

Apprenticeships for adults leading to NQF level 5



Timeline



ID number 29641

Background

Many companies in Austria are looking for skilled labour. The results of the Skilled labour radar 2019 (a company survey on the demand for/lack of skilled labour) show that the shortage is likely to continue to worsen in the coming years merely due to demographic developments. Compared to 2018, in 2019 the skilled labour shortage rose in almost all branches of the Austrian economy. It is experienced particularly intensely in construction and tourism as well as in artisanal/technical fields. Broken down by educational attainment, it is particularly difficult to fill vacancies with apprenticeship graduates.

Objectives

The objectives of setting up apprenticeship programmes for adults, leading to EQF level 5 are winning new target groups for dual VET programmes and taking action to reduce the skilled labour shortage.

Graduates of general education programmes at upper secondary level and university dropouts are at the centre of attention in this respect.

Description

Under the title Apprenticeship NEW for adults, the Federal Economic Chamber has taken the initiative within its education campaign (*Bildungsoffensive*) to develop a programme for people with a higher education entrance qualification that leads to a dual VET qualification at NQF/EQF level 5. Through this programme the attractiveness of dual VET programmes for these new target groups should be increased. At the same time, the programme should cover knowledge, skills and competences that enable the graduates to carry out a range of more comprehensive and more responsible tasks, providing him with the necessary skills as needed by the labour market.

These new NQF/EQF level 5 qualifications shall also be made accessible to graduates of dual VET programmes. Learners who have completed a dual VET programme at upper secondary level should be able to acquire these new qualifications through a specially defined assessment procedure. This should lead to continuous education pathways

(*durchgängige Bildungspfade*) – from dual VET qualifications at NQF/EQF level 4 to master craftsperson qualifications at NQF/EQF level 6. These new qualifications shall be part of higher VET, an area of education, which is to be established formally in Austria and which is promoted by the Economic Chamber in cooperation with the Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs.

After its development, the programme leading to these new NQF/EQF level 5 qualifications shall be laid down in a national act. The qualifications will be formal in that they will be governmentally regulated.

2019 Design

In 2019, the Austrian Economic Chamber commissioned ibw with compiling a discussion paper comprising possible models/approaches to establish a programme through which graduates of upper secondary education with a higher education entrance qualification can acquire dual VET qualification at NQF level 5.

At the same time, another initiative of the Economic Chamber in Upper Austria defined a programme called Dual Academy (DA), in which a two- to three-year dual VET programme (formal learning) and a period of at least one year of work experience (informal learning) lead to a qualification (DA professional) at NQF level 5.

2020 Design

In October 2020, the discussion paper was finalised and presented to relevant stakeholders on several occasions. During the year, many stakeholder discussions were held to explore possibilities for the implementation of this initiative. Qualification profiles for NQF 5 qualifications were also developed to bring concrete examples into the discussions.

2021 Legislative process

In 2021, the formal decision to establish a separate Higher VET education segment was taken, which was also the starting signal for the implementation of this initiative. In parallel, and with reference to the Higher VET Act, the legal bases for the establishment of NQF 5 qualifications in the form of dual VET programmes started to be created.

The ministry of economic affairs took over the responsibility for the Dual Academy programme from the Economic Chamber of Upper Austria with the intention to implement it across Austria and to base it on the Higher VET Act to formalise the qualification.

2022 Approved/Agreed

In April 2022, the Dual Academy (DA) qualification was assigned to NQF level 5. Since May 2022, the DA programme has been offered throughout Austria. The programme always starts on 1 May and runs until 15 February of the following year. Trainees can join the programme at any time during this period. A central DA office supports those responsible in the economic chambers in all nine provinces with the successive expansion of the DA.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, seven apprenticeship occupations were added to the Dual Academy programme.

2024 Implementation

In May 2024, a new cycle of the Dual Academy programme commenced. At the time approximately 750 training companies participated in the programme.

Also, the Higher VET Act came into effect on 1 May 2024, and although the Dual Academy is not explicitly mentioned in the law, in practice as a formal NQF 5 qualification it is regarded as part of the higher VET education segment.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, no amendments were done relating explicitly to apprenticeship training for adults. However, particular attention was paid to ensure that higher VET, is accessible to adult learners in employment.

Bodies responsible

- 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 Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET)

Target group

Learners

Adult learners

Entities providing VET

Companies

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

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

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Dornmayr, Helmut and Rechberger, Marlies \(2019\): Fachkrafteradar 2019 \[Skilled labour radar 2019\]. Part I: Schlüsselindikatoren \[key indicators\]. ibw-Forschungsbericht No 197 \(in German only\)](#)

[Summary of the Skilled labour radar 2019 \(in English\)](#)

[Dornmayr, Helmut and Rechberger, Marlies \(2019\): Fachkrafteradar 2019 \[Skilled labour radar 2019\]. Part II: Bericht \[report\]. ibw-Forschungsbericht No 198 \(in German only\)](#)

[Website of the Dual academy, Upper Austria with basic information \(in German only\)](#)

[ReferNet news Austria: Dual academy takes off](#)

[ReferNet news Austria: new apprenticeship programme to attract highly qualified learners](#)

[Die Bildungsoffensive der Wirtschaftskammern Österreichs \(The We educate the economy plan of the Austrian Economic Chambers\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Establishing a higher VET field

To realise parity of esteem and increase the visibility and public perception of higher VET qualifications, a discussion on the establishment of a defined educational field for higher VET qualifications was started in 2019 within educational policy.

 AUSTRIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Increasing attractiveness of apprenticeship training

In January 2020, the Austrian parliament passed an amendment to the Vocational Training Act (BAG), jointly developed by the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs and the social partners.

 AUSTRIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation


Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Implementation of the national qualifications framework

The NQF development and implementation process is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).

 AUSTRIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Skilled labour radar

In 2018, the Austrian Economic Chamber published the Skilled labour radar, a research report prepared on its behalf presenting key indicators on unemployment, employment trends and the job market, as well as the results of a survey amongst 4 500 enterprises on the need for, and shortage of, skill

 AUSTRIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

We educate the economy plan: promoting innovative and excellence in VET

The We educate the economy plan was approved in 2018 by the Austrian Economic Chamber and focusses on developing projects in five fields:

 AUSTRIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ … ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Apprenticeships for adults leading to NQF level 5: 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/29641>