

Current initiatives to promote the educational and labour market integration of refugees in Vienna

To date (30 September) 56,356 applications for asylum have been filed in Austria in 2015, compared to 17,010 for the whole of 2014 (cf. [Asylstatistik 09/2015](#)). In the federal capital Vienna (which at the same time is the most populous Austrian province), three initiatives are currently underway that aim to make the educational and labour market integration of refugees easier.

In the mother-tongue integration support scheme [StartWien](#), which is funded by the Vienna City Administration, info modules tailored to refugees have been offered since mid-September 2015. These modules address asylum seekers as well as people who have been granted asylum or subsidiary protection. They are held twice a week in cooperation with the Vienna adult education centres and aim to give orientation and impart initial information about important topics (e.g. education, health, living and cohabitation) in the respective mother tongue (with the focus on Arabic, Farsi/Dari).

In Austria, schooling is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 14. This also applies to people of this age group who seek or have been granted asylum or subsidiary protection. As part of so-called **Jugend Colleges** (Youth Colleges), relevant education and training will also be provided in the future to young people who are already beyond compulsory school age and who arrived in Vienna only recently. Following a clearing phase in which their interests and previous qualifications will be clarified in needs-oriented modules, young people between the ages of 15 and 21 will be prepared in these colleges for entry into school-based education or a vocational training programme. As well as German language classes, which need to be attended by all students, different subjects will be offered that can be attended individually. Career guidance and periods of work placement will make it easier for the young people to decide which education or training path they want to pursue. It is also planned that they are supported by social pedagogues. The periods of study in these colleges, which are open to new entrants every month, will differ depending on the young people's previous qualifications. The educational providers, which will be determined by an ESF call, will have the final say on which contents they will teach and how they will organise these colleges. A total of 1,000 college places will be financed by the ESF and funds provided by the Vienna City Administration.

In Austria, asylum seekers have very restricted access to the labour market. As soon as they are recognised as refugees or granted subsidiary protection, they get unrestricted access to the labour market. By the end of September 2015, around 19,000 recognised refugees and people who have been granted subsidiary protection were registered with Public Employment Service (AMS), two thirds of them in Vienna. AMS Vienna has now launched a pilot project called [Kompetenzencheck](#) (competence check) that aims to promote their fast integration into the labour market. The focus is on helping refugees have their qualifications recognised. Where necessary, the qualifications which they would additionally need are defined. The competence check has been designed as a [course](#) of ten hours. It lasts for five

weeks and includes one-on-one coaching. Support is currently provided in Arabic, Farsi, Russian and French.