

Vocational Education Systems in the participating countries

Austria

Overview

Compulsory education until the age of:	Until completing 9 th grade (6-15 years old normally)
Age of usual entrance into the vocational training:	Depending on programme between age of 14-16
What are the pupils' requirements for entering the VET system?	Depends, but in general lower secondary education
Is there a dual system?	yes
If not, does any other work-based training exist?	/
Are internships scheduled during the training?	Yes, work-based learning scheduled

1. Structure of the general school and VET system

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a very important role in the Austrian education system. A distinction is made between mainly school-based programs and dual track training programs with apprenticeships. Both are chosen to equal proportions of young people. 75% of all learners who have completed compulsory schooling are in a VET programme, as the programmes cover all the economic sectors and lead to a wide range of qualification levels.

The last year of compulsory schooling corresponds with the first year of secondary school (9th grade). After the pupils have completed the lower secondary level either at a secondary school (Hauptschule - expires 2018/19), a New Middle School (Neue Mittelschule -NMS) or the lower cycle of the academic secondary school (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule- AHS), they have to decide between general education and vocational training.

The school-based vocational training can be started from the 8th grade on, the dual vocational training begins after the completion of the 9th grade, as the completion of the first year of secondary education and a minimum age of pupils of 15 years is necessary.

2. Details of the Vocational Education System

There are several options for young people choosing vocational education. The Pre-vocational School (Polytechnische Schule - PTS) prepares for further work-based vocational training that they can only start from the 9th grade on. Different types of school-based

programmes leading to diverse levels of qualification are the second option. Overview of the options:

- Mainly school-based VET programmes (Schools for intermediate vocational education) (berufsbildende mittlere Schulen - BMS)
- Mainly school -based VET programmes (Colleges for higher vocational education) (berufsbildende höhere Schulen -BHS) and
- Dual vocational training, apprenticeship for >15 year-olds, work-based learning, either at the workplace or a VET institution with a proportion of 80%, 2-4 years (from 9th grade on).

Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen (Schools for intermediate vocational education - BMS)

- Mainly school-based VET programme
- work-based learning and training at school (50% vocational), compulsory internships at companies during summer holidays
- Age of pupils 14 – 18 years
- ISCED 3B level
- Pupils are qualified for immediate professional activity
- Graduates are granted access to specially regimented occupations
- Takes one to four years, depending on choice of occupation
- Ends with a final examination
- With completing further examinations, e.g. Berufsreifeprüfung, add-on courses, graduates are granted access to educational programmes on the post-secondary and tertiary level
- Graduates fulfil the requirements for a future entrepreneurship

Berufsbildende höhere Schulen (Colleges for higher vocational education - BHS)

- Mainly school-based VET programme
- work-based learning and training at school (60% vocational), compulsory internships at companies during summer holidays
- duration: 5 years, evening classes are possible for employed persons
- age of pupils 14 – 19 years
- ISCED 4A level
- Offers consolidated general education plus quality professional education, combining theoretical and practical knowledge
- Graduates achieve access to higher (tertiary) education, are qualified for upscale professional activities and regimented occupations
- Final degree: double qualification Reifeprüfung (matura) and diploma
- Basis for future entrepreneurship
- High level of education, corresponds to post secondary level in other European countries

Dual vocational education training – apprenticeship + part-time vocational school

- Pre-conditions: completion of compulsory schooling and lower secondary level, mostly at the pre-vocational school (Polytechnische Schule), age above 15 years
- work-based learning, either at the workplace or a VET institution with a proportion of 80%,
- Duration 2-4 years, mostly 3 years
- ISCED 3B level
- About 206 recognized occupations (october 2012)
- Complete vocational qualification
- Besides the workplace-based education, pupils attend a vocational school that provides basic professional theory, supports and completes the work-based education and extends general education (10 weeks per year – mostly blocked).
- Final examination at the Chamber of Commerce
- The funding of vocational school (teaching staff, school maintenance) is carried out by the Austrian Bundesländer. The federal state refunds 50% of the costs for teaching staff to the Länder.

Work-based training at VET institution (Überbetriebliche Ausbildung)

- Austria guarantees vocational training for all young people under the age of 18 years. For those who do not find a workplace for their apprenticeship, a work-based training at a VET institution (Lehrwerkstätte) is provided.
- since 2008 this kind of vocational training is accepted as equal to the workplace-based training.
- As in the dual vocational education training system, besides the work-based education, pupils attend part-time vocational school
- Final examination at the Chamber of Commerce

Work-based VET at companies

- Work-based training with 80% proportion of total training hours
- Professional competence-building under real working conditions
- Training regulations: Austria-wide training regulation for each training occupation, containing competences and skills that training companies have to teach their apprentices. It also contains an occupation profile that includes those skills that need to be achieved by the apprentices until the end of their training.
- Participation: The social partners have far reaching influence on the structure and contents of teaching in the official training regulations through their attendance in advisory committees.
- Funding: Work-based VET is funded by the training companies; Apprentices earn small salaries paid by the companies on the basis of a collective contract. Training companies can also be promoted by public programmes.
- Final examination at the Chamber of Commerce: The final examination is divided in a practical and a theoretical part. The apprentice does not need to take a theoretical exam, if he/she completed the last year of VET school positively. Examination board: consists of representatives of employers and employees.

- Possibilities for further qualification: examination for the master craftsman's diploma, access to tertiary level of education can be achieved during the VET programme by completing the Berufsmatura (matura), self-employment

3. Statistics

About 80% of the Youth in 10th grade in Austria pass one of the vocational education programmes; 40% complete apprenticeships, 60% pass the school-based trainings.

In 2011 128.000 Austrian young people took part in a work-place based apprenticeship. Especially in the fields of crafts and commerce, this kind of vocational education training is favoured – the sector trains about one half of the apprentices of Austria. In the fields of trade, industry and tourism, work-based VET is also widespread.

4. Political responsibility

The ministry for education is politically responsible for the school-based vocational education. Competences in practical education are shared by the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs, as well as the political level of the “Länder” and the social partners.

The well-established model of social partnerships in Austria is a system of economic and socio-political cooperation between associations of employers, employees and representatives of the government. The social partners have the function to adjust labour relations and to cover economic and social policy. Apart from that in the field of VET, the social partners have far reaching influence on the structure and contents of teaching in the official training regulations through their attendance in advisory committees.

5. Advantages and challenges of the VET system

Advantages	Disadvantages/ challenges
Diversity of political institutions with competences in the VET system: possible influence of different interest groups, different types of students are represented, ability to innovate	Complex network of political responsibilities is a challenge for the coordination and fair distribution of public funds
	Permeability of the education system, possibilities to reach higher levels of qualification is practically not given in the way it is theoretically ensured, especially concerning access to Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences; further standardization needed
Very divers and wide range of VET programmes	Practical training either at companies or VET

with high proportions of practical training hours, especially in the dual apprenticeship training.

institutions is intended and widely provided in the school-based training, but not obligatory. Hence, not all students complete practical training lessons.

The Austrian VET system addresses very diverse target groups and their special competences as well as learning skills.

Good links of general education and VET

Employment opportunities are very good with vocational education; diverse further professional education offers opportunities for upscale positions at companies/ self-employment, etc.

High impact of social partners in arranging VET → labour-market relevant development of VET

The demand of the Youth determines the number of training places offered. The needs of the labour market are not primarily taken into account. There is a lack of statistical outlooks on future needs of the economy and information on where there is a lack or excess of human resources.

Dualism in VET: Work-based and school-based VET

In case of tensions on the training market due to economical conditions, the vocational schools are able to guarantee training to a large proportion of apprentices.

Lack of coordination between school-based and work-based programmes can lead to unproductive forms of competition in gaining the Youth as students/ apprentices.

Workshop-based dual programmes (*Überbetriebliche Ausbildung*) are costly and risk reducing the incentives for employers to provide apprenticeships.

Choice of education model and vocation in relatively early age and self-contained systems with increasing amounts of alternatives and choices, lead to drop outs due to structural factors, disappointments and downward mobility.

The VET system has a structural irregularity in the 9th grade, with a double transition for apprentices and some students spending a year in an inappropriate track.

Gender-specific segregation, especially in field of Mathematics, Computer Science, Natural Sciences and Technology; as young people need to make early decisions regarding their education, and due to the strong dominance of vocational training, female Youth only rarely choose educational training in the MINT field.

Industry experience for VET trainers is mandatory, teachers are close to relevant professional experience

Literature and online resources

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