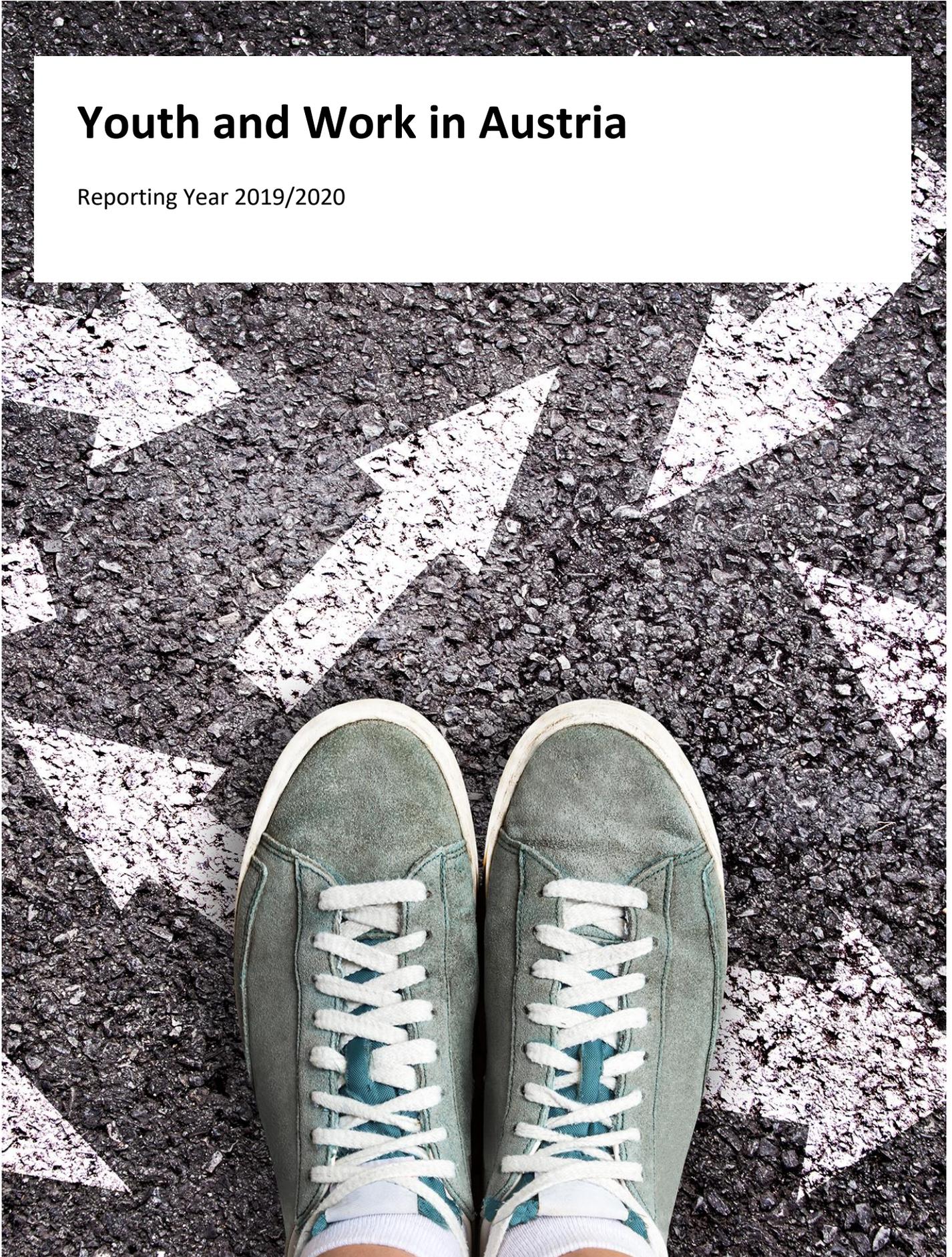


# Youth and Work in Austria

Reporting Year 2019/2020



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# Introduction

Austria's labour market policy programmes support young people in finding suitable training and adequate jobs, ranging from career counselling and Youth Coaching to supra-company apprenticeship schemes and low-threshold programmes such as Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*). These widespread programmes and projects are subject to ongoing adjustments and upgrading in order to provide better opportunities, impart skills and competences and individualised assistance to young people. The Youth Coaching programme was introduced throughout Austria in 2013, while the Fit for Training pilot project was launched in 2014. The Compulsory Education or Training initiative adopted in July 2016 is a particularly important project. With the implementation of Education Training till 18, compulsory schooling will be followed by another period of compulsory education or training to enhance young people's skills beyond the ones acquired in the existing nine years of compulsory education, thus improving their chances in life. Young adults (age 19-25), too, are being offered new opportunities with the implementation of a special labour market policy programme called 'Training Guarantee till 25' (*Ausbildungsgarantie bis 25*), which focuses on education and training to ensure sustainable labour market integration.

The annual 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 2020, the population of Austria was 8,901,064, i.e. a slight increase by 0.5% on 2019. In 2000, this figure was 8m people. Roughly 49.2% of the population are male and 50.1% female. The share of under 20-year-olds continued to drop in 2020 (19.3% versus 23.1% in 2000). 61.6% (2000: 61.5%) are of working age (20-64 years). Persons aged 65plus account for 19% (2000: 15.4%).<sup>1</sup> The slight increase in the population is due to immigration as well as positive natural change. 40,613 more people moved to Austria compared with the number of people who left the country in 2019, meaning that net immigration increased by roughly 15% versus the year before.<sup>2</sup>

Around 1.5m persons living in Austria on 1 Jan 2020 were of foreign nationality. This corresponds to roughly 16.7% of Austria's total population. More than half (52.4%) of these foreign nationals came from other EU and EFTA countries, the largest portion (13.5%) being from Germany. 47.6% are third-country nationals, of whom 17.3% are from Serbia and 16.6% from Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

Growth of the Austrian population will be higher than predicted in recent forecasts. As early as 2030 Austria will have roughly 9.2m inhabitants provided the current trend continues. The Austrian population will continue to grow to reach 9.9m people by 2080. This will coincide with a significant age shift in our society towards the older end of the age spectrum.

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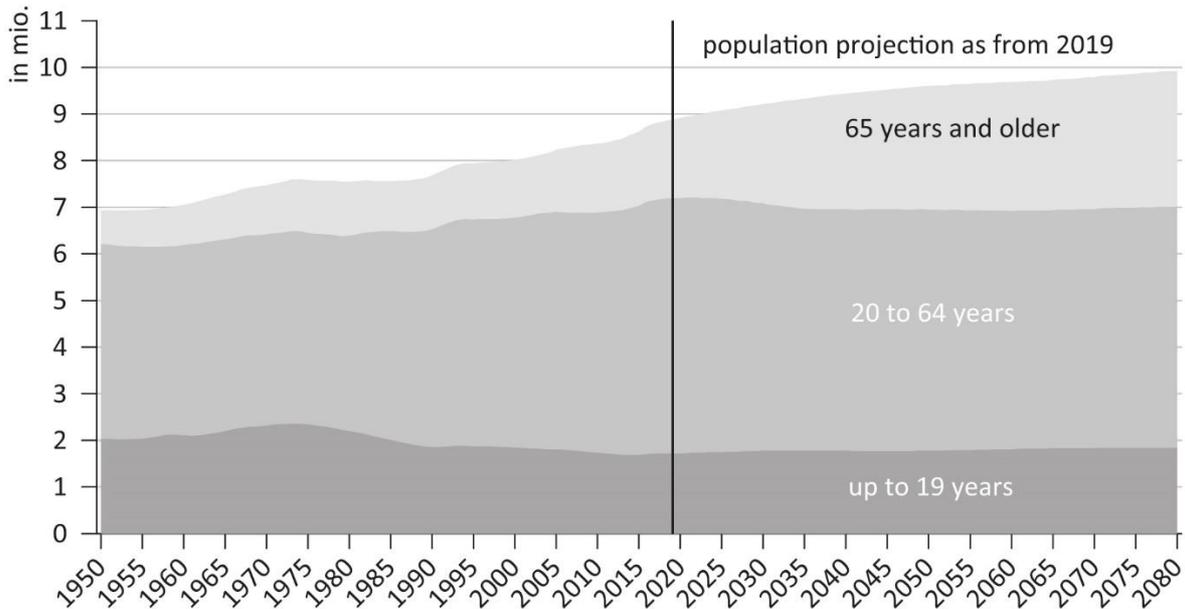
<sup>1</sup> Source: Statistics Austria; table on annual average population since 1869 broken down by gender, broad age groups and nationality.

<sup>2</sup>Source: Statistics Austria, press release: 12.272-112/20.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, press release: 12.274-114/20.

Although the number of children and young people under 20 years of age will continue to grow, their proportion within the population will decline (from 19.4% in 2019 to 18.6% by 2080), whereas the proportion of those aged 65plus will rise substantially from 18.8% in 2018 to 28.9% in 2080<sup>4</sup>; (see Figure 1 on page 6).

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



Source: Statistics Austria, population forecast 2018.

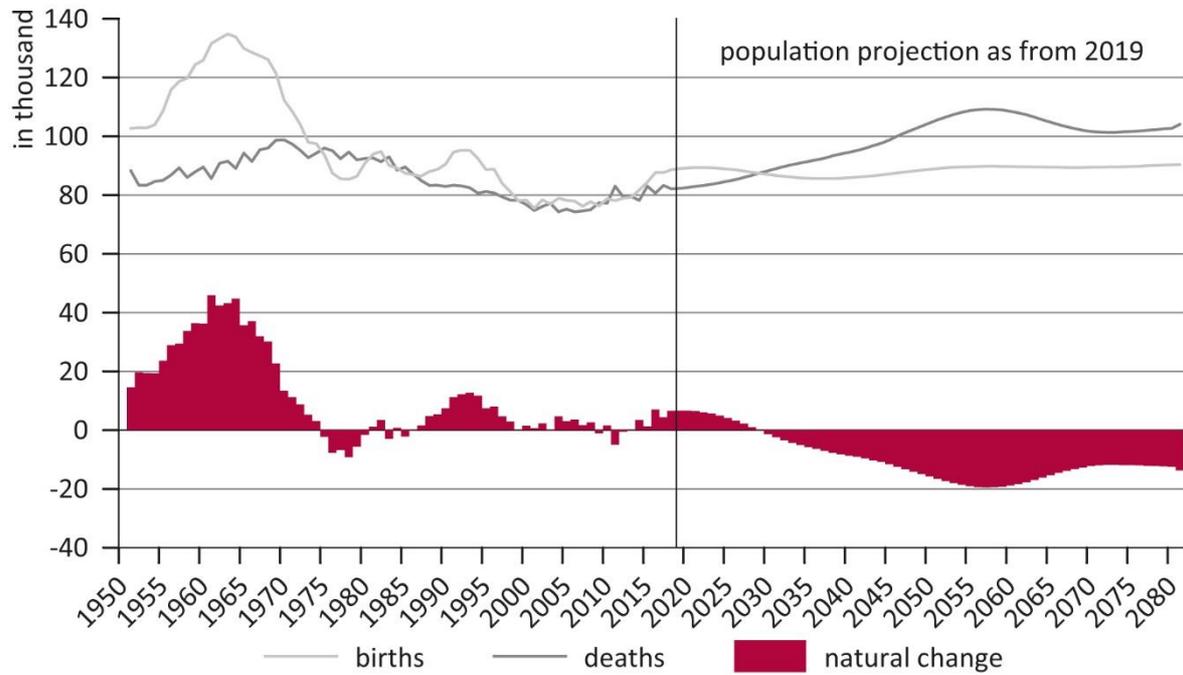
The average number of live births was 90,000 per year in the 1980s and 1990s, with figures peaking in 1982 and 1992 (see Figure 2 on page 7). Since then there has been no consistent trend and the number of new-borns varies between 70,000 and 90,000 per year. Natural population growth in 2019 was again positive (+1,566) and slightly higher than in the year before (2018: +1,560). The total number of children born in 2019 was 84,952<sup>5</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 2019, this rate was 1.45 children per woman. 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 projections by Statistics Austria, the average number of

<sup>4</sup> Source: Statistics Austria; Table: Population forecast for Austria 2018-2100 (main scenario).

<sup>5</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, press release: 12.273-113/20.

children per woman will stagnate at around 1.55 till 2040<sup>6</sup>, while life expectancy for women and men will continue to rise<sup>7</sup>.

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



Source: Statistics Austria, population forecast 2018.

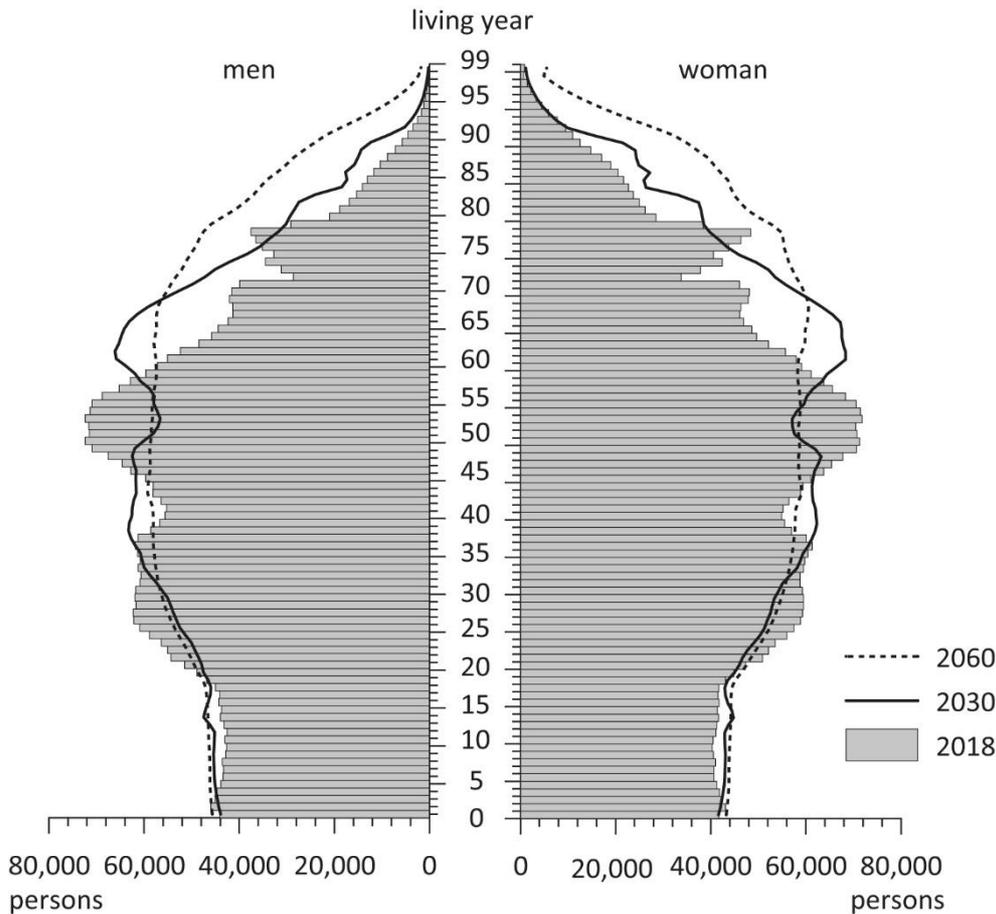
The age pyramid (see Figure 3 on page 8) shows the composition of the Austrian population for 2018, 2030 and 2060<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table Austria: detailed tables of main variants (quick report)

<sup>7</sup> Source: Statistics Austria; table on population level and structure.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, population level 2018.

Figure 3: Age pyramid 2018, 2030 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% of the resident population aged 25-64 had no more than compulsory education as their highest level of educational achievement, this proportion was only some 14% in 2019. In addition, there have been substantial increases in all continued education qualifications. Between 1971 and 2019, the proportion of graduates from secondary technical and vocational schools (BMS) has almost doubled from 7.5% to 13% or that of people with upper secondary education credentials has soared from 6% to 17%. In 1971 only some 3% of Austria's resident population had higher education credentials, while in 2019 their share was 20% (this percentage also includes higher

education-related establishments); 37% of the resident population aged 25 to 64 in 2019 had an apprenticeship training background.<sup>9</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 2019, in which a mere 16% of women age 25-64 years had compulsory education (men: 11%), 28% had apprenticeship training (men: 46%), 16% were BMS graduates (men: 9%) and 18% (men: 17%) had completed the full cycle of upper secondary education. 22% (men: 18%) had tertiary education credentials. 31% of the younger women (25-34 years) had completed higher education in 2019 versus 22% of the men in this age group.

Compared with other EU Member States, Austria is in the upper mid-range for people with secondary level II qualifications and in the mid-range for people with tertiary level qualifications: in 2019, 87.3% of all 20- to 24-year-olds had secondary II level as their minimum educational attainment, the EU-28 average being 84%. Croatia boasted the highest ratio (97.3%) followed by Greece with 94.5% and Ireland. The lowest proportion was registered in Spain (74%), Denmark (75.6%) and Germany (77.5%). The percentage of people with tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) in Austria was 42.4% in 2019<sup>10</sup>, the EU average being 41.6%. This indicator was highest for Cyprus with 58.8% followed by Lithuania with 57.8% and Luxembourg in third place with 56.2%. The lowest percentages were reported for Romania with 25.8% followed by Italy with 27.6%<sup>11</sup>.

### 1.3 Youth employment and unemployment

During the Covid-19 pandemic, youth unemployment rose and youth employment fell. Since the latest available data are from 2019, this section is based on international and national data reflecting the pre-Covid situation. At the end of every sub-section, we will briefly address the current trend using the available monthly data.

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table B1: Population aged 15 years and over by highest level of educational attainment –national classification, age and gender, annual average 2019, percentage share: BMA's own calculations.

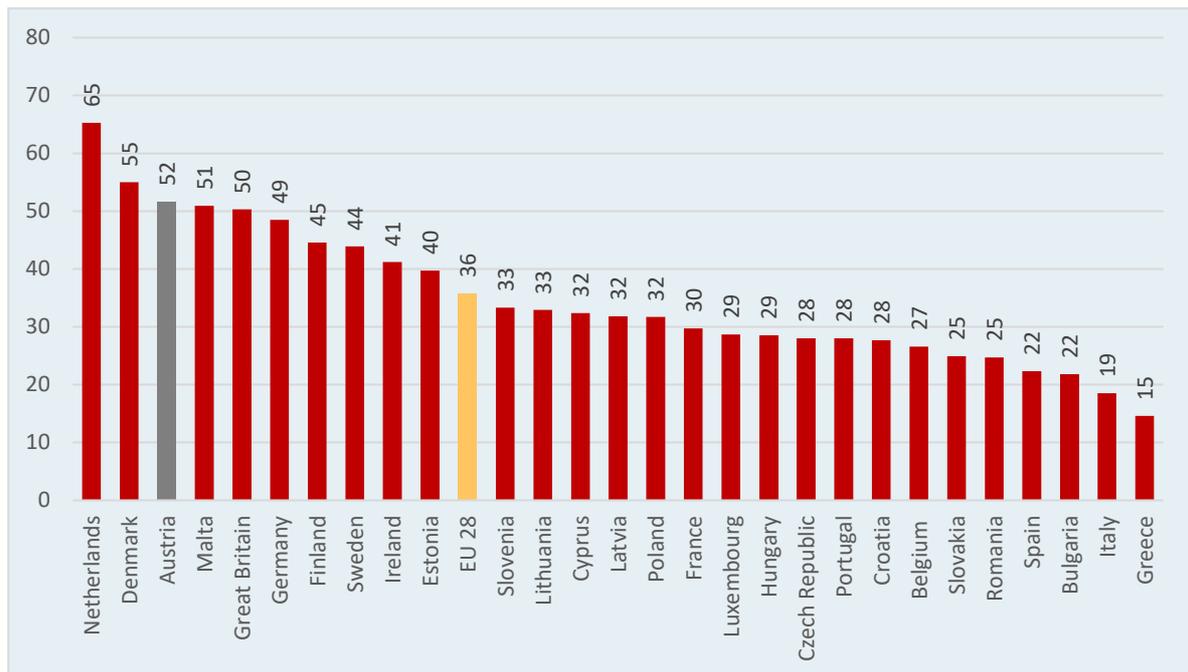
<sup>10</sup> BHS colleges come under ISCED 5.

<sup>11</sup> Source: EUROSTAT.

### 1.3.1 Unemployment and employment in international comparison

According to EUROSTAT, the 2019 youth employment rate increased by 0.3 percentage points against the previous year to 51.6% (men: 53.8% or up 0.9 percentage points, women: 48.4% or down 0.3 percentage points). Austria thus again ranks third within the EU behind Denmark with 55.0% and the Netherlands with 65.3%. For this indicator, the EU-28 average is 35.8% in 2019 (see Figure 4 on page 10)<sup>12</sup>

Figure 4: Youth employment rate in 2019 (aged 15 to 24), international comparison



Source: ELIS; EUROSTAT retrieved on 6 May 2020. Note: values are rounded; ratio of active population aged 15-24 to corresponding resident population averaged across 2019.

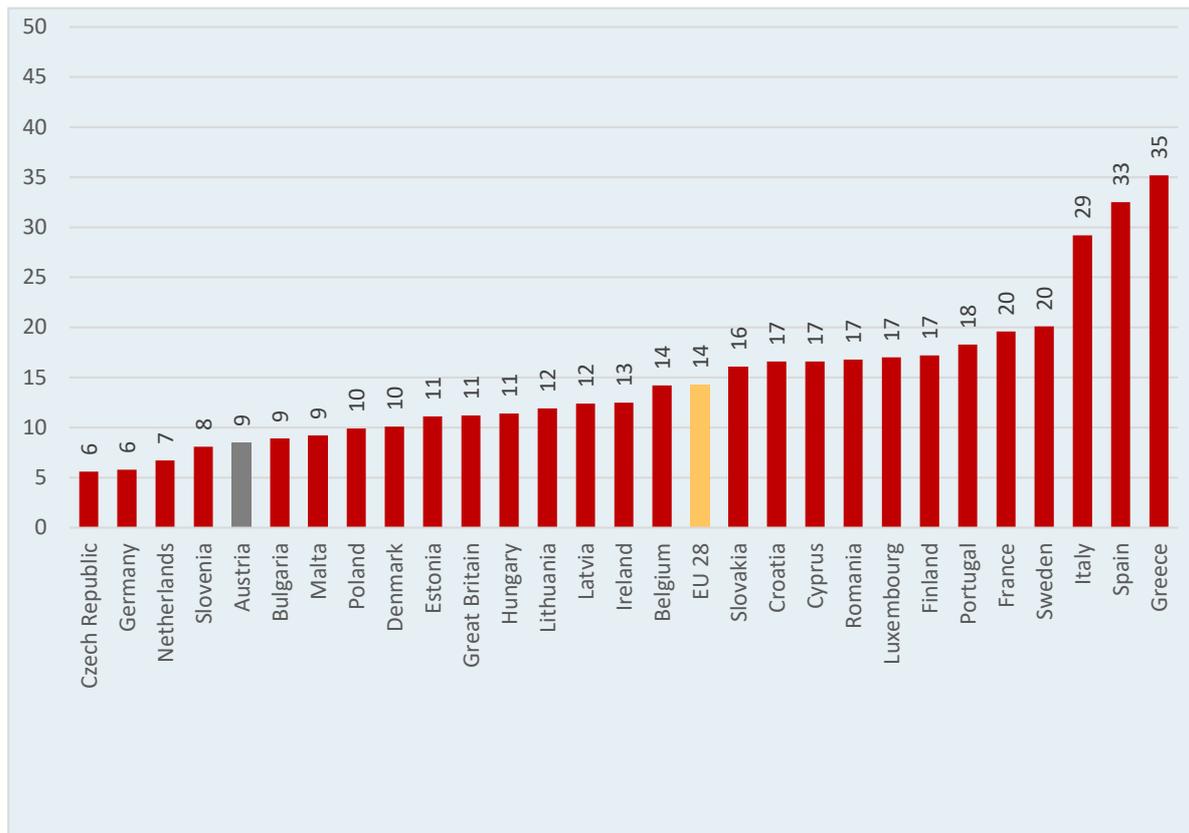
Analytical data – such as those on labour turnover – clearly illustrate that the youth labour market is characterised by above average dynamics. The annual labour turnover in this age group amounts to roughly 100%.

Compared with other countries, the 2019 **unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24 years** of 8.5% - i.e. down by 0.9 percentage points on 2018 (men: 9.2% or -0.2 percentage points; women: 7.8% or -1.6 percentage points) – ranks Austria as fifth behind Slovenia with 8.1%, the Netherlands with 6.7%, Germany with 5.8% and the Czech Republic

<sup>12</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; Labour Force Survey.

with 5.6%. The EU-28 average in 2019 was 14.3%, with the highest unemployment rates among under 25-year olds being reported for Greece with 35.2%, Spain with 32.5% and Italy with 29.2% (see Figure 5 on page 11 ).

Figure 5: Youth unemployment rates in 2019, international comparison



Source: ELIS; EUROSTAT retrieved on 15 May 2020; Note: values are rounded.

The youth unemployment rate only relates to the workforce, i.e. to all those persons 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 ratio 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 the Czech Republic 1.7%, in Slovenia 2.9% and in Germany 3% of all young people aged 15-24 years were out of work in 2019. In Austria, they accounted for 4.8% (women: 4.1%, men: 5.5%), the EU-28 average being 6% in 2019. Sweden had the highest proportion (11.1%) followed by Spain (10.7%). Sweden and Finland reported the highest percentages (12% and 9.2%, respectively) for ‘younger’ young people (aged 15 to 19 years), while the Czech Republic boasted the lowest percentage (1%) followed by Poland with 1.2%. For this indicator,

Austria reported 3.9% in 2019 (women: 3%, men: 4.7%), the EU-28 average being 3.7%. For 'older' young people aged 20-24 years, the situation is different: Spain with 16.4% and Greece with 14.4% recorded the highest proportion as opposed to the Czech Republic and Germany, which had the lowest proportions of 2.3% and 3.8% respectively. Austria ranks eighth with 5.6% (women: 5%, men: 6.2%). The EU-28 average for this indicator was 8.2% in 2019.

The 2019 **ratio of long-term unemployed youth (12 months and more)** aged 15 to 24 years was lowest in Denmark (0.5%) and highest in Greece (19%). With 1.5%, Austria comes seventh (women: 1.4% and men: 1.6%).

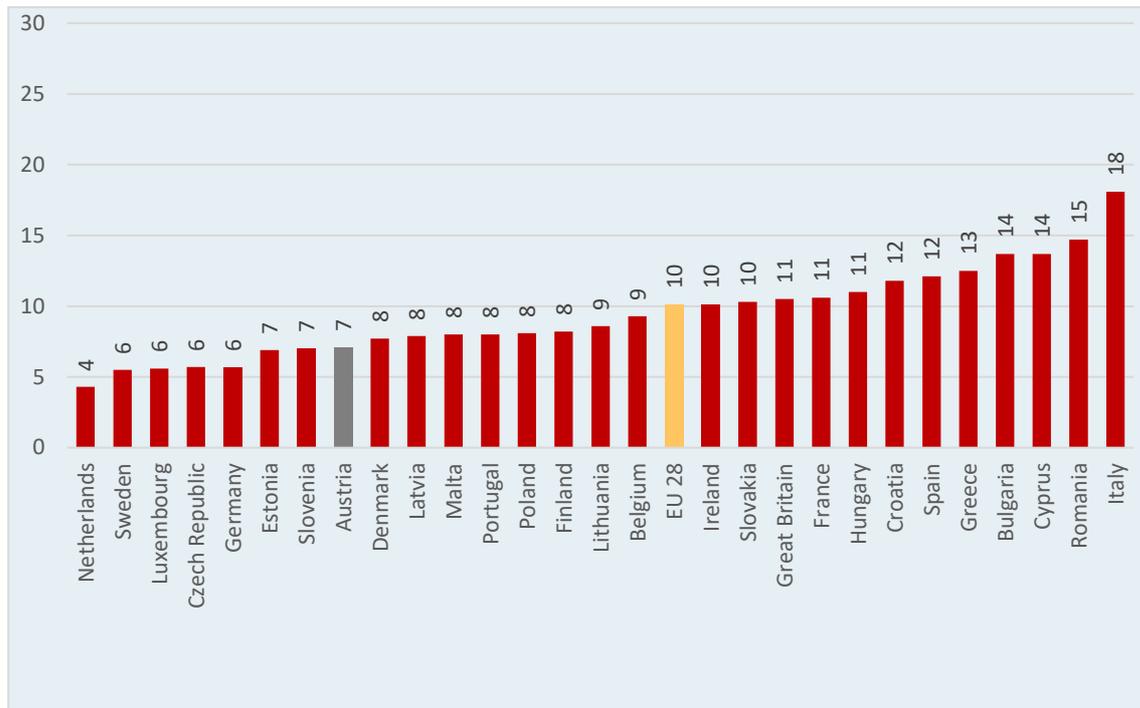
The **NEET rate** (Not in Education, Employment or Training) shows the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 years who are not in education, employment or non-formal training as a percentage of the resident population (15-24 years) and is thus broader in scope than the unemployment rate. This indicator is lowest for the Netherlands (4.3%) followed by Sweden with 5.5% and Luxembourg with 5.6%. Austria ranks eighth with a NEET share of 7.1% (women: 7.3%, men: 7%). The EU-28 average is 10.1% (women: 10.4%, men: 9.9%). The highest NEET rate of 18.1% was recorded by Italy (see Figure 6 on page 13).

After a continuous improvement of the labour market situation on an EU average in recent years, the unemployment rate increased in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken in its context. This is particularly true of young people. In Sept 2020, almost 3m under 25-year-olds in the EU were unemployed compared with 2.7m in Sept 2019. The EU's average youth unemployment rate thus rose to 17.1% (versus 15.0% in Sept 2019). The total unemployment rate increased from 6.6% to 7.5%. Austria's youth unemployment rate rose from 9.0% to 9.4%, while its total unemployment rate rose from 4.5% to 5%<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> In the current situation, the international rate of unemployment is likely to reflect the number of unemployed less accurately than is usually the case. By definition, people are considered to be unemployed if, according to the polled data, they have actively sought work in the past four weeks and may enter work within the next two weeks. However, during the lockdown, there were few opportunities to seek and enter jobs due to, inter alia, childcare duties. Source: EUROSTAT, retrieved on 30 Oct 2020.

Figure 6: NEET rate, 15-24 years, 2019



Source: EUROSTAT, retrieved on 17 June 2020; Note: values are rounded; the NEET rate is the proportion of young people who are neither in employment, nor education, nor training.

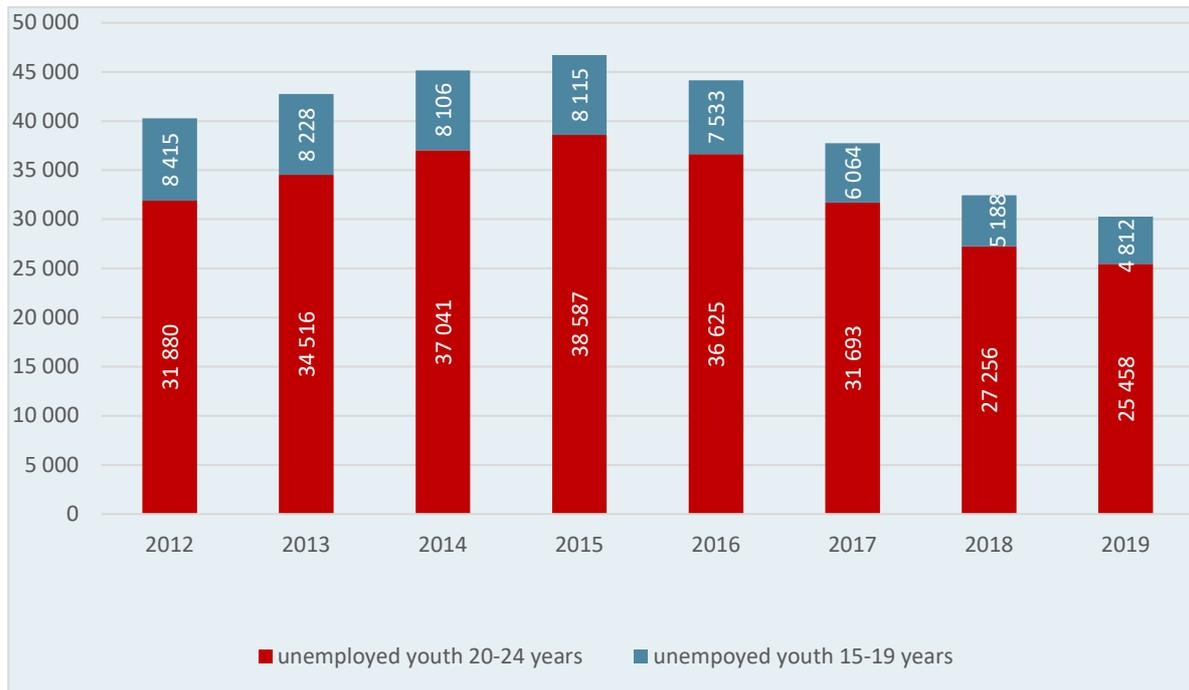
### 1.3.2 Youth unemployment and employment in Austria

In 2019 the stock of young employees (15 to 24 years) dropped by 1 percentage points to 447,461 persons (national data), whereof 134,492 are 15 to 19 years old and 312,969 are 20 to 24 years old. Both age groups recorded drops: -0.5% among 15- to 19-year-olds and -1.2% among 20- to 24-year-olds.

Unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24 years fell by 6.7% (-2,174 young people) in 2019 compared with the previous year. Among 15- to 19-year-olds it decreased by 7.3%, among 20- to 24-year-olds by 6.6% (see Figure 7 on page 14). Broken down by gender, unemployment among young men fell by 6.9% and among young women by 6.4%. This compares with a reduction of total unemployment in 2019 by 3.5% or -10,779 to 301,328 persons registered by the PES as unemployed<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> National administrative data/ELIS.

Figure 7: Unemployed youth aged 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years, 2012-2019



Source: PES (national data); retrieved from BALI on 18 June 2020.

The 2019 unemployment rate based on registered unemployed (national definition) in the age group of 15- to 24-year-olds fell 0.4 percentage points to 6.3% over the year before. Although unemployment rates indicate that young people are at a slightly more than average risk of unemployment than other groups with longer-term labour market attachment, the average unemployment period of those aged 25 and under is significantly shorter than that of other age groups. In 2019 the average period of time needed by young job-seekers to leave the unemployment register was 62 days (+1 day versus 2018), whereas the average period for all unemployed people was 121 days (+4 days against the previous year)<sup>15</sup>.

The annual average of training participants aged less than 25 years dropped by 10.5% to 26,366 young participants in 2019 compared with the previous year, i.e. this decline was slightly more pronounced than that of all training participants, which fell by 9.9% to 61,959. Young men's participation in training fell by 13.2% in 2019 and young women's by 6.7% against the previous year; see also Figure 8 on page 15<sup>16</sup>. 12.343 young people on average

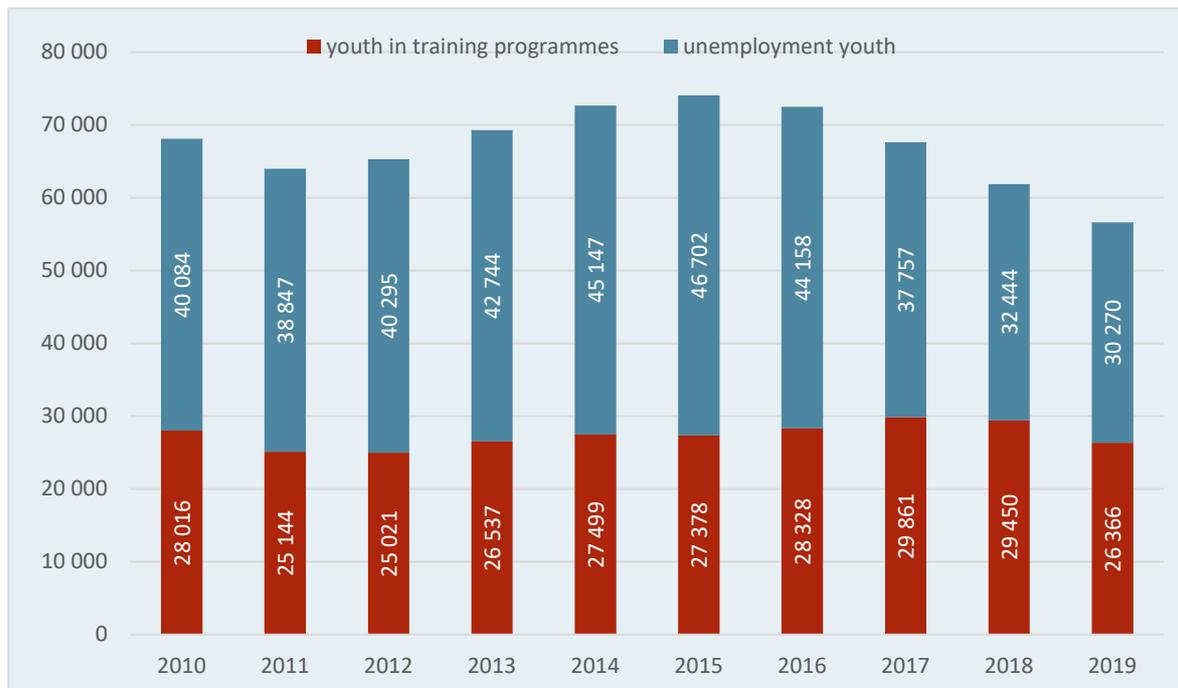
<sup>15</sup> National administrative data/ELIS and BALI data retrieved on 18 June 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Source: National administrative data/ELIS and BALI data retrieved on 18 June 2020.

participated in supra-company training programmes offered under the Training Guarantee in 2019<sup>17</sup>.

Of the 25,458 unemployed young adults aged 20 to 24 years in 2019 43% had only compulsory schooling, 34% had completed apprenticeships, approx. 7% some form of intermediate school, approx. 16% upper secondary or academic education (see Table 1 on page 16). This compares with the following educational attainment levels for the total population of 20- to 24-year-olds: 14% (of whom many were still in training) had compulsory education or less, roughly 28% apprenticeship training, 9% intermediate school level and roughly 50% upper secondary or tertiary education<sup>18</sup>.

Figure 8: Unemployed youth aged 15 to 24 years enrolled in training measures, 2010-2019



Source: PES (national data); retrieved from BALI on 22 July 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Source: National administrative data/ELIS.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, microcensus labour force survey 2019; Table B 1: Population aged 15 years and over by highest level of educational attainment – national classification, age and gender, annual average 2019.

Table 1: Unemployed youth (20-24 years) by highest level of educational attainment, 2012-2019

Education and Training	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Compulsory education</b>	13,825	14,729	15,725	16,329	15,352	13,162	11,291	10,951
<b>Apprenticeship training</b>	11,951	13,066	13,391	14,422	13,416	11,491	9,751	8,758
<b>Vocational training</b>	2,235	2,275	2,416	2,442	2,323	2,012	1,768	1,669
<b>Higher education</b>	3,762	4,317	4,833	5,263	5,435	4,945	4,377	4,016
<b>unknown</b>	108	129	135	131	99	82	69	64
<b>Gesamt</b>	<b>31,880</b>	<b>34,516</b>	<b>37,041</b>	<b>38,587</b>	<b>36,625</b>	<b>31,693</b>	<b>27,256</b>	<b>25,458</b>

Source: BMA, PES DWH, retrieved on 18 June 2020; 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.

In 2020, a negative trend emerged due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the policy measures it entailed. In Oct 2020 the number of unemployed young people rose by 19.0% to 35,000 persons compared with the previous year, while the share of apprenticeship-seekers increased by 4.9%. At the end of October, 7,800 apprenticeship-seekers were registered with the PES to be matched with 7,300 instantly available apprenticeship slots notified to the PES.

## 1.4 Young people after completion of training: education-related career monitoring survey<sup>19</sup>

The education-related career monitoring survey is used to analyse the job careers of young people who completed school, training or university between 2008 and 2016.

After completion of their apprenticeship most young people enter employment as opposed to their peers who, after completion of compulsory education and AHS, tend to choose continuing education pathways. Out of those young people who completed apprenticeships in the 2015/16 school year 74% were economically active, 5% were in continued training, 10%

<sup>19</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, young people after completion of training: results of the education-related career monitoring survey (BibEr) carried out at the request of the Social Affairs Ministry and PES for the 2008/09-2010/11 school years, Vienna, June 2015 – own updates for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 school years; Sept 2020.

were registered as unemployed by the employment service and 11% had some other labour market status 18 months after completion of training. Among secondary technical and vocational school (BMS) graduates, 43% were in employment, 41% in training, 4% in the PES's unemployment register and 11% had some other labour market status. Most of academic secondary school (AHS) graduates were in continued training/education: 18 months after graduation only 6% were economically active, 82% in continued education/training, 1% in the PES's unemployment register and 11% had some other labour market status. For secondary technical or vocational colleges (BHS) graduates the situation 18 months after completion of school was as follows: 44% were economically active, 47% continued education/training, 2% were registered as unemployed and 8% had some other labour market status.

Within the first two years after completion of schooling, only 2% of compulsory school graduates and 11% of AHS graduates had not entered any further education/training programme. For BMS and BHS graduates the ratios were 48% and 47%, respectively, whereas 91% of apprenticeship graduates did not continue training within the first two years after completion of their apprenticeship.

For young people who do not continue training within the first two years after completion of schooling/training, the risk of being unemployed is particularly high after compulsory school and lowest for BHS and university graduates: 18 months after completion of education, 12% of the young people with nothing but compulsory schooling were economically active, 19% unemployed and 68% had some other status. Among young people with completed apprenticeships, roughly, 79% were economically active and 10% registered as unemployed with the PES, while 76% of BMS graduates were economically active and 7% registered with the PES. Conversely, only 2-3% of AHS, BHS and university graduates were among the registered job-seekers, but only 36% of AHS graduates were economically active compared with 84% of BHS graduates and 76% of university graduates.

The median gross monthly entry level income in (full-time)<sup>20</sup> employment was €2,020 for young people with completed apprenticeships or BHS schooling, €1,990 for those with completed BMS training, €1,710 for those with completed AHS education and €2,470 for higher education graduates (university, university of applied sciences, teacher training colleges including doctorate)<sup>21</sup>. Broken down by gender, female BMS graduates earned €1,770, their

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<sup>20</sup> Entry level income (gross) of persons who did not continue training in the first two years of completing school/training.

<sup>21</sup> For university graduates: persons who completed education/training under the age of 30 years irrespective of whether they continue education/training.

male counterparts roughly €2,130. After BHS schooling, women earn €1,810 and men €2,190 on average. Female AHS graduates earn roughly €1,580 and male AHS graduates €1,840. The gender pay gap is more pronounced between women (average €1,670) and men (average €2,170) with completed apprenticeships, i.e. men earn 30% more than women. After higher education (study programmes) the median income of women was €2,350 and that of men €2,650. This is not only due to the differently weighted fields of training chosen by women and men but also to major gender differences within these fields.

## 1.5 Apprenticeship statistics and apprenticeship market<sup>22</sup>

Apprenticeship training in Austria has always been a key component of both vocational training and career entry. As at 31 Dec 2019 a total of 109,111 apprentices were in training with 29,034 employers (including supra-company training/ÜBA programmes). Two thirds of apprentices are male and only one third female. The number of apprentices increased by 1,196 persons, or 1.1%, in 2019 against the previous year. Of these 109,111 apprentices 7,422 were trained under the supra-company training scheme (*Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung – ÜBA*), while 8,213 young people had vocational training slots under §8b of the BAG, with 6,625 of them enrolled in apprenticeships with extended periods of training and 1,588 in apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills; 5,714 received training within companies and 2,499 in ÜBA training establishments.

In the past ten years, the number of apprentices in the first year of training had continued to decline and totalled only some 33,900 apprentices in 2019 versus 39,800 in 2010. Compared with the previous year, it dropped by 1.5%. At the same time, the number of 15-year-olds continues to decrease: whereas in 2010 they were still some 94,600, this figure was only 85,800 in 2019. The ratio of apprenticeship entrants to the total population of 15-year-olds (apprentice ratio) was 39.5% in 2019 and thus 0.5 percentage points below the level of the year before – see Figure 9 on page 19. The proportion of apprentices without Austrian citizenship in the first year of training was 15.8%<sup>23</sup> in 2019, i.e. down by 0.1 percentage points on 2018. They are thus very underrepresented within the dual training system.

A closer look at the previous educational qualifications of pupils of vocational schools within the dual training system shows that the greatest proportion completed the pre-vocational

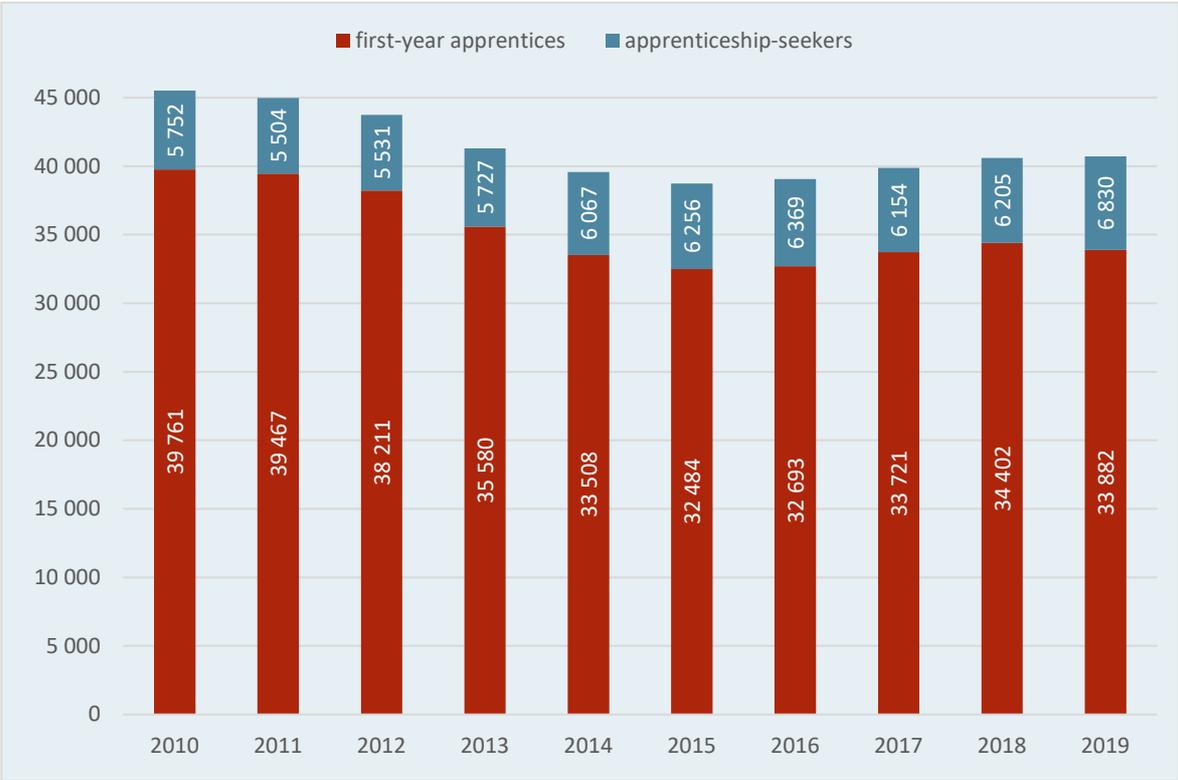
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<sup>22</sup> Source: Austrian Economic Chamber; apprenticeship statistics 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Source: statistics unit of Austrian Economic Chamber.

year (*Polytechnische Schule* – PTS), while many of them have migrated from secondary technical and vocational schools (BMS) and secondary technical or vocational colleges (BHS): in the 2018/19 school year, approximately 29.2% of apprentices (pupils of vocational schools within the dual training system) had previously attended pre-vocational year courses, 13.8% a BMS, 12.7% a BHS, 0.8% a general secondary school and 13.1% a new secondary school, 11.2% a vocational school within the dual training system (e.g. those repeating classes or changing their apprenticed trade), 6.6% an upper secondary AHS and 0.8% a lower secondary AHS. 6% had previously been enrolled in some form of continued training, whereof the majority had completed a BMS course<sup>24</sup>.

Figure 9: Apprentices in their first year of training and apprenticeship-seekers, 2010-2019



Source: 2019 apprenticeship statistics of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and BALI retrieval of 18 June 2020 (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.

<sup>24</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, school statistics; Table 'Previous educational qualifications of apprentices in the first classes of vocational schools within the dual training system 2018/19'.

In 2019 the stock of apprenticeship-seekers increased by 10.1% to 6,830 persons over the previous year, while the number of PES-registered apprenticeship vacancies increased by 14% to 6,247. The demand for apprenticeships exceeded the supply of training slots offered by employers by 583 on an annualised average in 2019. 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 1.1 in 2019. The proportion of employers notifying their apprenticeship vacancies to the PES<sup>25</sup> was 81.5%<sup>26</sup>.

In 2019 a total of 46,390 apprentices (i.e. 42.5% of all apprentices or up 1.4% on the previous year) were trained in trades and crafts in 16,307 companies offering such training. 16,446 persons or +4.4% (15.1%) were trained in one of the 1,224 companies with training slots in the industrial sector and 15,283 persons or +2.2% (14%) in one of the 3,854 companies with training slots in the retail sector in 2019 (see Figure 10 on page 21). Broken down by training sectors, supra-company training schemes reported the greatest decline (down 10.6%), while banking and insurance reported the strongest increase (up 8.3%) followed by information and consulting with +7.5% in 2019 as compared to the previous year.

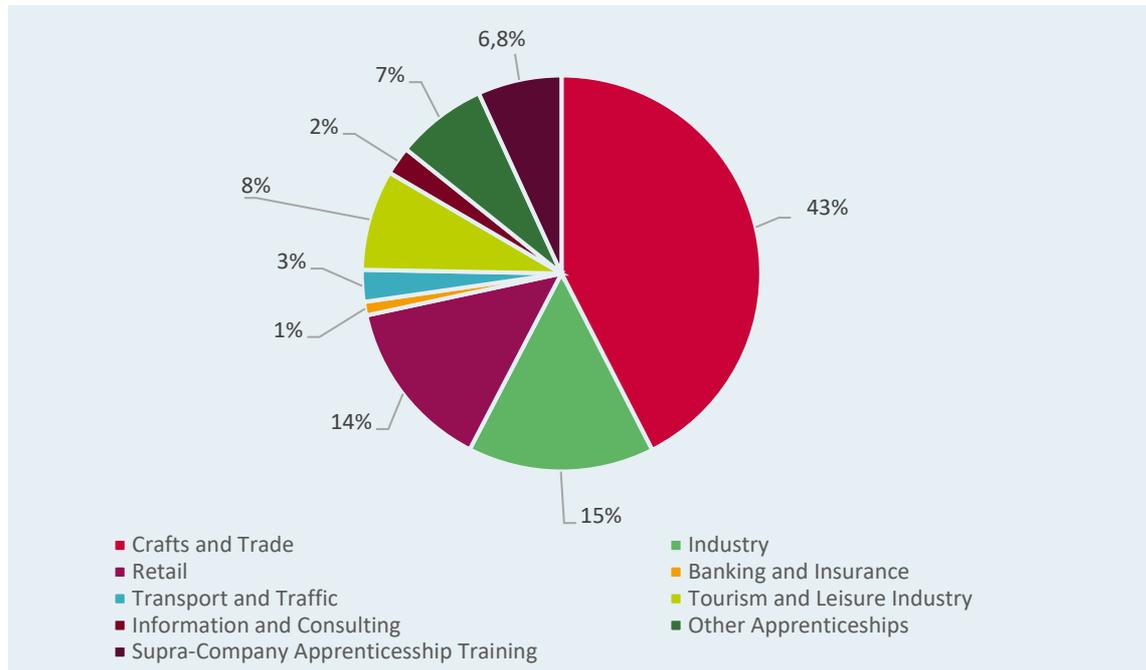
In addition to personal interests and skills, the choice of apprenticed trades is influenced by the supply of available training slots on the one hand, and by the general economic framework on the other. In Austria young people still tend to be very traditional in choosing apprenticeships. Out of all young women apprentices in 2019, 22.3% chose retail including associated fields, 10.6% clerical apprenticeships and 8.5% hairdressing (hair stylist). Male apprentices preferred to be trained in the modularised apprenticeships of metal engineering (13.3%), electrical engineering (12%) and automotive engineering (10%). Roughly 63% of all female apprentices were trained in the ten most popular apprenticed trades in 2019. Male apprentices show a similar range of career choices: about 64% were trained in the ten most popular apprenticed trades.

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<sup>25</sup> PES involvement (apprenticeships) = inflow of apprenticeship vacancies divided by all apprenticeships actually taken up. This figure may exceed 100% if the number of incoming apprenticeship vacancies is greater than the number of apprenticeships taken up.

<sup>26</sup> Source: Endel et.al., *Lehrlingsausbildung: Angebot und Nachfrage 2020 (Apprenticeship training: supply and demand 2020)*, Synthesis Forschung, March 2020.

Figure 10: Percentage of apprentices by sectors in 2019



Source: 2019 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).

### 1.5.1 Retention rates for training companies and sectors<sup>27</sup>

After having completed their apprenticeship, a number of these young women and men move on to a standard employment relationship with the same employer. In 2014, two years after completion of their apprenticeship, more than one third (37%) of all (former) apprentices (women: 32.3%, men: 39.5%) were still working for the company that had trained them. According to forecasts by Synthesis Forschung, the rate of retention by the original employer will drop to roughly 35% by 2019. Of all apprentices with PES-subsidised training slots, 26.7% were still employed by their training company in 2014 two years after completion of training. The highest retention rate within this group is recorded for young women in subsidised apprenticed trades with a low proportion of women (2014: 34.7%).

<sup>27</sup> Source: Frick et. al., *Lehrlingsausbildung: Angebot und Nachfrage, Entwicklung und Prognosen 2014 bis 2019; (Apprenticeship training: supply and demand, development and forecasts 2014-2019)*, Synthesis Forschung, June 2015 (latest figures available).

Two years after completion of training, almost 43% of apprenticeship graduates were no longer employed in the sector they had been trained for, while slightly more than half (56.5%) of young skilled workers (54.7% female and 57.5% male) were still (or again) in their original sector. According to Synthesis Forschung projections, retention rates for training sectors will increase to 56.9% by 2019. For skilled workers trained in PES-subsidised training places, the sectoral retention rate was 48.6% in 2014. Here, too, the highest retention rate (53.6%) was reported for girls in subsidised apprenticed trades with a low proportion of women.

# 2 The Austrian Education and Training System

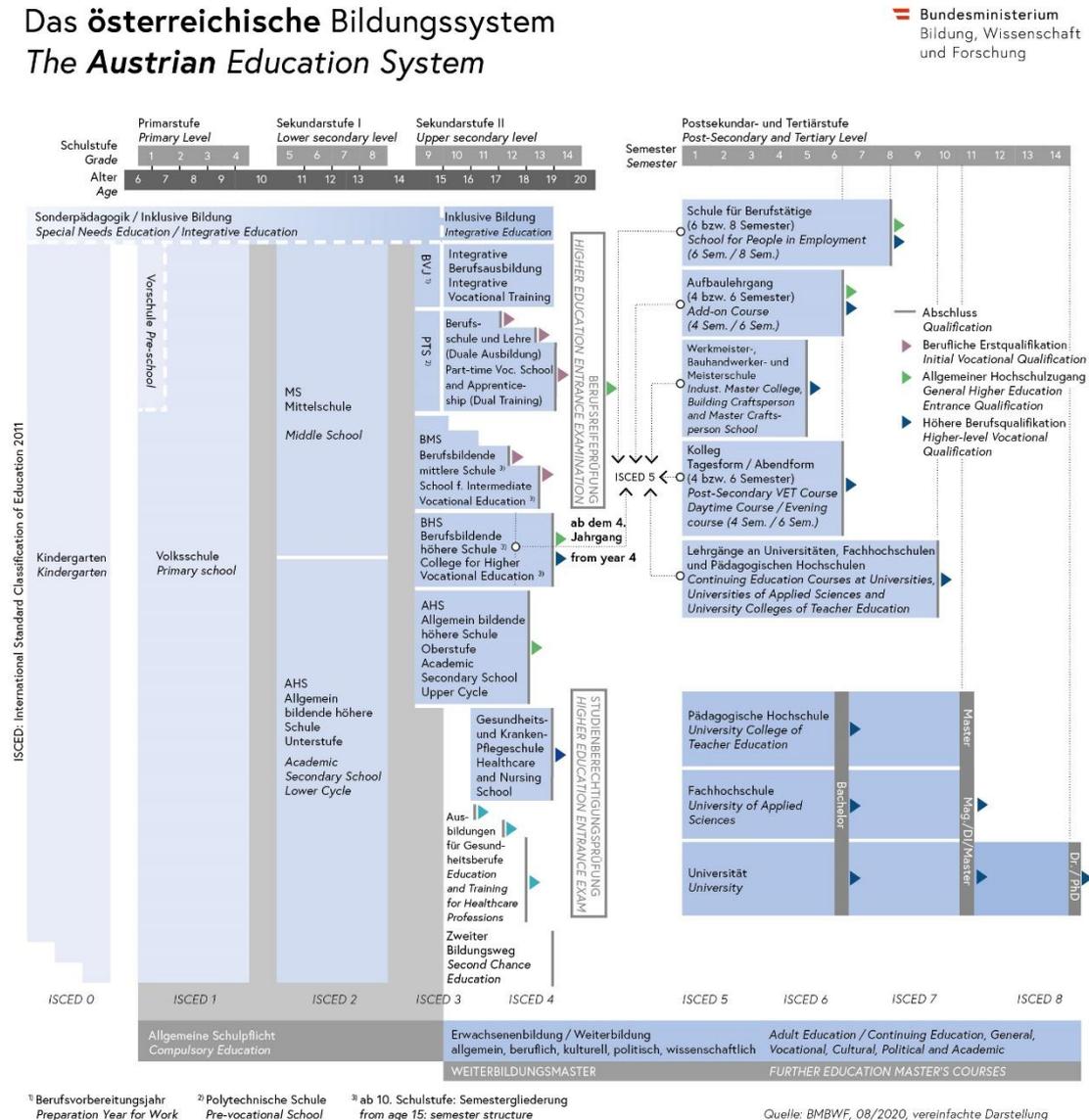
The Austrian system is characterised by a great variety of education and training options for different specialisations. Supported by figures on the various types of education and training pathways, the following sections will thus describe the whole system from school to tertiary education. The third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

## 2.1 Education and apprenticeship

Figure 11 on page 24 provides an overview of the Austrian education system from kindergarten to tertiary education. After kindergarten 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 11: The Austrian education system

## Das österreichische Bildungssystem The Austrian Education System



Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), Aug 2020.

### 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 elementary pre-school education establishments (e.g. kindergarten); for children who have turned five by 31 Aug of any given year, enrolment (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 habitual use) 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 86.5%, while that of children aged four rose from 80.4% to 96.1% and of those aged five from 86.3% to 98.5% over the same period<sup>28</sup>. For children aged 0 to 2 years, attendance rates increased from 4.6% to 30.1%<sup>29</sup>.

The majority of school-age children, i.e. more than 98%,<sup>30</sup> attend primary school, which comprises four years (primary level). The remaining 2% attend special-needs schools, other general schools with their own organisational status (such as Realschule, Waldorf and Montessori schools) or schools with foreign curricula. Children of compulsory school age who are not yet ready for primary 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. Here the pupils' education pathways diversify for the first time into two types of schools, i.e. the lower level of academic secondary schools (*Allgemein Bildende Höhere Schule – AHS*) and the (comprehensive) secondary schools (*Mittelschule – MS*, see item 2.3.6 on page 38). For admission to an AHS, children completing Year Four of primary school must have good or excellent marks in German/Reading/Writing and Arithmetic or must pass an entrance examination to that particular school. The choice of lower secondary level school depends on a number of factors, i.e. which schools are available in any given region or the time needed to travel to and from the preferred type of school or the pupils' social and socioeconomic background.

### **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: a pre-vocational year (*Polytechnische Schule – PTS*, one-year course), level II academic secondary schools (AHSs, four years), secondary technical and vocational schools (*Berufsbildende Mittlere Schulen – BMSs*; one to four years) and secondary technical and

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<sup>28</sup>Source: Statistics Austria, statistics on children's day-care centres 2019/20, ratio includes children who have entered school early.

<sup>29</sup> Ratio includes care provided by child minders.

<sup>30</sup> Source: Statistics Austria: Bildung in Zahlen (Education in Figures) 2018/19.

vocational colleges (*Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen – BHSs*, five years). The ninth grade or Year Nine is the last year of general compulsory education, whereupon young people may either continue their school-based education in upper secondary academic or upper secondary technical and vocational schools or colleges, or they may enter the dual training system.

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 56.

Pupils who fail to complete the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of an MS secondary school (and thus lower secondary level) after Year Nine or 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 a (N)MS or PTS 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.

Moreover, the Education Package 2018 (Pädagogikpaket 2018 - Federal Law Gazette I no. 101/2018) introduced the legal framework enabling pupils who completed their general compulsory education (Year Nine) with negative marks at upper secondary schools or colleges to 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. This provision entered into force as of Sept 2019.

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 of Year Nine, technical and vocational schools offer a wide variety of training opportunities in secondary technical and vocational colleges (*Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen – BHSs*) or secondary technical and vocational schools (*Berufsbildende Mittlere Schulen – BMSs*).

They provide both sound general education and initial vocational training of varying duration and level.

Secondary technical and 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 its special types of schools. They 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. BMS graduates may take the vocational matriculation examination (*Berufsreifeprüfung*) to gain general access to higher education. Completion of a three-year (minimum) BMS course is equivalent to NQF<sup>31</sup> level 4. 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 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 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*, 20%). Apprenticeships involve formal training which ends with a final examination. Completion of an apprenticeship is equivalent to NQF level 4. There are around 215 recognised

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<sup>31</sup> NQF = National Qualifications Framework.

apprenticeship trades in many different fields. Roughly 39.5% of young people leaving compulsory school in any given year enter apprenticeship-based training<sup>32</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 56 , 3.2 on page 43 and 3.3.4 on page 59. 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.

### **2.1.3 Pupils by type of school**

In the school year 2019/20, Austrian schools had 1,115,318 pupils<sup>33</sup>, with 47.9% of them being female. At the beginning of lower secondary level in Year Five, 59.8% of all pupils attended a (new) secondary school (N)MS, 35.5% the lower level of academic secondary schools AHS, 1.9% a special needs school, 1.5% an (N)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%) or to a BHS (31.9%). From (N)MS schools roughly 42.4% move on to AHS or BHS schools, the majority to the latter type of school (33.7%)<sup>34</sup>.

In Year Nine, i.e. at the beginning of the upper secondary school level, 35.5% of the pupils attend a BHS, 28.4% an AHS, 16.3% a PTS pre-vocational year and 16.1% a BMS school, 2.4% a special-needs school and 0.6% a VET 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 greater percentage in higher levels of secondary education<sup>35</sup> (lower level of AHS: 52.1% female; upper level of AHS 58.2% female, BHS 53% female, vocational schools of dual system: 33% female, pre-vocational year: 35.9% female)<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Source: apprenticeship statistics 2019 of the Austrian Economic Chamber - WKO (ratio of apprenticeship entrants to the total population of 15-year-olds on an annual average in 2019).

<sup>33</sup> Including schools with their own statutory rights and organisation.

<sup>34</sup> Educational transitions from the 2017/18 to 2018/19 school year; source: Statistics Austria.

<sup>35</sup> Basis: all school levels.

<sup>36</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, StatCube.

## 2.2 Tertiary education

Standard matriculation examinations (*Reifeprüfung*), matriculation and diploma examinations (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung*), academic entrance examinations (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*) or 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*) and vocational training academies (*berufsbildende Akademien*), as well as training 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 more than 40% of 30- to 34-year-olds had tertiary or equivalent education attainment levels (ISCED 5-8) in 2019<sup>37</sup>.

Slightly more than three quarters of all students are trained at the 16 science and six arts universities, all of them public universities. 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 2018/19, 381,845 students (54% female) were in higher education (short-term courses included), whereof 288,492 studied at universities, 61,744 at universities of applied sciences, 16,546 at teacher training colleges and 15,063 at private universities. The proportion of foreign students is approx. 28%. Foreign nationals studying in Austria primarily come from Germany, Italy and the other EU-28 countries. Taken together, these countries account for roughly 70% of all foreign students<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Source: EUROSTAT LFS; retrieved on 24 July 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Source: Statistics Austria: Bildung in Zahlen (Education in Figures) 2018/19.

## 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 2 on page 30, roughly one fourth (22%) of the 308,538 regular studies in the winter semester of 2019 were in the humanities and cultural sciences, 22% in engineering, 15% in natural sciences, 14% in social studies and economics and about 12% in law. In the humanities and cultural sciences the proportion of female students is 70% and in veterinary medicine programmes even some 80%. At 30%, engineering study programmes report the lowest percentages of women. In specific study programmes (such as mechatronics) female students account for less than 10%.

Table 2: Regular study programmes by field of study (total), winter semester 2019

Regular study programmes by field of study	Women	Men	Total	Percentage of Women
Humanities and culture sciences	47,527	20,308	67,835	70.1%
Engineering sciences	20,267	46,182	66,449	30.5%
Interdisciplinary sciences	872	569	1,441	60.5%
Art sciences	4,402	3,297	7,699	57.2%
Teaching training studies	12,916	7,431	20,347	63.5%
Medicine	7,729	6,682	14,411	53.6%
Natural sciences	25,815	19,236	45,051	57.3%
Law	20,454	16,108	36,562	55.9%
Social and economic sciences	2,474	21,763	44,237	50.8%
Theology	962	1,168	2,130	45.2%
Veterinary medicine	1,368	349	1,717	79.7%
Individual courses	313	320	633	49.4%
Other study activities	16	10	26	61.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165,115</b>	<b>143,423</b>	<b>308,538</b>	<b>53.5%</b>

Source: uni:data; data reported by universities on the relevant cut-off date as required by the university study reporting ordinance (UniStEV), with add-on courses not included.

## 2.2.2 Universities of applied sciences

Today there are 21 universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen* – FHs) throughout Austria. Of the 55,203 regular FH students in the winter semester of 2019, 71% were enrolled in bachelor programmes and 29% in master programmes, while the phase-out of diploma programmes is almost completed with only a few students left (two in the 2019 winter semester).

Table 3: Regular students enrolled in FH study programmes by fields of training, winter semester 2019 (cut-off date: 15 Nov 2019)

Regular students enrolled in FH courses by areas of training	Women	Men	Total	Percentage of Women
Art and Design	514	362	876	58.7%
Health sciences	6,516	1,491	8,007	81.4%
Military and security sciences	29	347	376	7.7%
Natural sciences	435	373	808	53.8%
Social sciences	3,031	1,016	4,047	74.9%
Technology and engineering sciences	5,072	15,247	20,319	25.0%
Economic sciences	12,260	8,510	20,770	59.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,857</b>	<b>27,346</b>	<b>55,203</b>	<b>50.5%</b>

Source: uni:data; data reported by universities on the relevant cut-off date as required by the university study reporting ordinance (UniStEV); data edited by BMBWF, Division IV/9.

Table 3 on page 31 provides an overview of FH students. In the winter semester 2019, most students chose training programmes in economics (38%), technology and engineering (37%) as well as health sciences (15%). 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>39</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Source: Statistics Austria: Bildung in Zahlen (Education in Figures) 2018/19.

### 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 in teaching. 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 4 on page 32. Training is now based on the age groups these future teachers are to teach rather than on the schools types they will teach in.<sup>40</sup> In order to manage the joint study programmes for the secondary level of general education, teacher training colleges and universities have formed four regional networks for cooperation.

Table 4: Students enrolled in teacher training colleges by type of teacher training (LA) programme; winter semester 2019/20

Students enrolled by type of teacher training LA programme	Women	Men	Total	Percentage of Women
Bachelor Elementary Education	455	3	458	99%
Bachelor LA Primary Level	5,903	811	6,714	88%
Bachelor LA for Elementary Schools	127	19	146	87%
Master LA Primary Level	1,448	118	1,566	92%
Bachelor LA Secondary Level General Education	3,209	1,954	5,162	62%
Master LA Secondary Level General Education	149	71	221	68%
Bachelor LA for New Secondary Schools (NMS)	115	98	713	54%
Bachelor LA for Special Schools	13	8	21	62%
Bachelor LA for Pre-Vocational Schools (PTS)	1	0	1	100%
Bachelor LA for Secondary Level Vocational Education and Training	750	810	1560	48%
Master LA for Secondary Level Vocational Education and Training	124	87	211	59%
Bachelor LA for Vocational Schools	12	20	32	38%

<sup>40</sup> Teacher training programmes based on types of schools are in phase-out; no more students are being admitted to these studies.

Students enrolled by type of teacher training LA programme	Women	Men	Total	Percentage of Women
Bachelor in Vocational Education at Secondary and Higher Vocational schools	58	49	107	54%
Bachelor LA for Religion at Polytechnic Schools (PS)	61	27	88	69%
Master of Music Education for Career Changers	15	11	26	57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,440</b>	<b>4,087</b>	<b>16,526</b>	<b>75%</b>

Source: Statistics Austria, statistics databases – studies at teacher training colleges, winter semester 2019/20 as at 28 Aug 2020; Note: Teacher training programmes for secondary level of 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.

### 2.3 Education policy priorities

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.

In Dec 2018 the Austrian Council of Ministers adopted the Education Package (*Pädagogik-Paket*), which consists of six projects and the following work packages: further development of primary/(new) secondary school; assessment of individual competences PLUS (iKM<sup>Plus</sup>) – a multifunctional concept; further development of curricula; performance assessment ordinance (LBVO)/competence grid; compulsory education and training; and readiness for school. The policy measures are being introduced gradually as of the 2019/20 school year. The Education Package aims at modernising the Austrian school system and aligning it with the requirements of today's society. For this purpose, it is necessary to create comparable standards throughout Austria, impart fundamental skills and competences and ensure that no child leaves school without these skills and competences. The objective is to further tal-

ents and interests and make up for any deficits in school performance, thus enabling children to complete their education pathways successfully and well-prepared for continued education or on-the-job training.

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 43.

### **2.3.1 Education reform 2017**

The education reform package of 2017 introduced greater autonomy for schools and the establishment of Education Directorates (*Bildungsdirektionen*), probably the most wide-ranging reform of school administration since the beginning of the Second Republic. Roughly two years after promulgation of the related act of law, we may look back on a successful implementation in both areas.

With the implementation of the education reform programme 2017, the following objectives are to be achieved: providing maximum leeway for individual schools to develop innovative education schemes against an appropriate backdrop of planning and resource security; enabling the creation of regional education concepts where school profiles are adequately coordinated and the pupils' transition from one school to another is optimised; improving the skills level of school principals and giving them the authority to design needs-based in-service and further training schemes for teachers independently; increasing transparency and enhancing governance of the school system by establishing a joint federal/Länder education authority; targeting quality development through improved quality management and uniform education control.

In 2018, the emphasis was on enhancing school autonomy and its implementation. As of 1 Jan 2018 school principals may choose their own teaching staff enabling them to find the teachers best suited for their respective team. Meanwhile, also the first school clusters have been established. In Sept 2018, federal school clusters were formed in Styria and Vorarlberg, compulsory school clusters in Burgenland, with additional clusters having sprung up in Carinthia and the Tyrol in 2019. Other clusters are being planned.

In 2019, the focus was on implementing the new hybrid authorities of Education Directorates. They were established at the beginning of 2019 and their top executives, the Education Directors, were appointed and entrusted with their tasks. This change introduces clear administrative structures and a clear demarcation of responsibilities between federal

and Länder levels. These directorates will be the first to administer both federal and Länder teachers.

Other new developments in the context of the 2017 education reform programme are being introduced in 2020.

A major change under this reform programme is the organisation of school oversight by educational regions. Depending on their size, two to seven such educational regions have been established in the individual Länder. Each educational region has its own school oversight team, which develops and implements regional strategies, concepts and measures that go beyond the horizon and purview of individual school locations or clusters and help improve the quality of education and enhance equal opportunities and gender equality in the region. This new structure of school oversight is becoming visible as of 2020. In terms of improved quality management, this means developing appropriate definitions and descriptions of school quality based on operationalisable criteria and indicators. A quality framework has already been prepared for this purpose. Currently a draft version, it is expected to be implemented at schools in the 2020/21 school year.

### **2.3.2 National strategy for preventing early drop-out from education/training**

This strategy involves three areas: prevention, intervention and compensation. Early school leaving is to be avoided by putting a stronger focus on vocational and educational career guidance, on the acquisition of competences, on practical aspects in technical and vocational education as well as on preventing repetition of classes. This includes ongoing efforts to improve the coordination of psychosocial support systems (the schools' social and psychological services, pupil and education counselling, Youth Coaching), in particular at and for schools with a high percentage of socially disadvantaged pupils.

### **2.3.3 Integration of refugee children and adolescents**

Since 2016 targeted measures have been taken to integrate refugee children and adolescents including, inter alia, language support and the establishment of mobile intercultural teams (MITs) to help schools solve communication problems with parents or conflicts at school as well as support measures for young refugees (15plus) who are no longer subject to compulsory education<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).

Although the MIT support project for refugee children and adolescents was phased out in August 2019 in its original format, the majority of Austria's federal states continues to rely on its staff within the framework of newly created psychosocial support structures (psychosocial support workers based on §11 of the Investment in Education Act or *Bildungsinvestitionsgesetz* – BIG). Consequently, this staff continues to be available for fostering integration at schools. 250 established posts have been added to help with educational integration at primary schools and (new) secondary schools in need of special support.

Moreover, measures have been taken to improve language skills and prioritise the development of German language skills (language of habitual use) in special remedial classes and courses. Language skills are important in all areas of education as they often are the first stumbling blocks for (adults but also) young people and later the reason why they (must) leave vocational training prematurely.

Introduced in 2018, the model of remedial German language classes and courses is intended to improve German language skills sustainably and, in so doing, increase the likelihood of educational and vocational success for all children and adolescents. In addition, pupils are to receive greater support than previously to enable them to join mainstream schooling rapidly. The introduction of remedial German language classes means that remedial lessons have been increased from 11 to 15 hours at primary level and to 20 hours at secondary level in combination with several hours of joint education with mainstream class pupils (e.g. music, sports), uniform testing of language skills after each semester and, consequently, options to change over to mainstream schooling after each semester. Remedial German language courses provide targeted support to former extraordinary pupils after change-over to mainstream schooling, six hours of such courses being provided per week.

Before they expire, a number of basic education programmes were offered in 2018 to refugees aged 15 to 19 years according to the quality standards of the Adult Education Initiative (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung*). They focus on teaching German, Arithmetic, ICT and Learning Skills. These programmes were supplemented by additional measures in the field of educational guidance and/or educational assistance as well as courses to complete previously missed compulsory education cycles. The programmes offered by the Adult Education Initiative and by the free Educational Counselling scheme (*Bildungsberatung Österreich*) continue to be available.

### 2.3.4 Reflexivity-based gender education and equality

As of Nov 2018 the policy decree on 'reflexivity-based gender education and equality' or Reflexive Geschlechterpädagogik und Gleichstellung (circular no. 21/2018) applies to the entire school system. It calls upon schools and all school administration officials to take a clear stance in dealing with violence and sexism and encourage reflexivity at school, in particular by developing the necessary competences at each and every level. This is of special importance to institutions that train future teachers. The policy decree aims to provide equal opportunities for action and development to all, irrespective of their gender and cultural background. The Education Directorates of the federal states are tasked with devising implementing plans for 2021-2023 for this decree, which are to be submitted to the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research for acceptance.

The policy decree is intended to help

- break down prejudices and give wider scope for individual action;
- overcome gender stereotypes and portrayals;
- eliminate prejudices towards boys and young men interested in education and health training programmes;
- better tap the existing potential of girls and young women in mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology (MINT subjects);
- take reflected decisions on how to plan one's own career and life;
- empower young people to have a greater say in health issues within the meaning of WHO guidelines and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5).
- develop subtle thinking beyond bipolar, rigid gender perceptions, thus attempting to prevent homophobia; and
- minimise gender segregation in education, the world of work and society, thus improving young people's life and job prospects and their opportunities to participate.

For further information on the policy decree addressing 'reflexivity-based gender education and equality' please refer to the website of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF): [bmbwf-Gender equality in schools.](#)

### **2.3.5 New curricula in technical and vocational education<sup>42</sup>**

In recent years a special curricula package introduced new curricula for different school types: five business and 28 technical, arts and crafts schools of the intermediate and upper secondary VET type (business school, business college, technical colleges), twelve agriculture and forestry curricula<sup>43</sup> and 29 social services curricula (such as tourism, fashion, household services, etc.). 'Vocation-related learning outcomes' (also of relevance for European and international classification) are indicated for all fields, disciplines and subjects, while every competence module includes education and teaching duties specifying the competences to be achieved and the curricula to be taught for any given semester.

All curricula of VET schools can be retrieved from: [berufsbildendeschulen.at](http://berufsbildendeschulen.at).

### **2.3.6 Secondary school (MS)**

Under the Education Package, all new (comprehensive) secondary schools are renamed as secondary schools as of the 2020/21 school year. The mission of secondary schools is to enable pupils – depending on their interests and affinities, their talents and aptitudes – to move on to upper secondary schools or colleges as well as to prepare them for working life. MSs are to develop the pupils' talents within a new teaching and learning culture focusing on flexible differentiation, individualisation and team work based on a curriculum which is identical with that of the AHS in all specialised subjects. A meaningful assessment of achievement in standard AHS and standard Year Six and up education, supplementary differentiated descriptions of the pupils' achievement (EDL) as well as talks between pupils, parents and teachers (KEL talks) are to focus on the pupils' strengths. Entitlement conditions for transfer to an upper secondary school are well-defined. Under the autonomy framework, schools may set their own priorities<sup>44</sup>.

### **2.3.7 New upper secondary level (NOST)<sup>45</sup>**

The new upper secondary level programme (*Neue Oberstufe* – NOST) is designed to help pupils acquire sustainable skills. It fosters the pupils' awareness of personal responsibility for learning outcomes and of the need to manage learning time and lifetime carefully. To

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<sup>42</sup> Source: BMBWF; note: the curricula for HAS, HAK, AUL and bilingual (German-Slovenian) HAK were already implemented in 2014, with the strands for working students (HAK B, Kolleg and Kolleg B) following in 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Nine disciplines including one new discipline (standard duration 5 years; for three disciplines additional AUL).

<sup>44</sup> Source: BMBWF.

<sup>45</sup> Source: BMBWF.

this end, support measures are put in place in response to the pupils' actual needs. Achievement is assessed by semesters, thus helping all pupils – from the gifted to the slow learners – to learn subjects gradually and continuously. Within the new upper secondary level, pupils will retain positive achievements; they will only have to correct negative outcomes and will have to repeat classes in specific cases only. This policy is to raise both their motivation and the rates of success. The new upper secondary level was introduced in 2017/18. Since then it has been implemented in about 230 academic secondary and technical/vocational schools. Currently, its contents are being adapted and further developed based on the results of the ongoing monitoring process and the NOST evaluation exercise.

## 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 23). 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 EducationTraining 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. 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 information 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](#).

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

The 18plus – *Berufs- und Studienchecker* ( $\approx$  check your job and study options at age 18plus) programme ([18plus.at](#)) assists pupils in the last two years of the upper level of academic secondary schools (AHS) and secondary technical or vocational colleges (BHS) 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 2019/20 school year a total of 326 schools with 17,067 pupils participated in the free 18plus programme. Broken down by types of schools, 98 BHSs (36.2%) and 173 AHSs (63.8%) as well as 10 joint AHSs/BHSs and 45 other schools took part.

### **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 = vocational information 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 offered by these vocational information centres at 72 locations around the country were used by roughly 499,000 persons in 2019. 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 the 2018/19 school year, assistance was provided to more than 97,600 primarily Year Seven and Year Eight pupils<sup>46</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 job compass (AMS-Berufskompass) and youth compass (AMS-Jugendkompass) provide 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. The training compass (AMS-Ausbildungskompass) offers detailed information on the Austrian education system, on education choices and training establishments.

'Workroom' (AMS-Arbeitszimmer) is the PES's youth platform which provides information to pupils, apprentices and students on school, job and higher education choices. Very popular in 2019 were information on schools and apprenticeships as well as concrete searches for apprenticeship vacancies. Other information searches related to study programmes and the 'clever girls' platform.

Young people may access the PES job lexicon (Berufslexikon-Startseite) to view detailed job descriptions arranged by level of educational attainment; more than 300 online videos supplement the written texts and photographs. General information videos and 'virtual' company visits are also available. They are supplemented by so-called 'FemTech' videos, which

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<sup>46</sup> Source: PES Annual Report 2019.

give examples of women in technical jobs and encourage girls to choose a career in this promising field.

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 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, remuneration of a retail apprentice is between €550 and €730 in the first year of training, between €590 and €820 in the second year and between €710 and €950 in the third year (2019). About 35% of young people in Austria enter 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 200 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 (BAG) and the School Organisation Act (SCHOG) as well as the Vocational Training in Agriculture and Forestry Act (LFBAG). The most important revisions in recent years will be described below.

### **3.2.2 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.

### **3.2.3 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 placement handicaps<sup>47</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

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<sup>47</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.

system. Extended training and the acquisition of partial skills may be provided within a company-based apprenticeship or within a supra-company apprenticeship (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.

8,213 of all 109,111 apprentices were in vocational training under §8b of the BAG (cut-off date 31 Dec 2019). Of these, 6,625 were enrolled in extended training programmes and 1,588 in programmes providing partial skills<sup>48</sup>.

### **3.2.4 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 counselling meetings – 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 a large number 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.

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<sup>48</sup> Source: 2019 apprenticeship statistics (Table: Apprentices by Länder) of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO).

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.

### **3.2.5 Apprenticeship following standard matriculation examination**

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

### **3.2.6 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 the Vocational Training Act (BAG). The funding guidelines are defined by the funding committee of the Federal Advisory Board on Vocational Training (*Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat*) composed of representatives of the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW), the Federal Ministry of Labour (BMA), the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and the Chamber of Labour (AK). Certain guidelines, such as those on coaching for apprentices and their employers, are drafted exclusively by the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs in consultation with the Federal Minister of Labour.

The subsidies available to individual companies in support of apprenticeship training are processed by the Apprenticeship Offices (*Lehrlingsstellen*) of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and financed by the Insolvency Contingency Fund (IEF), with the latter spending roughly €229.5m (planned figures<sup>49</sup>) on company-based apprenticeship subsidies in 2019. Detailed information on subsidies to company-based apprenticeships is available on the following sites:

- BMDW (Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs) on subsidising apprenticeships: [Themen/Lehre- und Berufsausbildung/Lehrlingsausbildung-Duales System/Lehre fördern](#)
- WKO (Austrian Economic Chambers) on subsidising apprenticeships: [Service/Bildung-Lehre/Förderungen-Lehre](#)
- Quality-related measures/activities: [Qualität in der Lehre](#)

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

Basic subsidies are determined by the rate of remuneration paid to apprentices (called '*Lehrlingseinkommen*'). 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 18plus years without upper secondary VET credentials 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 18plus.

#### **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).

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<sup>49</sup> Source: BMA, funds spent on young people.

**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 vocation schools, attending preparatory courses for repeat examinations or tutorials at compulsory school level. Also additional attendance of vocational school forms is supported (wherever the time spent at school is credited towards apprenticeships, the period of apprenticeship is reduced or a vocational school form has been missed owing to change of training slot).

**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, provided 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;
- No PES subsidy is claimed for the young apprentice (such as for women in male-dominated occupations), and
- The apprenticeship contract was concluded between 1 Aug 2018 and 31 Dec 2020 (there are plans to extend the term to 2021).

**i) 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. €814,293<sup>50</sup> from funds under §13e of the IESG were made available for this purpose in 2019.

- Final apprenticeship examinations (Lehrabschlussprüfung LAP)
  - Clearing centre for final apprenticeship examinations: The clearing centre (*Clearingstelle LAP*) has been established in order to assure the quality of test questions in final apprenticeship examinations (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’). Up to €330,657<sup>51</sup> could be made available for this measure in 2019 from funds earmarked for this purpose.
  - 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/di-

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<sup>50</sup> Source: Annual report WKO inhouse.

<sup>51</sup> Source: Annual report WKO inhouse.

dactic 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. In 2019, €1.2m<sup>52</sup> were earmarked for this purpose.

- 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 develop systemically relevant tools in pilot projects. In order to enhance quality development in the dual training system, a data-based quality management system is available for apprenticeship training ('quality management in apprenticeships') throughout Austria. 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,

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<sup>52</sup> Source: Annual report WKO inhouse.

the following measures are eligible for funding, their focus being on persons from migrant backgrounds as well as on persons qualifying as recognised refugees or for subsidiary protection status (see also ‘Supra-regional placement in apprenticeships’). Funding is based on additional resources made available under §13e of the IESG. In 2019, €3.4m<sup>53</sup> were provided for this measure:

- 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 projects:

- 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 inplacement foundation for young adults aged 20 to 30 years (see Info Box 3); and
- Upstream support to access apprenticeship training.

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<sup>53</sup> Source: Annual report WKO inhouse.

### **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 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.

**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 number of coaching programme users has soared in recent years. In 2019 roughly 2,200 apprentices sought help under this coaching scheme. In addition, more than 200 companies used the coaching programme for employers of appren-

tices. Since its inception in Dec 2016 till the end of Dec 2019, a total of 7,133 apprentices and 1,018 training companies were assisted by the coaching programme for apprentices and the one for employers of apprentices.

The two 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 is to monitor the migration from supra-company to company-based apprenticeships and provide a wider range counselling options.

### **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 inplacement foundation**

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 this foundation programme. The number of persons eligible for subsidisation is limited to 1,000.

#### **Info Box 4: Europass<sup>54</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 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 Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMBWF), 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](#).

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<sup>54</sup> Source: BMBWF.

### Info Box 6: Apprentice bonus

Since July 2020 an apprentice bonus (*Lehrlingsbonus*) has been in place, which may total up to €3,000. Training companies receive €2,000 for newly recruited apprenticeship entrants, with micro- and small-size companies receiving an additional bonus of up to €1,000. To this end, the apprenticeship contract must have been concluded between 14 Mar and 31 Oct 2020; for apprentices taken on from a supra-company training scheme (ÜBA), the applicable period extends to 31 Mar 2021.

### 3.2.7 Apprenticeships subsidised by the public employment service

In addition to subsidies to company-based apprenticeships (for details see item 3.2.6 on page 46), the PES supports apprenticeships of the following groups:

- Girls/women in apprenticed trades with a low proportion of women<sup>55</sup>;
- Specially disadvantaged<sup>56</sup> apprenticeship-seekers<sup>57</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 overheads). The grant is awarded for one year of training/apprenticeship at a time and may be granted for up to three years in total.

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<sup>55</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>56</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>57</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/new secondary schools with special needs; slow learners after completion of compulsory schooling, etc.

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 regular 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.

The PES spent roughly €38.5m<sup>58</sup> on individualised financial support in 2019.

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

This strong 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 2019, the Austrian government spent around €920m for the integration of young people into the labour market. Of these, €579m were spent on subsidies and grants, while roughly €230m went towards subsidising company-based apprenticeships. Another €111m were available for a number of programmes offered by the Social Affairs Ministry Service. In addition, funds totalling €53m were provided for the targeted expansion of the Education-Training till 18 initiative in 2019. When fully operative, the Education-Training till 18 initiative will receive another €57m per year as of 2020.

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)**

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 Production Schools or supra-company training schemes are available to disadvantaged youth. Under the Education-Training till 18 programme, the federal government intends to

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<sup>58</sup> Source: BMA, funds spent on young people.

provide a wide variety of dovetailing schemes, the necessary assistance and appropriate incentives to make the participation in education and training opportunities more binding.

Whereas most young people already continue education or take up apprenticeships after completion of compulsory school, a small group of their peers fail 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 will be supported by the EducationTraining till 18 programme through appropriate choices tailored to their needs.

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 (BMA), the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK), the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) are responsible for the implementation of the EducationTraining till 18 programme. Other relevant stakeholders 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*) related to the EducationTraining till 18 programme was adopted by parliament in July 2016 and entered into force on 1 Aug 2016, with continuing education or training being compulsory as of 1 July 2017 after completion of the necessary preparatory measures.

### **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. Stage 1 involves an initial interview, stage 2 more detailed counselling and stage 3 ongoing assistance of up to one year. The whole programme is based on counselling, guidance and case management 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.

All 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 2019, there were a total of 60,196 participants in Youth Coaching (33,714 male and 26,482 female) (stages 1-3)<sup>59</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 disadvantaged 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. Since Jan 2016 the Fit for Training programme of the Social Affairs Ministry Service (SMS) 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 young people 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

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<sup>59</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special assessment TN 0-24 years, UeW\_v3, exported on 14 Aug 2020.

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 nation-wide, low-threshold standardised programme for disadvantaged young people who are not 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.

2019 Fit for Training programmes (pre-programme modules included) recorded a total of 5,277 participants (3,119 male and 2,158 female)<sup>60</sup>.

### **3.3.4 Training Guarantee for young people – supra-company apprenticeship 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.

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<sup>60</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special assessment TN 0-24 years, UeW\_v3, exported on 14 Aug 2020.

In the 2019/20 training year, roughly 10,700 young people participated in supra-company apprenticeship schemes. Funds appropriated for this purpose amounted to approx. €150m.

Authorised training providers who have taken on a young person from the ÜBA programme on or after 1 Aug 2013 may claim funding of €1,000 after the first year of training or after the end of the period of continued employment under certain conditions – for more details see item 3.2.6 h) on page 48.

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

The Training Guarantee till 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. The Training Guarantee till 25 programme has been implemented by the PES since 2017.

In 2019 about 12,200 persons received this kind of skills training, with a total of €77.14m spent on this programme. On an annual average, 13,500 young people aged 18-24 years with no more than compulsory schooling were registered as unemployed in 2019 (or about 45% of all unemployed members of this age group). 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/ inplacement foundation schemes;
- School-based education and training.

## 3.4 Programmes for certain target groups

### 3.4.1 Policies for young people with health-related employment handicaps<sup>61</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 employment handicaps is based not only on their legally defined disabilities (beneficiary disabled persons according to the Austrian Disability Employment Act [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 this is supported by medical assessment and results in major placement difficulties or limited job opportunities for those concerned. Holders of disability passports have been included in these measures since 2010. The average number of young people with health-related employment handicaps listed in the employment service's unemployment register in 2019 was 2,430.

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 57), 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 3.2.3 on page 44).

9,555 young people with health-related employment handicaps received subsidies from the public employment service in 2019, roughly 1,400 of whom were assigned to employment measures and 3,200 to support measures. A very large part of them was given the opportunity to participate in initial or advanced training programmes: in 2019, the number of young people with health-related employment handicaps supported by the PES with skills training measures was 8,000<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Disabilities of beneficiary persons are graded by official assessment (*Feststellungsbescheid*) pursuant to the Austrian Disability Employment Act (BeinstG), the Victims Welfare Act (*Opferfürsorgegesetz*) or/and similar legislation (*Landesbehindertengesetze*) of the individual Austrian Länder (states). The public employment service, too, may grade clients as having health issues based on their restricted physical or psychological aptitude for the labour market.

<sup>62</sup> Source: PES DWH, cube: fdg\_personen 2019, number of persons.

### **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 has shifted the strategic focus of its programmes in recent years. Whereas in the early 1990s measures of vocational integration focused on beneficiary disabled persons (i.e. persons registered as such), the group of persons eligible for support has been gradually widened and 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 market integration 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.

The past key programme for improving the labour market situation of people with disabilities was BABE 2014-2017 (BABE = German acronym for disability – training – employment). With the Inclusion Package adopted in October 2017 by the National Council, strengthening labour force participation and fostering the development and continuation of existing programmes for people with disabilities continue to be the focus of disability policy. To this end, the government and major stakeholders agreed a package of measures (Inclusion Package) 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.

In addition to extending the legal protection of people with disabilities, the annual budget resources for improving labour force participation of people with disabilities have been increased under the Inclusion Package.

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 (15-24 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 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 (formerly Production Schools), Training Assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*), Job Assistance (*Arbeitsassistenz*) and Job Coaching.

NEBA accompanies young people in need of assistance on their gradual path towards integration, i.e. from Youth Coaching, Fit for Training (formerly Production Schools), vocational training under §8b of the BAG (acquisition of partial skills, extended periods of apprenticeship training), Job Assistance, Job Coaching and skills training projects to formal 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 more detail in item 3.3.2 on page 57.

### **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 more detail in item 3.3.3 on page 58.

### **Training Assistance**

The (vocational) Training Assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz – BAS*) programme is aimed at improving labour market integration of young people with individual impairments. The BAS scheme supports young people with disabilities and other employment handicaps through Inclusive Vocational Training (*Integrative Berufsausbildung – IBA*) as well as assis-

tance both at the workplace and at school to ensure the sustainability of this training pathway. Suitable preparation, support and guidance measures are offered to ensure young people's successful completion of the chosen training programme. In 2019 a total of 9,806 young people (6,942 male and 2,864 female) participated in this programme<sup>63</sup>.

### **Job Assistance programme for young people**

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 to ensure crisis intervention to secure jobs at risk. In 2019 a total of 7,368 young people (4,392 male and 2,976 female) were enrolled in this programme<sup>64</sup>.

### **Job Coaching**

The Job Coaching programme is designed for young people in need of special assistance due to their cognitive impairment or other 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 2019 a total of 908 young people (569 male and 339 female) participated in this programme<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special assessment TN 0-24 years, UeW\_v3, exported on 14 Aug 2020.

<sup>64</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special assessment TN 0-24 years, UeW\_v3, exported on 14 Aug 2020.

<sup>65</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special assessment TN 0-24 years, UeW\_v3, exported on 14 Aug 2020.

## **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 for Young People in the Workplace (*Persönliche Assistenz für Jugendliche 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 2019 a total of 150 young people (whereof 75 male and 75 female) benefited from this Personal Assistance scheme<sup>66</sup>.

## **Skills training**

The objective of skills training programmes is to offer, alongside Production Schools, specific education/training with due regard to the participants' individual capabilities. In addition, they offer the opportunity of getting accustomed to job situations in the private sector. In recent years, a number of skills training programmes in Production Schools have been aligned with the standardised Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*) scheme. In 2019 a total of 1,064 young people (585 male and 479 female) were enrolled in the various skills training projects<sup>67</sup>.

## **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 2020 integration enterprises provided a total of 2,256 jobs under the employment module (whereof 1,687 jobs for people with disabilities).

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

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<sup>66</sup> Source: SMS Reporting: total number of persons; since for technical reasons it is not possible to provide evaluations by age, the 2018 distribution has been used as a basis for calculating the distribution in 2019.

<sup>67</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special assessment TN 0-24 years, UeW\_v3, exported on 14 Aug 2020.

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 2020 a total of 127 people participated in the IBL programme, whereof 117 were trained in apprenticeships and 10 still retained for the legally defined period following apprenticeships. The programme is to be further expanded to provide 130 apprenticeship slots by 2021. The money spent by the Compensatory Levy Fund (*Ausgleichstaxfonds*) on integration enterprises was €41.5m in 2019.

# 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. 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 €442m 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 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 almost 90,000 trainees by the end of 2019) of learning support and advice or intensive training in German, Mathematics and Science in the early periods of technical/vocational school 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.

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.

## 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 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 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: mapping, outreach, preparation and offer:

- Mapping: identifying the target group, available services and skills needs. Enabling prevention through early warning systems and measures.
- 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, apprenticeships or traineeships.

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 on page 56). Current developments can be retrieved from the European Commission's website at: [EU-Youth Guarantee](#).

### 4.3 ERASMUS+

Erasmus+<sup>68</sup> is the EU's programme for education, training, youth and sports for the period 2014-2020. It provides opportunities for adolescents and young adults to gain experiences abroad by studying, working or volunteering in other European countries.

Erasmus+ is intended to support the mobility of e.g. (higher education) teaching staff, students, pupils and apprentices. They may gather experiences abroad by entering traineeships or studying a semester in another EU country, etc. On the other hand, it fosters international cooperation and partnerships between institutions and countries, e.g. through the eTwinning network for schools.

Other major elements of Erasmus+ include standards and frameworks for the recognition of qualifications, courses, universities or diplomas. A wide range of tools is available for this purpose: the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), etc.

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<sup>68</sup> For more information refer to the Erasmus+ website of the European Commission: Link: [EU-Erasmus+](#) as well as to the Austrian website: [National-Erasmus+](#).

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## Abbreviations

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Abbreviations</b>
AHS	Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule = academic secondary school
AUL	Aufbaulehrgang = advanced course (for working students)
BABE	Behinderung, Ausbildung, Beschäftigung = disability, training, employment
BAG	Berufsausbildungsgesetz = Vocational Training Act
BHS	Berufsbildende Höhere Schule = secondary technical and vocational college
BJV	Bundesjugendvertretung = youth representatives at the federal level
BKA	Bundeskanzleramt = Federal Chancellery
BMASGK	Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz = Federal Ministry of Labour, Health, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
BMBWF	Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung = Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
BMDW	Bundesministerium für Digitalisierung und Wirtschaft = Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs
BMHS	Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen = secondary technical and vocational schools and colleges
BMS	Berufsbildende Mittlere Schule = secondary technical and vocational school
BS	Berufsschule = vocational school within the dual training system
DWH	Datawarehouse
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ERASMUS	Support programme of the European Union
EU	European Union
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Union
FH	Fachhochschule = university of applied sciences

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Abbreviations</b>
HAK	Handelsakademie = business college
HAS	Handelsschule = business school
Ibobb	Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf = information, counselling and guidance on education and career
ICT	information and communication technologies
IESG	Insolvenz-Entgeltsicherungsgesetz = Act on Wage Compensation from the Insolvency Contingency Fund
IFA	Internationaler Fachkräfteaustausch = Austrian association for the international exchange of young workers
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LA	Lehramt = teacher training programme
LAP	Lehrabschlussprüfung = final apprenticeship examination
LBVO	Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung = performance assessment ordinance
LFBAG	Land- und Forstwirtschaftliches Berufsausbildungsgesetz = Vocational Training in Agriculture and Forestry Act
MIT	Mobiles interkulturelles Team = mobile intercultural team
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NMS	Neue Mittelschule = new secondary – i.e. comprehensive – school
NOST	Neue Oberstufe = new upper secondary level
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PES	Public employment service
PTS	Polytechnische Schule = pre-vocational year, a one-year course following on Year Eight
SCHOG	Schulorganisationsgesetz = School Organisation Act
ÜBA	Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung = supra-company training programme
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WKO	Wirtschaftskammer Österreich = Austrian Economic Chamber



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