

Contact Points for people who gained professional qualifications abroad (AST)

Description

Counselling on recognition and further educational topics for migrants, people entitled to asylum status and to subsidiary protection. Multilingual consultations are offered in the following languages: German, Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, Turkish, English, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, French, Romanian, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Farsi, Arabic, Dioula, and Bobo. Through lobbying and networking with decision-makers and opinion leaders AST gathers information, analyses and responds to policy initiatives and social developments with the aim to represent the interests of migrants.

Beneficiaries

 **Migrants / refugees**

Migrants and Refugees

Countries

 **Austria**

Education level and sector

-  **Upper secondary education**
-  **Upper secondary vocational education and training (school-based)**
-  **Upper secondary vocational education and training (work-based learning)**

- Not connected to the formal education and training system
- Upper secondary VET (academic and apprenticeship based)
- VET (school-based and apprenticeship based)

Type of policy/initiative

 **Intervention**  **Compensation**

Intervention/Compensation

Level of implementation / Scope

Local level Regional level National level

- Local level
- Regional level
- National level

Stage of implementation

On-going

Since 2013

Aims of policy/initiative

Some qualified migrants spend years being trapped in low skilled jobs despite having foreign qualifications. The reasons are diverse: lack of support in their job search, family reasons, being a single wage earner or complex processes of qualifications recognition. The contact-points help migrants to improve their labour market situation by providing information, further education and training, counselling and clarification of professional goals.

AST Contact Points have been established to inform migrants and refugees about recognition of their qualifications, the ways the qualifications are used, and potential improvements of their (labour market) integration. The BZ (Beratungszentrum für MigrantInnen, Counselling Centre for Migrants) is a holding organization for regional AST-centres, and it coordinates the activities and tasks of contact-points (AST). Contact-points (AST) are acting as advice service under the framework of the Recognition and Assessment Act.

Features and types of activities implemented

Activities of recognition counselling:

- forwarding of diplomas to validation offices

If necessary, request of certified translations of diplomas, certificates and other documents. The cost to certify translations of documents is covered as well.

- Clarification of necessity and possibility of formal recognition
- Assistance during recognition proceedings
- Providing information on German language courses and „bridging courses“ and how to find financing for these courses

Ongoing collaboration and networking with the public employment services, employment promotion fund or integration fund for support on further education trainings, social partners, education providers, recognition authorities, the Ministry of Science and federal governments.

Resources

AST is sponsored by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection. Some of the employees are supported by the municipality. Currently, 26 counsellors are employed. In 2018, EUR 1,906,300 were dedicated to all AST Contact Points in Austria.

Evaluation of the measure

Migrants and persons entitled to asylum should be reached early, after their settlement in Austria, by counselling on labour market and educational issues. Knowledge about the Austrian labour market, education opportunities, eligibility for funding as well as requirements for access to qualification and recognition can prevent employment in jobs for which they are overqualified.

The number of AST clients is documented statistically. Reports include an internal evaluation which is written for each federal province and Austria. Beside that an external evaluation has been published: <http://www.anlaufstelle-erkennung.at/articles/view/314>

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

The external evaluation of AST shows that participation in the counselling speeds up the recognition and/or assessment of foreign qualifications, helps with re-qualification and further training/education, supports finding employment suited to migrants' qualifications, and helps avoid underqualified employment.

Success factors

AST tries to reach as many migrants as possible and make it easy to access the counselling by offering the service in many languages, free of charge, and in several regional centres. Some of the counsellors are also migrants and/or have grown up in multicultural environments, meaning that they are familiar with customs, traditions and international education systems. Importance of further education and exchange of experiences in order to maintain professional credentials.

Contact details for further information

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Related intervention approaches



Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Source URL: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/contact-points-people-who-gained-professional-qualifications-abroad-ast>