

# Action plan to promote entrepreneurship in education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 AUSTRIA

## Timeline

2020 Implementation 2021 Implementation 2022 Implementation  
2023 Implementation 2024 Implementation 2025 Implementation

ID number 38690

## Background

The challenges of the future are subject to a high degree of uncertainty. Climate change, Industry 4.0 and digitalisation of all areas of life and work, go hand-in-hand with geopolitical and social problems. These challenges require ideas for the sustainable further development of Austria as a business location.

This requires self-confident and responsible citizens who shape their own future and that of society through entrepreneurial and social initiative. People who actively implement ideas are the engine for further development and economic prosperity.

To this end, the activities, projects and measures on entrepreneurship are to be rolled out more widely and new measures are to be developed.

## Objectives

The action plan for entrepreneurship education has the following objectives:

- (a) at the societal level, it will be a matter of dealing with the political, social and economic significance of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and working effectively and efficiently to achieve these goals;
- (b) at the individual level, it will be about promoting the continuous development of professional expertise and interdisciplinary competences, strengthening autonomous and independent action and enabling people to deal with uncertainty and solve problems in a structured way;
- (c) in this way, the self-efficacy of pupils, students and apprentices is to be strengthened, participation in society learnt and thus a contribution made to equal opportunities.

According to a position paper, the following central fields of action are associated with these objectives:

- (a) entrepreneurship skills should be embedded at all levels of education and training;
- (b) all pupils, students and trainees should receive at least 100 hours of entrepreneurship education;
- (c) entrepreneurship education should be strengthened in the initial training of teachers and trainers as well as in their further and continuing vocational training;

- (d) entrepreneurship as a learning environment should be supported both in the dual system and in full-time schools;
- (e) partnerships between education institutions and enterprises, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), shall be further developed in terms of regional development and entrepreneurship networks and organisations shall be strengthened at regional, national and European level;
- (f) the participating ministries shall jointly initiate at least 10 relevant projects or implement at least 10 relevant measures in the period up to 2025.

## Description

In November 2020, the National action plan for entrepreneurship education was presented, the core element of which is the Map of actions for children and young adults in the field of entrepreneurship education.

The plan was developed from a cooperative venture between the Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW), the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and other ministries, including the Federal Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth (BMAFJ) and the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF), the Federal Chancellery and about 65 stakeholders (including the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKÖ), the Federation of Austrian Industries (IV), the Austrian National Bank (OeNB), universities, initiatives, and foundations who have set up a joint vision/objective for a future-proof Austria by 2025 and have agreed to work towards that objective. They have compiled a comprehensive map of measures to achieve this vision. Their coordinated procedure (bundling of activities, initiatives and projects) aims to strengthen their impact.

The core element of the action plan is the Map of actions for children and young adults in the field of entrepreneurship education. It consists of three parts:

- (a) part 1: schemes for the structural widening of entrepreneurship education and the strengthening of an entrepreneurship education ecosystem. This part indicates schemes planned to promote and perpetuate entrepreneurship education in Austria;
- (b) part 2: activities involving entrepreneurship education from primary to secondary II levels. This part provides an overview of the existing activities and outlook on planned projects;
- (c) part 3: definitions for entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education and sustainable entrepreneurship education.

The ministries and institutions involved will initiate at least 10 relevant projects or implement at least 10 relevant measures in the period up to 2025, some of which are already in progress or are being implemented, and which are especially relevant for vocational education and training (VET):

- (a) establishment of the SMART training firm pilot in VET schools;
- (b) school development: entrepreneurship schools (VET schools and colleges), VET schools and colleges with a special focus/specialisation on entrepreneurship education;
- (c) piloting of learner cooperatives;
- (d) ideas and business plan competition;
- (e) Youth innovative: an established public competition for pupils and apprentices to reward innovative ideas;
- (f) entrepreneurship as a separate competition at EuroSkills;
- (g) establishment of entrepreneurship weeks (piloted in 2020);
- (h) Youth start - a digital learning platform for entrepreneurship education (piloted in 2020).

The digital entrepreneurship learning platform Youth start digital lab is being developed and will be compatible with the Austrian curriculum for upper secondary schools and can be used both in and outside the classroom. The platform is based on existing and scientifically proven teaching materials as provided through the Youth start entrepreneurial challenges programme or the Entrepreneur handbook series, which will be prepared for digital use and

supplemented with new content. Users will be able to create individual learning pathways, adapt content to their own needs and receive immediate feedback. The platform is being developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (BMBWF) by the Initiative for Teaching Entrepreneurship (IFTE) and in cooperation with the University College for Teacher Education Vienna/Krems (KPH Vienna/Krems).

### 2020 Implementation

At an entrepreneurship summit in November 2020, the Map of actions for children and young adults was presented as the heart of the Austrian action plan for entrepreneurship education. This map, which includes established entrepreneurship education measures and projects, is intended to promote the advancement of entrepreneurship education at all levels of education and training by making existing projects and measures widely accessible and by implementing them, in addition to developing new measures.

In October 2020, the Entrepreneurship week initiative was piloted in two VET colleges in Tyrol and Vienna. This is an entrepreneurship education scheme for young people (aged 14–19), especially in upper secondary VET schools and colleges. It is held either at school or externally (in a shared space or a makerspace), with the intention of spending 3 to 5 days intensively dealing with entrepreneurship and working on one's own ideas. It should help the young people involved to access or deepen projects during the current or next school year. The Entrepreneurship week is to be organised in cooperation with young start-ups, established businesses and ecosystem experts. The project was organised by AustrianStartups and the Initiative for Teaching Entrepreneurship (IFTE) on behalf, and with the support of the Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW), the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO).

Regarding the Youth Start Digital Lab, in the winter semester 2020/21, the first ready-made digital learning offers for learners were tested in cooperation with teacher training colleges together with teachers from VET schools and colleges. From the findings of these tests, further development steps were worked out.

### 2021 Implementation

The measures set out in the action plan were further expanded. The Youth Start Digital learning platform piloted in 2020 was expanded and filled with content, and the Youth start entrepreneurship challenges programme was expanded to 49 options. This programme offers comprehensive teaching and learning formats on topics of entrepreneurship education that are prepared in the form of 49 challenges. The challenges can be selected according to the age of the respective group of learners through different levels, topics and time frames.

Other measures in the action plan were implemented in 2021:

#### Smart training firms

Training firms are a teaching model at schools for business administration in which learners learn about the complex processes and interrelationships of business practice in companies, reflecting business reality. The smart training firms model places a special focus on networked work, modern sales structures, innovative services and social media marketing. In addition to the focus on digitalisation, sustainability, social sensitivity and digital quality are core topics for smart training firms.

#### Learner cooperatives

In the school year 2020/21, learner cooperatives were initiated in four pilot schools, three colleges of agriculture and one college of business administration. Within the framework of this model, learners set up and run cooperatives for learning purposes, which carry out business activity largely based on reality within a defined framework. An essential component is the close cooperation with regional partner cooperatives. In November 2021, a checklist was published showing all the necessary steps for setting up a learner cooperative. Work has also begun to identify further locations for learner

cooperatives beyond the pilot schools.

#### Youth entrepreneurship week

The activities started in 2020 for Youth entrepreneurship week and were continued in 2021, reaching 70 trainers and 1 800 learners in 55 events across Austria. A new website was also launched with all the necessary information for schools to get involved in the programme. With the Entrepreneurship journey, an offer was also developed to support young people in taking further their ideas developed during entrepreneurship week, e.g. through competitions, learning opportunities and networking events.

#### Youth start digital lab

The digital learning offers of Youth start digital lab on entrepreneurship education were further expanded and made available on the learning platform of the Ministry of Education. Registration on the platform and access to the content is possible for all interested parties. Teachers have their own access so that the learning content of Youth start can be linked to other courses on the learning platform. The offers on the platform of the Youth start entrepreneurial challenges have been further expanded: currently, 49 so-called challenges are available there.

### **2022 Implementation**

The above activities, initiatives and projects were continued and further developed in 2022.

Between May 2022 and June 2023, 110 Youth entrepreneurship week exercises were supported in planning, implementation and follow-up, which reached around 3 300 learners.

The Youth start digital lab was further expanded. Short explanatory videos were created for different target groups to facilitate the introduction to the platform.

### **2023 Implementation**

In 2023, the activities, initiatives and projects described above were continued.

Furthermore, the JAA (Junior Achievement Austria) launched the junior company mini, a programme designed for learners in primary school. The junior company programme has been in operation for a number of years. In this programme upper secondary school learners set up real companies for the duration of a school year, offering products and services they have developed themselves on the open market. They develop their own business idea and navigate all the phases of a real business project, from brainstorming and team building to planning, production, marketing and sales, right through to closing the deal. The JAA provides materials and organises yearly events such as a marketplace and competitions. In the new version, primary school pupils learn basic economic concepts and set up their own mini-companies. With guidance from teachers and experts, they design, produce, and sell products, learning about entrepreneurship and their own potential.

At the November 2023 Entrepreneurship Summit, an interim report was presented which outlined the measures that have already been implemented, those that are still in progress, and further initiatives that have been added.

### **2024 Implementation**

In 2024, all aforementioned activities, initiatives and projects were continued.

At the European junior company competition 2024, Austria's best junior company 2024 secured the leadership award, the EmpowerHer award and, for the first time in history, the title 'JA Europe company of the year 2024'.

In addition, the Austrian platform for entrepreneurship started to outline a 2030 vision.

### **2025 Implementation**

In 2025, the activities, initiatives and projects described above were continued.

As part of the Entrepreneurship Summit, the finalised version of the map of actions for children and young adults was presented in November 2025.

Since the pilot phase in autumn 2020, a total of 340 youth entrepreneurship weeks have been carried out by the end of the 2024/25 school year, reaching a total of 12 000 learners. In the Vision 2030, the Austrian startup ecosystem players recommend expanding this project to all schools in Austria.

Currently, a pre-scientific paper in general secondary schools or a diploma thesis in vocational secondary schools is a mandatory component of the school-leaving examination (Matura). In their 'Vision 2030', relevant Austrian startup ecosystem players recommend, among other things, that in the future, learners should have the option to complete a one-year entrepreneurial project as part of the junior company programme instead of this pre-scientific paper.

## **Bodies responsible**

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) (until 2022)
- Association for the Promotion of Cooperative Education, Science and Research (genoBWF)
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) (until 2025)
- Initiative for Teaching Entrepreneurship (IFTE)
- 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**

Teachers  
Trainers

### **Entities providing VET**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)  
VET providers (all kinds)

## **Thematic categories**

### **Modernising VET offer and delivery**

Developing and updating learning resources and materials  
Acquiring key competences

## **Subsystem**

IVET

## Further reading

Information of the Ministry of Education on entrepreneurship education and the action plan and action map (in German only)

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Entrepreneurship education - Map of actions for children and young adults [Entrepreneurship education - Landkarte der Aktionen für Kinder und junge Erwachsene] (in English)

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Youth innovative

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Student cooperatives

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Website of the entrepreneurship week

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Basic information on the project website Youth start digital lab (in German only)

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Youth start entrepreneurial challenges programme

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Website of Junior Achievement Austria (JAA)

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Interim report on the National action plan for entrepreneurship education for children and young adults 2023 (in German only)

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Vision 2030 (in German only)

## Related policy developments

**2022 Completed**

### Women entrepreneurs go to school

Since September 2017, within the policy 'Women entrepreneurs go to school' (*Unternehmerin macht Schule*), women entrepreneurs have inspired learners to pursue an entrepreneurial career.

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#### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

#### Subsystem

IVET

#### “ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Action plan to promote entrepreneurship in education: 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->

