



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the
Development
of Vocational Training

**Progress in implementing European policy priorities for vocational education and training in the Copenhagen process
(2002 – 2010)**

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE DIRECTORS GENERAL FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING

AUSTRIA

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THEME 1: PROGRESS IN MODERNISING EUROPEAN VET SYSTEMS IN THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE CO-OPERATION

1.1 Overall assessment of progress in the Copenhagen process of cooperation in VET and priorities for future cooperation

Since 2002 – since the start of the Copenhagen process – (vocational) education policy in Austria has been dealing with the following priorities of increased cooperation in VET:

- 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
- in association with transparency and the theme of recognition, greater efforts for quality assurance with the processes and learning outcomes (proofs of qualifications) in VET and CVET, also comprising the need for further training of the trainers and teachers.

Various actions and measures were taken here. The focus here was 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.

Since 2005 one key theme of VET in Austria or of the General Directorate for VET in the BM:UKK has been the “quality of VET”. The VET Quality Initiative (QIBB) was launched; one part of this is the project “Educational Standards in VET”.

Future strategic priorities are permeability, flexibility, partnership and equality of opportunities as part of the strategic framework for Education & Training 2020 and the post-Lisbon strategy EU 2020.

1.2 Governance, cooperation and ownership¹ of the different actors in the Copenhagen process

- a) Has the open method of coordination in the Copenhagen process allowed all stakeholders, including social partners, to contribute to modernising VET in the EU? Please explain and indicate strengths and weaknesses of the governance structure at European level.

One strength of the open method of coordination is the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, ACVT. In this the social partners and also the employers and employees are integrated efficiently at the European level. The Committee provides a formal forum in which, at the

¹ “Ownership” refers here to the respective capacities of different stakeholders, their power or capacity to set and take responsibility for the Copenhagen agenda at both country level and European level.

European level, the opinions of all national representatives of VET and the national stakeholders involved in this are/can be incorporated very well.

This control structure has weaknesses, however, in that results obtained at the European level can hardly be incorporated in the different national levels of the member states. The cooperation at the European level in the bodies of the Educational Committee and the ACVT also often proves difficult due to the differences between the VET systems in the European member states.

- b) What is your opinion on legal and/or regulatory changes which took or will need to take place to implement priorities of the Copenhagen process?

Legal and regulatory changes to successfully implement the priorities of the Copenhagen process are incumbent on the respective member states.

1.3 External dimension of European cooperation in VET

- a) Please indicate the most important regions/countries outside the EU with which your country cooperates in VET and strategic fields you cooperate in.

The countries of the Western Balkans are a particular area of focus for the Austrian educational cooperation. Austria has a network of educational coordinators with offices in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Albania, many projects have been carried out to develop educational and VET systems in the Western Balkans and to come more in line with EU education policy, for example regional projects on the themes of tourism training and training companies (these are virtual companies to train business practice in all areas). In Shkoder (Albania) an Austrian College of Engineering with focus on Information Technology has been set up. The cultural association Kulturkontakt, with financial support from the Austrian Development Agency, is developing many projects in the region in cooperation with the educational coordinators.

Austria also supports educational reform measures in Southeast Europe within the framework of the Regional Cooperation Council and the Education Reform Initiative of South-Eastern Europe.

Currently in Austria there is also growing interest in cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus and also Turkey. At the moment there are educational coordinators in Russia (St. Petersburg), Ukraine (Odessa) and Moldova (Chişinău). The intercultural centre promotes school partnerships in the region and also with the countries of the Western Balkans.

Austria's well-developed and efficient VET system also attracts interest worldwide. Each year a large number of high-ranking delegations from many countries all over the world visit Austria to find out more about Austrian VET.

Many VET schools and colleges in Austria promote foreign partner schools and also offer in-service and further training seminars for teachers and educational experts, in some cases on a commercial basis.

There is also an intensive partnership with the Southern Chinese province of Canton, with which a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in VET has been signed. Many teach-

ers have come to further training at Austrian colleges of engineering (*HTLs*), vocational schools and colleges and *Fachhochschulen*. When they return they take up important positions at VET schools and colleges and in authorities in the province of Canton, and as part of the project Austrian companies also have contacts in Canton.

- a) In which new fields and countries/regions would it be desirable to coordinate, at EU level, to support 'openness of VET to the world'?
- o Better positioning of Europe as an educational location in the world and the implementation of projects including on a commercial basis would be new possible fields of activity.
- o Candidate countries should be systematically introduced to the EU education policy and its instruments.
- o European Neighbourhood Policy: introduction to EU education policy and instruments for the countries which are open to this.
- o Other countries: there is particular interest in cooperation with the "major economies", for example Brazil, USA, Russia, China, India, Japan. For some of these countries it is difficult to find reliable data for the education and VET systems, this could be provided by the EU. Bilateral cooperation programmes, like the ones which in some cases exist for the HE sector, could also be initiated for VET. Promoting the learning of non-EU languages could also be considered, the EU could also be used as a platform to sell Europe better as an educational location.
- o Non-European OECD countries could be another focus of cooperation.

As part of the development cooperation of the EU, education and VET could be attached more importance and improved cooperation could be sought between the GDs AidCO and EAC.

THEME 2: SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE VET POLICY DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Impact of globalisation on VET

In 2007/08 because of the importance of foreign trade for Austria and the effects of globalisation, 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 small and medium-sized enterprises
7. intelligent regulation: increase quality – reduce density
8. use coordination processes efficiently
9. promote development and corporate responsibility
10. build up the 'brand Austria'

The objectives of this measure were:

- to clarify the new challenges of foreign trade,
- 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, Austria's 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 foreign trade mission statement is aimed at all actors and institutions involved in foreign trade: companies, coordinating institutions (e.g. the social partners and research and innovation promotion), governance systems, the education sector, research.

With the foreign trade mission statement, the education sector will be put in a wider context. The first of the ten formulated requirements is 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. This includes in particular openness to internationality and interculturality in general and the international economy in particular.
6. Mobility contributes to both the acquisition of the competences needed by foreign trade and also to optimisation with the allocation of human resources.
7. Companies have to complement their internationalisation activities with targeted and strategic HR development concepts.
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.
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.

The internationalisation of the HE sector, for example because of the Bologna process, has effects on the curricula, the forms of teaching and learning, teachers etc. at the *Fachhochschulen*, which provide academically-founded vocational education at the HE level.

With the accreditation of *Fachhochschule* courses, the international and therefore global development perspectives are attached particular importance. In addition, in many *Fachhochschule* courses, parts of the studies have to be completed abroad; this means an important contribution to the education and training of *Fachhochschule* students will be guaranteed. The internationalisation and therefore globalisation will continue to be one of the key points for the accreditation or reaccreditation of *Fachhochschule* courses.

2.2 Impact of technological progress on VET

- a) Which elements of your VET system (curricula, pedagogies, sectors and study fields, training providers, finance, governance, teachers and trainers) are most affected by technological progress, in which fields and how?

In education and training at VET schools and colleges, the basic alignment towards citizenship and employability means that technological progress has to be considered both in the curricula and also in the lesson design. IT and media competence is, on the one hand, an essential interdisciplinary theme for all education and training courses, and on the other hand technological developments are integrated in the relevant subjects. In the area of methodology and didactics there are great opportunities for development with the use of blended learning.

FutureLearning – the successful next development of the eFit initiative

The BM:UKK is making an ongoing contribution to help keep PC and internet use active in lessons by introducing broad programme designs. The use of learning platforms or “social software” (wikis, weblogs, social bookmarking, ePortfolios) are important examples of the recognition of new communication and work forms. “FutureLearning”, the IT implementation project begun in 2007, will be continued accordingly with adapted goals.

The areas of focus of the BM:UKK’s “Futur(e)Learning II” initiative are:

1. Support for new forms of learning and learning arrangements by central services

2. Modern in-service teacher training at all levels
3. Promotion of a culture of innovative pilot projects

The specific measures can be outlined as follows for the corresponding areas of focus:

1. Individualisation and Web 2.0 tools
2. Learning platforms – edumoodle and others
3. e-Content for the learning process
4. Innovative pilot projects (Open Source Initiative, active boards, game-based learning, equipment guidelines and room concepts, internet security and internet policy, artistic/creative projects).

http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/17328/fl_ii.pdf

New technologies in teaching and learning processes

Information and communication technologies in the classroom

To optimise the teaching quality and output of VET many different media are used, and here the medium in the learning process always has a serving function. Information and communication technologies can be used in all subjects. Elements of eLearning and blended learning also support and complement the teaching organisation.

Fachhochschule courses

Fachhochschule courses are vocational courses whose curricula have to be designed in such a way that graduates have reasonable chances of finding a professional activity corresponding with their qualifications. Technological progress is taken into consideration accordingly when designing the curricula. Basically engineering courses are affected by this in the *Fachhochschule* sector.

b) Which VET initiatives are you planning in the short and long terms in response?

The curricula of all VET schools and colleges are periodically evaluated and updated. Thanks to the ongoing feedback with the users (companies, institutions, tertiary sector) and the close link with the economy (teachers with many years of business practice, work placements for pupils), it can be ensured that developments in the area of new technologies/new changes are recognised in good time.

Technical/scientific courses will remain an important focal point of the *Fachhochschule* sector.

2.3 Impact of demographic change and international migration on VET

In the future, the Austrian population will continue to decline based on the birth rate, the population will grow only because of 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.

Certain groups of immigrants are clearly less qualified than the average among the population. There is also the problem that qualifications obtained abroad are usually not recognised and the people (have to) accept jobs without qualification requirements or with different qualification

requirements. 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.

Pupils with first languages other than German

in absolute figures

AUSTRIA	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Part-time vocational schools	7,305	8,039	7,057	7,345	7,968	10,593	11,012
VET schools	5,221	5,940	6,332	7,324	7,535	8,078	8,361
VET colleges	8,198	9,332	9,826	11,105	11,698	13,240	14,226
Teacher training colleges	106	127	202	220	209	237	252
VET schools and colleges	20,830	23,438	23,417	25,994	27,410	32,148	33,851

http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/8953/info_2_2009.pdf

Pupils with first languages other than German

in percentages

AUSTRIA	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Part-time vocational schools	5.5	6.2	5.6	5.9	6.2	7.9	8.1
VET schools	10.7	12	12.5	13.4	14.2	15.4	16.1
VET colleges	6.6	7.4	7.7	8.4	8.7	9.8	10.5
Teacher training colleges	1.2	1.4	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.6	2.7
VET schools and colleges				8.1	8.4	9.7	10.2

http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/8953/info_2_2009.pdf

The BM:UKK created the “Migration, Intercultural Education and Language Policy” department to pay sufficient attention to the issue of migration in the school system and to ensure coordination of the activities in this area.

At VET schools and colleges within the framework of the VET Quality Initiative (QIBB) with focus on individualisation, measures are also planned and implemented to make the most of the opportunities of interculturality and promote youths with a migration background.

European Year of Intercultural Dialogue – Austria’s contribution

The **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 (EYID 2008)** pursues the following goals:

- to raise awareness among as many citizens as possible about the importance of intercultural dialogue in everyday life
- to generate interest in and curiosity about different cultures in our life and working environment
- to promote acceptance, mutual understanding and dialogue between people from different cultures
- to reflect on differences constructively
- to promote active participation in social life of all people living in Europe
- to strengthen the citizens' intercultural competences, which constitute an important requirement for professional and social success

- to strengthen a solidary and pluralistic society and to demonstrate constructive conflict resolution models
- to make projects with a model character visible for a broad public in the area of inter-cultural dialogue and to establish networks here.

<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/europa/ejid/ziele.xml>

Pupils and other groups of people in the education sector (teachers etc.) were one of the major **target groups** of the activities.

The initiative was carried out in the course of 2008. As part of the implementation, many events and school projects on this theme were promoted. The BM:UKK 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 4000 pupils in a competition as part of the Europe Project 2008 (<http://www.projekt-europa.at/>; this project is also being continued).

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).

- a) Which VET initiatives are you planning to cope with the effects of demographic change, for example, fewer young and more older people?

The following measures for more equality of opportunities at Austrian schools can be mentioned:

- **Early language promotion**
All children who do not yet have a good command of the German language will attend a “compulsory” year at nursery school before starting school. This means that in particular children from socially weaker groups and children with a migration background have the best-possible start to school. For this measure the federal government has increased its investments for language promotion at the nursery school level to five million euros a year in the next three years, a tenfold increase. The provinces implement this measure. Each child who goes to the first primary school class needs to have command of the German language.
- **Extension and expansion of language support classes for irregular pupils**
The German support classes for children who come to Austria and do not yet have command of the German language are being extended in primary school and the offer is being expanded to the lower secondary schools and prevocational schools. German language skills are essential for successful integration and equal opportunities at school and in careers. The increase in funds proposed as part of the integration platform for schools with a high percentage of pupils with a migration background is welcomed and included in budget negotiations.
- **Expansion of daycare**
The number of available daycare places has already been increased this year by 40 percent to 95,000 places. The daycare must be of the highest quality so that parents who work also accept this offer for their children. Daycare must not be a “storage centre for children”, it must be an attractive combination of learning opportunities and leisure. This is why a quality seal was created for successful daycare. New, better rooms must also be created for daycare. The major school development programme, which will be enacted in autumn with funding of one billion euros, will provide more rooms for leisure, learning and sport. This measure is particularly important for single mothers.
- **New secondary school**
In autumn 2008 the new secondary school started in 167 classes at 67 school locations in five federal provinces. Around 3,500 pupils will benefit from the new secondary school. The new, performance-oriented and equal-opportunity school will prove that with later separation of children, more equality of opportunities and better performances are not contradictory. With individualisation and the promotion of all aptitudes and talents, the

best possible preparation is made for the pupils' educational career choice at the age of 14. The new secondary school will be the BETTER school for ALL children. As well as the launch of the first new secondary schools, the launch of the new secondary school scheme is also being prepared in the other federal provinces. The next objective is the launch of the new secondary school in all federal provinces in the 2009/10 school year.

- **More aid for pupils**

The aid for pupils has already been increased in this school year by 13%. The aid for pupils supports children from socially weaker environments to help them obtain intermediate and higher school qualifications.

- **Berufsmatura**

In autumn the *Berufsmatura* will already be starting in a nationwide pilot phase. In the future apprentices will be able to do the *Matura* free of charge alongside their apprenticeship. This is a key project to upgrade apprenticeships. This means we are giving apprentices the opportunity to obtain further education and training at *Fachhochschulen*, universities and other institutions. The federal government pays for the preparation courses. Three of four exams can already be taken during the apprenticeship, the last when the candidates are 19. No education path may become an "educational cul-de-sac", so this project is one of the most important projects for lifelong learning which is implemented in close cooperation with the social partners

The Fachhochschule sector

Offers for non-traditional students are an integral component in the *Fachhochschule* sector. At the *Fachhochschulen* part-time courses for people in employment are available, and relevant vocational qualifications are credited for the studies. *Fachhochschulen* can also offer target group-specific courses and programmes for CVET, which are aimed in particular at people with professional experience or who are interested in gaining further qualifications.

- b) Which VET initiatives are you planning to cope with the effects of international migration (emigration and immigration) on VET in your country?

Basic education for immigrants

As part of the ESF, the BM:UJK promotes measures in adult learning which improve access to lifelong learning for immigrants and increase their educational and career options.

These measures take into consideration the particular living conditions of the target group and, with easily accessible education offers and coaching, provide entry to an educational path which ranges from literacy and basic education measures to obtaining qualifications in second-chance education as well as CET programmes.

Language promotion for migrants is not isolated, it is part of educational measures which, as well as language competence (literacy, German and native language), teach competences in the fields of EDP, mathematics, political education and also learning to learn and social competence. Accompanying multilingual offers such as educational counselling, coaching, mentoring and peer groups ensure the long-lasting effect of the educational measures.

Training programmes for trainers in the areas of literacy, basic education and second-language acquisition for immigrants as well as models for structured presentation of existing compe-

tences are currently being developed throughout Austria. These competence profiles can be used as a basis for individual educational plans and also as proof on the labour market.

The particular target group are trainers with a migration background.

In the next three years a total of around 3.4 million euros will be provided for this purpose.

Class divisions in the 9th grade

As part of the initiative for the individualisation of teaching and to improve the academic performance of the pupils at *BMHSs*, from the 2007/08 school year it became possible to divide the compulsory subject German in the 9th grade and from the 2008/09 school year it was possible for further divisions in the 9th grade (in applied mathematics and a relevant compulsory subject) (with the creation of additional teacher hours by the BM:UKK). The teacher hours are allocated in a way that divisions in large classes (with more than 30 pupils) can be made in order to support pupil-focused teaching.

The divisions of classes in the 9th grade have improved the annual assessments at colleges in the compulsory subjects German and applied mathematics; the improvement can be seen both in the percentage of pupils successfully completing a year and also in the average grades of the class. The improvements are around 4% with the number of positive assessments, with the average class values between 3% and 6% compared with the corresponding average class values in the undivided classes. An increase in the positive effects of class divisions must be expected if the already introduced educational programmes (using the opportunities of smaller classes with corresponding forms of teaching and learning) take effect.

On account of the visible successes in the 2008/09 school year, a continuation of the “division initiative in the 9th grade” and an extension of this to the 10th grade are recommended.

Project: Transition stage of HTBL of Vienna 10

At the Federal College of Engineering (HTBL) of Vienna 10, in the 2008/09 school year so-called transition stages were established for the three classes electrical engineering, electronics and mechanical engineering.

These have the tasks of preparing pupils who

- have successfully completed the eighth grade but have not passed the entrance examination and are therefore not yet suitable for entry into the first class or first year of a VET school or college or
- have been accepted in the first class or the first year of a VET school or college but cannot be expected to participate successfully in the lessons

for successful attendance of the first class or first year of a VET school or college by repeating, complementing and ensuring the required skills and knowledge.

The transition stage is offered as a 1-year course which enables the participants to complete their compulsory schooling at the ninth grade. Positive completion of the transition stage also enables participants to enter the first class of a VET school or college. The concept is essentially based on the principles of a small class (15 pupils) and teaching in the core subjects of German, English and mathematics with six hours each per week.

An initial assessment of the academic support shows that the transition stage model has an entirely positive effect on the particularly hard to categorise student population (only male stu-

dents, high percentage of students with a migration background, educationally-deprived environment, lack of language skills). In the 2009/10 school year another transition stage will be offered, and at the same time the further school path and success of the graduates of the first year will be supported academically.

Fachhochschule sector

On account of the expected decline in the number of *Matura* holders in the future, it will be necessary to increase the percentage of non-traditional students (with a migration background).

2.4 Impact of a 'greening economy' on VET

Initiative "Education for Sustainable Development"

This sustainability strategy was enacted at the end of 2008 in the Ministerial Council and within the framework of education policy pursues a 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)

Continuing the Austrian sustainability strategy, the ESD was developed in a consultative process in 2007 (BMLFUW, BM:UKK and BMWF 2008). Implementation began in 2009.

The national measure (regional and local levels are included) 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.

Fachhochschule courses related to the specialist areas of environmental engineering and environmental bio-resource management need to teach corresponding awareness of the problems and competences.

- c) Please indicate whether response strategies responding to these challenges should or could be coordinated at European level.

A joint EU strategy could be helpful for elaborating corresponding study programmes.

2.5 Other challenges for VET

a) Which other major challenges must VET policy address in the future in your country?

- § 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

THEME 3: ECONOMIC CRISIS – VET POLICIES AS RECOVERY MEASURES

3.1 Impact of the crisis on VET

In the **formal education system** there are no effects of the current financial and economic crisis. But it is fairly unlikely that there will be any consequences for the formal system (particularly the full-time VET sector) at all, as it mainly comprises long-term programmes that provide education in different specialisations and thus offer students a wide variety of career options. At the present time it cannot be said (although it seems rather unlikely) whether demand for fairly crisis-resistant service-oriented specialisations (such as tourism, clerical work, etc.) will perhaps increase, while technology-focused specialisations (such as construction, electronics, mechatronics, etc.) will be less in demand due to their proximity to the industrial sector, which is more susceptible to the crisis.

It is only in the field of **apprenticeship training** (i.e. the dual training sector) – an educational programme that must also be assigned to formal learning – that any consequences might be felt, although this cannot be predicted at present. Some 80% of apprenticeship training is held in companies, which provide training on a voluntary basis and in a primarily needs-oriented manner. Waning production and falling orders due to the crisis have repeatedly led to short-time work and plant closures, for which reason apprenticeship training is more 'exposed to the crisis'. Nevertheless most recent figures reveal that companies have not yet reduced apprenticeship training – on the contrary: currently there are more apprentices than in the comparison period last year. According to the apprenticeship statistics published by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) there were a total of 123,105 apprentices by late March 2009. This equals a plus of 1.3% year on year. In addition, companies repeatedly underline that they will not reduce their training activities, as they expect an increase in demand for skilled workers after the crisis. Trade unions, however, fear a reduction in the companies' willingness to train apprentices. But this contrasts with figures provided by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), according to which "apprenticeship posts not immediately registered as vacant" (i.e. apprenticeship places that – although reported as vacant to AMS – are later filled) exceed the number of "apprenticeship post seekers not immediately available" (i.e. young people who have already been registered as apprenticeship seekers but take an apprenticeship post only at a later date). The calculated surplus of apprenticeship posts is slightly more than 7,000 as of late March 2009. This figure, which relates to the near future, is significant mainly because the majority of apprentices are recruited in the summer or early autumn (between August and October). Concrete figures relating to the actual development of the apprenticeship post market in 2009 will not be available before the spring of 2010. Only then will concrete statements be possible about whether the crisis has had any impact on the employers' willingness to train and the apprentices' choice of apprenticeship trades.

	Vacant apprenticeship posts	Apprenticeship seekers
1994	7750	4986
1995	5719	5563
1996	3282	7924
1997	3791	9032
1998	2311	7323
1999	2616	4957
2000	3098	4906
2001	3482	5483
2002	2887	6101
2003	2823	7434
2004	2750	7334
2005	4224	7898
2006	4648	7511
2007	4759	6923
2008	4951	7470
2009	4234	7407

Source: Information available on request by e-mail; BMWFJ. Youths registered with the AMS looking for an apprenticeship.

Whereas the effects of the crisis are not yet visible in the formal education system, consequences can already be seen in the **non-formal sector** (i.e. in the field of learning outside formal educational institutions). This involves first and foremost the provision and promotion of training measures for people who are affected by short-time work or unemployment. Year on year, the number of training participants increased by 17.8% in April 2009, according to AMS. Overall more than 64,000 people are enrolled in programmes organised within the so-called 'active labour market policy'.

- a) What are the main VET measures already introduced (or planned) in your country because of the crisis?

Against the background of the negative economic development and employment trend in Austria, several initiatives have been planned within the governmental programme from 23rd of November 2008². The main aim is the preservation of jobs and the support of job applicants to help them adapt to changed structures of the labour market and to gain new qualifications.

One of the measures in 2009 was the **Kurzarbeit** (short-time work) which has been reformed in March. It is now possible to use reduced working hours for further education. The specific grants for reduced working hours have been raised to 15% to set additional incentives for employees. In most cases 60% of fees for courses can be granted by the European Social Fund; 40% have to be paid by the enterprise. In mid-April 2009 about 47,300 people were using the measure of short-time work.

This measure is targeted toward the individual and aims to empower the individual by providing the possibility to visit training courses during reduced working hours because of short-time work.

² This information has already been sent in preparation for the Swedish presidency and the conference "The role of VET in meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow" in November 2009.

Another measure to enable extra-occupational qualifications was the implementation of the “**Weiterbildungsgeld**” (financial support for further education) within unemployment insurance. It is possible to draw this money for three to twelve months at the amount of the respective unemployment benefit. With the measure “Bildungskarenz plus” the model is now even more attractive. In 2009 increased use can be seen – from January to March 2009 2,635 people were given money for further education. This means an increase of about 260% compared to 2008. This measure is targeted toward the individual and aims to empower the individual by helping with the obtainment of qualifications.

Another focus in 2009 was on the **programme for qualification of unemployed people**. In March 2009 38,875 people over the age of 25 were registered as participants in training courses at the Public Employment Service Austria. That means an increase of about 21% compared to 2008. There has been particular focus on the target group of young people, but current programmes are also focused on ensuring there is an adequate number of skilled workers and preventing a lack of skilled workers on the labour market.

Since the **Vocational Training Act (BAG) amendment in 2008** it has been, possible pursuant to §30 BAG – Supra-Company Apprenticeship Training, to complete apprenticeship training in a training establishment. The training of youths in a training establishment is subject to the approval of the BMWFJ, this checks the organisation and equipment in the establishment, the availability of corresponding training staff, the financing and quality of the apprenticeship training. If the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), in accordance with the guidelines of the administrative council for supra-company apprenticeship training which contain quality standards comparable with the provisions of §30, commissions a training establishment with supra-company apprenticeship training, pursuant to §30 b BAG no approval of the BMWFJ is necessary for the period the training is commissioned.

For 2009/10 as part of the training guarantee there are a total of 12,300 training places available, with 1,250 of these reserved for people who are disadvantaged on the labour market (integrative VET).

To cover the skilled workers' gap and for youth employment there is also a package of measures which is not directly regulated by the Vocational Training Act or via school laws, e. g:

Implacement foundation for irregular apprenticeship qualifications

The implacement foundation is a very successful labour market policy tool which enables job-seekers to gain qualifications which are in line with company requirements. The training consists of theory and practice and is also aligned with the future workplace. In sectors where there is a lack of skilled workers, the implacement foundation provides companies with the opportunity to have the sought skilled workers trained specifically for their requirements. At the same time the implacement foundation offers jobseekers the opportunity of a qualification with a guaranteed job after the training. Training courses with a final apprenticeship examination need to be offered here based on the requirements of a modern world of work.

Intensive training for skilled workers

For youths from the age of 17 (only candidates who have reached the age of 18 can take the final apprenticeship examination) who have stopped their education/training. Acquisition of apprenticeship qualifications in related apprenticeship occupations also needs to be possible (additional exams).

The “**Jugendbeschäftigungspaket**” (**Youth Employment Package**) 2008 contains a training guarantee for young people who cannot be placed into regular apprenticeship posts: the amendment of the Vocational Training Act in 2008 entitles the Public Employment Service Austria to establish and commission suitable training institutions to provide supra-company apprenticeship training which can cover the entire training period of apprenticeship training in the respective trade. Linked to this innovation, bureaucracy has been reduced: the authorisation of the BMWFJ is not necessary if the body commissioned by the Public Employment Service and the vocational training offered meet the quality standards defined by the guidelines issued by the Governing Board of the Public Employment Service.

Comparable programmes have been running for the last few years and have been financed by funds of the labour market policy: in the form of courses over several months, a number of training places were provided to people unable to find employment on the regular apprenticeship training market, with the option of renewal at the end of a training measure. In the year 2009/2010 approximately 12,000 training places with tailor-made training offers relating to different apprenticeship trades will be available. This kind of training is an integrative part and comparable element of the apprenticeship training and can cover the entire training period. These labour market-driven measures are certainly substitutional: the priority is company-based VET. Therefore, training institutions are obliged to make targeted efforts to transfer the young person to a company-based apprenticeship.

This measure is targeted toward the individual (by providing a training place to people who failed to find employment in the regular training market) and aims to empower the individual by providing a tailor-made training programme to become a skilled worker.

Pact for Apprenticeship Training: In the so-called Pact for Apprenticeship Training, 1,200 companies have provided a commitment so far to the BMWFJ to offer the same or an increasing number of apprenticeship posts in 2010 compared to 2009.

The initiative was started by the BMWFJ 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.

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.

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. The measure is not an individual measure, it is in the context of the youth employment package which was already agreed before the crisis.

Fit for Future (book): The purpose of the "Fit for Future" award, conferred as a state prize since 2008, is to spotlight those training enterprises which stand out with exemplary and future-oriented training methods, concepts and practices and also to make their forms of training available to other companies involved in company-based apprenticeship training. This will improve the transfer of innovative training practice and also the quality of apprenticeship training.

THEME 4: IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF JOINT WORK ON EUROPEAN PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS

4.1 Transparency of qualifications

- a) Please assess the overall impact of the European principles and tools on transparency of qualifications:

Since 2007 the Austrian **Lifelong Learning (LLL) strategy** has been in the form of guidelines which were compiled by an expert consortium (cf. BM:UKK 2008 and Tritscher-Archan and Mayr 2008, p. 21ff).

Here a consultation process involving all stakeholders was carried out from June to November 2008. Since January 2009 a five-member, independent team of academics have been working on analysing the statements they have received and on recommendations for the next action steps to implement the LLL strategy. In 2009 the Ministerial Council was officially informed about the outcomes of the consultation process and an interdepartmental decision was made about the further course of action.

The five guidelines of the LLL strategy are:

1. Life-stage orientation
2. Focus on learners
3. Lifelong guidance
4. Competence orientation
5. Promoting participation in LLL

Lines of action of the LLL strategy

1. Strengthening *pre-school learning and education* as a longer-term basic requirement
2. *Basic education and equality of opportunities* as a foundation in the school and initial education sectors
3. Free-of-charge *obtainment of fundamental qualifications in second-chance education* up to the *Berufsreifepfung (BRP)*
4. Expansion of *alternative transition systems* in particular at the second threshold (transition to professional life)
5. Funding structures, counselling offers and taking work-life balance into consideration with collective bargaining agreements to improve the *reconciliation between education, family and career*
6. Infrastructure measures which facilitate *reorientation in education and career*
7. Ensuring *basic education and basic competences in adulthood*
8. Improving *community education approaches* using communal facilities and in organised civil society
9. Expansion of *non-formal educational offers* in non-school youth education, CVET and general adult learning
10. Promotion of *learning-friendly working environments*
11. Improving quality of life with *education in later adulthood*, in particular for socially disadvantaged senior citizens

12. Developing procedures to recognise non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and competences in all education sectors

Priorities of the LLL strategy

- Evaluation of the status of development with activities and good practice in the 12 lines of action in terms of the contribution to the LLL system and the expected effects; the basis here is a refinement and empirical implementation of the LLL indicator system
- Four interdepartmental development programmes for the transversal main paths teaching/learning methods and teaching/learning architectures, subject support models, requirements analyses and learning-to-learn competence; particular consideration of the line of action of reconciling education, family and career and the professionalisation of pedagogical skilled workers in all areas
- At least one excellent pioneering pilot project each for the lines of action pre-school, innovative transition policy, reorientation, community education, expansion of non-formal offers, learning-friendly working environments, and recognition of competences
- For obtaining qualifications in second-chance education as well as basic education, conclusion and implementation of the preliminary work of the Bund-Länder Commission between the federal government and the provinces on new support schemes in adult learning and adjustment of the targets based on extended requirements analyses. In basic education: expansion of the offers to cover Austria
- Development programme for daycare offers to reconcile education, family and career in synergy with pre-school and initial education
- Development programme to improve equality of opportunities in non-formal CET/adult learning in synergy with the development of offers for quality of life for older people
- Funding programme for equality of opportunities in initial education in synergy with transversal main paths of teaching/learning methods and teaching/learning architectures, subject support models and learning competence

4.2 Impact of European principles and tools on national LLL policies and practices and VET developments

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

The NQF development process started after the EQF consultation process in 2006. Most Austrian stakeholders involved in the consultation process agreed on the need for developing a NQF. The first “fact-finding phase” (February to October 2007) aimed to gather and analyse information, to do research work and to prepare a consultation paper. This document was used in a broad national consultation process which took place from January to September 2008. A total of 270 responses were received and the evaluation team presented its conclusions and recommendations to the national steering group in November 2008. The report (Konsolidierung der Stellungnahme zum Konsultationspapier – Consolidation of Opinions on the Consultation Paper) analysing the feedback from different stakeholders identified a number of open questions and challenges for the further development of the NQF (see below).

Based on the results of a broad consultation process (see involvement of stakeholders), the BM:UKK and BMWF are preparing a policy paper to devise the strategy for the Austrian NQF implementation.

Rationale and the main policy objectives

The main objective of the Austrian NQF is to map all obtainable national qualifications and present them in relation to each other and to make implicit levels of the Austrian qualification system explicit. NQF should help to make Austrian qualifications better understood and internally comparable.

In addition, the main objectives are to:

- Facilitate clear referencing of Austrian qualifications to the EQF;
- Improve pathways between VET and HE;
- Promote the use of learning outcomes in a standard setting, curricula and assessment
- Support lifelong learning and enable stronger links between continuing learning and the formal education and training system;
- Recognise a broader range of learning forms (including non-formal and informal learning).

The NQF development process is organised into three strands: formal qualifications, qualifications acquired in non-formal learning (for example in adult education institutions outside the formal education and training system) and informal learning.

Involvement of stakeholders

The General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training of the BM:UKK has initiated and is coordinating the NQF development in cooperation with the BMWF which is in charge of higher education.

Stakeholders are involved via working groups. In 2006, an NQF project group was set up. It includes representatives from BM:UKK and BMWF. The group coordinates NQF agendas within both ministries and is responsible for strategic planning, commissioning research studies and communication with stakeholders. Ten members of this group are director general for VET (BMUKK) as chair, the director general for universities and universities of applied sciences (BMWF) as co-chair and coordinators of several departments of these two ministries

(VET; general education; adult education and lifelong learning; legal issues; management of staff and school; research; universities and universities of applied sciences).

In February 2007, a national NQF steering group was initiated. It includes 23 members of all ministries, social partners and provinces. As they are in charge of qualifications development, validation and certification processes in different subsystems and sectors, their main task is to involve stakeholders from their sphere of influence in NQF development. The national steering group prepared the NQF consultation document.

A management group within the BMUKK and the BMWF supports the work of the national steering group.

In 2009 one of the most important questions was able to be solved (referencing of VET qualifications to levels 6 to 8). In Austria the following solution was found:

Bologna Qualifications	Qualifications except for Higher Education (VET, adult education)
8 - PhD	8
7 - MA	7
6 - BA	6
	5
	4
	3
	2
	1

Levels and descriptors

The NQF consultation document has proposed an 8-level structure to be sufficiently distinctive from the main characteristics of the Austrian qualification system. It proposed that the EQF descriptors, based on knowledge, skills and competence, shall be used as a starting point and the basis to develop the NQF. Moreover the EQF descriptors will be the NQF descriptors too.

The most important lessons learned and the next steps

A broad consultation process was organised in Austria and feedback was received from stakeholders from all subsystems of education and training and social partners. The report analysing the feedback identified a number of open issues and challenges for the further development. It also reflects the (sometimes conflicting) views of different stakeholders.

The consultation paper emphasised that NQF will have an orientation and communication function to make the existing qualification system visible and help individuals to compare their qualifications and engage in further learning activities. This was broadly supported in the consultation process. However, further debate is needed to decide whether NQF should also be used to drive national reform.

Another issue to be addressed in the near future is the referencing of national qualifications to the NQF level. There are still some open questions to be discussed (e.g. the issues of partial qualifications, how to apply the principle of best fit, procedures and operational structures).

Further development is needed to clarify questions relating to the learning outcomes approach in terms of concepts and sound assessment methodologies and tools. How to balance outcome orientation and input factors will be one of the central questions to be answered in the near future.

Experience until now has shown that stakeholder involvement in all phases of NQF development is both crucial and beneficial. In Austria, a good platform for cooperation between different stakeholders has been created. Further involvement of stakeholders to strengthen ownership and commitment will be needed. To ensure successful NQF implementation implies the need to engage and include education training providers and universities.

One of the important outcomes so far is extensive research, which was carried out at the beginning of the NQF development and used for drafting the consultation document (e.g. a study focusing on statistical frameworks for classification of qualifications, a study on the status quo of the learning outcomes approach in formal qualifications in Austria).

The BMUKK has commissioned three sectoral pilot (and one more is going to be carried out in 2010) projects and set up working groups to foster further developments and to prepare relevant strategies.

In the first half of 2010, criteria for the referencing of qualifications to the levels of the NQF are being developed, and in addition reference qualifications are being determined for the orientation of references. At the same time the actual procedure and the referencing process for qualifications to the NQF are also being developed. The objective is to have completed the criteria and the process for the referencing of qualifications by mid-2010 and also to have set up the NQF office, the National Coordination Point.

<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/europa/nqr/index.xml>.

The NQF in Austria will comprise qualifications from the formal, non-formal and informal sectors.

The sub-strategy comprises setting up qualification-issuing bodies (QVSs) as regulators of qualifications which are valid sectorally and/or nationally, without an equivalent in the formal education system. These will undertake the validation of qualifications. Authorities, chambers, associations and similar institutions which are already responsible for handing out certificates can take on the tasks of a QVS. An accrediting authority (NQF office, NQF steering group) 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.

In 2009 in a pilot project in the area of non-formal qualifications, possibilities of referencing offers of non-vocational adult learning to the NQF were tested. For 2010 a pilot project from the construction sector and exemplary referencing of non-formal qualifications from this sector are planned. Based on the experiences from these projects, the already existing strategic considerations and proposals need to be evaluated and refined. At the same time in 2010 the strategy of referencing qualifications from the non-formal sector will be developed, and implementation will begin afterwards.

European Credit Transfer System (ECVET)

Austria began the development of ECVET in 2006 with a start-up conference and the national consultation process. Here 28 opinions were provided by different stakeholders. At the same time, pilot projects were carried out in order to test the possibilities of implementing ECVET in individual sectors (e.g. Vocational Qualification Transfer System, VQTS 2003 – 2006 and VQTS II 2007 – 2009 www.vocationalqualification.net).

Austria plans to use ECVET first of all as an instrument to promote and increase 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).

For the implementation of ECVET, a scientific study was carried out in 2008 to analyse the “ECVET suitability” of the Austrian VET system (Sabine Tritscher-Archan, Karin Luomi-Messerer, 3s, 2008: Implementation of ECVET in Initial Vocational Education and Training. Research Report on behalf of BM:UJK. <http://www.ibw.at/media/ibw/fb137.pdf>).

The result of the study was that the implementation of ECVET requires legislative (creation of a clear legal framework) and organisational adjustments (greater alignment of curricula and training plans towards learning outcomes, more breakdown of qualifications into smaller units). In 2010 the elaboration of the further strategy for the implementation of ECVET and the creation of an ECVET guideline are planned to make it easier for practitioners from full-time VET schools and colleges and enterprises to handle ECVET – including with the use of already available Europass Tools.

The BM:UJK employed an 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 BM:UJK, 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.

Europass-Tools

The **Europass Tools** are used widely, as can be seen by the current data:

Use of Europass from 2000 to 2006

Year	Total participants	Participants with Europass	Participants with Europass in %
2000	1151	573	49.78
2001	1384	884	63.87
2002	1487	709	47.68
2003	1661	511	30.76
2004	1888	1001	53.02
2005	1841	1020	55.40
2006	2161	1042	48.22

Information of the OeAD (Austrian Exchange Service)

The database on the **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.

4.3 The learning outcomes approach as a basis for LLL policies and practices and VET developments

- a) Please assess the impact of the learning outcomes approach on LLL and VET policies and practices in your country.

In Austria, the transparency of learning programmes and the lasting retention of acquired skills were specified as key development objectives in vocational education and training, even before the discussion of the European Qualifications Framework was launched. The *Educational Standards in Vocational Education and Training* initiative was a major stepping-stone designed to ensure the comparability of learning outcomes in core areas, irrespective of specialised or discretionary (under the school autonomy rule) learning programmes offered at individual schools. Tuition, i.e. classroom practice, is the key process in the quality management system QIBB. In line with Europe-wide developments, this process is to be geared to learning outcomes in both its specification (by way of curricular rules binding throughout the country as well as by way of discretionary curricular rules) and its implementation (by way of competence-oriented tuition).

The purpose of educational standards

In vocational education and training, curricula have the character of outline requirements. Coupled with the discretionary scope granted under the school autonomy rules, this has resulted in a high degree of school-specific curricular planning. The crafting of nationwide educational standards is not intended to counteract this development, though core areas of tuition are to be standardised and geared to learning outcomes (*signposting function for class work*). Viewed in this light, the educational standards specify selected curricular core areas and provide the basis for competence-oriented tuition at all schools, which is intended to ensure the achievement of the desired learning outcomes. The discretionary scope of schools, which is usually used to meet location-specific requirements, is not affected. Common objectives and competence-oriented tuition prepare the ground for a nationwide evaluation of vocational education and training (*evaluation function at system level*). Appropriately adjusted, standard-referenced final examinations (partially standardised matriculation and diploma and/or final examinations) at the relevant schools will yield information on the achievement of the set learning outcomes. Combined with surveys of school leavers this will amount to comprehensive system feedback that will deliver indicators for directing the course of developments (*effect-oriented education management*). In the last analysis, the educational standards for vocational education and training also serve to upgrade transparency, something that has been widely achieved with the certificate supplements (*information function*). The introduction of standards is in line with Europe-wide efforts to represent learning programmes in terms of learning outcomes and it is conducive to the implementation of the *European Qualifications Framework* since it makes educational credentials transparent and comprehensible.

Development plan and stage

The overall aim of the project is to design and implement competence-oriented tuition on the basis of educational standards in the entire field of school-bound vocational education. The development effort was initially concentrated on higher level schools and is now being extended step by step to middle level schools and to vocational schools. Owing to the variety of learning programmes on offer, this is a highly complex task – four successive project phases are designed for each specialised area:

Phase 1 covers the crafting of the competence model and the formulation of the goals to be achieved with the help of descriptors and tuition examples (which explain and illustrate the descriptors).

In Phase 2 a considerable number of tuition examples are generated; these are closed tasks that can be built into class work. They are designed to stimulate class work, to point the way, and to be used for self-evaluation. In the given case, they are supposed to upgrade the quality of class work.

Phase 3 serves the purpose of piloting examples at selected pilot schools. The examples are introduced into class work and the experience fed back to the working group.

Phase 4 is mainly about laying the pedagogical groundwork for competence-oriented tuition and about implementing the required support structures. The following standards are currently being crafted for the *occupation-related core competences of VET* (the development stage is given in brackets):

- College for Business Administration with IT profile (Phase 4)
- VET College – Business and Law (for all “specialist business programmes”, Phase 4)
- School of Engineering – Construction Engineering (Phase 3)
- VET College – Electrical Engineering (Phase 3)
- College for Business Administration – Entrepreneurship and Management (Phase 3)
- VET College – Computer Science (Phase 2)
- VET College – Electronics (Phase 2)
- College for Business Administration – Digital Business and Management (Phase 2)
- VET College – Information Technology (Phase 2)
- College for Business Administration – International Business (Phase 2)
- VET College – Mechanical Engineering (Phase 1)
- VET College – Mechatronics (Phase 1)
- VET College – Fashion (Phase 1)
- VET College – Educational Science/Didactics (Phase 1)
- VET College – Tourism (Phase 1)
- VET College – Service Industries (Phase 1)

Use of learning outcomes

Austria is moving to strengthen the learning outcome approach in all parts of the education and training system as it will be key for the referencing of qualifications to the NQF. Many qualifications are already learning outcome-oriented, but the approach has not been applied consistently across all.

In 2005, the BMUKK launched a project to develop educational standards for core subject areas in general and VET. The educational standards for VET schools and colleges define “content” (subject and knowledge areas and topics with specified goals) and “action” (cognitive achievements required in the particular subjects), and personal and social competences related to the respective field are also included. Four competences are described: subject-matter competence (declarative knowledge), methodological competence (procedural knowledge), social competence (ability to communicate, cooperate and interact) and personal competence (being able to steer own actions by self-motivation and self-control).

In apprenticeship (dual system), the training regulation is issued for each profile by the BMWFJ. It consists of the “occupational competence profile” (Berufsprofil) with related activities and work descriptions and the “in-company curriculum” (Berufsbild) with knowledge and skills to be acquired by apprentices.

The Lehrabschlussprüfung (final apprenticeship examination) is to assess whether the candidate has acquired the necessary skills and competences to begin qualified work. It comprises a theoretical and a practical test. Master craftsman examinations (for manual trade vocations) and examinations to prove the respective competence (for other regulated trades) are organised by the economic chambers in the provinces.

In general education, the learning outcome approach is mainly implemented through objectives in curricula.

Curriculum Design – Learning Outcome Orientation project

In March 2009, in the General Directorate for VET of the BM:UJK, the Curriculum Design – Learning Outcome Orientation project began with the objective of presenting (in the long term) all curricula for VET (*BHSs*, *BMSs*, school-based part of apprenticeship, special forms) in a competence-based and learning outcome-oriented manner. Here the previous work within the framework of educational standards in VET (competence models, descriptors) is integrated in the future curricula for those subjects for which educational standards have already been elaborated. At the same time those subjects for which there are (still) no educational standards are presented in a learning outcome-oriented manner. This is done according to fixed criteria for the description of learning outcomes. This means the curricula in VET will also correspond with the requirements for referencing to the National Qualifications Framework in Austria in the future.

The objective is to complete the guideline for the design of competence-based and learning outcome-oriented curricula for *BHSs* by March 2010. Afterwards guidelines will be drawn up for all other school forms. The 490 curricula in VET will be presented in a competence-based and learning outcome-oriented manner in a gradual process.

In **higher education**, a “qualification profile”, which describes aims of learning outcomes and definitions of learning outcomes for each module, was introduced by the University Act (Universitätsgesetz) in 2002.

4.4 Guidance

The national strategy for “Lifelong Guidance” developed in 2007 has been used as a basis for planning many measures in recent years.

Relevant examples include:

- Setting up an efficient nationwide and provider-independent educational guidance system in the area of adult learning accompanied by improved coordination; measures for the professionalisation and networking of counsellors (university-style course (cf. www.bifeb.at), graduation at the Academy of Continuing Education (cf. www.wba.or.at), “bib-innovation-network 2007-2010” project (cf. www.bib-infonet.at))
- The BM:UJK decreed a catalogue of obligatory measures developed together with the Public Employment Service Austria and the social partners in the area of information, counselling and guidance for the 7th and 8th grade (Circular no. 17/2009) and created implementation aids for schools here (cf. www.bmukk.gv.at/berufsortientierung).
- Within the framework of the key2success initiative (cf. <http://key2success.schulpsychologie.at>) and of the cooperation project with the BMWF “Study checker” (www.studienchecker.at) there was intensification of guidance for *Matura* holders.
- 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) with the following instruments, which will begin in 2010:

- Support with orientation and decision-making processes for pupils at upper secondary level: Projects of schools and associations supporting them are eligible for subsidisation (cf. www.vielewege.at)
- Improving the qualifications of school and educational counsellors
- 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 (national Lifelong Guidance Forum, cf. www.lifelongguidance.at).

4.5 Mobility in VET

If we look at the overall picture, we can say that mobility in VET has increased in recent years. The demand for Leonardo da Vinci stays abroad, for example, has risen continuously and in some cases sharply since 2000:

- + 176.76% among participants excluding students
- + 231.49% among students (up to 2006)

In 2000, 951 people applied for a stay abroad with Leonardo da Vinci while in 2009 there were already 2,632 (figures excluding HE students). In 2006 for the first time more than 2,000 Austrians completed a Leonardo da Vinci work placement in another EU country. From when the programme began in 1995 until 2008, around **20,000 people** were able to enjoy Leonardo da Vinci mobility in Europe.

The demand among Austrian pupils rose from 846 in the year 2000 to 1,742. Students also used Leonardo da Vinci very intensively: in 2006 more than twice as many **students** completed a work placement than in 2000: 1,021 instead of 308.

Among apprentices the demand for a work placement has fallen. In 2000 there were still 413 apprentices applying for a Leonardo da Vinci work placement, but in 2009 there were only 269 applications. The promotion of apprentices was therefore established as a **national priority** in the 2010 appeal. Other areas of focus for 2010 such as the organisation of a major apprentice conference are planned.

The use of EU funds is very pleasing: from 2000 to 2006, **95 percent of EU funds** for Leonardo da Vinci work placements were **fully used**. This was also possible because the BM:UKK provided national funds for mobility projects.

The Austrian Leonardo da Vinci trainees choose Germany as their destination country in 19% of cases. Other destination countries are: Great Britain (17%), Ireland (9%) and Italy (8%). The percentage of trainees going to Central and Eastern European countries is also rising. In 2000 it was only five percent who went to a Central or Eastern European country, but by 2006 this figure had risen to more than nine percent.

Development of demand for stays abroad overall

Year	Applying participants (excluding students)	Applying stu- dents	Total applying participants
2000	951	308	1259
2001	1624	465	2089
2002	1608	914	2522
2003	1749	825	2574
2004	1452	639	2091
2005	1768	895	2663
2006	2045	1021	3066
2007	2187	Erasmus	
2008	2211	Erasmus	
2009	2632	Erasmus	

Information of the OeAD (Austrian Exchange Service)

THEME 5: STRENGTHENING THE LINKS BETWEEN VET AND THE LABOUR MARKET

5.1 Identifying and anticipating skill needs

- a) Please assess progress in your country in developing systems for early identification and anticipation of skill needs and mismatches (forecasts, employers' surveys, regional and sectoral councils or forums, etc.).

For training apprentices, the qualification requirements of the economy are collected mainly by incorporating specialists from the companies. If necessary, additional academic analyses and assessments are also obtained.

In the area of VET schools and colleges, the following measures are carried out to coordinate the requirements of the labour market and (future) contents of the curricula:

- Graduate surveys (including with standardised questionnaire)
- Studies on the demand for qualifications (survey of study and occupation preferences)
- Coordination meetings with representatives from the economy and small crafts (feedback rounds on individual curricula)
- Expert surveys
- Survey of qualification dimensions relevant for employment (e.g. commissioned studies to ascertain the required qualifications in the business and technical sectors; e.g. Arthur Schneeberger, Alexander Petanovitsch with the cooperation of Harald Hable: HTL und Qualifikationsbedarf der Wirtschaft. Analysen zur Arbeitsmarktlage und europäischer Vergleich. [Colleges of engineering and the qualification requirements of the economy. Analyses of the labour market situation and European comparison.], 2009: <http://www.ibw.at/media/ibw/ibw%20FB%20146.pdf>.)

In the area of VET schools and colleges, the curricula are devised and revised in so-called curricula groups. These consist of teachers from the corresponding specialisations who (in some cases) are/ were themselves active in the respective occupational field.

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).

One of the products of the AMS is the skills forecasting tool. The online system, which has existed since 2002, summarises statements on current and foreseeable labour market trends and qualification requirements and makes them available to a broad public in structured form via the Internet (www.ams.at/qualifikationsbarometer). 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 analysis. In the form of AMS reports on qualification structures, 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), 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 qualifications. Between 2002 and 2008, with the AMS research network, there was an annual event on qualification requirements of the future which was held together with the social partners on specific themes (e.g. qualification requirements in the area of health and social affairs, qualification requirements of youths and older employees). In 2009 this series of events was replaced by regular meetings of the so-called standing committee.

With the inclusion of the “Learning regions” measure in the rural development programme during the EU structural funds period 2007 to 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.

5.2 Integrating changing skill needs into VET

- a) Please assess progress in your country in incorporating results of identifying and anticipating skill needs in VET provision and guidance services.

In the area of apprenticeship training and full-time school-based VET offers, future qualification requirements are taken into consideration by introducing new apprenticeship occupations and curricula and by modernising existing apprenticeship occupations.

The initiative to change or expand the apprenticeship occupations 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).

The curricula for the VET schools and colleges (*BMSs*, *BHSs*) are also 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.

New curricula are developed and already existing ones are adapted with the involvement of the social partners and representatives from the economy.

With their autonomy, the individual school locations also have the opportunity to adapt 20 hours per week in their curricula to regional requirements of the labour market.

The social partners themselves also elaborate proposals for measures in the education sector, for example: “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).

5.3 Involving labour market actors in VET

- a) Please assess progress in your country in involving labour market actors (social partners, sectors, companies) in VET in terms of system development, governance and management.

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.

There are the following responsible bodies in apprenticeship training:

- Federal and regional advisory boards on apprenticeship as permanent bodies: elaboration of proposals for new apprenticeship occupations, new training regulations and forms and also recommendations for financing the training.
- BM:WFJ: proposals for new legal regulations
- BM:UKK: further development (new curricula) and regulation of the school-based part of dual training on the basis of (new) requirements of the labour market.

In the federal 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.

For the VET schools and colleges, expert opinions are obtained from the economy (businesses) and graduate surveys 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 qualification requirements.

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*, where around 40% of the available study courses are designed for people in employment, considerable labour market orientation has been developed at the 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 *Fachhochschule* study courses and their quality assurance, which are oriented towards the labour market requirements and acceptance on the part of the students.

5.4 Promoting workplace learning

- a) Please assess progress in promoting workplace learning in your country.

Around 80% of dual training takes place at the company workplace, the remaining 20% is the academic part of the training at vocational school. In the area of apprenticeship training, workplace-related learning is also promoted by the company and supra-company apprentice-

ship subsidisation which has been expanded in recent years and underwent fundamental reform in 2008.

In most full-time school-based forms of VET– *BHSs* and *BMSs* – there are compulsory work placements in the respective occupational field. These take place both during the school year and also when there is no teaching.

THEME 6: ADDRESSING EQUITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

6.1 Addressing equity and social inclusion in/via VET

- a) Please assess policy progress in your country to reduce disadvantage and to ensure social inclusion in VET and via VET.

The theme of equality of opportunities and social justice is of major importance in Austria as "justice as a result" and "quality indicators" are dealt with in great detail.

Different approaches are pursued to create equality of opportunities and social justice:

- specific initiatives (e.g. the "apprenticeship and Matura" scheme, the training guarantee up to the age of 18, programmes for the promotion of women, etc.)
- financial subsidies and support

There is agreement among Austrian education policy-makers that to create equality of opportunities and social justice it is essential to enable all learners to have the same opportunities precisely because of the diversity of the Austrian education system and the comparatively early differentiation of education and training pathways.

As a corresponding contribution to improve the educational opportunities of 10-15 year-olds, the BM:Ukk set up an expert commission to work out strategies for school organisation.

The tasks of the 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 compulsory school qualifications in second-chance education (cf. http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/16253/ek_zwb_02.pdf).

The Public Employment Service (AMS) supports women and girls in their choice of career and obtainment of qualifications, 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). As well as many brochures and websites, the AMS also offers personal advice for women and girls. With equal opportunity-oriented and non-discriminatory service offers, the AMS also helps promote the equality of women and men on the labour market and equality of opportunities for all workers.

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 was introduced in autumn 2009, mainly in view of language training.

Another important contribution to equality of opportunities is the training guarantee up to the age of 18: 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.

Mother-tongue teaching initiative

<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/muttersprachlicher-unterricht/index.xml>

In Austria, some 360 teachers for mother-tongue classes are currently employed. Of these, 287 teach Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian or Turkish. Across Austria, another 17 languages are taught. The website www.muttersprachlicher-unterricht.at was created on the initiative of committed Viennese mother-tongue teachers. This website mainly contains texts, worksheets and other suggestions for the classroom as well as topical information (such as on expert conferences or in-service teacher training measures), specialist texts on multilingualism and promotion of the first language, as well as a wealth of links.

The goal of the website is to support the mother-tongue teachers' important activities and give them the opportunity to contact one another and exchange ideas. Teachers of all other, not yet available languages are invited to introduce information and material in their languages.

The website www.muttersprachlicher-unterricht.at comprises

- useful information on mother-tongue instruction,
- tips for current events,
- specialist texts on the topics of multilingualism and promotion of the first language,
- worksheets and other suggestions for classroom use, and
- a wealth of links.

"A kući sprecham Deutsch." Survey of level of language proficiency in multicultural primary school classes: bilingual language acquisition in migration (four-year long-term study)

The linguistic development of more than one hundred children of different languages of origin was studied at a total of six primary school locations in Vienna – from the time the children entered school until the end of the 4th class of primary school. The level of language proficiency in German of all pupils was surveyed three times a year, with children whose first language was Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian or Turkish the linguistic development in their mother tongue was surveyed at the same time. The following sub-areas of the language were recorded: spontaneous speech (in the form of open interviews), system linguistics (morphology, syntax), vocabulary – semantic fields, text comprehension, text production. In addition, their first steps in the foreign language English were included in the survey. This comprehensive psycho-linguistic study was complemented by an accompanying sociolinguistic survey in order to ascertain non-language factors that (do not) impact on language acquisition.

The following recommendations could be derived from the survey of the level of language proficiency:

- 1) take some pressure away from teachers,
- 2) modernise the teachers' pre-service education and training,
- 3) intensify the promotion of German and mother tongue acquisition at nursery school level,
- 4) secure and intensify the promotion of mother tongue at school level,
- 5) German as a second language requires the application of different didactics than mother-tongue German instruction,
- 6) make increased use of the parents' skills.

<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/15807/sprachstandserhebung.pdf>

6.2 Measures supporting people 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 apprenticeship occupations, 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 federal 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 age of 19 and 24 (special programme for youth employment, SPJU), JOBS FOR YOU(TH))
- Youth Training Guarantee Act (JASG) and supra-company apprenticeship training

To reduce the number of school dropouts, measures

- to increase the percentage of pupils with a qualification from upper secondary level and
- to strengthen key and basic competences (reading, writing, arithmetic) before pupils undergo a VET programme are being implemented.

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 (the so-called "Initiative 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.

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 BM:UKK.

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 economic crisis 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 and by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and the provinces.

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" was originally for the period from 2002 to 2009 and was used by 13,342 girls (cf. 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 in-service training at the university colleges of education (PHs) at the provincial level, by the Department of Gender Mainstreaming/Gender and School of the BM:UKK.

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. BM:UKK 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 and 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, they learn to organise themselves, and develop the willingness to cooperate and own 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 who are not used to learning in the structures and educational policies of the adult learning sector.

"Special programmes" for the young (public employment service, AMS):

- Measures within the Youth Training Guarantee Act (JASG): provision of additional training slots by way of a safety net for young people in search of apprenticeships who have failed to become apprenticed after completing their compulsory school years
- Jobs4You(th): employment and upskilling programme for unemployed youths below the age of 25, chiefly 19- to 25-year-olds, concentrating on young women and young people with compulsory schooling only
- Obtaining basic qualifications at a later age (completion of lower secondary school)

6.3 Active citizenship

In the field of school-based education, 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 insofar as in 2007 the active voting age was lowered from 18 to 16 in Austria (cf. BGBl. I no. 27/2007).

THEME 7: QUALITY, EXCELLENCE AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

7.1 Quality of VET

- a) Please assess progress in your country in improving the quality of VET provision.

The first initiatives to implement systematic quality development at VET schools and colleges in Austria were already introduced before the beginning of the Copenhagen process. A first step in this direction was the "Quality network for VET schools and colleges" (QN), which was launched by the General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training (GD for VET) of BM:UKK in 1997. In 1999 the Q.I.S (Quality in Schools) initiative³ was launched, which encompasses both general-education and vocational schools and has helped initiate debates on quality at Austrian schools on a wide front. Q.I.S. is based on qualitative approaches of organisational development and action research and focuses on school programme-related work conducted at school locations.

In 2004, also on the initiative of the GD for VET of BM:UKK, conceptual preparatory activities were started for a quality initiative that specifically targets the VET sector. The VET Quality Initiative⁴ or QIBB for short, was implemented as early as in the 2006/2007 school year at nearly all VET schools and colleges: at part-time vocational schools; at schools and colleges for engineering, arts and crafts; at colleges of business administration and business schools; at schools and colleges of social and services industries; at colleges for agriculture and forestry; and at colleges for nursery teacher training and colleges of social pedagogy.

QIBB is implemented in line with developments at the level of European VET policy. Thus QIBB constitutes, for example, a key 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 (EQARF), which was adopted within the context of the Copenhagen process.

QIBB not only covers the level of individual schools but all system levels (including educational administration and school inspection). QIBB's core element is a quality management system aiming to systematically safeguard and develop teaching quality and administration services quality. Therefore, both pedagogical action (i.e.: initiating, supporting and facilitating socially relevant and school-oriented education and training processes) and administrative action (i.e.: creating, securing and developing the framework conditions necessary for teaching and learning) are at the focus of attention. The development process follows the so-called PDCA quality control circle (planning and setting of objectives; implementation, evaluation and measurement; analysis, assessment and reporting).

The following core instruments are used at the various system levels (Ministry, school inspection, schools): mission statement, matrix of quality objectives, annual work programme, objective-setting talks, instruments to collect evaluation data, and quality reports.

The development and implementation of educational standards for the VET sector has been one special-focus project within the framework of QIBB since early 2005. Educational standards constitute an instrument for securing and developing quality in the "teaching and learning" field of action of the QIBB mission statement; the use of educational standards is directed at improving teaching and is intended to enhance the comparability of educational

³ www.qjs.at

⁴ www.qibb.at

qualifications.⁵ The establishment of the Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ARQA-VET)⁶ in 2007 can be termed yet another major milestone to promote the issue of quality at national and European levels. ARQA-VET was set up on the initiative of GD II of BM:UJK as one of the now 21 national reference points of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ENQA-VET). ARQA-VET's main task is to promote the quality culture in the Austrian VET landscape and network all actors. In this connection, networks are set up both nationally and within the EU context of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ENQA-VET). In this way, ARQA-VET is actively involved in implementing a European VET area and increases the attractiveness of the Austrian VET system.

Since the 2009/2010 school year, schools have had the possibility to conduct an external evaluation procedure (peer review in QIBB) within the framework of QIBB on a voluntary basis.⁷ The procedure applied within the framework of QIBB is based on the European peer review procedure, which was developed in the course of several Leonardo da Vinci projects.⁸ Peer review in QIBB is coordinated and supported by ARQA-VET in terms of content.⁹

Currently work is also ongoing on developing a quality framework model for the field of adult education, which is intended to form the basis for the mutual appreciation of quality efforts of educational institutions and countries on the one hand and a quality-promoting overall strategy for the Austrian ALE sector on the other.¹⁰

b) What are the main obstacles?

The main challenges since the introduction of QIBB in the 2005/06 school year have certainly been in connection with the introduction and establishment of a quality culture on the side of providers, viz. the schools. Supported by training seminars and the provision of resources, for example, school quality project managers were trained and employed at the school level, but it has been possible to achieve considerable progress in this context. The application of the quality instruments described under item A (e.g. mission statement, school programme, quality report. etc.) is today taken for granted in most schools and has therefore become part of everyday school life. The next major challenge within the framework of QIBB is the introduction of the external evaluation (peer review), which was launched on a voluntary basis in the 2009/10 school year.

c) Which initiatives are you planning to implement EQARF?

The first activity to implement EQARF was taken in Austria as early as in June 2009. At that time, BM:UJK held a round table discussion on the topic of setting up a European reference framework for quality assurance in IVET and CET. The major stakeholders from the ministries involved (BM:UJK, BMWFJ), the social partners, representatives from the fields of academia and research, as well as representatives at the level of providers (IVET and CET) were informed for the first time by BM:UJK about potential contents, possibilities and options provided by EQARF within the framework of national implementation.

⁵ <http://www.qibb.at/de/bildungsstandards.html>;
<http://www.bildungsstandards.berufsbildendeschulen.at/de/home.html>

⁶ www.arqa-vet.at

⁷ www.peer-review-in-qibb.at/

⁸ www.peer-review-education.net/

⁹ www.arqa-vet.at

¹⁰ Cf. Gruber, Elke/Schlögl, Peter: Qualitätsrahmenmodell für die Erwachsenenbildung in Österreich (QUEB). [Quality Framework Model for Adult Learning in Austria (QUEB).] Entwurf zur Stellungnahme. Klagenfurt and Wien 2009.

The next initiative is planned for January 2010 in the form of an Austrian EQARF kick-off conference that will launch national implementation of EQARF in Austria. Follow-up projects to define the national strategy to implement EQARF will include, for example, projects connected with the selection, definition and (partial) surveying of the proposed EQARF indicators in connection with the QIBB monitoring structure. A national steering group in which all the major stakeholders (responsible ministries, representatives at provider level, social partners, etc.) are represented will elaborate content-related proposals on the national implementation of EQARF. The entire process of national implementation of EQARF and in particular its dissemination will be organised and supported by ARQA-VET.

7.2 VET fostering excellence and higher level qualifications

- a) Please assess progress in your country in fostering excellence, and introduction of initiatives such as higher level qualifications/programmes in higher/tertiary education, or centres of vocational excellence.

The "Jugend Innovativ" contest

Jugend Innovativ is a school competition for innovative ideas from the fields of business, design, engineering, science, as well as from the thematic fields ICT and climate protection.

For more than 20 years, Austrian pupils have presented new ideas and developments at Jugend Innovativ contests, thus revealing the creative and innovative potential existing at Austrian schools. The ideas competition Jugend Innovativ was launched in the 1987/88 school year

The aim of Jugend Innovativ has been to reduce fear of contact with new technologies and intensify project work in schools in order to increase the number of HE students of scientific and technical studies in the medium and long term. Each year the best and most innovative projects are selected and awarded cash and travel prizes as well as attractive special prizes. In addition, the projects submitted receive project-related funds.

Jugend Innovativ offers the possibility to deal with innovative questions and implement ideas within the framework of a project using original, creative or different working methods. By carrying out the project, often in cooperation with companies, participants also acquire important key (social) skills such as teamwork, independence, problem-solving competence and communicative skills for their later entry into the world of work. Furthermore, the contest is accompanied by innovation- and creativity-promoting measures for schools and teaching (seminars for teachers and pupils, etc.).

Jugend Innovativ is carried out and further developed by austria wirtschaftsservice on behalf of the BMWFJ and the BM:UJK.

<http://www.jugendinnovativ.at>

SkillsAustria – WorldSkills – EuroSkills

In its capacity as a national office within the economic chamber organisation, SkillsAustria coordinates the Austrian professional competitions for young skilled workers. These professional competitions are held as qualifying events for WorldSkills and EuroSkills in cooperation with the federal guilds and professional associations of the following federal sections: Crafts & Trade; Tourism; Industry; and Information & Consulting. Furthermore, SkillsAustria is responsible for coaching and sending the Austrian team to the international professional competitions WorldSkills and EuroSkills.

Since 1961 the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber has sent participants to professional competitions on a regular basis. Since then, 419 participants have taken part for Austria, winning 170 medals - 58 times gold, 53 times silver and 59 times bronze as well as 137 "Medaillon of Excellence" certificates. In the 2009 Calgary competition, 26 participants won four gold medals and two silver and two bronze medals.

More than 400 young skilled workers from across Europe took part in the European professional competition EuroSkills in Rotterdam (Netherlands) when it was held for the first time in September 2008. 16 Austrian participants - five young women and eleven men - gained a total of 15 medals. - Of these 15 medals, six gold and four silver medals were won in individual competitions, with two gold and silver medals each and one bronze medal in team ratings. The Austrian participants in the EuroSkills 2008 came from the following occupational groups: electrician, hairdresser, florist, motor vehicle engineering specialising in motorcycles, motor vehicle engineering specialising in passenger vehicles, cook, landscape gardener/designer, bricklayer, restaurant service, cleaning, and gas- and water-pipe fitter. Thus Austria took second place in the national ranking.

www.worldskills.at

Cooperative Open Learning (“COOL”)

COOL (Cooperative Open Learning) was launched as a teaching concept in 1996 as a school pilot. By 2009 the concept had been adopted by around 90 VET schools and colleges and has already been included in the VET curricula. In 2001 a COOL Impulse Centre was set up by the BM:UKK for the purpose of developing, distributing and integrating COOL at VET schools and 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).

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.

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

Information on COOL: http://www.act.at/upload/1694_Zusammenstellung%20Booklet.pdf

Greimel-Fuhrmann, Bettina (2006): Was ist und was kann Cooperatives Offenes Lernen (COOL)? Neues Unterrichtskonzept. Charakteristika, Chancen und Risiken [What is Cooperative Open Learning (COOL) and what can it do? New Teaching Concept. Characteristics, Opportunities and Risks]. In: wissenplus 3-06/07. Online:

http://www.wissenistmanz.at/wissenplus/zeitschrift/archiv/heft-3-2006-07/wp3_0607_imfokus.pdf (13.11.2009).

Maderthaner, 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 Teachers and trainers

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

In 2006 as part of a reform of teacher 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 private PHs were formed. The new PHs have been structured in line with the Bologna study architecture and offer Bachelor study programmes (HE 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 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-house IVET trainers 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 IVET trainers.

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, BM:UKK and BMWF employed a working group to redesign 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 orientation aids and for quality assurance, greater permeability between the school types and the possibility of lateral entry. The recommendations brought forward by the expert group on NEW teacher training (http://www.bmukk.gv.at/medienpool/18839/labneu_empfexpgr.pdf) will be discussed in the first half of 2010 with all stakeholders and interest groups and their further implementation will be worked on.

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 it is also planned to work out new service and pay legislation.

The Academy of Continuing Education (WBA) constitutes 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) (cf. BM:UKK and BMWF 2009, p. 37f).

7.4 Improving horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training systems

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).

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

The policy is based on (comparison and) exams:

- § final exams offered within the regular school system can be taken on an external basis; i.e. without having attended the respective programme; these exams provide “entry” qualifications to further/higher education programmes, e.g. *Reifeprüfung* exams (generally the entry requirement for university/higher education studies), *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (to access university studies in specific study areas), *Berufsreifeprüfung* for graduates of apprenticeship and 3-4 year school-based VET programmes (incl. health sector) to access any type of higher education course (university and non-university) – exemption of certain subject areas for holders of specific occupation-related qualifications and language certificates;

Berufsreifeprüfung (BRP)

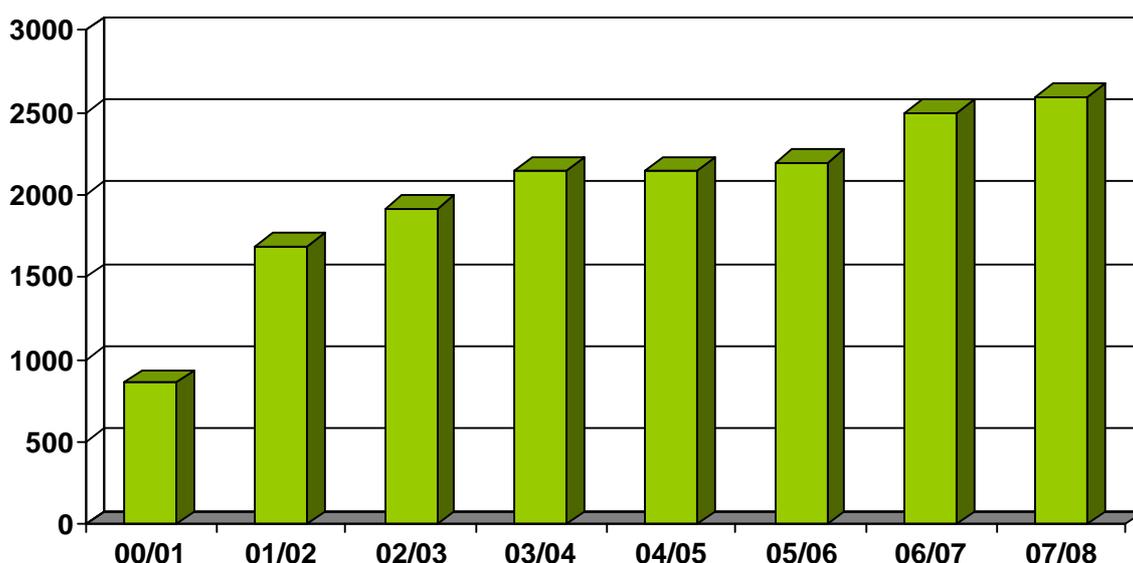
The “*Berufsreifeprüfung*” (<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/bw/zb/berufsreifepuefung.xml>) came into force in September 1997. Ever since, there has been the possibility to pass a BRP on the basis of practical knowledge acquired in employment. This is possible for graduates of an apprenticeship, of secondary technical and vocational schools of at least three years duration, for graduates of schools for nurses and medical-technical schools of at least 30 months duration and, as of the amendment on 1st September 2000, also for graduates of

the skilled workers examination in agriculture and forestry. The BRP is equal to the *Reifeprüfung* obtained at upper secondary schools in the sense that both qualify for admission to Austrian universities and *Fachhochschulen*, as well as post-secondary courses, and are considered as a qualification for senior posts in the public service. The BRP marked the first time in Austria that knowledge acquired through practical work was put on a par with theoretical school knowledge.

The “Berufsreifeprüfung” consists of four partial exams: German, mathematics, one modern foreign language and a specialisation from vocational practice. Basically the BRP is an exam for external students. The BRP act, however, states that exams may also be taken in courses recognised by the BMUKK offered by adult learning institutions which are not part of the public education system. This also constitutes a novelty in the Austrian educational system.

- § people who have not undergone/completed apprenticeship training are admitted to the final apprenticeship exam and thus acquire vocational qualifications and can then seize the respective further training and qualification opportunities.
- § access to *Fachhochschule* courses is also possible via final apprenticeship exam (initial VET, relevant work-experience, and additional exams)
- § adults who attend upper secondary-level VET programmes can be given “credit” for parts of their initial education and training if it is in a similar/same field

Issued BRP certificates 2000/01 to 2007/08



Source: ÖIBF/ ibw - 2008

Additional offers to prepare for *Berufsreifeprüfung* are provided at ALE institutions. Within the framework of the Federation-Provinces Promotion Scheme, the bases and quality criteria for a free preparatory offers are elaborated that will be financed jointly by the federal and provincial governments.

With an amendment of the Vocational Training Act (*BAG*) in 2006, the legal foundations were established for the modularisation of apprenticeship training (dual training). 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.

Apprenticeship and Matura

With the “Apprenticeship and Matura” scheme an initiative was launched in autumn 2009 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. The scheme enables apprentices to acquire the upper secondary school-leaving certificate in addition to their practical apprenticeship training and the companies have a greater number of higher qualified staff. Three of the four partial exams (German, modern foreign language, mathematics and a specialist area from the respective apprenticeship occupation) for the *Berufsmatura* exam can already be taken before the final apprenticeship exam. The last partial exam can only be taken by people over the age of 19. No additional fees will accrue for the preparatory courses and exams for the *Berufsmatura*, with course fees taken over by BM:UJK. At the same time, federal provinces support companies whose apprentices complete the “Apprenticeship and Matura” scheme. (<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/bw/bm/berufsmatura.xml>)

THEME 8: ENHANCING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

8.1 Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET

- a) Please assess progress in your country in taking greater account of transversal knowledge skills and competences in VET qualifications, curricula and learners' assessment, to foster creativity, innovation and intra/entrepreneurship.

European Year of Creativity & Innovation 2009

In Austria the thematic year 2009 was seen as a helpful instrument to enter into an intensive and longer reflection process about creativity and innovation by means of education, arts and culture. The EYCI2009 was mainly seen as a kick-off for a dialogue with major actors that goes beyond the thematic year and was put into a relevant connection with the "post-2010 Lisbon process" for growth, employment and social cohesion, in which education needs to play a particularly major role.

Of central importance was the question of how innovative changes of education systems themselves can be implemented more efficiently and quickly in order to be able to optimally prepare learners for the challenges of the future in the light of the changed economic and social structures. Moves need to be taken to enable sustainable innovative change processes at all levels of the education system,

- the level of system control (governance)
- the level of organisation (organisational development, learning organisations, etc.) as well as the
- level of the individual (personal willingness to change, personalised learning,
- leadership, etc.)

On the one hand, measures to implement the EYCI2009 in Austria had an awareness-raising character (information campaigns, media cooperation, festival of creativity and innovation, etc.), on the other hand the series of events aimed to launch an intensive content-related reflection process on the guiding question "How are new elements integrated into the system?" and persuade major actors from society to become involved in related discussions.

Awareness-raising/public relations work

- Austrian web platform on the EYCI2009
Creation of the domain www.kreativinnovativ09.at and invitation to other departments, social partners and major stakeholders for participation; the platform is at the centre of the web campaign on the EYCI2009 with an event calendar, specialist information and testimonials of well-known personalities on the topic of creativity and innovation as well as interactive forms of participation; the goal is provision of information, awareness-raising, "networking"
- "Creative & Innovative" brochure
Information campaign in the form of a brochure about support measures regarding the development of creativity and innovative capacity in the school area (measures for art and culture education, science education, entrepreneurship education, etc.); persuading pupils, teachers and schools so they become more involved;
http://www.kreativinnovativ09.at/projekte/?no_cache=1&cid=561&did=447&sechash=a7efca07

- Cooperation with the Association of Free Radios
Assistance agreement with the Association of Free Radios, thematic linking to the EYCI2009; awareness-raising, discussion on key issues of the EYCI2009 at regional level throughout the year 2009

Conferences, events

- EU peer learning activity “Promoting Cross-curricular Key Competences”
A European expert conference was held on the initiative of Austria within the framework of the EU peer learning cluster “Key Competences” from 10-12 Nov. 2008 in Vienna; discussion about methods to promote creativity and innovative capacity as well as other soft skills in the school area, presentation of examples of good practice in Austria;
<http://www.kreativinnovativ09.at/fileadmin/EuDocs/Vienna%20PLA%20final%20version%20Jan%2026th.pdf>

Series of events: “How are new elements integrated into the system?”

- Preparatory expert conferences
In an extended discussion process, some 50 experts each will meet in three expert conferences to deal with key issues in the area of innovation and creativity in the education sector. Discussions build on the assumption that starting points need to be identified at different (system) levels in order to facilitate and promote creativity and innovative processes in the education sector. The outcomes of the individual conferences will be documented accordingly and will form the basis for the contents of the network meeting in October 2009.
- Network meeting “How are new elements integrated into the system?”
This network meeting continues in the spirit of the three previous expert meetings and summarises their outcomes in terms of educational policy developments and requirements.
- Festival of creativity and innovation
Complementing the dialogue process “How are new elements integrated into the system?” this event aims to reach an audience that is not directly interested in the subject matter and not associated with a particular institution. By means of a specific programme design and a targeted selection of the location, it is aimed to reach particularly pupils, students, adults, people interested in technology, science, art and culture as well as spontaneous visitors. The goal is to make it easier to understand, experience and literally “grasp” the abstract terms “creativity” and “innovation”, which are often used in an undifferentiated manner, and demonstrate the wealth of options of creative and innovative activities in an interdisciplinary and interactive way.
- Education, creativity, innovation - cooperation with the Alpbach Technology Talks
In cooperation with the Alpbach Technology Talks, the content of a working group meeting on the subject of education – creativity – innovation was planned.

Creativity and openness for innovation are described as key personal competences in the general education objectives of many VET schools and colleges. In this context, creativity refers not only to relevant artistic school types and subjects but also to teaching specific ways of thinking. Furthermore, within the framework of educational standards in VET, standards for all school types are also formulated for personal and social competences that will be reflected in the curricula of the VET sector.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship constitutes a key issue in Austrian VET, which is supported by a range of measures in the cooperation of BM:UJK with other ministries and institutions.

At VET schools and colleges, the content of entrepreneurship education is taught in a very wide range of subjects including Accounting; Business Administration; Economics; Economy and Law; Project Management; Quality Management; Case Studies; Practical Training in Business Administration; Personal Development and Social Skills; Training Firm; Controlling and Annual Accounts; and particularly in the special focus and area specialisation Entrepreneurship and Management.

State entrepreneurial examination

In Austria, the State entrepreneurial examination, which forms part of the master craftsperson or entrance examination, is a prerequisite for self-employment. The entrepreneurial examination is waived upon completion of specific school-based educational pathways, such as vocational schools with commercial focus, schools and colleges of business administration, colleges of engineering, schools and colleges of management and service industries, schools and colleges of tourism, some specialist colleges, HE institutions and universities (as laid down in Federal Law Gazette II no. 210/1999, §8).

Training firms

Training firms serve as training locations for entrepreneurial thinking and acting. Students work in the training firm 3 to 4 hours a week. They apply the learning content in practice and in this way learn to think and act like an entrepreneur. Training firms have real partner firms in the world of business. This close partnership aims to encourage experience exchanges to simulate company practice. Foreign-language training firms are also operated to improve foreign language skills.

Business projects

Students at VET schools and colleges carry out project work in a team or as an individual work to solve concrete tasks in business or technology. On the basis of a practice-oriented assignment, students draw up academically founded works. These project works must be documented and presented by students and are integrated into the final exam as an exam area.

School pilot project

The Schumpeter College of Business Administration in Vienna's 13th district offers the area specialisation "Entrepreneurship and Management" in combination with targeted promotion for gifted students (the so-called "fast-track scheme"). The subject "Entrepreneurship and Management", which teaches the required entrepreneurial know-how, has also been designed for the pilot project "college of business administration for business informatics" and the postsecondary VET course for business informatics.

8.2 Encouraging partnerships

- a) Please assess progress in your country in promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in partnership between VET providers, cultural organisations, networks, creative industries and research.

Cooperation between businesses and educational institutions improves career navigation and advances practical skills acquisition and resources for training.

A joint initiative between the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ – Wirtschaftskammer Österreich) and the BM:UJK to set up educational partnerships as networks of cooperation is proving its worth.

Since 2002, schools and educational institutions have formed over 40 educational partnerships nationwide with businesses, regional Economic Chambers, and other organisations, and numerous others are making concrete progress. The joint “qualification offensive” of the WKÖ and the BM:UJK (formerly BMBWK) is aimed primarily at better education and training, better career navigation, as well as towards the advance of practice in schools.

The close cooperation of the business sector and schools is of major importance from an economic point of view, as it will produce a well-educated workforce and therefore high-value products and services. Austria cannot win the costs competition but can score very highly in the competition for quality. The educational partnerships will provide a major contribution to this success.

Every educational partnership has its own story and develops its own dynamics. The development is extremely promising. A nationwide implementation of partnerships is expected in the future.

The secret of the partnerships’ success is a practice-oriented concept that can be quickly implemented in any interested locality, paired with project consulting and assistance that conforms with the target group. This cooperation is flexible, individually compatible and takes shape based upon the varied qualification needs and realities of the regions. The networks are open and are continually expanding.

Local moderators accompany and coordinate the development of the partnerships. The cooperation and networking succeed both through modern communication technologies and personal interactions such as communal events, economic discussion forums, and meetings between representatives and opinion leaders.

One particularly successful interaction: managers take the function of a “Principal for a Day” and take over the tasks of school headmasters for one day.

A monthly newsletter is being sent to 8,000 schools. The overall concept and case studies can be found at www.unternehmen-bildung.at and www.bildungscluster.at.

THEME 9: FINANCING VET

9.1 Improving efficiency, equity and levels of VET funding

- a) Please assess progress in your country in improving public and private investment in VET and in particular cost sharing. Please report on policies aimed at improving efficiency, equity and the levels of VET financing. Please distinguish between different types of VET (IVET, CVET, training for unemployed).

Apprenticeship Training

Apprenticeship Training in the dual system comprises 80% of in-company training. Training costs related to in-service training are paid by the training companies, an apprenticeship remuneration is paid to apprentices. The costs of part-time vocational schools (20% of training time) are borne by public funds. Thus the greater part of costs to be borne for the Apprenticeship System falls to the private sector. A number of incentives have been implemented during the last years in order to increase companies' readiness to train apprentices.

If the apprentices have started the apprenticeship training before 28 06 2008, their training enterprises can ask for an annual tax bonus of EUR 1.000.- (Lehrlingsausbildungsprämie).

Additionally there is a special financial support for every additional apprentice employed before the same qualifying date. ("Blum-Bonus"). This subvention is paid by the Labour Market Service and amounts to monthly

EUR 400 in the first year of apprenticeship training,

EUR 200 in the second year of apprenticeship training and

EUR 100 in the third and fourth year of apprenticeship training. Both forms of subventions are currently phased out.

For all apprentices who started their training after 28 06 2008, there is a new support scheme: Lehrlingsförderung NEU.

It consists of a basic subvention and additional subventions related to quality aspects. Moreover there is a bonus for enterprises starting with apprenticeship training for the first time or restarting after at least three years without apprentices.

The basic subvention depends on the salary an enterprise pays to the apprentice (apprenticeship remuneration):

1st year: apprenticeship remuneration x 3

2nd year: apprenticeship remuneration x 2

3rd year and 4th year: apprenticeship remuneration x 1

The quality oriented grants consist of:

- Subventions for the further education of apprentices and trainers (e.g. courses to deepen specific knowledge and skills or general occupation oriented knowledge like languages, soft skills etc.)
- Assistance for low achieving apprentices (e.g. courses in the case of low linguistic competence)
- Subvention for graduation with excellent (EUR 250,--) or good success (EUR 200,--)
- Bonus of EUR 3.000,-- per apprentice, when the enterprise documents the apprenticeship training and all apprentices pass a test in the middle of the apprenticeship successfully.

Enterprises which start with apprenticeship training for the first time or after at least three years without apprentices get a bonus of EUR 2.000 for every apprentice, but it is limited to the first ten apprentices.

Lehrlingsförderung NEU has to be evaluated every two years, for the first time by 30 06 2010. The result of the evaluation has to be reported to the General Assembly. Moreover there is a continuous monitoring of Lehrlingsförderung NEU in order to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of the subventions.

The new support scheme is administrated by the apprenticeship offices established in the regional chambers of economy.

The new system requires much more administration than the old one, but it is a lot more target-oriented and promotes quality and further positive effects. It is predominantly financed by the Insolvenz-Entgelt-Fonds (Fund for insolvency compensation) which can be completed by means from the Labour Market Service (Arbeitsmarktpolitik-Finanzierungsgesetz).

The "überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung" in special training institutions for teenagers who did not find a regular apprenticeship position in a company (according to the "Ausbildungsgarantie", a law ensuring the right for initial training of young people) is financed by the labour market service.

IVET in schools and 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 in Austria essentially consists of universities and *Fachhochschulen (FHs)*, 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 to be paid by 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.

Promotion of gifted learners (fast-track scheme)

A scholarship system '*Begabtenförderung*' for the further training of outstanding apprentices and skilled workers was created in 1996. Since then, about 7.500 persons and 9.000 further training initiatives have been co-financed by the scholarship system funded by the BMASK and the Austrian Economic Chamber. Main thematic areas are courses to prepare candidates for self-employment (master craftsman's courses, entrepreneur's examination courses,...), preparatory courses for the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (i.e. the certificate providing university access for skilled workers) and courses or stays abroad.

9.2 Use of the Lifelong Learning Programme

- a) To what extent has the Lifelong Learning Programme supported VET policy development? Do you consider this support as sufficient?
Given the new programming period from 2014, how could support for VET from the Lifelong Learning Programme be improved?

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.

Fact-based proposals to improve the use of the LLP for the objectives of VET can only be made properly following an evaluation of the national interim reports and of the European report in late 2010. From the Austrian perspective the following cornerstones can be specified from the results available to date ¹¹

Content orientation

- continuation of the integrated programme in terms of lifelong learning – no separation into HE programmes and other programmes!
- enhancement of flexibility between programmes
- increased uniformity in the programme to enhance efficiency and comprehensibility
- focus on mobility in terms of cross-border learning and teaching stays as well as knowledge exchange –
- as a complementary measure, cross-border cooperation and development projects to support national educational policy priorities
- closer linking of mobility with learning outcomes to ensure transparency and permeability (transferability of learning outcomes)
- securing quality as a central aspect in all measures of the programme
- preparation of institutions for individual mobility (e.g. by introducing institutional agreements to handle mobility such as in Erasmus)
- integration of the pilot project “Comenius individual mobility” as a specific action in the new programme and related preparation of institutions
- increasing output-orientation by extending the lump-sum system to other areas
- bringing third states closer
- extending the joint degree programmes
- mobility account in Erasmus – repeated stays abroad in a “modular system” within 24 months
- the possibility of additional shorter stays apart from the classic Erasmus mobility track

¹¹ These are based on statements of selected delegates in the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Administration of the programme

- combination of centralised and decentralised administration is basically useful, but an extension of decentralisation to ensure efficient and customer-friendly programme administration is essential
- centralised strategic steering and coordination function by the European Commission
- clear separation of responsibilities between the national authority, National Agency and the European Commission (in particular in the drawing up of the *ex post* statements of assurance)
- no duplication and “over-administration” – observation of the ISO certification of the National Agency
- stable programme management: timely transmission of all relevant documents (application forms, report forms, etc.) and paying out of funds
- avoidance of legal uncertainty due to continually changing administrative provisions (guidelines for national agencies, reporting obligations, contracts for beneficiaries)
- creation of so-called “mobility agencies” to handle learning mobility and relieve the national agencies

9.3 Use of other EU funds

- a) To what extent have EU funds such as the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Investment Bank funds and pre-accession instruments supported implementation of VET reforms in your country?

The contribution of the ESF Objective 3 (2000-2006) in the education sector and in particular in the school area consisted in being able to make available additional budgetary funds to implement labour market-relevant activities. In concrete terms this has been reflected in many different areas (IVET and CET):

in the field of school education, the focus of measures is in the following fields:

- skills training and qualification measures for disadvantaged people, in particular school dropouts and people who have not completed compulsory schooling or a VET school or college;
- qualification for promising labour market sectors (in particular information and communication technologies) and improved transition from IVET to the labour market;
- foreign language offensive;
- “train the trainers”: accompanying in-service teacher training for the three mentioned areas as well as informatics qualification and equality of opportunities (such as continuing training for teachers in “gender sensitivity” and “gender mainstreaming”).

In concrete terms, the following instruments are handled in the four principal areas of activity (AA):

AA 1: Skills training and qualification measures for disadvantaged people, in particular school dropouts and people who have not completed compulsory schooling or a VET school or college;

- COOL in colleges of business administration and business schools
- S-1.5a Team teaching and open learning at business schools and colleges of business administration for people under employment

AA 2: Qualification for promising labour market sectors (in particular information and communication technologies) and improved transition from IVET to the labour market

- new specialist training model with an IT qualification plus work placement
- MUT – Girls and Technology

AA 3: Foreign language offensive

AA 4: Train the trainers – in-service teacher training

- b) What are your plans to use these funds to continue modernising VET both in the context of the mid-term review of the current financial framework (2007-13) and the next programming period from 2014 onwards?

In the new ESF programming period 2007-2013 (the “ESF Employment” programme), the contents focus more on “fighting discrimination”:

AA 1:

- increasing the number of individuals with basic qualifications and educational qualifications as well as reducing the percentage of school dropouts
- thematic focus on year 9”: “schools and social work (fighting early school termination, obtainment of educational qualifications in second-chance education, integration of migrants)

AA 2:

- reorientation and quality development of a system of qualifying educational programmes for people in employment

AA 3:

- innovative measures (including the selected enhancement of permeability (NQF, educational standards)”; National Qualifications Framework – consultation and implementation, educational standards in VET – development and implementation

AA 4:

- improving the ability of orientation, guidance and decision-making in educational and career choice in particular for disadvantaged people
- facilitating guidance, orientation and decision-making processes among students at upper secondary level
- application management related to apprenticeship posts for compulsory school graduates
- improving the qualifications of school and educational counsellors

AA 5

- improving the knowledge of teachers regarding qualification requirements in promising economic sectors
- combating the dropout problem, support for learning successes, integrative VET
- extension of offers to use information and communication technologies in the classroom. Blended learning, IT related in-service teacher training
- teaching of key qualifications and key competences on the basis of the European reference framework for key competences
- promotion of quality initiatives at VET schools and colleges

Within the framework of the priorities of ESF employment as specified above, all planned projects can be perceived as a contribution to reforming and modernising the VET system.

In the ALE sector the following strategic objectives are being pursued:

- sustainable integration of disadvantaged adults in society, education and labour market; reduction of barriers and creation of equality of opportunities
- professionalisation and quality development in ALE

Target groups include the following: low-skilled people; people without any VET qualification or with lacking or inadequate basic education; socially and regionally disadvantaged people; immigrants; women; disadvantaged youths; older people, teachers, counsellors, trainers, etc.

The following measures are being taken:

- improving access to basic education and higher education (educational qualifications) for disadvantaged people in ALE
- extending and developing new approaches of educational information and counselling in the regional and urban areas
- extension and innovative development of offers for basic education and elementary educational qualifications (in particular the lower secondary school qualification) and forms of access to HE (in particular *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* and *Berufsreifeprüfung*)
- setting up networking structures, transfer of innovative educational schemes, development of novel methodical and didactic approaches
- establishment of a cooperative, cross-institutional and horizontal qualification system for people active in ALE
- support in the implementation of quality standards for the IVET and CET programmes specified above and promotion of quality assurance systems at ALE institutions

2014+: To date it is not yet possible to make any relevant statements due to the lack of specific data on the actual programme focuses.

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