university, regardless of their financial means. The model: the Income Share Agreement (ISA), which was developed in 1995 by students at the Witten/Herdecke University. Currently, CHANCEN eG supports more than 1,100 students at 40 educational partners in over 100 courses of study. Since the beginning of 2018, the social enterprise has also been active in Africa with its subsidiary [CHANCEN International GmbH](#): In Rwanda, the international offshoot of CHANCEN eG is currently financing 1,300 students and is currently launching a major education funding initiative to 10,000 students from Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa.