



Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

AUSTRIA



Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

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policy in 2015-17**

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Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period, the proportion of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) programmes in Austria was well above the EU average: 70.2% in 2013 (European Commission, 2015, p. 8), against 48.9% in the EU; 69.8% in 2014 compared to 48% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 105); 70% in 2015 compared to 47% in the EU ⁽¹⁾. At 47%, the number of upper secondary initial vocational education and training (IVET) students following work-based programmes in 2014 was also higher than the 34% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 105). The employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates was higher than in the EU: 86% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 2) and 83.7% in 2015 (European Commission, 2016, p. 2) compared to 70.8% and 74.1% on average in the EU in respective years. Adult participation in lifelong learning was also above the EU rate: 14.2% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 9) and 14.4% in 2015 compared to 10.7% on average in the EU in both years (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 105) (Table 1).

Modernisation of the VET system was under way and semester-based modularisation of upper-secondary programmes was being prepared. In the preceding years, generalisation of work experience in programmes and the learning outcomes approach in curricula (including apprenticeships) had been started; standardised competence-based leaving exams had been piloted; and initiatives such as the *Lehre mit Matura* (completing an apprenticeship in parallel with studying for higher education entrance) had been introduced.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, data for 2015.

Table 1. Framework data: score on VET indicators in Austria and in the EU: 2010, last available year and recent trend

Indicator label	2010		Last available year		Recent trend (per year)		
	AT ^f	EU ^f	Yr	AT ^f EU ^f	Range	AT	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility							
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	69.8 ^b 48.0 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▫ -0.4	▫ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	47.7 ^b 34.0 ^b _{E2}	'13-'14	▫ -0.4	▫ 0.1
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14	95.9 69.2 ^{E3}	'13-'14	▫ 0.0	▫ -1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	33.0	38.0 ^e	'10	33.0 38.0 ^e			
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	12.0	20.0 ^e	'10	12.0 20.0 ^e			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	13.8		'15	14.4 10.7 ^b	'13-'15	↗ 0.2	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	87.0	66.0 ^e	'10	87.0 66.0 ^e			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	65.4 ^b 42.7 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▫ -0.5	▫ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	26.0	25.0 ^e	'10	26.0 25.0 ^e			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	35.5 ^b 33.0 ^b	'14-'15	▫ 1.2	▫ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	8.1	5.3	'15	8.8 6.9	'10-'15	↗ 0.1	↗ 0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)	4.6		'15	4.5 ^C 4.3 ^b _C	'13-'15	↘ -0.1	↘ -0.1
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	19.8		'15	16.6 9.5 ^b	'13-'15	↘ -2.5	↘ -0.4
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	7.7 ^B	9.5 ^e _B	'11	7.7 9.5 ^e			
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	76.7 ^B	80.2 ^e _B	'11	76.7 80.2 ^e			
Skill development and labour market relevance							
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.75 ^b 0.56 ^b _{E4}	'12-'13	▫ 0.00	▫ -0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	11.2 ^b 6.4 ^b _{E5}	'12-'13	▫ 0.2	▫ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.8	0.8 ^e	'10	0.8 0.8 ^e			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14	1.2 ^b 1.0 ^b _{E6}	'13-'14	▫ 0.0	▫ 0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14	28.7 ^b 30.0 ^b _{E7}	'13-'14	▫ 0.6	▫ -0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14	42.4 9.3 ^{E8}	'13-'14	▫ 2.2	▫ 0.4
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	59.1	41.5 ^{E9}	'12	60.7 41.6 ^{E9}	'10-'12	▫ 0.8	▫ 0.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	86.8 ^b 77.2 ^b	'14-'15	▫ 0.5	▫ 0.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	8.9 ^b 5.3 ^b	'14-'15	▫ 2.2	▫ -1.0
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over			'15	29.6 ^b 23.7 ^b	'14-'15	▫ 0.7	▫ -0.1

Indicator label	2010		Last available year		Recent trend (per year)			
	AT ^f	EU ^f	Yr	AT ^f	EU ^f	Range	AT	EU
low-educated)								
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	83.2	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	58.5	55.2	'15	46.3	57.3	'10-'15	▪ -2.4	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)		13.9	'15	7.3 ^b	11.0 ^c	'14-'15	▪ 0.3	▪ -0.2
30-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)		33.8	'15	38.7 ^b	38.7 ^c	'14-'15	▪ -1.3	▪ 0.8
NEET rate for 18- to 24-year-olds (%)	9.1	16.6	'15	9.3	15.8	'10-'15	↗ 0.1	↘ -0.1
Unemployment rate for 20- to 34-year-olds (%)	6.7	13.1	'15	7.4	12.9	'10-'15	↗ 0.3	↗ 0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	88.0	77.4	'15	86.9 ^c	76.9 ^c	'10-'15	↘ -0.5	↘ -0.2
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	17.6	27.3	'15	15.4 ^c	23.5 ^c	'10-'15	↘ -0.4	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)	73.9	68.6	'15	74.3	70.0	'10-'15	↗ 0.1	↗ 0.3
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	54.9	53.4	'15	53.1 ^c	52.6 ^c	'10-'15	↘ -0.5	↘ -0.2
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	86.2 ^d	82.8 ^d			

^(A) UOE (UNESCO OECD Eurostat) back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED (international standard classification of education) 2011 not yet available.

^(B) AES (adult education services) 2011, used as proxy for 2010 baseline.

^(C) 2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata.

^(D) Forecast made in 2016.

^(E1) Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

^(E2) Based on 25 countries (missing: ES, PL, RO); partial information for NL.

^(E3) Based on 27 countries (missing: NL); partial information for EL, IT.

^(E4) Based on 19 countries (missing: BE, DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT, SK).

^(E5) Based on 21 countries (missing: DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT).

^(E6) Partial information for NL.

^(E7) Based on 25 countries (missing: HR, IT, UK).

^(E8) Based on 23 countries (missing: BE, IE, FR, CY, UK).

^(E9) Based on 22 countries (missing: DE, IE, EL, NL, SI, UK).

^(b) Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

^(f) Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

^(z) Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

^(e) Eurostat: 'estimated'.

NB: EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified. Arrows ↗ or ↘ signal a positive or negative trend based on more than two data points and of magnitude 0.1 per year or more. Trends based on more than two data points but of smaller magnitude are indicated by →; trends based on two points only are marked ▪. Trends are estimated by means of regression models.

Source: Cedefop, 2017a, p. 105.

CHAPTER 1.

MTD 1 – All forms of work-based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

1.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The country's priorities in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training (DGVT), are:

- (a) for apprenticeship:
 - (i) integrate migrants into dual and school-based VET;
 - (ii) strengthen VET in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the programme *Coaching and counselling of apprentices and training companies*;
- (b) for work-based learning in school-based VET, ensure that every curriculum in the vocational sector contains mandatory practice during the course (duration four weeks to three months, depending on the field or profession).

1.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

1.2.1. Upgrading the final exams of five-year VET programmes

The regulation for final exams of five-year VET programmes (ISCED-P 354-554), granting occupational qualifications and access to higher education, was amended in 2015. The diploma thesis needs now to be written by a team of up to five students. The thesis needs to have a practical focus, and cooperation with companies is strongly advised. It is to be checked against plagiarism. Assessment is based on scientific standards. Also, the written exams are now partially centralised.

1.2.2. Improving learner access to apprenticeship places

The pilot project *Supra-regional apprenticeship placement* started in 2015. It was initiated by the Austrian economic chamber in cooperation with the employment service and the federal ministries of economy and labour. The project is open to all young people, with particular focus on young refugees. The project offers an online test (available in different languages) to identify the strengths, competences and interests of learners and the results form the basis for finding suitable apprenticeship places. A one-week introduction internship can be organised. In 2016, an additional module – *B.mobile: Using the skilled workers'*

potential ⁽²⁾ – was introduced. It offers a preparatory course in subject-specific German, mathematics, practical work and intercultural aspects. An apprentices' coach is provided on site to support the training relationship and offer permanent support to the learner, in both occupation and personal issues.

Coaching and counselling for apprentices and companies has also been mainstreamed across Austria since October 2015.

⁽²⁾ https://www.wko.at/site/fachkraeftepotenzial/b_mobile.html

CHAPTER 2.

MTD 2 - Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET ⁽³⁾

A quality assurance national reference point (QANRP) was set up in 2007, covering publicly funded school-based IVET for young people and adults. A national quality assurance initiative (QIBB) for school-based IVET had been launched in 2004 to support school development. QIBB also applies to work-based learning for IVET in schools and colleges and refers to related internships, though it is not always mandatory. The 2012 legislation makes quality management an official task for all schools. Almost all VET providers carry out self-evaluation, though external evaluation has been possible in the form of peer reviews. In 2014, social partners initiated a series of quality development projects in apprenticeship to increase the share of apprenticeship graduates while maintaining high quality in training. This initiative forms a comprehensive quality strategy for apprenticeship as it covers various procedures and guidelines/standards for different stages in the process: qualification development, accreditation of companies, trainer training, and quality of training and the final exam.

Quality labels have been introduced in continuing vocational education and training (CVET). An agreement between the federal and provincial level (2011)

⁽³⁾ Sources:

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop):

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

ReferNet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>

Priorities reported by Directors General for vocational training for the 2016-20 period;

EQAVET (2016 Secretariat survey, website, newsletters): <http://www.eqavet.eu>

2016 compendium of EQAVET NRP *Erasmus+* funding;

Council recommendations on the 2016 national reform programmes:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/2016/#>

Education and training monitor 2016 country reports:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en

led to O-Cert (a quality framework for adult education institutions) and helps these institutions access public funding.

Data collections/surveys cover labour market outcomes by attainment and programme type, including for specific VET graduate groups. Renewal/design of new qualifications/programmes/curricula in IVET and CVET consider information on transition and employability. The standing committee on new skills provides recommendations to education and training authorities. Data on skills needs, transition and education and training research are used to adapt methods and learner support. The labour force survey 2011 (annual publication, part of the Austrian micro census and the European labour force survey 2011) includes an ad hoc module on employing people with disabilities. The public employment service holds a general survey among large companies on the topics of qualification requirements and CVET every two years.

2.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET

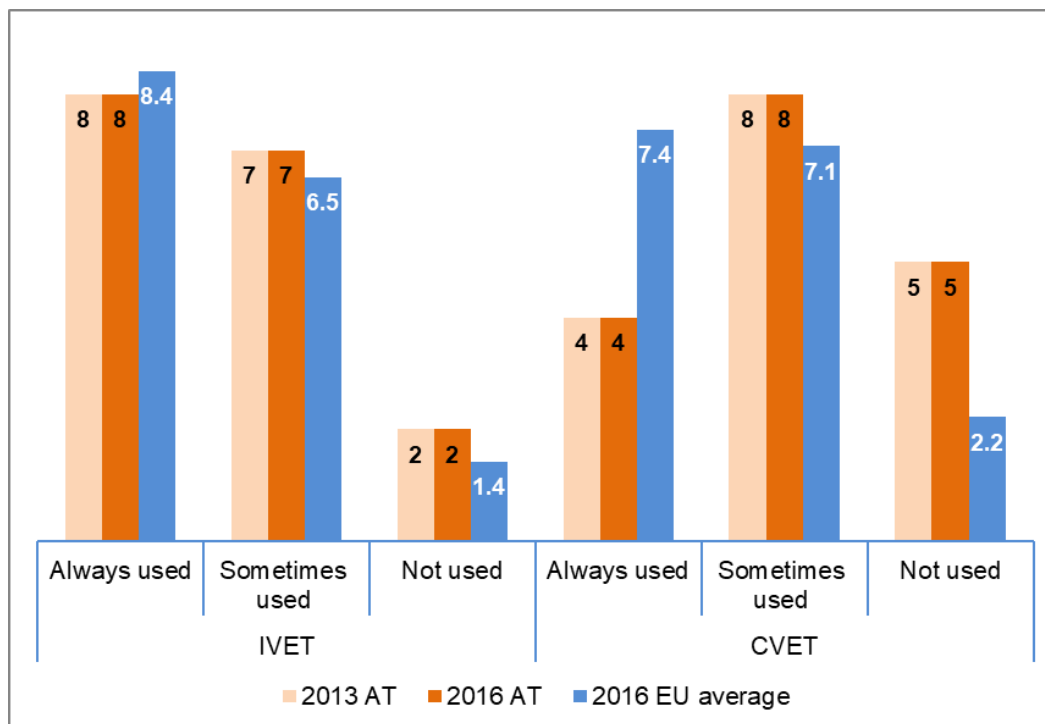
For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to:

- (a) design a systematic quality management system for apprenticeship training;
- (b) support quality-related measures.

In the reporting period, the QANRP has been using *Erasmus+* funds to run a joint project with the Finish QANRP to develop a teacher training programme in order to strengthen the involvement of teachers in school quality management. The QANRP is also working on relaunching a website to disseminate EQAVET-related work to relevant stakeholders; it also participates in peer review activities with other QANRPs (for example FI, HR, SI).

The situation on the systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor the VET system ('always used' item in Figure 1), has remained unchanged compared to 2013. Austria was close to the EU average in IVET and below in CVET in 2016. The EQAVET indicators that are not used in IVET are those related to the success rate of disadvantaged groups and on the effectiveness of schemes used to promote better access to VET.

Figure 1. Use of EQAVET indicators



NB: Of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation, eight were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 and 2016 in Austria, compared to 8.4 in the EU on average in 2016.

EU average was calculated based on available information for 31 out of 35 VET systems.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on EQAVET Secretariat surveys for 2013 and 2016 data.

2.2. Continuous information and feedback loops in initial VET

The country's priority for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to design a systematic quality management system for apprenticeship training.

A study concluded early 2016 analysed data on the outcomes of apprenticeship training to understand better the transition and employability of VET graduates and the effectiveness of Austria's funding system for companies offering training.

As of March 2016, data from the labour force survey on early school leavers have been made accessible for use by researchers and stakeholders. The Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMAŠK) developed this database in cooperation with Statistics Austria and public employment service Austria (AMS).

CHAPTER 3.

MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

3.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The country's priorities in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are two-fold:

- (a) for young people:
 - (i) foster the *Lehre mit Matura*;
 - (ii) extend the youth education guarantee to the age of 25 and implement compulsory school or training attendance to the age of 18 (*Education until 18*);
- (b) for adults:
 - (i) support the recognition of already acquired (parts of) qualifications;
 - (ii) enable qualifications of secondary education to be obtained through second chance education courses for adults.

3.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

3.2.1. Permeability and flexibility

A 2015 Amendment to the vocational training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz, BAG*) ⁽⁴⁾ promoted participation in the *Lehre mit Matura* scheme. The scheme was introduced in 2008 by the Federal Ministry of Education. It enables apprentices to take part in preparatory courses for the so-called *Berufsreifeprüfung*, the exam giving access to higher education to those VET graduates whose programmes did not automatically lead to it; they can also sit the exam for free. Experience had shown that the apprenticeship period is too

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Service/Bildung-und-Lehre/Lehre/Rechtsinformation/BAG-Novelle-2015.html>
https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2015_I_78/BGBLA_2015_I_78.pdf

short for many to prepare properly for the exam while carrying out regular workplace training. Previous amendments to the law had already provided for an extension of the apprenticeship period in such cases. The 2015 amendment reduced red tape by allowing the apprentice and the training company to agree to extend the training period for the duration of the exam preparation without having to ask the consent of the regional apprenticeship advisory board. The amendment is expected to lead to an increase in the share of all apprentices opting for *Lehre and Matura*, from about 10% in 2014 to 15% by 2020. Training companies can receive subsidies for the extension period.

3.2.2. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.2.2.1. Improving the transparency of partial qualifications

Individuals at a disadvantage (young people who cannot find a regular apprenticeship place, special educational need students, those who could not attain a compulsory school leaving certificate, and people with disabilities) can usually be provided with training. So far, training has been provided according to individual needs, with the decision on the training content being made in coordination between vocational training assistance services (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*) and school authorities. As no binding standards existed, the partial qualifications acquired were not always transparent to employers. A 2015 Amendment to the vocational training Act provided for standardised forms of partial qualifications. As a consequence, while individualised training is still possible, the Ministry of Economy can provide guidelines for standardised partial qualifications to ensure they are recognised on the labour market and also make it easier for learners to continue training in the corresponding apprenticeship trade.

3.2.2.2. Easing the process of recognition of qualifications acquired in third countries

The federal Act on the simplification of procedures to recognise and assess foreign educational and professional qualifications entered into force in July 2016⁽⁵⁾. A federal recognition portal will be established, along with information centres to provide comprehensive and consistent information on procedures.

(⁵)

https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgblAuth&Dokumentnummer=BGBLA_2016_I_55

3.2.2.3. National qualifications framework ⁽⁶⁾

The Austrian national qualifications framework (Austrian NQF) was linked to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in 2012. It is designed as a comprehensive framework based on learning outcomes, to include qualifications from formal, non-formal and informal learning. At the higher levels, there are two sets of level descriptors:

- (a) the Dublin descriptors for higher education qualifications that follow the Bologna structure;
- (b) EQF descriptors for the non-Bologna strand: qualifications from VET and adult learning).

Since 2012, several actions have been taken: developing criteria and procedures for allocation of qualifications from non-formal learning contexts, developing a national database for qualifications, fine-tuning procedures, and strengthening dialogue with stakeholders. The Austrian Parliament approved the federal Act on the national qualifications framework ⁽⁷⁾ in March 2016, meaning that the work towards full implementation can start ⁽⁸⁾. An important feature of the Austrian NQF is that levels 6 to 8 remain open to VET qualifications acquired outside higher education institutions. A Y-structure was adopted, introducing parallel descriptors to capture differences between higher education and VET qualifications at these levels. A steering group (*NQR-Steuerungsgruppe*) ⁽⁹⁾, consisting of 30 members representing all the main stakeholders, was set up in September 2016. The first assignments to levels of the Austrian NQF took place

⁽⁶⁾ Cedefop, 2017b.

⁽⁷⁾ Published in the Federal Law Gazette 14 of 2016, Part I, issued on 21.3.2016.
https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2016_I_14/BGBLA_2016_I_14.pdf

⁽⁸⁾ The indicators to implement this refer to:
(a) including major qualifications, such as initial school-based vocational qualifications, apprenticeships and master craftsperson qualifications by 2018;
(b) alignment of curricula in formal education and training, particularly VET, to learning outcomes orientation by 2020;
(c) increase in cross-border mobility in VET for 20%.

Source:

<https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/module?genetics.am=Content&p.contentid=10007.180581>

⁽⁹⁾ The key task of the NQF steering group is to provide advice to public authorities responsible for education and training and qualifications at all levels, particularly the two coordinating ministries: the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy.

in 2017. A representative sample of VET qualifications were assigned to level 4 (qualifications from apprenticeship training and VET schools) and level 5 (qualifications from VET colleges).

3.2.2.4. *ECVET* ⁽¹⁰⁾

Transfer of learning is possible under certain circumstances within VET and from VET to higher education. Modularisation of programmes for adults had started in 2010. The European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) guidelines to linking theoretical and practical parts of dual training better have been piloted. In 2014, an ECVET implementation strategy was published. By 2015, 11 training programmes in teaching professions (corresponding to 31% of all apprentices) were structured in modules, but the concept differs from that of ECVET. In the reporting period, a national working group was set up to monitor developments. Tools are ready to be used but further communication is needed, as employers consider the process to be bureaucratic and may find it difficult to see the added value. The Ministry of Education is developing tools to support the quality of compulsory work placements in school-based VET on the basis of ECVET instruments. A national coordination point (NCP) for ECVET is still to be officially appointed. A community of practice exists through the team of experts, which provides advice and training for the preparation of curricula and training plans.

3.2.2.5. *Validation* ⁽¹¹⁾

Austria does not have an overall national strategy on validation of non-formal and informal learning, although elements and regulations exist in different parts of formal education and training. Also, outside the formal system there are regulations and initiatives that allow recognition of prior learning and use validation of learning acquired in other contexts. The work towards an integrated national validation strategy only started with the implementation of the national lifelong learning strategy 2020, adopted in 2011, and the work on the Austrian national qualifications framework. Validation can be used for second-chance completion of lower secondary education, upper secondary certificates that grant higher education access, professional titles, admission to apprenticeship exams, higher education (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung* for a specific study programme), or regulated professions. The exam-granting higher education access for

⁽¹⁰⁾ Source: the ECVET users' group members.

⁽¹¹⁾ Cedefop, 2017b; Cedefop et al., 2017.

graduates from apprenticeship or school-based VET that do not lead directly to higher education (*Berufsreifepf*ung) includes validation elements: for example, work-experience and non-formally acquired language qualifications can lead to exemption from exam modules.

A consultation document for the national validation strategy (including key objectives and measures) was published in 2015 and a national consultation process carried out. A national strategy for validating non-formal and informal learning has been drafted ⁽¹²⁾; this is expected to serve as the starting point for defining organisational structures and a detailed implementation plan. A uniform framework for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning is still to be set up.

3.2.3. Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups, jobseekers and employees

3.2.3.1. Training obligation until age 18 to prevent NEET status

The legislation on training obligation until the age of 18 ⁽¹³⁾ was approved by Parliament in 2016 and entered into force in the spring of 2017. As of 2017-18, young people who would otherwise not continue education and training beyond compulsory schooling (age 15) or discontinue a programme they have taken up, will have to undertake some form of training until they have passed age 18. Those who do not get a place in a school or in a company to do an apprenticeship must participate in VET training centre programmes (*überbetriebliche Lehrlingsausbildung*), or attend a so-called production school, or in any other labour market policy measures targeted to this group. The law provides for fines for parents should their sons/daughters not comply with this obligation and not attend any programme. The aim is to reduce the number of early school leavers and young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Implementation ⁽¹⁴⁾ will build on coordination and coaching services

⁽¹²⁾ The validation strategy provides an overview of existing validation arrangements, serves as a basis for developing new initiatives, assuring their quality, and for training and developing professionals.

⁽¹³⁾ Training obligation Act/youth training Act (*Ausbildungspflichtgesetz/Jugendausbildungsgesetz*).
https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2016_I_62/BGBLA_2016_I_62.pdf

⁽¹⁴⁾ BMASK, 2016: Fragen und Antworten zur Ausbildung bis 18 [FAQs about the *Training up to the age of 18* scheme]. <https://www.ausbildungbis18.at/>
<https://www.facebook.com/AusBildungbis18>

targeted at supporting and guiding young people and their parents. A monitoring system will be established. The budget is EUR 221 million for 2016-20. The measure will be evaluated in 2021.

3.2.3.2. *Training guarantee extension up to age 25*

In October 2016, the federal government extended the training guarantee up to the age of 25. This is a special scheme of the public employment service that guarantees to young unemployed people aged from 19 to 25, and with only compulsory education completed, the right to acquire VET qualifications by attending AMS's programmes.

3.2.3.3. *Competence checking and training for refugees*

In 2015, the Vienna branch of the public employment service piloted the scheme *Competence checks for the occupational integration of refugees (Kompetenzcheck zur beruflichen Integration von Asylberechtigten)* to assess educational attainment, skills and competences and prior work experience. Between August and December 2015, a total of 898 recognised refugees took part in five-week assessment courses, led by native-speaking trainers in Arabic, Farsi, Russian, and French, in which data on participants' qualifications were collected in collaboration with training firms, enterprises and educational institutions ⁽¹⁵⁾. The aim was to use the check results to tailor training to the needs of learners and in line with labour market demands; an example might be a mix of German, occupational guidance, mentoring, vocational qualification, and work placement.

The *Step-in* project (2017-18) aims at helping young refugees enter training through targeted learning in professional competences and German language. Beneficiaries gather practical experiences through periods of work placement. The project has a regional focus on Styria and Vienna.

The 2016-18 project *You can do it – The knowledge of refugees is valuable* supports young refugees in identifying their competences as the basis for making their choice of occupation and gaining an apprenticeship diploma. The project has a regional focus on Upper Austria.

⁽¹⁵⁾ See press conference:
<http://www.ams.at/ueber-ams/medien/ams-oesterreich-news/asylberechtigte-auf-jobsuche>

The *Youth college* for refugees ⁽¹⁶⁾ was founded in September 2016 by the city of Vienna. It offers courses to young refugees from 15 to 21 years to prepare for a secondary school, VET training or employment.

⁽¹⁶⁾ <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/social/integration/start-wien/youth-college.html>

CHAPTER 4.

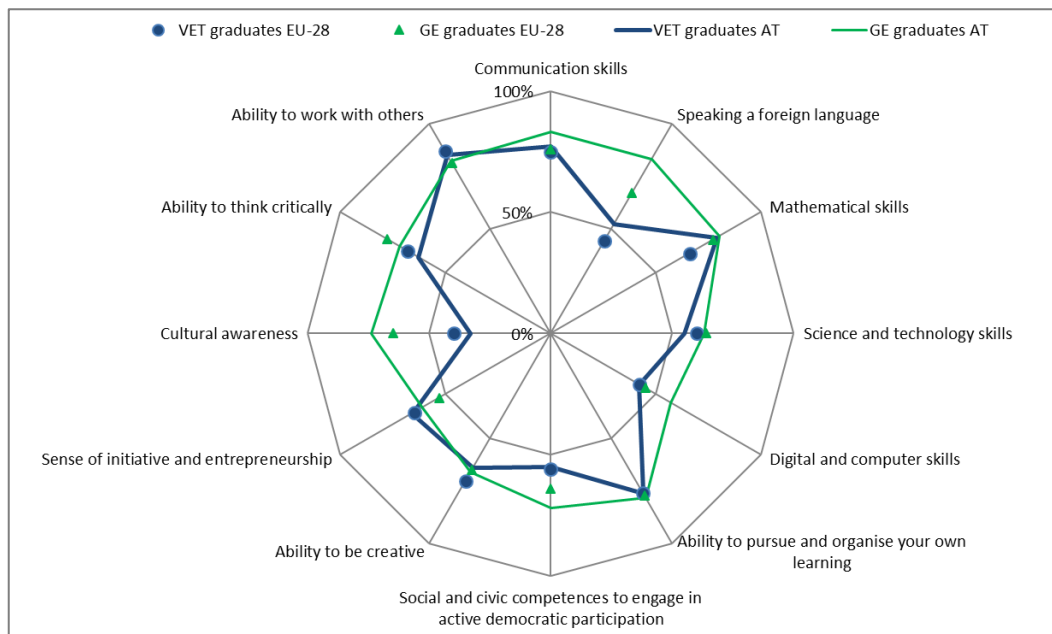
MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

4.1. Baseline

Compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes feel they have:

- (a) stronger (ranked by priority):
 - (i) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
 - (ii) ability to work with others;
- (b) weaker:
 - (i) foreign language speaking;
 - (ii) cultural awareness;
 - (iii) social and civic competences (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET

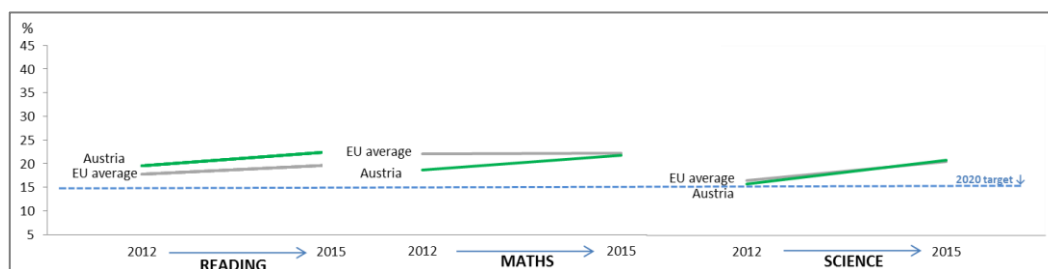


NB: GE stands for general education. Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.

Source: Cedefop, 2017c.

The context of key competences in 2015 was mainly characterised by an increasing share of young low achievers in reading, maths and science compared with 2012 (Figure 3). The share of low achievers in Austria was lower for maths and higher for reading and science than in the EU on average, where the trend is similar.

Figure 3. **Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**



NB: Low achievement means failing level 2 on the PISA (programme for international student assessment) scale.

Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

As VET enrolls 70% of all upper secondary learners in the country ⁽¹⁷⁾, this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes. This is happening against a background where acquisition of key competences has been accorded major importance. The programmes offered in school-based VET and in apprenticeships (dual system) aim to qualify learners for immediate entry to a labour market that increasingly requires interdisciplinary competences such as creativity, the ability to work in teams, social competence and the ability to deal with conflict. All upper secondary VET programmes have, for many years, encouraged the acquisition of key competences ⁽¹⁸⁾. VET has traditionally been more competence-oriented than general education, and curricula have regularly been updated, in several cases based on bottom-up initiatives. Key competences are often integrated in the curricula either as individual subject areas, as underlying principles, intended learning outcomes, or promoted through specific teaching methods.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Calculated from Eurostat; data for 2015.

⁽¹⁸⁾ For more information on key competences in VET see Tritscher-Archan and Petanovitsch, 2016.

4.2. Key competences in initial VET

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to:

- (a) modernise job/training profiles;
- (b) foster training alliances (participation subsidies);
- (c) achieve curriculum reform, ensuring that all VET schools have competence-oriented curricula (70% already finalised).

Since 2015-16, the partly standardised competence-oriented final exam has been mainstreamed in VET programmes and the *Berufsreifepprüfung* that grant higher education access.

In 2017, the education ministry presented the digitalisation strategy *School 4.0. – Now we are going digital*. It focuses on:

- (a) providing digital and critical thinking competences for learners from primary education onwards;
- (b) digital skills for teachers through a new course from school year 2017-18 onwards, supported by establishing a national digital learning centre and future learning labs in colleges, where teachers can experiment with digital tools;
- (c) modernising infrastructure and equipment at schools, including tablet and laptop computers for pupils;
- (d) digital learning tools, including open education resources.

CHAPTER 5.

MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

The country's priority for 2016-20 in initial training of teaching/training staff in VET schools, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is to reform the curricula for all teachers including VET.

Following the teacher training Law adopted in 2013 ⁽¹⁹⁾, the harmonisation of pre-service teacher training is currently being implemented nationwide. This reform is being carried out in cooperation between universities ⁽²⁰⁾ and university colleges of teacher education (PHs) ⁽²¹⁾. The new programmes for upper secondary teachers are provided by both universities and university colleges. Programmes for teacher training for part-time school in apprenticeship training are provided at the university colleges. The colleges had to align their study programme according to the Bologna cycle. They started to offer the new bachelor of arts (BA) and master of arts (MA) degree programmes in the academic year 2016-17. It is envisaged that all teachers will have an MA degree.

Competence orientation is at the core of these curricula, with a focus on general pedagogical competence, subject-related and didactic competence, diversity and gender competence, social competence and awareness of the profession. Curriculum development is work in progress, with evaluation scheduled for 2020.

Provisions for getting a teaching post for different types of prospective teachers are also work in progress. Provisions are set for lateral entrants who:

- (a) have successfully completed a relevant higher education programme and have at least three years of relevant professional practice. These can enrol

⁽¹⁹⁾ Federal Act on the new teacher training scheme (*Bundesrahmengesetz zur Einführung einer neuen Ausbildung für Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen*).

⁽²⁰⁾ Responsible for training teachers for general academic schools and upper secondary VET.

⁽²¹⁾ In charge of:

- (a) training teachers for primary and lower secondary schools, i.e. *Hauptschule*, now *Neue Mittelschule*;
- (b) teachers for the school-based part of apprenticeships, hands-on practice and VET-related theory in school-based programmes.

- in part-time short study programmes that aim to impart pedagogical and didactic contents and award credits for subject-specific academic contents;
- (b) have not completed a relevant higher education programme but have a relevant master craftsperson certificate or VET college (BHS) qualification and professional practice. These need to complete a bachelor programme, with credits awarded for recognised parts of the vocational education and training already obtained.

Graduates of specialist and pedagogical tertiary programmes only need to complete the induction period after proving relevant professional practice.

Other major changes are being introduced, including:

- (a) entrance tests for prospective students;
- (b) as of September 2019, all teachers, irrespective of the type and level of school/programme they would like to work in, will be requested to have a master degree; until then, bachelor graduates can be employed provided they commit themselves to complete master studies within five years.

Four regional development alliances have been set up to implement the new teacher training scheme. The new scheme for primary school level was launched throughout Austria on 1 October 2015. Nationwide implementation of teacher training programmes for secondary education level followed on 1 October 2016 ⁽²²⁾.

⁽²²⁾ <https://www.bmb.gv.at/schulen/pbneu/index.html>

Conclusion

Since 2015, Austria has improved its work-based learning and apprenticeship system through further structuring the process for matching supply and demand of apprenticeship places, offering more support and guidance to learners and enterprises. Steps to upgrade the final exam for five-year VET programmes were also taken. Measures have been adopted to ease progression from apprenticeship to higher education and improve transparency and recognition of qualifications. Progress was made in the national qualifications framework and the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Groups in need (early school leavers and NEETs, young unemployed, refugees) were provided with additional training opportunities. A strategy was launched to support the development of key competences in initial VET. Implementation of the 2013 federal Act on teacher training, including VET school teachers, has continued.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions and the country's policy priorities for 2016-20 are being addressed. Yet, information available to Cedefop at the time suggests issues which could benefit from further consideration include:

- (a) developing actions for continuous information and feedback loops in CVET to inform better the strategy for CVET provision;
- (b) initiatives support to entrepreneurship education;
- (c) supporting the development of key competences in continuing VET;
- (d) making more systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor VET developments.

Also, over the past three years, new developments seem to be lacking in initial and continuing training of in-company trainers and mentors, and continuing professional development of VET school teachers. Setting out policy priorities for the remaining period until 2020 could also be considered in:

- (a) continuous information and feedback loops in CVET;
- (b) key competences in continuing VET;
- (c) continuous professional development of in-company trainers and mentors.

List of abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
AMS	public employment service Austria
BAG	<i>Berufsausbildungsgesetz</i> vocational training Act
BHS	VET college
BMASK	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DGVT	Director General for Vocational Education and Training
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
GDP	gross domestic product
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
NCP	national coordination point
NEET	not in education, employment or training
NQF	national qualifications framework
PHs	university colleges of teacher education
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
QF-EHEA	qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area
QIBB	national quality assurance initiative
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
VET	vocational education and training

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