

## Press Release

Vonovia SE  
Universitätsstraße 133  
44803 Bochum  
Germany

Silke Hoock  
Press Officer  
Corporate Media Relations  
T +49 234 / 314 - 1582  
Silke.hoock@vonovia.de  
[www.vonovia.de](http://www.vonovia.de)

Stefan Noort  
Head of Department  
Communications IHK  
T +49 511 3107-231  
[Stefan.noort@hannover.ihk.de](mailto:Stefan.noort@hannover.ihk.de)

Nicole Göttlicher  
Press Officer HR  
Continental  
T +49 511 938-1640  
[Nicole.goettlicher@conti.de](mailto:Nicole.goettlicher@conti.de)

### **Success for Vonovia and new skilled workers: German Chamber of Industry and Commerce confirms full equivalence of electronics engineers from Colombia**

- **Vonovia's Chief Human Resources Officer Ruth Werhahn congratulates Colombian employees and praises their courage and commitment**
- **The Chamber and Continental AG say recruitment outside the EU has been a success, praising exemplary training as a result of good cooperation between all parties involved**
- **Nationwide deployment during roll-out of solar panels on properties**

*Bochum, January 11, 2024* – Today, 13 Colombian employees at Vonovia, Germany's leading housing company, have received official recognition of equivalence as "Electronics Engineers for Building and Infrastructure Systems" from the Hanover Chamber of Industry and Commerce, on par with their German counterparts. This has become possible due to their 14-month employment as skilled workers at Vonovia combined with support from the Chamber and vocational training at Continental. "It's a good day for all of us. Our Colombian colleagues are now fully recognised skilled workers in the German labour market, and all the doors are open to them," says Ruth Werhahn, Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) at Vonovia. After recognition of their qualifications, the Colombian specialists, who were recruited by Vonovia in South America in 2021, can now be taken on as permanent employees.

"To attract new skilled workers", said Ruth Werhahn, "Vonovia had decided to look beyond its national borders. And Colombia was a place where we found skilled and courageous people who appreciated the good prospects we were offering. So they took this opportunity for a new life and made the most of it." She also praised the excellent level of cooperation of everyone involved. "It was real teamwork that led to success," she said.

The skilled workers, who had been recruited in Colombia under the TEAM programme of the German Federal Employment Agency, had already been learning German and had passed a language proficiency test. After their arrival in September 2022, they received on-the-job support from the Chamber and from the training provider Continental. Vonovia looked after its new colleagues, accompanying them to the relevant local government offices and finding accommodation for them.

“Once the Chamber had reviewed their job qualifications shortly after their arrival, we worked with our partners on a programme of training modules which the Colombians still needed. This was important in ironing out any differences in vocational standards, so that they could obtain full professional recognition. The recruitment of skilled workers outside the EU and their qualification for the German labour market went extremely well here, thanks to good teamwork,” said Maike Bielfeldt, Managing Director of the Hanover Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

The project is based on the German Skilled Immigration Act, which came into force in 2020 and has since been amended. The Act speeds up the recognition of existing foreign job qualifications and gives skilled immigrants up to two years to acquire any missing skills and any expertise of common technologies that they lack in Germany.

The Continental Institute for Technology and Transformation (CITT) as training provider is also pleased with the good results: “The people recruited in Colombia had a basic knowledge of German and were keen to integrate within Germany. Working with our partners, we created a model that combined learning German, process-based learning and harmonisation with the relevant German job requirements. At the same time, we demonstrated how foreign employees can be successfully equipped as skilled workers and can be integrated into society within a short period of time,” said Dr Ariane Reinhart, Member of the Executive Board for Human Resources and Sustainability at Continental AG.

After successfully integrating 13 electronics engineers from Colombia last year, Vonovia has employed a further 26 Colombian electronics engineers since November 2023. For them, too, the recognition and validation process of their skills is now underway, so that they can start supporting the expansion of photovoltaic systems at Vonovia throughout Germany. Again, it involves working with the Chamber and Continental. In the meantime, Vonovia has been recruiting further Colombians. This third group of electronics engineers have now been receiving German lessons in Bogotá since January.

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**Caption: Ruth Werhahn, Chief Human Resources Officer at Vonovia, congratulates employees on the recognition of their professional equivalence by the Hanover Chamber of Industry and Commerce. The housing company had recruited the electronics engineers in Colombia. The Colombians were also congratulated by Ariane Reinhart, Member of the Executive Board of Continental AG, and Maike Bielfeldt, Managing Director of the Hanover Chamber of Industry and Commerce.**

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## **About Vonovia**

Vonovia provides a home for over one million people. The housing company is at the center of society, which is why Vonovia's activities never just have an economic perspective, but always a social one as well. Vonovia is involved in finding answers to the current challenges on the housing market. The company is committed to greater climate protection, increased age-appropriate housing, and good coexistence in neighborhoods. In cooperation with social organizations and the districts, Vonovia supports social and cultural projects that enrich neighborly community life. Customers and their needs are the focus of Vonovia's activities. On-site property managers and in-house craftsmen take care of tenants' concerns. This customer proximity ensures a fast and reliable service. Vonovia also invests substantially in the maintenance of its buildings and develops housing-related services to improve quality of life.

The Bochum-based company has been listed on the stock exchange since 2013. The shares were included in the DAX in September 2015. Vonovia employs around 15,800 people. Chairman of the Management Board is Rolf Buch.

## **About the Hanover Chamber of Industry and Commerce**

The Hanover Chamber of Industry and Commerce provides services for and represents the interests of over 180,000 member companies in Hanover, the capital of the State of Lower Saxony, the Greater Hanover Region and the administrative districts of Diepholz, Nienburg, Schaumburg, Hameln-Pyrmont, Hildesheim, Holzminden, Göttingen and Northeim. The Chamber has its head office in Hanover and six offices in the Greater Hanover Region. As a statutory body under public law, the Chamber also fulfils a range of statutory functions, especially in relation to vocational training. The Chamber currently supervises around 21,000 apprenticeships at 5,600 companies where training is provided.

## About Continental

Continental develops pioneering technologies and services for sustainable and connected mobility of people and their goods. Founded in 1871, the technology company offers safe, efficient, intelligent and affordable solutions for vehicles, machines, traffic and transportation. In 2022, Continental generated sales of €39.4 billion and currently employs around 200,000 people in 57 countries and markets.

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