

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 career guidance, with an equally wide variety of responsibilities. From this point of view, there is no uniform system of educational and vocational guidance, but there are certain legally regulated responsibilities and coordination efforts.

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

- career guidance and counselling offered by education and training institutions;
- 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](#)).

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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, Science and Research (BMBWF) 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 (the first stages of development starting in 1999), there is a clearer structure of responsibility and coordination for this general target group.

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 BMBWF, responsibility for guidance for jobseekers in the labour market sector (and those seeking training) lies in principle with the AMS.

The Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW), which is responsible for the company-related part of Austrian apprenticeship training, is an important contact for dual training. The Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (short: Ministry of Social Affairs) and the Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism (BMNT) 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 BMBWF 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, Science and Research (BMBWF) coordinates career guidance activities in Austria to a certain extent. But the BMBWF, BMDW 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 BMBWF (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:

- a. implementation of basic competencies in all curricula;
- b. focus on process orientation and support;
- c. professionalisation of counsellors and trainers;
- d. quality assurance and evaluation of offers, processes and structures;
- e. broaden access, create offers for new target groups (Götz, R. 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 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 BMBWF (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 2019, the LLG Forum includes the following, but varying, members:

- a. National Agency Erasmus+;
- b. Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF);
- c. Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection;
- d. Federal Chancellery;
- e. Public Employment Service Austria (AMS);
- f. Chamber of Labour Vienna;
- g. Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB);
- h. Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO);
- i. Chamber of Agriculture;
- j. Federal Association of Industry (IV);
- k. Austrian Association for Education and Economics;
- l. Network of practitioners (bib-infonet);
- m. Euroguidance Austria;
- n. Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifef);
- o. Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (öibf);
- p. ibw - Research & Development in VET (ibw);
- q. several University Colleges of Teacher Education (PH);
- r. regional networks from the Netzwerk Bildungsberatung (project networks for career guidance).

There are also different coordination networks at regional level.

In 2005, the BMBWF (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 school teachers. Partner organisations 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.

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 have also been established and various innovative projects and initiatives have been developed between different stakeholders and partners at different levels.

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 [ICT in lifelong guidance](#)).

Jugendcoaching (Youth Coaching) is a result of the bilateral agreement between the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (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 Centre, 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. Every Thursday the IBOBB Café offers guidance in foreign languages with a translation service (every Thursday one of four different languages) and once a month 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 and employers, resulting in the implementation of Production schools (*Produktionsschulen*) with a duration of three months up to 12 months where students (14-21 years old; up to 24 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 2018, production schools were offered at around 90 locations 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:

- a. guidance and counselling provided by education and training institutions;
- b. 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*). However, in the respective curricula of different school types and in various decrees of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), 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 – ApflG*, 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. While the first results of implementation are currently being evaluated, this measure is expected to bring a further increase in the importance of vocational orientation (possibly accompanied by a further increase in the complexity of the offer structures and the need for stronger collaboration and coordination between the different guidance services).

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. Guidance services are treated by policy stakeholders as playing an important role in preventing and reducing unemployment, labour shortages, skill mismatch and in 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. 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 in the 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 (para. 13b SchUG). In addition, teachers at all lower and upper secondary schools (i.e. from 5th to 13th grade, ISCED 2 to 5) are active as student and educational counsellors. A core task of these counsellors is to inform pupils 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 continuing 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 11th and 13th grades for young people aged between 17 and 19, in order to support pupils 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.

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

“Meine Technik” (My technology) is an information platform for future female technicians. In addition to a lot of information, the initiative also offers funding for topic-related projects. **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 handicapped people 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 is an initiative of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT), which aims to improve equal opportunities for women in industrial and non-university research. To this end, the initiative's website provides various information and actions to make successful women in technology and research visible (e.g. Expert of the Month), but also offers concrete funding.

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 conducted by the public employment service in 2010 (Nowak, 2009), 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 98 local organisations. Its activity is supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection and aims to promote social inclusion and active labour participation of all citizens. AMS provides access to 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 [ICT in lifelong 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. Their service focuses on companies, supporting them especially in finding apprentices. For example, the career guidance and information services provided by **BiWi 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. Tyrol is still developing an offer. 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 Chamber of Economy, in Salzburg, co-financed by the federal province government. For young people the testing and counselling is usually free of charge. (Examples: *Talentcenter Styria, Talente-Check Salzburg*, or *Lower Austria Begabungskompass*) (see sections [ICT in lifelong guidance](#) and [Career guidance for school pupils](#)).

In addition to the guidance services in schools, adult education and career guidance centres of the AMS and economic chambers there are some specialist guidance services for special needs groups such as migrants and refugees, handicapped people, 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 2016, **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.

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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 (*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, Science and Research (BMBWF) 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, 53 certification procedures have been carried out. At present (2019), 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 career 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 [Tirol](#)).

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. (Bundesrichtlinie betreffend 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*) (Krötzel, 2010).

Circular No. 17 of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF, 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 BMBWF (then Ministry of Education) 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 *Grundsatzterlass für Schüler- und Bildungsberatung* (Basic Decree for Student and Educational Guidance) and Circular No. 30/2017 *Grundsatzterlass für Berufsorientierungskoordination* (Basic Decree for Career Guidance 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 New secondary school (*Neue 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.

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

[Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Austria](#)

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 the 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 - Economic Development Institute): WIFI and the economic chambers have educational and professional, qualified and experienced advisors that provide support in career decision-making. Users 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 collaboration among stakeholders](#)) are currently developing approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of their services and especially of the Talent-Centres, but so far, no results are available.

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](#).

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 have to 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 2017 86,000 students at seventh, eighth and ninth grade visited an AMS career information centre. In total, more than half a million young people and adults used the information offers of the centres. Further information can be found [here](#).

In 2016, 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 2015. It should be noted that in some federal provinces these Talent checks are mandatory for young people in this age group (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](#)).

Up to 2015, the Austrian Institute for (*Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung, öibf*) carried out a [yearly differentiated evaluation of the counselling contacts](#) in the Network Educational Counselling Austria (*Netzwerk Bildungsberatung Österreich*); results beyond 2015 are currently not available. In 2015 a total of 104,000 adult counselling contacts were registered in the Austrian Career Guidance Network, double the figure for 2014. 92% of these were face-to-face counselling services. The evaluation provides a differentiated insight, for example, in terms of consulting formats, personal characteristics and education level of the customers.

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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:

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

Example of projects or initiatives

BIC.at (*BerufsInformationsComputer*) is an online-platform for occupational orientation and developed by ibw, Research & Development in VET (*Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft, ibw*) and 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, 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, the education system, 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 test, better adapted to a young target group, improved structuring of the information on education and training providers, and more videos.

Online educational counselling Austria (*Online-Bildungsberatung Österreich*) is part of the Network educational counselling Austria (*Netzwerk Bildungsberatung Österreich*). This is an initiative of Department of Adult Education of the 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](#)).

Bib-atlas is a website, where users of all age groups can easily find offers for education advice throughout the country. Users can search by federal province, by target group, by a special focus on topics and interests like labour market, further education, grants or by preferred counselling setting such as face-to-face, group counselling, chat- or e-mail. The website will not be updated at present (2018/19), because financing issues have to be clarified after the end of a funding period.

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 (2019) the platform offers more than 6,300 interviews in about 10 different languages, mainly in German but with almost 1,000 in English. 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).

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Training and qualifications

Regarding the qualification of career guidance counsellors in Austria, a fundamental distinction has to be made between counsellors (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 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 universities 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 of Psychology (*Schulpsychologie*) and the Psychological Student Counselling (*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 \(Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich, wba\)](#) and the project ECGC (European Career Guidance Certificate) in cooperation with the Danube University Krems (see below) are two 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 may exist 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 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:

- Bifeb** (Federal Institute for Adult Education): training course for educational and career counselling; 261 training sessions that have to be attended personally, 400 training sessions in total, duration approximately two years;
- Danube University Krems**: master training course for educational and career counselling, duration four semesters;
- WIFI Wien**: diploma training course, Trainer for educational and career counselling; 245 training sessions, duration approximately two years;
- BFI Wien**: diploma training course, Coach for educational and career counselling – educational counselling with focus on case management; 200 training sessions.

Some universities, such as the Danube University Krems or Sigmund Freud University, are currently developing new master programmes in education and career counselling. 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.

The [bib-wiki](#) is a nationwide online initiative directly targets educational counsellors engaged in adult learning across a diverse range of organisations and institutions. It is directed towards enabling exchange of information and experiences among professionals in continuous education. The aim is to provide practically useful peer support. By means of online Wiki technology, contributions can be uploaded by registered users - i.e. professional counsellors - and by a central editing team. A dedicated functionality for online discussions is available to registered professionals. Some content is also made publicly available without user registration. Bib-wiki 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 and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (then Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture).

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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, Science and Research (BMBWF) 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 the handicapped 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, 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 cost to clients is low because of funding by 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 advisors 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 students 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. Students from the seventh and eighth grades undertake 32 hours of compulsory career guidance classes. The aim of the classes is to help students develop their CMS.

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*) 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 [here](#)).

The **KL:IBO** project provides competence learning through individualisation and profession-orientation and aims to support 10 to 14 year-old students in analysing their competences, create portfolios and design their future. The project promotes student self-assessment and the feedback provided by peers, teachers and parents. Teachers become coaches and companions to support the competence assessment and the development of student portfolios. They actively involve students in gaining more responsibility in their further professional development.

The **My future** initiative was implemented in seventh and eighth grade of the lower secondary level [especially in the new middle schools (*Neue Mittelschule*)] in several federal provinces (*Bundesländer*) including Upper Austria and Tyrol. 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 (*Branchenpräsentationen*) 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 they provide and develop **BIC.at**, the online career information resource of the Austrian Economic Chambers (see section [ICT in lifelong 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 and their parents, businesses and schools; they are free of charge, being funded by the Viennese Economic Chamber.

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, Science and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, BMBWF*). 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 **#yourfuture** (for those who are not sure if they want to start study or want to enter the labour market).

WhatchaSKOOL is a workshop concept for high school students at upper secondary level (aged 14 to 18). It is an initiative of the web-platform **whatchado** (see section [ICT in lifelong guidance](#)). Members of the whatchado staff visit schools and offer up to 90-minute lectures for large groups. They motivate young people to explore their occupational interests, wishes, expectations and goals and inspire them to broaden their views for the variety of career opportunities. The basis of the workshops is the personal life story of the lecturers, especially the two whatchado founders, who travelled in their

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 Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) (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*). 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:

- as many institutions and organisations as possible become involved in regional networks of educational counselling;
- broadest possible coverage of the country by regional access points to educational counselling is achieved;
- as many different population groups as possible are actively targeted;
- 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 (*Initiative 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 (*Weiterbildungsakademie 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 are to focus on employment by promoting sustainable and high-quality employment and, by providing special support to employees and employers. 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 supports 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. Lifelong learning level is, according to the results of the Adult Education Survey (AES) 2016/17, high in comparison to the EU average and constantly growing, but the participation of the low- and medium-qualified in adult learning is moderate. There is evidence that the country continues to invest in developing active labour market measures ([Erwachsenenbildung. Ergebnisse des Adult Education Survey \(AES\)](#)).

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 have skills'/'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 para.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 [Career guidance for adult learners](#)) are also open to unemployed adults.

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. Companies which hire these workers receive integration subsidies and wage subsidies for a period of three months (men) or six months (women). There is also the possibility to integrate the unemployed into a social enterprise as a first step of reintegration into the labour-market. According to the 2017 *AMS annual report*, around 30,000 people were able to take up subsidised employment through this initiative (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich, 2018*).

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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 (see section [Guidance for unemployed adults](#)).

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Guidance for early leavers

Youth guarantee programmes (YGP) have been developed with the aim of supporting those at risk of dropping out. 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, the action 'future youth', as well as the youth coaching.

Youth guarantee programmes 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, Science and Research (BMBWF), the youth section within the Federal Chancellery (*Bundeskanzleramt*) and the Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW). 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 BMBWF 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 production schools (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 2017 Austria had a 7.4% rate of early school leaving from education and training and has reached its Europe 2020 target (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 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 pupils in the ninth year of compulsory schooling who are at risk of dropping out, 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 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:

- a. 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 dropping out. The identification of pupils as at risk is..., with the guardians'/parents' consent, made known 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;
- b. 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](#)).

[Production schools](#) (see section [Coordination and cooperation among stakeholders](#)) are offered nationwide (such schools were offered in 2018 at about 90 locations; there were over 3,000 participants in 2016) 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 age 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 production schools builds on four approaches:

- a. one-on-one coaching;
- b. practical, work-oriented training modules;
- c. the knowledge workshop, where basic qualifications are taught;
- d. sports activities.

Following the completion of participation, a folder is delivered to the young people. It contains the competence profile before and after the production school, 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 production schools 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 para. 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 para. 8b BAG can be carried out as follows:

- a. *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;
- b. *extended apprenticeship*: training in an apprenticeship can be extended by up to two years. The training concludes with an apprenticeship-leave

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 school 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 drop-outs 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*, ApfIG, 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 has taken 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 the youth coaching should help to avoid drop-out and to reintegrate NEETs into education and training (see section [Guidance for early leavers](#)). As the first evaluations of the initiative are still in preparation, it is not yet possible to make reliable statements about the effects.

Changes in law regulating apprenticeships to reduce drop-out: In December 2011, the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*, BAG) was amended, and now includes a new 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.

The Austrian Public Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice 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 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. For the 2018/19 training year, the AMS has places available for around 11,500 participants. The cost is EUR 191 million from the AMS and the federal provinces (*Bundesländer*).

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 in order to gain a sustainable foothold in the labour market. With this AMS programme and a budget of EUR 37 million in 2018, around 17,800 additional young people were offered a training perspective via the AMS.

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 up to the age of 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 dropping out, 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](#).

Production schools are offered nationwide (at about 90 locations in 2018, with over 3,000 participants in 2016) and form a follow-up measure to 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 between 15 and 21 (and those with disabilities up to the age of 24) who have completed youth coaching and are registered as unemployed with AMS are eligible for participation in such schools. 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 in recent years, 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 problems, 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*) is being carried out on behalf of the Republic of Austria, represented by the Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection within the framework of the Public Employment Service Vienna (AMS Vienna). It covers those aged 15 to 25 without an educational qualification beyond compulsory schooling and, regionally, the federal capital Vienna. The project has the goal of getting young people back on board without having completed their training and helping them concretely. The website is 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 consists of five sub-projects:

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

The website has 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 is an online questionnaire which - arranged according to subject areas - provides information regarding where young people can see for support, if they have problems. The website leads to a total of 112 specific results and recommends 61 contact points which can be contacted directly and free of charge by young people. All information is summarised in a separate print version, which also serves as an aid for the guidance and counselling service centres to be visited. The website can be accessed in many languages and so is particularly aimed at the target group of young migrants and refugees.

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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, Science and research (BMBWF) 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 dropping out 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:

- 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)];
- at the organisational level (school): youth coaching measures, but also early warning systems and involvement of parents as education partners;
- 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 2011 the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (then Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, in short Ministry of Social Affairs) issued a special directive on the promotion of employment opportunities for women and men with disabilities (*Sonderrichtlinie berufliche Integration*). 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 (*Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA), 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.

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 is the existing so-called *Beschäftigungsoffensive* (employment initiative) for people with disabilities.

A new aspect is 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 (*Arbeitsassistentz*): the concept of work assistance has three main objectives:

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

Targets groups are mainly:

- a. 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%;
- b. young people with special educational needs, with learning disabilities or with social and emotional impairments up to the age of 24;
- c. companies that employ these people or are willing to employ them.

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 Network of professional assistance (*Netzwerk berufliche Assistenz*, NEBA) which is a service of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health 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.

UNerHÖRT: this is a project 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.

In the project **UNerHÖRT** equalizent offers online occupational information in sign language, especially for young people (the age is not defined in more detail). In addition to written information and pictures about Austrian apprenticeships, information about many apprenticeships is also offered in sign language. There are sign language descriptions of the occupational fields as well as tips for the application process.

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Guidance for immigrants

In 2010, the National action plan for integration (*Nationaler Aktionsplan für Integration*, NAP.I) 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. It is precisely because integration is a cross-cutting issue that the corresponding framework conditions can only be created in cooperation with all those responsible. The *NAP.I* 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.I* 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.I* different strategies are used by Austria to tackle the high unemployment among those with a migrant background:

- a. access to apprenticeships promoted by companies, AMS and apprenticeship training programmes;
- b. active labour market policies for youth;
- c. career guidance projects like Career coaching, Fit for training, Production schools;
- d. migrant communities' involvement in developing projects for immigrants;
- e. the involvement of experts with migrant background in developing career guidance activities;
- f. 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 (see also [here](#)).

The target groups of the ÖIF are:

- a. asylum beneficiaries, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and third-country nationals;
- b. people with a migration background;
- c. institutions, organisations and multipliers in integration, social welfare and education;
- d. 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:

- a. counselling of new immigrants;
- b. organising workshops for new immigrants and authorities;
- c. counselling on issues related to integration, particularly language, education and employment;
- d. language courses;
- e. values and orientation courses;
- f. networking with key players at all levels of responsibility;
- g. project implementation (e.g. mentoring for migrants);
- h. funding programmes, scholarships and awards;
- i. factual and background information on integration and migration;
- j. 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 para. 5 of the Recognition and Evaluation Act (*Anerkennungs- und Bewertungsgesetz*, AuBG) (for further information please see [here](#)).

With the website 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.

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 was extended until the end of March 2019. 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 union 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 Flüchtlinge*) 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 Supra-regional 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 up to the age of 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 runs until 2022. By February 2019, a total of around 550 people had taken part in the programme. To date, 106 people have been placed in apprenticeships.

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 140 employees speaking 39 different languages. In 2016 they could offer more than 7,000 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 12 % 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!') is the result of collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce, 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 - Startbegeleitung für Asylberechtigte 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](#)).

Project Zukunftsraum (future space) is developed by Diakonia Refugee Service Vienna with the aim of helping refugees' integration by providing access to housing services, social and vocational career guidance and job-placement. The project is financed by the city of Vienna. **INTO Vienna** is another project developed by Diakonia Refugee Service Vienna. This is an integration institution for those entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection. The aim is to enable people with a refugee background to participate in social life and to lay the foundation for equality in legal, social, economic and cultural terms through individual support in the integration process; this may involve support for language acquisition, education participation and labour market integration. The project is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (*Asyl-, Migrations- und Integrationsfonds*, AMIF) and the Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (*Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration, Äußeres*).

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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