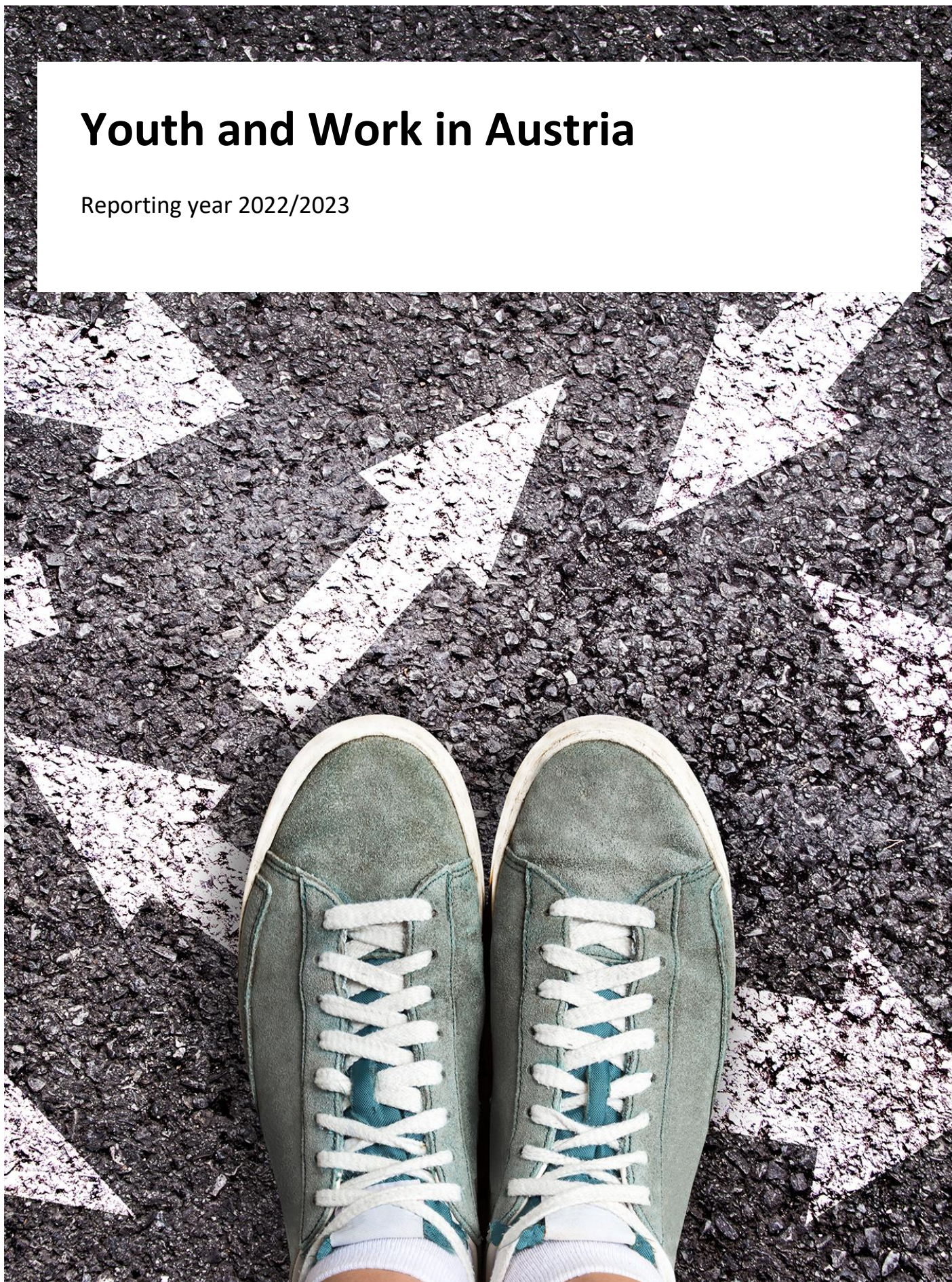


# Youth and Work in Austria

Reporting year 2022/2023



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Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW), Stubenring 1, 1010 Vienna

Authors: Ingrid Nagl (BMAW/Division III/A/3) with contributions from Herwig Tarmann (BMAW/Division III/B/4a) and in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK)

Overall Implementation: BMAW/Directorate General III/A/3

Translation: Eva Holzmair-Ronge

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# Introduction

Austria's labour market policy programmes support adolescents and young adults in finding suitable training and adequate jobs. The Compulsory Education/Training scheme adopted in 2016 and the accompanying Education/Training till 18 programme are particularly important. Since their introduction, compulsory schooling is followed by another period of compulsory education or training to enhance young people's skills and improve their chances in life. For this purpose, various support, counselling and training measures are available ranging from career counselling, Youth Coaching and supra-company training schemes to low-threshold programmes such as Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*) designed to make young people familiar with the challenges of apprenticeships. These programmes are subject to ongoing adjustments and upgrading in order to impart the necessary skills and competences and offer individualised assistance to young people. With the implementation of the Training Guarantee till 25 (*Ausbildungsgarantie bis 25*), labour market policy has responded to the needs of young adults (19-25 years). The consequences of the Corona crisis are particularly felt by young people. Dedicated active labour market programmes, including the option of contacting young people directly whenever they are at risk of leaving education or training or providing guaranteed training during economically insecure times, have been reliable footholds in the crisis years of 2020/2021/2022 and remain important anchors in 2023.

The brochure Youth and Work in Austria aims to provide an overview of education, training and employment of young people in Austria focusing on the wide range of labour market policies available to young people and on current changes and new developments. We wish to thank all those who have provided information and contributed to this brochure for their support!

The first chapter of the brochure includes an overview of the demographic situation as well as education and labour data. The second chapter describes the Austrian education system and current priorities in education policies. The third part 'Vocational Education and Support at the Transition from School to Work' starts with a presentation of vocational information programmes and the Austrian apprenticeship system highlighting available subsidy schemes and new developments. This is followed by a description of how the transition from school to work is managed including labour market policies for young people and specific target groups. The fourth chapter 'Activities of the European Union' addresses initiatives and programmes launched at the European level.

# 1 Data, Facts and Figures

Population, level of educational attainment, employment: the present chapter provides an overview of the development of Austria's population, the education, training and labour market situation of young people as well as the transition from school to work. For this purpose, we use national data on population changes, unemployment, employment, education and apprenticeships on the one hand, and international survey data on the other, to compare the situation in Austria with that in other countries.

## 1.1 Demographic trends

On 1 Jan 2023, there were 9,104,772 people living in Austria. This is 125,843 or 1.4% more than at the beginning of 2022 and the largest increase in a single year since the foundation of the Second Republic. The reason for the increase in Austria's population is due to international immigration. Refugee movements from Ukraine account for a good part of immigration. In 2022, roughly 67,000 more people immigrated from Ukraine to Austria than left Austria to go back. In total, almost 137,000 more people immigrated from abroad than emigrated in 2022.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, Austria's population figure still hovered around 8m.

49.3% of the population are male and 50.7% female in 2023. The proportion of young people under 20 years is 19.3% in 2023 (the same as in the year before) and has continuously dropped since 2001 (22.9%). 61.1% (down 0.2 percentage points) are of working age (20-64 years). The proportion of people aged 65 years and over is 19.6% (up 0.2 percentage points) versus 15.4% in 2001.<sup>2</sup>

1,730,286 persons living in Austria on 1 Jan 2023 were of foreign nationality. This corresponds to roughly 19% of Austria's total population (1 Jan 2022: 17.7%).<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of 2023, more than half (51.4%) of these foreign nationals came from other EU and EFTA countries as well as the United Kingdom. With 25.3%, people from Germany

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, press release: 13.082-110/23.

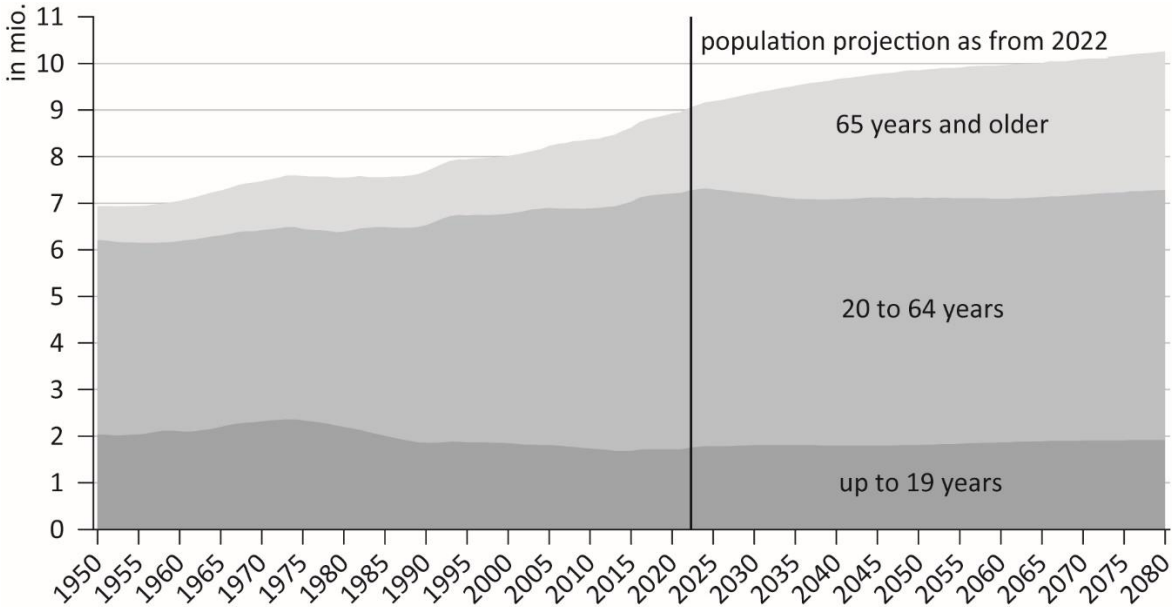
<sup>2</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Population by age and gender – time series.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, press release: 13.003-31/23.

again form the largest proportion within this group in 2023, followed by people from Romania (16.6%), Croatia (11.5%), Hungary (11.2%) and Poland (7.6%). Third-country nationals account for the second-largest share in all non-Austrian nationals totalling 48.6% of whom 14.5% are people from Serbia, 14.2% people from Turkey, 11.7% people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 9.5% are refugees from Ukraine and 4.2% people from the Russian Federation.<sup>4</sup>

Austria’s population increase will accelerate in the future. As early as 2030 Austria will have roughly 9.4m inhabitants provided the current trend continues. The Austrian population will continue to grow to reach 10.3m people by 2080. This will coincide with a significant age shift in our society towards the older end of the age spectrum. Although the number of people under 20 years of age will continue to grow, their proportion within the population will decline (from 19.3% in 2023 to 18.6% by 2080), whereas the proportion of those aged 65plus will rise from 19.6% in 2023 to roughly 29% in 2080<sup>5</sup> (see also Figure 1 on page 6).

Figure 1 - Population by broad age groups 1950 – 2080 (medium variant)



Source: Statistics Austria, population forecast 2021

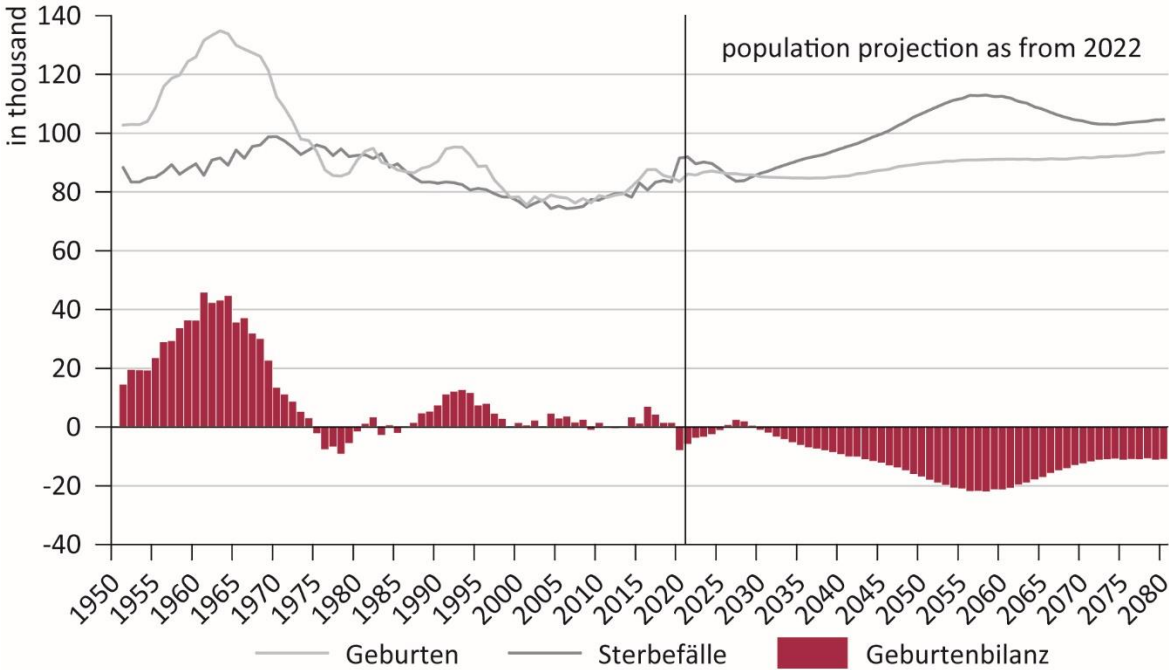
<sup>4</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Population at the beginning of 2002 till 2023 by detailed nationality, BMAW’s own calculations.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Forecast of population structure for Austria 2021-2080.

The average number of live births was 90,000 per year in the 1980s and 1990s, with figures peaking in 1982 (94,840) and 1992 (95,302) (see Figure 2 on page 7). Since then there has been no consistent trend and the number of new-borns varies between 70,000 and 90,000 per year. Natural population growth in 2022 was again negative; with 82,198 babies born in 2022, the number of newborns dropped by 4.5% on 2021, while 93,107 people died over the same period, up 0.2% on the previous year<sup>6</sup>.

The average number of children per woman (total fertility rate) fell from around 1.5 in the 1980s to around 1.39 in 2009. In 2022 this rate was 1.41 children per woman (2021: 1.48). In comparison: in 1963 total fertility reached a record post-war level of 2.82 and was thus almost twice as high as nowadays. According to the natural population dynamics (fertility variant) projected by Statistics Austria, the total fertility rate will rise continuously and stagnate around 2.10 in 2076<sup>7</sup>, whereas life expectancy for both women and men will continue to rise<sup>8</sup>.

Figure 2 - Births and deaths 1950 – 2080 (medium variant)

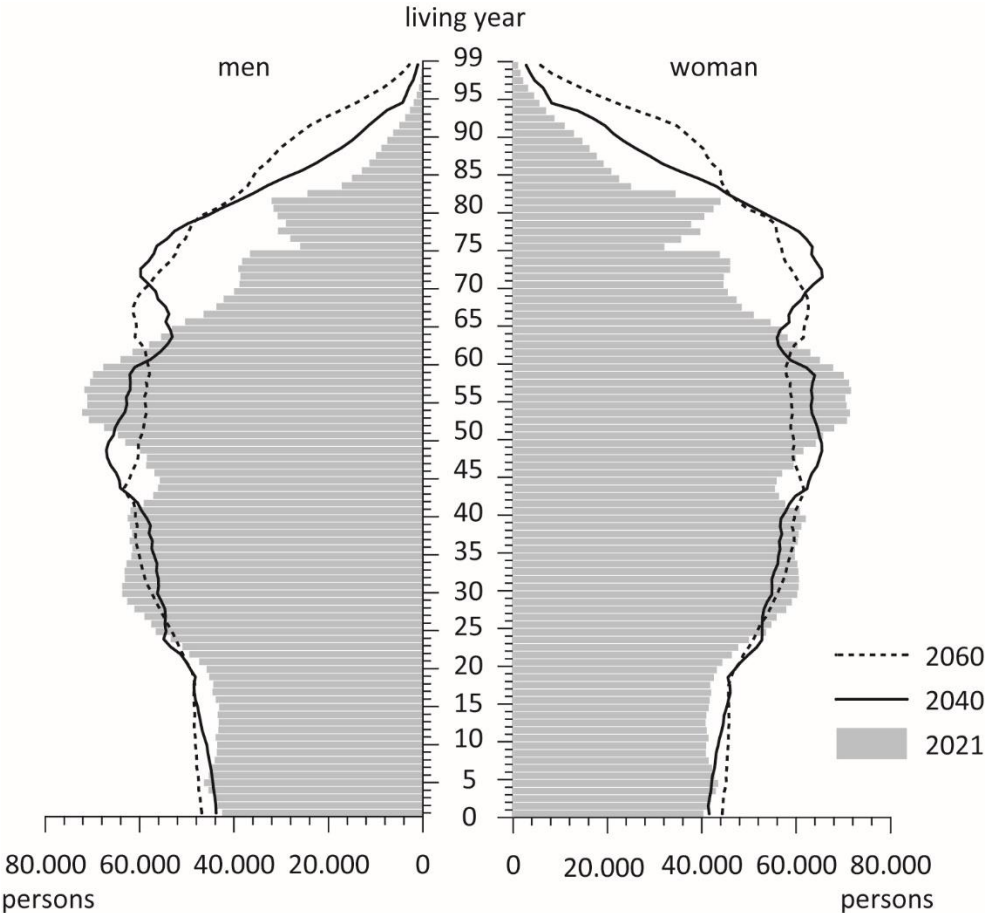


Source: Statistics Austria, population forecast 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, press release: 13.009-037/23.  
<sup>7</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Projected natural population dynamics 2019-2100, fertility variant Austria.  
<sup>8</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, table on population level and structure.

The age pyramid (see Figure 3 on page 8) shows the composition of the Austrian population for 2021, 2040 and 2060<sup>9</sup>.

Figure 3 - Age pyramid 2021, 2040 and 2060



Source: Statistics Austria.

### 1.2 Level of education

There has been a general increase in the educational attainment levels of Austria’s resident population since 1971. Whereas in 1971 roughly 58% and in 1981 still 46% of the resident population aged 25-64 had no more than compulsory education as their highest level of

<sup>9</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, population level 2022.



educational achievement, this proportion was only 13.4% in 2022. There have been substantial increases in all continued education qualifications. Since 1981 the number of persons with intermediate- and higher-level school leaving certificates has almost doubled and was 30.1% in 2022. In 1981 only some 4.5% of Austria's resident population had higher education credentials, while in 2022 their share was 21.7% (this percentage also includes higher education-related establishments); 34.8% of the resident population aged 25 to 64 in 2022 had an apprenticeship training background.<sup>10</sup>

Women in particular have caught up in recent decades. Their level of education now is much higher: in 1971, 70.4% of **all women aged 25-64** had compulsory education and only 1.3% higher (tertiary) education qualifications. This contrasts with 2022, in which a mere 15.1% of **women aged 25-64 years** had compulsory education (men: 11.7%). 26.1% had apprenticeship training (men: 43.5%), 16.4% were BMS graduates (men: 8.7%) and 18.5% had completed the full cycle of upper secondary education (men: 16.6%). 23.6% (men: 19.1%) had tertiary education credentials (including higher education-related establishments). 33.1% of the **younger women (25-34 years)** had completed higher (tertiary) education in 2022 versus 22.9% of the men in this age group.<sup>10</sup>

With 8.4% of **early leavers from education and training**<sup>11</sup> reported in 2022 (+0.4 percentage points on 2021) Austria is in the middle of the field for this indicator (women: 7.4% and men: 9.5%). The lowest proportions are recorded by Croatia (2.3%), Ireland (3.7%), Slovenia and Greece (4.1% each). Romania has the highest value for this indicator in 2022 with 15.6%, followed by Spain with 13.9%. This compares to an EU-27 average of 9.6%<sup>12</sup>.

Compared with other EU Member States (EU-27), Austria is in the upper mid-range in 2022 both for **people with at least secondary level II qualifications** and for **people with tertiary level qualifications**:

85.4% (women: 88%, men: 82.8%) of all **20- to 24-year-olds** had **secondary II level** as their minimum educational attainment, the EU-27 average being 83.6%. Croatia boasted the highest ratio (97.2%), followed by Ireland with 95%, Slovenia with 94.7% and Greece with 94%. Germany had the lowest ratio with 70.6%.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Statistics Austria: Table B9: Population aged 15 years and over by highest level of educational attainment – national classification, age and gender, annual average 2022, percentage share: BMAW's own calculations.

<sup>11</sup> Percentage share of 18- to 24-year-olds with no more than lower secondary level education who did not participate in any initial or further training programme in the four weeks preceding the survey.

<sup>12</sup> Source: EUROSTAT.

The percentage of **30- to 34-year-olds** with **tertiary education** (ISCED 5-8) in Austria was 44%<sup>13</sup> (women: 48.8%, men: 39.7%), the EU-27 average being 42.8%. This indicator was highest for Luxembourg with 62.9%, followed by Cyprus with 62.7% and Ireland with 61.9%. The lowest percentages were reported for Romania with 26.3%, followed by Italy with 27.4% and Bulgaria with 33.4%<sup>14</sup>.

### 1.3 Youth employment and unemployment

Whereas in 2020 youth unemployment rose and youth employment fell during the Covid-19 pandemic, youth unemployment continued to drop and youth employment continued to rise in 2022, the last year of the pandemic, due to measures taken by the federal government. This is also illustrated by Austria's excellent youth employment rate compared with that of other European countries. This chapter is based on international and national data reflecting the labour market situation of young people in Austria in 2022. At the end of every section, we will briefly address the current trend using the available monthly data.

#### 1.3.1 Unemployment and employment in international comparison

According to EUROSTAT, the 2022 youth employment rate (age 15-24 years) rose by 1.7 percentage points against the previous year to 51.9% (men: 55.6% or up 1 percentage point, women: 48.2% or up 2.5 percentage points). Austria again ranked third within the EU in 2022 – as it did in 2021 – behind Denmark with 56.1% (+2.2 percentage points) and the Netherlands with 75.5% (+3.8 percentage points). The EU-27 average for this indicator was 34.7% (+2 percentage points against 2021) – see Figure 4 on page 11<sup>15</sup>.

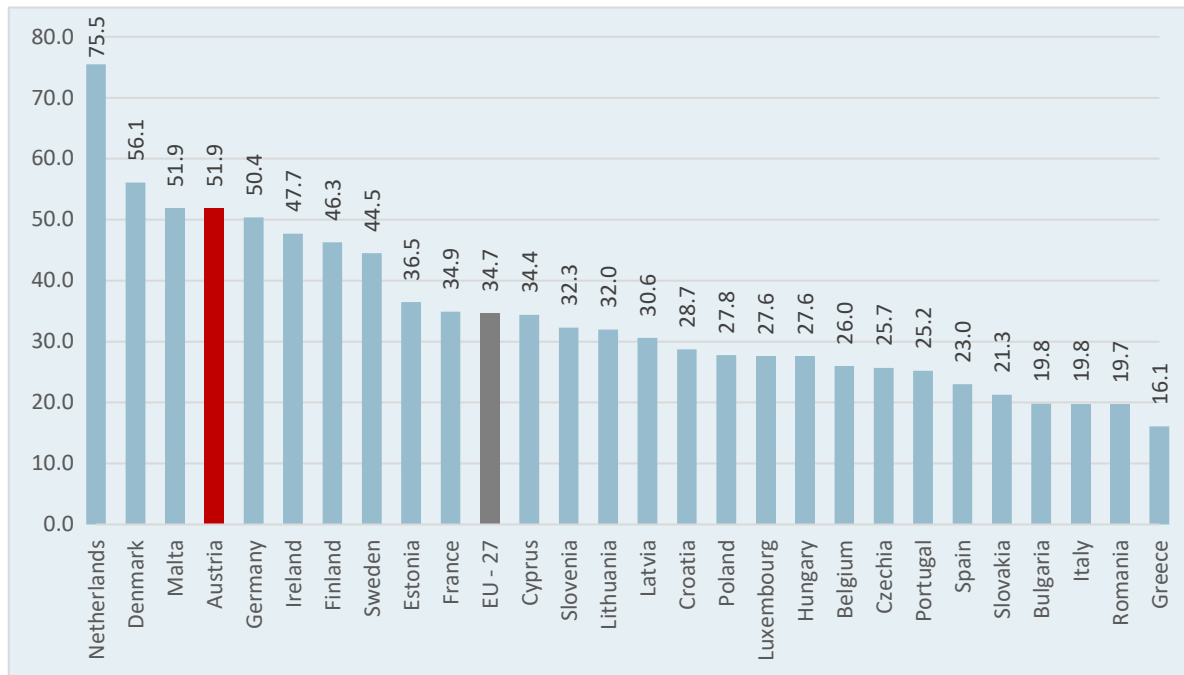
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<sup>13</sup> BHS colleges come under ISCED 5.

<sup>14</sup> Source: EUROSTAT.

<sup>15</sup> Source: BMAW; AMIS Table on the employment rate of 15- to 24-year-olds in international comparison, based on EUROSTAT data (retrieved on 2 May 2023).

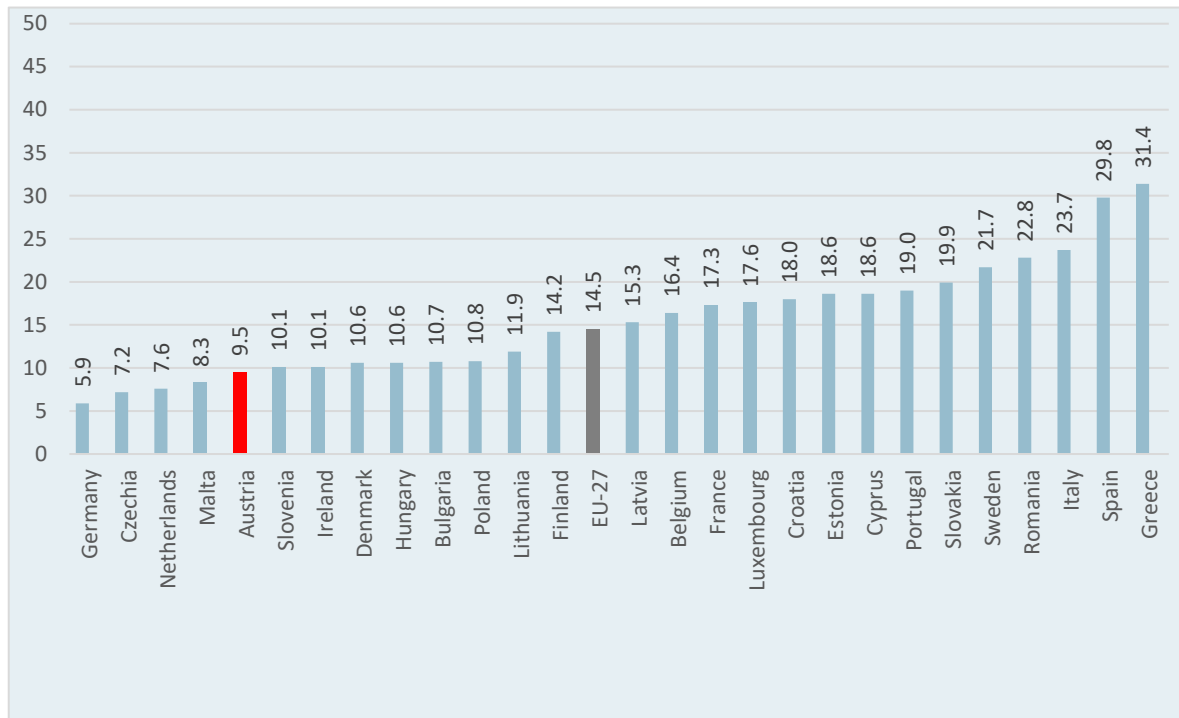
Figure 4 - Employment rates of young people aged 15 to 24 – European comparison 2022



Source: BMAW-AMIS Table (EUROSTAT/retrieved on 2 May 2023); Note: ratio of active population aged 15-24 to corresponding resident population averaged across 2022.

Compared with other European countries, the **unemployment rate** during the last year of the Covid-19 pandemic (2022) of 9.5% **among young people aged 15-24 years** - i.e. down by 1.5 percentage points on 2021 (men: 9.5% or -1.2 percentage points; women 9.5% or -1.8 percentage points) – ranks Austria fifth (versus sixth place for this indicator in 2021). The lowest unemployment rates were recorded for Germany with 5.9% (-1 percentage point), Czechia with 7.2% (-1 percentage point) and the Netherlands with 7.6% (-1.7 percentage points). The EU-27 average was 14.5% (-2,1 percentage points) in 2022. The highest unemployment rate of under 25-year-olds was reported for Greece with 31.4% (down 4.1 percentage points) and Spain with 29.8% (down 5 percentage points) – see Figure 5 on page 12.

Figure 5 - Youth unemployment rates - European comparison 2022



Source: BMAW-AMIS Table on youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) in European comparison (retrieved from EUROSTAT on 18 April 2023)

The youth unemployment rate only relates to the workforce, i.e. to all who are (potentially) available for (and willing to) work. This means that, for instance, people who, for whatever reason, are not (are no longer) seeking a job are not included. Since this rate is generally higher among young people (e.g. because of training), it is more informative to relate **unemployment among this group to the total population of the same age**.

In Czechia 1.9%, in Bulgaria 2.4% and in Germany 3.2% of **all young people aged 15-24 years** were out of work in 2022. In Austria, they accounted for 5.4% or -0.8 percentage points against 2021 (women: 5%, men: 5.8%), the EU-27 average being 5.9% (-0.6 percentage points) in 2022. Sweden had the highest proportion (12.4%), followed by Spain (9.7%) and Estonia (8.3%)<sup>16</sup>.

Sweden reported the highest percentage for **'younger' young people aged 15 to 19 years** (14.4%) in 2022, followed by Finland and the Netherlands (7.8% each), while Bulgaria and

<sup>16</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 21 Aug 2023; Table: Youth unemployment rate by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions – from 15 to 24 years.

Poland boasted the lowest percentage (1.1% each), followed by Czechia with 1.3% and Hungary with 1.6%. For this indicator, Austria reported 4.6%, down 0.7 percentage points against 2021 (women: 5%, men: 4.2%), the EU-27 average being 3.9% (unchanged from previous year).<sup>17</sup>

For **'older' young people aged 20-24 years**, Spain recorded the highest proportion with 14.3%, followed by Greece with 13.6% and Estonia with 11.7% as opposed to Czechia and Germany, which had the lowest proportions of 2.5% and 3.7%, respectively. With 6.2% or down 0.7 percentage points against 2021 (women: 5.1%, men: 7.2%), Austria is again eleventh within the European Union. The EU-27 average for this indicator is 7.9% (-1.2 percentage points).<sup>18</sup>

The 2022 **youth long-term unemployment rate (12 months or longer)** for people aged 15 to 24 years was lowest in the Netherlands (0.3%, down 0.2 percentage points) and highest in Greece (13.1%, down 2.3 percentage points on 2021). Austria reports 1.1% (-0.6 percentage points) for this indicator in 2022. The EU-27 average is 2.9% (-0.8 percentage points).<sup>19</sup>

The **NEET rate** (Not in Education, Employment or Training) shows the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 years who are not in education, employment or non-formal training as a percentage of the resident population (15-24 years) and is thus broader in scope than the unemployment rate. In 2022, this indicator was lowest in the Netherlands (2.8%, up 0.2 percentage points) and Sweden (4.9%, down 0.2 percentage points) as well as Belgium (6.6%, down 0.9 percentage points). With a NEET rate of 8.1, or down 0.4 percentage points against 2021 (women: 7.9%, men: 8.2%), Austria was in the lower mid-range. The EU-27 average was 9.6%, down 1.2 percentage point against the previous year (women: 9.7%, men: 9.5%). The highest NEET rates of 17.5% (-0.5 percentage points) and 15.9% (-3.9 percentage points) were recorded by Romania and Italy, respectively – see Figure 6 on page 14.

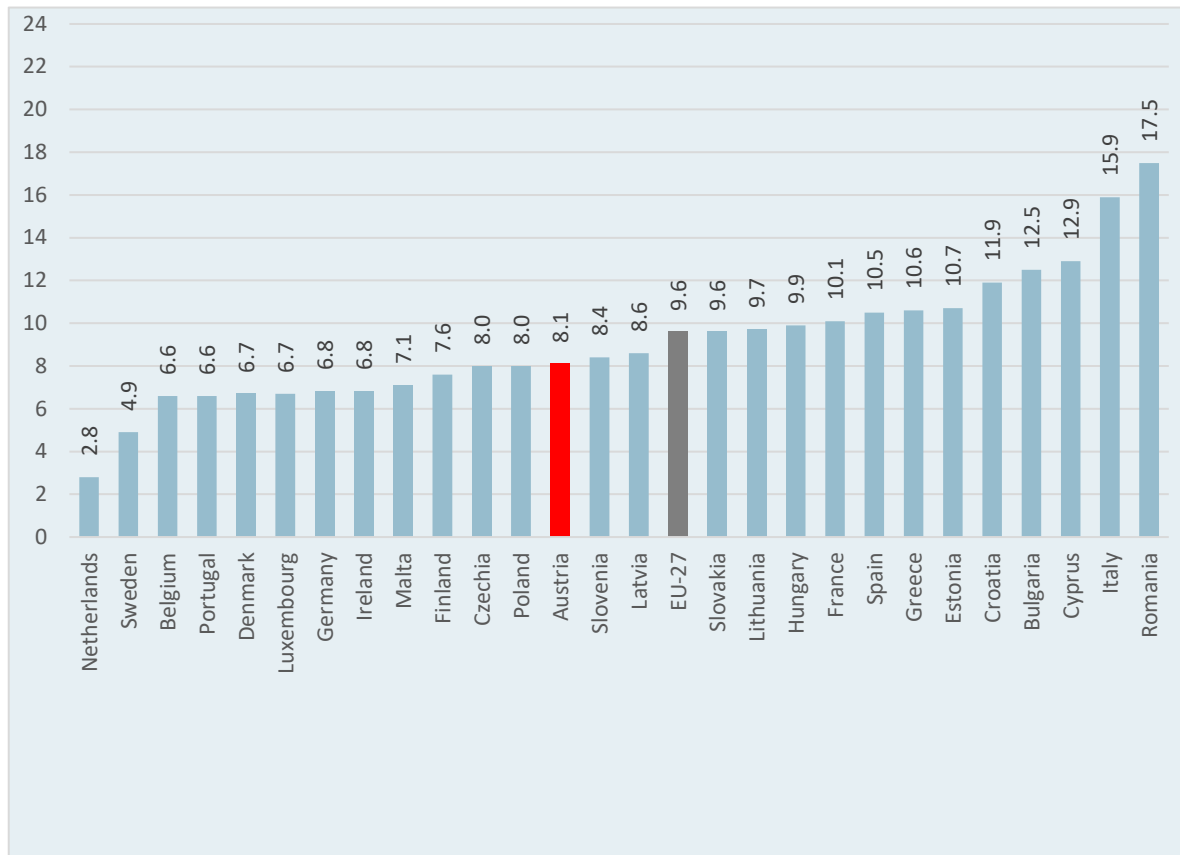
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<sup>17</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 21 Aug 2023; Table: Youth unemployment rate by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions – from 15 to 19 years.

<sup>18</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 21 Aug 2023; Table: Youth unemployment rate by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions – from 20 to 24 years.

<sup>19</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 21 Aug 2023; Youth long-term unemployment rate (12 months or longer) by sex and age – from 15 to 24 years.

Figure 6 - NEET rate, 15 to 24 years, 2022



Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 21 Aug 2023; the NEET rate is the proportion of young people who are neither in employment, nor education, nor training.

The labour market situation for young people has improved significantly in the European Union in 2022, with the unemployment rate for young people (under 25) having fallen accordingly – see also Figure 5 on page 12.

In July 2023, around 2.7m young people under 25 were unemployed in the EU (compared to 2.10m in July 2021). This puts the EU’s average youth employment rate at 13.9% versus 14.6% in July 2022, i.e. a decrease of 0.7 percentage points compared to July 2022. The total unemployment rate on an EU average fell from 6.1% in July 2022 to 5.9% in July 2023 (down 0.2 percentage points compared to July 2022).

In Austria, the youth unemployment rate was still at 10.2% in July 2022. This rate rose noticeably at the end of July 2023 by 1.4 percentage points compared to July 2022. Total unemployment in Austria, too, rose from 4.6% in July 2022 to 5.6% in July 2023 (up 1 percentage point compared to July 2022).<sup>20</sup>

### 1.3.2 Youth unemployment and employment in Austria<sup>21</sup>

The stock of young employees (15 to 24 years) increased by 3 percentage points (+12,821 workers) in 2022 on the year before, whereof 137,356 are under 20 and 308,475 are 20 to 24 years old. Both age groups recorded increases: +4.2% for those under 20 and +2.4% for those aged 20-24.

**Unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24** fell by 15.6% to 25,518 (-4,708 young people) on average in 2022 compared to the previous year. This compares with an average reduction of **total unemployment** in 2022 by 20.7% or 68,621 to 263,121 persons registered by the PES as unemployed.

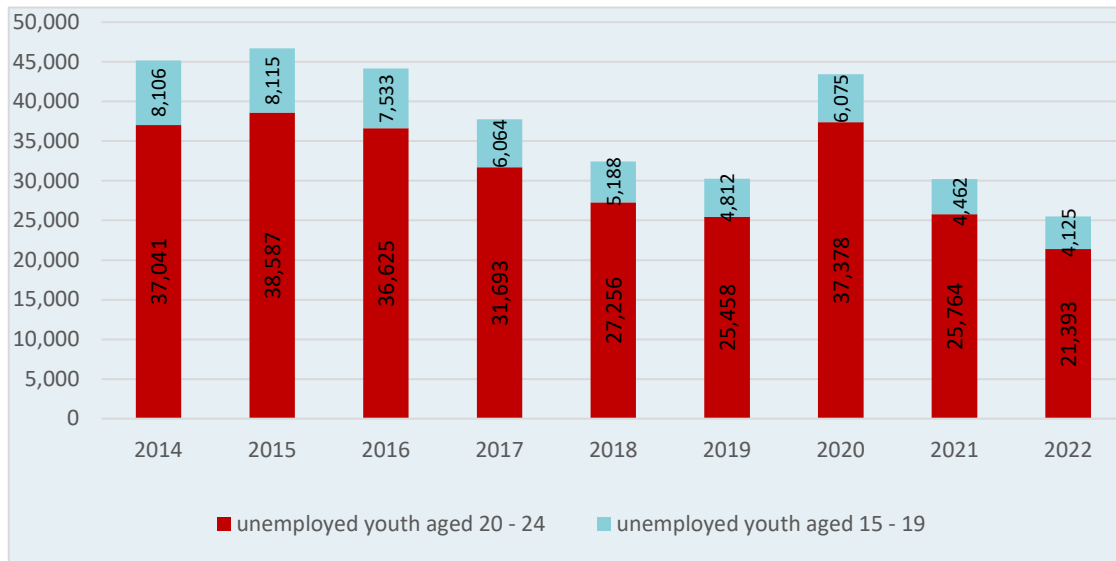
Unemployment among young people aged under 20 dropped by 7.6% (-337), while the decline in unemployment among 20- to 24-year-olds was more significant (-17% or -4,371) – see Figure 7 on page 16. Broken down by gender, unemployment among young men (15 to 24 years) fell by 13.8% (-2,391) to 14,930 and among young women by 18% (-2,317) to 10,588.

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<sup>20</sup> Source: EUROSTAT, retrieved on 4 Sep 2023: European comparison of youth unemployment rates and total unemployment rates, last available data (July 2023).

<sup>21</sup> National administrative data/AMIS (BMAW).

Figure 7 - Unemployed youth aged 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years - 2014 - 2022



Source: PES (national data); BMAW/AMIS, retrieved on 24 Aug 2023.

The 2022 unemployment rate based on registered unemployed (national definition) in the age group of 15- to 24-year-olds fell 1.1 percentage points to 5.4% over the year before. The average period of registration with the public employment service (stock) for young people (15 to 24 years) decreased in 2022 (-24 days on 2021) to 54 days; compared to the other age groups, it is significantly lower. The average duration of unemployment (until exiting from the unemployment register) was 58 days for young unemployed persons in 2022, which is 20 days less than in 2021 (men: 57 days, women: 59 days), while the overall average duration for all unemployed persons was 127 days, which is 27 days less than in the previous year (men: 128 days, women: 127 days).<sup>22</sup>

In 2022, the PES supported 129,390 young people (15-24 years), down 31.8% or 60,226 fewer than in the previous year. Of these, 35,772 (-64.2%) young people were funded with employment aid. 89,868 (-3.8%) young people were enrolled in skills training measures and 33,478 (-5.5%) were offered support. Of these, 451 young people or +1.6% received start-up subsidies in 2022 and were included in the PES's business start-up programme.<sup>23</sup>

The number of participants aged less than 25 years in PES training programmes decreased by 3.7% to 25,623 young people in 2022 on the year before (annual average stock). The

<sup>22</sup> Source: national administrative data/BMAW/AMIS and AMIS database retrieval of 21 Aug 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Source: national administrative data/BMAW/AMIS, PES subsidies and grants, 2022.



number of all training participants fell by 1.2% to 69,524. Young men's (under 25) participation in training dropped by 1.1% and young women's by 6.9% in 2022 against the previous year; see Figure 8 on page 18.<sup>24</sup>

In 2022, there were 11,001 participants (-8.6% over the year before) in supra-company apprenticeships (training contracts >25 years) – for more information on supra-company training see item 3.3.4 on page 70. 6,276 (+4,2%) young people participated in Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*) and 67,058 (+11.4%) in Youth Coaching (*Jugendcoaching*)<sup>25</sup>, while 2,469 (+56.1%) sought assistance under the coaching programme for apprentices (*Lehrlingscoaching*) and coaching programme for employers of apprentices (*Lehrbetriebscoaching*).<sup>26</sup>

Out of the 21,393 unemployed young people aged 20-24 years in 2022, 48.1% had no more than compulsory education, 29.4% apprenticeship credentials, 6.5% intermediate level training and 15% higher or academic credentials (see **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** on page **Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.**). The highest levels of educational attainment for the total population of 20- to 24-year-olds, many of whom are still in education or training, are as follows: 15.8% compulsory education, 26.9% apprenticeship training, 9.2% intermediate school level and 47.8% higher school level or tertiary education.<sup>27</sup>

Analytical data – such as those on labour turnover – clearly illustrate that the youth labour market is characterised by above average dynamics. The annual labour turnover in this age group amounts to roughly 100%. This was also the case in 2022.

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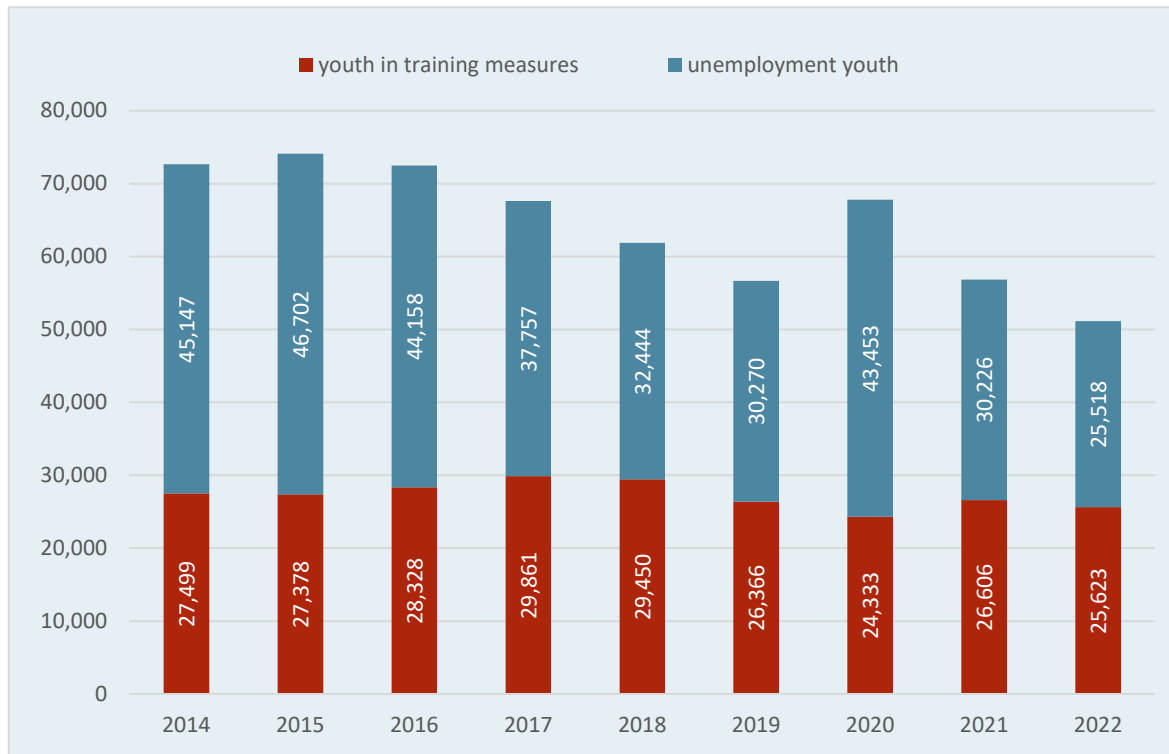
<sup>24</sup> Source: National administrative data/BMAW/AMIS/ Table: 'Labour market data for young people, annual average 2022'.

<sup>25</sup> Participants since the beginning of the year.

<sup>26</sup> Source: national administrative data/BMAW/AMIS/Table: Implementation – active labour market policy 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table B 9 2022, Population aged 15 and over by highest level of educational attainment - national classification, by age categories and gender, BMAW's own calculations.

Figure 8 - Unemployed youth aged 15 to 24 years enrolled in training measures - 2014 - 2022



Source: PES (national data); BMAW/AMIS table on labour market data of young people (under 25) – annual average 2022.

Table 1 - Unemployment youth (20-24 years) by highest level of educational attainment 2015 - 2022

Educa-tion/Train-ing	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Compul-sory School</b>	16,329	15,352	13,162	11,291	10,951	16,328	11,712	10,299
<b>Appren-ticeship</b>	14,422	13,416	11,491	9,751	8,758	12,114	8,186	6,281
<b>Intermedi-ate Level</b>	2,442	2,323	2,012	1,768	1,669	2,421	1,708	1,398

Educa- tion/Train- ing	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Higher Level	5,263	5,436	4,945	4,377	4,016	6,067	3,877	3,205
N/A	131	99	82	69	64	448	282	211
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,587</b>	<b>36,625</b>	<b>31,693</b>	<b>27,256</b>	<b>25,458</b>	<b>37,378</b>	<b>25,764</b>	<b>21,393</b>

Source: PES-DWH, retrieved on 21 Aug 2023.

Note: higher education includes upper secondary schools and academic education as in this age group many young people have not yet completed their tertiary study programmes.

The measures introduced by the federal government in the first pandemic year 2020 – including special programmes targeted at adolescents and young adults – to ensure sufficient training slots and provide skills training have taken effect. This could also be seen in the reduced unemployment figures for adolescents and young adults (15- to 24-year-olds, down 30.4%) in 2021. The positive trend in youth unemployment was maintained in 2022.

Owing to the **short-time working scheme** (*Corona-Kurzarbeit*), numerous employment and training relationships were secured during the Covid-19 crisis. Almost 75,400 young people under 25 years received short-time work compensation (*Kurzarbeitsbeihilfe*) in 2021. In 2022, this figure dropped to 23,500 people. The option for apprentices to apply for short-time work was a key element in safeguarding in-company apprenticeships during times of crisis. Apprentices on short hours receive 100% of their previous net pay. The scheme also takes into account the progression in training years and thus the increase in the apprentices' remuneration so that they do not suffer any financial disadvantages. In April 2020, roughly 50% of all apprentices (approx. 50,000 persons) were on short hours. At the end of December 2021, they were still 6,500. As the economy recovered, the number of apprentices on short hours fell to zero by the end of 2022. Since 1 Jan 2023, apprentices can no longer be included in short-time work.

The **Corona Job Initiative** (*Corona-Joboffensive*) was a major component in achieving the federal government's objective of helping young adults with no more than compulsory education to complete apprenticeships under the **Training Guarantee till 25**. In 2021 roughly

209,000 persons were supported under the Corona Job Initiative of whom around 37,000 (18%) were low-skilled young adults. The Corona Job Initiative ended in December 2021.

Overall, 2022 provided positive surprises to the labour market: rising employment and declining unemployment. Unemployment continued to drop at the beginning of 2023, albeit at a much slower pace. Neither the last ripples of the pandemic, nor the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis, were able to break the favourable trend. Robust economic growth of around +4.5% in real terms led to a significant increase in labour demand, a high number of job vacancies and falling unemployment. However, unemployment in Austria has risen slightly month-on-month since April 2023.

The number of registered unemployed rose towards the end of August to roughly the previous August's level, namely 261,298 or up 12,279 against the end of August 2022. In addition, there are 59,461 persons registered with the PES as training participants. This figure has fallen slightly by 951 compared to the previous year. If unemployed and PES training participants are taken together, this will give an increase in registered unemployed of +11,328 or +3.7% over the previous year.

Youth unemployment also rose noticeably at the end of August 2023 to 29,386 registered young people under the age of 25 (up 11.5% over August 2022). The stock of registered unemployed under 20 has risen by 12.6% and that of registered unemployed aged 20-24 years to 11.2% on the previous year. However, these figures must be seen against the backdrop of a much more favourable unemployment trend for young people during the Covid-19 labour market crisis in 2020/2021 than for the over-24 age group.

At the end of August 2023, the apprenticeship market showed a surplus of 1,095 notified apprenticeship vacancies across Austria, meaning 8,374 immediately available apprenticeship-seekers (without participants in supra-company apprenticeship training) could choose from 9,469 immediately available apprenticeship positions that had been notified to the PES.

## 1.4 Young people after completion of training: training-related career monitoring survey<sup>28</sup>

The training-related career monitoring survey is used to analyse, after a two-year follow-up period, the job careers of young people who completed school, training or university between 2008 and 2018, thus enabling a closer look at the subsequent labour market status of graduates and their income trends.

After completion of their apprenticeship most young people enter employment as opposed to their peers who, after completion of compulsory education, pre-vocational schools or AHSs, largely tend to choose continuing education pathways. Young people who have completed AHSs or tertiary education have a very low risk of unemployment. However, young people with compulsory school or AHS credentials who do not enter continued education or training within two years after graduation have a particularly low employment rate, which is only just under 13% for those having completed compulsory or pre-vocational schools and 41% for AHS graduates.<sup>29</sup> By contrast, graduates of colleges of higher vocational education (BHSs) have the best chances of moving into employment without further training after graduation. Almost 84% of them are economically active 18 months after graduation, followed by apprenticeship graduates with over 78%.

Table 2 - Labour market status 18 months after completion of education/training in the 2018/19 school year

	In education/train- ing	Economically active	Registered with the PES	other
<b>Compulsory/pre-vocational school</b>	93.2%	0.6%	2.9%	3.3%
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	4.8%	74.1%	11.7%	9.3%
<b>School of intermediate vocational education (BMS)</b>	40.8%	42.4%	5.7%	11.0%
<b>Academic secondary school (AHS)</b>	80.6%	7.8%	1.0%	10.6%

<sup>28</sup> Source: Statistics Austria; career monitoring survey (BibEr) by commission of the Social Affairs Ministry and the PES for the school years 2008/09 to 2010/11, Vienna, June 2015 – updated by the BMAW for the 2017/18 school year; July 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Employment rates refer to the labour market status 18 months after completion of training.

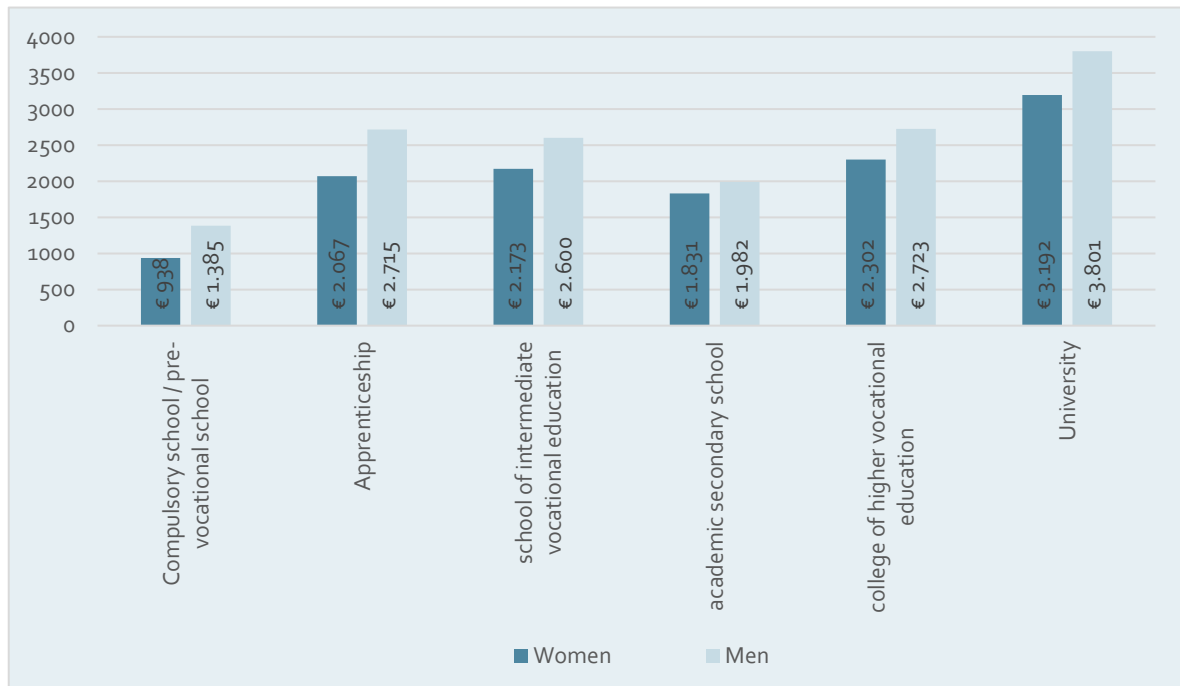
	In education/train- ing	Economically active	Registered with the PES	other
<b>College of higher vo- cational education (BHS)</b>	44.9%	45.1%	3.1%	6.9%
<b>University course</b>	19.8%	70.2%	1.6%	8.4%
<b>University</b>	42.5%	44.1%	2.0%	11.4%

Source: Statistics Austria; career monitoring survey (BibER); data updated by the BMAW for the 2018/19 school year; September 2023.

The median income 18 months after completion of education/training of 2018/19 graduates was €2,971.60 for men and €2,567.30 for women. This corresponds to a gender pay gap of around 15.7%. By comparison, the gender pay gap for graduates of the 2017/18 cohort was around 17.7%. The gender pay gap continues to be dependent on the level of educational attainment. The difference in income is greatest among young people who have no more than compulsory schooling, with the median income of men being 47.6% higher than that of women 18 months after completion of education. With 'only' 8.6%, the difference is smallest for AHS graduates. Although some of the difference in income between women and men can be explained by different preferences in the choice of education/training fields (e.g. apprenticeships or BHS school types), a significant gender pay gap remains even after taking these difference into account.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The basic figure is restricted to persons who have not attended any further training within the first two years after completion of training and who have been employed for 18 months after completion of training. Income from employment is based on gross earnings minus special payments (such as holiday and Christmas bonuses). The monthly income is determined by multiplying the daily income thus calculated by 365/12.

Figure 9 - Median income 18 month after completion of education/training 2018/19



Source: Statistics Austria; career monitoring survey (BibER); data updated by the BMAW for the 2018/19 school year; September 2023.

## 1.5 Apprenticeship statistics and apprenticeship market

Apprenticeship training in Austria has always been a key component of both vocational training and career entry. As at 31 Dec 2022 a total of 108,085 apprentices were in training with 28,553 employers (including supra-company training/ÜBA programmes). 67.5% of the apprentices were male and only 32.5% female. The number of apprentices increased by 492 persons or +0.5% in 2022 against the previous year. Of the 108,085 apprentices in this year 6,228 or 5.8% were trained under the supra-company training scheme (*Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung – ÜBA*).

8,422 of all apprentices in 2022 had vocational training slots under §8b of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG*), with 7,171 of them enrolled in apprenticeships with extended periods of training (5,710 received training within companies and 1,461

<sup>31</sup> Source: Austrian Economic Chamber; apprenticeship statistics 2022.

in training establishments) and 1,251 in apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills (616 received training within companies and 635 in training establishments).

In the past 16 years the number of apprentices in the first year of training continued to decline and totalled only 31,969 apprentices in 2020 versus 41,176 in 2007; since 2020 the number of apprentices in the first year of training began to rise to reach 35,233 apprentices in 2022 or an increase of 6.9% on the previous year – see also Figure 10 on page 25. It should be noted, however, that the annual average number of 15-year-olds rose by 878 or +1% to 86,585 young people of this age group in 2022.

The ratio of apprenticeship entrants to the total population of 15-year-olds (apprentice ratio) was 40.7% in 2022, i.e. up 2 percentage points on the year before. The proportion of apprentices without Austrian citizenship in the first year of training was 16.9% in 2022, i.e. up by 0.1 percentage points on 2021. This is roughly in line with the proportion of non-Austrian nationals among all 15-year-olds, which was 17.4% in 2022.

A closer look at the previous educational qualifications of pupils of vocational schools within the dual training system shows that the greatest proportion completed pre-vocational schools (*polytechnische Schule* – PTS), while many of them have migrated from schools of intermediate vocational education (*berufsbildende mittlere Schule* – BMS) and colleges of higher vocational education (*berufsbildende höhere Schule* – BHS): in the 2021/22 school year, 29.6% of apprentices (pupils of vocational schools within the dual training system) had previously attended pre-vocational schools, 13% a BMS, 13.1% a BHS, 15.8% a compulsory secondary school, 5.5% a vocational school within the dual training system (primarily those repeating classes or changing their apprenticed trade), 6.3% an upper secondary AHS and 0.9% a lower secondary AHS. 6.6% had previously been enrolled in some form of continued training, whereof roughly half of the new entrants with continued training credentials had completed a BMS course lasting three or four years<sup>33</sup>.

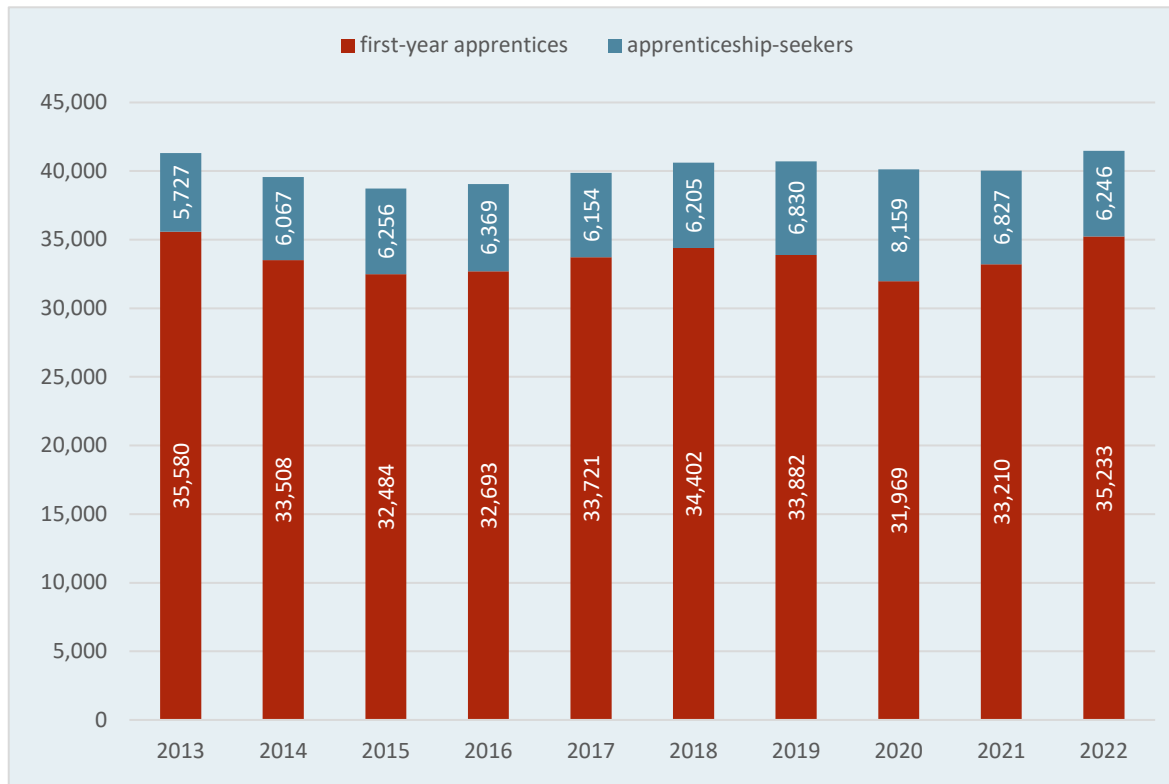
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<sup>32</sup> Source: Austrian Economic Chamber; statistics staff unit.

<sup>33</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, *Bildung in Zahlen* (Education in figures) 2021/22/volume of tables; item 1.5.13.1. Table on previous education of pupils in the first grades of vocational schools 2021/22.



Figure 10 - Apprentices in their first year of training and apprenticeship-seekers - 2013 - 2022



Source: 2022 apprenticeship statistics of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and BMAW-AMIS database retrieval of 21 Aug 2023 (stock of apprenticeship-seekers); apprentices in the first year of training as at 31 December of each year (cut-off date); annual average stock of immediately available apprenticeship-seekers without any employer's pledge to recruit them.

In 2022 the stock of apprenticeship-seekers fell by 8.5% to 6,246 (-581) persons over the previous year, while the number of PES-registered apprenticeship vacancies increased by 33.8% to 9,694<sup>34</sup>. For the year 2022, there were 2,452 more apprenticeship vacancies than demand for apprenticeship positions on average. The number of apprenticeship-seekers will continue to drop by around 2% in 2023 to an annual average of 6,160 persons.<sup>35</sup>

The ratio between immediately available apprenticeship-seekers registered with the public employment service and the immediately available apprenticeship vacancies notified to the employment service was 0.6 on average in 2022. PES involvement in matching the seekers

<sup>34</sup> Source: BMAW; retrieved from AMIS database on 21 Aug 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Source: Schwingsmehl et.al, *Lehrlingsausbildung: Vorschau auf Angebot und Nachfrage 2023* (Apprenticeship training: projected supply and demand 2023); Synthesis Forschung, Mar 2023.

and providers of apprenticeships was 86% in 2022, reaching an all-time high since monitoring began in 2007 (+11 percentage points over 2021), and will further increase to 86.3% in 2023 according to forecasts by Synthesis Forschung<sup>36</sup>.

In 2022 a total of 46,913 apprentices (i.e. 43.4% of all apprentices or up 0.1% on the previous year) were trained in trades and crafts. 16,428 persons or 15.2% (+1.2%) were trained in the industrial sector and 15,193 persons or 14.1% (+0.3%) in the retail sector in 2022. 1,218 apprentices or 1.1% (+2.5%) were trained in the banking & insurance sector, 2,856 apprentices or 2.6% (+2.6%) were trained in the transport sector and 9,536 apprentices or 8.8% (+5.4%) were trained by other authorised training providers (such as lawyers, municipal departments, etc.)

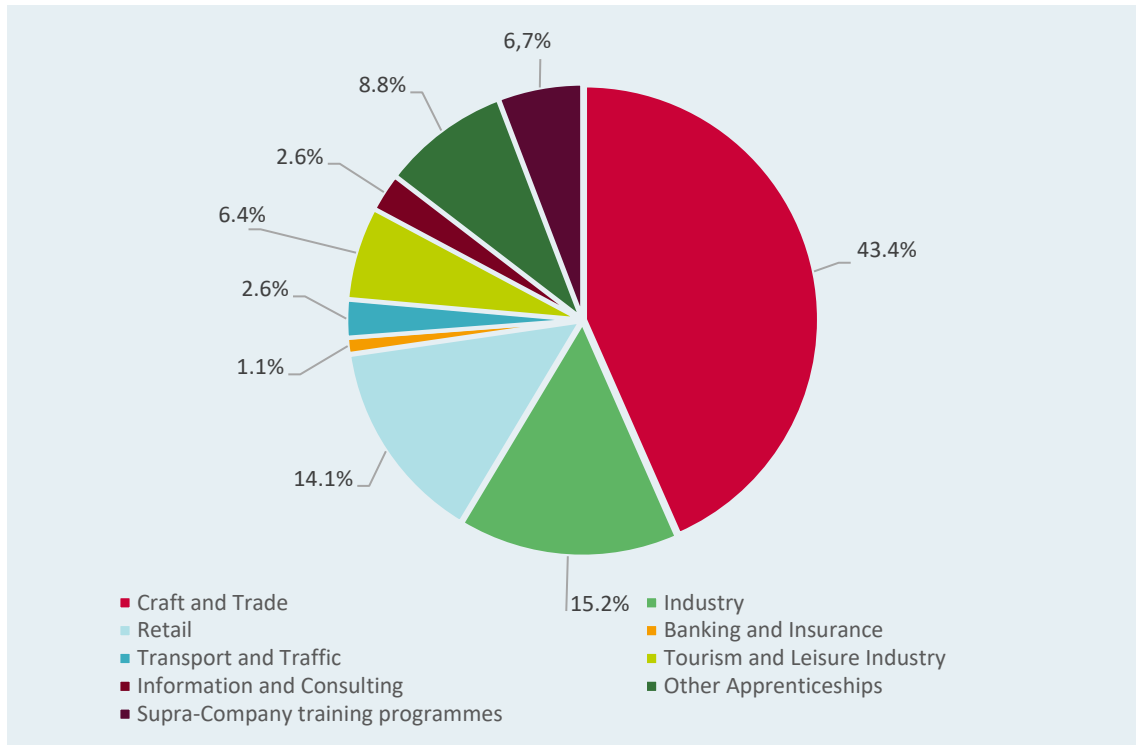
The largest increase in apprentices in 2022 was reported by the information & consulting sector, i.e. 2,764 apprentices or 2.6% of all apprentices, up 9.8%. The only sectoral decline compared to the previous year was in supra-company apprenticeships; 6,228 apprentices or 5.8% were trained in this sector, meaning a drop of 9.5% on 2021 (see Figure 11 on page 27).

In addition to personal interests and skills, the choice of apprenticed trades is influenced by the supply of available training slots on the one hand, and by the general economic framework on the other. In Austria young people still tend to be very traditional in choosing apprenticeships. Out of all young women apprentices in 2022, 20.5% chose retail including associated fields, 10% clerical apprenticeships and 5.9% hairdressing (hair stylist). Male apprentices preferred to be trained in the modularised apprenticeships of electrical engineering (12.8%), metal engineering (12.3%) and automotive engineering (9.8%). 58% of all female apprentices were trained in the ten most popular apprenticed trades in 2022. Male apprentices show a similar range of career choices: 63.5% were trained in the ten most popular apprenticed trades.

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<sup>36</sup> Source: Schwingsmehl et.al, *Lehrlingsausbildung: Vorschau auf Angebot und Nachfrage 2023* (Apprenticeship training: projected supply and demand 2023); Synthesis Research, Mar 2023.

Figure 11 - Percentage of apprentices by sectors in 2022



Source: 2022 apprenticeship statistics of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO).

Note: Other authorised training providers = employers who are not members of the WKO (e.g. lawyers, municipal departments, etc.). 'Other authorised training providers' were designated as 'non-chamber' till 2012. ÜBA = supra-company training (training providers authorised to train apprentices under the Vocational Training Act [BAG], e.g. supra-company training programmes commissioned by the PES, independent training providers).

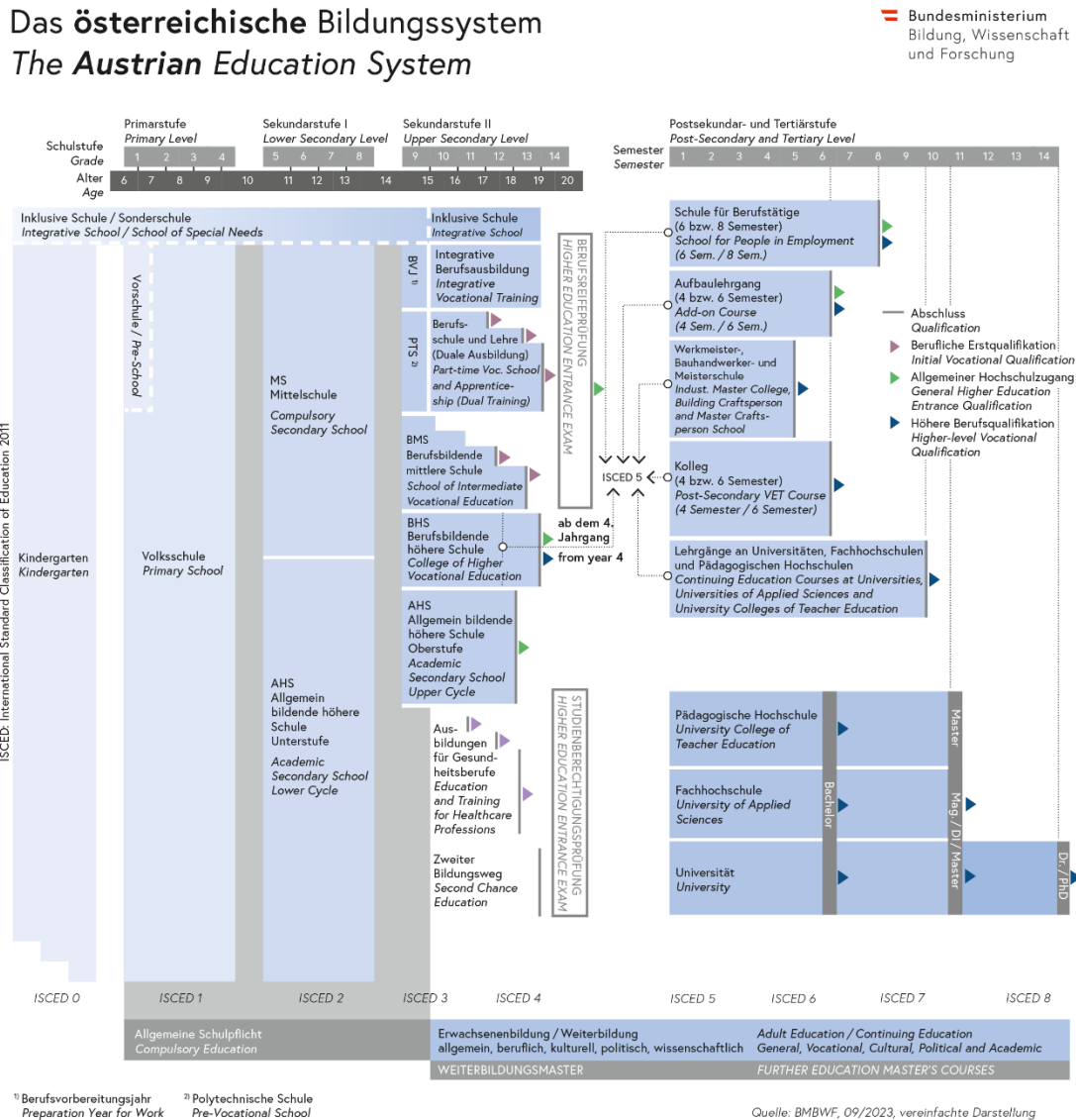
# 2 The Austrian Education and Training System

The Austrian system is characterised by a great variety of education and training options for different specialisations. Supported by figures on the various types of education and training pathways, the following sections will thus describe the whole system from school to tertiary education. The third section will address education policy priorities.

## 2.1 Education and apprenticeship

Figure 12 on page 29 provides an overview of the Austrian education system from pre-school to tertiary education. After pre-school and primary school, pupils may choose among an increasing number of school types and training programmes offering a variety of specialisations. In the field of education, the legislative and the executive powers are shared by the federal government and the Länder (federal states).

Figure 12 - The Austrian education system



Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), Sep 2023.

### 2.1.1 Up to lower secondary level (secondary level I)

There are nine years of compulsory education in Austria, beginning at the age of six. Children below school age may attend pre-school education establishments (e.g. kindergarten); for children who have turned five by 31 August of any given year, enrolment in kindergarten (minimum 20hrs/4 days per week) is compulsory and free of charge in the last year before entering school. Children who enter school early are exempted from compulsory attendance of kindergarten. The obligation to send a child to kindergarten may be replaced by

home education or child minders upon request. This implies that the child does not require any support in developing German language skills (language of education) and that the tasks of providing education and inculcating values are met.

The attendance rate of children aged three in kindergarten increased from 45.3% in 1995 to now 88.8% (kindergarten year 2022/23), while that of children aged four rose from 80.4% to 96% and of those aged five from 86.3% to 99.1% over the same period. In Austria, almost every third child under age 3 (29.1%) is in day care in the 2022/23 kindergarten year.<sup>37</sup>

The majority of school-age children, i.e. roughly 98%<sup>38</sup> attends primary school (primary level, four years). The remaining 2% attend special-needs schools, other general schools with their own organisational status (such as *Waldorf* or *Montessori* schools) or schools with foreign curricula. Children of compulsory school age who are not yet 'ready for school' are enrolled in preparatory or pre-school programmes designed to help children grow into the challenges of school life.

After primary school, as a rule at the age of ten, children move on to lower secondary level (secondary level I). The lower secondary level lasts four years. Upon completion of primary school, the pupils' education pathways diversify for the first time into two types of schools, i.e. the lower level of academic secondary schools (*allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule* – AHS) and the compulsory secondary schools (*Mittelschule* – MS). The choice of lower secondary level school depends on a number of factors: alongside the regional educational supply or commuting distance to the preferred type of school, the pupils' social environment and socioeconomic background play a major role.

*Mittelschule* (MS) is the compulsory secondary school for 10- to 14-year-olds in Austria. After successful completion of primary school all pupils may attend a compulsory secondary school. Its mission is to enable pupils – depending on their interests and affinities, their talents and aptitudes – to move on to schools of intermediate or higher education as well as to prepare them for working life. MSs combine the performance standards of lower secondary AHSs with a new teaching and learning culture focusing on flexible differentiation, individualisation and team work to provide targeted support to pupils.

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<sup>37</sup> Source: Statistics Austria (statistics on children's day-care centres 2022/23).

<sup>38</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, *Bildung in Zahlen* (Education in figures) 2021/22.

The curriculum of MSs is identical with that of AHSs in all specialised subjects. Since the 2022/23 school year, both types of school have a new compulsory subject: Basic Digital Education. Special features of compulsory secondary schools include sound vocational guidance and the subject Nutrition and Household. Under the autonomy framework, schools may set their own priorities. Moreover, there are so-called special forms of compulsory secondary schools, including music, sports and ski MSs. Since the 2022/23 school year, the pilot project of a MINT<sup>39</sup> MS has been introduced.

Performance is assessed in German, Mathematics and Living Foreign Language from Year Six onwards according to the two performance levels Standard and Standard AHS. In addition to the numerical school report, pupils receive a supplementary differentiated description of their performance (*ergänzende differenzierende Leistungsbeschreibung – EdL*), which records their performance strengths and learning progress. Periodical child-parent-teacher meetings (*Kind-Eltern-Lehrpersonen-Gespräche – KEL-Gespräche*) are held to discuss performance levels, learning progress, strengths and, where necessary, support measures.

For admission to an AHS, children completing Year Four of primary school must have good or excellent marks in German and Mathematics or must pass an entrance examination to this particular school.

### **2.1.2 Upper secondary level (secondary level II)**

Having completed the lower secondary level with Year Eight, pupils move on to the upper secondary level (secondary level II). At this level, the following education pathways are available: pre-vocational schools (*polytechnische Schule – PTS*, 1-year course), vocational schools of the dual training system (*Berufsschule – BS*; 2-4 years), level II academic secondary schools (*allgemeinbildende höhere Schule – AHS*, 4 years), schools of intermediate vocational education (*berufsbildende mittlere Schule – BMS*; 1-4 years) and colleges of higher vocational education (*berufsbildende höhere Schule – BHS*, 5 years). Year Nine is the last year of general compulsory education, whereupon young people may either continue their school-based education in upper academic secondary schools or schools of intermediate or colleges of higher vocational education, or they may enter the dual training system.

Pupils who fail to complete the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of a compulsory secondary school (*Mittelschule – MS*) or a pre-vocational school (*polytechnische Schule – PTS*) during compulsory education

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<sup>39</sup> MINT stands for mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology.

or after continuing education in a voluntary Year Ten may continue to attend these schools under a voluntary Year Ten or Year Eleven programme with the approval of both the school provider and the competent education authority. The same conditions apply to pupils who complete one of the schools mentioned in the first sentence in Year Nine of general compulsory education as extraordinary pupils. They, too, are entitled to continue attending these schools for another year as ordinary or extraordinary pupils.

Pupils who complete their general compulsory education (Year Nine) with negative marks at schools of intermediate or higher education may enter a voluntary Year Ten programme at a PTS school. This gives young people the chance to (re-)design their vocational and educational career after Year Nine and benefit from the school's vocational guidance and basic vocational education curriculum.

PTS schools follow directly on Year Eight and last one year. They offer general education, vocational guidance and basic vocational education. With the introduction of the Education Training till 18 initiative, all young people under 18 years are obliged to continue education or training after completion of general compulsory schooling. For more details see item 3.3.1 on page 67.

Academic secondary schools (AHSs) have either secondary levels I and II, i.e. lower and upper secondary levels, or only upper secondary level education lasting four years (or five in special strands). Pupils graduate from an AHS by taking and passing the standard matriculation examination (called *Matura* or *Reifeprüfung*), which permits access to universities, universities of applied sciences, teacher training colleges and academies as well as post-secondary VET courses (called *Kolleg*).

As of Year Nine, schools of vocational education offer a wide variety of training opportunities. This is particularly true of colleges of higher vocational education (*berufsbildende höhere Schulen* – BHSs) or schools of intermediate vocational education (*berufsbildende mittlere Schulen* – BMSs). They provide both sound general education and initial vocational training of varying duration and level from Year Nine.

Vocational education establishments include the vocational schools of the dual training system (*Berufsschulen* – BSs) as well as schools providing education and training in the fields of engineering, technology, arts and crafts, business, commerce, household services, tourism, fashion, arts and design, product management and presentation, social services, agriculture and forestry, pre-school education, social education including all special types of schools. From the 2023/24 school year, this educational landscape is supplemented by a 5-



year college of higher nursing and social care education (*höhere Lehranstalt für Pflege und Sozialbetreuung*) and a 3-year vocational school for social care professions including nursing prep programmes (*Fachschule für Sozialberufe mit Pflegevorbereitung*). Schools of vocational education can be of different types and duration (1-5 years):

The three- or four-year BMS courses are full-time courses of intermediate level education including mandatory practical training (compulsory placement). They start from Year Nine and impart the whole gamut of initial vocational training including the corresponding vocational credentials. BMS graduates may take the vocational matriculation examination (*Berufsreifeprüfung*) to gain general access to higher education. In addition, they have the option of attending two- to three-year add-on courses – conducted during the day or in the evening – which, analogous to the five-year BHS courses, conclude with matriculation and diploma examinations. Thus they acquire general access to higher education on the one hand, and complete initial vocational education and training at NQF level 5 on the other. Completion of a three-year (minimum) BMS course is equivalent to NQF level 4<sup>40</sup>. The one- or two-year BMS courses are full-time courses from Year Nine and serve to provide vocational prep training.

The five-year BHS courses are full-time courses of upper-level education including mandatory practical training (compulsory placement). They start from Year Nine and are concluded with matriculation and diploma examinations. BHS graduates have dual qualifications: they acquire general access to higher (university) education on the one hand, and have completed initial training in a vocation including the corresponding vocational credentials on the other. Completion of a BHS course is equivalent to NQF level 5. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade of a BHS corresponds to ISCED level 5 (ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education), i.e. short-cycle tertiary education. The skills and competences acquired in a BHS are thus directly comparable to academic qualifications. In the case of technical and industrial BHS courses as well as add-on and post-secondary VET courses, there is the possibility of acquiring the title of engineer after 3 years of professional practice. In the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the engineer title is classified in level 6 and is thus on the same level as a bachelor's degree. For this, it is necessary to go through a certification procedure.

In addition to continuing their education after completion of compulsory schooling, pupils may also choose to enter the dual training system, i.e. apprenticeships that involve on-the-job training (80%) plus compulsory attendance of vocational school courses (*Berufsschule* –

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<sup>40</sup> NQF = National Qualifications Framework.

BS, 20%). Apprenticeships involve formal training which ends with a final examination. Completion of an apprenticeship is equivalent to NQF level 4. There are 212 recognised apprenticeship trades in many different fields. 40.7% of young people leaving compulsory school in any given year enter apprenticeship-based training<sup>41</sup>. For more details on the transition from school to work, the dual training system, the supra-company training system, etc., refer to items 3.3 on page 67, 3.2 on page 52 and 3.3.4 on page 70. Those who have completed their apprenticeships may move on to attend schools for skilled construction workers, master craftsmen/craftswomen or foremen/forewomen. Moreover, they may take academic entrance examinations or vocational matriculation examinations enabling them to enter the tertiary education system or gain access to certain tertiary study programmes. Under the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research's funding programme for vocational matriculation examinations (*Berufsmatura: Lehre mit Reifeprüfung*), apprentices may take these examinations free of charge.

### 2.1.3 Pupils by type of school

In the school year 2021/22, Austrian schools had 1,139,244<sup>42</sup> pupils, with 48.5% of them being female. At the beginning of lower secondary level in Year Five, 59% of all pupils attended a compulsory secondary school MS, 36.3% the lower level of academic secondary schools AHS, 1.9% a special needs school, 1.6% a MS attached to an AHS and 1.2% a recognised school with own statutory rights. From the lower level of AHS more than 90% of the pupils move on to the upper level of an AHS (61.2%) or to a BHS (33.6%). From MS schools roughly 41.2% move on to AHS or BHS schools, the majority to the latter type of school (32.9%).<sup>43</sup>

In Year Nine, i.e. at the beginning of the upper secondary school level, 35.4% of the pupils attend a BHS, 28.7% an AHS, 16.4% a PTS pre-vocational year and 16.1% a BMS school, 2.6% a special-needs school and 0.9% a general-education school of own statutory rights, meaning that more than 60% of pupils in Year Nine attend schools that are to be completed with a matriculation examination. In 1980 this ratio was only 40%. Female pupils account for a

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<sup>41</sup> Source: apprenticeship statistics 2022 of the Austrian Economic Chamber – WKO (ratio of apprenticeship entrants to the total population of 15-year-olds on an annual average in 2022).

<sup>42</sup> Including schools with their own statutory rights and organisation.

<sup>43</sup> Educational transitions from the 2020/21 to 2021/22 school year; source: Statistics Austria.

greater percentage<sup>44</sup> in higher levels of secondary education (lower level of AHS: 51.6% female; upper level of AHS 57.7% female, BHS 53.5% female, vocational schools of dual system: 32.1% female, pre-vocational school: 36.5% female).<sup>45</sup>

## 2.2 Tertiary education and non-university post-secondary education

Standard matriculation examinations (*Reifeprüfung*), matriculation and diploma examinations (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung*), academic entrance examinations (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*) and vocational matriculation examinations (*Berufsreifepfung*) permit access to tertiary-level education at universities, universities of applied sciences, teacher-training colleges and academies (although some courses of study may require additional examinations). In addition, non-university based post-secondary education comprises VET courses (*Kollegs*) as well as add-on courses based on the participants' previous vocational qualifications and training them to become master craftsmen/craftswomen or foremen/forewomen. In order to qualify for post-secondary VET courses and academies, students are required to pass matriculation examinations, matriculation/diploma examinations, vocational matriculation examinations or academic entrance examinations. Schools for master craftsmen/craftswomen or foremen/forewomen, in turn, require their students to have completed their vocational training (apprenticeship).

University education and training is provided by university colleges of teacher training, universities and universities of applied sciences. In Austria 44% of 30- to 34-year-olds (men: 40%, women: 48%) had tertiary or equivalent education attainment levels (ISCED 5-8) in 2023<sup>46</sup>.

Roughly three quarters of all students are trained at the 16 science and six arts universities, all of them public universities. As part of their continuing education activities, public universities are increasingly offering university courses in addition to their standard study programmes. In the winter semester 2021/22, 16,240 students attended at least one of these courses. The University for Continuing Education in Krems is the leading provider in this field<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Basis: all school levels.

<sup>45</sup> Source: Statistics Austria.

<sup>46</sup> Source: EUROSTAT LFS 2023-Q1; retrieved on 12 Sep 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, *Bildung in Zahlen* (Education in figures) 2021/22.

Alongside these public universities, universities of applied sciences represent the second major area of tertiary training. In recent decades the number of university graduates and students has risen substantially. In the winter semester 2022/23, 398,084 students (55% female) were in higher education (short-term courses included), whereof 286,193 studied at universities, 70,933 at universities of applied sciences, 20,920 at teacher training colleges and 20,038 at private universities. The proportion of foreign students is approx. 31%. Foreign nationals studying in Austria primarily come from Germany, Italy and the other EU countries. Taken together, these countries account for roughly 70% of all foreign students.

### 2.2.1 Universities

Austria has 22 public universities, which currently offer more than 1,000 programmes of study to prospective students. The transition of study programmes from a two-stage system (diploma/doctorate) to three stages (bachelor/master/doctorate) will be completed in the forthcoming years. The number of diploma degree programmes under the previous system is already very low.

As illustrated in Table 3 on page 36, roughly 22% of the 296,177 enrolled students in the winter semester of 2022 were in engineering, 20% in the humanities and cultural sciences, 15% in natural sciences, 15% in social studies and economics and about 11% in law. In the humanities and cultural sciences the proportion of female students is 70% and in veterinary medicine programmes even some 80%. At 32%, engineering study programmes report the lowest percentages of women. In specific study programmes (such as mechatronics) female students account for less than 10%.

Table 3 - Formal study programmes by field of study (total), winter semester 2022 (cut-off date: 28 Feb 2023)

Groups of studies	Women	Men	Total	Proportion of women
Humanities and cultural science	41,329	17,686	59,015	70.0%
Engineering	21,170	44,981	66,151	32.0%
Interdisciplinary programmes	1,495	859	2,354	63.5%

Groups of studies	Women	Men	Total	Proportion of women
Arts	4,450	3,418	7,868	56.6%
Teacher training programmes	11,751	6,462	18,212	64.5%
Medicine	8,815	7,035	15,850	58.8%
Natural sciences	26,334	18,475	44,809	58.8%
Law	18,466	13,432	31,898	57.9%
Social science and economics	23,134	22,514	45,648	50.7%
Theology	901	1,104	2,005	44.9%
Veterinary medicine	1,431	353	1,784	80.2%
Individual study programmes	305	243	548	55.7%
Other study activities	22	13	35	62.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>159,602</b>	<b>136,575</b>	<b>296,177</b>	<b>53.9%</b>

Source: uni:data; data reported by universities on the relevant cut-off date as required by the higher education statistics and documentation ordinance (UHSBV), with add-on courses not included.

### 2.2.2 Universities of applied sciences

Today there are 21 universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen* – FHs) in Austria. Of the 58,726 formally enrolled FH students in the winter semester 2022, 71% were enrolled in bachelor programmes and 29% in master programmes.

Table 4 - Formally enrolled students in FH study programmes by fields of training, winter semester 2022 (cut-off date: 15 Nov 2022)

Formally enrolled students in FH study programmes by fields of training	Women	Men	Total	Proportion of women
Design, arts	581	387	968	60.0%
Health sciences	8,825	1,942	10,767	82.0%
Cultural sciences	16	1	17	94.1%
Military and security	56	375	431	13.0%
Natural sciences	489	368	857	57.1%
Social sciences	3,098	981	4,079	75.9%
Technology, engineering	5,609	15,586	21,195	26.5%
Economics	12,084	8,328	20,412	59.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,758</b>	<b>27,968</b>	<b>58,726</b>	<b>52.4%</b>

Source: uni:data; data reported by universities on the relevant cut-off date as required by the higher education statistics and documentation ordinance (UHSBV); data edited by BMBWF, Division IV/10.

Table 4 on page 38 provides an overview of FH students. In the winter semester 2022, most students chose training programmes in technology and engineering (36.1%), economics (34.8%) as well as health sciences (18.3%). Information technology and electronics were the most popular programmes in the technical field. Study programmes in economics mainly focus on business administration. Around four out of ten programmes are attended by working students<sup>48</sup>.

### 2.2.3 Teacher training colleges

Austria's 14 teacher training colleges (*pädagogische Hochschulen*) offer initial, further and in-service training in all education-related fields of work, in particular for teachers. They provide bachelor's and master's programmes for future teachers at primary level, secondary level of general education (in cooperation with universities) and secondary level of vocational education – see Table 5 on page 39. Training is now based on the age groups these

<sup>48</sup> Source: Statistics Austria: *Bildung in Zahlen* (Education in figures) 2021/22.

future teachers are to teach rather than on the school types they will teach in as was the case previously.<sup>49</sup> In order to manage the joint study programmes for the secondary level of general education, teacher training colleges and universities have formed four development networks for cooperation.

Table 5 - Students enrolled in teacher training colleges by type of teacher training (LA) programme; winter semester 2022/23

<b>Students enrolled in teacher training colleges by type of teacher training programme</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion of women</b>
<b>Lateral studies in music education</b>	0	0	0	0%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme in Elementary Education</b>	532	15	547	90%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme in Social Pedagogy</b>	43	5	48	89%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Primary Level</b>	6,635	839	7,492	89%
<b>Master's degree programme (LA) for Primary Level</b>	3,380	339	3,719	91%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Elementary schools</b>	19	5	24	79%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for New Secondary schools</b>	11	15	26	42%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Secondary vocational education</b>	1,064	1,281	2,345	45%

<sup>49</sup> Teacher training programmes based on types of schools are in phase-out; no more students are being admitted to these studies.

<b>Students enrolled in teacher training colleges by type of teacher training programme</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion of women</b>
<b>Master's degree programme (LA) for Secondary vocational education</b>	281	143	424	66%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Special schools</b>	1	1	2	50%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme (LA) Secondary general education</b>	3,239	1,991	5,230	62%
<b>Master's degree programme (LA) Secondary general education</b>	691	341	1.032	67%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for subject area at BMHS</b>	6	8	14	43%
<b>Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Religion in compulsory schools</b>	1	4	5	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,921</b>	<b>4,987</b>	<b>20,908</b>	<b>76%</b>

Source: Statistics Austria, statistics databases – studies at teacher training colleges, winter semester 2022/23 as at 20 June 2023;

Note: Teacher training programmes for secondary level of general education (AB): joint study programmes of universities and teacher training colleges; these study programmes are counted on the basis of the allocation formula defined in §24 of the higher education statistics and documentation ordinance (UHSBV). It requires that studies be rounded to the nearest whole number, which may result in deviations between the sum total and the added sub-totals. The data in the table include the proportion of students in bachelor's and master's LA degrees in secondary level of general education and master's LA degrees for lateral entries in music education which are to be allocated to teacher training colleges.



## 2.3 Education policy priorities<sup>50</sup>

Good education and training are important for an individual's development, and they are indispensable for successful entry into formal-sector jobs. In order to give children and young people good and fair education opportunities, the Austrian education system is being continually developed. Successful education programmes are being continued, while new options and reforms are introduced to create fairer opportunities.

Policy measures taken in the apprenticeship system – such as modularisation of training or subsidies to apprenticeships – will be described in item 3.2 on page 52.

### 2.3.1 Pre-school education – federal training initiative and EU project to improve framework conditions

Participation in pre-school education programmes and interaction with well-trained and highly qualified professionals is beneficial for all children, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There is a growing demand for pre-school education for children aged 0 to 6 years in Austria. However, varying outline conditions for staff, low social recognition of the profession as well as high fluctuation of professionals in Austria have led to a shortage of staff and thus a limited supply of high-quality early childhood education.

According to a study by the BMBWF, some 20,200 pre-school educators and carers will be needed by 2030. In recent years, the federal government has therefore created numerous new training pathways to qualify as pre-school educators and carers. Formats for lateral entrants at teacher training colleges, training centres for pre-school education and universities as well as special initiatives for work-based training of assistants already working in this field are intended to open up new target groups and enhance the diversity of teams. In addition, training places in post-secondary VET courses have been increased since 2021. By integrating pre-school education into the well-known *Klasse Job* campaign, the federal government is taking yet another step to counter the shortage of skilled labour.

As part of the TSI project 'Improving staff conditions for better quality in early childhood education and care in Austria' funded by the European Commission and launched in December 2022, work is being carried out in close partnership with the federal states and with

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<sup>50</sup> Source: BMBWF.

the involvement of other relevant stakeholders as well as international experts to improve working conditions for pre-school staff in Austria.

Since 2008 the federal government's pre-school investment programmes have been ongoing under agreements concluded under Article 15a of the Federal Constitutional Act (*Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz – B-VG*) and designed to advance expansion and quality.

### **2.3.2 Top Class Job**

The Top Class Job (*Klasse Job*) departmental strategy comprises a wide-ranging set of measures aimed at meeting the demand for teaching staff in the long run. It pursues three key fields of action:

- Modernising the narrative of school.
- Addressing new target groups for the teaching profession and professionalising staff management.
- Further developing the training of teachers.

The lateral entry programme, which has attracted over 3,500 interested individuals, has also proven to be a successful approach to enabling people with academic background (minimum bachelor's degree from university/FH) and relevant professional experience to switch to the teaching profession. To improve the availability of data and meet the demand for teachers, a demand forecast for the years 2023-2030 has been drawn up and plans to conduct a three-year evaluation of lateral entry have been discussed.

### **2.3.3 The Education Package: encourage and develop skills**

The Education Package (*Pädagogik-Paket* <https://www.paedagogikpaket.at/>) includes a set of aligned measures and instruments aimed at optimally preparing children and young people for life in an increasingly complex world. Pupils should be able to fashion their lives as confident and independently thinking individuals and assume responsibility for themselves and society. This can be achieved by classes focusing more than before on a steady and systematic build-up of skills and competences.

At the same time, the Education Package gives teachers, pupils, parents and guardians greater clarity and transparency regarding the individual school's learning goals to be achieved. Consistent assessment of, and an increased exchange on, the pupils' current state

of learning and development are to provide guidance for all the parties involved so as to shape further learning processes in a targeted manner.

### Measures and instruments

From school entry to beyond the end of compulsory education, these measures and instruments of the Education Package greatly contribute towards achieving individual educational success.

To ensure a good start at school and to prevent educational poverty, it is important to record the development of central school-preparatory skills as early as possible – i.e. already before school entry – to be able to plan and initiate appropriate support measures. With the **school entry screening** (*Schuleingangsscreening*), primary schools now have an easy-to-use, flexible, scientifically sound diagnostic procedure at their disposal with the added benefit of being attractive for children. The aim of the school entry screening is to help ensure that school-age children receive the best possible support around school entry enabling them to acquire the necessary basic skills and safeguard their educational opportunities from the very beginning.

The 2023 curricula for primary and lower secondary levels, which entered into force (bottom up) in the 2023/24 school year, form the basis for modern teaching in the future. They focus equally on the development of subject-specific and interdisciplinary competences. Digital skills, environmental education, sustainability, economy, finance, consumer, media education and other current 'cross-cutting themes' are given greater importance, including a holistic view of pupils and their personal and social skills. Interdisciplinary, critical thinking, communication, cooperation and creativity (21<sup>st</sup> century skills) are promoted by the curriculum reform.

**Competence grids** (*Kompetenzraster*) and exemplary learning tasks are educational tools for teachers made available for specific subjects from the 2023/24 school year. They specify the competence descriptions laid down in the curricula by using three competence levels to describe the competences to be acquired by pupils. Competence grids primarily serve teachers to plan the teaching process and to reflect on their teaching work, taking into account the formats in which pupils express a level of competence. But they also come in handy in preparation for discussions with pupils, parents or guardians about learning progress and levels of achievement.

**Individual competence measurement PLUS** (*individuelle Kompetenzmessung PLUS* – iKM<sup>PLUS</sup>) is a standardised tool mainly designed to make performance more transparent. Information obtained with iKM<sup>PLUS</sup> forms an important point of reference for the further development of teaching and for providing targeted, individualised and sustainable support to pupils enabling them to acquire key skills.

Finally, the Your Future (*Deine Zukunft*) **education and career guidance tool** (*Bildungs- und Berufsorientierungstool* – BBO Tool), which is already used at the beginning of Year Seven, is an instrument that helps pupils find their future individual education and career pathway on their own. Career decisions can be well prepared and made more deliberately by examining individual recommendations for action.

In future, the **revised Performance Assessment Ordinance** (*Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung* – LBVO) will provide for increased consideration and incorporation of current pedagogical concepts, such as in particular the paradigm of competence orientation. Furthermore, the LBVO is to be restructured on the one hand and adapted in terms of language and content on the other.

The **mandatory nature of education** means that all pupils are supported in achieving the minimum standards in German, Mathematics and English. Any weaknesses of pupils are addressed by targeted support, with this support being continued – where needed – after completion of general compulsory education.

#### **2.3.4 New curricula in technical and vocational education<sup>51</sup>**

The 2023/24 school year will see the implementation of two new types of school in the vocational school system: the higher vocational college for nursing and social care (*Höhere Lehranstalt für Pflege und Sozialbetreuung* – HLPS) and the vocational school for social professions and prep courses for care professions (*Fachschule für Sozialberufe mit Pflegevorbereitung*). These two types of school are another major building block in meeting the demand for skilled labour in nursing and social care; by 2030, roughly 8,000 school-based training places should be available in the nursing and social (care) professions segment.

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<sup>51</sup> Source: BMBWF; Note: The curricula for HAS, HAK, AUL and bilingual HAK Slovenian were already implemented in 2014, the forms for working students (HAK B, Kolleg and Kolleg B) followed in 2015.

After completing their training, graduates of HLPs have ‘dual qualification’ credentials – they are skilled nursing assistants and entitled to enter tertiary education – including various credit transfer options, e.g. when taking up a relevant FH degree course.

Within the three-year programme, the theoretical contents of nursing assistant training are brought forward and credited towards the subsequent nursing assistant training programme resulting in a reduction of the training period.

In addition, numerous school pilot projects and transitional curricula have been adopted into the mainstream school system.

In view of ongoing multiple transformations, current priorities in vocational education include areas such as ‘green transition / green skills’, digitalisation and AI.

All curricula of vocational education establishments can be retrieved from: [ABC SchoolFinder](#).

### **2.3.5 Strengthening school autonomy at AHSs and BMHSs**

The amendment to school law, Federal Law Gazette I no. 96/2022, created the legal basis for schools to decide autonomously whether to apply full-year or semester-based (SOST) upper secondary teaching. School autonomy was also extended by allowing schools to shorten the winter semester for final classes. The focus is on utilising the room for manoeuvre offered by school autonomy to realise the individual performance potential of pupils. The aim is to provide more individualised support to pupils in line with their strengths, talents and interests.

With the amendment to school law, Federal Law Gazette I no. 96/2022, individual learning support (*individuelle Lernbegleitung* – ILB) – a programme to support pupils with learning lags and/or learning weakness – will also be made available to all intermediate and higher schools of at least three years from Year Ten (meaning in Years Ten, Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen as well as in add-on courses) from the start of the 2023/24 school year, unless the school programme is for working students. ILB is about individualised, holistic support for pupils with learning deficits to improve their overall learning situation. ILB aims to raise awareness of learning successes and initiate a positive further development in the process. For more information consult: [Die individuelle Lernbegleitung - ILB](#).

### 2.3.6 Integration of refugee children and adolescents

Targeted measures are taken to integrate refugee pupils including, inter alia, language and psychosocial support as well as support measures for young refugees aged 15 plus who are no longer required to attend school<sup>52</sup>.

From the 2023/24 school year, language education will be integrated as an overarching topic into the curricula of primary and lower secondary levels. The promotion of German language acquisition is of great importance in all types of schools as knowledge of the language of instruction is essential for success at school, participation in social life and future integration into the labour market. Based on scientific evaluation, measures for the advancement of German language support were thus defined in 2022 and 2023, enabling teachers to assign pupils with inadequate German language skills to tailor-made support measures. Additional teachers are deployed so that children and adolescents can be given longer-term support in German in smaller groups.

The model of German language support aims to enable children and young people to take part in mainstream lessons as quickly as possible by providing intensive support in learning the language of instruction. Pupils who are unable to follow lessons due to a lack of German language skills get 15 (primary level) or 20 (secondary level) weekly hours of intensive language training in German support classes. In addition, they spend several hours learning together with pupils from mainstream classes (e.g. music, physical exercise and sports). After migration to mainstream schooling, extraordinary pupils continue to receive targeted language support in German support courses and ordinary pupils in remedial lessons.

To prevent career losses for pupils attending German support measures, more flexible test periods for standardised language assessment were incorporated into law in April 2023, meaning that pupils who make good progress in learning German can immediately transfer to mainstream classes.

Due to the Ukraine crisis, so-called 'transitional courses' are currently being offered at academic secondary schools (AHSs) as well as schools of intermediate and colleges of higher vocational education (BMSs and BHSs). These courses are designed for displaced young people with little knowledge of German, the language of instruction.

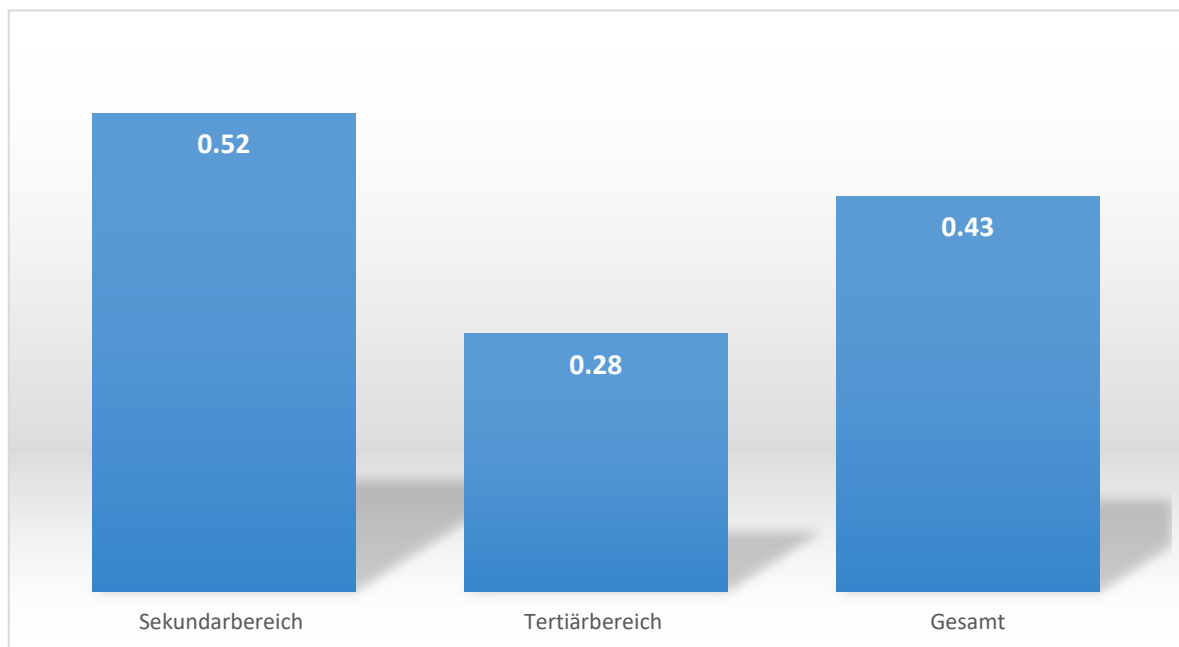
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<sup>52</sup> Source: BMBWF.

### 2.3.7 Gender-sensitive career guidance and educational choices

Many of the educational and career decisions are still based on gender stereotypes, as is substantiated by data. The BMBWF uses the dissimilarity index to monitor the gender imbalance along the education chain: in secondary education by type of school (Year Ten) and in higher education by study programme (undergraduate degree programmes begun). The Figure shows that roughly half of all pupils (52%) would have had to change their school type and 28% of undergraduates in higher education would have had to change their degree programme to achieve a balanced gender ratio.<sup>53</sup>

Figure 13 - Segregation in education / dissimilarity index 2021/22



Source: BMBWF – own calculation.

Note/explanation: segregation in education currently stands at 43%. The gender ratio in education would be balanced at 0%.

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<sup>53</sup> To calculate the overall index, various categories (headcounts in school types in a specific school year on the one hand, and number of study programmes begun on the other) are summarised, thus taking into account that the choice of school education can subsequently influence the choice of degree programmes. Measures to reduce gender segregation must therefore begin at an early stage.

A persistent shortage of skilled workers in MINT professions and in the fields of education, care and social services highlights untapped potential: girls are still substantially underrepresented in technical training programmes and boys in educational or care-related training programmes.

To counter the shortage of skilled workers, new types of schools have been established in the fields of education, care and social services in addition to the existing ones: the three-year vocational school for social professions and prep courses for care professions (*Fachschule für Sozialberufe mit Pflegevorbereitung*) and the five-year higher vocational college for nursing and social care (*höhere Lehranstalt für Pflege und Sozialbetreuung*). The *MI(N)Tmachen* action plan for more MINT specialists aims to attract more young people to MINT training programmes and support them on their pathway to successful completion of education and training, a special focus being on attracting young women.<sup>54</sup>

The 'gender equality policy' in the school system aims, among other things, to reduce typical gender-based education and training choices.<sup>55</sup> The circular 'Reflexivity-based gender education and equality' or *Reflexive Geschlechterpädagogik und Gleichstellung* (2018) and the ensuing integration of this policy into the new curricula of primary schools, compulsory secondary schools and the lower levels of academic secondary schools are intended to provide early guidance to pupils to help them identify gender stereotypes, address these stereotypes and, in so doing, expand their own life and career prospects (gender-sensitive career guidance).

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<sup>54</sup> MI(N)Tmachen action plan: [https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Aktuelles/MI\(N\)T-machen.html](https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Aktuelles/MI(N)T-machen.html)

<sup>55</sup> Materials on 'gender equality policy in schools' of BMBWF:

[https://portal.ibobb.at/fileadmin/Berufsorientierung\\_und\\_Bildung/IHS-Geschlechtersegregation-Bericht-2018.pdf](https://portal.ibobb.at/fileadmin/Berufsorientierung_und_Bildung/IHS-Geschlechtersegregation-Bericht-2018.pdf)

[https://service.bmf.gv.at/BUDGET/Budgets/2018\\_2019/bfg2019/teilhefte/UG30/UG30\\_Teilheft\\_2019.pdf](https://service.bmf.gv.at/BUDGET/Budgets/2018_2019/bfg2019/teilhefte/UG30/UG30_Teilheft_2019.pdf)



# 3 Vocational Education and Support at the Transition from School to Work

Austria's education/training system is being adapted on an ongoing basis in order to improve young people's development and job opportunities (see also item 2 on page 28). This policy includes career counselling, support and new programmes within the apprenticeship system as well as programmes at the transition from the various school types to the world of work. The Education Training till 18 initiative is intended to guarantee every young person some form of training. It was introduced in 2017 and now applies throughout the country. As well as supra-company apprenticeships, major other initiatives include the Apprentice Coaching (*Lehrlingscoaching*), the Youth Coaching (*Jugendcoaching*) or the Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*) programmes. They are supplemented by projects targeted at specific groups and described in greater detail below.

## 3.1 Vocational and educational information

Finding the right occupation is a special challenge for young people in view of the often very complex and broad range of career options available. It is a difficult task to maintain an overview of the gamut and diversity of career perspectives in the modern workplace and to help young people choose careers that match their individual skills and interests.

Career guidance services in Austria are broad-based and wide-ranging. Alongside Austria's public employment service with its core tasks of career counselling and job brokerage, a variety of other entities, e.g. the Chamber of Labour and the Economic Chamber, offer advice. Career guidance at school includes improvement of basic learning skills in class, compulsory vocational guidance for Year Seven and Year Eight pupils, projects and hands-on experiences (days of practical job experience, company visits, visits to information and counselling centres, etc.) as well as information provided by vocational and academic education counsellors.

### 3.1.1 Vocational and educational information at school

Schools support vocational choices by strengthening the pupils' career management skills in class, by offering appropriate information and counselling as well as by providing hands-

on insights into working life. This great variety of consistent support is summarised under 'ibobb' (German acronym for information, counselling and guidance on education and career) and is mainly intended to enable pupils to make independent education and career choices based on their interests and abilities. Close cooperation with extra- and post-curricular entities – e.g. the PES's Vocational Info Centres (BIZ), information and advice by the social partners and the tertiary education sector – is of key importance in this context. For more information refer to the following BMBWF link: [ibobb](https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/ibobb).

The ibobb portal offers valuable vocational information and guidance materials: [portal.ibobb.at](https://portal.ibobb.at)

With the *18plus – Berufs- und Studienchecker* (≈ check your job and study options at age 18plus) programme ([Link: 18plus](#)), pupils in the last two years of the upper level of academic secondary schools (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades of AHSs) and of colleges of higher vocational education (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades of BHSs) are assisted in making better informed decisions about their post-secondary training and educational career in line with their interests and aptitudes. This project focuses on the pupils' individual talents, affinities, interests and strengths. In the 2022/23 school year, 367 schools (214 AHSs and 153 BHSs) participated with 23,217 pupils in the free 18plus programme, bringing the total to 375,000 pupils since the beginning of the programme.

### **3.1.2 Career counselling and guidance by the public employment service**

Austria's public employment service is a first-stop shop for information on employment and careers. The PES offers initial counselling to young people who have completed or are about to complete compulsory schooling or seek apprenticeship training. It also helps early school leavers to complete their education cycle. Interested young people will be registered as apprenticeship-seekers and placed in an apprenticeship where possible, or in a supra-company training programme where required. A special regional PES office for young people is available in Vienna.

BIZ counsellors (BIZ = *BerufsInfoZentren* or Vocational Info Centres) help young people with information retrieval and questions on career and education choices. They also provide lectures, workshops, seminars or in-house fairs on work and career issues. The numerous services of these Vocational Info Centres are provided at 73 locations around the country. The public employment service offers special services to schools, such as arranging guided visits for classes to one of the BIZs where pupils are given the chance to discover their vocational interests and affinities. All Year Seven or Year Eight pupils are required to visit a BIZ centre

to give them the opportunity to gather independent information on career and training pathways and take informed decisions on their future job and education. Information for parents and teachers completes the range of BIZ services. BIZ counsellors are thus not only instrumental in helping schools to achieve the education targets defined in the curriculum but also in strengthening the pupils' information skills. In 2022, BIZ counsellors conducted 4,271 workshops for school classes – in-house, in schools and online.<sup>56</sup>

The public employment service offers online registration for apprenticeship-seekers (Lehrstellensuchend melden), as well as numerous items of information:

The interactive application portal (*Bewerbungsportal*) of the PES contains instructions, exercises and tips on all steps of the job application process (AMS-Bewerbungsportal). Hands-on support is provided by checklists and many examples of application letters and CVs from different fields of occupations. An 'application coach' provides step-by-step support in writing an application letter and a CV.

The PES's job compass (AMS-Berufskompass) provides initial orientation on career choices. An online test asks personal and job-related questions of relevance to an individual's career choice, and after submitting the answers test participants are given a list of suggestions on suitable jobs and an individual evaluation of the test results. Young people aged 12 to 14 years are offered their own age-appropriate vocational guidance tests (BIZ-BOTs) by the Vocational Info Centres. In 2022, the PES job compass was used around 60,000 times a month.

The PES's training compass (AMS-Ausbildungskompass) includes more than 4,000 training options that are available in Austria and offers young people detailed information on the Austrian education system, on education choices and training establishments.

The PES's youth platform 'Workroom' (*Arbeitszimmer*) was redesigned in 2021 and re-launched in 2022 under the name of 'Mein Beruf, meine Zukunft – die AMS-Jugendseite' (my job, my future – the PES youth page). This platform provides essential information to pupils, apprentices and students on school, job and higher education choices.

Young people may access the PES job lexicon (Berufslexikon-Startseite) to view detailed descriptions of almost 1,800 jobs arranged by level of educational attainment; more than 400 online videos supplement the written texts and photographs. General information videos

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<sup>56</sup> Source: PES Annual Report 2022.

and 'virtual' company visits are also available. Smaller special tools highlight a variety of aspects for different target groups, such as the PES salary compass, the FiT salary calculator and the PES career videos. The PES job lexicon records around 190,000 visits per month.

Although the PES vocational information system (Berufsinformationssystem – BIS) is primarily targeted at experts, one fifth of the general public uses this system as well. It describes roughly 500 occupations (*Berufe*) and provides details on training, earnings prospects, qualifications, etc.

An online educational and vocational information platform of the private association *Bildung und Beruf* (Beratung Bildung und Beruf) is targeted at pupils, at individuals with higher education qualifications, as well as at those who are already employed, and provides information on education, training and careers. Moreover, it offers basic training, courses and coaching in the context of education and career choices, career planning, lifelong learning, etc.

## 3.2 Apprenticeship

Facts and figures on apprenticeships and their integration into the education system have already been described in previous sections. This section delves into framework conditions, new developments and subsidy programmes.

### 3.2.1 Framework conditions for the dual training system

The dual training system plays an important role in Austria, as it combines practical on-the-job training and school-based theoretical education (on one or two days per week or for several weeks per school term). The duration of apprenticeship training varies according to the chosen trade and may last two, two and a half, three, three and a half or four years and is completed with a final apprenticeship examination. Sector-specific priority programmes have been introduced for a number of apprenticed trades. An apprentice's 'wage' is called *Lehrlingseinkommen*, its minimum rate being defined in the relevant collective agreement. This remuneration will increase with every year of training, and in the last year it will reach roughly 80% of a corresponding skilled worker's wage. For example, the collective agreement for employees and apprentices in the retail sector defines the remuneration of a retail apprentice to be €730 in the first year of training, €940 in the second year, €1,200 in the third year and €1,250 in the fourth year (applicable as of 1 Jan 2022). Apprenticeships end

with a final examination. In 2022, 40.7%<sup>57</sup> of 15-year-olds in Austria entered an officially recognised apprenticeship after completion of compulsory education, thus making the dual system the strongest upper secondary level education pathway in numbers. Would-be apprentices may choose from roughly 210 apprenticed trades. Based on the continuous development of training regulations and the introduction of new apprenticed trades, the dual system is able to meet the requirements of the world of business and work and provide training in tune with the needs of the market.

Apprenticeships are regulated by the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG*) and the School Organisation Act (*Schulorganisationsgesetz – SCHOG*) as well as the Act on Vocational Training in Agriculture and Forestry (Land- und *Forstwirtschaftliches Berufsausbildungsgesetz – LFBAG*). The most important revisions in recent years will be described below.

### 3.2.2 Revision of the Vocational Training Act

- The revision of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG*) in March 2020 replaced the terms '*Lehrlingsentschädigung*' (literal translation: apprentice's compensation) and '*Verwendung*' (literal translation: use of apprentices) by '*Lehrlingseinkommen*' (apprentice's remuneration) and '*Beschäftigung von Lehrlingen*' (employment of apprentices) to promote the use of an appreciative and contemporary language. Every five years all job profiles are to be subject to a mandatory analysis to ensure their ongoing modernisation and the quality of economic and technical standards.
- The 2020 BAG revision linked the supra-company apprenticeship training scheme (*überbetriebliche Lehre – ÜBA*) more firmly with company-based apprenticeships by involving companies entitled to train apprentices in the design of training contents and routines. The companies were also involved in the design of apprenticeships with extended periods of training and apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills according to §8c of the BAG.
- As of March 2020 people with childcare duties or health issues may enter part-time apprenticeships. The revisions stipulate the option of part-time training for apprentices with children, i.e. authorised training providers and apprentices may agree in the apprenticeship contract to reduce the normal daily or weekly working hours by 50 per cent at most. In order to reach the training goal (passing the final apprenticeship exam),

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<sup>57</sup> Source: Apprenticeship statistics of WKO, as at 31 Dec 2022; demographic development.

the standard period of an apprenticeship may be extended by the reduced working hours, but the total period of extension may not exceed two years. A corresponding option for extension is applicable to apprenticeship relationships with extended periods of training (§8b(1)) or apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills (§8b(2)).

- Another new provision of the BAG stipulates that periods of training for apprenticeships following on completion of a school of vocational education may be extended by no more than one year where required to ensure sufficient time for training the apprentice in question.
- With the revision of the BAG in 2020, and in view of the challenges posed by Covid-19 for the economy and the labour market, the instrument of short-time work was extended to include (with a statutory time-limit) apprentices in order to support training companies and thus preserve apprenticeship positions. Amendments in 2021 extended the possibility for apprentices to do short-time work for another period. Most recently, this time-limit has been legally anchored by the 2022 amendment till 31 Dec 2022 and not extended (has now been phased out).

### **3.2.3 Modularisation of apprenticeship training**

Since 2006, there has been the possibility of modularising apprenticed trades. A modularised apprenticeship provides training in three modules: basic module (two years, acquisition of basic skills), main module (minimum one year, acquisition of the knowledge and skills typical of the chosen trade), special module (half a year to one year, acquisition of trade-specific detailed knowledge).

The joint basic module ensures a uniform groundwork for training, while the various main and special modules can be combined as needed for the apprenticed trade in question. Within a total period of four years, participants may complete these basic, main and special modules.

### 3.2.4 Extended periods of apprenticeship training and acquisition of partial skills (vocational training under §8b of the BAG)

A revision of the Vocational Training Act (BAG) in 2003 provided the legal basis for inclusive vocational training of disadvantaged persons with special barriers to placement<sup>58</sup>.

Within extended apprenticeships, the period of training may be extended by one year or in exceptional cases, and if this is required to prepare a candidate for the final apprenticeship examination, by up to two years. Participants may also acquire partial skills within one and three years of training. Trainees in an extended training programme have the same status as other apprentices concerning their obligation to attend vocational school within the dual system. Extended training and the acquisition of partial skills may be provided within a company-based training scheme or within a supra-company training programme (ÜBA). It is supported by the Training Assistance programme (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*) under which support workers provide different types of support to disadvantaged and disabled young people while they are trained in a company (or by another provider) and attend vocational school.

8,422 of all **108.085** apprentices were in vocational training under §8b of the BAG (cut-off date 31 Dec 2022), whereof 7,171 apprentices were enrolled in apprenticeships with extended periods of training and 1,251 were enrolled in apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills, 6,326 being trained in companies and 2,096 by special providers.<sup>59</sup>

As of 2015 the revised BAG offers the option of drafting standardised curricula for acquiring low-threshold initial and partial skills within vocational training schemes under §8b of the BAG. This helps with the implementation of the Education/Training till 18 strategy by providing transfer opportunities which ensure that those who have acquired only partial skills may easily enter upskilling programmes at any given time in the pertinent occupation.

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<sup>58</sup> These are individuals who could not be placed in formal-sector apprenticeships and who belong to the following groups: individuals with special educational needs at the end of compulsory education spent, at least in part, under the curriculum of a special-needs school; individuals who have not finished their schooling at general lower secondary schools or have finished schooling with too many negative marks; people with disabilities within the meaning of the Disability Employment Act (BeinstG) and/or the Länder's disability legislation; or socially disadvantaged individuals who, under vocational guidance, have been found to be unlikely to succeed in apprenticeships.

<sup>59</sup> Source: 2022 apprenticeship statistics (Table: Vocational training under §8b: 2002-2022), Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO).

### **3.2.5 Apprenticeship with matriculation examination**

Since 2008 apprentices may take ‘vocational’ matriculation examinations (*Berufsmatura*) free of charge. Participants may take three of the four component examinations (German, Living Foreign Language, Mathematics and Special Discipline, i.e. the training field of the candidate) while still in apprenticeship training (i.e. before taking their apprenticeship examination) and the last component examination after their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In order to take the vocational matriculation examination free of charge within the subsidised programme launched for this purpose, at least one of the required examinations must have been taken successfully while in training, whereas the other examinations may be taken free of charge no later than three or five years after completion of an apprenticeship. Within an introductory phase – composed of an analysis of the apprentices' potential, basic courses in German and Mathematics as well as a counselling meeting – the apprentices are prepared for entry into the funded programme.

Each of the federal states in Austria has a coordination office responsible for managing the applications for and organisation of the preparatory courses. Preparatory courses are open to apprentices as of the first year of training in all apprenticed trades. The courses are offered by large numbers of providers, e.g. WIFI, BFI, adult education centres, as well as vocational or upper secondary schools. They may be attended outside the working hours. If their employer agrees, apprentices may attend the preparatory course also during their working hours. If so, apprenticeship training may be extended for a maximum period of 18 months in agreement with the apprentice in question. However, extension of the period of training is not mandatory.

Having passed the vocational matriculation examination, successful candidates have unrestricted access to study programmes of Austrian universities and universities of applied sciences, post-secondary VET courses and other Austrian training establishments requiring matriculation examinations for enrolment.

### **3.2.6 Apprenticeship following standard matriculation examination**

Graduates from academic secondary schools or colleges of higher vocational education may enter fast-track apprenticeships as an additional form of practical vocational training. Graduates from schools of intermediate vocational education providing three or more years of training, matriculation certificate holders as well as young people who have already com-



pleted an apprenticeship may have an(other) apprenticeship of three or more years' duration reduced by one year. Attendance of vocational school classes is condensed into shorter periods as well.

### 3.2.7 Subsidies to company-based apprenticeships

Subsidies to company-based apprenticeships create incentives for employers to taken on apprentices and enhance the quality of training thus provided. Training clusters managed by several companies (*Ausbildungsverbände*), training and continued training of trainers, additional training options for apprentices, training in apprenticed trades in response to regional demand for skilled workers, evenly-distributed access of young women and men to the various apprenticed trades are promoted by this subsidy scheme. Funding of counselling, assistance and support services helps raise the chances of successful training as well as increase participation in training, in particular in areas with only a few training companies or apprentices.

As of 2008 subsidies to company-based apprenticeships are available under §19c of the Vocational Training Act (BAG). The guidelines are defined by the funding committee of the Federal Advisory Board on Vocational Training (*Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat – BBAB*) composed of representatives of the then Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW), the then Federal Ministry of Labour (BMA)<sup>60</sup>, the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and the Chamber of Labour (AK). Certain guidelines, such as those on coaching for apprentices and their employers<sup>61</sup>, are now drafted exclusively by the Federal Minister of Labour and Economy following the merger of the two departments in May 2022.

Subsidies to company-based apprenticeships are processed by the Apprenticeship Offices (*Lehrlingsstellen*) of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and are financed by the Insolvency Contingency Fund (IEF). In 2022, roughly €246m<sup>62</sup> were made available by the Insolvency Contingency Fund for subsidies to company-based apprenticeships. Detailed information on subsidies to company-based apprenticeships is available on the following sites:

- BMAW on subsidising apprenticeships: [Allgemeine Informationen/Lehre- und Berufsausbildung/Lehrlingsausbildung-Duales System/Lehre fördern](#)

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<sup>60</sup> Now Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy.

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.lehre-statt-leere.at/>

<sup>62</sup> Source: Forecast budget calculation 2023 of WKO Inhouse GmbH.

- WKO on subsidising apprenticeships: [Service/Bildung-Lehre/Förderungen-Lehre](#)
- Quality-related measures/activities: [Qualität der Lehre](#)

#### **a) Basic subsidies**

Basic subsidies are determined by the rate of remuneration paid to apprentices (*Lehr-lingseinkommen*). In the first year of training they total three monthly gross remunerations for apprentices as defined by collective agreements, in the second year they total two monthly gross remunerations and in the third year and fourth year they total one such remuneration.

A special variant of these basic subsidies is available to apprenticeships for adults (persons aged over 18 without upper secondary vocational qualifications who are not subject to PES subsidies). In such cases, the level of subsidisation will be based on the remuneration paid to auxiliaries to calculate the remuneration of apprentices aged over 18.

#### **b) Inter- and supra-company training programmes**

Subsidies may be claimed by authorised training providers whose apprentices have completed inter- or supra-company training programmes, such as training clusters, job-related additional training of apprentices going beyond their job description, preparatory courses for taking the final apprenticeship exam or preparatory courses for the vocational matriculation exam without extending the period of apprenticeship (with the time spent in these courses being counted towards working hours); the cap on funding these inter- and supra-company training programmes was already increased from €2,000 to €3,000 in 2021 – for more information see: [Förderung: Zwischen- und überbetriebliche Maßnahmen - WKO.at](#)

#### **c) Professional development programmes for trainers**

In order to enhance the quality of apprenticeships, subsidies are available for the professional development of trainers. Eligible professional development programmes must total a minimum of eight hours and relate to the trainers' upskilling in areas such as training law, interaction with apprentices and personality development.

#### **d) Bonus for passing final apprenticeship exam with good or excellent marks**

Authorised training providers whose apprentices have passed the final apprenticeship exam with good or excellent marks at their first attempt in the relevant apprenticed job are eligible for this bonus payment.

**e) Measures and projects promoting an evenly distributed access of women and men to apprenticed trades**

Austria supports measures and projects aimed at achieving an evenly distributed access of women and men to apprenticeships. They include, inter alia, Job Coaching, programmes to raise employers' awareness, or initiatives encouraging women to enter engineering-type apprenticeships.

**f) Measures for apprentices with learning difficulties**

Measures are in place to bear the expenses incurred for repeating classes at vocational schools, attending preparatory courses for repeat examinations or tutorials at compulsory school level. Also additional attendance of vocational school forms is supported (with previous periods of training being credited or periods of apprenticeship being reduced or in cases where a vocational school form has been missed because the apprentice in question has switched training slots). This special measure was changed into a permanent one on 1 May 2021.

**g) Subsidy to the costs of board and lodging during attendance of vocational school classes**

Under this subsidy scheme, employers get the costs of board and lodging during the apprentices' attendance of vocational school classes reimbursed, which otherwise they would have to bear.

**h) Bonus for training apprentices from supra-company training establishments**

This type of subsidy is available to companies that enrol apprentices who have begun their training in supra-company training establishments under §30 or §30b of the BAG in their own company-based apprenticeship programmes. The subsidy is provided in the form of a one-off bonus of €1.000 if the following conditions are met:

- Training is provided in the same or in a related apprenticed trade;
- The training period spent in the ÜBA programme is credited;
- The apprentice remains in the training provider's company for at least one year from the beginning of the new apprenticeship or until expiry of the obligation to continue employment as defined in §18 of the BAG;
- No PES subsidy is claimed for the young apprentice (such as for women in male-dominated occupations).

This type of subsidy applies to apprentices beginning their apprenticeships by 31 Dec 2023.

**i) Added bonus for training companies which take over apprentices – available since 1 May 2021**

This new subsidy offers an additional incentive for taking over apprentices from other training companies (company units) which have become insolvent or been shut down. It consists of a one-off bonus of €1,000 per apprentice and training provider and is paid out once the statutory probationary period in the company is completed. The existing bonus for taking over apprentices from a supra-company training establishment remains in place – for more details see: [Einmalprämie für Lehrbetriebe aus insolventen oder geschlossenen Lehrbetrieben.](#)

**j) Subsidies to counselling, support and assistance services**

- Quality of training – training guidebooks

Training guidebooks are offered to employers to help them structure training and assure its quality. They include guidelines, tips and best practice examples of imparting complex learning contents.

- Final apprenticeship examinations
  - Clearing Centre for final apprenticeship examinations (*Clearingstelle LAP*): this Clearing Centre has been established to assure the quality of test questions in final apprenticeship examinations (*Lehrabschlussprüfungen – LAPs*) for all Apprenticeship Offices. Its tasks include inter alia: to check current test questions and examples for their relevance; draft new ones and, if approved, mark them with a ‘quality label’. For example, the Clearing Centre drafted a blueprint for the preparation of examiners for their tasks and developed a certificate (‘certified LAP examiner’).
  - Funding the costs of repeat LAP examinations: this funding option is available to cover the repeat examination fee as well as the costs of the necessary test materials for apprentices who failed the final apprenticeship examination (LAP) once or twice.
  - Attendance of training courses in preparation for job of examiner: costs incurred by the attendance of training courses preparing examiners for the educational/didactic aspects of examinations or providing further training in this respect are reimbursed by the Apprenticeship Offices upon application. Apprentices, too, are supported financially if they attend courses in preparation for the final apprenticeship examination.

- Support to promote the internationalisation of dual training
  - In order to support internationalisation, a number of funding options are available, including: reimbursement of the apprentices' remuneration during placements abroad, financial support to apprentices for language courses in the context of placements abroad, bonuses for apprentices while staying abroad, special services to apprentices and their training companies in the context of placements in other countries as well as participation in international skills competitions.
  - Employers who enrol their apprentices or apprenticeship graduates in international skills competitions (WorldSkills – international vocational skills competition, EuroSkills – European vocational skills competition) may be supported with a grant. The Apprenticeship Office pays grants in the form of prorated refunds of the apprentices' remuneration or the employee's wage or salary for the period of (external) preparation and of the competition itself.

- Digi Voucher (*Digi-Scheck*) for apprentices, training-related courses for apprentices **(new subsidy since 6 Apr 2021)**

This scheme supports participation in courses which impart or strengthen the contents of job profiles or those taught at vocational schools as well as vocational meta-skills (e.g. in the fields of digitalisation, resource management or climate protection). Apprentices must apply for this kind of support. 100% of the costs of approved courses may be refunded up to a ceiling of €500 per course. Apprentices may attend up to three courses per calendar year. For more information see: [Digi Scheck für Lehrlinge - WKO.at](#)

- Supplementary measures to support the quality of company-based apprenticeship training

These measures are designed to support quality management and quality assurance in company-based training as well as to test or further develop systemically relevant tools in pilot projects. In order to enhance quality in the dual training system, an Austria-wide and data-based quality management system is available for apprenticeship training ('quality management in apprenticeships'). Austria-wide coordination is ensured by the newly established quality committee of the Federal Advisory Board on Vocational Training (*Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat*).

- Supplementary measures to support integration into apprenticeship training and the labour market

In addition to the above support measures, and for the purpose of ensuring better – also supra-regional – integration into apprenticeship training and the labour market,

the following measures are eligible for funding, their focus being on persons from migrant backgrounds as well as on persons qualifying for recognised refugee or subsidiary protection status (see also ‘Supra-regional placement in apprenticeships’). Funding is based on additional resources made available under §13e of the IESG.

- Targeted support within the framework of the ‘coaching and counselling programme for apprentices and their employers’ (see Info Box 1);
- Organisation and provision of accompanying support measures in addition to the types of funding specified in item III of the guideline according to §19c (1) 1-7 of the BAG as well as, where required, psychosocial care;
- Projects and instruments helping beneficiaries to enter company-based apprenticeship training;
- Projects supporting the company-based training of young adults with the aim of enabling them to take the final apprenticeship examination.

This involves the following actions:

- Supra-regional placement of young people with special integration needs in apprenticeship vacancies (see Info Box 2);
- ‘JUST Integration’ – foundation for young adults who find it difficult to integrate into working life; it offers individual assisted and supported job-related training to complete formal apprenticeships (focus on persons qualifying for asylum or for subsidiary protection);
- ‘JUST 2 JOB’ – targeted placement foundation for young adults aged 20 to 30 years (see Info Box 3); and
- Upstream support to access apprenticeship training.

### **Info Box 1: Coaching and counselling for apprentices and their employers**

This **coaching programme for apprentices and their employers** (Link: [Lehre statt Leere](#)) aims to reduce the number of drop-outs, increase the number of successful apprenticeship examinations and raise the quality of training by providing coaches to assist apprentices and their employers whenever problems occur. The programme was launched in summer 2012 with a pilot project in the federal states

(Länder) of Upper Austria, Styria, Tyrol and Vienna and extended to the whole of Austria in 2015.

**Coaching for apprentices:** if problems occur during training, assistance by a professional coach may be requested from Apprenticeship Offices by apprentices (for themselves), by trainers or those responsible for training within a company, by vocational schools or by parents. The tasks of these coaches include: to have an initial talk with the apprentice in question; to identify perspectives; to conduct mediation where required; to assist with choosing refresher, upskilling or continued training programmes; and to support apprentices in preparation for the final apprenticeship examination. The steps to be taken are identified and defined in the initial meeting. Follow-up meetings to discuss the progress made are agreed between apprentices and coaches according to individual requirements.

**Coaching for employers:** coaching for the employers of apprentices; coaches may be requested from the WKO's Apprenticeship Offices by employers of apprentices to address issues of on-the-job training design, of how to deal with apprentices or where to request funding as well as to provide information on educational opportunities for apprentices and trainers. The kind and intensity of counselling depend on the requirements of the company concerned and are agreed on an individual basis.

In 2022, 2,145 apprentices sought help under the coaching scheme. In addition, more than 323 companies used the coaching programme for employers of apprentices. Since its inception in Dec 2016 till the end of Dec 2022, a total of 10,815 apprentices and 1,573 training companies were assisted by the coaching programme for apprentices and the one for employers of apprentices.

**Info Line:** in order to provide important information on apprenticeships during the Covid-19 lockdown in spring 2020 to all those concerned and interested, a special telephone info line was established and continued after the lockdown.

The programmes are to be increasingly used in a preventive manner and supplemented by digital counselling over the next years. Moreover, unless Training Assistance is already involved, the coaching programme for apprentices can support the migration from supra-company to company-based apprenticeships.

### **Info Box 2: Supra-regional placement in apprenticeships**

A Vienna-based pilot project involves supra-regional placement in apprenticeships to offer career perspectives to recognised young refugees (under 25 years) in occupations suffering from shortages of apprentices. The skills and interests of these young people are identified before placement to ensure optimal matching with available training slots. The young refugees are appropriately prepared for the requirements of an apprenticeship and assisted after placement. A special coach is available locally to ensure permanent contact and help them with questions relating to their job and their private life. These coaches also counsel employers on apprenticeships involving young refugees.

### **Info Box 3: JUST 2 JOB placement foundation**

Roughly 1,000 young adults aged 18-30 years with only compulsory education credentials who continue to be registered as unemployed despite the PES's efforts to place them in a job, and who show interest in completing apprenticeships and entering subsequent employment, are funded under the targeted JUST 2 JOB placement foundation programme. It focuses on supra-regional placement in training and employment as well as on integrating returners into the labour market.

### **Info Box 4: Europass<sup>63</sup>**

The Europass is a means of documenting skills and qualifications uniformly throughout Europe, thus helping to understand information on the knowledge and skills acquired and facilitating their recognition in other European countries. It includes the Curriculum Vitae (single template for writing individual CVs), Europass Mobility (document to record knowledge and skills acquired in another European country), Certificate Supplement and Diploma Supplement (describes the knowledge and

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<sup>63</sup> Source: BMBWF.



skills acquired by holders of certificates and diplomas) and the Language Passport (assessment of language skills and qualifications).

#### **Info Box 5: Sponsoring talent through mobility projects – placements abroad for talented apprentices**

Since 2014 placements of talented apprentices in other countries have also been eligible for financial support under a special programme. Initiated by the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and the former Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW), this project offers placements abroad to achievers, i.e. apprentices with average marks of 2.0 or under in their most recent vocational school reports. It is targeted at apprentices in an ongoing apprenticeship as defined by §2 of the BAG as well as at apprenticeship graduates having passed the final examination no more than one year ago. For more information and further details refer to: [ifa-Begabtenförderung/Mobilitätsprojekte](#).

#### **Info Box 6: Apprenticeship bonus 2023 – photo, optical and medical devices retail (Vienna)**

Just as in 2022, apprenticeship bonuses are available for the Vienna area in 2023. Up to three financial subsidies can be granted to current Viennese members of the sector in the WKO (per apprentice taken on under an apprenticeship contract; start of apprenticeship period must be between 1 Jan 2023 and 31 Dec 2023; apprenticeship must be registered with the Vienna Apprenticeship Office and provided in Vienna), namely:

- For the admission of apprentices into the apprenticed trades of medical device salesperson or photo multimedia salesperson, a one-time start bonus of €2,500 per company;
- For the admission of apprentices into one of the above-mentioned apprenticeships, an additional one-time subsidy of €500 per company and apprentice; and

- For apprentices supported in 2023, another one-off €1,500 per company and apprentice after completion of three years of training and positive/successful completion of the apprenticeship.

For the further requirements for claiming the apprenticeship bonus 2022 see the following link: [Lehrlingsbonus 2023 - WKO.at](#)

### 3.2.8 Apprenticeships subsidised by the public employment service

In addition to subsidies to company-based apprenticeships (for details see item 3.2.7 on page 57), the PES supports apprenticeships of the following groups:

- Girls/women in apprenticed trades with a low proportion of women<sup>64</sup>;
- Specially disadvantaged<sup>65</sup> apprenticeship-seekers<sup>66</sup>;
- Participants in programmes offering extended apprenticeship training or the acquisition of partial skills; as well as
- Young people aged 18plus years whose inadequate skills can be addressed by apprenticeship training or who are early school leavers.

The subsidy may be claimed by companies and other training providers. It is paid as a monthly grant towards the costs of apprenticeships, extended apprenticeship training or the acquisition of partial skills (apprentices' remuneration, staff costs and material expenses). The grant is awarded for one year of training/apprenticeship at a time and may be granted for up to three years in total.

There is the possibility of changing from non-subsidised to subsidised apprenticeships with extended training or the acquisition of partial skills if at the end of a standard period of apprenticeship an extended period of training is agreed. In such a case, only the additional period needed for extended training will be eligible for subsidisation.

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<sup>64</sup> All apprenticed trades where the proportion of female apprentices in the total number of apprentices was below 40% in the previous year of training.

<sup>65</sup> If the Land Directorate of the public employment service includes early school leavers in the group of eligible persons, the subsidy level for employers is €400 and for training providers €453.

<sup>66</sup> e.g.: people with physical, psychological or mental impairment; people having social problems; people who spent part or all of their education in special needs schools or in general secondary/compulsory secondary schools with special needs; slow learners after completion of compulsory schooling, etc.

The PES spent roughly €35.7m<sup>67</sup> on individualised financial support in 2022.

### **3.3 Managing the transition from school to work**

The focus of Austria's labour market policy on young people and young adults aged under 25 years is also illustrated by the public funds made available for this purpose: in 2022 the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy spent around €907m for the integration of young people into the labour market (including funds of activating labour market policy as well as funds of company-based apprenticeship subsidies according to the Vocational Training Act [BAG] and excluding subsidies for short-time work, which accounted for an additional €60m for the target group of under 25-year-olds). Of these, roughly €635m were spent on PES subsidies and grants, while €220m went towards subsidising company-based apprenticeships. Another €38m of active labour market policy funds were available for a number of programmes offered by the Social Affairs Ministry Service.

Transition from school to employment involves many challenges for young people and is not always straightforward. Therefore, young people are offered a wide variety of measures and projects designed to meet their different requirements and capabilities. They revolve around counselling and assistance services as well as schemes giving young participants sufficient time to mature at their own pace and acquire the necessary skills. They are intended to offer guidance and support to help young people steer through the often-confusing maze of occupation and education landscapes.

#### **3.3.1 Education Training till 18 (compulsory education/training)**

Whereas most young people already continue education or take up apprenticeships after completion of compulsory school, a small group of their peers fails to do so. They drop out of school or training, take up unskilled jobs or intermittently withdraw from the education, training and job market. In particular young people without sustainable access to continued learning are supported by the Education Training till 18 programme through appropriate choices tailored to their needs.

As of July 2017 every young person is required to continue education/training following completion of compulsory school. Compulsory school graduates may do so by moving on to upper secondary schools or colleges or by entering apprenticeships. Programmes such as

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<sup>67</sup> Source: PES DWH data analysis, as at: 29 Aug 2023.

Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*) or supra-company training schemes are available to disadvantaged youth.

The EducationTraining till 18 programme uses a variety of dovetailing schemes to provide the necessary assistance and appropriate incentives for making education and training a success.

This is ensured by better coordination and greater efficiency in using the many existing schemes as well as by closing the gaps in and between current programmes. The necessary (further) developments relate to the following areas: assisting young people in making appropriate education/training choices; preventing young people from dropping out of education/training; preparing disadvantaged youth for the requirements of continued training; as well as upgrading company-based and supra-company apprenticeships.

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW), the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK), the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and the Federal Chancellery (BKA) are responsible for the implementation of the EducationTraining till 18 programme. Other relevant actors involved in this process include the public employment service, the Social Affairs Ministry Service (SMS), the Länder, social partners, youth representatives at the federal level (BJV) and the local communities.

The Compulsory Education or Training Act (*Ausbildungspflichtgesetz – APfIG*) underlying the EducationTraining till 18 programme entered into force on 1 Aug 2016; once the related measures were in place, continuing education or training became compulsory as of 1 July 2017. The Compulsory Education or Training Act has been revised to improve the data quality of the reporting system of the EducationTraining till 18 programme. This revision entered into force on 1 Jan 2021.

### **3.3.2 Youth Coaching**

Youth Coaching is targeted at all Year Nine pupils, under 19-year-olds 'staying outside the system' as well as young people under age 25 if they have been identified as having special educational needs or disabilities, individual impairments or social disadvantages or as being at risk of failing to complete secondary levels I or II (early school leavers). Youth Coaching takes place in three stages. Young people entering this programme may need only the first stage or proceed to stages 2 and 3 after completion of the first one. Stage 1 involves an initial interview, stage 2 more detailed counselling and stage 3 ongoing assistance of up to

one year. Youth Coaching is based on counselling and guidance to outline perspectives for young people. Youth Coaches identify the young people's strengths and capabilities together with their charges, whereupon they will draft an adequate development plan.

Young people are to be empowered to take appropriate and independent decisions on how to continue training or education after completion of compulsory schooling. Youth Coaching does not involve any form of actual training, but rather various forms of counselling to prevent young people from ending up on the streets or being kicked out of the welfare system. Its ultimate goal is to ensure a successful transition to future working life.

In 2022 there were a total of 67,023 participants in Youth Coaching.<sup>68</sup> The programme is implemented within the project funding system of the Social Affairs Ministry Service.

### **3.3.3 Fit for Training**

Programmes such as supra-company apprenticeship training may be overly ambitious for some young people. They need other types of support to gradually accustom them to learning and working. Based on this approach (career guidance, personal development and maturing, basic and hands-on learning processes), the Fit for Training programme (*AusbildungsFit*) helps young people prepare for continuing training and opens up (career) perspectives. The programme is implemented within the project funding system of the Social Affairs Ministry Service.

Fit for Training was developed in 2013, its contents being coordinated with the PES. The pilot scheme to test a future nation-wide programme was organised within the 'maturing projects' funded by the Social Affairs Ministry Service (*Sozialministeriumservice* – SMS). Since Jan 2016 the Fit for Training programme of the Social Affairs Ministry Service and the Production Schools of the PES and the Länder have been gradually dovetailed to enhance synergies and ensure structural improvement for better quality and efficiency.

The Fit for Training programme is intended to prepare young people for training focusing on those who are in need of assistance and whose enrolment in, or successful attendance of, continuing vocational training courses is bound to fail due to deficits in defined basic skills. For this purpose, the programme primarily addresses the participants' lack of individual capabilities to make them fit for the next step towards vocational training. This nationwide, low-threshold standardised programme for disadvantaged young people who are not

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<sup>68</sup> Source: BMSGPK, data as at: 01 Jan 2023.

yet ready to enter training is based on consistent individual support to guide participants towards (vocational) training or into the labour market without losing precious time (to detours). As of 2019, young people with serious problems are offered pre-programme modules to give them more time to stabilise, get motivated, build relationships and form a structured daily schedule. 2022 Fit for Training projects recorded a total of 6,486 participants<sup>69</sup>.

### **3.3.4 Training Guarantee for young people – supra-company training programme (ÜBA) – §30 BAG**

As of 2008 young people who cannot be placed in a company-run apprenticeship have the guarantee that they will be enrolled in equivalent apprenticeship programmes in a supra-company training entity including recognised final exams.

There are two types of supra-company training: ÜBA 1 and ÜBA 2.

**ÜBA 1** is a training course that requires completion of the entire course offered by a training entity or by such an entity in cooperation with a company-run training workshop. Although participants can complete training within an ÜBA 1 setting, a key objective is to help them switch to regular company-based apprenticeships during training.

**ÜBA 2** is based on training contracts that do not cover the entire period of an apprenticeship, with practical training being provided in appropriate partner entities. They are designed as pathways towards placement in, and completion of, company-run apprenticeships.

Extended training periods or the acquisition of partial skills under §8b of the BAG are also provided under the ÜBA programme.

In 2022, around 11,600 young people participated in supra-company training schemes<sup>70</sup>. Funds totalling roughly €186m were authorised for the 2022/23 training year.

Authorised training providers who have taken on a young person from the ÜBA programme may claim funding of €1,000 after the first year of training or after the end of the period of

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<sup>69</sup> Source: BMSGPK, data as at: 01 Jan 2023.

<sup>70</sup> Source: PES DWH data analysis, as at: 31 July 2023.

employee retention under certain conditions – for more details see item 3.2.7 h) on page 59.

### **3.3.5 Training Guarantee till 25**

The Training Guarantee till 25 (*Ausbildungsgarantie bis 25*) is Austria's key programme for upskilling young people aged 19-24 years. A variety of qualification-based training programmes are available to young adults (having no more than compulsory education) to open up good labour market prospects in the long term and effectively address the impending shortage of skilled workers in Austria through this scheme. The Training Guarantee till 25 programme is implemented by the PES as of 2017.

In 2022, 11,957 persons received skills training under the Training Guarantee till 25, with a total of €73.7m spent on this programme. On an annual average, 11,845 young people aged 19-24 years with no more than compulsory schooling were registered as unemployed in 2022.<sup>71</sup> This is a clear improvement on 2021 (13,290 young people aged 19-24 years with no more than compulsory schooling registered as unemployed). The Training Guarantee is implemented under applicable federal guidelines through funding of PES programmes which are primarily aimed at providing vocational training credentials.

The following tools are used for this purpose:

- Apprenticeship training for young adults aged 18plus;
- Intensive programmes to train young people to become skilled workers;
- Supra-company vocational training;
- Preparation for final apprenticeship examinations;
- Job-related skills training;
- Training within the framework of labour foundation/ implacement foundation schemes;
- School-based education and training.

The Training Guarantee till 25 has been substantially expanded. The key focus is on the target group of young adults with low qualifications or with qualifications that are no longer marketable. The proportion of this age group in all unemployed workers was 15% in 2022.

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<sup>71</sup> Source: PES DWH data analysis, as at: 29 Aug 2023.

In view of the number of low-skilled unemployed 20- to 30-year-olds, the then Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) and the then Federal Ministry of Labour (BMA) agreed to establish the **Just2Job implementation foundation**<sup>72</sup>. As of Oct 2020 up to 1,000 young adults may enter this foundation programme to receive shortened training in a company. The programme uses intensive individual support to help participants pass the extraordinary final exam for such shortened apprenticeships in a company and become integrated into the labour market through subsequent employment under a fully insured employment contract. For this purpose, 100 supra-regional placements (training and employment at least 50km away from home) are supported financially by special mobility packages (moving costs, rent, housing costs, travel costs as well as costs of special case management such as looking for a new home, dealing with authorities).

100 returners are supported with a special returners' package (childcare costs and travel costs related to childcare, extended part-time apprenticeship = extended participation in the foundation programme).

The expenses paid from funds for company-based apprenticeships are estimated to total some €12m by the end of 2024.

### 3.4 Programmes for certain target groups

#### 3.4.1 Policies for young people with health-related barriers to employment<sup>73</sup>

Under Austria's Public Employment Service Act (AMSG) disadvantaged persons are to be given special assistance. In order to comply with this legal duty of ensuring greater equality of opportunity in the labour market, the public employment service uses a broader definition of disability: its assistance to unemployed young people with health-related barriers to employment is based not only on their legally defined disabilities (beneficiary disabled persons according to the Austrian Disability Employment Act [*Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz* – BeinstG], the Victims Welfare Act [*Opferfürsorgegesetz*] or the Länder's disability legislation) but also on the actual possibilities they have of being integrated into the labour market. Hence it takes into account physical, psychological or mental impairment provided that

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<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile the two ministries have been merged to form the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW).

<sup>73</sup> Disabilities of beneficiary persons are graded by official assessment (*Feststellungsbescheid*) pursuant to the Austrian Disability Employment Act (BeinstG), the Victims Welfare Act and/or similar legislation of the individual Austrian Länder (*Landesbehindertengesetze*). The public employment service, too, may grade clients as having health issues based on their restricted physical or psychological aptitude for the labour market.



this is supported by medical assessment and results in major placement difficulties or limited job opportunities for those concerned. Holders of disability passports have also been included in these measures since 2010. The average number of young people with health-related barriers to employment listed in the employment service's unemployment register in 2022 was 1,813<sup>74</sup>.

In principle, this target group may access the entire range of programmes offered by the public employment service, including the Youth Coaching programme (for details see item 3.3.2 on page 68), which assists this group with its individual needs and concerns. One of the priorities of the employment service is to support the training of young people with health issues and social disadvantages (see also item 3.2.4 on page 55).

Approx. 8,400 young people with health-related barriers to employment received subsidies from the public employment service in 2022, roughly 1,600 of whom were assigned to employment measures and 3,000 to support measures. The number of young people with health-related barriers to employment supported by the PES with skills training measures was roughly 6,600<sup>75</sup>.

### **3.4.2 Policies of the Social Affairs Ministry to foster participation in working life by young people with disabilities**

Participation in working life is one – if not the key – element for integrating young people with disabilities into society as a whole and achieving an inclusive society.

In response to a changing labour market, the Social Affairs Ministry Service is required to shift the strategic focus of its programmes. The group of persons eligible for support has been gradually widened in recent years and is now based on the kind of personal assistance needed by people with disabilities. Specific assistance needs arise from special life situations, age and life course, special types of impairment or the coexistence of disability and other disadvantages that are likely to make labour force participation more difficult. Basically and within the meaning of disability mainstreaming, all young people with disabilities have access to all general labour market measures and appropriate support. However, a number of disabilities require special assistance in the workplace or in preparation for the labour market.

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<sup>74</sup> Source: PES DWH, cube: PST analysis (stock of unemployed) 2017-ongoing, stock.

<sup>75</sup> Source: PES DWH, cube: fdg personen 2021, number of persons.

With the National Action Plan on Disability (NAP Disability) 2022 - 2030, strengthening labour force participation and fostering the development and continuation of existing programmes for people with disabilities remain the focus of disability policy. To this end, the government and major stakeholders agreed a package of measures, which includes a mix of new enterprise-focused and person-centred programmes as well as measures to extend existing programmes in response to actual needs. The package is to be implemented in stages.

The Social Affairs Ministry offers a wide variety of funding and support tools for the integration of disabled people into the labour market, which includes projects and individual assistance or a combination of both, with a special focus on young people (15-25 years). All measures in support of labour market participation of people with disabilities are open to young people in need of assistance, i.e. young people with disabilities or with impairments caused by individual social factors. Innovative measures developed in response to the specific needs of these young people will be described in greater detail below.

The Employment Assistance Network (*Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz* – NEBA) of the Social Affairs Ministry Service plays a key role in ensuring equality of people with disabilities and fighting against poverty and exclusion. NEBA provides a very differentiated system of assistance to young people with disabilities as well as to marginalised young people or those at risk of exclusion at the transition from school to work, including Youth Coaching, Fit for Training, Training Assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*), Job Assistance (*Arbeitsassistenz*) and Job Coaching. In addition, the network has been supplemented by the NEBA company service to provide counselling and service to companies focussing on their needs.

NEBA accompanies young people in need of assistance on their gradual path towards integration, i.e. from Youth Coaching, Fit for Training, vocational training under §8b of the BAG (acquisition of partial skills, extended periods of apprenticeship training), Youth Job Assistance, Job Coaching and skills training projects to formal training and employment relationships.

### **Youth Coaching**

The Youth Coaching programme is central to supporting young people with disabilities or in need of assistance. Young people are to be empowered to take appropriate and independent decisions on how to continue training or education after completion of compulsory schooling. The Youth Coaching programme is described in greater detail in item 3.3.2 on page 68.

## Fit for Training

Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*), the successor programme to Production Schools, is intended to assist young people in finding their pathways to continuing training. It is described in greater detail in item 3.3.3 on page 69.

## Training Assistance

The (vocational) Training Assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz* – BAS) programme is aimed at improving labour market participation of young people with individual impairments. The BAS scheme supports young people with disabilities and other barriers to employment through Inclusive Vocational Training (*Integrative Berufsausbildung* – IBA) as well as assistance both at the workplace and at school to ensure the sustainability of their training pathway. Suitable preparation, support and guidance measures are offered to ensure young people's successful completion of the chosen training programme. In 2022 a total of 10,749 young people (7,666 male and 3,083 female) participated in this programme.<sup>76</sup>

## (Youth) Job Assistance

The Job Assistance programme is one of the key instruments of Employment Assistance services available in Austria to help finding a job. It pursues three major goals: to maintain an existing job (preventive function); to help with finding a job (inclusive function); as well as to play the role of central contact for disadvantaged job-seekers and workers, their employers, superiors, colleagues, etc. (communicative function).

Job Assistance services may range from analysing the situation together with the young client to exploring individual career options, providing job-search support and special workplace assistance in the initial phase of an employment relationship. Another key function of this programme is crisis intervention to secure jobs at risk. In 2022 a total of 7,662 young people (4,470 male and 3,192 female) were enrolled in this programme.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special analysis age at entry <24 years, UeW 2022 (v10), data frozen on 31 Dec 2022.

<sup>77</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special analysis age at entry <24 years. UeW 2022 (v10), data frozen on 31 Dec 2022.

## NEBA company service

The NEBA company service provides counselling and other services tailored to the individual needs of companies. It is a central point of contact for companies to assist them in all matters relating to 'work and disability'. In 2022, 4,896 companies were assisted by the NEBA company service.<sup>78</sup>

## Job Coaching

The Job Coaching programme is designed for young people in need of special assistance due to their cognitive impairment or physical disability as well as for their employers, but in fact it is mainly used for young people with learning disabilities.

Job Coaches provide direct and individual assistance in the workplace, thus promoting the professional, communicative and social skills of their charges. This is to empower young disabled workers to become independent in meeting workplace requirements. At the same time it should raise company staff awareness for disability-related issues. In 2022, a total of 1,300 young people (834 male and 466 female) participated in this programme.<sup>79</sup>

## Personal Assistance in the Workplace

Young people with severe functional impairment often have greater difficulties finding and retaining employment even if they have adequate skills for the job. Personal Assistance in the Workplace (*Persönliche Assistenz am Arbeitsplatz*) is tailored to these workers' needs to ensure self-determined and equal participation in the labour market for this group. Workers relying on such personal assistance receive the kind of one-on-one support needed for doing the job or completing vocational training. In 2022, 633 young people (whereof 300 female and 333 male) benefited from this Personal Assistance scheme.<sup>80</sup>

## Skills training

The objective of skills training programmes is to offer, alongside Fit for Training, specific training/upskilling with due regard to the participants' individual capabilities. In addition,

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<sup>78</sup> Source: Social Affairs Ministry Service, staff unit, evaluation based on data as at 23 June 2023.

<sup>79</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special analysis age at entry <24 years, UeW 2021 (v9), data frozen on 31 Dec 2022.

<sup>80</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, UeW 2022 (v9), data frozen on 31 Dec 2023. For technical reasons it is currently not possible to provide analyses by age of participants. The reported figures relate to the total number of persons using this programme in 2022.

they offer the opportunity of getting accustomed to job situations in a free market economy. With the 'barrier-free training' pilot project, an additional fully accessible training programme for adolescents and young adults, including those with more severe disabilities, has been in place since 1 Jan 2023. In 2022, a total of 1,017 young people (555 male and 462 female) were enrolled in the various skills training projects.<sup>81</sup>

### **Women with disabilities**

Women and girls with disabilities are to be specially supported by needs-based programmes, as they face multiple forms of discrimination, and the employment rate of beneficiary disabled women is still lower than that of men with disabilities. For this reason, a special working group with relevant stakeholders and experts was set up in 2022. In addition to various measures to empower women with disabilities, a successful pilot project for promoting the inclusion of women called '*InklusionsförderungPlus für Frauen*', which uses wage subsidies to motivate companies to hire women with disabilities, has become part of mainstream funding programmes. This resulted in the proportion of women rising from 38% in 2019 to 41% in 2022.

### **Prevention with a focus on extremism**

Strengthening prevention measures focussing on extremism has become increasingly important for young people with disabilities, all the more so in view of the psychosocial impact of various crises (pandemic, war, inflation, etc.). Preventing extremism is a cross-cutting issue aimed at effectively removing the breeding ground for anti-Semitism, racism, extremism, radicalisation and terrorism. This policy thrust is intended to consolidate social cohesion, convey a sense of social belonging and strengthen the resilience of young people at risk of exclusion and significantly increase their future chances of participation in the general labour market.

### **#change**

The #change project is an assistance service offering free, low-threshold clinical-psychological counselling, treatment and health psychology prevention to adolescents and young adults throughout Austria to enable them to participate in projects of the Social Affairs Ministry Service and boost their chances in the labour market. In 2022, 1,384 adolescents

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<sup>81</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6 special evaluation age at entry < 24 years, UeW 2022 (v10), data frozen as at 31 Dec 2022.

and young adults (up to the age of 24) in need of assistance due to mental illnesses or psychosocial support needs were supported under the #change programme.<sup>82</sup> Link to [#change](#).

### Integration enterprises

In place for around 40 years, integration enterprises are seasoned and indispensable tools for the vocational integration of people with disabilities. During this time, integration enterprises have evolved into modern and efficient companies with social responsibility. Integration enterprises have become reliable employers for people with disabilities and professional partners for business and industry. As of 1 Jan 2023 integration enterprises provided a total of 2,427 jobs under the employment module, whereof 1,849 jobs for people with disabilities. The number of jobs for people with disabilities is to be increased to 2,000 in 2023.

As well as jobs, integration enterprises offer training slots to people with disabilities. In autumn 2015 a new priority programme was rolled out called 'Apprenticeships in Integration Enterprises' (*Integrative Betriebe Lehrausbildung* – IBL). People with disabilities are to be given not only low-threshold skills training but also access to quality training with formal credentials. Based on the infrastructure available (equipment, expert staff, etc.), integration enterprises are well placed to ensure high-quality training aimed at improving participants' employability through taking the final apprenticeship examination, thus enabling sustainable integration into the general labour market. As at 1 Jan 2023 a total of 182 people participated in the IBL programme, whereof 172 were trained in apprenticeships and 10 retained for the legally defined period following apprenticeships<sup>83</sup>. The programme is to be further expanded to provide 200 apprenticeship slots in 2023.

The money spent by the Compensatory Levy Fund (*Ausgleichstaxfonds*) on integration enterprises was around €48.2m in 2022.

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<sup>82</sup> Source: BundesKOST, #change – clinical-psychological and health psychology counselling and treatment of adolescents and young adults in NEBA projects, evaluation report 2023.

<sup>83</sup> For the employee retention period see guideline on apprenticeships in integration enterprises (*Richtlinie Integrative Betriebe Lehrausbildung*) of the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, para. 3 of item 10.

# 4 Activities of the European Union

## 4.1 European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) supports initiatives that promote employment as well as economic and social cohesion in the Member States of the European Union and co-funds national, regional and local projects that improve the levels of employment and the inclusiveness of the labour market.

The Operational Programme Employment Austria 2014-2020 (ESF OP) is based on the Europe 2020 Strategy and the National Reform Programme. This funding period runs until 2023. Parallel to this, the ESF+ was included in 2021-2027, which supplements the essential elements with further points. The EU 2020 objectives of relevance to the ESF include higher levels of labour force participation, reduction of early school leavers and combating poverty. The ESF budget for Austria 2014-2020 totals roughly €556m plus co-funding by national partners. Austria is active in the following fields: equality of women and men; active and healthy ageing; active inclusion; reduction of early school leavers; access to lifelong learning; employment for job-seekers; and adapting to change.

Under this Operational Programme, the European Social Fund supports disadvantaged adolescents and young adults who are neither in employment nor in training (NEET). The aim is to assist them on their way back to training and to offer flanking measures to ensure stabilisation and personal development.

In order to reduce school dropout rates, the ESF supports measures (involving more than 94,000 trainees by the end of 2022) of learning support and advice or intensive training in German, Mathematics and Science in the early periods of vocational school/college attendance to help pupils cope with the requirements made and avoid the risk of failure.

In addition to measures already carried out, young people with disability or impairment will be offered other support measures such as Youth Coaching, Fit for Training, Training Assistance, Job Assistance and Job Coaching programmes. These services are combined in the Employment Assistance Network (*Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz – NEBA*), which is funded by the ESF+, and are available to young people throughout Austria free of charge.

The ESF supports a number of other options as well: education counselling or development projects supporting timely completion of compulsory schooling and appropriate link-up with continuing education or training.

Additional measures, accessible as of 2021, have been adopted by the ESF in attempts to counter the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. For this purpose, roughly €114m have been made available to fund policies under which the education career of adolescents and young adults is supported by various additional programmes involving digital learning. Young people who are particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic are offered a second chance to complete missed compulsory education cycles and acquire adequate basic education or enter retraining programmes in the fields of health/nursing, ICT and sustainability. Moreover, various existing training measures and employment projects are expanded to include disadvantaged groups.

The new ESF+ Programme 2021-2027 primarily addresses the country-specific recommendations of the European Commission. Therefore, the programme focus is on promoting a more balanced participation of women and men across occupations as well as equal working conditions and better reconciliation of work and private life by, inter alia, new and innovative childcare supply. Moreover, older people are to be supported in the labour market and measures taken to reduce and/or avoid the creation of poverty.

**Special emphasis is placed on providing support to young people.** Early school leaving is addressed by formal and non-formal learning support as well as socio-educational and regional mobile guidance on the one hand, and by a differentiated range of assistance services to gradually make young people with special needs familiar with suitable forms of training or achieve sustainable integration into the labour market on the other hand.

In addition to gender equality and sustainability, other hallmarks of the entire programme are lifelong learning, digitalisation and social innovation. Another focus is the inclusion of people with disabilities in ESF measures.

With the Just Transition Fund (JTF) the European Commission has introduced a new instrument to promote the transition of individual regions towards a climate-neutral economy.



## 4.2 European Youth Guarantee

In 2013 the European Youth Guarantee was adopted by the European Council. Young people under 25 who are neither in employment nor in training are to get a good-quality, concrete offer for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education within four months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. This is to prevent young people from staying outside the education/training system or the labour market for a long time.

In autumn 2020 the European Youth Guarantee was further enhanced under the title '**A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee**'. The target of the 2013 European Youth Guarantee that all young people receive a **good-quality offer within a period of four months** is maintained whilst the age bracket is widened to include **all young people aged under 30**. The current Youth Guarantee includes a greater distinction between temporary NEETs and longer-term NEETs to **enhance the focus on the second group** which is likely to require **more individualised support, coaching, basic skills**, etc. In addition, the role of **skills needed for transition towards a more digital and greener economy** is to be strengthened. Future Youth Guarantee schemes are to be primarily structured around four phases: stock-taking (mapping), information (outreach), preparation and offer:

- Stocktaking/Mapping: identifying the target group, available offers and skills needs. Enabling improved prevention through early warning systems and measures.
- Information/Outreach: a communication and contact strategy, in particular for hard-to-reach young people (cf. EducationTraining till 18, open youth work).
- Preparation: develop individualised action plans that take into account young people's needs. Performing counselling, guidance and mentoring. Enhancing digital skills with preparatory training. Assessing, improving and validating other important skills.
- Offer: the fourth phase involves acceptance of the offer under which participants will exit the Youth Guarantee programme. A good-quality offer may include – subsidised or non-subsidised – employment, (continued) education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship.

Austria's implementation strategy revolves around the EducationTraining till 18, ÜBA, Youth Coaching, Fit for Training and Training Guarantee till age 25 schemes (see item 3.3 Managing the transition from school to work on page 67).

**Current developments can be retrieved from the European Commission's website at: [EU Youth Guarantee](#).**

### 4.3 ERASMUS+

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2021-2027. Alongside the 27 EU Member States the following countries participate in the programme: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Northern Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. Following Brexit, the United Kingdom left the programme on 1 Jan 2021. However, ongoing projects with UK participation from the old programme (2014-2020) or mobilities to the United Kingdom that had been approved before this date can still be carried out.

Erasmus+ provides opportunities for adolescents and young adults to gain experiences abroad by studying, working or volunteering in other European countries.

It is intended to support the mobility of e.g. (higher education) teaching staff, students, pupils and apprentices. Participants may improve their skills through studies abroad, traineeships for students and trainees, teaching and professional development activities, youth exchange projects, youth work and measures in the field of sport. The programme also aims to encourage international cooperation and partnerships among institutions and countries. With this comprehensive programme, Erasmus+ contributes towards raising awareness about European Union common values and diversity.

Moreover, Erasmus+ has a systemic impact by strengthening a sustainable and horizontal internationalisation of the Austrian education system, from pre-school via all forms of schools and higher education establishments to adult education, by supporting education policy priorities as well as by promoting instruments of transparency and recognition and Europe-wide networks. The programme also includes initiatives for excellence such as the European Universities, Joint Masters, Centres of Vocational Excellence, Jean Monnet Actions (European studies) and Erasmus+ Teacher Academies.

Erasmus+ is a key component in designing the European Education Area and the European Higher Education Area and in supporting the implementation of the Digital Education Action Plan and the European Skills Agenda. More than €28bn will be made available by the European Union for this programme between 2021 and 2027. The funds are intended to enable roughly ten million people to participate in Erasmus+.

In Austria the BMBFW is the national authority tasked with coordinating the implementation of Erasmus+. OeAD-GmbH is the national agency tasked with implementing and managing Erasmus+.

A description and further information can be found on the website of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (Link: [BMBWF](#)), the Erasmus+ website of the European Commission (Link: [EU-Erasmus+](#)) and on the Austrian website (Link: [OEAD Erasmus+](#)).

#### **4.4 Recovery and Resilience Facility**

The social and economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic led the European Union to launch the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) on 19 Feb 2021, which is primarily designed to support post-Corona recovery and future resilience through green and digital transformation and a series of country-specific reforms and investments. The Austrian implementation plan focuses, among other things, on knowledge-based recovery, which will also be implemented in the labour market. An essential goal of the plan are measures that specifically benefit the next generations, for example promotion of education and skills.

Young people also benefit from implemented instruments that are relevant to the labour market (training bonus, financing of retraining and upskilling measures); for example, the Youth Coaching programme is explicitly co-financed by NextGenerationEU.

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## Abbreviations

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
EU	European Union
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
MS	Mittelschule = compulsory secondary school
AHS	Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule = academic secondary school
PTS	Polytechnische Schule = pre-vocational school
BHS	Berufsbildende höhere Schule = college of higher vocational education
BMS	Berufsbildende mittlere Schule = school of intermediate vocational education
BMHS	Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen = schools of intermediate and colleges of higher vocational education
HAS	Handelsschule = business school (intermediate level)
HAK	Handelsakademie = business college
HLPS	Höhere Lehranstalt für Pflege und Sozialbetreuung = higher vocational college for nursing and social care
AUL	Aufbaulehrgang = add-on course
BBO Tool	Bildungs- und Berufsorientierungstool = education and vocational guidance tool
IKM PLUS	Individuelle Kompetenzmessung PLUS = individual competence measurement PLUS
ICT	Information and communication technology
AI	Artificial intelligence
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
WKO	Wirtschaftskammer Österreich = Austrian Economic Chamber
PES	Public employment service
DWH	Data Warehouse

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
BABE	Behinderung, Ausbildung, Beschäftigung = disability, training, employment
ÜBA	Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung = supra-company apprenticeship training
Ibobb	Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf = information, counselling and guidance on education and career
BMAW	Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Wirtschaft = Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy
BMBWF	Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung = Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
BMSGPK	Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz = Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection
BKA	Bundeskanzleramt = Federal Chancellery
BJV	Bundesjugendvertretung = youth representatives at the federal level
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Union
LA	Lehramt = teaching profession
LBVO	Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung = Performance Evaluation Ordinance
LAP	Lehrabschlussprüfung = final apprenticeship examination
MIT	Mobiles interkulturelles Team = Mobile Intercultural Team
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
BAG	Berufsausbildungsgesetz = Vocational Training Act
SCHOG	Schulorganisationsgesetz = School Organisation Act
LFBAG	Land- und Forstwirtschaftliches Berufsausbildungsgesetz = Act on Vocational Training in Agriculture and Forestry
IESG	Insolvenz-Entgeltsicherungsgesetz = Act on Wage Compensation from the Insolvency Contingency Fund
IFA	Internationaler Fachkräfteaustausch = International Young Workers Exchange

**Abbr.****Meaning**

ERASMUS+

Funding programme of the European Union



**Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy**

Stubenring 1, 1010 Vienna

+43 1 711 00-0

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