



## Attachment 3.1

# **National Authorities for Apprenticeships: Policy learning and support to promoting apprenticeship systems and VET policy experimentation under the European Alliance for Apprenticeship**

## **Country report Austria**

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## 1. Country context

### 1.1 Economic context

#### Working population

According to the microcensus there were **4,112,800 employees** on an **annual average in 2014**, of which 2,175,300 were men and 1,937,500 women. The number of employees increased by 8,000 compared to the previous year. Whereas the number of employed men fell by 5,000, the number of employed women rose by 13,000. The **employment rate, that is the share of employees (age group of 15- to 64-year-olds) in the population**, was **71.1%** (men 75.2%; women 66.9%, cf. Fig. 1) in **2014**. Therefore – although it was slightly below the 2012 rate (71.4%) – the rate has risen continuously in recent years.

Fig. 1: Employment rate (in %)

	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Men	73.3	74.9	76.8	76.0	76.2	75.2
Women	59.7	62.2	64.8	65.7	66.7	66.9
Total	66.5	68.6	70.8	70.8	71.4	71.1

Source: [Statistics Austria](#) (retrieved on 16.6.2015)

The **employment rate of 15- to 24-year-olds** was far above the EU-28 average (52.1% compared to 32.5%) in 2014 (cf. Fig. 2). This is mainly due to the diversity of programmes on the upper secondary level (dual system, school-based VET, cf. 1.3), which train according to the requirements of the labour market.

Fig. 2: Employment rate of 15- to 24-year-olds (in %)

	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Österreich	52.3	54.4	52.8	53.7	52.1
EU-28	36.4	37.3	33.8	32.6	32.5

Source: [Statistics Austria](#) (retrieved on 16.6.2015) and [Eurostat](#) (retrieved on 16.6.2015)

#### Sectors of the economy – how well does the VET offer mirror the sectors of economic activity

Over the last three decades, a clear structural change towards tertiarisation has been observed in Austria. This is revealed, in particular, by the distribution of the **gross domestic product** (GDP) and of **people in employment broken down by economic sectors** (cf. Fig. 3). Whereas in 1980 about one tenth of people in employment were active in the primary sector, this share halved within 30 years to less than 5% or 196,200 people. In the same period, the share of people employed in the service sector rose from around 50% to approximately 70% (2013).



Fig. 3: Distribution of GDP (in %) and employees (in 1,000) by economic sectors in Austria

Economic sector	1980		1990		2000		2013	
	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.	GDP	Empl.
Primary sector	5.3	322.4	3.7	368.5	2.0	316.0	1.5	196.2
Secondary sector	35.9	1,233.6	32.2	1,259.5	30.8	1,119.1	28.7	1,081.4
Tertiary sector	58.8	1,490.2	64.1	1,878.3	67.2	2,381.6	69.7	2,893.4
Total	100.0	3,046.2	100.0	3,506.3	100.0	3,816.7	100.0	4,175.2

Note: Empl. = employed;

Source: Statistics Austria, Eurostat, OECD retrieved on 2 October 2014; in-house calculations

The **VET programmes** offered in Austria have reacted to this structural change. Curricula of existing programmes have been updated and adjusted, new programmes have been introduced. There are VET options in practically all economic sectors.

### **Labour market structure and development – skills levels of the population**

The **population's educational attainment** among those aged 25 to 64 has risen sharply in recent decades (cf. Fig. 4). The share of this population group whose highest qualification is compulsory schooling declined sharply between 1981 and 2012, from 46.0% to 19.1%. Pronounced increases can be observed in programmes above the lower secondary level, however.

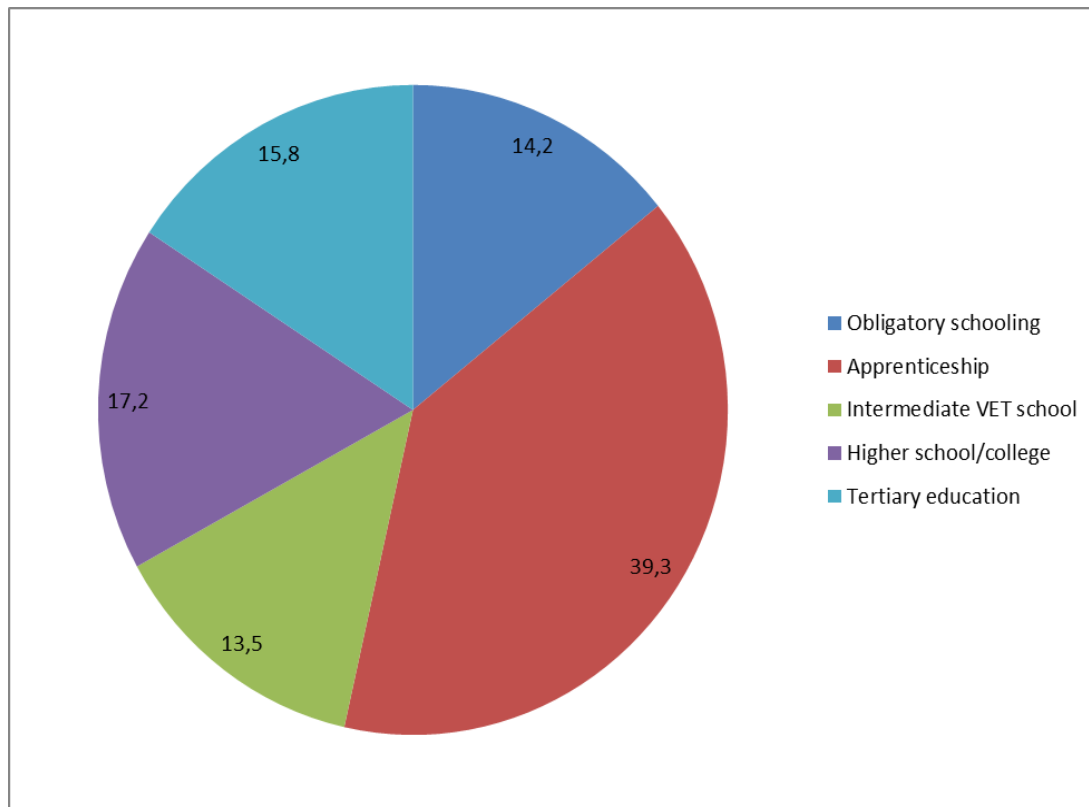
Fig. 4: Educational attainment of population aged 25 to 64 (in %) by highest completed level

Highest completed level	1981	2001	2012
Tertiary qualification	4.5	10.5	15.9
Secondary qualification	49.5	63.4	65.0
Higher schools/colleges	7.2	10.9	14.0
School for intermediate vocational education	11.2	13.1	15.4
Apprenticeship	31.0	39.4	35.6
Completed compulsory schooling	46.0	26.2	19.1

Sources: [Statistics Austria](#) and [Education in Figures 2013/14](#) (both sources retrieved on 16.6.2015)

When analysing the **employees by highest educational attainment**, it can be seen that almost 40% of them have completed an apprenticeship as their highest completed programme (cf. Fig. 5). A share of 17.2% has completed a school which leads to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate and about 16% a university-level programme.

Fig. 5: Employees by highest educational attainment



Source: [AK Wien](#) (retrieved on 16.6.2015)

There are clear connections between **unemployment rates** and the **highest completed programme** (Fig. 6). Only 3.5% of the workforce with a tertiary qualification were affected by unemployment in 2013. Among those who have not completed any programme higher than compulsory schooling, however, the unemployment rate was 10.0%. People with a certificate from academic secondary school were also more frequently affected by unemployment (6.9%) than holders of a certificate from a college for higher vocational education (4.0%), for example.

Fig. 6: Unemployment rate by highest educational attainment (in %), 2013

Year	Compulsory school	Apprenticeship	School for intermediate vocational education	College for higher vocational education	Academic secondary school	Tertiary qualification
2012	9.2	3.6	3.3	3.8	5.5	2.4
2013	10.0	4.2	2.8	4.0	6.9	3.5

Source: Statistics Austria 2013: Labour Force Survey - Microcensus

According to Statistics Austria, **unemployment among 15- to 24-year-olds** was at 10.3% at the end of 2014. In the European comparison, Austria boasts the **second lowest youth unemployment rate** within the EU (after Germany). The EU-28 average value was 21.9%. This comparatively low value is mainly due to the wide range of vocational programmes at the upper secondary level, which is well

accepted by the young people with their different interests and talents. In addition, a large number of youth labour market policy programmes and projects exist which are provided by the public sector (such as the [Training Guarantee up to the age of 18](#)) and can benefit young people who do not find a place at school or in an apprenticeship.

### **Business environment, the relative importance of SMEs**

According to the 2012 Structural Business Statistics (ÖNACE 2008: Sections B-N; 95) there were 314,855 **enterprises in Austria** in 2012 (cf. Fig. 7). These companies employed more than 2.5 million people. The distribution of **employees by employee size categories** reveals the SME structure of the Austrian economy. The vast majority (87.1%) of companies employ between one and nine people. Overall, about 17% of employees work in these companies. Only 0.4% of the Austrian enterprises are large companies, but 37% of all employees work in these.

Fig. 7: Companies by size categories

Employee size category	Number of companies	Employees
1 to 9 employees	274,178	421,764
<i>in % of total volume</i>	<i>87.1%</i>	<i>16.8%</i>
10 to 19 employees	22,225	278,061
<i>in % of total volume</i>	<i>7.1%</i>	<i>11.1%</i>
20 to 49 employees	11,940	347,772
<i>in % of total volume</i>	<i>3.8%</i>	<i>13.9%</i>
50 to 249 employees	5,386	534,005
<i>in % of total volume</i>	<i>1.7%</i>	<i>21.3%</i>
250 or more employees	1,126	927,191
<i>in % of total volume</i>	<i>0.4%</i>	<i>37.0%</i>
Total	314,855	2,508,793

Source: [Statistics Austria](#) (retrieved on 16.6.2015)

### **Regional differences**

Austria is a relatively small country, nevertheless **differences** can be found between the nine provinces and also between the urban and more rural regions, such as regarding education and training programmes, the economic structure and the unemployment rate (cf. [Education in Figures 2013/14](#), retrieved on 16.6.2015)

#### **Further links:**

[Statistics Austria](#)

[Lehrlingsstatistik der WKO](#)

[Statistik der WKO](#)

[Indikatoren und Statistiken des ReferNet Austria](#)

[Daten zur Lehrlingsausbildung und Jugendbeschäftigung 2012/13](#)

[Education in Figures 2013/14](#)

[Österreich. Zahlen. Daten. Fakten. 2014/15](#)

[ibw Survey on Apprenticeship Training. 2014](#)



## 1.2 Political and social context of the apprenticeship system

### Competences (federal, regional)

The **governance structure** of the apprenticeship training system involves a large number of actors. The tasks and competences in both, the company-based part as well as the school-based part, are divided among several bodies on federal, regional and local levels (cf. 2.1). The social partners, which fulfil key tasks both regarding contents and administration of apprenticeship training, play a particularly important role (cf. 2.2).

### History of the apprenticeship system

The beginnings of company-based VET date back to the **Middle Ages**. During that period, trade associations carried out so-called master craftsperson apprenticeships. Towards the end of the **19<sup>th</sup> century** the public sector became involved in VET: The traditional craftsperson apprenticeship was complemented by school-based programmes.

In the **period following World War I**, major framework conditions were created for apprenticeship training which improved the protection of apprentices, such as the prohibition of night work for young people, the limitation of weekly working hours to 44 hours, the creation of works councils and the establishment of chambers of labour as representations of interest including of apprentices, etc.

**After World War II** the range of provisions of the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act (*Gewerbeordnung, GewO*) was bundled in the first draft of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz, BAG*), which entered into force in 1969. This Act – in particular after its 1978 amendment – is still valid today: It regulates the key framework conditions for this VET pathway. The execution of the Act was assigned to the apprenticeship offices, which were set up in every province. They are supported by advisory boards on apprenticeship at federal and regional level which are comprised equally of representations of interest of employers and employees. With the Vocational Training Act, an IVET trainer exam was introduced which also regulates qualification requirements for IVET trainers; in addition, the first steps were taken to list the job profiles, i.e. the in-company training curricula, broken down by apprenticeship years.

#### **Source and further information:**

Elke Gruber: [Berufsbildung in Österreich – Einblicke in einen bedeutenden Bildungssektor](#). In: Fritz Verzetnitsch/Peter Schlögl/Alexander Prischl/Regine Wieser (Hg.): *Jugendliche zwischen Karriere und Misere. Die Lehrausbildung in Österreich, Innovation und Herausforderung*. ÖGB-Verlag. Wien 2004, S. 17-38

### The image of VET and apprenticeship in society

At the upper secondary level, the Austrian education system is characterised by a **well developed and differentiated VET system**, which consists of full-time VET schools (schools for intermediate vocational education [BMS] and colleges for higher vocational education [BHS]) and dual training



(apprenticeships). Around 80% of every age group in the tenth school year opt for a VET programme, with about half attending a school and half an apprenticeship (cf. [The Austrian social partners](#)).

Basically, apprenticeship training meets with **wide acceptance** in all economic sectors, particularly in the crafts and trades sector, but also in wholesale and retail and the tourism industry. The importance of apprenticeship training can be seen in particular by the fact that almost 40% of the Austrian workforce boast an apprenticeship diploma as their highest educational attainment (cf. [AK Wien](#)).

In recent decades, apprenticeship training has become more and more popular due to the educational expansion. Although this is an encouraging development, it has created a number of **challenges** as well. The young people who take up an apprenticeship have very heterogeneous requirements. Many of them do not have sufficient basic skills after completing compulsory schooling, so they cannot find an apprenticeship post at a company. This fact has resulted in a differentiation of apprenticeship programmes in recent years: Alongside “regular” apprenticeships, integrative/inclusive VET programmes were introduced in 2003 to enable young people with learning difficulties to prolong their apprenticeship period or acquire partial qualifications. In addition, to ensure that apprenticeship remains an attractive VET track, the possibility was created of obtaining both a vocational qualification and the higher education entrance qualification in one combined scheme (termed “Berufsmatura”).

Another goal of this “Berufsmatura” scheme is to upgrade the apprenticeship system, due to the fact that many young people (and their parents) have recently attributed a better **image** and thus more attractiveness to school-based education and training pathways. This has led to increasing pressure for the apprenticeship training system. Furthermore, apprenticeship training has the reputation of offering fewer advancement options, lower incomes, and frequently a “dirty” working environment. Those who are responsible for the apprenticeship training system are aware of the need to further enhance the **appreciation** of this pathway because well qualified skilled workers are essential for safeguarding the economic location of Austria.

### **Overall apprenticeship policy of the government**

The competitive situation with BMS and BHS, the decline in the number of 15-year-olds due to the demographic development and the skilled labour shortage as deplored by the economy require measures to **enhance the attractiveness, image and quality of dual VET**.

One key aspect in this connection is to regularly adjust the training contents (which are regulated in the job profile for the company-based part of apprenticeships and in the framework curriculum of part-time vocational schools for apprentices) to the actual requirements of the economy (cf. 2.4). With the “Quality Management in Apprenticeship” initiative launched in 2014, a quality management system was introduced. The measures combined under this name aim to contribute to ensuring that a larger proportion of young people who take up an apprenticeship complete it as well and succeed in passing the apprenticeship-leave exam. One major educational policy demand – raised by the social partners, among other stakeholders – is to further improve permeability to the tertiary level for apprenticeship graduates and also to create suitable programmes at tertiary level. Another





essential goal is to enhance the basic skills of apprenticeship beginners, such as by a reform of the ninth school year. Comprehensive career guidance aims to contribute to raising awareness of the wide range of existing apprenticeship programmes and counteract the frequently false ideas about apprenticeship training (such as that it is an educational cul-de-sac, that graduates earn less income, etc.).

### **Apprentices, companies and VET schools involved in apprenticeship training**

The [Apprenticeship Statistics](#), which are published every year by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, include key statistical data as at the 31 December of the respective previous year. For 2014 the following **key data** can be given:

- As at 31.12.2014 there were **115,068 apprentices in Austria**. This corresponds to a decline of 4.6% compared to the previous year.
- Almost **two thirds** of all apprentices in 2014 were **male** (75,819), **one third female** (39,249).
- Overall there were **31,878 training companies**. This means there are 1,717 fewer than in the period of comparison of the previous year.
- **Distribution by economic sectors**: Most apprentices are trained in the crafts and trades sector (42.7%), followed by the wholesale and retail sector (14.6%) and industry (13.9%).
- Clear gender-specific trends can be found regarding the **choice of apprenticeship occupations**: Young women still prefer typical careers for women. Almost half of all female apprentices are trained in retail trade and the occupations office assistant and hairdresser. The three most popular apprenticeships among young men are metal technology with 11,352, followed by electrical engineering with 8,725 and motor vehicle engineering with 7,236 male apprentices.
- Although there are some 200 apprenticeships (cf. the [List of Apprenticeships](#)), young people mainly choose few of them: More than two thirds of all female apprentices – 26,552 in absolute figures – are trained in the **ten most popular apprenticeships**. Among young men, there is not quite the same concentration on the main apprenticeships: More than half of all male apprentices – so a total of 48,775 – are trained in the ten most popular occupations.

## **1.3 The overall education system and the VET system**

### **Structure of the education system and VET in general**

The nine-year **compulsory schooling period** in Austria starts with attendance of the four-year **primary school** (cf. Fig. 8). At the **lower secondary level**, pupils have the choice between two four-year school forms: the **lower level of academic secondary school** and **new secondary school** (into which the previous general secondary school was integrated). After lower secondary school, learners need to complete another school year to complete their nine years of compulsory schooling. This can be completed, for example, by attending the one-year pre-professional training at **pre-vocational school**, which focuses on familiarising pupils with the world of work and deepening their general education. Pre-vocational school is mainly attended by those who want to continue in a dual VET pathway.



Dual VET is one of four options open to students at **upper secondary level**. Whereas dual VET can only be started upon completion of the nine-year compulsory schooling period, the other pathways can be started immediately after the lower level of academic secondary school or new secondary school. One of these options is the **upper level of academic secondary school**. This level is completed after four years with the upper secondary school-leaving exam and the matriculation certificate, which gives access to all tertiary establishments. The other two options are the VET tracks **school for intermediate vocational education** and **college for higher vocational education** (the latter of which is completed with the matriculation and diploma exam). This means that, together with **dual VET** (apprenticeship training), learners have the choice between three VET pathways at the upper secondary level (for more details, cf. the text below).

Learners also find a large number of VET programmes in the **post-secondary, non-tertiary sector** (cf. Fig. 8). These mainly serve to provide further and higher qualifications for holders of initial VET qualifications. The “classic” **tertiary sector** with universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education focuses on providing academic/knowledge-based education, with vocational elements being increasingly integrated in recent years in order to enhance the employability of its graduates.

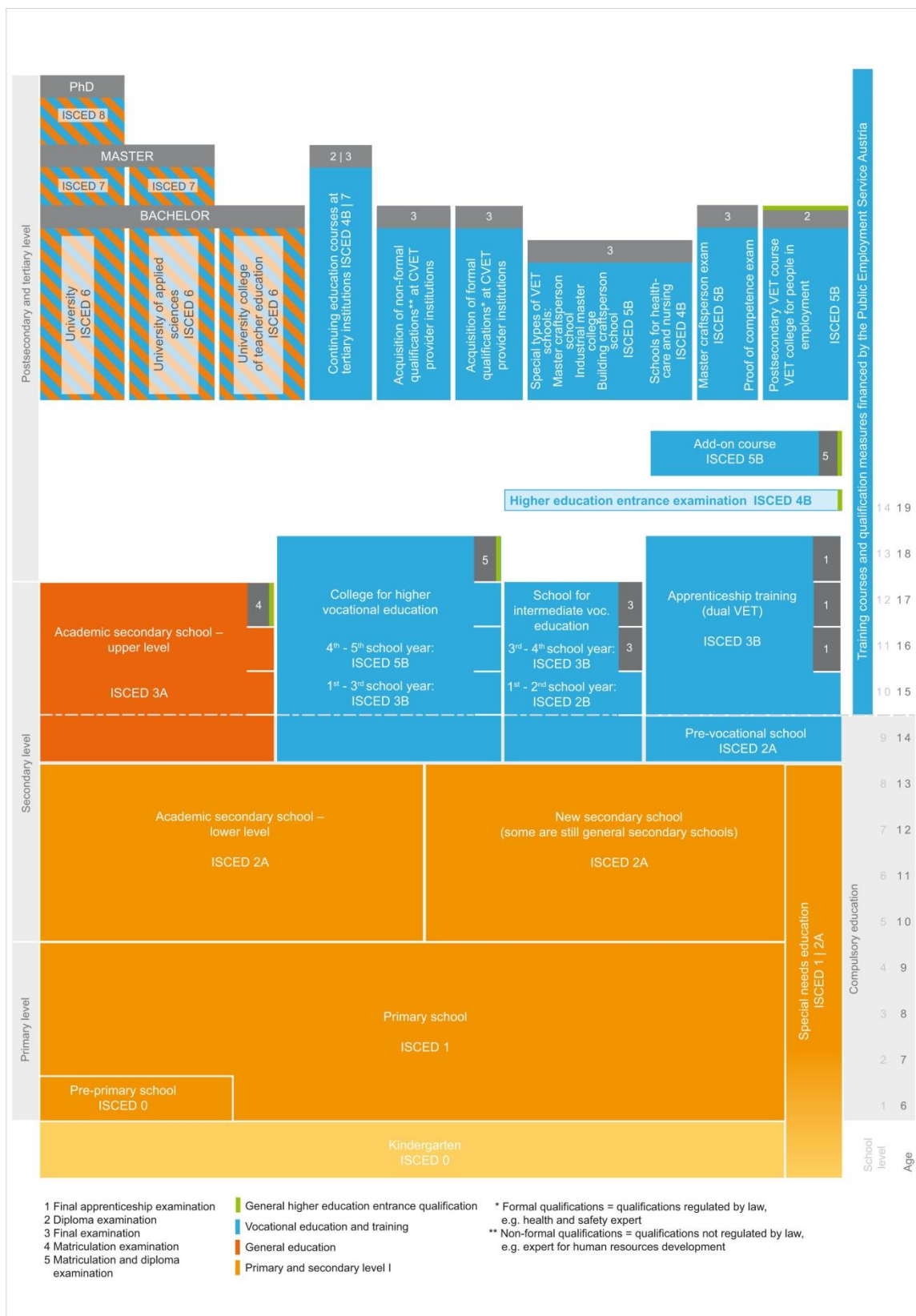
### **National Qualifications Framework, allocation of VET qualifications**

The implementation of a **National Qualifications Framework** (NQF) has been a key objective of educational policy for some years. In 2014/15 an **NQF Act** has been drafted, which will be appraised as early as in the summer of 2015. This law will then enter into force on 1 January 2016. At the same time, this will be the official starting signal for the allocation of qualifications to one of the eight levels.

To date **qualifications have not yet been allocated officially**, for which a formal application to the responsible NQF bodies will be required. In discussions, however, most experts advocate allocation of apprenticeship diplomas to Level 4. It is not planned to allocate these diplomas differentiated by the length of training (such as two-year apprenticeships to Level 3, three- and four-year periods to Level 4) – unless substantial arguments for such allocations are found when implementing learning outcome orientation.



Fig. 8: The Austrian education system



Source: ibw



## Overview pathways within the VET system

Learners at the **upper secondary level** have the choice between two pre-professional school types and three VET programmes (cf. Fig. 8):

- pre-vocational school (PTS), one-year pre-professional school;
- schools for intermediate vocational education (BMS), one- and two-year pre-professional schools and also three- and four-year VET schools with various area specialisations (business, technology, agriculture, social affairs, tourism, etc.);
- colleges for higher vocational education (BHS), five-year VET colleges which lead to the upper secondary school-leaving certificate with various area specialisations (business, technology, fashion, design, agriculture, tourism, kindergarten teacher training, etc.);
- dual VET (apprenticeship/apprenticeship training), from the tenth grade, around 200 two- to four-year apprenticeship occupations in various area specialisations (construction, electrical, information technology, wholesale and retail trade, etc.).

This diversity of pathways reveals the **special importance** of VET in Austria. Another indication of the great importance of VET is its attractiveness, which manifests itself in high participant figures (cf. The image of VET and apprenticeship in society). The three VET programmes can be characterised as follows:

- Graduates of a **three- and four-year BMS** acquire qualifications entitling them to immediately exercise relevant occupations and giving them access to specific regulated professional activities. Following acquisition of the *Berufsmatura* certificate (which provides general access to higher education for graduates of specific VET programmes) or attendance of add-on courses, graduates are entitled to enrol in tertiary programmes.
- **Five-year BHS** (which is offered both as a day form and evening form for people in employment) provides in-depth general education and high-quality specialist training which combines theory and practice. BHS pupils finish this pathway with a matriculation and diploma exam, granting them general access to the higher education sector, a professional qualification for senior occupations and access to regulated professions. BHS also provides the basis for later self-employment. A reduction of the study duration at a university of applied sciences can be achieved based on a specialist qualification obtained at a BHS.
- **Dual VET** takes place at two places of learning: 80% of the training period takes place at a training company, 20% at a subject-specific part-time vocational school, attendance of which is compulsory. Graduates of the apprenticeship-exit exam in one of currently 200 offered apprenticeship occupations acquire a full professional qualification. Depending on the occupation, training lasts between two and four years, but in most cases three years. After completing an apprenticeship, graduates have many educational options available (such as the acquisition of the master craftsperson qualification). The *Berufsmatura* certificate additionally entitles them to attend tertiary educational establishments.

### **Further information:**

[Berufsbildende Schulen in Österreich](#)

ReferNet "[VET in Europe – Country Report Austria](#)" (2014)

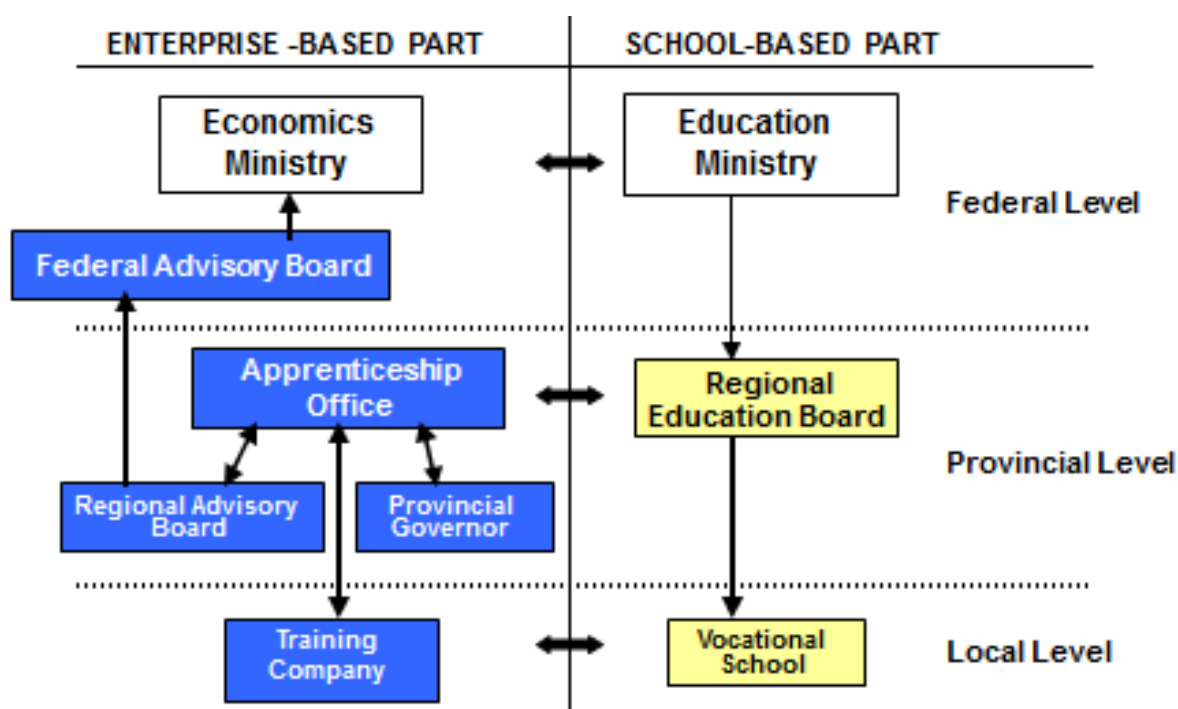
## 2. Key features

### 2.1 Governance of VET and regulatory framework

#### Governance

As shown in the following figure, a large number of institutions form part of the governance structure of apprenticeship training:

Fig. 9: Governance structure of apprenticeship training



Source: ibw

#### *Federal level*

The **Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy** (BMWF) is responsible for the enterprise-based part of apprenticeship training. It is in charge of the Vocational Training Act (BAG), which provides the legal basis for this VET programme, as well as for the training and examination regulations which exist for each apprenticeship trade. Another central body on the federal level is the **Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship** (BBAB). This board is set up by the Ministry of Economy upon the proposal of the social partners (Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Federal Chamber of Labour). Part-time vocational school teachers are co-opted as advisory members. The BBAB submits expert opinions to the Ministry of Economy, e.g. on the restructuring of apprenticeship trades or on structural reforms.

The **Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs** (BMBWF) is responsible for the school-based part of apprenticeship training. It issues framework curricula for part-time vocational schools for each apprenticeship trade. It is also in charge of the Federal School Organisation Act (SchOG) in which the provisions concerning the organisation of part-time vocational schools and the



cornerstones for the framework curricula are laid down. In addition, the Ministry bears 50% of the costs for teaching staff of part-time vocational schools.

#### *Provincial level*

At provincial level the **Apprenticeship Offices**, which are located in the economic chambers in the individual provinces, act as vocational training authority on behalf of the Ministry of Economy. They examine (jointly with representatives of the regional chambers of labour) the training companies' suitability to provide apprenticeship training in subject-specific and staff-related respects; in addition, they are responsible for examining and recording apprenticeship contracts. In principle it is their task to provide wide-ranging counselling to apprentices and training companies in all matters concerning apprenticeship. The apprenticeship-leave exams and subsidisation schemes for training companies are also handled by Apprenticeship Offices.

Set up in every province, **Regional Advisory Boards on Apprenticeship** (LBAB) provide counselling services in all issues related to VET. They are responsible for preparing expert opinions, proposals and suggestions directly related to the apprenticeship training system in the respective province. On their proposal, chairpersons of apprenticeship-leave examination boards are appointed by the heads of Apprenticeship Offices.

The **Provincial Governors** assisted by the respective provincial government offices are responsible for apprenticeship training and act as apprenticeship authority of the second instance. They decide on appeals in apprenticeship training matters, such as the withdrawal of the authorisation as a training company, and on cancellations of illegally registered apprenticeship training contracts. Provincial governors appoint the members of their respective LBAB.

Part-time vocational schools are within the sphere of competence of the respective province which is responsible for constructing and equipping them. Moreover, it is in charge of implementing the federal framework curricula for each apprenticeship trade and for supervising the schools in educational and technical matters. These duties are carried out by regional school inspectors of the **Regional Education Boards**. In addition, they finance half of the salaries of teachers of part-time vocational schools.

#### *Local level*

On local level the **training enterprises** with their authorised apprenticeship trainers are responsible for the provision of apprenticeship training. It is in their enterprise that the respective apprentice is trained to become a skilled worker. In this work they are assisted by IVET trainers. In various sectors of industry, apprenticeship counsellors are appointed to provide subject-specific counselling to training enterprises. Working in close cooperation with the LBABs, their two prime tasks are to advise the authorised apprenticeship trainers in the appropriate design of the individual enterprise-based training programme and, in particular, to promote cooperation between training enterprises and part-time vocational schools.

**Part-time vocational schools** form an integral part of the economic life of their respective location. Direct contact with training companies in the region is a key prerequisite to ensure they optimally fulfil their educational task.



## VET-research

VET research is primarily done by non-university institutes, in particular, by the institutes affiliated to the social partners, i.e. [ibw Austria](#) – Research and Development in VET (affiliated to the Federal Economic Chamber) and the [öibf](#) – Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (affiliated to the Chamber of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation). These research institutes are involved in a number of tasks within apprenticeship training: They conduct needs analyses for new apprenticeship trades, support the Ministry of Economics in designing training and examination regulations, compile the apprenticeship-leave examinations for the majority of apprenticeship trades, and issue information and counselling materials on apprenticeship training. Moreover, at ibw the Clearing Office for the quality assurance of the apprenticeship-leave examination is set.

Biannually, ibw and öibf compile a report about the "Situation of Youth-Employment and Apprenticeship in Austria" ([edition 2014](#)). As stipulated in the Vocational Training Act, this report has to be submitted to the National Council, providing the basis for discussions and reforms. Additionally, an [annual report](#) published by ibw gives a statistical overview of structural data, trends and perspectives of apprenticeship in Austria. Furthermore, ad-hoc research projects on apprenticeship training commissioned by various stakeholders are carried out by ibw and öibf, e.g. cost-benefit analysis, the overall evaluation of the apprenticeship support system, etc.

## Regulatory framework

Apprenticeship training is regulated by a number of laws and regulations. In the following, the major legal bases of the enterprise-based part and the school-based part, are listed and their contents outlined. (N.B.: The German abbreviation "BGBl." stands for Federal Law Gazette.)

### *Enterprise-based part*

The enterprise-based part of training is regulated by the **Vocational Training Act** (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*, BAG, BGBl. no. 142/1969 as amended), which is within the sphere of competence of the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFV).

**Training regulations** stipulate the job profile specific to the respective apprenticeship trade. This job profile is the curriculum for the training company. In a catalogue broken down by apprenticeship years, the job profile covers the professional competences which the apprentice must be taught in the course of company-based training. For newly regulated apprenticeship occupations, not only job profiles but also activity descriptions are formulated, which lay down, in the form of a short list, the occupational requirements the trained apprentice is able to meet. Also included in the training regulation are provisions concerning the apprenticeship-leave examination. Training regulations are valid across Austria.

In the field of apprenticeship, **collective bargaining agreements** (CBAs) also play a major role. They are the result of negotiations between representatives of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the unions. The majority of CBAs refer to entire sectors and are binding on all companies of the respective sector. Some large companies have their own CBAs. Regarding apprenticeship training, CBAs specify minimum remuneration to be paid to apprentices during their apprenticeship period.





The **apprenticeship contract** is entered into between the authorised apprenticeship trainer and the apprentice and forms the basis of vocational training in the dual system. It must be concluded in writing. In case of underage apprentices, the apprenticeship contract must also be signed by his or her legal representative. Standardised forms can be obtained from the Apprenticeship Offices. The apprenticeship contract must include the name of the apprenticeship in which training is conducted, the apprenticeship period, the beginning and end of training, details regarding the people authorised to train apprentices and, if applicable, the IVET trainer, details related to the apprentice, a note concerning compulsory attendance of part-time vocational school, any periods of training held within the framework of a training alliance with other companies or educational institutions, the amount of the apprenticeship remuneration and the day on which the apprenticeship contract is concluded.

#### *School-based part*

The *School Organisation Act* (*Schulorganisationsgesetz*, SchOG, BGBl. no. 242/1962 as amended) regulates the responsibilities and structures of all school types (among others, the part-time vocational schools for apprentices) within the sphere of competence of the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (BMBF). Its content includes the following items: the structure of the Austrian school system; general accessibility and exemption from tuition fees at public schools; the structure of curricula; provisions related to school pilot projects and special provisions concerning school organisation (individual school types and their tasks; organisation forms; admission prerequisites, curricula and training times; qualifications; number of schoolchildren per class; teachers and principals/head teachers).

Another important act is the so-called **School Instruction Act** (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz*, SchUG, BGBl. no. 472/1986 as amended), which regulates instruction and teaching at the schools to which the SchOG applies. It comprises provisions about the following areas, for example: admission, assessment of schoolchildren, repetition of school grades, cooperation of teaching staff, schoolchildren and legal guardians, etc.

Apart from these two important framework laws, **curricula** represent major parts of the legal framework. They are regulations issued by BMBF on the basis of the SchOG. All curricula provide for special focuses that can be selected autonomously by schools. This not only enables schools to define special focuses within a given framework but also to develop their own school profiles.

## **2.2 Business, social partner and state cooperation**

### **Involvement of social partners**

The **social partners**, i.e. the Economic Chamber (representation of employers' interests), the Chamber of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation (representation of employees' interests), are **heavily involved** in the apprenticeship training system.

Within the governance structure they play a particularly important **strategic role** via the Regional Advisory Boards on Apprenticeship (LBAB, cf. 2.1) and even more so via the Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship (BBAB, cf. 2.1). The BBAB consists of twelve people with voting power from the social partners (six from the Economic Chamber, six from the Chamber of Labour and the Trade Union Federation) and two non-voting members from the VET school area. The BBAB, which has its





seat at the Federal Economic Chamber in Vienna, exerts considerable influence on the design of the apprenticeship training system by drawing up expert opinion reports related to key aspects of apprenticeship training (such as legal amendments, the introduction of new apprenticeships, the modification of existing ones, etc.) on behalf of the Ministry of Economy. Decisions made on the basis of these reports are valid throughout Austria. The LBABs, which are located at the Apprenticeship Office (cf. 2.1), can likewise compile expert reports on apprenticeship training in the respective province (e.g. reports concerning the organisation of the apprenticeship-leave examination, regulations of training alliances, IVET trainer examination committees, etc.). Decisions taken on the basis of LBAB reports are valid in the province.

The social partners also have important **operative tasks** in apprenticeship training. They are involved in the entire lifecycle of the qualification, from the needs analysis to the review of the training programme. In particular, they

- take the initiative for creating or modernising an apprenticeship;
- prepare the draft training regulation with the help of VET research institutes (cf. 2.1);
- define the training standards, i.e. they formulate the job profile and the activity description (cf. 2.1);
- define the assessment standards, i.e. which knowledge and skills does an apprenticeship examination candidate have to show that s/he passes the exam;
- are involved in examination boards.

Furthermore, the social partners are entitled to comment on drafts of school-related acts, curricula and other regulations. Moreover, they are also very active in career guidance and vocational counselling. In particular, the Economic Chambers offers services at the so-called Career Guidance Centres (*Berufsinformationszentren*, BIZ) across Austria. With the BIC.at career guidance tool ([www.bic.at](http://www.bic.at)), the Economic Chambers have their own web-portal where job descriptions, VET and CVET options, tips on career choice and job applications, as well as a large variety of service materials are offered, in some cases even in several languages. Career Guidance Centres are also run by the Public Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS). They offer comprehensive information about occupations, their contents and requirements, about IVET, CET paths, the labour market and employment options. For apprenticeship post seekers, AMS operates the apprenticeship post platform <http://www.ams.at/lehrstellen/> jointly with the Federal Economic Chamber.

**Individual companies** are usually not directly involved in operative tasks (e.g. in the design of training regulations). The representation of interest of employers can however draw on relevant expert knowledge and involve company representatives in all operative tasks.

### 2.3 Financing of VET/apprenticeship

The apprenticeship training programme is financed by the **training companies** and **public authorities**.

As regards the **school-based part of apprenticeship training** (school maintenance, teachers' pay), funds are provided by the provinces. The Federal Government refunds 50% of the costs for teaching staff. Like all students in (VET) schools, apprentices in their part-time role as learners at vocational school pay a small contribution to the cost of textbooks and travel permits.



Concerning the **company-based part of training**, the costs for this part are borne by the respective training company. The **apprenticeship remuneration**, which is paid by the training company, constitutes the major part of the costs for apprenticeship training. Its amount is laid down for each individual apprenticeship occupation in collective bargaining agreements (CBA, cf. 2.1). Where no CBAs exist, it is necessary to agree on the apprenticeship remuneration in the apprenticeship contract individually. The remuneration increases with every apprenticeship year until, in the final year, it totals an approximate average of 80 % of the corresponding skilled worker's wage. In the course of their training, apprentices will, however, also contribute to the training company's economic productivity through their productive work. Their share in productive work increases with every apprenticeship year.

Moreover the training company bears the costs for the **qualified IVET trainers** and the **training equipment**. It also funds additional training programmes, e.g. language courses, specialist courses, course on social skills, etc.

The costs of apprenticeship training **reduce** the company's **taxable profits**. This means that the state co-finances, albeit indirectly, a part of the costs of the company-based part of apprenticeship training. Moreover, there are also benefits regarding non-wage labour costs: In the first two years of apprenticeship, the **health insurance contributions** are waived for the employer and for the apprentice. Nevertheless, apprentices are fully insured. The contributions to **accident insurance** are waived for the entire training period while insurance coverage remains intact. Contributions to **unemployment insurance** are only payable in the last year of the apprenticeship, the obligation to pay them is waived during the remainder of the apprenticeship period.

In addition, a large number of direct **subsidisation options** exist for apprenticeship training.

The training company can apply for **basic subsidisation** at the end of every apprenticeship year. The amounts of subsidies are:

- for the 1<sup>st</sup> apprenticeship year: three gross apprenticeship remunerations pursuant to the respective collective agreement
- for the 2<sup>nd</sup> apprenticeship year: two gross apprenticeship remunerations pursuant to the respective collective agreement
- for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> apprenticeship years: one gross apprenticeship remuneration each pursuant to the respective collective agreement
- for half apprenticeship years: half of one gross apprenticeship remuneration pursuant to the respective collective agreement

**Quality-oriented subsidisation** options available for the following:

- inter- and supra-company training measures (training alliance measures, job-specific additional qualification for apprentices, preparatory courses for the apprenticeship-leave examinations)
- continuing education and training measures for IVET trainers
- apprenticeship-leave examinations taken with good results or distinction
- measures for apprentices with learning difficulties (such as tutoring courses at compulsory school level in German, mathematics, modern language)



- equal access by young women and young men to the different apprenticeships (eligibility for subsidisation covers: accompanying job coaching for apprentices, and projects focusing on the placement of young women in apprenticeships with a share of women of up to 30 %)
- periods of work placement abroad for apprentices

According to the 2011 amendment to the Vocational Training Act, subsidisation is available for **guidance, counselling, care and support services** aiming at enhancing opportunities for successful vocational training and raising participation in training particularly in sectors with few training companies. These include:

- coaching of apprentices and counselling services for companies
- providing training guidelines for ten core apprenticeship occupations
- safeguarding the quality of the apprenticeship-leave exam by setting up the clearing office for the apprenticeship-leave examination

The **Public Employment Service Austria** (*Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*) also runs subsidisation schemes for apprenticeship posts designed to integrate problem groups into the labour market. Companies receive a flat-rate grant towards the costs of an apprenticeship. This grant is payable for the following categories of apprentice, for example:

- young women in apprenticeships with a low share of women (share of female percentages in the total number of apprentices amounted to less than 40% in the previous training year);
- particularly disadvantaged apprenticeship seekers: e.g. young people who have physical disabilities, mental or emotional deficiencies or learning difficulties or who are socially maladjusted;
- participants in integrative IVET schemes;
- people aged 18 or over whose employability problem resulting from a lack of qualifications can be solved by means of an apprenticeship.

Basic subsidisation and quality-related funding are financed from the Austrian insolvency remuneration fund (one part of the revenues of the fund is reserved for subsidisation of apprenticeship posts). The subsidies of AMS are financed from the labour market policy budget.

According to **recent calculations** (cf. [Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick](#) 2014), a training company spends on average an annual amount of EUR 15,500 per apprentice. The school-based part of training amounts to approximately EUR 5,650 per person per year. Compared to full-time VET schools where the costs for a student amount to around EUR 9,530 per year, apprenticeship training is considerably cheaper for public authorities. The most expensive form of IVET training is the supra-company training where young people who do not find a company-based apprenticeship post are able to learn an apprenticeship in a training workshop funded by AMS. The school-based part of apprenticeship training is provided at the regular part-time vocational school. This form of training amounts to EUR 17,270 per learner.



## 2.4 National standards – matching supply and demand

### Modernisation of training regulations

The continuous **modernisation of training regulations** is of great importance to ensure that requirements on modern occupational profiles are met. **Initiatives** for new regulations (introduction of new apprenticeships or updating/revising existing ones) are, in general, launched by the affected sectors, the social partners or the Ministry of Economy, but international/European developments are likewise taken into consideration. In any case, the requirements of working life and practical requirements in a sector are always in the foreground. Statistical data or skills forecasting studies also play a role, albeit a minor one, when introducing new apprenticeships. In June 2015, [17 new or updated training regulations](#) entered into force. Among them there is the new apprenticeship “medial products trader”, which should enable companies in this growing economic field to train their own skilled workers.

The **content of training regulations** is prepared by the Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship (BBAB, cf. 2.1) or the Ministry of Economy. They are supported in this work by experts from the respective sector as well as by [ibw](#) Austria – Research & Development. The following overview shows the procedures connected with the introduction of a new apprenticeship:

#### 1. Preparation

- The Ministry of Economy, the social partners or companies take the initiative for creating or modernising an apprenticeship
- Consideration of European developments as well as solutions introduced in other countries
- Clarification of the basic framework by the Ministry of Economy and the social partners

#### 2. Elaboration of training regulation and framework curriculum

- Preparation of draft training regulations by education research institute
- Expert discussions in the BBAB
- Submission of expert opinions of the BBAB to the Ministry of Economy
- Development of a framework curriculum which corresponds to the training regulation by an expert group under the leadership of the Education Ministry
- Preparation of drafts for nationwide review

#### 3. Issuing of regulations

- Involvement of all stakeholders in a consultation and review process
- Evaluation of opinions and comments
- Issuing of training regulations by the Ministry of Economy and of framework curricula by the Education Ministry

#### 4. Follow-up measures

- Creation of supportive manuals and additional material by the companies’ professional organisation, partly supported by the employees’ representation or VET institutes to support training companies
- Provision of information to training companies by apprenticeship offices
- Training of trainers in companies and of teachers in part-time vocational schools



- Training of examiners of apprenticeship-leave examinations
- Accompanying evaluation

### **Supply and demand**

Apprenticeship training is largely **demand-driven**. Young people apply directly to a company that offers an apprenticeship post in their chosen occupation. Apprenticeship places are offered in occupations that the company has identified as required for future operations and growth. As a result, apprenticeship training ensures a good match with future skills needs.

However, supply and demand **do not always match**: Not all young people find an apprenticeship post in an occupation they are interested in. On the other hand, there are companies that do not succeed in filling their vacant apprenticeship posts because there are not enough applicants. There are various reasons for this mismatch: Even though there are around 200 apprenticeships (cf. 2.5), young people tend to select only a certain range of apprentices (cf. 1.2). Vocational guidance and counselling should counteract this trend. Moreover, apprentices are often not willing to travel too far to their training company. While there are vacant apprenticeship posts e.g. in the tourism sector in the west of Austria, young people in the east search for a post in this field.

### **Training regulation and school curriculum**

The knowledge and skills required for an apprenticeship occupation are specified in training regulations as a result of labour market requirements. In this respect, the ability to **exercise an occupation** is in the foreground: Training in an apprenticeship aims to qualify graduates to take up their chosen occupation immediately upon termination of training. Training regulations thus lay down the minimum requirements for the training content to be imparted in the training company. At the same time, a consistent training level for the individual apprenticeship occupation is ensured. When specifying and wording the concrete training content, i.e. the job profile, it must always be considered that skills requirements are subject to regular changes. Therefore, the individual items of the job profile are not laid down statically, but rather formulated dynamically, so that curricula can be adjusted easily to new developments. Training regulations place much emphasis on the provision of key skills: independence, individual responsibility, teamwork, etc. are promoted significantly by company-based training. Environmentally friendly and quality-oriented work forms an integral part of every modern training regulation. When creating training regulations, European integration is also taken increasingly into account. This aims to increase the Austrian skilled workforce's willingness to be mobile and at the same time strengthen the Austrian companies' competitiveness.

The school curriculum is developed by teachers and representatives of the Ministry of Education. It is based on the training regulation, that is, on the job profile of the company-based part of training.

### **Assessment and certification of training**

The **apprenticeship-leave exam** aims to establish whether the candidate has acquired the skills and competences required for the respective apprenticeship occupation and is able to carry out the activities particular to the occupation himself or herself in an appropriate manner. The exam consists of a practical and a theoretical part. The theoretical part is waived under certain conditions, for



example if the candidate can prove successful completion of part-time vocational school. In the practical part the candidate has to demonstrate his practical skills and competence. The apprenticeship qualification can also be acquired via a so-called **exceptional admission**. For this purpose, relevant periods of professional practice and attendance of relevant course events are credited as a substitute for formal apprenticeship training.

When passing the exam, the graduate receives a **certificate** which bears the name of the occupation. It is issued by the Apprenticeship Office (cf. 2.1).

## 2.5 Programms and pathwas in the apprenticeship system

Currently (June 2015) there are around **200 apprenticeship trades** in Austria. They are set up as individual, group, special-focus or modular apprenticeships. All apprenticeship trades are laid down in the [list of apprenticeships](#), which specifies the apprenticeship periods and relationships to other apprenticeship trades including credits awarded for already completed apprenticeship periods.

In the apprenticeship training system, the **two places of learning** are the training company and part-time vocational school. The apprentice is in a training relationship with his or her training company and a student at a part-time vocational school at the same time. The company-based part of apprenticeship training makes up the major part of the apprenticeship period (80%).

Young people who do not find a company-based apprenticeship post have the option to complete an apprenticeship within the framework of **supra-company training** (*überbetriebliche Ausbildung, ÜBA*). Originally conceived as a transition for finding a foothold in the first labour market (that is, the regular apprenticeship market), ÜBA was enshrined as an equivalent element of the dual VET system in 2008 as part of the 'training guarantee until the age of 18'. The training guarantee means that all compulsory school graduates who are not accepted by an upper secondary school (cf. fig. 8) and cannot find an apprenticeship post in a company are able to learn an apprenticeship trade in a training workshop funded by the Public Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*). The school-based part of apprenticeship training is provided at the regular part-time vocational school. ÜBA apprentices complete their training with the apprenticeship-leave examination. Thus, ÜBA-apprentices and apprentices in companies receive the same qualification.

To address the heterogeneous group of persons interested in completing dual VET, **inclusive VET** (*Integrative Berufsausbildung, IBA*) was introduced in 2003. IBA is mainly intended for young people who, at the end of compulsory schooling, have special educational needs and have not graduated from lower secondary level. IBA can be implemented in two variants: either the apprenticeship period can be extended by one or two years or only selected competences of an apprenticeship trade are taught (partial qualifications). Young people who are trained over a prolonged period are obliged to attend part-time vocational school. Compulsory attendance of part-time vocational school also exists as part of the partial qualifications, the extent is adjusted to the individual situation of the apprentice, however. Partial qualifications are supported by vocational training assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*). This advises and supports the training companies and young people before and during the training. In case of a prolonged apprenticeship, IBA is completed with the apprenticeship-leave exam, in case of partial qualifications the leaving exam is extended to the



competences specified beforehand. The attained level is determined by professional experts and a member of the vocational training assistance.

### **Access and guidance**

The training in an apprenticeship occupation is **open to all young people** who have completed their nine years of compulsory schooling. No specific school qualification is required for access to an apprenticeship. For young people who have already completed apprenticeship training or who have graduated from a higher school at upper secondary level, the apprenticeship period is reduced by half a year or year.

Usually apprentices are **young** when they start their training: The share of 15+16-years old is about 64%. Previous education is rather diverse: Most of them finished a pre-vocational school (35%) or lower secondary education (14%, cf. fig. 8). The rest starts a fully school based education at grade 9 but drops out and changes to apprenticeship training. The transition from secondary academic schools (“gymnasium”) to apprenticeship training is below 1% (for lower secondary) and 5% (for upper secondary academic schools). The share of young people with migration background in apprenticeship training is way below their share in the population. According to international student achievement tests (like PISA, TIMSS) apprentices have on average comparatively low test scores. It is important to keep in mind that this result is due to (self)selection and allocation effects at the end of compulsory education and may not be interpreted as the result of education provided in apprenticeship training.

If young people want to learn an apprenticeship trade, they need to **apply** to a company that offers apprenticeship posts. However, it is not always easy for young people to select the suitable occupation from among 200 apprenticeship occupations and find the appropriate apprenticeship post. Different services and initiatives have been set up to support them: In principle, placement into training vacancies in the dual system is conducted through the careers guidance of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). However, not all companies register vacant training places with AMS. General information about apprenticeship training and help in the search for vacant apprenticeship posts are provided by the Apprenticeship Offices (cf. 2.1). Jointly with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, AMS has set up an online apprenticeship exchange ([www.ams.at/lehrstellen](http://www.ams.at/lehrstellen)), which enables young people to search for potential training companies efficiently. The educational counselling and careers guidance offices of the economic chambers support young people by providing a variety of offers (cf. 2.2). With the career guidance tool BIC ([www.bic.at](http://www.bic.at)), the economic chambers have established a state-of-the-art communication forum that gives key support to help young people make decisions and provides comprehensive information when looking for a suitable occupation. Those young people who do not get an apprenticeship post have the possibility of learning an apprenticeship within the framework of a supra-company training (cf. text above).

### **Progression and permeability**

Apprenticeship graduates have a **wide range of possibilities** to upgrade and broaden their skills. One of the most important qualifications they can obtain is the master craftsperson qualification. Although the only formal requirement for sitting the master craftsperson examination is to be of age





(i.e. 18 years), most of the candidates have acquired an apprenticeship qualification before. Similarly, the industrial master college (*Werkmeisterschule*) or the building craftsperson college (*Bauhandwerkerschule*) are both important continuous VET programmes for apprenticeship graduates. In addition, there are many specialist courses/programmes which are targeted at skilled workers. Such courses/programmes are mainly offered by the CET establishments of the social partners, i.e. the Economic Promotion Institute ([WIFI](#) – Institute for Economic Promotion of the Austrian Economic Chambers, [bfi](#) – Vocational Training Institute of the Chamber of Labour and Austrian Trade Union Federation).

Apprenticeship graduates can also continue their learning at university after taking the so called *Berufsreiferprüfung* (BRP). The BRP, which provides **access to all higher education (HE) study programmes**, is open to graduates of specific vocational programmes at intermediate qualification level (such as apprenticeship graduates, but also graduates of three- and four-year BMS, cf. fig. 8). The content of the exam is oriented towards the curriculum of an upper secondary school which provides HE entrance qualifications and comprises four partial exams: German, mathematics, one modern language, and a specialisation from vocational practice or from IVET. For the individual exams, preparatory courses are offered at CET institutions for a fee, attendance of these is not compulsory though. However, participants in such courses can apply for grants. In addition, candidates have to pay exam fees. For apprentices who prepare for the BRP exam parallel to their training or already complete a partial exam during the apprenticeship, costs for preparatory courses, exam material and the exam itself will be borne by the state.

At *Fachhochschulen* (FH, university of applied science) apprenticeship graduates also have access **without the HE entrance examination** since they have a **VET qualification**. However, only about 6% of the students at these universities have completed a BRP.

At *Fachhochschulen* there are also dual programmes in which theoretical and practical phases alternate. However, such programmes are relatively rare in Austria – currently (as at July 2015) only four programmes are designed in this way. The number of students in dual programmes was 1,242 in the entire academic year 2013/14. Despite a largely positive development in the last ten years, student figures overall remain at a relatively low level. Around 1,200 graduates were counted in the academic year 2012/13 in one of the (then three of four currently available) dual programmes.

Those responsible for the respective programme also determine the way the dual structure is organised. Usually, however, students spend their first year solely at the respective FH as they are provided with a sound basic education in their discipline. Afterwards, practical and theoretical phases alternate at certain intervals, e.g. three-month intervals. Students conclude a training agreement with the company and are typically paid for their work as well. In the practical phases, students work on subject-specific projects in which they need to implement in practice the theoretical contents they have been taught. The topics and contents of these projects need to be coordinated with the teachers at the FH at the beginning of the practical phase to ensure they fit in precisely with the curriculum.

## **Diversity**





To address the heterogeneous group of persons interested in acquiring a dual VET qualification, various steps have been taken:

- In 2003 inclusive VET (*Integrative Berufsausbildung*, IBA) was introduced in order to cater for learners with special educational needs (cf. text above)
- In 2008 the supra-company training (*Überbetriebliche Lehrlingsausbildung*, ÜBA) was enshrined as an equivalent element of the dual VET system (cf. text above).
- The “Lehre and Matura”- (or “*Berufsmatura*”)-scheme for apprentices was introduced in 2008 to enable apprentices to acquire the HE entrance examination parallel to their apprenticeship training (cf. 1.2).
- In order to support people with different and multiple problems at the interface between school and the world of work Youth Coaching (*Jugendcoaching*) was initiated in 2012. This measure was introduced to keep young people under the age of 19 as long as possible in the education and training system as well as reintegrate NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training). Retention and reintegration aim to enhance the young people’s educational level and consequently their labour market opportunities. Youth Coaching essentially comprises advice, support and supervision of young people until they are integrated into an (upper secondary) education and training system (among others, into apprenticeship training, cf. fig. 8). Likewise in 2012 a coaching programme specifically targeted at apprentices and training companies was introduced (*Coaching for Lehrlinge und Lehrbetriebe*). Coaching is conducted by professional coaches and comprises initial talks, the identification of perspectives, a mediation process as well as support for preparing for the final apprenticeship examination.

## 2.6 Company training and teaching at schools

### Learning in companies

**Companies** that want to train apprentices submit an application, before recruiting them, for determination of suitability for apprenticeship training to the respective competent Apprenticeship Office (cf. 2.1) of the Federal Economic Chamber. Local competence rests with the Apprenticeship Office of the province where the training company is based. The Apprenticeship Office is obliged by law to examine in collaboration with the Chamber of Labour whether the company meets the prerequisites for apprenticeship training. If that is the case, the company will be issued a “declaration” certifying that the company is entitled to recruit apprentices. The **prerequisites** for becoming an apprenticeship training company are:

- Pursuant to the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act (*Gewerbeordnung*) the company must be **legally entitled** to carry out the activities in which the apprentice is to be trained. However, apprentices cannot only be trained by companies in trade, commerce and industry, but also by members of the liberal professions, such as pharmacists, architects, lawyers, civil engineers, etc., and by associations, administrative offices and other legal entities.
- The company needs to be **equipped** and managed in a way that it is in a position to impart to the apprentice all of the knowledge and skills included in the occupational profile. Those companies that cannot fully impart this knowledge and these skills have the possibility to train apprentices within the framework of a training alliance (cf. text below)). The company size is not decisive for apprenticeship training.



- In addition, a sufficient number of professionally and pedagogically **qualified trainers** must be available in the company.

The **authorised apprenticeship trainer** (*Lehrberechtigte/r*, such as the company owner) is entitled to train apprentices himself/herself. He or she may, however, entrust another competent employee with this task. The success of company-based apprenticeship training is mainly determined by the professional competence and pedagogical (teaching) skills of the **IVET trainer** (*Ausbilder/in*). The work of the IVET trainer not only requires certain previous professional qualifications but also proof of knowledge and skills related to vocational education and law. This knowledge is proven in the course of the IVET trainer exam. The examination is waived for people who have completed the forty-hour IVET trainer course. Some qualifications or examinations (such as successful completion of the master craftsman exam or completion of a part-time industrial master college) are treated as equivalent to the IVET trainer examination. The majority of trainers train their apprentices on a part-time basis alongside their regular work. But there are also full-time trainers and full-time training supervisors in many large companies.

Initial vocational education and training is held under **real-life working conditions**. The apprentice acquires the required knowledge and skills which are laid down in the job profile (cf. 2.4) for the respective apprenticeship occupation. Immediately upon completion of the training, he or she is able to take up a qualified professional activity as a **skilled worker**. Most of the training is provided as part of productive activities; this reduces costs and increases the apprentice's motivation to learn. Companies which cannot provide the job profile completely have the possibility to use complementary practical training in a **training alliance** (*Ausbildungsverbund*). In some sectors, supra-company training centres (e.g. the "training construction sites", *Bauakademie*) are established by businesses.

There are two types of training alliances: The establishment of a training alliance is **compulsory** if a company cannot fully impart the knowledge and skill laid down in the training regulation. Complementary training measures may be conducted in another company or educational institution (e. g. CET establishments of the social partners) that are suited for this purpose. It must, however, be possible to train the knowledge and skills vital for the apprenticeship occupation mainly at the actual training company. In the apprenticeship contract (or one of its appendixes), agreement on the training content that will be imparted outside the actual training company as well as "alliance partners" (suited companies or institutions) is reached. It is also possible to enter into training alliances on a **voluntary** basis, if training companies aim to impart special skills to apprentices – possibly going beyond the occupational profile (e. g. special-purpose computer programmes, foreign language skills, soft skills, etc.).

The apprentice is in a **training relationship** with his or her training company but is involved in productive activities. A **contract** is concluded between the training company and the apprentice (as well as his/her legal representative, in case the apprentice is not yet of age). This contract must be submitted to the Apprenticeship Office for recording purposes. The Apprenticeship Office will then examine the data of the apprenticeship contract and the training company's suitability. In addition, it awards credits for occupation-specific training periods. The recording of the apprenticeship contract is a prerequisite for the apprentice's later admittance to the apprenticeship-leave exam.



When difficulties during training occur, both apprentices and training companies can apply for an accompanying **coaching** (cf. 2.5).



## Learning at schools

The focus of education at **part-time vocational school** is on occupation-oriented specialist instruction (with about 65%); general subjects make up some 35% of the schooling period. Specialist instruction includes subject-related theoretical training supplementing enterprise-based training but also subject-related practical training in workshops and/or laboratories. A subject-related language training is an obligatory part of the school curriculum.

Part-time vocational schools are established for **individual apprenticeship occupations**. The apprentice is obliged to attend vocational school. He or she is summoned to attend part-time vocational school depending on where the training enterprise is located in the respective province. Classes are grouped according to the individual apprenticeship occupation or in some cases according to groups of related apprenticeship occupations.

The following **organisation forms** of teaching at part-time vocational schools exist:

- all year round, i.e. at least on one full school-day or two half school-days a week
- by block, i.e. for at least eight weeks continuously
- seasonally, i.e. in block form at a particular time of year

The variety of organisation forms is due to consultation between the business sphere and those responsible for school instruction and takes account of the individual economic and regional sectors' needs.

Part-time vocational school teachers are trained in a three-year bachelor course at **university colleges of education**. The first and third year of the study are completed on a part-time basis, the second is a full-time study year. Graduates are awarded the academic degree Bachelor of Education (BEd). Greatly simplified, the following **three groups of part-time vocational school teachers** can be distinguished:

- Group 1: Teachers of general education subjects and teachers of business administration
- Group 2: Teachers of occupation-related theory
- Group 3: Teachers of occupation-related practice

The prerequisite for obtaining the teaching diploma for part-time vocational schools in Groups 1 and 2 is the certificate of secondary education and VET diploma which grants access to tertiary education (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung*) from a specialist VET college, the upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*Reifeprüfung*) or the certificate providing general access to higher education (HE) for skilled workers and graduates of three- to four-year full-time VET schools (*Berufsreifepfung*) and relevant training. For Group 3 it is necessary to furnish proof of a relevant master craftsperson certificate or an equivalent relevant qualification as well as the general university entrance qualification. In addition, as well as personal aptitude, at least three years' relevant professional practice is required for admission to HE study programmes.



## 2.7 VET excellence – Image and marketing of apprenticeships

### VET excellence

There are no explicit **excellence programmes** in apprenticeship training in Austria. For apprentices who want to acquire a higher education entrance qualification parallel to apprenticeship training, the “Lehre and Matura”-scheme was introduced (cf. 2.5). Despite them being demanded on the labour market, apprenticeship qualifications are often seen as being less attractive than VET school or college qualifications as well as the certificate acquired at academic secondary school (cf. Fig. 8). One of the aims of the classification of qualifications to the National Qualifications Framework is to underline **parity of esteem** between certificates placed on the same level. Although apprenticeship qualifications differ from, for instance, the certificate acquired at academic secondary schools in terms of learning sites (companies/part-time schools vs. fully school-based) and learning focus (VET vs. GE), both qualifications are seen as NQF level-4 qualifications (neither of these qualifications have been classified yet as the NQF has not yet been set up, cf. 1.3).

### Image of apprenticeship in the society

Even though the **image of apprenticeship training** has deteriorated over the last few years, it is still a successful educational programme in many respects:

- According to the 2013 Labour Force Survey, 35% of all self-employed in Austria have an apprenticeship certificate as their highest qualification. Therefore, apprenticeship training is by far the most important qualification of self-employment in Austria and is obviously a good “springboard” for setting up (or taking over) one’s own company.
- Regarding the labour market status 18 months after obtaining a first qualification, apprenticeship graduates reach by far the highest figures in the (direct) transition to employment after graduation (cf. Fig. 10). More than three quarters of all apprenticeship graduates in the graduation year group 2009/10 were employed one and a half years after graduating. Among graduates of colleges for higher vocational education this figure was 42%, among those from schools for intermediate vocational education it was 40%.
- Also regarding income from their first dependent employment, the situation of apprenticeship graduates compared to other educational qualifications can be assessed as favourable: Among one third (33%) the entry-level income is between EUR 1,800 and EUR 2,400 and another quarter earn EUR 2,400 or more. This means that apprenticeship graduates are represented more in the highest income segment than employees who graduated from a BHS (8%).



Fig. 10: Labour market status 18 months after obtaining qualification, and income (in EUR) from the first dependent employment, by educational qualification, graduation year group 2009/10 (in column-percent)

	CS	Appren- ticeship	BMS	AHS	BHS	Uni./FH
	ISCED 2	ISCED 3B	ISCED 3B	ISCED 4A	ISCED 3-4B	ISCED 5-6
<b>Labour market status</b>						
In training	92.4	4.4	43.1	82.0	48.7	40.0
Employment	1.1	76.5	39.6	5.5	42.2	45.2
AMS registration	2.3	9.3	6.1	0.9	2.3	1.9
Others / not active	4.2	9.9	11.2	11.6	6.8	12.8
<b>Entry-level income*</b>						
< 1200 EUR	70.2	12.4	27.6	50.3	13.5	22.8
1200 to < 1800 EUR	26.5	27.5	42.4	34.6	44.2	17.8
1800 to < 2400 EUR	3.3	33.0	25.0	11.0	34.4	16.4
2400 EUR or more	-	27.1	5.0	4.1	7.9	43.0

Note: CS = compulsory school, BMS = school for intermediate vocational education, AHS = academic secondary school, BHS = college for higher vocational education, uni./FH = university/*Fachhochschule*, AMS registration = registration as job seeker with Public Employment Service; \* for uni./FH graduation year group 2008/2009

Source: Statistics Austria, Qualification-related employment monitoring; [ibw Survey on Apprenticeship Training](#) 2014

To improve the attractiveness of apprenticeship training, measures are taken both for training companies and for potential apprenticeship post seekers and apprentices. To ensure that the available range of programmes is interesting and modern, training contents are continually updated and adapted to the needs of the economy, both in the job profile for company-based training and in the framework curricula of part-time vocational school. At the same time, measures are taken to improve the quality of training in the company and part-time vocational school (cf. text below). Furthermore, various financial incentives are offered for training companies (cf. 2.3).

**Awards ceremonies** are another way of drawing attention to apprenticeship training and the activities of the training companies. There are two important awards:

- The Minister of Economy awards the prize "[State-honoured training company](#)" to training companies for special achievements in apprenticeship training. Criteria for awarding this state prize include: success in apprenticeship-leave exams and in provincial and national competitions; dedicated involvement in the field of career guidance; cooperation ventures entered into by the training company; and its in-house and external CET programmes for apprentices and trainers.
- State prize "[Best training companies – Fit for future](#)": Every two years, the state prize "Best training companies – Fit for future" is conferred by the Ministry of Economy in the categories small, medium-sized and large enterprises. The objective of this state prize is to improve quality, innovation and sustainability in apprenticeship training. Specifically the state prize aims to set a clear signal for quality in apprenticeship, acknowledge the excellent work of the Austrian economy in the field of youth training, help win over new companies for apprenticeship training, raise awareness among parents and youths of the good training provided in Austrian companies and the wide spectrum of apprenticeship occupations.

**Guidance and counselling** plays an important role in attracting young people to apprenticeship training. Towards the end of the compulsory schooling period (seventh and eighth school year, in some school types also in the ninth school year), compulsory career guidance (*Berufsorientierung* or



BO) classes are provided. In some cases it is a separate school subject, in others it is integrated in other subjects or projects. One aim of BO is to inform pupils about the possibilities of apprenticeship training. A fixed part of BO are work shadowing days, which aim to provide pupils with first practical experiences and impressions of the world of work.

As well as career guidance offered at school level, Public Employment Service Austria (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) has the legal mandate of providing career guidance. AMS offers information, counselling and advice in career guidance centres (*Berufsinformationszentren*, BIZ). The social partner organisations, which run their own guidance and counselling centres, are also important actors in the field of career guidance. The career guidance centres of AMS and the social partners have self-information areas and offer one-on-one and group counselling at their locations. They also support schools in their information activities by offering online career information databases (such as [www.bic.at](http://www.bic.at), [www.karrierekompass.at](http://www.karrierekompass.at)), a large variety of brochures and career information films, and by organising lectures for classes, sector presentations, training for job applications, events for teachers and parents, job fairs, etc., which at least in part explicitly focus on apprenticeship training. Moreover, comprehensive information about the respective training programmes is provided by many sectoral and professional associations, but also by many training companies.

### **Quality assurance**

There are quality assurance mechanisms at all stages of the lifecycle of an apprenticeship qualification (cf. [website](#)). A key element of quality assurance is the **involvement of businesses and social partners** in order to meet the requirements of the labour market.

The **main quality assurance mechanisms** are:

- Development of new and modernisation of existing apprenticeships (cf. 2.4): The continual adaptation of apprenticeship occupations to economic and technological developments ensures the lasting attractiveness and quality of apprenticeship training. Related initiatives are most often launched by the affected sectors and the Ministry of Economy or the social partners. All the interest groups concerned (representations of interest of employers and employees) and the responsible ministries (Ministries of Economy and Education) are involved in the development of new apprenticeships. Research support is provided by *Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft* (ibw, Research and Development in VET).
- Accreditation procedure for training companies (cf. 2.6): Every company which wants to train apprentices needs to go through an accreditation procedure. For this purpose, the company submits an application for determination of its suitability for apprenticeship training to the respective competent Apprenticeship Office. In collaboration with the Chamber of Labour, this office subsequently examines whether the company meets the legal and company-specific prerequisites for apprenticeship training.
- VET and CVET of trainers: IVET trainers who are in charge of training apprentices need to furnish a relevant qualification, which not only comprises subject-related competences in the apprenticeship concerned but also know-how concerning vocational pedagogy and law. The IVET trainer qualification is acquired by completing a trainer examination and/or attending a course. This compulsory qualification is complemented by a wide range of continuing training options



- (such as companies' in-house CVET programmes for IVET trainers, programmes provided by adult learning institutions, trainer colleges and trainer forums).
- Standards for the apprenticeship-leave examination (cf. 2.4) and the clearing office for the apprenticeship-leave exam: This exam is organised by the Apprenticeship Offices. It is taken before an exam committee. This ensures that the training and its validation are separated, which makes an essential contribution to objectivity and therefore quality assurance. The clearing office for the apprenticeship-leave exam ensures quality assurance throughout Austria for the tasks which the candidates need to carry out in the exam. The clearing office is set up in the Ministry of Economy and supervised by ibw. Its tasks include: safeguarding a uniform quality standard by checking the tasks, assessment guidelines and solution options to see if they comply with the respective examination regulation, subject-specific correctness, practical relevance, and corresponding didactic quality.
  - Exam preparation for apprentices and examiners: For apprentices, this preparation comprises preparatory courses, which are provided by various training institutions, and the learning materials drawn up by ibw. For examiners there exists the option of completing certified training programmes (the graduates of which are awarded the title "examiners for the apprenticeship-leave examination"). The examiner manuals of ibw offer examiners occupation-specific guidelines on how to design oral exams.

In 2013 the **Quality Management in Apprenticeship** (*Qualitätsmanagement Lehrlingsausbildung*, QML) initiative was launched by the social partners. The goal of this comprehensive quality strategy is to ensure that even more young people complete an apprenticeship and pass the apprenticeship-leave examination – without lowering the level of the exam. QML builds on a set of annually evaluated [indicators](#) of apprenticeship dropouts, the number of apprentices who (do not) sit for the final exam as well as the number of apprentices who (do not) acquire the apprenticeship certificate.

### 3. Recent developments

The Austrian apprenticeship training system is a highly regarded sub-system of IVET which is completed by around 40% of an age cohort. International comparisons of youth unemployment rates and transitions to the labour market prove its positive effect. Its strengths also include its comparatively responsive governance structures, its adaptability to changing demands for qualifications, its small share in public educational expenses (compared with full-time school-based VET), its provision of a full qualification, and its lasting attractiveness for companies. Of particular importance is the fact that, due to the involvement of the social partners, apprenticeship training is considered as a training scheme "from the economy for the economy". Its proximity to the economy and therefore to the labour market makes an essential contribution to the attractiveness of this VET pathway.

However, due to the competition from school-based VET programmes and the high share of pupils at risk at the end of the compulsory schooling period, the apprenticeship training system is running the risk of becoming increasingly attractive for rather low-performing youths. This, in turn, has negative repercussions on the companies' offer of apprenticeship posts. To counteract this trend, **several**





**measures** targeted at young people and (potential) training companies have been taken. These include guidance and counselling activities at school, youth coaching, financial support, image campaigns, quality assurance mechanisms, etc.

## 4. Literature

The following publications have been used for compiling this report and give more information about apprenticeship training in Austria:

Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend (2012): Apprenticeship. Dual Education and Training in Austria. Download:

[https://www.bmwf.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrlingsUndBerufsausbildung/Documents/Die\\_Lehre\\_HP\\_engl.pdf](https://www.bmwf.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrlingsUndBerufsausbildung/Documents/Die_Lehre_HP_engl.pdf) (accessed 10.05.2015)

Bliem, Wolfgang, Schmid, Kurt, Petanovitsch, Alexander (2014): Erfolgsfaktoren der dualen Ausbildung. Transfermöglichkeiten. ibw-Forschungsbericht Nr. 177 [Success Factors of Dual Training. Transfer Options. ibw research report no. 177]. Download:

[http://www.ibw.at/components/com\\_redshop/assets/document/product/1392296354\\_fb177.pdf](http://www.ibw.at/components/com_redshop/assets/document/product/1392296354_fb177.pdf) (accessed on 20.06.2015)

Dornmayr, Helmut, Nowak, Sabine (2014): Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick 2014 – Strukturdaten, Trends und Perspektiven [2014 Survey of Apprenticeship Training – Structural Data, Trends and Prospects], ibw research report no. 176, Vienna. Download:

[http://www.ibw.at/components/com\\_redshop/assets/document/product/1413353704\\_fb180.pdf](http://www.ibw.at/components/com_redshop/assets/document/product/1413353704_fb180.pdf) (accessed on 20.06.2015)

Dornmayr, Helmut, Löffler, Roland (2014): Bericht zur Situation der Jugendbeschäftigung und Lehrlingsausbildung in Österreich 2012-2013 [Report on the situation of youth employment and apprenticeship training], research report of ibw and öibf commissioned by BMWF, Vienna. Download:

<http://www.bmwf.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrlingsUndBerufsausbildung/Documents/Bericht%20zur%20Situation%20der%20Jugendbesch%3%a4ftigung%20und%20Lehrlingsausbildung%20in%20%3%96sterreich%202012-2013.pdf> (accessed on 18.06.2015)

Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft (2014): Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes Austria. Article within the Framework of ReferNet Austria. Download:

<http://www.refernet.at/index.php/en/publications/articles> (accessed on 11.05.2015)

Tritscher-Archan, Sabine (et al.) (2014): VET in Europe. Country Report Austria. Report within the Framework of ReferNet Austria. Download: <http://www.refernet.at/index.php/de/publikationen/laenderberichte> (accessed on 19.05.2015)