The AMS¹-Skills Barometer - a web-based labour market information tool
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Abstract

The ‘AMS-Skills Barometer’ was developed to provide a broad group of different users with valid, comprehensible and well structured information on current and medium-term occupation and qualification needs. It has been the first comprehensive nation-wide online labour market information system developed for the Austrian Public Employment Service². Already available information from different forecast sources (e.g. regional, sectoral, European) is exploited and merged in a synoptical way. It contains mainly occupational and vocational information which guides the structure and composition of the information system that was designed in 2002 and has been developed further on since then (latest development: regional labour market information was integrated into the AMS-Skills Barometer). Following recent trends in vocational research, also a comprehensive classification of skills and competencies has been designed and integrated into the ‘AMS-Skills Barometer’ to provide for a better picture of current and future labour market needs.

Methodology of forecast and recent developments

The methodological approach applied in the process of establishing and updating the ‘AMS-Skills Barometer’ principally and still is one of editing already existing labour market relevant information. This is done through a process of searching sources, collecting and critically evaluating information, joining these together and finally editing them along the given structures of the ‘AMS-Skills Barometer’. The result, both textual and graphic, can be looked upon as a synopsis of compiled information. A general update of the online tool ‘AMS-Skills Barometer’ takes place every March and October. Editing is done by a team of experienced authors. They follow a common framework of ‘working rules’ that guarantee that all texts within the ‘AMS-Skills Barometer’ are homogenous with regard to content and style. The main sources of information are labour market statistics, studies on skills demand for the Austrian labour market, specific analyses on job advertisements commissioned by the AMS, scientific publications, articles, journals and similar sources or explorative interviews with labour market experts in specific occupational fields. As a new source on regional labour market trends, a regular enterprise survey among more than 7,000 enterprises with at least 20 employees is carried out every two years covering more than 20% of all Austrian employees (with a high feedback rate of above 30%). Among others the survey contains quantitative information on occupational demand and skills (actual and increasing trend information is provided).

The result of the methodology is to forecast on qualitative basis occupational and qualification trends for 3-4 years. The forecast is made for 24 occupational sectors, approx. 100 occupational fields and more than 550 single occupations.

¹ AMS is the abbreviation for ‘Arbeitsmarktservice’, the Austrian Public Employment Service.
² It has been developed in cooperation with the Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft (ibw).
The potential use of Cedefop forecast results

Cedefop emphasizes the need for a ‘multifaceted approach’ to combine quantitative and qualitative methods and the need for dialogue about ‘data, trends and political strategies on employment and socioeconomic development in individual countries’\(^3\). From our perspective, it might prove valuable to initiate such dialogue with the goal of common learning and finding ways to better integrate quantitative methods of forecasting with more qualitatively oriented ones.

Furthermore, for us the question of how to make use of Cedefop results for different national stakeholders is of interest. The recent Cedefop publication on ‘skills supply and demand in Europe’\(^4\) emphasizes the need for ‘better labour market information and intelligence [...] to help guide the choices and decisions of all Europe’s citizens’. Also, the need for dissemination to the broader public and not only policymakers is underlined and the need for ‘better web-based tools’ to disseminate results. The purpose of the ‘AMS-Skills Barometer’ is exactly to provide specific user groups like policy-makers in public services, politics and firms, counsellors as well as individual job seekers among others with such information. Hence, it would be a valuable effort to explore ways of possibly integrating Cedefop’s European and national forecasts into the ‘AMS-Skills Barometer’. In this regard, questions of methodology (classifications, time frames, differentiation level, etc.), illustration of data and value added of forecast results for different user groups have to be addressed. Also, the consistency of results would need to be researched in more detail. The European forecasts could eventually function as a link between current illustration of regional / national labour market developments and European trends.

Besides that, the biannual enterprise survey carried out by the Austrian Public Employment Service might also be a future resource for Cedefop’s Skillsnet.

Further Reading


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