

# ■ A bridge to the future: European VET policy 2002-10

National policy report – Austria

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*This report is one of a set of European country reports on VET policy developments prepared within Cedefop's ReferNet network. ReferNet is a European network of national networks providing information and analysis on national VET to Cedefop and disseminating information on European VET and Cedefop work to stakeholders in the EU Members States, Norway and Iceland. The report has been produced by ReferNet Austria on the basis of a common template created by Cedefop. It is intended as a contribution to Cedefop's fourth policy report which reviews progress in VET towards the policy goals of the Copenhagen process. The opinions expressed in this national report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.*

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## Introduction

This **report on VET policy** gives an overview of measures, initiatives and projects, triggered by the Copenhagen process (2002 – 2010), which have been and are being initiated and carried out in Austria. It is part of a series of **country reports on VET policy** in the EU member states, Norway and Iceland which have been drawn up within the framework of ReferNet, the reference and information network of Cedefop. The contents of these country reports will be included in the fourth Cedefop Policy Report, in which the progress made within the framework of the Copenhagen process is analysed.

The report is divided into **nine subject areas** which have been identified at the European level as a priority for the promotion and continued development of VET: Chapter 1 deals with the **socio-economic challenges** of globalisation, technical progress, demographic changes and the ecologisation of the economy for VET policy. The second chapter is dedicated to the effects of the **economic and financial crisis** which has persisted since autumn 2008. Here measures are presented which have been taken or are being taken in the area of VET to reduce the effects of the crisis. The third chapter gives an overview of the work associated with implementing the **European principles and instruments**. Their development and implementation is very important for education policy in Austria. The **strengthening of the link between VET and the labour market** is the focus of the fourth chapter. Here there are details of the methods used to identify the future qualification requirements, especially in terms of the involvement of stakeholders. The fifth chapter deals with the measures to create **equality of opportunities, social justice and active citizenship**. Access to VET will be enabled or facilitated for all people with the various initiatives launched in this area. Central aspects of VET, i.e. **quality, excellence and attractiveness**, are discussed in the sixth chapter. Despite the comparatively high attendance rates in Austria, continuous improvement of VET is an important goal for all stakeholders. Promotion of **creativity and innovation** is the focus of many projects which are described in more detail in the seventh chapter. Chapter 8 focuses on the various **financing mechanisms of VET**. Issues here include the increase in efficiency and equality of opportunities coming from better use of funds and also the use of funds from the Lifelong Learning programme and other EU programmes. The ninth and final chapter summarises the progress made in the **modernisation of the Austrian VET system within the framework of the Copenhagen process** and lists priorities and targets of future cooperation projects.

This report has been drawn up under the auspices of the Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw) by **authors** of the 3s research laboratory, the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) and the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (öibf) (cf. report information, ch. 10). It is based in particular on the first VET policy report from 2008 (cf. bibliographical information below). The authors of this edition would like to thank those who wrote the report from 2008 for providing the information. For their cooperation and useful comments on this report they would also like to thank the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK), in particular Ms Sonja Lengauer.

To complement this report, information on Austrian VET can be found in the other ReferNet publications, the Austrian **National VET Research Report** and the Austrian country report on **VET in Europe** (cf. bibliographical information below).

**Reports on VET in Austria within the framework of ReferNet**

Luomi-Messerer, Karin and Vogtenhuber, Stefan (2009): National VET Research Report Austria. Report within the Framework of ReferNet. Wien.

Download in GE and EN: <http://www.refernet.at/index.php/publikationen/forschung>

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Lorenz Lassnigg (*Institut für Höhere Studien*)

## 1. Socio-economic challenges for future VET policy development

The **socio-economic challenges for VET policy** – globalisation, technology, demography and migration as well as ecologisation – selected for this report have been known for a long time and are also the subject of many political documents and initiatives at the European, international and national levels. It is also common practice to mention these themes as motivational by way of introduction with many different political projects. But it is often difficult to differentiate the extent to which it is mere rhetoric or if it is actually an operational reference to these challenges in the sense that the (planned) measures contribute to their solution.

Many measures refer to these challenges. But whether and to what extent these are promising is often hard to judge. To be able to assess political initiatives in a meaningful way **two requirements** seem important: first of all it is necessary to put the challenges in concrete terms with regard to problems which can be dealt with in quality and quantity; second an estimate of the expenditure of the measures taken in terms of the extent of the problems is necessary to be able to identify mere rhetoric and prevent many costly “drops in the ocean”.

Based on these considerations the following **questions** arise:

1. To what extent are the problems which have to be dealt with sufficiently clarified in order to give concrete political answers and what is being done/has been done for this clarification and concretisation?
2. To what extent are there basic principles for assessing the extent of the problems and setting corresponding priorities and are these also being set?
3. Which measures are being taken and are these also correspondingly effective?

The following examination of the subject areas covers these questions. There is also weighting according to the above questions with the selection of the described initiatives so that the clarity/concretisation and the weighting/setting of priorities are drawn on as preferential selection criteria for measures. In this way it should be prevented that too much importance is attached to more or less popular or too weak and unpromising initiatives.

Overall an evaluation of **education policy programmes from 2005-2008** (cf. Lassnigg 2008) shows clear emphasis on challenges from migration, an average amount of emphasis on the technology sector and less emphasis on the challenges from globalisation, ecologisation and demography overall (apart from migration questions). The evaluation comes to the conclusion that the socio-economic aspects are discussed more on the level of rhetoric and there are not many operational ideas about how the challenges can actually be met. The themes of education policy discussions which have existed for a long time are adapted to the rhetoric of the new challenges instead of operational ideas on promising measures being developed.

### 1.1 Impact of globalisation on VET

Austria sees itself as a small open economy which has to exist among the international competition. In the decades since liberation from the National Socialist regime, Austria has undergone an impressive economic and social catch-up process in which the country

has developed into one of the richest countries based on conventional indicators. For decades the export sector has also been seen as an important motor of development.

Since the 1980s at the latest, however, structural problems of the Austrian economy have been pointed out again and again, which on the one hand indicate a dominance of traditional sectors of the economy and on the other hand also a weakness in the area of research and development (R&D) (cf. 1.2). Under the aspect of **globalisation**, openness to the international competition and society's use of this development in particular seem to be of importance. On account of its location and history, the process of opening of the new democracies in the Eastern European states has particular importance for Austria. The economy has expanded very successfully in this area while society is (still) to some extent opposed to this opening by maintaining considerable impediments to mobility on the labour market (cf. also 1.3).

There are in some cases different estimates of how promising Austria is in terms of globalisation: the facts are not particularly clear. Ostensibly the position of Austria on the basis of comparative indicators such as GDP growth and productivity is close to the leaders or at the front of those just behind (cf. BMWFJ 2009a). But, as shown in more detail in the section on technology (cf. 1.2) – in particular on the basis of the paradigm of the new growth theory, in which the innovation system is ascribed central importance – certain questions are asked on sustainability or longer-term support capacities of the available structures: These concern for example the low level of higher education (HE) qualifications and also the minor importance of high-technology in the economic structure.

From OECD-studies we can deduce that the strong expansion into the Central and Eastern European area may have led to **double-edged consequences**: on the one hand there have been major economic successes and on the other hand this expansion sometimes took place in traditional fields, as a result of which the pressure to innovate may have been reduced temporarily and a greater need to catch up may have arisen.

To deal with the questions on the development of the Austrian competitive position in political terms, in 2007/08 a **mission statement for foreign trade** (cf. BMWFJ 2009b) was developed based on a comprehensive appraisal of the competitive position which formulates **ten requirements**, the first of which refers to the education sector (cf. BMWFJ 2009b, p. 9-11):

1. Increase the significance of education
2. Become a technological pioneer
3. Become a hub of Central Europe
4. Focus on future markets
5. Use the potential of the service sector
6. Promote the internationalisation of SMEs
7. Intelligent regulation: increase quality – reduce density
8. Use coordination processes efficiently
9. Promote development and corporate responsibility
10. Build up the 'brand Austria'

Apart from this initiative, which will be explained in more detail as an example (cf. text below), aspects of globalisation have so far played a role mainly at the level of educational contents in the Austrian education system, for example in the areas of political education (cf. 5.3), economic education and consumer education as well as pre-service and in-service education and training for teaching staff. But it is more a background theme and it is hard to say what actual range these stimuli and offers have and to what extent they also show effects. A study on the preparation of young people for the requirements of globalisation in schools (cf. Schmid 2006) has revealed a mixed picture. Among pupils and

teachers there are sometimes positive attitudes towards and assessments of globalisation, but to a considerable extent there are also clearly disapproving opinions (among a third of teachers there is a disapproving/critical view). Pupils express high willingness to move location (three quarters can imagine living abroad for some time). A third of pupils feel they are not informed enough about international economy questions, and half say that these questions are covered rarely in lessons. The teaching material also concentrates largely on the national economy. Teachers consider internationalisation initiatives to be of great importance. English in particular is used very often as a working language at the schools of two thirds of the questioned teaching staff. Only 20% of teachers have had professional experience abroad. Half of the younger foreign language teachers have had no experiences abroad during their education.

### **The Austrian foreign trade mission statement: Shaping globalisation – success with openness and innovation**

The **background** to the measure is the great importance for Austria of foreign trade, which has to face the new challenges of globalisation. It is assumed that the actors have to adapt to new conditions and in many areas cannot continue to act as they have been doing so far.

The **objectives** of this measure were to clarify the new challenges, to ascertain Austria's actual starting position among the globalised competition and to develop a joint strategic goal for the different actors. Major challenges here will be the fact that in the academic area top-level research has to be promoted, the central location has to be used to develop into a Central European logistics centre and the internationalisation of activities, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises and in the production and export of knowledge-based industry-oriented services has to be further increased.

The **target groups** of this initiative cover a very wide area and concern all actors and institutions involved in foreign trade: from companies, coordinating institutions (e.g. the social partners and research and innovation promotion) and governance systems on to the education sector and research itself.

The **implementation** of this comprehensive catalogue of measures will start in 2010. It is hard to estimate how long it will take to implement because of the economic and financial crisis.

### **Sphere of action**

The **sphere of action** of the measure is at the national and international level. It is also part of the government programme for the current legislation period.

With this measure the **education sector** will be put in a wider context. The first of the ten formulated requirements is therefore also to "increase the significance of education". In the section "Human Resources" the following strategic goals and guidelines are formulated (cf. BMWFJ 2009, p. 249):

1. Austria will then be internationally competitive when the high wage level is justified with correspondingly high productivity of the work.
2. The basis for the productivity of the work is established in initial and continuing education and training.
3. Investments in education are investments in the future which must be seen under the aspects of efficiency and equality of opportunities.
4. Specialist know-how including export-related expert knowledge and foreign language skills are the required "hard skills" of an internationally-oriented economy.
5. The specialist competences require a broad basis of "soft skills" and basic attitudes.

<p>This includes in particular openness to internationality and interculturality in general and the international economy in particular.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Mobility contributes to both the acquisition of the competences needed by foreign trade and also to optimisation with the allocation of human resources.</li> <li>7. Companies have to complement their internationalisation activities with targeted and strategic HR development concepts.</li> <li>8. Education itself can and needs to be an “export product”. Austria needs to be attractive as an educational location and also to establish its educational products on foreign markets.</li> <li>9. The high importance of education for the economy and society has to be reflected in a new obligation to pursue educational objectives and in particular in a reform of school administration.</li> </ol> <p>The <b>actors</b> are specified only indirectly by the objectives and challenges. In the “Human Resources” section, which refers directly to the education sector, the social partners (high wage level has to be associated with correspondingly high productivity), the educational institutions (providing the population with know-how and “hard” and “soft skills”; education as an export product), the employees (mobility), companies (targeted HR development to support internationalisation) and policy (reform of school administration) are discussed.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p>The “Human Resources” working group has carried out an <b>evaluation</b> of the status of VET: the qualification level is seen as good, and VET as excellent. Weaknesses are seen in basic education and the low number of technical/scientific training programmes. Need for action is identified in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ higher qualification in intermediate and later acquisition phases,</li> <li>▪ basic education (literacy),</li> <li>▪ international themes and foreign languages,</li> <li>▪ intercultural and entrepreneurial skills,</li> <li>▪ cross-border mobility and integration,</li> <li>▪ exporting education and networks,</li> <li>▪ increasing efficiency by reforming administration.</li> </ul> <p>These guidelines need to be put in more concrete terms first, however.</p> <p>An evaluation of the entire mission statement is planned for the spring of 2010. The implementation of previous measures relates to support for companies in export activities, research activities in the area of the international economy, etc. Measures in the education sector mainly concern the promotion of mobility stays for pupils, apprentices and teachers.</p>
<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <p>The most important “<b>obstacle</b>” which has influenced the implementation of the measure is the financial and economic crisis, which first of all has led to considerable slumps in exports and has shifted the focus to short-term measures (cf. 2.1).</p> <p>In the medium and long-term, however, the mission statement provides a basis for concrete initiatives and measures in the education sector. Priorities are worked out where need for action is seen. But there will certainly be a considerable <b>challenge</b> in convincing the actors in the education sector of these priorities.</p> <p>With regard to the initial questions for this assessment (cf. text above) we can say that in</p>

the foreign trade mission statement there is clarification of the problems arising for VET from globalisation, and with regard to economic policy strategies this is being consistently followed. There is also a certain weighting where the education policy challenges are put in first place. More concrete details and implementation are still lacking though.

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Mende, Johannes (2007): Sekundärstudie “Export wissensbasierter Dienstleistungen” [Secondary study “Export of Knowledge-Based Services”], Wien: I.S.E. Online: <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Aussenwirtschaft/Internationalisierungsoffensive/Documents/StudieExportwissensbasierterDienstleistungen.pdf> (29.11.2009).

## 1.2 Impact of technological progress on VET

In the area of the relationship between **technological development and education** there have long been several open questions about the effectiveness of the innovation system and the innovativeness of the Austrian economy. Austria has a strong and diversified system of VET with a clear focus on the secondary level. The specifics are that VET begins relatively early at the age of 15, the system contains both strong company-based apprenticeship training and also a strong full-time school system for VET, and that within school-based VET a considerable percentage of young people also obtain full entitlement to attend a higher education (HE) institution. In comparison, the HE system is rather weak. The area of technology and sciences in particular is attended and completed by a relatively low number of students, and this number is also falling. For a long time there have been discussions about the too low supply of technically/scientifically trained staff. The university of applied science (Fachhochschule, FH) sector, which is heavily business-oriented, was not set up until the 1990s. This is often attended by graduates of VET colleges (BHSs), who thus often acquire eight- or nine-year practice-oriented technical or economic training. In the quantitatively dominating area of universities, the HE sector is characterised by long study times, diverse study conditions sometimes with heavy overcrowding and chronic underfunding. This situation is also expressed in unfavourable assessments of Austrian universities in the different rankings as well as in unfavourable assessments of research activities (with a few exceptions).

In view of this structure, which has changed only little in recent years, Austria has still fared rather badly in **comparative assessments of the innovation system** in the recent past. In the last few years, significant investments have been made in the innovation system, which have concentrated mainly on the interface between research and the corporate sector. The corresponding structural indicators and also the position in the innovation scoreboard (cf. EIS 2009) have improved significantly and here Austria is moving to join the top countries.

The **economic structure** is characterised by the fact that, to catch up, Austria was a technology importer for a long time, i.e. it essentially imported technical progress. Above all in more recent assessments, Austrian companies have to be seen disproportionately highly as “modifiers” of imported innovations, with the strength lying in the area of “me-

dium high-tech". There are a considerably high number of companies which do not innovate, and high-technology is not developed much. One specific aspect is that the most innovative companies are mainly international groups which, in some cases, have set up research activities in Austria.

With this structure in mind, there have been discussions for a long time on the Austrian "**growth paradox**", in which the economic successes actually do not go together with the predictions of growth and innovation research. In the "new growth theory", which is apparently becoming increasingly established as a theoretic paradigm, innovativeness is becoming the most important growth factor. A necessary shift of the qualification structure towards tertiary qualifications is derived from this. This argument is also shared by the relevant researchers (cf. e.g. Peneder et al. 2006, 2007). It is postulated that the Austrian economy has to take a new growth path, which would mean a change from a technology importer to a technology supplier. The **challenges for the education sector** are explained in this change. Generally there are two questions: first, is research in the HE sector sufficiently developed to contribute to this transition and second, which qualifications are necessary in order to bring about this transition?

Unfortunately there are no sufficiently empirically substantiated answers to these questions. This is also connected with the complexity of the innovation system. There are many factors – from the climate for innovation and economic and regional structures on to labour relations and governance systems – which are necessary for a functioning innovation system, so it is not completely clear which priorities have to be set for the further development of the innovation system. There is thus differentiation between radical and incremental innovation and between production and diffusion of innovations, for example. In innovation research there are also approaches which focus more on the significance of diffusion, which is promoted by practical application competences as are provided in intermediate VET. Here it is a matter of changing: instead of either/or between HE education and intermediate VET it is a question of the "right mix". The traditional strength of technology importers could therefore also be effective under the current and future conditions.

In Austria the priorities were not and still are not in the area of education. It cannot be clearly shown where these priorities have to be set, however. Despite the low academisation there are no clear signs of an effective lack of academics; despite the estimate that BHS qualifications would be a substitute for HE qualifications, a considerable number of BHS graduates continue their studies afterwards. There are also clear wage gaps to the HE institutions within comparable specialisations; the companies in qualified areas have much fewer problems looking for employees than companies in less qualified areas, etc.

A clear **innovation strategy** is therefore a question of political decisions under considerable uncertainty: there is widespread agreement that there is clear underfunding of the HE sector – at the universities alone an additional requirement of one billion euros is expected. There is strong evidence that the education reserves are not being exhausted in the current structure of the education sector (high amount of lacking basic competences, strong link of participation and performance with social background). In the VET structure there are also different considerations in the direction of reorganisation. For all these problem areas there are proposals for solutions but also many open questions.

Minimum consensus can be seen in the need to increase the number of students and graduates of technical and scientific studies. One way of achieving this is to increase female participation in this area. There have been clear indications for a long time that gender-specific segregation is particularly pronounced in Austria. This starts with the gender-specific discrepancies in the performance and interest in mathematics and sciences during the compulsory schooling period, as became clear with PISA, includes the highly gen-

der-specific selection of job specialisations and ends with large gender-specific discrepancies with HE studies. One measure trying to counteract this is described in the following. This measure also refers to many more extensive problems associated with gender segregation and performance of the tasks of counselling, orientation and information for education and careers (guidance).

### **FIT – Women in Technology**

The **background** to this scheme is the long-known large gender-specific difference in terms of access by women to research and technology. In 2002 a programme (fFORTE - **F**rauen in **F**orschung und **T**echnologie or Women in Research and Technology) was developed to tackle this problem in different ways. One sub-programme is aimed at the school system in order to make technology attractive for female pupils and to inform them about it in different ways. As well as one initiative specialising in career guidance (mut! Girls and Technology, cf. 8.3), the programme FIT (Women in Technology) also aims to generate interest in technical and scientific studies and therefore open up access to these fields.

“The **objective** of this project is to increase the percentage of women in technical/scientific courses and professions. This is done by motivation and targeted counselling as well as accompanying and supporting young women in terms of technical/scientific education and training and career options” (cf. <http://www.fforte.at/unterseite/10/fforte-schule.html>).

Pupils from the tenth grade (i.e. after compulsory schooling) are the main **target group** of FIT. Other target groups are teachers, parents and businesses.

The project has been **implemented** throughout Austria since 2002. The most important measures are information events at schools and days of practical work experience for female pupils at universities and Fachhochschulen on available technical and scientific courses. Six university towns in Austria are involved. Information material is provided during the events. So-called FIT female ambassadors carry out the events at schools. These are selected because they should be able to address the female pupils as well as possible by using their similar experiences, with these being students and graduates of technical courses in particular. At the six locations there are various responsible institutions implementing the project (see FIT website) and at the HE institutions there are people acting as contact points in the technical/scientific study branches. Of a total of around 90,000 euros in the initial years (around 15,000 euros equally for each location), the subsidy has now risen to 280,000 euros per year (between 35,000 euros and 65,000 euros for each location). In addition to the project subsidisation, between 10,000 euros and 50,000 euros is raised as funds by sponsors depending on the year and size of the location, but often this is not possible. With the events in schools around 5,500 female pupils are reached overall (for each location the figures are between 500 and 1,000, they have risen greatly in some cases in recent years), at the days of practical work experience around 1,500 interested young women are reached (the number varies between 100 and 500).

### **Sphere of action**

The **sphere of action** of the initiative is national, but it is implemented at the regional level. There are contact points in six of the nine provinces which in some cases also handle the surrounding regions (e.g. Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland).

It is a project with the framework of a **broader strategy** of promoting women in research and technology which is also supported by several sponsors (Council for Research and Technological Development, the Federal Ministries for Science and Re-

search; of Economics, Family and Youth; for Transport, Innovation and Technology and of Education, Arts and Culture). There are also various sponsors from research, the economy and the public. The initiative sees itself “as a model for extensive promotion of women with the aim of establishing networks with EU-wide and international initiatives in the area of ‘women in research and technology’” (from fForte programme). In four sub-programmes the aim is to promote girls and women at the different stages of their education and career paths (from educational and career choice on to occupation) and in different areas (education sector, science, world of work), so that career obstacles are removed along the entire career path.

In the area of school and the FIT initiative the **main actors** are the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture as funding authority, the project teams (which are located at the regional level in different institutions, e.g. at equality institutions in HE establishments, in projects for girls and women, or as independent projects etc.), institutions of the provinces and also the schools and HE institutions.

### Evaluation

In 2009 an evaluation was concluded to provide responsive feedback to the sponsors and implementers and comprised four sub-areas: appraisal of implementation (cf. Wroblewski, Leitner, Osterhaus 2009), case studies for detailed analysis of implementation (cf. Wroblewski and Leitner et al. 2009a), acceptance among female pupils, teachers and female ambassadors (cf. Wroblewski and Leitner et al. 2009b), influence on career choice (cf. Leitner und Wroblewski et al. 2009). A qualitative-quantitative approach was selected.

The assessment of the **effectiveness** and the **effects** of the initiative has been incorporated in a concept of the career choice process. Here it can be seen that with this initiative a very important problem for Austrian VET is addressed but this does not come close to resolving the issue, however. First of all the gender-specific decisions have already largely been taken in life before this measure comes into effect. Second, with these interventions several weaknesses in career guidance are revealed as the requirements for the effectiveness of the intervention are often not met: the schools sometimes do too little to initiate career choice processes. The information level on career options is also often not seen as part of a school’s responsibilities. On account of the very heterogeneous prerequisites of career guidance in different schools and different pupils, very different needs are addressed which sometimes cannot be sufficiently covered by the limited scope of action of the initiative, however: The pupils are in different phases of their selection process (some are in the evaluation or decision phase, others only in the searching and preselection phase) and have very different starting conditions (sometimes there is only information on technical study options while in other cases there is confirmation of already made (preliminary) decisions). The evaluation emphasises only a certain uncertainty with the goals of the initiative.

Important **indicators of success** of the evaluation relate to the implementation and acceptance of the measures and an awareness of the target groups for technology/science. As a general impact-oriented indicator of success the increase in the percentage of women in technical/scientific studies was selected, but the achievability of this goal with the measures is questioned – much more extensive measures would be necessary here. A qualitative analyse of the programme’s influence on career choice was conducted (cf. conclusions).

The **incorporation of the results** in other political measures is not foreseeable yet because the evaluation was not completed until 2009.

## Conclusions

As **obstacles** it has become apparent that in some cases the schools are not accessible because they face too many non-school offers; in addition, bureaucratic regulations for project implementation often require great expenditure and the superordinate institutions act only partially in a supporting capacity, and this is very important in particular in the initial phase of establishing contacts in a (new) region. The originally selective approach – providing events at certain points in time – has already been expanded in some regions towards a whole-year project, which facilitates and improves contacts on account of current activities.

One general **challenge** of the programme is the attempt to influence the school system “from outside”. This means that on the one hand different barriers are linked which generally concern the conditions for establishing contact (organisational expenditure, support from bureaucracy and heads of schools etc.). The effectiveness, however, also depends considerably on the environment at the schools themselves, in particular the extent to which activities for career guidance and information are fixed components in school life and the extent to which this is performed as a task. In this respect the schools have turned out to be very heterogeneous. If the necessary environmental requirements are not met, however, the interventions will not suffice in order to achieve effects. To be able to influence study choice it is also noted that the interventions begin when the pupils are at an even younger age and that the parents and teachers also need to be involved to a greater extent. In some cases this has already occurred, e.g. when the target group of 18 year-olds was brought forward to the 16 year-olds. The resources were not sufficient for involving the parents and teachers more, however. Younger pupils are also already targeted by the second initiative in fForte, i.e. “mut – Girls and Technology” (cf. 8.3); the third initiative “IMST Gender Network” deals with the mathematics and science teachers.

With regard to the initial questions it can be stated that the intention of the programme is certainly suitable to help solve the basic problem of increasing the number of students and graduates in technical and scientific studies. The evaluation is also a step towards this goal. Overall, however, the contribution of this programme can only be small because there is far too little clarification beforehand of many problems which impair the access of young women to technical and scientific studies and occupations. Many additional initiatives are definitely required in order to find answers to the question of suitable responses of VET to technical progress.

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### 1.3 Impact of demographic change and international migration on VET

Like many others, the **Austrian population** is subject to an ageing process, it creates its growth mainly through **immigration**. There are big regional differences in migration flows, for example between town and country, so the population growth in Vienna, for example, is much higher than in other regions. At the same time the possibilities of immigration are handled very carefully. On account of the circumstances of immigration in the last few decades, certain groups of immigrants are clearly less qualified than the average among the population. There is also the problem that qualifications obtained abroad are not recognised and the people are employed in dequalified jobs. In recent years there has been a shift in migration flows so that as well as the traditional (economic) migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia and Turkey, immigration from EU countries has also increased.

The education sector has to face new circumstances in some areas: in Vienna, for example, the percentage of children and youths with a migration background has clearly increased. Adaptation to these new challenges is proceeding only slowly, however, so the real educational options of youths with a migration background differ considerably from those of youths without a migration background. The gained competences also differ significantly, as shown by the PISA surveys. Since education is often not continued after compulsory schooling, the percentage of children with a migration background in general compulsory education is higher than in VET. The percentage of pupils with a migration background measured by the spoken everyday language amounts to 18% in general education, while in VET this is only 10% (cf. Specht 2009, volume 1, indicator B4). Among the different areas of VET it is mainly the VET schools which accept many youths with a migration background (20%, in the business sector this is even 37%). The percentage is much lower in apprenticeship training (8%). In some regions there are still visible trends of children and youths with a migration background transferring to special needs schools. The switch from school to a job is also much harder for youths with a migration background to manage than for those without a migration background. Current efforts to deal with the challenges of demography and migration are characterised by the fact that the issue is no longer only of interest for relevant specialists, it has also come to more general attention. Similarly the situation is dealt with empirically in a more focused manner and is also documented by statistics in a better way.<sup>1</sup> At the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) with the department “Migration, Intercultural Education and Language Policy” a facility has also been set up which deals with the issue of migration in the school system and coordinates the activities in this area.

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<sup>1</sup> Recently there have been several studies and research findings which elaborate the problems in this area. The theme was the main issue at the First Austrian Conference on Vocational Education and Training Research (cf. Biffl 2009, Bock-Schappelwein, Bremberger, Huber 2009, Sprung 2009). In the first Austrian National Report on Education (cf. Specht 2009) considerable attention was also paid to the theme (cf. statistical processing by the indicators in NRE Volume 1: A3, B4, B5, F3, F4, F8; and also Herzog-Punzenberger and Unterwurzacher 2009, Feyerer 2009, Steiner 2009, Schneeberger 2009).

Overall it is clear that to maintain its population level, Austria needs a certain amount of immigration, but this issue is heavily disputed politically and is also used by political parties within parliamentarism for populist politics (it is not uncommon to hear directly hostile comments against immigration or immigrants within the official political spectrum). So it is important in particular to use the ground for integrative politics by preparing the social climate and also, for example, to establish the required acceptance for measures to promote children and youths with a migration background. At the political level there are discussions and measures which on the one hand refer to the specific selection of migrants and draw relatively high barriers, e.g. with language skills, and on the other hand also emphasise the early promotion of children with a migration background. In the **school system** there are many **support strategies** but there is no common line for their implementation, however.

On the one hand the **Year of Intercultural Dialogue** (2008) was used to create a better network between actors who are active in this area and to trigger new activities and also improve and bundle existing activities. On the other hand it was used as an occasion to raise greater awareness about the advantages of interculturality and to strengthen the actors in this area by means of support and multiplier effects.

### European Year of Intercultural Dialogue – Austria’s contribution

The **background** to the measure was Austria’s involvement in the EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008.

“The **main objective** was to raise awareness that cultural diversity represents an enrichment and potential for innovation for society. With regard to education policy there was support for the reforms which focus on equality of opportunities and individual promotion, and with regard to cultural policy a powerful signal was sent to civil society in terms of empowerment and participation.” (BMUKK 2009).

One of the important **target groups** of the activities was pupils and other groups of people connected with education, in particular teachers.

The initiative was carried out in the course of 2008 and is now finished. As part of the **implementation**, hundreds of events and school projects on this theme were promoted. The Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) provided around three million euros here. PR work was also done with media co-operation projects, in particular with the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF and the newspaper “Der Standard” and non-commercial radio stations. There was also a “dialogue tour”, during which events were carried out with creative artists in the federal provinces. In the first half of the year, this work was the focal point, in the second half of the year many activities focusing on multilingualism were carried out. Around 3,000 events were organised in connection with the projects. The number of submissions for project activities as part of the educational principle of “intercultural learning” almost doubled in 2008. The following “flagship projects” were carried out in the area of education: (1) development of international cultural projects within the framework of school partnerships between Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia with pupils aged between ten and 14, teachers and creative artists, (2) development of concepts for sustainable handling of language diversity (<http://www.projekt-querdenken.eu/en/index>) within the framework of international school teams from EU and Western Balkan countries, Turkey and Russia, (3) setting up an international school network between EU and Mediterranean countries, (4) implementation of ten projects in which apprentices worked in project teams with creative artists and economic experts on the themes of the labour market, key competences and interculturality and presented their results at public events, (5) setting up a mobile interactive culture café (<http://www.cafemelange.net/>), (6) popularisation of migrant languages (<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/europa/lnds/index.xml>); this project is also being continued, (7) events on culture in Turkey as traditionally one of the most important countries of origin of migrants (<http://www.tuerkischekulturwochen.at/>), (8) submission of cultural projects or individual works on cultural identities by 4,000 pupils in a competition as part of the Europe Project 2008 (<http://www.projekt-europa.at/>); this project is also being continued. As well as these “flagship projects” the theme of interculturality was also incorporated in many other programmes and activities which are dedicated not only to this theme: among the total of 2,500 promoted school projects, 55 projects on the educational principle of “intercultural learning” were carried out (<http://ikl.bmukk.gv.at/projreport.aspx?ID=46>); 280 schools submitted 700 projects as part of the “School Cultural Budget” sub-programme, which, by dealing with art and culture, aimed to make a contribution to intercultural dialogue; 73 events were carried out as part of the “Global Education Weeks” (<http://www.oneworld.at/globaleducationweek/>); as part of the “Political Education” action days 43 of a total of 100 projects were dedicated to the theme of intercultural dialogue; in the “Media Literacy Award” 50 works were dedicated to this theme. The Regional Education Board for Vienna, where the percentage of migrants in the school system is at the highest, promoted around 75 projects at schools, and 13 of these were in the area of VET and teacher training. The main focus of the activities was on the area of general education, however. Examples in the

area of VET are school partnerships, school exchange programmes, work placements abroad, diversity competence for teachers, teaching modules, culturally-specific information, school neighbourhoods, intercultural events. Finally more than 200 events were also carried out by civil society organisations in schools or together with schools (e.g. intercultural camps, workshops on racism and anti-racism).

### Sphere of action

The **sphere of action** was at the national level, but the regional and local levels were also included, and sectorally education, culture and the media were involved in particular. It was an **individual measure** directly initiated from the European level. This was also used, however, to incorporate and improve many different activities in the area of intercultural education, in some cases also with additional funds from the BMUKK.

The main actor was the BMUKK as National Coordinating Body (NCB). The other members of the NCB were institutions of the administration, social partners, organisations of creative artists and important media partners, and many activists at grass-roots level.

### Evaluation

An evaluation report was compiled and published for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (cf. BMUKK 2009b).

In this the activities are **assessed** extremely positively. The assessments refer mainly to input-side criteria, however. There was no attempt to ascertain effects on the attitudes of the participants or on the population, which would also be extremely difficult.

Used as **indicators of success** are the reach with media activities, the number and participation in events, the number and development of projects, the internationality of the partnerships and the inclusion of different groups of actors in the school area, in particular pupils and teachers. Larger media events reached an estimated 27% (1.9 million people), for adverts on television and radio a reach of 47% and for reporting a reach of 14% is estimated. In printed media the reach is higher at 68%. Nearly 900 people (multipliers, politicians, creative artists) took part in the dialogue tour.

There has been **incorporation** of the results in other political measures on the one hand by improving the institutional basis for the work of the BMUKK with the establishment of the Department of Migration, Intercultural Education and Language Policy, and on the other hand by continuing various projects or project focal points (cf. BMUKK-IKM, BMUKK-MU).

### Conclusions

**Obstacles** which arose when carrying out the measure are not reported.

**Challenges** which still have to be overcome certainly exist in involving organisations of civil society more in such activities with greater emphasis on equal opportunities. The main challenge remains to consolidate the ground for the acceptance and integration of migrants in Austria.

With regard to the initial questions it needs to be stated that with the measure a European initiative has been taken on and implemented. This was not done on the basis of more detailed analyses of the problems. Even if no information is available on measurable effects, initiating a wide-reaching public debate and in the education sector in particular on the positive aspects of diversity and interculturality must definitely be seen as positive – not least because, with this, there can also be improved acceptance of the necessary support measures.

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### 1.4 Impact of the greening of economy on VET

Environmental issues play an important role in the political public in Austria (e.g. nuclear power, environmental protection, genetic engineering), even if they have maybe not yet reached the economic and operational levels so much.<sup>2</sup> So **environmental education** also has a long tradition even if its effects are not so clear. Back in 1994 guidelines for environmental education were developed in a framework ordinance. In an award-winning Internet portal termed "Forum Environmental Education" the experiences, materials and partners for networking opportunities are presented.

As well as many other smaller projects, important environmental education activities are a network of ecological schools called "ÖKOLOG", which currently comprises more than 260 schools ([www.oekolog.at](http://www.oekolog.at); [www.ensi.org](http://www.ensi.org)), an eco-label for schools and educational establishments ([www.umweltzeichen.at/schule](http://www.umweltzeichen.at/schule)) and participation in an EU Comenius project "Partnership and Participation for a Sustainable Tomorrow – SUPPORT" (<http://support-edu.org/>).

Subsequently the activities to promote sustainability have also expanded from direct environmental education to cover other themes, for example in 1997 with health education (BMUKK health education) and also with economic education and consumer education (BMUKK consumer education).

For a few years the Government has been supporting a strategy of **Sustainable Development**, which is organised by the Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW or "Ministry of Life" for short) (cf. BMLFUW 2002). Education is formulated as a challenge together with research in a guiding goal within the field of action "quality of life". The basic idea is that for all fields of action of the sustainability strategy (quality of life, economy, space, politics) specific education programmes and communication strategies have to be developed and implemented within the framework of the entire education system. The indicators put forward in the sustainability strategy (cf. BMLFUW 2002, p. 41) do not take this requirement into account, however, because only the EU benchmarks (participation in lifelong learning, early school leavers), complemented by a national indicator of CVET participation, have been included. Explic-

<sup>2</sup> Austria's position in the EU monitoring report is not so favourable regarding the environmental indicators (cf. EC 2009). Cf. also the indicators on Austrian development <http://www.nachhaltigkeit.at/article/articleview/78126/1/25662> (20.12.2009).

itly mentioned is the use of educational activities in several fields of action or guiding goals connected with the development of a sustainable lifestyle and with innovation policy, in the area of regional provision of education offers (cf. 4.1) and in association with the fight against poverty.

Within this framework an **initiative “Education for Sustainable Development”** has also been set up, which has developed a sustainability strategy parallel to the Lifelong Learning strategy. This strategy was enacted at the end of 2008 in the Ministerial Council and within the framework of education policy pursues an independent line connected with the UN Decade for Sustainable Development 2005-2014. An attempt is being made to go beyond mere environmental education by also including sustainability of teaching and learning processes as well as that of educational careers. The goal of integrating sustainable action as a transversal theme in education policy is thus being pursued.

#### **Austrian strategy for “Education for Sustainable Development” (ESD)**

The **background** to the measure is the UN Decade for Sustainable Development. Continuing the Austrian sustainability strategy, the ESD was developed in a consultative process in 2007 (BMLFUW, BMUKK and BMWF 2008). Implementation began in 2009.

As **objectives** of the ESD, “change in awareness towards sustainability among students and teachers needs to be supported and the actors also need to be integrated in networks” (cf. BMLFUW/BMUKK/BMWf 2008, p. 3). The ESD pursues the following goals: (1) firmly establishing the theme of “sustainability” in the education system; (2) initiating and strengthening partnerships and networks; (3) developing competences of the teachers; (4) intensifying research and innovation; (5) developing scenarios for sustainable development models; (6) monitoring and evaluation.

**Target groups** are mainly the actors and institutions in the education sector, and representatives from the economy and society also need to help promote informal learning at the workplace and in the social community.

A platform has been established (“Decade Office”) which has organisational tasks. In 2009 “sustainable consumption” was declared the theme of the year. Here educational and multimedia materials were provided, events were carried out and projects were developed (cf. BNE-SC09). To establish a network, in November 2009 work was begun to set up an “Alliance for Education on Sustainable Development”. Belonging to this alliance are all those organisations and institutions which embrace the standards of education for sustainable development as set out in the Austrian strategy. 26 organisations of different size with different main areas of focus currently belong to this Alliance (cf. ESD Alliance).

#### **Sphere of action**

The sphere of action is at the **national level**, the regional and local levels are included too. Sectorally the focus is on the education and environmental sectors.

It is an independent **education policy strategy** in connection with the Austrian sustainability strategy, which attempts to influence the education sector.

The **main actors** are on the one hand the three supporting Ministries (as well as the BMLFUW also the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Federal Ministry for Science and Research), on the other hand the Decade Office and, in particular, the many activists and their organisations (the so-called ESD Alliance).

## Evaluation

There is still **no formal evaluation**. Within the framework of the UNECE reporting (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe), work is being done on an appraisal in an interactive process (cf. ESD reporting). An **assessment** of the efficiency/effectiveness and the effects is not yet possible with the current status.

**Indicators of success** are the developed and implemented projects and the integration in a network in the alliance (cf. ESD alliance). A prize-giving process is also carried out as part of the UNESCO Commission, 43 award-winning projects are documented (cf. ESD prize-giving). Importance is attached to a certain independence of the strategy to be able to integrate the special perspective of sustainability more in education policy.

## Conclusions

On the one hand, education requires the integration of different social aspects (work, leisure and consumption, environment, prosperity, social cohesion) for sustainable development and, on the other hand, requires implementation of new pedagogical principles, so **obstacles** can be seen above all in the traditional boundaries and pedagogical methods. It is therefore suggested to also place emphasis on pre-service and in-service education and training for teaching staff in particular.

“For VET the integration of sustainable visions is a particular **challenge**. Dual VET (apprenticeship training) in particular offers an ideal learning field here: the students face business requirements and have to bring these in line with school learning objectives. This means environmental aspects and social concerns come up against economic interests. The necessary negotiation processes represent important learning experiences in terms of this strategy.” (cf. BMLFUW, BMUKK, BMWF 2008, p. 17).

With regard to the initial questions it can be stated that the ground can be prepared with the initiative in order to establish a broader basis for the many different sustainable development activities. The interactive and collective activities of the ESD reporting can contribute to better foundations and assessments of the problem situation. The objectives cover a broad enough range that we can expect progress in principle. The future will show if sufficient funds will be raised for continued implementation.

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## 1.5 Other challenges for VET

**Further challenges in VET** which are not addressed explicitly by the four themes above are, in particular, questions of equality of opportunities (cf. ch. 5), the connection between economic and social aspects, the prevention of social exclusion and the improvement of social cohesion.

In the analysis of the education policy objectives these challenges are expressed by the following keywords, which in some cases can also be assigned **high priority**:

- Social discrimination, social inheritance
- Early splitting of educational courses
- All-day care for children
- Permeability, transitions, interfaces
- Safety net for youths
- Early childhood promotion
- Basic education, basic competences
- Language competence
- Early school leaving, drop-outs

With this theme of social equality of opportunities and exclusion, which was neglected in education policy for a long time, there are in some cases considerable differences of opinion between different actors. Detailed analyses would be very important here.



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## 2. Economic crisis – VET policies as recovery measures

The current economic and financial crisis has, starting from the banking and finance sector, shown effects on the real economy from the fourth quarter of 2008 and was still continuing at the time this report was written (November 2009).

In the area of VET the effects of the crisis can be seen to different extents: in **IVET** (formal VET) the crisis can be seen above all in the declining number of apprenticeship posts and in a probably increased demand for full-time school-based training places. In **CVET** (non-formal VET) shifts between VET sectors caused by the crisis can be observed; overall, however, the extent of CVET activities has remained relatively stable to date.

To cushion the impact of the effects of the crisis (decline in orders and production, especially in industrial firms), it is mainly **short-term immediate measures** (cf. 2.1) which have been taken with regard to VET in order to provide training to support people who have been affected by short-time work or unemployment. In the area of dual training, however, a **longer-term education policy measure** is being promoted (keyword: "youth employment pact", cf. 2.1), which was already introduced before the crisis in part as a response to the structural problems of apprenticeship training (cf. text below).

### Effects on the formal education system

In the area of **VET schools and colleges (BMHSs)**, effects of the crisis have hardly been seen so far. Overall such effects are also unlikely because in Austria there are no mechanisms regulating access to formal VET in terms of long-term relevance for employment. The crisis may lead to increased demand for more "crisis-resistant" service-oriented specialisations (e.g. tourism, business studies etc.) while technology-focused studies (e.g. civil engineering, electronics, mechatronics etc.) will be less in demand because of their association with industry which is more susceptible to the effects of the crisis. The probability of such a development is rather low, though, because the education decisions in this segment are, according to experience, based on other criteria (influence of parents, own interests etc.). Since the number of apprentices in the first apprenticeship year has fallen, however, (cf. text below), we can assume a shift towards VET schools and colleges. The school statistics for the relevant period (enrolments at VET schools and colleges in autumn 2009) are not yet available, so this cannot be proven with figures at the moment, though.

In the area of **apprenticeships (dual training)** noticeable effects can be seen, however. 80% of apprenticeship training takes place in companies which train voluntarily and primarily based on needs. Drops in production and orders because of the crisis have led and continue to lead again and again to short-time work and company closures, which is why apprenticeship is more exposed to the crisis. In fact the latest figures (October 2009) of the apprenticeship statistics from the Austrian Economic Chambers prove that the number of new admissions (apprentices in the first apprenticeship year) has fallen considerably compared with the previous year and the overall number of apprentices has also dropped: this means that at the end of October 2009 there was a total of 38,926 apprentices in the first year of an apprenticeship in the whole of Austria. Compared with the same period in the previous year this means a decline of 3.5%. The number of apprentices overall in the annual comparison also fell, but this decrease was relatively moderate at only – 0.3%. There are no academic forecasts for the further development in the coming months. Experts assume, however, that the figures at the end of 2009 will confirm the downward

trend. If this occurs, it would mean that both the total number of apprentices and also the number of new admissions would fall for the first time since 2004.

This **downward trend in the apprentice numbers** is not only because of the economic crisis. There are other reasons, as shown by the number of apprenticeship seekers who have (still) not found an apprenticeship: although overall the number of apprentices in the first apprenticeship year is falling, (cf. text above), the number of those who have registered with the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) as “immediately available registered apprenticeship seekers” (i.e. youths who have already registered as apprenticeship seekers but do not take up an apprenticeship until a later point in time) is also declining. This means that even if the demand for apprenticeship posts still exceeds supply, the “apprenticeship shortage” is somewhat less than in the previous year.<sup>3</sup>

Overall with the declining number of apprentices there is an overlap of **four phenomena**: as well as the effects of the economic crisis, demographic change, the often low mobility and the frequent lack of quality of apprenticeship applicants also play a role. On account of the demographic development – the number of youths overall is falling – a drop in the number of apprentices is expected in the coming years. In individual Austrian provinces (Salzburg, Tyrol) the declines are already down to the fact that vacant apprenticeship posts cannot be filled. Overall the decline in the number of apprentices is much higher than would be expected for demographic reasons, however. This is undoubtedly an effect of the economic crisis.

To sum up: in Austria the economic crisis is exacerbating the already existing demographic and structural problems in the area of apprenticeships. Most current measures are either fighting the **effects of the crisis** (cf. 2.1) or especially in the area of apprenticeships are aimed mainly at improving the quantity of available apprenticeship posts (cf. 4.4, 6.1 and 8.1). Fundamental measures to improve the quality of the general conditions and the long-term employment relevance of apprenticeships have not been sufficiently taken so far. VET measures are not being taken to deal with the crisis, instead measures are being taken against the effects of the crisis in the area of VET.

#### Effects on the non-formal education system

As well as effects of the crisis in the area of formal education there are also consequences in the **non-formal area** (i.e. in the area of education outside formal educational establishments). Training measures for people affected by short-time work or unemployment have been extended or introduced (cf. 2.1). According to the statistics of AMS, the number of people who are in training had increased by around 35% in October 2009 over the previous year. Overall 73,797 people are in training as part of the so-called “active labour market policy”.

Despite these increases, overall no increase in CVET activities can be seen, however. Instead major CVET providers saw a change in quantity between the types of CVET measures from autumn 2008 to autumn 2009. While supra-company and internal courses

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<sup>3</sup> According to data of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), the number of immediately available registered apprenticeship seekers at 31.10.2009 totalled 6,145 (- 5.0% compared with the previous year). The number of immediately available reported vacant apprenticeship posts however was only 3,537 (- 0.3% compared with the previous year). Purely in terms of figures there was a shortage of 2,608 apprenticeship posts in October. There are clear differences between the different regions however. While in some provinces the ratio of vacant apprenticeship posts to apprenticeship seekers is almost equal (Upper Austria), in conurbations in particular the calculated apprenticeship shortage is very high (in Vienna there are almost five apprenticeship seekers for a vacant apprenticeship).

within companies are less in demand, the activities on behalf of AMS have increased. On average the number of CVET measures is therefore **roughly the same**.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.1 Initiatives for recovery

To cope with the effects of the crisis in the area of VET, **new measures** have been taken and **existing instruments** have also been further developed and used more. One key measure which was actually introduced before the crisis (June 2008) is the so-called “youth employment package” (cf. 5.2)<sup>5</sup>. It contains a combination of measures consisting of a complete restructure and increase in apprenticeship subsidisation (mainly incentives with a quantitative effect), legal simplifications with the termination of apprenticeship relations and a so-called “training guarantee up to the age of 18” (cf. 5.2). This guarantee stipulates that all compulsory school graduates who do not have a school place to continue their education and cannot find an apprenticeship post in a company are able to learn an apprenticeship in a supra-company training establishment (training workshop) financed by the Public Employment Service Austria or AMS. These new measures have been in effect for the first time since the apprenticeship year which began in autumn 2008 and are therefore also working against the consequences of the crisis. Since they were conceived before the crisis, however, **two measures** are described here as examples which were taken only as a response to the crisis:

### Short-time work with qualification

**Background to the measure:** In February 2009 short-time work in Austria was subject to new regulations during the economic and financial crisis. By short-time work we mean a reduction of working hours and pay for a limited time because of economic difficulties. The purpose of this measure is to temporarily reduce labour costs and at the same time to keep employees who are needed again after the crisis is over. One of the features introduced with the new regulations for short-time work was that companies can also apply for a **qualification grant** as well as short-time work grants. Within the framework of a short-time work agreement the companies must pay the employees in question short-time working support to compensate in part for the loss of earnings. For this short-time working support the employer can apply for a short-time work grant from the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS).

If qualification measures are carried out additionally during the short-time work, the employer has to pay the employee taking part in these measures qualification support at least at the amount of a fixed flat rate. To partially cover his/her costs arising here, he/she can apply to the AMS for a qualification allowance. The subsidy amounts to 60% of course fees. A requirement here is that the measures are worthwhile in terms of labour market policy. This means they must be “general qualification measures” which do not primarily concern the workplace of the employee in the company with short-time work,

<sup>4</sup> There are still no total figures available for all CVET providers for the mentioned period. The described development is based on the figures of the biggest Austrian provider, the Institute for Economic Promotion (WIFI), however. Cf. WIFI education statistics in 2008/2009, November 2009.

<sup>5</sup> In January 2008 under the title “Labour market – Future 2010” the federal government and social partners agreed on a package of measures for youth employment and to cover the skilled workers’ gap, and this came into force in June 2008. Cf. Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection: Labour market policy in Austria in 2008, October 2009: [http://www.bmsk.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/2/7/9/CH0690/CMS1249975678352/arbeitsmarktpolitik\\_in\\_oesterrreich\\_web.pdf](http://www.bmsk.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/2/7/9/CH0690/CMS1249975678352/arbeitsmarktpolitik_in_oesterrreich_web.pdf) (downloaded on 27.11.09)

instead they must provide qualifications which, to a large extent, can be transferred to other companies and fields of work. Participation in this training must be at times at which the employee would otherwise (i.e. if there was no short-time work) be obliged to go to work.

**Objectives:** With the qualification allowance incentives should be made for participation in qualification measures. The working hours not worked because of short-time work need to be used to ensure meaningful qualification in terms of labour market policy and business.

**Target group:** Employees and companies involved in short-time work

**Status of implementation:** The legal foundation for the measure was created by amending the Public Employment Service Act (Arbeitsmarktservicegesetz or AMSG) in January and June 2009. The combination of short-time work and qualification has been possible since April 2009.

According to information provided by AMS, in mid-October 2009 there were 39,461 employees overall in short-time work in 307 companies throughout Austria. Compared to the high of 56,860 in spring 2009, however, it can be seen that the short-time work figures are falling.

The additional qualification allowance was used by 68 companies throughout Austria in mid-October. This is three companies less than in the previous month.

For the AMS short-time work and the associated allowances for 2009 (until mid-October) have so far led to costs of 263 million euros. Half of the allowance is financed by funds of the AMS and half by the European Social Fund (ESF).

### Sphere of action

**Sphere of action:** Legal measure at the federal level. It is a **targeted measure** as a response to the crisis. The measure is not for a limited time. It remains to be seen if this measure will be transformed into a longer-term education policy strategy after the end of the crisis to cushion the blow of economically difficult times.

**Main actors:** AMS, companies affected by the crisis.

### Evaluation

**Efficiency/effectiveness:** Around 1/5 of short-time workers are currently (November 2009) using this qualification option. The number of participating companies is relatively low (around 70). The extent to which the implemented qualification measures are actually, as intended by the legislator, meaningful in terms of labour market policy and not only related to the workplace but also provide qualifications which, to a large extent, can be transferred to other companies and fields of work, cannot be answered sufficiently at the moment. On the one hand the AMS has not prepared the data on the contents of the qualifications systematically, and on the other hand, in view of the short amount of time the measure has been running so far (since April 2009), it is too early to determine medium-term effects on the labour market. An evaluation of this measure has also not yet been carried out.

**Indicators of success:** Cf. "status of implementation"

**Other political measures:** The responsible Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMAŠK) plans to further extend this qualification incentive if the crisis continues or intensifies.

## Conclusions

Conceptually the measure has **high synergy potential** because the idle periods in companies, arising because of the loss of orders on account of the crisis, can be used meaningfully. The qualification support has a double effect: it is both an incentive for the further training of the employees and also an economic stop-gap measure to reduce the effects of the crisis on the companies.

De facto, the measure has not yet had a **broad quantitative effect**. It is still worthwhile though. The qualitative effect still cannot be evaluated at the current point in time. One occasional difficulty, however, is that the corresponding qualification measures and course offers have to be tailored very specifically for the respective short-time work schedule, which in some businesses, depending on the order situation, is very flexible.

After the introduction in January (law) / April (implementation) 2009, the measure was **revised in June 2009**. Changes include the fact that the administrative effort for registering short-time work was reduced.

## Sources

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## “Pact for apprentices”

**Background to the measure:** Taking into consideration the economic crisis and the fear that the companies could become less willing to train because of this, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economics, Family and Youth (BMWFJ) initiated an agreement (“Pact”) in June 2009 with apprenticeship training companies. In this agreement the participating companies became obliged to keep their number of apprentices at least constant in the 2009/2010 training year, “to continue the successful Austrian dual system [in apprenticeships] and to set this up as modern training”. The initiative was started by the Ministry initially together with the 15 biggest apprenticeship training companies in Austria. Afterwards other companies joined this “Pact”. The 15 companies which signed the Pact at the start train around 11,000 apprentices.

**Objectives:** With the measure the aim is to maintain the number of apprenticeship training places in Austria. At the same time the aim is for a signal effect for people applying for apprenticeships and an increase in motivation for other companies to continue training. Overall the image of apprenticeships also needs to be improved.

**Target group:** Companies which train apprentices

**Status of implementation:** Since the start of the initiative in June 2009 more than 1,000 additional companies have joined the “Pact”. By mid-November 2009 a total of 1,209 companies became obliged to keep their number of apprentices at least constant

until 2010.
<b>Sphere of action</b>
<p><b>Sphere of action:</b> national measure</p> <p>Since the voluntary commitment of the companies is mainly declaratory in character and that in the event of dispute there will hardly be a legal effect, the effect of the measure is mainly to <b>raise awareness</b> and <b>recognise the commitment</b> of the training companies. The measure is not an individual measure, it is in the context of the <b>youth employment package</b> (cf. 5.2) which was already agreed before the crisis and with which new support options and greater flexibility when terminating apprenticeship contracts were introduced.</p> <p><b>Main actors:</b> BMWFJ, participating companies</p>
<b>Evaluation</b>
<p><b>Efficiency/effectiveness:</b> We will have to wait until the end of the apprenticeship year to evaluate whether the objective of maintaining the number of apprenticeship places in the companies involved in the Pact in apprenticeship year 2009/2010 will be achieved. The objective of increasing the signal effect and raising awareness may be achieved, however. After initially being signed by 15 companies, more than 1,200 further companies joined the “Pact”, which indicates broad public interest and visibility.</p> <p><b>Indicators of success:</b> Statistics which might enable conclusions to be drawn on the success of this measure will not be available until 2010. The number of companies which have joined shows the economy’s positive response to this initiative, however.</p>
<b>Conclusions</b>
<p>The measure’s main characteristic is to raise awareness and it is definitely a worthwhile move to build confidence and improve the image of apprenticeships. At the moment it cannot be said if it will be incorporated in a broader education policy strategy. Accompanying measures to cushion the blow of structural and demographic problems in the area of apprenticeships would also be necessary, however.</p>
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### **3. Impact and implications of the joint work on European principles and tools**

#### **3.1 Impact of joint work on European principles and tools on national LLL policies and practices and VET developments**

Since 2007 the Austrian **Lifelong Learning (LLL) strategy** has been in the form of guidelines which were compiled by an expert consortium (cf. BMUKK 2008 and Tritscher-Archan and Mayr 2008, p. 21ff). For this LLL strategy paper, a consultation process involving all stakeholders was carried out from June to November 2008. Since January 2009 a five-member, independent team of experts has been working on analysing the statements they have received and on recommendations for the next action steps to implement the LLL strategy. It is planned to officially inform the Ministerial Council about the outcomes of the consultation process and bring about an interdepartmental decision about the further course of action. In addition, a dissemination and motivation event is planned as part of a full-day congress, where the outcomes of the consultation process will be presented by the experts commissioned with analysing them, and the planned next steps will also be presented and discussed. Even if the outcomes of the consultation process are still not available at the moment, it can still be seen that the five LLL guidelines have now become widely accepted and have been incorporated in many sub-strategies and planning documents of different administrative areas and organisations (cf. BMUKK and BMWF 2009, p. 21f).

The national **Lifelong Guidance** strategy must be seen in close association with the development and implementation of a national LLL strategy because it is fixed as one of the five guidelines in this. It is used as a basis for planning many measures, such as the expansion of provider-neutral offers in educational counselling for adults and the further professionalisation of counsellors, intensification of guidance for holders of the upper secondary school-leaving certificate (Matura), different forms of project support and the establishment of interdepartmental coordination and cooperation mechanisms in the national Forum for Lifelong Guidance (cf. Krötzl 2009). Within the framework of the "Project Alliance on educational guidance", a study was published in 2009 on the structure of counselling institutions in Austria and their use (cf. öibf 2009). In 2009 three regional events spanning different federal provinces were also carried out on the theme of "regional cooperation and coordination mechanisms" at different locations.

The **Europass tools** are being used more and more, as can be seen by the current data. The number of monthly visits to the Europass homepage has risen from around 30,000 in 2007 to 43,000 in 2009. With the **Europass Mobility documents** the number of total registrations is currently at 7,270 (at the end of October 2009). There were 2,097 registrations here from January to the start of November 2009. This is already more than in the whole of 2008, when around 1,800 people registered for a mobility document. The database on **Europass Certificate Supplements** contains 1,550 documents. This figure has increased by around 100 compared with 2008 because a series of supplements on qualifications were added to the database, and although these can no longer be obtained (e.g. apprenticeship occupations and specialisations in VET schools and colleges which have expired) they are still recognised. A survey at Austrian higher education (HE) institutions revealed that 97% of the HE institutions hand out a **Europass Diploma Supplement** to the graduates when they complete their studies. From 2010 all Austrian HE institutions are going to provide this document. At 85% of the HE institutions the Diploma Supplements are issued both in English and in German, at 10% solely in English, and at the re-

maintaining 5% only in German. In 37% of the HE institutions other Europass documents are also used, with the **Language Passport** indicated as the most common here.<sup>6</sup>

There has been further progress in the **development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF)** for Austria since 2008 (cf. Tritscher-Archan and Mayr 2008, p. 56ff). The consultation process on the NQF is now concluded, a panel of experts analysed the approximately 270 statements which were submitted by Austrian stakeholders between January and June 2008. In November 2008 these results, conclusions drawn from them and corresponding recommendations (cf. Aff et al. 2008) were presented to the national steering group and a broad public during a conference. On the basis of these results and further discussions, the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and the Federal Ministry for Science and Research (BWF) are currently (as of November 2009) preparing a political position paper in which the strategy for the further development and implementation of the Austrian NQF is set out.

There is largely agreement among the stakeholders regarding a series of **characteristics** which the Austrian NQF should have: for example, the NQF needs to be used for orientation and not regulation. There are also concerns here, however, that this orientation function may have regulating implications in the medium or long term. There is also widespread agreement regarding the number of levels: eight levels seem to be suitable for representing the Austrian qualifications landscape. The descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) need to be used as a basis for the development of the descriptors. In the report of the group of experts, improvement of communication between the individual education areas is also recommended as well as continuing work on the recognition of non-formally and informally obtained learning outcomes.

The consultation process has also shown, however, that there is still **need for clarification** with a number of questions. This includes the following aspects (cf. Luomi-Messerer 2009a):

- Objective and functions of the NQF: should the NQF be (only) a transparency and orientation instrument or should it also be used to initiate national reforms? In this regard the medium and long-term implications of the development of an NQF need to be discussed in more detail.
- Future integration of stakeholders: who should be integrated in which way, how should responsibilities be allocated, how should ownership be developed?
- Orientation towards learning outcomes: which concepts and methods for describing learning outcomes and for checking and validating learning outcomes should be used?
- Classification of qualifications in the NQF: how should the principle of “equivalence (parity of esteem) rather than equality” or the “best fit” principle be realised? Which qualifications or qualification types should be included in the NQF? Which procedures and structures are necessary here?

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<sup>6</sup> E-mail information of the NEC – Austrian National Europass Centre. Since this survey was carried out for the first time in 2009, there is no comparable data for the previous years.

For the further discussion of these open questions and to prepare the decisions in terms of the further course of action, different **activities** were initiated by the BMUKK in 2009. For example, a fourth “NQF pilot project” was commissioned in the electrical sector (after construction, health and tourism, carried out in 2008) (cf. example below). In addition “NQF discussion circles” were held, during which themes such as descriptors for the Austrian NQF, classification processes and structures were discussed. Exchange is also being sought and promoted with other European countries – e.g. with participation in European projects (such as EQF-Ref – [www.EQF-Ref.eu](http://www.EQF-Ref.eu) and ZOOM – [www.zoom-efq.eu](http://www.zoom-efq.eu)), cooperation with like-minded countries (Germany, Denmark, Luxembourg, Switzerland) and an NQF expert group with Poland and Croatia.

In Austria it is currently planned to use **ECVET** first of all as an instrument to promote transnational mobility in training and continuing training; other uses are not planned at the moment. When implementing the recommendation of the European Commission, Austria will choose a variant which corresponds best with the requirements of the VET system at upper secondary level (cf. Nöbauer 2009). The BMUKK used an informal ECVET group of experts whose task it is to discuss ideas and visions on the implementation of ECVET in Austria and to exchange information (e.g. on experiences in ECVET pilot projects). In June 2009 the BMUKK, together with the Federal Chamber of Labour and the National Agency for Lifelong Learning (OeAD GmbH), organised a conference on the theme of “ECVET – A European Credit Point System for VET” where possible implementation scenarios for ECVET in Europe and Austria were discussed with a wider circle of stakeholders. Austrian institutions are also involved – in some cases with additional support from the BMUKK – in European ECVET pilot projects (e.g. M.O.T.O. – <http://ecvet-moto.isfol.it> and SME MASTER Plus – [www.sme-master.eu](http://www.sme-master.eu)). The BMUKK has also commissioned a project to create an Austrian guideline for the implementation of ECVET for the purpose of mobility exchanges (cf. 3.2).

In connection with the establishment of an NQF, as already mentioned, **validation of non-formal and informal learning** is being discussed. With regard to non-formal learning, a strategy and working group has been set up which presented a strategy paper in September 2009 (cf. Schlögl 2009b). Here it is suggested setting up so-called “qualification awarding bodies” (QVSs) as regulators for qualifications which are valid sectorally and/or nationally, without an equivalent in the formal education system, which will undertake the validation function. For the question of determining learning outcomes in particular, close cooperation with educational institutions is recommended. Authorities, chambers, associations and similar institutions which are already responsible for handing out certificates can take on QVS functions. An accrediting authority which still needs to be set up will entrust QVSs with the task of handing out individual or several national qualifications. Cross-sectoral standards for validation and competence identification procedures need to be taken into consideration with this accreditation. Another suggestion is to compile a criteria catalogue for the authorisation of QVSs and to discuss methodical and procedural aspects of a national strategy to validate non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills. At the start of 2010, the results of current pilot projects will also be available here. One of these projects deals with the possibilities of classifying offers of non-vocational adult learning to the NQF, in another there is a case study on specific professions, the bookkeeping professions, which require certain certificates obtained outside the formal education system. Based on the experiences from these projects, the already existing strategic considerations and proposals need to be evaluated and refined, and after this implementation should begin.

Even if it is difficult to attribute the changes in the Austrian education system to individual European instruments or strategies, it can be stated that the European initiatives in many areas have led to dynamic development or at least to more intense discussion. In particular the increasing importance of **orientation towards learning outcomes** and the already

begun implementation of corresponding instruments (such as the educational standards, cf. 8.4 and 9.1) lead to a rethinking process at all levels and in all areas of the education system. In the VET sector a concrete debate on developments is currently being held regarding a learning outcome-oriented and competence-based redesigning of curricula, for example (cf. BMUKK and BMWF 2009, p. 16). In 2009 the piloting stage of the educational standards in VET was also continued and here the project manual was updated (cf. BMUKK 2009).

The integration of **many stakeholders** in the described processes must definitely be seen as positive because it will guarantee greater acceptance with the use of the European principles and instruments. The challenge, however, is to find corresponding agreements within a justifiable time period in view of the different interests and objectives.

### NQF pilot projects

As part of the development of an NQF in Austria, to date four **NQF pilot projects** have been carried out in the areas of construction (Tritscher-Archan 2008; 2009a), electrical engineering (Tritscher-Archan 2009b), tourism (Luomi-Messerer et al. 2008; Luomi-Messerer and Lengauer 2009) and health (Schlögl 2009a). Another project, which has qualifications in the business-administrative sector (commercial and office occupations) as its content, will start in March 2010.

The **objective** of the previous pilot projects was to check how selected qualifications from the listed sectors could be allocated to a level on the basis of the EQF descriptors. Also analysed was the question of whether the EQF descriptors would suffice for classifying Austrian qualifications or whether additional explanations, amendments or Austria-specific descriptors would be necessary. Further information on the future strategy of NQF development should be derived from the results.

Four NQF pilot projects are already **concluded**. Three of these projects (in the construction, tourism and health sectors) were carried out parallel to the NQF consultation process (cf. text above), one (in the electrical sector) was completed afterwards. The results of the first three projects are contained in a compendium in which a series of research works created as part of the NQF development are published (cf. Markowitsch 2009).

At the **centre** of the pilot projects was the elaboration and testing of the procedure already described in the NQF consultation paper for the classification of existing qualifications to the NQF. In all of the projects workshops were carried out with experts and stakeholders whose task it was to analyse selected qualifications with regard to the level of the associated learning outcomes. The learning outcomes were compared with the descriptors of the EQF levels. This “matching” should provide the basis for classification and referencing decisions. In another step it was discussed whether the made classification is a prototype for the respective qualification type (e.g. final apprenticeship examination or certain school leaving qualifications) or whether there should be various classifications here. Finally it was discussed whether the descriptors of the EQF suffice for the classification of the qualifications or whether amendments, explanations or separate Austria-specific descriptors would be necessary.

### Sphere of action

The experiences and results of the pilot projects need to be taken into consideration with the further development and implementation of the NQF. They can therefore help prepare an **education policy strategy** with regard to the NQF. The key **actors** in the pilot projects were experts from the corresponding sectors who discussed, made and argued for or against classification and referencing decisions. Here they were supported by education researchers whose task it was to present the workshops and provide additional

expertise in terms of EQF and NQF.
<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>No explicit evaluation</b> of these pilot projects was carried out. From the project reports we can see, however, that the chosen work design was assessed positively by the workshop participants.
<b>Conclusions</b>
Some of the <b>key results</b> of the pilot projects and also <b>challenges</b> for the further work on the NQF will be outlined briefly here:
The eight levels of the EQF seem to suffice for classifying Austrian qualifications. It was discovered, however, that the quality of the available learning outcome descriptions varies greatly and in this area further developments are necessary in order to enable referencing to the NQF on the basis of learning outcomes. Currently it seems necessary to draw on additional information (e.g. with regard to the value of a qualification on the labour market) to be able to make a classification and referencing decision. For the classification of qualifications which are acquired in non-formal or informal learning contexts in particular it seems to be necessary to continue to promote learning outcome orientation and develop methods to validate learning outcomes.
With regard to the question of prototypical classification there is general agreement in terms of formal qualifications, but in some cases there are also different classification and referencing decisions from different working groups.
The pilot projects largely confirm that an Austria-specific descriptor table for classifying those qualifications which can be obtained in Austria is not absolutely necessary. The high level of abstraction of the EQF descriptors was not seen as an obstacle for the classification – even if this gives some room for interpretation which can occasionally lead to a qualification being referenced to different levels by various experts. As part of the pilot project for the sample classification of qualifications from the health sector excluding doctors (cf. Schlögl 2009a) it has been noted, however, that clear classification of existing qualifications is currently not possible in many cases because the generic descriptors of the EQF are underdetermined and do not allow a perfect fit (cf. also Luomi-Messerer 2009b).
In the pilot projects (and also in the course of the consultation process and the subsequent discussions) the need for additional explanations was repeated again and again. Possible aspects which could be included in an “explanatory table” are, for example, the clarification of central terms of the EQF descriptors (e.g. compilation of a “national glossary” in which the terms are also explained using examples from the Austrian qualifications system), “typical qualifications” to illustrate the requirements of a level (e.g. qualifications from the formal qualification system which have a high level of awareness) and other criteria and principles for classification and referencing to the individual levels (e.g. clarification of the “best fit” principle).
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### 3.2 Promoting geographical mobility of learners/apprentices and teachers/trainers in VET

Basically we can differentiate between mobility for the **purpose** of learning (a foreign language, for example) and working (e.g. a work placement abroad), and here it is often not possible to make a clear separation (cf. Tritscher-Archan and Lenger 2010, p. 8ff).

**Information** on possibilities of mobility and support is available at the individual institutions (e.g. schools, universities etc.), at placement associations, on the Internet etc. But there is no national information or coordination body spanning different providers for mobility stays.

In Austria mobility is mainly **financed** by EU funds. Although there are also national, regional and local programmes, there is hardly any centrally accessible data on their finances or the number of mobilities supported by these programmes (cf. Tritscher-Archan and Lenger 2010, p. 21ff). The total of subsidies applied for from the Leonardo da Vinci programme has risen between 2000 and 2009 from just over 2.3 million euros to around 4.3 million euros, so an increase of 87%. The total amount of used subsidies increased correspondingly from 1.32 million euros in 2000 to 2.5 million euros in 2009, a rise of 89% (cf. OeAD 2009, p. 10).

As already explained, **data on the mobility** of students and teachers in Austria is available centrally only for mobilities which are supported by EU programmes (cf. OeAD 2009). Since there are also mobilities which are not financially supported by the EU programmes but this data is hard to discover, no precise statements are possible on the actual extent of mobility movements in Austria.

On the basis of the data on the EU funding programmes, between 2000 and 2009 in **IVET** there was an overall increase from 1,262 to 2,011 stays abroad. The distribution according to training types is interesting here. While the mobility of pupils, with an increase from 846 in 2000 to 1,742 in 2009, meant more than twice as many applications, this figure fell among apprentices from 413 in 2000 to 269 in 2009. The figures for stays abroad which were actually taken up are meaningful only up to 2006 because corresponding projects since 2007 are not finished yet in some cases. Between 2000 and 2006 the number of mobilities among apprentices rose only slightly from 227 to 244, among pupils the figure was more than doubled from 471 to 1,084.

Among **young skilled workers** in 2000, 224 mobilities were applied for and 32 were successfully carried out. After this the number of applications fell considerably, in 2001 there were only 81 applications and in 2006 there were 90 applications. The number of stays abroad that were actually taken up rose from 32 in 2000 to 45 in 2006. The data up to 2009 shows – after a recent decline in the number of applications in 2007 to only 76 – a rise to 123 in 2009. With the actual mobilities there was continuous growth from 58 in 2007 to 92 in 2009.

Among the **trainers** there have been fluctuating application figures since the year 2000 (between 100 and 300 applications). The number of stays abroad that were actually taken up rose from 154 in 2000 to 173 in 2009, however.

#### **Creation of an Austrian guideline for the implementation of ECVET and support of transnational mobility**

With the aim of **supporting transnational mobility** the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) commissioned a project to **create an Austrian guideline for the implementation of ECVET**.

After the previous activities on **ECVET at the national level** – in particular based on the study “Implementation of ECVET in Initial Vocational Education and Training in Austria” (Luomi-Messerer and Tritscher-Archan 2007) – and on the discussed principles for the implementation of ECVET in Austria (Nöbauer 2009), further steps for concrete, practical implementation are necessary. The aim of the project is therefore to elaborate **proposals for solutions for the practical implementation of ECVET** which are suitable for the Austrian VET system. An **Austrian guideline for the implementation of ECVET for the purpose of mobility exchanges** therefore needs to be created.

Here on the one hand **examples of good practice** with regard to the three main elements of ECVET (units of learning outcomes to describe qualifications, allocation of ECVET points and conclusion of partnership agreements) from EU projects and existing mobility exchanges need to be analysed, and on the other hand a **workshop with practitioners** needs to be organised to discuss and then develop the guideline.

The **target group** of the project are **people from VET establishments who (want to) carry out transnational mobility projects** (e.g. teachers, people responsible for mobility, project sponsors from VET schools and colleges, part-time vocational schools for apprentices, training enterprises, sectoral organisations).

The project was **started at the end of 2009** and the target is for it to be concluded by **mid-2010**.

#### **Sphere of action**

The results of the project need to be used at the **national level** with the **use of ECVET in transnational mobility projects**.

Here it was seen as a good idea to **create a network of national expertise** in this area and to aim at **know-how transfer**. The previous experiences in Austria with ECVET and with the crediting of learning outcomes as part of transnational mobility projects therefore need to be analysed. Completed and existing ECVET and mobility projects need to be analysed in terms of their operationalisation of the three main elements of ECVET – units of learning outcomes, ECVET points, and partnership agreements. Here the focus needs to be on projects under Austrian coordination or with Austrian participation as a partner. If necessary, further projects without Austrian involvement also need to be taken into consideration. The aim is to describe examples of good practice in order to make the results useable for the Austrian ECVET guideline (as a collection of examples which can be fallen back on as part of the further use of ECVET).

At a workshop **practitioners** need to discuss the first version of the Austrian ECVET guideline and the analysed examples of ECVET main elements from relevant projects and make suggestions to optimise the guideline. The participants need to come from VET institutions and be familiar with the principles of ECVET or have experience with transnational mobility projects in VET.

The Austrian **ECVET guideline** needs to be finalised on the basis of the results from the project analysis and the discussion with practitioners. The final product has to be oriented towards practitioners who want to use the principles of ECVET in mobility projects in order to facilitate the recognition of learning times and learning achievements abroad for students involved in VET.

#### **Evaluation**

An evaluation is not arranged at the moment. It is being considered, however, to improve the guideline on the basis of the actual experiences with mobility stays or with the implementation of ECVET at a later point in time in case necessity arises from practice.

#### **Conclusions**

Since the project was not commissioned until the end of 2009, there are still no results available and no conclusions can be drawn either.

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## 4. Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market

### 4.1 Identifying and anticipating skill needs

Basically there are three approaches for identifying and forecasting **future skill needs** in Austria, which have been developed by three different institutions (cf. Zuckersteinova and Strietska-Illina 2007):

1. Projection of the qualification requirements and offer of the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS);
2. Projection of the qualification requirements of the Austrian Institute for Economic Research (WIFO);
3. Labour market forecasts of the Synthesis Forschung research society which are regularly carried out for the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS).

Other research institutes (e.g. ibw, öibf, 3s, AMS etc.) also bring different products to the discussion on skill needs. One of these products is the skill forecasting tool **AMS Skills Barometer** (AMS-QB, [www.ams.at/qualifikationsbarometer](http://www.ams.at/qualifikationsbarometer)). The online system, which has existed since 2002, summarises statements on current and foreseeable labour market trends and skill needs and makes them available to a broad public in structured form via the Internet. When collecting information, existing written data (e.g. from studies on qualification requirements) is used and merged. If necessary interviews are held with experts from the different occupational areas and professional fields. The AMS-QB is therefore mainly an instrument for presentation more than research and analysis. In the form of **AMS skills structure reports** the results of the AMS-QB are also published each year in written (printed) form. These reports are available both for the whole of Austria and also for each federal province.

The AMS research network ([www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at](http://www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at)), which was also initiated in 2002 by the AMS, is for exchanging information and the use of synergies between a series of Austrian research institutes, including in the area of forecasting skills. Between 2002 and 2008 with the AMS research network there was an annual event on **skill needs of the future** which was held together with the social partners on specific themes (e.g. skill needs in the area of health and social affairs, skill needs of youths and older employees). In 2009 this series of events was replaced by regular meetings of the so-called **standing committee** (cf. example in 4.3).

The **AMS's large company monitoring** is a regular complete survey of AMS Austria among all Austrian companies with more than 20 employees (overall more than 20,000 companies). This monitoring covers aspects including development of requirements and skills (the most important professions in demand in the company, retrospective development of demand in the last two years, rough development of skills in the coming twelve months, development and requirement of qualifications in the corresponding in-demand professions) and the continuing training of the employees (themes for internal and external continuing training measures). In the past, the questionnaire for the AMS large company monitoring was used by around one third of the contacted companies as a possibility for providing feedback for AMS Austria. This corresponds to a return rate of around 7,000 to 8,000 questionnaires for each survey. The survey is carried out every two years – the last one was in 2009.

Lassnigg and Markowitsch (2005), in a **keynote study on anticipation mechanisms and quality assurance**, have dealt with the interaction between training and employment (matching) and existing approaches and methods of anticipation in Austrian VET. One of the results of this study was a proposal for quality indicators to determine supply and demand, in particular with regard to the alignment of VET on the labour market (cf. also Lassnigg 2008). Afterwards a training classification was developed and, based on this, a monitoring system was proposed for the relationship between training and the labour market. The monitoring system targets regular reporting to provide a standardised information basis for the participating institutions, ministries, social partners and research facilities. Some of the indicators were published in the National Report on Education (cf. Lassnigg and Vogtenhuber 2009).

In **apprenticeship training** the skill needs of the economy are collected mainly by incorporating specialists from the companies. If necessary, additional academic analyses and assessments are also obtained (cf. 4.2 and 4.3).

In the area of **full-time school-based VET** (VET schools and colleges, BMSs and BHSs), as well as improving communication with the economy, science and research with **graduate surveys** it is also attempted to ascertain skill dimensions relevant for employment (studies were commissioned in areas such as the business and technical sectors). Schneeberger et al. (2008), for example, have conducted an explorative online survey among graduates of technical VET colleges (so-called colleges of engineering, HTLs) in order to improve the empirical basis for questions related to the degree of subject-related specialisation in curriculum design and the need for additional qualifications. The study showed the limits of a too restricted specialisation in IVET and emphasised the need for a broad subject-related and supra-disciplinary qualification. In the future, including as part of the educational standards initiative (cf. 8.4 and 9.1), corresponding surveys will be carried out on the use of the competences communicated in the schools on the labour market.

The **Fachhochschule sector** was geared towards the requirements of the labour market from the beginning. **Requirements and acceptance analyses** need to be included with an application for accreditation of a study course. The requirements analysis has to demonstrate and evaluate the labour market opportunities of the graduates using macroeconomic indicators of the economic development and labour market relevant for the study course as well as with qualitative surveys (interviews with labour market experts and HR managers at companies). With the initial accreditation of a study course, requirements and acceptance analyses must be carried out by an independent institute, for the reaccreditation after five years they can also be carried out by the applicant (cf. [www.fhr.ac.at](http://www.fhr.ac.at)).

With the inclusion of the “**Learning Regions**” measure in the rural development programme during the EU structural funds period 2007-2013, the theme of learning, education and qualification requirements was integrated more in the regional context. “Learning Regions” are an instrument to enhance lifelong learning and to establish knowledge management in rural areas. In a “Learning Region”, important actors from a region form a network on matters associated with the theme of “learning”. Within three to nine months the network elaborates a strategy to provide the inhabitants of the region with appropriate and attractive learning opportunities. It determines areas of focus and develops projects in the area of education. After this the projects are implemented by all or individual partners. The network remains in existence as a designing body.

As support for the development of a “Learning Region”, a series of manuals were written by the Austrian Institute for Adult Education ([www.oieb.at](http://www.oieb.at)) in cooperation with experts from the areas of education and regional development, with these including surveys of educational requirements.

<p><b>Regional educational requirements forecasts manual</b></p> <p>When planning regional education and learning offers, the principle of trial and error often dominates. The <b>objective</b> of the initiative for regional educational requirements forecasts is to improve the ability to plan education and competence acquisition processes in so-called “Learning Regions” by systematically ascertaining the situations at the outset, the educational requirements and barriers. Here the planning needs to be put on an empirical basis, and all key stakeholders need to be included in the survey process.</p> <p>The manual is targeted at <b>educational establishments</b> (adult learning organisations, universities and Fachhochschulen), at <b>corporate consultants</b>, the <b>Public Employment Service Austria</b> (AMS), at <b>regional developers</b>, at <b>associations</b>, etc.</p>
<p><b>Sphere of action</b></p> <p>So far a series of regional surveys of educational requirements have been carried out in <b>different regions</b> and for different sectors. Some of these surveys are summarised in the manual. A guideline is also provided for future surveys which contains detailed information for the survey design and for the selection of appropriate methods.</p> <p>The measure is integrated in the “<b>Austrian programme for the development of rural areas</b>” (LE07-13) of the Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW). Key actors are the Austrian Institute for Adult Education and the regions themselves, where the competence lies for the development and implementation of regional surveys of educational requirements.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p>Evaluations are an <b>integral component</b> of the concept of regional surveys of educational requirements. By comparing the educational measures with the requirements hypotheses, the extent to which targets are reached will be checked and findings will be derived for further surveys of requirements.</p>
<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <p>Surveys of educational requirements are associated with <b>uncertainty and limitations</b> because there is not <u>one</u> requirement which has to be ascertained, instead the requirement is always linked to a context and is different for different groups within a region. The educational requirement is also subject to change over time, which is why this has to be ascertained on an ongoing basis and the data must be up to date. Successful development of education and qualifications in the region also requires integration in additional measures, such as merging the requirements situations with the different individual motivations to take part in education and training.</p>
<p><b>Sources</b></p> <p>OIEB (2009): Regionale Bildungsbedarfserhebung. Theorien, Prozesse und Methoden für eine partizipative Umsetzung [Regional Survey of Educational Requirements. Theories, Processes and Methods for Participatory Implementation]. Wien. Online:  <a href="http://www.netzwerk-land.at/leader/veranstaltungen/downloads-veranstaltung/lernende-regionen-bildungsbedarfserhebung/handbuch_bbe_einseitiger_druck">http://www.netzwerk-land.at/leader/veranstaltungen/downloads-veranstaltung/lernende-regionen-bildungsbedarfserhebung/handbuch_bbe_einseitiger_druck</a> (4.12.2009).</p> <p>Learning regions: <a href="http://www.netzwerk-land.at/leader/lernende-regionen">http://www.netzwerk-land.at/leader/lernende-regionen</a></p>

## 4.2 Integrating skill needs of the labour market into VET provision

The research results on qualification requirements forecasts of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) are used in the area of **VET** mainly for **AMS qualification and skills training measures** (personal training measures and support within the framework of active labour market policy) and for **supra-company apprenticeship training**.

In the area of **apprenticeships**, future skill needs are taken into consideration by introducing new apprenticeship occupations and by modernising existing apprenticeship occupations. The initiative to change the apprenticeship occupation landscape generally comes from the social partners, which, via their work in the regional and federal advisory boards on apprenticeship, play a decisive role in determining the contents of apprenticeships (i.e. which knowledge, skills and competences are taught) and also the structure (e.g. designing the apprenticeships as modular apprenticeships, cf. example below).

Relevant **studies and negotiations** are reflected in major inputs of the social partners on the work-related design of VET and CVET, and ultimately, for example, in the new design of company and supra-company apprenticeship subsidisation (cf. 8.1). Also relevant in this regard are papers written by social partners, e.g. “Labour market – future 2010 – proposals of the social partners for a package of measures to cover the skilled workers’ gap and youth employment” (ÖGB et al., 2007), “TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY OF LEARNING – concepts of the Austrian social partners for lifelong learning as a contribution to the Lisbon strategy” (ÖGB et al., 2007) and “Action plan for older workers” (ÖGB et al., April 2008).

Qualification aspects which are relevant for professions including empirical findings increasingly also represent an important principle for the development of qualifications which are relevant for employment in the **full-time school area**. Accordingly, the curricula for the VET schools and colleges (BMSs, BHSs) are continually adapted based on the assessment of experts and also on the basis of the results of graduate surveys, and new training programmes are created. So, for example, the study results on the employment-related skill needs of graduates of colleges of engineering (HTLs, Schneeberger et al. 2008) have contributed to the fact that new specialisations have been set up in which rather wide subject-related and supra-disciplinary qualifications can be obtained. One existing weak point is that the results of AMS-based forecast and qualification research are not taken into consideration in school-based VET. On the one hand, the results of this work cannot be used directly for the further development of school-based VET in terms of curriculum development or for setting up new specialisations (consideration of these would require academic analysis with particular focus on school-based VET), and on the other hand there is a general lack of institutionalised cooperation between the AMS and the ministries responsible for the school sector.

### Modularisation of apprenticeship training

Modular apprenticeships (MLBs), which have been possible since the amendment of the Vocational Training Act in 2006, are divided into a basic module and into main and special modules. With a maximum total training period of four years there are many different options available in terms of content and organisation. The modularisation should enable an improvement in educational planning in view of permanent changes in the labour market. The **objective** of modularisation is to **flexibilise** the VET system, improve compliance with **sectoral requirements**, create additional numbers of potential new training enterprises, and to better link IVET and CVET. The measure should also reduce the number of individual occupations (there are currently around 260 apprenticeship occupations) and improve transparency in the apprenticeship occupation landscape. The attractiveness of training should also be increased with a modern system, both among compa-

nies and also among youths.

Modularisation is an opportunity to **shape apprenticeship occupations**. The social partners and the Ministry of Economics can also continue to design apprenticeship occupations as individual, special-focus or group apprenticeship occupations (cf. Archan 2006, p. 14ff).

### Sphere of action

The debate on the introduction of modularisation was initiated by the Economic Chamber, which drafted a proposal for a concept. This was discussed and developed by the social partners, the ministries responsible for apprenticeships and the provinces. In January **2006** the amendment of the Vocational Training Act, which enshrined modularisation in law, finally came into force.

Modular apprenticeships can be created in **the whole of Austria**.

### Evaluation

There are currently **four MLBs**; many others are being discussed or elaborated. There is not yet an evaluation of the modularisation concept or of the four MLBs because the training programmes have not been completed. An ex-ante evaluation of the modularisation concept (cf. Archan 2006) has shown, however, that the economy was basically positive towards this approach. Many proposals for the modularisation of existing apprenticeship occupations also prove that this concept has received a good response.

### Conclusions

With reference to Gruber (n.d.), modularisation can be seen as an important motor for modernisation of the Austrian VET system in order, on the one hand, to be more in line with the different needs of heterogeneous biographies and, on the other hand, also the required professional flexibility and mobility. Using the example of a profession, Gruber argues for integrated qualification models which “integrate in a network both initial training and preparation for a professional qualification in second-chance education (advanced training occupations) and also continued vocational education and training in a flexible system” (Gruber, n.d., 20). One objective which should be achieved by modularisation is winning over additional training enterprises and apprenticeship posts while bridging the gap between IVET and CVET and dealing with the challenge of making apprenticeship training more usable for second-chance education.

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### 4.3 Involving labour market actors in VET

The integration of stakeholders of the labour market in VET processes is mainly via institutionalised cooperation projects between the responsible national and regional authorities and the social partners. The cooperation differs depending on the area of education (cf. also Tritscher-Archan and Mayr 2008).

In **apprenticeship training**, federal and regional advisory boards on apprenticeship set up permanent bodies which give proposals for new apprenticeship occupations, elaborate new training regulations and forms and give recommendations for financing the training. With the involvement of specialists from companies and, if necessary, also research institutions, proposals are drafted for new legal regulations by the responsible Federal Ministry of Economics, Family and Youth (BMWFJ). The **vocational school** as the academic part of dual training is regulated by the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and further developed in view of changed requirements (new curricula). In the provinces, the teaching contents and forms of learning are adjusted by means of cooperation projects of the vocational school inspectors and school heads with representatives from the economy.

In the **full-time school-based VET sector** (VET schools and colleges) expert opinions are obtained from the businesses and special surveys (graduate surveys, cf. 4.1) are carried out. Curriculum drafts are also presented to the social partners for appraisal. In some cases sector representatives are co-opted into the boards of trustees of the educational establishments.

In **CVET** the requirements of the labour market are incorporated in the development of the CVET offer via different cooperation projects, for example by integrating the employer and employee associations into the relevant bodies or with the academic establishments brought together in the research network of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). One new initiative is, for example, the standing committee on skill needs (cf. example below).

The funds for the **qualification measures** for unemployed people from the AMS have been greatly increased in recent years. Since these funds come from the contributions of employees and employers, they are used almost entirely in the interest of the social partners or the companies and gainfully employed. Here the social partners are cooperating with the responsible government institutions at the federal and regional levels.

With the establishment of **Fachhochschulen** (FHs), where around 40% of the available study courses are designed for people in employment, considerable labour market orientation has been developed at the higher education (HE) level. The social partners are represented in the Fachhochschule Council and are therefore involved in the review and approval procedure of applications to set up FH study courses and their quality assurance, which are oriented towards the labour market requirements and acceptance on the part of the students.

#### Standing committee on skill needs

On the proposal of the AMS Supervisory Board (the AMS's highest administrative body), in October 2009 a platform (= standing committee) was founded which contains representatives of the AMS (administrative council, board of directors, specialist department for qualification, regional managers), of the social partners, relevant ministries and the major providers of CVET of the social partners – the Institute for Economic Promotion (WIFI) and the Vocational Training Institute (bfi). This body decides on the establishment of **groups of specialists** (people responsible for HR and education from large key companies) for certain **occupational areas** (e.g. construction, tourism, electrical, chemical,

automotive etc.), which exchange ideas in several focus group meetings on questions regarding the development of employment and qualifications.

The **background** to this initiative is the further development of cooperation to ascertain and assess the skill needs of the future by including all stakeholders to the greatest extent possible.

#### Sphere of action

The initiative consists of specialist groups for specific themes which come together at the **national level** for certain occupational areas. In 2009 meetings were held for the machinery/automotive/metal and chemical/plastic sectors. For 2010 discussions are planned in the areas of electrical engineering and telecommunications, office and administration, health and tourism, biological and medical engineering, construction, marketing and advertising.

#### Evaluation

Since this initiative was not started until October 2009, there are currently **no evaluation results** available. The high participation rates at the meetings held so far show great interest among all stakeholders, however.

#### Conclusions

The initiative aims to deal with central challenges in the individual occupational areas. These arise in particular with regard to the innovations necessary in order to remain competitive. With the need for specialist qualifications in mind, innovation potential in particular needs to be promoted by **creating specific VET and CVET offers** and the responsibilities of the individual stakeholders need to be clarified.

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## 4.4 Promoting workplace learning

Workplace-related learning is very important in **IVET** at the upper secondary level. In **apprenticeship training** around 80% of the entire training takes place at the company workplace, the remaining 20% is the academic part of the training at vocational school. In **VET schools and colleges** (BMHSs) there are compulsory work placements in companies which have to be completed when there is no teaching. In colleges of engineering (technical VET colleges), for example, before beginning the last year (fifth year), compulsory work placements of at least eight weeks must be proven.<sup>7</sup>

The **promotion** of workplace-related learning is about both the quantitative and also qualitative expansion/improvement of VET. In the area of **apprenticeship training**, workplace-

<sup>7</sup> In technical BMSs and BHSs the entire teaching takes place in the school, but an essential part is in the form of practical training in workshops and laboratories. In BMSs this practical part comprises about a third of the entire compulsory teaching hours, in BHSs this is around 20%.

related learning is promoted by the company and supra-company apprenticeship subsidisation which has been expanded in recent years and underwent fundamental reform in 2008 (cf. 4.4, 5.2, 6.1 and 8.1).

Since the reform, the **company-related apprenticeship subsidies** have been handled by the Apprenticeship Offices of the Economic Chambers with the involvement of employee representatives. Essentially the new subsidy consists of a basic subsidy and a series of additional quality and employment-related subsidies (cf. 8.1). On the one hand these should provide an incentive to create additional apprenticeship posts and on the other hand they should help increase the quality in apprenticeship training. Quality-related subsidisation criteria include, for example

- the quality bonus for enterprises whose apprentices can successfully furnish evidence of their qualifications by the middle of their apprenticeship period (cf. example below),
- subsidies for training alliances and additional training programmes for apprentices that exceed the statutory occupational profile,
- preparatory courses for the final apprenticeship examination and the examination providing access to higher education for skilled workers and graduates of three- and four-year full-time VET schools (Berufsreifepfung) during apprenticeship training,
- support measures for apprentices with learning difficulties,
- bonuses for final apprenticeship examinations taken with excellent or good results,
- subsidies for the continuing training of trainers.

The **personal subsidies** continue to fall within the sphere of responsibility of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). As part of the introduction of the “training guarantee up to the age of 18” (cf. 2.1 and 5.2), starting with training year 2008/09, the supra-company apprenticeship training was established as an equal and regular component of dual VET as well as the company-based apprenticeship offer which still has priority. With the change the social protection of the participants has also clearly been improved: the compensation for training, granted at different amounts before, has been raised to a uniform level, and the subsidised youths are now included in the unemployment insurance system. The target groups have also been expanded by increasingly targeting early school leavers and “older” youths as well as the socially disadvantaged youths and those with learning deficits. With these changes there has been compliance with some of the results and recommendations of the conducted evaluations of youth employment measures in Austria (e.g. Huber et al. 2005).

#### Evidence of qualification after half of the apprenticeship period

The **background** to the measure is improving the **quality** of training as well as basic incentives to create company-based apprenticeships.

The **objective** is to increase the number of companies which provide high-quality training places and generally increase the quality of company-based training.

The **target groups** are the training companies and the apprentices in these companies. The measure has been in force since mid-2008, the corresponding subsidisation guidelines were decided in April 2009 (cf. 8.1).

#### Sphere of action

The measure is part of company-based apprenticeship subsidisation. All training companies in Austria are eligible for subsidisation. A requirement is that all apprentices in the company take a **practical test** and that **training documentation** is kept as proof of the knowledge and skills imparted in the company. If all apprentices in a year pass the practical test, the company will receive a **subsidy** of 3,000 euros for each apprentice.

<b>Evaluation</b>
Since this measure was not started until the subsidisation guideline came into effect in April 2009, there are no evaluation results available yet.
<b>Conclusions</b>
The measure represents a key incentive to raise the <b>quality of training in companies</b> . It remains to be seen to what extent the requirement that – with certain exceptions – all apprentices in a company have to pass the practical test represents an obstacle to success and how this measure will affect the recruitment of apprentices.
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## 5. Addressing equity, social inclusion and active citizenship

### 5.1 Addressing equity in VET

In the first **Austrian National Report on Education 2009** (cf. Specht Ed. 2009) Austria is following the tradition of fact-based decision-making (“evidence-based policy”). The themes of equity and social inclusion are very important in this report as “equity as a result” and “quality indicators” are dealt with in detail.

In Austria different approaches are used to attempt to establish equity and social inclusion: on the one hand by **implementing specific initiatives** (e.g. with “apprenticeship and Matura” – cf. 6.3, with the “training guarantee up to the age of 18” – cf. 2.1 and 5.2, with various programmes for the promotion of women etc.), and on the other hand with **financial subsidies and support** (e.g. free offer of “apprenticeship and Matura” for apprentices – cf. 6.3). Ultimately in Austrian education policy there is agreement that to create equality of opportunities and social justice it is very important to enable all students to have the same opportunities precisely because of the diversity of the Austrian education system and the comparatively early differentiation.

As a corresponding contribution to **improve the educational opportunities of 10 to 15 year-olds** the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) set up an **expert commission** to work out strategies for school organisation. The tasks of this commission range from evaluating existing school models on to education policy innovations and socio-political aspects. The points identified as particularly important include the promotion of permeability in the school system, the creation of a nationwide offer of all-day school forms and making it easier to acquire the compulsory school qualification in second-chance education (cf. [http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/16253/ek\\_zwb\\_02.pdf](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/16253/ek_zwb_02.pdf)).

As a measure to raise flexibilisation and increase permeability between educational offers and options, the *Berufsaufreifeprüfung* (BRP) was introduced in 1997. Since autumn 2008 an amendment of the BRP law has made it possible to complete the BRP alongside apprenticeship training (“**Apprenticeship and Matura**”, cf. also 6.3). For apprentices who are preparing for the BRP in the first apprenticeship year this is free of charge. Three of the four partial exams (German, modern foreign language, mathematics and a specialist area from the respective apprenticeship occupation) can already be taken before the final apprenticeship examination, and the last partial exam when the person has reached the age of 19. Previously passing the BRP was possible for apprentices only after successfully completing the apprenticeship and was associated with costs for those involved.

With regard to the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills, the **exceptional admission to the final apprenticeship examination** must be cited, where practical periods relevant to the subject and attendance of courses are recognised and replace the formal apprenticeship period. In adult learning there are also examples of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning processes, e.g. as part of the **Academy of Continuing Education** (<http://www.wba.or.at/>).

In particular for creating equality with regard to the choice of careers which are (un)typical of gender, the project “**Women in Research and Technology**” (fFORTE, [www.fforte.at](http://www.fforte.at)) is worth mentioning. fFORTE is a funding programme supported by four ministries for women in science and technology which aims to show how female potential can be successfully used in male-dominated academic areas. fFORTE was launched in February

2002 on the recommendation of the Council for Research and Technological Development, and since then the initiative has been regularly expanded and adapted. The concept is unique in terms of the wide range of target groups and in terms of its highly-demanding objectives regarding academic policy. It provides new stimulus to the potential for development of highly qualified female researchers and increases the equality of opportunities of women and men. After a successful five-year pilot phase (2002-2007), fFORTE is being extended and expanded in its new period of development (2009-2012).

The **Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)** also supports women and girls in their choice of career and qualification, in looking for work which will secure their livelihood and in returning to work after having a baby (cf. [www.ams.at/sfa/14073.html](http://www.ams.at/sfa/14073.html)). As well as many brochures and websites, the AMS also offers personal advice for women and girls.

The endeavours to ensure equality of opportunities and social justice need to begin as early as possible, however. To enable all children, irrespective of their socio-economic background, to have the best possible educational options and opportunities when starting their further educational and later professional lives, children in the last year before compulsory schooling need to be obliged to visit suitable institutional childcare facilities. This **compulsory last year at nursery school** will be introduced in autumn 2010, mainly in view of language training.

Another important contribution to equality of opportunities is the **training guarantee up to the age of 18** (cf. 5.2): students who, after compulsory school, do not receive a school place or apprenticeship post are given apprenticeship training in a supra-company training workshop and are therefore entitled to training until the age of 18. **Integrative vocational education and training (IBA)**, which was introduced to support disadvantaged youths, will be explained in detail in the next chapter.

#### **Pilot scheme for new secondary school (NMS)**

**Background:** The previous practice in Austria of presenting pupils aged ten with the choice between the “academic” lower cycle of higher general-education school (AHS lower cycle) and “practical” lower secondary school education path was recognised as too early in pedagogic and social terms. At this age the aptitudes and talents of the children are still hard to assess, and this can lead to wrong education path decisions and therefore also high drop-out rates and tutoring expenses. The choice of school is often based on the ideas of the parents, and children from educationally-deprived (“difficult-to-reach”) groups in particular are at a disadvantage here.

**Targets/target groups:** The NMS is a joint school for 10 to 14 year-olds which implements modern pedagogic concepts and a performance-based teaching and learning culture. Educational focal points are individualisation and differentiation, integration, equality of opportunities and gender equality, promotion of creativity, sport, eLearning, full-day care and opening up the school to the outside.

For the NMS the curriculum of the AHS lower cycle applies. Compulsory orientation towards the educational standards creates the basis for objective assessment and comparability of the performance level of the pupils and contributes to quality assurance. Teaching is done by teachers of the lower secondary school and AHS, also together in a team (team-teaching). The maximum number of pupils per class is 25.

**Status of implementation:** The pilot scheme for a new secondary school was introduced in the 2008/2009 school year (as so-called “Generation 1”) at 67 locations with 331 classes, initially in five Austrian provinces. In the 2009/2010 school year (“Genera-

tion 2”), participation was extended to a total of 244 locations with 801 classes (including the first classes from the 2008/2009 school year which were now moving up to the second classes) and to the whole of Austria. By the 2011/2012 school year other locations may be added to the existing ones. The development work in the pilot schools covers the entirety of a schooling period, i.e. the pilot scheme will last until the end of the 2014/2015 school year.

### Sphere of action

Since the 2009/10 school year, locations **in the whole of Austria** have been offering the NMS pilot scheme and are therefore taking part in the development work. Of the 801 classes (incl. classes which have moved up), only 38 are at an AHS, the vast majority are at lower secondary schools. It remains to be seen to what extent a joint school for 10 to 14 year-olds can actually be realised and whether there will not “only” be an upgrade of the lower secondary schools.

### Evaluation

In several sub-projects the Federal Institute of Educational Research, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School Sector (BIFIE) is carrying out an **evaluation** and accompanying academic research for the NMS pilot project. The **first results** of a survey of head teachers after a year of NMS are already available (September 2009). These show a **positive result** on the part of the schools: both the general conditions and also the changes associated with the pilot scheme (in particular in the area of pedagogical design of lessons and motivation to work) are assessed positively. Only with the available further training, which is assessed as satisfactory overall, are there deficits in individual areas.

For 2010 a **parental survey on feeder primary schools** for NMS locations is planned, with which in particular the awareness level of the NMS among the target group (parents) and the reasons for or against choosing the NMS will be asked and, in general, factors influencing the decision for the NMS will be analysed. In-depth peer evaluations will also be carried out at selected locations.

Whether and in which form the pilot scheme will become a regular operation cannot be seen yet and will depend on the results of further evaluation steps.

### Conclusions

The key challenge for an actual joint school for 10 to 14 year-olds is the incorporation of lower secondary schools and AHSs. Even though the number of participating AHS classes has increased slightly in the second project cycle (from 3.6% in the first NMS classes in the 2008/09 school year to 5.5% in the 2009/10 school year), the overall percentage is still extremely low (4.7%).

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## 5.2 Support services for groups at risk

In the last ten years the efforts to **promote the integration of youths** in the training and employment system have concentrated on four areas (cf. BMASK 2009):

- measures to increase the number of available apprenticeships and training places (new apprenticeships, integrative VET, financial incentives for training companies such as new subsidisation scheme for apprenticeship posts with a practical test, the so-called “Blum Bonus”, financial and organisational support from training alliances with training enterprises in individual provinces)
- measures to make it easier for youths to enter VET (career guidance, subsequent acquisition of lower secondary school qualification, promotion of basic education)
- qualification and employment programmes for youths between the ages of 19 and 24 (special programme for youth employment, SPJU), JOBS FOR YOU(TH))
- Youth Training Guarantee Act (JASG) and supra-company apprenticeship training

Measures to reduce the number of **school dropouts** essentially aim at two areas: at increasing the percentage of pupils with a qualification from upper secondary level and at strengthening key and basic competences (reading, writing, arithmetic) before they undergo a VET programme. Major measures in this connection include a higher degree of professionalisation of the teaching staff in the direction of peer mediation and support of learning successes, reducing the number of pupils per class to 25, initiatives to promote reading skills (e.g. “Lesefit”), setting up a pedagogical support structure for pupils with learning deficits (e.g. target group-oriented teaching material) and literacy and basic education measures.

With a further reform in 2009 as part of Labour Market Package II (cf. BMASK 2009), the Labour Foundation was expanded with the addition of a **Youth Foundation**. Those who benefit from the Foundation are youths who lose their job and before were employed for at least three months at small and medium-sized enterprises or personnel leasing companies. Tailored support and qualification measures and new career prospects become possible for the youths. A requirement for participation in the Foundation is that the enterprise pays 1,000 euros per person to the Foundation. For the duration of the Youth Foundation, the drawing of unemployment benefit is extended. Foundation participants do not become long-term unemployed because of this. In addition the youths receive a foundation grant of 100 euros per month. As a response to the crisis (cf. ch. 2) as part of Labour Market Package II, a labour foundation with particular focus on youths was enshrined in law. The Youth Foundation will be used specifically for a total of 2,000 19-24 year-olds. This created an additional possibility for qualification focusing mainly on the particular needs of young unemployed people, many of whom have lost their work at a personnel leasing company, for example, because of the economic crisis. The total costs of the Youth Foundation may come to a maximum of ten million euros, two million euros of which is provided by the entrepreneurs. The rest is financed from the insolvency contingency fund, by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and by the provinces.

Measures for pupils and people with a **migration background** include: language support classes; German courses for parents of schoolchildren and nursery schoolchildren; mother-tongue curricula and intercultural teaching staff at secondary schools and business-oriented VET schools and colleges; literacy and basic education measures; support for preschool education; vocationally-oriented support courses and education offers within the framework of CET. In many cases, financial support is granted by the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK).

**Measures for gender equality** concern targeted career guidance measures for women and girls and technology-specific women’s programmes, e.g. “Women in the crafts and technology” (2006-2008). The initiative “mut! – Girls and Technology” (cf. 8.3) was origi-

nally for the period from 2002 to 2009 and was used by 13,342 girls (cf. [www.mut.co.at](http://www.mut.co.at)). On account of the success, funds were again announced for mut! for the 2009/10 school year, this time to promote activities in the area of pre-service and in-service education and training for teaching staff and continuing training at the university colleges of education (PHs) at the provincial level, by the Department of Gender Mainstreaming/Gender and School of the BMUKK. Since 2002 mut! has developed from a pilot project to a programme which, as well as measures for the target group of girls, also directly includes actors from their environment (especially family and school). It therefore has to be underlined that gender-sensitive career guidance is of social and socio-political relevance, and this is very important within the school system.

In addition, creation of attractive learning offers for women in rural regions who are less likely to access education (“difficult to reach”) and at a disadvantage is also an essential approach. **Women who are not used to learning and difficult to reach** and who, due to their age, educational and qualification level and lack of ICT knowledge, experience particular discrimination, are addressed in a targeted manner and receive **information and counselling** on site about special educational offers (cf. BMUKK and BMWF 2009).

The project partnership “Learn forever II – lifelong learning (LLL) in the age of the information society 2007-2013” (cf. <http://www.learnforever.at>) elaborates and implements projects in order to **motivate women who are disadvantaged in their access to learning to take part in continuing training programmes**. The aim is for women to have equal participation and access to LLL and to new information and communication technologies. Irrespective of age, social background and regional origin, women and men have to participate equally in all areas of society. Here the gap needs to be closed between those who are able to use learning as a principle of active (life) shaping and those to whom, because of unequal conditions, access to education and further education and training remains closed. “Learn forever II” undertakes specific activities here in order to integrate women disadvantaged in their access to learning into the LLL process. The issue of learning needs to become part of the everyday lives of women, increase the acceptance of new media as well as strengthen and motivate women in their self-confidence as students. “Learn forever II” is a project over several years in which women-focused non-profit organisations and educational establishments have come together to implement innovative projects in the provinces of Styria, Salzburg, Upper Austria, Vienna and Carinthia. In 2008 “Learn forever II” was one of the projects nominated for the Austrian State Prize for Adult Education in the category “Innovation 08”. In mobile so-called ICT learning workshops or in the educational scheme termed “Learning arrangement”, these women acquire computer competence, they learn to learn, to organise themselves, and to develop capabilities of cooperation and self-initiative. As a supporting measure, they are offered educational counselling with analyses of potential and coaching. The educational schemes for this target group are currently being implemented in Styria, Salzburg, Upper Austria and Vienna, adjusted to the needs on site and, at the same time, further developed. It is the longer-term goal to anchor LLL for women not used to learning in the structures and educational policies of the adult learning sector.

**Measures for national occupational mobility** comprise grants for the course costs, the incidental costs of the course and living costs. The figures show that education measures and grants for incidental costs of the course are among the most important measures in terms of quantity with around 40,000 subsidisation cases in the yearly average in 2006 and around 33,000 subsidisation cases in the yearly average in 2008.

Several provinces have implemented initiatives to support disadvantaged people. Here **easily-accessible strategies for educational counselling and career guidance information** need to be mentioned. In Salzburg, Vienna and Tyrol prospective Matura holders are being advised for the first time in their decision for studies or a profession by specially

trained guidance counsellors. **“Study checkers”** are specially trained teachers who are supposed to help with the choice of further education or training (cf. [http://www.schulpsychologie.at/uploads/media/Studienchecker\\_Info\\_01.pdf](http://www.schulpsychologie.at/uploads/media/Studienchecker_Info_01.pdf)). Among other helpers, representatives of the students’ union and AMS also have to give insights into studies and possible occupational fields. The project was initiated together by the School Psychology and Psychological Student Counselling services and is going to be gradually extended to cover the whole of Austria. Since the start of November 2009 (2009/10 school year), 41 schools from the listed provinces have been taking part in this pilot project. Around 4,000 pupils will benefit from documents, training and counselling. **Jobseeking companions** (cf. [www.berufsorientierung.at](http://www.berufsorientierung.at)) are primarily a contact point for Styrian apprenticeship-seeking youths and for those youths who are in the process of choosing a career or educational path and need information and support. By accompanying and supporting them, it is made easier for young people to decide on a further education or training option (school or apprenticeship). So the key elements of this initiative are individual information discussions and longer-term personal accompaniment of the youths. Jobseeking companions accompany the youths and provide them with orientation and encourage them to deal confidently with their own future, with decisions, and also with uncertainties. Intensive contacts with parents and cooperation with companies and regional institutions are also key concerns of the project, which is supported by the BMUKK and the province of Styria.

The high drop-out rates at Austrian universities on the one hand and the acute lack of skilled workers on the other suggest that the choice of education and career by young people is not always accurate. So, at the national level, within the framework of compulsory and professional career guidance and educational counselling in all types of schools, preparation for the world of work needs to be begun on time and targeted decision-making needs to be supported. This is why an interministerial working group, the **“Expansion of career guidance and educational counselling” task force**, was set up and located at the BMUKK. Covered themes include gender-sensitive career guidance (focusing on girls and technology and boys and non-traditional professions). From the 2009/2010 school year the “Catalogue of compulsory measures in the areas of information, counselling and guidance for the seventh and eighth grade” will be applicable (cf. [www.bmukk.gv.at/Medienpool/18542/2009\\_17.pdf](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/Medienpool/18542/2009_17.pdf)).

#### **Supra-company apprenticeship training – “training guarantee up to the age of 18”**

Under the title “Labour market – future 2010” it was decided to realise both the goal of developing the support systems for company-based VET in line with requirements and also a **training guarantee for all youths up to the age of 18**. As an instrument to fulfil this “training guarantee”, supra-company apprenticeship training was expanded.

A **requirement** for carrying out supra-company VET was the update of the Vocational Training Act (BAG) in 2008. Until then it was not possible for the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) to promote uninterrupted VET within the meaning of the BAG. Since 1998 measures in the area of VET have been possible thanks to the Youth Training Guarantee Act (JASG). But these measures were always for a limited time and were used to obtain partial qualifications in the area of VET and to prepare for dual VET and facilitate entry into the regular apprenticeship market. Now it is legally enshrined that the entire apprenticeship training can be carried out in a supra-company establishment and is also eligible for subsidisation. Therefore with the amendment of the BAG, the system of supra-company apprenticeship training was established as an equal and regular component of dual VET.

The main target groups are **youths** who have completed their compulsory schooling and do not have a school place to continue their education and cannot find a regular appren-

ticeship post in a company. As well as socially disadvantaged youths and those with learning deficits, early school leavers, “older” youths (i.e. youths who completed compulsory schooling at least a year ago) and youths with career aspirations which cannot be covered by the available apprenticeships in companies also need to be included in the programme.

If there is the possibility and the desire to switch to company based-training during the training period, this can be done at any time, and the time already spent training will be fully credited.

#### Sphere of action

The measure is available in **the whole of Austria**. The **Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)** in particular is involved in the implementation of the measure.

#### Evaluation

An **initial evaluation** is currently (November 2009) ongoing. The focus of this (accompanying) evaluation is the quality and adequacy of supra-company training offers for the relevant target groups, which has to be described mainly on the basis of the participants' satisfaction and the satisfaction of the teachers and trainers responsible for the placement services. Particular attention is also paid to the question of the extent, causes and consequences (retention) of training stoppages and changes.

#### Conclusions

The first results of the accompanying evaluation are expected in 2010.

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#### Integrative vocational education and training (IBA)

**IBA** is regulated in the Vocational Training Act (BAG) and has been applicable since 2003. People eligible for IBA are individuals that could not be placed into a regular apprenticeship relationship by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and either:

- had special educational needs at the end of compulsory schooling and who were, at least in part, taught according to the curriculum of a special needs school or
- have no, or only a negative, final certificate from lower secondary school or
- have “disabilities” within the meaning of the Act on the employment of people with disabilities (Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz) and/or the respective Regional Act on people with disabilities (Landesbehindertengesetz) or
- of whom it has to be assumed – within the framework of career guidance measures or due to an unsuccessful placement attempt in a regular apprenticeship relationship – that it will, in the foreseeable future, not be possible to find any regular apprenticeship vacancy for them for reasons exclusively related to the person himself/herself.

IBA provides for two alternatives, viz. either **prolongation** of the legally stipulated apprenticeship period by one year, in exceptional cases by up to two years, or obtainment of a **partial qualification**, in which the occupational profile is restricted to parts of the

apprenticeship occupation in question.
<p><b>Sphere of action</b></p> <p>IBA has applied <b>throughout Austria</b> since 2003.</p> <p>The following actors are foreseen in the implementation of this measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The <b>Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)</b> attempts to place all young apprenticeship seekers in a regular apprenticeship post. If that is not possible, the AMS will search for training places for those youths to whom one of the above conditions applies within the framework of IBA. A subsidisation for training enterprises that employ young people within the framework of IBA is foreseen in the AMS support criteria.</li> <li>▪ <b>Vocational training assistance</b> has the task of advising and supporting the youths and training enterprises before and during the training. It also takes over the function of a “hub”, viz. coordination of all parties involved.</li> <li>▪ The Apprenticeship Offices at the <b>Economic Chambers</b> will register the training and apprenticeship contracts as soon as all prerequisites have been met (AMS assignment, vocational training assistance) and will organise the final apprenticeship examinations.</li> <li>▪ The Federal Ministry of Economics, Family and Youth (BMWFJ) oversees IBA.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p>The <b>initial evaluation</b> concluded in 2006 analysed the implementation phase. The <b>second evaluation</b> carried out in 2008 identified new developments, examined the extent to which IBA has become established as a new form of training and worked out prospects and options for further development, in particular with regard to possible legislative adaptations.</p> <p>Previous experience made by the implementing institutions and training enterprises with IBA is <b>very satisfactory</b>. Despite the increased need for supervision in the companies, 82% of the questioned enterprises are satisfied with the form of training and in more than a fifth of companies IBA has even led to an increase in the social commitment of the employees.</p> <p>The vocational training assistants also have a positive assessment. One key criterion for success with their work is the <b>intensive supervision</b> of all involved actors, in particular the apprentices. In the opinion of the assistants, the youths were able to make <b>great development steps</b> with this form of training, and integration in the first labour market in particular lets them mature here. The integrative apprentices are generally very satisfied with their training. But in their career choice the youths are restricted by their impairments and also by the available apprenticeships and training courses, however.</p> <p>At the end of 2007 <b>3,410 or 2.6% of the almost 130,000 apprentices</b> were in integrative apprenticeship training. This means the number of IBA apprentices has roughly tripled since 2004. 65% of these IBA apprentices completed an extended apprenticeship and 35% a partial qualification.</p>
<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <p>IBA <b>increases youth employment</b> and successfully <b>tackles social exclusion</b> and disadvantages. It is a nationwide measure which became part of the standard training in 2008. On account of the increasing demand, supervision bottlenecks can sometimes be seen, however, and the evaluation also shows possibilities of optimisation in terms of the involvement of the enterprises in the integration of their apprentices.</p>

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### 5.3 Active citizenship

In the European framework of reference for key competences for lifelong learning (cf. European Commission 2005) **civic competence** is outlined together with interpersonal, intercultural and social competence.

Initiatives in the area of **active citizenship** are closely linked with the area of policy-making. The measures include examples such as the trade union school (Adult Education Association organised by the Austrian Trade Union Federation, VÖGB) and basic political education (Lower Austrian Education and Heritage Organisation, BHW NÖ), which since 2008 has been offered free of charge in Lower Austria by the Education and Heritage Organisation (BHW, [www.bhw-n.eu](http://www.bhw-n.eu)). With a target group-oriented offer of political education in basic education, participants learn to better recognise the democratic political dimension of their own actions. They can develop individual opportunities to take part more in social and political life (cf. [www.alphabetisierung.at/fileadmin/pdf/Projekte/08\\_01\\_08\\_Infotext\\_Websites.pdf](http://www.alphabetisierung.at/fileadmin/pdf/Projekte/08_01_08_Infotext_Websites.pdf)). In the project report and in the evaluation (cf. Wittmann 2009) it is emphasised how important it was to the participants to “be able to have a say” and expand their knowledge to help them participate in decision-making. The trainers are trained by the Austrian Society for Political Education, which developed a corresponding training programme in 2007 as part of a pilot project. The pilot course on “basic political education in basic education” took place in 2008 in St. Pölten with 32 three-hour units. The concept behind this is based largely on the results of the Grundtvig 1 programme “Political participation with social competence” (110622-CP-1-2003-1-DE-Grundtvig-G1). In didactic terms, a lot of scope was allowed for discussions and playful development, and there were also excursions and a discussion event.

Offers to **reflect on social processes and empowerment** for the participants have also been successfully implemented in Austria for several years, e.g. the two-year university-style course “Economics/Politics/Civil Society. Development Area of Social Responsibility”. The pilot course at the Catholic Social Academy of Austria ([www.ksoe.at](http://www.ksoe.at)) was awarded the Innovation Prize of the Catholic Adult Education Forum in Austria in 2007. Recognised in particular was the fact that with this course the ksoe is counteracting the social trends of economisation and diminishing solidarity by having a broad understanding of social responsibility. The objective of the course is to enable the participants to initiate and support development processes of social responsibility in the professional, social and political environment. A concrete innovative social project is being implemented as part of the course. 21 participants completed the first course (2004-2006) and 20 the course from 2006-2008. They extended their competences in areas such as lobbying, conflict management, economics, politics, civil society activities and social ethics. Many different educational work methods were used, for example “discourse cafés”, “action learning” and a “change of perspective” to become familiar with the other areas of society at specific places.

Another example of academic courses in the area of **community work and regional development** is the Local Agenda 21 training course: the objective of Local Agenda 21 is, with sustainable development at the municipal level and with the involvement of as many citizens and actors as possible, to safeguard and improve the quality of life permanently at the location in question. For a sustainable development process to be implemented in the municipalities, it is necessary to support the process with external advice and moderation. For this reason in Carinthia, for example, training to become an LA21 moderator began in April 2002. The training course contained fundamental principles of sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 and also practical support for a Local Agenda 21 pilot municipality. Social cohesion is therefore also promoted within and between city districts and villages. The social capital is a necessary requirement for sustainable development. The OECD underlines the importance of this issue and carries out international research projects to measure social capital. This is why Socialcap.at, a supra-disciplinary network of institutions, experts from the academic world and practice in Austria, was created. Socialcap.at combines basic research (policy research) and the development, measurement and activation (action research) of social capital in communities and societies.

Finally the political education in school-based training also has to be pointed out: with the creation of the **compulsory subject “history and political education”** as part of an amendment of the School Education Act (Schulunterrichtsgesetz, BGBl. II no. 290/2008), political education has been compulsory in the eighth grade in Austria since the 2008/09 school year. This is of importance because in Austria in 2007 the active voting age was lowered from 18 to 16 (cf. BGBl. I no. 27/2007).

#### **Compulsory subject “history and political education” (democratic political education)**

The Austrian school can fulfil the objective formulated in the School Organisation Act, for instance, according to which “pupils [shall be] led to independent judgement and social understanding, be open-minded about political and ideological thinking of others and have the capacity to be interested in the economic and cultural life of Austria, Europe and the world and, with love of freedom and peace, be involved in the joint tasks of humanity” only if it takes **(democratic) political education into consideration correspondingly with children and youths**.

The key **concern** of this subject is to teach democratically founded awareness of Austria, pan-European thinking and a cosmopolitan attitude supported by an understanding of the existential problems of humanity.

One **main objective** of (democratic) political education is to promote a culture of democracy and human rights which enables each individual to be involved in the collective project to develop communities. The main concern is therefore to enhance social cohesion, mutual understanding and solidarity.

Political education deals with current **political questions**, their historical connections and the possibilities of influencing decisions. It is a requirement both for the development of individual competences and also for safeguarding and developing society overall. At a time characterised by increasing complexity in all areas of life, political education means an active contribution to shaping society and to realising and developing democracy and human rights.

Regarding the **strategy**, the main focus is on individual experiences and on practical approaches which are suitable for promoting living together in the community. It is about

interpersonal relationships, the development of individual and collective identities and the conditions for living together, to name just a few points.

So (democratic) political education therefore comprises **practices and activities** which have developed as part of a bottom-up method. It aims to enable pupils to be actively and responsibly involved in the decision-making processes in their environment. Participation is the key to promoting and strengthening a democratic culture which is based on awareness of shared basic values such as human rights and freedoms, equality in diversity (minority rights) and the rule of law as well as commitment to these values.

### Sphere of action

The subject has become established as a compulsory subject at the **national level** in all school types.

### Evaluation

With the “International Civics and Citizenship Education Study” the teaching principle of political education which applies here is being **evaluated** for the first time in Austria. How are pupils aged between 13 and 14 in different countries prepared at school to fulfil their role as (active) citizens? That is the core question of the study in which 39 countries from all parts of the world are taking part. The results are expected in autumn 2010 (<http://iccs.acer.edu.au/>).

### Conclusions

Youths need to be put in a position in terms of (self-)reflective political thinking and action **to develop political thought independently** and to expand this and also to participate actively and with their own responsibility in political processes (cf. Krammer 2008).

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## 6. Quality, excellence and attractiveness of VET

### 6.1 Improving the quality of VET

On the basis of a wide public debate, a large number of projects and pilot schemes since the mid-1990s, **quality development and quality assurance** have become established as key education policy objectives in the **full-time school-based VET sector** in recent years. In line with the international trend, the focus in Austria has also shifted from central input control towards process and output control. From this follow fundamental changes in the conception of control levels.

The packages of measures in this area include, first and foremost, the introduction of a quality and feedback culture covering all levels of the school system – ranging from teachers and the school as the pedagogical acting unit to regional and nationwide administration (cf. White Paper 2003). In order to “systematically improve” the reform target of “school and teaching”, quality development is given priority in schools over structural reforms (cf. final report by the committee on the future; critical views on overdue structural reforms, also: Schmid/Pirolt 2005; Lassnigg et al. 2007). Self-evaluation, development planning, reporting and agreement on objectives constitute the major elements of this new understanding of quality.

Within the framework of the **Quality in Schools (Q.I.S.)** project, which was launched in 1999, the main aim consisted in stimulating and encouraging schools to question their own quality, steer it and develop it further. At the heart of developments in Q.I.S. there is the school programme, which includes the school’s mission and value statement, information on the actual position as well as concrete targets and measures in various quality areas. Internal evaluation is inseparably linked with the school programme. Q.I.S. is a service offered at schools with material, information, experience exchange, discussion and presentation options in a virtual quality network ([www.qis.at](http://www.qis.at)).

The implementation of quality development and quality assurance measures is effected at schools on a **voluntary basis**. To date there is no legal obligation to conduct internal or external evaluation as in other countries. In 2005, in very general terms, quality assurance was legally incorporated in the school sector, which however does not entail any specific binding measures (cf. B-VG BGBl. I 31/2005; Art. 14 (5a)).

Quality development efforts in VET schools and colleges have been supported by the **VET Quality Initiative (QIBB)** since 2005/2006. QIBB is the first Austrian initiative in which all levels of the system – schools as well as school inspection and administration – are systematically involved. Despite its voluntary nature, the degree of implementation regarding internal elements of quality development such as the creation of the mission statement and school programme as well as self-evaluation is now generally relatively high in the full-time school sector (cf. Gutknecht-Gmeiner et. al 2007, p. 33, 67, 93).

Internal evaluation and quality management are accompanied by the introduction of **educational standards** in the main subjects and testing procedures at schools that are based on these standards (cf. 8.4 and 9.1). This initiative was launched in 2002 in the general education sector, with a binding introduction of educational standards at primary school and lower secondary level effected on a legal basis starting on 1 January 2009 (BGBl. II No. 1/2009). The development of educational standards for the VET sector was started some time later in 2004/2005, and here in a first step general education and in a second

step profession-related core competences were defined for the 13th grade by standards. The piloting stage has been ensued in three pilot phases (October 2007 to June 2010).

Closely connected with the introduction of the educational standards are reforms of the curricula and the upper secondary school-leaving exam (Reifeprüfung), where there is also competence orientation at the moment. The new **partially centralised Matura** will be implemented for the first time in 2014 at all higher general education schools (AHSs), the VET colleges (BHSs) will follow a year later. The new regulations will also apply for the external Matura and the Berufsmatura. The necessary amendment of the School Education Act (BGBl. I No. 112/2009) has been in force since 17 November 2009. The new Matura consists of three pillars: pre-scientific work, standardised written exams (throughout the whole country on one day) in the compulsory subjects of German, mathematics and a first modern foreign language, as well as oral exams which remain the competence of the school. Areas of focus where the school has autonomy must be taken into consideration with at least one of the three pillars. The compulsory written exams are assessed according to a centrally specified grade scale. The reform aims to increase quality, comparability and fairness and generally bring about a change in teaching and learning culture (cf. website of the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, BMUKK: Virtual Press Office, 22.10.2009).

In October 2007, ARQA-VET (**Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training**) was set up, which is used as a contact point and service facility for all questions associated with the theme of quality in VET and supports the General Directorate II for Vocational Education and Training of the BMUKK in the implementation of QIBB and the national and European activities of the ENQA-VET (European Network for Quality Assurance) ([www.arqa-vet.at](http://www.arqa-vet.at)).

On the theme of **professionalisation**, the measures integrated in QIBB “**Leadership Academy**”, a nationwide inter-institutional qualification project of the BMUKK for head teachers and managers in school administration, and the development of a “**Quality Academy**” to recognise competences in the area of quality management and evaluation by the Danube University of Krems must be mentioned.

Since June 2008 in the **area of dual training (apprenticeship training)** there has been a new subsidisation scheme for training enterprises which claims to be a voluntary quality assurance system: the **evidence of qualification after half of the apprenticeship period** (cf. example below and 4.4). According to the Guideline for the Subsidisation of Training of Apprentices in Companies (cf. § 19 c of the Vocational Training Act (BAG)), enterprises are eligible for subsidisation if their apprentices successfully participate in quality-related evidence of qualification (practical test) at the half-way point of the apprenticeship period: Here companies have to fulfil several requirements such as keeping training documentation as proof of the practice regarding the teaching of knowledge and skills of the occupational profile and successful passing of a practical test by the apprentice within a specified period during the training.

In the apprenticeship training, **supra-company training alliances** also help improve the quality of training. The main goal of a training alliance is to tackle the problem of a lack of apprenticeship positions. By being integrated in the training, specialised small and medium-sized enterprises also have the opportunity to train apprentices even if they cannot entirely teach the items specified in the corresponding occupational profile (knowledge and skills), and apprenticeship positions can be created here. Actually the number of apprenticeship positions has not increased as much as was hoped, however, but the qualification screw is turned strongly: voluntary training alliances, which can be set up to expand and complement the knowledge and skills beyond the occupational profile, ensure better quality in the apprenticeship training. From the current perspective, this development is

particularly important for positioning apprenticeships in the competitive environment of school-based education, and also taking into consideration the lack of skilled workers, as meaningful and high-quality training. In Austria, according to estimates, around 5,000 training enterprises and 15,000 apprentices are involved in training alliances (cf. Lachmayr and Dornmayr 2008).

### VET Quality Initiative (QIBB)

**Background:** QIBB was launched in 2005/2006 as a comprehensive quality management system with the aim of safeguarding and further developing the quality of VET schools and colleges. The framework conditions, triggers and challenges for the development of QIBB can be found in the increasing autonomisation of the school locations, the participation of interest groups in the further development of the school sector, and in international and European discourses and development paths. QIBB sees itself explicitly as a strategy for implementing the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) developed at European level (cf. BMBWK 2006, p. 16 and 18-21).

Specifically named QIBB **objectives** include: aid to school development, safeguarding competitiveness, professionalisation; QIBB is not meant to be a monitoring tool (cf. BMBWK 2006, p. 12f.).

**Target groups:** QIBB encompasses all areas of the VET system at the upper secondary level, viz. the schools, school inspection, and the competent specialist pedagogical departments of the Education Ministry. QIBB builds on the Quality in Schools (Q.I.S.) project, which was launched in 1999 (cf. 6.1.1).

**Status of implementation:** In the 2006/2007 school year, QIBB was already implemented at nearly all school locations in all BMHS areas in the whole of Austria. At the core of QIBB there is the schools' internal self-evaluation and systematic quality development (and that of other system levels). Nationwide evaluation focal points (or key areas that are tailored to individual school types or regions) as well as agreements on objectives for schools, school inspections, and the BMUKK/General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training render development steps binding. A series of instruments (see text below, the online platform for feedback by students, teachers and parents should also be mentioned) have been developed to support the activities conducted within the framework of QIBB and make them comparable by means of harmonisation.

The central elements of QIBB are the following:

- the mission statement,
- the Q-matrix (processes/quality areas, indicators),
- internal evaluation,
- the quality reports,
- the management and performance reviews,
- external evaluation.

All of these elements (with the exception of external evaluation) have already been elaborated for all system levels, with the formulation of objectives being broken down – within the meaning of a logical model – from the upper to the lower levels and embellished with details specific for the level or the respective school type.

Since autumn 2009 with “Peer Review in QIBB” for VET schools and colleges there has been a first offer for external evaluation at the school level ([www.peer-review-in-qibb.at](http://www.peer-review-in-qibb.at)), which will be carried out in the 2009/2010 school year for the first time in a regular operation at around ten schools. The procedure is based on a formative, i.e. development-

oriented peer review process for schools developed at the European level (cf. the European peer review projects [www.peer-review-education.net](http://www.peer-review-education.net)), which was tested and adapted in Austria in the 2008/2009 school year as part of a peer review pilot project with seven VET schools/colleges. At the same time peer review supports the implementation of the CQAF/EQARF.

### Sphere of action

QIBB applies to the **entire VET system**. An official connection has been made between QIBB, the development of educational standards and the creation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (cf. QIBB website, [www.qibb.at](http://www.qibb.at)). In addition, QIBB's content is connected with other projects in the education sector, particularly with issues of the further development of school autonomy, curriculum development (topicality, "matching supply and demand"), etc.

Due to the **integration of all institutional levels of the school system** in QIBB, the information or development measures can basically be used with synergy effects for other education policy projects. However, there exists no publicly accessible information on whether and how this will be implemented. The same applies to cooperative ventures in the field of labour market or social policies.

### Evaluation

A key success factor of QIBB is its **high participation rate** by schools of an average of 75%, in the majority of school types the share of schools implementing QIBB is at 90% or above (as of March 2007, cf. Gutknecht-Gmeiner et al. 2007, p. 93). This is a very high value particularly when considering the voluntary nature of participation: in the implementation phase, related activities involved pull and motivation factors and a school-oriented implementation architecture (such as school-based regional quality project managers (LQPMs), who acted as promoters at regional level), which relatively quickly created a critical mass of participants.

However, no publicly accessible information is available on which development steps were actually triggered by QIBB at schools or at the system level nor which effects were achieved in that way. This must be seen overall in connection with a **lack of meta-evaluation**, which could also provide information about whether the objectives pursued by QIBB – unbureaucratic support of development, participation by various interest groups, and transparency – have been achieved from the perspective of the affected and involved groups.

### Conclusions

The implementation of QIBB can be termed as very successful overall, a high degree of implementation at schools can be observed. Some questions remain open, however: they concern the introduction of (further) measures for external evaluation at all levels, the meta-evaluation of QIBB implementation, and the systematic capitalisation of the initiative for other policy areas. In the longer term, the school inspection's function needs to be redefined.

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### Evidence of qualification after half of the apprenticeship period

**Background:** While with QIBB a quality managements system for full-time school-based VET has been available since 2005/2006, for dual VET (apprenticeship training) there was no such initiative until 2008. With the practical test a type of voluntary quality assurance has now also been introduced in dual training.

The practical test in the middle of the apprenticeship period is organised for all apprenticeships by the Apprenticeship Offices of the provinces. The occupation-related contents and standards of the practical tests have been decided for each apprenticeship occupation by the funding committee of the Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship. The practical tests comprise the knowledge and skills learnt in the first apprenticeship year. The **objective** is to discover whether a minimum training level which can be expected is achieved by the middle of the apprenticeship period.

**Target group:** For all apprentices who began their training after 27 June 2008, their training enterprises have the opportunity to receive the subsidy "Evidence of qualification after half of the apprenticeship period" totalling 3,000 euros per apprentice. This means high-quality training by training enterprises is promoted. The following requirements have to be met here:

- Training documentation has to be kept for each apprentice.
- The apprentice has to successfully pass a practical test in the middle of the apprenticeship period.
- All apprentices in a year at the training enterprise have to take the practical test.
- The application for subsidisation must be submitted to the Apprenticeship Office.

Like for the final apprenticeship examination there are examination regulations for the practical test: the practical test regulations. The jury for the practical test consists of two experts from the respective apprenticeship occupation, similar to the final apprenticeship examination board. These are one employer representative and one employee representative.

The first practical tests were carried out in autumn 2009, there is still no data available on these.

### Sphere of action

The practical test is a **nationwide** offer for **all apprenticeship occupations**. The practical tests are organised by the Apprenticeship Offices of the provinces. The subsidisation can be applied for by all **enterprises** which are entitled to train apprentices pursuant to the Vocational Training Act (BAG) or the Vocational Training Act for Agriculture and Forestry (LFBAG).

### Evaluation

There is currently (as of Nov. 2009) no data available on the participation and effect of the practical test.

<b>Conclusions</b>
Subsidisation of training enterprises with the practical test in the middle of the apprenticeship period and training documentation is a step towards improving quality in the training.
<b>Sources</b>
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## 6.2 Promoting excellence in VET

For nearly all existing professions there are regional **professional competitions or apprentice competitions** (since 1953 in Vienna, for example, carried out by the Chamber of Labour together with the trade unions and VET schools). Here the knowledge and skills which apprentices are taught at VET schools and companies are tested. The best are declared regional champions. The professional competitions are therefore a “showcase” and at the same time preparation for the final apprenticeship examination (as part of dual training) or the final examination (in full-time school-based VET for three years). At **international professional competitions** such as “WorldSkills” (world professional championships), which is held every two years, very good results are also regularly achieved by the Austrian participants. Here the competitions in the individual professions can also be seen as a contest of the VET systems. So the dual VET system, which is limited to several Central European countries, comes up against purely school-based systems (mainly in Northern Europe and Asia) or the essentially company-specific training system of the USA and other countries. Since 2007 Austria has also been a member of ESPO (European Skills Promotion Organisation). In 2008 ESPO organised the first EuroSkills competition, which since then, alternating with WorldSkills, will take place every two years in an EU member state (cf. website of Skills Austria, [www.worldskills.at](http://www.worldskills.at), 16.10.2009).

Since 2008 the annual **state prize “Best training enterprises – Fit for future”** has been awarded by the Ministry of Economics based on a competition initiated in 2000 by the Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw). The objectives of the state prize are to strengthen quality, innovation and sustainability in apprenticeship training. In particular the state prize should be a clear indicator of the quality of apprenticeships, distinguish the Austrian economy for its outstanding work in the field of youth training, help gain new enterprises for apprenticeship training and raise awareness among parents and youths about the good training provided in Austria’s companies and the wide spectrum of apprenticeship occupations (cf. BMWA 2008 and [www.ibw.at/fitforfuture](http://www.ibw.at/fitforfuture)).

In the area of full-time school-based training the **promotion of gifted students** is a concern of the Austrian educational work. The Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) has cooperated with the Austrian Research and Support Centre for the Gifted and Talented (özb) to create a fundamental decree to promote gifted students which was issued to all schools at the start of the 2009/10 school year and in which the education policy strategy for promoting gifted students is set out. Some schools also define themselves explicitly as “pilot schools for promoting gifted students” ([www.begabtenzentrum.at](http://www.begabtenzentrum.at)). These also include schools of upper secondary level, even though participation in this sector appears low compared with the primary level.

### 6.3 Higher level qualification in VET

To complement the previous Berufsreifeprüfung (BRP), which was successfully implemented in 1997 and since then has enjoyed enormous popularity, in September 2008 the training model “**Apprenticeship and Matura**” was started. This pursues the goal of completing the previous form of Berufsreifeprüfung parallel to the apprenticeship or intermediate VET (cf. example below).

In the area of **healthcare professions** the post-secondary training programmes for elevated medical technology services (e.g. dietician, speech therapist, physiotherapist) and also midwife were transferred to tertiary Fachhochschulen (FHs) in 2006 (this process is still ongoing). With the integration in the FH sector, an increase in the quality of training, among other things, was sought (cf. decision of the Fachhochschule Council from 3 July 2004). The courses still last for three years and are concluded with the HE title of Bachelor (BA). The first such qualifications were obtained in 2009.

The **training of teaching staff** for primary, lower secondary and VET schools was converted into HE training when the Higher Education Act came into force in 2005 (BGBl. I No. 30/2006). Since 2007/08 it has been at **university colleges of education** (formerly teacher training colleges or vocational teacher training colleges), concluding with the title of Bachelor (BA) (cf. also 6.5).

#### Apprenticeship and Matura (Berufsmatura)

**Background/objectives:** After the successful implementation of the Berufsreifeprüfung (BRP) in 1997, which enjoys great popularity, in September 2008 on the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and the social partners, the training model “Apprenticeship and Matura” (also called Berufsmatura) was started in a nationwide pilot phase. While the previous BRP is based on the completion of an apprenticeship, three- or four-year VET school, nursing training etc., an amendment of the BRP law means that parallel preparation for the vocational qualification and Matura is possible in the new model. With an additional funding programme, this preparation and also taking the exam are free of charge for apprentices. The funds are provided by the BMUKK.

The most important new features in detail:

- Preparation for the BRP runs parallel to the apprenticeship training “in first-chance education”.
- Three of the four partial BRP exams can be taken before the final apprenticeship exam, the final partial exam – as previously – when candidates are 19.
- The vocationally-specific exam (one of the four partial BRP exams) can also be taken within the framework of the final apprenticeship examination (LAP).
- Uniform, competence-based curricula have been developed for the three partial exam subjects German, English and mathematics.
- The partial exam in German will be supplemented by an oral exam (quality assurance).
- A project-oriented subject-specific piece of work (from corporate practice) will be possible.

**Status of implementation:** In the first pilot year 2008/09, 3,000 apprentices already took up the offer for “Apprenticeship and Matura”. In 2009/10 it is hoped that this will be extended to 4,000 participants (cf. website of the BMUKK: Virtual Press Office, 04.03.2009).

<b>Sphere of action</b>
The <b>Austrian model</b> is based on positive experiences gained with pilot projects at the local level. It therefore also represents another step towards the interlinking of company-bound and full-time school-based VET programmes.
<b>Evaluation</b>
The extent to which the HE entrance qualification obtained in this way will also lead to de facto higher transfer rates to tertiary institutions cannot be assessed at present. The findings of the previously already existing BRP, which can also still be obtained as part of second-chance education, show here that a fundamental improvement was possible to achieve even though this is at a rather low level in terms of quantity. At any rate, this measure will have an impact on generally improving the reputation of these VET programmes as it facilitates a formally <b>improved vertical permeability</b> .
<b>Conclusions</b>
Overall with this initiative for improved vertical permeability it can be seen that a lot of attention in terms of structural improvements is paid to this area by the actors in the dual training segment but also at the government level.
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#### 6.4 Improving horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training system

In Austria there is a broad, very differentiated and generally highly accepted initial vocational education and training (IVET) sector at the upper secondary level. Due to the differentiation of VET paths, it is increasingly important to **improve the permeability** between the different IVET paths (horizontal permeability) and continuous options to obtain access requirements to further educational programmes (vertical permeability).

An improvement in the interface between the lower and upper secondary level is sought with the **pilot scheme for a new secondary school (NMS)**, a joint school for all 10 to 14 year-olds. This started in the 2008/09 school year. In Austria there is currently the practice, which is unusual compared with other European countries, of presenting pupils aged ten with the choice between the “academic” lower cycle of higher general education school (AHS lower cycle) and “practical” lower secondary school education path. This path was recognised as too early in pedagogic and social terms. The choice of school is often based on the ideas of the parents, and children from educationally-deprived groups in particular are at a disadvantage here. With the NMS, group-specific access to education will be replaced and measures can therefore be taken to improve changes of school at the “seams”. The pilot scheme is currently in the second year (cf. Ch. 5.1).

With an amendment of the Vocational Training Act (BAG) in 2006, legal foundations were established for the **modularisation of apprenticeship training** (dual training) (cf. example below). This aims to flexibilise and improve the horizontal permeability of the dual VET system, improve compliance with sectoral requirements, increase the number of training enterprises, and link the IVET sector and specialisation in occupations. Also, in terms of lifelong learning the VET schools are being opened for part-time CVET, so even after the

end of the apprenticeship period the contents offered by the VET schools as part of modules can also be used for CVET.

With the “**Apprenticeship and Matura**” scheme an initiative was launched in 2008 with the aim of integrating the previous form of Reifeprüfung after an apprenticeship or intermediate VET more in IVET to make the apprenticeship more attractive and to improve vertical permeability (cf. ch. 6.3).

With the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) the **recognition and integration of non-formally and informally acquired competences** are attached particular importance. Within this NQF, it is intended to give these learning contexts basically the same significance as formal learning processes in terms of lifelong learning. As the procedures and methods are still relatively new, a different time specification is laid down here, however. Practical implementation can in fact look back on several years of relevant experience (since 1998), currently however the assessment of learning outcomes is often effected in the form of local or regional initiatives and mostly on a project basis. Here it is possible to identify individual projects within the framework of the EU’s Leonardo da Vinci programme or several portfolio projects, particularly on competence aspects of voluntary activities, equal development partnerships, immigrants’ initiatives, the Academy of Continuing Education (cf. example below), the competence balance of the Tyrol Centre of the Future, etc. (for a more comprehensive presentation of this topic, see Zürcher 2007, p. 115f).

The **Academy of Continuing Education (WBA)** is a best-practice model of an accreditation and recognition system that builds on competences. Since 2007, it has certified and issued diplomas to adult educators by laying down competences, content and standards and examining and recognising their proof of competence. WBA awards a two-tier occupational qualification with a certificate and diploma and supports permeability between adult education and university-based initial and continuing training ([www.wba.or.at](http://www.wba.or.at)) (cf. BMUKK and BMWF 2009, p. 37f).

#### Academy of Continuing Education (WBA)

**Background/objectives:** Since 2007, WBA has certified and issued diplomas to **adult educators** in a special standardisation and recognition procedure by laying down competences, content and standards and examining their proof of competence. People active in adult education have the possibility to have credits awarded for their competences, skills and practice periods, which they may have acquired in different ways, via qualifications with a modular structure. They are issued a recognised certificate and diploma. The competences adult educators still lack can be acquired at different educational establishments for adults. The development activities were conducted in a project financed by the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and ESF, involving all key adult learning (ALE) associations and academic representatives.

**Target group:** Access requirements for the WBA are a completed VET programme (such as the apprenticeship diploma) or a school qualification beyond compulsory schooling (from general-education schools or the VET sector). Candidates also have to furnish proof of practice in the ALE sector.

The following **sequence of actions** is foreseen:

1. Information and counselling  
Interested individuals can obtain initial information and details about the WBA model from counsellors in the provinces.
2. Positioning  
Positioning is the first step to become a “Certified Adult Educator” or “Qualified Adult

<p>Educator". It provides the possibility to have previously acquired competences tested and recognised by the WBA.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Educational plan Candidates clarify jointly with a specifically trained WBA counsellor the already fulfilled and still open requirements for obtaining the qualification of "Certified Adult Educator".</li> <li>4. Competence acquisition Then candidates acquire the competences they still lack. Their WBA counsellor will support them in finding suitable offers.</li> <li>5. Qualification "Certified Adult Educator" As soon as candidates have completed the three-day certification workshop and can furnish proof of all required competences, they will be awarded the WBA Certificate I.</li> <li>6. Qualification "Qualified Adult Educator" As soon as candidates have completed the final oral examination and can furnish proof of all competences required for the WBA Certificate II, they will be awarded the WBA Certificate II.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Sphere of action</b></p> <p>WBA qualifications provide <b>options to link up with university-based VET and CET</b>. For the Master's degree course "MAS Career Management – Career Guidance" at the University of Klagenfurt, which specifically targets adult educators specialising in guidance, for example, 40 ECTS points of the WBA diploma will also be credited.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p>The WBA is characterised by its anticipation of major European educational policy objectives (viz.: recognition of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge; classification of qualifications into a reference model; target group: key actors in lifelong learning; etc.). The WBA's innovative value lies – as is shown – not primarily in a new training concept or new content but in linking the recognition of acquired competences with a counselling-supported completion of the competence profile of individuals towards the qualification of "adult educator" that is accepted across different associations. In this respect this represents a <b>unique offer in Austria</b> that takes up existing offers, identifies gaps in offers, helps fill them, merges learning outcomes and makes them transparent.</p>
<p><b>Conclusions:</b></p> <p>The WBA could provide a major impetus towards the professionalisation of teachers in non-school ALE. The development over the coming years will show whether the certificates and diplomas will meet with lasting acceptance on the part of educational facilities and teachers.</p>
<p><b>Sources</b></p> <p>Schlögl, Peter; Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria and Schacherbauer, Eva (2006): Machbarkeitsstudie zu einem modularen Qualifizierungssystem "Weiterbildungsakademie" für lehrende und pädagogisch-planende Personen in der Erwachsenenbildung, BildungsberaterInnen und BibliothekarInnen, i.A. des Verbandes Österreichischer Volkshochschulen, Projektbericht des ÖIBF [Feasibility Study of a Modular Qualification System "Academy of Continuing Education" for Teachers and Educational Planners in Adult Learning, Educational Counsellors and Librarians, on behalf of the Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres, Project Report of the ÖIBF]</p> <p><a href="http://www.wba.or.at">www.wba.or.at</a></p>

## 6.5 Teachers and trainers

In Austria, the **in-service education and training of teaching and training staff in vocational and continuing training programmes** is regulated very differently, depending on the educational path. Apart from university-based programmes, post-secondary teacher training colleges and adult learning (ALE) institutions have also existed so far.

In 2006 as part of a reform of pre-service and in-service education and training for the compulsory school area, the post-secondary (vocational) teacher training colleges were converted into **tertiary university colleges of education** (PHs). From the 51 institutes, nine public and five PHs were formed. The new PHs have been structured in line with the Bologna study architecture and offer Bachelor study programmes (higher education degree “Bachelor of Education”). They additionally have legal mandates to cooperate with universities and conduct applied research oriented towards occupational areas.

In this connection, two aspects are particularly important for Austrian VET: firstly, that now also teachers in the dual system (vocational school teachers) undergo tertiary education, and secondly that these new higher education (HE) institutions offer comprehensive further and in-service training courses for teachers across the entire VET sector (also intermediate and upper full-time schools).

In addition, **university-based teacher training** is currently undergoing changes, primarily due to the implementation of the Bologna architecture in study programmes. This mainly concerns programmes for teachers at VET schools and colleges.

There have been no legal changes regarding **in-company trainers** in apprenticeship training active within the framework of apprenticeship training since the start of the Copenhagen process. Instead the new features in this area refer to regional and supra-regional networking or CVET activities for trainers, such as:

- [www.ausbilder.at](http://www.ausbilder.at) (cf. example below);
- Tyrol Trainers' Forum ([www.ausbilderforum.at](http://www.ausbilderforum.at)), which has existed since 2000 as a cooperation of the province of Tyrol and the social partners (Chamber of Labour, Vocational Training Institute, labour union, Institute for Economic Promotion) within Tiroler Arbeitsmarktförderungsgesellschaft m.b.H (AMG) and offers an improved image for apprenticeships and apprenticeship training, CVET and networking options;
- Trainers' Forum of the Vienna Chamber of Labour and the Vienna Vocational Training Institute (bfi), which has been offering free-of-charge information evenings about current topics regularly since 2006.

**In-service and further training of teachers in healthcare and nursing** has to date been conducted in the form of internal hospital programmes, short-term university programmes or programmes of university character that have been officially recognised. Since 2007, at least in some Austrian provinces, these programmes have been increasingly converted into the Fachhochschule sector and implemented within the framework of Bachelor or Master study programmes. The extent to which they will be fully converted cannot be currently assessed, however.

At the start of 2009 the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and the Federal Ministry for Science and Research (BWF) employed a working group to **re-design teacher training and its framework conditions**. The working group consisting of national and international experts has the responsibility to draw up the key points for modern teacher training. The basic principles here are: training at the tertiary level for everyone involved in the teaching profession (including nursery school teachers), the highest pedagogical and content level during the entire training, entrance procedures as orienta-

tion aids and for quality assurance, greater permeability between the school types and the possibility of lateral entry. The proposals of the group of experts will be discussed in the first half of 2010 with all affected individuals and interest groups. Afterwards work will begin on elaborating the new framework conditions such as further development of the 2002 University Act and the 2005 Higher Education Act. At the same time new service and pay legislation also needs to be worked out (website of the BMUKK: new teacher training, 26.02.2009).

<p><b>Information platform</b> <a href="http://www.ausbilder.at">www.ausbilder.at</a></p>
<p><b>Background:</b> The information platform <a href="http://www.ausbilder.at">www.ausbilder.at</a> originated from national initiatives of TTNNet Austria. Within the framework of a conceptual relaunch in 2007, a modern layout and state-of-the-art opportunities provided by the medium of the Internet were used to design it with a view to service-orientation. Editorial support comes from the Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw).</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b> The online information for in-house company trainers comprises an extensive collection of resources for company-based training of apprentices, relevant documents and up-to-date information about CVET options and specialist events as well as examples of good practice. The provider organisations of this initiative are the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the Federal Ministry of Economics, Family and Youth (BMWFJ).</p> <p><b>Target groups:</b> Apprentice trainers, training enterprises</p> <p><b>Status of implementation:</b> <a href="http://www.ausbilder.at">www.ausbilder.at</a> is a site well supported editorially offering information tailored towards corporate training practice as well as detailed facts and reports and also presents interesting issues in a concise form. Development of the content and graphics is planned in the first half of 2010.</p>
<p><b>Sphere of action</b></p> <p>The <b>publicly accessible website</b> provides national legal foundations, data and facts on apprenticeship training and the education system in general as well as on European vocational training initiatives (ECVET, EQF, LLL etc.). In addition practical materials for in-company training (selection of apprentices, guidelines etc.) and also examples of good practice are provided. A collection of sector-specific evaluation results, studies and relevant publications on the subject area, which are available directly as downloads, make the platform very user-friendly.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Feedback</b> from users on the contents of the website and on its user-friendliness is collected regularly by the editorial team and implemented accordingly with updates. Development of the content and graphics is planned in the first half of 2010.</p>
<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <p>It is a major challenge to ensure the <b>constant attainment of trainers</b> in the just under 40,000 training enterprises across Austria. The support of training processes and the topicality of information and data can however be improved decisively via the Internet. The practice of in-house company trainers is frequently characterised by the requirements of resolving ad hoc challenges or obtaining information that should be as topical as possible.</p>
<p><b>Sources</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.ausbilder.at">www.ausbilder.at</a></p>



*Daniel Köster (ibw)*

## 7. Enhancing creativity and innovation

In Austria in the period from 2000 to 2010 there were **no longer-term structural education policy measures** to increase creativity and innovation, but there were a lot of individual **projects, initiatives, partnerships and subsidies** with very different approaches, spheres of action and running times.

The significance of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial thinking is, on a theoretical level, recognised by a large majority of stakeholders in Austria (politics, education providers, employer and employee representatives) as a key factor for economic development and competitiveness. Specific measures in this area face two difficulties, however:

1. Creativity and innovation cannot be “enacted”, they emerge from suitable basic structural conditions.
2. The Austrian education system is very segmented.

This means that in this area there can naturally be few measures which take effect only on the legal level. Actually in the reporting period in Austria there are no legal changes which would have altered the framework conditions in the VET system in such a way that independent thought, own initiative and the recognition and use of unused resources would now be aided and promoted more than before. In Austria the historically rooted segmentation into academic and non-academic/VET education and training paths and into sectors within the VET system is deeply embedded in people’s awareness and in the public perception. New approaches, transversal initiatives and the implementation of innovative ideas in VET are not aided by this.

Nevertheless there are many projects, initiatives, partnerships, subsidies etc. aimed at improving creative skills, innovative potential and entrepreneurial thinking. This above all **project-based approach** in Austria is logically consistent and suitable with regard to the aforementioned difficulties. In the following section initiatives from different areas are described by way of example.

In association with creativity and innovation two features particular to Austria must be mentioned: on the one hand school autonomy, and on the other dual training (apprenticeship training).

**School autonomy:** Both in the compulsory school area and in the VET sector, the school legislation (School Organisation Act or SchOG etc.) gives schools the opportunity to determine their curricula autonomously within certain specifications. Compared internationally, this autonomy is relatively high. For many initiatives and projects for promoting creativity and innovation, this autonomy is the framework and the instrument which the schools use for their own measures. Essentially school autonomy was introduced in the 1990s. In the reporting period for this study there were no changes in school autonomy which would change the basic prerequisite for initiatives in the area of creativity/innovation.

**Dual training (apprenticeship training):** The concept of dual training differs from purely school-based training in the strong company link. By regularly switching apprentices between the practical training enterprise and the more theoretical vocational school, there is a continuous change from theory to practice and from practical skills back to a systematic level of reflection. Various new studies provide empirical evidence that the system of dual VET in Austria has high potential for creating innovation and in particular also promotes

entrepreneurial thinking via the diversity of requirements and personal responsibility inherent in the system (cf. Ebner et al. 2008, p. 207ff).

Apprenticeships and the possibilities of school autonomy are **strengths of the Austrian VET system**. But it is still necessary to further check the framework conditions and the structure of the VET system in terms of the suitability for creativity and innovation.

### 7.1 Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET

As shown above, in the reporting period there are no changes in the structure of the VET system or in the curricula which would put cross-sectoral skills, innovation, creativity or entrepreneurship much more to the fore than before. Among the projects which have a broad effect in terms of figures, an initiative is described here whose particular focus is on improving entrepreneurial competences.

<b>Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate</b>
<p><b>Background to the measure:</b> Well-founded economic knowledge, entrepreneurship and business competence are not special knowledge for specialists, they have to be part of comprehensive general education in a competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society. This is why the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) developed the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate (UF), <b>a learning programme and a standardised, certified testing system</b> which can be completed voluntarily by pupils.</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b> The economic competence of pupils needs to be improved in order to promote <b>entrepreneurial thinking as a basic competence</b> in the long term. At the same time the additional qualification obtained with the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate needs to be based on a uniform standard which is also recognised by the employing companies. This is why it was also intended to define a uniform standard of basic economic / business knowledge when developing the learning and testing modules.</p> <p><b>Target group(s):</b> Pupils, schools, companies</p> <p><b>Status of implementation:</b> In the 2004/2005 school year the UF was carried out for the first time as a model initiative. Many schools offer the UF as part of regular geography and economics lessons, a compulsory subject or optional exercise. For the schools this is also an opportunity to set their own areas of focus within the framework of the school autonomy described above. The UF consists of four sub-modules: three basic modules (Module A from the eighth grade, Modules B and C in the upper cycle for 14-19 year-olds) and a further advanced module ("UP", which can also be completed at an adult learning institution after finishing school). In November 2009 there were 147 schools overall throughout Austria where UF exams were taken. The number of schools where UF modules are taught is probably even higher because statistically only exams are registered. Since its introduction in 2004, 16,380 module exams have been taken in Austria.</p>
<b>Sphere of action</b>
<p>The Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate is a <b>voluntary additional qualification</b> offered to schools and pupils in the whole of Austria.</p> <p>Originally the UF was designed primarily for higher general education schools (AHSs), i.e. for schools which do not have a specialist vocational alignment. Actually the Economic Chamber is encountering growing interest including from prevocational schools and schools of agriculture and forestry, however. 110 of the 147 participating schools are</p>

AHSs. This corresponds with around <b>one third of all Austrian AHSs</b> .
<b>Main actors:</b> Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, participating schools and pupils
<b>Evaluation</b>
The extent to which the business competence of the pupils who take the UF exams has actually increased or increases has not been evaluated so far. To evaluate the efficiency only two indirect indicators can therefore be used: the <b>number of successfully passed exams</b> and the <b>number of participating schools</b> . Both figures (cf. text above) have been increasing continuously since the project began and indicate success. If we consider the purely voluntary nature of the measure, the participation of a third of Austrian secondary academic schools is remarkable. The adoption of the UF model in other countries (Germany, France, Ireland, Czech Republic, Russia, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Poland and Kosovo) is another indication of the significance of the concept.
<b>Conclusions</b>
The increasing number of participants in the UF indicates that the offer corresponds with a requirement and participation has a benefit (which can be felt) for the pupils (and the parents).  The fact that after five years the project is now starting to have a broad effect on the Austrian AHSs would be worth a comprehensive <b>evaluation</b> , in particular in terms of the actually gained competences and the added value on the labour market.
<b>Sources</b>
Homepage of the Entrepreneur's Skills Certificate: <a href="http://www.unternehmerfuehrerschein.at/">http://www.unternehmerfuehrerschein.at/</a>  Press release of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber on the fifth anniversary of the UF: <a href="http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091201_OTS0227/schmied-und-leitl-in-linz-5-jahre-unternehmerfuehrerscheinsind-5-jahre-foerderung-des-unternehmergeists/channel/politik">http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20091201_OTS0227/schmied-und-leitl-in-linz-5-jahre-unternehmerfuehrerscheinsind-5-jahre-foerderung-des-unternehmergeists/channel/politik</a>

## 7.2 Improving the quality of teaching

The Austrian school system is very segmented. The school administration is characterised by an unclear competence situation. Decisions are made at the federal, provincial, district, municipal and school levels. Comparative studies of the OECD indicate a low level of efficiency in the ratio of education expenses to success at school (cf. Gonand, Journard, Price 2007). This concerns general educational and VET schools/colleges equally. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching are taking place under these general conditions.

<b>Cooperative Open Learning (“COOL”)</b>
<b>Background to the measure:</b> COOL (Cooperative Open Learning) is a teaching concept based on different progressive educational approaches and mainly on the Dalton Plan developed by Helen Parkhurst in the USA and which was begun as a school pilot project in 1996 on the initiative of dedicated teachers at a business school in Steyr (Upper Austria). The reason for this school pilot project was the distinct heterogeneity of the pupils in the first classes in terms of age groups, development, performance, motivation to learn and learning speed which made conventional, purely teacher-focused teaching work almost impossible. The working world also increasingly demanded greater consideration of soft skills in school education. Thanks to the success of this school pilot scheme, this concept has so far been adopted by around 90 VET schools/colleges (as of June 2009) and has already been included in the curricula.

**Objective:** COOL is a new form of teaching and learning in which the promotion and development of more **independence, personal responsibility and team skills** are the focus with the pupils. This is done by providing as much as possible **freedom for the individual in the learning process** and at the same time responsibility for the **community**. The aim here in particular is to encourage the resources and potential of the individual not in terms of creating an elite but with **differentiation of learning methods**.

The key **features** of COOL are:

- The teachers cooperate in class teacher teams. This includes regular team meetings, initial written exams at the start of the school year and so-called “Coolcilia” (Coolzilien), meetings of delegates of the class teacher teams for the purpose of reflecting on and developing the COOL project.
- The pupils work with written, often also interdisciplinary assignments (work orders). In up to a third of teaching time the pupils have the freedom to choose when, where and how they want to deal with the set tasks (from six to eight subjects) by the specified deadlines.
- The teachers become moderators, coaches, companions for the learning process and can therefore respond to the individual pupils and support them in a targeted manner.
- With so-called “feedback forms” on work and social behaviour, pupils are encouraged to critically self-reflect.
- In the class council meeting, which takes place weekly or fortnightly, the pupils discuss their concerns, practise rules for discussions and minute-taking and learn moderation techniques.
- In teacher-pupil forums held several times each semester (one elected teacher and one pupil representative per class), common rules for living and working together in the COOL area are worked out and stipulated in “contracts”.
- The parents are integrated in the school’s teaching and educational work. At regular parents’ evenings (at least three times a year) suggestions, wishes and fears on the subject are expressed.

**Target group:** Teachers, pupils, parents

**Status of implementation:** The origins of this initiative go back to 1996. Since then the idea has been continuously developed. In 2001 a COOL Impulse Centre was set up by the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) for the purpose of developing, distributing and integrating COOL at VET schools/colleges. In 2002 a nationwide COOL academy course was set up for teachers who want to implement COOL as a teaching concept in their schools. Since 2006 there has been a lot of work done to apply the COOL method to eLearning (eCOOL Initiative).

#### Sphere of action

COOL can be implemented on a voluntary basis in **schools in the whole of Austria**.

**Main actors:** “Cooperative Open Learning” Impulse Centre, participating schools, pupils, teachers, parents

#### Evaluation

**Efficiency/effectiveness:** The COOL concept has already been **evaluated several times** (cf. Greimel-Fuhrmann 2006). Several studies confirm the positive effects especially on the development of soft skills among the pupils and on the professional situation of the teachers. An empirical study (cf. Maderthaner and Altrichter 2007) emphasises in particular the perceived effect of the project at the participating schools on the **cooperation in the teaching staff** and the **self-organisation of learning and work processes**.

**Indicators of success:** Indicators of success which have been ascribed to the COOL concept in the evaluations are a comparatively low number of lessons missed by the pupils, a falling number of repeaters and slightly improved average grades. The evaluation results also show that the will of pupils in COOL classes to actually complete school was much more pronounced than among pupils in non-COOL classes. Lesson contents which were often considered uninteresting had a more positive reception with the COOL concept. The performances of the pupils in COOL classes also improved in those subjects for which this teaching concept is not intended. The studies establish that COOL leads to greater team spirit, cohesion, better social integration and higher motivation among the pupils and also among the teachers. The positive experiences with COOL have acted as an incentive to also make the concept an integrated part of the curricula.

### Conclusions

The success of this concept is an indication of **possibly existing structural deficits** in the general conditions at schools to train the aforementioned competences for the pupils and for cooperation among teachers.

Since the success of this project is also decisively connected with the voluntary nature of participation, compulsory participation would not be in the spirit of the project.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive evaluation of the **correlation between general conditions at schools and specific social competences** would be an important starting point for further improvements in the quality of teaching methods in the future.

### Sources

COOL homepage: <http://www.cooltrainers.at/>

Information on COOL: [http://www.act.at/upload/1694\\_Zusammenstellung%20Booklet.pdf](http://www.act.at/upload/1694_Zusammenstellung%20Booklet.pdf)

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Maderthaler, Paul and Altrichter, Herbert (2007): Kooperatives, offenes Lernen in kaufmännischen Schulen: Entwicklung und Stand einer Unterrichtsinnovation [Cooperative Open Learning in Colleges of Business Administration and Business Schools: Development and Status of a Teaching Innovation]. In: Erziehung & Unterricht, 157 (2007) 5/6, p. 518-528.

## 7.3 Innovation-friendly institutions

The more project-based approach described above for the measures to promote creativity and innovation necessarily involves a certain complexity of the available offers and possibilities. This may be an obstacle to access. The initiative described in the following is important with this background in mind. It is not aimed specifically at the VET sector as it also includes all players in society relevant for **innovation and creativity**.

### “creative & innovative”: shaping the future of schools

**Background to the measure:** The proclamation of 2009 as the Year of Creativity and Innovation (EYCI 2009) by the European Union was the occasion for the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) to initiate a platform in cooperation with other relevant players (Federal Ministry of Economics, Family and Youth, Chamber of Labour,

Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the cultural organisation KulturKontakt Austria, the Federation of Austrian Industry, National Agency for Lifelong Learning, the creative industry working group Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kreativwirtschaft etc.).

The **objective of the platform** is access to and the exchange of up-to-date information on events, projects and the latest developments in the area of creativity/innovation in Austria and Europe. Existing initiatives need to be bundled together and made available to a wider public. The covered subjects range from sciences, environment, technology and research, social competence, interculturality and society as well as education and lifelong learning onto art and culture, creative industry and entrepreneurialism and also new information and communication technologies.

**Target groups:** General public, interested educational establishments and learners

**Status of implementation:** The platform has been available to the public since the start of 2009 with a webpage as an information portal. Apart from information on events, one important component is the **list of all relevant programmes and initiatives** to promote the creative and innovative potential of youths. In autumn 2009 at the start of the school year a comprehensive overview of the many projects was published for the second time in the form of a brochure.

### Sphere of action

**Sphere of action:** national information platform

It is not a measure with its own contents, instead it **groups together and announces existing initiatives**.

**Main actors:** BMUKK and cooperation partners, schools, pupils

### Evaluation

**Efficiency/effectiveness:** The objective of collecting information and enabling access to it is achieved by the Internet platform. There are no studies about how much and in what way this information is used.

**Indicators of success:** The number of times the information has been accessed on the Internet has not been published so far. With regard to the strategic importance of the theme, the platform is definitely not well-known enough.

It is planned to **continue and expand** the platform beyond the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.

### Conclusions

With regard to the wealth of information in the nature of the theme and the complexity arising from the project-based approach, measures to exchange information are not only a good idea, they are also highly necessary. For the further expansion of the measure not only will **greater involvement of the cooperation partners** be necessary, targeted **announcement of the platform as a whole** to a broader general public will be necessary too.

### Sources

creative & innovative platform <http://www.kreativinnovativ09.at>

Collection of the programmes and initiatives of "Shaping the future of schools":  
[http://www.kreativinnovativ09.at/projekte/?no\\_cache=1&cid=561&did=447&sechash=a7efca07](http://www.kreativinnovativ09.at/projekte/?no_cache=1&cid=561&did=447&sechash=a7efca07)

## 7.4 Encouraging partnership

Creativity and innovation also arise from networks and cooperation ventures between partners who would not work together with a conventional approach. **Migration** in particular is increasingly becoming a key question for economic competitiveness for two reasons:

1. Qualified migration is necessary in order to counteract the increasingly apparent lack of skilled workers.
2. People with a migration background have high economic innovation potential for the Austrian economy.

This is why a **cooperation project** is presented here which, although not a VET measure in the narrower sense, with partnerships between migrants and companies promotes competences both on the employee and on the employer side and aims to open up innovation potential.

### Mentoring for migrants

**Background to the measure:** The economy and society are becoming increasingly international. In the public perception migration is often seen primarily as a problem. More than 1.4 million people with a migration background live in Austria. In recent years immigration accounted for 95% of population growth in Austria. At the same time in certain sectors in Austria there is now already a lack of skilled workers and this will become more pronounced in the coming years. According to OECD, without immigration by 2025 the number of 20 to 24 year-olds would fall by one quarter. This is why **migration and integration** are key themes for the location of Austria. In Austria more than a half of all goods and services are already exported, and mobility is also rising. Many people with a migration background living in Austria have their roots in the growth regions of Eastern and Southeast Europe. In Vienna even around a third of the population have an Eastern or Southeast European migration background. The **potential of people with a migration background for the economy** is clearly underestimated in some cases. For internationally operating companies in particular language skills, experience abroad and mobility are important criteria when filling vacant positions. Immigrants fulfil many of these requirements and with their resources therefore make a valuable contribution to corporate development. In particular the familiarity with aspects specific to a particular country, such as the legal framework, business processes, mentality and culture, is attractive for companies. The use of people with a migration background may also increase the acceptance of the Austrian company in the respective target countries.

With this in mind, in February 2008 on the initiative of the Austrian Economic Chambers (WKÖ) together with the project partners the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) and Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), the project "Mentoring for migrants" was initiated. The project arranges **mentoring pairs** consisting of a qualified person with a migration background (mentee) and a manager from a company (mentor).

**Objective:** In this way qualified people with a migration background will be helped with their integration in the labour market. At the same time the project contributes to the internationalisation of the Austrian companies. It needs to be made easier for the companies to use cultural diversity as innovation potential and a competitive economic advantage.

**Target group(s):** Qualified migrants, companies

**Status of implementation:** In the four rounds up to September 2009 (three of which were only in Vienna and one in Vienna and Upper Austria) more than 200 mentoring

pairs were formed. In the different rounds up to 40% of the mentees took up work during or after the mentoring. 72% of the mentors also saw an advantage for themselves – for example intercultural experience and new contacts. In September 2009 a new round of mentoring for migrants began, this time in three provinces. In 2010 the project will be extended gradually to the whole of Austria.

### Sphere of action

So far the project has taken place in three provinces (Vienna, Lower Austria and Upper Austria). The measure is an **offer to interested migrants and companies**. The main actors are the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and the participating mentors and mentees. The mentees come from all age groups, the core group is aged between 25 and 40. Around three quarters have an academic qualification and one quarter vocational training.

### Evaluation

**Efficiency/effectiveness:** 40% of the mentees find work during or after the mentoring. Each project round is concluded with an evaluation (questionnaires to mentors and also mentees). The core theme of the mentoring relationship is the question of how the professional qualification brought from abroad can be used in Austria. Apart from the advantages for the mentees (support in the application process, establishment of contacts, motivation etc.), 72% of the mentors indicated that they also see an advantage for themselves. The extent to which definite innovation possibilities or added economic value for the companies arise from this cannot be seen from the evaluations.

**Indicators of success:** The success of the project can be seen both in the placement rate of the mentees and also in the satisfaction of the participants. The (economic) benefit for the participating companies is difficult to measure. Possible indicators would be if the mentees take up employment with the mentor's company or economic cooperation ventures of the companies with the regions of origin of the mentees. There is no data available here.

### Conclusions

The predominantly positive response from all participants – including the mentees who do not find work immediately – points to the **success of the project** and has led to an expansion of this initiative. Despite the overall success, the **relatively low placement rate** of the mentees of “only” 40% is noticeable. With an expansion and further development of the project, precise examination of the **possible obstacles to integration in the labour market** is therefore required. In particular, further developing or “fine-tuning” the project in terms of positive effects for the participating companies could increase the attractiveness further.

### Sources

Project homepage: <http://wko.at/mentoring>

Results of the evaluation of the third project round in Vienna:

[http://portal.wko.at/wk/format\\_detail.wk?angid=1&stid=493154&dstid=8769&opennavid=0](http://portal.wko.at/wk/format_detail.wk?angid=1&stid=493154&dstid=8769&opennavid=0)

Presentation on the homepage of the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF):

[http://integrationsfonds.at/de/betreuung/beruf\\_beim\\_oeif/mentorenprogramm/#c1535](http://integrationsfonds.at/de/betreuung/beruf_beim_oeif/mentorenprogramm/#c1535)

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## 8. Financing VET

### 8.1 Improving efficiency, equality of opportunities, financing VET

#### IVET in schools and higher education (HE) institutions

The financing model in **full-time school-based IVET**, including the vocational school part of **apprenticeship training**, has remained largely unchanged since the beginning of the Copenhagen process. The expenses are funded almost solely by the public sector (mainly by the federal government). Teaching activities in the **HE sector**, which essentially consists of universities and Fachhochschulen (FHs) in Austria, is also largely public financed. Unlike public universities, which are basically funded in the form of global budgets, with the FHs there is the financing concept of study place management: on the basis of the applicable Fachhochschule development and financing plan, the federal government bears the costs of an agreed number of study places. Those running FH study courses are also entitled to demand **tuition fees** of 363.36 euros per semester from the students. At the **public universities** tuition fees were demanded from all students until the 2008/09 academic year. Since the summer semester 2009 a new regulation has been in effect which releases the great majority of students from the obligation to pay the tuition fees. The private share in the funding for public universities has therefore fallen greatly. Before the change the public universities received around 150 million euros in tuition fees a year, this corresponded with around 5% of the total university budget.

#### Company-based part of apprenticeship training (dual system)

The **company-based part of apprenticeship training** is financed mainly by the training enterprises, which on the one hand bear the training costs and on the other hand pay the apprenticeship remuneration for the apprentices. There are also a series of subsidies and measures: on the one hand the company-related subsidies (“new subsidisation scheme for apprenticeship posts”, cf. 4.4 and 6.1) and on the other hand measures for youths who could not find a regular apprenticeship post (supra-company apprenticeship subsidisation within the framework of active labour market policy, cf. 5.2). The **background to the measures** was that both the number of enterprises training apprentices and also the number of available apprenticeship positions have fallen greatly since the 1980s, which is why more and more youths could not find an apprenticeship post. According to the labour market statistics of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), the number of apprenticeship seekers had risen to 6,156 in the yearly average by 2005, and at the same time 2,900 apprenticeship posts were vacant. By 2008 the number of apprenticeship seekers had fallen a little to 5,695, and in the yearly average there were more vacant apprenticeship posts with 3,633. As part of a comprehensive youth employment package, both subsidisation measures were subject to new regulations in 2008.

The basis for the “**new subsidisation scheme for apprenticeship posts**”, which has been in force since the 2008/09 training year, was a proposal elaborated by the social partners. All company-related subsidies are now handled by the Apprenticeship Offices of the Economic Chambers with the involvement of representatives of the employees. In total with various measures around **265 million euros** are distributed to the training enterprises annually. Afterwards the subsidies are granted under the prerequisite that the apprenticeship relationship is maintained over the entire training year. The new subsidisation scheme will increase the quantity and also the quality of apprenticeship training in the

companies. It consists of the basic subsidisation and additional measures which, in some cases, refer to quality-related criteria:

1. **Basic subsidisation:** The new basic subsidisation replaces the apprenticeship training premium which until 2008 was granted for every apprenticeship place based on a standard rate. The new differentiated model provides for grants staggered over apprenticeship years based on apprenticeship remuneration agreed in collective agreements. In the first apprenticeship year three apprenticeship remunerations are granted, in the second apprenticeship year two and in both the third and fourth apprenticeship years one apprenticeship remuneration is granted.
2. **New apprenticeship places:** “Blum Bonus II”, cf. example below
3. **Evidence of qualification after half of the apprenticeship period:** cf. example in 4.4 and 6.1
4. **Inter- and supra-company training measures:** For compulsory or voluntary training alliance measures which improve quality and also for job-specific additional training, 75% of the course costs are granted up to a total amount of 1,000 euros per apprentice over the entire training period. 75% of the costs of preparation courses for final apprenticeship examinations are also subsidised up to a total amount of 250 euros. The amount of subsidy is capped in each case per calendar year and training enterprise. Attending preparation courses for the Berufsreifeprüfung during work time is paid with the gross apprenticeship remuneration to the extent of the completed teaching units.
5. **CET for trainers:** 75% of the course costs for CET measures for trainers with a minimum duration of eight hours (a maximum of 1,000 euros per trainer and calendar year).
6. **Excellent and good performance in final apprenticeship examinations** Authorised apprenticeship trainers receive 200 euros if their apprenticeship graduates have completed their final apprenticeship examination with good results, and 250 euros in the event of excellent results.
7. **Measures for apprentices with learning difficulties:** If it is necessary to repeat a vocational school class in order to complete vocational school, the enterprises are paid the gross apprenticeship remuneration during the time of the additional vocational school teaching and any expenses for accommodation. Enterprises also receive 100% of the costs for preparation courses for re-examinations in the vocational school and for tutoring expenses at compulsory school level in German, mathematics and a modern foreign language (or mother tongue for apprentices with a migration background). The enterprises are granted a maximum of 1,000 euros per apprentice over the entire training period.
8. **Equal access by young women and young men to the different apprenticeship occupations:** Each year from the total subsidisation budget up to five million euros can be allocated for measures and projects which aim to reduce or end the gender-specific segregation of the apprenticeship market.
9. **Subsidies for integrative VET – partial qualifications:** For these particular training relationships only certain subsidisation measures are used, in each case with higher subsidy totals or caps. The basic subsidisation (cf. point 1) for each training year is three apprenticeship remunerations, for example.

As well as the company-related subsidies, since the end of the 1990s a series of measures have been developed and continuously reformed for the **integration of youths** in the training and employment system. These measures are financed by the AMS within the framework of active labour market policy. The Youth Training Guarantee Act (JASG), also called “safety net”, was enacted in 1998 and provided for course places and foundation places for youths who could not find a training place. The objective of the JASG measures was a change to a regular apprenticeship post, which is why the safety net had a transitional character and was originally limited to ten months. Since the 2004/05 training year,

the duration of measures has been extended to up to twelve months with the possibility of further extension. Supra-company training places were also provided in the safety net. As part of the reforms in 2008 there have also been changes in this area, the safety net was expanded into a “training guarantee” (cf. 5.2). Since then all specific measures of the AMS have been united within the framework of supra-company apprenticeship training pursuant to the Vocational Training Act (BAG § 30b), while the JASG measures expired on 1 January 2009. Supra-company apprenticeship training is therefore a regular component of dual VET in which the entire apprenticeship period up to the final apprenticeship examination can now be completed. The social protection was also improved by including the subsidised people in the unemployment insurance system and raising the compensation for training. The target group was also extended: in addition to youths with learning deficits and socially disadvantaged youths, early school leavers and “older” youths are also included.

## CVET

In the area of CVET the financing situation has also remained largely unchanged since 2000. The majority of funds are raised by the enterprises, the CVET participants and the AMS within the framework of active labour market policy for qualification measures. In 2006 the public sector contributed around 12% of the entire annual CVET expenditure (cf. Lassnigg, Vogtenhuber and Kirchttag 2008). In 2007 public financing in the area of adult learning was increased by around a third. This is mainly connected with the fact that in the ESF programme planning period from 2007 to 2013 in focus 3 (Lifelong Learning) there was a shift in funds from the school area to the adult learning area. Furthermore there are a series of different financial incentive structures for companies (e.g. **training allowance**) as well as for private individuals (e.g. **education vouchers**) (cf. Tritscher-Archan and Mayr 2008).

## Educational building loan or educational loan

Since September 2005 building societies have been able to grant **state-supported loans** to private individuals for education, CET and qualification measures. Since then the four national building societies have developed tailored offers, in some cases also offered in cooperation with educational institutions (initial and continuing education and training). With regard to the interest rate, the same conditions apply as with housing saving, i.e. the interest rate is determined on the basis of Euribor with an interest rate ceiling of a maximum of 6% p.a. (with an interest rate floor of 3% p.a.). During the training period there are no or very low monthly repayment rates (only interest payments), the repayment term begins after completion of the training or continuing training. The educational loans can be used for course and study fees (CET, postgraduate courses, semesters abroad, vocational and master schools) and also for indirect costs associated with the education or training measure (learning material, accommodation, travel expenses etc.).

Different regions have also developed their own **educational loan models**. The province of Tyrol, for example, provides interest-free loans for occupation-related training measures. The granting of a subsidy is linked with certain income limits. Interest-free loans are granted up to a maximum of 4,000 euros or 80% of the allowable education costs (direct and indirect expenditure) if the household income of the grant applicant does not exceed certain limits.

### Subsidisation for additional (Blum Bonus) or new apprenticeship places (Blum Bonus II)

The **background** to the “subsidisation for additional apprenticeship places” (Blum Bonus – named after the former government commissioner for youth employment and apprenticeship training) and the reformed measure “subsidisation for new apprenticeship places” (Blum Bonus II) is the decline in enterprises training apprentices and in the available apprenticeship places. While the number of vacant apprenticeship places has fallen, the number of apprenticeship seekers has risen. The **objective** of both measures is to increase the number of company-based training places with a financial incentive system for training enterprises.

**Target group:** Training enterprises of all specialisations.

**Status of implementation:** Subsidisation for additional apprenticeship places (Blum Bonus) was introduced in September 2005, and here the criterion of “additionality” (i.e. an increase in the number of apprentices) was decisive for awarding the subsidy. Enterprises received the financial subsidy if their number of apprentices increased compared with a particular cut-off date. Overall the enterprises were able to gain up to 8,400 euros in subsidies for each apprenticeship relationship in this way. Instead of the Blum Bonus, which was characterised as needing reform (cf. “Evaluation”), as part of the fundamental reform in 2008 a system of differentiated and needs-oriented apprenticeship subsidisation was established. The measure “New apprenticeship places” (Blum Bonus II) emerged from this reform as part of the package of measures. Now apprenticeship places are subsidised in newly founded companies, in companies which are training apprentices for the first time and in companies which are accepting apprentices again after a break of at least three years after the end of the last apprenticeship relationship.

**Statistics:** In 2005 a total of 9,479 apprenticeship places were subsidised by the first Blum Bonus (additional apprenticeship places), in 2006 it was 16,895. No figures are available yet for the subsidisation for new apprenticeship places (Blum Bonus II).

#### Sphere of action

The subsidisation is **part of the package of measures for the subsidisation of training of apprentices in companies** (“New subsidisation scheme for apprenticeship posts”, cf. text above, 4.4 and 6.1) pursuant to § 19c of the Vocational Training Act (BAG). The **sphere of action** of the measures extends across the whole of Austria.

The **main actors** are the social partners (Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Federal Chamber of Labour) and, in particular, the Apprenticeship Offices of the Economic Chambers of the individual provinces, which act as vocational training authority of the first instance. The Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship, whose members are appointed by the Minister of Economy based on a proposal from the social partners, drew up the guidelines for the new apprenticeship subsidisation (cf. BBAB, BMWFJ 2009). The guideline has been in force since April 2009 and regulates the new apprenticeship subsidisation in detail. Since 2008 the Apprenticeship Offices of the Economic Chambers have been responsible for handling the entire new apprenticeship subsidisation, up to mid-2008, for example, the Blum Bonus was handled by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS).

#### Evaluation

For the reformed measure “New apprenticeship places” (Blum Bonus II) there is still no evaluation. The Lower Austrian Chamber of Labour has carried out a study on the **efficiency** of the first Blum Bonus in 2005 and 2006. It came to the conclusion that this measure had a positive influence on the creation of additional apprenticeship places but

with considerable knock-on effects. On the basis of a simple regression model it was estimated that almost three quarters of all subsidised apprenticeship places would have existed even without the subsidisation. Moreover, it was seen as problematic that all apprenticeship posts were subsidised with a lump sum, irrespective of regional and supra-regional requirements situations and innovative professions.

**Indicators of success:** Overall according to estimates, in 2005 around 2,800 apprenticeship places were created by the Blum Bonus (new apprenticeship places in total: 38,600 apprenticeship beginners, Blum Bonuses overall: 9,500), in 2006 there were around 3,800 (39,400, 16,900). This means that only a fraction of all subsidised apprenticeship places were actually created because of the measure. With a total subsidy of 8,400 euros per subsidised apprenticeship relationship over the entire apprenticeship period this means that the costs of an apprenticeship place actually created by the Blum Bonus are much higher: 28,662 euros per additionally created apprenticeship place in 2005 and 37,813 euros in 2006 (Wacker 2007).

### Conclusions

The Blum Bonus has achieved its objective – creation of additional apprenticeship places – even if the costs seem very high because of the knock-on effects (cf. “Evaluation”). For “Blum Bonus II” (subsidisation for new apprenticeship places) the maximum amount of subsidy for each subsidised apprenticeship relationship has been limited to 2,000 euros. A point of criticism which has been expressed about the new apprenticeship subsidisation scheme concerns the matter that all apprenticeship occupations continue to be subsidised and not only those where there is a lack of skilled workers.

### Sources

BBAB, BMWFJ (2009): Guideline for the Subsidisation of Training of Apprentices in Companies pursuant to § 19 c of the Vocational Training Act (BAG): [http://portal.wko.at/wk/dok\\_detail\\_file\\_wk?angid=1&docid=885933&stid=414085](http://portal.wko.at/wk/dok_detail_file_wk?angid=1&docid=885933&stid=414085) (01.12.2009).

Wacker, K. (2007): Teure neue Lehrstelle. Eine Untersuchung zur Effizienz des Blum-Bonus [Expensive New Apprenticeship Place. A Study of the Efficiency of the Blum Bonus]. NÖ Arbeiterkammer, Wien. Online: [http://noe.arbeiterkammer.at/bilder/d57/lehrstellenmarkt\\_studie.pdf](http://noe.arbeiterkammer.at/bilder/d57/lehrstellenmarkt_studie.pdf) (01.12.2009).

<http://www.lehre-foerdern.at/> (01.12.2009)

## 8.2 Use of Lifelong Learning Programme funds

As well as the Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig individual subsidisation schemes (mobility), partnerships, multilateral projects for innovation development in VET and for the transfer of innovation, networks and events, the main contents of the subsidised projects of the LLP are clearly in the area of **IVET**. The predecessor programmes Socrates II and Leonardo da Vinci II made key contributions to an **internationalisation** of the Austrian VET landscape and to improved international **cooperation ventures** both for VET establishments and administration and also for VET research. This can be seen in the subsidised projects, the themes of which are mainly in the area of comparability and transparency of qualification systems, competence orientation and identification, focus on learners and educational counselling as well as improvement of the quality of VET (cf. Gutknecht-Gmeiner and Klimmer 2007). Each year around **21 million euros** from the LLP are currently being used in projects coordinated from Austria. Many of the nationally coordinated projects are designed as supporting and accompanying measures for the European initiatives for cooperation in general and vocational education and training (keyword EQF,

ECVET). Without the subsidies from EU funds, many of the projects and initiatives would not have been carried out.

### Peer review in IVET

The project and three follow-up projects arising from it (cf. “Conclusions”) were funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Quality assurance and development have become an increasingly promoted element in European VET in recent years. The traditional setting of input-oriented control in conjunction with central supervision by inspection was classified as unsatisfactory here. The central **objective** of the peer review project in IVET and its follow-up projects was and is to also make the instrument of peer review usable as an external evaluation procedure – established practice in the quality assurance process in the European HE sector – for VET.

The peer review process is based on existing quality assurance procedures and needs to be integrated in existing quality circles. Within the framework of the projects, a European peer review process tailored specifically for IVET establishments was developed which has been tested in pilot schemes in different countries. In the pilot phase in 2006 a total of 15 European peer reviews were carried out in eight different countries.

Peers are experts in the specialist field being evaluated and are on a par with the people whose performance is being evaluated. Usually they are colleagues from external establishments who, independently and without bias, assess the quality of different areas and aspects of another VET establishment (e.g. teaching quality, results, effects). The main concern is cross-border cooperation. In the pilot phase a peer always came in each case from another European country.

### Sphere of action

The initiative is part of European efforts to improve quality assurance and quality development systems and is aimed at IVET institutions in the whole of Europe (ISCED 3/4).

Peer review is aimed at a series of **actors** in schools, training centres and companies. The initiative also addresses pupils and parents, at the system level people in ministries, authorities, political parties, social partners and education experts and academics.

For the continuation of cross-border peer reviews at the European level, the “European Network for Quality in Vocational Education and Training” (ENQA-VET) appointed a thematic working group which was entrusted with elaborating proposals for sustainable implementation.

### Evaluation

In the pilot phase there was **continuous support and evaluation** by the responsible project partners. The peers and also responsible people in the pilot schools were asked to answer questions about the review process, about the quality of implementation, strengths and weaknesses, motivation to participate and personal satisfaction and to make suggestions for improvements. There was also an external evaluation on the basis of monitoring data and surveys of project participants and external stakeholders (cf. Speer 2007).

Generally the concept as well as the developed instrument were assessed by the participants as very positive for the further development of institutional quality. The improvement compared with other evaluation procedures was seen especially in the fact that the review process as a “friendly” procedure is clearly less frightening and enables more open exchange. Awkward themes therefore also come up which tend to be rather played down or not discussed at all with other forms of tests (e.g. audits or inspections). But there is hardly any feedback on the actual results of the reviews in terms of the further development of quality at the pilot schools.

## Conclusions

The success of the first European peer review project and the continued interest of the VET establishments have led to other European projects. In total three European projects under the supervision of the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (öibf) have been concluded so far (“Peer Review in Initial Vocational Education and Training”, “Peer Review Extended” and “Peer Review Extended II”), and another is currently in progress (“Peer Review Impact”). The Peer Review Manual for Initial Vocational Education and Training (cf. Gutknecht-Gmeiner et al. 2007) was given the **Lifelong Learning Award 2009** of the Austrian National Agency for Lifelong Learning.

In Austria the concept of the peer review in VET has already been integrated in the quality loop and enhances the existing tools of quality development and assurance: a procedure developed on the basis of the European model and the project results has been offered to VET schools/colleges within the framework of the VET Quality Initiative (QIBB, cf. 6.1) since autumn 2009.

In other European countries and regions such as Finland, Italy, Hungary and Catalonia it is also planned to implement peer review as an additional external element of the quality assurance systems.

## Sources

Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria et al. (2007): Europäisches Peer Review Handbuch für die berufliche Erstausbildung [European Peer Review Manual for Initial Vocational Education and Training], Wien, Juni 2007. Online: [http://www.peer-review-education.net/index.php?class=Calimero\\_Webpage&id=14769](http://www.peer-review-education.net/index.php?class=Calimero_Webpage&id=14769) (20.12.2009).

Speer, Sandra (2007): Evaluation report of the Leonardo da Vinci-Project Peer Review in Initial Vocational Education and Training, Köln.

<http://www.peer-review-education.net/>  
<http://www.peer-review-in-qibb.at>

### 8.3 Use of other EU funds

With the **ESF funds** there has been a shift towards adult learning in the current programme period 2007-2013. Compared with the previous period 2000-2006, the funds in the area of adult learning have increased by almost 22 million euros to around 50 million euros. Meanwhile in the school sector the available funds of almost 88 million euros (2000-2006) have fallen to around 48 million euros in the current period. With this shift in funds, the recommendation of the accompanying evaluation of ESF Objective 3 (2000-2006) has been met, which – as well as clarifying fundamental questions of responsibility and financing – also suggested moving the ESF funds from the school system towards adult CET.

Contributing to reforms in the **school area** in the previous period were above all qualification measures for disadvantaged people in colleges of business administration and business schools (“COOL in colleges of business administration and business schools”, cf. 7.3, and “Team teaching and open learning at colleges of business administration and business schools for people in employment”) as well as qualifications for promising labour market sectors (“New specialist training model with IT qualification and industrial placement” and “mut! Girls and Technology”, cf. example below). In the current period the contents are focused on **tackling disadvantages**. So a diagnostic procedure is used for example essentially at colleges of business administration and business schools in the sub-

ject German to increase the number of youths remaining in the education system and reduce the number of drop-outs.

The focus with the promotion of adult learning remains the expansion of new **forms of teaching and learning** (keyword: focus on learners) and accompanying offers. Competence identification procedures, easy access to educational offers for educationally disadvantaged people (basic education, preparation courses for the acquisition of lower secondary school qualifications for adults, basic education for migrants), Berufsreifeprüfung, qualification measures for women and supra-institutional educational counselling networks are other focuses of the current ESF programme period. Other goals of the ESF measures are professionalisation and quality development.

### mut! Girls and Technology

The project “mut! Girls and Technology” was promoted by the ESF within action strand 2 “Qualification for promising labour market sectors (in particular information and communication technologies) and improved transition from IVET to the labour market” and with support by national and regional authorities and organisations. Since 30 September 2009 the project has been completed after running for seven years in total. The project was divided into three project phases (2002-2004, 2004-2007 and 2007-2009).

The **background** to the project is the very low percentage of girls and women in technical and handicraft training branches and occupations in Austria. The idea behind the project was to establish a contact point in every province for **gender-sensitive career guidance** with a focus on girls and technology in the school context. As part of this career guidance, girls should be promoted in the technical/handicrafts sectors and the career choice spectrum should be expanded in the direction of technical/handicrafts training programmes. Overall the project aimed at increasing gender sensitivity among **teachers** and **integrating the theme** in training and continuing training institutions as well as creating a network of relevant actors.

The measures and offers implemented within the project were aimed mainly at teachers and head teachers in the school sector, nursery school teachers and students training to be teachers, training institutions, regional and town schools councils, youth workers and trainers as well as girls and boys, parents, people in charge of apprentices and journalists. In total more than 30,000 people were reached directly in the whole of Austria.

### Sphere of action

With different focuses in different regions, many individual measures were carried out in the whole of Austria under the project promoted by ESF between 2002 and 2009. The **project sponsor** was the association “Akzente Salzburg” which, as a supra-regional contact point, provided the target groups with information from the school context on questions of gender-sensitive career guidance. In each province two to three project partners were involved (regional offices). The strategic guidance of the regional activities in the individual provinces was provided by the women’s affairs offices of the participating provinces.

Since 2002 methods have been developed and tested throughout Austria to make girls and young women aware of the range of professional options open to them and to increase their confidence in their own technical and handicraft skills. One focus was the work with and at colleges of engineering (HTLs), which in many specialisations have a very low percentage of girls among the students. One result of these efforts is a guideline for the implementation of the teaching principle “education for the equality of women and men” at HTLs (cf. BMBWK 2006).

In the third and last project phase (2007-2009) the sustained incorporation of the elaborated concepts was the priority. The experience gained throughout the whole project has been summarised in three position papers in which the most important recommendations have been formulated:

1. Girls in technical training programmes ([http://www.mut.co.at/intra/docs/Ruth\\_htl349.pdf](http://www.mut.co.at/intra/docs/Ruth_htl349.pdf), 21.12.2009)
2. Teacher training and further training ([http://www.mut.co.at/intra/docs/mut\\_sonstige394.pdf](http://www.mut.co.at/intra/docs/mut_sonstige394.pdf) (21.12.2009)
3. Technical handicraft lessons in Austria ([http://www.mut.co.at/intra/docs/mut\\_bericht408.pdf](http://www.mut.co.at/intra/docs/mut_bericht408.pdf), 21.12.2009)

The first two papers deal with how career guidance and educational counselling can also be made gender-sensitive in the future and how a contribution can be made to bring about a long-term increase in the percentage of girls in technical training programmes. The third paper deals with the technical handicraft lessons in Austria and shows models and possibilities for abolishing the classification “textile work = female” / “technical work = male”.

### Evaluation

During the seven years that the project was running a great deal of individual measures were carried out. At the closing event in May 2009 there was an overall presentation of the results and a discussion on the themes of the position papers by more than 40 experts. Overall the initiatives and objectives of the project were recognised as positive and helpful by many experts during the course of the project and at the closing event.

### Conclusions

Although the project has been completed, the efforts to ensure gender-sensitive educational counselling and career guidance are still in the initial stages. This is because actual implementation on-site at the schools and in companies has proved difficult: the teachers at technical schools and the responsible people in technical companies are often sceptical about women and are becoming more open only slowly and in certain areas. The challenge now is to continue to use the results and experiences from the project, to actually apply the developed and in some cases tested concepts (gender-appropriate language, training for teachers, optimised curricula etc.) and to continue to develop these as best as possible in line with requirements. As well as the training facilities and enterprises, politics and administration are targeted in particular because sustained incorporation requires a top-down mandate.

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<http://www.mut.co.at>  
<http://gender.schule.at/>

## 8.4 Improving VET governance

In the school sector there have been no essential changes since 2000 with regard to the **institutional and administrative structures of the school administration**. The Austrian system of school governance is still characterised by a complex federal system which is highly regulated by official/hierarchical structures. With the comparative research, mainly in association with the international large scale assessments (PISA etc. ), there was a certain pressure to reform arising because the Austrian school system was characterised as comparably inefficient and socially unjust (e.g. OECD 2005; Schütz, Ursprung, Wössmann 2005; Hanushek, Wössmann 2006, Gonand et al. 2007, Schmid et al. 2007, Schmid, Ascher, Mayr 2009). In particular since 2006 – within the existing structures – reform steps have been made which mainly concern the compulsory schooling sector and also in part the IVET system.

The already implemented reform measures and those currently being implemented comprise intensified **teaching in small groups** in the ninth grade and in vocational schools, **language support classes** for pupils with German as a second language in VET schools and vocational schools, expansion of the **apprenticeship and Matura** scheme (Berufsmatura, cf. 6.3), introduction of **middle management** at VET schools and colleges, **educational standards** in VET (cf. example below).

Another reform step is the **new standardised competence-oriented Reifeprüfung**, which will be carried out from the 2013/14 school year at all higher general education schools and will then also arrive at VET colleges. One new aspect here is that the written exams are defined centrally in at least three subjects (German, mathematics, modern foreign language) and are therefore standardised. Other measures carried out with school autonomy are the pre-scientific work and the oral exams. The objective of the new Reifeprüfung is to increase the objectivity, transparency and comparability of pupil performance and increase the significance of final exams. It will also contribute to an increase in quality and quality assurance and promote the European comparison of qualifications (keywords: NQF and EQF).

A new **Teachers' Employment Act** including new working time models and the extent of teaching duties of teachers are currently under discussion.

In the area of **CET** the non-profit associations of the KEBÖ (Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions) and the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) have concluded a **performance agreement** in association with public financing. The three-year agreement will help bring about more **planning certainty** beyond the budget year and greater scope for action and **quality assurance**. The performance agreement focuses on objectives which guarantee open access, transparent offers including educational information and counselling and continuous nationwide offers. Implementation is assessed with the help of indicators with regard to specified target figures. Concrete measures were determined in the areas of basic education, obtainment of qualifications by adults, political and cultural education, social competences and personal development. One key component is the implementation of quality assurance measures. This should also considerably improve the so far lacking collection of statistics.

#### **Educational standards in VET**

In recent years, especially within the framework of European cooperation, results and competence orientation has increasingly become the focus of attention with the control of educational processes. The educational standards represent a core element of an increasing turn towards governance oriented to results and effects in Austria.

The educational standards in VET determine interdisciplinary core competences which are important for further educational and career paths. They consist of competence models

which formulate descriptors for the corresponding subjects or specialist areas along the dimensions of action and content.

Educational standards are based on the applicable curricula, and in particular on the educational objectives and educational and teaching tasks specified here. The expected learning outcomes concentrate on the entire educational effect of the taught subject or the specialist area. The declared objective is to **safeguard shared core competences of all pupils** of a school type which refers to the final qualification of a VET programme. Transparency and comparability and also the quality of qualifications etc. will therefore be improved. The aim is for comprehensive **feedback** on the Austrian VET system in order to subsequently include targeted support measures and receive evidence-based information for the further development and ongoing improvement of quality of teaching (cf. BMUKK 2009).

The educational standards have to fulfil four central functions:

1. **orientation function** for competence-based teaching
2. **evaluation function** of VET teaching at the system level
3. **control function** with results- and effect-based education management
4. **information function** by increasing transparency and comparability of final qualifications

### Sphere of action

The educational standards in VET are currently in the third and last **pilot phase** which will be concluded by 2010. First of all the standards for VET colleges are developed, then the initiative will be extended to the entire VET system. The educational standards are an important sub-project of the Austrian VET Quality Initiative (QIBB, cf. 6.1) and must be seen in connection with the educational standards in general education. The latter will be checked for the first time in the spring of 2012 for the eighth grade and in 2013 for the fourth grade.

The educational standards in the area of VET are elaborated by working groups consisting of experienced teachers, subject experts and academic specialists. Coordination and supervision are incumbent on the steering group in the responsible Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK). The project will also be supported academically.

### Evaluation

In the current pilot phase, the elaborated didactic examples are tested at selected pilot schools in order to guarantee the quality and comprehensibility of the examples in advance. In this phase there is an improvement, revision and selection of the examples. The collections of didactic examples are then compiled on the basis of these experiences.

### Conclusions

With the educational standards initiative, the performance aspect in the governance of the Austrian educational system is greatly improved. Performance represents a key feature of outcome orientation but is almost entirely excluded in the applicable provisions and regulations (cf. Lassnigg and Vogtenhuber 2009). It is clear, however, that the standards can cover and measure only part – even if a very important part – of the entire educational effect of a subject or specialist area. A reduction of school-based learning to learning outcomes which can be checked in the educational standards and to the “easily measurable” therefore has to be prevented in order to not pose a risk to educational objectives which cannot be checked directly by standards (keyword “Teaching to the Test”).

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## 9. Progress in modernising European VET systems in the Copenhagen process and priorities for future cooperation

### 9.1 Impact of European cooperation in VET on the developments of national VET policies

Since the adoption of **European VET policy**, which was inspired and triggered by the “Copenhagen Declaration” from 29 and 30 November 2002, education policy in Austria has dealt with the key **priorities** of greater cooperation in VET. These were and are strengthening the European dimension of VET and CVET, improving the transparency of proofs of qualifications, support in setting up information and career counselling and guidance, better recognition of competences acquired in different ways, and not least, in association with transparency and the theme of recognition, the greater efforts for quality assurance with the processes and outcomes (proofs of qualifications) in VET and CVET, also comprising the need for further training of the trainers and teachers.

To achieve these priority objectives a **host of actions and initiatives** have been implemented in Austria. The focus here is on strengthening the European dimension of VET and CVET, in particular improving the transparency of VET qualifications, promotion of language skills, cooperation of teachers in projects and networks and exchange of apprentices, pupils and teachers.

#### **Strategic framework: quality and competence orientation**

As a focus of the strategic framework of General Directorate II (VET) in the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) the theme of “**quality of VET**” is a central theme. Back in 2005 a quality initiative was set up and a key idea of the Copenhagen process thus became institutionally and mentally established in Austria (cf. 6.1). One sub-area here was the “educational standards project” for all VET full-time schools. This is characterised by teaching and learning based on the concept of competences and therefore on the concept of learning outcomes too (cf. example below). The early start with quality projects and competence orientation in school-based VET prepared the ground for a broad understanding of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

#### **Future priorities: permeability, flexibility, partnership, equality of opportunities**

For the future, curricular and structural changes within the leading education policy concepts of **permeability and flexibility** of VET programmes will be made the focus of the BMUKK’s work. Associated with this, the level of learning outcomes needs to be raised on the widest possible basis. This will require new quality in the partnership between involved stakeholders (affected ministries, social partners) and the different VET providers. The EQF and the EQARF need to work as a supporting frame of reference.

Permeability, flexibility and strong partnership in VET across the providers have to be used for the overall objective of including all youths in training until they are 18/19 and also open the door and opportunities in the tertiary education sector in the form of CVET or HE qualifications more than in the past. Here too the partnership will have to overcome traditional segmentation tendencies for the benefit of the youths. Impact factors in the direction of greater permeability and equality of opportunities in the Austrian education system in general and VET programmes of the upper secondary level, the apprenticeship training system and post-secondary VET and CVET in particular will therefore be raised to

a new level. Of central importance here is the process of establishing a functioning National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which promotes participation in education and recognition of learning achievements in the form of credits.

### Implementation

The BMUKK or General Directorate II (VET) as a centre of activities within the framework of the Copenhagen process focused on **cooperation** at the national and international levels for the implementation of projects as part of the Copenhagen process.

So the work on the **National Qualifications Framework** (NQF) is coordinated by both education ministries, the BMUKK and the Federal Ministry for Science and Research (BMWF) and implemented with considerable cooperation and involvement of different actors (consultation, delivery of expertise) (cf. also 3.1). A **national NQF steering group** consisting of the federal ministries as well as the social partners and the provinces was set up. The task of this steering group set up in summer 2007 was to develop initial proposals for an NQF on the basis of commissioned studies (“detailed analyses”). These studies were concluded and by the start of 2008 a first consultation paper was drawn up, for which all affected institutions were able to give their opinions. The main concern of the consultation, which ended on 30 June 2008, was to receive objective opinions from all the involved parties on solutions for creating and implementing the NQF. In total around 270 opinions were received. In the end a series of events on the NQF took place. The objective of the series of events was to explain the EQF and NQF to the affected people and make it possible to give opinions on the consultation paper and on the NQF in general. The statements were summarised and commented on by educational experts (cf. Aff et al. 2008).

As well as the BMUKK and the BMWF, the Austrian University Conference and the Fachhochschule Conference also held events on the theme and published comprehensive documentation (cf. Austrian University Conference 2009).

The strategy for the development of the NQF by the National Steering Group ensured concentration on **formal learning** as a first step. This was called “corridor 1”. **Non-formal learning** (“corridor 2”) was also dealt with in the form of one of the aforementioned “detailed analyses”, however, and is currently also an issue in a working group. The many opinions and public discussion events prove the importance attached to the development of the NQF.

The question of the development of specifically Austrian **descriptors** for the levels of the NQF has been discussed for a long time and has also been the subject of detailed analyses. In the opinions from the VET sector a majority do not consider it necessary to formulate national descriptors. It was agreed, however, to develop national “explanations” of the descriptors of the eight levels of the EQF in order to provide assistance for users.

Subsequently **sectoral projects** were commissioned by the BMUKK or the Federal Ministry for Health to implement a possible future NQF for civil engineering (ibw), electrical engineering (ibw), healthcare (öibf) and tourism (3s). With the exception of the report on electrical engineering, all project results are printed in the compendium “The National Qualifications Framework in Austria. Contributions to Development” (cf. Markowitsch 2009).

Currently a series of important questions are waiting for an answer, in particular the question whether from level 6 only HE institutions can hand out proofs of qualifications. Another important question is the classification of apprenticeship diplomas: uniform or on

different levels. The high significance of NQF development can be seen in the inclusion of the theme in the new government programme (cf. government programme 2008, p. 200).

Just as with respect to EQF-NQF, the BMUKK has also carried out information/consultation activities for the transparency instrument **ECVET** and commissioned studies on foundations for implementation. The opening event and the first presentation of ECVET in Austria took place in September 2006, since then several national conferences have been held to provide information and to discuss ECVET in Austria. The consultation process within Austria (November 2006 to February 2007) provided 28 opinions from ministries, the social partners, universities, schools and other educational establishments. Many transnational pilot projects on ECVET with an Austrian coordinator and/or Austrian participation show the importance of the transparency instrument. In 2008 an “ECVET suitability study” with the title “Implementation of ECVET in Initial Vocational Education and Training in Austria” was also carried out (cf. Luomi-Messerer and Tritscher-Archan 2008), the objective of which was to show the extent to which the Austrian VET system is prepared for ECVET.

The currently favoured approach for the implementation of ECVET in Austria specifies application in the area of **transnational mobility** in particular here. The schools and training institutions need to be given extensive flexibility for implementation here. The institutions with central responsibility for VET (ministries etc.) give only the total ECVET points and are otherwise restricted to supportive measures, in particular information and the development of accompanying materials. Experts commissioned by the BMUKK are currently developing a guideline which will contain practical information and forms for the implementation of ECVET (in combination with Europass) and a collection of examples. The Austrian approach is also attracting interest from the European Commission because this enables unbureaucratic implementation of ECVET throughout the whole of Europe.

In 2005 a national steering group for coordination and strategic development in the area of information, counselling and guidance for education and careers was set up. In 2006 (under the auspices of the BMUKK) with representatives of all ministries and institutions responsible at the federal level for information, counselling and guidance for education and careers in the year, a **National Lifelong Guidance Strategy** was defined with the following main programmatic objectives: implementation of basic competences for educational career and life planning in all curricula; focus on process orientation and support; professionalisation of counsellors and trainers; quality assurance and evaluation of courses being offered, processes and structures; widening access – creating offers for new target groups. The strategy was used as a basis for planning many measures in the following years – such as the expansion of provider-neutral offers in the area of educational counselling for adults with simultaneous improved coordination and measures to increase the professionalisation of counsellors (“bib-innovation-network 2007-2010” project – [www.bib-infonet.at](http://www.bib-infonet.at)) or the intensification of counselling for Matura holders as part of the key2success initiative (see <http://key2success.schulpsychologie.at>) and the BMWF project “Study checker” ([www.studienchecker.at](http://www.studienchecker.at), cf. 5.2). This strategy also comprises the subsidisation of projects to provide information, counselling and guidance for education and careers in and in cooperation with schools as part of the implementation of the operational programme of ESF Objective 2 (2007-2013) and the establishment of transversal coordination and cooperation mechanisms in the area of information, counselling and guidance for education and careers at the regional and federal levels (cf. [www.lifelongguidance.at](http://www.lifelongguidance.at)).

Social partner institutions, umbrella organisations from the school and tertiary sectors, parents’ associations, senior citizens’ associations, immigrants’ associations, church associations, and associations active in adult learning have taken part in the extensive consultation process for the **Lifelong Learning (LLL) strategy**. The individual federal provinces and various federal ministries have also taken the opportunity to introduce current

perspectives and developments. Overall 64 statements have been received, with all major establishments and institutions having taken part in the process. A large dissemination and motivation event was carried out in 2009 within the framework of a full-day conference. On this occasion, the results of the consultation process were presented by the academics commissioned with evaluation and the planned next steps were also communicated and discussed.

In terms of the Copenhagen process **quality assurance** in school-based and dual VET in Austria has become increasingly important in recent years as a theme and objective of measures. Reference must be made here first of all to the “VET Quality Initiative (QIBB)” which has been active since 2005/06 (cf. also 6.1). QIBB was launched as a comprehensive quality management system with the aim of safeguarding and further developing the quality of VET schools and colleges. QIBB sees itself explicitly as a strategy for implementing the “Common Quality Assurance Framework in VET” developed at the European level. A key success factor of QIBB is its high participation rate by schools of an average of 75%, in the majority of school types the share of schools implementing QIBB is at 90% or above. This is a very high value particularly when considering the voluntary nature of participation.

With the theme of quality assurance and quality development, the work to implement **learning outcome orientation** and to **develop educational standards** in VET schools and colleges (BMHSs), classified internationally as ISCED 3B (VET schools), 4A (VET colleges) and 5B (colleges for people in employment) is linked together. Since 2005 work has been done on the development of educational standards in the VET sector (cf. example below and 8.4). To ensure acquisition of a final qualification, first of all educational standards for the 13th year of schooling were formulated for selected general-education subjects and selected entire specialist training programmes. This aims to improve the definition of interfaces and design transitions more smoothly. Current work is focusing on designing and piloting didactic examples for the classroom which are to contribute to improving teaching quality. At present, competence models, descriptors and prototypical examples are being developed in 24 working groups. Some working groups already have the pilot stage behind them. The revised educational standards are communicated to all teachers and other stakeholders. The first steps of implementation in the form of competence-oriented teaching and competence-oriented curricula are being made. The results of educational standards will also be integrated into the final exams (“Reife- und Diplomprüfung”, the upper secondary school-leaving exam that provides access to HE and labour market qualifications).

In 2007 the **Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training** (ARQA-VET) was set up at the Austrian Exchange Service (ÖAD), the Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research. This establishment aims to support the actors involved in VET in Austria with offers and know-how in the area of quality assurance and development and, in particular, to play an active intermediary role from and to the European level (cf. [http://www.arqa-vet.at/arqa\\_vet/was\\_machen\\_wir/](http://www.arqa-vet.at/arqa_vet/was_machen_wir/)).

In 2008 legal foundations were established by the federal government as well as an implementation concept of the social partners to **promote the number and quality of available apprenticeship places** (cf. Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship 2008). This means a boost in the direction of quality development for dual VET in Austria. As well as documentation of the progress of training and a practical test in the middle of the apprenticeship period (cf. 4.4 and 6.1), the new subsidies by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMAK) are aimed at increasing the qualification of the trainers in the companies (cf. also 4.4 and 6.1). In the recommendation of the European Union on quality assurance in VET and CVET from 2009 these aspects are also

considered. The European initiative for quality assurance is mainly an attempt to establish more of a research basis for VET and its association with the labour market and society. On account of the growing significance of evidence based policy, in particular with regard to the process and outcome quality of VET, and also on account of the increasing public subsidies for the company-based part of dual training in Austria, it has to be expected that in the medium and long-term apprenticeship training will be supported and influenced much more by evaluation than in the past.

Other measures as part of the Copenhagen process concern the **promotion of key qualifications**. Inspired by the key competence concept of the Memorandum for Lifelong Learning (2001), in the VET schools/colleges an "Impulse Centre for Entrepreneurship Education" (EESI) and a group of multipliers were set up in all federal provinces (cf. <http://www.eesi-impulszentrum.at/>). The BMUKK has also set up an information platform where there is extensive information on current events and projects for the **European Year of Creativity and Innovation** in 2009 in Austria (cf. 7.4).

### Educational standards in VET

The project **Educational standards in VET**, which started in 2007, focuses on final qualifications. The **objective** of the project is to define core areas of teaching in a learning outcome-oriented manner in order to establish the basis for implementing competence-oriented teaching (orientation target for teaching). By formulating common core areas and through competence-oriented teaching, the prerequisite for an Austria-wide evaluation of VET teaching is created (evaluation target at system level). Combined with the survey among graduates, this additionally provides comprehensive system feedback with the necessary information to ensure that a controlling influence can be exercised on the system (impact-oriented educational management). Ultimately educational standards in the area of VET also have the objective of being regarded as a development of the transparency instruments which were largely implemented in the form of Europass Certificate Supplements (information function).

The educational standards in the area of VET are elaborated by **working groups** consisting of experienced teachers, subject experts and academic specialists. Coordination and supervision are incumbent on the steering group in the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMU/KK). The project will also be supported academically.

**Target groups** are the teachers at VET schools/colleges and their pupils and also the labour market parties (information function of the qualifications).

The project is in the **pilot phase** during which didactic examples are tested at selected schools. The pilot scheme is carried out in order to ensure high quality and comprehensibility of the didactic examples. The objective of the pilot scheme is therefore to improve, revise and select didactic examples and the subsequent creation of collections of didactic examples.

### Sphere of action

The **sphere of action** of the project and its results is national and refers to all full-time schools and colleges. By linking together with the transparency instruments ECVET and EQF an important European transparency function is expected.

The educational standards project is a major quality assurance and quality development project which is associated with the QIBB initiative (VET quality, cf. 6.1). The project is therefore **part of a larger education policy strategy**. The **main actors in the project** are the VET department in the BMUKK, the VET schools/colleges in all provinces and experts providing academic accompaniment.

<b>Evaluation</b>
It will not be possible to assess the <b>efficiency/effectiveness</b> until the effects are available: the project is currently in the pilot phase, an evaluation will not be carried out until the introduction. It is planned to use the results for describing the learning outcomes in the NQF.
<b>Conclusions</b>
<p><b>Obstacles</b> for implementing the measure have arisen mainly because of the new nature of learning outcome orientation in the Austrian education system. To overcome these obstacles a host of information events have been carried out with teachers who have experience in curricula development and are active, and academic support and accompaniment have been organised. A lot of information and a manual have been developed which are available on the project homepage: (cf. <a href="http://www.bildungsstandards.berufsbildendeschulen.at/de/downloads.html">http://www.bildungsstandards.berufsbildendeschulen.at/de/downloads.html</a>).</p> <p><b>Challenges</b> which still need to be overcome are in the development of further sector-specific pilot projects and their implementation on a broad basis, including the accompanying evaluation.</p>
<b>Sources</b>
<p><a href="http://www.bildungsstandards.berufsbildendeschulen.at/">http://www.bildungsstandards.berufsbildendeschulen.at/</a></p> <p>Work platform "Educational Standards in VET", <a href="http://bildungsstandards.qibb.at/">http://bildungsstandards.qibb.at/</a></p>

## 9.2 Governance, cooperation and ownership of the different actors in the Copenhagen process at European level

The **centre of Austrian initiatives and activities** in the area of the Copenhagen process is General Directorate II, VET, of the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK). Many Austrian establishments are participating in European activities to improve VET, mobility and the exchange of knowledge, experiences and examples in this area. Mobility and transparency of qualifications are the focuses of many current cooperation projects in which Austrian institutions are involved.

In order to put the European dimension in the area of VET on a solid foundation with stays abroad and their organisation and preparation, in 1995 the **IFA association (Association to Promote the International Exchange of Apprentices, Young Workers and Trainers of the Economy)** was founded as a service unit to promote the mobility of skilled workers (cf. [www.ifa.or.at](http://www.ifa.or.at)). The members of the association are the Austrian Economic Chambers, the Federation of Austrian Industry, Junior Chamber Austria and Junior Industry. IFA is now a leading establishment in Europe in terms of international mobility. The service unit acts as a central contact point for information and counselling for youths, enterprises and educational establishments in relevant matters. IFA organises work placements abroad, applies for and allocates the funds necessary here and ensures that competences acquired abroad are recognised. IFA has specialised in looking after non-academics and each year enables more than 400 apprentices, pupils from VET schools/colleges, employees and trainers to receive a work placement abroad. If we look at the different services of the association we can see that each year IFA provides services for 2,000 youths, 150 companies, schools and other educational establishments. The services of IFA start before the work placement abroad. IFA supports not only interested individuals with the planning of their placements abroad, it also helps companies and VET schools/colleges set up and carry out exchange programmes. IFA fulfils a European service function as the

association looks after youths and adults from other EU countries who complete a work placement in Austria. IFA is also the authorised information centre for the Europass Mobility document in Austria.

In the **peer learning cluster “New skills for teachers”** (cf. <http://www.kslll.net/PeerLearningClusters/ClusterDetails.cfm?id=11>) Austria works together with partners from Spain, Germany, Iceland, Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Romania and Estonia as well as Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF). Since 2006 there have been eight meetings and three peer learning activities, one of which took place in Vienna in 2007. The topic of this meeting was the partnership between schools, enterprises and the role of teachers and trainers. Austria was also actively involved in cooperation in the other activities.

One focal point of education policy with a European alignment has, for years, been improvement of access to counselling services, development of corresponding quality assurance systems and coordination and cooperation at the national, regional and local levels. It is also precisely these four areas of focus which are in the 2009/2010 work programme of the **European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN)**, a network of European states to exchange and develop concepts for the establishment of comprehensive systems of lifelong guidance (cf. <http://elgpn.eu>) in which Austria is involved.

Also needing to be mentioned is the thematically relevant project **ECGC (European Career Guidance Certificate)** and its predecessor project MEVOC, both implemented on the initiative of the Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw) with financial support from the European Commission and the BMUKK. Within the framework of these projects, competence standards and bases for certification for career guidance were developed with different partner countries (cf. [www.ecgc.at](http://www.ecgc.at) and [www.mevoc.net](http://www.mevoc.net)).

Broad qualification back in the initial education stage when learning **foreign languages** has, for more than a decade, been a focal point to strengthen the European dimension and, at the same time, to set up cooperation projects and networks between Austria and the other EU member states. This concerns, for example, cooperation and organisation of conferences on the European Language Portfolio (ELP). In autumn 2009 Graz was the location of a major ELP conference: the international conference with experts from 31 member states of the Council of Europe had the objective to discuss the future development of the European Language Portfolio (ELP). The conference was organised by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe together with the BMUKK. The event gave the opportunity to take stock of the results of the ELP project so far, to assess the influence in the member states, to show new support tools for ESP developers and to discuss future strategies. European language portfolios as “learning companions” aim to motivate pupils of all ages to individually plan their learning programmes and to assess themselves and to raise awareness of intercultural experiences. The ELP was presented by the Council of Europe in the European Year of Languages and since then has attracted great interest in the member states. 102 models were accredited by the ELP Validation Committee. Austria has eight accredited ELP models for all age groups; the national models for basic level, intermediate level and upper level have been developed on behalf of the BMUKK at the Austrian Language Competence Centre (cf. [www.oesz.at](http://www.oesz.at)).

### **Central European Cooperation in Education (CECE)**

Since 1997 there have been regular regional conferences at the official level between Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia. The objectives are close **co-operation in educational matters** between neighbouring states, the implementation of concrete joint projects, and, in particular, the exchange of expertise and good practice at

the administrative level in all areas of lifelong learning (e.g. quality development, decentralisation and financing of education systems, completion of the 2010 work programme, implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in the area of general and vocational education and training, cooperation in the HE and VET sectors, creation of national qualifications frameworks, development and implementation of an LLL strategy etc.).

With the EU expansion in 2004 and thus the accession of Austria's neighbouring countries, the areas of cooperation extended from regional to increasingly content-related and organisational cooperation ventures at the EU level, in particular with the implementation of the EU work programme "General and vocational education and training 2010" and also with the preparation for Austria's EU presidency in 2006. Within the framework of the CECE a solid and reliable partnership has thus developed over the years in which both regional and also international questions of education policy are discussed and subsequently approaches are sought together to further improve the education systems.

Back in February 2004 as part of a conference of ministers from Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, a Joint Memorandum of Understanding was signed and cooperation at the organisational and content-related levels was therefore intensified and put on a more binding basis. After this memorandum expired, in 2007 another Memorandum of Understanding was signed in order to adapt the cooperation between the five neighbouring countries to the changed conditions. As well as restructuring the cooperation at the different institutional and administrative levels of the CECE countries, an expansion of the network between the CECE states will also facilitate and support their work at the European and international levels. Regularly holding joint conferences, seminars and expert workshops will help pursue the goal of continued "learning from each other" and, not least, will enable better use of resources: joint research projects and the exchange of expertise can ensure better use of the limited knowledge resources in all participating countries and show new possible solutions. This process will be continued with the implementation of the new "strategic framework up to 2020" decided at the European level.

### 9.3 External dimension of European cooperation in VET

With regard to cooperation ventures which go beyond EU member states, the many contacts and cooperation ventures with **EU candidate countries** and **countries outside the EU** need to be pointed out.

#### **Austria's bilateral cooperation projects with countries from Central and Southern/Eastern Europe**

Reorientation of VET is one of the most important concerns in the Southern/Eastern European states. A good VET system also has a positive effect on economic and social development and makes an important contribution to democracy and peace. In cooperation with the **European Training Foundation (ETF)** and the association **Kulturkontakt**, the VET General Directorate (General Directorate II of the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, BMUKK) is supporting projects to promote these developments. The Austrian cooperation projects are handled by the "educational coordinators" sent by the Education Ministry. There are currently educational coordinators outside the EU in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, Russia and the Ukraine.

Two major regional projects were carried out in the Western Balkans: one concerns **training companies** (virtual companies for training purposes), the second concerns training for tourism. School partnerships with Eastern neighbouring countries of the EU are also promoted by the Intercultural Centre, with implementation being the responsibility of the par-

ticipating schools. Examples here are projects and the cooperation of VET schools/colleges with their partners; participation in educational competitions, teaching projects and joint in-service and further teacher training and the invitation of youths from the neighbouring states to come and visit VET schools/colleges in Austria.

There is a special form of cooperation in Austria's participation in **WorldSkills** (cf. also 6.2), which took place this year in Calgary (Canada). They enable not only recognition for the youths but also give trainers and companies the opportunity to establish important contacts and, overall, to improve the image of apprenticeship in their country and internationally.

### **Detailed example: Educational cooperation between Austria and Albania**

Since 1995 there has been a project office in Tirana which deals with the set-up and implementation of bilateral education projects. In close cooperation between the educational institutions of Austria and Albania, many reform projects have been implemented since then. The cooperation in the area of educational counselling and overall with the Education Ministry is particularly intense. Other central educational establishments such as the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and the National Institute of Curricula Development, Further Teacher Training and Evaluation are contact partners for the reforms which have to be carried out. These are complemented by cooperation projects with various international organisations such as the DACHplus Group, the International German Adult Education Association (PARSH), SwissContact, CARDS VET Office and Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE). The cooperation focuses on vocational education and training in schools and colleges (schools for business, tourism schools, agricultural schools), German as a foreign language and gender sensitivity in teaching in the secondary school sector (cf. <http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at/page.aspx?target=230536>).

### **Other cooperation ventures**

The Austrian VET system also attracts interest outside of Europe. Many high-ranking **education policy delegations and school experts** visit Austria every year. There are particularly intensive contacts with China. In the last three years, some 200 Chinese head teachers have visited Austria to learn from Austrian VET. There are special relationships with the most populous province in the south of the country, the province of Canton. Between Austria and the province of Canton there is a Memorandum of Understanding regarding cooperation in VET. Many teachers at Chinese VET schools came to two- to nine-month further training programmes in Austria, e.g. at colleges of engineering, VET schools, Fachhochschulen etc. When they return, as shown by reports and visits on-site, the teachers trained in Austria are successful and working in important positions in China. The educational cooperation projects are also accompanied by company contacts.

There are also a host of **bilateral projects** in the education sector, including on a commercial basis, e.g. advanced tourism training programmes. General Directorate II of the BMUKK has a key involvement in these cooperative activities.

### **Cooperation ventures with international establishments**

The BMUKK cooperates in various **projects with international organisations** for VET. One of many examples is Austria's involvement in the OECD review for VET "Learning for Jobs", in which many countries outside Europe are also involved. Other current OECD projects involving Austria concern areas such as guidance and counselling, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and migration.

Austria is also active within the framework of the ETF (European Training Foundation), e.g. by organising study visits.

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## 10 Report information

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## Websites

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 Education standards of Austria's VET schools and colleges: [www.bildungsstandards.berufsbildendeschulen.at](http://www.bildungsstandards.berufsbildendeschulen.at)  
 Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection: [www.bmask.gv.at](http://www.bmask.gv.at)  
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 Education system in Austria: [www.bildungssystem.at](http://www.bildungssystem.at)  
 Cooperative Open Learning (COOL): [www.cooltrainers.at](http://www.cooltrainers.at)  
 European peer review projects: [www.peer-review-education.net](http://www.peer-review-education.net)  
 Eurostat: [www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat](http://www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat)  
 Fachhochschule Council: [www.fhr.ac.at](http://www.fhr.ac.at)  
 Information platform for trainers: [www.ausbilder.at](http://www.ausbilder.at)  
 Leadership Academy: [www.leadershipacademy.at](http://www.leadershipacademy.at)  
 Apprenticeship promotion organisation: [www.lehrepoerdern.at](http://www.lehrepoerdern.at)  
 New secondary school: [www.neuemittelschule.at](http://www.neuemittelschule.at)

Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training: <http://www.arqa-vet.at>  
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Academy of Continuing Education: [www.wba.or.at](http://www.wba.or.at)  
Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Department of Statistics: <http://wko.at/statistik>  
Tyrol Centre of the Future: [www.zukunftszentrum.at](http://www.zukunftszentrum.at)

### 10.3 List of acronyms

Abbreviation	German term	English term/explanation
abf-austria	<i>Arbeitsgemeinschaft Berufsbildungsforschung</i>	Austrian Working Group on VET Research
AHS	<i>allgemeinbildende höhere Schule</i>	Secondary academic school (higher general education school) – junior cycle and senior cycle
ALE	<i>Erwachsenenbildung</i>	adult learning
AMS	<i>Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich</i>	Public Employment Service Austria
ARQA-VET	<i>Österreichische Referenzstelle für Qualität in der Berufsbildung</i>	Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
BAG	<i>Berufsausbildungsgesetz</i>	Vocational Training Act
BBAB	<i>Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat</i>	Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
BFI	<i>Berufsförderungsinstitut</i>	Vocational Training Institute
BHS	<i>Berufsbildende höhere Schule</i>	VET college
BIC	<i>Berufsinformationscomputer</i>	database containing career information, job descriptions etc.
<i>Bifie</i>	<i>Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung des Bildungswesens</i>	Federal Institute of Educational Research, Innovation and Development of the Education System
BildokG	<i>Bildungsdokumentationsgesetz</i>	Education Documentation Act
BIZ	<i>Berufsinformationszentrum</i>	Career guidance centre
BMF	<i>Bundesministerium für Finanzen</i>	Federal Ministry of Finance
BMG	<i>Bundesministerium für Gesundheit</i>	Federal Ministry for Health
BMHS	<i>Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen</i>	VET schools and colleges
BMLFUW	<i>Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft</i>	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
BMS	<i>Berufsbildende mittlere Schule</i>	VET school
BMASK	<i>Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz</i>	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
BMUKK	<i>Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur</i>	Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
BMWFJ	<i>Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend</i>	Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth

BRP	<i>Berufsreifeprüfung</i>	examination providing access to higher education for skilled workers and graduates of three- and four-year full-time VET schools
CET	<i>Weiterbildung</i>	continuing education and training
CVET	<i>berufliche Weiterbildung</i>	continuing vocational education and training
CVTS	<i>Continuing Vocational Training Survey</i>	<i>Continuing Vocational Training Survey</i>
ECHP	<i>European Community Household Panel</i>	European Community Household Panel
ECVET	<i>Europäisches Lernkreditsystem</i>	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EQR / EQF	<i>Europäischer Qualifikationsrahmen</i>	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	<i>Europäischer Sozialfonds</i>	European Social Fund
EU-SILC	<i>Gemeinschaftsstatistiken über Einkommen und Lebensbedingungen</i>	<i>Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions</i>
FH	<i>Fachhochschule</i>	university level study programmes of at least three years' duration with vocational-technical orientation
FHR	<i>Fachhochschulrat</i>	<i>Fachhochschule</i> Council
FHStG	<i>Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz</i>	<i>Fachhochschule</i> Studies Act
FLAF	<i>Familienlastenausgleichsfonds</i>	Family compensation fund
GE	<i>Allgemeinbildung</i>	general education
GewO	<i>Gewerbeordnung</i>	Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act
HE	<i>Hochschulbildung</i>	higher education
IHS	<i>Institut für Höhere Studien</i>	Institute for Advanced Studies
IBA	<i>Integrative Berufsausbildung</i>	integrative vocational education and training, integrative VET
ibw	<i>Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft</i>	Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy
ISCED	<i>International Standard Classification of Education</i>	<i>International Standard Classification of Education</i>
IVET	<i>berufliche Erstausbildung</i>	initial vocational education and training
JASG	<i>Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz</i>	Youth Training Guarantee Act
KEBÖ	<i>Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs</i>	Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions
LAP	<i>Lehrabschlussprüfung</i>	apprenticeship-leave examination

LBAB	<i>Landesberufsausbildungsbeirat</i>	Regional Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
LFI	<i>Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut</i>	Institute for further education in rural areas
LFS	<i>Labour Force Survey</i>	Labour Force Survey
LLG	<i>Lifelong Guidance</i>	Lifelong guidance
LLL	<i>Lebenslanges Lernen</i>	Lifelong learning
MZ	<i>Mikrozensus</i>	<i>microcensus</i>
NEC	<i>Nationales Europass Zentrum</i>	National Europass Centre
NQR / NQF	<i>Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen</i>	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	<i>Organisation für wirtschaftliche Kooperation und Entwicklung</i>	<i>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</i>
ÖGB	<i>Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund</i>	Austrian Trade Union Federation
öibf	<i>Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung</i>	Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training
PTS	<i>Polytechnische Schule</i>	prevocational school
SBP	<i>Studienberechtigungsprüfung</i>	higher education entrance examination
SchOG	<i>Schulorganisationsgesetz</i>	School Organisation Act
SchUG	<i>Schulunterrichtsgesetz</i>	School Education Act
VET	<i>Berufsbildung</i>	vocational education and training
WB	<i>(berufliche) Weiterbildung</i>	continuing (vocational) education and training
WIFI	<i>Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut</i>	Economic Promotion Institute of the Economic Chambers

