
Austria

VET in Europe – Country Report

2014

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ibw Austria - Research & Development in VET
Rainergasse 38
A-1050 Vienna
www.ibw.at

Author: Sabine Tritscher-Archan
With contributions from Sabine Nowak (statistics), Silvia Seyer-Weiß (chapter 2) and Gabriele Grün (chapter 3)

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Introduction

This report provides a picture of the **Austrian vocational education and training (VET) system**. It covers a **broad range of topics**: Following introductory background information about the political and socio-economic context in Austria, the second chapter describes the Austrian education system. It presents VET programmes both at school level and in higher education as well as those outside the formal education system. A graphic complements the text and aims to illustrate the different VET pathways and options. The third chapter focuses on the instruments and processes to match qualification supply and demand. It describes how qualifications are defined and what processes take place in this connection. The fourth and final chapter deals with the financial incentives given to encourage participation in VET. In addition, this chapter informs about educational counselling and career guidance services.

The **VET sector** plays a major role in the Austrian education landscape. This is shown, on the one hand, by the **high attractiveness** of VET programmes for young people: some 80% of all pupils who have completed compulsory schooling opt for a VET path. On the other hand, the major significance of VET also manifests itself in the **diversity of programmes**. A pronounced differentiation both in the school-based and in the dual VET sector ensures that every young person is able to optimally develop their strengths and talents. The success of the Austrian VET system is also reflected in the low youth unemployment rate and the international recognition of Austrian skilled workers.

This report forms part of a series of **country reports about the VET systems** in the EU member states, in Norway and Iceland which are available in English on the Cedefop website (<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports>). The reports were drawn up as part of the reference and information network of Cedefop (ReferNet) with the aim of providing interested readers with information about the national VET systems and their characteristics.

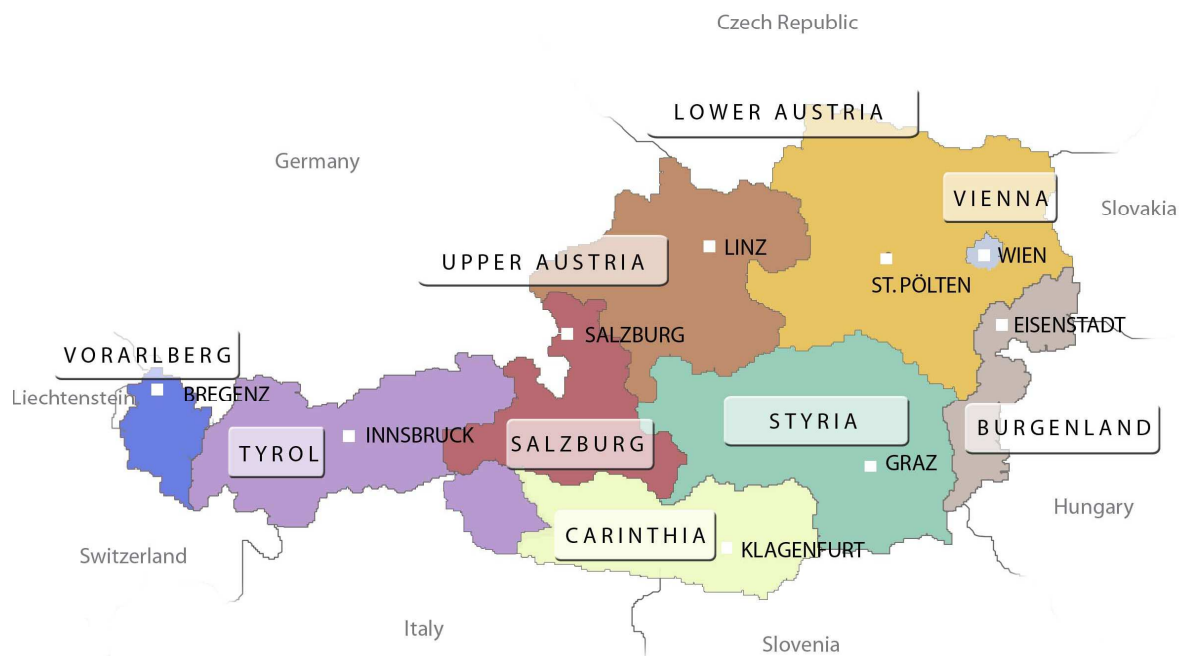
The Austrian report was written by **ibw Austria – Research & Development in VET**. Further information on Austrian VET policy, VET research and specific themes of VET can be found in the various ReferNet publications which can be downloaded on the ReferNet website (cf. www.refernet.at/en > *Publications*).

1. External factors influencing VET

1.1 Political and socio-economic background

Austria is a **parliamentary republic** based on the principles of democracy and separation of powers. It comprises **nine federal provinces** (cf. fig. 1), each with its own provincial government. **Vienna** is a province and at the same time the federal capital.

Fig. 1: Austria and its federal provinces



Artwork: ibw

The Austrian **Parliament** consists of two chambers: the National Council (*Nationalrat*) and the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), which share **the legislative power** at federal level. The National Council has 183 members; these are elected through direct vote by the population every five years. The members of the Federal Council (currently: 61; the precise number depends on the population development in the federal provinces) are delegated by the provincial diets, the parliaments of the federal provinces. They represent the interests of the provinces with regard to federal legislation.

The **executive powers**, i.e. the enforcement of the laws and ordinances passed by the legislature, are exercised by the **federal provinces**, unless the Federal Constitution stipulates that the **Federal Government** is responsible for them. The executive branch at federal level comprises the Federal President as the Head of State and the Federal Government, which is chaired by the Federal Chancellor. At provincial level, the executive branch comprises the Governor and the Provincial Government. In principle, Austria is characterised by a relatively high degree of federal structures.

A key role is played by the Austrian **social partnership** – a system of economic and social policy cooperation between the representations of interest of employers, employees, and representatives of the government. The social partnership is not limited to regulating labour (industrial) relations but encompasses nearly all fields of economic and social policies. Furthermore the social partners play a key role in the education sector (cf. also chapter 2).

1.2 Population and demography

Located in Central Europe, Austria covers an **area** of 83,858 km².

The **number of inhabitants** in 2003 was slightly above 8.1 million, in 2014 more than 8.5 million (cf. fig. 2). The continuously rising number of inhabitants since the mid-1980s is due to the increased influx of foreign nationals in particular (positive migration balance, negative to balanced natural population growth).

Fig. 2: Population development and development of the number of foreign nationals

	2003	2006	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
AT	8,100,273	8,254,298	8,335,003	8,351,643	8,375,164	8,408,121	8,451,860	8,507,786
Fo. nat.	746,753	796,666	852,604	876,068	905,435	945,176	997,038	1,066,114
in %	9.2	9.7	10.2	10.5	10.8	11.2	11.8	12.5

Note: Fo. nat. = number of foreign nationals having their usual residence in Austria on 1st January; in % = share of foreign nationals among the entire population

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 30 September 2014; in-house calculations

According to the data provided by Statistics Austria, the Austrian population will also grow in the future – projections assume a population size of slightly below 8.9 million by 2025 (cf. fig. 3). In terms of the **demographic development** it is clear that society is undergoing an ever increasing ageing process. Whereas in 2013 only some 18% of the population were 65 or

older, this population group's share in the total population is expected to be as high as about 19% by 2015 and will even rise to more than 21% by 2025.

Fig. 3: Development of the age structure of the Austrian population (on an annual average)

	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2025
0 – 24 years	2,273,754	2,245,423	2,237,955	2,234,582	2,227,065	2,219,617	2,175,251
25 – 64 years	4,605,787	4,659,216	4,676,095	4,691,734	4,705,780	4,723,826	4,767,829
65+ years	1,461,942	1,483,895	1,512,261	1,542,254	1,570,115	1,594,809	1,904,593
Share of 65+	17.5	17.7	17.9	18.2	18.5	18.7	21.5
Total	8,341,483	8,388,534	8,426,311	8,468,570	8,502,960	8,538,252	8,847,673

Source: Statistics Austria, population projection 2014, main scenario (mean fertility, life expectancy, immigration), in-house calculations, retrieved on 30 September 2014

The number of **people over the age of 65 in relation to 15- to 64-year-olds amounted to about 1 to 4 in Austria in 2013** (cf. fig. 4: 27%) In other words: there was one pensioner for every four people of working age (15 to 64 years of age). Based on projections, this ratio will change from about 1 to approx. 2 by 2060: one pensioner for less than two people in employment. According to projections, the development in Austria up to 2050 will be a little more favourable than the EU-28 average.

Fig. 4: Ratio between persons over 65 and those aged 15 to 64 years

	2013	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
EU-28	27.48	31.82	39.01	45.91	49.43	50.16
Austria	26.77	29.25	37.43	44.28	46.63	50.38

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 2 October 2014; in-house calculations

1.3 The economy and the labour market

A clear structural change in the direction of tertiarisation can be observed in Austria over the course of the last three decades. This is revealed, in particular, by the distribution of the **gross domestic product (GDP)** and of **people in employment broken down by economic sectors** (cf. fig. 5). Whereas in 1980 as many as about one tenth of people in employment or 322,400 individuals were active in the primary sector, this share halved within 30 years to less than 5% or 196,200 people. In the same period, the share of people employed in the service sector rose from around 50% to approximately 70% (2013). The distribution is therefore approximately within the EU-28 average (2013: 70.6%).

Fig. 5: Distribution of GDP (in %) and employees (in 1,000) by economic sectors in Austria

Economic sector	1980		1990		2000		2013	
	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.
Primary sector	5.3	322.4	3.7	368.5	2.0	316.0	1.5	196.2
Secondary sector	35.9	1,233.6	32.2	1,259.5	30.8	1,119.1	28.7	1,081.4
Tertiary sector	58.8	1,490.2	64.1	1,878.3	67.2	2,381.6	69.7	2,893.4
Total	100.0	3,046.2	100.0	3,506.3	100.0	3,816.7	100.0	4,175.2

Note: Empl. Employed;

Source: Statistics Austria, Eurostat, OECD retrieved on 2 October 2014; in-house calculations

When analysing the **employment rate by age groups** it can be seen that Austria has clearly higher rates among the 15- to 49-year-olds than the EU-28 average (cf. fig. 6: "Total"). Especially in the group of 15- to 24-year-olds in Austria, the employment rates were far above the EU average in the years of comparison (2003, 2006 and 2013). This is mainly due to the apprenticeship system (cf. 2.2.1) and education in the VET school sector (cf. 2.2.1) (e.g. in 2013: A: 53.8% vs. EU-28: 32.3%). In the group of 50- to 64-year-olds, the share of employees in Austria has approximated the EU average continually over the years (2003 to 2013); in 2013 it was, at 59.9%, already slightly above the EU average of 59.3%. The low employment rate in this age group until the middle of the first decade of this millennium was due to the comparatively favourable pension scheme. With the pension reform in 2005 there was an endeavour to gradually move the *de facto* retirement age to the legal retirement age (men: 65, women: 60), which led to an increase in the employment rate.

When taking the **highest educational attainment** according to ISCED categories (ISCED-1997) into account, the employment rate in Austria in the age categories 15 to 24 and 25 to 49 was in some cases clearly above the EU-28 average in all three periods of comparison (2003, 2006 and 2013). In the age cohort of 50- to 64-year-olds, the employment rate in 2013 was within the average of all 28 EU countries. The rate of Austrian higher education graduates (ISCED 5-8) in the age group of 25- to 49-year-olds was higher than the EU average in 2013 (A: 90.5% vs. EU-28: 86.2%).

Fig. 6: Employment rate by age groups and highest educational attainment (in %)

	ISCED	2003			2006			2013		
		15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU-28	0-2	25.0	66.1	41.8	24.4	66.8	43.4	19.7	59.3	43.8
	3-4	46.9	79.1	54.7	47.9	80.3	57.7	42.7	78.7	62.0
	5-8	60.7	88.0	72.4	60.2	88.4	74.1	54.6	86.2	76.2
	TOTAL	35.9	77.4	51.5	36.4	79.0	54.5	32.3	77.0	59.3
A	0-2	33.9	70.5	33.6	38.1	69.0	39.1	36.2	68.3	42.0
	3-4	67.4	86.1	46.5	68.9	86.1	51.0	69.2	87.0	61.8
	5-8	69.1	91.9	66.3	70.6	91.4	71.5	67.4	90.5	77.3
	TOTAL	50.6	84.5	45.3	54.0	84.3	50.9	53.8	85.3	59.9

Note: A = Austria, 15-24 = age group between 15 and 24 years; 0-2 = ISCED levels 0 to 2 (elementary level, lower secondary level), 3-4 = ISCED levels 3 to 4 (upper secondary level, post-secondary but not tertiary), 5-6 = ISCED levels 5 to 8 (tertiary A+B)

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 2 October 2014

Regarding the **labour market status** 18 months after obtaining a first qualification, apprenticeship graduates (cf. 2.2.1) reach by far the highest figures in the (direct) transition to employment after graduation (cf. fig. 7). More than three quarters of all apprenticeship graduates in the graduation year group 2009/10 were employed one and a half years after graduating. Among graduates of colleges for higher vocational education (BHSs, cf. 2.2.1) this figure was 42%, among those from schools for intermediate vocational education (BMSs, cf. 2.2.1) it was 40%.

Also regarding **income** from their first dependent employment, the situation of apprenticeship graduates compared to other educational qualifications can be assessed as favourable (cf. fig. 7): Among one third (33%), entry-level income is between EUR 1,800 and EUR 2,400 and another quarter earn EUR 2,400 or more. This means that apprenticeship graduates are represented more in the highest income segment than employees who graduated from a BHS (8%). In a comparison of vocational qualifications, the first income situation of BMS graduates in the income segment between EUR 1,200 and EUR 1,800 is the only one which can be rated as more favourable, which is due, among other factors, to the positive earning structure of new graduates of healthcare and nursing schools (which are characterised as BMSs).

Fig. 7: Labour market status 18 months after obtaining qualification, and income (in EUR) from the first dependent employment, by educational qualification, graduation year group 2009/10 (in column-percent)

	CS	Appren- ticeship	BMS	AHS	BHS	Uni./FH
	ISCED 2	ISCED 3B	ISCED 3B	ISCED 4A	ISCED 3-4B	ISCED 5-6
Labour market status						
In training	92.4	4.4	43.1	82.0	48.7	40.0
Employment	1.1	76.5	39.6	5.5	42.2	45.2
AMS registration	2.3	9.3	6.1	0.9	2.3	1.9
Others / not active	4.2	9.9	11.2	11.6	6.8	12.8
Entry-level income*						
< 1200 EUR	70.2	12.4	27.6	50.3	13.5	22.8
1200 to < 1800 EUR	26.5	27.5	42.4	34.6	44.2	17.8
1800 to < 2400 EUR	3.3	33.0	25.0	11.0	34.4	16.4
2400 EUR or more	-	27.1	5.0	4.1	7.9	43.0

Note: CS = compulsory school, BMS = school for intermediate vocational education, AHS = academic secondary school, BHS = college for higher vocational education, uni./FH = university/*Fachhochschule*, AMS registration = registration as job seeker with Public Employment Service; * for uni./FH graduation year group 2008/2009
Source: Statistics Austria, Qualification-related employment monitoring

An analysis of **unemployment rates by age groups** reveals that Austria boasts significantly lower unemployment rates than the EU-28 average in all age categories (cf. fig. 8). Particularly noteworthy is the gap between the 15- to 24-year-olds. Although this figure slightly deteriorated in Austria in the period of comparison, it was nevertheless clearly below the EU average in 2013 (A: 9.2% vs. EU-28: 23.4%). The reasons for this relatively low youth unemployment can be found in the wide range of programmes provided by the Austrian (vocational) education and training system (cf. chapter 2), primarily however in apprenticeship training (cf. 2.2.1) and their high labour market acceptance.

Taking into account the **highest educational attainment**, the generally clearly lower unemployment rates in Austria in an EU-28 comparison extend over all education levels and age groups. For example, the unemployment rate for people who graduated at upper secondary level (ISCED 3-4) as their highest educational attainment was, among 25- to 49-year-olds, at 3.7% (2003, 2006) and 4.2% (2013), while this rate in the EU-28 average was 8.4% (2003), 7.3% (2006) and 9.3% (2013). This is in particular because of the differentiated vocational training programmes (cf. 2.2.1) available at this educational level, which are continually adjusted to meet the needs of the labour market and are therefore kept attractive both for learners and also for employers.

Fig. 8: Unemployment rate by age group and highest educational attainment (in %)

	ISCED	2003			2006			2013		
		15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU-28	0-2	20.4	11.7	7.2	21.3	11.2	7.5	31.0	20.4	13.6
	3-4	18.1	8.4	7.7	15.7	7.3	6.9	20.8	9.3	6.8
	5-8	12.3	4.8	3.8	13.6	4.3	3.6	18.8	6.5	4.0
	TOTAL	18.3	8.3	6.7	17.4	7.4	6.3	23.4	10.3	7.8
Austria	0-2	10.1	8.4	8.6	13.4	8.9	5.4	12.7	10.1	6.3
	3-4	6.3	3.7	5.2	6.5	3.7	3.4	7.5	4.2	3.0
	5-8	:	2.5	:	:	2.6	1.9	:	3.3	2.6
	TOTAL	7.5	4.2	5.3	9.1	4.2	3.5	9.2	4.6	3.5

Note: : = no data available

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 3 October 2014

Public education spending for the primary and secondary sector in Austria in 2011 amounted to 3.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP), which was exactly the EU-21 average and a little below the OECD average (cf. fig. 9). State spending for the tertiary sector and also for all education sectors combined in Austria was above the EU-21 and the OECD average (cf. fig. 9).

Fig. 9: Spending for education by origin of funds and education sector, in % of GDP, 2011

	Primary; secondary; post-secondary, non-tertiary sector (ISCED 0-2, 3-4)		Tertiary sector (ISCED 5-6)		All education sectors (incl. elementary sector) ISCED 0-6	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
EU-21	3.5	0.2	1.2	0.2	5.3	0.5
OECD	3.6	0.3	1.1	0.5	5.3	0.9
Austria	3.5	0.1	1.4	0.1	5.5	0.2

Source: OECD, Education at a glance 2014, OECD indicators, Paris, 2014

Public education spending for the secondary sector (ISCED 2-4), where the focus of VET is in Austria, was higher than the EU-28 average in all years of comparison in Austria (2002 to 2011) (cf. fig. 10). In a comparison of the years 2002 and 2011, spending increased slightly in Austria (2002: 2.64% vs. 2011: 2.66%), and fell slightly in the EU average (2002: 2.27% vs. 2011: 2.23%).

Fig. 10: Public education spending for the secondary sector (ISCED 2-4) in % of GDP

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU-28	2.27 (e)	2.29 (e)	2.23 (e)	2.20 (e)	2.17 (e)	2.17 (e)	2.22 (e)	2.39 (e)	2.37	2.23
Austria	2.64	2.72	2.61	2.52	2.54	2.49	2.55	2.82	2.65	2.66

Note: (e) = Eurostat estimate

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 6 October 2014

1.4 Qualification level of the population

The number of 18- to 24-year-olds who have only completed **compulsory schooling** in Austria was, at 7.3% in 2013, clearly below the EU average (EU-28: 12.0%, cf. fig. 11). Austria has therefore already reached the benchmark figure envisaged throughout Europe by 2020 of lower than 10% early school leavers. This relatively low figure is attributed to the wide and differentiated range of education and training programmes after compulsory schooling, above all apprenticeship training and the VET school sector (cf. 2.2.1).

Fig. 11: Early school leavers: Share of 18- to 24-year-olds in the population who only have a compulsory school qualification and do not attend any upper secondary programme (in %)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU-28	16.0	15.7	15.4	14.9	14.7	14.2	13.9	13.4	12.7	12.0
Austria	9.5	9.1	9.8	10.7	10.1	8.7	8.3	8.3	7.6	7.3

Source: Eurostat, figures of the EU Labour Force Survey, retrieved on 6 October 2014

In 2012, 85% of all graduates of ISCED levels 3 and 4 in Austria were from **(pre-)vocational training programmes** (cf. fig. 12). Of more than 76% graduates at ISCED level 3, by far the largest share of graduates comes from apprenticeship training, which approximately 40% of every age group in year ten opt for (cf. also 2.2.1). At ISCED level 4, Austria has 23.1% graduates in VET programmes, which is more than three times as many as in the EU average (6.6%). This share reflects the high importance of colleges for higher vocational education (BHSs) at the upper secondary level (cf. 2.2.1) in Austria.

Fig. 12: Graduates of ISCED 3 and 4 programmes, by educational programme and gender (in line percent)

	2007						2012					
	3 GE	3 PVT	3 VET	4 GE	4 PVT	4 VET	3 GE	3 PVT	3 VET	4 GE	4 PvT	4 VET
E	37.1	3.7	40.8	0.8	0.0	6.6	37.4	0.3	43.0	1.1	0.0	6.6
A	14.3	16.9	46.1	0.0	0.0	22.7	14.7	13.5	48.7	0.0	0.0	23.1

Note: E = EU-28 (2012 excluding Ireland), A = Austria, GE = general education, PVT = pre-vocational training, VET = vocational education and training, 3 = ISCED level 3, 4 = ISCED level 4
Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 7 October 2014; in-house calculations

The share of those who have a qualification at least at **upper secondary level** in Austria was, at 87.4% in 2013, far above the EU-28 average of 81% (cf. fig. 13). In contrast to the EU-28 average with a higher share of female graduates (young women: 84%, young men: 78%), in Austria about as many young women as young men have acquired a related qualification (young women: 87.4%, young men: 87.3%).

Fig. 13: Share of 20- to 24-year-olds with at least a qualification at upper secondary level (in %)

	2002			2005			2008			2013		
	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M
EU	76.8	79.4	74.1	77.6	80.3	74.9	78.6	81.5	75.8	81.0	83.8	78.4
A	85.3	84.6	86.1	85.9	87.3	84.6	84.5	84.8	84.2	87.4	87.4	87.3

Note: EU = EU-28, A = Austria, TOT. = total, F = female, M = male
Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 7 October 2014

While in the average of all EU-28 countries in 2013 36.9% of 30- to 34-year-olds had a **higher education qualification** (ISCED 5-6), this rate in Austria was only 27.3% (cf. fig. 14). Austria is therefore well below the benchmark of 40% envisaged as part of the Europe 2020 strategy and under the target determined at the national level of 38%. If we also include qualifications from post-secondary programmes (e.g. master craftsperson and industrial master programmes, ISCED 4B), from colleges for higher vocational education (ISCED 4A) and healthcare and nursing schools (ISCED 4B) as vocational qualifications comparable with higher education degrees, the higher education graduation rate among 30- to 34-year-olds would be currently around 37%. This means Austria would have already almost reached both the national and also the European 2020 benchmark.

Fig. 14: Share of 30- to 34-year-olds with a higher education qualification (ISCED 5-6), in %

	2004	2008	2012	2013
EU-28	26.9	31.2	35.9	36.9
Austria	21.0	22.2	26.3	27.3

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 7 October 2014

Austria has also nearly reached another benchmark figure which, by 2020, aims at an average of 15% of adults in working age to be taking part in **lifelong learning** (LLL). In just over ten years, the participation rate in Austria has almost doubled from 7.5% (2002) to 13.9% (2013). In the EU-28 average, the share of LLL participants rose from 7.1% (2002) to 10.5% (2013).

Fig. 15: Lifelong learning: Share of the population between 25 and 64 who took part in training or a class in the last four weeks before the survey (in %)

	2002			2005			2008			2013		
	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M
EU	7.1	7.7	6.6	9.6	10.3	8.8	9.3	10.2	8.5	10.5	11.4	9.6
A	7.5	7.3	7.6	12.9	13.5	12.3	13.2	14.2	12.2	13.9	15.3	12.6

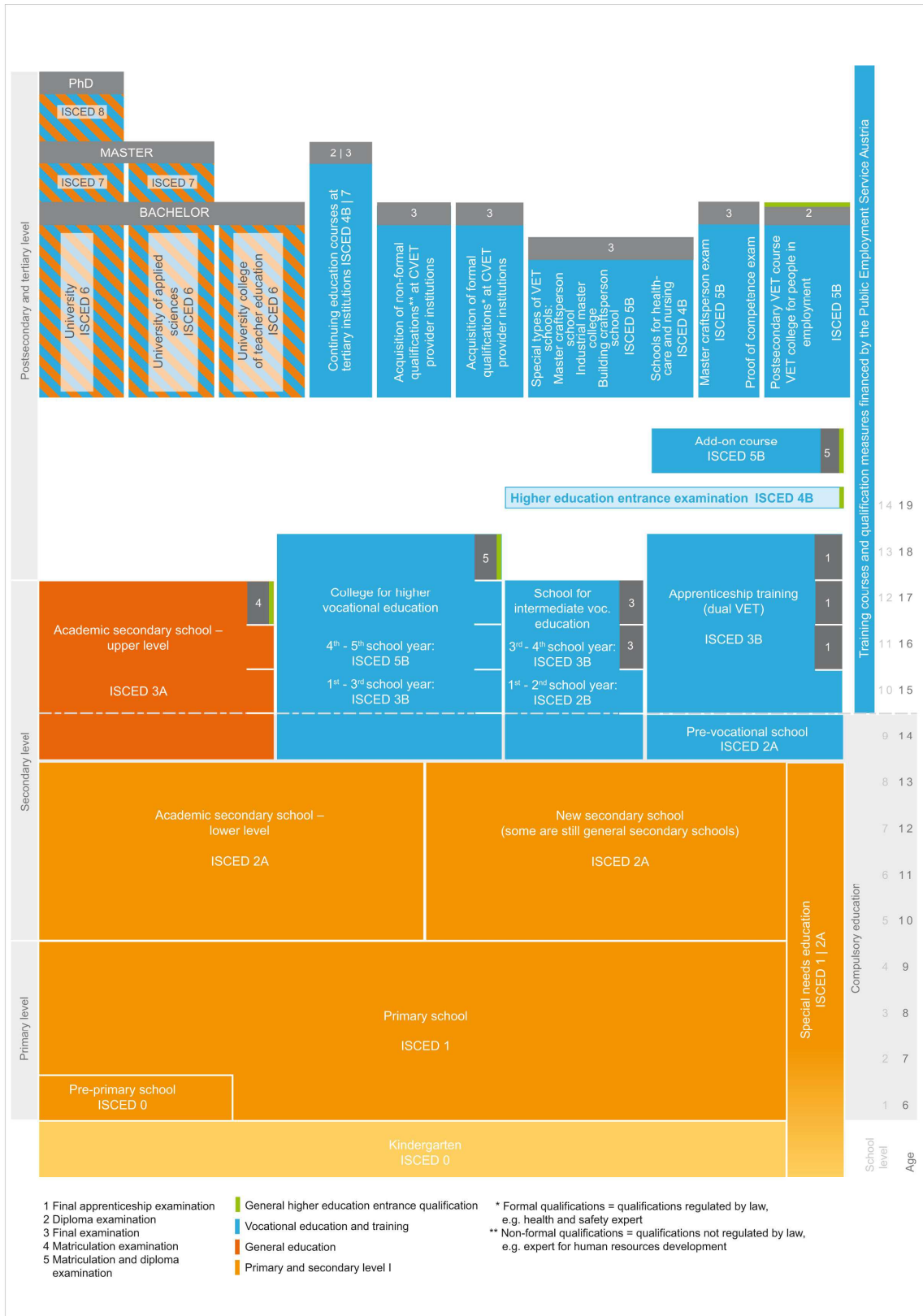
Note: EU = EU-28, A = Austria, TOT. = total, F = female, M = male

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 7 October 2014

2. Providing VET in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1 Chart of the national education and training system

Fig. 16: The Austrian initial and continuing education and training system (ISCED-2011)



Source: ibw

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

In Austria **compulsory schooling** starts at the age of six and lasts for nine years (cf. fig. 16). It comprises the four-year primary level, then the four-year lower secondary level. To complete compulsory schooling, pupils can attend the one-year prevocational school (cf. 2.2.1), a one-year school for intermediate vocational education (cf. 2.2.1) or the first year of any other school (lasting several years) of the upper secondary level.

At primary level with the four-year **primary school** there is a comprehensive school for all six- to ten-year-olds which focuses on general education. Solely children with special educational needs can attend either a **special needs school** that is tailored to their needs or also primary school classes that are run in an integrative (inclusive) scheme.

At the age of ten, when children transfer to lower secondary level, the first differentiation into two school types takes place: pupils can change to **new secondary school** (*Neue Mittelschule*, NMS) or the lower cycle of **academic secondary school** (*allgemein bildende höhere Schule*, AHS). Pupils with special educational needs can attend the fifth to eighth grade at a **special needs school**. Some NMS schools are still run as general secondary schools (*Hauptschulen*); this school form will cease to exist by 2018/19, however. New secondary school and the lower cycle of AHS are general education schools for 10- to 14-year-olds and last for four years. The switch from primary school to new secondary school or the lower cycle of AHS requires a positive final certificate (i.e. no negative marks are allowed) of the fourth grade of primary school; for entry to the lower cycle of AHS, additional performance requirements (such as certain marks in the main subjects) need to be met.

2.2.1 VET pathways at the upper secondary level

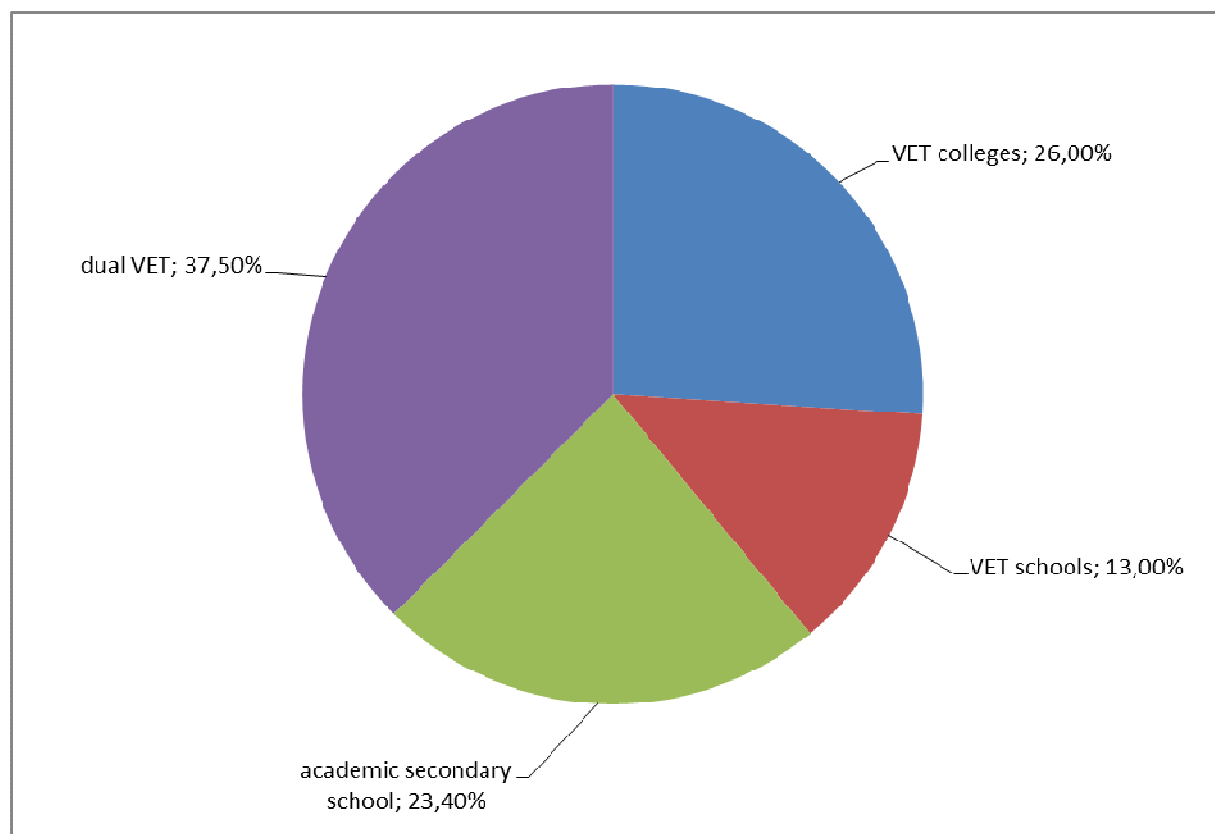
The final year of compulsory schooling corresponds to the first year of the upper secondary level. At this point, the school system's differentiation increases (cf. fig. 16). As well as the four-year upper cycle of **academic secondary school** (*AHS-Oberstufe*), there is now a choice between **two pre-vocational school types** and **three VET programmes**:

- **pre-vocational school (PTS)**, one-year school preparing, in particular, for apprenticeship training,
- **schools for intermediate vocational education (BMSs)**, one- and two-year prevocational schools and also three- and four-year VET schools with various area specialisations (business, technology, agriculture, social affairs, tourism, etc.),

- **colleges for higher vocational education (BHSs)**, five-year VET colleges which lead to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate with various area specialisations (business, technology, fashion, design, agriculture, tourism, kindergarten teacher training, etc.),
- **dual VET (apprenticeship/apprenticeship training)**, from the tenth grade, around 200 two- to four-year apprenticeship occupations in various area specialisations (construction, electrical, information technology, wholesale and retail trade, etc.).

This **diversity of pathways** reveals the special importance of VET in Austria. Another indication of the great importance of VET is its **attractiveness**, which manifests itself in high participant figures. More than 75% of young people in the tenth grade (i.e. one year after the end of compulsory schooling) attend a VET pathway (cf. fig. 17). Some 38% complete dual VET (apprenticeship), the remainder opt for one of the two VET school types (BMS or BHS).

Fig. 17: Share of learners in the tenth grade by educational programmes, school year 2012/13 (in %)



Source: Statistics Austria, ibw calculations

Prevocational school (PTS, according to ISCED-97 3C, according to ISCED-11 2A)

PTS follows the eighth grade, lasts for one year and is mainly attended by pupils who want to learn a profession as part of the dual VET system (apprenticeship) immediately after completing compulsory schooling. PTS also prepares pupils for transfer to upper secondary schools (AHS, BMS, BHS), however.

PTS offers both general and also occupation-related teaching in various area specialisations (metal, electrical, construction, timber, wholesale and retail trade/office, services/tourism, mechatronics, health, social affairs). Every pupil has to select an area specialisation. A combination of theoretical information and practical experiences (e.g. as part of company tours and days of practical work experience in training workshops or companies and also as part of practical classes) aims to help pupils become familiar with the world of work and also give them tailored guidance and preparation for their future profession which they still have to choose.

Overview of schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education (BMSs and BHSs, together: BMHSs)

The acquisition of vocational skills and competences as well as a well-founded general education is at the centre of VET programmes at BMHSs (i.e. at three- to four-year BMSs and five-year BHSs). In this way, graduates can enter working life directly or opt for a wide range of CET and higher qualification programmes after completing these schools.

For **admission** to a BMHS it is necessary to furnish proof of successful completion of the eighth school year. Depending on previous qualifications (such as NMS or the lower cycle of AHS, cf. fig. 16), the envisaged school type (BMS or BHS), and the available school places, previous performances (i.e. the achieved marks in the main subjects) and/or an admission exam represent additional selection criteria. The major **characteristics** of both school types are:

- **Differentiation:** In accordance with their abilities and interests, pupils can select from among a variety of specialist areas and training focuses. Schools have the autonomy to change the number of hours of individual subjects within a certain range, offer new subjects, or specify training focuses and area specialisations to respond to regional economic conditions to an even greater extent.

- **VET content and methodology:** BMHS curricula provide for a combination of general education and intensive specialisation training in theory and practice, with BMS putting more emphasis on practical elements than at BHS. Action-oriented teaching is a key basic principle at both school types; the work in workshops, laboratories, kitchens, practice firms, etc. and mandatory work placements lasting several weeks in business constitute compulsory parts of the training.
- **Curriculum development:** The training objectives and contents of BMHSs are specified in framework curricula which are regularly adapted with the help of experts from the economy (cf. 3.1). They are regulated by the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (BMBWF). In the implementation of the framework curricula, schools are entitled to change the number of lessons of individual subjects autonomously or develop their own focuses, taking greater account of (regional) economic requirements.
- **Key skills:** Entrepreneurial competence is both an interdisciplinary principle and the subject of special focuses. One foreign language is compulsory; depending on the school type, this figure may be up to three. The foreign language (above all English) is also used increasingly as a working language. The teaching of IT skills has long gone without saying in all BMHSs. Teamwork is encouraged by project work in particular, while communication skills are trained in lectures and presentations.
- **Business projects:** When working on projects or diploma theses (part of the final exam at BHS) with specific tasks from the business sphere or technology, students can gather fundamental subject-related experiences and learn to apply project management methods. They can test their key skills and set up initial contacts for their later entry into the world of work.
- **Teaching staff with business experience:** For many occupation-related practice and occupation-related theory subjects, BMHS teachers are required to prove subject-related business practice. Only with this and with pedagogical training at a higher education establishment are teachers entitled to teach at BMHSs. People with a master craftsperson qualification can also teach certain occupation-related practice subjects.

Schools for intermediate vocational education (BMSs, one- and two-year forms: ISCED-97 3C, ISCED-11 2B; three- and four-year forms: ISCED-97 and ISCED-11 3B)

With the successful completion of a final exam, students at a **three- and four-year BMS** acquire qualifications entitling them to immediately exercise relevant occupations and giving them access to specific regulated professional activities. Following completion of the *Berufsreifeprüfung* examination (cf. 2.2.3) or attendance of add-on courses, graduates have access to programmes in the post-secondary and tertiary areas. Three- and four-year BMSs also offer the prerequisite for a later activity as an entrepreneur.

One- and two-year BMSs are pre-vocational. In these schools, which are available in the areas of home economics, agriculture and social affairs, the pupils acquire basic vocational competences which prepare them for more specific vocational training and for simple activities on the labour market.

Colleges for higher vocational education (BHSs, ISCED-97 4A; ISCED-11 – years 1 to 3 ISCED 3B, years 4 and 5 ISCED 5B)

Five-year **BHS** (which is offered both as a **day form** and **evening form for people in employment**) provides in-depth general education and high-quality specialist training which combines theory and practice. BHS pupils finish with a matriculation and diploma exam, granting them general access to the higher education sector, a professional qualification for senior occupations and access to regulated professions. BHS also provides the basis for later self-employment. A reduction of the study duration at a *Fachhochschule* can be achieved based on a specialist qualification obtained at a BHS.

Post-secondary VET courses (Kollegs) are a shortened form of BHS. Basically classified as post-secondary training (ISCED-97 and ISCED-11 5B, cf. also fig. 17), their qualification is identical with that of regular BHSs, however. The area specialisations at post-secondary VET courses also correspond with those of the long form of BHS. The main target group of post-secondary VET courses is graduates of academic secondary schools, i.e. people who have no IVET qualification. A prerequisite for admission to post-secondary VET courses is successful completion of a matriculation certificate (*Reifeprüfung*). Post-secondary VET courses are offered in a two-year day-time form with a modular design or a mostly three-year evening form; they are completed with a diploma examination (*Diplomprüfung*). In this way, graduates acquire the qualification for senior occupations and are given access to regulated trades.

The following table gives an overview of the essential characteristics of pre-vocational and VET schools and colleges in Austria:

Fig. 18: Essential characteristics of (pre-)vocational schools at upper secondary level in Austria

Characteristic	PTS	BMS – one- and two-year	BMS – three- and four-year	BHS
Focus	Pre-VET	Pre-VET	VET	VET
Grade	9th	9th	9th to 12th	9th to 13th
Age of learners	15 years	15 to 16 years	15 to 18 years	15 to 19 years
ISCED-1997 ISCED-2011	3C 2A	3C 2B	3B 3B	3B/4A 3B/5B
Duration	One year	One to two years	Three to four years	Five years
Access requirements	Completion of the eighth school grade	Completion of the eighth school grade	Completion of the eighth grade, marks in the main subjects, if necessary admission exam	Completion of the eighth grade, marks in the main subjects, if necessary admission exam
Education/ training contents	Deepening general education, teaching basic VET	Deepening general education, teaching basic VET	Deepening general education and VET at intermediate qualification level	Deepening general education and VET at higher qualification level
Share of vocational education and training	Around 50%	Around 50%	Around 60%	Around 60%
Work placements	Participation in days of practical work experience during lesson time	Participation in days of practical work experience during lesson time	Compulsory work placement lasting several weeks when there are no lessons (summer months); work placement at technical BMS during lesson time	Compulsory work placement lasting several weeks when there are no lessons (summer months)
Qualification	Final certificate	Final certificate	Final examination (VET qualification at intermediate level)	Matriculation and diploma exam (VET qualification at higher level and HE entrance qualification)
Entitlements on the labour market	Pre-vocational training; exercise of auxiliary and on-the-job training activities	Pre-vocational training; exercise of auxiliary and on-the-job training activities	VET qualification; access to specific regulated professions	VET qualification; access to specific regulated professions
Continuing vocational education and training options	Transfer to a school of upper secondary level; dual VET	Transfer to a school of upper secondary level; dual VET	<i>Berufsreifeprüfung</i> ; add-on courses, specific post-secondary VET courses; subject-specific continuing VET options	Higher education studies, subject-specific continuing VET options

Dual VET (apprenticeship, apprenticeship training, ISCED-97 and ISCED-11 3B)

At the end of compulsory schooling, some 38% of young people take up **dual VET** (cf. fig. 17) in one of the approximately 200 legally recognised apprenticeships. Their apprenticeship diploma represents a full professional qualification. A **prerequisite** for taking up an apprenticeship is the successful completion of nine years of compulsory schooling. Most apprentices complete compulsory schooling by attending prevocational school (cf. fig. 16) after lower secondary level and then start an apprenticeship. Depending on the occupation, training lasts between two and four years, but in most cases three years. The apprenticeship period can be reduced for those who have already acquired either apprenticeship or school qualifications in the same or a similar specialist field.

The young people themselves are responsible for finding an apprenticeship post. Newspaper advertisements and online databases, e.g. the apprenticeship exchange of Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), provide support and Public Employment Service Austria also offers a placement service. Most apprentices are found in the crafts and trades because an apprenticeship is, in many cases, the only training track for occupations in this field. In commerce, industry and the tourism sector, apprenticeship training is also widespread.

Apprenticeship training takes place at two places of learning: in the training company and at part-time vocational school (therefore the term “dual” system). The apprentice is in a training relationship with his or her training company and a student in a part-time vocational school at the same time. The training is based on the apprenticeship agreement between the authorised apprenticeship trainer and the apprentice, which is recorded by the apprenticeship offices. The apprenticeship offices are located at the Economic Chambers in the federal provinces, but work as authorities on behalf of the Ministry of Economy. Together with representatives of the Chamber of Labour, the apprenticeship offices also check the suitability of training companies (i.e. the facilities and the qualification of the trainers). In addition, they advise training companies and apprentices and organise the implementation of apprenticeship-leave examinations.

Company-based training, for which the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW) is responsible, comprises about 80% of the apprenticeship time. The apprentice is involved in the production or service-provision process and acquires the necessary skills under real-life conditions of working life.

For every apprenticeship occupation, there exists a training regulation (*Ausbildungsordnung*), which is valid across Austria and includes the job profile (*Berufsbild*). This is a type of curriculum for the company-based part of training that lays down the minimum knowledge and skills to be taught to apprentices by companies. The competence profile (*Berufsprofil*), which is also specified in the training regulation, formulates in a learning outcome-oriented manner the competences apprentices should have acquired by the end of their training. The social partners are essentially in charge of taking decisions about what in-company curriculum and/or competence profile an apprenticeship occupation is based on and they exert a decisive impact on the structure and content of apprenticeship training via their work in advisory councils.

The IVET trainer is responsible for planning and carrying out the training. He/she must have certain subject-specific and teaching qualifications which are proven in the course of the IVET trainer examination or a 40-hour trainer course with a vocationally-specific interview.

In-company training is largely funded by the companies themselves. Young people receive apprenticeship remuneration from their employer; this is usually regulated in the (sector- or company-specific) collective agreement. There are a number of public subsidies available to support training companies, however.

At the end of the apprenticeship period, every apprentice can sit for the **apprenticeship-leave examination (LAP)**. This exam aims to determine whether the candidate himself/herself is able to appropriately carry out the activities necessary for the occupation. The LAP comprises a **practical** and a **theoretical part**. The theoretical part is waived if the exam candidate can prove successful completion of the final grade of part-time vocational school (i.e. has no negative marks in the certificate). The apprenticeship qualification can also be acquired via a so-called exceptional admission. For this purpose, relevant periods of professional practice and attendance of relevant course events are credited as a substitute for formal apprenticeship training.

Following successful completion of the LAP, graduates have various CET options, such as taking the master craftsperson exam for a skilled craft (cf. 2.2.3). Access to HE programmes can be acquired by already taking the exam called *Berufsreifepfung* (BRP, cf. 2.2.2) during the apprenticeship training. For many, an apprenticeship also forms the basis for a self-employed career. Almost 40% of managers in the business sphere have completed an apprenticeship.

As well as company-based training, the apprentice is obliged to attend **part-time vocational school**. The task of part-time vocational school is to impart fundamental, occupation-related theoretical knowledge, support and complement company-based training, and expand general education. The curriculum of part-time vocational school is prepared based on the training regulation of the respective apprenticeship occupation by the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (BMBF). The federal provinces provide the funding for vocational school (teachers, school maintenance). But the federal government refunds 50% of the costs for teaching staff to the provinces.

Teachers at part-time vocational schools either need to prove a degree from a university college of teacher education (cf. 2.2.3) or a subject-specific university course or completion of a VET programme plus three years of professional practice.

Young people who do not find a company-based apprenticeship post have the option to complete an apprenticeship within the framework of **supra-company training** (*überbetriebliche Ausbildung*, ÜBA). Originally conceived as a transition for finding a foothold in the first labour market (that is, the regular apprenticeship market), ÜBA was enshrined as an equivalent element of the dual VET system in 2008 as part of the 'training guarantee until the age of 18'. The training guarantee means that all compulsory school graduates who are not accepted by an upper secondary school (academic secondary school or school for intermediate vocational education/college for higher vocational education) and cannot find an apprenticeship post in a company are able to learn an apprenticeship trade in a training workshop funded by AMS. The school-based part of apprenticeship training is provided at the regular part-time vocational school. ÜBA apprentices complete their training with the LAP.

To address the heterogeneous group of persons interested in completing dual VET, **inclusive VET** (*Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA) was introduced in 2003. IBA is mainly intended for young people who, at the end of compulsory schooling, have special educational needs and have not graduated from lower secondary level. IBA can be implemented in two variants: either the training period can be extended by one or two years or only selected competences of an apprenticeship trade are taught (partial qualifications). Young people who are trained over a prolonged period are obliged to attend part-time vocational school. Compulsory attendance of part-time vocational school also exists as part of the partial qualifications, the extent is adjusted to the individual situation of the apprentice, however. Partial qualifications are supported by vocational training assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*). This advises and supports the training companies and young people before and during the training. In case of a prolonged apprenticeship, IBA is completed with the apprenticeship-leave exam, in

case of partial qualifications the leaving exam is extended to the competences specified beforehand. The attained level is determined by professional experts and a member of the vocational training assistance.

The following table gives an overview of the essential characteristics of dual VET:

Fig. 19: Essential characteristics of dual VET in Austria

Characteristic	Dual VET (company and part-time vocational school)
Grade	10th to 13th
Age of learners	15 to 18 years
ISCED-1997	3B
ISCED-2011	3B
Duration	Two to four years, usually three years
Access requirements	Completion of compulsory schooling (nine school years)
Education/training contents	Teaching of professional competences, deepening of general education
Share of vocational education and training	Around 90% (company-based part and occupation-related practice part at part-time vocational school)
Work placements	80% of the training time is in the company
Qualification	Final certificate (VET qualification at intermediate level)
Entitlements on the labour market	VET qualification; access to specific regulated professions
Continuing vocational education and training options	<i>Berufsreifeprüfung</i> ; add-on courses (possibly following completion of a preparatory course), subject-specific continuing VET options (e.g. master craftsperson exam)

2.2.2 VET at post-secondary and tertiary level

There is a wide range of VET and continuing VET options after upper secondary level (cf. fig. 16). Some of these post-secondary and tertiary programmes are offered in the **formal education sector**, i.e. at schools and higher education establishments, others in the **non-formal sector**, i.e. at CET establishments.

In the **formal education sector** it is largely qualifications regulated by law which are awarded at post-secondary and tertiary level (cf. following text). However, there are also education and training programmes which lead to qualifications not regulated by law (e.g. CET courses at tertiary institutions, cf. following text). In the **non-formal education sector** qualifications can also be obtained which have a legal basis (cf. 2.2.3). In addition, CET institutions also award VET qualifications which are not subject to any legal regulation (cf. 2.3).

Qualifications regulated by law which are acquired in a formal education context are allocated to an ISCED level and are therefore also included in statistical data. Only a few qualifications regulated by law (e.g. industrial master college) which are obtained in the non-formal education sector are classified in ISCED and are therefore taken into consideration in the education statistics. Qualifications which do not have a legal basis are not classified in ISCED and are therefore not shown in the statistics. This circumstance leads to considerable **undercoverage of VET** at the levels after upper secondary level. The ISCED classification (both the 1997 version and also the 2011 version) therefore illustrates the Austrian qualifications landscape only inadequately. The **National Qualifications Framework**, which is expected to be introduced in 2015, aims to solve this problem of a lack of clarity in classification and therefore provide a better foundation for a description of the Austrian education system and also for international comparisons of education. The following table gives an overview of VET and continuing VET after upper secondary level.

Fig. 20: Overview of VET and continuing VET after upper secondary level

Educational establishments/ qualifications	Acquisition in the formal sector	Acquisition in the non-formal sector	Qualification regulated by law	Qualification not regulated by law	ISCED 2011 classification
Add-on courses	x		x		ISCED 5B
Post-secondary VET courses	x		x		ISCED 5B
BHSs for people in employment	x		x		ISCED 5B
Master crafts-person exam		x	x		ISCED 5B
Proof of competence exam		x	x		---
GuK-schools	x		x		ISCED 4B
Master crafts-person schools	x		x		ISCED 5B
Industrial master colleges		x	x		ISCED 5B
Building crafts-person schools		x	x		ISCED 5B
Qualifications in the CET area		x	x		---
Qualifications in the CET area		x		x	---
University colleges of teacher education	x		x		ISCED 6
<i>Fachhochschulen</i>	x		x		ISCED 6 / ISCED 7

Fig. 20 (continued): Overview of VET and continuing VET after upper secondary level

Educational establishments/ qualifications	Acquisition in the formal sector	Acquisition in the non-formal sector	Qualification regulated by law	Qualification not regulated by law	ISCED 2011 classification
Universities	x		x		ISCED 6 / ISCED 7
CET courses at tertiary institutions	x			x	ISCED 4B / ISCED 7

Note: BHSs = colleges for higher vocational education, GuK-schools = schools for healthcare and nursing, CET = continuing education and training

Source: in-house presentation

In the formal education context there are the following schools at **post-secondary level** (cf. fig. 16) which award vocational qualifications regulated by law:

- **add-on courses**,
- **post-secondary VET courses** (short form of colleges for higher vocational education, BHSs) and **BHSs for people in employment** (evening form): These lead to the same qualification as the long form of BHS (cf. therefore information under 2.2.1).,
- **schools for healthcare and nursing** (GuK-schools),
- **special forms of schools for intermediate vocational education**: These exist in the area of engineering and crafts in particular. Industrial master colleges and building crafts-person schools are offered at CET establishments (cf. therefore information under 2.2.3), master craftsperson schools are schools of the formal education system.

Add-on courses (ISCED 5B)

Add-on courses generally last for three years and lead BMS graduates to the matriculation and diploma certificate of the corresponding BHS. They can also be attended by apprenticeship graduates who, usually, have to complete a one- or two-semester preparatory course beforehand, however. Add-on courses have a modular design (general education and in-depth module) and are often offered in combination with post-secondary VET courses.

Schools for healthcare and nursing (ISCED 4B)

Although they are formally allocated to ISCED level 4, **schools for healthcare and nursing** (GuK-schools) can, in terms of the qualifications and on account of the age at which the learners begin (access is possible after successful completion of ten school grades), be

counted as tertiary vocational education. Beginning in the next school year (2015/16), all GuK-schools will be gradually converted into *Fachhochschulen* so that the training will then also be formally classified at ISCED level 6. GuK-schools are always set up in connection with hospitals. At least half of the entire training time of 4,600 hours needs to be dedicated to practical training and at least a third to theoretical instruction. Students are entitled to a monthly allowance, which the school provider is obliged to pay. After preparing a written subject-specific piece of work (*Fachbereichsarbeit*) and taking a diploma exam at the end of their training, graduates are entitled to hold the occupational title “Qualified nurse” (“*Diplomierte/r Gesundheits- und Krankenschwester/-pfleger*”).

Special forms of BMS

Special forms of BMS exist in engineering and crafts schools in particular. One of these school types which is offered in the formal education sector is the master craftsperson school which provides subject-specific CET. It lasts for one to two years, has a minimum age requirement of 18 years and regularly also requires completed vocational training or professional practice.

VET establishments at **tertiary level** include universities, *Fachhochschulen* and university colleges of teacher education, which provide qualifications regulated by law. Attendance of these institutions requires **HE entrance qualifications**. These can be obtained by positive completion of

- the matriculation exam (*Reifeprüfung*) of an academic secondary school (AHS),
- the matriculation and diploma exam (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung*) of a college for higher vocational education (BHS, cf. 2.2.1),
- *Berufsreifeprüfung*,
- the higher education entrance examination (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*).

In addition, access requirements for higher education studies can be met under certain conditions by people with relevant professional qualifications (such as an apprenticeship diploma) and, as a rule, after taking specific additional exams, without taking the above-mentioned exams.

The exam and certificate ***Berufsreifeprüfung (BRP)***, which provides access to all HE study programmes, is open to graduates of specific vocational programmes at intermediate qualification level (such as apprenticeship graduates, graduates of three- and four-year BMS and GuK-schools). The content of the exam is oriented towards the curriculum of an upper sec-

ondary school which provides HE entrance qualifications (AHS or BHS) and comprises four partial exams: German, mathematics, one modern language, and a specialisation from vocational practice or from IVET. Some of these exams can be replaced by already obtained certificates (such as language certificates). For the individual exams, preparatory courses are offered at CET institutions for a fee, attendance of these is not compulsory though. However, participants in such courses can apply for grants. In addition, candidates have to pay exam fees. For apprentices who prepare for the BRP exam parallel to their training or already complete a partial exam during the apprenticeship, costs for preparatory courses, exam material and the exam itself will be borne by the state.

In contrast to the BRP, the **Studienberechtigungsprüfung (SBP)** exam and certificate opens up access only to a specific area of specialisation in tertiary institutions. It requires applicants to furnish proof of previous knowledge acquired through job-specific programmes in relation to their desired study course. Should they not be able to prove such previous knowledge, they can take additional exams.

University colleges of teacher education (Pädagogische Hochschulen or PHs, ISCED-11 6 and 7)

University colleges of teacher education aim to train compulsory school teachers in a three-year bachelor course. These PH courses focus on imparting knowledge and skills related to teaching and didactics as well as their application in school life. Students are obliged to complete periods of work placement at selected schools of the chosen school form or at specific training establishments in order to collect teaching experience. Based on a PH degree and depending on their selected subject and credit transfer options they can take up a master course at an FH or university.

Fachhochschulen (FHs, ISCED-11 6)

Fachhochschule courses, which are offered both in day form and on a part-time basis in evening form, serve to provide an academically founded VET qualification. These are bachelor and master courses - as well as diploma study courses, which are expiring -, where a period of work placement is a mandatory part of the curriculum. The courses are completed with an academic thesis followed by a final exam. Successful completion of an FH master programme or diploma study course entitles graduates to access subject-related PhD courses – or doctoral courses (which are expiring) – at university.

University (ISCED-11 6, 7 and 8)

Students at **university** can enrol for general education and vocational subjects. Vocational programmes mainly exist in the technical, medical and business fields and in teacher training for upper secondary schools. University students can complete three-year bachelor courses and, on that basis, master courses of at least two years' duration. Graduates of master and (expiring) diploma courses have the possibility to obtain a PhD or (expiring) doctoral degree.

As well as formal qualifications, i.e. qualifications regulated by law, higher education establishments also offer **qualifications** for different target groups which have **no legal basis**. Since 1994 **Danube University Krems (DUK)** has been an independent centre for CET in the tertiary sector which provides solely postgraduate CET programmes.

CET courses at tertiary institutions (ISCED-11 4B; ISCED-11 7)

Universities provide CET and higher qualification in **CET courses** (often also called university courses) both for postgraduates and for non-HE graduates who fulfil other access requirements (e.g. professional practice). These courses lead to a master degree (for example MSc., LL.M., etc.) or to the title 'Akademische/r...' ('Graduate...') if the curriculum awards at least 60 ECTS points. Participants have to pay a fee, which takes into account actual course costs. The events are mostly held in the evening or on weekends. Very frequently, these courses also comprise e-learning elements.

2.2.3 VET outside formal schools and HE institutions

As well as qualifications from schools and HE institutions, there are many qualifications which also build on legal bases (service legislation, regulations, directives, etc.) which are acquired outside the formal education sector, i.e. **in the non-formal or CET sector** (cf. fig. 16). Many of these qualifications are not classified in ISCED and are therefore not taken into consideration in the education statistics (cf. fig. 20).

Qualifications regulated by law can be obtained in the CET sector in **various establishments**:

- The qualification can be at a **special school form** (industrial master college and building craftsperson school) at a CET establishment of the social partners (WIFI – Institute for

Economic Promotion of the Austrian Economic Chambers, bfi – Vocational Training Institute of the Chamber of Labour and Austrian Trade Union Federation).

- Qualifications regulated by law are also taught in **establishments of employers**, e.g. police training in the Security Academy of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, various training programmes for federal employees in the Federal Academy of Public Administration, etc.
- Some qualifications are awarded on the basis of a successfully passed examination by a **certifying authority** (e.g. offices responsible for the master craftsperson exam) or a **representation of interest** (chamber). To prepare for these exams, preparatory courses are regularly offered at CET establishments, and although these are not compulsory, they are still attended by the majority of exam candidates.
- Non-profit or commercial **CET establishments** offer various courses which lead to qualifications regulated by law (e.g. training as an occupational safety specialist). It is also possible to acquire qualifications in second-chance education (e.g. compulsory school qualification) in CET establishments.
- **Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)** does not itself provide training but does finance many qualification measures (including also for the acquisition of qualifications regulated by law) for unemployed people to make it possible or easier for them to (re)enter the labour market.

The acquisition of qualifications in the listed establishments is often associated with costs which have to be paid by the qualification applicant. But there are also labour market policy programmes in place which promote the training of employees (such as the educational leave scheme, or skills development under the ESF) and job-seekers (such as labour foundations, the New Skills scheme). In the following there are examples of some qualifications which are regulated by law and are acquired outside the formal school and higher education sector.

Special school forms: Industrial master colleges (Werkmeisterschulen) and building craftsperson schools (Bauhandwerkerschulen) (ISCED 5B)

These special forms of school for intermediate vocational education (BMS) have curricula governed by public law but are offered at CET establishments. They enable students to acquire higher professional qualifications after completing VET programmes (apprenticeship, school for intermediate vocational education) in the technical/commercial field (**industrial master college**) and the construction sector (**building craftsperson school**). They last for two years and are completed with a final examination before an exam committee. Graduates

are entitled to train apprentices and, following four years of relevant activity, to exercise a relevant trade in a self-employed capacity. Relevant courses can be taught by teachers of schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education. Qualified experts (such as holders of the master craftsperson qualification and holders of the 'Ingenieur' degree) can also teach these courses.

Security Academy: training for the police force

Training for the police force is held at the Security Academy, the training and research centre of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI). It comprises basic police training (PGA), programmes to become an official in charge, and courses for executive officials. PGA comprises 19 months of theoretical and five months of practical training at a police station. The training programmes for officials in charge and executive officials are CET programmes for the police force and are a prerequisite for advancement to a managerial position in the police force.

Office responsible for the master craftsperson exam: Master craftsperson examination (Meisterprüfung) and proof of competence examination (Befähigungsprüfung)

People aged 18 or over are entitled to take the **master craftsperson examination or the proof of competence examination**. Both exams are part of continuing vocational education and training, but are mostly taken with the aim of becoming self-employed. The master craftsperson exam and the proof of competence exam must be completed before engaging in a regulated occupation; they are laid down in the Austrian Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act (*Gewerbeordnung*). The master craftsperson exam must be taken by all those who want to become self-employed in the skilled crafts, the proof of competence exam is mandatory for all the other regulated trades. Both exams usually consist of five modules, which can be taken individually at the office responsible for the master craftsperson examination. Specific preparatory courses are mainly provided by the CET institutions of the social partners. Following submission of the required module certificates, applicants are awarded a master craftsperson certificate or proof of competence certificate. On certain conditions, holders of these qualifications can also be admitted to a bachelor course at a *Fachhochschule*.

Chamber of Architects and Consulting Engineers: Civil engineering exam (Ziviltechnikerprüfung)

Civil engineers carry out the planning, consultancy and preparation of expert opinions for specific specialist areas (such as construction and surveying, geology, etc.). To be able to take the **civil engineering examination**, which is laid down in the Austrian Civil Engineers' Act (*Ziviltechnikergesetz*), candidates need to prove a degree from a relevant study programme at a university or *Fachhochschule* plus three years' professional experience. The exam is held by the competent provincial government. The exam subjects comprise professional and administrative legislation as well as the regulations valid for the specialist area and business administration.

2.3 Other forms of training

Qualifications not regulated by law are acquired in particular at **CET institutions**, in **companies**, in **higher education institutions** (cf. information in 2.2.2) and, to a lesser extent, also in **schools** (some schools enable their pupils to acquire the ECDL as an additional qualification, for example).

CET institutions

The Austrian CET landscape is characterised by a high degree of institutional diversity and an associated wide range of available courses. The around 1,800 institutions throughout Austria offer a wide range of **CVET programmes** primarily so that people can deepen and extend vocational competences and skills and obtain qualifications. The main reasons for participation in CVET are the following: the employee's preservation of gainful employment, improvement of his/her professional position, and reintegration into the labour market.

The **CET institutions of the social partners** are particularly active in the area of CVET. The Institute for Economic Promotion (WIFI, educational institute of the Economic Chamber – social partner on the employers' side) offers courses and training for nearly all economic sectors. The available courses, which are offered to self-employed people as well as people in dependent employment, range from management training onto language course and offers for specific sectors. The education programme of the Vocational Training Institute (bfi, the CVET institution of the Chamber of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation – social partner on the employees' side) comprises areas including personal development and man-

agement, IT training, office and business administration, languages, courses for social and healthcare professions and also qualification measures for unemployed people and people facing the threat of unemployment. The Institute of Agrarian Education and Training (LFI), the education and training company of the Chamber of Agriculture (employers' side), offers CVET in all specialist branches of agriculture and forestry and also training in the areas of business management, environment and nature, personal development and creativity, health and nutrition, IT, construction, energy and technology as well as traditions and culture.

The **scope** of available education and training programmes is closely connected with the scope of the taught competences and with the educational objective. The range extends from individual lectures to courses lasting for several semesters, which are usually designed to be followed on a part-time basis. The **education and training courses** (curricular contents and their teaching) and the **qualifications** (type, structure and content of the final examination) are designed by the educational establishments themselves. They are geared strongly towards the labour market and sectoral requirements and also the demand by the participants in education and training. Teaching is usually very practice-oriented: on the one hand, teachers are often experts with many years of practice working in the economy, on the other hand there are also rounds of discussions and project and final works which bring real-life situations from the professional life of the participants to the lessons.

The **access requirements** for the education and training programmes and for the final examination are determined by the providers themselves. For shorter, more general courses there are often no specific requirements, for attending longer, more vocationally-oriented training relevant specialist professional practice or a specific qualification are generally required.

The **funding** of CVET depends on what type of training is attended. In most cases, the costs of CET are borne by the participants and/or companies. There are, however, a number of measures (such as educational leave) and financial subsidies (e.g. in the form of grants and tax relief) in order to (partially) cover expenses. All these initiatives aim to serve as incentives to take part in CET in order to improve the companies' economic situation and strengthen the CET participants' position in the labour market.

Companies

CVET in companies is of great importance. According to the fourth European Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS4) from 2010, the number of companies actively involved in CET was, at 87%, well above the EU-28 average of 66%. Here the companies either offer in-house training or they use the wide range of programmes offered by CET institutions (cf. text above). The share of employees who attended CET courses was 33% in 2010 (based on the employees of all companies). On average, every participating person spent 30 hours of paid work time attending courses during the year. Calculated based on the employees of all companies, this means an intensity of ten hours of participation for each employed person.

3. Shaping VET qualifications

3.1 The development of curricula

In order to guarantee that VET is business- and labour market-oriented, existing VET programmes and **curricula** are regularly developed, updated and adjusted. One major goal of this adjustment process is to achieve congruency between VET and employment as well as between qualification supply and demand, by attempting to appraise future developments at an early stage and respond to them proactively. In the Austrian VET sector there are different **anticipation processes** that lead to curricular adjustments. Major stakeholders in this process include the social partners, which can frequently support the coordination process between educational provision and qualification requirements and/or make statements on curriculum drafts. The outcomes of various analyses of qualification requirements (cf. 3.2) are considered accordingly in this process.

In the following, the processes during the development of curricula are presented for various VET programmes.

Schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education (BMSs and BHSs, together: BMHSs)

The educational objectives and content of schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education (BMHSs, VET schools of upper secondary level, cf. 2.2.1) are laid down in **framework curricula**. They are regulated by the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (BMBWF). Initiatives towards curricular reforms and/or the introduction of new subjects or area specialisations are launched by the educational institutions themselves or by BMBWF. In so-called curriculum committees, teachers and BMBWF experts work together with representatives of the economy to develop draft curricula for the respective subjects. As well as a number of other institutions, the social partners also receive the drafts to issue their statements. In the implementation of the framework curricula, schools are entitled to change the number of lessons of individual subjects autonomously or develop their own focuses, taking account of (regional) economic requirements.

In 2004 **educational standards** were introduced in the VET school sector: these are learning outcomes which are derived from the curricula, are formulated in a specific wording, focus on final qualifications and describe the learners' increase in competences as desired by the end of the training. Educational standards also contain central learning contents and

competences which are described using concrete examples for classroom use. In this respect, educational standards make a significant contribution towards supporting competence-oriented teaching design in the VET sector. But the objectives of teaching are still specified in the decreed curricula. By introducing the educational standards, a strong trend towards competence orientation has become established in VET, which is now also reflected in the new curricula.

Dual VET (apprenticeship)

The training content for every apprenticeship occupation (cf. 2.2.1) is laid down in training regulations (for the company-based part) and curricula (for the school-based part). The **in-company curriculum** (*Berufsbild*, a type of curriculum for the company-based part) is adopted within the framework of the training regulation by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW). Initiatives to adjust existing or introduce new in-company curricula are frequently taken by companies or social partners. The Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship (BABB) – a body which comprises social partner representatives and advises the Ministry of Economy in dual VET issues – also introduces proposals or prepares expert opinions about possible reforms. The actual designing of in-company curricula and thus the orientation towards qualification requirements is, as a rule, conducted by BABB sub-committees or the educational research institutes of the social partners: ibw Austria – Research & Development in VET on the employers' side and the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (öibf) on the employees' side. **Framework curricula** for part-time vocational school are designed in a similar way to in full-time VET schools and colleges (cf. text above). Framework curricula are laid down in analogy to company-based training.

Fachhochschulen

The initiative to set up new courses at *Fachhochschulen* (FHS, cf. 2.2.3) and modify existing training contents often comes from the economy. The **study plan**, which is elaborated by a development team, must be subjected to a needs and acceptance analysis. In this process, the economy's quantitative demand for students is determined and the developed training and qualification profile is evaluated by potential employers. Programmes are authorised for a maximum of five years. During that time it is possible to make necessary adaptations by submitting change applications. Upon expiration of the five years, an application for reaccreditation is required. As well as another needs and acceptance examination it also comprises an evaluation report which is based on a peer review. In this way it is also possible to ensure a matching of qualification requirements and VET programmes.

In the CVET sector it is easiest to adjust programmes to qualification requirements. In this sector it is possible to respond to the economy's needs most quickly. The extensive lack of legal bases as well as competition between providers on the free CET market lead to more flexibility and scope when designing **needs-oriented courses**.

3.2 Mechanisms and processes to anticipate qualification requirements

Practice-oriented educational objectives, contents and methods as well as their regular **updating (adaptation)** constitute one characteristic of the Austrian VET sector. This is achieved by continually adapting curricula and educational objectives (cf. 3.1). The basis for the further development, updating and adaptation of existing VET programmes is the instruments and processes for identifying **future qualification requirements (anticipation)**. These instruments and processes are mainly funded by Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). The most important ones include:

- **Skill needs studies:** These are mostly conducted for specific sectors and industries (e.g. timber, IT), but also for regions (such as federal provinces) and education programmes (e.g. certain specialisations of colleges for higher vocational education, dual VET, etc.). The main beneficiaries of these studies are the stakeholders in these sectoral/regional areas as well as staff responsible for the curriculum and other areas in the VET pathways that are of relevance for the specialisations.
- The **Qualification Barometer** of Public Employment Service Austria (AMS-QB): This online system, which was set up in 2002, summarises current and foreseeable labour market trends and qualification requirements and makes them accessible to the general public in a structured format via the internet (<http://www.ams.at/qualifikationsbarometer>). The AMS-QB is above all an instrument of representation: for gathering information, existing written data (e.g. from skill needs studies) are used and merged. In addition, interviews are held with experts from the various occupational areas. Contents refer to the whole of Austria, and they are complemented by summary information for every province and analyses of job ads.
- **AMS Standing Committee on New Skills:** On the proposal of the AMS Supervisory Board (AMS's highest administrative body), a platform (i.e. the Standing Committee) was set up in 2009, which comprises representatives of AMS as well as representatives of the social partners, relevant ministries, and the major CET providers: Institute for Economic Promotion (WIFI, cf. 2.3) and Vocational Training Institute (bfi, cf. 2.3). This body decides

on setting up clusters (expert groups) about specific occupational areas, in which HR and training managers from key major companies exchange opinions about issues related to employment and qualification development in workshops. With the direct involvement of major CVET establishments it is ensured that the results of these meetings are incorporated into education offers without delay. Building on the results from the workshops, for example, curricula for modularised programmes (“New Skills programme”) have been developed for all nine clusters.

3.3 The development of the National Qualifications Framework in Austria

In 2012 a major milestone in the development of the **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)** in Austria was achieved: the referencing report, which had been prepared jointly by the Education and Science Ministries and presents the connections between the levels of the Austrian NQF with those of the EQF, was sent to the European Commission.

The Austrian NQF will comprise eight levels, with qualifications assigned to Levels 6 to 8 based on different sentences describing them. Whereas qualifications of the Bologna architecture acquired at higher education (HE) institutions (these are: bachelor, master and PhD) are classified according to the Dublin descriptors, assignment of all the other qualifications builds on the EQF descriptors. Levels 1 to 5, which are also characterised by the EQF descriptors, will comprise qualifications from all education contexts.

With the NQF, an instrument will be available in Austria which aims to portray all qualifications independent of where they have been acquired. The NQF must merely be understood as a transparency instrument, meaning that it will not have any regulating effect.

In the course of the NQF development, attention was increasingly directed towards non-formal qualifications (i.e. qualifications not regulated by law, cf. 2.3), which will be made more visible. It is also planned to take informally acquired competences into account, and in this respect appropriate credit transfer methods still need to be developed and tested.

4. Promoting participation in vocational education and training

Vocational education and training (VET) is **extremely important** in Austria. Some 80% of all pupils who have completed compulsory schooling opt for a VET path (cf. fig. 17). Here they can select from among a wide range of programmes, both in the full-time school-based and in the dual VET sector. This aims to ensure that every young person can develop his or her own strengths and talents in the best possible way.

In order to maintain the attractiveness of VET in the future it is necessary to give the programmes an interesting and modern design. Accordingly it is important to continually **update VET contents** in the curricula and adapt them to the requirements of the economy (cf. 3.1). In some partial areas of VET (such as dual VET, CVET), **financial incentives** aim to keep people interested in following these VET pathways (cf. 4.1). But the learners' interest is also raised by providing comprehensive **educational counselling and career guidance services**, by offering a large number of opportunities both in the school-based and the non-school area to obtain information about the various options (cf. 4.2).

4.1 Financial support for vocational education and training

Although dual VET (cf. 2.2.1), being a practice-oriented VET pathway, is enjoying wide popularity, the number of training companies has been declining in recent years. **Public subsidies** are being used to attempt to counteract this development. Consequently a new funding scheme for training companies entered into force with the 2008 amendment to the Vocational Training Act. This scheme is not only intended to enhance the quantitative situation on the apprenticeship post market but also improve the quality of training. Within this subsidisation system, there are various **types of support**: every company that trains an apprentice is entitled to so-called basic support. This comprises three gross apprenticeship remunerations pursuant to the collective agreement in the first apprenticeship year, two in the second year, and one each in the third and fourth years. The training company can apply for basic support at the end of the respective apprenticeship year. Subsidies also cover inter-company and supra-company VET measures and the acquisition of competences which go beyond the job profile / in-company curriculum (cf. 2.2.1). Companies where apprentices pass the apprenticeship-leave exam with good results or distinction can also apply for grants. Subsidies are also available for CET measures for IVET trainers and for measures taken for apprentices with learning difficulties (such as tutoring courses).

Apart from the above-mentioned types of support, there are additional **benefits regarding non-wage labour costs**: in the first and second apprenticeship year, both the company's and the apprentice's health insurance contributions are waived. The contribution to accident insurance for apprentices is waived throughout the entire apprenticeship. Contributions to unemployment insurance need to be paid only in the final year of apprenticeship.

Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) also runs apprenticeship post support schemes designed above all to integrate problem groups into the labour market. Companies receive a flat-rate grant towards the costs of an apprenticeship. The grant is payable for the following categories of apprentice, among others: young women in apprenticeships with a low proportion of women (share of female apprentices among the total number of apprentices in the previous training year below 40%); especially disadvantaged apprenticeship post seekers (such as young people who have mental or physical disabilities or emotional problems, learning deficits, or who are socially maladjusted); participants in inclusive IVET schemes (cf. 2.2.1); and people aged 19 or above whose difficulties finding employment on account of their lack of qualifications can be solved by means of an apprenticeship.

Another area where financial support is available for institutions and learners is **continuing/adult education and training**. An act which is important in this connection is the Financing Act on the funding of adult education and public libraries from federal funds (*Bundesgesetz über die Förderung der Erwachsenenbildung und des Volksbüchereiwesens aus Bundesmitteln*). This act regulates the tasks that are eligible for funding (VET, acquisition and extension of school qualifications by adults, etc.), how funding is given (in the form of loans, grants to cover credit costs, etc.), and what institutions can obtain subsidies on which conditions. Funds only go to education and training institutions whose activities are non-profit-oriented. For the CET providers, however, there exists no legal entitlement to funds. Financial support is organised by the Department for Adult Education of the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (BMBF).

As well as support at **federal level**, **provinces** and **municipalities** also provide funding, either directly or in the form of separate companies and funds. For this purpose, municipalities and provincial governments mainly apply demand-driven funding instruments (education cheques, educational accounts, and similar). Preferred target groups of funding are employees, young people, and those at a disadvantage on their respective regional labour markets. The **social partners** also act as providers of funds for CVET for their respective clients. Similarly to municipalities and provincial governments, social partners also tend to use demand-driven funding instruments (e.g. the education voucher of the Chambers of Labour).

Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) finances skills training, qualification and retraining measures within the framework of active labour market policies.

Tax incentive systems play a major role in Austria to support company-based CET. Companies have the possibility to claim a tax-free **training allowance** (*Bildungsfreibetrag*) amounting to 20% of the cost of external and in-house CVET measures. This lowers the basis of assessment for income or corporation tax. They can also opt for an **education bonus** (*Bildungsprämie*) amounting to 6% of expenses.

Employees and employers have a number of options to **claim CVET expenses as tax exempt**. Expenses and costs for CVET, inasmuch as they are connected with the exercised occupation, can be written off from taxes as business expenses or advertising expenses. Also people in dependent employment have the possibility to write off costs for occupationally relevant CVET measures as advertising expenses. Self-employed people can write off pure training expenses as business expenses inasmuch as they are connected with the exercised or a related occupation.

4.2 Educational counselling and career guidance

In Austria there is a **considerable diversity** of institutions, providers and initiatives in the field of information, counselling and guidance on learning and occupations:

Educational counselling and career guidance in schools of lower and upper secondary level

Educational counselling and career guidance **in the school sector** is in principle within the sphere of responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (BMBWF). From the fifth school grade onwards, students' counsellors and career guidance officers are available at all schools for schoolchildren and parents who have questions about schools and careers. They provide information about possible education paths, access requirements, as well as qualifications acquired with certificates and diplomas; and they provide young people with a basic overview of CET options. Guidance is conducted by teachers who have the relevant qualifications and who are termed, depending on the school type, students' counsellor (*Schülerberater/in*) or educational counsellor (*Bildungsberater/in*) and provide their counselling services in addition to their teaching activity. In the final years of lower secondary level, in the seventh and eighth school grade, **career guidance** is a compulsory subject totalling 32 hours a year. The aim of these lessons includes improving the schoolchildren's decision-making competence, social skills, determination and perseverance. Short periods of work

placement at companies and personal contacts with people from different occupations aim to help schoolchildren examine their career aspirations and take independent decisions.

At **prevocational schools** (cf. 2.2.1) career guidance plays a particularly important role, as this school type is at the interface between obligatory and further schooling. Career guidance aims to inform schoolchildren and parents about regional possibilities in apprenticeship training and, in vocational guidance classes, prepares them for so-called real-life encounters (e.g. days of practical work experience) and important information events and job information fairs, etc.

Teachers with specialist qualifications also work as career guidance officers at **schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education** (*BMHSs*, cf. 2.2.1). Students at *BMHSs* have already taken their first decision about their professional career. But thanks to the good level of general education provided at schools, the entire range of professional development options is also open to them. Therefore, educational counselling and career guidance at these schools always includes in-depth reflections on the already made career choice.

Educational counselling and career guidance in the tertiary sector

The majority of **universities** offer both Psychological Counselling Offices, which help students in issues related to study organisation and problems during studies, and career planning centres, which support students with their entry into the world of work. These institutions are within the sphere of responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF).

Psychological student counselling services at universities and *Fachhochschule* institutions offer general course guidance, psychological counselling, psychotherapy, aptitude diagnostics, coaching, supervision, etc. to holders of the upper secondary school-leaving certificate and HE students.

Career planning centres at universities offer HE students and university graduates one-on-one counselling, information events e.g. on topics such as job applications and CVs, as well as individualised career planning. In addition, the centres organise seminars on areas such as presentation techniques, rhetoric and IT, as well as events such as career fairs and company presentations.

CET sector

Educational counselling and career guidance is becoming increasingly important in the **CET sector**. This is particularly evident in the establishment of comprehensive educational databases (<http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at>, <http://www.eduvista.com>), an Austria-wide platform for educational counselling, and the merger of institutions to guarantee independent and supra-institutional information and guidance services. Major adult education establishments, such as the institutions run by the social partners (WIFI on the employers' side, bfi on the employees' side, cf. 2.3) frequently offer their own guidance services.

Guidance and counselling by Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)

Across Austria, at more than 60 locations, the career guidance centres (BIZ) of **AMS** offer comprehensive information about occupations, their contents and requirements, about initial education and training, CET paths, the labour market and employment options. Apart from information material in the form of brochures, information leaflets, videos, etc. AMS also develops information databases on occupations and on initial and continuing education and training programmes for different target groups, which are accessible online at <http://www.ams.at/berufsinfo>.

For apprenticeship post seekers, AMS operates the apprenticeship post platform <http://www.ams.at/lehrstellen> jointly with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. In addition, EURES advisors who are employed at AMS provide information about job offers and working conditions in other countries of the European Economic Area.

Anyone who is interested can use the information and services offers provided by AMS's career guidance centres (BIZ) free of charge. Print media, videos and PCs are available for customers to obtain information themselves. For **young people in need of guidance** there exists a selection of career guidance tools (e.g. the compass for apprenticeship occupations, interest test). The advisors working at BIZ provide support in information research and are available for one-on-one information and counselling talks to assist in career and educational decisions. In addition, BIZ also provides services for specific target groups (e.g. schoolchildren, teachers, parents) and on specific topics (e.g. career guidance, presentations of occupations, job applications, days of technology for girls).

AMS offers one-on-one counselling talks for **people registered unemployed**. These talks aim to match the jobseekers' personal requirements, strengths and intentions with the situa-

tion on the labour market. Furthermore there exists the possibility to take part in training programmes and courses (e.g. vocational guidance courses, training for job applications, job trials, skills training and qualification courses, etc.). In special cases, (young) women can take advantage of assistance in career choice, skills training and qualification.

AMS also supports the **school-based information activities** by means of a large number of brochures, career guidance films, occupational information and CET databases on the Internet, and by organising events and trade fairs.

Guidance and counselling by social partners

The Chambers of Labour and **trade unions** mainly offer educational counselling and career guidance via their joint adult learning institutions: the Vocational Training Institutes (bfi). In addition, they publish information material and organise information events.

The counselling services of the **Economic Chambers** and their adult education institutions, the Institutes for Economic Promotion (WIFIs), focus in particular on IVET and CVET. These services are offered across Austria at several locations in the so-called career guidance centres (BIZ). With the career guidance tool (<http://www.bic.at>), the Economic Chambers have their own web portal where job descriptions, VET and CVET options, tips on career choice and job applications, as well as a large variety of service materials are offered, in some cases even in several languages. The Economic Chambers' career guidance centres provide comprehensive information material on a self-service basis and organise events geared towards the world of work such as sector presentations, school and information events, as well as training for job applications. As well as information for groups (such as school classes), one-on-one counselling talks are also offered. In addition, the Institutes for Economic Promotion's career guidance officers offer individualised counselling services on the basis of comprehensive psychological testing procedures.

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	German term	English term/explanation
abf-austria	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Berufsbildungsforschung	Austrian Working Group on VET Research
AHS	allgemeinbildende höhere Schule	academic secondary school (higher general education school) – junior cycle and senior cycle
ALE	Erwachsenenbildung	adult learning
AMS	Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich	Public Employment Service Austria
BAG	Berufsausbildungsgesetz	Vocational Training Act
BBAB	Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat	Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
bfi	Berufsförderungsinstitut	Vocational Training Institute
BHS	Berufsbildende höhere Schule	college for higher vocational education
BMASK	Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen	Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs
BMF	Bundesministerium für Finanzen	Federal Ministry of Finance
BMFJ	Bundesministerium für Familie und Jugend	Federal Ministry of Family and Youth
BMG	Bundesministerium für Gesundheit	Federal Ministry for Health
BMHS	Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen	schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education
BMS	Berufsbildende mittlere Schule	school for intermediate vocational education
BMWFW	Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft	Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy
BRP	Berufsreifeprüfung	examination providing access to higher education for skilled workers and graduates of three- and four-year full-time VET schools
CET	Weiterbildung	continuing education and training
CVET	berufliche Weiterbildung	continuing vocational education and training
ECVET	Europäisches Lernkreditsystem	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EQR / EQF	Europäischer Qualifikationsrahmen	European Qualifications Framework

ESF	Europäischer Sozialfonds	European Social Fund
FH	Fachhochschule	university level study programmes of at least three years' duration with vocational-technical orientation
FHStG	Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz	<i>Fachhochschule</i> Studies Act
GE	Allgemeinbildung	general education
GewO	Gewerbeordnung	Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act
HE	Hochschulbildung	higher education
IBA	Integrative Berufsausbildung	inclusive vocational education and training, inclusive VET
ibw	Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft	ibw Austria – Research and Development in Vocational Education and Training
IHS	Institut für Höhere Studien	Institute for Advanced Studies
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	berufliche Erstausbildung	initial vocational education and training
KEBÖ	Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs	Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions
LAP	Lehrabschlussprüfung	apprenticeship-leave examination
LLL	Lebenslanges Lernen	Lifelong learning
MZ	Mikrozensus	microcensus
NEC	Nationales Europass Zentrum	National Europass Centre
NQR / NQF	Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen	National Qualifications Framework
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
VET	Berufsbildung	vocational education and training
WB	(berufliche) Weiterbildung	continuing (vocational) education and training
WIFI	Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut	Institute for Economic Promotion of the Economic Chambers

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Further information and websites

- Public Employment Service Austria: <http://www.ams.at>
- Education system in Austria: <http://www.bildungssystem.at/>
- Vocational education and training in Austria: <http://www.ibw.at/de/bbs>
- VET schools and colleges: <http://www.berufsbildendeschulen.at>
- Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection: <http://www.bmask.gv.at>
- Federal Ministry for Health: <http://www.bmg.gv.at>
- Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs: <http://www.bmbf.gv.at>
- Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy: <http://www.bmwf.gv.at>
- ENIC NARIC Austria: http://www.bmwf.gv.at/wissenschaft/international/enic_naric_austria/
- Austrian schools and colleges of social and services industries (HUM): <http://www.hum.at>
- Apprenticeship training in Austria: <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrlingsUndBerufsausbildung/Seiten/default.aspx>
- ReferNet Austria: <http://www.refernet.at>
- Statistics Austria: <http://www.statistik.at>
- Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Department of Statistics: <http://wko.at/statistik>