

Coaching and counselling for apprentices and training companies

The Austrian apprenticeship training system is regarded as a model in Europe for a form of IVET provision that meets the requirements of the labour market and facilitates a smooth transition from training to the employment system. Although thanks to the apprenticeship system Austria scores well regarding youth (un)employment in an international comparison, a great many challenges have to be overcome from an Austrian perspective by educational and labour market policy-makers. These include the relatively high number of apprenticeship dropouts and of candidates who do not attempt to take or fail the apprenticeship-leave exam.

To counteract these challenges, in 2012 the Ministry of Economy in tandem with the Ministry of Labour initiated a coaching scheme for apprentices and training companies, which was piloted in four Austrian provinces between 2012 and 2013. Based on the results of an accompanying evaluation, in 2014 the decision was taken to continue with this measure and extend it to the whole of Austria. Since October 2015 this measure, which is financed with funds from the Insolvency Remuneration Fund (the largest part of which is supplied by employers' contributions), is offered nationwide.

This coaching programme aims to support apprentices and training companies during training, to facilitate positive completion of the apprenticeship-leave exam and enhance the quality of apprenticeship training, thus counteracting training dropouts in particular.

As part of this scheme, apprentices are provided with one-on-one counselling and guidance by professional coaches. Their task is to support the apprentices and look at any problems that emerge, because young people at risk of dropping out from training frequently face challenging situations in more than one area of their life. As part of the coaching scheme, an initial interview is conducted to determine further cooperation between the coach and the apprentice. A coaching measure can consist of coaches pointing out career or personal perspectives, providing support with the choice of qualification and continuing education and training programmes, as well as helping with preparation for the apprenticeship-leave exam. If necessary, conflict mediation and case management also form part of the scheme. Interested individuals can apply either to the apprenticeship office or to other institutions (such as the Chamber of Labour, Public Employment Service) or via the web portal or hotline. By including target group-appropriate information materials and media as well as flexible and needs-oriented approaches (such as the hotline and online counselling), the measure is designed in such a way that it can be used without difficulty.

Counselling for training companies can comprise training design, quality management, acquisition of apprentices, continuing education and training as well as additional training, subsidies or legal issues. Similarly, coaching for training companies can include conflict resolution between apprentices and companies, and address general challenges connected with the apprenticeship training in the situation of the specific company. Applications for coaching of training companies need to be submitted to the apprenticeship office.

After the evaluation of the pilot period, several improvement measures were introduced. A coordination office was set up with the task of implementing and carrying out the scheme. One of the main tasks of this office is to involve all relevant stakeholders and include existing structures (such as youth work, youth coaching, Public Employment Service, non-school education establishments) in the implementation of the scheme, to use synergies as well as possible. In addition, the target groups are now defined in greater detail than during the pilot phase. While they were initially described in a general way, now training companies and apprentices with a migration background, young women in non-typical apprenticeship

occupations as well as SMEs have been cited as being especially worthy of support. New developments have also been introduced regarding the structure of the coaching process. For example, compulsory follow-up after completion of the coaching process has been introduced.

Further reading and information

Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy:

<http://www.bmfwf.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrlingsUndBerufsausbildung/Seiten/CoachingundBeratung%C3%BCrLehrlingeundLehrbetreibe.aspx> (retrieved on 7.12.2015).

Coordination office: <http://www.koordinationsstelle.at/> (retrieved on 7.12.2015)

Guideline pursuant to § 19c (1) (8) of the Vocational Training Act. Last amended in July 2014:

http://www.bmfwf.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrlingsUndBerufsausbildung/Documents/Richtlinie_%C2%A7_19c_Abs_1_Z_8_Endfassung_Juli_2014.pdf (retrieved on 7.12.2015)

Website "Rock Your Future": <https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/RockyourFuture-deinLehrlingscoach/Startseite---LehreFoerdern-Lehrlingscoaching.html> (retrieved on 7.12.2015)

Wieser, Regine, Litschel, Veronika und Löffler, Roland: Begleitende Evaluierung und Wirkungsanalyse des Pilotprojekts "Coaching und Beratung von Lehrlingen und Betrieben" in den Bundesländern OÖ, Steiermark, Tirol und Wien [Accompanying Evaluation and Analysis of Impact of the Pilot Project "Coaching and Counselling of Apprentices and Companies" in the provinces Upper Austria, Styria, Tyrol and Vienna], commissioned by BMFWF and BMASK, 2012-2014. öibf project no. 12/15