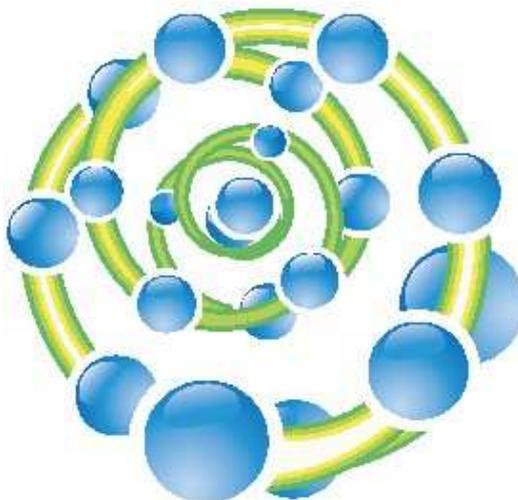


## Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes

**Austria**



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## **A. Apprenticeship training in Austria – background**

### **A.1 Definition of terms**

Dual vocational education and training (dual VET, also termed apprenticeship training) fully meets the criteria specified in the Cedefop guidelines: It is a nationwide regulated, formal training pathway at the upper secondary level (ISCED 3B) which – in line with the occupation-based VET approach – imparts a full qualification for a specific occupation. Currently (as at: May 2014) there are around 200 apprenticeships. As suggested by the term “dual”, apprenticeship training takes place at two places of learning: in a training company and at an occupation-specific part-time vocational school (time ratio 80:20). The apprentice is in a contractually regulated training relationship with his/her training company and is a student at a part-time vocational school at the same time. For every apprenticeship occupation, a binding training regulation is issued which contains the specific competence profile (a profile of learning outcomes) and the job profile (an in-company curriculum). School-based training is regulated by an occupation-specific framework curriculum that is valid all over Austria. Schools themselves can autonomously adapt training courses to certain extent. The governance structure of the apprenticeship training system involves a large number of actors. The social partners, which fulfil key tasks both regarding contents and administration, play a particularly important role.

### **A.2 Statistical data and background information**

#### **A.2.1 Number of participants**

Currently some 40% of youths (these are about 120,000 students) of an age cohort take up apprenticeship training (cf. Fig. 1 in the Annex). Another 40% opt for full-time school-based VET (VET school [*berufsbildende mittlere Schule*] or VET college [*berufsbildende höhere Schule*]). The remaining 20% attend academic secondary school [*allgemeinbildende höhere Schule*, AHS].

In recent years, a decline in apprenticeship figures can be observed, which is mainly connected with the demographic development (the number of 15-year-olds is decreasing) (cf. Fig. 2 in the Annex). Other factors influencing this development, however, include competition from full-time vocational schools (VET schools and VET colleges), academic secondary school (AHS) as well as changes of the economic structure (tertiarisation).

### **A.2.2 Qualification entry level required**

Training in an apprenticeship occupation is basically open to all young people who have completed their nine years of compulsory schooling. No specific school qualification is required (from a purely formal perspective) for accessing an apprenticeship. In practice, however, the training companies expect candidates to have at least a positive qualification from lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*). The majority of youths (35.3%) attend the one-year prevocational school (*Polytechnische Schule*) before taking up an apprenticeship (cf. Fig. 3 in the Annex) or drop out after the first year of a VET school in order to change to apprenticeship training.

### **A.2.3 Sectors and occupations covered**

The range of about 200 apprenticeships is spread over nearly all sectors of the economy. When analysing the apprenticeship figures by major economic sectors (based on the classification used by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber), it can be seen that despite declines in previous years, apprenticeship figures in “crafts and trades” are still the highest: The share of apprentices among the dependent workforce in this sector is 7.4% (2013). In second place comes “commerce”, where 5.2% of all people in dependent employment are apprentices. In the sector “banking and insurance” their share is the lowest with 1.3% (cf. Fig. 4 in the Annex).

Broken down by apprenticeship occupations, a pronounced difference between male and female apprentices can be observed in particular in the choice of occupations. Partly caused by the smaller number of apprenticeships that are attractive for (young) women, female apprentices show a particularly high concentration on a few occupations. In late 2013 almost 50% of female apprentices were trained in merely three apprenticeships (retail trade, office assistance, hairdresser). Among male apprentices, the share of the three most frequently attended apprenticeships (metal technology, electrical engineering, motor vehicle engineering) combined was only about 35% (cf. Fig. 5 in the Annex).

### **A.2.4 Funding arrangements**

The costs of company-based training are borne by the respective training company. School-based training (at part-time vocational school) is financed by the public (the federal and provincial governments). This means that by far the greatest part of costs of vocational training are borne by companies.

The apprenticeship remuneration (the payment for apprentices) makes up the main part of costs for apprenticeship training from the perspective of companies. Its amount is specified in sector- or company-specific collective agreements and ranges between some EUR 380 and some EUR 2,000 gross a month (14 times a year) depending on the apprenticeship occupation and year. The remuneration increases with every apprenticeship year until, in the final year, it totals an approximate average of 80% of the corresponding skilled worker's wage. The reason for this is that the apprentices' share in productive work increases with every year, which means they contribute more to the training company's productivity every year.

The costs of equipping part-time vocational schools with machinery, equipment and teaching material are borne by the federal provinces, whereas the federal government and the respective province share costs for the teaching staff equally. In addition, a large number of (publicly financed) subsidisation options (cf. B.2) and reductions in contributions (such as to sickness and accident insurance, cf. B.2) exist for apprenticeship training.

#### **A.2.5 Formal qualification obtained by apprentices**

The apprenticeship certificate is a legally regulated, formal qualification. In the ISCED classification, the apprenticeship certificate is ranked as 3B, in the eight-level Austrian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) it is designated as a reference qualification for level 4.<sup>1</sup>

#### **A.2.6 Guidance and selection arrangements, outcomes**

In Austria some 15% of apprentices leave training prematurely. Some 95% of apprenticeship graduates also sit for the final apprenticeship exam after completing their apprenticeship, with some 5% of apprenticeship graduates not completing this exam successfully. This means that about 90% of apprenticeship graduates complete their training with a positive final apprenticeship exam.

The apprenticeship forms a sound basis for an activity in the economy and also counteracts unemployment. Among the apprenticeship graduates who did not take up another training programme within the first two years after receiving their diploma, half are employed three months after graduation, and the figure is as high as 89% within the first year following graduation. This share is (in some cases considerably) above the shares found in other education

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<sup>1</sup>) cf. Austrian EQF Referencing Report:  
[http://www.bildung.erasmusplus.at/fileadmin/III/dateien/lebenslanges\\_lernen\\_pdf\\_word\\_xls/nqr/EQR-Zuordnungsbericht/OEsterreichischer\\_EQR\\_Zuordnungsbericht.pdf](http://www.bildung.erasmusplus.at/fileadmin/III/dateien/lebenslanges_lernen_pdf_word_xls/nqr/EQR-Zuordnungsbericht/OEsterreichischer_EQR_Zuordnungsbericht.pdf) (accessed on 18.05.2014).

and training programmes. Furthermore, figures prove that apprenticeship training – a “training scheme from the economy for the economy” – precisely meets the companies’ requirements. In 2013, 92.4% of apprenticeship graduates were employed in line with their qualification, i.e. at their skills level. Some 30% of apprenticeship graduates even hold a managerial function (i.e. as managing directors, tradespersons, department heads, etc.).

## **B. Major aspects of apprenticeship training**

### **B.1 Attractiveness and career guidance**

To improve the attractiveness of apprenticeship training, measures are taken both for training companies and for potential apprenticeship post seekers and apprentices. To ensure that the available range of programmes is interesting and modern, training contents are continually updated and adapted to the needs of the economy, both in the job profile for company-based training and in the framework curricula of part-time vocational school (cf. A.1). At the same time, measures are taken to improve the quality of training in the company and part-time vocational school (cf. B.4). Furthermore, various financial incentives are offered for training companies (cf. B.2.2).

#### **B.1.1 Improve guidance and counselling**

Towards the end of the compulsory schooling period (seventh and eighth school year, in some school types also in the ninth school year), compulsory career guidance (*Berufsorientierung* or BO) classes are provided. In some cases it is a separate school subject, in others it is integrated in other subjects or projects. One aim of BO is to inform pupils about the possibilities of apprenticeship training. A fixed part of BO are work shadowing days, which aim to provide pupils with first practical experiences and impressions of the world of work.

As well as career guidance offered at school level, Public Employment Service Austria (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) has the legal mandate of providing career guidance. AMS offers information, counselling and advice in career guidance centres (*Berufsinformationszentren*, BIZ). The social partner organisations, which run their own guidance and counselling centres, are also important actors in the field of career guidance. The career guidance centres of AMS and the social partners have self-information areas and offer one-on-one and group counselling at their locations. They also support schools in their information activities by offering

online career information databases (such as [www.bic.at](http://www.bic.at), [www.karrierekompass.at](http://www.karrierekompass.at)), a large variety of brochures and career information films, and by organising lectures for classes, sector presentations, training for job applications, events for teachers and parents, job fairs, etc., which at least in part explicitly focus on apprenticeship training. Moreover, comprehensive information about the respective training programmes is provided by many sectoral and professional associations, but also by many training companies.

### **B.1.2 Improve status of apprenticeship**

Cf. B.1.4 and B.1.5.

### **B.1.3 Ensure apprenticeship leads to formal qualifications**

The objective of apprenticeship training is the acquisition of the apprenticeship certificate, which follows successful completion of the apprenticeship-leave examination. As well as the quality of company- and school-based training, many measures (exam preparation, coaching for apprentices and training companies, various subsidisation options for apprenticeship posts, etc.) explicitly aim at the acquisition of the certificate.

To guarantee full provision of training for the apprentice, the apprenticeship contract is binding after a three-month probation period and can only be dissolved by the training company and the apprentice in duly justified, legally regulated cases.

Complementing, or within the framework of, the measures presented in B.4.1, which are mainly offered by the Ministry of Economy and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the Quality Management in Apprenticeship (*Qualitätsmanagement Lehrlingsausbildung*, QML) initiative was launched in 2013 by the social partners. Its goal is to ensure that even more young people complete an apprenticeship and pass the apprenticeship-leave examination – without lowering the level of the exam.<sup>2</sup> QML builds on a set of annually evaluated indicators of apprenticeship dropouts, the number of apprentices who (do not) sit for the final exam as well as the number of apprentices who (do not) acquire the apprenticeship certificate.

In the initial phase of this data-based quality assurance scheme, the focus is on apprenticeships where the worst indicators are found. More in-depth analyses are conducted for the

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<sup>2</sup>) Although the majority of apprentices complete the apprenticeship positively, around 15% leave the training prematurely and some 5% do not pass the apprenticeship-leave exam (cf. A.2.6).

apprenticeships concerned jointly with the responsible representative bodies to identify the causes as far as possible. These can be found in the following fields, among others: topicality and quality of in-company training curricula/training regulations; the suitability of apprentices; the training companies' degree of specialisation and equipment; the quality of in-company training (IVET trainers, the planning of training, etc.); the quality of complementary training provided at part-time vocational school, etc.

The analysis and interpretation of these indicators form the basis for quality assurance and improvement measures, such as the adjustment of in-company training curricula; improvement of career guidance; measures supporting apprentices (such as remedial lessons, coaching); train-the-trainer programmes; supporting materials for training companies; improvements in the apprenticeship-leave exams, etc.

#### **B.1.4 Promote positive image of apprenticeship towards parents and learners**

As well as classic image-promoting measures (such as “A career with apprenticeship”, the quality seal “State-honoured training company”, the state prize “Best training companies – Fit for future”, which is conferred every two years – cf. B.2.1), the manifold activities of school- and non-school-based career guidance and information (cf. B.1.1) must be mentioned.

With the introduction of the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (BRP) in 1997, an option of vertical permeability was created. By taking four partial exams (German, mathematics, modern foreign language, occupation-related specialist area), apprenticeship graduates acquire unrestricted access to the HE-sector. Since the autumn 2008, apprentices have been able to take the BRP exam free of charge (the federal government bears the costs of preparation courses and the exam attempt) in parallel with their apprenticeship training.

Basically, the image of apprenticeship training builds on the training options (apprenticeship occupations, in-company training quality) and, in the long term, on the career opportunities arising from this pathway (professional position, employability, job security, income, career aspects, etc.). Even though apprenticeship training is very successful in many respects, a marked tendency towards school- and HE-based pathways can be observed.

#### **B.1.5 Expand the choices for apprenticeship – Up-scale programmes**

The introduction of the BRP in 1997 has enabled unrestricted HE access for apprenticeship graduates. Based on their professional experience, apprenticeship graduates can also ac-

cess subject-specific *Fachhochschule* programmes. Additionally a wide range of continuing training pathways are open to apprenticeship graduates, such as in the field of the master craftsperson qualification.

### **B.1.6 Design and test pilot system level schemes/programmes**

Apprenticeship training is a training pathway which is firmly rooted in the Austrian education landscape. Different social, economic and technological trends have repeatedly made changes necessary in recent years, however, in order to maintain the attractiveness of apprenticeship training. Currently it is being considered, for example, to attract more holders of the upper secondary school-leaving certificate (particularly from the academic school form) to apprenticeship training. The first regional pilot activities are already being implemented but concrete effects cannot yet be described.

## **B.2 Support for companies, in particular SMEs**

The Austrian apprenticeship training system – like the national economic structure – is largely borne by SMEs.

### **B.2.1 Improve awareness of apprenticeship benefits**

As well as various PR activities and campaigns (such as “A career with apprenticeship”) and temporary measures (such as “The training companies’ scouts”<sup>3</sup>) there are public awards for excellent training quality: The Ministry of Economy confers the title “State-honoured training company” to training companies for special achievements in apprenticeship training and awards the state prize “Best training companies – Fit for future” every two years.

It is, however, essential that training companies create benefits with apprenticeship training. Most important here is safeguarding their own skilled workers for the future (and consequently supporting the companies’ continuity and innovation). Expenses for company-based training (time, resources, trainers, apprenticeship remuneration, etc.) are additionally offset by the apprentices’ productive work during the apprenticeship period. The expected cost-benefit

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<sup>3</sup>) In this proactive approach, “scouts” inform potential training companies about the possibilities of training (the legal bases; the framework conditions; subsidisation, support and funding procedures, etc.). They motivate the companies to offer training places and provide advisory support.

ratio of training is a key factor which determines how many training places the companies offer, where the benefit cannot exclusively be quantified in productive activity.

## **B.2.2 Provide financial and non-financial support**

In Austria, apprenticeship training is supported and funded in different ways.

### *Financial support*

The training company receives a basic subsidisation for every apprentice, the amount of which is graded based on apprenticeship years<sup>4</sup>. In addition, there exist measure-related subsidies (often with a focus on quality and the support of target groups<sup>5</sup>). Furthermore, for the first two apprenticeship years, no sickness insurance contribution needs to be paid (neither the employer's nor the apprentice's share). No accident insurance contribution needs to be paid for the entire apprenticeship period.

Apprentices are primarily subsidised by Public Employment Service Austria (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich*, AMS), which follows a target group-specific approach<sup>6</sup>. In addition, there are many support options available from the provinces (such as for commuting or boarding school, or in the form of learning tools, etc.).

Basic subsidisation and quality-related funding are financed from the Austrian insolvency remuneration fund, which itself is mainly financed from employers' contributions. The subsidies of AMS are financed from labour market policy funds.

### *Content-related support*

Training companies in Austria are provided with subject-specific and didactic training materials. They are complemented by a large number of print or online products which are commissioned by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*,

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<sup>4</sup>) For the first apprenticeship year, basic subsidisation is three, for the second year two, and for the third and fourth apprenticeship year it amounts to one gross apprenticeship remuneration according to the collective agreement in each case.

<sup>5</sup>) Support includes: (1) inter- and supra-company training measures (training alliance measures, occupation-related additional training of apprentices, preparation courses for apprenticeship-leave exams), (2) continuing training measures for IVET trainers, (3) apprenticeship-leave exams taken with good results or distinction, (4) measures for apprentices with learning difficulties (such as remedial courses at compulsory school level in German, mathematics, modern foreign language), (5) equal access by young women and young men to different apprenticeships as well as work placements abroad for apprentices.

<sup>6</sup>) Support is provided, among others, for young women in occupations with a low share of women, youths who are disadvantaged on the labour market, participants in an inclusive vocational training scheme (*Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA).

WKO) and/or the Ministry of Economy. They include, among others, online search databases for apprenticeship training places; recruitment guidelines; selection procedures and selection tests for applicants; websites such as [www.ausbilder.at](http://www.ausbilder.at). This last-mentioned website not only offers a wide range of legal information but also a series of materials with a service character (such as the factsheets about new apprenticeship occupations). The majority of these materials are prepared by *Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft* (ibw, Research and Development in VET). Another tool is the checklist “Quality in Apprenticeship”, which answers questions such as “How can I draw the attention of young people to my company?”, “How do I find suitable apprentices?”, “How do I structure the training?”, etc. So-called training guidelines are a new approach (cf. B.4.1).

### **B.2.3 Set up joint training centres in support of groups of SMEs that work together**

Companies which want to train apprentices but cannot train the full extent of the job profile due to their in-company conditions have the option of taking part in a compulsory training alliance: Here certain training measures are carried out in another suitable company or a CVET institution<sup>7</sup>. In addition, there are voluntary training alliances which aim to impart additional knowledge and skills beyond the job profile. In some provinces, institutionalised training alliances have been set up which inform and advise companies about possible partner companies and training establishments.

### **B.2.4 Administrative simplification for accreditation and placement**

The current system attempts to make available lean administrative procedures with little bureaucracy involved which are customer-/training company-oriented. The nine apprenticeship offices, which are located in the regional economic chambers, act as main points of contact for training companies in the following areas: accreditation as a training company; apprenticeship contracts; legal advice; coordination of apprenticeship-leave examinations; subsidies for training companies; career guidance; support of gifted apprentices, etc.<sup>8</sup> Standardised forms (e.g. for apprenticeship contracts) as well as various online tools<sup>9</sup> (financial support, guidebooks related to apprenticeship training, career guidance, quality assurance/development, apprenticeship-leave examination, etc.) also simplify administration.

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<sup>7</sup>) The respective training company must however be able to impart the main part of the knowledge and skills which are vital for the apprenticeship occupation.

<sup>8</sup>) A precise list of tasks can be found at:

<https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Dienststellenkontaktseite.html?orgid=14827>

<sup>9</sup>) Centrally accessible at [www.ausbilder.at](http://www.ausbilder.at); cf. also B.2.2 Content-related support

Matching on the apprenticeship post market is supported by online tools. The main actors here are AMS and the social partners. There are also various regional (funded by provinces) and private initiatives (such as pools of different companies).

## **B.3 Governance**

### **B.3.1 Enhance governance system and regulatory framework/review design, governance and monitoring**

In recent years no major changes have been made to the governance system. There are no plans for main changes in the future either. New developments have only occurred regarding the subsidisation of training companies (cf. B.2.2) and some quality assurance aspects (cf. B.4), but these have not changed the basic governance system.

### **B.3.2 Participation of social partners and other stakeholders**

A large number of institutions form part of the governance structure of apprenticeship training. At the federal level, the Ministry of Economy and the Education Ministry in particular are involved. They bear final responsibility for the company-based and school-based parts of apprenticeship training. They also adopt the decisive laws and decrees which regulate apprenticeship training (these are: the Vocational Training Act [*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*, BAG], the training regulation for each apprenticeship occupation, as well as the School Organisation Act [*Schulorganisationsgesetz*, SchOG], School Education Act [*Schulunterrichtsgesetz*, SchUG], and the framework curricula for each apprenticeship occupation). At the level of the provinces, the apprenticeship offices, which are set up in the regional economic chambers but act in the sphere of competence delegated to them on behalf of the Ministry of Economy, (for information about their tasks cf. B.2.4). At the regional level, the training companies and part-time vocational schools are major actors of the governance structure.

The social partners play a particularly important role in the governance of the apprenticeship training system. They exert considerable influence on the design of the apprenticeship training system via regional advisory boards on apprenticeship (*Landesberufsausbildungsbeiräte*, LABB) and the Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship (*Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat*, BABB). BABB in particular is an important body which draws up expert opinions related to key aspects of apprenticeship training (such as legal amendments, the introduction of new

apprenticeships, the modification of existing apprenticeships, etc.) on behalf of the Ministry of Economy. The social partners are also major actors in the field of career guidance (cf. B.1.1).

### **B.3.3 Undertake national policy dialogue leading to partnerships, and/or legal frameworks for apprenticeship**

With the introduction of the training guarantee up to the age of 18 (in 2007, *Ausbildungsgarantie*) and its implementation measures (supra-company training [*Überbetriebliche Berufsausbildung*, ÜBA], inclusive VET [*Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA], accompanying labour market policy measures such as intensive training for skilled workers [*Facharbeiter-Intensivausbildung*], youth coaching [*Jugendcoaching*], apprentice coaching [*Lehrlingscoaching*], grants for skilled workers [*Facharbeiter-Stipendium*], career guidance, etc.), greater public responsibility than ever before was assumed for providing options for all young people in Austria. From 2016 an obligation for all youths between the ages of 16 and 18 (*Ausbildungspflicht*) to attend education or training programmes will be established.

### **B.3.4 Involve companies in curriculum design and review**

In most cases, individual companies are not directly involved in the design of training regulations and the curricula of part-time vocational schools. The representation of interest of employers (Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, *Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*, WKO) can however draw on relevant expert knowledge and is structurally integrated in BBAB (cf. B.3.2).

### **B.3.5 Reference qualifications from apprenticeship to NQF**

In the Austrian eight-level NQF, the apprenticeship diploma is the reference qualification for level 4.

## **B.4 Quality assurance in apprenticeship**

In recent years the topics of quality assurance and quality development have considerably gained in importance in VET and therefore also in apprenticeship training. A new trend is to introduce special procedures and instruments for quality management. These are combined with the new Quality Management in Apprenticeship (*Qualitätsmanagement Lehrlingsausbildung*, QML) initiative to form a comprehensive quality strategy (cf. B.1.3).

#### **B.4.1 Ensure quality learning outcomes**

In concrete terms, the following mechanisms and instruments of quality assurance are established in the apprenticeship training system:

- a) Development of new and modernisation of existing apprenticeships: The continual adaptation of apprenticeship occupations to economic and technological developments ensures the lasting attractiveness and quality of apprenticeship training. Related initiatives are most often launched by the affected sectors and the Ministry of Economy or the social partners. All the interest groups concerned (representations of interest of employers and employees) and the responsible ministries (Ministries of Economy and Education) are involved in the development of new apprenticeships. Research support is provided by *Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft* (ibw, Research and Development in VET).
- b) Accreditation procedure for training companies: Every company which wants to train apprentices needs to go through an accreditation procedure. For this purpose, the company submits an application for determination of its suitability for apprenticeship training to the respective competent apprenticeship office. In collaboration with the Chamber of Labour, this office subsequently examines whether the company meets the legal and company-specific prerequisites for apprenticeship training.
- c) VET and CVET of trainers: IVET trainers who are in charge of training apprentices need to furnish a relevant qualification, which not only comprises subject-related competences in the apprenticeship concerned but also know-how concerning vocational pedagogy and law. The IVET trainer qualification is acquired by completing a trainer examination and/or attending a course. This compulsory qualification is complemented by a wide range of continuing training options (such as companies' in-house CVET programmes for IVET trainers, programmes provided by adult learning institutions, trainer colleges and trainer forums).
- d) Exam preparation for apprentices and examiners: For apprentices, this preparation comprises preparatory courses, which are provided by various training institutions, and the learning materials drawn up by ibw. For examiners there exists the option of completing certified training programmes (the graduates of which are awarded the title "examiners for the apprenticeship-leave examination"). The examiner manuals of ibw offer examiners occupation-specific guidelines on how to design oral exams.

Other measures and instruments of quality assurance are the following: training materials (see B.2.2), standards for the apprenticeship-leave examination and the clearing office for the apprenticeship-leave exam (see B.4.2), apprenticeship subsidies (see B.2.2), quality seal (see B.1.4).

So-called training guidelines, which are initially being developed for ten apprenticeships, are a new approach. They comprise a general section for all apprenticeship occupations and an occupation-specific section and include best-practice examples on training design, tools for reflecting on and designing one's own training in practice and implementing legal training requirements in the company. Particular attention is paid to the inclusion of competence-oriented approaches in vocational pedagogy.

#### **B.4.2 Develop standards and assessment approaches**

- Job profiles: Every training regulation lays down the specific job profile (or in-company curriculum) and the competence profile (or activity description) of the respective apprenticeship occupation (cf. A.1). The curriculum of part-time vocational school is equivalent to the training regulation. In many occupations, the job profile is supplemented by supportive training guidelines, materials and manuals.
- Standards for the apprenticeship-leave examination and the clearing office for the apprenticeship-leave exam: This exam is organised by the apprenticeship offices. It is taken before an exam committee. This ensures that the training and its validation are separated, which makes an essential contribution to objectivity and therefore quality assurance. The exam aims to determine if the apprentice has acquired the skills and knowledge required for the apprenticeship occupation and is able to work in the trained occupation. The clearing office for the apprenticeship-leave exam ensures quality assurance throughout Austria for the tasks which the candidates need to carry out in the exam. The clearing office is set up in the Ministry of Economy and supervised by *Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft* (ibw, Research and Development in VET). Its tasks include: safeguarding a uniform quality standard by checking the tasks, assessment guidelines and solution options to see if they comply with the respective examination regulation, subject-specific correctness, practical relevance, and corresponding didactic quality.

#### **B.4.3 Linking public funding to quality standards**

Only accredited training companies are entitled to train apprentices and receive public subsidies. In the field of measure-related support options (cf. B.2.2), subsidies are available for training companies which take additional measures to raise their training quality. These subsidies are granted ex-post. The wide range of content-related support options (cf. also B.2.2) also aim to raise and safeguard quality. They are funded by various public actors – there is no direct connection with the specific quality of apprenticeship training at the company (or at part-time vocational school).

#### **B.4.4 Validation and recognition of competences/qualifications**

At the individual level, people have the option to enrol in subject-specific *Fachhochschule* programmes. Another option is the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship-leave examination (for people who can furnish proof of professional experience). A new approach is the “Competences with a System”-scheme (*Kompetenzen mit System*, KmS)<sup>10</sup>. In addition, apprenticeship certificates are envisaged as being equivalent to other VET pathways (VET school and VET college). Agreements on the mutual recognition of a number of apprenticeship occupations have been concluded with Germany, Hungary and the South Tyrol.

#### **B.4.5 Establish a credit system for apprenticeship**

To date there exists no system on mutual recognition in the sense of a credit transfer system. The apprenticeship training system is also a topic of ECVET-related discussions.

### **B.5 Innovative or special apprenticeship initiatives**

#### **B.5.1 Promote apprenticeship/work-based learning programmes at tertiary level**

In Austria there are no dual learning programmes at tertiary level. The only forms of work-based learning at tertiary level are (compulsory) work placements which have to be completed as part of specific study programmes.

#### **B.5.2 Increase chances for specific targets (disadvantaged groups, etc.)**

All compulsory school graduates who cannot find a place at an upper secondary school or a company-based apprenticeship place are given the opportunity to learn an apprenticeship trade at a training centre financed by AMS. The school-based part of apprenticeship training is provided at the regular part-time vocational school. Training is completed with the apprenticeship-leave examination. This so-called supra-company training has been an equivalent element of dual VET since 2008.

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<sup>10</sup>) This KmS scheme aims to create the possibility for job seekers – as part of several educational modules – to acquire the competences required to obtain a formal qualification via the pathway of the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship-leave exam.

Introduced in 2003, inclusive VET (*Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA) mainly targets young people with special pedagogical support needs at the end of compulsory schooling, young people without a lower secondary school qualification, as well as those who cannot complete an apprenticeship without special support. IBA can be implemented in two variants: either the training is completed over an apprenticeship period that is prolonged by up to two years, or it is restricted to partial areas of an apprenticeship, in which case its duration can be one to three years, depending on the training contents. Attendance of part-time vocational school is compulsory. The training relationship is accompanied by the vocational training assistance, In case of a prolonged apprenticeship, IBA is completed with the apprenticeship-leave exam, in case of partial qualifications the leaving exam is agreed on individually.

### **C. Main strengths and weaknesses of the Austrian dual system**

The Austrian apprenticeship training system is a highly regarded sub-system of IVET which is completed by around 40% of an age cohort. International comparisons of youth unemployment rates and transitions to the labour market prove its positive effect. Its strengths also include its comparatively responsive governance structures, its adaptability to changing demands for qualifications, its small share in public educational expenses (compared with full-time school-based VET), its provision of a full qualification, and its lasting attractiveness for companies. Of particular importance is the fact that, due to the involvement of the social partners, apprenticeship training is considered as a training scheme “from the economy for the economy”. Its proximity to the economy and therefore to the labour market makes an essential contribution to the attractiveness of this VET pathway.

Nevertheless it also shows weaknesses and problem areas: The high share of Austrian pupils at risk at the end of the compulsory schooling period (according to the 2009 PISA survey: some 30%) in combination with the social attractiveness of school types which lead to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate is fostering the trend towards adverse allocation effects from the perspective of the apprenticeship training system: The apprenticeship training system is running the risk of becoming increasingly attractive for rather low-performing youths. This, in turn, has negative repercussions on the companies' offer of apprenticeship posts, which due to the tertiarisation of the economy is additionally facing the challenge of creating and establishing apprenticeship occupations in new areas (sectors, occupations)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup>) Traditionally, apprenticeship is strongly rooted in the manufacturing and less in service occupations.

## Abbreviations

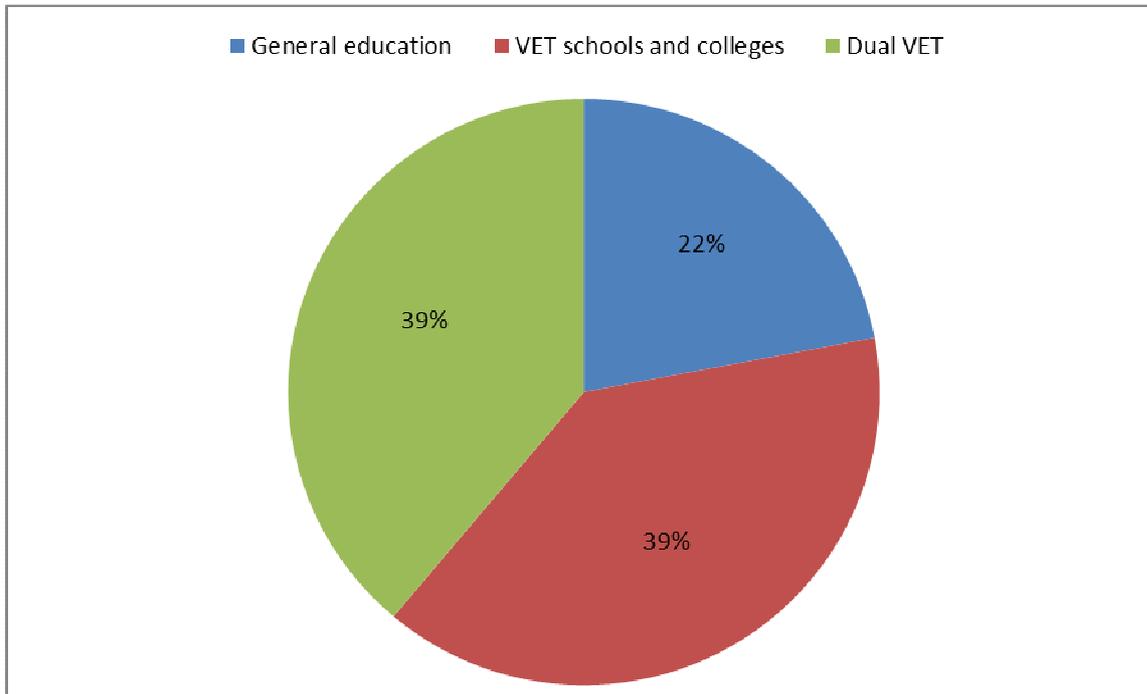
AMS	Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich	Public Employment Service Austria (PES)
BAG	Berufsausbildungsgesetz	Vocational Training Act
BBAB	Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat	Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
bic	Berufsinformationscomputer	Career Guidance Tool ( <a href="http://www.bic.at">www.bic.at</a> )
BMASK	Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen (kurz: Bildungsministerium)	Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (or Ministry of Education for short)
BMWF	Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft (kurz: Wirtschaftsministerium)	Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (or Ministry of Economy for short)
BRP	Berufsreifeprüfung	examination providing general access to higher education for skilled workers and graduates of three- to four-year full-time VET schools
IBA	Integrierte Berufsausbildung	Inclusive VET
ibw	Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft	Research and Development in VET
LAP	Lehrabschlussprüfung	Apprenticeship-leave examination
ÜBA	Überbetriebliche Berufsausbildung	Supra-company training
WKO	Wirtschaftskammer Österreich	Austrian Federal Economic Chamber

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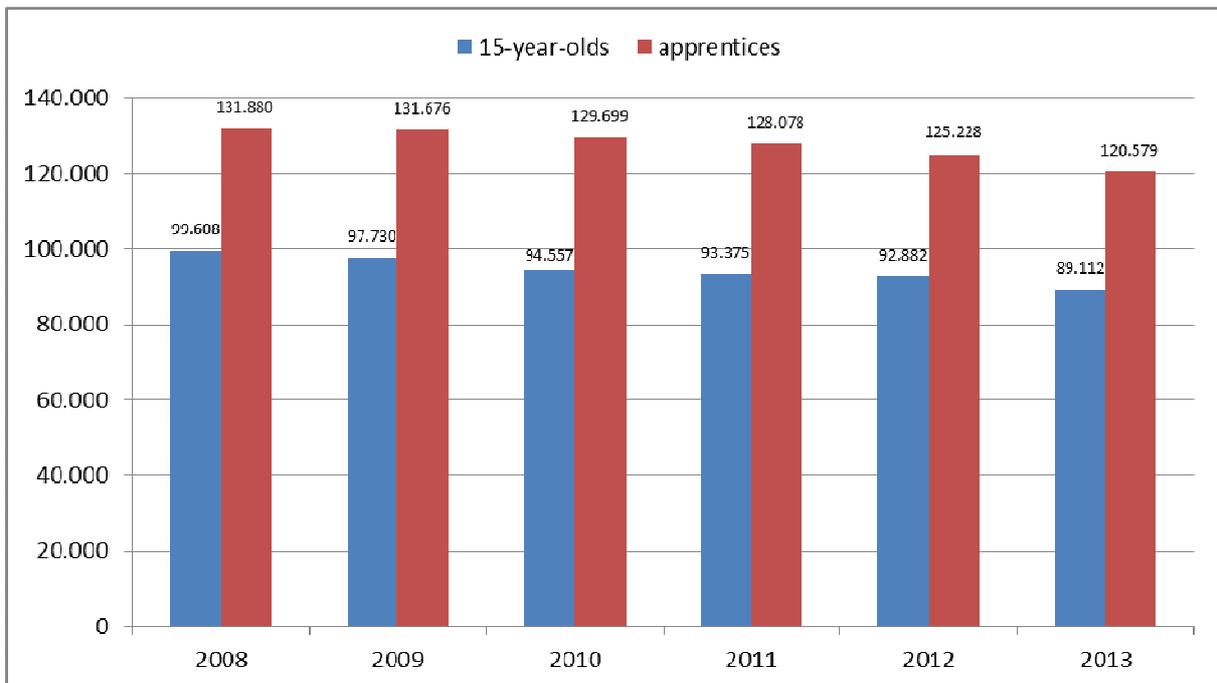
## Annex

Fig. 1: Distribution of students at grade 10 by school type (school year 2011/2012)



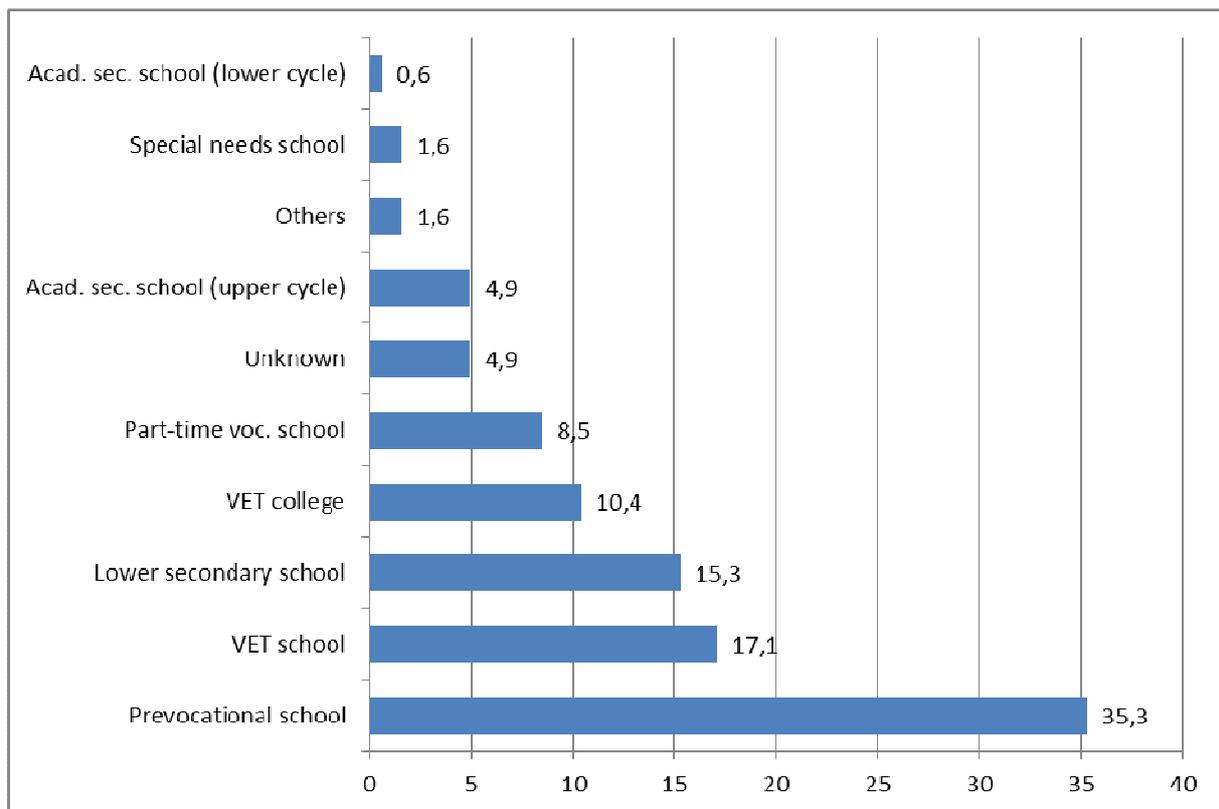
Source: Dornmayr, Nowak 2014

Fig. 2: Development of apprenticeship figures and numbers of 15-year-olds (2013)



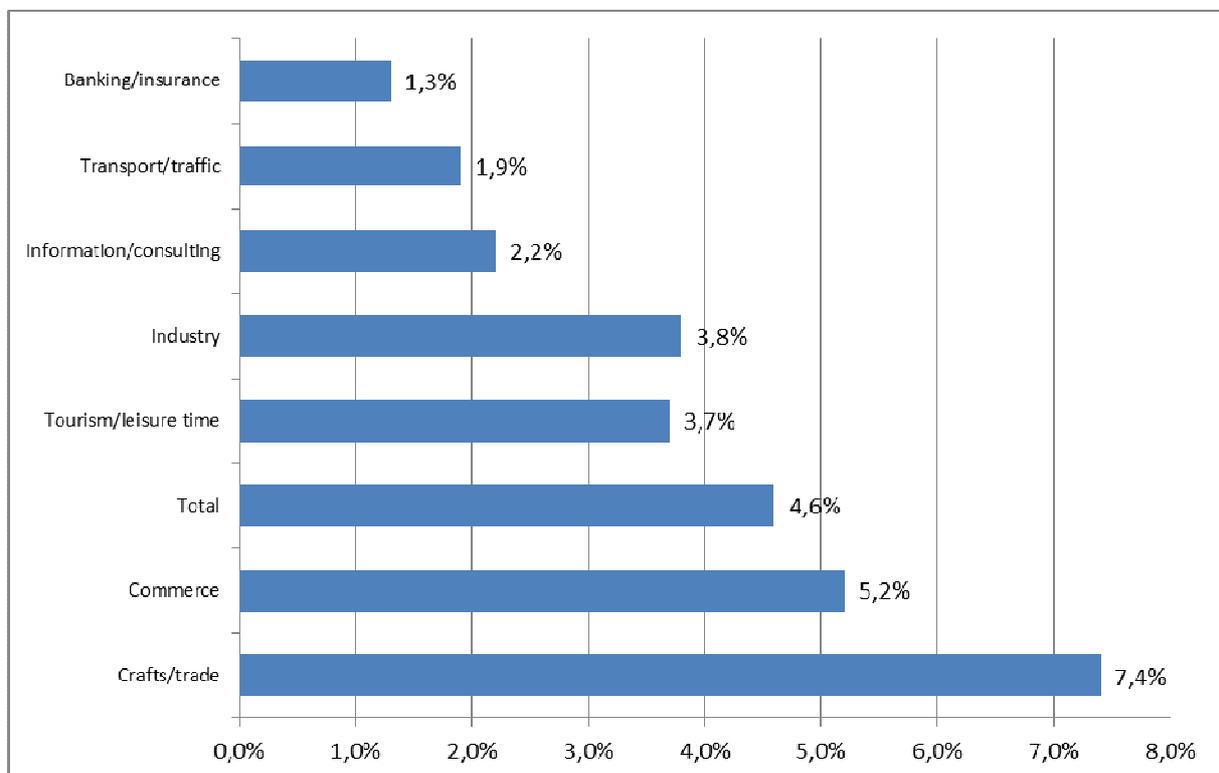
Source: Dornmayr, Nowak 2014

Fig. 3: Qualification entry level of apprentices (2013)



Source: Dornmayr, Nowak 2014

Fig. 4: Apprenticeship quota in economic sectors (2013)



Source: Dornmayr, Nowak 2014

Fig. 5: Gender-specific apprenticeship choice (2013)

Girls			Boys		
Apprenticeship	Number	Share of total number of female apparent.	Apprenticeship	Number	Share of total number of male apprentices
1. Retail trade services	10,964	25.4	1. Metal technology	11,212	13.7
2. Office assistant	5,273	12.2	2. Electrical engineering	8,852	10.8
3. Hairdresser and wigmaker	4,424	10.3	3. Motor vehicle engineering	7,837	9.5
4. Restaurant specialist	1,659	3.8	4. Installations and building technology	4,897	6.0
5. Cook	1,600	3.7	5. Retail trade services	4,887	6.0
6. Gastronomy expert	1,204	2.8	6. Joinery	3,639	4.4
7. Pharmaceutical trade assistance	1,190	2.8	7. Cook	3,055	3.7
8. Hotel and catering assistant	1,164	2.7	8. Bricklayer	2,967	3.6
9. Administration assistant	1,049	2.4	9. Painter and coating technician	1,912	2.3
10. Wholesale trader	783	1.8	10. Mechatronics	1,662	2.0

Source: Dornmayr, Nowak 2014