

Competence checking and training for refugees

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 AUSTRIA

Timeline

2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation	2018 Implementation
2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation	2021 Implementation
2022 Implementation	2023 Implementation	2024 Implementation
2025 Implementation		

ID number 27981

Background

Since 2015, regional projects and initiatives have been developed in various federal provinces – with a focus on Vienna and Upper Austria – to support the integration of refugees, especially young people, into society, education and the labour market. These projects are often carried out through cooperation between the provincial government, the social partners and the Public Employment Service.

In addition to learning and training opportunities, the focus is on identifying the skills that the refugees already have.

Objectives

The objectives vary from measure to measure, but can be summarised as follows:

- to obtain more detailed knowledge of the level of education and skills of refugees to better adapt the placement and qualification activities of the Public Employment Service (AMS) to the needs and opportunities of refugees;
- to support the integration of immigrants;
- to make a contribution to meeting the demand for skilled labour.

Description

In 2016, the following three programmes started to facilitate the integration of refugees in the education and labour market system:

The 2016-18 project, *You can do it (Du kannst was)*– the knowledge of refugees is valuable, supports young refugees in identifying their competences as the basis for making their choice of occupation and gaining an apprenticeship diploma. The project was initiated and developed as joint responsibility of the Chamber of Labour Upper Austria, the Economic Chamber Upper Austria and the Federal Government of Upper Austria. It has a regional

focus on Upper Austria and is carried out in cooperation with the public employment service and with the support of various stakeholders and partners such as the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF).

The programme Youth College for Refugees was founded in September 2016 by the city of Vienna which is still the responsible body for the programme. It offers courses to young refugees from 15 to 21 years of age to prepare them for secondary school, VET training or employment. The college offers language and basic education in a structured, school-like system with around 32 hours of weekly classes. Course durations range from 6 to 24 months, depending on individual needs, and allow participants to catch up on their compulsory school-leaving certificates, complete German language exams as required by the Integration Act, and prepare for further education or entry into the labour market. The overall goal is to reduce unemployment within this target group and facilitate the long-term integration of immigrants with the right to reside in Austria into the workforce. During the first year of implementation, 1 268 adolescents and young adults were counselled and classified according to their education background and 153 young people were successfully placed in employment, further training or apprenticeship. There are 1 000 places available per year for participants.

In addition, since 2016 the Public Employment Service (AMS) designed and commissioned a competence check for refugees, which is carried out by various adult education institutions. The model included a five-week course in the refugees' native language in which the refugees' competences and qualifications were assessed through various procedures (including questionnaire surveys, various tests and work trials) and basic language skills were taught in individual and group settings. Based on this, qualification measures with a subsequent job placement are proposed.

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

In 2019, all the above-mentioned programmes (Youth College, You can do it, AMS competence checking for refugees) were continued.

The Youth College programme has been given a new focus within the Start Vienna initiative and is intended to support young refugees in particular in compensating for school deficits to facilitate the start of VET. In line with this new direction the name of the programme changed into 'Youth college - Start Vienna'.

In 2019, updated figures on the AMS competence checking programme for 2018 were available, which show that out of a total of 50 604 individuals entitled to asylum, and those with subsidiary protection who are affected by unemployment, around 40 900 were funded in 2018 at a cost of about EUR 163 million. This means that four out of five people entitled to asylum were supported.

Furthermore in 2018, around 7 700 people (7 500 asylum seekers and around 200 other people) took advantage of an AMS competence check (24% were women). Of the qualification assessments for professional integration, 48% took place in Vienna, 15% in Vorarlberg and 15% in Styria. More than half of the participants were from Syria, 20% from Afghanistan, 8% each from Iraq and Iran. This competence check was designed and commissioned by the AMS and carried out by various adult education institutions. The programme has been in operation since 2016. The model included a five-week course in the refugees' native language in which the refugees' competences and qualifications were assessed through various procedures (including questionnaire surveys, various tests and work trials) and basic language skills were taught in individual and group settings. Based on this, qualification measures with a subsequent job placement are proposed.

2020 Implementation

The project You can do it, which was originally carried out in the province of Upper Austria, has since been expanded to other provinces and is also being carried out in Salzburg, Vorarlberg, Burgenland, Lower Austria and in a similar form in Vienna.

In the project Youth college – start Vienna, 200 course places were made available in 2020 for young people aged between 15 and 25. Course participation lasts between 6 and 24 months, depending on demand, and enables them to catch up on their compulsory school-leaving certificate and complete the German language examinations as per the Integration Act, as well as prepare them for entry into further education or the labour market.

The AMS competence check for refugees is now called Competence check for vocational integration; it is commissioned by AMS Vienna and carried out by different training institutes. The focus region of the programme is Vienna.

2021 Implementation

In 2021, all three projects were continued.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences was included as a measure in the National Implementation Plan (NIP) with the examples You can do it, Competences with a system (*Kompetenzen mit System*) and Just2Job. All three projects focus on the acquisition of an apprenticeship diploma through the recognition of informally acquired competences with complementary non-formal learning settings. The projects are not exclusively targeted at refugees, but include this target group.

Competences with a System has been carried out on behalf of the PES since 2009, currently in 16 apprenticeship occupations from different sectors (tourism, construction, metal technology, office, etc.). It prepares people without a formal vocational qualification but who already have practical work experience in the respective occupation, depending on the extent of this experience, for an apprenticeship qualification in one to three alternating learning and work phases. The aim is to recognise the participants' previous experience and thus lead them to an apprenticeship qualification in shorter learning phases.

The aim of the Just2Job placement foundation is to prepare young adults aged 20 to 30 with formal qualifications or qualifications that are no longer usable to complete an apprenticeship in half of the formally scheduled apprenticeship period. The programme has been implemented since 2020. The apprenticeships are basically possible in all sectors with apprenticeship training.

2023 Implementation

In the fall of 2023, the NGO Volkshilfe launched the programme 'Perspective now [*Perspektive JETZT*]', a pre-qualification initiative aimed at young asylum seekers aged 15 to 25 in Upper Austria who are receiving state support. The programme is designed to help those interested in starting an apprenticeship by offering initial guidance and support in the areas of work and training. Participants learn about Austria's education and training system, assess their skills, and gain a realistic understanding of both the opportunities and the requirements for entering apprenticeship. According to the programme's concept, 80 individuals are expected to benefit from its full range of services. The primary countries of origin for participants include Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Turkey.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the Viennese Youth College has received additional financial support. Backed by the federal government as part of the integration initiative, the Vienna Youth College is to be expanded to 5 000 places per year from fall 2024 onwards.

Additionally, 1 000 places were offered through the 'College 25+' programme, which opened up to asylum seekers with a high likelihood of being granted residence, such as refugees from Syria, who are 25 years or older.

The programme Perspective Now (*Perspektive JETZT*), launched by the NGO *Volkshilfe* as a pre-qualification initiative for young asylum seekers aged 15 to 25 in Upper Austria who receive state support, expired on August 31, 2024.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, the projects You Can Do It, Competences with a System, Just2Job, the Viennese Youth College, as well as College 25+ continued to operate.

Bodies responsible

- Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS)
- City of Vienna
- Economic Chamber of Upper Austria
- Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria

Target group

Learners

Learners with migrant background, including refugees

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Competence checks: Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich. Geschäftsbericht 2018 \[Public Employment Service Austria. Annual Report 2018\].](#)

[Project 'Du kannst was' \[You can do it\] - project information](#)

[Start Wien - Youth College of the City of Vienna - short information](#)

[Information of the labour market service on the project 'Competences with a system'](#)

[Information on the Youth foundation 'Just2Job'](#)

Related policy developments

2019 Discontinued

Compulsory year of integration for refugees

The compulsory year of integration for refugees was decided in May 2017 by the Austrian parliament. It is mainly targeted at unemployed refugees, for whom it is mandatory.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Promoting VET's social agenda and quality development

Since 2016, the Austrian Economic Chamber, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW), has funded up to 100% of the costs of projects supporting quality, gender equality and social integration in apprenticeships:

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

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

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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