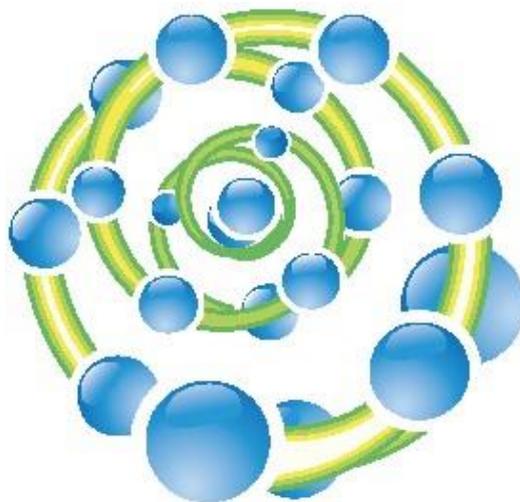


**Supporting teachers and trainers for successful
reforms and quality of VET –
mapping their professional development in the EU**

Austria



eQUIHS

employment • qualification • innovation

This report is part of a series of reports drawn up within Cedefop's reference network ReferNet. The information provided in these reports supplements the reports about VET systems which can be accessed online at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>.

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Author: Elfriede Wagner

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1 Introduction

Vocational education and training (VET) is of major importance in the Austrian education system: 78% of young people who remain in the education system after completing compulsory schooling opt for a vocational pathway.¹ In addition, the VET system is highly differentiated, both in the school-based and in the dual sector. As a consequence, there are many different categories of teachers and trainers, depending on the type of educational establishment and subject taught. The training of these teachers differs considerably in some cases. A first rough **categorisation of teachers** in IVET at upper secondary level provides the following picture:²

- teachers of general education subjects
- teachers of occupation-related theory
- teachers of occupation-related practice
- IVET trainers (company-based part of dual training)

The Austrian VET system is faced with the following **current challenges** regarding teachers:

One major challenge is the **ageing of the teaching staff**: It is expected that almost one third of teachers in the VET school sector (schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education, BMHSs) will retire between 2010 and 2020 (Bruneforth/Lassnigg 2012:48).

Teachers in the VET sector have similar **horizontal and vertical segregation patterns** to the rest of the labour market: Whereas at VET colleges for engineering and crafts only about one quarter of the teaching staff are female, this share is as high as two thirds at schools of business and colleges of business administration, and schools of social occupations even boast a proportion of female teachers of over 80%. As regards managerial positions, however, women are underrepresented: In all school types, the share of women in the management is clearly below their share in the teaching staff (Bruneforth/Lassnigg 2012:49).

¹ Source: Statistics Austria, School Statistics (10th school year 2013/14) – in-house calculations

² Teachers at universities of applied sciences and at universities are not discussed in this report for lack of space, and teachers of the healthcare and nursing professions are not either. Initial and continuing VET of the latter is mainly regulated by the Healthcare and Nursing Act, with the Federal Ministry of Health responsible for its execution.

In Austria there is a lack of **teachers with a migration background** and this picture will, it seems, not change in the near future: Whereas, for example, 12% of pupils at part-time vocational schools for apprentices, 22% at BMSs and 16% at BHSs use a conversational language other than German,³ more than 99% of future teachers trained at university colleges of teacher education for the VET sector have German as their first language (Unger et al. 2012:196).

In the Austrian VET system, **specialist training** and practice are traditionally at the centre of teacher training whereas pedagogical qualifications tend to be assigned less importance. But whereas teachers in the VET school sector need to complete a pedagogical training programme at bachelor's level at the latest after starting their teaching career, legal requirements regarding pedagogical qualifications for company-based trainers are minimal.

In an international comparison, **pedagogical professionalisation** must be considered as rather weak, and the same applies to the connection between pedagogical practice and research. VET research itself (with the exception of business education) is represented only weakly at university level (cf. Lassnigg/Laimer 2013).

At present, teacher education and training is undergoing a comprehensive reform process, the Austria-wide implementation of the new **teacher training scheme** for the secondary level – and therefore for the VET school sector – is not scheduled until the academic year 2016/17. For this reason, this report mainly includes a description of the previous training system, supplemented by explanations on the future system.

³ Source: Statistics Austria 2015:156

2 Teachers in school-based IVET

2.1 Training of teachers

The IVET of teachers at general education and VET schools is **heavily regulated** in Austria.⁴ Depending on the category of teachers there are **four types of educational establishments with competence in this field**:

- a) Since October 2007, prospective teachers have been able to enrol in teacher training programmes at a total of nine **university colleges of teacher education (PHs)**⁵ of the federal government and five private university colleges of teacher education, both for the compulsory schooling sector and for parts of the VET sector. Another focus of PHs is on in-service and continuing training programmes for all teachers. The organisation of PHs is regulated by the Higher Education Act.

Teacher training programmes at PHs provide pedagogical training with a strong practice orientation. PHs are tertiary institutions, graduates are awarded the degree Bachelor of Education. Those who want to voluntarily intensify or specialise their training can attend master's degree programmes directly at the PH or at a university.

Admission to a PH-based programme is governed by the Higher Education Admission Regulation, in most cases there exist several access pathways. A simplified description is provided in Info Box 1 and Info Box 2. In all cases, access to programmes of vocational education/pedagogy⁶ at PHs is linked to an employment contract with a school.

The PHs are within the sphere of competence of the Education Ministry (BMBWF), which also specifies the framework curricula for the study programmes. Based on the Higher Education Act, PH curricula need to list the educational objectives and contents as well as the competences to be acquired.

In the next few years the public PHs will be faced with a pronounced decrease in staff as a result of retirements. According to projections of BMBWF from 2013, it can be expected that by 2025 around 57% of the teaching staff at public PHs will have retired.⁷

- b) The training of teachers of general education subjects⁸ in the VET school sector is held at a total of eight **universities** and six universities of art. Students can enrol for most of the teacher training programmes without going through any admission procedure. In

⁴ Legal bases can mainly be found in the 2005 Higher Education Act and the 2002 Universities Act.

⁵ In 2007, post-secondary teacher training colleges – previously responsible for the training of compulsory school teachers – and federal in-service teacher training colleges – previously responsible for the CVET of teachers – were converted into university colleges of teacher education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*).

⁶ The study of vocational pedagogy entitles graduates to teach occupation-related theory or occupation-related practice at schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education.

⁷ BMBWF, as quoted in Rechnungshof 2014:195.

⁸ General education subjects include humanities and cultural study subjects as well as science and arts subjects.

line with the universities' tradition of research-led teaching, the focuses of teacher training programmes at universities are on subject-specific and teaching-related training.

Universities are subject to the 2002 Universities Act and are within the sphere of competence of the Science Ministry (BMWFW). The curricula for the individual study programmes are specified autonomously by the various universities.

- c) Future teachers of commercial and business-oriented subjects are obliged to complete a programme of business education at a **university**.
- d) The training of teachers for schools for intermediate vocational education in agriculture and forestry, part-time vocational schools for apprentices in agriculture and forestry, as well as of teachers in the subject area agriculture and environment at colleges for advanced vocational education in agriculture and forestry takes place at the **University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy**.

The following two info boxes describe (in a slightly simplified form) the initial training of teachers for VET schools, broken down by school type and subject:

Info Box 1: Training of teachers of general education subjects and occupation-related theory

	General education	General education, business, occupation-related theory	Business subjects	Theory of agriculture and forestry	Theoretical subjects in engineering and crafts
	BMHS	Part-time vocational school	BMHS	BMHS	BMHS
Access requirement	General HE entrance qualification	Completion of a relevant BHS; aptitude test	Bachelor in economics	Completion of a college for advanced vocational education in agriculture and forestry or a partial study at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences	Completion of a relevant technical study; aptitude test
Training	Teacher training diploma programme at university (270 credits)	Part-time bachelor's programme at PH (180 credits)	Master's programme in business education (150 credits) ⁹	Bachelor's programme at the University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy (180 credits) ¹⁰	Part-time programme at PH (15 credits)
Teaching practice	One-year teaching practice after the study, before entry to school service	Supervised school service and school practice studies are included in the curriculum	School practice is integrated into the curriculum	School practice is integrated into the curriculum	Supervised school service and school practice studies are included in the curriculum
Relevant professional practice	-	At least 3 years, <i>before</i> pedagogical training	2 years, <i>after</i> pedagogical training	Teaching practice is integrated into the curriculum	At least 2 or 3 years, <i>before</i> pedagogical training

⁹ Alternatively: diploma programme (270 credits) based on the general higher education entrance qualification (*Matura*)

¹⁰ Alternatively: shortened part-time bachelor's programme for graduates of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences

Info Box 2: Training of teachers of occupation-related practice

	Occupation-related practice in agriculture and forestry	Occupation-related practice in engineering and crafts		Occupation-related practice in engineering and crafts
	BMHS	BMHS		Part-time vocational school
Access requirement	Completion of a college for advanced vocational education in agriculture and forestry or a partial study at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences	Completion of a relevant BHS; aptitude test	Relevant master craftsperson certificate; aptitude test	Relevant master craftsperson certificate or apprenticeship diploma and <i>Studienberechtigungsprüfung</i> ¹¹ ; aptitude test
Training	Bachelor's programme at the University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy (180 credits) ¹²	Part-time bachelor's programme at PH (180 credits)		Part-time bachelor's programme at PH (180 credits)
Teaching practice	School practice is integrated into the curriculum	Supervised school service and school practice studies are included in the curriculum		Supervised school service and school practice studies are included in the curriculum
Relevant professional practice	Teaching practice is integrated into the curriculum	At least 2 years, <i>before</i> pedagogical training	At least 3 years, <i>before</i> pedagogical training	At least 3 years, <i>before</i> pedagogical training

In the past, repeated **bottlenecks in terms of teaching staff** could be observed. In order to be able to maintain school life, however, people were recruited as teachers even though they had not yet completed the required teaching practice after the end of their university study, had not yet completed the basic stage of their teacher training programme or had only completed a programme that was related with the subject to be taught without any pedagogical qualifications.

The following figures reveal both the size and gender distribution of current teachers and students of teacher training programmes: In the school year 2013/14, 11,111 women and 10,557 men taught at BMHSs, 1,664 women and 3,184 men at part-time vocational schools¹³, 283 women and 482 men were enrolled in a teacher training programme for part-time vocational schools¹⁴, and 715 women as well as 483 men in a teacher training programme for a BMHS specialist area.

¹¹ Examination which only grants access to the programme for which it was taken (university, university of applied sciences, university college of teacher education, or post-secondary VET course)

¹² Alternatively: shortened part-time bachelor's programme for graduates of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences

¹³ Source: Statistics Austria, Teacher Statistics

¹⁴ Source: Statistics Austria, Higher Education Statistics

Reform of teacher training in Austria

At present, teacher training is undergoing comprehensive reforms.¹⁵ In the future, only the following three types of teacher training programmes will be offered:

- teacher training programme for primary level,
- teacher training programme for general education subjects at secondary level,
- teacher training programme for occupation-specific subjects at secondary level.

All teacher training programmes will provide for a bachelor's degree programme with 240 credits and a master's degree programme with 60-120 credits, with some of the programmes in the field of VET being clearly shortened due to the option of credit transfer for relevant professional practice (see further below). In the future, (part-time) completion of a master's degree programme will be necessary for being employed in a permanent position.

With the implementation of the teacher training reform, the current teacher training diploma programmes will be converted to the **Bologna structure**, with previous institutions being maintained. In all future programmes there will be admission procedures: PHs already apply different aptitude and admission procedures, and at universities certain procedures will be introduced either before or during the first semester. The introduction to teacher training is under the supervision of a mentor and features reflection-oriented courses at PH in a one-year induction period.

At the core of the new teacher training scheme there is **competence orientation**. The focus is on general pedagogical competence, subject-related and didactic competence, diversity and gender competence, social competence and awareness of the profession. Framework curricula aim to ensure that teacher training is offered based on certain standards throughout Austria. A continued process of competence development in in-service and continuing training aims to ensure that teachers are able to meet the constantly changing professionalisation requirements.

The **Quality Assurance Council** has been set up with the goal of ensuring external quality assurance which provides quality-oriented, academic support for the development of teacher

¹⁵ The legal bases of these reforms are, first and foremost, the Federal Act amending the 2005 Higher Education Act, the 2002 Universities Act and the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Federal Framework Law concerning the introduction of a new teacher training scheme or *Bundesrahmengesetz zur Einführung einer neuen Ausbildung für Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen*), the 2013 Amendment to the Service Code – Pedagogical Service (*Dienstrechts-Novelle 2013 – Pädagogischer Dienst*), as well as the 2013 Higher Education Curricula Ordinance (*Hochschul-Curricula-Verordnung 2013*).

training programmes. The Council's tasks include reviewing the teacher training curricula that should be newly developed and submitting an annual report on the current state of teacher training in Austria.

New teacher training in the field of VET

Future teacher training programmes will be oriented towards a study architecture in conformity with the Bologna Framework and bachelor's programmes will be extended to 240 credits. This is because subject-specific academic parts will be intensified while providing for **stronger interlinking with school-based practice**.

In **teacher training programmes for the VET sector**, a difference will be made between students who already hold a relevant HE degree and those who have not. Lateral entrants who have successfully completed a relevant study programme and can furnish proof of at least three years of relevant professional practice can enrol in part-time short study programmes, with credits being awarded for subject-specific academic contents. These programmes aim to impart pedagogical and didactic contents. It is not mandatory for this group to complete a master's programme.

Those who have not completed a relevant study programme but have a relevant master craftsperson certificate or BHS qualification and professional practice do not need to furnish proof of general higher education entrance qualifications. They need to complete a bachelor's programme, with credits awarded for parts of their previous VET. The need to complete a master's programme can be waived by ordinance of the responsible ministry. In this case, students complete the induction period connected with the bachelor's programme. These regulations for lateral entrants pursue the objective of making the teaching profession more attractive for people with the relevant qualifications.

Graduates of specialist and pedagogical tertiary programmes (i.e. graduates of business education and of agrarian and environmental pedagogy) hold a special position here. They only need to complete the induction period after proving relevant professional practice.

2.2 Continuing education and training of teachers

Teachers at BMHSs are in principle obliged to attend continuing education and training (CET) programmes, with no legal specifications laid down regarding their duration. As a rule,

CET programmes take place during the school year and are offered at PHs. Certain mobility programmes of the European Union are also considered as CET.

Nationwide CET programmes for teachers in the VET sector are planned by the responsible ministry (in coordination with PHs and regional school administration bodies) and announced by decree every spring for the following school year. Registration for courses is possible in the winter semester for the current school year and is done electronically by the teachers who want to take part; however, they need to be matriculated at the PH which offers the respective course. Participation in CET needs to be approved by the school management or regional school inspector.

The main fields of the CET for teachers at PHs are subject-specific academic theory, subject-specific didactics, general pedagogy and personal development.

Other topics are:

- educational standards, implementation of competence orientation in the classroom, and further development of evidence-based school and teaching development
- special courses for the qualification of managers
- in-service teacher training programmes at companies, i.e. teachers cooperate in the company processes to experience the state of the art of developments
- special purpose programmes on English as a conversational and specialist language (more rarely also French and Italian)
- e-learning, e-didactics, blended learning
- inclusive education and inclusive VET
- courses to enhance teaching, diagnostic and support competence to encourage individualisation and differentiation as well as the gifted and talented
- environmental topics, political and democracy education

The Education Ministry set out **quality standards** for in-service and continuing training in a policy document in December 2011.¹⁶

Additional CET options are offered in the form of various part-time university-based CET programmes, which as a rule last four semesters. During its last programming period, the ESF funded a few CET programmes, such as events focusing on qualification requirements in promising economic sectors and the teaching of work-oriented key skills.

¹⁶ See https://www.bmbf.gv.at/ministerium/rs/2011_21.html

2.3 Support for teachers by practice-oriented academic research

In Austria the link between pedagogical research and practice is weak, both regarding the participation of practice in research and in the sense of an academic thinking about practice and its research-led further development (cf. Lassnigg/Laimer 2013). Being well established at university level, the field of business education can be seen as an exception to this.

The Higher Education Act provides for obligatory **research to be conducted on the occupational fields** at PHs and emphasises the connection with teaching. Nevertheless, only 1.4% of the overall staff resources were spent on research in the academic year 2011/12 (Rechnungshof 2014: 249). As part of the reform packages for the further development of PHs, BMBWF has awarded scholarships to PH teaching staff for doctoral and habilitation candidates in the form of leaves of absence. This now aims to strengthen the research competence of PHs.

The platform EPIK (Development of Professionalism in the International Context)¹⁷ aims to link international discourse on the professionalism of teachers with national discussions and to pool competences from the different areas of the system (universities, PHs, school administration) in this process. It is not clear, however, how active and research-led this initiative is.

2.4 Quality assurance initiatives in VET

In 2004 the General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training of the Education Ministry introduced its **quality management** strategy in the form of QIBB (the VET quality initiative)¹⁸. The objective of QIBB is the integration of systematic quality management (QM) to assure and further develop school and teaching quality as well as the quality of administrative services at the governance levels of the federal government, provincial governments, and schools. QIBB aims to support and encourage the autonomous and professional work of actors at every system level. The QM instruments provided in QIBB aim to help to systematically observe, evaluate and reflect on the quality of processes and results to ensure that well-founded measures can be taken. Staff talks and CET for managers, teachers and other staff at schools form part of the QM measures encouraged by QIBB.

¹⁷ See <http://epik.schule.at>.

¹⁸ See <http://www.qibb.at>.

QIBB is one element of the national strategy to implement the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), which was adopted in the context of the Copenhagen process.

ARQA-VET stands for Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training. ARQA-VET supports BMBF in the further development and implementation of QIBB. It sees itself as a point of contact and service provider regarding all issues related to quality in VET and it is a hub in the European EQAVET network. It organises the annual quality network conference on VET in Austria and is responsible for qualifying those who are entrusted with QIBB at schools.

2.5 Conclusions for the school-based VET sector

In the training of teachers for the VET sector, subject-specific relevant expert knowledge and practice are traditionally predominant in Austria whereas pedagogical professionalisation is of secondary importance. With the current reform of teacher training, more importance is being attached to the pedagogical aspect. In previous years, some reforms have already been implemented in the VET sector which impact on teacher training and the work of teachers (such as the introduction of QIBB, educational standards, the centralised upper secondary school-leaving exam, individualised learning support for pupils with learning difficulties). But a teacher training system which, on the one hand, focuses strongly on specialist competences and, on the other, also focuses strongly on IVET made competent implementation of reforms difficult because many teachers did not have the necessary know-how. Seen from that angle, it does not only appear to be a challenge but also an opportunity that significant proportions of teachers are retiring now and in the next few years, which makes it necessary to qualify a large number of new teachers. However, following the present reforms, there is a lack of staff resources in terms of quantity and also quality at training establishments (cf. Lassnigg/Laimer 2013).

When the new service and pay legislation enters into force, all teachers will only be entitled to the statutory holiday period (five weeks as a rule). It will then probably also be easier for them to take part in CET measures during school holidays. But only time will tell if the legal reforms will lead to strategic staff development and teachers will continue developing their competences and will be able to adjust to constantly changing professionalisation requirements.

3 Company-based IVET trainers¹⁹

The **dual IVET system** in Austria is regulated by a **complex governance structure** with a large number of stakeholders and mutual institutional monitoring control. This structure aims to ensure that apprenticeship training is oriented towards the needs of the business world and the labour market.

In the apprenticeship training system, the two places of learning are the training company and the part-time vocational school. Company-based training comprises some 80% of the training time. It is based on a high degree of self-organisation and self-control the legal framework for which is provided by the Ministry of Economy. In most cases, apprentices are involved in the production or service-provision process, which aims to ensure that they acquire the necessary skills under real-life conditions of working life.

The legal bases for apprenticeship are laid down in the **Vocational Training Act**. Training regulations and an examination regulation have been issued for each of the current (as of September 2015) 197 apprenticeship occupations²⁰. These regulations of the Ministry of Economy are, in most cases, combined as “training regulations” and include the specific activity description of the occupation (i.e. occupation-specific tasks), the job profile (or company-based training curriculum, with training contents for the individual apprenticeship years), as well as the contents of the apprenticeship-leave exam. The training companies are obliged to teach the job profile. Depending on the occupation, the apprenticeship lasts for two to four years.

Companies that want to train apprentices are obliged to submit an application for determination of suitability for apprenticeship training to the local competent apprenticeship office²¹ and have a so-called **declaration** issued. The prerequisites for apprenticeship training are, on the one hand, the fulfilment of legal conditions (i.e. the company, pursuant to the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act, needs to be entitled to carry out the activities in which the apprentice is to be trained), and on the other hand the fulfilment of corporate conditions (i.e. the company needs to be equipped and managed in a way that it is in a position to impart to the apprentice all the knowledge and skills included in the job profile – those companies that

¹⁹ As there are hardly any dual training pathways at tertiary level in Austria, this chapter focuses on initial and continuing education and training of in-house company trainers in the dual system at upper secondary level.

²⁰ For the list of apprenticeships, see <http://lehrberufsliste.m-services.at>.

²¹ The apprenticeship offices located in the regional economic chambers act as vocational training authority of the first instance and, at the same time, first point of contact for training companies in issues related to apprenticeship training.

cannot fully impart this knowledge and these skills have the possibility to train apprentices within the framework of a training alliance). In addition, a sufficient number of professionally and pedagogically qualified trainers must be available in the company (“ratio”).²²

The company that is entitled to train apprentices needs to nominate an IVET trainer. As well as having a minimum age of 18 years, an IVET trainer needs to furnish proof of certain qualifications. This proof can take the form of the IVET trainer exam, the IVET trainer course, or a substitute for exam or course attendance (such as the master craftsperson exam, completion of a part-time industrial master college, the entrepreneurial exam). Most IVET trainers carry out their training as part of their main work – as a kind of sideline – but many larger companies also have full-time trainers.

The **IVET trainer exam** is an oral exam based on examples from training practice. It needs to take the following areas into consideration:

- determination of the training objectives based on the job profile,
- planning of the training at the company,
- preparation, implementation and supervision of the training,
- behaviour of the IVET trainer towards the apprentice,
- questions related to the legal bases of the apprenticeship training as well as its position/importance in the Austrian education system.

IVET trainer courses are offered by the adult education establishments of the social partners. They aim to impart, in 40 periods of instruction completed with an expert interview, the necessary pedagogical, psychological, training plan-related and training method-specific as well as legal knowledge and skills required for the training of apprentices. The course contents are the same as those of the IVET trainer exam.

The mandatory basic qualification described above can be supplemented voluntarily by attendance of **CET measures**. For this purpose, programmes are offered at adult education establishments and in some cases in-house CET programmes are also available for IVET trainers. In addition, in recent years so-called **IVET trainer colleges** and IVET trainer forums have been set up in most Austrian provinces with the aim of providing CET specifically for IVET trainers. For the most part they are coordinated by the regional economic chambers in cooperation with the respective chamber’s CET institution. Most of them offer certification in

²² More specifically, this means that, for every five apprentices, there should be at least one VET trainer who is not exclusively entrusted with training tasks, or that for every 15 apprentices there should be at least one VET trainer who is exclusively entrusted with training tasks.

various stages. Furthermore they promote experience exchange and networking between IVET trainers. The latter is also the goal of regional and sector-specific get-togethers for IVET trainers.

The Economic Chamber funds measures related to the CET of IVET trainers in their interaction with apprentices, such as pedagogy, didactics, personal development, diversity, etc. A prerequisite for support is a minimum participation of eight hours. The funding amount totals 75% of the course fees but no more than € 1,000 per trainer and calendar year.

3.1 Quality assurance initiatives in dual training

In Austria, training companies are provided with subject-specific and didactic **training aids** which are either prepared by the representative bodies of the economic sectors or commissioned by the Ministry of Economy or the Federal Economic Chamber, such as the websites www.ausbilder.at and www.qualitaet-lehre.at, or the training folder with information for newcomers to apprenticeship training.

In the last two years, so-called training guidelines have been developed for 14 quantitatively important apprenticeship occupations in a first step. They comprise a general section for all apprenticeship occupations and an occupation-specific section including best-practice examples. They aim to serve as tools to help companies and IVET trainers design and reflect on their own training practice.

In addition, the apprenticeship offices provide free-of-charge **counselling services** on the following topics:

- interaction with apprentices
- subsidies for training companies
- training options for IVET trainers and apprentices
- implementation of company-based training based on quality criteria

Particularly in case of difficulties in interactions with apprentices and the risk of a termination of apprenticeship training, counselling services can be supplemented by coaching services for training companies or their trainers. This **coaching scheme for training companies** – similar to the coaching scheme for apprentices, which will not be covered here – was launched on the initiative of the Ministry of Economy and the Social Ministry in 2012 and 2013 as a pilot project in four Austrian provinces and is scheduled to be extended across the country in 2015.

In 2013 the **Quality Management in Apprenticeship** (QML) initiative was launched. This initiative aims to ensure that more young people complete an apprenticeship and pass the apprenticeship-leave exam – without lowering the level of the exams. QML builds on 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 diploma. In the initial phase of this data-based quality assurance scheme, the focus is on apprenticeships with high numbers of apprentices where the worst indicators are found. More in-depth analyses are conducted for the apprenticeships concerned jointly with the responsible representative bodies to identify the causes as far as possible. On this basis, measures are decided which aim to increase success rates, such as train-the-trainer programmes, supporting materials for training companies, etc.

With the 2015 amendment of the Vocational Training Act a Quality Committee was established. This Committee has the task to develop instruments and measures for quality assurance in VET. These comprise, among others, the implementation of programmes and projects to support apprentices as well as training companies in making apprenticeship training a success.

Conclusions for the company-based VET sector

Although the overwhelming part of apprenticeship training is held in companies and IVET trainers need to take on the role of trainers, mentors, educators and superiors towards their apprentices, the legal requirements for basic qualifications are very low and no requirements are made on their CET. Two reasons are mentioned for this situation: on the one hand, because the task of IVET trainer should be as easily accessible as possible and open to as many people as possible, on the other hand, because apprenticeship training is most often provided by IVET trainers in addition to their activity as skilled workers. This means for company-based training, much more so than for school-based training, that the degree of professionalisation, especially regarding the pedagogical element, is fairly low. Apprenticeship training is considered a self-organising process, the quality of training is seen as being sufficiently ensured by the given standards (declaration, job profile, activity description), by the training companies' own interests in well-qualified staff, and by apprenticeship-leave exams. It is true that Austrian apprentices frequently achieve good results in international competitions. But there are also indications of problems connected with quality such as failed apprenticeship-leave exams, non-appearance at the exam (despite the fact that the training period was completed) and apprenticeship graduates who have difficulties becoming established on the labour market (cf. Lassnigg/Laimer 2013, Dornmayr/Löffler 2014).

4 Abbreviations

ARQA-VET	Österreichische Referenzstelle für Qualität in der Berufsbildung	Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
BAG	Berufsausbildungsgesetz	Vocational Training Act
BHS	Berufsbildende höhere Schule	College for higher vocational education
BMASK	Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen	Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs
BMS	Berufsbildende mittlere Schule	School for intermediate vocational education
BMHS	Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen	Schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education; the VET school sector; VET schools
BMWF	Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft	Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy
EQAVET	Europäische Bezugsrahmen für die Qualitätssicherung in der beruflichen Bildung	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
IHS	Institut für Höhere Studien	Institute for Advanced Studies
PH	Pädagogische Hochschule	University college of teacher education
QIBB	Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung	VET quality initiative
QM	Qualitätsmanagement	Quality management
QML	Qualitätsmanagement Lehrlingsausbildung	Quality Management in Apprenticeship

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