



Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024

AUSTRIA



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1. Introduction

This VET policy brief ⁽¹⁾ produced by Cedefop presents a snapshot of vocational education and training policy developments in Austria between 2020 and the end of 2024 ⁽²⁾. It presents the context and the challenges the country faces, a selection of the latest VET-related statistics, as well as the national priorities until 2030 identified in Austria's national implementation plan. This policy brief provides information from Cedefop monitoring and analysis on the implementation of the [Council Recommendation on VET](#) and [Osnabrück Declaration](#) and contributes to shaping new EU priorities in VET as of 2026 and informing the mid-term evaluation of the Council Recommendation on VET.

2. National VET context and challenges

2.1 National VET context

Austria has a strong industrial base, made up by many export-oriented small- and medium-sized enterprises. The vocational education and training (VET) system is a cornerstone of the nation's economic success, playing a crucial role in developing a skilled workforce that meets the evolving demands of the labour market. It also contributes to keep youth unemployment rate relatively low.

The Austrian VET system is characterised by a dual approach, which combines work-based learning within companies and formal education at vocational schools. The broad range of VET programmes is not only reflected in the various types of training and qualification levels but also in the fields of study. Emphasis is placed on the acquisition of key competences including language, as well as digital and entrepreneurial skills. Continuing VET plays a crucial role in ensuring that the workforce remains adaptable and responsive to evolving industry demands. The Austrian lifelong learning system offers many opportunities for individuals to enhance their skills and knowledge throughout their careers. The close collaboration between educational institutions and the business sector is a key feature, aligning the curriculum with labour market needs. While the education ministry oversees most school-based VET, the governance of apprenticeship is a collaborative effort involving the ministries of economy (company-based track) and education (school-based track), social partners, and the Federal States (*Länder*).

There are several laws, ordinances and guidelines in place, which form the legal background for the implementation of dual and school-based VET and apply throughout Austria. The Vocational Training Act (1969) regulates the operational aspects of dual vocational training, while the School Organisation Act and School Instruction Act outline the tasks and structure of schools. They regulate all areas of teaching, such as admission of learners, learners' assessment, and cooperation between teaching staff, learners and legal guardians. The trade regulations oversee access to self-employed practices of

⁽¹⁾ See also the previous edition: Cedefop. (2024). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2023 – Austria](#). Cedefop monitoring and analysis of vocational education and training policies.

⁽²⁾ For some developments, the information available until mid-2025 has been included.

regulated trades, setting the foundation for quality assurance of the continuing VET examinations master craftsperson and qualification. For continuing vocational training in general, alongside national regulations, many decisions are made at regional or institutional level (Cedefop & ibw Austria – Research & Development in VET, 2023).

Vocational training is a key topic in Austria, especially against the background of digitalisation, the increasing need for skilled workers, demographic change and climate protection. Various measures are being put in place to meet these challenges. In the current [government programme 2020-24](#) (Republic of Austria, 2020), the federal government focuses on strengthening in-company apprenticeship training and expanding the range of adult education to secure the supply of skilled workers, responding to developments such as the digital and green transitions (BMBWF & BMDW, 2022).

2.2 Challenges

Austria has faced a significant skilled worker shortage for several years, driven by demographic ageing and the rising appeal of general education (ReferNet Austria & Cedefop, 2022a). Shortages are most pronounced in construction, manufacturing, tourism, healthcare, engineering and information and communication technology (ICT), with ICT specialists, which is well above the EU average and is delaying the digital transition. The green transition is also affected, with 17 occupations reporting skill shortages in 2022 linked to green knowledge (European Commission, 2023a). While adult participation in lifelong learning is relatively high, access remains difficult for low-qualified individuals and those in rural areas (European Commission, 2023b).

The digital and green transition, but also other megatrends such as internationalisation require changes in both the professional and education sectors, impacting what is taught and how it is taught. Initial and continuing education must therefore equip learners as well as pedagogical staff with the skills arising from these megatrends (BMBWF & BMDW, 2022).

Moreover, disadvantaged groups were less integrated in the education and labour market. Among the long-term unemployed, less than half had completed lower secondary education and the employment rate for older workers aged 55-64 in 2022 remained below the EU average. Additionally, the unemployment rate of people with a migration background was substantially higher than it was for natives, and their percentage of early leavers was three times higher than those of native-born. The labour market participation of persons with disabilities deteriorated in 2021 and the disability employment gap increased, exceeding the EU average. The employment rate of women in 2022 was well below the rate for men and the percentage of female part-time workers was, with 51%, the highest rate in the EU (European Commission, 2023a).

3. National VET policy priorities

Austria prepared a national implementation plan in 2022 to tackle both EU-level priorities and its national objectives for VET and lifelong learning. It focuses on the following six thematic categories.

- (a) Skill change: ensuring alignment between vocational training programmes and industry requirements secures the labour market demand for relevant skilled workers. This involves constant collaboration between educational institutions and employers to identify and integrate emerging skill demands in VET.
- (b) Green transition and sustainability: the transition of societies to an environmentally sustainable and resource-efficient, circular and climate-neutral economy has an impact on the world of work and thus on the skills requirements of employees. Green skills need to be included in vocational qualifications and teachers' skills.
- (c) Digitalisation: the digital transition of the economy, has an impact on the employees' skills requirements, requiring updates to vocational qualifications as well as teachers' skills. Introducing digital tools and platforms will enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and relevance of VET programmes.
- (d) Social dimension: the lack of skilled workforce also calls for better inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups, such as women, older workers, the low-qualified and migrants into VET and the labour market.
- (e) Internationalisation: VET needs to prepare learners for a globally interconnected world. It must incorporate international perspectives, cross-cultural competencies, and collaboration with institutions and industries across borders.
- (f) Institutional changes: continued efforts are needed to keep and further improve the overall attractiveness of VET, through high-level amendments, such as guaranteeing high quality and attracting competent pedagogical staff.

A total of 30 measures announced in the NIP are assigned to these categories, as well as to three vocational training levels: school-based vocational training, dual vocational training and vocational further training.

4. Main policy developments 2020-24

4.1 Skills change

The following major measures have been implemented since 2020, to improve the alignment of skills provision in VET to the labour market needs.

The amended Vocational Training Act, effective from 1 May 2020, sets basic principles for [developing new occupational profiles](#) on 2019 [guidelines](#). It establishes a formal, transparent procedure for creating apprenticeship occupations and ensures ongoing review and updates to align training with evolving labour market skills (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). Since 2020, several [apprenticeship occupation regulations have been updated or newly introduced](#). For example, the Event management assistant apprenticeship was launched in 2021, and the Mechatronics apprenticeship was expanded in 2022 with a new module Digital manufacturing technology. The latest apprenticeship package, effective from 1 June 2025, regulates seven apprenticeships and amends six training regulations.

In 2021, a project was launched to develop a [concept for better integrating transversal competences into apprenticeship training](#). Led by two research institutions with input from social partners and the ministries, the [final report on transversal competences in practical](#)

[vocational training](#) was published in 2022. It highlights key areas such as digital skills, sustainability and greening, methodological, communicative, social, personal, and work-related competences. Since then, this report has served as the foundation for incorporating transversal job profile components into all future updates of apprenticeship training regulations and the creation of new ones (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025; Löffler & Stöhr, 2022).

Concerning the objective to improve the offer of career orientation for young people aged 14, the [education and career information fair L14](#) is organised annually by the chamber of labour in Vienna. In November 2023, the fair was for the first time offered as a hybrid fair, on-site and digitally ⁽³⁾.

Moreover, the [digital career guidance offer](#) has been greatly expanded. In 2021, the Innovation Service Salzburg, a joint venture of the Province of Salzburg, City of Salzburg, Economic Chamber and Federation of Industry, launched an [online educational and career orientation map](#), offering targeted, categorised searches for various groups across the province. The regularly updated site includes links and contact details for the providers. Since 2023, the Economic Chamber's [virtual company tours](#) use 360° videos to provide an immersive look into around 80 apprenticeships, with over 50 available in 3D virtual reality. These tours let users explore typical work situations and professions either on-site or from home, and the selection is continually growing. Further, the Vienna Chamber of Labour has expanded the [Jopsy app](#) in 2024. Originally designed for young people under 18, a version for adults aged 18 and over, called Jopsy+, has been added. This image-based career guidance tool creates a personalised interest profile and based on this profile, it suggests suitable career paths. Jopsy+ targets young adults exploring degree programmes, individuals returning to the labour market, and those considering a career change (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

4.2 Green transition and sustainability

Since 2020, Austria has set up several measures to promote the green transition and sustainability in VET and thereby to reach its goal of climate neutrality by 2040.

The [GREENOVET project was launched in 2020](#) and aims to foster the development of VET excellence in green innovation. It is partly funded by the Erasmus+ programme and involves 18 partners from four European countries (FI, AT, PT, MK). In 2022 the analysis of green skills gaps started and, in support, the Green-Tech Academy Austria ([Greta](#)) was established at the beginning of the same year. The primary goal is to foster collaboration and networking within the knowledge triangle of research, economy, and education, including also regional vocational schools. Following a skills gap analysis on green innovation, the GREENOVET team developed a self-assessment tool for VET providers to evaluate their capacity for green innovation. This tool encourages organisations to reflect on their culture and workflows and is suitable for VET institutions seeking to assess and

⁽³⁾ AK Wien Bildungs- und Berufsinformmesse L14: [So finden Junge ihren Bildungsweg](#) [AK Wien Education and Career Information Fair L14: How young people find their educational path].

improve their green innovation capabilities. In June 2024, the conference on 'Empowering sustainable futures through VET' was held in Graz (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The [Just Transition Action Plan on Training and Reskilling](#) (BMK, 2023), published by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action (BMK, Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz) in January 2023, aims to secure a skilled workforce to support a just and inclusive green transition by 2030. Developed through a collaborative process since 2020, the plan involved the BMK, the public employment service, the Austrian Chamber of Labour, social partners, and other stakeholders. It is organised around four thematic fields and features 37 concrete measures with designated responsible institutions and timelines (ReferNet Austria & Cedefop, 2023b). The plan focusses on integrating green competences into VET programmes, providing climate relevant training for trainers, and meeting the demand for skilled labour required for the green transition (ReferNet Austria, & Cedefop, 2023b). At the end of 2023, the '[ÖGB Climate Office](#)' was launched as a centre of excellence within the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB, Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund) to support works councils and employees throughout the green transition (ÖGB, 2025).

Moreover, in the last few years [green skills have become increasingly important when creating new and updating existing training regulations](#) (Bliem & Lukasser, 2024). Since 2020, [new training regulations](#) have been set up for several apprenticeship programmes (e.g. wastewater technology) and [several training experiments were transferred to a regular apprenticeship programme](#) (e.g. retail, with a focus on digital sales), after initially being a training experiment. In May 2023, new apprenticeship profiles were introduced in areas such as wastewater management, engineering, and plastics technology as part of a broader apprenticeship reform. Additionally, in [July 2024 three new apprenticeships were introduced](#), namely the 'Fiber composite technology,' 'District heating technology,' and 'Climate gardener' (aiming to mitigate urban overheating through the greening of buildings), showing a clear [emphasis on supporting the green transition through vocational training](#) (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Moreover, in line with the 2022 final report on transversal competences in vocational training (see Section 4.1), the transversal competences of sustainability and greening were incorporated in existing training regulations. For example, in September 2023, the existing electrical engineering apprenticeship was extensively updated to incorporate green skills, including a dedicated training module on renewable energy and electromobility (BMAW, 2024). Further, in February 2024, the following special modules have been integrated into the [general part of electrical engineering](#): smart home (which includes commissioning of building systems using smart home technologies) as well as renewable energy and electromobility (installation, testing and commissioning of renewable energy production and storage facilities, such as photovoltaic and wind power plants and electric vehicle charging facilities) (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In March 2024, Austria unveiled its national roadmap for initial and continuing education and training to achieve a climate-neutral building sector by 2030 ⁽⁴⁾. Developed within the framework of the EU project [ReBUSk](#) (Reboot BUILD UP Skills), this roadmap aims to ensure that all necessary skills for meeting the energy and climate goals in the construction sector are in place by 2030 (ReferNet Austria & Cedefop, 2024a).

4.3 Digitalisation

Digitalisation has been a major topic on the political agenda for many years. Since 2020, several measures have been introduced to promote digitalisation in VET, to meet the skills needed on the labour market.

The [8-Point Plan for digital learning](#) started to be implemented in 2020 and marks a strategic evolution from the earlier 'School 4.0' initiative by creating a more integrated digital learning environment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For its implementation, an additional [investment of EUR 250 million](#) was allocated until 2024. Key measures in 2020 included the rollout of a centralised digital school web portal, the distribution of digital devices to lower secondary learners, as well as teacher training. In 2021, actions included the improvement of the digital school infrastructure and certification of learning apps. In 2022, the new subject 'Basic digital education' was introduced in lower secondary education and conceptual work on a 'digitisation passport' began, aimed at strengthening and standardising basic digital competences for VET schools and colleges (BMHS, NQF levels 4 and 5). In 2023, AI-related initiatives were introduced in schools as part of the programme 'Artificial Intelligence – Opportunity for Austria's Schools'. In 2024, AI initiatives expanded further, with pilot projects launched in selected schools to explore best practices for integrating AI into the classroom (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025; Bundesministerium Bildung, 2025).

The [learning platform Wise-up](#) was launched at the end of 2022 with approximately 15 000 online courses. Companies can use this platform to digitise their own company-specific learning content and make it accessible to their employees. The course selection covers topics relevant to all professions, such as digitalisation and soft skills as well as specialised content, like the fundamentals of electrical engineering. The course offerings are continuously updated and expanded (Cedefop & Refernet, 2025; ReferNet Austria & Cedefop, 2024b). In 2023, Wise up expanded its offerings for apprentices by connecting to several major German-language learning platforms, resulting in ten professional channels with digital learning opportunities for popular apprenticeships such as mechatronics, metal technology, retail, and office assistance. Existing digital content, including animated and real image videos as well as web-based training, was curated by experts for suitability in dual vocational education and organised into structured learning paths. Additionally, new content was created to fill gaps in available resources, alongside the development of quizzes and reflection tasks to support learning progress. By October

⁽⁴⁾ The building sector is a key factor in Austria and the EU's energy and climate goals, accounting for nearly one-third of Austria's energy consumption and 17% of its greenhouse gas emissions, excluding emissions from building material production.

2024, the platform had expanded considerably, offering access to over 20 000 high-quality digital courses from reputable education and training providers (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025; Bliem & Lukasser, 2024).

To support the digitisation of training administration, [the online service for company apprenticeship promotion \(LOS\)](#), which digitises the application and processing of apprenticeship subsidies, has been operational since 2022 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The DigComp-Cert certification system for digital competences underwent a pilot phase and was then officially introduced in 2022. This system certifies individuals' digital competences based on the [DigComp 2.2 AT model](#) and also piloted competence levels 1-5. DigComp-Cert comprises two parts, a knowledge check (Dig-Cert, requiring an appointment at a test centre) and a proof of competence. The latter can be independently selected, with various forms and scopes (e.g. certificates, confirmation of participation, degree). Upon examination of the submitted proof of competence, DigComp-Cert certificates are issued and can be digitally shared (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The education ministry started cooperating with the university colleges of teacher education in 2022, to set up [initial and further training programmes on AI topics for teachers](#) (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In November 2023, the [National strategic roadmap for the Austrian digital decade](#) was submitted and defines among others the national target, to raise the basic digital skills of the Austrian population aged 16 to 74 from 63% in 2021 to 70% by 2026 and to 100% by 2030. Moreover, in 2022, Austria employed 220 700 ICT specialists, marking a 17.5% increase compared to 2017. However, the number needs to increase further, as two out of three managers still complained about a lack of ICT specialists in their companies.

The 'DigiPro-HTL' project, which integrates digital methods and processes like computer aided engineering, simulation, digital twin, and augmented reality into teaching, has been [extended for 2024-29 under the new name 'DigiPro II – Professional digital methods and tools'](#).

The Ministry of Labour and Economy and the Austrian Economic Chamber launched the ['Digi-Scheck' funding programme for apprentices](#) to promote future skills in the areas of digitalisation, sustainability, climate protection, energy and resource management and job-related foreign languages in addition to dual vocational training. Eligible measures must have taken place between beginning of 2023 until end of 2024 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

The Austrian labour market has a strong and growing demand for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) experts. A study by Economica projects a need for 58 000 additional STEM jobs in Austria by 2029. It is therefore important to motivate more young learners to pursue STEM education. In 2023, the Ministry of Education approved the [Join in STEM action plan](#), which aims to strengthen STEM skills across all education levels, from early childhood to higher education and vocational training. The plan consolidates existing and new STEM measures into eight key action lines, including improving teaching quality and curricula. In September 2023, 14 regions received the STEM Regions Quality Label for the first time. In October 2024, the first doctoral students

began their studies in digital transformation at the newly established Interdisciplinary Transformation University (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

4.4 Social dimension

Since 2020, the following measures have been introduced to promote social inclusion and increase equal opportunities.

The pilot phase of the [Digital pioneers project](#) was completed in September 2022, with 29 young women having completed the first year of the programme across three federal provinces (Vorarlberg, Tyrol and Upper Austria). The programme lasting a minimum of 10 months, incorporates an eight-week basic training, covering business innovation, project management, digital skills and programming. Afterwards, participants complete a paid internship of at least eight months in a partner company or a scientific institution, in which they focus on developing digital literacy, process and system competences. After the pilot phase the programme was offered in the three federal provinces, the planned roll out to other federal provinces did not take place in the reporting period (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Moreover, important national action plans address the social dimension in education and training. For example, the [Join in STEM action plan](#) (see Section 4.3), adopted in June 2023, responds to the lower graduation rates of women in STEM programmes in Austria, with the percentage also below the EU average. This action plan aims to dismantle gender-related STEM stereotypes and encourage girls and women to pursue STEM education in school-based educational and vocational orientation. It supports this goal by empowering STEM teachers to boost the confidence of girls and women in STEM subjects across all education levels. Further, the [Just transition action plan for education and training](#), published in 2023 (see Section 4.2), aims to transform society to a low-emission, resource-efficient, and climate neutral economy. The plan specifically focuses on supporting women, the unemployed, people without any school diploma, socially disadvantaged groups and people with disabilities to ensure an inclusive transition.

4.5 Internationalisation

Since 2020, the following measures aim to promote internationalisation of VET schools and colleges, transnational cooperation and the mobility of both learners and teachers.

In 2022, a process to [increase the internationalisation of VET schools](#) was initiated, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research, with the Ministry of Labour and Economy and the social partners (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). In the first half of 2023, a survey was conducted among teachers and school administrators on behalf of the Ministry of Education and the Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD, Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung). The survey examined existing internationalisation structures and processes and identified challenges faced by institutions (BMBWF & BMDW, 2022; Cedefop & Refernet, 2025). Towards the end of 2023, the findings were discussed with teachers, headteachers, and education directorates. The insights and recommendations were compiled into a report (not published), intended to guide necessary structural adjustments. Key recommendations include integrating

mobility-related tasks into teachers' regular working hours, providing more targeted information to specific groups, and establishing central service centres within education directorates (Bliem & Lukasser, 2024).

The study [International mobility in apprenticeship training](#) was conducted to investigate why significantly fewer apprentices participated in the Erasmus+ mobility programme than learners from general education. The results, presented in 2021, revealed that apprentices, trainers and companies were largely unaware of the Erasmus+ offer. In response, the OeAD and the Austrian Economic Chamber launched the [Apprenticeship without borders](#) (ReferNet Austria & Cedefop, 2023a) campaign in 2022. This initiative aims to [double the annual number of apprentice mobilities](#) from 1 000 apprentices in 2020 to 2 000 by 2027. This number refers to the approved outbound mobilities, which however differ a lot to the actual carried out mobilities. From 2021 until 2023, the number of approved outbound mobilities among apprentices increased from 344 to 650, while the actual number of mobilities which finally took place were in 2021 at 90 and increased to 466 mobilities until 2023. The campaign includes targeted information materials, video interviews, and the Instagram campaign 'Go beyond your borders'. In September 2022, the OeAD celebrated the [Erasmus+ apprentice week](#) across Austria, featuring numerous events and initiatives to promote Erasmus+ mobility for apprentices. At the same time also the number of mobilities among trainers and professional increased from 222 approved applications in 2021 to 626 until 2023 (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025; ReferNet Austria & Cedefop, 2023).

Austria continues to participate in international competitions; in 2021 [EuroSkills took place in Graz](#) and the closing ceremony of the [WorldSkills competition in 2022 took place in Salzburg](#).

4.6 Institutional change

Since 2020, institutional changes have taken place to improve VET attractiveness and quality.

In 2022, the Council of Ministers formally decided to [establish higher VET as a distinct segment within the education system](#) and initiated the development of a Higher VET Act. The main aim is to unify the diverse landscape of higher VET by establishing common standards and a legal framework that fosters a common understanding, thereby enhancing its visibility and attractiveness. Its main objective is to formally recognise and certify skills gained through practical work experience, offering a credible alternative to traditional academic pathways. The Higher VET Act came into force on 1 May 2024. The Act targets skilled workers holding intermediate qualifications at NQF level 4 but lack higher education entrance qualifications. It enables these individuals to pursue higher VET qualifications at NQF levels 5 to 7, while ensuring their existing competences are formally recognised (Cedefop & Refernet, 2025).

The qualification is granted upon successful completion of a three-part validation and examination process, comprising a written exam, an oral exam, and a practical exam. Together, these components evaluate whether the candidate has achieved the learning outcomes specified in the validation and examination regulations. These regulations also

outline the eligibility criteria that candidates must meet to participate in the exams. Additionally, preparatory courses may be offered to support candidates in exam readiness. The new qualification levels are as follows:

- (a) Extended Professional Qualification (HBQ) at NQF level 5;
- (b) Professional Certificate (FD) at NQF level 6; and
- (c) Advanced Professional Certificate (HFD) at NQF level 7.

In the second half of 2024, work began to develop implementing guidelines for qualification providers in accordance with the new legislation. The law has inspired many industry stakeholders to design and introduce new higher VET qualifications. The first of these, the 'HBQ Technical Consulting for Energy Efficiency,' will be available starting September 2025. This qualification focuses on 'green skills,' which are specifically identified as a priority area for qualifications under the HBQ Act (ReferNet Austria & Cedefop, 2025).

A two- to three-year programme, called [Dual Academy](#), has been set up at NQF level 5, targeting learners who have gained the Matura qualification. The programme combines work-based learning in a company with formal education at a vocational school and includes a compulsory stay abroad aimed at fostering the development of social, digital and international skills. Apprentices are employed and usually receive a salary determined by collective agreements. Following a pilot phase, this programme has been rolled out in 13 professional fields across Austria since September 2022. The spectrum ranges from technology to IT and software to banking and logistics (ReferNet Austria & Cedefop, 2022b; European Commission, 2023b).

The [amendment of the Vocational Training Act \(2020\)](#) introduced part-time apprenticeship training for parents with childcare obligations and for learners with health restrictions. Since then, companies have been allowed to agree with affected apprentices to reduce their daily or weekly training time by up to half of the statutory or collectively agreed normal working hours. Additionally, the total duration of the apprenticeship, which is typically three to four years, can be extended by up to two years. The aim of this regulation is to enable individuals with caregiving responsibilities or health limitations to start or continue their apprenticeship by shortening their daily or weekly training hours. This also includes the option to convert existing full-time training programmes into part-time arrangements. This new flexibility opens the door to [new target groups to follow an apprenticeship programme](#) (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

From 2021 until 2024, several [revised examination regulations for Master Craftsperson and Proof of Competence examinations](#) were issued. Both exams aim to demonstrate comprehensive specialist competence, managerial skills, and the ability to independently manage a business and train apprentices, though they apply to different crafts and trades. Furthermore, the Proof of Competence was assigned to NQF level 6 in 2023, while the Master Builder qualification was assigned to NQF level 7 in 2024. Additionally, as of January 2024, examination fees for both the Master Craftsperson and Proof of Competence exams (including first and second attempts) have been fully waived. Learners who took the exam in 2023 and paid the fees are eligible to request a refund. The

regional Economic Chamber offices responsible for administering the exams have already received reimbursement for these costs from public funds (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

In 2022, the [Startup Apprenticeship](#) pilot project was launched by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy. In this project, established companies with experience in providing training places for apprentices, enter a training alliance with a startup to facilitate their entry into apprenticeship training. The aim is to enhance the quality and appeal of vocational training (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). The Austrian Association of Entrepreneurs (Österreichischer Gewerbeverein) organises and supports this project, aiming to promote skilled workers, apprenticeships, young entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial responsibility.

5. Statistical information in relation to EU targets

VET is highly valued in Austrian society, a fact supported by recent statistics. In 2024, 85.3% of recent IVET graduates aged 20 to 34 found a job on the labour market, surpassing the EU-27 average of 80.0%. Additionally, 84.7% of these graduates had a work-based learning experience as part of their VET in 2024, which was almost 20 pp higher than the EU average and well above the 2025 EU target of 60%.

Austria also performs strongly in lifelong learning. In 2022, 52.2% of adults aged 25 to 64 reported having engaged in learning activities within the past 12 months. This rate significantly exceeds the EU-27 average of 39.5% and already surpasses the 2025 EU target of 50%. Furthermore, 21.4% of low-qualified adults participated in learning during the same period, which is above the EU average of 18.4%, though still below the EU 2025 target of 30%.

Learner outcomes are favourable as well. The dropout rate in 2024 was only 8.1%, which was below the EU-27 average of 9.3% and already meeting the EU target of less than 9% by 2030. The NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) rate among learners stood at 9.2% in 2024, lower than the EU average of 11.0%, but still slightly above the 2030 EU target of 9%.

Austria has a digitally skilled population, with 64.7% of individuals demonstrating digital skills, which is well above the EU average of 55.6%. The country aims for 100% of people aged 16 to 74 to possess at least basic digital skills by 2030, which will require consistent progress and sustained support. The country employs 237 000 ICT specialists, representing 5.3% of total employment, exceeding the EU average. Despite this, Austria faces skills shortages of ICT specialists in the labour market. While digital skills improvements in formal education show promise, fully leveraging this advantage for the workforce remains a challenge (European Commission, 2024b).

Table 1. **European vocational education and training policy dashboard: Austria**

Type of indicator ⁽⁵⁾	Indicator	Last available year	AT	EU-27	Policy Document	EU target (year)
VET for developing a lifelong learning culture						
Progress	Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) [*]	2022	52.2	39.5	Skills Agenda Council Resolution on EEA ESPR Action Plan	50% (2025) 47% (2025) 60% (2030)
Progress	Low-qualified adults with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%) ^(*)	2022	21.4	18.4	Skills Agenda	30% (2025)
Progress	Unemployed adults with a learning experience in the last 4 weeks (%)	2024	20.8	15.3	Skills Agenda	20% (2025)
Context	Employment rate for 20–64-year-olds (%)	2024	77.4	75.8	ESPR Action Plan	78% (2030)
Context	Early leavers from education and training (%)	2024	8.1	9.3	Council Resolution on EEA	<9% (2030)
Context	NEET rate for 15–29-year-olds (%)	2024	9.2	11.0	ESPR Action Plan	9% (2030)
VET for Resilience, transitions, sustainability and excellence						
Progress	Adults (16–74-year-olds) with at least basic digital skills (%)	2023	64.7	55.6	Skills Agenda ESPR Action Plan	70% (2025) 80% (2030)
Progress	Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%)	2024	85.3	80.0	Council Rec on VET	82% (2025)
Progress	Recent IVET graduates (20–34-year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	2024	84.7	65.3	Council Rec on VET Council Resolution on EEA	60% (2025)
Context	25–34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	2024	44.1	44.2	Council Resolution on EEA	45% (2025)
Context	Gender employment gap (%)	2024	6.9	10.0	ESPR Action Plan	To be halved (2030)
Context	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (1000s)	2024	1529	93 333	ESPR Action Plan	15 million decrease (2030)
Context	Employed ICT specialists (1000s)	2024	237	10273.6 ^e	2030 Digital Compass	20 million, with convergence between men and women (2030)
VET for the European Education Area						
Progress	Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%) ^{**}	2021	2.2	2.1 ^{dv}	Council Rec on VET Skills Agenda Council Rec Europe on the Move	8% (2025) 12% (2030)
Context	Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2023	1.1	1.2 ^d		

Available flags: d – definition differs, e – estimated, V – Cedefop estimate.

^{*}Eurostat data (Adult Education Survey, special calculation excluding guided on-the-job training)

^{**} Provisional estimates affected by the Covid19 pandemic

Source: Cedefop (n.d.). [European VET policy dashboard](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-vet-policy-dashboard/methodology).

⁽⁵⁾ Definitions on the type of indicators are available at <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-vet-policy-dashboard/methodology>

6. Conclusion

Since 2020, Austria has undertaken various actions to address the policy priorities outlined in its national implementation plan. While some of those measures began earlier, significant developments have occurred since then.

In response to the priority of addressing skill changes, significant efforts have been made to better align vocational training with industry needs. The amended Vocational Training Act (2020) introduced formalised, transparent procedures for developing new apprenticeship profiles, strengthening the connection between training offerings and evolving industry needs. Progress has also been achieved in integrating transversal job profiles into all future revisions of existing apprenticeship regulations. Transversal competences identified in a 2022 report are being integrated into apprenticeship updates. Career orientation has improved, notably through digital tools, yet skill shortages remain in ICT and green-transition sectors, requiring ongoing curriculum adaptation. Continuous, timely monitoring and agile adaptation of curricula and qualifications remain essential to align supply and demand effectively with evolving industry needs.

Green transition and sustainability are another priority, with significant progress since 2020. While the GREENOVET project assessed existing training gaps in this area, green skills have been incorporated into modernised apprenticeship profiles. The Just Transition action plan embeds green competences in VET and teacher training, while the Green-Tech Academy Austria (GRETA) promotes collaboration towards a sustainable society. Launched at the end of 2023, the ÖGB Climate Office supports works councils and employees through the green transition. In 2024, Austria unveiled a national roadmap under the EU project ReBUSk project, aiming to ensure climate-neutral building skills by 2030. Continued efforts are essential to address green skills shortages across occupations.

Digitalisation has been a priority for many years, with additional measures implemented since 2020. The 8-Point Plan serves as a strategic plan to establish a comprehensive digital learning environment. Key initiatives include the development of a digital school portal, device distribution, teacher training, and the introduction of a learning app. Preparatory work on a 'digitisation passport' for VET schools began in 2022, however no further progress was evident at the time of reporting. AI initiatives started in 2023 and expanded with pilot projects in 2024. The Wise-up platform for digitalised company training grew significantly, and the DigComp-Cert system was introduced to validate digital competences nationally and internationally. Initial steps have been taken to integrate AI into upper secondary vocational school curricula and teacher education. The Join in STEM plan supports STEM job demand, and digital transformation studies started at the Interdisciplinary Transformation University in 2024. The 2024 Digital Decade report urges boosting digital skills for those distant from digitalisation. It further calls for implementing measures to significantly increase the number of ICT specialists through upskilling and reskilling, while actively addressing the gender gap in the sector (European Commission, 2024b).

Some social inclusion measures are already in place, such as the coaches for apprentices and training companies to reduce dropouts. To encourage women's

participation in technical VET programmes, the Digital pioneers were put in place, complemented by the Join in STEM action plan. The Just Transition Action Plan for Education and Training, which supports the green transition, specifically targets the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Although these groups are acknowledged in key strategic plans, it remains to be seen how effectively they will be included during implementation. Overall, intensified efforts to address the educational challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, as well as to enhance their labour market qualifications and participation, would contribute to securing the need for additional skilled labour (European Commission, 2024a).

Internationalisation in VET has progressed since 2020, with initiatives to increase VET school participations. The Apprenticeship without borders campaign aims to double the Erasmus+ participation among apprentices by 2027. Apprentice and trainer exchanges have grown, but more effort is needed to reach the 8% EU mobility target.

Institutional changes include supporting learners with health or care duties via reduced apprenticeship hours and attracting learners with Matura through the Dual Academy programme. The Higher VET Act (May 2024) allows skilled workers without higher education entrance qualifications to pursue higher VET (NQF levels 5-7), recognising their professional skills formally. These are significant changes developments, though their impact on VET's attractiveness remains to be assessed.

Austria has been progressing in all its national priorities. The Austrian VET system should continue to consolidate the gains achieved since 2020, while accelerating scale-up efforts, particularly in digital learning, green-skills development and inclusion initiatives. Further steps in these measures will allow Austria to meet the objectives set in the national implementation plan in line with the Council Recommendation on VET and the Osnabrück Declaration.

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BMK	<i>Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz</i> [Federal Ministry for Climate Action]
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ÖGB	<i>Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund</i> [Austria Trade Union Confederation]
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
VET	Vocational education and training

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