

Dual vocational education and training in Austria – a successful VET pathway

High youth unemployment rates, skilled labour shortage, skills mismatches, as well as difficulties in the transition from the education system to the labour market – all these factors have raised interest in dual VET programmes, which are characterised by alternating school-based and company-based training stages, both at European level and at the level of Member States. This is definitely reasonable – considering the fact that empirical data on apprenticeship training in Austria once again underline the success of this training model. It is evidenced by a high satisfaction rate with the training on the part of the apprentices, their smooth labour market integration, and the low youth unemployment rate in a European comparison.

Comprehensive empirical data material generated in the course of various studies that were commissioned by the [Economics Ministry](#) and conducted by [ibw](#) and [öibf](#) proves that dual VET, which is provided in Austria alongside VET at full-time VET schools at the upper secondary level, constitutes a successful training model despite facing several challenges. As a result of demographic changes, the heterogeneity of apprenticeship beginners, competition from school-based VET programmes, as well as image problems, apprenticeship training has come under increasing pressure in recent years. The findings of statistical analyses and a survey among Austrian apprenticeship diploma holders about two years after graduation reveal the great number of advantages brought about by apprenticeship training, however.

Apprenticeship training not only makes it considerably easier to enter the labour market but also has positive effects on satisfaction with employment. With a total of 85%, the overwhelming majority of apprenticeship graduates are employed at skilled worker's level – and therefore in line with their qualification – two years after being awarded their diploma. Another 11% are already employed in an executive position. Therefore it is hardly surprising that, overall, 96% assess integration in their company as positive, 95% also like working in their occupation. In retrospect, most apprenticeship graduates rate their training in the company and at part-time vocational school as positive and also consider the contents taught during training as usable to a high extent. From today's viewpoint, around 85% would therefore again opt to take up apprenticeship training as their initial VET pathway. In a direct comparison with upper secondary school graduates of the same age, the questioned apprenticeship graduates see themselves as being at an advantage in many different respects, such as regarding the diverse organisation of work and the ability to use what they have learned also in their private life.

In addition, apprenticeship training boosts the graduates' professional careers and reduces their risk of becoming unemployed – in particular in comparison with dropouts. Whereas 80% of apprenticeship graduates are employed three years after successful graduation, only 38% of dropouts are still employed three years after their training. The likelihood of finding a place of work also increases with training success: the more successful graduates are in the apprenticeship-leave exam, the much higher their share among the self-employed and people in dependent employment and the lower their share among the unemployed. Although it is often viewed critically that career decisions need to be taken at a young age in Austria (young people have to choose one of several education and training pathways at the age of 14), the collected data supports this early entry into the apprenticeship training system. This is because the older apprenticeship beginners are when taking up training, the more likely it is that they will drop out later: among apprenticeship beginners who were 15 years old when taking up their training, 7.4% dropped out in the survey period, while the share of dropouts among 25-year-olds was as high as 36.5%.

The fact that youth unemployment is still rather low in Austria in a European comparison is essentially attributable to the success of dual VET together with a differentiated range of school-based VET programmes. At 10.6% (based on Eurostat), youth unemployment in 2015 was in the second most favourable position (behind Germany) and clearly behind the European average (EU-28) of 20.3%.

Further information:

Dornmayr, Helmut and Winkler, Birgit: (2016). Befragung österreichischer LehrabsolventInnen zwei Jahre nach Lehrabschluss [Survey among Austrian apprenticeship graduates two years after completion of training]. Vienna: ibw. [Download](#) (in German only)
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Dornmayr, Helmut. (2016): Nach der Lehre: Ausbildungserfolg und Erwerbskarrieren der LehrabgängerInnen 2008-2013 in Österreich [After the apprenticeship: training success and professional careers of apprenticeship graduates and dropouts from 2008 to 2013 in Austria]. Vienna: ibw. [Download](#) (in German only)
ibw-research brief no. 92: [DE](#) || [EN](#)

Dornmayr, Helmut, Litschel, Veronika and Löffler, Roland (2016): Bericht zur Situation der Jugendbeschäftigung und Lehrlingsausbildung in Österreich 2014-2015 [Report on the situation of youth employment and apprenticeship training in Austria in 2014-2015]. Vienna: ibw-öibf. [Download](#) (in German only)
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