

# ■ **Austrian VET Policy Report**

## Progress report on developments 2002 - 2008

**Sabine Tritscher-Archan / Thomas Mayr (eds.)**

ibw - Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft



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European Centre for the Development  
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Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft

# **Austrian VET Policy Report**

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**Sabine Tritscher-Archan  
Thomas Mayr (eds.)**

**Vienna, 2008**

*This report is one of a set of European country reports on VET policy development. It has been produced as a contribution to Cedefop's third policy report which reviews progress in VET towards the policy goals of the Copenhagen process. The opinions expressed in this national report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.*

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## **Masthead**

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Vienna, 2008

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Sabine Tritscher-Archan (ibw)

## Executive Summary

This **Policy Report** forms part of the Cedefop ReferNet 2008 work programme; **abf-austria** is responsible for its implementation in Austria. This report includes the most important information about the "*national progress in VET towards EU policy goals within the framework of the Copenhagen process and according to the policy priorities defined in the Helsinki Communiqué*" (cf. Specification for ReferNet 2008 work programme).

The main section of this report is subdivided into **seven policy areas** identified by education ministers as priorities for national policy design in the VET sector (cf. summary below). The **introductory chapter** of this report deals with socioeconomic aspects and aspects of labour market relevance, the background of which aims to enhance understanding of national policy design. The **final chapter** provides an outlook of possible educational policy priorities after 2010, when the Lisbon process will be completed.

The seven policy areas can be **summarised** as follows:

**Improving access to and equity in VET:** The VET sector plays a major role in the Austrian education landscape. Despite the high participation rates in a European comparison, the main goals of education policy are the maintenance of the attractiveness of VET and its extension and continuous further development. A large number of measures have therefore been launched or implemented since 2002 to attain these goals. These measures include, above all, initiatives to increase flexibilisation and enhance permeability (e.g. modularisation of apprenticeship training), intensify educational counselling and career guidance (e.g. creation of a network of apprenticeship advisors), and improve quality (e.g. creation of the VET Quality Initiative QIBB). In addition, measures have been taken to facilitate and simplify access to VET for all, e.g. via Integrative VET.

**Lifelong learning through VET:** A series of policy measures have pursued the objective of enhancing permeability between the individual VET tracks. Supplementing the previous *Berufsreifeprüfung*, there will be models for the parallel preparation for a VET qualification and *Reifeprüfung* as of the autumn of 2008. Additional current projects include pilots of educational standards for the VET sectors to better define interfaces and facilitate transitions. The elaboration of a national Lifelong Guidance strategy aims to encompass all areas of the education sector and all age groups. This strategy is to become part of a comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning strategy. The Austrian education culture is traditionally strongly geared towards the formal IVET sector. Nevertheless, also due to discussions at European level, the theme of recording and validating non-formally and informally acquired skills is increasingly gaining in importance. There are many related local and regional initiatives. At national level, the Academy of Continuing Education (WBA) can be named as an example, where future adult educators can have credits awarded for existing competences to obtain the WBA Certificate or WBA Diploma.

**Improving quality of VET:** Quality development and quality assurance have established themselves as key educational policy objectives in the school sector over the past five years. Here the focus in Austria has shifted from central input control towards process and mainly output control. All levels of the education system are systematically integrated into the VET Quality Initiative (QIBB), which was launched in 2005/06. The introduction of educational standards and the testing procedures which they build on aim to be another step towards the improvement of quality. In the dual VET sector, the subsidisation of apprenticeship places is currently being refocused; in the future it will be geared also towards quality aspects. The in-service and further training of teachers in the VET sector was raised to the tertiary level in

2006 with the conversion of previously post-secondary teacher training colleges to university colleges of education.

**Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market:** The linking of IVET and CVET with the labour market is safeguarded in Austria by institutionalised cooperation ventures between competent authorities and the social partners. Policy measures have been taken in the dual VET sector particularly by introducing financial incentives for the (additional) recruitment of apprentices (e.g. *Blum Bonus*, cost reduction for training enterprises) and by redesigning the apprenticeship occupation landscape (e.g. the Integrative VET scheme, modularisation, introduction of new apprenticeships). Cooperation between educational institutions and the social partners aims to ensure that qualification-related requirements made by the business sphere are considered in VET at an early stage.

**Governance and funding:** The Austrian governance and financing structures in the VET sector are basically characterised by very stable fundamental structures. Changes in the field of administration since 2002 include the introduction of university autonomy. Current discussions focus on a new school administration that is to follow the principles of new public management (transparency, accountability, responsibility, etc.). The main objectives are the extension of school autonomy, the creation of regional education directorates, and increased budgetary scope for schools. Policy measures conducted since 2002 in the field of financing have aimed at reducing costs for training enterprises. In addition, the training allowance for companies, which was introduced in 2000, was extended to in-house company training in 2002 and educational vouchers for CVET have been introduced.

**EU tools and geographic mobility within VET:** The instruments EQF, ECVET and Europass, which were developed at European level, are highly important overall for the Austrian VET system. At present, with extensive participation of all stakeholders, a National Qualifications Framework is being created. In a parallel development, there is a much greater focus on learning outcomes. Regarding the possible implementation of ECVET, preliminary activities to examine the "ECVET suitability" of the VET sector have been conducted. Another educational policy objective is to encourage qualifying mobility in VET as part of the internationalisation strategy. In this connection, great importance is given to the Europass instruments.

**Development of VET statistics:** To analyse IVET and CVET in Austria, statistical datasets are available that are produced at the sectoral, regional and national level (e.g. education statistics) and within the framework of international surveys (e.g. the Labour Force Survey). The aim is to continuously improve and extend datasets, e.g. by publishing a National Report on Education.

## Notes by the Editors

The policy measures described in the individual chapters in most cases do not just pursue one educational policy objective but several. They have, therefore, frequently been specified under different chapters and marked by related cross-references.

This report was drawn up under the auspices of the Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw) by a **team of authors** from the ReferNet Austria consortium's institutions 3s, IHS and öibf (cf. Theme 10). ReferNet Austria is a project of abfaustria. The authors would like to thank the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK), the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) and the social partners for their valuable hints and supplements.

Sabine Tritscher-Archan and Helmut Hafner (ibw)

## 1 National political and socio-economic context

### 1.1 National political/policy-context

The VET sector plays a **major role** in the Austrian education landscape. This is reflected in particular by the broad and varied provision of VET programmes, which is widely accepted by learners. Some 80 % of all schoolchildren opt for a VET path at the upper secondary level after compulsory schooling. One explicit goal of VET policies that is of high priority at all competence levels is the maintenance of the attractiveness of VET and its extension and continuous further development.

Austria is a largely **uniform education area**, which is mostly regulated centrally at the federal level. The legal designing of VET is split among several ministries. The involvement of the social partners leads to corporatist elements in educational policy decision making processes. The CVET sector, however, is relatively unregulated. CVET providers are largely autonomous in the designing and organisational implementation of their provisions.

The large number of actors and different spheres of responsibility in the individual areas of the VET system leads to differing patterns of **policy design and administration**:

**VET schools and colleges, BMHS** (upper secondary level, ISCED 3 and 4): The Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) acts as the supreme supervisory authority of all BMHS and is, above all, responsible for elaborating school legislation. Regional Education Boards are responsible for execution at the regional level. A series of tasks to be fulfilled by schools of defined area specialisation are within the sphere of competence of other ministries, e.g. the Health Ministry (schools for healthcare occupations) or the Agriculture Ministry (schools of agriculture and forestry). With regard to VET schools and colleges, the social partners are entitled to issue their statements on drafts of school legislation, curricula, etc. Initiatives related to policy measures in the field of the BMHS are frequently triggered by BMUKK and often stimulated by European developments.

**Apprenticeship training** (upper secondary level, ISCED 3): The company-based part of apprenticeship training falls within the competence of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA), which among other things elaborates the Vocational Training Act. The apprenticeship offices, which are located at the regional economic chambers, are responsible for administration and organisation. The BMUKK is responsible for the school-based part of training (including elaborating acts and framework curricula) and is supported in its implementation by the Regional Education Boards. The social partners are substantially involved in the designing of the apprenticeship training. They frequently initiate the introduction of new apprenticeships or the modernisation of existing ones, draw up expert opinions regarding changes in the apprenticeship area, and trigger policy measures. In addition, they are called in for co-designing the curricula of vocational schools for apprentices.

**Fachhochschule programmes, FH** (tertiary level, ISCED 6): *Fachhochschule* providers (e.g. municipalities, federal provinces, social partners) initiate FH study programmes and are responsible for their installation and maintenance. The BMUKK finances a major part of the costs of every study place; the remainder is paid by the provider. The *Fachhochschule* Council ensures external quality assurance and also triggers policy measures.

**CVET**: In the field of CVET there are no explicitly defined legal or educational policy supervisory functions for the total sector. The legislator has adopted a few framework laws and provided for political responsibilities in certain areas (e.g. for subsidies). The BMUKK bears responsibility for CVET in the school sector, the Federal Ministry for Science and Research

(BMWF) for CVET at HE institutions. CVET providers in non-school and non-HE CVET institutions are largely autonomous within the framework of legal specifications and mainly subject to the market conditions of supply and demand.

Fig. 1: VET priorities

No.	Policy priority	Main causes and reasons	Policy approach
1.	<b>Increasing permeability</b> (cf. 2.2.1, 3.1, 3.2.2, 7.3.2)	Preventing “educational cul-de-sacs”; facilitating access to the highest VET level for all learners; improved linking of IVET and CVET within the meaning of LLL	Introduction of option of attending apprenticeship and the <i>Berufsreifeprüfung</i> scheme simultaneously; increased problem-awareness of visibility and recognition of informal learning; recognition of professional experience as access to CVET programmes
2.	<b>Drawing up a National Qualifications Framework</b> (cf. 7.2.1, 7.2.2)	Creation of more transparency; more objective presentation of qualifications in an international comparison; EU recommendation	Development of an NQF involving all relevant stakeholders – consultation procedure; increased orientation to learning outcomes; participation in the Bologna process
3.	<b>Orientation towards learning outcomes</b> (cf. 7.3.2)	Creation of more transparency and improved comparability; enhancing geographical mobility; EU recommendation	Preparation of educational standards oriented towards learning outcomes; re-formulation of curricula and vocational training plans
4.	<b>Extension of quality assurance</b> (cf. 4.2.1, 4.2.2)	Continuous improvement of educational provision; transparent presentation and safeguarding of learning outcomes; EU recommendation	Setting up a quality management system in VET (QIBB); drawing up educational standards; re-orientation of subsidisation for apprenticeship posts – orientation, among others, towards quality aspects
5.	<b>Intensification of educational counselling and career guidance</b> (cf. 2.1.1, 3.2.2)	Optimising the matching process between supply and demand in the labour market; making up information deficits of young people	Improved networking of educational institutions and training providers; strengthened cooperation between school and the business sphere
6.	<b>Guaranteeing education until the age of 18</b> (cf. 2.1.1, 3.2.1)	Reducing the share of young people who have not completed upper secondary level; safeguarding youth employment by access to CVET	Increasing the number of school places at VET schools and colleges; training provisions by Public Employment Service comprising entire programmes until the apprenticeship diploma
7.	<b>Adaptation of curricula and vocational training plans</b> (cf. 5.4.1, 5.4.2)	Adjustment to sectoral needs / changes of the labour market; improved coordination between the education sector and the business sphere; increasing flexibility	Extending the scopes of action by introducing curricular autonomy; modularisation of apprenticeship training; continuous adjustment of curricula and vocational training plans (new apprenticeship occupations, new specialisations)

8.	<b>Promoting lifelong learning</b> (cf. 3.1.1)	Social developments and economic changes in a globalised world make LLL important for every individual; maintaining employability	Preparing a comprehensive and coherent LLL strategy; creating framework conditions; incentive structures; improving credit transfers for learning outcomes obtained in all learning contexts
9.	<b>Further development of the Fachhochschule sector</b> (cf. 5.1)	Increased demand for graduates of technological, scientific and technology-oriented service study programmes; part-time educational provisions	Needs-oriented educational provisions – orientation of content to the needs of the economy; creation of part-time educational provisions
10.	<b>Reorganisation of teacher training</b> (cf. 4.3.1)	Upgrading of teacher training; improved international comparability	Conversion of previous training institutions to university colleges of education

Sources: BMUKK, BMWA, FHR

## 1.2 Socio-economic context

The Austrian national economy is currently in a stage of prosperity. Compared to 2003, growth of the **gross domestic product (GDP)** has more than doubled and is already above the EU average in 2007.

Fig. 2: Growth rate of real GDP (percentage changes to last year)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Austria	1.2	2.3	2.0	3.3	3.4
EU (27 countries)	1.3	2.5	1.9	3.0	2.9
EU (25 countries)	1.3	2.5	1.8	3.0	2.8

Source: Eurostat

In accordance with the dynamic of this development, the **employment rate** increased and the number of unemployed declined in the same period. In 2007 the employment rate was higher and the unemployment rate lower than the respective EU averages. The present favourable economic situation also had an impact on the extent of **youth unemployment**: Whereas unemployment of people below the age of 25 was as high as 10.3 % in 2005, it decreased two years later by 1.7 percent to 8.6 %.

Fig. 3: Employment rate (in %)

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Austria	68.9	67.8	68.6	70.2
EU (27 countries)	62.6	62.9	63.5	64.5
EU (25 countries)	63.0	63.3	64.0	64.8

Source: Eurostat

Fig. 4: Unemployment and youth unemployment rates (in %)

	overall	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Austria		4.3	4.8	5.2	4.7	4.4
EU (27 countries)		8.9	9.0	8.9	8.2	7.1
EU (25 countries)		9.0	9.0	8.9	8.2	7.2
	of people below the age of 25	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Austria		8.1	9.4	10.3	9.1	8.6
EU (27 countries)		18.0	18.4	18.3	17.1	15.4
EU (25 countries)		17.8	18.2	18.2	16.9	15.2

Source: Eurostat

From an analytical perspective, not only developments connected with the business cycle play a role in the formulation and conception of educational policy measures and activities, but also longer term, structurally influenced trends. In Austria, the most important developments include the following:

**Demographic change:** In Austria, demographic changes reflect, among other things, a declining share of young people and a tendency towards the increasing “aging” of society. One typical feature is the rising statutory retirement entry age.

Fig. 5: Share of under-15-year-olds in total population (in %)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Austria	16.5	16.3	16.1	15.9	15.6
EU (27 countries)	16.6	16.4	16.2	16.0	15.8
EU (25 countries)	16.6	16.4	16.2	16.0	15.9

Source: Eurostat

Fig. 6: Average retirement entry age

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Austria	58.8	-	59.9	61.0
EU (27 countries)	61.0	60.5	61.0	61.2
EU (25 countries)	61.0	60.5	60.9	61.0

Source: Eurostat

**Migration and share of foreigners:** Between 2001 and 2006 the number of foreigners living in Austria rose by some 6%.

Fig. 7: Share of people with non-Austrian citizenship

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of people	766,055	731,631	755,124	765,303	788,609	814,065

Source: Eurostat

**Sectoral change:** As in other EU countries, also in Austria the tertiary sector has gained in importance in the last ten years.

Fig. 8: Gainfully employed by economic sectors (in %)

	1995	2006
Primary sector	7.4	5.5
Secondary sector	31.8	28.2
Tertiary sector	60.7	66.3

Source: Statistik Austria

**Growing knowledge and information society:** In the last ten years, Austria has clearly moved in the direction of an information and knowledge society. One indicator for this development is the increasing technologisation of private and professional life – as is proven, by way of example, by the rise of the Internet access density.

Fig. 9: Internet access density: Households with Internet access (in %)

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Austria	45	47	52	60
EU (27 countries)	40	48	49	54
EU (25 countries)	42	48	51	56

Source: Eurostat

### 1.2.1 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Integration platform
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>Approximately 1.4 million people with a migration background live in Austria. This equals slightly less than one fifth of the population. Although most are integrated into society, the integration process does not always function optimally. Aiming to improve this situation, the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) launched the Integration platform foreseen by the Government Programme 2007-2010 in 2007.</p> <p>The Integration platform is a discussion and cooperation platform, in which a large number of actors at the federal, regional and municipal levels collaborate with integration associations, NGOs, religious communities, with the business sphere and many other institutions. The platform aims to elaborate proposals for the integration of all people with a migration background. It concerns all spheres of social life – from the housing sector to education and the labour market.</p> <p>The opening conference was held in Vienna on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2007. In addition, a website was established (<a href="http://www.integration.at">www.integration.at</a>), where every Austrian has the opportunity to submit suggestions to improve integration. Furthermore, experts from the BMI and the Austrian Integration Fund jointly with experts from academia and practitioners compiled a compendium with the title “<i>gemeinsam kommen wir zusammen</i>” (“together we are moving closer”), which analyses the topic of integration from different perspectives (such as “education and language” and “labour market and business”) and includes a collection of suggestions. This compendium was published on the Integration platform’s website in January 2008 to further</p>

boost related discussions. Between April and Mai 2008 moreover a far-reaching information initiative was conducted with the title “tour 2008”. This event gave people in all provinces the opportunity to discuss issues with experts and affected individuals.

By the summer of 2008 it is planned to elaborate an integration strategy building on the compendium and submitted suggestions, on the basis of which the BMI will submit a package of measures to the government.

### **C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:**

The Integration platform operates at national level; institutions from across the country are involved in the platform. In addition everyone can take part in the discussion process via the website.

The Integration platform is not intended as an isolated measure but the kick-off of an integration strategy. Furthermore it is planned to issue reports on integration twice a year to create awareness in a lasting manner.

### **D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

No evaluation results are yet available on this measure.

### **E. Conclusions:**

No final assessment about the success of this measure can be given as it is still ongoing.

Source: BMI ([www.integration.at](http://www.integration.at))

### **A. Title of policy/measure:**

2002 Amendment to the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act (*Gewerbeordnung*, GewO): Liberalisation of access to professions

### **B. Outline of the policy/measure:**

The GewO was amended in 2002 (BGBl. I no. 111/2002), whereby adjustments in the field of VET were also linked in. This amendment aimed to further strengthen the business location of Austria and maintain its international competitiveness. The liberalisation of access to professions pursued the goal of providing incentives to entrepreneurship and counteract the deficit of self-employment that prevails in Austria.

The following major changes were adopted inter alia:

- **Simplified access to the master craftsperson exam:** Since the 2002 amendment to the GewO, the only prerequisite for being admitted to the master craftsperson exam has been proof of full legal age. A final apprenticeship exam or a subject-related previous qualification or practical work experience are no longer prerequisites for candidates. The master craftsperson exam consists of five modules and, in this way, examines all knowledge and skills required for exercising a craft or trade. The master craftsperson exam alone is a variant of the certificate of competence required for taking up a craft or trade. Subject-oriented apprenticeship diplomas, technical programmes at VET colleges, relevant university degrees are taken into account in so far as the scope of the exam is restricted by the knowledge and skills learned within the framework of these programmes. This easing of access to the master craftsperson exam and the restricted scope of the exam aim to motivate particularly young apprenticeship graduates, graduates of technical VET colleges and university to take the master craftsperson exam and start their own business.
- **Simplification of craft and trade categories, and simplified access:** Since 2002 the GewO has included a list of all regulated crafts and trades the entrepreneurial exercising of which requires a certificate of competence. This list distinguishes between crafts and

trades and other regulated crafts and trades. All activities that do not fall under the heading of regulated crafts and trades can be registered as unregulated crafts and trades. There is a craft and trade access regulation for all regulated crafts and trades. This access regulation regulates the different combinations of the certificate of competence (examination/training programme and/or practical periods) ("formal certificate of competence"). For the crafts and trades, one variant of access is the master craftsman exam. Individuals who are able to furnish proof of another type of training and/or practice that is not listed in the "formal certificate of competence" are entitled to submit an application for recognition of this individual competence as equivalent. The trade authority will examine whether this knowledge and experience and these skills suffice for exercising the craft or trade in an entrepreneurial capacity. In addition, it is possible that in accordance with the scope of proven competence, authorities grant a restriction to sub-activities of the relevant craft or trade. This form of "individual certificate of competence" takes account of easier recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences.

The 2002 amendment to the GewO applies to all people in Austria who want to exercise a craft or trade independently. This amendment's implementation has been completed.

#### **C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:**

The GewO applies across Austria. The liberalisation of access to professions on the basis of the 2002 amendment can be considered a policy measure for easier recognition of existing competences (acquired in different learning contexts). Main actors involved in this measure were the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA), whose sphere of competence encompasses the GewO, as well as the Federal Economic Chamber and specialist organisations.

#### **D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

A research consortium led by the Austrian Institute for SME Research, commissioned by BMWA, in December 2004 examined the effects of the GewO amendment on Austrian companies. It revealed that simplified access to the crafts and trades has had a positive effect on the number of start-ups. The individual competence procedure has also been criticised regarding the following points: the impossibility to assess the quality of applicants within a short period of time; emerging workaround strategies related to the master craftsman exam and entrance exam; and the view that people furnishing an "individual certificate of competence" lag behind people with a general certificate of competence in terms of their performance.

#### **E. Conclusions:**

The tenor to the 2002 GewO amendment is basically positive. Further adjustments and the consideration of evaluation results are expected for the near future however.

Source: BMWA

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## 2 Improving access to and equity in VET

### 2.1 National policy context on improving access to and equity in VET

The Austrian VET system is characterised by the **considerable importance of IVET**, i.e. the VET schools and VET colleges as well as apprenticeship training. On average, some 80 % of young people in their tenth year sign up to a VET programme. Of these, about 40 % take up an apprenticeship, 15 % attend a VET school, and ca. 27 % a VET college. Approximately 5 % complete their training by the end of the compulsory schooling period (duration: nine years).

CVET is then mostly understood as a continuation of IVET. CVET typically serves to extend and deepen the qualifications acquired in IVET. In 2005 some 19 % of Austrian employees had made use of provisions of non-formal vocationally-oriented CVET (e.g. courses).

Despite the comparatively high participation rates in IVET, **measures to enhance the attractiveness of VET** are major items on the political agenda. They are closely connected with employment, social and education policy objectives such as the aim of full employment, the reduction of social inequalities, and the enhancement of productivity in order to secure the business and production location Austria. The policy of increasing the attractiveness of VET is, among others, targeted at the following **groups**:

**Early school leavers:** The indicator "early school leavers" measures the share of 18-24-year-olds whose highest educational attainment is a qualification from lower secondary level and who do not attend any IVET or CVET programme. Since 2002 it has stood at about 10 % in Austria. According to the 2001 census, the share of 20-24-year-olds who in the course of their educational career do not attain any formal educational qualification beyond compulsory schooling is 17 %. It can therefore be assumed that the share of early school leavers is not higher than this value.

**Immigrants:** Measures to facilitate access to education and increase the attractiveness of VET for immigrants are of particular importance. Because the disadvantages this group has to face in terms of their educational level attained is great: According to the 2001 census, the share of Austrian 20-24-year-olds who have not completed lower secondary level was 13 %, whereas the share of those with a foreign citizenship was 47 %. This inequality must be seen not least also under the aspect of educational aspiration and socialisation. It is precisely immigrants from the two biggest immigrant countries Serbia and Turkey (apart from Germany) that frequently come from so-called "difficult-to-reach" groups (that is to say: people who are less likely to access education). Measures to increase educational participation by this group therefore require parents to exert their influence and become involved very early in the socialisation process (see section 2.3). Last but not least, also in this context, comprehensive educational counselling and career guidance are of key importance.

**Gender-specific career and educational choice:** Now as before, educational and career decisions are taken to a large extent according to gender-specific factors. Women, for example, are typically clearly underrepresented in technical VET programmes.

## 2.2 Increasing access to and attractiveness of VET

### 2.2.1 Policy progress since 2002

Since 2002 a wide range of measures have been taken to increase the attractiveness of VET and further increase participation in VET. Besides, there are of course some measures that were started before 2002 and have since been implemented successfully, such as the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship-leave examination, within the framework of which informally acquired competences are recognised in the admission to the apprenticeship-leave exam.

In the following only major examples of measures are described that have been newly initiated or structurally reformed since 2002:

#### **Measures to increase flexibilisation and enhance permeability between educational provisions and options** (cf. 3.2.2, 5.4.2)

- Modularisation of apprenticeship training (since 2006): Following broad basic training in two-year basic modules, flexibility is enhanced due to optional main modules and voluntary special modules.
- Reform of the *Berufsreifeprüfung* scheme

#### **Recognition of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills** (cf. 1.2.1, 3.4.2)

- Exceptional admission to the apprenticeship-leave examination: Within the framework of this measure, non-formally and informally acquired competences are recognised in the admission to the apprenticeship-leave exam.
- Implementation of the first pilot projects to recognise non-formal and informal learning processes in adult education (e.g. the Academy of Continuing Education)
- Easier access to the master craftsman exam due to recognition of professional experience (2002 Amendment to the Trade Commerce and Industry Regulation Act)

#### **Measures to raise awareness and change attitudes to learning**

- Since the autumn of 2005 campaigns have increasingly been conducted (such as "*Lernen bringt's*", i.e. education has positive effects and is worth it) in cooperation with the media. In adult learning, an award has been premiered (the "Education Champion")

#### **Stimulating private investment from enterprises, households, and individuals** (cf. 5.2.2)

- increased aid for schoolchildren as of 2007
- creation of financial investments for companies to create or offer more apprenticeship posts ("*Blum Bonus*"),
- facilitation of favourable tax treatment of educational expenses for companies and households
- introduction of education vouchers and region-specific education accounts (i.e. with different regulations in the various provinces)
- further extension of HE study allowances
- financial and organisational support for training alliances in training enterprises (in individual provinces)
- extension and increase of the training allowance for companies

### **Professionalisation and intensification of educational counselling and career guidance** (cf. 3.3.2)

- creation of a network of apprentices' advisors who create additional apprenticeship posts via contacts and acquisition by the Austrian economic chambers (subsidised by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour and the regional governments)
- programme by the Federal Institute for Adult Learning on "Educational counselling" for the professionalisation of educational counsellors

### **Measures to modernise VET and improve its quality** (cf. 4.2.2)

- Creation of the quality initiative QIBB ("*QualitätsInitiative Berufsbildung*", quality initiative in VET): This initiative was launched in the 2005/2006 school year with the objective of implementing school-specific quality management systems.
- Implementation of the ICT strategy: The aim is that all Austrian general education and VET schools are equipped with an Internet connection and the appropriate infrastructure and increasingly use e-learning in the classroom.
- During 2008 the application of educational standards will be tested. In this process, the focus will be learning outcomes. The educational standards specify the competences schoolchildren should have obtained after a certain school year.
- Reorganisation and increasingly qualitative orientation of apprenticeship subsidies, additional funding of training alliances and creation of the option of a premature termination of the apprenticeship relationship with previous mediation procedure (with simultaneous continuation of a supra-company training guarantee) in the course of the planned amendment to the Vocational Training Act (within the framework of the so-called "youth employment package").

### **Increasing the number of graduates in mathematical and scientific subjects**

- This objective is to be achieved by close cooperation between schools and universities, an upgrading of mathematical and scientific subjects, and the targeted pedagogical preparation of mathematical and scientific knowledge.
- Various initiatives (mainly on the part of the social partners) to raise young women's interest in technical occupations.

## **2.2.2 Examples of policy measures**

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Reform of educational leave 2008
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
The educational leave initiated on the basis of a social partner agreement aims to facilitate participation by employees in VET and CVET measures. Educational leave can be agreed between employer and employee starting in the second year of employment. The duration of this educational leave can be between three months and one year. Pursuant to the Unemployment Insurance Act, employees are eligible for a CVET allowance in the amount of the notional unemployment benefit for the duration of the educational leave if individuals who are using the opportunity of the educational leave meet candidacy pursuant to unemployment insurance legislation and furnish proof of participation in a CVET measure of at least 20 weekly hours. As of the 1 <sup>st</sup> of January 2008 the minimum employment duration required for candidacy was reduced from three years to one year and the CVET allowance raised from previously EUR 436 a month to the amount of the notional unemployment benefit, which on average corresponds to an increase by 70 %. In addition, also seasonally employed people (with interrupted employment relationships) are now entitled to conclude an agreement on an educational leave on certain conditions.

The specific advantages of educational leave include:

- The acquisition of school and university qualifications is possible within the framework of the educational leave.
- Even in other countries foreign language courses are allowed.
- Companies do not have to meet any conditions nor do they incur any costs if employees on educational leave obtain higher qualifications at the same time.
- Companies are supported by the Public Employment Service Austria in the recruitment of substitute employees.

### C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

Educational leave represents a major CVET instrument and a measure within the framework of the promotion of lifelong learning. Educational leave is designed as a demand-oriented measure: It is ultimately up to the employee which courses to attend.

### D. Assessment of the policy/measure:

Thanks to the reform of educational leave as of early 2008 a considerably increased number of participants are assumed in the medium term. No informative results or evaluation studies are to date available.

### E. Conclusions:

One problem connected with the former regulation was the relatively low amount of financial support during educational leave, which was improved by raising the so-called “CVET allowance” to the amount of the notional unemployment benefit.

The reform also redefined the candidacy for educational leave or made it considerably easier (instead of three years of uninterrupted employment, now merely a one year employment relationship) and reaches new target groups (e.g. seasonal workers). Hence as many as three quarters of all employees are eligible for educational leave.

Sources: BMUKK, BMWA

## 2.3 Improving equity for specific target groups

### 2.3.1 Policy progress since 2002

The major **target groups** of measures to increase the attractiveness of VET are early school leavers and school dropouts, women, socially and mentally disadvantaged people, people with disabilities, older workers, immigrants and the low skilled.

In a European comparison, the share of **early school leavers** is relatively low in Austria. Between 2002 and 2006 it remained essentially constant.

Fig. 10: Share of early school leavers

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Austria	9.5	9.3	8.7	9.0	9.6
EU (27 countries)	17.1	16.6	15.9	15.5	15.2
EU (25 countries)	16.6	16.1	15.4	15.1	15.0
EU (15 countries)	18.7	18.3	17.5	17.1	16.9

Sources: Eurostat, Statistik Austria

With regard to the aspect of access to IVET and CVET, also the pronounced interdependency of the IVET and CVET sectors needs to be emphasised.

As shown in the following table, participation in learning activities of people in gainful employment is strongly linked with the highest completed school qualification (i.e. educational attainment). People with an educational attainment of between ISCED 0 and ISCED 2 reveal a clearly lower participation in education than higher qualified individuals both in an EU average and in Austria.

Fig. 11: Participation in learning activities by educational attainment of people in gainful employment (in %), reference year 2005

	EU (25 countries)	Austria
ISCED 0-2: Preschool, primary school and lower-secondary school	15.1	15.2
ISCED 3: Secondary levels I and II	47.5	65.2
ISCED 5-6: Tertiary level	37.4	19.6

Source: Eurostat

It has already been mentioned at the beginning of this section that **immigrants** represent a particularly disadvantaged group in terms of access to learning. They are clearly underrepresented at VET schools and colleges as well as at secondary schools, whereas they are overrepresented at special-needs schools. However, it has been possible to significantly raise the share of schoolchildren of non-German mother tongue at VET schools and colleges since 2004/2005 (cf. Fig. 12).

Fig. 12: Share of schoolchildren of non-German mother tongue (in %)

	School year 2004/2005	School year 2006/2007
Primary schools	17.4	20.3
Lower secondary schools	15.1	18.7
Special-needs schools	24.0	26.5
Pre-vocational schools	19.2	20.4
Secondary schools	10.0	11.7
Vocational schools for apprentices	5.9	7.9
VET schools	13.4	15.4
VET colleges	8.4	9.8

Sources: Statistik Austria, BMUKK, ibw calculations

In order to increase the specified target group's participation in education, **a large number of political measures** have been launched since 2002:

- Measures to reduce the number of **early school leavers** essentially aim at two areas: at increasing the share of schoolchildren with a qualification from secondary level II and at strengthening key and basic competences (reading, writing, arithmetic) before they undergo a VET programme. Major measures in this connection include:
  - higher degree of professionalisation of the teaching staff in the direction of peer mediation and support of learning successes
  - reduction of the number of schoolchildren in classes to 25 to intensify pedagogical support
  - initiatives in the field of measures to promote reading skills (e.g. “*Lesefit*”)
  - setting up a pedagogical support structure for schoolchildren with learning deficits (e.g. target group oriented teaching material)
  - literacy and basic education measures
- Measures for schoolchildren and people with a **migration background** include: language support classes; German courses for parents of schoolchildren and kindergarten children; 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; or educational provision within the framework of CVET. In many cases, financial support is granted by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK).
- **Measures to address gender aspects in education and training:** The following exemplary measures aim to increase women's participation in education:
  - targeted educational counselling measures for girls and women
  - technology specific women's programmes (e.g. “*Women in the crafts and technology*” from 2006 to 2008)
  - creation of attractive learning provisions for women in rural regions who are less likely to access education (“difficult to reach”) and at a disadvantage
  - promotion for girls and women in technical and scientific HE study programmes

### 2.3.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Integrative vocational education and training ( <i>Integrative Berufsausbildung</i> , IBA) (cf. 3.2.2, 5.2.2)
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>Entering into force in 2003, IBA is regulated by the Vocational Training Act. Eligible groups for IBA are those who could not be placed in a regular apprenticeship by Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and who either</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• had special educational needs at the end of compulsory schooling and who were, at least in part, taught according to the curriculum of a special needs school; or</li> <li>• have no, or only a negative, final certificate from lower secondary school or</li> <li>• have “disabilities” within the meaning of the Act on the Employment of People with Disabilities; or</li> <li>• of whom it has to be assumed – within the framework of career guidance measures or due to an unsuccessful placement attempt in a regular apprenticeship relationship – that it will, in the foreseeable future, not be possible to find any regular apprenticeship vacancy for them for reasons exclusively related to the person himself/herself.</li> </ul> <p>IBA provides for two alternatives, viz. either prolongation of the legally stipulated apprenticeship period by one year, in exceptional cases by up to two years, or partial qualification, in which the occupational profile is restricted to parts of the apprenticeship occupation in question.</p>
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
<p>The following actors are foreseen in the implementation of this measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMS attempts to place all young apprenticeship seekers in a regular apprenticeship post. If that is not possible, AMS will search for training places for those to whom one of the above conditions applies within the framework of IBA. A subsidisation for training enterprises that employ young IBA people is foreseen in the AMS support criteria.</li> <li>• Vocational training assistance has the task of advising and supporting the youth and training enterprises before and during the training. It also takes over the function of a “hub”, viz. coordination of all parties involved.</li> <li>• The apprenticeship offices will complete the training and apprenticeship contracts as soon as all prerequisites have been met (AMS assignment, vocational training assistance) and will organise the apprenticeship-leave exams.</li> </ul> <p>Supervision of IBA is incumbent on the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour.</p>
<b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>Previous experience made by implementing institutions and training enterprises with the IBA scheme are very satisfactory. Some three quarters of training enterprises have had a positive experience with this form of training. Also the increasing number of interested young people is remarkable: Between 2004 and 2005, the number of apprentices in IBA increased by more than 74 %. By late 2005 a total of 1,940 young people were taking part in an IBA programme. By late August 2006 this number had increased to as many as around 2,400.</p>
<b>E. Conclusions:</b>
<p>IBA is a successful part of the policy aiming at enhancing youth employment and combating social exclusion and disadvantages. The measure is conducted throughout the country.</p>

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### 3 Lifelong learning through VET

#### 3.1 National policy context on Lifelong learning through VET

The current process of developing an **Austrian lifelong learning (LLL) strategy** must be seen against the background of a broad, very differentiated and generally highly accepted initial vocational education and training (IVET) sector at the upper secondary level. Some 80 % of all young people complete a dual or full-time school-based VET programme. Since the mid-1990s, more young people have acquired general university entrance qualifications at VET colleges than at secondary general education schools. This means that the VET sector represents an important pillar of LLL in Austria. Nevertheless, the five guidelines of the Austrian LLL approach as agreed on within the framework of a national consultation process – viz.: life-stage orientation, putting learners at the centre, lifelong guidance, competence orientation and promoting participation in LLL for the VET actors – constitute challenges at various levels. These are in particular:

- **Increased strategic coordination** and also coordination of financing flows at federal level and between the federal and provincial governments: Due to different legal framework conditions and ministerial competences e.g. in the field of active labour market and education policy, new strategic coordination and efficiency enhancement instruments at the federal level need to be identified.
- Due to the differentiation of VET paths and development forms, 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 provision (vertical permeability). This applies in particular to programmes to obtain higher education (HE) entrance qualifications.
- **Provision for adults** is not available for all VET qualifications or training forms. Even where available, it is usually highly time-consuming or very expensive. In this regard, increasing need for innovation can be identified.

#### 3.2 Facilitating transfer between VET pathways

##### 3.2.1 Policy progress since 2002

###### **Innovative legislation**

Since 2002, with active participation by the social partners, several key developments of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*, BAG) have been made, which are of importance for the theme under investigation. The 2003 amendment to the BAG created Integrative VET (*Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA) and hence set a major impetus towards the integration in the world of work of socially disadvantaged people, people with personal placement difficulties or with disabilities (cf. 2.3.2, 3.2.2, 5.2.2). IBA can be implemented either as an apprenticeship training scheme with a longer training period or as a VET programme imparting partial qualifications. The 2006 BAG amendment created the legal bases for a possible modularisation of the apprenticeship training system. This modularisation aims to flexibilise the dual VET system, improve compliance with sectoral requirements, increase the number of training enterprises, and link the IVET sector and specialisation in occupations. Since then, the first appropriately designed training regulations have been adopted.

### **Youth employment pact**

Under the motto "Labour market – Future 2010", the government and social partners have agreed on a comprehensive package of measures for youth employment and covering the skilled workers' gap. Following preliminary activities by the social partners, the Council of Ministers decided on measures that are scheduled to come into force as early as before the summer of 2008. The package essentially comprises three points: Firstly, a reform of the subsidisation of apprenticeship posts for companies (viz.: differentiation of subsidisation schemes; consideration of quality criteria of the training); secondly, improved VET provision will be available via the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) for young people who cannot find an apprenticeship post, with the programmes now comprising entire apprenticeships until the apprenticeship diploma; thirdly, a mediation procedure for extraordinary terminations of apprenticeship relationships with the aim to continue or complete training in a company-based or supra-company form.

### **Apprenticeship and *Matura***

Following the successful implementation of the *Berufsreifepprüfung* (BRP) in 1997, which continues to enjoy enormous popularity, another initiative was launched in 2007 that aims to integrate into IVET, in parallel schemes, the form of the university entrance qualification obtained after an apprenticeship training or intermediate education. This reform process has also integrated successful pilot projects conducted over the past years, which combined company-based and full-time school-based training forms. However, no final model exists yet (cf. 3.2.2).

### **Gender mainstreaming**

Current projects aim to reduce barriers towards non-traditional and technological programmes, widen the occupational spectrum open to young women and increase the number of women in technical occupations in the long term. In addition, backing is given to vocational guidance offices that offer technical and handicraft courses for young women. These projects aim to improve, in particular, women's and the public's acceptance of female employment in non-traditional occupations. Also, targeted career guidance measures to improve labour market opportunities of young women have been conducted (e.g. the skills training and employment initiative "*Unternehmen Arbeitsplatz*" and the programme for women in the crafts and technology "*Frauen in Handwerk und Technik 2006-2008*") and in part subsidised by the AMS to widen their spectrum of occupational choices by non-traditional occupations. In addition, a reduction of gender-specific segmentation of the workplace is to be brought about, and women are to be qualified and motivated to take on jobs with better income opportunities.

### **Educational standards**

In a pilot phase, which is scheduled to last until 2008, Austria is testing the use of educational standards and is, in this way, supplementing the so far prevailing strategy of input control by a more intense focus on learning outcomes. The standards lay down the competences pupils should have acquired in a lasting manner up to a specific school year. The competences of both pupils and teachers are described in such a concrete way that they can be implemented into tasks and surveyed by using testing procedures. Since early 2005, the Austrian VET sector has been involved in the development of educational standards (pilot phase since 2007). To ensure acquisition of a final qualification, first of all educational standards for the 13<sup>th</sup> year of schooling were formulated for selected general-education subjects and selected entire specialist training programmes. This aims to improve the definition of interfaces and design transitions more smoothly. Current work is focusing on designing and piloting didactic examples for the classroom which are to contribute to improving teaching quality.

### 3.2.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Integrative vocational education and training ( <i>Integrative Berufsausbildung</i> , IBA) (cf. 2.3.2, 5.2.2)
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
An extension of the Vocational Training Act ( <i>Berufsausbildungsgesetz</i> , BAG) makes transition to the VET sector easier for young people with personal placement difficulties.
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
<p>The amendment to the BAG, which entered into force in 2003 with the innovation "Integrative VET" in § 8, was a consequence – meeting various interests and at the same time necessary – of the needs of a group of young people and their parents, of enterprises and not least the objective of the state as defined in Article 7 of the Austrian 1997 Federal Constitution and respective EU treaties and directives concerning non-discrimination. This development was mainly triggered by organisations for people with disabilities and the social partners. Due to the extension of the BAG, the dual system was opened to young people with reduced mobility and/or disabilities; this BAG amendment was given preference over the adoption of relevant separate legislation, which had also been considered in the negotiation stage. IBA can basically be implemented in two different forms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. by prolongation of the statutory apprenticeship training duration by one year or, in exceptional cases, by two years if that is deemed necessary for meeting requirements within the framework of the apprenticeship-leave examination (LAP) (§ 8b (1) BAG). At its basis there is the apprenticeship contract (in analogy to other apprenticeships).</li> <li>2. by concluding a training contract that foresees acquisition of a partial qualification (of one to three years' training duration) by restriction to certain parts of an occupational profile of an apprenticeship, if necessary supplemented by skills and knowledge from occupational profiles of other apprenticeships (§ 8b (2) BAG). The training contract must comprise skills and knowledge that are usable in the business sphere.</li> </ol> <p>People eligible for IBA are individuals that could not be placed into a regular apprenticeship relationship by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and are part of one of the following groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. people who had special educational needs at the end of compulsory schooling and were, at least in part, taught according to the curriculum of a special needs school</li> <li>2. people who did not acquire any qualification at lower secondary level or obtained a negative assessment in the final exam</li> <li>3. people with disabilities within the meaning of the Act on the employment of people with disabilities (<i>Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz</i>)</li> <li>4. people of which it can be assumed for exclusively personal reasons that no apprenticeship post can be found for them</li> </ol> <p>The prerequisite for inclusion in an integrative apprenticeship relationship is confirmation issued by AMS that no placement in a normal apprenticeship relationship is possible and that the apprentice's support is guaranteed due to vocational training assistance. The prerequisite for subsidisation of vocational training assistance by the Federal Office for Social Affairs is the conclusion of a clearing process and that subsequent start of an IBA is approved for the respective youth.</p>

**D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

As of the key date 31.12.2007, a total of 3,410 young people were completing an IBA in Austria. This corresponds to 2.6 % of all apprentices (WKÖ 2008). In 2006 an initial evaluation of IBA was conducted, which essentially constituted an implementation analysis and documented the state of implementation. Figures show a positive development and the implementation stage can be rated as successful. But many points are still open in the debate related to daily practice or are still being discussed. By way of example, two aspects are mentioned here:

- The extension of eligibility for integration to all provisions of VET, viz. also to full-time school-based forms of upper secondary level, has to date not been achieved. In this respect there is clearly some backlog demand.
- Due to the situation that essentially small enterprises train integrative apprentices, one key training place potential for the partial qualifications area remains unused, as partial qualifications could be tailored to the manufacturing or work process of the industrial sector, which is frequently highly structured and geared towards division of labour.

**E. Conclusions:**

see above

**A. Title of policy/measure:**

Apprenticeship and *Matura*

**B. Outline of the policy/measure:**

Supplementing the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (BRP), which was introduced in 1997 and builds on final certificates obtained after completion of an apprenticeship, a VET school, a training programme in nursing, etc., there will be models for the parallel preparation for a VET qualification and *Reifeprüfung* as of the autumn of 2008. The details of implementation are still being negotiated within the framework of a ministerial working group though individual cornerstones can already be discerned.

**C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:**

The major planned innovations as of the autumn of 2008 (as of: March 2008):

- It is planned that preparation for the BRP can be conducted in parallel to apprenticeship training "in first-chance education", basically in two forms:
  - Model 1: upon conclusion of the apprenticeship contract by prolongation of the training period
  - Model 2: at the same time or shortly after apprenticeship training, not necessarily with the training provider's consent
- Three of the four partial exams can be taken before the final apprenticeship exam, the final partial exam – as previously – when candidates are 19.
- The programme will be free of charge for apprentices as of the autumn of 2008 and for all other groups probably as of the autumn of 2009.
- The vocationally-specific exam can also be taken within the framework of the apprenticeship-leave examination (LAP).
- Uniform, competence-based curricula will be developed for the three core subjects German, English and Mathematics.
- A project-oriented subject-specific piece of work (from corporate practice) will be possible.
- Admission to the BRP will also be open to people who have successfully completed the fourth semester at a VET college (BHS) for people in employment or the third year of a BHS.
- The partial exam in German will be supplemented by an oral exam (quality assurance).

- Preparation for the BRP at part-time vocational schools and VET colleges is oriented towards the model of recognised adult learning and is conducted within the same contractual framework design: within the framework of partial legal capacity at institutions of federal schools or within the framework of private-sector administration of provincial governments at part-time vocational schools

Still pending are questions related to the management of financing and/or subsidisation instruments, as to date different financing mixes (structure, project and individual support) have been used and also because at the schools to be included in the scheme different legal regulations and administrative logics apply.

#### **D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

Positive experience made with project-similar measures at local level is now planned to be followed by a nationwide concept. In this connection, many administrative and conceptual challenges need to be mastered. As the initiative is backed at the highest political level, successful implementation is likely. The quantitative dissemination of the scheme, however, remains open, as issues related to acceptance on the part of training enterprises, schools and young people undergoing training cannot be assessed at present. Also, effects connected with the other closely related educational provisions (BHS, day form and part-time) cannot be assessed as yet.

The implementation of this measure also represents another step towards the interlinking of company-bound and full-time school-based VET programmes. At present it cannot be assessed in how far the HE entrance qualification obtained in this way will also lead to *de facto* higher transfer rates to tertiary institutions. Findings made with the BRP reveal that a basic improvement could be achieved, but is quantitatively very limited. At any rate, this measure will have an impact on generally improving the reputation of these programmes as it facilitates a formally improved vertical permeability.

#### **E. Conclusions:**

This renewed initiative towards increasing vertical permeability shows that the actors of the dual training segment as well as stakeholders at government level pay great attention to this area in terms of structural improvements apart from the mission of youth employment and successful integration into the world of work.

### **3.3 Improving guidance and counselling services and creating guidance structures**

#### **3.3.1 Policy progress since 2002**

In the years 2005 and 2006 under the auspices of the Education Ministry, an interministerial working group involving the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), the social partners and other partners elaborated a **national Lifelong Guidance strategy** (cf. 6.4.2), which essentially aims to encompass all areas of the education sector and all age groups. On the basis of national and international studies and in coordination with developments and discussions at EU level, and the preparation of the national LLL strategy, the following programmatic targets were defined as cornerstones:

- **Implementation of basic competences in all curricula:** in as many educational measures as possible the objective should consist in consciously aiming at teaching and acquiring major basic competences to enable responsible educational and vocational career decisions.
- **Focus on process optimisation and support:** Top-quality decision-making processes are the prerequisite for successful educational and vocational career decisions in all life stages. Therefore, all support measures should be oriented towards these processes. As such, the support aspect should be paid particular attention to.

- **Professionalisation of advisers, counsellors, trainers:** Improvement and intensification of training, continuing, further and in-service training of counsellors, trainers, teachers active in the fields of information, guidance and counselling for education and the world of work in various sectors.
- **Quality assurance and evaluation of provision, processes and structures:** To create an efficient lifelong guidance system it is necessary to systematically analyse and further develop the quality of provision, processes and structures in the fields of information, guidance and counselling for education and the world of work. In this connection, orientation towards actual citizens' needs must be paid special attention to. The efficiency of the methods used should be evaluated.
- **Widening access – creating provision for new target groups:** Provision should be designed and custom-made in such a way that it actually reach the people who are in special need of this support. A topic that must still be investigated is what are the specific problems for which there exist no offers at all or too few.

Regarding the above programmatic objectives, concrete proposals for measures were prepared for the various sectors and a close mutual linking to the future national LLL strategy was created. In addition, support instruments are to be used to support the strategy's objectives. In the new ESF programming period, for example, mainly measures and measure developments in the fields of information, guidance and counselling that focus on the programmatic objectives of the national strategy were supported.

### 3.3.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Project Alliance on Educational Guidance ( <i>Projektverbund Bildungsberatung</i> )
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
The overall objective of the Project Alliance on Educational Guidance (working period 2007-2010) consists in setting up an efficient nationwide and provider-independent educational guidance system in Austria with the focus on adults. This must also be seen within the overarching framework of the implementation of the Austrian strategy on Lifelong Guidance (LLG). The financial means are provided by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK), the ESF, provincial governments and additional regional financiers.
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
The individual sub-projects focus on very different levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creation and extension of regional, provider-independent guidance provision</li> <li>• development and testing of new concepts and methods on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o easily accessible approaches and activation</li> <li>o identification of informally acquired competences, also for people with disabilities</li> <li>o personal reflection and involvement of the environment</li> <li>o specific testing and guidance procedures</li> <li>o consideration of the needs of difficult-to-reach individuals</li> <li>o convergence and coordination of existing information and guidance options</li> <li>o involvement of other relevant institutions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• At the organisational level and for counsellors, planning mainly focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o networking of advisers, counsellors, information and training options</li> <li>o development of a supra-institutional knowledge management system for educational guidance officers</li> <li>o development of an accreditation and quality assurance system for educational guidance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- o development of a nationwide documentation system for guidance, information and counselling services (first of all at the level of the Alliance, later also beyond that)
- o transfer of national and international good practice

Within the framework of the immediate and extended Project Alliance it is planned to enable and encourage information and experience exchange between the individual sub-projects. The qualification and certification of the guidance staff is to be effected in collaboration with the Academy of Continuing Education at the Federal Institute for Adult Learning (cf. 3.4.2).

#### Partner organisations

In the Project Alliance on Educational Guidance, at the initiative of the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training, major non-profit provider organisations from seven Austrian provinces have joined forces that had already been active in recent years either in the establishment of regional provider-independent educational guidance or with development and networking tasks. Not immediately represented in the Project Alliance are two provinces:

- For organisational reasons, a separate networking project for educational guidance is emerging in Vienna.
- For subsidisation reasons, provider-independent educational guidance is being implemented in a separate project in the province of Burgenland (not Objective 2 region).

Close cooperation ventures are also foreseen with these projects and alliances.

#### **D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

Related activities were launched in the autumn of 2007 and will be evaluated in the form of an interim evaluation by the BMUKK.

#### **E. Conclusions:**

A first successful attempt was made to actively include previously mainly regionally active stakeholders in a network of supra-regional developments – without giving up their autonomy, which will have long-term structural effects on institutions and provisions of educational and career guidance, information and counselling in Austria (here with the focus on adults). This participatory approach will probably be beneficial for the acceptance of the developed models of quality assurance, of knowledge management and statistics.

### **3.4 Validation (identifying, assessing and recognizing) skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning**

#### **3.4.1 Policy progress since 2002**

The Austrian education and business culture is traditionally strongly geared towards the IVET sector. It is oriented towards occupational profiles and activity descriptions and hence builds on formally acquired qualifications as proof of abilities and competences. This view is supported by relatively well developed provision in second-chance education (viz.: the acquisition of IVET qualifications by adults).

But the **topic of recording and validating competences** is increasingly meeting with pronounced interest in public debate. This is mainly the case among adult learning (ALE) actors but also more and more in the HE sector, as a result of the conversion to the Bologna architecture, which gives rise to expectations that an increasing number of applicants for Master's programmes boast previous professional experience. Less resonance can be identified at present in the corporate and school sectors.

Supra-regional political initiatives can be identified, on the one hand, in the collection and conception of possible examples (nationally and internationally). Thus, for example, Austria

took part in the RNFIL initiative (Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning) by the OECD. A working group to develop a national validation procedure has been set up at the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK). In addition, the BMUKK has published a relevant systematic analysis (cf. Zürcher 2007).

Furthermore, the general demand for **integrating non-formally and informally acquired competences** was attributed major importance in connection with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) currently under development. Within this NQF, it is intended to give these learning contexts basically the same significance as formal learning processes. As the procedures and methods are still relatively new, a different time specification is laid down here, however.

Practical implementation can in fact look back on several years of relevant experience (since 1998), currently however it is often effected in the form of local or regional initiatives and mostly on a project basis. Here it is possible to identify individual projects within the framework of the EU's Leonardo da Vinci programme or several portfolio projects, particularly on competence aspects of voluntary activities, EQUAL development partnerships, immigrants' initiatives, the Academy of Continuing Education (cf. 3.4.2) etc. (for a more comprehensive presentation of this topic, see Zürcher 2007, p. 115f).

### 3.4.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Academy of Continuing Education ( <i>Weiterbildungsakademie</i> , WBA)
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
Since 2007, the Academy of Continuing Education has certified and issued diplomas to adult educators in a special standardisation and recognition procedure by laying down competences, content and standards and examining their proof of competence. People active in adult education have the possibility to have credits awarded for their competences, skills and practice periods, which they may have acquired in different ways, via qualifications with a modular structure. They are issued a recognised certificate and diploma. The competences adult educators still lack can be acquired at different educational establishments for adults. The development activities were conducted in a project financed by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and ESF, involving all key ALE associations and academic representatives.
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
Fulfilment of access requirements is a completed VET programme (such as the apprenticeship diploma) or a school qualification beyond compulsory schooling (from general-education schools or VET schools). Candidates also have to furnish proof of practice in the ALE sector.
Procedure:
1. Information and counselling Interested individuals can obtain initial information and details about the WBA model from counsellors in the provinces.
2. Positioning Positioning is the first step to become a "Certified Adult Educator" or "Qualified Adult Educator". It affords the possibility to have previously acquired competences tested and recognised by the WBA.
3. Education and training plan Candidates clarify jointly with a specifically trained WBA counsellor the already fulfilled and still open requirements for obtaining the qualification of "Certified Adult Educator".
4. Competence acquisition Then candidates acquire the competences they still lack. Their WBA counsellor will sup-

port them in finding suitable provisions.

5. Qualification “Certified Adult Educator”

As soon as candidates have completed the three-day certification workshop and can furnish proof of all required competences, they will be awarded the WBA Certificate I.

6. Qualification “Qualified Adult Educator”

As soon as candidates have completed the final oral examination and can furnish proof of all competences required for the WBA Certificate II, they will be awarded the WBA Certificate II.

WBA qualifications provide options to link up with university-based VET and CVET. Thus, for example, it is foreseen that Danube University of Krems will offer a Masters degree course in lifelong learning as of the winter semester 2008. Provided WBA graduates boast university entrance qualifications and the WBA diploma, they are entitled to apply for this Masters degree course, with credits being awarded for a part of the competences and the learning and work performance rendered at the WBA. Also for the Masters degree course “MAS Career Management – Career Guidance” at the University of Klagenfurt, which specifically targets adult educators specialising in guidance, 40 ECTS points of the WBA diploma will be credited.

**D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

The WBA is characterised by its anticipation of major European educational policy objectives (viz.: recognition of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge; classification of qualifications into a reference model; target group: key actors in lifelong learning; etc.). The WBA’s innovative value lies – as is shown – not primarily in a new training concept or new content but in linking the recognition of acquired competences with a counselling-supported completion of the competence profile of individuals towards the qualification of “adult educator” that is accepted across the borders of associations. In this respect this represents a unique provision in Austria that takes up existing provisions, identifies gaps in provision, helps fill them, merges learning outcomes and makes them transparent.

**E. Conclusions:**

The WBA could make a major impetus towards the professionalisation of the sector of “teaching and training staff” in non-school ALE. The development over the coming years will show whether the certificates and diplomas will meet with lasting acceptance on the part of educational facilities and teachers.

**A. Title of policy/measure:**

Competence Balance (*Kompetenzenbilanz*) of the Tyrol Centre of the Future (*Zukunftszentrum Tirol*)

**B. Outline of the policy/measure:**

The Competence Balance is a coaching procedure developed by Thomas Lang-von-Wins and Claas Triebel from the Department for Work Psychology at Munich University; it had been commissioned by the Tyrol Centre of the Future, an institution of the Tyrol Chamber of Labour within the framework of an EQUAL project; since 2003, more than 1,600 people have passed through this procedure. Total costs for drawing up a competence balance are EUR 800 per person, with individual charges reduced by subsidies to a retainer amount of EUR 190 (as of: autumn 2007).

Within the framework of a competence balance procedure, the concept of competences, on the one hand, is understood in line with Erpenbeck’s definition of “self-organisation dispositions” and, on the other, complies with the classification into specialist, methodical, social and personal competences, which are widely used in discussions in German-speaking countries.

**C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:**

At the centre of the systematic coaching procedure, which comprises three one-on-one sessions, there is not so much the collection of own competences within the meaning of the application of an instrument but rather “learning by participants about themselves and their own individual competences in the process of dealing with themselves”. The procedure comprises a total of four sessions of two hours each over a period of about four weeks. A coach takes part in the sessions and acts as the expert in conducting the procedure. The concrete programme for participants comprises an introductory workshop (two hours) and three subsequent talks (six to eight hours) with a personal coach. Before each of these meetings, “homework” must be done (six to ten hours) by compiling facts and reflecting on them (six to ten hours). This homework constitutes a major prerequisite for each of the coaching sessions, during which the produced material is discussed. In the subsequent coaching session, work focuses on clarifying the participant’s goals. This aims to teach participants to present their own goals in a better way and argue in favour of their own decisions on the basis of the competences and motives for their own performance that they have identified and named. The result will be elaborated by the coach in the form of an individual competence balance comprising some 15 to 20 pages. It includes the participant’s career, learning experience, a description of his/her personality and competences, a personal assessment by the coach, and agreements made between the coach and the participant. Quality control is ensured by all coaches completing qualifying measures of several days and compiling at least two competence balances under supervision. In addition, a detailed coaching manual is available. All the coaches boast an academic degree (two thirds in psychology) and have completed different specialist training measures combined with practical experience in the field of career guidance.

**D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

The Competence Balance sees itself as a “positioning procedure helping to identify own strengths and abilities and formulate concrete objectives and steps for the future” with the aim of facilitating vocational reorientation and new orientation processes. It is mainly oriented towards participants “who seek their own position and resources”. Their primary objectives as a “resource-activating procedure” consist in increasing the participants’ self-value, clarifying their own preferences, raising awareness of their competences and developing career paths in a sound manner. The competence balance very consistently shifts the “development perspective into the centre”. Pursuant to its mission this presupposes that participants learn “to understand their own development and identify the development paths behind it by grasping ‘biographically interconnected units’”. Explicitly in contrast to application-oriented procedures, this method is linked with the claim that, with the help of the competence balance as a “comprehensive approach that puts the participants’ biography, values and competences at the centre”, objectives are elaborated that “have a different quality than gains due to insight from common testing procedures”. As a consequence, not the result of the recording of competences but “the (participants’) activation is in the foreground”.

**E. Conclusions:**

The theoretically and conceptually well elaborated procedure is currently only of regional importance, with the expert public following developments with interest. This procedure has to date not spread supra-regionally.

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## **4 Improving quality of VET**

### **4.1 National policy context on improving quality of VET**

The different VET forms (dual, full-time school, HE, CVET) are accompanied by differing spheres of competence and responsibility of societal stakeholders (school authorities, social partner institutions, companies, quality assurance agencies of the HE sector, etc.). In addition, it is necessary to distinguish between differing levels of pedagogical activities and the system level.

Manifold and partly systematic quality efforts can be identified for the full-time school-based and HE-based educational provisions, which however are of binding character only in the *Fachhochschule* sector. At schools, this is done on a voluntary basis. In the CVET sector, institutions respond to the respective demand behaviour by major customers (such as companies, the Public Employment Service Austria, etc.). Also the giving of individual awards of distinction for quality efforts (also for companies) confirms this picture in practice.

Quality efforts at the system level, within the meaning of a systematic alignment of supply and demand – quantitatively and qualitatively – in turn are sector-specific and of great importance in apprenticeship training and labour-market policy motivated qualifications.

Although all actors are aware of the key role of teachers and trainers in connection with quality efforts, no systematic reconnection of in-house and further training of teachers or trainer qualifications has to date been effected. It is true that access qualifications to these activities are regulated via formal qualifications (viz.: teaching diploma studies or trainer qualifications) but currently no systematic linking of education content and training forms for teachers/trainers with increasingly quickly changing requirements on teaching, education and teaching behaviour can be discerned.

### **4.2 Improving quality in VET provision**

#### **4.2.1 Policy progress since 2002**

On the basis of wide public debate, a large number of projects and pilots since the mid-1990s, quality development and quality assurance have established themselves as key educational policy objectives in the school sector over the past five years. In line with the international trend, the focus in Austria has also shifted from central input control towards process and mainly output control. From this follow fundamental changes in the conception of control levels.

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

Within the framework of the Quality in Schools (Q.I.S.) project, which was launched in 1999, the main aim consisted in stimulating and encouraging schools to question their own quality,

steer it and develop it further. At the heart of developments in Q.I.S. there is the school programme, which includes the school's mission and value statement, information on the actual position as well as concrete targets and measures in various quality areas. Internal evaluation is inseparably linked with the school programme. Q.I.S. is a service offered at schools with material, information, experience exchange, discussion and presentation options in a virtual quality network (<http://www.qis.at>).

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

Despite its voluntary nature, the degree of implementation regarding internal elements of quality development such as the creation of the mission statement and school programme as well as some form of self-evaluation is to date in general relatively high in the school sector (cf. Gutknecht-Gmeiner et al. 2007, p. 33, 67, 93).

Very pronounced are quality development efforts in the VET schools and colleges sector, which have been supported in related activities within the framework of the VET Quality Initiative (QIBB) since 2005/2006 (cf. 4.2.2). QIBB is at the same time the first Austrian initiative in which all levels of the system – schools as well as school inspection and administration – are systematically involved.

A topic of current debate is the possible introduction of external evaluations; first approaches have been made for the school level, where the possible introduction of Peer Reviews into the overall QIBB concept is being analysed.

Internal evaluation and quality management are accompanied by the introduction of educational standards in the main subjects and testing procedures at schools that are based on these standards. This initiative was launched in 2002 in the general education sector, with a binding introduction of educational standards at primary school and lower secondary level planned to be effected on a legal basis as early as in 2008. The development of educational standards for the VET sector was started some time later in 2004/2005.

Other activities include the development of a so-called “Quality Academy” to recognise competences in the field of quality management and evaluation by Danube University Krems (this measure is also embodied in the QIBB) and the establishment of an Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training – ARQA-VET) in October 2007.

In the area of professionalisation, the Leadership Academy should also be mentioned. It is a nationwide and supra-institutional qualification project by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) for head teachers and managers in school administration.

Largely unaffected by these educational policy strategies and measures are, on the one hand, the company-based part of dual training and, on the other, the CVET sector.

## 4.2.2 Examples of policy measures

<p><b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b></p> <p>VET Quality Initiative (<i>QualitätsInitiative BerufsBildung</i>, QIBB)</p>
<p><b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b></p> <p>Launched in 2005/2006 as a comprehensive quality management system, QIBB aims at safeguarding and further developing the quality of VET schools and colleges (BMHS). The framework conditions, triggers and challenges for the development of QIBB can be found in the increasing autonomisation of the school locations, the participation of interest groups in the further development of the school sector, and in international and European discourses and development paths. QIBB sees itself explicitly as a strategy for implementing the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) at European level (cf. BMBWK 2006, p. 16, 18-21). Specifically named objectives include: aid to school development, safeguarding competitiveness, professionalisation; QIBB is not meant to be a monitoring tool (cf. BMBWK 2006, p. 12f.). QIBB encompasses all areas of the VET system at the upper secondary level, viz. the schools, school inspection, and the competent specialist pedagogical departments of the Federal Ministry. QIBB builds on the Quality in Schools (Q.I.S.) project, which was launched in 1999 (cf. 4.2.1).</p> <p>At the core of QIBB there is the schools' internal self-evaluation and systematic quality development (and that of other system levels). Nationwide evaluation focal points (or key areas that are tailored to individual school types or regions) as well as agreements on objectives for schools, school inspections, and the BMUKK/General Directorate for Vocational Education and Training render development steps binding. A series of instruments (see text below, the online platform for feedback by students, teachers and parents should also be mentioned) has been developed to support the activities conducted within the framework of QIBB and make them comparable by means of harmonisation.</p> <p>The central elements of QIBB are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the mission statement,</li> <li>the Q-matrix (processes/quality areas, indicators),</li> <li>evaluation (internal evaluation),</li> <li>the quality reports,</li> <li>the management &amp; performance reviews,</li> <li>external evaluation.</li> </ul> <p>All of these elements (with the exception of external evaluation) have already been elaborated for all system levels, with the formulation of objectives being broken down – within the meaning of a logical model – from the upper to the lower levels and embellished with details specific for the level or the respective school type.</p>
<p><b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b></p> <p>QIBB applies to the entire VET system. An official connection has been made between QIBB and the development of educational standards (cf. 3.2.1) as well as the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (cf. QIBB website). In addition, QIBB's content is connected with other projects in the education sector, particularly with issues of the further development of school autonomy, curriculum development (topicality, "matching supply and demand"), etc.</p> <p>Due to the integration of all system levels in QIBB, the information or development measures can basically be used with synergy effects for other educational policy projects. However, there exists no publicly accessible information on whether and how this will be implemented. The same applies to cooperative ventures in the field of labour market or social policies.</p>
<p><b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b></p> <p>A key success factor of QIBB is its high participation rate by schools of an average of 75 %, in the majority of school types the share of schools implementing QIBB is at 90 % or above (as of March 2007, cf. Gutknecht-Gmeiner et al. 2007, p. 93). This is a very high value par-</p>

ticularly when considering the voluntary nature of participation: In the implementation phase, related activities involved pull and motivation factors and a school-oriented implementation architecture (such as school-based regional quality project managers who acted as promoters at regional level), which relatively quickly created a critical mass of participants.

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

#### **E. Conclusions:**

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

Currently under discussion is the question of introducing a form of external evaluation. Initially, this is about external evaluation at the school level, the other levels are not (yet) affected. A study, which was commissioned by ARQA-VET, is being conducted with all affected and involved groups until late 2008 to investigate the possibilities of adapting and introducing a formative, i.e. development-oriented peer review procedure for schools (cf. the European peer review projects at [www.peer-review-education.net](http://www.peer-review-education.net)). At the same time, the first peer review pilots are being implemented at schools. The implementation of the European Peer Review at European level will also be investigated as of 2008 in a thematic working group of ENQA-VET (cf. the working programme ENQA-VET 2008-2009), in which it is expected that Austria will be taking the chair.

### **4.3 Supporting the professional development of VET teachers and trainers and increasing the attractiveness and social status of the teaching and training professions**

#### **4.3.1 Policy progress since 2002**

In Austria, the **training of teaching and training staff in IVET and CVET programmes** is regulated very differently, depending on the educational path. Apart from university-based programmes, post-secondary teacher training colleges and ALE institutions also exist at present.

The major innovation within the framework of in-house and further teacher training for the school sector has been the conversion of previously post-secondary teacher training colleges to **tertiary university colleges of education** (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*, PH) – a process still in full swing. Implementation started in 2006 and has pursued the goal of merging 51 institutes of in-service, further and continuing training for teachers into eight state-run PHs as well as the option of setting up private institutions of higher learning. At present there are twelve such institutions, the other four are denominational HE establishments. The new PHs have been structured in conformity with the Bologna study architecture and offer Bachelor study programmes (academic 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 continuing training

provision 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 concerns in the overwhelming majority of cases programmes for teachers at VET schools and colleges. Some university locations have already completed this process, others are presently undergoing conversion.

There have been no legal changes regarding in-house company trainers active within the framework of apprenticeship training during the reporting period. Relevant innovation rather refers to regional and supra-regional networking or CVET activities for trainers, such as:

- <http://www.ausbilder.at> (cf. 4.3.2)
- Tyrol Trainers' Forum (<http://www.ausbilderforum.at/>), which was founded in 2000 in a cooperation of the province of Tyrol and the social partners (Chamber of Labour, bfi Vocational Training Institute, Trade Union, Institute for Economic Promotion) within *Tiroler Arbeitsmarktförderungsgesellschaft m.b.H* (AMG) and offers CVET and networking options
- Trainers' Forum of bfi Vocational Training Institute Vienna, which has been offering free-of-charge information evenings about current topics several times a year since 2006 with funds of the Chamber of Labour Vienna

In-service and further training of teachers in 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, a new development can be discerned, namely that these programmes are increasingly converted into the *Fachhochschule* sector and implemented within the framework of Bachelor or Master study programmes. Currently it cannot be assessed, however, in how far they will be converted completely.

### 4.3.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
<a href="http://www.ausbilder.at">http://www.ausbilder.at</a>
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
The online information provision for in-house company trainers comprises a collection of resources for company-based training of apprentices, relevant documents and topical information about CVET options and specialist events. The provider organisation of this initiative is the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour.
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
The website <a href="http://www.ausbilder.at">http://www.ausbilder.at</a> originated from national initiatives of TNet Austria. Within the framework of a conceptual relaunch of the information portal in 2007, a modern layout and state-of-the-art opportunities provided by the medium of the Internet were used to design it with a view to service-orientation. References to TNet and Cedefop have remained, the service section was considerably extended. Conception and editorial support comes from the Institute for Research on Qualifications of the Austrian Economy.
The resource collection refers to national legal bases, facts and figures regarding apprenticeship training and the education sector in general, as well as European VET initiatives (ECVET, EQF, LLL, etc.). It also offers practice material for the in-house company situation (selection of apprentices, guidelines, etc.) and a collection of good practice. It is very user-friendly thanks to directly downloadable files including a collection of sector-specific evaluation results, studies and relevant publications about the thematic area.
<b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b>
It is a major challenge to ensure the constant attainment of trainers in the just under 40,000 training enterprises across Austria. The support of training processes and the topicality of information and data can however be improved decisively via the selected medium of the Internet. The practice of in-house company trainers is frequently characterised by the requirements of resolving ad hoc challenges or obtaining information that should be as topical as possible. It will have to be seen how much the portal is used and then draw conclusions for orienting its content and advertising for it.
<b>E. Conclusions:</b>
<a href="http://www.ausbilder.at">www.ausbilder.at</a> is a site well supported editorially offering comprehensive information and detailed facts and reports, which are primarily tailored towards corporate training practice, but also presents interesting issues in a concise form.

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## 5 Strengthening the links between VET and the labour market

### 5.1 National policy context on strengthening the links between VET and the labour market

The linking of VET and CVET with the labour market is safeguarded in Austria by **institutionalised cooperation ventures between competent authorities and the social partners**. Depending on the VET sector, these links are of a differing nature.

2. In **IVET in the apprenticeship training system** (training providers, vocational schools for apprentices, training alliance), advisory boards on apprenticeship at federal level (Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship) and regional level (Regional Advisory Board on Apprenticeship) constitute permanent bodies aimed at adapting and further developing apprenticeship training. They discuss not only proposals for new apprenticeships, new design principles (such as area specialisations, training focuses or modularisation) and new forms of training (such as Integrative VET), but also for financing options regarding training, they obtain scientific expert opinions and draw up proposals for legal new regulations by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA).
3. **Part-time vocational school for apprentices** as a part of the dual training system is administered by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and further developed with regard to changed requirements (new curricula). In the provinces, training content and forms of learning are adapted by sustainable and varied cooperation ventures of advisors for part-time vocational schools for apprentices and head teachers with representatives of the business sphere.
4. At **VET schools and colleges**, the linking to the labour market is effected, on the one hand, by obtaining expert opinions from the sectors and also partly by conducting specific surveys, and on the other hand by reviewing draft curricula from the social partners as well as co-option of sectoral representatives on the advisory boards of the educational establishments.
5. In **CVET**, labour market requirements are met by establishing different links in the development of the CVET provision. Thus, for example, employer associations offer educational guidance and CVET in all regions via their adult learning (ALE) institution, the Institute for Economic Promotion (WIFI) – apart from many private educational providers. Pursuant to a micro census survey from 2003 on lifelong learning, some 12 % of the gainfully employed and 12 % of the unemployed attended a WIFI course over the past twelve months, among employees of small enterprises this share was even higher (cf. Schneeberger 2005, p. 34ff.). The Vocational Training Institute (bfi) has close links to employee associations. According to the 2003 micro census, bfi accounted for 6 % of employees with course attendance and 35 % of unemployed with course attendance (cf. Schneeberger 2005, p. 34). The *Laendliches Fortbildungsinstitut* (LFI), which is run by the associations for agriculture and forestry, is oriented towards the needs of the rural area and employment in the agrarian sector including the increasingly frequent cross-sectoral income combinations.
6. In the 2001 business year, the Public Employment Service (AMS) spent EUR 465 million for the training of unemployed and other target groups for CVET (Schlögl, Schneeberger, 2003, p. 23), in the 2006 business year it was EUR 567 million (Annual Report 2006). These funds come from the contributions paid by employees and employers and are therefore spent in collaboration with the social partners in the relevant bodies (administrative bodies etc.) in the interest of qualifying the workforce. In their work, social partners cooperate at the federal and provincial levels with responsible government institutions.

7. With the setting up of the **Fachhochschule** (FH) sector, where some 40 % of study programmes are designed for people in employment, a strong labour market orientation at HE level has been developed. The ALE effect is also revealed by the age of new entrants. At FHs, part of the diploma study programmes is organised as study provision for people in employment. The FH sector, which was founded in 1994, is of increasing importance also for adult education. 29 % of students first admitted in the winter semester 2005/06 were over the age of 25 (as against 10 % at universities). In the academic year 2007/08, an additional 32% of FH students were enrolled in part-time programmes (*Fachhochschule* Council, 2008). The social partners are represented on the *Fachhochschule* Council and hence cooperate in the review and approval procedure – oriented towards labour market requirements and societal needs – of applications for setting up FH study programmes and in their quality assurance.

## 5.2 Involving companies/sectoral organisations/social partners in VET provision to make it more responsible to labour market needs

### 5.2.1 Policy progress since 2002

The key to safeguarding the labour market orientation of VET in Austria are measures in two areas: On the one hand there are **incentives for companies to recruit apprentices** and hence maintain the percentage rate of 40 % apprentices per age group, on the other hand, new **apprenticeships** are being **developed** and existing ones **modernised** and apprenticeship advisors recruited. The Government programme "*Unternehmen Arbeitsplatz*" implemented in 2006 includes a focus on youth in which the VET-related objectives of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) are formulated. Within the framework of the qualifying and skills training initiative "*Unternehmen Arbeitsplatz*", the following measures with particular focus on promoting youth employment are taken or extended: Jobs4You(th); the so-called Blum Bonus; provisions for people aged 25 years and under to acquire lower secondary qualifications in a combination wage scheme (cf. BMWA, *Jugendbeschäftigung in Österreich*, 11.9.2006).

To **reduce costs for training providers**, the following measures have been taken since 2002:

- Apprenticeship training bonus: Since 2002, an apprenticeship training bonus of EUR 1,000 p.a. is paid out for every apprentice.
- Reduction of non-wage labour costs for apprentices: Since 2003, no contributions to accident insurance have to be paid for apprentices, contributions to sickness insurance are waived for the first two years of apprenticeship, as is the insolvency fee supplement to the unemployment insurance contribution in the final apprenticeship year.

In a move to attract new training providers, **apprenticeship advisors** have been employed since 2004: In coordination with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the Federal Government's Commissioner for Youth Employment and Apprenticeship, a nationwide network comprising a total of 18 apprentices' advisors was set up in 2004, whose task consists in opening up additional company-based training slots by establishing relevant contacts and conducting targeted acquisition activities. This provision is very well received by companies: Until September 2006, more than 13,000 companies were contacted and about 5,700 commitments for admission of apprentices obtained.

**Integrative VET** (IBA) – similar to apprenticeship training – is regulated in the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*, BAG) which entered into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2003 (cf. 2.3.2, 3.2.2). Pursuant to IBA provisions, it is possible to agree on apprenticeship contracts with the possibility of prolongation or of training in partial qualifications. For 2004 a total of 1,114 training relationships within the framework of IBA were registered, with

prolongable contracts accounting for 715 and partial qualifications for 399 relationships. By 2007 the number of IBA youth increased to 3,410. The variant with a prolongation of apprenticeship period is more frequent than obtainment of partial qualifications. The IBA set a major impetus towards the integration of socially disadvantaged or less gifted people and people with disabilities in the world of work. Inclusive VET schemes are supported by vocational training assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*).

At the initiative of the Government Commissioner Egon Blum, companies providing additional training places have been subsidised since the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2005. For every additional apprentice, a monthly apprentice bonus of EUR 400 is paid out in the first apprenticeship year, EUR 200 in the second, and EUR 100 in the third. This type of subsidisation is currently being modified. The new relevant detailed guidelines are expected to be available by late June 2008.

**Educational clusters** are voluntary agglomerations of companies and educational facilities at regional level. They were created at the initiative of the Austrian economic chambers and the former Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (now: Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture). By 2006 some 50 regional educational clusters were set up across the country. A nationwide active educational cluster office in its capacity as a service platform promotes further networking between the education sector and the business sphere.

The **training allowance for companies** for external training measures was introduced in 2000. It was extended in 2002 to in-house training. In this process, companies can access two forms of support by the Federal Government for their CET expenditure, which they can use as alternatives: The training allowance reduces the assessment basis for income and corporate tax, so that 120 % of the actual costs of external and in-house CVET measures can be claimed as business expenses; alternatively, an education bonus totalling 6 % of expenses can be obtained for corporate VET and CET measures in external establishments (cf. Lassnigg, Vogtenhuber, Steiner, 2006, p. 55). According to CVTS-3 the course attendance rate in companies with ten employees or more increased between 1999 and 2003 from 31 % to 33 % (Statistik Austria 2007).

## 5.2.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
<i>Blum Bonus</i> , 2005, measure by the Federal Government to promote employment of apprentices
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
The number of apprenticeship posts in companies has fallen since the mid-1990s as compared to the number of apprenticeship seekers. To keep companies' apprentice ratio high and thus safeguard the value of the apprenticeship training system for the labour market, incentives were created for training enterprises to provide additional apprenticeship places. The aim of the measure is safeguarding a sufficient number of apprenticeship places by reducing company expenses. The target group of the measure are training enterprises as well as young people seeking an apprenticeship post. The level reference is apprenticeship training (ISCED 3B). Subsidisation for additional apprenticeship places refers to all sectors of training. The measure is implemented on a nationwide basis.
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
This is not an isolated measure but part of comprehensive measures related to the "safety net" for young people with difficulties in the apprenticeship training market. The basis of the measure is the 1998 Youth Training Guarantee Act ( <i>Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz</i> , JASG), which underwent several amendments until 2005.

Major actors in the development or implementation of the measure are the social partners, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA), the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and the training enterprises. Companies apply to the AMS for a *Blum Bonus* allowance. Payment is effected retrospectively upon submission of proof of training or the increased number of apprenticeship posts as compared to previous years. Funds are provided from the insolvency balance fund (*Insolvenzausgleichsfonds*), viz. the companies. For every additional apprentice, a monthly apprentice bonus of EUR 400 is paid out to the training providers in the first apprenticeship year, EUR 200 in the second, and EUR 100 in the third.

**D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

The number of apprentices increased between 2004 and 2007 from 119,071 to 129,823.

**E. Conclusions:**

The subsidisation of apprenticeship posts will be continued. However, certain criteria connected with training quality and future need for qualifications will be taken more strongly into account than before.

**A. Title of policy/measure:**

Integrative vocational education and training (*Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA), since 2003 (cf. 2.3.2, 3.2.2)

**B. Outline of the policy/measure:**

The IBA aims at a better integration of socially disadvantaged and/or less gifted young people and people with disabilities into the education sector and the world of work. Integrative VET in training enterprises and vocational schools for apprentices is facilitated by the vocational training assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*).

The objective of this measure is that more disadvantaged young people access recognised apprenticeship training programmes, thus giving them the opportunity to obtain a diploma. The target group are young people with social and/or school-related difficulties.

The measure has been implemented increasingly over the last four years.

**C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:**

The measure is implemented across Austria. It must not be seen as an isolated measure but part of a comprehensive package related to the "safety net" for young people with difficulties in the apprenticeship training market. The basis of the measure is the 1998 Youth Training Guarantee Act (*Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz*, JASG), which underwent several amendments until 2005.

Major actors in the development of the measure were the social partners, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) and the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) for the section on part-time vocational school. The Public Employment Service (AMS), the training enterprises or independent training institutions pursuant to the Vocational Training Act § 30 are mainly involved in the implementation of this measure. The AMS places young people with restricted opportunities of placement with training providers or training institutions. There is a training variant with either a prolonged apprenticeship period or restricted training objectives.

**D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

The measure has been welcomed, as is shown by the growth from 1,940 to 3,410 training relationships between 2005 and 2007. An initial evaluation study has been conducted (Heckl et al. 2006).

**E. Conclusions:**

This measure will be continued as it has proven successful.

### 5.3 Integrating learning with working

#### 5.3.1 Policy progress since 2002

Cf. 5.2.1

#### 5.3.2 Examples of policy measures

### 5.4 Integrating skills and competence needs of the labour market into VET provision

#### 5.4.1 Policy progress since 2002

In the **apprenticeship training scheme**, reference to the qualification needs in the labour market is safeguarded by continuous involvement of experts from companies and, if necessary, of research institutions in the adjustment and new development of apprenticeships. Major results of these cooperative ventures include the launch of modular apprenticeships, whereby existing apprenticeships are restructured, and the continued implementation of new apprenticeships.

**Modularisation:** The 2006 BAG amendment is the legal basis for modularisation of apprenticeship training aiming to flexibilise the VET system, improve compliance with sectoral requirements, create additional numbers of potential new training enterprises, and link IVET and specialisation in occupations (cf. 5.4.2). A modular apprenticeship trade consists of a basic module as well as main and specialised modules, which aim to teach qualifications according to special production modes and services of certain sectors. Within a maximum total training period of up to four years, relevant options exist (cf. BMWA, *Jugendbeschäftigung in Österreich*, 11.9.2006).

**New apprenticeship trades:** Since 2000 some 30 new apprenticeships have been set up, including for example the occupations: construction plants and equipment engineering; bookkeeping; event technology; staff supply and recruitment service; mobility service; corporate service provision; media expert specialising in advertising industry and market communication; financial services; and sports administration. With the establishment of these new apprenticeships in growth and service sectors, Austria has reacted to the structural change in the business sphere.

The major development lines of **qualification needs** are, as a rule, introduced into the discussion by studies conducted by the WIFO, IHS or other research institutes (ibw, öibf, 3c, etc.). These studies are commissioned by the AMS or social partner associations. Trailblazing studies and publications in this context since 2002 have included the WIFO's white paper "*Mehr Beschäftigung durch Wachstum auf Basis von Innovation und Qualifikation*" ("More Employment through Growth on the Basis of Innovation and Qualification") (Aiginger et al., 2006) and the WIFO's qualification needs projection until 2012 (Fritz et al., 2007).

Relevant studies and negotiations are reflected in major inputs by the social partners on labour-related designing of VET and IVET, as most recently in the publications "*Arbeitsmarkt – Zukunft 2010 – Vorschläge der Sozialpartner für ein Maßnahmenpaket zur Deckung des Fachkräftebedarfs und zur Jugendbeschäftigung*" (ÖGB et al., 2007), "*CHANCE BILDUNG – Konzepte der österreichischen Sozialpartner zum lebensbegleitenden Lernen als Beitrag zur Lissabon-Strategie*" (ÖGB et al., 2007) or "*Aktionsplan für ältere ArbeitnehmerInnen*" (ÖGB et al., April 2008).

In 2002 the AMS Research Network and the Austrian Working Group on VET Research (abf austria) were founded. These platforms aim to communicate and make accessible research findings. The abf Austria has also taken on reporting tasks in the Refer network for Cedefop. These foundations aim primarily to strengthen the empirical basis regarding labour market orientation in VET and CVET by networking and optimising the dissemination of relevant research findings. Relevant information can be retrieved at the website of AMS Österreich: [www.ams.at](http://www.ams.at) (5 May 2008).

#### 5.4.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Modularisation of apprenticeship training
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>The basic principle of the Austrian modularisation concept is the structuring of apprenticeships into a basic module, main and special modules. Within a maximum total training period of up to four years, there are relevant design options.</p> <p>Modularisation aims to impart "qualifications in accordance with the special production modes and services of certain sectors" (BMWA 2006, p. 9). This is planned to create an additional number of potential new apprenticeship training providers as well as linking IVET and CVET. The target group of modularisation are training enterprises and young people seeking an apprenticeship.</p> <p>To date the first examples of modularisation have been developed and legally regulated, such as installations and building technology and material technology. In the medium term, additional modular occupations will be developed.</p>
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
<p>The measure is part of the ongoing modernisation of apprenticeship training in the interest of maintaining the labour market orientation of learning outcomes and the attractiveness of training for the young people and enterprises in Austria.</p> <p>Major actors in modularisation are the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA), training enterprises, the social partners, and – for implementation at vocational schools – the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK).</p>
<b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b>
The first training programmes in modularised apprenticeships are scheduled to be launched as of the autumn of 2008, therefore no evaluation is yet possible.
<b>E. Conclusions:</b>
The 2006 amendment to the Vocational Training Act forms the legal basis for the modularisation of apprenticeship training. Modularisation is in its infancy but is one of the future-oriented topics of dual training as it is aimed to connect specialisation and range of training.

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## 6 Governance and funding

### 6.1 National policy context on VET governance and funding

The Austrian governance and financing structures in the VET sector are basically characterised by very stable fundamental structures. Changes have been conducted and discernible since 2002 in the following areas:

- Administrative / institutional changes: university autonomy, discussion about a new school administration, new subsidisation scheme for apprenticeship posts
- Financing: CVET vouchers, university global budgets, subsidisation scheme for apprenticeship posts
- Support of closer cooperation between various stakeholders: higher importance to research-guided expertise, educational clusters

To understand these tendencies, it is necessary to briefly examine the basic types of political governance and financing in the Austrian VET system:

**Full-time school-based VET** is in practice financed exclusively by the public sector and, in terms of its governance structure, forms part of the Austrian school administration scheme. From an international perspective this can be characterised as relatively bureaucratic, strongly regulated, hierarchical and input-controlled. The Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) in its capacity as the supreme authority regulates the major part of the school sector, has authority on staff matters regarding recruitment and the payment of teachers and is responsible for the organisational and specialist further development of schools.

The financing of **apprenticeship training** is conducted via training enterprises (the company-based part of apprenticeship training and remunerations for apprentices) and the public sector (expenditure for vocational schools for apprentices and vocational school teachers as well as financial incentives for companies to create new / additional apprenticeship posts). The governance structure can be characterised in terms of offered apprenticeship posts as a demand-oriented market model, which is mainly subject to the entrepreneurial cost-benefit calculation. At the same time, however, the structure is co-governed by political processes due to the involvement of the social partners and the public sector within the definition of apprenticeship occupations and apprentices' occupational profiles as well as the school-based training section at vocational schools for apprentices.

In the **HE sector**, there are differing financing and governance systems for the *Fachhochschule* (mixed financing and accreditation system steered by the *Fachhochschule* Council) and universities (financing by the public sector via global university budgets and university autonomy). Additional financial funds come from third-party funding research as well as tuition fees paid by students.

**CVET** largely follows the principle of supply and demand. Financing is ensured due to investments on the part of individuals and/or companies. However, the public sector exerts influence via various financial support instruments and the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS, e.g. requalification of people registered unemployed within the framework of active labour market policy).

## 6.2 Changes made to administrative/institutional structures

### 6.2.1 Policy progress since 2002

Modernisation efforts in the administrative structures of the Austrian VET system are connected with the principle of new public management: An initial implementation step was conducted in 2002 with **university autonomy**, which granted competence in staff and budget responsibility as well as internal organisation to universities.

Administrative changes will in the future be made in the field of **subsidisation for apprenticeship posts** (the so-called “**subsidisation of the future**”, cf. 6.3.1.: To date, several agencies have been responsible for handling subsidisation, in the future the majority of support will be handled by a single institution, namely the apprenticeship office, where an appropriate infrastructure must still be set up). Overall, some EUR 250 million p.a. will in future be paid out directly to member enterprises via the regional economic chambers.

In the **school segment**, reform discussions were triggered by Austria's just average performance in international student performance comparisons (PISA, TIMMS). Apart from a reform discussion about the restructuring of the obligatory schooling system (keyword: abolishing of the early differentiation), increasingly also the relatively high public expenditure for education and obvious deficits regarding administrative efficiency are moving into the focus of debate. As the core message it can be stated that, in an international comparison, Austria has a federative, strongly regulated, hierarchic and input-controlled model of school administration.

The aim of the reform discussions is not the reduction of public expenditure but its efficient use and the rerouting of administrative cost savings into teaching. In addition, major improvements in the sense of efficient, incentive-adequate procedures (keywords: school autonomy, recruitment of teachers, HR development) can be expected, which are ultimately planned to contribute to raising student performance. Key elements furthermore relate to the quality assurance and development strategy (keywords: educational standards, central *Matura*, educational monitoring, etc.) and hence a strengthening of the outcome component of governance.

Due to the very complex school administration structure, which boasts a large number of actors and institutional interests, this reform process is proving lengthy. Positive is, however, the acceleration of the reform dynamic at least in the sense of a comprehensive discussion process. The latest Government programme lays down the reorganisation of school administration as a priority (cf. 6.2.2.). To date, the following steps have been implemented:

**Political strengthening of the ministries competent in the VET sector:** In 2005 the parliamentary two-thirds majority, which up to then had been required for changes in school legislation, was abolished (individual provisions still necessitate a two-thirds majority).

**Encouraging administrative reforms regarding the implementation of principles of new public management (transparency, accountability, responsibility, etc.):** Relevant examples include: the introduction of the flexibilisation clause in administrative activities by the Federal Institute for Adult Learning or – exemplary for transparency and system monitoring – the 2002 Education Documentation Act (*Bildungsdokumentationsgesetz*) and the National Report on Education 2007/2008, which is currently in the preparation phase (cf. 8.2).

**First steps towards school autonomy:** Schools now have the possibility to set specialist priorities and enter into cooperation with companies independently – for example via sponsoring.

## 6.2.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Reorganisation of school administration
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>The current Government Programme (2006) lays down the reorganisation of school administration as a priority. For the reorganisation of school administration the following measures are foreseen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extension of the schools' autonomy</li> <li>• creation of regional education directorates</li> <li>• abolition of administrative overlaps in the education sector</li> <li>• improving the efficiency of school inspection by introducing an external evaluation office and agreements on attainment of objectives</li> <li>• reorganisation of school districts</li> <li>• introduction of a middle management for schools</li> <li>• greater budgetary scope at administrative levels and schools by enabling a higher degree of flexibility (the so-called "flexibilisation clause")</li> </ul> <p>The aim consists in increasing efficiency and further decentralising the general and vocational school system. In a complementary development it is planned to establish outcome control elements.</p>
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
The reforms are to take place both at national and regional level. The main institutions triggering developments and taking decisions are various expert commissions and the constitution convention. Reform efforts basically affect all school administration levels and the teacher service and pay legislation.
<b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b>
Evaluation is planned to be conducted via reports on education. A National Report on Education is scheduled to be published as early as in 2008 (cf. 8.2).
<b>E. Conclusions:</b>
The reorganisation of school administration overall is a lengthy and to date not yet completed reform process with the objective of a decentralisation of decision-making structures (keyword: school autonomy) and a strengthening of the outcome components of governance.

## 6.3 Changes made to funding arrangements for VET

### 6.3.1 Policy progress since 2002

The main basic financial structures and amounts of expenditure have remained stable. Changes to the financing structures have been made at universities with the conversion to global budgets for individual universities.

A change in the expense amount (i.e. additional funds) is achieved by reducing the maximum number of pupils per class by 2010, by measures on early language promotion in the pre-school area (related measures on the part of municipalities are funded by the Federal Government) and for the acquisition of educational qualifications by adults.

In the VET sector, **three major changes** can be observed:

1. **Cost reductions for training enterprises** in the form of an apprenticeship training premium, a reduction of non-wage labour costs for apprentices, and a special premium for enterprises that offer additional apprenticeship posts (the so-called *Blum Bonus*). These changes are elaborated on in chapter 5.2.1. in more detail. As of mid-2008 a new support system for apprenticeship posts will be conducted within the framework of the “youth employment package” with a much broader orientation than previous subsidisation options. This “**subsidisation of the future**” will comprise a new basic subsidisation to replace the previous apprenticeship training premium, a premium for new additional apprenticeship posts (termed “*Blum II*”) and various quality-oriented support approaches such as for CVET measures for trainers, additional training programmes for apprentices, training alliances, the acquisition of the vocational school qualification by young people with learning deficits, premiums for excellent final apprenticeship certificates, etc.
2. The **training allowance for companies** for external measures was introduced in 2000. It was extended to in-house training in 2002 (cf. 5.2.1.).
3. In the CVET sector, new financial incentive mechanisms have been set up in the form of **educational vouchers** (cf. 6.3.2.). Since 2002 the system of demand-oriented subsidisation for private training efforts has been extended. The organisational and provider structure of this subsidisation is broadly diversified. It ranges from direct support for particular VET and CVET options (such as the Upper Austrian Educational Account) and subsidies for travel and housing costs to flat-rate support for a variety of educational provisions in the form of vouchers. The amounts of subsidies also vary widely. The major providers of these subsidies are the representations of interests of employers and employees as well as the provinces. The conditions for using such support are regulated differently depending on the provider. Due to this pronounced heterogeneity it can be assumed that there exists the need for harmonisation to increase transparency and to grant all employees in all provinces the same opportunities for participating in CVET. This is also formulated as an objective in the present Government Programme (quality assurance in adult learning).

### 6.3.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Educational vouchers provided by the Vienna Chamber of Labour
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
Since 2002 it has in principle been possible for every employee to apply for an educational voucher. Only one voucher a year can be used. The voucher's value is EUR 100. Parents on parental leave can use an additional EUR 50. Important exceptions apply for the acquisition of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), of the European Language Licence (ELL) and other courses of modular design organised on successive levels. In this case, one voucher can be used for every module, which means that subsidisation totals EUR 100 per module. In the case of ELL and ECDL modules the exam fee will also be paid against submission of the payment slip on passing the exam. Another special regulation exists for the bridge courses for the <i>Berufsreifeprüfung</i> . In this case, the amount of subsidy is EUR 50 per semester (viz. also EUR 100 p.a.), the support can, however, be used for every subject where lessons are attended.
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
Educational vouchers are educational incentives. They aim to promote CVET participation by employees. Educational vouchers are demand-oriented subsidisation instruments: Interested employees select the courses or CVET measures they expect to provide them with vocational qualification. Educational vouchers can, however, only be used for certain courses.

<b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b>
To date no scientific evaluations have been conducted.
<b>E. Conclusions:</b>
To date experience with the instrument of educational vouchers is very positive. In the period from 2002 to 2006, some 290,000 educational vouchers were requested. Due to their limited amount it can be assumed that they primarily make the upgrading qualification, which is offered in the form of shorter / more inexpensive courses, more attractive. In the case of longer / more cost-intensive higher qualification measures, it is likely that relevant synergy effects can be achieved. Nevertheless, educational vouchers represent an important new and innovative financing and support option in the Austrian context.

Sources: AK, BMWF, BMUKK

## 6.4 Promoting partnerships in VET policy making

### 6.4.1 Policy progress since 2002

The involvement of actors and interest organisations from the spheres of business, science and society in educational policy-making has a long tradition in Austria. It largely builds on close cooperation between the Austrian federal government and the social partners.

A trend towards increased cooperation between the various actors in VET can be located in **initiatives for a widespread use of educational resources (keyword: educational clusters)** (cf. 5.2.1.).

Regarding the promotion of closer cooperation between the various stakeholders in the political decision-making process there are tendencies towards a **stronger involvement of research-guided expertise** in the preliminary stages of political decision-making processes. In addition, supplementary cooperation forms with the social partners, as well as representatives of enterprises, scientific institutes and NGOs are increasingly involved. Parties will be invited to cooperate in the political agenda depending on their respective specialist expertise or degree of affectedness regarding the policy.

In recent years, mainly educational policy measures or guidelines triggered by the European Union such as the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF, cf. 7.2.2), the consultation process on the planned credit system for VET (ECVET, cf. 7.3.2) or the elaboration of a national Lifelong Guidance strategy (cf. 6.4.2) have led to the involvement of experts and stakeholders. As a rule, scientific studies have been drawn up in advance and involved actors given the opportunity to issue statements. Then working groups have been formed by employees of the competent federal ministries, the social partners and consulted representatives of the invited organisations and institutions. Generally, the competent ministry has taken over coordination of these working groups.

The partnerships between educational policy decision-makers and representatives of the consulted organisations from the spheres of society, business and science are informal and of limited duration. They dissolve after the respective consultation stages have terminated.

### 6.4.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network – a contribution by national networks and actors – case study Styria
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
Following a call within the framework of the Joint Actions Programme for submitting proposals for European networks on lifelong guidance, two applications were approved; one network was coordinated by the Austrian partner, the Styrian Adult Education Association in close consultation with the Education Ministry.
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
<p>Within the framework of this network, jointly with partners from Germany, Finland, France, Poland and the Czech Republic, framework conditions and requirements for lifelong guidance were identified and analysed, comparative surveys and reflections conducted, and proposals and recommendations for the further development at regional, national and European level formulated, also with reference to the European reference documents on lifelong guidance that were elaborated in parallel. The core of these recommendations aim at increased cooperation and consultation at national level with an intensification of European cooperation but also with stepped-up initiatives for concrete innovative further development at regional and local level in collaboration with all actors for educational and career information, counselling and guidance.</p> <p>These recommendations were introduced combined with intensive cooperation in the European Expert Group for Lifelong Guidance and also triggered concrete developments in Austria. First of all, in 2005, a permanent working group was set up in the Education Ministry, which subsequently continued development and strategy work jointly with the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA), the Federal Ministry for Social Security, Youth and Generations, and the social partners as well as other non-governmental institutions. This Austrian Platform for Lifelong Guidance has since met in several strategy workshops, developed objectives and actions for Austria's future procedure, has actively taken part in international developments and will be further developed into an Austrian Forum for Lifelong Guidance.</p>
<b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b>
To date no evaluation results are available.
<b>E. Conclusions:</b>
If the Styrian Educational Network is able to implement more developments and innovations over the coming years in the field of educational counselling for adults in Styrian regions within the framework of the Project Alliance on educational guidance and building on previous experience with regional educational guidance, this is not least one concrete outcome of comprehensive and sustainable work conducted on the theme of lifelong guidance at a wide range of levels.

Source: <http://www.bildungsnetzwerk-stmk.at/0801/III.html>

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## 7 EU tools and geographic mobility within VET

### 7.1 National policy context to introduction and dissemination of EU tools: EQF, ECVET and Europass and the promotion of geographical mobility within VET

The instruments EQF, ECVET and Europass, which were developed at European level and aim to promote the comparability of qualifications and international mobility in VET, are **highly important overall for the Austrian VET system**. This is revealed, for example, by the far-reaching participation of stakeholders in the EQF consultation process. The major results obtained through the consultation process include: general agreement with the EQF objectives; a positive outlook on possible consequences for lifelong learning; and the decision to create an NQF as the prerequisite for implementing the EQF. The EQF's main aim is the comparability of qualifications but not standardisation (cf. Markowitsch, Schlögl, Schneeberger 2006). Hence the EQF represents the trigger for developing an NQF and can generally be seen as the impetus for the smooth reform of the Austrian education system.

In addition, in the ECVET consultation process, wide participation of stakeholders could be observed. However, as the process at the European level has not progressed far enough for work to be possible as regards specifications, the ECVET has to date not had any substantial effect on the Austrian education system. But related projects are supported and preliminary considerations on implementation are being made (cf. 7.3).

The Europass instruments are becoming steadily more important. In 2005 an NEC was set up that works on the continuous improvement of its services and collaboration with organisations, institutions and companies (cf. 7.4).

As a result of the European initiatives EQF, ECVET and Europass, debates about reform of the Austrian education system have intensified. These mainly focus on increased orientation towards learning outcomes and a change in the field of the validation and recognition of learning achievements, whether from the formal, non formal or informal areas.

Also in connection with the promotion of geographical mobility, the EU initiatives play a major role, particularly in the field of IVET however there is still considerable need for development.

### 7.2 Promoting the comparability of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and their future compatibility with EQF

#### 7.2.1 Policy progress since 2002

The **promotion of comparability of qualifications** is closely connected with initiatives such as the implementation of the EQF and the ECVET and the development of an NQF for Austria and is also demanded in connection with the EU's Education and Training 2010 work programme. In the consultation process on the EQF an agreement in principle by the actors on the EQF and implicitly also on an NQF has become visible. What must be stressed as positive is the comprehensive participation by stakeholders in the consultation process.

Currently Austrian efforts focus on an increased orientation towards **learning outcomes**. These developments are accompanied by a debate on fundamental reforms in the education system. In 2005 ministerial offices initiated a project regarding the development of educational standards for general and vocational core subjects (cf. 3.2.1). The educational standards formulate requirements on problem-solving capacities and on teaching and learning to safeguard the acquisition of school-based basic skills. The required learning outcomes are

described in the form of specialist subject-specific and interdisciplinary skills students are expected to have acquired by a particular year and are important also for their further school-based and vocational development. At present the educational standards elaborated for the VET sector are being piloted. In the dual system some learning outcome oriented descriptions are already available as the occupational profile of in-house company training is structured by knowledge and skills.

**Challenges** to be faced are found in the collaboration between the VET sector and education at tertiary level as well as the coordination of the individual processes such as of the NQF development, the implementation of the LLL strategy or of the Bologna process. In addition, a joint understanding of the concepts and terms relevant in this context as well as a comprehensive and again for all stakeholders understandable description of learning outcomes still needs to be developed to enhance the transparency and comparability of qualifications and, above all, to be able to state reasons for referencing learning outcomes to the respective levels. Initially, solutions to these open issues are frequently drawn up within the framework of pilot projects. Thus, for example, relevant projects regarding the description of learning outcomes or the referencing to levels on the basis of learning outcomes are being conducted in the construction and tourism sectors.

### 7.2.2 Examples of policy measure

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Development and implementation of an Austrian NQF
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>The process to "develop and implement an Austrian NQF" was officially launched in 2006 with the establishment of a project group with representatives of the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and the Federal Ministry for Science and Research (BMWf).</p> <p>The implementation of the EQF is a voluntary process in which Austria decided to take part. The creation of an NQF that comprises all education sectors and takes into account the outcomes of formal, non formal and informal learning processes was decided as a result of the EQF consultation process. This not only aims to simplify and make more transparent the referencing of the Austrian qualification system to the EQF but also pursues additional educational policy objectives (cf. BMUKK, BMWf). In the consultation document on the Austrian NQF the following central aims are laid down (cf. BMUKK, BMWf 2008):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the explicit description of the implicit level of the Austrian qualification system and hence a transparent referencing to the levels of the EQF</li> <li>• support for the sustainable further development of the qualification system by orientation towards learning outcomes</li> <li>• the creation of a neutral point of reference to enable transparency and comparability of qualifications</li> <li>• the creation of a common, complete NQF comprising all education sectors with a separate administration structure and a joint quality assurance strategy</li> <li>• the strong positioning of Austrian qualifications via the NQF and EQF on national and European labour markets</li> <li>• the creation of an orientation option for citizens to compare qualifications and organise educational activities</li> <li>• the referencing of qualifications, rather than of skills and individuals within the meaning of an individual competence profile</li> <li>• the growth of the NQF by participation of all stakeholders within a period of three to four years</li> </ul>

- the improved use of learning outcomes attained in non formal and informal contexts

The Austrian NQF will comprise all education segments (viz.: general education, vocational and tertiary education and training, ALE, CVET) and sectors and aims to include, apart from the formal system, also learning outcomes from non formal and informal contexts.

Following an initial fact-finding phase (from February to October 2007), during which the NQF consultation paper was elaborated, the NQF process is currently in the consultation phase (December 2007 to late June 2008). All stakeholders in the Austrian education system have been asked for their written statements on the consultation document: Building on these results, the national steering group will draw up a recommendation for implementing the NQF in October 2008. By 2010 it is planned that all qualifications of the formal education system are referenced to the NQF, at the same time the first steps to present qualifications from the non formal and informal sectors will be taken.

### **C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:**

The development and implementation of the NQF is effected at the national level and is being coordinated by the NQF project group and the NQF national steering group. The drawing up of the consultation document was supported by a consortium of researchers.

Major principles of the NQF include the creation of transparency of qualifications and the application of a learning outcome oriented approach in the referencing to the NQF levels. In addition, the principle of equivalence ("parity of esteem") but not equality of qualifications is applied. Hence, for example, qualifications from general education can be rated as equivalent with a view to the learning level attained to qualifications from the VET sector although the content varies widely. The principle of the "parity of esteem" also applies to qualifications from the field of VET and HE.

The NQF project group (representatives of BMUKK and BMWF) is coordinating the NQF development process. The national steering group (representatives of major institutions of the Austrian education landscape that influence qualification processes and content as well as legal framework conditions, such as representatives of the ministries, social partners and provinces) is the body that supports the strategy for the overall process in an advisory capacity. All stakeholders are asked for their written statements on the consultation paper during the consultation process.

### **D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

Evaluations are to date not available as the process is not yet complete. A broad and fundamental debate about reforms in the education system can be seen as a result of the EQF and NQF processes.

### **E. Conclusions:**

The previous process has shown that a comprehensive dissemination of relevant information and a broad involvement of the actors will be major prerequisites for the success of this measure.

The most important open questions in the NQF development process are about the level of content, namely the actual referencing of qualifications to the individual levels. It can be expected that comprehensive and in-depth discussions will have to be held for all stakeholders to reach agreement.

Sources: BMUKK, BMWF 2006

### **7.3 Promote the transfer and accumulation of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and facilitating the future implementation of ECVET**

#### **7.3.1 Policy progress since 2002**

Austria was actively involved in the **ECVET consultation process**. This process was coordinated by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and all relevant stakeholders issued their statements. These were analysed by a consortium of researchers and presented at an event held in 2007. This synoptic presentation served as the basis for preparing the national position, which was submitted to the European Commission in April 2007 (cf. BMUKK, BMWF 2007).

The main results of these statements refer to the principle of subsidiarity, the key objectives of ECVET and the core objectives of the planned application. On the issue of subsidiarity it is stated that the application of ECVET should be on a voluntary basis, not lead to any obligations for the education and training system nor to a fragmentation of programmes. The major goal seen is the application of ECVET in the formal area as the first step of implementation. In addition, mobility is to be facilitated by recognising programmes completed abroad. But also a word of warning is expressed regarding too high expectations, which ECVET will probably not be able to meet. Major aspects for the application of ECVET identified include: the toolbox character of ECVET, the necessity of development with as wide as possible participation of practitioners and stakeholders (bottom-up approach) and the central role of the Memoranda of Understanding.

Other initiatives that have a major impact on the development of ECVET are: the NQF and EQF processes, the elaboration of educational standards for general education and, above all, for VET; and quality initiatives in the school sector (cf. Nöbauer 2007).

Individual Leonardo da Vinci projects on ECVET are supported by the BMUKK and BMWA, for example the project VQTS (Vocational Qualification Transfer System – Leonardo da Vinci project A/03/B/F/PP-158.034, [www.vocationalqualification.net](http://www.vocationalqualification.net)), which was awarded two European prizes, and the project SME-Master (2006-4244/001-001 LE2710ECV, [www.sme-master.eu](http://www.sme-master.eu)).

In addition, the BMUKK commissioned a study about the possibility of implementing ECVET in IVET in Austria, in which the legal framework conditions and the status quo of mobility in IVET is analysed and recommendations for the implementation of ECVET are formulated (cf. Luomi-Messerer, Tritscher-Archan 2007).

With the implementation of ECVET it is not only planned to facilitate transnational mobility but also vertical and horizontal permeability between the various education paths in Austria and the recognition of learning outcomes from non formal and informal areas. In the current debate in Austria it is stressed however that the beginning should focus on the formal area – decentralised and in form of pilot projects – and the emphasis of application should be on transnational mobility.

### 7.3.2 Examples of policy measures

<p><b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b></p> <p>Study on the implementation of ECVET in the Austrian IVET sector</p>
<p><b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b></p> <p>This study was commissioned in 2007 by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) (cf. Luomi-Messerer, Tritscher-Archan 2007). Although the ECVET recommendation is not yet available, the first steps have been taken in Austria with this study. The study aimed to examine legal and organisational framework conditions in the school-based and dual IVET sectors in Austria with regard to their ECVET "suitability".</p> <p>Findings about concrete implementation options of ECVET in IVET were obtained in an analysis of favourable as well as, in particular, inhibiting factors on the currently valid legal and organisational framework conditions. In accordance with the "three pillars" of ECVET, reference is made to the description of qualifications on the basis of learning outcomes and learning units; the allocation of credit points, and the transfer process (accumulation and validation of learning achievements). As ECVET aims at promoting transparency to enhance mobility, also the existing practice of periods spent abroad in the full-time school-based and dual sectors is analysed. With the help of this analysis, areas with need for adjustment are identified. In addition, on the basis of concrete mobility projects – one from the field of full-time VET school education, one from the apprenticeship sector –, it is shown where implementation of ECVET would currently be possible and where need for adjustment exists.</p> <p>The study refers to IVET (at upper secondary level). In Austria this covers VET schools and colleges as well as apprenticeship programmes in the dual system.</p>
<p><b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b></p> <p>This study refers to the framework conditions to implement ECVET at the national level. The focus of the study is an analysis of framework conditions for international mobility and the recognition of learning outcomes obtained abroad in the IVET sector.</p> <p>The study was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and conducted by experts from two research institutions.</p>
<p><b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b></p> <p>The study has led to the following main results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implementation of ECVET in Austria would require legislative and organisational adjustments with regard to human and financial resources.</li> <li>• For drawing up learning outcome oriented curricula and training plans it would be necessary to develop adequate methods to describe knowledge, abilities and skills.</li> <li>• Qualifications would have to be structured in more detail and in modules to facilitate transfer of units in the international context.</li> <li>• Units and qualifications would have to be assessed numerically with credit points.</li> <li>• Competent bodies would have to determine a definition of units, a formulation of learning outcomes and the allocation of credit points.</li> <li>• An ECVET agency would have to coordinate all these activities.</li> <li>• Mobility and permeability would have to be given a clear legal framework.</li> </ul>
<p><b>E. Conclusions:</b></p> <p>From these results the following recommendations were derived:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First of all, it would be necessary to clarify what primary objective is being pursued with ECVET – whether it is mainly about qualifying mobility or if ECVET should be established as a system increasing permeability within the qualification system.</li> </ul>

- ECVET should be tested in pilot projects in one or two areas in practice.
- From the pilots, methods should be developed or selected to describe learning outcomes and existing forms of credits and cooperation surveyed.
- Also practical experience with transnational mobility projects and, in particular, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of school attendance abroad or, in general, of mobility stays abroad should be taken into consideration. (The status quo of mobility in IVET could only be analysed to a limited degree within the framework of this project, particularly with regard to the school area, as data on stays abroad during school time are not recorded centrally.)
- In further steps, experience from the pilots should be taken into account.
- The implementation of ECVET should be conducted in close consultation with the NQF process.

## 7.4 Promoting Europass and ensuring synergy with EQF and ECVET

### 7.4.1 Policy progress since 2005 to introduce and promote Europass

Since the introduction of a National Europass Centre (NEC) and the creation of a website ([www.europass.at](http://www.europass.at)), **Europass instruments** have become increasingly important as can be seen from the access figures to the website: The number of monthly visits to the site rose from 4,400 in 2005 to about 30,000 in 2007. The template for the Europass CV was downloaded up to 5,000 times a month during that period.

Austria was the first country to create the new Europass Mobility document online (more than 1,200 registrations between January and June 2006), and since 2005 the Europass Diploma Supplement has been issued automatically at all universities and *Fachhochschule* institutions. By October 2006 more than 1,400 Europass Certificate Supplements in IVET had been prepared by the competent federal ministries (BMUKK, BMWF 2007).

In connection with the NQF and the EQF, events were held in 2007 by the NEC, in which representatives of the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) were invited to report about progress achieved in the respective processes. In the longer term there may be an adjustment of the Europass documents such as of the Certificate Supplements or Diploma Supplements to the NQF. In turn it would also be possible to take the Europass documents into consideration when developing the NQF. There are currently few synergies with ECVET because this process has not progressed so far and there exist no relevant specifications about cooperation.

The NEC's major successes include the growing visibility of the Europass instruments and collaboration with relevant ministries (Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture; Federal Ministry for Science and Research; Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour) and with other institutions such as the National Agency for Lifelong Learning, the Austrian Exchange Service and the European Commission (Education and Training) (cf. [www.europass.at](http://www.europass.at)).

The introduction phase of Europass Training has now been completed, the focus of future work will be on increasing visibility of this instrument as a contribution to increased transparency and enabling the recognition of competences and skills, particularly in connection with the development of the Austrian NQF. More seminars and similar events (conferences, workshops) are planned to be organised.

More improvements are planned regarding the promotion of Europass training, instruments such as the Europass newsletter and the Europass homepage are planned to be improved and increasingly accessible as information platforms. Another goal is to strengthen coopera-

tion with organisations, institutions and enterprises to take advantage of possible synergy effects.

The implementability of the Europass Mobility document is to be further developed, with particular attention paid to usability in general, particularly the comparability with instruments of existing university exchange programmes (Erasmus) is to be improved.

#### 7.4.2 Examples of policy measures and practice

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Establishment of the NEC Austria (May 2005)
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>The NEC's central task consists in conducting the implementation of Europass training in Austria and taking over activities such as counselling and information, public relations, networking, coordination and administration (cf. <a href="http://www.europass.at">www.europass.at</a>).</p> <p>With regard to counselling and information, the NEC is the first point of contact for interested individuals and institutions with queries regarding Europass and all Europass documents. Another defined core task of the NEC is the networking of relevant national agencies and institutions.</p> <p>The NEC's public relations work is conducted within the framework of events and via publications in which the individual Europass documents are made known and their use promoted. The website represents a first step, Europass information seminars are also held. More activities are planned.</p> <p>Networking at national level is characterised by the NEC's efforts to strengthen collaboration of all relevant institutions for the use and dissemination of Europass training. This especially aims at the interfaces between education and business (education authorities, institutions of the social partnership, enterprises). The Austrian Europass advisory council, which was set up as the national steering instrument, therefore comprises representatives of all mentioned areas. Internationally, the NEC Austria closely cooperates with the Europass centres of all thirty other Europass countries and with the European Commission.</p> <p>For coordination and administration of all areas connected with the Europass training and its documents, pursuant to Article 11 of the Europass decision, the Europass Centre is responsible in its capacity as the central implementation institution of Europass in Austria. Relevant tasks comprise in particular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting up the national information system (Europass website),</li> <li>• presenting the European dimension of the documents,</li> <li>• making accessible the Europass CV and the Europass Language Passport via the national Europass website,</li> <li>• coordinating all activities in connection with the administration and issuing of the Europass Mobility document,</li> <li>• proactive linking to relevant information about the Europass Certificate Supplement and Diploma Supplement,</li> <li>• cooperating with Euroguidance Austria, and</li> <li>• compiling statistical evaluations on the use of the documents.</li> </ul> <p>A national Europass advisory council has been set up as a national steering instrument for</p>

the targeted political and strategic orientation in Austria. Its task is political decision-making and specifying guidelines for the operational implementation of the Europass. Members of the advisory board are: representatives of the federal ministries, the provider organisations of the social partnership, the provinces, and other institutions and bodies relevant for the implementation and use of Europass (cf. [www.europass.at](http://www.europass.at)).

The NEC was set up in 2005, the first stage of implementation is seen as complete. Current work focuses on improving existing instruments and strengthening existing cooperation ventures as well as establishing new cooperation ventures.

### **C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:**

The decision to set up an NEC was taken at the national level by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and implemented in May 2005.

The NEC was at first located in the Leonardo da Vinci National Agency, but since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2007 it is in the National Agency for lifelong learning. The NEC was set up by the BMUKK. In the promotion and dissemination of the Europass instruments, the actors were federal ministries, local and national education authorities, the Austrian Europass advisory council, the social partners, EURES, universities, schools and companies. One focus was on strengthening cooperation with EURES, the NECs in the neighbouring countries and with enterprises as well as on creating synergies with the lifelong learning programme and the implementation of an EQF and NQF.

### **D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

The NEC supports the use of the Europass by conducting various activities related to information such as specific publications, events, and the Europass website.

The Europass newsletter, various information material and handouts for employers are disseminated as publications. NEC representatives have participated in various national and international meetings and seminars, furthermore in 2007 in three provinces Europass conferences were organised with some 250 participants. The website [www.europass.at](http://www.europass.at) is continually improved and extended, the number of accesses to the homepage and downloads of the Europass documents are increasing steadily.

### **E. Conclusions:**

No obstacles blocking the establishment of the NEC are known. For the future, a continuous improvement of existing structures, tools and cooperation ventures is planned.

## **7.5 Promoting geographical mobility of learners within VET**

### **7.5.1 Policy progress since 2002**

One of the objectives of Austrian education policy-makers is to **increase international mobility in VET**. Despite the basic openness for school attendance and work placements abroad – thus, for example, the School Instruction Act (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz*, SchUG § 25 (9)) provides that schoolchildren who can furnish proof of having completed at least five months up to one entire school year in non-German-speaking countries are automatically entitled to enter the next year – as well as the opportunity in principle for apprentices to spend parts of their company training abroad, these opportunities are used in IVET only to a limited degree. However figures about mobility prove there is a trend towards an increased number of stays abroad. Thus, the number of participants in mobility projects within the

framework of Leonardo da Vinci<sup>1</sup> rose continually from 1,151 in 2000 to 1,819 in 2005 (cf. Schmid 2006). In 2006 as many as 2,128 individuals were using this subsidy (cf. BMUKK, BMWF 2007). The majority of these stays however were just two to three weeks long and are viewed more as "excursions" and rather than as integral parts of training, and hence do not fall within the meaning of "qualifying mobility". Mobility is widespread in the tertiary sector, the introduction of ECTS has enhanced it even more: in the academic year 2005/06, stays abroad were facilitated for 4,079 students with a duration of between 3 and 12 months via the Erasmus programme. In the academic year 2006/07 this figure had reached the amazing level of 4,228 (BMUKK, BMWF 2007a).

With the implementation of ECVET it is planned to increase geographical mobility in VET in the longer term. An analysis of ECVET "suitability" of the Austrian VET sector has been made within the framework of a study (cf. 7.3.2). This analysis together with its conclusions and recommendations can be considered as one step towards increasing mobility in VET.

Apart from ECVET there is a series of other initiatives to promote geographical mobility, i.e. the project Pro Mobility (2006 – 4503/001-001 PIL PILOTP), which aims at reducing barriers to mobility and **promoting qualifying mobility** in qualitative and quantitative respect (cf. 7.5.2).

The IFA association (*Internationaler Fachkräfteaustausch*, International Young Workers' Exchange) was founded in 1995 as a service unit to promote the mobility of skilled workers. Members of IFA include all Austrian economic chambers, the Federation of Austrian Industry, Junior Chamber Austria (*Junge Wirtschaft*), and Junior Industry (*Junge Industrie*). IFA acts as a one-stop-shop for interested individuals in the incoming and outgoing areas and is the point of contact both for skilled workers and apprentices and for enterprises and VET schools and colleges (cf. <http://www.ifa.or.at/de/ueber-uns/>). When evaluating projects, IFA also takes into account the European Quality Charter for Mobility and attaches great importance to its compliance in implementation.

The "go international" initiative was launched by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. One of the 32 "action programmes to internationalise Austrian business" that are included in "go international" deals with the internationalisation of education (cf. <http://www.go-international.at/spezialprogramme/11/>). Apart from manuals on English for special purposes for the world of work, a study about the degree of internationalisation of the Austrian education system was commissioned (cf. Schmid 2006). This study particularly examines the Austrian schoolchildren's and students' mobility behaviour, experience abroad and willingness to be mobile. Another goal of "go international" is to support work placements abroad for skilled workers, schoolchildren and apprentices. It aims to promote mobility stays of learners outside the LLL programme. A cooperation venture has been set up with the above described association IFA.

The significance of promoting geographical mobility is also expressed by the initiative by Leonardo da Vinci National Agency Austria, which launched in 2006 the awarding of the Leonardo da Vinci "European Quality in Mobility Awards". 24 projects are selected by an international jury representing various target groups, including IVET. Five projects were conferred the "Quality in Mobility Award 2006" (cf. <http://www.leonardodavinci.at/article/articlegallery/478/1/66>).

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<sup>1</sup>) Data on mobility within IVET outside the Leonardo da Vinci programme are not centrally recorded in Austria.

## 7.5.2 Examples of policy measures

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
"Pro Mobility – platforms for the promotion and support of qualifying mobility in VET“ (2006 – 4503/001-001 PIL PILOTP)
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>The project Pro Mobility was launched in 2006, it will end in August 2008 (cf. <a href="http://www.pro-mobility.net">www.pro-mobility.net</a>). The core goal is to reduce barriers to mobility and promote qualifying mobility in qualitative and quantitative respect.</p> <p>Short and medium term project objectives are the setting up of two platforms and the organisation of prototype exchanges. PMCs (Pro Mobility Committees) are founded in every country in the framework of which the educational policy stakeholders support the operational project partners in setting up a Pro Mobility Toolkit (PMT), do lobbying work for the use of the toolkit and disseminate information about qualifying mobility. By institutionalising the PMCs they should also serve the promotion of transnational cooperation after the project end. On a virtual platform, the PMT will be available where information about the infrastructure required for qualifying mobility and necessary tools are accessible.</p> <p>The long term project goal is the implementation of qualifying mobility as a part of the internationalisation strategy of IVET, i.e. that qualifying mobility similar to Erasmus studies in HE is anchored as an integral part of IVET and integrated in national laws and regulations.</p> <p>The Pro Mobility website directly addresses stakeholders in IVET, i.e. schools and training providers as well as schoolchildren and apprentices who want to take part in qualifying mobility.</p>
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
<p>Pro Mobility has an international orientation, twenty partner institutions from three countries – Austria, Germany and Slovenia – take part.</p> <p>Pro Mobility is an EU project initiated and coordinated in Austria. Additional funds are made available by the BMUKK and BMWA. The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber is responsible for coordinating the project. Apart from the steering group comprising seven institutions, representatives of competent ministries, chambers, professional associations, trade union, educational and exchange organisations are involved as members of the national Pro Mobility committee.</p>
<b>D: Assessment of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>The results of the projects will be available in accordance with the three work phases: preparation and analysis, developing and testing phase, implementation and dissemination (cf. <a href="http://www.pro-mobility.net/pdf/results/work_phases_packages.pdf">http://www.pro-mobility.net/pdf/results/work_phases_packages.pdf</a>). As of May 2008 the third project phase will start. One key result of the project is the PMT, which will include information about the infrastructure required for qualifying mobility and the necessary tools (such as checklists, information about the Europass transparency instruments, about other education systems, descriptions of competences and qualifications, a database of sending and receiving institutions) (cf. <a href="http://www.pro-mobility.net/de/pmtoolkit.php">http://www.pro-mobility.net/de/pmtoolkit.php</a>). To test the PMT at least three prototype exchanges will be organised in every country. Subsequently the people and institutions involved in these prototype exchanges will provide feedback about the toolkit, which will be improved on the basis of the feedback.</p> <p>The findings will be used at the national level to encourage the internationalisation of IVET. Related adaptations of legislation are being planned and will be supported by the members of the national PMCs.</p>

**E. Conclusions:**

The organisation of longer-term mobility stays that lead to eligible competences ("qualifying mobility") is currently linked to a series of problems. The PMT aims to support exchanges as regards their organisation. Nevertheless not all problems can be resolved in that way, i.e. the language problem (very frequently, learners do not have sufficient command of their host country's language), the age problem (learners at the upper secondary level are usually under 18, which necessitates care obligations), the interface problem (curricula are not always compatible, learners have to acquire the knowledge and skills they missed in the sending country) etc. Here it is important to remedy the situation at the educational policy level, e.g. by granting relevant funds (such as to finance mentors), by setting up structures (such as a single point of contact that helps with the organisation of exchanges), etc.

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## 8 Development of VET statistics

### 8.1 Progress made on national VET statistics since 2002

To analyse VET and IVET in Austria, statistical datasets are available that are produced at the sectoral, regional and national level and within the framework of international surveys.

A major part of VET is located in the formal IVET system. This area comprises the apprenticeship training of the dual system, the VET schools and colleges and higher learning programmes. At the national level, this area is covered by official education statistics (school and HE statistics), at the international level the Labour Force Survey (LFS), EU-SILC and the UOE data survey must be mentioned. Apart from the LFS, which includes information about CVET, Austria takes part in the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS). Administrative data about CVET at the national level is supplied by statistics on qualification measures conducted by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) within the framework of active labour market policies and the CVET courses conducted by the KEBÖ associations (Conference of Adult Education Institutions). In KEBÖ, ten ALE institutions are organised.

#### Federal statistics on education and the educational attainment register

Official education statistics are newly regulated by the Education Documentation Act (*Bildungsdokumentationsgesetz*, BildokG 2002), which entered into force in 2003, and have since been completely transformed. The federal statistics on the education sector, which had to be newly established according to legislation, replaces the statistics on “schools and HE institutions” formerly drawn up. Pursuant to the Education Documentation Act the federal institution Statistics Austria has the mission to draw up the new education statistics with a regional structure and maintain a register about the educational attainment of the Austrian residential population (the so-called educational attainment register). In the education statistics, which covers all education areas, information about all sectors (federal and regional schools, the school-based and the company-based part of apprenticeship training, schools of agriculture and forestry, schools for healthcare, public and private sector) as well as data on schoolchildren, human resources and finances is merged. The educational attainment register is additionally linked with information about benefits paid by the AMS and about recognitions of qualifications obtained abroad.

The statistics on schoolchildren, students and graduates has since the school or study year 2003/04 been based on individual data from reporting educational institutions. The new system is expected to lead to substantial improvements as compared to the previous reporting practice, especially as it is now possible on the basis of individual data to observe and describe retention periods, educational biographies (flows of schoolchildren between the individual educational provisions). The new form of survey is also expected to bring about an improved collation of school successes and qualifications as well as educational participation. Major sociodemographic information about schoolchildren (e.g. parents’ educational attainment and occupational status, the schoolchildren’s country of birth) is not part of the data collection process, therefore detailed analyses of individual educational careers are not possible on that basis. For this purpose, additional information about the use of the education system’s resources would be required.

With regard to personnel data, the merger is expected to bring about an improved data collection and a more detailed and uniform presentation of the organisationally separated federal and regional teachers. To date, for example, no full-time equivalents (FTEs) have been reported for teachers, only the headcount on the basis of employment plans. Pursuant to

information provided by competent offices in the education ministry FTEs will also be available following conversion of data collection or it will be possible to calculate FTEs on the basis of the actual teaching load.

The situation regarding collecting data on education expenses within the formal system has clearly improved in recent years, mainly due to national and international experience made in the course of UOE data surveys. Competent ministries commissioned two projects to examine the national UOE financial data reporting in the HE sector and school sector in an international comparison with selected countries. This has led to improvements of data quality with a view to the UOE specifications and pinpointed difficulties of international comparability. For federal statistics on the education sector, work is currently conducted on a school type and area specialisation specific evaluation of education expenses, as the ISCED-based presentation of UOE data is not sufficiently informative in a national and regional context. The main trouble areas are currently found in the collection of data on education relevant expenses by hospitals for the schools for healthcare and the education expenses by private households. Also the assignment of public education expenses to different school types, which in the federal budget are summarised in one item, has not been resolved.

All data sources for the new integrated education statistics are being converted, for which reason relevant data are currently only partly available. With the expiry of the former school statistics in the school year 2002/03 no more detailed information is available. Because the data collection according to the new educational documentation remained incomplete for the following years: For the school years 2003/04 to 2005/06 only aggregated data are available that build on projections (according to Statistics Austria the vacancies filled in the school year 2005/06 was between 70 % and 80 %). First complete data are expected for the past school year (school attendance for the year 2006/07 and success and qualification data for the 2005/06 school year). This data has however only been published in excerpts, a comprehensive volume of tables is scheduled to be published in April 2008. Therefore at present experience about applications by users of the new education statistics is still not available. At any rate, a comprehensive database with the new education statistics encompassing all educational areas of the formal system should be available in future, whereby data access by research institutions, in particular to (anonymised) individual data, has not been clarified or is at present not foreseen by law.

### **European surveys: LFS, CVTS, ECHP, EU-SILC**

These datasets contain information about IVET (LFS, ECHP, EU-SILC) and CVET (LFS, CVTS, ECHP).

One major statistical innovation of the Austrian LFS data was accompanied by a complete redesigning of the survey instrument (micro census, MC). Since 2004 the MC has based on a continual survey. Whereas previously the survey was conducted only in one month per quarter and there were (basically) twelve reference weeks per year, the reference weeks are now spread across the entire year, which improves mapping of seasonal fluctuations. A new development is the inclusion of the detailed area specialisation in VET and CVET (ISCED education and training fields), which, on the one hand, is surveyed for the highest educational attainment and the current formal education path attended and, on the other, for the non-formal CVET path attended during the reference period. Conversions not only led to a break in series 2004/05, profound innovations necessitated some readjustments in the course of 2004 and 2005, which also affected education variables, such as the collection of data on the highest educational attainment. From a statistical perspective, a restriction is the sample size: Disaggregated evaluations (e.g. education levels and specialisations pursuant to ISCO occupational groups in a regional structure and by sex) cannot be conducted on the basis of a single quarterly dataset. This problem exists in Austria as well as in all small countries participating in the LFS and is being discussed at European level. One major data gap of the MC is income. It was last surveyed in 1999 within the framework of a special pro-

gramme. In future it is planned to link MC data with the data from wage tax statistics, which will cover at least a part of incomes (of employees).

### **AMS qualification statistics**

The subsidisation statistics of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) contains information about the qualification and skilling measures funded within the framework of active labour market policies, with the measures mostly being attributable to CVET. Since 2000 subsidisation cases have been recorded electronically. This conversion was accompanied by an extension of the recorded data. Since then however statistical recording and reporting has not undergone any essential further development. Data gaps exist in the recording of the duration and content of courses on offer. Regarding course duration, the number of subsidised days is recorded but not the number of hours a day. Information about the subject matter of the courses is not available. This is termed a deficiency by AMS but there are no concrete plans on how to close this data gap.

### **KEBÖ statistics**

The statistics of the Conference of Adult Education Institutions (KEBÖ) includes information about the ten non-profit organisations for adult learning that are KEBÖ members. The type of collection and presentation differs between organisations, both regarding scope and regarding the quality of the published data. Therefore KEBÖ's overall statistics are very rudimentary with considerable gaps in terms of surveyed categories of participation and course duration. No differentiation is made between general and vocational CET. No data about motives, consequences, expenditure, etc. are available. No further developments worth mentioning have been made since 2002. At the level of individual organisations, however, some more detailed data are available. The adult education centres must be highlighted in this context as spearheading developments. The KEBÖ associations obtain support from federal funds on the basis of annual agreements. An initiative is currently being implemented in the Education Ministry, which is competent for them, aiming at improving and harmonising statistics in cooperation with KEBÖ. A working group is developing common standards and criteria of data collection and reporting in order to validate and obtain informative data building on service level agreements.

In the sector of continuing vocational education and training (CVET) the data situation in Austria must currently be rated as unsatisfactory. In the LFS, the period of observation for CVET participation is four weeks before the survey, which is extremely short. Also the one-year observation period of the LFS ad hoc modules 2003 is too short due to delayed effects of CVET in the labour market. For adequately assessing the labour market outcomes of CVET, in addition, a much more precise measurement and collection of a number of aspects related to course attendance would be required: scope and quality, occupational relevance, motives and consequences, obligatory or voluntary participation, financing, etc. For Austria, no panel data on CVET are available. An exception is the ECHP, in which Austria took part for the first time in 1995 until its expiry, and partly the CVTS. The successor of ECHP – EU-SILC – does not include any information about non formal and informal CET. The CVTS does not cover many Austrian enterprises that employ less than ten people.

## 8.2 Examples of policies/measures/projects for improving national VET-statistics

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
Education Documentation Act ( <i>Bildungsdokumentationsgesetz</i> , BilDokG 2002)
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>The Federal Act on Documentation in the Education Sector (Education Documentation Act) forms the legal basis for the redesigning and merging of educational statistics and is relevant for the formal section of VET. Its integrated education statistics now consists of a total evidence of schoolchildren and students, the federal statistics on the education sector, and the educational attainment register.</p> <p>The person-related data are collected in the educational institutions and passed on for the total evidence of schoolchildren to the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) or for compiling the federal statistics on education and the educational attainment register to the federal institution Statistics Austria. The schoolchildren's statistics are therefore based on individual data and hence replace the previous school statistics on the basis of classes (or years). In the federal statistics on the education sector, data a wide range of areas (data on schoolchildren and student statistics, human resources and finances) as well as sectors are merged. In the future, the educational attainment register will link education-related data with information from other registers (such as the Central Register of Residents). This procedure aims to make previous censuses unnecessary, in which people were questioned directly. Official statistics will in future use these datasets for "interview-free censuses". The emerging uniform database will be used for data reporting to the EU within the framework of educational policy cooperation and supply output indicators about the Austrian education system.</p> <p>Data related to schoolchildren enable breakdowns by sex, age and region. On the basis of individual data it is possible to create flow statistics (flows of schoolchildren between and within education and training programmes, about changes of schools and specialisations within the same school, dropout rates). This is expected to provide key information for the further development of the school system. Regional data are planned to be used as bases for decision-making as regards building and extending schools. Teaching-related data are needed e.g. for calculating class sizes, data about multilingualism, need for support, and popularity of particular school events.</p>
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
Local school administrations have the task of populating the database automation-supported with the required person- and class-related features. The introductory phase was characterised by a high workload for converting local schoolchildren administrations. Pursuant to information provided by BMUKK and Statistics Austria comprehensive evidence about schoolchildren and graduates has been compiled for the first time for the past school year 2006/07 and now exist in all the foreseen variants. Conversion processes in the collection of education-related HR and financial data are not complete.
<b>D. Assessment of the policy/measure:</b>
As federal statistics on the education sector and the educational attainment register have not been published to date, evaluation of the qualitative improvement of the database on the education sector and the planned administrative savings are still outstanding.

<b>A. Title of policy/measure:</b>
National Report on Education
<b>B. Outline of the policy/measure:</b>
<p>Currently the first National Report on Education for Austria is being compiled, which is scheduled to come out as early as in 2008. Its aim is the description of the Austrian school system that is as comprehensive as possible.</p> <p>In the first section, this is done on the basis of data and indicators that refer to the major objectives and quality areas of the school system. This section of the report largely follows the models of related education reports in the neighbouring countries (mainly Germany and Switzerland) that primarily build on the presentation and interpretation of indicators on the education system. In this process, indicators for the various levels of service provision (context, input, processes, output and outcomes) are presented with connections established between these levels. In addition, the education report aims to clarify the database and data availability for regular national reporting practice as well as proposals for an improvement of the data situation and their applicability.</p> <p>The second section is more problem oriented, analytical and of a more normative nature. In this section, the thematic focus is on the main fields of development in the school sector, they are analysed on the basis of available data and research findings and options for a quality oriented further development discussed. Thus, for example, pedagogical issues and themes related to the governance of the school sector are treated that are of immediate importance for education policy. In the context of efforts related to evidence-based governance, two themes are treated that are of relevance also for the further development of the education statistics: the topic of improved support and use of education research as a knowledge resource and the problem of under-representation of issues of educational economics in the Austrian research landscape. In both sections it is attempted to establish as far as possible interfaces to international indicator systems (OECD, EU) and priority policy fields (e.g. the EU's Lisbon objectives).</p> <p>A separate adult learning report is planned in the near future, to follow on from the education report. In this respect, the BMUKK is still in the conceptual stage.</p>
<b>C. Policy/measure operation and delivery:</b>
<p>The education report aims to provide an as comprehensive as possible stocktaking and focus on different sectors of the school system where the pressure to implement changes is high and which are therefore at the centre of educational policy discussions. It is directed on the one hand towards educational administration and education policy makers; on the other hand however it also serves to provide information to those members of the public who are interested in education issues. The text quality should, first of all, meet scientific standards and reflect the state of the art in the academic analysis of the theme. Secondly, the text should also be understandable to the educated layperson. The education report has been commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and is the cooperative efforts of many authors and practitioners in different disciplines. The contractor is the Federal Institute for Education Research, Innovation and Development of the Education Sector (bifie), which is in charge of the content-related and organisational coordination with the authors.</p>

**D. Assessment of the policy/measure:**

A quality assurance procedure lays down requirements on individual contributions in detail. Responsibilities for compiling the education report are structured into three parts: Overall project management is incumbent on bifie. The structuring and content-related overall conception is borne and within the responsibility of a group of editors, comprising eight education researchers from Austrian universities and non-university research institutions. This group at the same time is the first instance in the quality assurance process for the individual contributions; this process basically consists of a review procedure made up of several levels. The authors are responsible for their contributions' content, but are subject to a multi-tier academic quality assurance procedure.

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## 9 VET and beyond

The year 2010 marks a milestone in the field of (vocational) education and training, as this is the year when the current work programme that aims to contribute to achieving the Lisbon targets is scheduled to end. The current wide-ranging reflection process includes considerations on what **priorities** will determine the educational policy agenda at national and European levels after that time and what the **objectives** should be.

### 9.1 What VET issues do you believe should be on the national and on the EU policy agenda post 2010 and why?

From an **Austrian perspective**, it will be important after 2010 **to continue and strengthen** the initiatives and policy measures that have already been taken or are currently in the implementation phase (cf. Fig. 1 and more detailed comments in the individual chapters). These include the following in particular:

**Safeguarding permeability:** It is an explicit objective of Austrian education policy to safeguard complete permeability between the individual education paths. Every holder of a qualification of whatever type must be provided access to another education path up to the HE sector. Major measures in this respect have already been taken in the past, e.g. with the introduction of the *Berufsreifeprüfung* certificate in 1997 (cf. 3.2.1, 3.2.2). At present, the creation of a combined scheme for the acquisition of a vocational qualification within the framework of an apprenticeship scheme and completion of *Reifeprüfung* is being discussed. Related pilot models are scheduled to be introduced in the autumn of 2008 (cf. 3.2.2). After 2010 this theme will still be on the national educational policy agenda and treated in connection with other important themes, such as the National Qualifications Framework, the lifelong learning strategy, and increased visibility and recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences.

**Orientation towards learning outcomes:** One of the key themes of the coming years, which will be on the educational policy agenda also after 2010, will be the increased orientation towards output-related learning outcomes. In current discussions about the introduction of educational standards (cf. 3.2.1, 4.2.1, 7.2.1), which are described in the form of specialist and transversal competences that schoolchildren should have acquired by a given year, this paradigm change from input to output orientation already becomes visible. The establishment of a National Qualifications Framework (cf. 7.2.2) and the possible implementation of ECVET (cf. 7.3.2) will further accelerate this development. First of all it will be of prime importance to define appropriate approaches and methods to formulate learning outcomes on the basis of findings obtained through pilots.

In connection with the NQF, which all qualifications formally acquired should be referenced to over the next two years, the focus will after 2010 increasingly be put on the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences.

With a view to the future implementation of ECVET, relevant decisions will have to be taken at political level about what should be achieved with ECVET in Austria, i.e. whether ECVET should primarily promote transnational mobility or if it should, in the long term, be set up as a system facilitating the transfer and accumulation of an individual's learning outcomes upon transfer from one learning context to another. This question combined with the safeguarding of permeability will continue to determine educational policy discussions after 2010.

**Quality assurance:** The theme of quality assurance will acquire an additional dimension. The prevailing input control to date in administration by application of laws and regulations is aimed to be increasingly supplemented by elements of output control. This is due, not least, to the future implementation of European transparency instruments, which perceive quality assurance as a key prerequisite for establishing mutual trust in transnational partnerships. Relevant examples in the school-based VET sector are educational standards, which are to be tested by applying testing procedures (cf. 3.2.1, 4.2.1, 7.2.1). In the dual VET sector, apprenticeship subsidisation is currently undergoing reform (cf. 2.2.1), in which output-oriented quality aspects are aimed to be taken more into account than previously.

**Educational counselling and career guidance:** Another policy priority that will be on the political agenda after 2010 is the intensification of educational counselling and career guidance. Precisely due to the diversity of provision in the Austrian education landscape, an early start and lifelong continuation of educational counselling and career guidance is indispensable. The theme of lifelong guidance (cf. 6.4.2) is therefore also discussed as part of the comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning strategy (cf. 3.1). Concrete objectives and measures include e.g. strengthening of cooperation ventures between the education and business spheres and the extension of career guidance at secondary schools.

**Promotion of lifelong learning:** Together with political acceptance of the comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning strategy currently in preparation, policy measures are expected to be taken, the implementation of which will influence the political agenda even after 2010. These measures will affect the five major guidelines of the LLL strategy: life-stage guidance, putting learners at the centre, lifelong guidance, competence orientation, and promoting participation in LLL for VET actors. For long-term orientation, fundamental decisions are required about financing principles that are consistent in themselves and affect the different education sectors from early years education to HE and ALE.

Evaluations of outcomes of the various targets of the Lisbon strategy and the discussion process with member states will be decisive for which educational policy priorities will be on the agenda at **European level** after the work programme expires in 2010.

## 9.2 How could these issues be addressed through national and EU policy and/or targets?

It is currently not possible to **specify any concrete policy measures or their objectives**, either at national or European level. At both levels, this will require in-depth discussions about **educational policy priorities**, which should be determined by involving all relevant stakeholders from (vocational) education and training.

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## 10 Information about the Report

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Sozialpartnerschaft in Österreich: [www.sozialpartner.at](http://www.sozialpartner.at)

## 10.3 Abbreviations

Acronym	German denotation	English denotation / explanation
abf-austria	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Berufsbildungsforschung	Network of VET research institutes
AHS	Allgemein bildende höhere Schule	higher general education school, junior cycle and senior cycle
ALE	Erwachsenenbildung	adult learning
AMS	Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich	Public Employment Service Austria
ARQA-VET	Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training	Österreichische Referenzstelle für Qualität in der Berufsbildung
BAG	Berufsausbildungsgesetz	Vocational Training Act
BBAB	Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat	Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
BFI	Berufsförderungsinstitut	Vocational Training Institute
BHS	Berufsbildende höhere Schule	VET college
BIC	Berufsinformationscomputer	database containing career information, job descriptions etc.
bifie	Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung des Bildungswesens	Federal Institute of Educational Research, Innovation and Development of the Educational System

BildokG	Bildungsdokumentationsgesetz	Education Documentation Act
BIZ	Berufsinformationszentrum	vocational information centres
BMF	Bundesministerium für Finanzen	Federal Ministry of Finances
BMGFJ	Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, Familie und Jugend	Federal Ministry of Health, Family and Youth
BMHS	Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen	VET schools and colleges
BMLFUW	Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
BMS	Berufsbildende mittlere Schule	VET school
BMUKK	Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur	Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture
BMWA	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit	Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour
BRP	Berufsreifeprüfung	examination providing access to higher education for skilled workers and graduates of three- and four-year full-time VET schools
CET	Weiterbildung (allgemein)	continuing education and training
CVET	Weiterbildung (berufsbildend)	continuing vocational education and training
CVTS	Continuing Vocational Training Survey	Continuing Vocational Training Survey
ECHP	European Community Household Panel	European Community Household Panel
ECVET	Europäisches Lernkreditsystem	European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training
EQR EQF	Europäischer Qualifikationsrahmen	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	Europäischer Sozialfonds	European Social Funds
EU-SILC	Gemeinschaftsstatistiken über Einkommen und Lebensbedingungen	Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
FH	Fachhochschule	university level study programmes of at least three years' duration with vocational-technical orientation
FHR	Fachhochschulrat	Fachhochschule Council
FHStG	Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz	Fachhochschule Studies Act
GE	Allgemeinbildung	general education
GewO	Gewerbeordnung	Crafts, Trade and Industry Act
HE	Hochschulbildung	higher education
IHS	Institut für Höhere Studien	Institute for Higher Studies

IBA	Integrative Berufsausbildung	Integrative vocational education and training, Integrative VET
ibw	Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft	Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	berufliche Erstausbildung	initial vocational education and training
JASG	Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz	Youth Training Guarantee Act
KEBÖ	Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs	Conference of Adult Education in Austria
LAP	Lehrabschlussprüfung	final apprenticeship examination
LBAB	Landesberufsausbildungsbeirat	Regional Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
LFI	Ländliche Fortbildungsinstitut	institute for further education in rural areas
LFS	Labour Force Survey	Labour Force Survey
LLG	Lifelong Guidance	Lifelong Guidance
LLL	Lebenslanges Lernen	Lifelong learning
MZ	Mikrozensus	micro census
NEC	Nationales Europass Zentrum	National Europass Centre
NQR NQF	Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation für wirtschaftliche Kooperation und Entwicklung	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
ÖGB	Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund	Austrian Trade Union Federation
öibf	Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung	Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training
PTS	Polytechnische Schule	prevocational school
SBP	Studienberechtigungsprüfung	higher education entrance examination
SchOG	Schulorganisationsgesetz	School Organisation Act
SchUG	Schulunterrichtsgesetz	School Education Act
VET	Berufsbildung	vocational education and training
WB	Weiterbildung	continuing vocational education and training

