

The background of the cover is a blue-toned map of Europe with white and yellow curved lines overlaid. The text "Spotlight on VET Austria" is prominently displayed in the lower right quadrant.

**Spotlight  
on VET  
Austria**

## Spotlight on VET

# Austria

### High standing

Austria attaches the utmost importance to a sound system of high-quality vocational education and training (VET), which it regards as the best basis for successful entry into working life and as a key factor for economic development.

The appeal of VET courses in Austria derives from

- the diversity of training paths,
- the high quality of training,
- the combination of theory and practice, and
- the permeability of the education system.

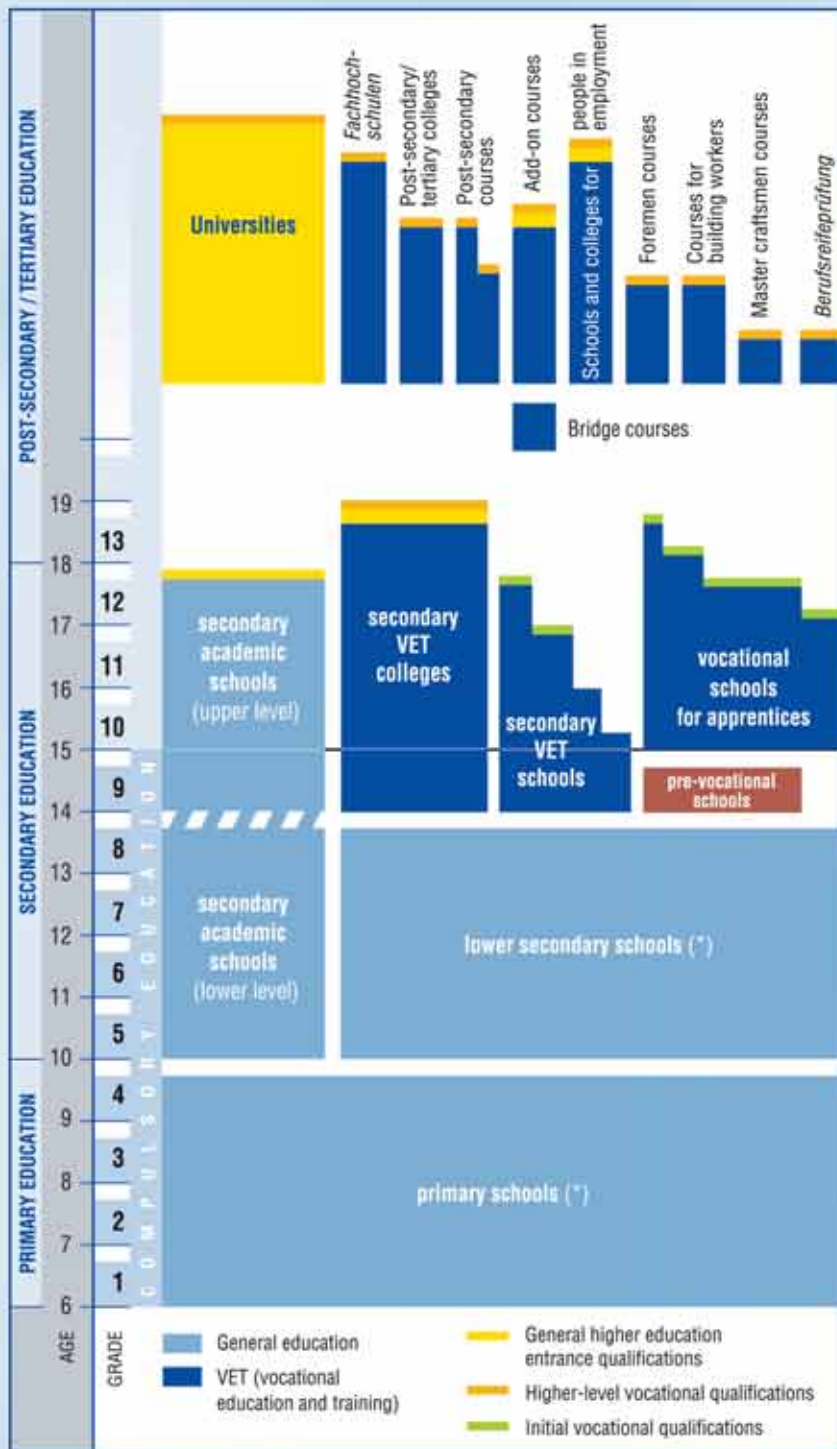
### Range of courses

Austria's differentiated VET system enables people to develop their individual strengths and interests. Training at upper secondary level and additional examinations such as the *Berufsreifeprüfung* open the door to post-secondary and university-level courses. The following are among the main sources of VET:

- **VET colleges** (*berufsbildende höhere Schulen*, 14-19 years of age) provide a double qualification - the university-entrance qualification (obtained by passing the *Reifeprüfung*) and a VET diploma. Those who successfully complete the five-year college course (in business management, technology, tourism, etc.) not only acquire general and vocational qualifications for higher-level occupations but also qualify for entry into higher education. The inclusion of VET colleges in Annex II of Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications testifies to the fact that VET-college students obtain qualifications equivalent to post-secondary training in most other Member States.
- **VET schools** (*berufsbildende mittlere Schulen*, 14-18 years) provide courses, generally of three to four years' duration, leading to general and vocational qualifications; those who pass the final examination are qualified to go straight into mainstream employment. VET-school courses of one or two years' duration combine general education with preparatory vocational training and serve as a 'bridge' to other training courses.
- **Apprenticeships** begin at the age of 15, on completion of compulsory schooling. There are about 260 apprenticeship trades, most of which involve a three-year dual training course of company-based training supplemented by attendance at a part-time school for apprentices (*Berufsschule*). Those who pass the final apprenticeship examination can go on to obtain further qualifications, for example by passing the master craftsman's examination in their trade or the *Berufsreifeprüfung*, which would entitle them to enter higher education.
- **Fachhochschulen** (from the age of 18) are university-level courses of applied science and technology. They are tailored to specific areas of professional activity, such as business management, tourism, media and design, etc., and provide scientifically underpinned vocational education. A period of practical work experience is a compulsory part of the curriculum. *Fachhochschulen* are open not only to learners who have passed the *Reifeprüfung* but also to those with vocational qualifications relevant to their intended course. Since 2002, *Fachhochschulen* have also been able to offer courses leading to Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

***Berufsreifeprüfung***: an examination providing an opportunity for people with initial vocational training (through an apprenticeship or a VET course of at least three years' duration) to take certain tests as external candidates to qualify for entry into higher education.

## The Austrian education system (simplified chart)



(\*) including special needs schools

Source: adapted from Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Directorate-General for Vocational Education: *Bildungsinformation*, 2004

# Austria

## Hallmarks

VET courses are in great demand among young people in Austria. The keys to their success are:

- a combination of general education with intensive theoretical and practical specialised training;
- key competences: entrepreneurship is both a cross-curricular principle and a special training focus; depending on the type of school, up to three foreign languages may be compulsory; in certain subject areas, classes may even be held in a foreign language; the acquisition of computer literacy is compulsory in all VET schools and colleges;
- the right of schools and colleges to determine their own training priorities on the basis of factors such as the requirements of the local economy (school autonomy);
- application of the 'learning by doing' principle in apprentice training and at VET schools and colleges (e.g. through practice firms);
- continuous cooperation between the education system and the business world to ensure that apprenticeship and training curricula keep abreast of developments;
- work on specific projects from the worlds of business and technology (VET schools and colleges);
- obligation for candidates for vocational teaching posts to present proof of industrial or commercial experience;
- differentiation of apprenticeship courses to reflect the diverse attainment levels of new apprentices (manual trades, high-tech trades, partial qualifications, etc.).

**Projects from the worlds of business and technology (VET schools and VET colleges):** trainees receive orders from companies to execute specific pieces of work, in which they practise specialised skills and gain in competence in key areas before presenting their finished product as part of the final examination.

## Challenges

Through numerous initiatives, Austria seeks to make its VET even better, even more appealing and even more in tune with the labour market. These initiatives include:

- extending school autonomy to make training paths more flexible,
- developing a quality-management system for VET (*Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung*),
- focusing education and training more sharply on learning outcomes and making attainments more comparable by means of training standards,
- restructuring teacher training from 2007 onwards to bring it into line with the Bologna principles, and
- making VET more flexible by introducing a modular structure for apprenticeships (2006).



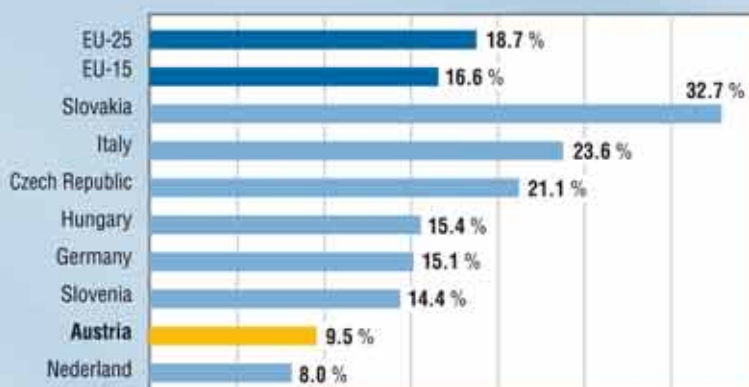
Austria is pursuing the aim of reinforcing the European dimension of its VET system, for example by:

- continuing the process of introducing the Europass, which is already at an advanced stage,
- vigorously supporting the development of a European qualifications framework and of a European credit system for VET,
- concluding agreements with other countries on the equivalence of qualifications and engaging in cooperation with neighbouring countries, and
- promoting mobility among young people within the education and training system.

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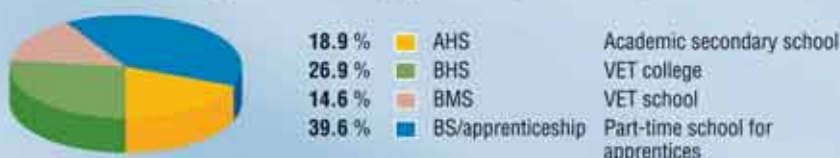
## Education and training in figures

The wide appeal of VET is one of the reasons why Austria has traditionally had one of the lowest rates of unemployment among 15- to 24-year-olds in Europe. (2004, figures in %).



Source: Eurostat, 2005

An impressive indicator of the popularity of VET is that more than 80 % of young people in the tenth year of schooling opt for a vocational course (distribution of learners in the 10th year of schooling by school type, 2002/03).



Source: Nowak, S.; Schneeberger, A., *Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick: Strukturdaten über Ausbildung und Beschäftigung*. Vienna: ibw, 2005.

Thanks to the numerous VET courses, a high percentage of people in the 25-64 age bracket have successfully completed their education to upper secondary level (ISCED levels 3-4) (2004).

Country	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
Czech Republic	11	77	13
Slovakia	13	74	13
Poland	16	68	16
<b>Austria</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>18</b>
Germany (*)	17	60	24
UK	15	53	28
France	34	41	24
Spain	54	19	27
EU-15 (*)	34	43	23
EU-25 (*)	32	47	21

**ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education**  
**ISCED 0-2:** pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education  
**ISCED 3-4:** upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education  
**ISCED 5-6:** tertiary education

The countries are listed by the percentage of their population educated to level 3 or 4.  
 (\*) Figures for 2003

Source: Eurostat, EU labour-force survey, Eurostat database, 2005

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### Further information

- Archan, S.; Mayr, T. *Berufsbildung in Österreich – Kurzbeschreibung*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2006. (Cedefop Panorama, No 125). Available on the Internet (as of 30 Jan. 2006) at: [www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/information\\_resources/Bookshop/publications.asp?section=22](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/information_resources/Bookshop/publications.asp?section=22)
- Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur, *Shaping the future and adapting to tomorrow's world. Austria's priorities in education policy*. BMBWK, Vienna, 2005. Available on the Internet (as of 30 Jan. 2006) at: [http://eu2006.bmbwk.gv.at/downloads/bildung\\_prioritaeten.pdf](http://eu2006.bmbwk.gv.at/downloads/bildung_prioritaeten.pdf)
- European Parliament and Council Directive 2005/36/EC of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications. Official Bulletin of the European Union, L 225, 30 September 2005, pp. 22-142. Available on the Internet (as of 30 Jan. 2006) at: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/de/oj/2005/l\\_255/l\\_25520050930de00220142.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/de/oj/2005/l_255/l_25520050930de00220142.pdf)

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<a href="http://www.bmwa.gv.at">www.bmwa.gv.at</a>	Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour
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*We wish to thank S. Archan and T. Mayr (ibw) for their valuable contribution.*

*This brochure focuses on some of the main aspects of vocational education and training in Austria and does not claim to be exhaustive.*

Project coordinator: *Sylvie Bousquet*



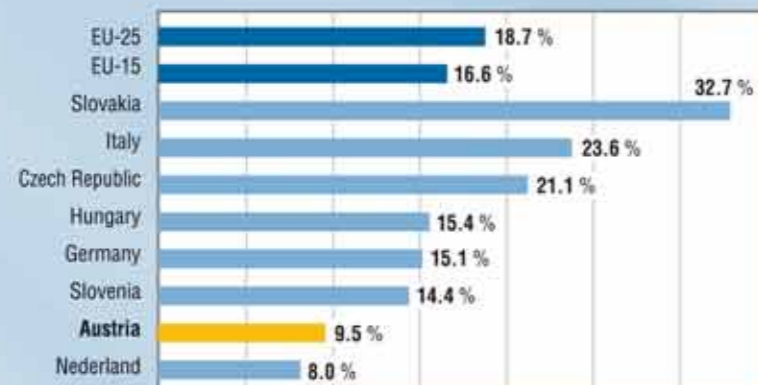
European Centre for the  
Development of Vocational Training

Europe 123, GR-570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea)  
Postal address: PO Box 22427, GR-551 02 Thessaloniki  
Tel. (30) 23 10 49 01 11, Fax (30) 23 10 49 00 20  
E-mail: [info@cedefop.eu.int](mailto:info@cedefop.eu.int) Homepage: [www.cedefop.eu.int](http://www.cedefop.eu.int)  
Interactive website: [www.trainingvillage.gr](http://www.trainingvillage.gr)

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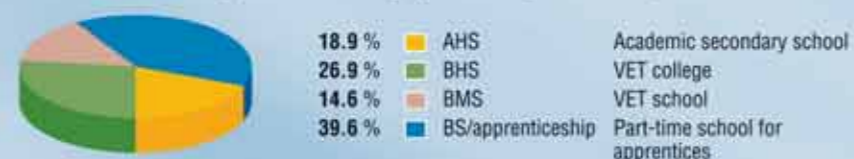
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 Postal address: PO Box 22427, GR-551 02 Thessaloniki  
 Tel. (30) 23 10 49 01 11, Fax (30) 23 10 49 00 20  
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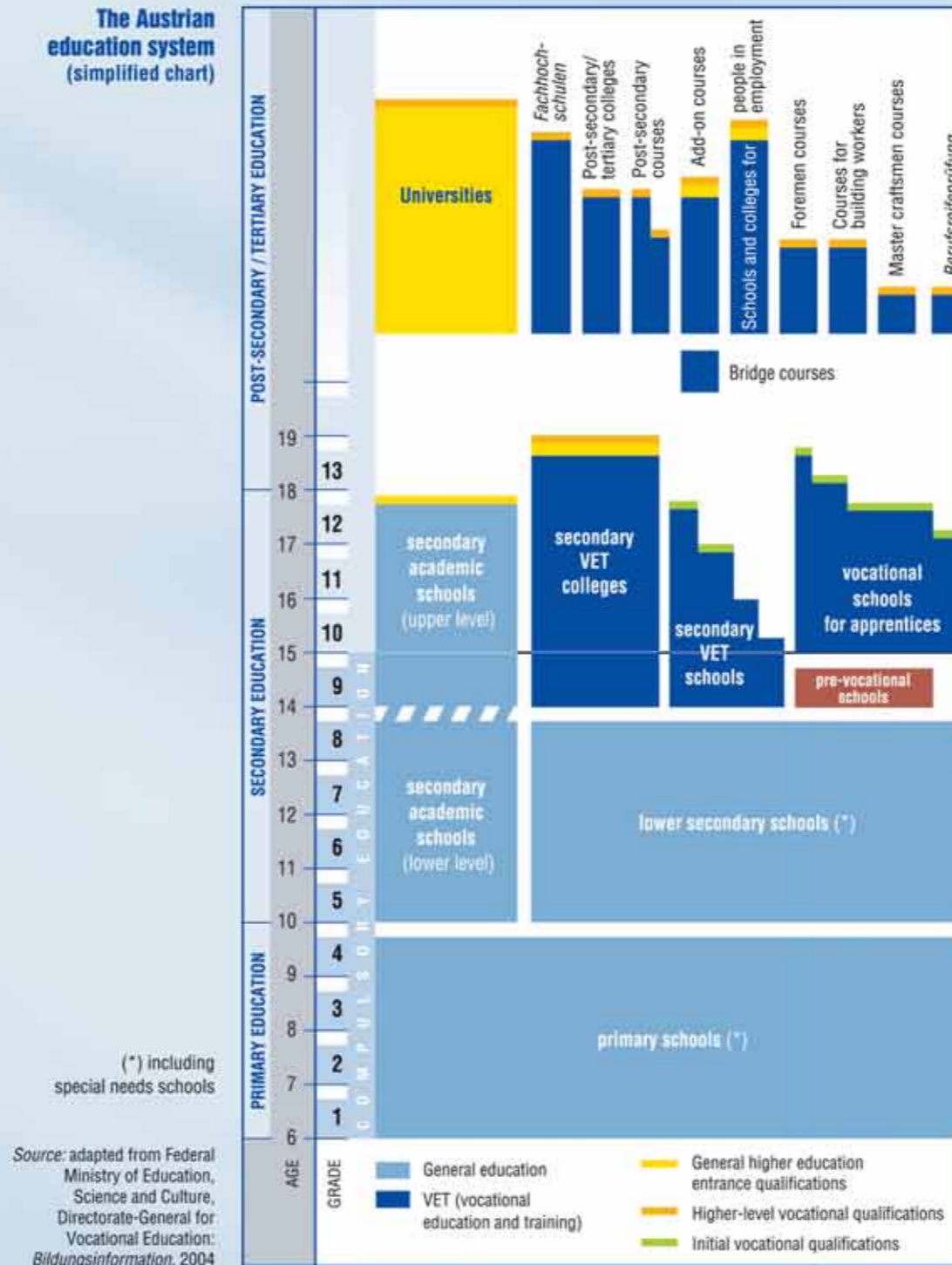
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