
Austria

VET in Europe – Country report

2012

Title: Austria VET in Europe – Country Report 2012

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This report has been co-financed by the European Union and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK).

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Introduction

The VET sector plays a major role in the Austrian education landscape. This is shown, on the one hand, by the high attractiveness of VET programmes for young people: some 80% of all pupils who have completed compulsory schooling opt for a VET path. On the other hand, the major significance of VET also manifests itself in the diversity of programmes. A pronounced differentiation both in the school-based and in the dual VET sector ensures that every young person is able to optimally develop their strengths and talents. The success of the Austrian VET system is also reflected in the low youth unemployment rate and the international recognition of Austrian skilled workers.

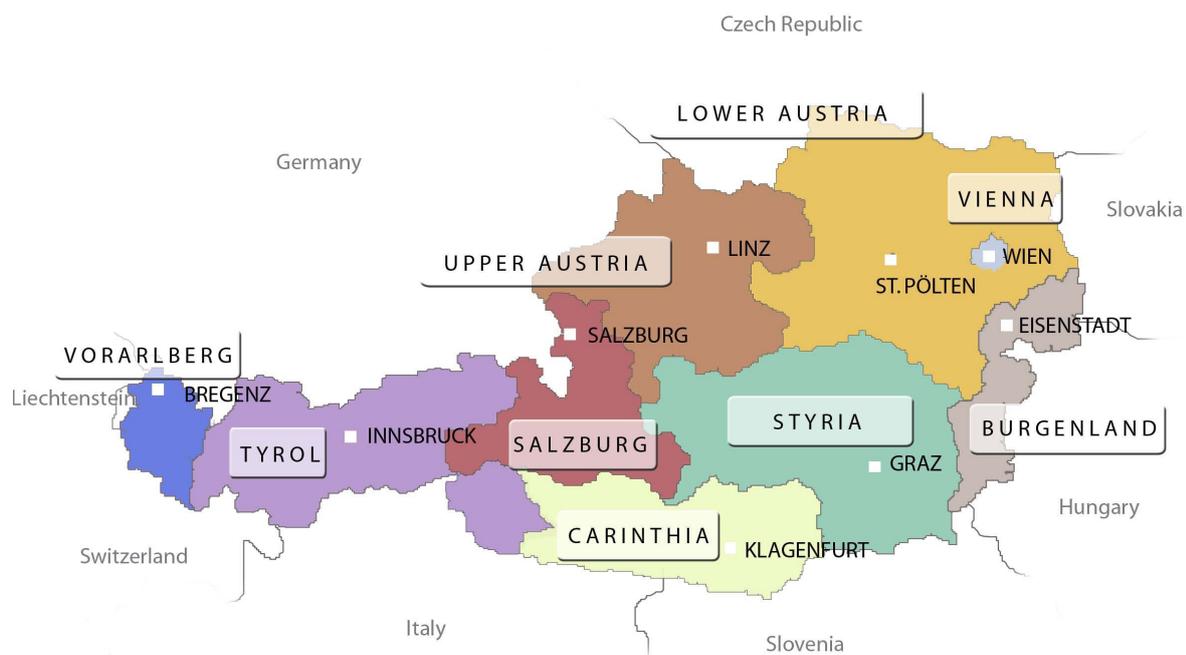
CHAPTER 1

1. External factors influencing VET

1.1 Political and socio-economic background

Austria is a parliamentary republic based on the principles of democracy and separation of powers. It comprises nine federal provinces (cf. fig. 1), each with its own provincial government. Vienna is a province and at the same time the federal capital.

Fig. 1: Austria and its federal provinces



Artwork: ibw

The Austrian Parliament consists of two chambers: the National Council (*Nationalrat*) and the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), which share the legislative power at federal level. The National Council has 183 members; these are elected through direct vote by the population every five years. The members of the Federal Council are elected and sent by the provincial diets (*Landtage*), the provinces' parliaments. They represent the interests of the provinces with regard to federal legislation.

The executive powers, i.e. the enforcement of the laws and ordinances passed by the legislature, are exercised by the federal provinces, unless the Federal Constitution stipulates in individual areas that the Federal Government is responsible for them. The executive branch at federal level comprises the Federal President as the Head of State and the Federal Government, which is chaired by the Federal Chancellor. At provincial level, the executive branch comprises the Governor and the Provincial Government. In principle, Austria is characterised by a relatively high degree of federal structures.

A key role is met by the Austrian social partnership – a system of economic and social policy cooperation between the representations of interest of employers, employees, and representatives of the Government. The social partnership is not limited to regulating labour (industrial) relations but encompasses nearly all fields of economic and social policies. Furthermore the social partners play a key role in the education sector (cf. also chapter 2).

1.2 Population and demography

Located in Central Europe, Austria covers an area of 83,858 km². The number of inhabitants in 2003 was slightly above 8.1 million, in 2012 more than 8.4 million (cf. fig. 2). The continuously rising number of inhabitants since the mid-1980s is due to the increased influx of foreign nationals in particular.

Fig. 2: Population development and development of the number of foreign nationals

	2003	2006	2009	2010	2011	2012
Austria	8,100,273	8,254,298	8,355,260	8,375,290	8,404,252	8,443,018
For. nat.	746,753	796,666	864,397	876,355	907,407	:
Sh. f. n.	9.2	9.7	10.3	10.5	10.8	:

Note: For. nat. = number of foreign nationals having their usual residence in Austria on 1st January; Sh. f. n. = share of foreign nationals; : = no data available.

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 4 October 2012; in-house calculations

According to the data provided by Statistics Austria, the Austrian population will also grow in the future – projections assume a population size of slightly below 8.9 million by 2025 (cf. fig. 3). In terms of the demographic development it is clear that the society is undergoing an ever increasing ‘ageing’ process. Whereas in 2011 only some 18% of the population were 65 or older, this population group’s share in the total population will be as high as about 19% by 2015 and rise to an amazing percentage of more than 21% by 2025.

Fig. 3: Development of the age structure of the Austrian population (on an annual average)

	2009	2011	2012	2015	2025
0 – 24 years	2,278,518	2,250,593	2,243,375	2,220,587	2,172,404
25 – 64 years	4,627,943	4,680,997	4,697,508	4,745,992	4,784,966
65+ years	1,462,381	1,488,186	1,511,952	1,593,149	1,907,022
Total	8,368,842	8,419,776	8,452,835	8,559,728	8,864,392

Source: Statistics Austria, population projection 2012, main scenario (mean fertility, life expectancy, immigration), in-house calculations, retrieved on 4 Oct. 2012

The number of people over the age of 65 in relation to 15- to 64-year-olds amounted to about 1 to 4 in Austria by 2010 (cf. fig. 4: 26%). In other words: there is one pensioner for every four people of working age (15 to 64 years of age). Based on projections, this ratio will change from about 1 to approx. 2 within the next 50 years: one pensioner for less than two people in employment. The development in Austria is therefore slightly more favourable than in the EU-27 average.

Fig. 4: Ratio between persons over 65 and those aged 15 to 64 years

	2010	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
EU-27	25.90	31.95	35.10	42.90	50.50	56.02	58.74
Austria	26.01	31.10	32.85	43.32	52.50	54.09	56.61

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 4 October 2012; in-house calculations

1.3 The economy and the labour market

A clear structural change in the direction of tertiarisation can be observed in Austria over the course of the last three decades. This is revealed, in particular, by the distribution of the gross domestic product (GDP) and of people in employment broken down by economic sectors (cf. fig. 5). Whereas in 1980 as many as about one tenth of people in employment or 322,400 individuals were active in the primary sector, this share halved within 30 years to reach slightly more than 5% or 219,600 people. In the same period, the share of employees in the service sector grew from about 50% to some 70% (2011). The distribution is therefore approximately within the EU-27 average.

Fig. 5: Distribution of the GDP (in %) and employees (in 1,000) by economic sectors in Austria

Economic sector	1980		1990		2000		2010 / 2011*	
	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.
Primary sector	5.3	322.4	3.7	368.5	2.0	316.0	1.5	219.6
Secondary sector	35.9	1,233.6	32.2	1,259.5	30.8	1,119.1	29.2	1,077.4
Tertiary sector	58.8	1,490.2	64.1	1,878.3	67.2	2,381.6	69.3	2,846.9
Total	100.0	3,046.2	100.0	3,506.3	100.0	3,816.7	100.0	4,144.0

Note: Empl. = employees; GDP figure 2010 / employees figure 2011;

Source: Statistics Austria, Eurostat, OECD retrieved on 4 Oct. 2012, in-house calculations

When analysing the employment rate by age groups it can be seen that Austria has clearly higher rates among the 15- to 49-year-olds than the EU-27 average (cf. fig. 6: 'Total'). Especially in the group of 15- to 24-year-olds in Austria, the employment rate is far above the EU average. This is due to the apprenticeship system (cf. 2.2) and education in the VET school sector (cf. 2.2). In the group of 50- to 64-year-olds, the share of employees in Austria has approximated the EU average continually over the years (2003 to 2011). The low rate in this age group is due to the comparatively favourable pension scheme. But with the 2005 pension reform it was attempted to adapt the de facto retirement entry age to the statutory one, which has led to a rise in the employment rate (cf. data from 2011).

When taking the highest educational attainment according to ISCED categories into account, the employment rate in Austria in the age categories 15 to 24 and 25 to 49 is (clearly) above the EU-27 average in all three periods of comparison. In the age cohort of 50- to 64-year-olds, the employment rate is within the average of all 27 EU countries. The rate of higher education (HE) graduates (ISCED 5-6) in the age group of 25- to 49-year-olds in 2011 in Austria was above the EU average (AT: 90.8% vs. EU-27: 87.1%).

Fig. 6: Employment rate by age groups and highest educational attainment (in %)

	ISCED	2003			2006			2011		
		15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU-27	0-2	25.1	66.1	41.9	24.8	66.9	43.5	21.6	62.1	43.3
	3-4	47.0	79.1	54.9	48.0	80.3	57.9	44.4	79.8	60.4
	5-6	60.7	88.0	72.4	60.3	88.4	74.1	55.5	87.1	74.9
	n/a	14.9	72.6	39.1	5.5	76.1	5.6	5.6	73.6	61.6
	TOTAL	36.0	77.4	51.5	36.6	79.0	54.5	33.6	78.0	57.5
Austria	0-2	33.9	70.5	33.6	38.1	69.0	39.1	39.3	69.9	41.7
	3-4	67.4	86.1	46.5	68.9	86.1	51.0	69.9	87.2	58.1
	5-6	69.1	91.9	66.3	70.6	91.4	71.5	66.1	90.8	76.4
	TOTAL	50.6	84.5	45.3	54.0	84.3	50.9	54.9	85.6	57.1

Note: 15-24 = age group between 15 and 24 years; 0-2 = ISCED levels 0 to 2 (elementary level, lower secondary level), 3-4 = ISCED levels 3 to 4 (upper secondary level, post-secondary but not tertiary), 5-6 = ISCED levels 5 to 6 (tertiary A+B), n/a = no data available

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 10 Oct. 2012

Regarding the labour market status 18 months after obtaining a first qualification, apprenticeship graduates reach the by far highest figures in the (direct) transition to employment after graduation (cf. fig. 7). Slightly less than 76% of apprenticeship graduates of the VET age group 2008/09 were employed. Among graduates of VET schools (*berufsbildenden mittlere Schulen, BMS*) this figure was 55%, among those of VET colleges (*berufsbildenden höhere Schulen, BHS*) 41%. Graduates of *BMS* and *BHS* additionally boast significant shares in further (also part-time) education and training programmes (post-secondary VET course, HE study, etc.) after their first graduation.

Also regarding income from their first dependent employment, the situation of apprenticeship graduates compared to other educational qualifications can be assessed as very favourable (cf. fig. 7): Among more than one third (36%), entry-level income is between EUR 1,200 and EUR 1,800 and another fifth earn between EUR 1,800 and EUR 2,400: therefore entry-level incomes of apprenticeship graduates are in all cases higher than those of employees with a *BHS* qualification. Compared to vocational qualifications, the first income situation of *BMS* graduates in the highest income segment is the only one which can be rated as even more favourable, which is due, among other factors, to the positive earning structure of new graduates of healthcare and nursing schools.

Fig. 7: Labour market status 18 months after obtaining qualification, and income (in EUR) from the first dependent employment, by educational qualification, graduation year group 2008/09 (in column-percent)

	Total	Comp. school	Apprenticeship	VET school (BMS)	Ac. sec. school (AHS)	VET college (BHS)	Uni./FH	Other qu.
	ISCED 1-6	ISCED 2	ISCED 3B	ISCED 3B	ISCED 4A	ISCED 3-4A+4B	ISCED 5-6	e.g. 4C, 5B
Labour market status								
In training	54.1	90.1	5.0	31.3	86.4	50.0	40.4	25.4
Employment	34.0	1.3	75.8	54.5	4.5	41.1	47.1	60.7
AMS registration	4.2	3.5	9.8	4.7	0.7	2.6	1.9	4.7
Others / not active	7.7	5.1	9.5	9.6	8.4	6.3	10.6	9.2
Entry-level income								
< 1200 EUR	34.6	91.1	34.0	33.7	63.7	41.7	22.8	27.3
1200 to < 1800 EUR	27.1	8.9	35.7	18.1	25.6	30.5	17.8	23.5
1800 to < 2400 EUR	19.3	0.0	22.3	16.1	8.4	20.5	16.4	25.0
2400 EUR and more	18.9	0.0	8.0	32.2	2.3	7.4	43.0	24.3

Note: comp. school = compulsory school; ac. sec. school = academic secondary school; uni./FH = university/university of applied sciences; other qu. = other qualifications; AMS registration = registration with Public Employment Service as job seeker

Source: Statistics Austria, Qualification-related employment monitoring; in-house calculations

An analysis of unemployment rates by age groups reveals that Austria boasts significantly lower unemployment rates than the EU-27 average in all age categories (cf. fig. 8). Particularly noteworthy is the gap between the 15- to 24-year-olds. Although this figure has slightly deteriorated in Austria over time, it is nevertheless clearly below the EU average. The

reasons for this relatively low youth unemployment can be found in the wide range of programmes provided by the Austrian (vocational) education and training system (cf. chapter 2), primarily however in apprenticeship training (cf. 2.2) and their high labour market acceptance.

Taking into account the highest educational attainment, it is striking that in Austria, compared to the EU-27, graduates of upper secondary level (ISCED 3-4) show clearly lower unemployment rates. This is due to varied VET courses available at this education level, which are regularly adjusted to the needs of the labour market.

Fig. 8: Unemployment rate by age group and highest educational attainment (in %)

	ISCED	2003			2006			2011		
		15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU-27	0-2	20.3	11.6	7.2	21.3	11.2	7.5	28.2	16.9	10.7
	3-4	17.8	8.4	7.7	15.5	7.3	6.9	18.6	8.1	6.5
	5-6	12.3	4.8	3.8	13.5	4.3	3.6	16.7	5.5	3.6
	n/a	13.9	7.9	7.4	19.7	:	:	19.5	8.5	:
	TOTAL	18.0	8.3	6.6	17.3	7.3	6.3	21.3	9.0	6.9
Austria	0-2	10.1	8.4	8.6	13.4	8.9	5.4	12.0	8.5	4.6
	3-4	6.3	3.7	5.2	6.5	3.7	3.4	6.2	3.3	2.9
	5-6	:	2.5	1.9	:	2.6	:	:	2.6	:
	TOTAL	7.5	4.2	5.3	9.1	4.2	3.5	8.3	3.8	2.9

Note: = no data available

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 10 Oct. 2012

Public education spending for the primary and secondary sector in 2008 in Austria amounted to 3.5% of the gross domestic product, which was slightly above the EU-21 average of 3.4% and precisely the OECD average (cf. fig. 9). State spending for the tertiary sector and also for all education sectors combined in Austria was above the EU-21 and the OECD average (cf. fig. 9).

In 2009 in the EU-27 countries an average of 5.4% of their GDP went on public spending for education, Austria comes to a share of more than 6% (cf. fig. 10). In a comparison over the years 2001 until 2008, a slight relative decline was observed both for the EU-27 average and for Austria regarding education spending for the secondary sector measured by the GDP; in 2009 spending rose again slightly (cf. fig. 11).

Fig. 9: Spending for education by origin of funds and education sector, in % of GDP, 2008

	Primary; secondary; post-secondary, non-tertiary sector (ISCED 0-2, 3-4)		Tertiary sector (ISCED 5-6)		All education sectors (including elementary sector) ISCED 0-6	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
EU-21	3.4	0.2	1.1	0.2	4.8	0.5
OECD	3.5	0.3	1.0	0.5	5.0	0.9
Austria	3.5	0.1	1.2	0.1	5.2	0.2

Source: OECD, Education at a glance 2011, OECD indicators, Paris, 2011

Fig. 10: Public education spending for all education sectors in % of the GDP, 2009

	ISCED 0	ISCED 1	ISCED 2-4	ISCED 5-6	Total
EU-27	0.55 (e)	1.24 (e)	2.41 (e)	1.22 (e)	5.41 (e)
Austria	0.55	1.05	2.83	1.57	6.01

Note: e = Eurostat estimate; ISCED 0 = early childhood education, ISCED 1 = primary education, ISCED 2-4 = secondary education, ISCED 5-6 = tertiary education

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 10 Oct. 2012

Fig. 11: Public education spending for the secondary sector in % of the GDP, 2001 – 2009

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
EU-27	2.27 (e)	2.32 (e)	2.35 (e)	2.29 (e)	2.25 (e)	2.23 (e)	2.19 (e)	2.24 (e)	2.41 (e)
Austria	2.66	2.66	2.74	2.63	2.53	2.55	2.49	2.55	2.83

Note: e = Eurostat estimate

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 10 Oct. 2012

1.4 Qualification level of the population

The number of 18- to 24-year-olds who have only completed compulsory schooling in Austria is, at 8.3% (referring to 2011), clearly below the EU average (EU-27: 13.5%, cf. fig. 12). This means that Austria has reached the benchmark of maximum 10% of early school leavers that was envisaged across Europe by 2010. This relatively low figure is attributed to the wide and differentiated range of education and training programmes after compulsory schooling, above all apprenticeship training and the VET school sector.

Fig. 12: Early school leavers: Share of 18- to 24-year-olds in the population who only have a compulsory school qualification and do not attend any upper secondary programme (in %)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU-27	17.0	16.5(b)	16.0	15.8	15.5	15.1	14.9	14.4	14.1	13.5
Austria	9.5	9.0(b)	9.5	9.1	9.8	10.7	10.1	8.7	8.3	8.3

Note: b = break in time series

Source: Eurostat; EU Labour Force Survey, downloaded on 10 Oct. 2012

In 2011 almost 85% of all graduates of ISCED levels 3 and 4 in Austria were from VET programmes (cf. fig. 13). Of more than 75% graduates at ISCED level 3, the by far largest share of graduates comes from apprenticeship training, which 40% of every age group in year ten opt for. At ISCED level 4, Austria has 22.1% graduates in VET programmes, which is almost three times as many as in the EU-27 average (8.7%). This share reflects the high importance of VET colleges (*BHS*) at the upper secondary level (cf. 2.2) in Austria.

Fig. 13: Graduates of ISCED 3 and 4 programmes, by educational programme and gender (in line percent)

		2005						2011					
		3 GE	3 PPT	3 VET	4 GE	4 PPT	4 VET	3 GE	3 PPT	3 VET	4 GE	4 PPT	4 VET
E	T	38.8	5.6	45.5	0.9	0.0	9.4	41.3	1.4	47.2	1.4	0.0	8.7
A	T	16.0	0.0	54.4	0.0	0.0	29.6	15.0	15.3	47.6	0.0	0.0	22.1

Note: E = EU-24 (excluding FR, UK and Malta, as there is no data broken down by education programmes available), A = Austria, T = total, GE = general education, PPT = pre-professional training, VET = vocational education and training 3 = ISCED level 3, 4 = ISCED level 4

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 11 Oct. 2012; in-house calculations

In 2010, in a comparison of post-secondary and tertiary education programmes, Austria was below the EU-26 average with first degrees in higher education (5A1) (AT: 55.3%; EU-27: 58.5%), and clearly below the EU-26 average with second degrees (5A2) (AT: 16.4%; EU-26: 24.8%, cf. fig. 14). But Austria showed almost twice as many graduates of tertiary programmes leading to the award of an advanced research qualification (ISCED 6, doctoral or equivalent) than in the EU average (AT: 4.3%; EU-26: 2.4%). In addition, Austria boasts by far higher shares of graduates of predominantly professionally oriented programmes of the tertiary sector 5B, amounting to more than one fifth of all qualifications of ISCED levels 5 and 6.

Fig. 14: Graduates of ISCED 5 and 6 programmes, by educational programme and gender (in line percent)

		2005						2010					
		5A1	5A2	5B1	5B2	6	5-6	5A1	5A2	5B1	5B2	6	5-6
E	M	63.2	18.7	13.9	0.3	3.9	100.0	59.1	24.1	13.5	0.1	3.2	100.0
	F	61.9	21.0	14.7	0.2	2.1	100.0	58.2	25.4	14.5	0.1	1.8	100.0
	T	62.4	20.1	14.4	0.2	2.9	100.0	58.5	24.8	14.1	0.1	2.4	100.0
A	M	64.4	2.2	25.0	0.5	7.9	100.0	49.7	19.2	25.9	0.0	5.1	100.0
	F	68.5	1.7	22.2	1.9	5.7	100.0	61.6	13.7	21.0	0.0	3.6	100.0
	T	66.5	1.9	23.5	1.2	6.8	100.0	55.9	16.4	23.4	0.0	4.3	100.0

Note: E = EU-26 (2005+2010 excluding France, no data available), A = Austria, M = male, F = female, T = total, 5A1 = tertiary education A/HE institution/first degree, 5A2 = tertiary education A/HE institution/second degree, 5B1 = tertiary education B (in A for example: post-secondary VET college, post-secondary VET course, university of education, part-time industrial master college), /1st qualification, 5B2 = tertiary education B/2nd qualification, 6 = tertiary education/HE institution/advanced research-oriented programmes such as doctoral programme

Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 15 Oct. 2012; in-house calculations

The share of those who have a qualification at least at upper secondary level in Austria is, at 85.4% (in 2011), far above the EU-27 average of 79.5% (cf. fig. 15). In contrast to the EU-27 average with a higher share of female graduates (young women: 82%, young men: 76%), in Austria about as many young women as young men have acquired a related qualification. Austria has therefore reached the benchmark figure envisaged within the EU by 2010 of at least 85% upper secondary level graduates.

Fig. 15: Share of 20- to 24-year-olds with at least a qualification at upper secondary level (in %)

	2002			2005			2008			2011		
	TOT.	F	M									
EU	76.7	79.3	74.0	77.5	80.2	74.8	78.4	81.4	75.6	79.5	82.4	76.7
AT	85.3	84.6	86.1	85.9	87.3	84.6	84.5	84.8	84.2	85.4	86.8	84.0

Note: EU = EU-27, AT = Austria, TOT. = total, F = female, M = male
Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 15 Oct. 2012

Austria has also reached or even exceeded another benchmark figure which by 2010 aims at an EU average of adults in working age of at least 12.5% who take part in lifelong learning (Austria 2005: 12.9%, 2011: 13.4%, cf. fig. 16). The new EU benchmark for 2020 is 15%.

Fig. 16: Lifelong learning: Share of the population between 25 and 64 who took part in a CVET measure in the last four weeks before the survey (in %)

	2002			2005			2008			2011		
	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M	TOT.	F	M
EU	7.2	7.8	6.6	9.6	10.4	8.8	9.4	10.2	8.5	8.9	9.6	8.2
AT	7.5	7.3	7.6	12.9	13.5	12.3	13.2	14.2	12.2	13.4	14.5	12.2

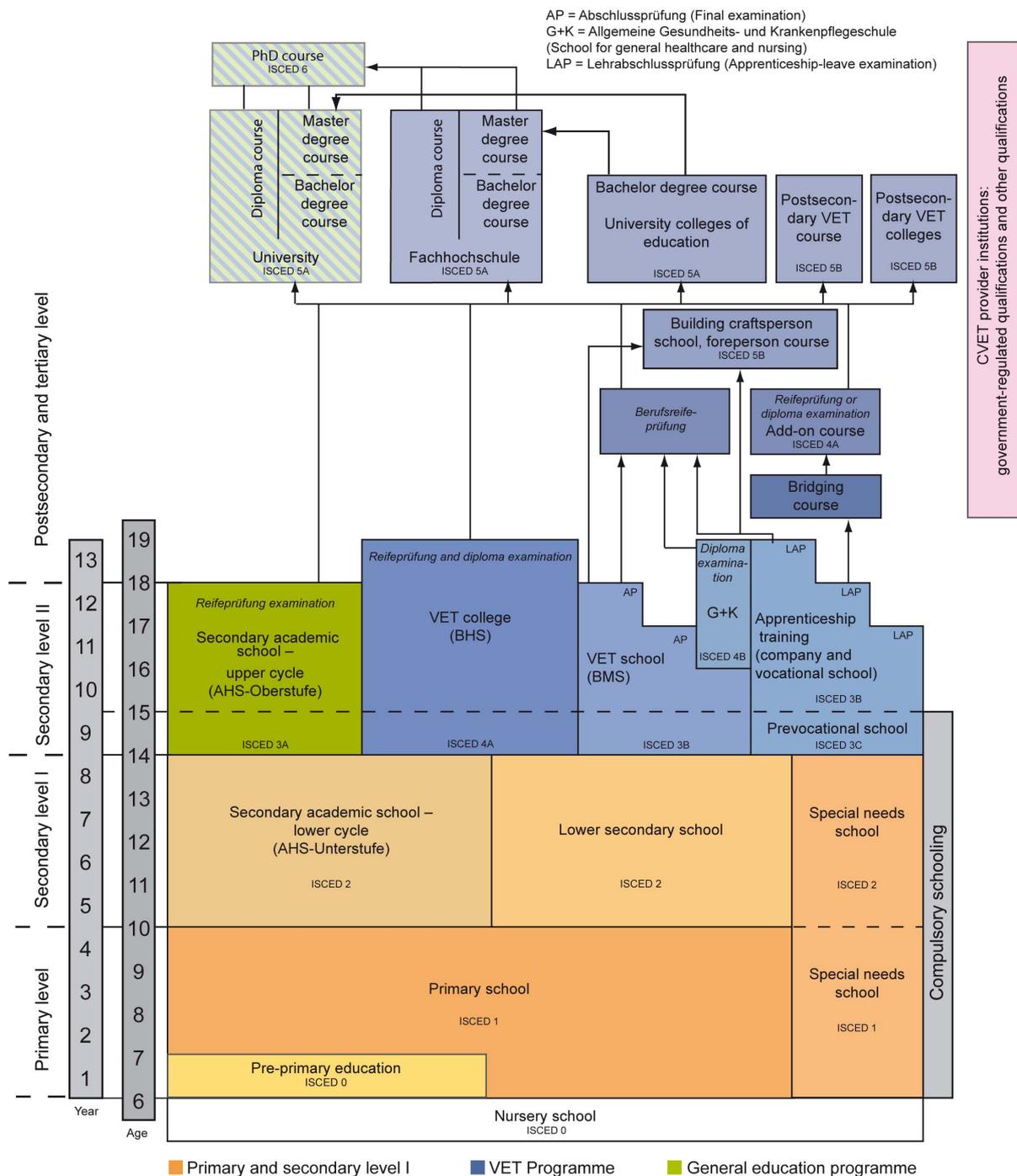
Note: EU = EU-27, AT = Austria, TOT. = total, F = female, M = male
Source: Eurostat, retrieved on 15 Oct. 2012

CHAPTER 2

2. Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1 The Austrian initial and continuing education and training system

Fig. 17: The Austrian initial and continuing education and training system (Source: ibw)



2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

In Austria compulsory schooling starts at the age of six and lasts for nine years (cf. fig. 17). For every child, it starts at primary level with four-year primary school. This school type is a comprehensive school which provides general education and is completed with the primary school certificate. Children with special educational needs can either attend a special needs school that is tailored to their needs or primary school classes that are run in an integrative (inclusive) scheme.

At the age of ten, when children transfer to lower secondary level, the first differentiation into three school types takes place: pupils can change to lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*), new secondary school (*Neue Mittelschule, NMS*) or the lower cycle of academic secondary school (*Unterstufe der allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule, AHS-Unterstufe*). Pupils with special pedagogical support needs can attend the fifth to eighth grade at a special needs school. Lower secondary school, *NMS* and the lower cycle of *AHS* are general education schools and last for four years. New secondary school has been run as a pilot since the school year 2008/2009 and is a joint school of 10- to 14-year-olds. From the school year 2012/2013 it is gradually being introduced as a regular school type. From the school year 2015/2016, all the first years of lower secondary schools will be converted to *NMS*s. Lower secondary schools will expire by the school year 2018/2019. The lower cycle of *AHS* will also be offered in the future but these schools can be turned into new secondary schools on a voluntary basis. The change from primary school to lower secondary school, new secondary school or the lower cycle of *AHS* requires a positive final certificate of the fourth grade of primary school; for entry to the lower cycle of *AHS*, additional performance requirements (such as certain marks in the main subjects) need to be met.

2.2.1 VET pathways at the upper secondary level

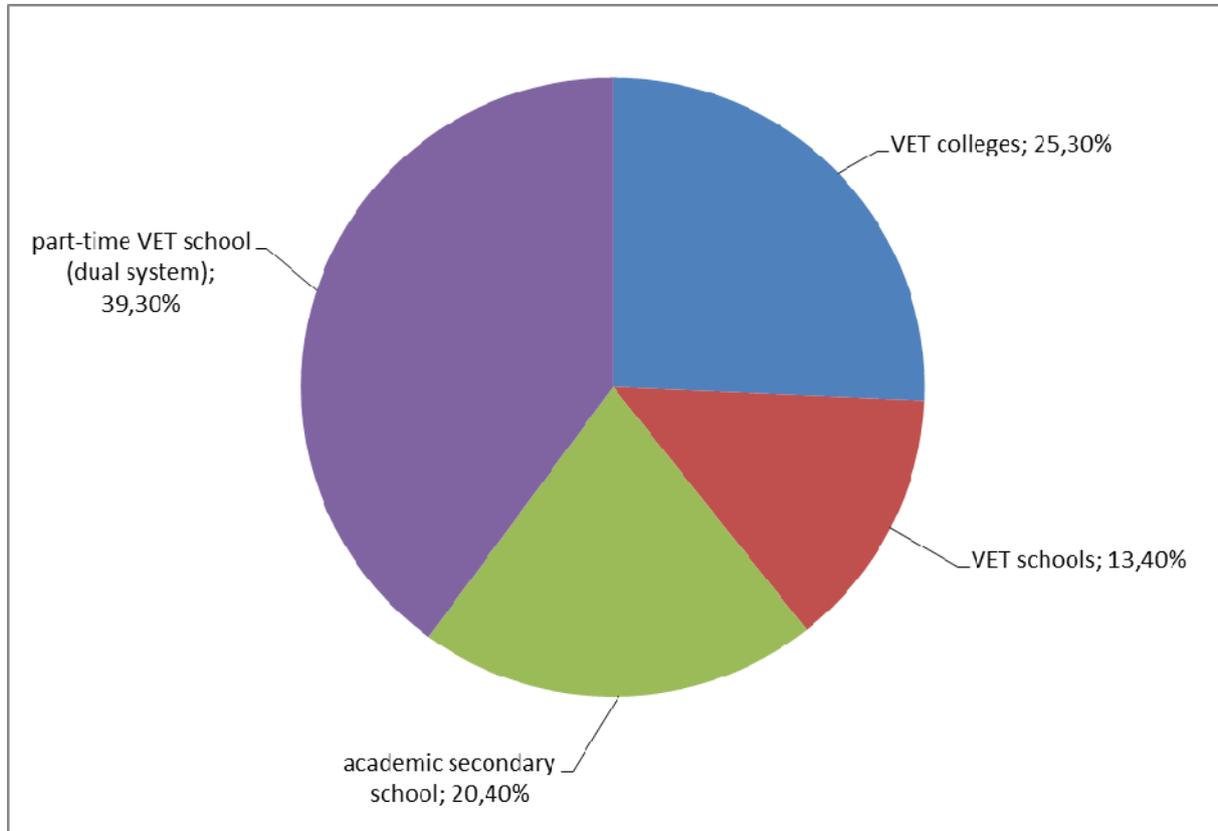
The final year of compulsory schooling corresponds to the first year of the upper secondary level. At this point, the school system's differentiation increases (cf. fig. 17). As well as the four-year upper cycle of academic secondary school (*AHS-Oberstufe*) and the one-year prevocational school (*Polytechnische Schule, PTS*), there is a choice between the following VET pathways at this point, which lead to different qualification levels:

- VET schools (*berufsbildende mittlere Schulen or BMSs*),
- VET colleges (*berufsbildende höhere Schulen or BHSs*),
- Schools for general healthcare and nursing (from year 11 onwards), and
- Dual VET (apprenticeship, *Lehre, Lehrlingsausbildung* – from year 10).

This diversity of pathways reveals the special importance of VET in Austria. Another indication of this is the high attractiveness of VET, which manifests itself in high participant figures. Some 80% of young people in the tenth grade attend a VET pathway (cf. fig. 18).

Some 40% complete an apprenticeship; the remainder opt for one of the available VET schools and colleges.

Fig. 18: Share of learners in the tenth grade by educational programmes, school year 2010/11 (in %)



Source: Statistics Austria, ibw calculations

Overview of VET schools and colleges (BMSs and BHSs, together: BMHSs)

The acquisition of vocational skills, competences and qualifications, as well as a well-founded general education, is at the centre of VET programmes at *BMHSs*. In this way, graduates can enter working life directly or opt for a wide range of CET and higher qualification programmes.

To be admitted to a *BMHS* it is necessary to furnish proof of successful completion of the eighth school year. Depending on previous qualifications (such as lower secondary school, *NMS* or the lower cycle of *AHS*, cf. fig. 17), the envisaged school type (*BMS* or *BHS*), and the available school places, previous performances and/or an admission exam represent additional selection criteria. The major characteristics of *BMHSs* include the following:

- differentiation: In accordance with their abilities and interests, pupils can select from among a variety of specialist areas and training focuses. Schools have the autonomy to change the number of hours of individual subjects within a certain range, offer new subjects, or specify training focuses and area specialisations;

- VET content and methodology: *BMHS* curricula provide for a combination of general education and intensive specialisation training in theory and practice, with *BMS* putting more emphasis on practical elements. Action-oriented teaching is a key basic principle at *BMHSs*; the work in workshops, laboratories, kitchens, practice firms, etc. and mandatory work placements in business constitute part of training;
- curriculum development: The objectives and content of education and training at *BMHSs* are laid down in framework curricula. They are regulated by the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (*Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, BMUKK*). In the implementation of the framework curricula, schools are entitled to change the number of lessons of individual subjects autonomously or develop their own focuses, taking account of (regional) economic requirements;
- key skills: Entrepreneurial competence is both an interdisciplinary principle and the subject of special focuses. Depending on the school type, up to three foreign languages, but at least one, are compulsory. The foreign language is also used increasingly as the working language. Computer literacy and skills are a *conditio sine qua non* in all *BMHS* forms; a number of programmes and focuses target the information and communication technology sector;
- business projects: When working on projects or diploma theses with specific tasks from the business sphere or technology (also as a part of final exams), students gather fundamental subject-related experiences and learn to apply project management methods. They test their key skills and set up initial contacts for their later entry into the world of work;
- teaching staff with business experience: For a number of subjects, *BMHS* teachers are required to prove subject-relevant business practice.

VET schools (berufsbildende mittlere Schulen, BMSs, 14-18 year-olds, ISCED 3B)

Students at *BMS* acquire VET qualifications entitling them to immediately exercise relevant occupations and giving them access to specific regulated professional activities. Depending on its specialist focus, *BMS* lasts between one and four years and is completed with a final exam. Following completion of additional exams, such as *Berufsreifeprüfung* (cf. 2.2.3) or attendance of add-on courses, graduates have access to programmes in the post-secondary and HE areas. *BMS* also offers the prerequisite for a later activity as entrepreneur.

VET colleges (Berufsbildende höhere Schulen, BHSs, 14-19 year-olds, ISCED 4A)

Five-year *BHS* (which is offered both as a day form and evening form for people in employment) provides in-depth general education and high-quality specialist training which combines theory and practice. Graduates are awarded general access to the higher education sector, acquire the qualification for senior occupations and obtain access to regulated professions. *BHSs* are completed with the upper secondary school-leaving exam (*Reife- und*

Diplomprüfung), viz. a double qualification. *BHS* also provides the basis for later self-employment. The high level of education and training at *BHSs* is also reflected in their recognition at the European level. The inclusion of *BHS* in Annex II of Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications confirms that graduates of *BHS* programmes acquire professional qualifications for which they need to complete programmes at the post-secondary level in the majority of the other member states. A reduction of the study duration at a *Fachhochschule* can be achieved based on the competences acquired by *BHS* graduates who want to continue their studies.

Post-secondary VET courses (*Kollegs*) are a special *BHS* form. Their main target group are graduates of academic secondary schools, i.e. people who have no IVET qualification. Therefore post-secondary VET courses represent entry to VET for this group. The prerequisite for admission to post-secondary VET courses is successful completion of a certificate of secondary education (*Reifeprüfung*). Post-secondary VET courses are offered in a two-year day-time form with a modular design or a mostly three-year evening form; they are completed with a diploma examination (*Diplomprüfung*). In this way, graduates acquire the qualification for senior occupations (depending on the specialisation of the respective post-secondary VET course; their specialisations are identical to those of the *BHS* main form) and are given access to regulated trades.

At *BHSs* and *Kollegs*, teachers of general-education subjects, occupation-related theory and occupation-related practice teach with a specific focus on the school's particular specialisation (such as business, technology, tourism). The qualifications these teachers need to prove are an HE degree, professional practice at a school, and often practical experience in the respective economic sector. Teachers of practical subjects need to prove a final certificate from a university of education (*Pädagogische Hochschule, PH*, cf. 2.2.3) or alternatively a master craftsperson certificate plus professional experience.

Schools for general healthcare and nursing (Schulen für allgemeine Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege or GuK, ISCED 4B)

GuK schools hold a special position among VET schools and colleges. Students need to have completed ten years of school before being allowed to attend these courses. *GuK* schools must be set up at hospitals or in connection with hospitals. At least half of the entire training time of 4,600 hours needs to be dedicated to practical training and at least a third to theoretical instruction. Students are entitled to monthly remuneration, which the school provider is obliged to pay. After preparing a written subject-specific piece of work (*Fachbereichsarbeit*) and taking a diploma exam at the end of their training, graduates are entitled to hold the occupational title 'Qualified nurse' (female title: '*Diplomierte Gesundheits- und Krankenschwester*'/male title: '*Diplomierter Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger*'). Teachers at *GuK* schools must be graduates of these schools, prove professional practice and have a specialist qualification acquired at the tertiary level.

Apprenticeship training (dual system, ISCED 3B)

At the end of compulsory schooling, some 40% of young people take up dual training (cf. fig. 18) in one of the approximately 206 (as at October 2012) legally recognised apprenticeships. Their apprenticeship diploma represents a full professional qualification. The prerequisite for taking up an apprenticeship is the successful completion of nine years of compulsory schooling. Most apprentices complete compulsory schooling by attending a one-year prevocational school (cf. fig. 17) after lower secondary level and then start an apprenticeship. Depending on the occupation, training lasts between two and four years, but as a rule three years. The apprenticeship period can be reduced for those who have already acquired either apprenticeship or school qualifications in the same or a similar specialist field (be it in Austria or abroad). In 2011 some 128,000 young people were in an apprenticeship. Traditionally, this form of VET is firmly established in particular in the crafts, trades and services, where around half of all apprentices are trained. In commerce, industry and in the tourism and leisure industry sector, apprenticeship training is also widespread.

Apprenticeship training takes place at two places of learning: in the training company and at part-time vocational school (therefore the term 'dual' system). Company-based training, for which the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth (*Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend, BMWFJ*) is responsible, comprises about 80% of the apprenticeship time. The apprentice is involved in the production or service-provision process and acquires the necessary skills under real-life conditions of working life.

For every apprenticeship occupation, there exists a training regulation (*Ausbildungsordnung*), which is valid across Austria and includes the in-company curriculum or job profile (*Berufsbild*). This is a type of curriculum for the company-based part of training and lays down the minimum knowledge and skills to be taught to apprentices by companies. The competence profile or activity description (*Berufsprofil*), which is also specified in the training regulation, formulates in a learning outcome-oriented manner the competences apprentices should have acquired by the end of their training. The social partners are essentially in charge of taking decisions about what in-company curriculum and/or competence profile an apprenticeship occupation is based on and they exert a decisive impact on the structure and content of apprenticeship training via their work in advisory councils.

In-company training is largely funded by the companies themselves. Young people receive apprenticeship remuneration from their employer; this is usually regulated in the (sector- or company-specific) collective agreement. There are a number of public subsidies available to support training companies, however.

The IVET trainer is responsible for planning and carrying out the training. He/she must have certain subject-specific and teaching qualifications which are proven in the course of the IVET trainer examination or a 40-hour trainer course with a vocationally-specific interview. In-company training is largely funded by the companies themselves.

At the end of the apprenticeship period, every apprentice can sit for an apprenticeship-leave examination (*Lehrabschlussprüfung, LAP*). This exam aims to determine whether the candidate himself/herself is able to appropriately carry out the activities necessary for the

occupation. The *LAP* comprises a practical and a theory examination. The theory exam can be waived if the exam candidate can prove successful completion of the final grade of part-time vocational school. The exam committee comprises employer and employee representatives. The apprenticeship qualification can also be acquired via a so-called exceptional admission. For that purpose, relevant periods of professional practice and attendance of relevant course events are credited as a replacement for formal apprenticeship training.

Following successful completion of the *LAP* graduates have various CET options, such as taking the master craftsman exam for a skilled craft (cf. 2.2.4). Access to HE programmes can be acquired through taking the exam called *Berufsreifeprüfung (BRP)*, cf. 2.2.3) as early as during the apprenticeship training. For many, an apprenticeship also forms the basis for a self-employed career. Almost 40% of managers in the business sphere have completed an apprenticeship.

As well as company-based training, the apprentice is obliged to attend part-time vocational school. Its task is to impart fundamental theoretical occupation-related knowledge, support and complement company-based training, and expand general education. The curriculum of part-time vocational school is prepared based on the training regulation of the respective apprenticeship occupation by the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (*Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, BMUKK*). The federal provinces provide the funding for vocational school (teachers, school maintenance). But the federal government refunds 50% of the costs for teaching staff to the provinces.

Teachers at part-time vocational schools either need to prove a degree from a university of education (cf. 2.2.3) or a subject-specific university course or completion of a VET programme plus three years of professional practice.

Young people who do not find a company-based apprenticeship post have the option to complete an apprenticeship within the framework of supra-company training (*überbetriebliche Ausbildung, ÜBA*). Originally conceived as a transition for finding a foothold in the first labour market (that is, the regular apprenticeship market), *ÜBA* was enshrined as an equivalent element of the dual IVET system in 2008 as part of the 'youth employment package', which was developed by the social partners and the federal government. The 'training guarantee up to the age of 18 years' as envisaged in this package enables all compulsory school graduates who do not have a place at an upper secondary school or cannot find a company-based apprenticeship place to learn an apprenticeship at a training centre ('training workshop') financed by AMS. The school-based part of apprenticeship training is provided at the regular part-time vocational school. *ÜBA* apprentices complete their training with the *LAP*.

To address the heterogeneous group of persons interested in completing dual training, inclusive IVET (*Integrative Berufsausbildung, IBA*) was introduced in 2003. Inclusive IVET mainly targets young people with special pedagogical support needs at the end of compulsory schooling, young people without any, or with a negative, lower secondary school qualification, as well as those who cannot complete an apprenticeship without special support. *IBA* can be implemented in two variants: either the training is completed over an apprenticeship period that is prolonged by up to two years, or it is restricted to partial areas of an appren-

ticeship, in which case its duration can be one to three years, depending on the training contents. Young people who are trained over a prolonged period are obliged to attend part-time vocational school. Also when being trained with the objective to obtain partial qualifications, they are obliged to attend vocational school depending on the specified training objectives. The training relationship is accompanied by the ‘vocational training assistance’ (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*), which has the task of advising and supporting the training companies and young people before and during the training. It also acts as a contact point for all parties involved and takes over coordination of training. In case of a prolonged apprenticeship, *IBA* is completed with the *LAP*; in case of partial qualifications the leaving exam covers the knowledge and skills acquired during the last twelve weeks of training. The attained level is determined by professional experts and a member of the vocational training assistance.

2.2.2 VET at post-secondary, non-tertiary level

In Austria, IVET programmes at this education level are provided within the framework of post-secondary VET colleges (*Akademien*) (ISCED 5B). The number of post-secondary VET colleges is greatly declining because more and more of them are being transformed into *Fachhochschulen* (cf. 2.2.3), i.e. tertiary sector educational institutions. But some programmes, mainly in the healthcare and social sphere, are (still) offered at post-secondary VET colleges. Attendance of a post-secondary VET college requires HE entrance qualifications (cf. 2.2.3).

2.2.3 VET at tertiary level

VET establishments at tertiary level include universities, universities of applied sciences, and universities of education. Attendance of these institutions requires HE entrance qualifications. These can be obtained by positive completion of

- the upper secondary school-leaving exam (*Reifeprüfung*) of an academic secondary school (*AHS*),
- the upper secondary school-leaving exam (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung*) of a VET college (*BHS*, cf. 2.2.1),
- *Berufsreifeprüfung*,
- *Studienberechtigungsprüfung*.

In addition, access requirements can be met on certain conditions by people with relevant professional qualifications (such as an apprenticeship diploma) and, as a rule, after taking specific additional exams, without taking the above-mentioned exams.

The exam and certificate *Berufsreifeprüfung* (*BRP*), which provides access to all HE study programmes, is open to graduates of specific vocational programmes at intermediate qualification level (such as apprenticeship graduates, graduates of three- and four-year VET schools). The content of the exam is oriented towards the curriculum of an upper secondary school which provides HE entrance qualifications (*AHS* or *BHS*) and comprises four partial

exams: German, mathematics, one modern language, and a specialisation from vocational practice or from IVET. Partial exams can also be taken in a modular form. Some of these exams can be replaced by already obtained certificates (such as language certificates). For the individual exams, preparatory courses are offered at CET institutions for a fee, attendance of these is not compulsory though. However, participants in such courses can apply for grants. In addition, candidates have to pay exam fees. For apprentices who prepare for the *BRP* exam parallel to their training or already complete a partial exam during apprenticeship, costs for preparatory courses, exam material and the exam itself will be borne by the state.

In contrast to the *BRP*, the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung (SBP)* exam and certificate opens up access to a specific area of specialisation in post-secondary and tertiary institutions. It requires applicants to furnish proof of previous knowledge acquired through job-specific programmes or non-occupational pathways in relation to their desired study course. Should they not be able to prove such previous knowledge, they can take additional exams.

Universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen or FHSs, ISCED 5B)

Fachhochschule courses, which are offered both in a day form and on a part-time basis in an evening form, serve to provide an academically founded VET qualification. These are Bachelor and Master courses - as well as diploma study courses, which are expiring -, where a period of work placement is a mandatory part of the curriculum. The courses are completed with an academic thesis followed by a final exam. Successful completion of an *FH* Master programme or diploma study course entitles graduates to access subject-related PhD courses - or doctoral courses (which are expiring) - at university. To be entitled to exercise their profession, *FH* lecturers require a subject-specific academic qualification in the form of a Master and/or PhD degree and specialist professional practice. Minimum requirements for *FH* professors are a PhD/doctor's degree and a habilitation. Another precondition is proof of didactical skills.

Universities of education (Pädagogische Hochschulen, PHs, ISCED 5B)

Universities of education aim to train compulsory school teachers in a three-year Bachelor course. These *PH* courses focus on imparting knowledge and skills related to teaching and didactics as well as their application in school life. Students are obliged to complete periods of work placement at selected schools of the chosen school form or at specific training establishments in order to collect teaching experience. Based on a *PH* degree and depending on their selected subject and credit transfer options they can take up a Master course at an *FH* or university. Teaching staff at *PHs* need a subject-specific university qualification or a *PH* qualification. In addition, teaching practice for the respective school type where the individual wants to teach at *PH* is required.

University (ISCED 5A)

Students at university can enrol for general education and vocational subjects. Vocational programmes mainly exist in the technical, medical and business fields and in teacher training for upper secondary schools (cf. 2.2.2). University students can complete three-year Bachelor courses and, on that basis, Master courses of at least two years' duration. Graduates of Master and (expiring) diploma courses have the possibility to obtain a PhD or (expiring) doctoral degree (ISCED 6). To be entitled to exercise their profession, university lecturers require a subject-specific academic qualification in the form of a Master and/or PhD degree. Minimum requirements for university professors are a PhD/doctor's degree and a habilitation.

CVET university courses (Universitätslehrgänge) (ISCED 5A)

Universities provide CVET and higher qualification in CVET university courses both for postgraduates and for non-HE graduates who fulfil other access requirements (e.g. professional practice). These courses lead to a Master degree (for example MSc., LL.M., etc.), or to the title '*Akademische/r...*' ('Graduate...') if the curriculum awards at least 60 ECTS points. Participants have to pay a fee, which takes into account actual course costs. The events are mostly held in the evening or on weekends. Very frequently, these courses also comprise e-learning elements.

2.2.4 VET outside schools and HE institutions

As well as qualifications from schools and HE institutions, there are many qualifications which also build on legal bases (service legislation, regulations, directives, etc.) which are acquired outside these educational establishments. Responsibility for these qualifications rests with the federal government, provincial and municipal governments. Some of these qualifications are trained in special school-based pathways (such as part-time industrial master and building craftsperson schools), others taught directly at institutions of the future employer (such as the Security Academy of the Federal Ministry of the Interior). For some qualifications there is no formal training – they are awarded based on successful completion of an exam by a certifying authority (such as the master craftsperson qualification or the certified financial accountant diploma).

The acquisition of these qualifications is frequently connected with costs which must be covered by the qualification applicant. But there are also labour market policy programmes in place which promote the training of employees (such as the educational leave scheme, or skills development under the ESF) and job-seekers (such as labour foundations, the New Skills scheme). In the following there are examples of some important qualifications which are acquired outside schools and HE institutions.

Part-time industrial master schools (Werkmeisterschulen) and building craftsperson schools (Bauhandwerkerschulen) (ISCED 5B)

These special forms of VET school (*BMS*) have curricula governed by public law but are offered at not-for-profit adult learning establishments. They enable students to acquire higher professional qualifications after completing IVET programmes in technical/commercial fields. They last for two years and are completed with a final examination before an exam committee. Graduates are entitled to train apprentices and, following four years of relevant activity, to exercise a relevant trade in a self-employed capacity. Relevant courses can be taught by teachers of VET schools and colleges (*BMHSs*). Qualified experts (such as holders of the master craftsperson qualification and holders of the '*Ingenieur*' degree) can also teach these courses.

Police force

Training for the police force is held at the Security Academy, the training and research centre of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (*Bundesministerium für Inneres, BMI*). It comprises basic police training (*PGA*), programmes to become an official in charge, and courses for executive officials. *PGA* comprises 19 months of theoretical and five months of practical training at a police station. The training programmes for officials in charge and executive officials are CET programmes for the police force and are a prerequisite for advancement to a managerial position in the police force.

Master craftsperson examination (Meisterprüfung) and qualifying examination (Befähigungsprüfung)

People aged 18 or over are entitled to take the master craftsperson examination or the qualifying examination. Both exams are part of continuing vocational education and training, but are mostly taken with the aim of becoming self-employed. The master craftsperson exam and the qualifying exam must be completed before engaging in a regulated occupation and are laid down in the Austrian Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act (*Gewerbeordnung*). The master craftsperson exam must be taken by all those who want to become self-employed in the skilled crafts, the qualifying exam is mandatory for all the other regulated trades. Both exams usually consist of five modules, which can be taken individually at the master craftspersons examination authorities. Specific preparatory courses are mainly provided by the CET institutions of the social partners (cf. 2.3). Following submission of the required module certificates, applicants are awarded a master craftsperson certificate or qualifying certificate. On certain conditions, holders of these qualifications are also admitted to a Bachelor course at a university of applied sciences.

Civil engineering exam (Ziviltechnikerprüfung)

Civil engineers carry out the planning, consultancy and preparation of expert opinions for specific specialist areas (such as construction and surveying, geology, etc.). To be able to take the civil engineering examination, which is laid down in the Austrian Civil Engineers' Act

(*Ziviltechnikergesetz*), candidates need to prove a degree from a relevant study programme at a university or university of applied sciences plus three years' professional experience. The exam is held by the competent provincial government. The exam subjects comprise professional and administrative legislation as well as the regulations valid for the specialist area and business administration. Preparatory courses at specialist providers are available as exam preparation.

Specialist exam for certified financial accountants

The specialist exam for certified financial accountants is laid down in the Austrian Financial Accounting Act (*Bilanzbuchhaltungsgesetz*). People are admitted to the exam if they can prove at least three years of specialist activity in the field of accounting. The exam comprises an oral and a written part and must be taken before the Parity Commission for Financial Accounting Professions, which comprises representatives of the Economic Chamber and of the Chamber of Public Accountants and Tax Advisors. The exam covers mainly in-depth knowledge and skills in the field of accounting (such as personnel accounting, cost accounting) and legal knowledge. Credits can be obtained for previous qualifications. For self-employment, holders of this qualification still require relevant authorisations according to the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act. Preparatory courses are offered by different CET institutions.

2.3 Other forms of VET

Adult education or adult learning, which in Austria is often understood as synonymous with CET, designates comprehensive learning by adults in educational establishments and in their working environment. Adult education comprises both CVET and general adult education. CVET primarily aims to deepen and extend vocational competences and skills and/or obtain qualifications. Furthermore, skills training and qualification measures as an instrument of active labour market policies can be summarised under this term. The main reasons for participation in CVET are the following: the employee's preservation of gainful employment, improvement of his/her professional position, and/or reintegration into the labour market. General adult education mainly focuses on expanding knowledge and enhancing awareness, without primarily professional reasons being behind it.

Depending on the type of institution and the defined objective of CET, it can be oriented towards the acquisition of a formal qualification. Many courses and programmes do not lead to any legally regulated qualification, however. This form of CET takes place in non-state CET institutions, for instance those run by the social partners, religious communities and associations. It can be geared to CVET and aim at strengthening or securing the employees' professional position. But it can also relate to general adult education and thus primarily serve to expand knowledge and enhance awareness. Specific figures and data on participation in such CET programmes are not available.

The key characteristics of CET programmes which do not lead to any legally regulated qualification are the following:

- institutions/providers: This form of CET is provided by non-state (commercial and not-for-profit) institutions. In Austria there is a dense network of education and training institutions of the large non-profit providers that have joined forces in the Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions or *KEBÖ*. The events held by these institutions range from individual lectures to courses with a curricular structure;
- status: The lack of data on the motivation to take part in general adult education measures has the result that the status of CET programmes which do not lead to legally regulated qualifications can only be specified imprecisely. Adults have a huge range of motivations to engage in education and training activities. Frequently it is difficult to distinguish between job-related and non-professional motives, all of which are relevant. In the fields of IT and foreign languages, for example, job-related and other expectations often overlap. It can, however, be assumed that a large portion of this form of CET is due to personal learning interest. Seen from that perspective, this form of CET is particularly important in the education landscape;
- curricula: The curricula are developed by the CET institutions. In most cases, the course material is elaborated by the course leaders themselves.

The funding of CET depends on what type of programme is attended. In most cases, the costs of CET are borne by the participants and/or companies. There are, however, a series of measures (such as the educational leave) and financial subsidies (e.g. in the form of grants and tax relief) for which participants and companies can apply in order to obtain (partial) coverage of expenses for job-related CET. All these initiatives aim to serve as incentives to take part in CET in order to improve the companies' economic situation and strengthen the CET participants' position in the labour market.

Teaching staff in CET measures are mainly active as trainers, coaches, and seminar or course leaders. In principle, no qualifications are specified as mandatory for these professions. It goes without saying that they boast relevant know-how in the subject they teach. In many cases these are individuals who exercise a profession and impart relevant specialisations. Commercial and technical courses, for example, are taught by practitioners from the economy, language classes by native speakers, etc. Didactical skills are not required, but people with teaching practice are preferred.

3. Shaping VET qualifications

3.1 The development of curricula

In order to guarantee that VET is business- and labour market-oriented, existing VET programmes and curricula are regularly developed, updated and adjusted. One major goal of this adjustment process is to achieve congruency between VET and employment as well as between qualification demand and supply, by attempting to appraise future developments at an early stage and respond to them proactively. In the Austrian VET sector there are different anticipation processes that lead to curricular adjustments. Major stakeholders in this process include the social partners, which can frequently support the coordination process between educational provision and qualification requirements and/or make statements on curriculum drafts. The outcomes of various analyses of qualification requirements (cf. 3.2) are considered accordingly in this process.

In the following, the processes during the development of curricula are presented for the individual VET programmes (cf. 2.2).

VET schools and colleges (BMSs and BHSs, together: BMHSs)

The educational objectives and content of VET schools and colleges (*BMHSs*, cf. 2.2.1) are laid down in framework curricula. They are regulated by the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (*BMUKK*). Initiatives towards curricular reforms and/or the introduction of new subjects or area specialisations are launched by the educational institutions themselves or the *BMUKK*. Whereas the contents of VET college curricula are newly designed every ten years, this is only done every 15 years in case of VET schools. In so-called curriculum committees, teachers and *BMUKK* experts work together with representatives of the economy to develop draft curricula for the respective subjects. As well as a number of other institutions, the social partners also receive the drafts to issue their statements. In the implementation of the framework curricula, schools are entitled to change the number of lessons of individual subjects autonomously or develop their own focuses, taking account of (regional) economic requirements.

In 2004 educational standards were introduced in the VET school sector: these are learning outcomes which are derived from the curricula, formulated in a specific wording, focus on final qualifications and describe the learners' increase in competences as desired by the end of the training. In addition, educational standards contain key learning contents and competences, which are formulated based on examples for classroom use. In this respect, educational standards make a significant contribution towards supporting competence-oriented teaching design in the VET sector. But the objectives of teaching are still

specified in the decreed curricula. Thanks to the introduction of educational standards, a pronounced trend towards output orientation has been launched in VET. The new curricula of VET schools and colleges are now being gradually designed in a competence-oriented manner.

Schools for general healthcare and nursing (GuK)

In the non-medical health professions (such as healthcare and nursing occupations, paramedical services, emergency medical occupations) programmes are designed within the framework of training regulations which are based on the laws regulating the respective occupations. The training regulations are elaborated by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Health (*Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, BMG*) with the involvement of experts and interest representations and adopted by the Health Minister. Based on these regulations, the curricula for the various programmes are drawn up by the Austrian Federal Health Institute (*Österreichisches Bundesinstitut für Gesundheitswesen*) on behalf of *BMG*; they have the status of recommendations.

Apprenticeship (dual system)

The training content for every apprenticeship occupation is laid down in training regulations (for the company-based part) and curricula (for the school-based part). The in-company curriculum (*Berufsbild*, a type of curriculum for the company-based part) is adopted within the framework of the training regulation by the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth (*BMWFJ*). Initiatives to adjust existing or introduce new in-company curricula are frequently taken by companies or social partners. The Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship (*Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat, BABB*) – a body which comprises social partner representatives and advises the Ministry of Economy in apprenticeship issues – also introduces proposals or prepares expert opinions about reform proposals. The actual designing of in-company curricula and thus the orientation towards qualification requirements is, as a rule, conducted by *BABB* subcommittees or the educational research institutes of the social partners: the Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy (*ibw*) on the employers' side and the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (*öibf*) on the employees' side. Framework curricula for part-time vocational school are designed in a similar way to VET full-time schools. In the apprenticeship sector, framework curricula are laid down in analogy to company-based training.

Fachhochschule institutions

The initiative to set up new courses at universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschule, FHS*, cf. 2.2.3) and modify existing training contents often comes from the economy. The study plan, which is elaborated by a development team, must be subjected to a needs and acceptance analysis. In this process, the economy's quantitative demand for students is determined and the developed training and qualification profile is evaluated by potential employers. Programmes are authorised for a maximum of five years. During that time

it is possible to make necessary adaptations by submitting change applications. Upon expiration of the five years, an application for reaccreditation is required. As well as another needs and acceptance examination it also comprises an evaluation report which is based on a peer review. In this way it is also possible to ensure a matching of qualification requirements and VET programmes.

Continuing education and training

In the CVET sector it is easiest to adjust programmes to qualification requirements. In this sector it is possible to respond to the economy's needs most quickly. The extensive lack of legal bases as well as competition between providers on the free CET market lead to more flexibility and scope when designing needs-oriented courses.

3.2 Mechanisms and processes to anticipate qualification requirements

Practice-oriented educational objectives, contents and methods as well as their regular updating (adaptation) constitute one characteristic of the Austrian VET sector. This is achieved by continually adapting curricula and educational objectives (cf. 3.1). The basis for the further development, updating and adaptation of existing VET programmes are the instruments and processes for identifying future qualification requirements (anticipation). Against the background of a continuously dynamic economic development, these instruments and processes are becoming even more important.

Instruments and processes supporting the analysis of qualification requirements are mainly funded by Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). The most important ones include:

- skill needs studies: These are mostly conducted for specific sectors and industries (e.g. timber, IT), but also for regions (such as federal provinces) and education programmes (e.g. certain specialisations of VET colleges, apprenticeship training, etc.). The main beneficiaries of these studies are the stakeholders in these sectoral/regional areas as well as staff responsible for the curriculum and other areas in the VET pathways that are of relevance for the specialisations;
- the Qualification Barometer of Public Employment Service Austria (AMS-QB): This online system, which was set up in 2002, summarises current and foreseeable labour market trends and qualification requirements and makes them accessible to the general public in a structured format via the internet (<http://www.ams.at/qualifikationsbarometer>). The AMS-QB is above all an instrument of representation: for gathering information, existing written data (e.g. from skill needs studies) are used and merged. In addition, interviews are held with experts from the various occupational areas and fields. Contents refer to the whole of Austria, and they are complemented by summary information for every province and analyses of job ads. The findings of the AMS-QB are also published in printed form on an annual basis under the title AMS report on qualification structures (*AMS-Qualifikationsstrukturbericht*);

- the Research Network of Public Employment Service Austria: This platform, which was launched by AMS, serves to exchange information and use synergies between a number of Austrian research institutes, including in the area of skills forecasts (<http://www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at>). Between 2002 and 2008 with the AMS research network there was an annual event on qualification requirements of the future which was held together with the social partners on specific themes (e.g. qualification requirements in the area of health and social affairs, qualification requirements of youths and older employees). In 2009 this series of events was replaced with regular meetings of the so-called Standing Committee;
- the AMS Standing Committee on New Skills: On the proposal of the AMS Supervisory Board (AMS's highest administrative body), a platform (i.e. the Standing Committee) was set up, which comprises representatives of the AMS (Supervisory Board, Board of Directors, specialist department for qualification issues, directors of the AMS's regional organisations) as well as representatives of the social partners, relevant ministries, and the major CET providers: Institute for Economic Promotion of the Austrian Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut, WIFI*) and the Vocational Training Institute (*Berufsförderungsinstitut, bfi*). This body decides on setting up cluster groups about specific occupational areas, in which HR and training managers from key major companies exchange opinions about issues related to employment and qualification development in three moderated workshops each. Since 2009 nine cluster meetings have been held: 'machinery, metal, motor vehicles', 'chemistry, plastics, new materials', 'office/administration', 'wellness/tourism', 'construction/building ecology', 'wholesale and retail trade', 'IT/telecom', 'healthcare' and 'energy/environmental technology'. With the direct involvement of major CVET establishments it is ensured that the results of these meetings are incorporated into education offers without delay. Building on the results from the workshops, for example, curricula for modularised programmes have been developed for all nine clusters. Between November 2011 and June 2012 about 4,600 people completed courses held as part of the AMS New Skills scheme.

3.3 The development of the National Qualifications Framework in Austria

In 2012 a major milestone in the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Austria was achieved: the referencing report, which had been prepared jointly by the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (*BMUKK*) and the Federal Ministry of Science and Research (*Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung, BMWF*) and presents the connections between the levels of the Austrian NQF with those of the EQF, was sent to the European Commission.

The Austrian NQF will comprise eight levels, with qualifications assigned to Levels 6 to 8 based on different sentences describing them. Whereas qualifications of the Bologna architecture acquired at higher education (HE) institutions (these are: Bachelor, Master and PhD) are classified according to the Dublin descriptors, assignment of all the other qualifications

builds on the EQF descriptors. Levels 1 to 5, which are also characterised by the EQF descriptors, will comprise qualifications from all educational contexts.

With the NQF, an instrument will be available in Austria which aims to portray all qualifications independent of where they have been acquired. The NQF must merely be understood as a transparency instrument, meaning that it will not have any regulating effect.

In the course of the NQF development, attention was increasingly directed towards non-formal qualifications, which will be made more visible. It is also planned to take informally acquired competences into account, and in this respect appropriate credit transfer methods still need to be developed and tested.

The development of the NQF in Austria has made a major contribution to introducing output and learning outcome orientation in curricula development.

4. Promoting participation in vocational education and training

Vocational education and training (VET) is extremely important in Austria. Some 80% of all pupils who have completed compulsory schooling opt for a VET path (cf. fig. 18). Here they can select from among a wide range of programmes, both in the full-time school-based and in the dual VET sector. This aims to ensure that every young person can develop his or her own strengths and talents in the best possible way.

In order to maintain the attractiveness of VET in the future it is necessary to give the programmes an interesting and modern design. Accordingly it is important to continually update VET contents in the curricula and adapt them to the requirements of the economy (cf. 3.1). In some areas of VET (such as apprenticeship training, CVET) financial incentives aim to keep people interested in following these VET pathways (cf. 4.1). But the learners' interest is also raised by providing comprehensive educational counselling and career guidance services, by offering a large number of opportunities both in the school-based and the non-school area to obtain information about the various options (cf. 4.2).

4.1 Promoting participation in vocational education and training financially

Although apprenticeship training (cf. 2.2.1), being a practice-oriented VET pathway, is enjoying wide popularity, the number of training companies has been declining in recent years. Public subsidies are being used to attempt to counteract this development. Consequently a new funding scheme for training companies entered into force with the 2008 amendment to the Vocational Training Act. This scheme is not only intended to enhance the quantitative situation on the apprenticeship post market but also improve the quality of training. Within this subsidisation system, there are various types of support: every company that trains an apprentice is entitled to so-called basic support. This comprises three gross apprenticeship remunerations pursuant to the collective agreement in the first apprenticeship year, two in the second year, and one each in the third and fourth years. The training company can apply for basic support at the end of the respective apprenticeship year. Subsidies also cover inter-company and supra-company VET measures and the acquisition of competences which go beyond the job profile/in-company curriculum (cf. 2.2.1). Companies where apprentices pass the apprenticeship-leave exam with good results or distinction can also apply for grants. Subsidies are also available for CET measures for IVET trainers and for measures taken for apprentices with learning difficulties (such as tutoring courses).

Apart from the above-mentioned types of support, there are additional benefits regarding non-wage labour costs: in the first and second apprenticeship year, both the company's and the apprentice's health insurance contributions are waived. The contribution to accident insurance for apprentices is waived throughout the entire apprenticeship. Contributions to unemployment insurance need to be paid only in the final year of apprenticeship.

Public Employment Service Austria (*Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*) also runs apprenticeship post support schemes designed above all to integrate problem groups into the labour market. Companies receive a flat-rate grant towards the costs of an apprenticeship. The grant is payable for the following categories of apprentice, among others: young women in apprenticeships with a low proportion of women (share of female apprentices in the total number of apprentices in the previous training year below 40%); especially disadvantaged apprenticeship post seekers (such as young people who have mental or physical disabilities or emotional problems, learning deficits, or who are socially maladjusted); participants in inclusive IVET schemes (cf. 2.2.1); and people aged 19 or above whose difficulties finding employment on account of their lack of qualifications can be solved by means of an apprenticeship.

Another area where financial support is available for institutions and learners is the adult education sector. An act which is important in this connection is the Financing Act on the funding of adult education and public libraries from federal funds (*Bundesgesetz über die Förderung der Erwachsenenbildung und des Volksbüchereiwesens aus Bundesmitteln*). This act regulates the tasks that are eligible for funding (VET, acquisition and extension of school qualifications by adults, etc.), how funding is given (in the form of loans, grants to cover credit costs, etc.), and what institutions can obtain subsidies on which conditions. Funds only go to education and training institutions whose activities are non-profit-oriented. For the CET providers, however, there exists no legal entitlement to funds. Financial support is organised by the Department for Adult Education of the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (*BMUKK*). The majority of education and training institutions funded by *BMUKK* are represented in the Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions, which was founded in 1972 (*KEBÖ*).

As well as support at federal level, provinces and municipalities also provide funding, either directly or in the form of separate companies and funds. For that purpose, municipalities and provincial governments mainly apply demand-driven funding instruments (education cheques, educational accounts, and similar). Preferred target groups of funding are employees, young people, and those at a disadvantage on their respective regional labour markets. The social partners also act as providers of funds for CVET for their respective clients. Similarly to municipalities and provincial governments, social partners also tend to use demand-driven funding instruments (e.g. the education voucher of the Chambers of Labour). Public Employment Service Austria (*AMS*) finances skills training, qualification and retraining measures within the framework of active labour market policies.

Tax incentive systems play a major role in Austria to support company-based CET. Companies have the possibility to claim a tax-free training allowance (*Bildungsfreibetrag*) amounting to 20% of the cost of external and in-house CVET measures. This lowers the basis of assessment for income or corporation tax. They can also opt for an education bonus (*Bildungsprämie*) amounting to 6% of expenses.

Employees and employers have a number of options to claim CVET expenses as tax exempt. Expenses and costs for CVET, inasmuch as they are connected with the exercised occupation, can be written off from taxes as business expenses or advertising expenses.

Also people in dependent employment have the possibility to write off costs for occupationally relevant CVET measures as advertising expenses. Self-employed people can write off pure training expenses as business expenses in as much as they are connected with the exercised or a related occupation.

4.2 Educational counselling and career guidance

In Austria there is a considerable diversity of institutions, providers and initiatives in the field of information, counselling and guidance on learning and occupations:

Educational counselling and career guidance in schools of lower and upper secondary level

Educational counselling and career guidance in the school sector is in principle within the sphere of responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK). From the fifth school grade onwards, school counsellors and career guidance officers are available at all schools for schoolchildren and parents who have questions about schools and careers. They provide information about possible education paths, access requirements, as well as qualifications acquired with certificates and diplomas; and they provide young people with a basic overview of CET options. Guidance is conducted by teachers with relevant qualifications who are termed, depending on the school type, school counsellor (*Schülerberater/in*) or educational counsellor (*Bildungsberater/in*) and provide their counselling services in addition to their teaching activity. In the final years of lower secondary level, in the seventh and eighth school grade, career guidance is a compulsory subject totalling 32 hours a year. The aim of these lessons includes improving the schoolchildren's decision-making competence, social skills, determination and perseverance. Short periods of work placement at companies and personal contacts with people from different occupations aim to help schoolchildren examine their career aspirations and take independent decisions.

At prevocational schools (cf. 2.2.1) career guidance plays a particularly important role, as this school type is at the interface between obligatory and further schooling. Career guidance aims to inform schoolchildren and parents about regional possibilities in apprenticeship training and, in vocational guidance classes, prepares them for so-called real-life encounters (e.g. days of practical work experience) and important information events and job information fairs, etc.

Teachers with specialist qualifications also work as career guidance officers at VET schools and colleges (*BMHSs*, cf. 2.2.1). Students at *BMHSs* have already taken their first decision about their professional career. But thanks to the good level of general education provided at schools, the entire range of professional development options is also open to them. Therefore, educational counselling and career guidance at these schools always includes in-depth reflections on the already made career choice.

Educational counselling and career guidance in the tertiary sector

The majority of universities offer both Psychological Counselling Offices, which help students in issues related to study organisation and problems during studies, and career planning centres, which support students with their entry into the world of work. These institutions are within the sphere of responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research (*BMWF*).

Psychological student counselling services at universities and *Fachhochschule* institutions offer general course guidance, psychological counselling, psychotherapy, aptitude diagnostics, coaching, supervision, etc. to holders of the upper secondary school-leaving certificate and HE students.

Career planning centres at universities offer HE students and university graduates one-on-one counselling, information events e.g. on topics such as job applications and CVs, as well as individualised career planning. In addition, the centres organise seminars on presentation techniques, rhetoric and IT, as well as events such as career fairs and company presentations.

CET sector

Educational counselling and career guidance is becoming increasingly important in the CET sector. This is particularly evident in the establishment of comprehensive educational databases (<http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at>, <http://www.eduvista.com>), an Austria-wide platform for educational counselling, and the merger of institutions to guarantee independent and supra-institutional information and guidance services. Major adult education establishments, such as the institutions run by the social partners (the Institute for Economic Promotion of the Austrian Economic Chamber on the employers' side and the Vocational Training Institute on the employees' side) frequently offer their own guidance services.

Guidance and counselling by Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)

Across Austria, at more than 60 sites, the career guidance centres (*Berufsinformationzentrum, BIZ*) of AMS offer comprehensive information about occupations, their contents and requirements, about initial education and training, CET paths, the labour market and employment options. Apart from information material in the form of brochures, information leaflets, videos, etc. AMS also develops information databases on occupations and on initial and continuing education and training programmes for different target groups, which are accessible online at <http://www.ams.at/berufsinfo>.

For apprenticeship post seekers, AMS operates the apprenticeship post platform <http://www.ams.at/lehrstellen> jointly with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ*). In addition, EURES advisors who are employed at AMS provide information about job offers and working conditions in other countries of the European Economic Area.

Anyone who is interested can use the information and services offers provided by the AMS's career guidance centres (*BIZ*) free of charge. Print media, videos and PCs are available for customers to obtain information themselves. For young people in need of guidance there exists a selection of career guidance tools (e.g. the compass for apprenticeship occupations, interest test). The advisors working at *BIZ* provide support in information research and are available for one-on-one information and counselling talks to assist in career and educational decisions. In addition, *BIZ* also provides services for specific target groups (e.g. schoolchildren, teachers, parents) and on specific topics (e.g. career guidance, presentations of occupations, job applications, days of technology for girls).

AMS offers one-on-one counselling talks for people registered unemployed. These talks aim to match the jobseekers' personal requirements, strengths and intentions with the situation on the labour market. Furthermore there exists the possibility to take part in training programmes and courses (e.g. vocational guidance courses, training for job applications, job trials, skills training and qualification courses, etc.). In special cases, (young) women can take advantage of assistance in career choice, skills training and qualification.

AMS also supports the school-based information activities by means of a large number of brochures, career guidance films, occupational information and CET databases on the Internet, and by organising events and trade fairs.

Guidance and counselling by social partners

The chambers of labour and trade unions mainly offer educational counselling and career guidance via their joint adult learning institutions: the Vocational Training Institutes (*bfi*). In addition, they publish information material and organise information events.

The counselling services of the economic chambers and their adult education institutions, the Economic Promotion Institutes (*WIFIs*), focus in particular on IVET and CVET. These services are offered across Austria at several locations in the so-called career guidance centres (*BIZ*). With the *BIC.at* career guidance tool (<http://www.bic.at>), the economic chambers have their own web portal where job descriptions, VET and CVET options, tips on career choice and job applications, as well as a large variety of service materials are offered, in some cases even in several languages. The economic chambers' career guidance centres provide comprehensive information material on a self-service basis and organise events geared towards the world of work such as sector presentations, school and information events, as well as training for job applications. As well as information for groups (such as school classes), one-on-one counselling talks are also offered. In addition, the Economic Promotion Institutes' career guidance offices offer individualised counselling services on the basis of comprehensive psychological testing procedures.

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	German term	English term/explanation
abf-austria	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Berufsbildungsforschung	Austrian Working Group on VET Research
AHS	allgemeinbildende höhere Schule	academic secondary school (higher general education school) – junior cycle and senior cycle
ALE	Erwachsenenbildung	adult learning
AMS	Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich	Public Employment Service Austria
BAG	Berufsausbildungsgesetz	Vocational Training Act
BBAB	Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat	Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship
bfi	Berufsförderungsinstitut	Vocational Training Institute
BHS	Berufsbildende höhere Schule	VET college
BMF	Bundesministerium für Finanzen	Federal Ministry of Finance
BMG	Bundesministerium für Gesundheit	Federal Ministry for Health
BMHS	Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen	VET schools and colleges
BMS	Berufsbildende mittlere Schule	VET school
BMASK	Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
BMUKK	Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur	Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture

BMWFJ	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend	Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth
BRP	Berufsreifeprüfung	examination providing access to higher education for skilled workers and graduates of three- and four-year full-time VET schools
CET	Weiterbildung	continuing education and training
CVET	berufliche Weiterbildung	continuing vocational education and training
ECVET	Europäisches Lernkreditsystem	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EQR / EQF	Europäischer Qualifikationsrahmen	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	Europäischer Sozialfonds	European Social Fund
FH	Fachhochschule	university level study programmes of at least three years' duration with vocational-technical orientation
GE	Allgemeinbildung	general education
HE	Hochschulbildung	higher education
IHS	Institut für Höhere Studien	Institute for Advanced Studies
IBA	Integrative Berufsausbildung	integrative vocational education and training, integrative VET
ibw	Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft	Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	berufliche Erstausbildung	initial vocational education and training

KEBÖ	Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs	Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions
LAP	Lehrabschlussprüfung	apprenticeship-leave examination
LLL	Lebenslanges Lernen	Lifelong learning
NQR / NQF	Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen	National Qualifications Framework
ÖGB	Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund	Austrian Trade Union Federation
öibf	Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung	Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training
PTS	Polytechnische Schule	prevocational school
SBP	Studienberechtigungsprüfung	higher education entrance examination
VET	Berufsbildung	vocational education and training
WB	(berufliche) Weiterbildung	continuing (vocational) education and training
WIFI	Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut	Economic Promotion Institute of the Economic Chambers
WB	(berufliche) Weiterbildung	continuing (vocational) education and training
WIFI	Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut	Economic Promotion Institute of the Economic Chambers

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Further information and websites

Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Department of Statistics: <http://wko.at/statistik>

Austrian schools and colleges of social and services industries (HUM): <http://www.hum.at>

Apprenticeship training in Austria:

<http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrlingsUndBerufsausbildung/Seiten/default.aspx>

Education system in Austria: <http://www.bildungssystem.at/>

ENIC NARIC Austria: http://www.bmwf.gv.at/wissenschaft/international/enic_naric_austria/

Fachhochschule Council: <http://www.fhr.ac.at/>

Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth: <http://www.bmwfj.gv.at>

Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture: <http://www.bmukk.gv.at>

Federal Ministry for Health: <http://www.bmg.gv.at>

Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection: <http://www.bmask.gv.at>

Federal Ministry of Science and Research: <http://www.bmwf.gv.at>

Public Employment Service Austria: <http://www.ams.at>

Vocational education and training in Austria: <http://www.ibw.at/de/bbs>

VET schools and colleges: <http://www.berufsbildendeschulen.at>

ReferNet Austria: <http://www.refernet.at>

Statistics Austria: <http://www.statistik.at>