

PANORAMA

Vocational education and training in Austria

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Vocational education and training in Austria

Short description

Sabine Archan
Thomas Mayr

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Quality is the objective

(Motto for the Austrian Presidency of the EU Council in the sphere of education,
January-June 2006)

‘The appeal and the high standing of vocational education and training in Austria derives from a wide diversity of paths, from the high quality of training, characterised by a particularly close link between theory and practice, and from the permeability of the education system. No educational path in Austria ends in a blind alley. Whether vocational education and training is provided entirely within an educational establishment or in the dual system, the option of seeking higher qualifications up to a university degree remains open to all.’

(Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture)

Introduction

The present publication on vocational education and training (VET) in Austria was compiled to mark the Austrian Presidency of the EU Council. It is one of a series of short descriptions forming part of the ongoing work of Cedefop on VET systems.

Cedefop's eKnowVet database contains information on VET in its partner countries. It covers eleven thematic areas, and searches may be country-specific or general in nature. The data are regularly updated by ReferNet ⁽¹⁾. The description of the national systems can be found on the pages of Cedefop's European Training Village website ⁽²⁾.

The present publication has been compiled by Sabine Archan and Thomas Mayr from the Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft (ibw), the Institute for Research on Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy, in close collaboration with Sylvie Bousquet of Cedefop. The final version was coordinated in consultation with the Federal Ministries of Education, Science and Culture, of Economics and Labour, of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and of Health and Women's Issues, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the Federation of Austrian Industry, the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour, the Austrian Trade Union Federation, the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture and the *Fachhochschulrat*, the supervisory council for Austria's university-level colleges of applied science and technology. The authors would like to thank the experts from these institutions for their cooperation and helpful comments and to extend their special thanks to the Austrian members of the Cedefop Governing Board (Peter Kreiml, Alexander Prischl and Gerhard Riemer). Lastly, they also wish to thank Eleonora Schmid of Cedefop for her suggestions during the drafting and revision of the text.

VET forms a prominent feature of the Austrian educational landscape. This is reflected, for example, in the wide appeal of VET among young people, with some 80 % of them opting for a VET at the end of their compulsory schooling. The great importance of VET also manifests itself in the range of courses on offer. A high degree of differentiation, both in school-based VET and within the apprenticeship system, the 'dual system', ensures that all young people are given the maximum opportunity to develop their strengths and talents. The success of the Austrian VET system is also demonstrated by the low rate of youth unemployment and the international recognition of Austrian vocational qualifications.

This publication provides an overview of VET in Austria. It is not possible to cover every aspect of the system in detail within this framework. Further information is available on the pages of the Cedefop and Eurydice ⁽³⁾ websites.

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December 2005

⁽¹⁾ Cedefop's European Network of Reference and Expertise.

⁽²⁾ http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/

⁽³⁾ <http://www.eurydice.org>

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1. General policy context

1.1 Political and administrative structures

Under the Federal Constitution of 1920, Austria is a parliamentary democratic republic. It comprises the nine provinces of Burgenland, Carinthia (Kärnten), Lower Austria (Niederösterreich), Salzburg, Styria (Steiermark), Tyrol (Tirol), Upper Austria (Oberösterreich), Vienna (Wien) and Vorarlberg. Vienna is also the federal capital. The country has been a member of the United Nations since 1955 and a Member State of the European Union since 1995.

The head of state is the President of the Republic, who is directly elected for a six-year term. He or she appoints the Federal Chancellor, who is head of the Federal Government. The Austrian Parliament has two chambers – the National Council (*Nationalrat*) and the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*). The 183 members of the National Council are directly elected by the people every four years. The Federal Council represents the interests of the federal provinces. Its 64 members are delegated by the provincial parliaments (*Landtage*).

Austria is characterised by a strongly federalist structure. Legislative and executive responsibilities are divided between the national and provincial levels. The same applies to responsibility for vocational education and training (VET) (see Chapter 3).

A special role is played by the cooperative partnership between the representatives of employers and employees (the ‘social partners’) and government representatives in almost every area of economic and social policy (see 3.2).

1.2 Population

Austria covers an area of 83 858 km² and had a population of 8 032 926 at the time of the 2001 census. There has only been a small overall increase in the size of the population since the end of the Second World War. After peaking in 1974, it declined thereafter as migrant workers returned to their own countries and the birth rate fell. The wars in the Balkans and the opening of the eastern borders led to an increase in the flow of immigrants, which caused the population to increase more sharply between the late eighties and the mid-nineties. Since then, the flow of new immigrants has slowed down (see Figure 1 below).

AUSTRIA AND ITS PROVINCES

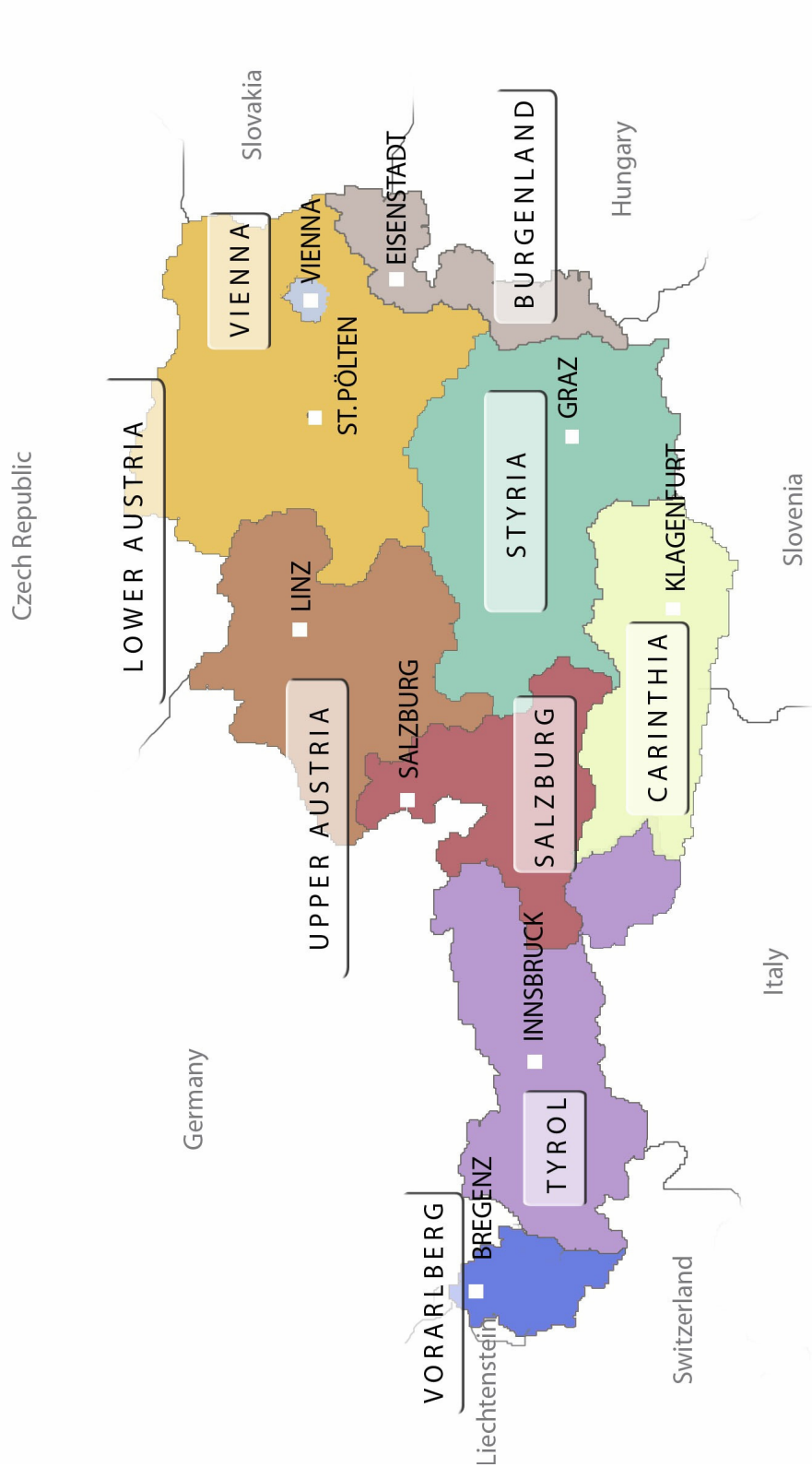
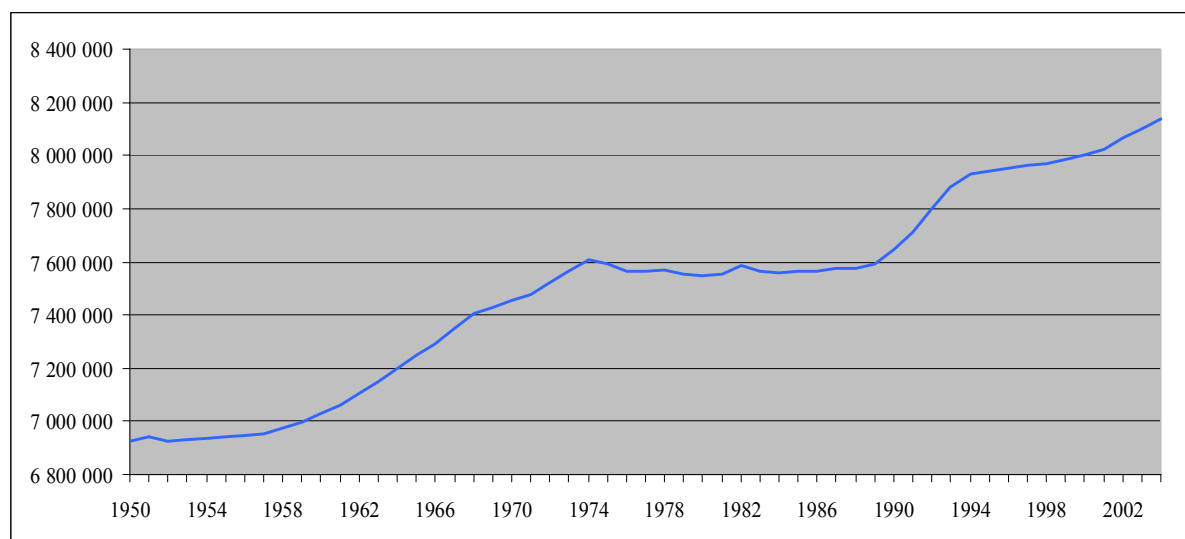


Figure 1: Population of Austria, 1951 to 2004



Source: Eurostat, population statistics, 2005.

Most non-Austrian nationals come from the successor states of the former Yugoslavia or from Turkey (see Table 1 below). Those from other EU Member States are mostly German citizens.

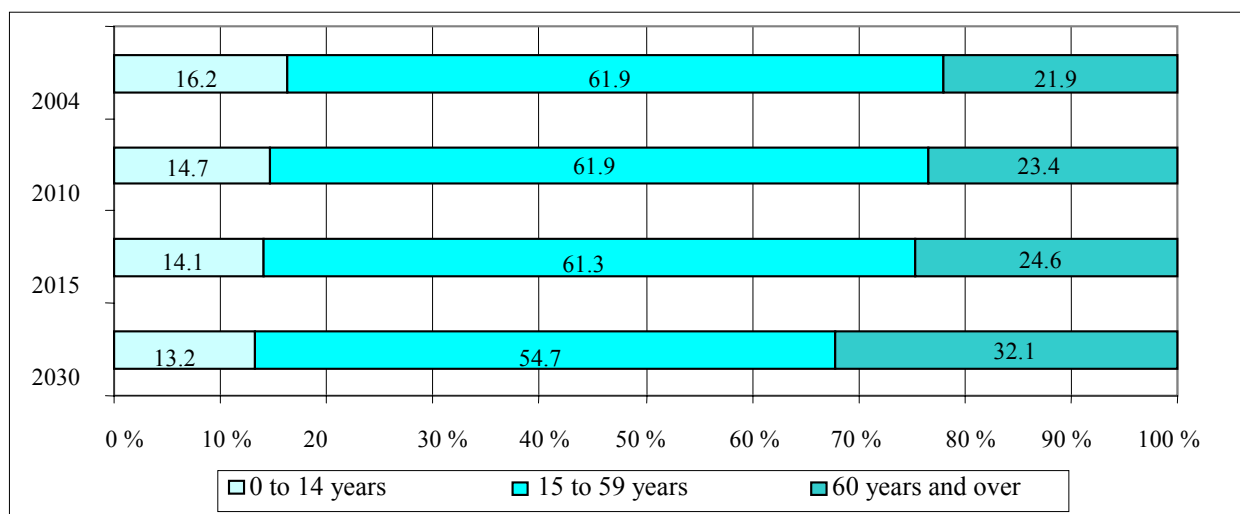
Table 1: Population by nationality (in thousands, 2002 to 2004)

Nationality	2002	2003	2004
All	8 084	8 118	8 175
Austrian	7 341	7 358	7 399
Other	743	760	776
<i>of whom:</i>			
nationals of countries of the former Yugoslavia	314	314	311
Turkish	127	125	120
Other	302	321	345

Source: Statistik Austria, *Statistische Übersichten*, Chapter 14: population, 2005.

As in most of the EU Member States, an ageing population distorts the Austrian age pyramid. The population is expected to grow by only 3 % or thereabouts by 2030. During the same period, the percentage of the population aged 60 and over is set to rise by 51 % from 1 789 000 in 2004 to 2 699 700 in 2030 (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Population by age group (in %): 2004 and forecasts for 2010, 2015 and 2030



Source: Statistik Austria, *Statistische Übersichten*, Chapter 14: population, 2005.

1.3 The economy and the labour market

From 1945 until the early 1970s, Austria experienced rapid economic growth. Thereafter, its growth rates settled at more modest levels. Except during the economic boom of 1990, which was triggered by the reunification of Germany, they have been roughly in line with the European average (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: GDP growth at constant prices – year-on-year percentage rates for 1995, 2000, 2004 and 2005

Year	Austria	EU-15	EU-25
1995	1.9	2.6	:
2000	3.4	3.7	3.7
2004	2.4	2.3	2.4
2005 ⁽¹⁾	2.1	1.9	2.0

⁽¹⁾ Forecast (:) Not available

Source: Eurostat, European system of accounts (ESA 1995), 2005.

As in other countries of the EU, the tertiary sector has grown in importance over the past ten years in Austria too. This is reflected in both the distribution of GDP and in the distribution by economic sector of the total number of persons in gainful employment (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Percentage of GDP and of the total number of persons in gainful employment for each sector of the economy, 2000 and 2004

Economic sector	2000		2004	
	% of GDP	% of persons in gainful employment	% of GDP	% of persons in gainful employment
Primary sector	2.1	5.8	1.9	5.1
Secondary sector	31.1	30.6	31.1	28.1
Tertiary sector	66.8	63.6	67.1	66.7

Sources: Statistik Austria, 2005, Wirtschaftskammer Österreich and our own calculations.

The Austrian economy is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, which account for almost half of all employees (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Workplaces and employees, 2004

Size category (No of employees)	Enterprises (absolute)	Enterprises (%)	Employees (absolute)	Employees (%)
Microenterprises (1-9)	280 873	90.3	348 088	16.4
Small enterprises (10-49)	24 516	7.9	482 748	22.8
Medium-sized enterprises (50-249)	4 623	1.5	467 282	22.0
Large enterprises (250 +)	969	0.3	823 006	38.8
Total	310 981	100.0	2 121 124	100.0

Note: The number of all employees (including those in enterprises that are not members of the economic chamber (Wirtschaftskammer) amounted in 2004 to 3 199 012, according to Statistik Austria.

Source: Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, *Statistisches Jahrbuch*, 2005.

The structure of the employment rate has changed considerably since the 1970s. A falling employment rate among men contrasts with a rising percentage of women in employment. In 2004, the overall employment rate was above the European average (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Employment rates in Austria, EU-15 and EU-25 with breakdown by sex, 2004 (in %)

	Austria	EU-15	EU-25
Female	60.7	56.8	55.7
Male	74.9	72.7	70.9
Total	67.8	64.7	63.3

Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, Eurostat database, 2005.

Compared with other countries, Austria's unemployment problems appear to be fairly low, especially if the high percentage of seasonal unemployment is taken into account. In 2004, the unemployment rate was approximately 4.8 %, which was considerably below the European average (see Table 6 below). From an Austrian point of view, however, the increase in structural unemployment causes concern.

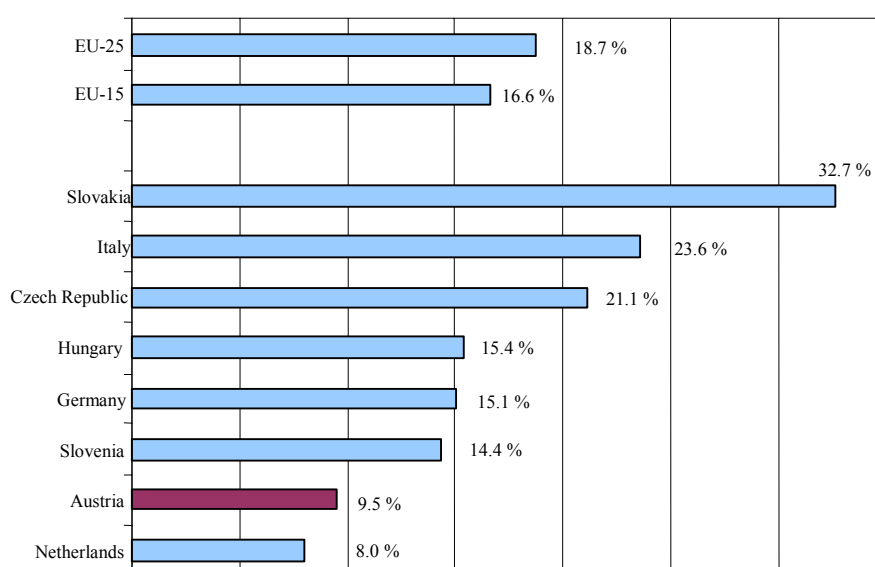
Table 6: Unemployment rate in Austria and EU-25 with breakdown by sex, 2000-2004 (in %)

	Austria		EU-25	
	2000	2004	2000	2004
Male	3.1	4.4	7.3	8.1
Female	4.3	5.4	10.2	10.2
Total	3.7	4.8	8.6	9.0

Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, Eurostat database, 2005.

Youth unemployment has risen over the past few years. Thanks to the wide diversity of practice-oriented training opportunities for those who have completed their compulsory schooling (see Chapter 4), it is still relatively low (9.5 %). This means that Austria ranks fourth behind the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland among the EU Member States with the lowest rates of youth unemployment (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Youth unemployment (15- to 24-year-olds) in Austria and selected EU Member States, 2004 (in %)



Source: Eurostat, 2005.

1.4 Educational attainment of the population

The percentage of the population having successfully completed the upper stage of secondary education is higher in Austria than in any other country of the EU-15 (see Table 7 below). If the comparison is based on the 25-member EU, Austria comes fourth behind the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. Only 18 % of the working-age population, on the other hand, are graduates of tertiary institutions, which is below the European average (EU-15: 23 %, EU-25: 21 %). The reason for the high percentage of the population with qualifications from the upper stage of secondary education lies in the structure of the education system, with its numerous options for VET. This can take the form of full-time VET in schools and colleges or an apprenticeship – see Chapter 4 and Table 8 below. In addition, many courses in the senior classes of secondary

school impart skills that are learned in other countries in further or higher education, such as training in general nursing leading to qualification as a registered general nurse (see also Directive 2005/36/EC) ⁽⁴⁾.

Table 7: Population aged 25 to 64 by highest level of educational attainment in Austria and selected EU Member States, 2004 (in %)

Country	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
Czech Republic	11	77	13
Slovakia	13	74	13
Poland	16	68	16
Austria	20	63	18
Germany (*)	17	60	24
United Kingdom	15	53	28
France	34	41	24
Spain	54	19	27
Portugal	74	13	13
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.

Table 8: Learners at upper secondary level (ISCED level 3) on VET courses in Austria and selected EU Member States (as a % of all learners at ISCED level 3), 1999 and 2003

Country	1999	2003
Czech Republic	80 (*)	80 (*)
Austria	78 (*)	79 (*)
Slovakia	80	75
United Kingdom	67	69
Germany	65	62
France	57	56
Poland	66	54
Spain	31	37
Portugal	25	28 (*)

ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education.

The countries are listed by the percentage of learners who were on vocational courses in 2003.

(*) The data cover both pre-vocational schools and establishments providing vocational education and training.

Source: Eurostat, UOE, Eurostat database, 2005.

⁽⁴⁾ European Parliament and Council Directive 2005/36/EC of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

2. Political developments

The high standing of VET makes it imperative to keep developing training structures and course content in order to maintain the strong appeal of VET among learners and its acceptance within the labour market. The assured provision of a wide range of courses serves to enable individuals to develop their strengths and interests to the full.

2.1 Further development of differentiation

At VET schools and colleges* (*) (see 4.2), differentiation is mainly achieved through the provision which allows individual establishments to determine the focus of the curriculum (see 7.7.1). The extension of the scope for schools and colleges to shape their courses autonomously, a process that began in 1995, also implies the need to safeguard the quality of courses. This was why, in 2004, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur* – BMBWK, hereafter Ministry of Education) incorporated a quality drive into its education plan for the period up to 2010. Another aim is that apprenticeships* should be available in almost every area of economic activity, including new areas such as information technology. The adoption of a modular apprenticeship structure, which is to be enshrined in the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz* - BAG) (see Annex 3) in 2006, is intended to allow for specialisation in economically important areas within the training plan for a certain occupation building upon a basis module.

In the apprenticeship framework (see 4.3), a more differentiated range of courses has been created in recent years to take more account of the diverse levels of prior knowledge and ability of new apprentices. Integrative vocational training, introduced in 2003, makes provision for apprentices to obtain partial qualifications or to extend the duration of their training. It is designed to help individual disadvantaged young people who cannot complete their apprenticeship without assistance. At the same time, there are also some four-year apprenticeships in high-tech occupations which are designed for particularly gifted young people.

2.2 Ensuring permeability

Since young people have to make decisions about their educational paths at the age of only 14 or 15 (see Chapter 4), permeability between the various types of course is an important objective of Austrian education policy. The introduction of the *Berufsreifeprüfung** (see 5.4) in 1997 created a new path for those who have completed an apprenticeship (*Lehre*) or a course at a nursing school, a school for paramedics or a VET school (*berufsbildende mittlere Schule* – BMS)* of a minimum duration of three years, enabling them to obtain an entrance qualification for general higher

(*) All terms marked with an asterisk in the text are defined in the glossary.

education* also taking account of the skills and competences they have already acquired (see Chapter 8).

A nationwide government information campaign entitled *Lehre + Matura**, which was conducted in 2005, was designed to focus attention more sharply on this opportunity to complete an apprenticeship as well as obtaining Austria's top school qualification.

2.3 Promotion of apprenticeships and provision of training opportunities

Although apprenticeships enjoy high standing for the practical training they provide, the number of companies training apprentices has declined in recent years. Financial incentives have been made available with a view to counteracting this trend (see 10.1.2).

At the same time, the percentage of young people who fail to secure a place in a school or an apprenticeship has risen. The Youth Training Provision Act (*Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz – JASG*) provides for special measures (see 4.4) for young people who are flagged up by the employment service.

2.4 Updating of course content

Continuous updating of the school curricula and regular redefinition of apprenticeship trades help to ensure that VET keeps abreast of changes in industry and commerce (see 7.1). For example, the emphasis on aspects of information technology (IT) for which the framework curricula provides and the scope they offer for innovative learning strategies, such as practice firms (*Übungsfirmen – ÜFA*)*, cooperative open learning (COOL, see 4.2.3) and engineering and technical projects (see 7.2), promote the acquisition of key skills and competences. Besides traditional business subjects, entrepreneurship is also built into the curriculum (see 4.2.3 on business administration colleges and business schools). The efforts of schools and colleges are bolstered by initiatives launched by the Federal Ministry of Education, such as *eFit Austria* ⁽⁵⁾ and *Unternehmen Bildung* ⁽⁶⁾, and through support centres such as ACT, the Austrian Centre for Training Firms (alternatively used for practice firms) ⁽⁷⁾ and the *Bildungscluster* office ⁽⁸⁾, which looks after voluntary regional cooperation between companies and training institutions and is run by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*) in partnership with the Ministry (see 7.2).

Training associations, further-education provision and trainers' networks (regional trainers' forums) and other corporate initiatives contribute to innovation in company-based training.

⁽⁵⁾ <http://www.efit.at/>

⁽⁶⁾ <http://www.unternehmen-bildung.at/>

⁽⁷⁾ <http://www.act.at>

⁽⁸⁾ <http://www.bildungscluster.at>

2.5 Quality in schools and colleges in the VET sector

In every category of school and college, quality-enhancement processes have been under way for several years. The aim of the Quality in Schools (*Qualität in Schulen – QIS*)⁽⁹⁾ initiative of the Ministry of Education is for each school or college to establish its own development programme and assess its own performance.

The main feature of the VET Quality Initiative (*Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung – QIBB*), launched in 2005, is the integration of school and college activities into a comprehensive system of quality management with a view to safeguarding and further enhancing the quality of teaching and administration with the aid of established best practices.

QIBB is the common framework for a quality network encompassing every category of VET institution. It covers schools and colleges, the inspectorates of the regional education authorities (see 3.1.1.2) and the VET Directorate-General of the Ministry of Education. As an overarching framework, QIBB fosters the development of common strategies but also leaves sufficient scope for account to be taken of the special features of the individual categories of school and college and of individual establishments.

QIBB is aligned with nationally and internationally recognised quality-management systems for educational establishments. In particular, QIBB takes account of the common quality-assurance framework (CQAF) for VET, which was developed at the European level as part of the Copenhagen Process.

2.6 Training standards in vocational schools and colleges

Given their twofold mission of vocational training and general education, schools and colleges in the VET sector* must respond rapidly to new economic and social demands and make more use of the autonomy available to institutions in shaping their course programmes. This makes it essential to ensure that they offer high-quality training and that their services are comparable. To this end, the Ministry of Education launched a project in 2005 for the development of quality standards for core elements of general education and specialised vocational training.

The training standards define target outcomes in the form of specialised and cross-curricular skills which trainees should have acquired by a particular year of schooling. National tests are to be used to check whether the targets have been met. The training tasks of schools and colleges in VET, however, go beyond these standards, which mean that the latter cannot be used to assess individual trainees or to rank VET institutions.

Standards for German, applied mathematics, English, economics and law, computing and science are developed in collaboration with the general education sector. For the core vocational elements, the Ministry cooperates closely with the governments of neighbouring countries.

⁽⁹⁾ <http://www.qis.at>

Once the standards have been piloted at VET colleges* (*berufsbildende höhere Schulen – BHS*), it is planned to create standards for VET schools* (*berufsbildende mittlere Schulen – BMS*), too. It seems that the part-time schools where apprentices are trained (*Berufsschulen – BS*) will come out clearly in favour of appraisal models based on problem-solving and practical skills in place of standards developed for specific subjects.

2.7 IT and e-learning

Since the year 2000, the *eFit-Austria* programme has helped to broaden access to education and enhance its quality through the sustainable use of information technology (IT). Of a total of EUR 52 million spent on the development of the IT infrastructure in public and private secondary schools, about half went to VET. The same applies to innovative IT-based school-development projects.

The number of participants in the *e-Learning in Notebook-Klassen* project in general education and VET had increased sevenfold by the 2004/05 session. In the framework of the *e-Learning Cluster*, students and teachers in the senior classes of academic secondary schools* and in VET implement e-learning strategies designed to adapt the organisation of classes and school management (e.g. learning platforms and instruments and methods of school development using broadband technology).

The European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) scheme not only benefits young people but will also benefit their future employers. Under the patronage of the Ministry of Education the *ECDL-barrierefrei* project was launched in the spring of 2004 for the purpose of providing course materials for people with special needs.

In addition, numerous students at VET schools and colleges* try to gain industrial IT certificates for specific occupations, while teachers seek qualification to act as instructors for the appropriate IT modules (see 7.2).

The most significant development has been the radical change in the learning process that has been effected by e-learning tools and environments. Some 30 % of schools and colleges in VET use a learning platform and produce electronically supported teaching aids and course materials. Austrian textbook publishers and education gateways lead the field in Europe in the production and distribution of e-content.

A total of some EUR 8 million was invested between 2000 and 2003 in an initiative for the use of new electronic media in teaching at universities and *Fachhochschulen*. Details of projects in this field are freely accessible from the Content Pool of the *fim Austria* server project⁽¹⁰⁾. Their continuing development and integration into the process of higher education is assured until 2007.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://serverprojekt.fh-joanneum.at>

2.8 Further development of *Fachhochschule* activities

The introduction of *Fachhochschulen* – FH* or Universities of applied science offering degree courses has considerably broadened the range of opportunities in the field of higher technical and vocational education over the past ten years, and this development process will continue throughout the period up to 2010. Development and Funding Plan III for *Fachhochschulen* ⁽¹¹⁾ provides for an extension of activity in the fields of technology, science and technology-related services. In addition, the international aspect of *Fachhochschule* activities is being reinforced, as are applied research and development. It is also intended to introduce more courses for people in employment. A key focal point is assessment for the purpose of quality assurance. The external quality-assurance procedure for *Fachhochschule* degree courses (*Fachhochschulstudiengänge* – FHS) can be organised on the basis of the Evaluation Regulation ⁽¹²⁾ enacted by the *Fachhochschulrat*, the umbrella body of the *Fachhochschulen* (see 3.1.4), as well as through the new Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance – AQA ⁽¹³⁾.

2.9 Reorganisation of teacher training

The Tertiary Colleges of Education Act 2005 (*Bundesgesetz über die Organisation der Pädagogischen Hochschulen und ihre Studien*) ⁽¹⁴⁾ incorporates teacher training at post-secondary teacher training colleges (*Pädagogische Akademien*), colleges for vocational teacher training (*Berufspädagogische Akademien*) and institutes of in-service teacher training (*Pädagogische Institute*) into the university sector. From 2007, the new tertiary colleges of education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) will offer internationally comparable degrees as envisaged in the Bologna Process. In future, tertiary colleges of education will be able to provide training for all educational professions, including training in areas such as school management and adult education (see 6.4).

2.10 Promotion of lifelong learning

A group of experts has presented a proposal for a comprehensive and coherent lifelong-learning strategy. Detailed discussions and the creation of a lifelong-learning task force to coordinate the necessary strategies and measures are in the pipeline.

⁽¹¹⁾ http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/11630/fhef_III.pdf

⁽¹²⁾ http://www.fhr.ac.at/fhr_inhalt/01_ueber_uns/EvalVO_032005.pdf

⁽¹³⁾ <http://www.aqa.ac.at/>

⁽¹⁴⁾ http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/12778/entwurf_hsg_05.pdf

3. The institutional framework

3.1 The administrative and legislative framework

Under the Federal Constitution, competence for VET is distributed among various national and regional institutions.

Until March 2005, a two-thirds majority in the National Council was required for amendments to legislation relating to schools. This requirement, however, has now been abolished. Nevertheless, provisions regarding compulsory schooling*, free schooling and religious instruction continue to have constitutional status, which means that their amendment still requires a two-thirds majority.

The main laws and regulations relating to VET are listed in Annex 3.

3.1.1 Vocational schools and colleges

(Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen – BMHS)

3.1.1.1 National responsibilities

- (a) The responsibilities of the Ministry of Education include the drafting of important educational legislation (see Annex 3), the provision of schools and the payment and in-service training of teachers. The Ministry is the highest supervisory authority. The execution of statutory provisions is the task of the Regional Education Authorities (see 3.1.1.2). The Ministry has direct responsibility for some engineering colleges (*höhere technische Lehranstalten* – HTL) and for the educational aspects of the colleges of agriculture and forestry (*höhere land- und forstwirtschaftliche Lehranstalten*), such as the design of framework curricula and college inspections.
- (b) The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (*Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft*, hereafter Ministry of Agriculture) is responsible for establishing and maintaining the colleges of agriculture and forestry (see 4.2) and for the selection and payment of teaching staff. Expenditure on teaching staff at colleges of agriculture and forestry is met in equal measure by the Ministry of Agriculture and the provincial governments (see 10.1.1).

3.1.1.2 Regional responsibilities

- (a) The Regional Education Authority (*Landesschulrat* – LSR) is responsible for the supervision of the schools within a province (*Land*). This function is performed by the regional school inspectors, each of whom is responsible for a particular category of school. The main body within the Regional Education Authority is the Education Board (*Kollegium*), which is required to submit proposals for the appointment of head teachers

(*Direktoren/Direktorinnen*) to the Ministry of Education. The Education Board can also deliver opinions on legislative bills and draft regulations, including proposed amendments to national curricula, and enact regulations applicable to schools within its region.

- (b) The provinces (*Länder*) are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of colleges of agriculture and forestry and meet half of the expenditure on teaching staff, the other half being met by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (see 10.1.1).

3.1.2 Training of health professionals other than doctors

- (a) The Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Issues (*Bundesministerium für Gesundheit und Frauen*, hereafter Ministry of Health) is responsible for creating the legal basis for the training of health professionals other than doctors, including for example members of the nursing profession, medical technologists and paramedics, and for the curricula of these training courses, the amount of training provision, conditions governing practical training, examination arrangements and appointment of teaching staff.

Training of health professionals other than doctors covers a broad spectrum, beginning with 130-hour courses for ancillary occupations, such as that of a medical receptionist, and extending to three-year bachelor's degree courses at a *Fachhochschule* for midwives and medical technologists and university degree courses for psychologists;

- (b) the bulk of responsibility for the provision of training institutions is exercised by the *Länder* on behalf of the Federal Government.

3.1.3 Apprenticeship (*Lehre*)

3.1.3.1 National responsibilities

- (a) Company-based training falls within the sphere of competence of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (*Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit*), whose responsibilities include drafting the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*), drawing up the official list of apprenticeship trades and enacting the training and examination regulations for each apprenticeship trade* (see Annex 3).
- (b) The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the school element of apprentice training, which includes drafting legislative bills and drawing up framework curricula. It shares the cost of teachers' pay with the *Länder*.
- (c) The Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship (*Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat*) was established by the Vocational Training Act. It comprises representatives of employers' and employees' organisations and of part-time schools for apprentices*. The Board presents the Ministry of Economics and Labour with proposals in the form of expert reports on matters such as the introduction of new apprenticeship trades or the modernisation of existing trades.

3.1.3.2 *Regional responsibilities*

- (a) Apprenticeship offices (*Lehrlingsstellen*) belonging to the chambers of commerce and chambers of agriculture are responsible for the administration of apprentice training. This involves assessing the aptitude of training companies together with representatives of the Federal Chamber of Labour, registering apprenticeship contracts and organising final apprenticeship examinations*.
- (b) The Regional Advisory Boards on Apprenticeship (*Landes-Berufsausbildungsbeiräte*) draw up proposals and make suggestions regarding apprentice training in their respective *Länder*. Their members (representatives of employers' and employees' organisations and of part-time schools for apprentices) are appointed by the governors of the *Länder*.
- (c) The Regional Education Authority (LSR) is responsible for the supervision of the part-time schools for apprentices* (*Berufsschulen*). This function is performed by the regional school inspectors.
- (d) The *Länder* are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of part-time schools for apprentices and meet half of the expenditure on personnel (see 10.1.2).
- (e) On-the-job training in agriculture and forestry is the responsibility of the relevant apprentice and specialist training centres (*Lehrlings- und Fachausbildungsstellen*) belonging to the regional chambers of agriculture. Their tasks are essentially the same as those of the apprenticeship offices.
- (f) The establishment and maintenance of part-time schools for apprentices for agriculture and forestry is the responsibility of the *Länder*, which also meet half of the personnel costs (see 10.1.2).

3.1.4 *Fachhochschulen*

- (a) The *Fachhochschulrat* – FHR, the supervisory council for Austria's *Fachhochschulen* – FH*, undertakes external quality assurance (accreditation and assessment) of these institutions.
- (b) The Ministry of Education finances most of the cost of study at a *Fachhochschule*; the remainder is met by the provider (*Erhalter*) (see 10.1.3).
- (c) Providers initiate *Fachhochschule* degree courses – FHS in consultation with organisations such as local authorities, provincial governments and employers' and employees' representative bodies and are responsible for establishing and maintaining these courses.
- (d) Development teams appointed by the providers design the degree courses (see 7.1.3).

3.1.5 **Continuing vocational education and training (CVET)**

- (a) The Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Authority (LSR) are primarily responsible for CVET in schools and secondary colleges; in the case of certain types of

training, such as forepersons' courses, responsibility may also lie with non-profit institutions of continuing education (see 5.3.2).

- (b) CVET in universities and *Fachhochschulen* is the responsibility of the institutions themselves (see 5.3.2).
- (c) Competence for CVET delivered outside schools and colleges lies with the *Länder* and the local authorities, CVET establishments or their funding bodies, companies, etc. (see 5.3.1).

3.2 The role of social partners

Cooperative partnership between associations of employers and of employees has a long tradition in Austria. The 'social partners', as these representative bodies are known, comprise, on the management side, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*), the Chamber of Agriculture (*Landwirtschaftskammer Österreich*) and, in special cases, the Federation of Austrian Industry (*Industriellenvereinigung*), with its voluntary membership. The labour side comprises the Chamber of Labour (*Bundeskammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte*) and the Austrian Trade Union Federation (*Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund*). The social partners' main aim is to reconcile conflicting interests through substantive compromises between the two sides of industry and between the social partners and the government.

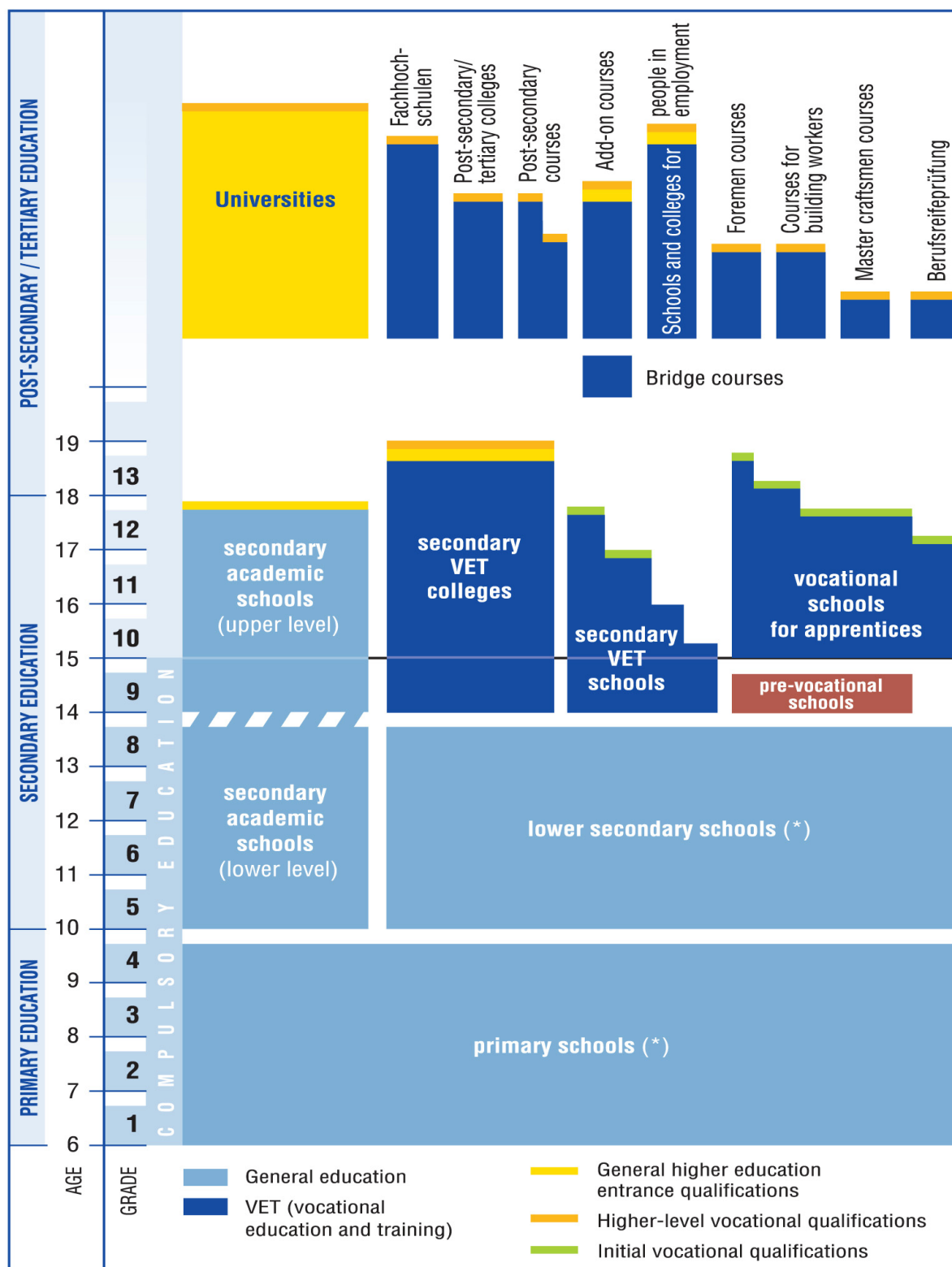
Social partnership is based on the principle of voluntarism. It is neither enshrined in the Constitution nor prescribed by statute. The social partners exert a powerful influence on the process of policy- and decision making. There are many ways in which they can bring this influence to bear. One channel that has traditionally been used is both sides' close relationship – partly institutional and partly personal – with political parties. The associations are also brought into the formulation of political aims within government departments by means of formal and informal consultation. This is demonstrated by their participation in numerous committees, advisory boards and commissions on various environmental, transport, social or other issues. Even in Parliament, experts from the employers' and employees' bodies are involved in the legislative process.

Participation of the social partners in VET:

- In the domain of schools and colleges, they are entitled to deliver opinions on relevant legislative bills, the curriculum, etc. They play an active part in the provision of information on education and training and careers (see 9.2.5) and encourage cooperation between VET institutions and the business community (see 7.2).
- In the field of apprentice training, they take initiatives to establish new apprenticeship trades* or to redefine existing trades. In addition, they are invited to collaborate on the compiling of framework curricula for part-time schools for apprentices. The remuneration payable to apprentices is determined as part of the industry-wide process of collective bargaining (see 10.1.2).

- In the sphere of higher education, chambers of labour and economic chambers or their educational establishments also play a part as providers of *Fachhochschule** degree courses.
- Many universities and *Fachhochschulen* request the opinion of the employers' and employees' representative bodies on their course programmes, even though they are under no obligation to consult these bodies.
- The content of continuing vocational education and training (CVET) is determined to a great extent by the large CVET establishments run by the Federal Economic Chamber through its provider arm, WIFI (*Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut*), by the Federal Chamber of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation through bfi (*Berufsförderungsinstitut*), their joint CVET provider institution, and by the Chamber of Agriculture through the Rural Advanced Training Institute (*Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut*). In addition, the social partners organise numerous events and activities dedicated to a particular theme, such as the launch of the internationally recognised *Investors in People* standards by the Federation of Austrian Industry, sponsor relevant studies, provide financial incentives for continuing training, such as the education vouchers issued by the chambers of labour, and engage in targeted lobbying for the provision of additional resources like an education premium or a tax allowance for education (see 10.2).

Figure 4: The Austrian education system – simplified chart



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

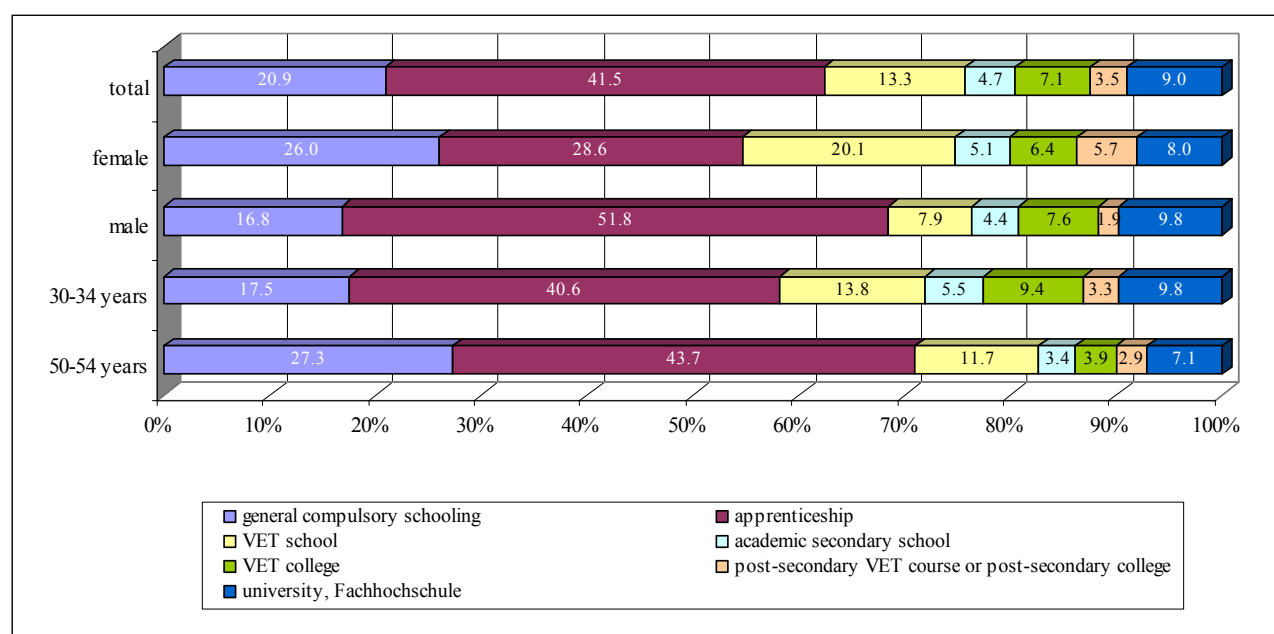
4. Initial vocational education and training

4.1 General characteristics of the school system

The School Organisation Act (*Schulorganisationsgesetz*) provides that young people at school should acquire the necessary knowledge and know-how for their lives and careers as well as the ability to learn independently, and hence acquire the capacity for lifelong learning.

Early differentiation from the lower years of secondary school and an appealingly broad range of opportunities for VET in upper secondary are characteristic of the Austrian education system. At the same time, one of the aims of Austrian education policy is to continue increasing the degree of permeability between the various educational paths. Besides providing recognised vocational qualifications, all VET courses exceeding two years' duration also lead to an entrance qualification to general higher education*, either directly through passes in the appropriate final examinations or indirectly, subject to success in specific supplementary examinations. The high standing of VET and the expansion of the education system since the 1970s have led to a widespread rise in the qualification levels of the working population (see Figure 5 below). Approximately 75 % of all people in employment have successfully completed a VET course and/or higher education.

Figure 5: Educational attainment of the working population aged 25 to 64 and of two selected age groups by highest level of qualification, 2001 (in %)



Source: Statistik Austria, 2001 census, reproduced from Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, *Bildung und Wissenschaft in Österreich*, 2004.

General compulsory schooling begins at the age of six and lasts for nine years, which means that most children complete it at the age of 15 (see Figure 4 above).

Children with special educational needs can either attend special schools which are tailored to their needs or be integrated into mainstream classes at other types of school.

4.1.1 Pre-school (3-6 years) and primary school (6-10 years)

Nursery school (*Kindergarten*) is the traditional form of pre-school education for children between the ages of three and six. It is not part of the school system, however, and attendance is voluntary. Some 90 % of five-year-olds attend a public or private nursery.

Children's actual 'educational career' begins with four years at primary school (see Figure 4 above), where they receive a comprehensive elementary education. A pre-school year is provided for children who have difficulty following lessons, and its content can be integrated into the first two years of primary school.

4.1.2 Lower secondary education (10-14 years)

At the age of ten comes the first sifting process into two types of school (see Figure 4 above), with about 70 % of all pupils moving on to a lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*) and the remaining 30 % entering an academic secondary school (*allgemein bildende höhere Schule*). In cities and large towns, where both types of secondary school are equally easy to reach, the distribution is different. In Vienna, for example, fewer than half of all children attend a lower secondary school.

To move from primary to secondary education, a pupil needs a favourable report at the end of primary four. Additional performance criteria, such as certain grades in the main school subjects, are required for entry to an academic secondary school.

4.1.2.1 Lower secondary school (Hauptschule – HS)

In four years at the lower secondary school, pupils obtain a basic general education, which qualifies them to move on to stage two of secondary schooling as well as preparing them for working life. In German, mathematics and a modern language, classes are streamed so that pupils' diverse learning needs can be taken into account. Career studies in the third and fourth years (years seven and eight of compulsory schooling) include the opportunity for pupils to spend several days on work experience gaining an insight into the activities of a business (see 9.2.1). Lower secondary schools also have the autonomy to specialise in particular subjects, such as modern languages, sport or computing.

4.1.2.2 Academic secondary schools (10-18 years) – lower stage (Allgemein bildende höhere Schule – AHS)

Academic secondary school comprises a lower stage of four years and an upper stage of equal duration. Pupils obtain a comprehensive general education. In the first two years (years five and six of compulsory schooling), academic secondary schools follow a curriculum which is

identical to that of lower secondary schools. From year seven, the differences between the categories of academic secondary school begin to emerge. These are:

- the *Gymnasium*, where pupils receive a traditional academic education, including classes in Latin,
- the *Realgymnasium*, which specialises in mathematics, science and subjects such as geometric design, and
- the *wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium*, specialising in economics, chemistry and technical and textile crafts.

The curriculum for the third and fourth years (years seven and eight of compulsory schooling) also prescribes the inclusion of career studies in the timetable.

4.1.3 Upper secondary education (14-18/19 years)

The last year of compulsory schooling corresponds to the first year of the upper stage of secondary education. It also coincides with more extensive differentiation within the school system (see Figure 4 above and Table 9 below). Besides the academic secondary schools and the one-year pre-vocational school (*polytechnische Schule*), there is now a wide choice of VET paths leading to diverse levels of qualification (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 and Figure 4 above):

- VET schools (*berufsbildende mittlere Schulen – BMS*),
- VET colleges (*berufsbildende höhere Schulen – BHS*),
- schools of health care and nursing (*Schulen für allgemeine Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege*), beginning in the eleventh year of schooling, or
- an apprenticeship (training on the shop floor and in a part-time school for apprentices (*Berufsschule*), beginning on completion of compulsory schooling).

About 80 % of young people in the tenth year of schooling are following a VET course (see Figure 6 below). Some 40 % of these are on an apprenticeship, 15 % are at a VET school, and 27 % attend a VET college. Approximately 5 % of young people do not continue their training after compulsory schooling.

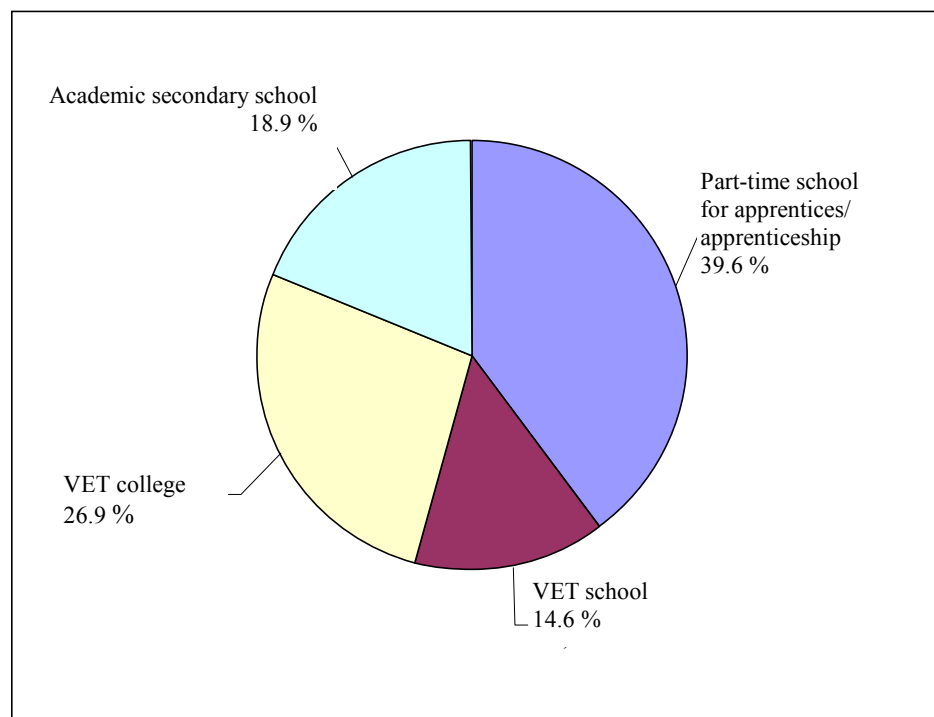
Table 9: Training opportunities at upper secondary level

School type	School years	Age of pupils/trainees	ISCED level (*) and qualification
Academic schools			
Academic secondary school (AHS) – upper stage <i>Oberstufenrealgymnasium</i>	9 to 12	14 to 18	ISCED 3A <i>Reifeprüfung</i>
Pre-vocational school			
<i>Polytechnische Schule</i>	9	14 to 15	ISCED 3C Certificate
Schools and colleges in VET			
Part-time school for apprentices (<i>Berufsschule</i> , as part of an apprenticeship)	10 to 13	15 to 19	ISCED 3B Final apprenticeship exam
VET school (BMS)	9 to 12	14 to 17	ISCED 3B Final examination
VET college (BHS)	9 to 13	14 to 19	ISCED 3A/4A <i>Reifeprüfung</i> and VET diploma

(*) ISCED: International Standard Classification for 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.

Figure 6: Distribution of learners in the 10th year of schooling by school type, 2002/03



Source: S. Novak and A. Schneeberger, *Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick*, 2005.

4.1.3.1 *Academic secondary schools – upper stage (14-18 years)* (*Allgemein bildende höhere Schule – AHS*)

In the upper years of academic secondary schools, comprehensive general education in the mainstream subjects continues. Students generally start a second modern language, and schools have a degree of autonomy to specialise in particular subject areas. The upper stage of secondary school culminates in the *Reifeprüfung**, also known as the *Matura**, and those who pass this examination are qualified to follow a course of study at the post-secondary (see 4.5) and tertiary (see 4.6) levels. Besides the eight-year academic secondary school, there is also the *Oberstufenrealgymnasium*, a school covering only the four senior years of secondary education and specialising in science, the arts or creative subjects.

4.1.3.2 *Pre-vocational schools (14-15 years)* (*Polytechnische Schule – PS*)

Pre-vocational school (*Polytechnische Schule*) begins after year 8 of compulsory schooling, lasts for one year and provides a general introduction to vocational training. Each student chooses one of the following subjects: metalwork, electrics, building, woodwork, commercial and secretarial studies, services and tourism. In accordance with the principle of school autonomy*, other subjects may be offered, such as information technology and mechatronics. The curriculum is designed in the light of career opportunities in the surrounding region and students' fields of interest. Pre-vocational schools give learners numerous opportunities to familiarise themselves with the world of work so that they will be well prepared for apprentice training.

4.2 **Vocational schools and colleges and schools of health care and nursing**

4.2.1 **VET schools and colleges: a brief introduction** (*Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen – BMHS*)

The acquisition of vocational skills and qualifications, along with a sound general education, is at the heart of the training provided in VET schools and colleges. Successful completion of this training opens the door to immediate employment as well as laying the foundations for a wide range of more advanced training and higher qualifications.

Entry into a VET school or college depends on successful completion of year 8 of compulsory schooling. Depending on the pupil's education history, whether he or she attended academic or lower secondary school for example, and on the applicant's choice of institution (VET school or VET college) and the availability of places, the pupil's record of achievement or an entrance examination may also serve to determine his or her eligibility. For artistic or educational and social subjects an aptitude test and/or interview is also required.

VET colleges (14-19 years) – double qualification

(Berufsbildende höhere Schule – BHS)

The five-year course at a VET college (ISCED 3A/4A) provides a more thorough general education and high-quality specialised training, marrying theory to practice. It concludes with a *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma (*(Reife- und Diplomprüfung)*), a double qualification giving successful candidates access to higher education as well as to regulated occupations* (see 8.2.1).

VET colleges also provide the basis for subsequent self-employment, in other words business start-ups. The high level of training at VET colleges is also reflected in the recognition accorded to it in the EU framework. The inclusion of VET colleges in Annex III to Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications ⁽¹⁵⁾ testifies to the fact that VET-college students obtain vocational qualifications equivalent to those for which post-secondary training is required in most other Member States. For those who go on to study at a *Fachhochschule*, the skills they have acquired at VET college can shorten the duration of their degree course.

VET schools (14-18 years)

(Berufsbildende mittlere Schule – BMS)

Courses at a VET school (ISCED 3B), which normally last for three or four years, combine general education with complete vocational training for certain occupations. Courses at a VET school, which may also be called a *Fachschule*, or specialised school, except those specialising in commercial subjects, culminate in a final examination (*Abschlussprüfung*). Those who pass the examination are qualified to go straight into employment and have access to certain regulated occupations (see 8.2.1).

After passing further exams, such as the *Berufsreifeprüfung**, or attending add-on courses* (*Aufbaulehrgänge*), young people are eligible to move on to post-secondary or higher education. Like VET colleges, VET schools also lay the foundations for a subsequent business start-up.

VET-school courses of one or two years' duration, particularly in the field of social work, combine general education with preparatory vocational training. They generally serve as a 'bridge' to courses in health care or social work, for which the minimum starting age is 17.

4.2.2 Characteristics of vocational schools and colleges

- Differentiation: Depending on their skills and interests, students can choose from numerous paths and areas of special training focus (*Ausbildungsschwerpunkt/Ausbildungszweig*). Schools and colleges have a degree of autonomy* to alter the number of hours devoted to individual subjects within certain limits, offer new subjects or focus more sharply on

⁽¹⁵⁾ European Parliament and Council Directive 2005/36/EC of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

particular specialised areas (see 7.1.1). Within these areas, the curricula of most courses in the first two years of training (school years 9 and 10) have a common core, and specialisation does not begin until the third year of training (school year 11).

- Combination of general education and intensive theoretical and practical specialised training: Greater weight is assigned to the practical aspects of training at VET schools. Activity-based learning is a fundamental principle at both VET schools and VET colleges; sessions in workshops, laboratories, kitchens, practice firms (*Übungsfirmen* – ÜFA)*, etc., and compulsory periods of work experience in business and industry are integral parts of the training programme (see 7.2).
- Core skills: Business competence or entrepreneurship is both a cross-curricular principle and an area of special training focus on many courses. Depending on the type of school, up to three foreign languages may be compulsory, and one is always compulsory. A foreign language is increasingly being used as the working language in non-language classes too (see 11.2). Computer literacy is a *sine qua non* in all types of VET, and numerous training courses and areas of special focus are specifically designed to train learners for the information and communication technology (IT) sector.
- Business projects: Working on projects and diploma assignments based on specific business- or technology-related tasks, which are also part of the final examinations, enables learners to gather basic technical experience and to master project-management methods. They practise their key skills and make initial contacts that can stand them in good stead when they come to seek their first job (see 7.2).
- Teachers with business experience: In many subjects, teaching staff must provide evidence of relevant experience in industry or commerce (see 6.1.1).

4.2.3 Specialisations of VET schools and colleges

VET schools and colleges (BMHS) offer numerous courses at various levels:

- **Colleges and schools of engineering, arts and crafts**
(*höhere technische, gewerbliche und kunstgewerbliche Lehranstalten* – HTL, 5-year-courses // *technische, gewerbliche und kunstgewerbliche Fachschulen*, 4-year courses)

Colleges (5-year courses) and specialised schools (4-year courses) offer a broad spectrum of disciplines: information technology, electronics, electrical engineering, data processing and organisation, mechatronics, mechanical engineering, construction engineering, interior design and timber engineering, chemistry, chemical engineering, materials engineering, media technology and media management, industrial engineering, art and design, business management and food technology.

Within these disciplines there are several specialisation options; in electrical engineering, for example, there is scope for specialisation in energy technology, industrial electronics, control engineering and computer and software engineering.

The intensive training (more than 35 hours a week) means that, while schools of engineering place heavy demands on young people, they also lay the foundations for employment in diverse areas of activity, such as development, production, sales and maintenance.

After at least three years' professional practice, college graduates can apply to the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour for the award of the professional title *Ingenieur* or *Ingenieurin*.

- **Commercial colleges and schools**

(*Handelsakademien* – HAK, 5-year-courses // *Handelsschulen* – HAS, 3-year courses)

The following are among the subjects and areas of special focus of commercial courses:

Business administration colleges (5-year courses) specialise in areas such as information management and technology, international economics with modern languages and culture, enterprise and management or logistics management and the haulage business.

Business schools (3-year courses) focus for instance on office management, information technology, sales management and cooperative open learning (COOL) ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Since 1993/94, students in business administration colleges and business schools have been working in practice firms* (ÜFA). In line with the curriculum introduced in 2003/04, all other teaching subjects have to be interlinked with the practice firm to form the so-called *ÜFA-Konnex* (see 7.2).

Students who successfully complete these courses are qualified for middle- and higher-level commercial and administrative posts in all areas of business and administration. Those who wish to start a business are exempt from the business-management or entrepreneurial examination*. Immediately after passing the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination* – or, in the case of a business school, the final examination* – they are eligible to take up self-employment in non-regulated occupations* such as those of a commercial agent or a trader.

- **Colleges and schools of management and services industries**

(*Höhere Lehranstalten für wirtschaftliche Berufe* – HLW, 5-year courses // *Fachschulen für wirtschaftliche Berufe*, 3-year courses)

Colleges (5-year courses) and specialised schools (3-year courses) specialise in modern languages, information technology and the creative arts. In addition, some of these institutions focus on welfare management, communication and media design, the environment and the economy, cultural and conference management, catering and sales management.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Cooperative open learning means:

- interspersing traditional instruction with individualised learning, whereby trainees work independently on specific allocated tasks and largely determine the form and speed of the learning process themselves;
- fostering social skills, such as communication, conflict resolution and teamwork, by encouraging trainees to adopt new working methods, practise self-control and take time for reflection;
- teamwork between teachers, involving joint planning of cross-curricular lessons and joint reflection with a view to facilitating cooperation with parents.

Successful students find employment in management and tourism, in catering and in public administration, including the health and welfare services, where they have commercial and administrative roles, for example as managers of large catering centres or customer-service managers.

- **Colleges and schools specialising in tourism**

(Höhere Lehranstalten für Tourismus – HLT, 5-year courses // Tourismusfachschulen, 3-year courses)

Colleges (5-year courses) and specialised schools (3-year courses) provide training in tourism or leisure management or hotel and restaurant management as an area of special focus. Some institutions specialise in the tourist trade, IT in tourism or international hotel and tourism management, including international training programmes in English.

The total duration of mandatory work-experience sessions is highest in these schools and colleges, ranging from 12 to 32 weeks. Those who successfully complete their courses are qualified to start work immediately in commercial and administrative posts in the tourism and leisure industry, such as those of a hotel and tourism receptionist, a management assistant in a hotel or a travel consultant.

- **Colleges and schools of fashion and clothing and colleges of artistic design**

(Höhere Lehranstalten für Mode und Bekleidungstechnik, Höhere Lehranstalten für künstlerische Gestaltung, 5-year courses // Fachschulen für Mode und Bekleidungstechnik, 3-year courses)

Colleges (5-year courses) and specialised schools (3-year courses) focus on fashion design and marketing and also specialise in product design, management and presentation. Successful students become fashion designers, production managers, assistant production managers and team assistants.

- **Colleges and schools of agriculture and forestry**

(Höhere land- und forstwirtschaftliche Lehranstalten, 5-year courses // land- und forstwirtschaftliche Fachschulen, up to 4 years)

Colleges of agriculture and forestry offer 5-year courses in agriculture, viticulture and fruit-growing, garden design and landscaping, horticulture, agricultural engineering, agricultural and food-business management and food technology, which qualify successful students to work in administration, management and marketing within these areas. After at least three years' occupational experience, they can apply to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management for the award of the professional title *Ingenieur* or *Ingenieurin*.

Specialised schools of agriculture and forestry can provide training in all occupations in farming and forestry or offer interdisciplinary courses. In addition, some schools are being established with an eye to the development potential of farming and forestry in particular regions.

- **Nursery teacher training colleges**

(*Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik*, 5-year courses)

Students learn about early child development and acquire the skill to use their knowledge appropriately in real-life educational and developmental work in nursery schools to meet the support needs of each individual child.

- **Colleges of social pedagogy**

(*Bildungsanstalten für Sozialpädagogik*, 5-year courses)

Students acquire the educational, psychological and sociological skills required for the personal development of children and young people in care centres such as crèches and homes and in youth work outside the school environment.

- **Schools for social occupations**

Specialised schools for occupations in the field of social work (*Fachschulen für Sozialberufe*, 3-year courses) and specialised schools for welfare services (*Fachschulen für Sozialdienste*, 2-year courses) provide pre-vocational training and often serve as a bridge for the transition to another 2-year or 3-year course, on completion of which they are fully trained for an occupation. This second course takes place in an institution of therapeutic pedagogy or remedial education (*Lehranstalt für heilpädagogische Berufe*), a specialised school for care services for the elderly and nursing (*Fachschule für Altdienste und Pflegehilfe*) or for family support and nursing. (*Fachschule für Familienhilfe und Pflegehilfe*).

4.2.4 **Schools for health care and nursing**

(*Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegeschulen*, 3-year courses)

To train as a general nurse, an individual must have successfully completed year 10 of the school system. Health care and nursing schools must be established either at hospitals or clinics or in conjunction with hospitals or clinics. At least half of the training time, which totals 4 600 hours, must be spent in practical training, and at least one third must be devoted to theory. Trainees are entitled to a monthly allowance, which the provider of the school has to pay. After producing a piece of written work on a specialised topic and sitting a diploma examination at the end of their training, those who are awarded the diploma are authorised to use the title *Diplomierte Gesundheits- und Krankenschwester/Diplomierter Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger* (registered general nurse).

4.3 **Apprenticeships (2-4 years): on-the-job and school training**

Along with the VET schools and colleges, apprenticeships represent a training model with a particularly strong practical element. Training is organised at two venues: company premises and a part-time school for apprentices (*Berufsschule – BS*). For this reason it is known in Austria as the ‘dual system’ (*duales System*).

The Austrian dual system* differs from other apprenticeship systems, particularly in terms of the status it enjoys within the national education system. In the tenth school year, the first year after the completion of compulsory schooling, some 40 % of young people begin apprentice training in one of about 260 legally recognised apprenticeship trades (*Lehrberufe*) (see Figure 6 above). Successful completion of the apprenticeship (*Lehre*) provides them with a full vocational qualification.

Traditionally, apprenticeships have been most closely associated with crafts and manual trades, for which about half of all apprentices are trained (see Figure 7 below). Apprentice training is also widespread in commerce, industry, tourism and leisure. In December 2004, statistics showed that there were almost 38 000 training companies, where some 120 000 apprentices were being trained.

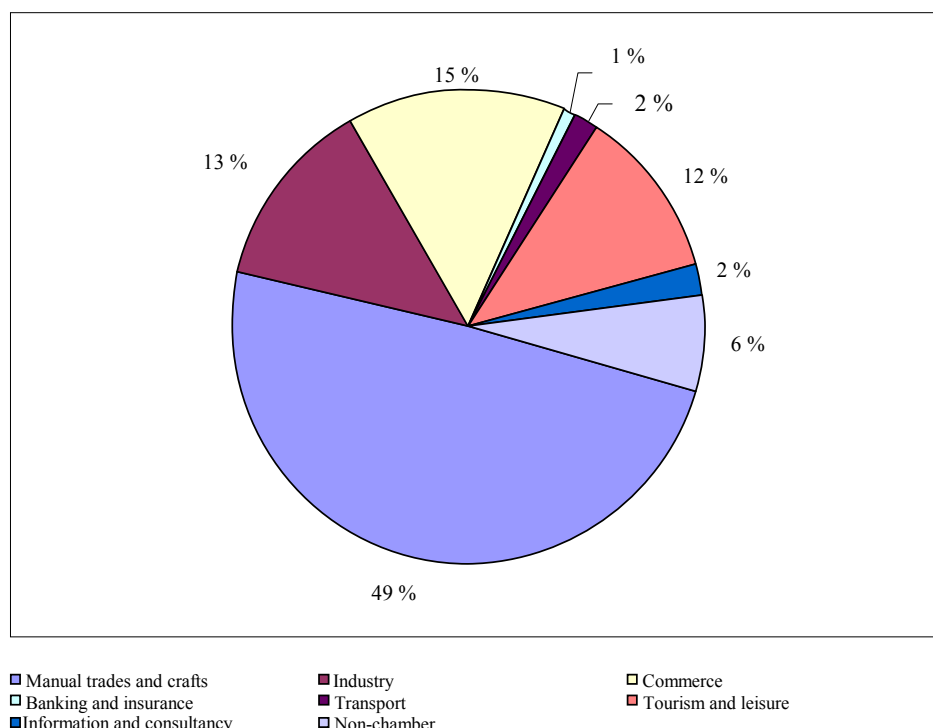
It is up to young people themselves to find a place on an apprenticeship scheme. Newspaper advertisements and online databases, such as the apprenticeship clearing house provided by the Employment Service and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber⁽¹⁷⁾, offer support, and the Employment Service also provides information about training vacancies (see Chapter 9).

Apprentices (*Lehrlinge*) are indentured to the company that will train them as well as being enrolled in the part-time school for apprentices. The young people receive from their employer a remuneration, the amount of which is prescribed by the applicable collective agreement (see Chapter 10).

The basis of the training arrangement is the apprenticeship contract between the authorised apprentice trainer and the apprentice, which is registered by the apprenticeship office (*Lehrlingsstellen*). In addition, the apprenticeship offices, together with representatives of the Chamber of Labour, verify the suitability of training companies, checking their facilities, for example, and assessing the aptitude of the employees responsible for training apprentices. They also advise the training companies and apprentices and organise final apprenticeship examinations

⁽¹⁷⁾ <http://www.ams.or.at/lehrstellen/>

Figure 7: Apprentices by type of economic activity, 2004



Non-chamber: companies that are not members of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber.

Source: Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, apprenticeship statistics, 2005 (excluding agriculture).

Depending on the apprenticeship trade, training lasts from two to four years, three years being the norm. If the apprentice has already obtained school or apprenticeship qualifications in the same or a similar trade, whether in Austria or elsewhere, the duration of the apprenticeship can be shortened.

4.3.1 Company-based training

Company-based training accounts for about 80 % of the apprenticeship period. The apprenticeship scheme is meant to enable young people to start practising their trade as soon as they have completed their apprenticeship. For this reason, the apprenticeship trades defined in the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG*) (see Annex 3) are covered by a nationwide training code which lays down a training profile* with a set of occupational descriptors for each trade (see 7.1.2). For occupations in farming and forestry, training codes are drawn up on a regional basis but are coordinated nationally as far as possible.

The training codes (*Ausbildungsordnungen*) contain the minimum requirements for the content of company-based training. This serves to ensure that uniform standards are applied within each apprenticeship trade. In cases where companies cannot offer the full range of training resources for a given apprenticeship trade, they can still be involved in apprentice training by forming a training association with other companies. In some trades there are also multicompany training centres such as the *Lehrbauhöfe*, practical-training sites for the building trades.

Apprentices are integrated into the process of production or service provision and acquire the essential skills on the job. Responsibility for planning and implementing the training programme lies with the trainer, who must possess certain levels of technical and educational competence (see 6.2).

4.3.2 Training in a part-time school for apprentices

Besides their company-based training, apprentices are required to attend a *Berufsschule*, a part-time school for apprentices. The function of this school is to impart basic theoretical knowledge pertaining to the relevant trade, to support and, where appropriate, supplement the company-based training process and to broaden the trainee's general education.

The main curricular focus of an apprentice's school training is on vocational training for his or her future trade, and 75 % of the timetable is devoted to this purpose, while the remaining quarter is spent on general education in subjects such as German, mathematics, a modern language and political studies, with the emphasis on character development and the enhancement of social and communication skills. Part of the specialised training takes place in workshops or laboratories. The curriculum of the part-time school for apprentices is compiled on the basis of the training code for the relevant trade (see 7.1.2).

The way in which apprentices' school training is organised differs between provinces:

- it may be organised on a block-release basis, whereby the apprentice spends several weeks at a time in school, normally eight to twelve weeks, or
- it may be organised on a day-release basis, in which case the apprentice attends the school on one or two days per week.

4.3.3 Final apprenticeship examination or skilled workers' examination

At the end of the apprenticeship, every apprentice can take the final apprenticeship examination (*Lehrabschlussprüfung*) or, for those training to become skilled farm or forestry workers, the skilled workers' examination (*Facharbeiter/innenprüfung*). These examinations are designed to assess whether candidates are capable of performing, independently and in a professional manner, the tasks required for the practice of the relevant occupation.

These examinations are divided into a practical and a theoretical part. Candidates who have passed their part-time school course are exempt from the theory test. The examination board comprises employers' and employees' representatives.

Before completing their apprenticeship, trainees can do part of the *Berufsreifeprüfung**, the examination through which they can qualify to enter higher education.

Those who pass the final apprenticeship or skilled workers' examination have various options to extend their qualifications, for example by taking the master craftspersons' examination* (*Meisterprüfung*) in a manual trade or in an agricultural or forestry occupation, in which cases

their previous training may exempt them from parts of the examination, or by sitting the *Berufsreifeprüfung* or the higher education entrance examination* (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*) to qualify for a course of study at a university or *Fachhochschule*.*.

For many, the apprenticeship is also the basis for self-employment. Almost 50 % of business owners in Austria have served an apprenticeship.

4.4 Alternative training courses

Because of the shortage of training places that has existed for several years in schools and/or companies, it was decided to adopt an instrument through which the government could intervene in the labour market. The aim of the Youth Training Provision Act (*Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz – JASG*) is to ensure that places on training courses are made available, at least on a temporary basis, to all young people who do not find a suitable apprenticeship after the end of their compulsory schooling.

At the heart of these ‘safety-net’ measures are training courses of up to 12 months’ duration in which knowledge and skills pertaining to a particular apprenticeship trade are imparted. The aim of these courses is placement on a regular apprenticeship. If this does not happen, young people can remain on these courses. The courses are cofinanced from the European Social Fund (ESF). Some 8 000 places on these Youth Training Provision Act courses were planned for the 2005/06 session. This represents about 7 % of the number of young people on regular apprenticeships.

4.5 Post-secondary level

Individuals who have passed the *Reifeprüfung**, the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination* or the *Berufsreifeprüfung** have numerous other educational options besides tertiary education, particularly in the fields of education, social work and paramedical occupations. In addition, the *Kolleg*, a post-secondary VET college covering a specific subject area, provides those who have successfully completed an academic secondary education with the opportunity to move into a course of vocational training (see 5.3.2).

Since 1997, the term ‘post-secondary’ has been applied to those educational establishments which

- provide courses offering at least 180 credits under the European credit-transfer system ECTS (i.e. three-year courses), and
- require applicants to have an entrance qualification for general higher education or, where appropriate, to produce evidence of artistic aptitude.

These institutions include teacher-training colleges, colleges of social work, which are currently being phased out, colleges for midwifery academies and medical technology, certain training centres for psychotherapy and conservatoires, as well as some private establishments for tourism and business management.

Colleges of social work (*Sozialakademien*)

Training courses include a lengthy compulsory period of work experience and qualify graduates for professional occupations in the realm of social work, for example in offices for youth and family welfare, in crisis centres, in careers advisory services or in street work. Graduates are given the professional title *Diplom-Sozialarbeiter/in* (graduate in social work). The courses in colleges of social work are already being converted gradually into four-year (eight-semester) degree courses at *Fachhochschulen**, culminating in the award of the academic title *Magister/Magistra (Fachhochschule)*, abbreviated to *Mag. (FH)*

Colleges of social work are also open to those who have successfully completed courses in nursing and paramedical professions.

Colleges of teacher training (*Pädagogische Akademien*)

At teacher training colleges for education, VET, religious education and agricultural education, teachers are trained for particular school types and subjects. Together with the institutes of in-service teacher training (*pädagogische Institute*), all of these academies are to be converted into tertiary colleges of education (*pädagogische Hochschulen*) by 2007 (see 2.9 and Chapter 6).

Colleges for health professions (*Akademien für Gesundheitsberufe*)

Besides the medical profession itself, there are numerous other highly skilled health professions, each with its own set of regulations governing professional training and practice. Colleges in this domain may only be established in association with hospitals or clinics and provide students with practical training for the following professions: midwife, physiotherapist, biomedical analyst, radiographer, nutritionist, ergotherapist, speech therapist and orthoptist. Applicants for admission to a training course at a college of medical technology are required to undergo an aptitude test. From the academic year 2006/07, training in health professions will be offered in the form of bachelor-degree courses at *Fachhochschulen* (see 4.6.1) as well as at the colleges.

4.6 Tertiary training

Until the 1990s, most degree courses were academic or research-based and lasted at least four years (eight semesters), after which students could embark on postgraduate study leading to a doctorate. A marked change came about in 1994 when *Fachhochschulen* were introduced in response to an international trend towards a more vocationally orientated, non-university tertiary

sector. The founding of the Danube University of Krems (*Donau Universität Krems*) in 1994 reflected the increasing importance of postgraduate education and training (see 5.3.2).

4.6.1 *Fachhochschulen*

The *Fachhochschule* Degree Courses Act (*Bundesgesetz über Fachhochschul-Studiengänge – FHStG*) 1993 (see Annex 3) made it possible to establish practice-oriented courses at the tertiary level. Other aspects that distinguished these new institutions from the universities were their organisational structures and funding models. The organisation of *Fachhochschulen* – FH or Universities of applied science was not prescribed by law, unlike the university structure, but was only subject to a few basic requirements.

Fachhochschulen are not developed by the Ministry of Education but by provider bodies, most of which are from the private sector; once they have been licensed by the *Fachhochschulrat* – FHR, the supervisory council for Austria's *Fachhochschulen* (see 3.1.4), they are run by the provider. They are subject to a prescribed accreditation and evaluation procedure, which is overseen by the *Fachhochschulrat* (see 7.1.3).

In contrast to universities, *Fachhochschulen* provide scientifically underpinned technical and vocational training. They are tailored, in other words, to specific areas of professional activity. A period of practical work experience is a compulsory part of the curriculum (see 7.2). Up to the present time, degree courses have been established in Austrian *Fachhochschulen* in the fields of economics and business management, tourism, engineering sciences, computer science and information technology, media and design. There are also interdisciplinary degree courses as well as courses in the fields of health and welfare, journalism and military science.

As a rule, the requirement for admission to courses at a *Fachhochschule* is the entrance qualification for general higher education* or a relevant vocational qualification (see 8.2). Courses of shorter duration (six semesters) have also been created expressly for students who have been through engineering college and have enough occupational experience to have earned the title *Ingenieur* or *Ingenieurin*. Since the number of students in any year of a given course is limited, applicants must undergo a selection procedure conducted by the provider in cases where the number of applicants for a course exceeds the number of places on the course.

In place of the traditional degree courses lasting eight to ten semesters, *Fachhochschulen* have also been able, since 2002, to offer courses leading to a bachelor's degree after six semesters and to a master's degree after a further two to four semesters. Those who graduate with a master's degree or the traditional degree are eligible for doctoral studies in their degree subject at a university.

Since the 1996/97 academic year, degree courses for persons in employment have also been offered (see 5.3.2).

4.6.2 Universities

As a rule, the requirement for admission to university degree courses is the entrance qualification for general higher education*. For certain courses – in the sphere of fine arts, for instance – there are additional entrance requirements. Moreover, because of the large number of applicants from home and abroad, further admission criteria or selection procedures have been introduced in some subjects, such as medicine, pharmacology and media studies (for example, a written examination following the first semester or a minimum average mark in the first semester). Since the 2001/02 academic year, students have had to pay a tuition fee of EUR 363.36 per semester.

In accordance with the Bologna Process, a three-tiered structure of bachelor's degree, master's degree or traditional *Diplomingenieur* degree and doctorate has been introduced, along with curricula in which a number of credits is assigned to each course element under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Some degree courses, such as those that provide a teaching qualification, are still based on the traditional 'long' degree course (nine semesters; see 6.1). The aim of regular degree courses (*ordentliche Studien*) is an academic qualification. Continuing-education courses at universities (*Universitätslehrgänge*) focus on advanced vocational training (see 5.3.2).

In 2004, Austria's universities were detached from the federal administration and were given extensive autonomy*. Since then, the Federal Government has used service agreements and the allocation of annual block grants as control mechanisms.

Table 10: Austrian and other students on degree or diploma courses in selected categories of post-secondary and tertiary institutions

Institution	1990/91	2000/01	2003/04
	Total	Total	Total
Universities ⁽¹⁾	186 607	221 505	185 438
<i>Fachhochschulen</i> * ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾	----	11 743	20 591
Colleges for health professions ⁽³⁾	1 618	2 727	2 992
Colleges of social work* ⁽⁴⁾	933	1 394	844
Teacher training colleges ⁽⁵⁾	7 421	13 264	12 984

Data: ⁽¹⁾ Data relate to the winter semester; ⁽²⁾ *Fachhochschule* courses were first introduced in 1994; ⁽³⁾ 2003/04: figures for 2002/03; ⁽⁴⁾ includes colleges of social work for persons in employment; ⁽⁵⁾ includes teacher training colleges for education, VET, religious education and agricultural education.

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, *Statistisches Taschenbuch 2004*.

5. Continuing vocational education and training

5.1 Overview

The main differences between continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and initial vocational education and training (IVET) lie in the ages of the learners and their previous educational attainments. Anyone who has completed IVET by serving an apprenticeship*, successfully completing a course at a VET school or college*, obtaining a degree from a *Fachhochschule**, etc., and then begins another stage in the education process is generally said to be embarking on CVET. Most people are over the age of 20 when they begin CVET.

In legal and organisational terms (see 5.2), the CVET landscape in Austria presents a very heterogeneous picture. This is one of the reasons why a comprehensive and uniform lifelong-learning strategy has yet to materialise. The wide range of CVET courses on offer and the diversity of providers (see 5.3), however, are regarded as strengths of the system.

5.2 Legal and organisational framework

CVET in Austria is not governed by a specific law. Although the Federal Act concerning the Promotion of Adult Education and of the Public Library System from Federal Resources, known by the short title Federal Adult Education Promotion Act (*Erwachsenenbildungs-Förderungsgesetz*), has been on the statute book since March 1973 and is an important piece of framework legislation, numerous other relevant legal provisions are scattered across a variety of laws governing the school system, higher education, taxation and the labour market.

The Federal Adult Education Promotion Act empowers the Federal Government to promote continuing education, for example by allocating grants to institutions or by funding innovative projects. Support is confined to institutions whose activities are not profit-driven. The amount of support is not prescribed (see 10.2). The Act does not make any stipulations regarding the organisational structure of CVET. It imposes an obligation on the Federal Government not to intervene in the compilation of programmes or curricula. Moreover, the body providing support has no powers to impose conditions regarding methodology or staffing. This guarantees the independence of the adult-education bodies.

Responsibilities for continuing education are widely dispersed:

- Besides the support available under the aforementioned Federal Adult Education Promotion Act, the federal provinces and the local authorities also support CVET in private and non-profit continuing-education establishments.
- CVET in schools, colleges and tertiary institutions is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, provided the exercise of such responsibility does not impinge upon the

autonomy* of institutions of higher education. *Fachhochschule* providers are authorised to establish CVET courses in subjects in which they already offer accredited degree courses*. The *Fachhochschulrat* must veto any courses that do not meet the relevant legal requirements.

- Company-based CVET and Employment Service schemes designed to upgrade jobseekers' skills are the political responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour.

Depending on the type and subject of CVET courses, however, they may also involve other ministries, namely the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, the Federal Ministry of Health and, in the case of continuing education for people who are elderly or have disabilities, the Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection (hereafter Ministry of Social Security).

Fiscal matters (the education premium, the tax allowance for education, etc.; see 10.2) fall within the remit of the Federal Ministry of Finance.

5.3 Providers and provision

Wide institutional diversity and a correspondingly wide range of options characterise the Austrian continuing-education landscape.

Besides the input of the public sector (schools, colleges and universities), which accounts for a minimal percentage of continuing education, the great dedication displayed by various groups within society is also a significant factor. The representative bodies of business and labour as well as the religious communities play a major role in shaping the landscape of continuing education through their institutions. The number of private providers has been rising in the last ten years, and they now operate about 1 800 educational establishments ⁽¹⁸⁾.

5.3.1 Continuing education in non-profit CVET establishments and in companies

5.3.1.1 Non-profit CVET establishments

Most CVET in Austria takes place in non-governmental, non-profit institutions of continuing education. Ten of the most important non-profit providers of CVET have formed themselves into the Austrian Adult Education Conference (*Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs – KEBÖ*). KEBÖ is not a special-interest group in the conventional sense but rather a think tank. It does not provide any continuing education itself. The sessions organised by the individual member institutions of KEBÖ differ widely in form and duration, ranging from single lectures to courses based on structured curricula, some of which prepare

⁽¹⁸⁾ ÖIBF, 'Qualitätssicherung und -entwicklung in der österreichischen Erwachsenenbildung', study conducted as part of a project entitled *Instrumente zur Sicherung der Qualität und Transparenz in der Erwachsenenbildung in Österreich (INSI-QUEB)*. öibf, Vienna, 2004.

participants for specific examinations, such as the *Berufsreifeprüfung** and the open qualifying examination for higher education* (see 5.4). As well as initiating and implementing educational measures, these institutions also provide advisory services, thereby creating an important interface between supply and demand in the field of continuing education (see 9.2.5).

Institutions run by the social partners

Each of the national representative bodies of business and labour has its own CVET institution; these establishments are run on a non-profit basis and are also members of KEBÖ.

The *Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut* – WIFI, operated by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*), on the employers' side, targets its education effort at apprentices, skilled workers and executives. The courses it offers range from management and business administration to self-development and languages as well as courses for particular industries. WIFI also provides *Fachhochschule* courses*. Forepersons' schools* for persons in employment (see 5.3.2), preparatory courses for examinations, including the *Berufsreifeprüfung** (see 5.4) and company-based continuing education and educational advisory services (see 9.2.5) complete the range of services offered by WIFI.

The *Berufsförderungsinstitut* – bfi is the CVET institution of the Chambers of Labour (*Kammern für Arbeiter und Angestellte*) and the Austrian Trade Union Federation (*Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund*) on the employees' side. The programmes on offer cover self-development and management, data processing, secretarial and business studies, languages, courses in health and welfare occupations, preparatory courses for officially recognised examinations, such as the open qualifying examination for higher education and the *Berufsreifeprüfung** (see 5.4), and educational and training measures for people who are unemployed or who face the threat of unemployment (see 5.3.3). The bfi also runs post-secondary VET colleges (*Kollegs*)* (see 5.3.2) and provides *Fachhochschule* courses*.

The *Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut* – LFI is the training enterprise of the Chambers of Agriculture (*Landwirtschaftskammern*). The training programme offered by the LFI, as well as covering all the traditional farming and forestry specialisations, also includes protection of the natural environment, self-development, health and nutrition, data processing, building, energy and agricultural engineering, service provision and income diversification. The range of educational services extends from practical training courses, educational courses and seminars to lectures and public discussions, study groups and visits to farms and other businesses. The LFI likewise provides preparatory courses for the *Berufsreifeprüfung**.

5.3.1.2 Companies

Great importance attaches to company-based CVET. A survey conducted in 1999 showed that the percentage of companies involved in continuing education and training in Austria (71 %)

was considerably higher than the European average of 54 %⁽¹⁹⁾. By investing EUR 850 million in continuing education and training, companies bear the largest share of the costs arising from the provision of continuing education and training. It is they, more than any other group, that drive demand for continuing education and training.

5.3.2 Continuing education and training leading to final secondary or tertiary examinations

Second-chance route to lower secondary qualification

Successful completion of the fourth year at a lower secondary school* (*Hauptschule*) is the prerequisite for progress to the next level of schooling. While it is not a formal requirement for apprenticeships or employment, the absence of such qualification is not a good starting point for a prospective apprentice or jobseeker. Several institutions of continuing education offer preparatory courses for the final *Hauptschule* examination, which is taken before a board of external examiners at a school. Part of the cost of these courses is payable by participants (see 10.2), and they generally take the form of evening classes. Young people up to the age of 18 can repeat the *Hauptschule* examination free of charge. The preparatory courses are chiefly supported by the Ministry of Education with the aid of resources from the European Social Fund and may also be financed from the employment-promotion budget through the Employment Service.

VET courses for adults and for people in employment

Courses in schools and colleges enable adults and working people to obtain the qualifications awarded by VET schools* and VET colleges*. This can be done at the following special forms of vocational college:

- Enrolment in a **VET college for persons in employment** (*berufsbildende höhere Schule für Berufstätige*) is subject to successful completion of compulsory schooling. Courses last four to five years and conclude with the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination*;
- **Post-secondary VET courses** (*Kollegs*) are intended primarily for those who have successfully completed academic secondary school*. A pass in the *Reifeprüfung** is the entrance requirement. *Kolleg* courses are modular in form and entail two years of day classes or, in most cases, three years of evening classes. They are often combined with continuation courses* and conclude with a diploma examination*.
- **Add-on courses** (*Aufbaulehrgänge*) generally take three years and take those who have successfully completed VET school (*berufsbildende mittlere Schule – BMS*) to the

⁽¹⁹⁾ Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), *European Social Statistics: Continuing Vocational Training Survey. Data for 1999*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2002, cited in:

A. Schneeberger and T. Mayr, *Berufliche Weiterbildung in Österreich und im europäischen Vergleich*. [research report commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour]. ibw, Vienna, 2004 (ibw-Schriftenreihe No 126).

Reifeprüfung and VET diploma of the corresponding VET college (*berufsbildende höhere Schule* – BHS). They are also open to those who have served their apprenticeship and who have attended a one- or two-semester preparatory course*. Add-on courses are modular in structure, with general educational and advanced specialised modules and are frequently offered in conjunction with *Kolleg* courses.

There are special forms of VET-school courses (*berufsbildende mittlere Schulen* – BMS) at business, schools of management and services industries and especially at schools specialising in technical trades. These courses are also offered at WIFI and bfi establishments:

- **Foremen courses for people in employment** (*Werkmeisterschulen für Berufstätige*) enable working tradespeople who have served an apprenticeship or successfully completed VET school to upgrade their vocational qualification. These courses last for two years and culminate in an examination before a board. Successful candidates are qualified to train apprentices and, after four years of practical work, to become self-employed in a relevant trade.
- **Courses for building workers** (*Bauhandwerkerschulen*) are similar to forepersons' schools but are specifically intended for people who have completed their vocational training in a building trade such as bricklaying or carpentry.
- **Master craftsmen courses** (*Meisterschulen*) provide specialised continuing education and training. Their courses last from one to two years; applicants for admission must be at least 18 years of age and are expected, as a rule, to have completed their initial vocational training and/or to have a certain amount of practical experience in their trade.

Other CVET opportunities include the following:

- There are numerous training opportunities in the **nursing profession**. Training takes place in general nursing schools and on care assistants' courses.
- **Colleges of social work for persons in employment** (*Akademien für Sozialarbeit für Berufstätige*), most of which have been converted into *Fachhochschule** degree courses, enable working people to obtain a diploma qualifying them for skilled work in public and private establishments in the fields of youth welfare, care of the elderly, rehabilitation, probation services, etc. Their courses take the form of evening classes and last for six to eight semesters.

Universities and *Fachhochschulen*

Both universities and *Fachhochschulen** offer CVET courses (see 4.6).

Universities offer continuing education and qualification upgrading in courses (*Universitätslehrgänge*) for both postgraduates and non-academics who satisfy other admission criteria, such as a minimum period of professional practice. These courses of study, which are designed in the same way as master's courses, lead to a master's degree or to the awarding of the prefix '*Akademischer...*' before the graduate's existing professional title, provided that the curriculum has a value of at least 60 ECTS credits. Participants are required to pay a tuition fee, which is set in the light of the actual cost of the course. Most classes take place in

the evenings or at weekends. In order to increase the accessibility of these courses, organisational forms that suit people in employment (evening or weekend sessions coupled with access to online resources) are being piloted.

A centre for continuing tertiary education was created in 1994 with the founding of the Danube University of Krems (*Donau Universität Krems*). Its role is confined to the provision of courses at the postgraduate level.

Fachhochschule providers have scope to offer special degree courses for people in employment, which are organised to take account of working people's free time and therefore comprise evening and weekend classes. Distance-learning components are also included, and the obligation to attend practical sessions may be waived for participants with relevant occupational experience. At the present time, about a third of all *Fachhochschule* courses are also offered as part-time courses for working people⁽²⁰⁾. Since 1 February 2004, providers of courses at *Fachhochschulen* have also been able to offer part-time continuing-education courses on the aforementioned university model in the subjects for which they are accredited.

5.3.3 Employability courses

The aim of this type of continuing education is to enhance the employability of people and groups of people who, having begun their careers, are either faced with an acute risk of unemployment or have already lost their job. There are, for example, some courses for people seeking to re-enter the labour market and for older people, as well as retraining courses for victims of economic restructuring and specific measures for young people who have left school without any qualifications. In view of the structural unemployment that has persisted for some time, this is becoming an increasingly important area of activity.

The key player in the implementation of employment policy is the Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice* – AMS). The Employment Service is not a training provider in its own right but finances people's participation in appropriate training sessions. If there is insufficient provision of training opportunities in a particular domain, the Employment Service can engage suitable non-profit or commercial training providers to run the required courses. In such cases the Employment Service is responsible for needs assessment and for the planning, implementation and efficiency of the training.

Other important initiatives in this field are labour foundations and funds, such as the *Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen-Förderungsfonds* to support employees in Vienna, which are financed from the budgets of the *Länder* and local authorities. Like the Employment Service, these public authorities do not run courses themselves but fund them, help jobseekers with applications and business start-ups and assist companies in the training of new apprentice trainers.

⁽²⁰⁾ http://www.fhr.ac.at/fhr_inhalt/00_dokumente/Auswertungen_2004_05_Web.pdf

5.4 Bridges from IVET to CVET

Along with diversity of supply, permeability is another important feature of the Austrian education system (see 2.2). In the context of lifelong learning, particular significance attaches to ease of access between initial and continuing education and training.

Besides the *Reifeprüfung** at the end of the senior stage of secondary school, the following paths also provide access to post-secondary and tertiary courses:

5.4.1 Higher education entrance examination

The higher education entrance (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*) provides access to a particular field of study in post-secondary and tertiary institutions. Applicants to sit the exam must furnish evidence of prior education, training or occupational experience in the chosen subject. In the absence of such evidence, additional examinations may be taken to make up the deficit.

5.4.2 *Berufsreifeprüfung*

The *Berufsreifeprüfung* is an examination which provides unrestricted access to post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions. It may be taken by those who have passed a final apprenticeship examination* (*Lehrabschlussprüfung*), who have successfully completed a course of at least three years' duration at a VET school* (*berufsbildende mittlere Schule - BMS*) or school for health care and nursing (*Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegeschulen*) or a course of at least 30 months' duration at a school for medical technicians (*Schulen für den medizinisch-technischen Fachdienst*) or who have passed the skilled workers' examination* (*Facharbeiter/innenprüfung*) for agriculture and forestry.

The content of the *Berufsreifeprüfung* is based on the secondary-school curriculum. It comprises four parts: a German test, a mathematics test, a modern-language test and an assessment in a special subject in which the candidate has either gathered experience at the workplace or received initial vocational training. These four parts of the examination can be taken on a modular basis. The assessment in the chosen specialisation is waived in cases where the candidate already has an advanced qualification, such as a pass in the master craftspersons' examination* (*Meisterprüfung*), successful completion of a forepersons' course* (*Werkmeisterschule*) or the diploma in health care and nursing. Certain non-formally acquired certified skills, such as proficiency in a foreign language, can also exempt the candidate from part of the exam. Preparatory courses for the various tests are offered in institutions of continuing education and training. A fee is charged for these courses, but they are not compulsory.

5.4.3 Bridge courses

Bridge courses* (*Vorbereitungslehrgänge*) lasting one to two semesters enable those who have successfully completed an apprenticeship to prepare for entry to an add-on course* (*Aufbaulehrgang*) (see 5.3.2).

5.4.4 Supplementary examinations for access to *Fachhochschulen*

In the realm of higher education, people who have not passed the *Reifeprüfung* but have a relevant vocational qualification, such as a successfully completed apprenticeship*, can fulfil the entrance requirements for a *Fachhochschule* course* in the corresponding field, but in most cases they will also be required to pass certain supplementary examinations.

6. Training of VET teachers and trainers

In contrast to teachers at academic schools*, the teaching staff of schools and colleges in the VET sector fall into various categories in terms of education and training, occupational experience and status. With the exception of teachers of academic subjects, several years' experience in a trade or in industry is required for appointment to the teaching staff of a VET institution. Many instructors also combine their teaching duties with an occupation in industry or commerce.

For historical reasons, teacher training takes place in dedicated post-secondary establishments, namely colleges of teacher training (*Pädagogische Akademien*) and colleges of vocational education (*Berufspädagogische Akademien*)⁽²¹⁾, and at universities. The type of training institution largely depends on the category of school in which the student will subsequently teach. The in-service training of teachers takes place at a *Pädagogisches Institut*, a college devoted to in-service teacher training.

As the Bologna Process unfolds and comparable degrees are introduced in higher education, all of these training courses, with the exception of those offered at universities, will be brought under one roof in tertiary colleges of education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*).

6.1 Training of teaching staff for schools and colleges in VET

The following factors are considered crucial in guaranteeing up-to-date, high-quality initial and in-service training of teaching staff:

- experience in industry or commerce as an appointment criterion,
- completed vocational training as an appointment criterion,
- training in education science during first years of service,
- closest possible cooperation with industry or commerce,
- some staff engaged in parallel activity in industry or commerce, and
- inclusion of modern technology and media.

6.1.1 Initial training of teaching staff for VET schools and colleges

Because of the diversity described above, there are various sets of entrance requirements for teacher training:

A course of study at university which incorporates a teaching qualification (*Lehramtsstudium*, lasting nine semesters) is required for teachers of

⁽²¹⁾ There are separate colleges for the training of teachers of religion.

- general subjects at VET schools and colleges* (BMHS) (as in the case of academic secondary schools, teachers train in two subjects); one postgraduate year of teaching practice with a parallel course at a college of in-service teacher training is required prior to appointment to a teaching post;
- commercial subjects, such as business management, at a VET school or college; business experience is an appointment criterion for teaching posts.

A university degree in a relevant subject or subjects following a course of study (lasting at least eight semesters) plus training in education science at an in-service teacher training college are required for teachers of

- engineering theory, as in the fields of electrical and mechanical engineering, as well as law, economics, etc., at a VET college or school; a certain number of years' industrial or other relevant business experience is required for admission to the teaching profession and appointment to a teaching post.

After successfully completing a course of study lasting six semesters at a college of vocational teacher training (*Berufspädagogische Akademie* – BPA, lasting six semesters), a person is qualified to

- give practical instruction in a specialised subject at a VET school or college* (BMHS) and teach the theory of that subject in a VET school* (BMS); the course is normally taken on an in-service basis; the admission requirements are either a *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma*, a pass in the master craftspersons' examination or a qualifying examination at the college of vocational teacher training (BPA) plus relevant occupational experience.

After successfully completing a course of study lasting six semesters at an agricultural teacher training college (*Agrarpädagogische Akademie*), a person is qualified to

- teach at a VET school or college of agriculture and forestry; the admission requirements are training at a specific VET college and a course of study at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (*Universität für Bodenkultur*) and/or a *Reifeprüfung** or *Berufsreifeprüfung** in conjunction with qualification as a master farmer or forester.

The training of teachers of health care and nursing takes place in the framework of special training courses for teaching duties, which are compulsory for anyone wishing to serve as a teacher in this area. Teachers of other health professions must possess an equivalent qualification.

6.1.2 Initial training of teaching staff for part-time schools for apprentices

Teachers for part-time schools for apprentices* are trained at a vocational teacher training (*Berufspädagogische Akademie* – BPA). This training may also be done on an in-service basis. The admission requirements depend on the subjects to be taught.

- For general and commercial subjects and technical theory, the usual criteria are a pass in the *Reifeprüfung** and practical industrial or commercial experience.

- For practical instruction, the requirements are a recognised vocational qualification and/or the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma* in conjunction with several years of relevant occupational experience.

6.1.3 In-service training for teaching staff of schools and colleges in VET

Teachers at VET schools* (BMS) and VET colleges* (BHS) are legally bound to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. How they obtain the requisite knowledge is their own choice. Teachers at part-time schools for apprentices (*Berufsschulen*) are required by law to attend a total of at least 15 hours of organised in-service training every year. It is planned to introduce a similar obligation for teachers at VET schools and colleges* (BMHS).

The in-service training of teachers takes place primarily at a college of in-service teacher training (*Pädagogisches Institut – PI*). The content and teaching methods are continuously updated to reflect the latest developments in education theory and in industry and commerce.

As well as instruction in vocational subjects and the teaching of those subjects, the colleges of in-service teacher training offer courses on a wide range of topics, such as the teaching of key skills, self-development, school development, practice firms* (ÜFA), modern languages and information technology. A distinction is made between two types of in-service training:

- courses designed to update teachers' knowledge of their respective subjects and of current teaching methods and to enhance their teaching skills (further professional training), and
- courses imparting additional skills or leading to additional qualifications, for example in new curricular subjects or in special fields such as quality management or project management (continuing education in the real sense of the term).

The in-service training of teachers from schools of agriculture and forestry takes place at the *Land- und forstwirtschaftliches Berufspädagogisches Institut*, a college devoted to the in-service training of teaching staff in this area.

6.2 Training of apprentice trainers

For company-based training in the apprenticeship (*Lehre*)* framework, companies must appoint at least one trainer (*Ausbilder/Ausbilderin*), who defines the training objectives and who plans and monitors the training process. In larger companies with apprentice training, there are also full-time trainers. The basis for the qualification of trainers is specialised knowledge of the apprenticeship trade (*Lehrberuf*)*, which can be certified by evidence of a pass in the final apprenticeship examination* (see 4.3.3) or of the successful completion of training at a specific VET school* or VET college* (see 4.2).

A trainer also needs to be a competent teacher of vocational skills and be familiar with the relevant legal provisions. These attributes are tested in a trainers' examination. Alternatively, a prospective trainer may attend a 40-hour trainers' course, which concludes with an oral

assessment in the form of an interview. In certain cases the requirement to take the trainers' examination may be waived.

The in-service training of apprentice trainers is not regulated by law and takes place on a voluntary basis. WIFI and the bfi (see 5.3.1), the VET provider institutions of the national business and labour organisations respectively, the college of in-service teacher training (PI) (see 6.1.3) and the centres for apprentice training and vocational training in agriculture and forestry offer appropriate courses.

6.3 Training for teaching staff of post-secondary and tertiary VET institutions

Teaching staff at the post-secondary colleges (see 4.5) have a degree or diploma in their specialised subject from a university, *Fachhochschule** or post-secondary college (see 4.6) as well as occupational experience.

Teaching staff at *Fachhochschulen** must be qualified academically, vocationally and as teachers. Most of them have a university or *Fachhochschule* degree in the subject they teach. In addition, they are often required to have completed a doctorate or furnish evidence of research work.

The in-service training of teaching staff at *Fachhochschulen* and post-secondary colleges is focused on curricular content in their respective specialised areas and on teaching methods.

6.4 Training of teachers and trainers employed in CVET

The initial and in-service training of teachers and instructors at schools and colleges for persons in employment* (see 5.3.2) is identical to that of their counterparts at VET schools and colleges* (BMHS).

There are no explicit rules governing the training in private and non-profit establishments, in companies and on employability courses (see 5.3.3) of teachers of adult-education classes. Applicants are primarily expected to possess specialised know-how. Languages, for example, are often taught by teachers of modern languages with university or post-secondary college training, while data-processing classes are frequently given by specialists with occupational experience. There are opportunities for teachers of adult-education classes to attend induction courses in education theory and teaching methods, but there is no obligation to undergo such training.

In-service training is likewise unregulated, but the institutes do offer seminars for their teaching staff. The Adult Education Promotion Act (*Erwachsenenbildungs-Förderungsgesetz*) of 1973 (see 5.2) established the legal basis for the creation of an in-service training establishment for teaching staff in the field of adult education, namely the Federal Institute for Adult Education (*Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung – bifeb*), which is under the authority of the Federal Ministry of Education.

7. Skills and competence development

Practice-oriented training objectives, content and methods and their continuous updating (adaptation) are characteristic features of VET in Austria. In the context of dynamic economic development, increasing importance attaches to the instruments and processes that are used to anticipate future needs in terms of capabilities and competence.

7.1 Development of curricula and training plans

7.1.1 Schools and colleges in VET

Training objectives and course content at VET schools and colleges* (BMHS) (see 4.2) are prescribed in framework curricula. These are enacted by the Ministry of Education. Moves to reform the curricula and/or to introduce new subjects or specialisations are initiated by the educational institutions themselves or by the Ministry. In the framework of bodies known as *Lehrplankommissionen*, teachers and experts from the Ministry and from the business community design curricula for the various teaching subjects. Like numerous other institutions, the social partners receive the drafts and are asked for their opinion. When they implement the framework curricula, schools and colleges have a degree of autonomy, which they can exercise by adjusting the number of hours assigned to individual subjects or by developing their own areas of special focus in order to meet the needs of the regional economy.

Training courses in health professions other than the medical profession are designed within the framework of statutory training orders (*Ausbildungsverordnungen*), each of which is based on the law governing the relevant profession. These are drawn up by the Federal Ministry of Health in consultation with experts and representatives of interested parties and are enacted by the Minister. Acting on behalf of the Ministry, the Austrian Health Institute (*Österreichisches Bundesinstitut für Gesundheitswesen*) designs the corresponding curricula, which have the status of recommendations.

7.1.2 Apprenticeships

Training profiles* are enacted by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour in the framework of the relevant Training Code (see Annex 3). Moves to adapt existing profiles or introduce new sets of descriptors are often initiated by companies or by the representative bodies of employers and employees. The Federal Advisory Board on Vocational Apprenticeship (*Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat*; see 3.1.3) also makes proposals or compiles expert reports on proposed reforms. The actual formulation of the occupational descriptors, which are the key to training requirements, is generally done by subcommittees of the Federal Advisory Board or by the educational-research institutes of the employers' and employees' bodies, namely the ibw, the Institute for Research on Qualification and Training

of the Austrian Economy, on the employers' side and the öibf, the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training, on the employees' side.

7.1.3 Fachhochschulen

The need for a new *Fachhochschule* degree course* (see 4.6.1) or for a change in existing course content is often first expressed by the business community. The course plan drafted by a development team (see 3.1.4) must undergo a needs assessment and an acceptance assessment. In this process, not only does the relevant industry assess the target number of students for the course in question, but potential employers also evaluate the drafted training and qualification profile.

A degree course is accredited for a maximum period of five years. During this time it is possible to make necessary adjustments by tabling amendment proposals. At the end of the five years, an application for reaccreditation is required. Besides a new needs and acceptance assessment, the application also includes an evaluation report based on a peer-review procedure. This is another way in which the range of training courses can be made to match the required pool of knowledge and skills.

7.1.4 Continuing education and training

Anticipation of future requirements in terms of knowledge and skills is easiest in the field of CVET. This is the area where the quickest response can be made to the needs of the economy. The virtual absence of a legal basis (see 5.2) and the competition among providers of CVET in the free market result in greater flexibility and wider scope for demand-driven training provision. At the same time, however, there is frequent criticism of the fact that the lack of regulation makes it more difficult to ascertain the quality, price and suitability of CVET courses on the market.

7.2 Developing competence in partnership with business

The following strategies for the development of skills and competences relevant to the world of work have been incorporated into the training system:

- Practice firms (Übungsfirmen – ÜFA) are places and methods for learning entrepreneurial thinking and action at schools and colleges in VET and in adult education. They have been a mandatory component of the curriculum at business administration colleges (*Handelsakademien*) and business schools (*Handelsschulen*) since 1993/94 and at colleges of agriculture and forestry (*Höhere land- und forstwirtschaftliche Lehranstalten*) since 2004/05. Modelled on real firms, the ÜFA replicates proper business transactions. The key skills that learners acquire there, such as teamwork, networking and linguistic competence, enable them to be professionally mobile in an international working environment. ÜFA have real partner businesses in industry and commerce. The Federal Ministry of Education

has established the Austrian Centre for Training Firms (alternatively used for practice firms) – ACT ⁽²²⁾ – as a service centre providing educational and organisational support for ÜFA.

- Technicians' and engineers' projects: individually or as part of a team, trainees at specialised schools and colleges of engineering (HTL, see 4.3.2) are required to perform specific project assignments in cooperation with companies in their last training year. The project work must be documented and presented, and it counts as a component of their final examination* or *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination*.
- Similar arrangements apply to diploma projects at the other types of VET college* (BHS) and final projects at VET schools* (BMS).
- Information technology: on the basis of agreements with IT companies, such as Microsoft and CISCO, students can gain international certificates in the context of modules forming an integral part of their course or offered as an extra option; in addition, VET schools and colleges* (BMHS) also offer notebook classes.
- Work-experience sessions: most students at VET and VET colleges and those at *Fachhochschulen* are required to undertake periods of practical work experience in companies during school holidays/college vacations or in term time.
- Applied research centres: some colleges of engineering (HTL) have facilities known as experimentation centres (*Versuchsanstalten*), where teaching staff also work as a rule, executing commissions for industry.
- Teaching staff with occupational experience: at VET colleges*, VET schools* and part-time schools for apprentices (*Berufsschulen*), as well as at *Fachhochschulen*, applicants for certain teaching posts are required to submit evidence of several years' experience in a relevant trade or profession (see Chapter 6). This maintains a transfer of knowledge from the business sector to the educational establishment.
- Education and training clusters (*Bildungscluster*): these are voluntary regional associations of companies and educational establishments. The Ministry of Education, and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber have set up their own *Bildungscluster* office ⁽²³⁾ as a service platform to support the formation and operation of such networks.
- Apprenticeships: as a rule, apprenticeship training takes place at two venues, namely a company and a part-time school for apprentices.
- Colleges of agriculture and forestry: four colleges of agriculture and forestry are organisationally linked with a research establishment, which serves to ensure that course content is always kept up to date.

⁽²²⁾ <http://www.act.at>

⁽²³⁾ <http://www.bildungscluster.at>

7.3 Skills anticipation methods and instruments

The Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice* – AMS) is the foremost promoter of instruments and methods designed to assist in the assessment of skill requirements. These instruments and methods include:

- skills needs analyses for particular economic sectors, target groups, etc.,
- the skills needs barometer (*Qualifikations-Barometer*) created by the AMS in 2002 ⁽²⁴⁾, in which information on the skills deemed most desirable by businesses at the present time and in the foreseeable future is collected, structured and made accessible to the general public through the Internet,
- the AMS research network ⁽²⁵⁾, which enables numerous Austrian research institutes to exchange information and serves to harness the synergy generated by their interaction, and
- an annual colloquium on future skill requirements, at which specific issues such as skill shortages in health and welfare and the training needs of young people and of older employees are discussed with representatives of the national business and labour organisations.

⁽²⁴⁾ <http://www.ams.or.at/qualifikationsbarometer>

⁽²⁵⁾ <http://www.ams.or.at/neu/1212.htm?parent=1171|1212>

8. Validation of learning

8.1 Background

One of the aims of Austrian VET policy is to achieve high-quality initial training that provides formal vocational qualifications and builds strong foundations for lifelong learning. Progress in this direction is reflected in the recognition accorded to certificates of initial training (see 8.2) in the labour market. In addition, there are also various strategies in Austria for the assessment of informally acquired qualifications (see 8.3).

8.2 Validation of formal learning

8.2.1 VET schools and colleges

VET schools* (BMS) (see 4.2) combine general education with full vocational training of three to four years' duration or, in the case of one-year and two-year schools, with pre-vocational training. One-year and two-year schools award a leaving certificate. Trainees who attend a three-year or four-year VET school end their training with a final examination (*Abschlussprüfung*) before an examining board. On successful completion of their training, they are equipped for skilled technical, commercial or administrative work in various sectors of the economy.

In VET colleges* (BHS) (see 4.2), students receive a sound general education along with more advanced specialised training, culminating in the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung*), which qualifies successful candidates both for higher education and for good jobs in industry and commerce. Those who go on to study at a *Fachhochschule** (see 4.6.1) can obtain credits for certain attainments in relevant subjects at VET college, which shortens their degree course. After three years of professional practice, graduates of engineering colleges (HTL) and colleges of agriculture and forestry (*Höhere land- und forstwirtschaftliche Lehranstalten*) can apply to the Ministry of Economics and Labour or the Ministry of Agriculture as appropriate, to be awarded the professional title *Ingenieur* or *Ingenieurin*.

Those who successfully complete a course of at least three years' duration at a VET school or at a VET college receive a certificate which gives them the same access to the practice of a trade as a pass in the final apprenticeship examination (*Lehrabschlussprüfung*). Successful completion of VET school or college also paves the way for self-employment, subject to fulfilment of certain conditions set out in the Trade Regulation Code (*Gewerbeordnung – GewO*; see Annex 3). Relevant specialised knowledge and skills acquired during their course gain them exemptions from examinations, or parts of examinations, that people normally have to take if they wish to become self-employed, such as the business-management or

entrepreneurial examination*, the aptitude test* and specialised parts of the master craftspersons' examination*.

Training courses in health professions other than the medical profession provide full vocational training for a legally regulated profession. Depending on the qualification to which a course leads, it will conclude with either a diploma examination* or a final examination* before an examining board.

8.2.2 Apprenticeships

Apprentice training (*Lehre*) concludes with a final apprenticeship examination (*Lehrabschlussprüfung*) or, in the case of farming and forestry occupations, a skilled workers' examination (*Facharbeiter/innenprüfung*); both comprise a theoretical and a practical part. Through their part-time training in a *Berufsschule*, apprentices receive an annual certificate. At the end of their last year, they are issued with a final certificate. If their marks are satisfactory, i.e. if they have not failed in any of the assessment categories, they are exempted from the theoretical part of the final apprenticeship examination or skilled workers' examination.

Individuals who have successfully completed their apprenticeship can start work immediately in skilled occupations and have access to regulated trades. In addition, they are exempt from examinations, or parts of examinations, that normally have to be passed as a precondition of self-employment.

8.3 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

In the effort to secure recognition of non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences, three strategies are pursued:

1. Recognition of occupationally acquired qualifications as a prerequisite for continuing education. For example:
 - Access to *Fachhochschulen**: *Fachhochschule* degree courses are open not only to applicants who have passed the *Reifeprüfung** but also to those with relevant vocational qualifications, such as the successful completion of an apprenticeship or of a course at a VET school (BMS) and certain other vocational attainments; if the training aim of the chosen *Fachhochschule* course so dictates, an applicant must sit additional qualifying examinations.
2. Access to examinations on the basis of acquired knowledge and skills. For example:
 - Access to the final apprenticeship examination (*Lehrabschlussprüfung*) or skilled workers' examination (*Facharbeiter/innenprüfung*): the Vocational Training Act* (BAG) and the Vocational Training (Agriculture and Forestry) Act* (see Annex 3) provide a means whereby people with no formal training in terms of an apprenticeship or attendance at a specialised school can still take the respective final exams. To be eligible for these exams,

such persons must have reached the age of 18 and must furnish evidence that they have acquired the relevant knowledge and skills by working in a specific occupation or by attending an appropriate training course.

- Access to the master craftspersons' examination*: one of the conditions of candidature is that the applicant must be at least 18 years old; evidence of formal vocational training or of a period spent practising the relevant trade, however, is not required.
3. Access to examinations as a route to continuing education. For example:
- Access to the *Berufsreifeprüfung** and the higher education entrance examination* (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*) (see 5.4): both of these examinations are classified as external candidates' exams, which means that no preparatory courses need be taken by applicants for admission. Candidates may be exempted from parts of the *Berufsreifeprüfung* if, for example, they submit a certificate testifying to competence in a foreign language or a certificate showing that they have passed the master craftspersons' examination*. Preparation for the exam is the responsibility of the candidates themselves. Passing the *Berufsreifeprüfung* qualifies the candidate for unrestricted entry to higher education, whereas those who pass the higher education entrance examination are eligible for access to one specific category of institution.
 - There are other ways to qualify for entry to higher education; for example, it is possible to sit the *Reifeprüfung** at an academic secondary school or the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination* at a VET college as an external candidate.

9. Guidance and counselling

9.1 Background

In Austria there are a wide range of sources, both within and outside schools, colleges and universities (see 9.2), from which education and careers advice can be obtained. Such guidance and counselling is addressed to all those who face decisions about their future education or career. The initial and continuing training of some education and careers advisers is regulated, whereas the activity of others is not underpinned by statutory provisions (see 9.3).

9.2 Providers of education and careers guidance and their target groups

9.2.1 Education and careers guidance at the lower level of secondary education

From the first year of secondary school (year 5 of compulsory schooling), pupils and their parents have access to the services of appropriately trained teachers for advice on educational options in year 9 and beyond. From year 7, classes in career studies are integrated into the school timetable. In addition, many schools and colleges in the VET sector hold open days to familiarise prospective trainees and their parents with their range of courses.

9.2.2 Education and careers guidance at schools and colleges in VET

Education and careers guidance at schools and colleges in the VET sector (see 4.2) falls within the remit of the Ministry of Education. Specially trained teachers, known as education counsellors (*Bildungsberater/innen*), are allocated a certain amount of time for their guidance activities. Pupils, parents and teachers can also avail themselves of the school psychology/education counselling service, a facility established by the Ministry and each of the regional education authorities (see 3.1.1). The Ministry and other bodies, such as the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, the employers' and employees' representative organisations and the Employment Service, publish a great deal of information material on careers, provide information through websites ⁽²⁶⁾ and jointly organise annual careers fairs.

9.2.3 Education and careers advice in tertiary institutions

In the sphere of higher education (see 4.6), psychological counselling centres for students, the Austrian Student Union (*Österreichische Hochschülerschaft*) and the career-planning centres at the universities provide individual advice on course choice and the organisation of studies and help students to make the transition from university to working life.

⁽²⁶⁾ e.g. www.berufsbildendeschulen.at and <http://www.learn4life.at>

9.2.4 Advisory services provided by the Austrian Employment Service

The Austrian Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice* – AMS) provides education and careers guidance for all interested parties, but especially for unemployed persons. In its own careers-information centres (BIZ), the AMS provides comprehensive information about the world of work and career opportunities. Besides printed brochures and other information material, the AMS also offers online databases for various target groups, such as young people who have passed their *Reifeprüfung*, those seeking a place in apprenticeship and people interested in continuing education. In cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education, the AMS holds three major fairs (BeST) every year⁽²⁷⁾, at which visitors can obtain information about careers, study and continuing-education opportunities. Information on job offers and working conditions in other European countries is available from the European Employment Services (EURES) database and from specialised EURES advisers.

9.2.5 Advisory services provided by employers' and employees' bodies

The chambers of labour and trade unions provide most of their advisory services on education and careers through their adult-education establishments, the bfi institutes (see 5.3.1). The chambers of commerce and their continuing-education establishments, the WIFI institutes (see 5.3.1), maintain their own information centres in the *Länder*, providing advice on matters relating to education and careers (BIZ). These services are intended for young people – and, to an increasing extent, adults too – and are largely free of charge. Besides providing personal advice, all of these institutes publish well-presented printed and online material on important aspects of career choices, produce informative websites, such as the Federal Economic Chamber's *Berufsinformationscomputer* site⁽²⁸⁾, and launch special initiatives, such as the information campaign designed to interest girls in technical trades.

9.2.6 Advisory services provided by apprenticeship offices

The apprenticeship offices (*Lehrlingsstellen*), accommodated in the regional chamber of commerce in each *Land*, are also bound, under the Vocational Training Act (see Annex 3), to provide advisory services on education and careers. Their activities in this field relate primarily to information on apprenticeship opportunities.

9.2.7 Other providers of advisory services

Numerous other institutions provide education and careers guidance for specific target groups; these include the counselling centres for women and girls as well as various information and counselling services for people with disabilities and for immigrants. Moreover, there is also an increase in the number of privately owned commercial advisory agencies offering educational advice and careers information and guidance, often in connection with job banks, jobsearch training and other services.

⁽²⁷⁾ <http://www.bestinfo.at>

⁽²⁸⁾ <http://www.bic.at>

9.3 Initial and continuing training of education and careers advisers

The initial and continuing training of advisers who are under the authority of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is regulated. There is no universally valid set of statutory rules governing the training of other advisers.

9.3.1 Education and careers advisers in schools, colleges and universities

The Ministry of Education is developing a framework curriculum with a view to standardising the training given to teachers of career studies.

Education counsellors (*Bildungsberater/innen*) at VET schools and colleges* (BMHS) are teachers with several years' teaching experience. They are selected by the head teacher or college principal for this role and attend a training course in careers guidance. In their initial training, comprising three base modules, and subsequent in-service seminars, all organised by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the colleges of in-service teacher training (*Pädagogische Institute* – PI) (see 6.1.3), the teachers acquire the necessary professional and methodological know-how.

The school psychology/education counselling service is staffed entirely by trained psychologists. The staff of the psychological counselling centres for university students also have a degree in psychology or another subject relevant to the type of counselling they provide and are trained in psychotherapy.

9.3.2 Education and careers advisers outside schools, colleges and universities

The training of Austrian Employment Service (AMS) staff is regulated internally. Its advisers are required to be qualified to at least *Reifeprüfung** level. Basic training lasts for 40 weeks and ends with a final examination. The AMS offers in-service training opportunities for its staff in both a regional and a supra-regional framework. Course content is planned on the basis of systematic training-needs surveys conducted at two- to three-yearly intervals.

The education and careers advisers of the employers' and employees' representative organisations are also trained internally. Most of the advisers have degrees or post-secondary diplomas in subjects such as psychology or educational social work. Their in-service training takes the form of experience-sharing sessions, study groups and training sessions on specific themes. Representatives of companies are often involved in this training.

Besides the internal staff training provided by institutions, there are also generally accessible basic and in-service training opportunities for education and careers advisers, such as:

- training of life coaches and welfare counsellors, who may also work in the field of education and careers guidance;

- a course run by the Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifeb) (see 6.4) entitled *Bildungsberatung – eine praxisbegleitende Fortbildung* (‘Education counselling – in-service training’) for all people who work in the field of education counselling and careers advice and guidance;
- a course of continuing training offered by WIFI in Vienna leading to qualification as a careers guidance trainer for people with experience of group management who have received full or advanced training as a life coach and welfare counsellor, social worker, psychologist, psychotherapist, etc.

10. Funding vocational education and training

10.1 Funding initial vocational education and training

In initial vocational education and training (IVET; see Chapter 4), a fundamental distinction must be made between funding the training establishment and supporting learners. The funding of the establishment (school provision, teachers' pay, etc.) is a matter of direct financing by the public authorities or private providers. Support for learners in the form of free travel, bulk textbook purchases, family support, etc., is indirect funding. This indirect funding is primarily effected through a specific fund known as *Familienlastenausgleichsfonds* (FLAF) which serves to redress the balance of financial burdens between families with children and those without children. The fund, which is stocked primarily from a levy on employers, is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection.

10.1.1 Funding of training at VET schools and colleges

As a matter of principle, no fees are charged for attendance at a public school in Austria. This means that households need only meet the cost of their children's subsistence, apart from small contributions in certain areas (see Table 11 below). Besides the public schools, there are various private schools, mostly run by recognised churches and religious communities, and school fees are charged for pupils at these private establishments.

The provider of most of the public VET schools and colleges* (BMHS) is the Ministry of Education (see 3.1.1). In the case of schools of agriculture and forestry, the burden is shared between the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the *Länder*. There are also private funding bodies. Private VET vocational schools and colleges are run by providers from the private sector. The cost of employing teaching staff in public and, to a certain extent, in private schools is met by the Ministry of Education. The bulk of the funding for training establishments in the health sector is provided by the *Länder*.

Pupil support (*Schulbeihilfe*), designed to help needy families when their children are progressing well at school, and the accommodation grant (*Heimbeihilfe*), for pupils who attend a school outside the area where their families live, are awarded by the Ministry of Education from school year 10, subject to fulfilment of certain statutory conditions.

In all types of school, textbooks are largely financed by the government from the fund for the redistribution of family burdens. Since 1996, learners have had to pay a user contribution of 10 %. Likewise, a yearly user contribution of approximately EUR 20 per pupil has been payable since 1996 towards the cost of transport between home and school.

Table 11: *Funding of vocational schools and colleges: summary*

	Public VET schools and colleges	Private VET schools and colleges
Direct funding		
School provision	Federal Ministry of Education (*)	Private school provider
Teaching staff	Federal Ministry of Education (*)	Federal Ministry of Education, where a contract has been concluded under the Private Schools Act
Pupil support and accommodation grant	Federal Ministry of Education	Federal Ministry of Education
School fees	---	Households
Indirect funding		
Textbooks	Federal Ministry of Social Security / fund for the redistribution of family burdens + households	Federal Ministry of Social Security / fund for the redistribution of family burdens + households
Free travel to and from school		
Indirect funding in the framework of family policy (e.g. family support)	Federal Ministry of Social Security / fund for the redistribution of family burdens	Federal Ministry of Social Security / fund for the redistribution of family burdens

(*) or the Federal Ministry of Agriculture in the case of schools of agriculture and forestry; or the *Länder* in the case of training establishments for health professions other than the medical profession.

10.1.2 Apprenticeship funding

The financial resources for the school element of apprenticeships* (school provision, teachers' pay, etc.) are provided by the *Länder* (see 3.1.3). The Federal Government refunds half the cost of employing the teaching staff.

Like students at VET schools and colleges, apprentices, in their part-time role as learners at a *Berufsschule*, pay a small contribution to the cost of textbooks and travel permits.

The company-based part of an apprentice's training is financed by the company training him or her. Apprentices receive a remuneration (*Lehrlingsentschädigung*) for their work, which is normally laid down in the collective agreement between the social partners (see 3.2) and increases from year to year of the apprenticeship.

There are a number of public support schemes to assist companies providing apprentice training:

- Since January 2002, training companies have been able to claim an annual apprenticeship premium of EUR 1 000 for each apprentice through their tax return. This covers their average wage costs for the time when their apprentices attend school.
- Companies employing a larger number of apprentices in 2005 than in 2004 receive a premium over a period of three years for each additional apprentice; the monthly amount of the graduated premium ranges from EUR 400 to EUR 100 per apprentice.

- In the first and second year of an apprenticeship, both the employer's and the apprentice's health-insurance contributions are waived.
- The contribution to accident insurance is waived in respect of apprentices throughout the entire apprenticeship.
- As a rule, contributions to unemployment insurance are only payable in the last year of the apprenticeship.

Another support scheme operated by the Austrian Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice* – AMS) is primarily designed to promote the integration of problem groups into the labour market. To this end, companies receive a flat-rate grant towards the cost of an apprenticeship. This grant is payable for the following categories of apprentice:

- girls in apprenticeship trades* in which women are considerably underrepresented (i.e. in which the percentage of female apprentices amounted to less than 40 % of the total number of apprentices in the previous training year);
- particularly disadvantaged apprenticeship applicants, such as young people who have physical disabilities, mental or emotional deficiencies or learning difficulties or who are socially maladjusted;
- people aged 19 and over with employability problems resulting from a lack of qualifications which could be solved by means of an apprenticeship (e.g. those who have completed academic secondary school; see 4.1);
- apprentices who acquire additional skills over and above the applicable descriptors in the training profile* (supplementary cross-company training).

Table 12: *Apprenticeship funding: summary*

	School-based and company-based training
Direct funding	
School provision	<i>Länder</i>
Teaching staff	50 % Federal Government, 50 % <i>Länder</i>
Pupil support and accommodation grant	<i>Länder</i>
Company-based training	Training companies (Support from Employment Service (AMS) and Federal Government)
Indirect funding	
Textbooks	Federal Ministry of Social Security / fund for the redistribution of family burdens + households
Free travel to and from school	
Indirect funding in the framework of family policy (e.g. family support)	Federal Ministry of Social Security / fund for the redistribution of family burdens
Special subsidies	Employment Service (AMS)

10.1.3 Funding of training in *Fachhochschulen*

A characteristic feature of the *Fachhochschule* sector is the system of mixed financing based on standard costing. The cost of establishing and maintaining *Fachhochschulen* is met by the provider body, which may be the federal province, the local authority, the VET institution of the national business or labour organisation (social partners), etc. The routine costs for each student place are shared between the Federal Government and the provider. In the light of annual staff and routine operating costs, the annual cost of one student place – the standard cost – is calculated. This amounts to some EUR 7 600 per annum in technical subject areas and about EUR 6 400 in commercial subject areas. The Federal Government meets about 90 % of the standard cost of a student place. The number of student places cofinanced by the Government is the subject of an agreement laid down in the current *Fachhochschule* development and funding plan. The remaining costs are met by the provider.

Under a decision taken by the National Council on 23 November 2000, providers are entitled to levy a tuition fee of EUR 363.36 per semester. The way in which the revenue from fees is used is determined by the provider. Students at *Fachhochschulen* are entitled to student support in certain circumstances, for example in the case of low parental income or good student performance.

10.2 Funding continuing vocational education and training

Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) in private and non-profit educational institutions and within companies (see 5.3.1) is chiefly funded privately by companies and by course participants.

CVET providers: Since 1973, the Federal Government has supported continuing education and training on the basis of the Federal Act concerning the Promotion of Adult Education (*Erwachsenenbildungs-Förderungsgesetz*) (see 5.2 and Annex 3). This law defines the tasks that are eligible for support (VET, catching up on or extending school education, etc.), how support is provided (through loans, subsidisation of borrowing costs, etc.) and which types of establishment can receive support and on what conditions. Support is only given to educational and training establishments operating on a not-for-profit basis. CVET providers, however, have no legal entitlement to support. Financial assistance is administered by the Directorate-General for Adult Education of the Ministry of Education. Most of the educational institutions supported by the ministry are represented in the Austrian Adult Education Conference (*Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs* – KEBÖ; see 5.3), which was founded in 1972.

In the case of **companies**, there are currently two forms of federal support for expenditure on further education and training, and companies can opt for one or the other:

- a tax allowance amounting to 20 % of the cost of in-house and external CVET measures, up to a maximum of EUR 2 000 per calendar day; this lowers the basis of assessment for income or corporation tax, as appropriate;
- an education premium amounting to 6 % of expenditure on initial and continuing staff training in external educational and training establishments.

Course participants: For people who attend courses with a view to rectifying their lack of qualifications from lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*) and to sitting the *Berufsreifeprüfung**, public support is available; this funding includes resources from the European Social Fund.

Besides this federal support, the *Länder* and local authorities part-finance CVET. In addition, there are various individualised support models⁽²⁹⁾ in many of the *Länder*, such as the education account in Upper Austria and Salzburg, the continuing-education account in Vienna and the system of education vouchers in Styria.

10.3 Funding of training measures for unemployed persons

Employment policies and training measures for the unemployed (see 5.3.3) are essentially public responsibilities, which are funded primarily from employers' and employees' contributions to unemployment insurance. Funds from the *Länder* and local authorities and from private initiatives, particularly on the part of the churches, for the training of unemployed people account for a far smaller percentage of the total amount devoted to these measures.

The Employment Service Act (*Arbeitsmarktservicegesetz* 1994, Federal Law Gazette 313/1994, as amended) formally separated the administration of employment services from the federal administration. In this respect, a distinction must be made between passive and active employment policy. The former covers a wage substitute payable to unemployed persons from the unemployment-insurance fund, while the latter covers not only advice, placement and support but also training to upgrade skills and qualifications and retraining.

The Employment Service (AMS) is funded by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, but it shapes the guidelines for active employment policy on its own responsibility; in other words, the Federal Minister of Economics and Labour is responsible for laying down the aims of employment policy and exercising his or her supervisory powers by verifying that these aims are being effectively pursued.

⁽²⁹⁾ <http://www.kursfoerderung.at>

11. The European and international dimension

The European and international dimension of VET is nurtured in Austria not only through the implementation of European initiatives (see 11.1) but also through numerous bilateral and multilateral projects (see 11.2).

11.1 Implementation of European initiatives

The introduction of the five Europass documents is already far advanced in Austria. Europass-Mobility (formerly Europass-Training) is available to all those – young people or adult learners in general education and VET, in schools, colleges, apprenticeships higher or continuing education – who would like to spend time learning or training abroad and to have their vocational and learning experiences documented. Austria is the first country where the new Europass-Mobility can be issued online ⁽³⁰⁾. For most of the VET schools and colleges* (BMHS) and for all apprenticeship trades* (*Lehrberufe*) and training courses in health professions other than the medical profession, Certificate Supplements have been drawn up in German and English and are universally accessible on a dedicated website ⁽³¹⁾, which has been available online since 2002. The Diploma Supplement has been automatically issued since 2005 by all universities and *Fachhochschulen** (see 4.6). The post-secondary colleges (see 4.5) issue the Diploma Supplement on request. Information about Europass-CV and Europass-Language Portfolio is available on the website of the National Europass Centre (NEC) ⁽³²⁾.

Through the EU education programmes Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates, learners at VET schools and colleges, trainees at general nursing schools, apprentices, students, teachers and trainers take part in international projects, educational visits and exchanges, work-experience schemes and language programmes. Numerous students at post-secondary colleges, universities and *Fachhochschulen* make use of the Erasmus programme.

Austrian VET policy vigorously supports the creation of a European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) and of a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF). Austrian experts are coordinating the development of a pilot programme on the transfer of qualifications acquired in the VET framework ⁽³³⁾. The national consultation process on the EQF in the autumn of 2005 also generated a discussion on the creation of a national qualifications framework. In the tertiary sector, use of the European credit-transfer system ECTS is mandatory.

⁽³⁰⁾ <http://www.europass-mobilitaet.at>

⁽³¹⁾ Explanations of some 800 certificates from a wide range of subject areas, occupations and course categories can be accessed at <http://www.zeugnisinfo.at>

⁽³²⁾ <http://www.europass.at>

⁽³³⁾ Leonardo da Vinci Project VQTS – Vocational Qualification Transfer System.
See www.VocationalQualification.net

For *Fachhochschulen**, the use of the ECTS is one of the accreditation and reaccreditation criteria. The academies have also started to use the ECTS in their course programmes.

11.2 Bilateral and multilateral cooperation

Numerous bilateral and multilateral initiatives have also been launched to give young people the necessary grounding for life in the age of globalisation.

- Numerous VET colleges* (BHS) (see 4.2) in Austria have concluded agreements with *Fachhochschulen* in Germany and with universities in Britain which enable students who have qualified from VET college to shorten the duration of their studies.
- There are various cooperation models between Austrian schools and educational establishments in neighbouring countries. For example, Austrian teachers are working at a commercial college in Bratislava, and Austrian and Czech pupils are taught together in twinned establishments.
- The Federal Ministry of Education is supporting a number of VET projects, chiefly in Central and South-East Europe. These include:
 - the development of training programmes for tourism and gastronomy,
 - cooperation networks among practice firms (ECO-NET) and schools of tourism (TOUR-NET),
 - the establishment of practice firms and their integration into the international network in cooperation with ACT, the Austrian Centre for Training Firms (alternatively used for practice firms, see 7.2).
- Numerous teachers, apprentices, school pupils and college students take part in Council of Europe and Unesco projects and events devoted to key issues.
- Through cooperation with examination centres in other countries, learners at VET schools and colleges* (BMHS) can gain international certificates of competence in foreign languages ⁽³⁴⁾.
- Bilateral agreements on the mutual recognition of apprenticeship qualifications (*Lehrabschlüssen*) have been concluded with Germany, Hungary and the Trentino-Alto Adige region (Southern Tyrol). In 2005, Austria signed joint declarations with Germany and Hungary on the comparability of vocational qualifications (apprenticeship qualifications and the equivalent Austrian school and college qualifications).
- In order to promote the mobility of apprentices, the 2003 amendment to the Vocational Training Act enshrined provisions regarding experience gained abroad, whereby training periods outside Austria of up to four months' duration in any training year are counted as part of an apprenticeship in the relevant apprenticeship trade*. The School Education Act also provides for the crediting of periods of training in foreign countries.

⁽³⁴⁾ <http://www.cebs.at>.

Annex 1: Acronyms and abbreviations

AHS	<i>Allgemein bildende höhere Schule</i> Academic secondary school
AMS	<i>Arbeitsmarktservice</i> Employment Service; Job Centre
BAG	<i>Berufsausbildungsgesetz</i> Vocational Training Act
bfi	<i>Berufsförderungsinstitut</i> Provider institution for vocational and educational training, funded by the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation
BHS	<i>Berufsbildende höhere Schule</i> Vocational education and training college; VET college
BIZ	<i>Bildungs- und Berufsinformationszentrum</i> Education and Careers Information Centre
BMBWK	<i>Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur</i> Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
BMHS	<i>Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen</i> Vocational schools and colleges
BMS	<i>Berufsbildende mittlere Schule</i> Vocational education and training school; VET school
BMWA	<i>Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit</i> Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour
BPA	<i>Berufspädagogische Akademie</i> College for vocational teacher training
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
FH/FHS	<i>Fachhochschule/Fachhochschul-Studiengang</i> University-level college of applied science / degree course at a <i>Fachhochschule</i>
FHR	<i>Fachhochschulrat</i> Supervisory council for the <i>Fachhochschulen</i> in Austria
FHStG	<i>Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz</i> <i>Fachhochschule</i> Degree Courses Act
FLAF	<i>Familienlastenausgleichsfonds</i> Fund for the redistribution of family burdens
GewO	<i>Gewerbeordnung</i> Trade Regulation Code

HAK	<i>Handelsakademie</i> Business administration college
HAS	<i>Handelsschule</i> Business school
HLW	<i>Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe</i> College for occupations in the service sector
HS	<i>Hauptschule</i> Lower secondary school
HTL	<i>Höhere technische Lehranstalt</i> Engineering college
ibw	<i>Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft</i> Institute for Research on Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy
ISCED	International Standard Classification for Education
KEBÖ	<i>Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs</i> Austrian Adult Education Conference (umbrella body for adult-education institutions in Austria)
LAP	<i>Lehrabschlussprüfung</i> Final apprenticeship examination
LFBAG	<i>Land- und forstwirtschaftliches Berufsausbildungsgesetz</i> Vocational Training (Agriculture and Forestry) Act
LFI	<i>Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut</i> Rural Advanced Training Institute
LSR	<i>Landesschulrat</i> Regional Education Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
öibf	<i>Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung</i> Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training
PI	<i>Pädagogisches Institut</i> College of in-service teacher training
PS	<i>Polytechnische Schule</i> Pre-vocational school
ÜFA	<i>Übungsfirma</i> Practice firm
WIFI	<i>Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut</i> Provider institution for vocational and educational training, funded by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber

Annex 2: Glossary

All terms marked with an asterisk (*) in the text are defined in this glossary.

Academic secondary schools (*Allgemein bildende höhere Schulen – AHS*): schools which pupils attend for eight years after primary school and which provide broad and advanced general education at the lower secondary level (ISCED 2, years 5 to 8 of a child's schooling) and upper secondary level (years 9 to 12, ISCED 3A), culminating in the *Reifeprüfung**; a pass in this examination qualifies pupils to enter higher education.

Add-on courses (*Aufbaulehrgänge*, ISCED 5B): further-education courses for those who have successfully completed VET school* or a bridge course*; add-on courses lead to the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination* of the VET college* offering the course.

Apprenticeship/Apprenticeship trades (*Lehre/Lehrberufe*): see *Dual system*.

Aptitude test (*Befähigungsnachweisprüfung*): any person aged 18 or over can sit the aptitude test, which may be taken in modular form; this test normally comprises the trainer examination and the business-management or entrepreneurial examination.

Autonomy (*Autonomie*): the right of a school or college to choose areas of specialisation (see *Special training focus**) from those available under the framework curriculum as well as to develop its own profile, for example by tailoring its courses to the needs of the regional economy and diverging from the prescribed total of weekly teaching hours per subject.

Berufsreifeprüfung: an examination through which individuals who already have an initial vocational qualification, such as those who have successfully completed an apprenticeship or a course at a VET school*, obtain an entrance qualification for higher education* by passing certain tests.

Bridge courses (*Vorbereitungslehrgänge*): courses for those who have successfully completed an apprenticeship* and wish to progress to a add-on course* or a college for persons in employment.

Business-management or entrepreneurial examination (*Unternehmer/innenprüfung*): examination for those who intend to practise a craft or trade on a self-employed basis, designed to verify that the candidate possesses the requisite business-management skills and knowledge of the relevant law; all graduates of VET colleges* and most people who have successfully completed VET school* are exempt from the business-management examination.

College of Social Work (*Akademie der Sozialarbeit*, ISCED 5B): for persons who have a university-entrance qualification (*Reifeprüfung**, *Berufsreifeprüfung** or *Studienberechtigungsprüfung**); college courses last for three years (six semesters) and end with a diploma examination; the diploma qualifies graduates to practise professions in the realm of social work; most colleges of social work have now been converted into *Fachhochschulen*.*

Completion of compulsory schooling (*Pflichtschulabschluss*): successful completion of year 9, which concludes a pupil's compulsory schooling*; this event is not marked, however, by the award of a special certificate.

Compulsory schooling (*Schulpflicht*): from the age of six, children permanently resident in Austria, irrespective of nationality, are required to attend school for nine years.

Diploma examination (*Diplomprüfung*): in the context of VET, the diploma examination constitutes part of the final examination at upper secondary VET colleges* (*Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination*), completes a course of study at a post-secondary VET college* or College of Social Work*.

Dual system (*Duales System*): sandwich-course system of training in an apprenticeship trade, in which company-based training under an apprenticeship contract is complemented by classes at a part-time school for apprentices*; apprentice training under the dual system lasts for two to four years, three years being the norm, and concludes with the final apprenticeship examination*.

Entrance qualification for general higher education (*Allgemeiner Hochschulzugang*, also known as *allgemeine Universitätsreife/Hochschulreife*): the *Reifeprüfung**, the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination*, and the *Berufsreifeprüfung** qualify successful candidates to study at universities, post-secondary colleges, *Fachhochschulen** and post-secondary VET colleges*. Depending on the type of school at which the qualification was obtained and on the intended course of study, additional examinations or aptitude testing* may be necessary.

***Fachhochschule, Fachhochschule* courses** (*Fachhochschul-Studiengänge – FH / FHS*, ISCED 5A): course of study at tertiary level, which provides practice-oriented and scientifically underpinned training relating to a particular area of professional activity; the courses last at least three years (six semesters) and the entry requirements are the general qualification for entry into higher education or a relevant vocational qualification; the course leads to the award of an academic degree.

Final apprenticeship examination (*Lehrabschlussprüfung*): practical and theoretical examination, taken on completion of apprenticeships* before a board comprising representatives of employers and employees; it includes a written and an oral component.

Final examination (*Abschlussprüfung*): Examination taken on completion of a three- or four-year course at a secondary VET school*, qualifying successful candidates to engage immediately in the occupation they have learned and providing access to regulated occupations*.

Foremen or forepersons' courses (*Werkmeisterschulen*, ISCED 5B): the courses offered extend the specialised theoretical education of people who have completed vocational training in a trade or industrial occupation; the course lasts for two years (four semesters) and concludes with an examination before a board, qualifying successful candidates to train apprentices and, after four years' relevant work, to become self-employed in the trade they have learned.

Higher education entrance examination (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*): since 1985, those who have not passed the *Reifeprüfung** but have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills in employment or through individual study have been able to take this examination in order to qualify for a particular course of study or group of courses.

Lower secondary school (*Hauptschule* – HS): four years of schooling (years 5 to 8; ISCED 2) after primary school; pupils receive a general education and are prepared for initial vocational training and/or transferred to VET schools* or academic secondary schools*.

Master craftsmen or craftsperson's examination (*Meisterprüfung*, ISCED 5B): anyone aged 18 or over may enrol for the master craftsperson's examination; assessment is carried out on a modular basis by the competent trade guild: three modules relate to specialised knowledge and skills, one to business management and the relevant legal provisions, culminating in the business-management or entrepreneurial examination, while the fifth module leads to the trainer's examination; those who have successfully completed VET college* and a course of at least three years' duration at a VET school* are exempt from the examination once they have been practising their trade for three years.

Matura: popular term for the *Reifeprüfung** and the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination*.

Occupational competence profile (*Berufsprofil*): for some years now, in addition to the training profile*, a competence profile has been formulated whenever training in a new occupation is introduced; it briefly lists the occupational standards that the trained apprentice will be able to achieve; the competence profile and the descriptors ensure that company-based training is closely coordinated with the relevant curriculum of the part-time school for apprentices*.

Part-time school for apprentices (*Berufsschule* – BS, ISCED 3B): mandatory theoretical element of the dual system*; incorporated into various organisational models, it accompanies the practical pursuit of an occupation during the apprenticeship stage.

Post-secondary VET courses (*Kollegs*, ISCED 5B): VET establishments for persons who have passed the *Reifeprüfung**, the *Reifeprüfung* and VET diploma examination* and the *Berufsreifeprüfung**, providing the same level of specialised theoretical and practical training as a VET college*. The courses last two to three years (four to six semesters) and culminate in the diploma examination*.

Practice firm (*Übungsfirma* – ÜFA): a virtual enterprise at a VET school* or VET college*, the establishment of which is compulsory or recommended, depending on the type of institution; the practice firm effects every type of transaction carried out by real businesses.

Pre-vocational school (*Polytechnische Schule* – PS, ISCED 3C): pupils intending to take a vocational course may, but need not, spend year 9 of compulsory schooling* in a pre-vocational school, which is often used to make the transition to an apprenticeship.

Regulated and non-regulated occupations (*Reglementierte und nicht-reglementierte Berufe*): access to some trades and professions is regulated by statutory provisions such as those of the Trade Regulation Code; other occupations are not subject to statutory regulation.

Reifeprüfung: final examination at an academic secondary school*; a pass in the *Reifeprüfung* is the entrance qualification for general higher education*.

Reifeprüfung and VET diploma examination (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung*): final examination at a VET college*, which provides a double qualification, namely an entrance qualification for general higher education* and the right to practise a particular trade or profession as well as qualifying the diploma holder for direct entry to executive posts.

Schools and colleges for persons in employment (*Schulen für Berufstätige*): these are VET schools*, VET colleges* and *Kollegs* (post-secondary VET colleges*) that offer courses for persons in employment, usually in evening classes.

Schools and colleges in the VET sector / in VET (*Berufsbildende Schulen*): these comprise part-time schools for apprentices*, VET schools* and VET colleges* at the upper secondary level as well as post-secondary VET colleges* and the Colleges of Social Work* (including forms of training for persons in employment).

Skilled workers' examination (*Facharbeiter/innenprüfung*): this practical and theoretical examination, taken on completion of apprenticeships in farming and forestry, is held before a board comprising representatives of employers and employees; it includes a written and an oral component.

Special training focus (*Ausbildungsschwerpunkt*, also known as *Ausbildungszweig*, *Fachrichtung* or *Fachbereich*): occupationally based specialisation chosen autonomously by a VET school* or VET college* for courses within its programme; this specialisation may be introduced in the first or third year of a course of training.

Training profile (*Berufsbild*): for each apprenticeship trade, a training profile is laid down in the training regulations; a catalogue defines the minimum basic occupational knowledge, advanced knowledge and skills to be imparted in the course of company-based training, broken down into training years. Cf. *Occupational competence profile**.

VET colleges (*Berufsbildende höhere Schulen*) (ISCED 3A / 4A): vocational colleges providing a higher level of initial vocational training along with a thorough general education; college courses last for five years and culminate in a final examination combining the *Reifeprüfung* and diploma examination*, enabling successful students to enter higher education (see *Entrance qualification for higher education**) and – depending on the course type – to obtain specific professional qualifications (double qualification).

VET schools (*Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen*; also specialised vocational schools or *Fachschulen*) (ISCED 3B): vocational schools providing vocational qualifications and general education; courses last from one to four years; a final examination is taken at the end of the three- and four-year courses.

Annex 3: Legislative and bibliographical references

A. Legal provisions

The abbreviation 'BGBL.' refers to the *Bundesgesetzblatt*, the Federal Law Gazette.

- **Adult Education Promotion Act (*Erwachsenenbildungsförderungsgesetz*): BGBL. No 171/1973**

Specifies the conditions on which adult education can be supported and the permissible support methods.

- ***Fachhochschule Degree Courses Act (Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz – FHStG): BGBL. No 340/1993, as amended***

Contains provisions on the accreditation and evaluation of degree courses at *Fachhochschulen*, on the responsibilities of the *Fachhochschule* Council and on the official designation of institutions as *Fachhochschulen*.

- **Federal Act laying down the Principles governing Part-time schools for apprentices of Agriculture and Forestry, BGBL. No 319/1975, as amended, plus the corresponding implementing acts adopted by the *Länder***

Regulates training at part-time schools for apprentices of agriculture and forestry.

- **Federal Act laying down the Principles governing Specialised Schools of Agriculture and Forestry (*Bundesgesetz betreffend die Grundsätze für land- und forstwirtschaftliche Fachschulen*), BGBL. No 320/1975, as amended, plus the corresponding implementing acts adopted by the *Länder***

Regulates training at specialised schools (*Fachschulen*) of agriculture and forestry.

- **Federal Agricultural and Forestry Schools Act (*Land- und forstwirtschaftliches Bundesschulgesetz*): BGBL. No 175/1966, as amended**

Regulates training at colleges of agriculture and forestry and the initial and in-service training of lecturers and instructors in agriculture and forestry.

- **Federal *Berufsreifeprüfung** Act (*Bundesgesetz über die Berufsreifeprüfung*): BGBL. I No 68/1997, as amended**

Lays down rules governing the *Berufsreifeprüfung**, an examination which enables people to obtain an entrance qualification for general higher education* if they have never passed the *Reifeprüfung** at an academic secondary school* or VET college* (see 5.4).

- **Health Care and Nursing Act (*Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegegesetz*), BGBL. I No 108/1997, as amended**

Regulates the practice of the general nursing profession and vocational training in general nursing (registered general nurses and care assistants).

- **School Education (Employed Persons) Act (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz für Berufstätige*), BGBl. 1 No 33/1997, as amended**

Contains provisions governing the training of adults at VET schools and colleges.

- **School Education Act (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz – SchUG*): BGBl. No 472/1986, as amended**

Regulates matters such as pupil admissions, pupil assessment, repetition of school years and cooperation between teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians.

- **School Organisation Act (*Schulorganisationsgesetz – SchOG*): BGBl. No 242/1962, as amended**

Defines the responsibilities and structure of Austrian schools (curricula and education level) under the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

- **Statutory orders enacted by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture laying down curricula for the various school categories**

- **Teacher Training College Act (*Akademie-Studiengesetz*) 1999, BGBl. No 94/1994, as amended**

Regulates the initial and in-service training of teachers, except for teachers at academic secondary schools* and teachers of certain subjects at VET schools and colleges*, pending the entry into force of the Tertiary Colleges of Education Act 2005 (*Bundesgesetz über die Organisation der Pädagogischen Hochschulen und ihre Studien (Hochschulgesetz)*).

- **Trade Regulation Code (*Gewerbeordnung – GewO*): BGBl. No 194/1994, as amended**

Lays down the conditions on which a person may start up a business. It also contains rules governing the right of establishment of those who have successfully completed courses at VET schools and colleges (e.g. definition of reckonable attainments).

- **Training Code (*Ausbildungsordnung*) ⁽³⁵⁾:**

Contains the specific set of occupational descriptors* for each apprenticeship trade* (a sort of curriculum of company-based training) and an occupational profile*, which describes the skills an apprentice must have acquired by the end of his or her apprenticeship.

- **Vocational Training (Agriculture and Forestry) Act (*Land- und forstwirtschaftliches Berufsausbildungsgesetz*): BGBl. No 298/1990, as amended**

Constitutes the legal basis for the on-the-job part of apprenticeships* in farming and forestry.

- **Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG*): BGBl. No 142/1969, as amended**

⁽³⁵⁾ <http://www.bmwa.gv.at/BMWA/Service/Lehrlingsservice/Lehrberufe/Liste/default.htm>

Forms the statutory framework for company-based apprentice training. Some provisions also relate to vocational schools and colleges.

- **Youth Training Provision Act (*Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz –JASG*): BGBl. I No 91/1998, as amended**

Contains provisions on political intervention in the labour market for the purpose of rectifying shortages of training places at schools and in enterprises.

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Annex 4: Important organisations

BMBWK – Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) Minoritenplatz 5 1014 Wien Tel. (43-1) 53 120-0 www.bmbwk.gv.at	BMGF – Bundesministerium für Gesundheit und Frauen (Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Issues) Radetzkystraße 2 1030 Wien Tel. (43-1) 711 00-0 www.bmgf.gv.at	BMLFUW – Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management) Stubenring 1 1012 Wien Tel. (43-1) 711 00-0 www.lebensministerium.at
BMSG – Bundesministerium für soziale Sicherheit, Generationen und Konsumentenschutz (Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection) Stubenring 1 1010 Wien Tel. (43-1) 711 00-0 www.bmsg.gv.at	BMWA – Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit (Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour) Stubenring 1 1011 Wien Tel. (43-1) 711 00-0 www.bmbwk.gv.at	BAK – Bundeskammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte (Federal Chamber of Labour) Prinz-Eugen-Straße 20-22 1040 Wien Tel. (43-1) 50165-0 www.arbeiterkammer.at
IV – Industriellenvereinigung (Federation of Austrian Industry) Schwarzenbergplatz 4 1031 Wien Tel. (43-1) 711 35-0 www.iv-net.at	Landwirtschaftskammer Österreich (Austrian Chamber of Agriculture) Schauflegasse 6 1014 Wien Tel. (43-1) 53 441-0 www.landwirtschaftskammer.at	ÖGB – Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund (Austrian Trade Union Federation) Hohenstaufengasse 10-12 1010 Wien Tel. (43-1) 534 44-0 www.oegb.at
WKÖ – Wirtschaftskammer Österreich (Austrian Federal Economic Chamber) Wiedner Hauptstraße 63 1045 Wien Tel. (43-5) 90 900 http://wko.at	bfi Österreich – Berufsförderungsinstitut Österreich (bfi, provider institution for VET, funded by the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation) Kaunitzgasse 2 1060 Wien Tel. (43-1) 586 37 03 www.bfi.at	WIFI Österreich – Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut der Wirtschaftskammer Österreich (WIFI, provider institution for VET, funded by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber) Wiedner Hauptstraße 63 1045 Wien Tel. (43-5) 90 900-3573 www.wifi.at
Landesschulräte (Regional Education Authorities) http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/service/links/Links_zu_den_Landesschul1569.xml Lehrlingsstellen (Apprentice centres) http://portal.wko.at/wk/dok_detail_file.wk?AngID=1&DocID=171763	AMS – Arbeitsmarkt Service (Employment Service) Treustraße 35-43 1200 Wien Tel. (43-1) 33 178-0 www.ams.or.at	FHR – Österreichischer Fachhochschulrat (Council responsible for supervising the Austrian Fachhochschulen) Liechtensteinstraße 22a 1090 Wien Tel. (43-1) 319 50 34-0 www.fhr.ac.at

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

Vocational education and training in Austria. Short description

Sabine Archan

Thomas Mayr

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Vocational education and training plays a key role in the Austrian education system. At the end of compulsory schooling, approximately 80 % of all young people opt for a vocational course. They can choose from a wide range of schools and courses, offering not only extensive vocational qualifications, but also the opportunity to undertake a host of additional vocational training courses at post-secondary and tertiary level after obtaining their initial vocational qualification or passing additional exams.

The continuing vocational education and training system offers a similar range of opportunities. A comprehensive, harmonised strategy for lifelong learning has recently been launched, demonstrating the growing importance of continuing training.

In this summary, it is impossible to cover all aspects of this complex system, which differs to some extent from that of many other EU Member States. That said, the annex to this report lists major publications from which further information can be obtained.

PANDORA

Vocational education and training in Austria

Short description



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