

Increasing international mobility of apprentices

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 AUSTRIA

Timeline



ID number 41922

Background

Apprenticeship training plays a central role in VET in Austria. Around 36% of an age cohort are trained in an apprenticeship occupation. In order to remain competitive, future young skilled workers must have a high willingness for vocational mobility and flexibility as well as a readiness for lifelong learning. Experiences abroad, for example in the form made possible by the Erasmus+ programme, play an important role. In addition to personal development and competence enhancement for participants, they also support the potential for innovation and the exchange of good practice.

Despite non-financial and financial support instruments such as Erasmus+, there are still some inhibiting factors that result in relatively fewer apprentices than VET learners undertaking international mobility experiences. For example, in 2020, 72% (3 707) of approved outbound mobility in VET was for VET learners at fulltime VET schools, 20% (or 1 038) for apprentices and 8% (419) for trainers and professionals.

Against this background, a broad project partnership of the institutional players responsible for apprenticeship training, on the one hand, and for international mobility, on the other, was set up to promote the international mobility of apprentices more strongly in the future. The project partnership consists of the National Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD), Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) and Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ).

Objectives

The aim of the initiative is to double the number of apprenticeships abroad from 1 000 in 2020 up to 2 000 by 2027.

Description

In order to learn more about motives and expectations, as well as existing obstacles to mobility and potential incentives for mobility abroad, the project Partnership commissioned ibw Austria: Research and development in VET in 2020 to conduct the study 'Foreign

mobility in apprenticeship training'. The results were presented at the OeAD on 30 September 2021 and a concrete objective and five action priorities for increasing apprenticeship mobility were derived from it.

The study shows that interest in foreign mobility exists in principle among both apprentices and trainers, but stays abroad are more difficult to organise in part-time vocational schools than in full-time vocational schools. There are also structural framework conditions that influence the probability of participation:

- (a) age of the apprentices;
- (b) loss of production;
- (c) time limits due to the dense training programme;
- (d) the complex support and counselling landscape;
- (e) widespread information deficits among companies, part-time vocational schools, trainers and apprentices;
- (f) underestimation of the benefits of foreign mobility.

If we look at the support structure for promoting the international mobility of apprentices, it becomes apparent that two central pillars can be identified in Austria: European and national support programmes (such as Erasmus+ and the WKO apprenticeship company support), which provide funding; and the International Young Workers Exchange (IFA, *Internationaler Fachkräfteaustausch*). This association has been organising and managing internships abroad for people in initial vocational training, young workers and trainers for 25 years.

Based on this analysis and the objective defined above, the project partnership agreed on five key areas for action:

- (a) utilisation of increasing Erasmus+ budgets and new opportunities for apprentices to spend time abroad, including an increase in individual support for accommodation costs and the possibility to spend time abroad even after completing an apprenticeship;
- (b) joint information strategy of the project Partnership, e.g. with an apprenticeship week with events and actions around the topic of Erasmus+ apprenticeship mobility in 2022 or joint information of trainers, training companies and vocational schools;
- (c) networking of stakeholders: planning of an international conference for the second half of 2022, regular contact seminars, study visits, trainers' congresses to network the stakeholders;
- (d) target group-oriented communication, including testimonials, social media campaigns, a social media toolkit and promotional videos;
- (e) content monitoring, follow-up and further development by analysing the results from completed and ongoing Erasmus+ projects to increase apprenticeship mobility as well as administrative simplifications.

To the statistical data that forms the basis for the target number of 2 000 apprenticeships abroad by 2027, it must be noted the official numbers from the OeAD statistics do not refer to mobilities that have actually taken place, but to mobility applications approved within an application year (not calendar year).

There are no official statistics on the actual number of apprenticeships mobilities. Only the figures provided by IFA on the mobilities organised and carried out by IFA are available. According to IFA, these comprise around 80% to 90% of all apprentice mobilities.

The discrepancies between mobilities applied for and those actually carried out result on the one hand from the fact that not all approved mobilities are actually carried out and on the other hand from the fact that a longer period than one calendar year is available for carrying out a mobility once it has been approved.

The basis for the target number of 2 000 apprenticeships abroad by 2027 is the approved mobilities of 1 038 in 2020.

In 2020, the OeAD published an annual report showing 5 176 approved outbound mobilities in IVET in 2019. This number contains 76% (or 3 910) learners at fulltime VET schools, 15 % (or 770) apprentices and 4% (217) trainers and professionals.

The numbers on actually carried out apprenticeship mobilities provided by IFA show 485 apprenticeships mobilities in 2019.

Further, in 2020 the study 'Mobility of apprentices abroad' was commissioned to ibw Austria.

2021 Design

In September 2021, the results of the study and the objectives and measures derived from it were presented at a joint press conference of the project partnership with the participation of the responsible ministers.

Further, in 2021 the OeAD published an annual report showing 5 365 approved outbound mobilities in IVET in 2020. This number contains 69% (or 3 694) learners at fulltime VET schools, 19% (or 1 038) apprentices and 8% (419) trainers and professionals.

In contrast to this high number of mobilities for 2020, which were all approved before the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020, the mobilities actually carried out fell to practically zero due to the pandemic. IFA reports just one actual apprenticeship mobility for 2020.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the OeAD, the agency responsible for Erasmus+ mobilities, together with the Austrian Economic Chamber, launched the 'Apprenticeship without borders' initiative. The campaign aims to double the number of apprentices mobilities from the current level of around 1 000 apprentices per year. The initiative is accompanied by newly prepared and comprehensive information materials for apprentices (including video interviews with role models), schools and companies as well as by the Instagram campaign 'Go beyond your borders'.

Part of the activities to attract international mobilities in apprenticeship training is also a further intensification of the participation of young skilled workers in vocational championships (especially Euroskills, World Skills).

Further, in 2022 the OeAD published an annual report showing 2 390 approved outbound mobilities in IVET in 2021. This number contains 69% (or 1 640) learners at full-time VET schools, 14% (or 344) apprentices and 9% (222) trainers and professionals.

The significant decline in mobility applications compared to 2020 is due to the ongoing restrictions caused by the COVID 19 pandemic.

The figures provided by IFA show 90 mobilities actually carried out in 2021, significantly more than in the previous year but significantly below the level before the COVID 19 pandemic.

2023 Implementation

At the end of February 2023, in the presence of the Minister of Education, the 10 000th apprentice was approved within the framework of Erasmus+ mobility abroad.

In 2023, the OeAD published a report showing 4 021 outbound mobilities in IVET in 2022. This number contains 68% (or 2 751) learners at full-time VET schools, 13% (or 502) apprentices, and 9% (379) trainers and professionals.

The numbers on actually carried out apprenticeship mobilities provided by IFA show 314 mobilities in 2022 compared to 90 mobilities in 2021. Despite the significant

increase, these figures are still well below the values before the start of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the OeAD published an annual report showing that the number increased in 2023 to 4 967 outbound mobilities in IVET. Thereof 3 261 (or 66%) were learners at full-time VET schools, 650 (or 13%) were apprentices, and 626 (or 13%) were trainers and professionals.

The numbers provided by IFA, show 466 mobilities actually carried out in 2023, a significant increase on the 314 mobilities carried out in 2022 and reflecting the recovery following the end of the COVID 19 pandemic.

The daily rates for mobility in vocational training for learners have been increased by 33% for the 2024 and 2025 application rounds. In addition, an increased travel allowance for environmentally friendly travel has been introduced and more travel days are eligible for funding for environmentally friendly travel.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, OeAD published an annual report showing 7 783 approved outbound mobilities in IVET in 2024. This number covers 61% (or 4 732) learners at full-time VET schools, 16% (or 1 254) apprentices, and 14% (or 1 052) trainers and professionals.

The numbers provided by IFA for 2024 show 472 apprenticeship mobility programmes actually carried out by IFA. This represents a further slight increase compared to 2023.

In May 2025, the OeAD Magazine was published for the first time with a focus on apprentice mobility under the title 'Apprenticeship without Borders'.

Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) (until 2025)
- Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD)
- Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) (until 2022)
- Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO)
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Education (BMB)
- Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)

Education professionals

Trainers

Entities providing VET

Companies
VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

European and international dimensions of VET

Mobility of learners and staff

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Osnabrück Declaration

European Education and Training Area and international VET

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[ibw-Study \(2021\): Initiatives to promote the international mobility of apprentices. Catalogue of initiatives and synopsis \[Initiativen zur Förderung der Auslandsmobilität von Lehrlingen. Initiativenkatalog und Synopse\] \(in German only\)](#)

[Cedefop thematic perspective \(2020\): International mobility in Apprenticeships: focus on long-term mobility: Austria](#)

[ibw-Study \(2021\): Mobility abroad in apprenticeship training. Framework conditions, funding instruments and actor perspectives \[Auslandsmobilität in der Lehrlingsausbildung. Rahmenbedingungen, Forderinstrumente und Akteursperspektiven\] \(in German only\)](#)

[OeAD et al \(2021\): Erasmus+ for apprentices: The goal is to double the number of apprentices' work placements abroad to 2 000 per year by 2027. Press release \(only in German\)](#)

[Campaign website 'Apprenticeship without Borders' \(only in German\)](#)

[OeAD Magazine 'Apprenticeship without borders' \(only in German\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Increasing internationalisation in VET

The Erasmus+ VET team Austria, located at OeAD, the Agency for Education and Internationalisation, plays an essential role in pursuing these goals. This is a network of professionals with expertise in European VET topics and Erasmus+.

 AUSTRIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Increasing international mobility of apprentices: Austria. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/41922>