

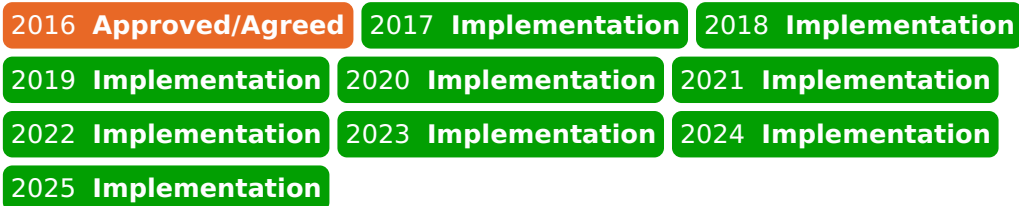
Training Obligation Act - training up to the age of 18

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 AUSTRIA

Timeline



ID number 27990

Background

Dropping out has not only far-reaching individual, but also economic, consequences. It leads to fragmented employment patterns, an increased risk of unemployment, lower entitlements in the pension system and increases the economic costs in the social system. Therefore, as many young people as possible should be able to achieve a secondary level II qualification and thus keep the number of NEETs as low as possible.

Since this is a general social, labour market and educational policy goal, responsibility for it falls under the shared responsibility of all relevant ministries, specifically the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Science und Research, Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.

Objectives

To reduce the number of early school leavers and young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Description

The legislation introducing a training obligation until the age of 18 was approved by parliament in 2016 and came into force in the summer of 2017. Since July 2017, young people who would otherwise not continue education and training beyond compulsory schooling (age 15) or discontinue a programme they have taken up, will have to undertake some form of training until they have passed the age of 18. Those who do not get a place in a school or in a company to do an apprenticeship must either:

- (a) participate in VET training centre programmes (*überbetriebliche Lehrlingsausbildung*);
- (b) or attend a so-called production school;
- (c) or participate in any other labour market policy measures targeted at this group.

The law provides for fines for parents should their children not comply with this obligation and not attend any programme. Sanctions may (but need not) be imposed, depending on the decision of the municipal administrative authority. Implementation will build on coordination and coaching services targeted at supporting and guiding young people and their parents.

During the 2016-18 implementation phase, a monitoring system was developed that integrated the data on dropouts from all upper secondary education pathways (general upper secondary education, VET, apprenticeship, youth labour market qualifications). If no further training was taken within 4 months of dropping out, the dropouts or their guardians are contacted by the coordination centres of the Training to 18 programme and a clearing, counselling and coaching procedure will be started. If the legal guardians are not cooperative, from the summer of 2018 sanctions could also be imposed. For the implementation phase of the compulsory education law, a scientific accompaniment was commissioned, which was carried out by a consortium of two research institutes from February 2017 to January 2019. This scientific monitoring focused not only on the economic and social benefits of the project, but also examined specific target groups of the Training up to the age of 18 programme, as well as essential measures and reforms in the education and training system with regard to their contribution to the achievement of the goal. The results of the scientific monitoring were expected in 2019. The budget was EUR 221 million for 2016-20. The measure will be evaluated in 2021.

Main elements of the training obligation are existing and well-established, supporting like the youth coaching which helps young people in the transition from compulsory schooling to education and training at upper secondary level, but also recently developed offers within the apprenticeship training system like training supervisors and apprenticeship coaching. All these offers are intended to help young people to find training possibilities or to stay in training and avoid dropout. There is ongoing monitoring for quality assurance and impact of the programme.

All measures developed and implemented within the training obligation fall under the shared responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Science und Research, Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. The main responsibility lies with the Ministry of Labour.

2016 Approved/Agreed

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

In 2019, almost 2 400 young people between the ages of 15 and 18 who had dropped out of education and training were followed. In two-thirds of the cases the result of the support was quite successful. The young people either returned to school or an apprenticeship or were supported by youth coaches in their search for a suitable training path.

The first results of an accompanying evaluation were published in 2019. The study was conducted jointly by the Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS) and the Austrian Institute for Vocational Training Research (öibf). The study focused on early school leaving, its causes, consequences and possibilities for countermeasures and the (macroeconomic) benefits of the programme. Several research modules of the study were devoted to supporting young people within and outside the education system. The study focused specifically on a young target group that required special support in continuing their educational careers due to disadvantage and sometimes to multiple risk factors.

In summary, the study showed that one of the great advantages of the training obligation until the age of 18 (AB18) is that it is not only a simple extension of compulsory schooling for another three years. Within the framework of the AB18, it is possible to meet the training obligation, for example, by participating in adult education measures for vocational integration or within the framework of labour market promotion. This often involves variation of training settings and pedagogical-

didactic approaches and opens up alternative ways to obtain a qualification.

A second innovative element of the AB18 highlighted in the report is seen in the fact that it is not only about setting up another compensation offer. Rather, a comprehensive approach is pursued, consisting of:

- (a) prevention;
- (b) intervention;
- (c) compensation.

A third central points for success of the AB18 are cooperation, networking and collaboration of all stakeholders to achieve a goal, which implies also to overcome particular interests. At least at the level of the major players, this means abandoning accustomed ways of thinking and focusing on:

- (a) financial resourcing;
- (b) differentiation into own and foreign target groups;
- (c) narrowly defined competences and mandates that have cross-border effects and at the same time create non-competences and non-mandates.

Training up to the age of 18 is an important step in this direction.

2020 Implementation

In 2020 the AB 18 programme reached its full implementation. At the end of 2020, an updated list of offers was published by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth, with education and training courses that are suitable for fulfilling the training obligation within the framework of the AB 18 programme.

At the Zero Project Award 2020, an international award for projects and initiatives in the field of education for disadvantaged people, the Training up to 18 programme was shortlisted as an innovative measure and received the Zero Project badge for its achievements for disadvantaged people. This won against 469 other nominations. A total of 193 projects, initiatives and guidelines from the field of education for disadvantaged people made it onto the shortlist.

With an amendment to the Vocational Training Act, in 2020 new regulations such as the possibility of part-time apprenticeships were introduced to enable young people to remain in training when they have care responsibilities (e.g. become parents). Also, such changes should be seen under the joint responsibility of the entire education and training system to fulfil the training obligation.

2021 Implementation

One main aspect of the implementation of the AB18 programme to prevent early leaving is the 'youth coaching'. In 2021 an evaluation of youth coaching was carried out. The results show the high effectiveness of the measure. In a comparison of the intervention group and the control group, a clearly positive effect of the measure (in the sense of training participation, for example) can be seen amongst the participants in the development of their labour market status instead of becoming learners at risk of early leaving.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, a total of 4 299 young people were accompanied who failed to fulfil their training obligation. Of these, 90% of the cases could be completed positively, i.e. transferred to training in the sense of the training obligation.

The National Implementation Plan (2022) sets as an objective the expansion of counselling, support and training opportunities for young people requiring training as part of the 'Training up to the age of 18' initiative. The effectiveness of the offers is to be analysed in annual reports.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, a total of 4 513 young people were accompanied who failed to fulfil their training obligation. 10% had been offered a training place. 33% had a perspective plan drawn up by youth coaching. 26% of the young people were looked after by the employment service, which resulted in a care plan being drawn up. The training requirement was suspended for 14% (according to paragraph 7 of the Training Compulsory Act). 5% were employed (according to paragraph 5 of the Training Compulsory Act). For a further 1%, no further violations of the training requirement were reported. The status of the remaining 11% is unclear.

Due to the relatively short period of time since the introduction of compulsory education until the age of 18, no directly observable effects on reducing early dropout from education had been documented.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, displaced young people under the age of 18 were included in the compulsory education requirement under the Training Obligation Act. At the time of the amendment, this primarily affected young people from Ukraine, although attending a Ukrainian secondary school online, which concludes with a school-leaving examination, also fulfils this requirement.

In 2024, a total of 5 529 young people were accompanied who failed to fulfil their training obligation. 11% had been offered a training place. 31% had a perspective plan drawn up by youth coaching. 32% of the young people were looked after by the employment service, which resulted in a care plan being drawn up. The training requirement was suspended for 13% (for various reasons, which are defined in paragraph 7 of the Training Obligation Act). 4% were employed (according to paragraph 5 of the Training Obligation Act). For a further 1%, no further violations of the training requirement were reported. The status of the remaining 8% was unclear.

2025 Implementation

At the time of the update of this policy development, no new data were available for 2025. There have been no further developments regarding this measure.

Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth (BMAFJ) (until 2021)
- Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) (until 2022)
- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Labour (BMA) (until 2022)
- Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET)
- Federal Ministry of Education (BMB)
- Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection
- Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Family in the Federal Chancellery of Austria

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Training Obligation Act/Youth Training Act \(Ausbildungspflichtgesetz/ Jugendausbildungsgesetz\)](#)

[FAQs about the Training up to the age of 18 programme](#)

[Training up to the age of 18 - project website](#)

[Evaluation and accompanying study on the training obligation until the age of 18 \(in German only\)](#)

[ReferNet news Austria - new law on training up to the age of 18](#)

[Final research Report according to 'Youth Coaching' \(only in German\):](#)

[Website of the nationwide coordination board \(only in German\)](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Pilot

Training supervisors to support apprentices and training companies

At the suggestion of the social partners, the Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) commissioned a study in 2018 to evaluate existing support structures in apprenticeship training and develop a concept for comprehensive and consistent support for apprentices and training companies through

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET

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.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Training guarantee extension up to age 25

In October 2016, the federal government extended the training guarantee up to the age of 25.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2022 Completed

Supraregional apprenticeship placement project

The Austrian Economic Chamber initiated the Supraregional apprenticeship placement project with a particular focus on young refugees, though Austrian nationals also have access to all supporting measures. The project's procedure is as follows.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

“ … ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Training Obligation Act – training up to the age of 18: 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/27990>