

# Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Austria

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## Introduction

Austria has an extremely wide variety of institutions, providers and initiatives in lifelong guidance, with an equally wide variety of responsibilities. From this point of view, there is no uniform system of lifelong guidance, but there are certain legally regulated responsibilities and coordination efforts in different sectors.

A distinction can be made between two established advisory systems that complement and support each other (see also [here](#)):

1. career guidance and counselling offered by education and training institutions
2. career guidance and counselling provided by the public employment service (AMS), social partner institutions and other semi-public or private institutions (see section [Access to guidance](#))

Regardless of the institutions, lifelong guidance is usually referred to in Austria as educational and vocational guidance (and counselling) and in schools as educational and vocational orientation. Especially in schools also the term 'information, counselling and orientation for education and careers' (IBOBB) is used but essentially means the same.

Due, among other things, to the strong and early differentiation of the education system into general and vocational education and, within vocational education, into full-time school-based and dual vocational education and training, there has historically been a distinction between educational guidance, which focused more on school and academic education, and vocational guidance, which focused more on apprenticeship training and the labour market.

While the distinction still exists in certain areas, today we generally refer to educational and vocational guidance to send a clear signal that career guidance always encompasses both aspects.

## Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

In respect of responsibilities and coordination, a distinction can be made between advisory services and offerings primarily aimed at young people and those that are primarily aimed at adults. While the basic responsibilities of the Federal Ministry of Education (BMB) are relatively clearly defined for school-based services, there is usually no clear dividing line between these target groups for most other services. With the initiative Educational Counselling Austria (*Bildungsberatung Österreich*) for adult guidance and the associated establishment of the Network Educational Counselling Austria (*Netzwerk Bildungsberatung Österreich*) in the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*) in 2011 there is a clearer structure of responsibility and coordination for this general target group (the first stages of development starting in 1999).

While the main responsibility for educational and vocational guidance in the school sector (compulsory schooling and upper secondary level) and for the university sector lies with the BMB, responsibility for guidance for jobseekers in the labour market sector (and those seeking training) lies in principle with the AMS.

The Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET) which is responsible for the company-related part of Austrian apprenticeship training, is an important contact for dual training. Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (short: Ministry of Social Affairs) and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management (BMLUK) are responsible for other school-based training areas, such as training in health professions or agricultural and forestry occupations, and so are also important stakeholders for educational and vocational guidance.

With the development of the [National lifelong guidance strategy](#) (see below), and the initiative and networks for educational guidance and counselling for adults, the BMB has also established itself as the responsible body for adult guidance.

Due to Austria's federal structure, the provincial governments of the federal provinces also play an important role in career guidance, especially in adult education funding; they are also regional partners and donors for many initiatives and programmes and school authorities, especially in compulsory education.

At the local level, national and regional strategies are implemented by schools and local offices of guidance providers (e.g. AMS). The adaptation of the strategies to local needs, as well as close contact with the local economy (companies), is a central element. In addition, there are numerous individual initiatives and consulting providers that need to be coordinated regionally and locally via appropriate networks (e.g. the *Netzwerk Bildungsberatung*).

Due to the important role of the social partners (both employee and employer representatives) in Austrian vocational education and training (especially in apprenticeship training), the social partner institutions have also established themselves as important service providers with responsibility in career guidance, both for young people and for adults. In supporting and supplementing institutionalised educational and vocational guidance in schools by teachers, the social partners and the AMS, provide a wide range of information and guidance services at national, regional and local levels.

The development of the youth guarantee/training guarantee (since 2008) and the training obligation until 18 (since 2017), intend the participation of young people in education and training to be increased and NEET rates be reduced. Social work institutions in youth coaching (since 2013) are becoming an increasingly important player in educational and vocational guidance. The institutional responsibility for these programmes lies with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

This differentiation in the official responsibilities and the diverse 'voluntary' commitment of numerous institutions and interest groups leads both to an extremely diverse and dense range of educational and vocational guidance services. At the same time there is great confusion and a considerable need for coordination, especially in the context of guidance for young people in and outside schools.

This creates a 'horizontal' governance challenge at the national level when it comes to coherent strategy development across the scattered institutional landscape for the provision of educational guidance to adults and young people. 'Vertical' governance is about strategy-driven coordination of policy development and implementation by government agencies as well as non-governmental organisations at national, regional and local levels.

To meet these challenges, the Federal Ministry of Education (BMB) coordinates career guidance activities in Austria to a certain extent. But the BMB, BMWET and the Ministry of Social Affairs have overall joint responsibility for the Lifelong learning strategy (*Strategie zum lebensbegleitenden Lernen, LLC:2020*) and thus for career guidance. Between 2005-06, due to close collaboration between BMB (then Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs), the public employment service (AMS) and social partners, the National strategy for lifelong guidance (*Strategie für Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf, IBOBB*) was developed, promoting coordination in all matters related to access to guidance in career guidance for young people and adults.

The Lifelong guidance strategy was drawn up in connection with the Lifelong learning policy in Austria. Lifelong guidance has been identified as one of five guidelines in the National strategy on lifelong learning.

Five goals of the Lifelong guidance strategy were defined in 2006:

1. implementation of basic competencies in all curricula;
2. focus on process orientation and support;
3. professionalisation of counsellors and trainers;
4. quality assurance and evaluation of offers, processes and structures;
5. broaden access, create offers for new target groups (Götz et al., 2014).

One aim of the educational institutions, social partners and other important players in educational and vocational guidance is to reach out to groups who are less educated.

A consequence of the strategy development was the establishment of a National Forum for Lifelong Guidance (*Nationales Forum Lifelong Guidance, LLG Forum*) for mutual information on and possible coordination of initiatives and activities of the individual players.

The LLG Forum has set itself the tasks of communication between stakeholders, (informal) cooperation within existing structures and coordination of offers and initiatives. The Forum presently works mainly at the communication level with a certain amount of overlap on cooperation, with few coordination functions. It was established in 2011 by the BMB (then Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture) but has existed as a national steering group (*Nationale Steuerungsgruppe*) since 2005 (see below). As of the beginning 2023, the LLG Forum includes the following, but varying, members:

1. National Agency Erasmus+;
2. Federal Ministry of Education (BMB);
3. Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF);
4. Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET);
5. Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection;
6. Federal Chancellery;
7. Public Employment Service Austria (AMS);
8. Chamber of Labour Vienna;
9. Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB);
10. Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO);
11. Chamber of Agriculture;
12. Federal Association of Industry (IV);
13. Austrian Association for Education and Economics;
14. Euroguidance Austria;
15. Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifeb);
16. ibw - Research & Development in VET (ibw);
17. Contact Points for people who gained professional qualifications abroad (AST);
18. ABZ\*Austria;
19. several University Colleges of Teacher Education (PH);
20. regional networks from the Netzwerk Bildungsberatung (Network Educational Counselling Austria, a project networks for career guidance).

There are also different coordination networks at regional level.

In 2005, the BMB (then Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture) set up the National Steering Group for Lifelong Guidance Policies which aims to support the development of LLG through the identified programme goals. This supports the implementation of CMS (career management skills) in compulsory education curricula and upper secondary education, increased access to guidance for different target groups, promotion of good quality guidance services, and professionalisation of career guidance counsellors at all levels and all institutions and schoolteachers. Partner organisations/entities such as Euroguidance Austria, the Austrian Economic Chamber and the Chamber of Labour have cooperated to address horizontal themes, such as the development of quality standards (see section [Quality assurance](#)), increased outreach to at-risk groups, knowledge management, and strategy development in relation to new challenges emerging in educational and occupational guidance. After the finalisation of the LLG strategy in 2006, cooperation within the steering group was continued on an information level until 2010. In 2011 the steering group was renamed the National Forum for LLG and continued as such ([Härtel and Marterer, 2022](#)).

Cross-sectoral cooperation has been improved to provide increased access to career guidance services, and to make the best use of all types of resources. Networks (Euroguidance, ELGPN) and funding projects developed through Leonardo, Erasmus+, Phare and ESF have played an important role in this regard and still do. National career guidance associations were also established and various innovative projects and initiatives have been developed between different stakeholders and partners at different levels.

The career guidance associations are largely disbanded. In 2023, there was only one Association of Austrian Educational and Vocational Guidance Counsellors ([VOBB](#)), which was founded in 2015. This small association focuses primarily on offering further training opportunities for its members.

Example initiatives and projects on coordination and collaboration include the following:

**BIC.at** (former: *BerufsInformationsComputer*) is a project developed by ibw - Research & Development in VET, beginning in 1985. **BIC.at** is an online information tool integrating occupational information with different access routes, tips on career planning, tips for application, and service materials (see section [Career information, ICT in guidance](#)). It is being further developed in cooperation with the career information centres of the chambers of economy and is accessible to all stakeholders. Feedback structures enable all those involved in career guidance to participate in further development of the tool.

**Jugendcoaching** (Youth Coaching) is a result of the bilateral agreement between the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Education (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)).

**IBOBB Network Styria** (*IBOBB Netzwerk Steiermark*): the Province of Styria has a regional network with representatives from the local administration, schools and the university college for teacher education, the Styrian Association for Education and Economics (*Steirische Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft, STV.G*), employers (represented by the economic chamber), the Talentcenter of the Economic Chamber, Chamber of Labour, trade unions and AMS. Its aim is to help young people's integration into the labour market through access to labour market data, and career guidance. The network coordinates events and services between the network-members and jointly organises some special events. Once a year the network organises a fair, where different career guidance organisations exhibit their services and offers to lower and upper secondary schools' teachers. Accompanying this, further training for teachers is offered in the form of lectures during the fair. In Graz (province capital) the IBOBB Network offers a so called **IBOBB-Café** which is run by the network partners together. Guidance is offered online and on site in various formats for young people, in some cases also in foreign languages. Young people (age group not defined) can come without pre-registration to ask experts from the network about career-related topics. On request the network also offers workshops on various topics like the Austrian education system, possibilities after compulsory schooling, interests/abilities/talents.

Collaboration between schools, training providers and employers, resulting in the implementation of the AusbildungFIT programme (fit for training programme, formerly known as production schools) with a duration of three months up to 12 months where students (15-21 years old; up to 25 years for certain disabled groups) have access to project-based learning experience, involving both educational and work-based activities in different companies. The aim is to give young people the opportunity to acquire basic qualifications and social skills that they have missed, as well as to get to know training possibilities and find their way better through the labour market. In 2023, AusbildungsfIT was offered from 46 project organisers in around 70 projects throughout Austria (more information, only in German, [here](#) and flyer in English, [here](#)).

**Talent-centres and Talent-checks**: for some years, a system of nationwide tests for young people aged 13-14 (in eighth grade of compulsory schooling, partly in seventh and ninth grades) has been set up throughout Austria by the career guidance services of the economic chambers under the collective name Talent check. In most federal provinces the economic chambers cooperate with the respective school authorities and/or the provincial governments to finance and organise the testing, but also with universities and the ibw Research and Development in VET (*Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft, ibw*) to develop the test-systems. For young people the testing and counselling are usually free of charge (see section [Access to guidance](#)).

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## Access to guidance

Access to career guidance services is provided nationwide and considers the differences between regions. As mentioned under Coordination and collaboration, Austria has extended guidance-related services complementing each other:

1. guidance and counselling provided by education and training institutions;
2. guidance services provided by the employment administration and other career guidance institutions (see also [here](#)).

Vocational orientation (*Berufsorientierung*) and career guidance in school has been regulated in general by the School Organisation Act (*Schulorganisationsgesetz - SchOG*) since 1998/1999 and defined in more detail in the School Education Act (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz - SchUG*) and in the respective curricula of different school types and in various decrees of the Ministry of Education (BMB). The Labour Market Service Act (*Arbeitsmarktservicegesetz, AMSG*) stipulates that the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) must provide information on the labour market and the world of work, as well as advice on issues such as the choice of occupation. To this end, the AMS operates around 70 career information centres throughout Austria, which are open to all interested parties, regardless of age or educational level; some of these centres specialise in youth counselling.

Since 1 August 2016, Austria has had a statutory *Education until 18* (*Ausbildung bis 18*), which can be understood as a further development of the youth guarantee (regulated by the *Ausbildungspflichtgesetz - ApfG*, Training Obligation Act). This training obligation has taken effect for the first time for the age cohort that completed compulsory schooling in the 2016/2017 school year and was due to enter general or vocational education and training at the upper secondary level in the autumn of 2017. Since then,

the Education until 18 has been implemented as an integral part of the education system and has further increased the importance of career guidance and the complexity of the support structure as well as the need for stronger collaboration and coordination between the different guidance services. An accompanying scientific study from 2019 emphasises the importance of cooperation and coordination between the various guidance and support systems (Steiner et al., 2019).

Most of the other guidance offers, such as those provided by the social partners, are offered voluntarily.

In the education sector, the school curriculum has integrated school-to-work issues through timetabled career education programmes. Policymakers and other stakeholders see career guidance services as an important tool for preventing and reducing unemployment, labour shortages and skills mismatches, and for improving labour mobility. Vocational orientation in schools starts formally from the seventh grade in lower secondary level (ISCED 2) with vocational orientation lessons, approximately at the age of 12 (see section [Career guidance for school pupils](#)). In many cases, however, vocational orientation measures are already taken before this, albeit unsystematically and voluntarily. Especially in lower secondary schools, the conviction is becoming increasingly accepted that basic educational and vocational orientation should be started much earlier as a kind of life orientation and that it should be an integrative component of every educational achievement.

Within the framework of vocational and educational orientation at schools, practical work experience (job shadowing, taster days) also takes place from the eighth grade onwards, the organisation and extent of which is regulated as a school-related event in the School Education Act ([Schulunterrichtsgesetz - SchUG](#)). For the purpose of individual vocational orientation in, for example, companies, pupils from the eighth grade onwards, i.e. also for learners in upper secondary schools (general and vocational education, ISCED 3 to 5), can be granted permission to stay away from lessons for up to 5 days in the school year. (§ 13b SchUG).

In addition, teachers at all lower and upper secondary schools (i.e. from 5<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> grade, ISCED 2 to 5) are active as [student and educational counsellors](#). A core task of these counsellors is to inform learners about further educational pathways as an orientation aid and preparation for decisions. The activities of student and educational counsellors are regulated by a basic decree issued by the Ministry of Education in 1993.

With the pre-vocational school (*Polytechnische Schule*, ISCED 3) at the ninth grade there is a type of school which, as a transition level into initial vocational education and training (especially apprenticeship), has a special focus on vocational orientation and pre-vocational training. This type of school, with its focus, is also regulated in the School Organisation Act (SchOG).

For some years there has been an increased focus on vocational and educational orientation at the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> grades for young people aged between 17 and 19, in order to support learners on the upper secondary level II (ISCED 3 to 5 / NQF 3 to 5) in their transition to working life, further education or studies. These offers are summarised under the programme name [18plus](#) (formerly *Studienchecker*) and are supported by the BMBWF and the Psychological Student Counselling Service (*Psychologische Studienberatung*) and School Psychology (*Schulpsychologie*). Participation by schools in this programme is voluntary. In the meantime, however, the majority of both general secondary schools and vocational secondary schools participate (see section [Career guidance for school pupils](#)).

In the context of the active labour market policies and as a part of its dual system (apprenticeship), Austria has improved access to up-to-date career information and job shadowing for different target groups, and has related them to the local, regional, national and international labour market opportunities. In the context of gender equality policies, Austria also provides access to gender-sensitive guidance approaches. These initiatives are supported by national and regional policies which offer financial support for projects and services that promote equal access for women and girls, for example in apprenticeships with a low proportion of women.

For examples for such initiatives, policies and financial support to show the wide range of activities see Chapter Gender-based policy in career guidance:

In the employment sector, a complex and scattered landscape of educational and career guidance services and programmes for adults have emerged over time. There are no statistical figures for persons involved in the provision of educational and career guidance. In a [study](#) published by the public employment service in 2010 (Eickhoff et al., 2010), it was estimated that around 8 000 to 10 000 people throughout Austria are employed full-time, part-time or self-employed in this field. Since then, the number has probably increased with the development of new services, such as youth coaching, nationwide testing of young people, and the expansion of counselling services for adults. Educational and career guidance - in the sense of LLG - tends to take place in a wide variety of institutional settings, beginning with teachers and counsellors in lower secondary school (ISCED 2) and upper secondary schools (ISCED 3 to 5), including counsellors and psychologists in universities (ISCED 6 to 8), as well as those of the AMS or career guidance centres of the social partners or youth workers in the youth coaching (*Jugendcoaching*).

A range of service offerings with relevance to adults is available from different stakeholders. The Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) is organised under one federal, nine regional and more than 100 local organisations. Its activity is supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (short: Ministry of Social Affairs) and aims to promote social inclusion and active labour participation of all citizens. Online and in 73 [career information centres \(BIZ\)](#) the AMS provides access to self-information (online tools and Info zones), orientation and placement of apprenticeships, traineeships and jobs (Service zone), and intensive guidance (Counselling zone) (see section [Career information, ICT in guidance](#)).

AMS services are organised in tiered levels. At the first level, there are self-help career guidance resources which are accessible online. At the second level are resources for group-based career guidance, which are focused on acquiring basic literacy skills, writing a CV and a cover letter, preparing for an interview, joining job clubs, increasing client motivation and self-confidence, and becoming employable. At the third level are services for individual and personalised career guidance.

Economic chambers provide region-specific career-related services for young people (at the end of compulsory education) to help them in their decision on upper secondary education within the highly complex Austrian education system (general education, school-based vocational education, apprenticeship training). They also offer guidance and support for students at the upper secondary level when deciding on a study programme or labour market entry and for adults in new and reorientation processes. In addition, they often offer services to support companies in their search for apprentices and sometimes support in the area of human resources development. For example, the career guidance and information services provided by [BiWi of the Viennese Economic Chamber](#) (*BiWi, Berufsinformationszentrum der Wiener Wirtschaft*), are only available to clients in the province of Vienna.

For some years, a system of nationwide tests for young people aged 13-14 (eighth grade of compulsory schooling, partly in seventh and ninth grades) has been set up throughout Austria by the career guidance services of the economic chambers under the collective name Talent check. In order to create a basis for further counselling, the talent checks usually consist of diagnostic testing of interests, abilities and personality. Depending on the federal province (*Bundesland*), this testing is structured very differently. In Styria and in Salzburg it takes place centrally in new large test centres, in Upper Austria and Vorarlberg testing and counselling takes place directly at schools, and in Lower Austria is decentralised in various career guidance centres. In Vienna, for example, there is no comparable offer but only a reduced version of a skills-check in schools. The Chamber of Carinthia offers a skills-check only, but centralised in a test centre. Other differences exist in the counselling services associated with the tests. In most federal provinces (*Bundesländer*) the economic chamber is cooperating with the respective school authorities and/or the provincial governments, but also with universities and the ibw, Research and Development in VET (*Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft, ibw*) to develop the test systems. The centres and test systems are run and financed by the regional Economic Chamber,

in Salzburg, co-financed by the federal province government. For young people the testing and counselling is mostly free of charge. (Examples: [Talente-Check Salzburg](#), or [Lower Austria Talente Check](#)), in some cases accessible for a small fee (example [Talentcenter Styria](#)).

In addition to the guidance services in schools, adult education and career guidance centres of the AMS and economic chambers there are some specialised guidance services for special needs groups such as migrants and refugees, persons with disabilities, women, elderly people, the low-qualified, and returners. These services try to support their identified target-groups with tailored offers. For the target-group youth at risk (NEETs, early leavers) the [youth coaching](#) offers a special programme to avoid drop-out and promote reintegration of early leavers into education and training. This programme combines career guidance and social work (see sections [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#), [Guidance for early leavers](#) and [Guidance for NEET](#)).

Since 2014, Online Educational Counselling Austria (*Online-Bildungsberatung Österreich*) as part of the Educational Counselling Austria (*Bildungsberatung Österreich*; see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)) has been developing an online counselling service for adult counselling which, via e-mail, chat, etc., tries to open up on a low-threshold basis new target groups which, due to spatial, temporal or personal barriers, have not yet found access to career guidance. While the formats of online educational counselling are continued by various network partners on a regional basis, the joint Austria-wide service was discontinued in 2023 (information on the regional online counselling services: <https://www.bildungsbuch.at/artikel/die-bildungsberatung-fuer-erwachsen...>)

In 2022 the non-profit social start-up [PATHfindr](#) was founded. The aim is to support young people making the transition from compulsory school to further education and training in a low-threshold way via the social media platforms TikTok, Instagram and Discord. In order to facilitate access to the target group and to reduce access barriers, information and guidance are provided directly on those platforms where young people spend at least part of their free time (see also [Career information and ICT in Guidance](#)).

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## Quality assurance

Austria promotes stakeholder interests in lifelong guidance by taking into consideration the diversity of their needs. In principle, all the different guidance providers have their own quality assurance systems in place, mostly using user evaluation. Most customer surveys are carried out and evaluated continuously using short written questionnaires that evaluate customer satisfaction with various aspects of counselling: counselling offer, duration, counsellors' competence, equipment, benefits perceived. Increasingly, follow-up surveys - for example after one to three years - are also being conducted to evaluate the sustainable benefits of counselling and draw conclusions for quality development.

Since these customer surveys are carried out individually in the respective institutions, neither the evaluations nor their results are generally publicly accessible.

Austria has a quality assurance system that is open to all institutions and is associated with certification. It is called [External quality assurance procedures for provider-neutral career guidance in Austria](#) (IBOBB-Verfahren – *Verfahren der externen Qualitätssicherung für anbieterneutrale Bildungsberatung in Österreich*).

This system and certification (so-called IBOBB certificate; IBOBB = Information, Counselling and Orientation for Education and Career) was established in 2009 to support the quality assurance and evaluation of the offers, processes and structures defined as a programmatic goal in the National lifelong guidance strategy (*Nationale Lifelong Guidance Strategie*, see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)). The certification is voluntary and is awarded by the Federal Ministry of Education (BMB) and carried out by an independent education research institute (Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training, öibf) with a review team of three persons. The aim of the procedure, which must be repeated every three years, is an independent review of the reliability and credibility of counselling services. In an on-site review, quality criteria are reviewed for independence and customer orientation, structural requirements, equality orientation, and quality development. The quality criteria are available in a [handbook](#) which describes the procedure of the certification. These criteria may also be used as orientation by guidance providers who do not plan to participate in the whole certification process.

Since 2009, 87 certification procedures have been carried out. At present (2025), many large consulting providers such as the vocational information centres of the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*), all the career guidance networks (*Netzwerk Bildungsberatung*) of the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*), and some career guidance centres of the economic chambers are certified (for further information see [here](#)).

There are comparable processes in several federal provinces for school-based educational and vocational guidance. Here - usually in cooperation between the respective economic chamber, the education administration of the federal province and various other institutions - quality seals are awarded to schools which attest to the high quality of the school in vocational orientation; an example is the Salzburg *Gütesiegel Berufsorientierungsfreundliche Schule* (Seal of quality vocational orientation friendly school). The process varies from province to province, but usually involves a written application in which the school must prove that it has fulfilled the quality criteria for vocational orientation laid down in a catalogue. In Salzburg, the schools are also inspected on site by a review team. These seals of approval are also limited in time, usually to three years; then a re-certification is required (example *Lower Austria*; example *Tyrol*).

Within the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*) common minimum standards for the services provided regarding the access to updated and gender-adapted career information, and minimum duration of a client interview have been developed. The standards have been adopted at central level, but each AMS has the autonomy to decide on the methods and strategies used to put them in practice (*Bundesrichtliniebetreffend Dienstleistungen des Kernprozess 3 in BerufsInfoZentren* (BIZ-Richtlinie, 2011)).

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## Career management skills

Career management skills (CMS) are a core element of the Austrian lifelong guidance strategy (*Strategie für Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf, IBOBB*) (Krötzl, 2010).

Circular No. 17 of the Federal Ministry of Education (BMB, then Ministry of education, art and culture) constitutes a catalogue of measures in the field of information, counselling and guidance for education and occupation (IBOBB) at the seventh and eighth school level. The Circular declares that it is the task of every school to support and accompany learning and development processes that develop CMS. To this end, appropriately qualified teachers must be active as student advisors, career guidance teachers and coordinators. The circular also defines how the CMS should be implemented in the classroom and in schools (for further information see [here](#)).

The BMB in 2017 also defined and described the roles of student and educational advisors, and of career guidance coordinators at schools, in this process in basic decrees [[Circular No. 22/2017 Grundsatzverlasse für Schüler- und Bildungsberatung](#) (Basic Decree for Student and Educational Guidance) and [Circular No. 30/2017 Grundsatzverlasse für Berufsorientierungskoordination](#) (Basic Decree for Vocational Orientation Coordination)].

In the education sector, school completion and the transitioning between school and labour market are priorities for the Austrian education system. The role of the career counsellors and of teachers is to help students identify their needs, interests and aspirations, develop positive expectations and adapt their career perspectives to their needs and interests.

Career-related themes are included in the school curriculum at the lower secondary level (ISCED 2, compulsory education). Since the school year 1998/99, vocational orientation instruction has been regulated in the school organisation act (*Schulorganisationsgesetz, SchOG*) as a 'mandatory exercise' and lower secondary schools in grades seven and eight must have 32 lessons each year. Depending on the school type they can decide between different organisational possibilities: a separate subject, project-oriented implementation or integrated into other subjects, or as a combination of these possibilities. Since the school year 2012/13, at least one lesson per week in the seventh or eighth grade must be organised as a separate subject in the school type Compulsory Secondary School (*Mittelschule*). CMS are integrated in the curriculum. The teachers have great autonomy in the implementation of the CMS-topics, but should take the decrees into account. Group-based support is provided to increase employability through the development of career management skills, writing a CV and a letter of motivation, job interview training, and promoting contact with companies by practical work experience (job shadowing).

Schools attach great importance to cooperation with teacher training colleges. One representative of the school board works closely with a representative of a teacher training college to develop training sessions focused on CMS development. In order to support school improvement, participants are asked to share written feedback specifying how they might apply what they have learned during training, so the programmes can be further developed.

In January 2023, a new curriculum for educational and vocational orientation (previously vocational orientation) at lower secondary level came into force, which both anchors the CMS principles as overarching goals and defines them as competence goals and curriculum content, even if the term 'career management skills' is not explicitly used in the curricula (for details see [IBOBB legal basis](#)). In the commentary on the subject-specific curriculum, explicit reference was made to the pioneering work of ELGPN on CMS as a basis for curriculum development, and it was emphasised that the competence model for the curriculum is explicitly oriented towards CMS (BMBWF, 2023).

Beyond school education and vocational orientation, CMS hardly play a role as an explicit concept in career guidance, even though many programmes and projects are implicitly oriented towards CMS.

There are several initiatives in the employment sector, related to CMS:

*i2b & GO!* (Ideas to business) is an incubation project implemented by the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) starting from 2000. Aiming to increase entrepreneurship and the number of successful businesses, the project provides support in developing a business idea and elicits feedback from external business experts. Once a business plan is uploaded on the website it receives feedback from two different experts within five weeks. The website provides free access to useful materials: handbooks, business plan templates, career events, tutorials, technical issues, and other websites. Users can send their ideas to the *i2b & GO!* business plan competition, a nationwide high-profile business competition financed by a bank and the WKO (for further information please see [here](#)).

**Unternehmerführerschein** (Entrepreneur's skills certificate®) is another initiative of the Austrian Economic Chamber and offers schools and students at upper secondary level (ISCED 3 to 5) – especially in general education – the opportunity to gain basic career competence as well as in-depth economic knowledge. The programme is structured in four modules. The content of module A is focused on basic concepts and fundamental economic relationships and can also be taken at lower secondary level (ISCED 2) from school grade seven and upwards. Each of these modules is concluded with its own online examination. Students receive a certificate for each module. If all the four Entrepreneur's skills certificate® examinations have been successfully passed, they replace the entrepreneur's examination prescribed by law in Austria for regulated crafts and trades.

**Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut** (WIFI - Institute for Economic Promotion): WIFI and the economic chambers have educational and professional, qualified and experienced advisors that provide support in career decision-making. Users (of all ages) can arrange information and orientation meetings depending on their questions and location; there are also potential analyses and tests, which can identify their abilities, interests and future possibilities.

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## Evidence, monitoring and assessment

Due to the fragmented counselling landscape, there is no overall information and evidence regarding the effectiveness of career guidance. However, there are some efforts to create better information basis on this topic at least in some guidance fields. Especially within the Network Educational Counselling Austria focusing on adult-guidance and within the public employment service (AMS) with its wide range of guidance and information services some approaches have been developed (see next paragraph). Also, the Talent-Centres of the economic chambers (see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)) are developing approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of their services and especially of the Talent-Checks, but the evaluations are only carried out for the regional talent checks and the results are not always publicly available. The user surveys (see section [Quality assurance](#)) also serve to assess and monitor user satisfaction and effectiveness of career guidance services, but are limited to specific institutions not generally accessible to the public.

In 2018, a [pilot study](#) was carried out within the Network Educational Counselling Austria (*Netzwerk Bildungsberatung Österreich*) in order to analyse the effects of career guidance on individual decision-making-processes. In this context, a panel survey was carried out. The first survey (n = 401) took place immediately after the counselling session to capture immediate effects on those seeking advice. The second survey (n = 56) was conducted three months later and aimed to observe medium and longer-term effects. An analysis of the structural and supply effects was also carried out.

In 2015 the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) conducted a study to evaluate the impact and quality of career guidance in their career guidance centres in the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*) of Tirol and Burgenland. A combination of different methods was used in this study. A small group of clients were interviewed in a qualitative panel before the consultation and three months after the consultation. In addition, a quantitative questionnaire survey and an evaluation of statistical labour market information were carried out. Further information can be found [here](#). A comparable evaluation for the AMS in Vienna was carried out from 2020 to 2022 and published in 2023. The impact of the guidance services was analysed using various methods, particularly a longitudinal survey of young customers. (Dürr et al., 2023).

Quantitative evaluations of counselling contacts are carried out more regularly by the individual career guidance providers. However, these do not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the success of the counselling.

Career information centres of the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) gather statistics about the group visits organised by schools. The data included are sex, age, and type of school. After each visit, the teachers must complete an online questionnaire. AMS also reports on the activities organised in schools. Career information centres also organise activities for students, unemployed persons and employees. Some basic figures are reported in the annual reports of the AMS. In 2023, almost 40

000 educational and vocational counselling sessions were conducted, 55% of them for adults. More than 5 000 school classes were supported as part of class visits to the career information centres (AMS, 2024). Further information can be found [here](#).

In 2024, the Austrian Economic Chamber published figures regarding the participants in the WKO Talent checks, a collective term for various test and counselling services for young people of aged 13-14. Around 65 000 young people took advantage of these offers in 2023. It should be noted that in some federal provinces these Talent checks are mandatory for young people in this age group (a short further information can be found [here](#)). However, these Talent-checks are just one part of the counselling services of these institutions (see section [Access to guidance](#)).

Since 2018, the Austrian Institute for (*Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung, öibf*) has been conducting a [yearly differentiated evaluation of the counselling contacts](#) in the Network Educational Counselling Austria (*Netzwerk Bildungsberatung Österreich*);

In 2022, a total of 40 551 counselling contacts with adults were registered in the Austrian Educational Guidance Network, twice as many as in 2014. 45% of these were personal individual counselling sessions and 67% were with women. The evaluation provides a differentiated insight, for example, into the counselling formats, personal characteristics and educational level of the clients (Gugitscher and Lachmayr, 2023).

The evaluation provides a differentiated insight, for example, in terms of consulting formats, personal characteristics and education level of the customers. "After the years of the Covid-19 pandemic, /.../, the year 2022 was characterised by a national interim financing with reduced resources and a further decline in the number of counselling contacts (cf. 2021: 51 942; 2020: 58 829)" (Gugitscher and Lachmayr, 2023; translated by the author).

Since 2021, the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) has been conducting a survey of high school graduates (*Maturierende*) on behalf of the Ministry of Education to evaluate the educational and career choices of young adults. The survey also includes questions about the use, scope and effectiveness of existing information and guidance services. Almost 8 000 people took part in the first survey of the 2021/2022 school year, which is around 18% of the target group (Dibiasi et al., 2022). Another survey was already conducted in the 2023/2024 school year (results not yet published). The IHS recommends regular implementation, including monitoring of career guidance measures every three years.

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## Career information, ICT in guidance

Austria's career information services are designed in a user-friendly way, taking into account different user-groups and contexts. For better use of financial and human resources, self-service tools which facilitate the online access to information are in place according to the different provider domains and areas of competence.

The public employment service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS), as the most important provider of career information, provides access to a wide range of self-service tools aiming to provide access to career information (info zones, career information centres), apprenticeships, traineeships and jobs (service zone), and intensive guidance (counselling zone) (see section [Access to guidance](#)).

AMS services are organised in tiered levels. On the first level, there are self-help career guidance resources which are accessible online. These resources focus on different topics and target groups, for example:

1. [www.karrierekompass.at](http://www.karrierekompass.at): landing-page with access to all online-resources of the AMS;
2. [www.berufslexikon.at](http://www.berufslexikon.at): occupational description on about 1 800 occupations with the possibility to select by educational pathway, occupation and groups;
3. [https://www.ausbildungskompass.at/](http://www.ausbildungskompass.at/): detailed descriptions of formal and non-formal education and training possibilities;
4. [https://www.berufskompass.at/](http://www.berufskompass.at/): online-interest-check for a first orientation which occupations could be of interest;
5. [www.gehaltskompass.at](http://www.gehaltskompass.at): information on earning opportunities in various occupations;
6. [https://bewerbungsportal.ams.or.at/bewerbungsportal/](http://bewerbungsportal.ams.or.at/bewerbungsportal/): interactive job-application training tool.

At the end of 2023, the AMS introduced the [AMS Berufsinfomat](#), the first AI-controlled chatbot tool. *AMS Berufsinfomat* answers questions about jobs, education and training in a dynamic way. The underlying AI technology is ChatGPT. The database accessed by the AI chatbot currently consists exclusively of other AMS online tools.

### Other Example of projects or initiatives

[BIC.at](http://BIC.at) ([www.bic.at](http://www.bic.at)) is an online-platform for occupational orientation developed by ibw, Research & Development in VET (*Institut für Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Austria*

*Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft, ibw*). It involves the following partners: The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and its Department for Educational Policy, and the nine regional economic chambers. The aim of the project is to provide online access to guidance resources for those interested in using self-help tools to make informed decisions regarding their education and career path. While an increased number of user access [www.bic.at](http://www.bic.at) via search engines, the tool is also widely used in career centres and schools, being of help for students, teachers and career practitioners. The online-tool started to be used in 1998 (first offline-version in 1987) and integrates a range of information: occupation descriptions, , formal and non-formal education and training possibilities as well as further training possibilities, data about apprenticeships, tips and tricks related to career choices and job-application, and links to different career resources, job platforms and search engines. Users can learn about job tasks and requirements of a specific occupation, working conditions and can use checklists for self-awareness of interests, wishes, abilities and prospects. It provides a direct link to the [Lehrbetriebsübersicht](#), an Austrian database which includes the names and addresses of all Austrian enterprises developing apprenticeships. Future developments will include more interactive tools, a new interest profile in addition to the existing interest profile , better adapted to a young target group (in 2025), improved structuring of the information on education and training providers, and more videos. The current interest profile is offered in German and seven foreign languages, including Ukrainian, Arabic and Farsi, to provide refugees and other non-German speaking people with easy access to career guidance.

From 2014 to 2023 the Online educational counselling Austria (*Online-Bildungsberatung Österreich*) was part of the Network educational counselling Austria (*Netzwerk Bildungsberatung Österreich*). This is an initiative of the Department of Adult Education of the Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research (until 2024 Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research). These services target adults with questions on education and occupation issues. All advisory services are non-proprietary, confidential and free of charge (see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)). While the Austria-wide platform was discontinued in 2023, the online services are largely continued at the regional level by the network partners (for a short overview see [Bildungsbuch.at](#))

The **Austrian Education System** (*Das Österreichische Bildungssystem*) is a website provided by Euroguidance Austria and has general and detailed information on the different stages of the Austrian education system. It is provided in German and English, works in an interactive way, starting from kindergarten up to university level. There is also the possibility to download or order print versions of the graphic representation in about 20 different languages which is especially useful in work with migrants and refugees to get a first impression of the possibilities in the diverse education and training system.

**ICT-based Talent-checks:** the use of ICT-based testing systems for testing of interests, talents and abilities is of growing importance. Almost all larger career guidance providers like the AMS use ICT-based testing systems; in most of the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*) the career guidance services of the economic chamber offers ICT-based Talent-checks to test students aged 13 to 14 on their interests, abilities and personality to get additional information on counselling for well-founded career and education decisions (see sections [Access to guidance](#) and [Career guidance for school pupils](#)).

**Whatchado** (derived from 'what shall I do?') is an online platform run by a private start-up company since 2012. The platform contains videos of people who talk about their profession and training. The interview partners are always asked the same seven questions, including 'What's your job about?', 'What's your background?' and 'Could someone with a different background do your job?' Today (2025) the platform offers more than 7 700 interviews in about 10 different languages, mainly in German. The interviews cover all occupational fields and qualification levels. Whatchado is aimed at all people (regardless of age) who want occupational orientation. The objective is to expand the perspectives for possible professional activities and to highlight the large number of possibilities by showing examples of other people with very diverse careers and education and training pathways. A short interest-matching is offered to orientation within the large number of videos (Euroguidance, 2018). In recent years, Whatchado has been expanded to include a job search platform and other additional services.

**Jobsy-App:** The Vienna Chamber of Labour has developed the Jopsy app, a picture-based career interest test that is optimised for mobile phones and offered in a version for teenagers and one for adults. The images and the reduced written language make the interest test easily accessible, particularly for people with limited knowledge of German, although language skills are required for the evaluation and further information.

**Berufe-VR:** In 2021, the educational and career guidance services of the economic chambers began developing a platform for virtual company tours. In the meantime (as of the end of 2024), 360° videos are available for around 80 apprenticeships, which can be explored interactively using VR glasses or via the web app <https://berufe-vr.at/> using a smartphone and tablet (with gyroscope function), but also via desktop. The videos explore two specific work environments with the associated activities for a particular occupation. VR glasses are available in the regional career guidance centres of the economic chambers.

In addition, there are numerous regional offerings, some of which draw on existing information (especially from BIC.at) and supplement it with regional information and some interactive offerings. Examples of such regional offerings are the Tyrolean 'Berufsreise' (career trip, [www.berufsreise.at](http://www.berufsreise.at)) or Was tun? from Burgenland (What to do?, <https://www.was-tun.at/>). Many of these offers are initiated and provided by the regional economic chambers and place a particular focus on providing information about apprenticeships.

**PATHfindr:** is a non-profit social start-up that was founded in 2022 by a secondary school teacher together with [Rat auf Draht](#), a children and youth telephone and chat hotline. The aim is to support young people making the transition from compulsory school to further education and training in a low-threshold way via the social media platforms TikTok, Instagram and Discord. Information and guidance is thus provided directly on the platforms where young people spend at least some of their free time.

Contact with the young people is provided by career practitioners, but also by specially trained peers, free of charge and anonymously. Since the beginning of 2023, around 6 500 young people have been reached in over 1 000 counselling sessions. In addition, the initiative also offers school workshops.

Pathfindr is quality certified with the IBOBB certificate (see section [Quality assurance](#)).

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## Training and qualifications

Regarding the qualification of career guidance practitioners in Austria, a fundamental distinction has to be made between practitioners (teachers) in school-based career guidance and those outside school.

### Career guidance professionals in school

The qualification of career guidance teachers (*BO Lehrer*) and coordinators is not clearly regulated by law. The prerequisite is the completion of a teacher training course, which does not necessarily have to include a focus on career guidance. Qualification for

career orientation takes place via courses in further teacher training at universities colleges for of teacher education. Essential contents of these courses are legal basics, gender and diversity, self-understanding, human education and career choice, practical training in companies and professional experience and tradition. For coordinators, the focus is on project management and counselling as well as coordination at the school location.

The courses follow an Austria-wide uniform concept, which is implemented by the university colleges of teacher education but specific to the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*). The training duration is three semesters and corresponds to 12 ECTS.

As part of the New teacher training programme (*Lehrerausbildung Neu in implementation since autumn 2016*), the qualification for career guidance in school is to be included as a special module in basic teacher training. Developments in this area are continuing. So far, a joint competence profile for career guidance teachers has been established.

Educational counsellors and student counsellors also include teachers with a degree in teaching and several years of teaching experience. The training and further education of these teachers takes place within the framework of a course at the teacher training colleges and lasts four to five semesters part-time and corresponds to 12 ECTS points.

Counsellors from the [school psychology service](#) (*Schulpsychologie*) and the [Psychological Counselling Service](#) for students (*Psychologische Studierendenberatung*) are active at the schools. They have a university degree in psychology.

#### *Career guidance professionals outside schools*

There is no general legal regulation regarding training and qualification of career guidance professionals, but efforts are being made to render such training and qualification more transparent by means of certification. The [Austrian Academy of Continuing Education](#) (*Weiterbildungskademie Österreich, wba*) is one of these approaches. However, career guidance professionals currently take these opportunities to a limited extent.

Depending on the respective consulting institution, internal training and education programmes are in place in some cases.

The training of career guidance practitioners at the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) is regulated internally. Employees in counselling and placement services must have passed their school-leaving examination or have completed vocational training and have several years of professional experience. However, young people are also being trained as part of an apprenticeship (personnel service) and prepared for the counselling profession. Basic training lasts up to 40 weeks, alternating with work-based learning phases, and ends with a final examination. Continuing education planning for employees at AMS is based on a systematic training needs evaluation which is conducted every two to three years (for further information please see [AMS Austria](#)).

The career guidance professionals in the career guidance services of social partners and in their further training institutions receive internal training; in some cases, further training is provided at regional level together with other institutions from their own organisation and through jointly organised further training events. They also have opportunities to participate in field visits organised by their management, where they can learn more about new professions and visit relevant companies in the field to get in-depth insights on a certain profession and be up-to-date with the advances of the labour market.

Counselling in the career guidance centres of the social partners is mainly provided by social pedagogues, psychologists or similarly qualified employees. Some institutions deliberately also accept lateral entrants from other occupational fields and train them on the job, for example in order to contribute specific industry know-how to counselling. In these cases, the prerequisite is completed vocational training and several years of work experience.

The same applies to counsellors at the various counselling institutions, some of which specialise in specific target groups and areas of work. In many cases, people with relevant studies (social work, social pedagogy, pedagogy, psychology) or with completed vocational training and longer professional experience are employed and trained on-the-job. Depending on the focus area and target group, in-service training is offered.

People who carry out and evaluate diagnostic procedures within the framework of career guidance and give advice on the basis of these results usually need to have completed a degree in psychology.

Apart from internal qualification measures at some institutions there are additional training courses in educational and vocational counselling offered by universities or institutions for further education. Relevant work experience or completed training is partly required for participating in these training courses:

1. [Bifeb](#) (Federal Institute for Adult Education): training course for educational and vocational counselling; 261 training sessions that have to be attended personally, 400 training sessions in total, duration approximately two years. The Bifeb offers various courses and programmes, e.g. on guidance skills, but also on specialised topics such as conflict management or AI in career guidance on the further training of guidance officers. The previous initial training course for career guidance, comprising a total of 400 training units and lasting approximately two years, was replaced in 2022 by a university course (60 ECTS) in cooperation with the University of Klagenfurt. However, this has not yet been able to be implemented due to a lack of participants and is scheduled to start for the first time in autumn 2025.
2. [WIFI Wien](#): diploma training course, Trainer for educational and vocational counselling; 255 training sessions, duration approximately two years;
3. [BFI Wien](#): diploma training course, Coach for educational and vocational counselling – educational counselling with focus on case management; 190 training sessions.

There are also master programmes at University Graz and University Klagenfurt in adult and vocational education, which also deal with vocational orientation and career guidance. However, career guidance is not a focal point of these studies.

Furthermore, career counsellors are organised in professional associations. One such organisation is the [Association of Austrian Education and Career Guidance Counsellors](#) (*Vereinigung Österreichischer Bildungs- und BerufsberaterInnen, VÖBB*) established in 2015. Its aims focus on the professionalisation of career guidance practitioners in Austria by offering further training programmes and fostering exchange among them.

[Erwachsenenbildung.at](#) (platform on adult education) is a comprehensive platform that offers extensive information on all topics related to adult education and also places a particular focus on the further training of adult education practitioners, including career guidance practitioners. The courses are mainly designed as freely accessible online courses, and to some extent as MOOCs. The current focus is on topics such as the use of AI in adult education. [Erwachsenenbildung.at](#) is an initiative of the Ministry of Women, Science and Research and was developed as part of a national project entitled Educational counselling Austria – continuous education (*Bildungsberatung Österreich – Erwachsenenbildung*) with financial support from the European Social Fund.

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## Funding career guidance

The funding of career guidance in Austria can generally be characterised as shared between public authorities like the Federal Government, the governments of the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*) and the municipalities, funding of specific services by social partner organisations and private funding by those seeking advice themselves. Especially in adult career guidance, European funds like the European Social Funds are used as joint financing.

All school-based activities for students at lower and upper secondary levels are funded by the budgets of the responsible ministries, especially the Ministry of Education (BMB) or the responsible regional governments. The services of the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*) are financed by public funding and completely free of charge for all who use them. This includes counselling services as well as providing information via websites and materials for all age groups.

Many guidance activities, especially for special interest groups like migrants/refugees, women, and those with disabilities are mainly outsourced to different external not-for-profit or for-profit organisations and funded by the public employment service.

The program of youth coaching (*Jugendcoaching*, also see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)) is publicly funded via the Ministry of Social Affairs and co-funded by the European Social Fund. Services for adults within the networks of the Education Guidance Austria are also public funded by BMBWF and part-funded by the European Social Fund; therefore services are provided completely free of charge.

The career guidance services of the economic chamber work differently. While some basic services like supporting schools, group counselling in the career guidance centres, individual counselling for young people (school students) websites and materials are funded by the regional economic chambers and therefore are free of charge, some high-end-services like in-depth counselling based on potential analyses (comprehensive aptitude, skills and personality tests) are mostly chargeable. However, there are some differences between the federal provinces. In some provinces, due to cooperation with the regional government, in-depth counselling services and testing are free of charge and jointly funded by the regional government; in other provinces, the costs for clients are low due to additional funding from the economic chamber. Adult services from the guidance centres of the economic chambers are mostly chargeable. Whenever the economic chambers finance some career guidance service, ultimately the employers, as members of the economic chamber, finance the services through their chamber contributions.

Some private career guidance counsellors and profit-institutes in career planning sell their services as a free financed career guidance offer.

## Career guidance for school pupils

Austria uses a three-level model for the development of career guidance in school, ranging from career education lessons taught by career teachers (only at lower secondary level, ISCED 2), to individual advice provided by student and educational counsellors and specialised support from the School Psychology Service (at lower secondary level, ISCED 2, as well as upper secondary level, ISCED 3 to 5).

The aim of career guidance in school education at lower secondary level is to help students make informed decisions regarding their further school or apprenticeship training, to develop a general overview of career possibilities, to prepare to apply for apprenticeship training and to provide access to individualised and integrated career services. At the upper secondary level, the aim is to help students make well-informed decisions for further academic programmes or other further education and training possibilities or for their direct labour market entry and also make them aware of career possibilities and the necessity of lifelong learning.

Access to career guidance services is provided for pupils starting in fifth grade. The main information provided is related to the education path and qualifications. The guidance services provided in school are available also to parents.

Guidance in school is provided by school counsellors and educational counsellors.

The actual career education/orientation classes in the lower secondary school begin in the 7th grade. Students from the seventh and eighth grades undertake 32 hours of compulsory career education/orientation classes. The aim of the classes is to help students develop their CMS. To support these lessons, the Ministry of Education developed the so-called *BBO tool 'Deine Zukunft'* (Career orientation tool 'Your future'). The core of this tool is an online questionnaire designed to support pupils in their initial considerations regarding school and training decisions and to initiate the further orientation process. The pupils' readiness to choose a career and their interests in school subjects are queried. In addition, the questionnaire provides information on whether there are any individual risks that could jeopardise the school career. The tool is supplemented by information sheets for parents, teachers and students, an explanatory video, further worksheets, etc. An important part of the offer is also specific further training for teachers to ensure the efficient use of the tool and its integration into the career education classes (BMBWF, n.d.).

All the activities in school career guidance are supported by the Public Employment Service Austria (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich, AMS*), the career guidance services of the social partners and different other career guidance providers with counselling offers, materials and tools.

The AMS is responsible for developing guidance activities to support young people at risk of early school leaving before they complete an education or training at upper secondary level (age up to 19). This may be in the form of access to information, training to activation or finding a job.

Starting in 2012, New secondary schools (*Neue Mittelschulen*; now *Compulsory Secondary School / Mittelschule*) have been developed. Data from 2015 indicate that the transformation of all lower secondary schools into new secondary schools improved the learning and the organisational culture, helped students with a migration background, and facilitated student transitions to the next education level. Regarding career guidance, this improvement consisted of the introduction of career guidance as an independent teaching subject and further introduction of career management skills as an overall principle in school educational and vocational orientation (see section [Career management skills](#)).

*Examples of practices (programmes, projects or initiatives)*

*Jugendcoaching* (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)) is a complementary counselling-oriented practice implemented in 2012. Its aim is to reduce school drop-out among teenagers by involving them in different activities (like consulting, supervision and individual meetings) and by providing access to information, support and counselling. Teenagers are motivated to complete their studies and to engage in apprenticeships. Due to its integrated and individualised approach, which considers personal and environmental challenges, the practice provides case management strategies (for further information please [see](#)).

The *My future* initiative was implemented in seventh and eighth grade of the lower secondary level [especially in the new secondary schools (*Neue Mittelschule*)] in several federal provinces (*Bundesländer*) including Upper Austria and Tyrol and was adapted by several other provinces. Developed and financed by the regional chambers of labour, *My future* supports the development of student self-awareness and self-understanding and encourages them to start building a career portfolio. The portfolio is used during parent meetings, allowing teachers to discuss the learning process of each student and his/her skills. Since the school year 2018/19 there is also a *My future* portfolio for prevocational schools (*Polytechnische Schule*) at the ninth grade.

*Talent/career portfolio* in schools is a practice aiming to identify students' skills and talents, by creating a portfolio in which they gather information about their abilities, interests, degrees, certificates, peer feedback results, and school projects. The basis of the practice lies in the school-wide enrichment model (SEM). Teachers facilitate portfolio assessment, but the student alone has the autonomy to decide what (s)he would like to include.

The **career guidance and information centre of the Viennese Economic Chamber** (*BiWi, Berufsinformationszentrum der Wiener Wirtschaft*) was established in October 1991. The main objective of BiWi is to serve as a connecting platform between education and the labour market and companies (transition from school to working life), providing practical career information and customised services to individuals and schools as well as businesses of the Viennese economy. BiWi offers its career guidance services in its own career centre but also directly in schools at both the lower and upper secondary level. They offer group counselling, individual counselling, talent checks, application training, and parents' evenings; they develop different print materials, on their own but also in cooperation with other career guidance centres of the economic chambers in other federal provinces. Special offers are the industry presentations (*BiWi Werkstatt*) which are a kind of fair where pupils can learn more about a specific industry by trying different activities, talking to apprentices and instructors. These industry presentations are organized by BiWi together with the regional industry representatives and vocational schools in 10 industrial fields throughout the year. Each fair last two to three days. Together with the research institute ibw, Research and Development in VET (*Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft*) and the economic chambers of the other provinces they provide and develop **BIC.at**, the online career information resource of the Austrian Economic Chambers (see section [Career information, ICT in guidance](#)). Apart from online content, a wide range of materials is available for downloading with a view to offline use by those who are less able / willing to work with online media. Direct interaction by counsellors is possible via email, i.e. in an asynchronous mode. The services and information offerings of BiWi are directed towards four dedicated target groups, including pupils at lower secondary level and learners at upper secondary level, their parents, businesses and schools; they are free of charge, being funded by the Viennese Economic Chamber. Similar programmes are provided by career centres of the economic chambers in all other federal provinces.

*Talent checks*: some years ago, the career guidance services of the economic chambers started to establish a system of nationwide tests for young people aged 13-14 under the collective name *Talent check* (see section [Access to guidance](#)).

The **18plus** programme is designed to help the young people undertaking matriculation and in matriculation classes in the 11th to 13th grades (depending on the school type: secondary academic schools 11th to 12th grade, VET colleges 12th to 13th grade) at upper secondary level (ISCED 3 to 5, age group 17 to 19) to adapt training and study selection better to their inclinations and abilities. The guidance service is provided by the Federal Ministry of Education (*BMB*). The aim of the psychological group work is to continue individual decision-making for the choice of profession and study and to define the next steps. Help starts with a portfolio folder for each student where supporting content is intended to help the pupils find and collect information. Young people learn about themselves: with the aid of a specially developed 18plus-guide, students will find their location in the study / professional selection process. Students may participate in group counselling at school through psychological student counselling and two interest tests: *Studien-Navi* (for those who are fairly sure they want to start to study) and *Karriereleiter* (for those who are not sure if they want to start study or want to enter the labour market).

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## Guidance for VET participants

Vocational education and training is very well developed and valued in Austria. The system promotes the improvement of guidance and counselling, skills competition, transnational mobility. The career guidance provided in VET aims to support students and parents in choosing apprenticeships and developing their skills; these students are more exposed to career education programmes.

Most of the activities in career guidance for VET participants take place on the lower secondary level in school career guidance supported by the career guidance services of the regional economic chambers (e.g. *BiWi*) and of the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich, AMS*) before the young people enter VET (see section [Career guidance for school pupils](#)).

When young people are in vocational training, the focus is on keeping them in training. To this end, apprentice coaching (*Lehrlingscoaching*) has been set up to support apprentices and training companies in the event of difficulties in training and to take measures to ensure that training can be continued. Also, *youth coaching* (*Jugendcoaching*) is a measure to avoid drop-out of young people from education and training. For students in VET colleges the programme **18plus** offers support in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> grades in the orientation process: whether to take up a study-programme or enter the labour market (see section [Career guidance for school pupils](#)).

Participants in vocational training also have access to all offers of the career guidance centres (of the AMS as well as of the economic chambers), should reorientation be necessary.

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Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices -  
Austria

## Guidance for higher education students

Austria's higher education system is oriented toward the needs of the labour market and closely collaborates with employers to ensure a smooth and rapid transition from education to the labour market. The system is also practice-oriented and takes into account the feedback received from companies and graduates in order to adapt the curriculum. Austrian universities and universities of applied sciences have implemented different strategies to gather data about graduate employment, their skills and job experiences.

With the Psychological Student Counselling Services (*Psychologische Studierendenberatung*) the Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF) offers a service at six university locations throughout Austria that helps students choose and begin their studies, supports them in their personal development during their studies, and advises them on study-related and personal problems. It also supports the project *18plus* for the orientation of prospective students (see section [Career guidance for school pupils](#)). The Psychological Counselling Service offers group information in schools, individual counselling, chat-counselling, and psychological counselling; it participates in different activities in schools and at career fairs (for further information please see [here](#)).

Career guidance for tertiary students is developed mainly by the universities and universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*, FH), often via so-called career centres and also by student organisations. External partners play some role in career guidance for higher education by offering high-level services like potential analyses and career coaching.

The focus of career guidance service in higher education lies, on the one hand, in information work at the interface between the upper secondary level and academic education and, on the other hand, in services for the students themselves. Student organisations (Austrian Union of Students, *Österreichische Hochschüler\_innenschaft*, ÖH) visit schools at upper secondary level to inform students about the different study programmes. At the same time, they are a service point for all questions and concerns of students about their studies. They developed an advisory voluntary service where students can learn about student life, accommodation and scholarships. Partnerships with employers are promoted to increase access to internships and job-shadowing activities (for further information please see [here](#)).

The career centres of the different universities and FH lay their emphasis in career zones services for students and graduates, such as organisation of application training and assessment centre training, job-placement, placement of internships and semester abroad, as well as individual career development counselling. An example of an important and one of the first university career centres is the bpp, *Zentrum für Berufsplanung* of the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU ZBP Career Centre).

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## Guidance for adult learners

Educational counselling for adults is traditionally somewhat formalised and has not been very visible in the past. It is often situated directly with major adult education institutions such as the Institute for Economic Promotion of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut Österreich*, WiFi), the CVET provider institution of the Chamber of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Association, Vocational Training Institute (*Berufsförderungsinstitut*, BFI) and the adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*, VHS). These institutions offer both course counselling for their own course participants and provider-independent educational counselling. Important consulting topics are re-entries, funding, compatibility of family and career, career development, and identification and recognition of informal competences.

Some regional governments (*Landesregierungen*) have established regional services that provide independent information and guidance for adults like the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (*Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds*, WAFF). These initiatives offer individual counselling, counselling funding, advice on suitable training and further education, and qualifications updating.

Beyond these, guidance services are provided by the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich*, AMS) for all age-groups and especially for job-seekers and the unemployed (see sections [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#) and [Access to guidance](#)), and of the Chamber of Labour for their members, which covers all employees in Austria. The services of the Chamber of Labour focus on information on upskilling possibilities and funding of further education and training, often in combination with information on workers' rights and protection.

Based on earlier initiatives, Educational counselling Austria (*Bildungsberatung Österreich*) was launched in 2011 by the Ministry of Women, Science and Research (BMFWF; then Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, BMUKK) (see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)). This initiative aims at developing a country-wide system of information provision and educational counselling directed towards adults. A network (Network Educational Counselling Austria) of relevant stakeholders was set up in each of the nine federal provinces (*Bundesländer*). In 2018, a different funding structure was set up in Styria for the Educational Counselling Network Styria. Since then, the Educational Counselling Styria has no longer been part of the Educational Counselling Network Austria. These regional networks include both organisations providing educational counselling services in a given region and organisations which, although they do not offer counselling services themselves, typically have access to relevant target populations. This is to ensure that:

1. as many institutions and organisations as possible become involved in regional networks of educational counselling;
2. broadest possible coverage of the country by regional access points to educational counselling is achieved;
3. as many different population groups as possible are actively targeted;
4. the service quality and the level of professionalisation in educational counselling can be increased.

With Educational counselling Austria and its networks, career guidance for adults has gained much visibility.

### Example of initiatives

**Adult education initiative Level Up** (*Level Up Erwachsenenbildung*): a nation-wide adult education initiative which helps adults (and young adults) to obtain a compulsory schooling completion certificate. The initiative is organised regionally through networks of service and education providers. It also aims to help young people at risk of unemployment because of low qualifications to catch-up

on missing basic certificates, so providing them with a better chance of participating in work-based learning.

**The Fair for work, studies and further education** (*BeSt, Die Messe für Beruf, Studium und Weiterbildung*): this targets people looking for adult education courses for their educational or professional development and young people looking for initial education and training. Within the framework of the *BeSt*, the citizens of Vienna can contact the networks of Education counselling Vienna and Lower Austria, the Education counselling Burgenland, the Bifeb and the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education (*Weiterbildungskademie Österreich*, wba) for information and counselling (see section [Training and qualifications](#)). In addition to Vienna - where the *BeSt* takes place every year - this fair is also held alternately every year at two other locations; alternately Salzburg or Innsbruck as well as Graz or Klagenfurt.

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## Guidance for the employed

In general, there is no specific policy or regulation of career guidance for the employed. However, employees can make use of the career guidance services offered by the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich*, AMS), which are open to all target-groups.

Some regional governments (*Landesregierungen*) have established regional services that provide independent information and guidance for adults in general but especially for the employed. The Vienna employment promotion fund (*Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds*, WAFF) is the biggest and most important of these regional service centres and offers individual counselling, counselling funding, advice on suitable training and further education and qualifications updating. Career guidance services are also provided by the trade unions and by the chambers of labour for their members. (see section [Guidance for adult learners](#)).

A particular focus of some career guidance services of the regional economic chambers is on supporting companies in their internal human resources development by offering counselling and testing of employees to determine talent and potential which could be developed and to analyse which further training measures could help.

The priorities of the ESF Programme in Austria for 2014-20 with the focus on employment by promoting sustainable and high-quality employment and, by providing special support to employees and employers has given a greater impetus on career guidance for adults. Since then, more attention has been paid to strategies and policies focus on consulting for companies, maternity leave management, as well as coaching and development offers for professional advancement and higher qualification. The ESF also supported the employability of older workers. Companies are to be sensitised to the challenges of demographic change and given advice; institutions such as WAFF are active in this context. The networks of Educational counselling Austria (see sections [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#) and [Guidance for adult learners](#)) also play an important role, especially in the guidance of low-qualified employees.

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## Guidance for unemployed adults

Austria has a high share of low- and medium-qualified unemployment. The Lifelong learning level is with 55%, according to the results of the Adult Education Survey (AES) 2022/23, high in comparison to the EU average and constantly growing, but the participation of the low- and medium-qualified in adult learning is moderate. Whereby the figures of the current evaluation are below the comparative figures of the last survey due to the effects of the corona pandemic. There is evidence that the country continues to invest in developing active labour market measures ([Statistik Austria, 2023](#)).

Career guidance for the unemployed is basically the responsibility of the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich*, AMS). In addition to counselling and job placement, the focus is on increasing employability by providing and financing further training measures. These measures can be of a technical nature as well as general measures of application training and job search; they are aimed at increasing placement opportunities.

A special focus of the programmes for low-skilled jobseekers is on placement in measures to acquire formal vocational qualifications. With 'apprenticeship for adults' some special programmes are in place which enable adults to acquire an apprenticeship qualification in a shorter period of time; in some cases, this is flexible and modular, in which existing competences are recognised and taken into account and additional financial support is granted (for further information please see [here](#)). One of these programmes is called "competences with system" (*Kompetenzen mit System*).

While these programmes are qualification measures and not guidance measures, accompanying career guidance is indispensable and directly linked.

**'Du Kannst Was'** (DKW, 'You can do it!') is a guidance practice first implemented in 2012 and provided by Austrian social partners in cooperation with regional adult learning providers. Its aims are to provide upskilling, obtaining a qualification and integrating migrants, refugees, minorities and people with special needs in the labour market. DKW is especially available for unskilled workers with substantial working experience aged 22 and above, such as metalworkers and cooks, through enterprise based-programmes. The project consists of three guided validation steps, interview, counselling, workshops and creation of portfolio, followed by a two-step examination and tailor-made training courses according to individual needs. The last step of the process is the awarding of an apprenticeship certificate/diploma (EQF level 4, NQF level 4), which attests to the successful completion of the final apprenticeship examination.

The legal background of the initiative came into force with the revised Vocational Training Act of 2011 (**BAG §23 Abs. 11**). DKW is supported by the European Social Fund and part-financed by the federal state and by the federal provinces participating in the project. Participation is generally free of charge, although a contribution for further training measures and a certification fee may apply. Monitoring of DKW is mostly done internally via feedback forms handed out to the participants, and informally through communication with different stakeholders. Practitioners involved in career guidance and counselling for DKW have a professional

pedagogical/sociological background or extensive work experience and are certified by the quality label IBOBB (*Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf*). Professionals for the identification and documentation workshops often have certificates such as CH-Q competence trainer and have completed NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) training.

The services of the networks of Educational counselling Austria (see sections [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#) and [Guidance for adult learners](#)) are also open to unemployed adults.

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## Guidance for older adults

Employers are aware of the different training needs of older adults and of their difference in will and motivation to engage in such training. They recognise the need to introduce and finance company-based incentives (increased salary or bonuses) to reward such involvement.

Some companies have introduced different types of incentive: time off work, job security, improvement of the career prospects, paid training. More than half of the companies with older employees have developed age-specific programmes and have introduced benefits for older people, providing access to a flexible working programme and mixed-age teams. 20% of Austrian companies have developed training for older adults. The smaller the company, the higher the chance of providing age-specific training programmes which aim to develop digital skills, language skills, and soft-skills (communication, motivation, personnel management). Job-related training is rarely introduced.

The extension of the employment periods, policy actions to improve work-life balance, the development of inclusive labour markets, the improvement of skills, and active ageing policies are all strategies to address segregation and segmentation of the labour market.

[Fit2work](#) is a nationwide programme to support employed and unemployed people with health problems to stay in work or to find employment. It offers counselling and therapy and develops, together with the clients, an action plan to secure employability. Fit2work is a health-related programme of the Ministry of Social Affairs but has, in the context of securing employability, a strong connection to career guidance. It is open to all age groups, though health-related job problems and maintaining employability may play a greater role with increasing age. The programme also supports companies through transfer of know-how and with information on creating healthy workplaces and helping employees to secure their employability. In addition, Austria's *50+ employment initiative* supports the integration of the unemployed aged above 50 who are registered as unemployed at AMS for more than 181 days.

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## Guidance for early leavers

Youth guarantee programmes (YGP) have been developed with the aim of supporting those at risk of early leaving. The programmes are financed at national level and involve an annual cost of 0.5-1.5 per cent of GDP.

The core elements of the Austrian YGP are the training obligation until 18, the training guarantee, as well as the youth coaching.

YGP use an individualised approach, involving personal interview and counselling, close relationship with the young person, and follow-up activities. The leading role in the development of the YGP is taken by the Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with other responsible ministries like the Ministry of Education (BMB), the youth section within the Federal Chancellery (*Bundeskanzleramt*) and the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET). Also, the Austrian Public Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich*, AMS) the social partners, the governments of the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*) and others play an important role in development, organisation and administration of some measures.

Participation in a Youth guarantee programme increases the chances of finding employment. The YGP and its activities focus on prevention, intervention and compensation (further information can be found [here](#)). This follows the National strategy on early school leaving (*Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-)Bildungsabbruchs*) first developed in 2012 and revised by the BMB in 2016 (then Ministry of Education). The prevention activities provide access to information regarding education and career options, personalised teaching, implementation of new teacher training programmes and language training for youngsters with a migrant background. New teacher training programmes are focused on raising awareness on cultural diversity and multilingualism.

The intervention phase of the programme includes access to an individual interview/counselling with a youth employment counsellor. During the interview, the young person expresses his needs and concerns, and the counsellor will identify ways to provide adequate individual vocational counselling and career guidance support; this may include intensive, longer-lasting career coaching programmes. A result can also refer to a concrete job offer or offer for apprenticeship training. A target agreement is established between the counsellor and the young client. When dealing with those aged 15 to 18, the aim is to provide the appropriate support to pursue studies and find an apprenticeship. For those aged 18 to 25 direct job placement can also be an option.

The compensation activities offer special training possibilities or bridging offers like the [AusbildungsFIT](#) programme (fit for Training) (see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)) for cases where, despite intervention, the young are not able to find appropriate education and training opportunities.

In 2023 Austria had a 8.6% rate of early school leaving from education and training and thus below the EU target of 9% set for 2030

(for further information please see [here](#)).

The National strategy on early school leaving, which aims to develop inter-connected and effective ways to prevent and intervene in order to tackle this phenomenon, brings together different stakeholders from schools and employment offices. This strategy must also be seen in the context of youth guarantee activities and leads to the initiative Education until 18 (*Ausbildung bis 18*) which refers to the obligation to participate in education and training until the age of 18 (see section [Access to guidance](#)). As a national strategy it aims to contribute to promoting networking and cooperation of relevant institutions and stakeholders, supporting teachers and school heads in further development of school and teaching, as well as extending relevant support by other professions.

*Youth coaching*, which has been implemented nationwide since 2013, and *AusbildungsFIT* (fit for training; formally production schools), which are based on this, form an important element of the Austrian strategy to combat early school leaving and the threat of exclusion; they mainly rely on prevention and early intervention. These measures are described in more detail [here](#).

**Youth coaching** is now (since 2017) an important part of the Education until 18 initiative and is implemented through the Social Ministry Service (SMS) as part of the Ministry of Social Affairs and AMS. Youth coaching has been addressed to all pupils in the ninth year of compulsory schooling especially those who are at risk of dropping out, NEETs between the ages of 14 and 19 and young people with special educational needs up to the age of 25.

Youth coaching aims to identify problems hampering durable integration into the initial vocational and training system and to elaborate solutions jointly with the young people and relevant to their social environment. Networks are formed on a case-by-case basis between the programmes offered by relevant institutions. These institutions are active in the non-profit welfare sector or they are other private non-profit associations that provide social services. While the programme itself is a national initiative, implementation takes place on a regional level with different responsible partners in the federal provinces.

There are two ways young people at risk are identified as eligible for coaching:

1. *early warning system at schools*: the form teachers fill in a standardised questionnaire for all pupils, which enable them to identify those from the ninth school year onwards who are at risk of early leaving. With the consent of the parents or guardians, the identification of pupils as being at risk is communicated to the youth coaches. For practical implementation within the school system a decree has been issued by the Ministry of Education which regulates the procedure to be taken by the teachers in cooperation with youth coaching;
2. *low-threshold approach*: NEETs and young people at risk of dropping out are identified due to cooperation of youth coaches with open youth work (OYW), the staff of AMS or other provider institutions.

The process of youth coaching follows a three-level model:

Level 1: initial personal advisory talks (maximum two months duration); clarification of current problems and resources, provision of information, referral to higher-level assistance and/or education and training systems when needed. The involvement of parents or legal guardians, teachers and youth workers is considerable in this level.

Level 2: counselling with case management approach (maximum six months); agreement on objectives, in-depth clarification of elements impeding (vocational) education and training and/or entry into the labour market, analysis of strengths and weaknesses, career guidance and organisation of job trial programmes.

Level 3: support in case management (maximum twelve months); along with the common elements of level 2, this level focuses also on contacts with companies and potential employers/training providers, talent and ability profile, coordinated and targeted use of external counselling and assistance institutions and services.

All the participants in the scheme from level 2 onwards are provided with a youth coaching folder which includes the most important documents and expert statements.

Youth coaching is financed via the SMS with federal funds and the tax compensation fund, where necessary using ESF funds. Funding prerequisites also include continuous project evaluation to review attainment of the desired success (basic information in English can be found [here](#)).

**AusbildungsFIT** (fit for training; formally production schools) (see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)) are offered nationwide (such programmes were offered in 2023 from 46 project organisers in around 70 projects; there were over 6 600 participants in 2023 (BMAW, 2024) and form a follow-up measure of youth coaching, enhancing its sustainable effect. SMS is mainly responsible. Production schools are a bridge between school and transition to work, offering support and competence development for young people in company-oriented structures.

Young people aged 15 to 21 (those with handicaps up to the age of 24) that have completed youth coaching and are unemployed registered to AMS are eligible for participation in such schools. Access is regulated under partnership between youth coaching and AMS while the duration of participation ranges from three to twelve months maximum.

Implementation of *AusbildungFIT* builds on four approaches:

1. one-on-one coaching;
2. practical, work-oriented training modules;
3. the knowledge workshop, where basic qualifications are taught;
4. sports activities.

Following the completion of participation, a folder is delivered to the young people. It contains the competence profile before and after the programme *AusbildungsFIT*, the jointly agreed development plan and the final report (objectives, social and work-related skills and progress of participants, job trial programmes completed by the participant).

The funding of *AusbildungsFIT* is mainly accomplished via the SMS with federal funds, funds of the tax compensation fund and of the ESF (information in English can be found [here](#)).

**Apprentice coaching** (*Lehrlingscoaching*) has been set up in recent years as a pilot project and mainstreamed across Austria since October 2015 to support apprentices and training companies in the event of difficulties in training, and to take measures to ensure that training can be continued and to avoid drop-out of young people from training.

Vocational training in accordance with § 8b of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz* - BAG) (formerly: *Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA (integrated vocational training)) is a training opportunity for disadvantaged or disabled young people who cannot be placed in a regular apprenticeship. The aim is a vocational qualification and integration into working life. The assignment to a training company is made by the AMS. Vocational training in accordance with § 8b BAG can be carried out as follows:

1. *partial qualification apprenticeship*: partial qualification means that only part of an apprenticeship job profile is trained. Both the duration of training (one to three years) and the partial qualifications to be learned are specified in a training contract;
2. *extended apprenticeship*: training in an apprenticeship can be extended for one year, in exceptional cases for up to two years.

The training concludes with an apprenticeship-leave exam.

Since a reform of the Compulsory Schooling Act (*Schulpflichtgesetz* 1985) in 2018 (school-year 2018/19) regulations were enacted to reduce, prevent and intervene in cases of pupil absenteeism. For example, with five unexcused days of absence in one semester or 30 unexcused hours of absence in one semester or three consecutive unexcused days of absence, a five-stage procedure is initiated. This includes a designated discussion among teacher, parents and student, a counselling session with the school counsellor, and, in the most extreme case, financial penalties up to EUR 400. Because school absenteeism is a frequent sign of increased risk of early school leaving, these measures are part of the strategy to prevent early school leaving (further information can be found [here](#)).

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## Guidance for NEET

Measures, initiatives and policies in career guidance for NEETs are largely the same as those for early school leavers. The information from the section on [guidance for early leavers](#) therefore also applies here. An essential difference lies in the access to the target group. While many measures tackling disengagement and early school leaving still start with potential early leavers at school and their prevention, NEETs can no longer be reached with these measures. The accessibility of the NEETs is therefore a great challenge. With open youth work, outreach counselling and elements of street work in places where young people gather, specialised institutions try to bring young people back into the education and training system.

With the statutory *Education until 18 (Ausbildung bis 18)* initiative/policy in effect from 1 August 2016, which can be understood as a further development of the youth guarantee (regulated by the *Ausbildungspflichtgesetz*, ApflG, Training Obligation Act), young NEETs who completed compulsory schooling between the ages of 15 up to 18 are obliged to take up further education and training. This training and education obligation took effect for the first time for the age cohort that completed compulsory schooling in the 2016/17 and was due to enter general or vocational education and training at the upper secondary level in the autumn of 2017. Within this policy, measures like youth coaching should help to avoid drop-out and to reintegrate NEETs into education and training (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)).

The Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) and the Austrian Institute for Vocational Education and Training Research (öibf) conducted a scientific study of the introduction of the Education to 18 programme in 2017 and 2018 to examine the causes, consequences and possibilities for counteracting early school leaving and the benefits of the Education to 18 programme.

Both economic and social benefits were identified that result from an increase in participation in economic and social life through education and training.

Three key findings of the accompanying evaluation are (Steiner et al., 2019):

- Education until 18 is not simply an extension of compulsory schooling ('more of the same'), but enables new training and qualifications.
- A central success factor is the combination of prevention, intervention and compensation.
- Another success factor is the strong focus on cooperation, networking and collaboration, and thus the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

While individual measures such as youth coaching are continuously evaluated, no further evaluation results are available for the overall Education until 18 programme.

Changes in law regulating apprenticeships to reduce drop-out: in December 2011, the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*, BAG) was amended, and now includes a mediation process if the company or the apprentice wants to terminate the training contract prematurely. The mediation process is intended to ensure that the training is not abandoned for reasons that could be avoided. Measures facilitating the completion of an apprenticeship as a 'second-chance education' (or education in evening classes) were also implemented. The changes entered into force on 1 January 2012. For more information see below and [here](#).

The Austrian Public Employment Service (*Arbeitmarktservice Österreich*, AMS) is responsible for developing guidance and training activities to tackle the situation of young people at risk. These guidance services focus on access to information, training to activation, or employment searches and are linked to the *Education until 18* initiative. Within this initiative the measures are concentrated on young people aged 15 to 18. Within the framework of the training guarantee up to 25 (as part of the youth guarantee), all measures were extended up to the age of 25.

Training guarantee up to 18 (*Ausbildungsgarantie bis 18*): The training guarantee up to 18 is implemented as part of the Education until 18 programme (see above). The training guarantee secures an in-company or inter-company training place for every young person who wants to start an apprenticeship. The AMS is responsible for the operational implementation of the training guarantee.

Training guarantee up to 25 (*Ausbildungsgarantie bis 25*): for young adults in Austria, this AMS programme, which was launched on 1 January 2017, also focuses more strongly on education and training as the key to sustainable labour market integration. Young adults aged between 19 and 24 who are registered as unemployed or have only completed compulsory schooling (approximately 43% of all unemployed people in this age group) are the target group of the Training guarantee up to 25. This is understood as a package of qualification measures that have been successfully implemented to date, such as intensive training for skilled workers, inter-company apprenticeship training, work foundations or job-related qualification. The aim of this mix of measures is to enable young adults in Austria to obtain a vocational qualification to gain a sustainable foothold in the labour market. With this AMS programme and a budget of EUR 72.5 million in 2023, around 11 600 additional young people were offered a training via the AMS (BMAW, 2024a).

While these measures are basically education policy and labour market policy training programmes, they are always directly linked to career guidance programmes. They are an indispensable prerequisite for the orientation and placement of the young people in suitable programmes according to their interests and abilities. The preceding and accompanying career guidance takes place both within the framework of the general AMS offers and in settings developed for this purpose, as well as within the framework of youth coaching.

#### *Examples of projects*

**Youth coaching** (see section *Guidance for early leavers*) is part of the 'Training until 18' initiative and is implemented through the Social Ministry Service (SMS) and Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). Youth coaching is a project which has been offered nationwide since 2013 and addresses pupils in the ninth year of compulsory schooling (lower secondary) who are at risk of early leaving, NEETs between the ages of 15 and 19, and young people with special educational needs up to the age of 24.

Youth coaching aims to identify problems hampering durable integration into initial vocational and training and to elaborate solutions jointly with the young people and relevant to their social environment. For this purpose, networks are formed on a case-by-case basis between the programmes offered by relevant institutions. These institutions are active in the non-profit welfare sector or they are other private non-profit associations that provide social services.

The second method for identifying young people at risk, who are eligible for coaching, applies to the NEET group, as well as young people at risk of dropping out of school. This low-threshold approach identifies NEETs via cooperation of youth coaches with open youth work (OYW), the staff of AMS or other provider institutions. Further information can be found [here](#).

**AusbildungFIT** (fit for training, formerly production schools) are offered nationwide (46 project organisers in around 70 projects with around 6 600 participants in 2023) (BMAW, 2024) and form a follow-up measure to youth coaching, enhancing its sustainable effect. SMS is mainly responsible. *AusbildungFIT* programmes are a bridge between compulsory schooling and initial vocational education and training or transition to work, offering support and competence development for young people in company-oriented structures. Young people aged between 15 and 21 (and those with disabilities up to the age of 25) who have completed youth coaching and are registered as unemployed with AMS are eligible for participation in such programmes. Access is regulated under partnership between youth coaching and AMS; the duration of participation ranges from three to twelve months maximum. (see sections *Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders* and *Guidance for early leavers*).

Apprentice coaching (*Lehrlingscoaching*): to reduce drop out in apprenticeship training, apprentice coaching was implemented as a pilot project in some federal provinces and mainstreamed across Austria since October 2015. Apprentices with problems with their training company, their instructor, family or in part-time vocational school, but also those with personal challenges, have the opportunity to participate in a coaching process to solve their problems and continue the training. If the problems concern the training company or trainers, they are integrated into the process. The programme is nationwide, free of charge and independent of the age of the apprentices. The same programme offers coaching for training companies and instructors/trainers if they have problems with their apprentices.

The project Undiscovered talents - prevention and intervention in the event of early drop-out (*Unentdeckte Talente - Prävention und Intervention bei frühzeitigem Bildungsabbruch*) was completed in 2020 and there is no follow-up project. The project is described here as an example of good practice, even though it has been completed. The project was carried out on behalf of the Republic of Austria, represented by the Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and regionally the federal capital Vienna, within the framework of the Public Employment Service Vienna (AMS Vienna). It covered those aged 15 to 25 without an educational qualification beyond compulsory schooling and, regionally. The project had the goal of getting young people back on board without having completed their training and helping them concretely. A website was part of a larger project of the Public Employment Service (AMS) Vienna called Perspectives for undiscovered talents - prevention and intervention in the event of early drop-out and consisted of five sub-projects:

1. to inform and motivate young people (career guidance);
2. to collect and evaluate basic data;
3. to check existing measures and search for new approaches;
4. to develop expert platforms;
5. to prepare information in an understandable way.

The website had two career guidance areas. Videos with young people to appeal emotionally, with authentic interviews pointing out the importance of qualifications, and an interactive guide through the consulting jungle. The guide was an online questionnaire which - arranged according to subject areas - provided information regarding where young people can seek support, if they have problems. The website led to a total of 112 specific results and recommended 61 contact points which could be contacted directly and free of charge by young people. All information was summarised in a separate print version, which also served as an aid for the guidance and counselling service centres to be visited. The website could be accessed in many languages and so was particularly aimed at the target group of young migrants and refugees. More details can be found in the project report [here](#) (Landauer, 2020).

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## Guidance for young people at risk

In the National strategy on early school leaving (*Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-)Bildungsabbruchs*), which was developed and published by the Federal Ministry of Education (BMB) in 2012 (then Ministry of Education, Art and Culture) and revised in 2016 (then Ministry of Education), young people from educationally disadvantaged and socio-economically weak backgrounds are identified as at risk of early leaving of school prematurely. Educational disadvantage, risk of exclusion and early school leaving are seen as central challenges in the education system. Accordingly, education and labour market policy measures, especially in career guidance, are concentrating primarily on these groups. Migrants, refugees and people with disabilities are not mentioned as at-risk groups but summarised in the global definition. However, it is further statistically explained that family background factors are decisive in increased risk.

The National strategy on early school leaving outlines three areas of action: prevention, intervention and compensation. Various measures have been developed and proposed, including some in educational and vocational guidance at the following three levels:

1. at the steering level (system): in particular, the expansion and quality assurance of vocational guidance and educational counselling [information, counselling and orientation for education and career (IBOBB)];
2. at the organisational level (school): youth coaching measures, but also early warning systems and involvement of parents as education partners;
3. at the personal level: including youth coaching as case management, apprentice coaching and production schools as bridging services.

For detailed information on the concrete measures see sections [Guidance for early leavers](#) and [Guidance for NEET](#).

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## Guidance for persons with disabilities

In 2012 the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (then Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, in short Ministry of Social Affairs, BMASK) issued a special directive on the promotion of employment opportunities for women and men with disabilities (*Richtlinien Individualförderungen zur Beruflichen Eingliederung von Menschen mit Behinderung*). The general aim of the programme was to create comprehensive measures and labour market policy instruments to improve equal opportunities for women and men with disabilities. The aim was to reach all such groups.

Although career guidance is not explicitly mentioned as a measure in the directive, measures such as accompanying assistance (clearing, vocational training assistance, work assistance, job coaching), qualification and employment and other support structures also imply career guidance measures.

In 2012, the National disability action plan 2012-20 (*der Nationale Aktionsplan Behinderung 2012-20*) was published by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which represents the initial situation for various specialist areas and formulates political objectives. The action plan contains 250 measures with corresponding timelines and responsibilities. The measures are aimed at the sphere of influence of the public administration and its institutions. The chapters on education, employment, awareness-raising and information contain various links to career guidance, although it is not explicitly named as such. For example, the continuation of inclusive vocational training (then *Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA, now Ausbildung gem. § 8b BAG), the expansion of youth coaching (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)), mentoring projects for career planning in the public administration, and also the further training and sensitisation of counsellors of the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) on the subject of disability are mentioned as measures. In 2023, the Ministry of Social Affairs published an updated version of the action plan as the [National Action Plan on Disability 2022-2030](#) (BMSGPK, 2023). In the areas of access to the labour market and education, the action plan essentially involves the continuation and adaptation of existing objectives and measures.

The National disability action plan is well placed to increase the commitment for the necessary improvement of the social and occupational situation of people with disabilities. In employment, the main part in the action plan 2012-20 was the so-called Beschäftigungsoffensive (employment initiative) for people with disabilities.

A new aspect then was the introduction of pilot projects to improve transitions from invalidity pension or occupational therapy and reduction of invalidity pension to (supported) employment and reintegration. This aims to create employment options for people with disabilities who have been caught in dead-end measures. In this context occupational rehabilitation and retraining is supported by the AMS and carried out by different counselling and training organisations. One important initiative in this field is BBRZ Reha which offers counselling and training in cooperation with AMS. The career guidance measures are carried out by AMS (further information can be found [here](#)).

In the social sector, educational counselling is frequently incorporated into counselling practices addressing social at-risk groups in a more comprehensive manner. Counselling services are available from government bodies and non-government organisations. The latter include services offered by charitable organisations, specifically tailored towards at-risk groups such as migrants and people with disabilities. Further to these, a range of associations according to Austrian association law (*Vereinsgesetz* 2002, VerG) provide educational counselling in the framework of a wider field of activities.

Work assistance (*Arbeitsassistenz*): the concept of work assistance has three main objectives:

1. safeguarding a job (preventive function);
2. support in the search for and acquisition of a job (integrative function);
3. addresses disadvantaged job seekers, employees, service providers, superiors, colleagues (communicative function).

Targets groups are mainly:

1. people with physical and psychological disability/illness who are employed or available on the labour market with a recognised degree of disability of at least 50%;
2. young people with special educational needs, with learning disabilities or with social and emotional impairments up to the age of 24;
3. companies that employ these people or are willing to employ them.

People with disabilities/illnesses and a degree of disability of at least 30% can also take advantage of the employment assistance if they cannot obtain or retain a job without this support. (Sozialministeriumsservice, n.d.)

The aim is to help the disabled person to clarify their professional perspectives and identify alternatives, to find and keep a job or an apprenticeship and to offer crisis management. The activities are coordinated by the Vocational assistance network (*Netzwerk berufliche Assistenz, NEBA*) which is a service of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (in short, Ministry of Social Affairs) and integrates several different organisations and institutions. The network collaborates with the regional offices of the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*), with schools and training providers, companies, social partners, health related services and the regional provinces. Nationwide there are about 100 regional and local counselling and accompanying institutions involved in the activities carrying out the operational implementation of work assistance (a short info in English you can find [here](#)).

Intensive career information course for the deaf: this is a service of [equalizent](#), a counselling and training institution that offers various services to integrate young people and adults with hearing impairments into education and the labour market. For example, training courses and counselling are offered for individuals, but also for companies. Young people who receive in-company training are supported during their training and young people and companies are supported in integration measures. A special feature is that all employees speak Austrian sign language. Equalizent also participates in the Vienna Youth College for Refugees (*Wiener Jugendcollege für Flüchtlinge*) (see section [Guidance for immigrants](#)) and cares for refugees with disabilities.

The course programme in career guidance is aimed at deaf and hearing-impaired people. One course ([Youth zone / Zone Jugendliche](#)) is aimed at young people aged 16 to 21 and offers, in particular, career guidance, an exploration of the world of work and internship opportunities. Another course ([Horizons](#)) is aimed at people aged 18 to 50 and provides support with career planning, job searches and applications, among other things.

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## Guidance for immigrants

In 2010, the National action plan for integration (*Nationaler Aktionsplan für Integration, NAP.*) was published; it included a comprehensive set of measures and integration indicators. All integration policy measures of the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*), municipalities, cities, social partners and the federal government were successfully bundled for the first time. Precisely because integration is a cross-cutting issue, the corresponding framework conditions can only be created in cooperation with all those responsible. The *NAP.* is intended to structure the Austria-wide cooperation of all those responsible for successful integration measures and to optimise their implementation. In addition to general integration policy guidelines, the *NAP.* deals in greater depth with challenges, principles and objectives in the following fields of action: language and education, work and occupation, rule of law and values, health and social affairs, intercultural dialogue, sport and leisure, as well as housing and the regional dimension of integration.

According to the *NAP.* different strategies are used by Austria to tackle the high unemployment among those with a migrant background:

1. access to apprenticeships promoted by companies, AMS and apprenticeship training programmes;
2. active labour market policies for youth;
3. career guidance projects like Career coaching, Fit for training, Production schools;
4. migrant communities' involvement in developing projects for immigrants;
5. the involvement of experts with migrant background in developing career guidance activities;
6. access to multilingual career guidance services.

The **Austrian Integration Fund** (*Österreichischer Integrationsfonds*, ÖIF) is a central institution for the implementation of the National action plan for integration and important in the field of career guidance. The ÖIF is a fund of the Republic of Austria and, as a nationwide integration service provider, a partner of numerous organisations and important actors in integration and migration in Austria. In nine integration centres throughout the country, the ÖIF offers information and advice for people with a migration background, carries out integration projects, and informs society about opportunities and challenges in the field of integration and migration.

The ÖIF was founded in 1960 by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BM.I) under the name United Nations Refugee Fund. Since 2002 the service profile of the ÖIF has been expanded and the ÖIF now shares responsibility for implementing the integration agreement. Within this framework, the ÖIF handles German tests for different skill levels across Austria and evaluates German integration courses to ensure consistent quality (for short information in English see also [here](#)).

The target groups of the ÖIF are:

1. asylum beneficiaries, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and third-country nationals;
2. people with a migration background;
3. institutions, organisations and multipliers in integration, social welfare and education;
4. the Austrian Company.

With integration centres in several provincial capitals as well as mobile counselling in towns, the ÖIF assists immigrants throughout Austria with their integration by providing counselling and information via regional and local networks of counselling services.

Services of the ÖIF include:

1. counselling of new immigrants;
2. organising workshops for new immigrants and authorities;
3. counselling on issues related to integration, particularly language, education and employment;
4. language courses;
5. values and orientation courses;
6. networking with key players at all levels of responsibility;
7. project implementation (e.g. mentoring for migrants);
8. funding programmes, scholarships and awards;
9. factual and background information on integration and migration;
10. contact persons on site for the integration agreement and European funds.

Another important nationwide service, partly a result of the *NAP.I*, is the Contact point for persons with qualifications acquired abroad (*Anlaufstelle für Personen mit im Ausland erworbenen Qualifikationen*, AST). Since January 2013, four contact points (AST) in Vienna, Linz, Graz and Innsbruck have been offering advice on the recognition and assessment of qualifications acquired abroad throughout Austria. In the other federal provinces, weekly consultation days take place. The contact points are the counselling centres within the meaning of § 5 of the Recognition and Evaluation Act (*Anerkennungs- und Bewertungsgesetz*, AuBG) (for further information please see [here](#)).

With the website [www.berufsanerkennung.at/en](http://www.berufsanerkennung.at/en) (Professional recognition in Austria) the ÖIF offers a multilingual platform with a step-by-step online check for a first orientation and necessary steps for obtaining formal recognition of qualifications from abroad. The website offers direct links to the regional centres of the AST to provide personal counselling in addition to the online information.

The ÖIF has set up a separate information page in Ukrainian and German to provide information about the various counselling and information services for people who have fled Ukraine as a result of Russia's war of aggression (see [here](#) for more information)

Apart from these basic information and counselling services for migrants and refugees, there are numerous initiatives, programmes and projects at regional and local level to give this target group access to career guidance. Typical for programmes and projects are those that go beyond career guidance and include other aspects of integration counselling.

Programmes like youth coaching (*Jugendcoaching*), described under Guidance for early school leavers and for NEETs, are open to migrants who are recognised refugees. Another important measure aiming at supporting integration of refugees and asylum seekers into society and working life is the compulsory/voluntary year for integration (*Verpflichtendes/Freiwilliges Integrationsjahr*). The obligatory integration year was passed by the Austrian parliament in May 2017 and is aimed primarily at unemployed refugees regardless of age. Since 2018, asylum seekers from Syria may also (voluntarily) participate in the integration year if they are highly likely to be recognised as entitled to asylum. The possibility of registering for vocational training during the integration year is ongoing on a regular basis. The integration year is organised by the public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) with the support of the ÖIF and interest groups such as the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO), the Chamber of Labour (AK), the trade unions and the Federation of Austrian Industry (IV). The measure consists of modules offered according to individual needs, such as recognition of existing skills and qualifications, language courses, values courses, career guidance and job application training.

#### *Examples of projects, services or programmes*

The Youth College for Refugees (*Jugendcollege für zugewanderte Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene*) was founded in September 2016 by the City of Vienna. It offers young refugees aged 15 to 21 courses to prepare for vocational training or employment. In the first year of implementation, 1 268 young people and young adults were advised by the Youth College and classified according to their education level. In the first year, 153 young people were able to find employment or training. Each year, 1000 places are available for participants at the Youth College.

**b.mobile:** in 2016, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*, WKO), in cooperation with the Austrian Public Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich*, AMS) and the federal ministries responsible for the economy and labour, initiated the pilot project Supraregional apprenticeship placement (*Überregionale Lehrstellenvermittlung*) and, in the same year, added the module b.mobile - Use the potential of skilled workers ([b.mobile - Fachkräftepotenzial nutzen](#)). The project is open to all young people at the age of 18 to 25, but the focus is on young refugees. A computer test (available in different languages) is carried out to determine the strengths, competences and interests of the learners. The test results form the basis for a supra-regional search for suitable training places. In the context in which about three-quarters of all recognised refugees live in eastern Austria, but more than 80% of the available training places are in the west or south of the country, the project tries to balance supply and demand for training places. In the b.mobile module the refugees undergo a preparatory course in subject-specific German,

mathematics, practical work and intercultural aspects. During a one-week internship, apprenticeship seekers and companies can check whether a training relationship is suitable for both. An apprentice coach is provided on site to provide the learner with long-term support in professional and personal matters. The pilot project ran until 2022 and was extended as a regular ongoing project. By February 2019, a total of around 550 people had taken part in the programme and 106 people have been placed in apprenticeships. Current participation figures are not available.

**Integration house Vienna** (*Integrationshaus Wien*) is a project which provides support to migrants and refugees with special needs, and single-parent families. A user-need approach focused on developing language skills, finding accommodation, and providing psychological, health and guidance support is valued. Counselling about work, vocational and further training and education is an explicit service of the Integration house Vienna. The services are multilingual, as is the website. Integration house Vienna is a not-for-profit organisation with 160 employees speaking 40 different languages. In 2023 they could offer more than 5 500 accommodation, counselling and care, training and childcare places. It is a partner of the youth college for refugees. The services are financed by public funding and private donations. About 13 % of the yearly budget is covered by different forms of private donation.

**BBE German** (BBE Deutsch) is a project implemented from 2013. The main focus is on raising awareness about the AMS role and means of support among refugees while accompanying refugees in German courses. The activities developed by a guidance counsellor focus on helping refugees in recognising their qualifications obtained abroad and challenges related to integration in a new country. The refugees also have access to further training, learn about job search strategies and start developing a qualification plan. The programme is run by various counselling institutions and funded by the AMS Vienna.

**'Du kannst was! ('You can do it!')** is the result of collaboration between the Economic Chamber, Chamber of Labour and local administration from Upper Austria. One aim of the project is to help people with an immigration background (older than 22) to obtain an apprenticeship certificate quickly and efficiently by recognising their competences and professional experience within a concrete profession. The project follows a four-step process, including a career counselling interview. It has now been extended to other federal provinces (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)).

The Interface Vienna project **Starting aid** for persons entitled to asylum or holding a subsidiary protection status (*Interface Wien - Startbegleitung für Asyl- und subsidiär Schutzberechtigte*) is a project of the city of Vienna to provide living and guidance support to refugees. A person is entitled to maximum two-year childcare, housing, health and career support. The project started in 2008 and includes experts with a migrant background. Counselling in refugees' mother tongue is also provided.

Another project of Interface Vienna is **Mom learns German** (*Mama lernt Deutsch*) which provides training support to migrant mothers with the aim of empowering them to play an active role in educating their children in a new country context. The training is focused on acquiring a good knowledge of the Austrian education and training system, developing basic skills, and learning about accommodation and the health system. Free childcare services are provided. Similar services are offered also by some other organisations.

**Mentoring for migrants** (*Mentoring für Migrantinnen und Migranten*) is a project developed by the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) in cooperation with AMS and ÖIF in 2008. It aims to match Austrian business members with qualified persons with a migration background (refugees or immigrants) in developing a mentor-mentee relationship. Two major objectives are to help to integrate qualified persons with a migration background into the labour market and to support the internationalisation of enterprises. Mentees are persons with at least completed vocational training at medium qualification level (corresponding to an apprenticeship certificate or higher) who have unrestricted access to the labour market and knowledge of German at least at level B1. For a period of six months, the mentor helps the mentee to find job opportunities, identify his/her skills, and develop job applications. A mentee must have good language skills or have been involved in a traineeship. The project is carried out in cooperation with the ÖIF. The contact partners for the mentees are within ÖIF; the contact for mentors runs through WKO. By 2018 1 800 mentoring pairs have been formed (further information in English can be found [here](#)).

In the social sector, educational counselling is frequently incorporated into counselling practices addressing social at-risk groups in a more comprehensive manner. Counselling services are available from government bodies and non-government organisations. The latter include services offered by charitable organisations specifically tailored towards particular at-risk groups, such as migrants and people with disabilities. Further to these, a range of associations according to Austrian association law (*Österreichisches Vereinsgesetz*, VerG) provide educational counselling in the framework of a wider remit.

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## Guidance for other groups

No further information is available for other groups that goes beyond the information already presented for the defined target groups.

## Gender-based policies

Equal treatment of the sexes is laid down in principle in Article 7 of the Austrian Federal Constitutional Law and is also based on the application of Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Federal Chancellery, n. d.). The 1993 [Equal Treatment Act](#) is also intended to protect employees against discrimination in the world of work, including training and further training. It therefore also has a certain overarching effect on career guidance. However, due to the fragmented structure of career guidance services, there are no explicit overarching legal regulations for dealing with the issue of gender equality in this area.

Nevertheless, there are corresponding regulations for both educational counselling and career guidance for children and young people at school and for the activities of the Public Employment Service (AMS). The Network Educational Counselling Austria has been working on the topic of gender and diversity standards in guidance for many years. In 2014, a detailed analysis was published that is considered a guide for the Network Educational Counselling Austria and the participating institutions (Ewers and Schallert, 2014).

The didactic principles of the curriculum for educational and vocational orientation at the lower secondary level explicitly define that vocational orientation teaching must be planned and carried out in a gender-reflective way ([curriculum for educational and vocational orientation](#)). With reference to the competence module used, questioning gender stereotypes is defined as part of the competence areas. Accordingly, the topic is also included in the curricula for teacher training and further education for career orientation teachers (for example, in the [framework curriculum](#) for the university course for education and career orientation teachers).

The Ministry of Education also offers a comprehensive collection of materials on [gender-sensitive career orientation](#) in the IBOBB portal to support teachers in the classroom with specific applicable material.

In 2011, the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) issued an internal guideline (BIZ guideline) setting out minimum standards for work in the career information centres, which, among other things, regulate access to up-to-date gender-adapted career information.

In the context of gender equality policies, Austria also provides access to a wide range of gender-sensitive guidance approaches. Most of the activities and projects focus on girls and women. These initiatives are supported by national and regional policies which offer financial support for projects and services that promote equal access for women and girls, for example in apprenticeships with a low proportion of women.

Some examples for such initiatives, policies and financial support to show the wide range of activities are:

**Mädchenzentrum Klagenfurt** (Girls' Centre Klagenfurt) is a local guidance centre in the city of Klagenfurt specialised to support girls and young women for example with special career guidance activities.

**"amaZone-Award"**: The "amazon-Award" is a yearly award for companies in Vienna that train girls and women engaged in craft & technology. The award is presented by the girls counselling centre "[Sprungbrett für Mädchen](#)" in Vienna in cooperation with the Vienna Economic Chamber and supported by the Public Employment Service (AMS), the Chamber of Labour, the Federation of Trade Unions and the Federation of Industry.

**"Promotion of girls and women in professions with a low proportion of women"**: The Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) supports companies with a monthly contributions of EUR 400 to the training costs that train girls or women in apprenticeships dominated by men. This support is also available for companies which take persons with disabilities into apprenticeship training or adults (people older than 18). In the case of adult training the support is EUR 900 monthly.

**FEMtech - Frauen in Technik und Forschung** (FEMtech - women in technology and science): FEMtech was an initiative of the Federal Ministry of Innovation, Mobility, and Infrastructure (BMIMI, then Federal Ministry Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK)), which aimed to improve equal opportunities for women in industrial and non-university research. To this end, the initiative's website provided various information and actions to make successful women in technology and research visible (e.g. Expert of the Month), but also offered concrete funding. At the end of 2024, after 20 years, the FEMtech initiative was transformed into a new initiative. The successor initiative, [Diversitec](#), expands the original focus of FEMtech to include additional dimensions of diversity.

**Girls'Day and Boys' Day**: One of the most extensive initiatives, which has existed since 2001, is [Girls' Day](#) (e.g. Girls' Day Vienna, [Wiener Töchtertag](#)), which is organised throughout Austria to give female pupils the opportunity to find out about technical and craft occupations that are predominantly practised by men on site in companies. Girls' Day is organised by the respective provincial governments in cooperation with various partners, such as the social partners and their educational and vocational guidance institutions, and usually takes place in April.

For several years, there has also been an additional [Boys' Day](#), which usually takes place in November and is intended to interest boys in occupations and training in the social, care and education sector. Both Girls' Day and Boy's Day are aimed for young aged approximately 12 to 18.

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