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Educational Counselling and Career Guidance: Huge Deficits among Youth with a Migration Background

Selected Findings of an *ibw-öibf* Study¹ Commissioned by Public Employment Service Austria (AMS)

Young people with a migration background are particularly strongly underrepresented at part-time vocational schools (apprenticeship training), VET colleges and in the upper cycle of secondary school, but overrepresented at special needs schools. Especially pronounced is this educational disadvantage among young people of Turkish and Serbian-Montenegrin citizenship. When analysing youth of these nationalities, it can clearly be seen that also their parents tend to come from so-called "difficult-to-reach" groups (that is to say: people who are less likely to access education). This underlines how necessary it would be to provide comprehensive and efficient educational counselling and career guidance precisely for this youth – and particularly at school level. Current related provisions must be rated as insufficient. Against this background, the *ibw* has been commissioned by the Austrian economic chambers to compile a multilingual version (apart from German also English, Croat, Serbian and Turkish) of parts of the Career Guidance Computer BIC (www.bic.at).

These are some of the findings of a recent study commissioned by Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and conducted by the research institutes *öibf* and *ibw*: Educational participation by young people with a migration background is clearly below average. Thus e.g. the share of students of non-German mother tongue at primary school is as high as 20.3% (school year 2006/07), but in the upper cycle of secondary school as low as 10.5%, at VET colleges only 8.7%, and at part-time vocational schools (apprenticeship training) merely 6.2% (school year 2005/06).

At the same time, pronounced differences depending on the immigrants' citizenship can be observed (cf. Graph 1). Young people of Turkish or Serbian-Montenegrin² citizenship show a particularly low participation in education. They account for 2.4% (Turkey) and 1.7% (Serbia & Montenegro) of schoolchildren at primary level, for example, but merely 0.3% (Turkey) and 0.6% (Serbia & Montenegro) of students at secondary school (school year 2006/07). At the same time, their shares at special needs schools are disproportionately high: 6.3% (Turkey) and 4.3% (Serbia & Montenegro).

The main reasons for this disadvantage in terms of access to upper secondary education can be found in their social origin and lacking knowledge about the Austrian education system, because mainly immigrants from the

mentioned countries come from rather so-called "difficult-to-reach" groups (that is to say: people who are less likely to access education). According to the 2001 census, the highest educational attainment of more than 70% of immigrants (over the age of 15) of Turkish or Serbian-Montenegrin citizenship is compulsory schooling (cf. Graph 2).

This underlines how necessary and urgent it would be to provide functioning educational counselling and career guidance precisely for youth with a migration background at school, because this is almost the only place in fact where all young people can be reached. Reality, by contrast, is much more sobering: It can be assumed that only about one fifth of youth with a migration background actually come into contact with educational counselling and career guidance at school. An earlier *ibw-öibf* study³ conducted in the group of 20-to-24-year-olds without a qualification from upper secondary level (i.e. whose highest educational attainment is completion of compulsory schooling) already provided hints of dramatic counselling and guidance deficits among youth with a migration background. Only 22% (of 20-to-24-year-olds without a qualification from upper secondary level) of non-German mother tongue have visited a careers guidance centre once in their life, and even merely 10% a job information fair. (Among 20-to-24-year-olds of German mother tongue without a qualification from upper secon-

dary level, as many as 50% have visited a careers guidance centre and 37% a job information fair.) The differences in school-based educational counselling are particularly striking and probably also have serious consequences on their educational behaviour: 45% of the questioned 20-to-24-year-olds of German mother tongue without a qualification from upper secondary level but only 14% of interviewees of another mother tongue have related experience. Possibly this is partly connected with their shorter total retention time in the education and training system, their premature completion of compulsory schooling (i.e. before reaching the 9th year of schooling), and sometimes with school attendance in their country of origin. By all means, however, this finding points at dramatic deficits in the area of educational counselling and career guidance for young people with a migration background.

Therefore it is frequently recommended to reorganise career guidance at school level, which is currently implemented on an integrative basis (i.e. not as a separate subject) in most cases and is hence often not put into practice at all.

The study additionally recommends a series of other measures to reduce this structural educational disadvantage of young people with a migration background and increase the provision and degree of utilisation of educational counselling and career guidance, such as the extension of gender-sensitive counselling provision, the promotion of vocational guidance passports, multilingual counselling and guidance for parents, the promotion of apprenticeship schemes for immigrants, etc.

With a view to the ongoing discussion on integration it must, not least, be emphasised that education represents a very important prerequisite for integration – not only but of course very particularly also for integration into the labour market. Therefore, increased and more efficient educational counselling and career guidance provision for young people with a migration background plays a very decisive role in the integration process.

¹ Wieser, Regine/Dornmayr, Helmut/Neubauer, Barbara/Rothmüller, Barbara (2008): Bildungs- und Berufsberatung für Jugendliche mit Migrationshintergrund gegen Ende der Pflichtschule, Wien. The entire final report on this study is available for download in German in the AMS Research Network (www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at).

² Although Montenegro has been an independent country since 2006, education statistics for the states Serbia and Montenegro now as before use a common category for them. Therefore values for Serbia and Montenegro cannot be presented separately.

³ Cf. Dornmayr, Helmut/Schlögl, Peter/Schneeberger, Arthur/Wieser, Regine (2006): Benachteiligte Jugendliche – Jugendliche ohne Berufsbildung, research report by ibw and öibf, commissioned by the Public Employment Service Austria, Vienna

WOLFGANG BLIEM

Example of good practice: Multilingual BIC

Not least against the background of this study, the *ibw* (Institute for Research on Qualifications and Training of the Austrian Economy), which has created, maintained and supported the Career Guidance Computer BIC (www.bic.at) for 10 years on behalf of the Austrian economic chambers, extended this provision in early April 2008 by **multilingual versions** (apart from German now also English, Croat, Serbian and Turkish) of the **interest profile** and **career choice** (tips on career choice and the job application process).

The BIC's provision, which is being used by as many as about 220,000 users a year, is now increasingly accessible also to young people with a migration background. The concept on which the multilingual feature builds is that reflections about vocational and personal interests, wishes, objectives, skills, etc. pose a considerable challenge even in one's own mother tongue. This reflection process should not be made more difficult by the fact that related suggestions need to be digested in a foreign language (German). In this sense, the multilingual "interest profile" and "career choice" versions must be seen as working tools aiming to facilitate access to the career choice process for young people with a migration background.

As the BIC is also very frequently applied within the framework of career guidance at schools, it additionally needs to be stressed that this provision does not aim at all to undermine the schools' efforts to teach these young people German skills. But career guidance must not be made dependent on sufficient command of foreign languages and should, in many cases, be offered in parallel to the acquisition of related language skills.

The multilingual BIC aims to meet the following expectations in particular:

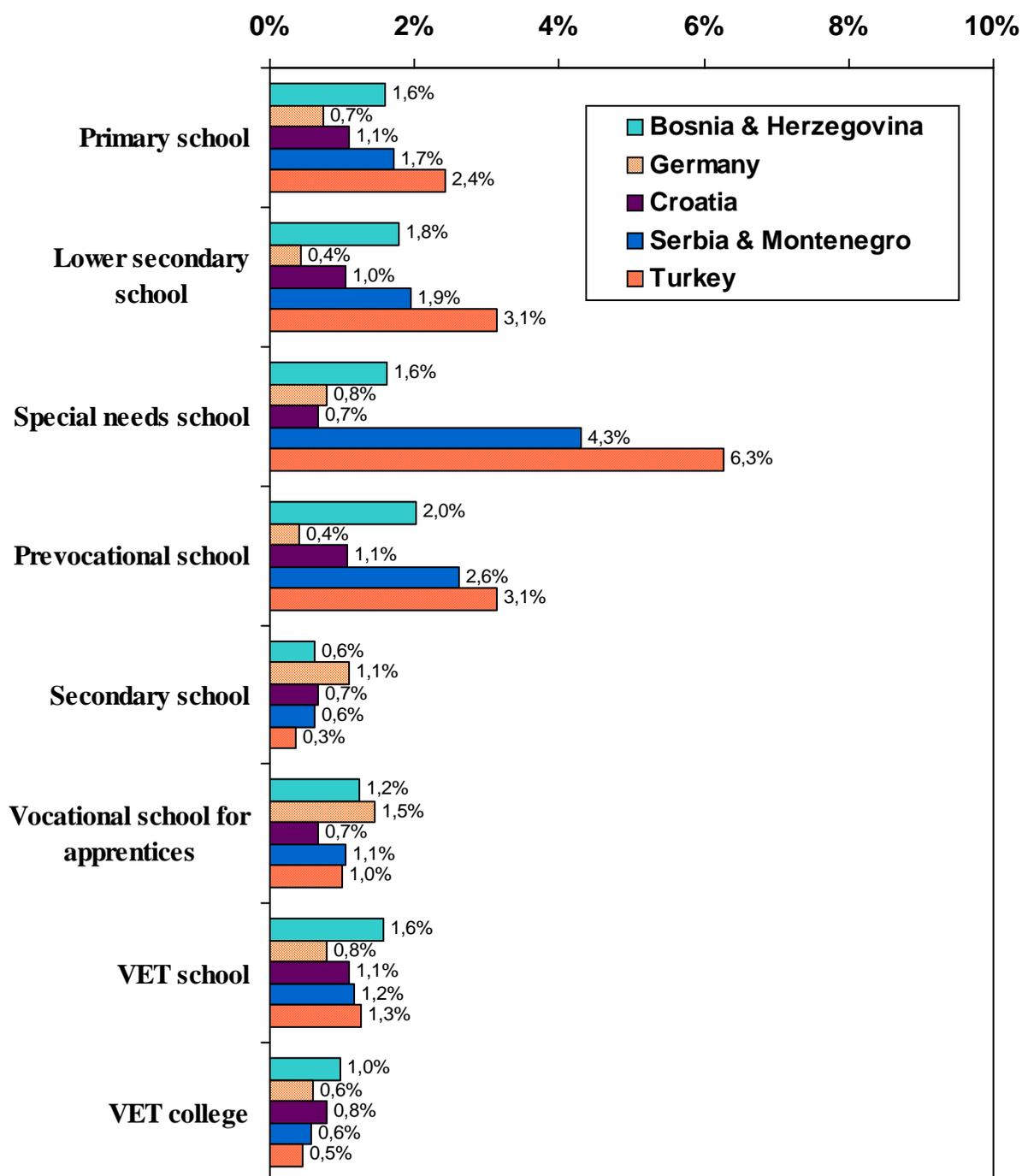
- to provide useful support in career guidance measures to counselling institutions that also or especially focus on working with immigrants and to schools.
- to increasingly raise awareness of the varied and interesting opportunities in the world of work and education among immigrants and to motivate them to reflect on them more intensively.

The entire study can be found at the following address:

http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/Berufsberatung_Jugendliche_Migrationshintergrund_Endbericht.pdf

GRAPH 1:

Schoolchildren of non-Austrian citizenship by school type and nationality (n=5)

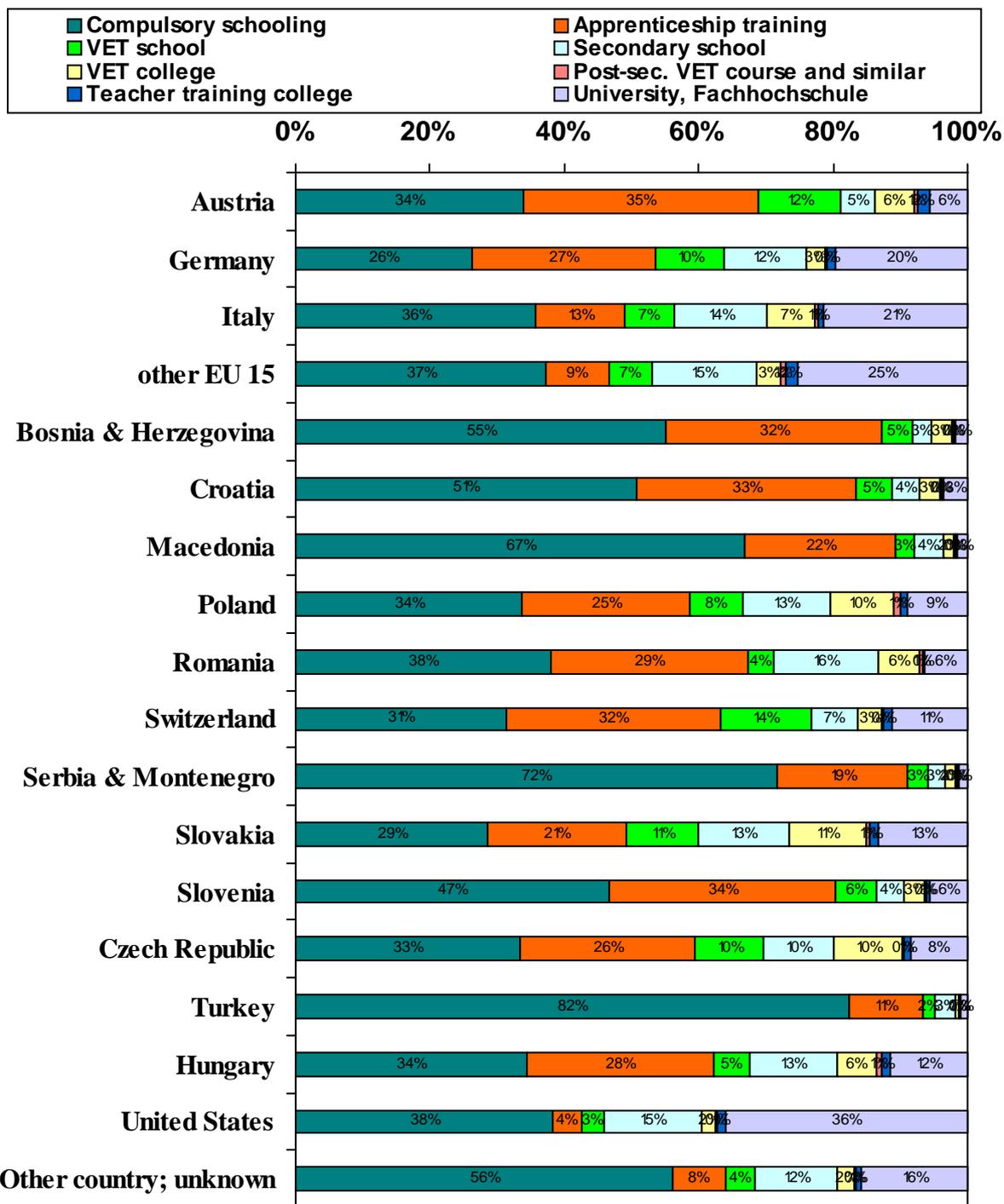


Source: Statistics Austria, school statistics & ibw calculations

Key date: 2006/07 school year

GRAPH 2:

Highest educational attainment by educational level and citizenship
(residential population over the age of 15; 2001 census)



Source: Statistics Austria (2001 census; ISIS database query) & own calculations

Note: The term "other EU 15 states" refers to the EU 15, i.e. EU member states up to and including 2003