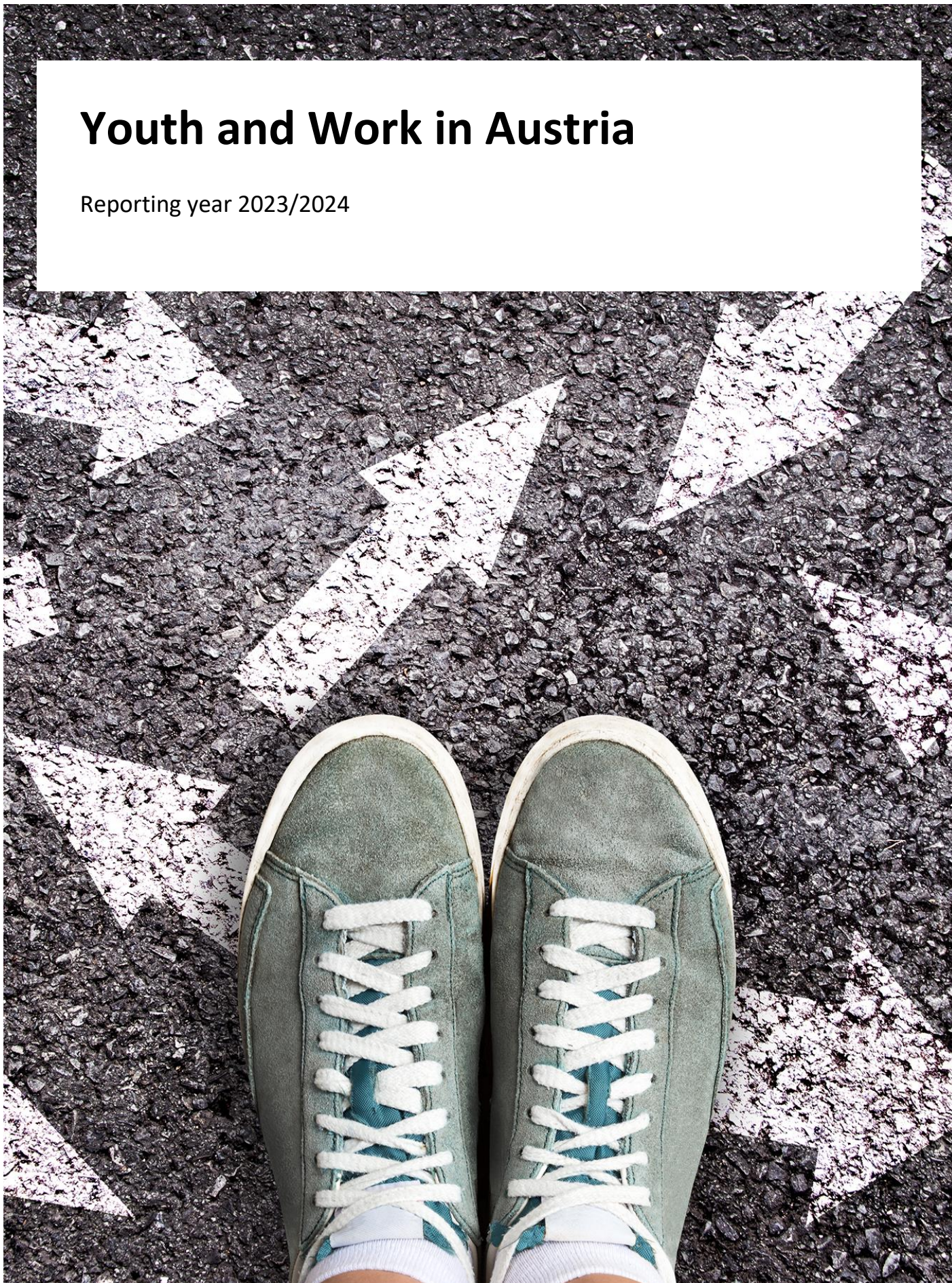


# Youth and Work in Austria

Reporting year 2023/2024



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**Authors:** Bernhard Moshhammer, Ingrid Nagl (BMAW/Division III/A/3) with contributions from Luka Vlasits and Kai Hartig (BMAW/Division III/B/4a), in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK)  
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**Feedback:** Please send your comments on the present publication to [johannes.schweighofer@bmaw.gv.at](mailto:johannes.schweighofer@bmaw.gv.at) or [bernhard.moshhammer@bmaw.gv.at](mailto:bernhard.moshhammer@bmaw.gv.at)

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# Introduction

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

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

The first chapter of the brochure provides an overview of the demographic situation as well as education and labour data. The second chapter presents the Austrian education system and current priorities in education policies. The third chapter 'Vocational Education and Support at the Transition from School to Work' describes vocational information programmes, the apprenticeship system, how the transition from school to work is managed and the programmes available to individual target groups. The fourth chapter addresses initiatives and programmes launched at the European level.

# 1 Data, Facts and Figures

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

## 1.1 Current situation and economic conditions

In 2023, the Austrian economy dipped into a slight recession, declining by 0.8% (compared to the very buoyant year 2022), while the rise in unemployment of 2.9% to 270,773 people versus 263,121 in 2022 was still moderate by comparison.<sup>1</sup> Another 70,546 persons (up 1.5%) were in training. If the unemployed and PES training participants are taken together, this will give an increase in registered unemployed of +8.674 or +2.6% over the previous year, which is lower than the increase in the unemployment rate. In June, the unemployment rate was 6.2% or up 0.5 percentage points over June of the previous year. According to the summer forecast of the Austrian economic research institutes WIFO and IHS, the situation in the labour market is likely to bottom out in 2024 and drop slightly in 2025.<sup>2</sup>

Youth unemployment (people under the age of 25), on the other hand, rose starkly by 11% to 28,323 people.<sup>3</sup> This trend is not surprising, as rising unemployment means that those groups of people who are new to the labour market are generally more affected than people who have been active on the labour market for a long time. This is also reflected in the detailed analysis of youth unemployment, its increase in the group of up to 19-year-olds being significantly stronger (up 13.6%) than in the group of 20- to 24-year-olds (up 10.5%). Nevertheless, with youth unemployment at 10.4% in 2023, Austria is still well placed by comparison. It occupied the sixth lowest place in 2023, the EU average being 14.5%.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: National administrative data/BMAW/AMIS and AMIS database retrieved on 29 May 2024.

<sup>2</sup> IHS (2024), summer forecast for the Austrian economy 2024–2025.

<sup>3</sup> Source: National administrative data/BMAW/AMIS and AMIS database retrieved on 29 May 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Source: EUROSTAT.

There is still a surplus of vacancies in the apprenticeship market. There were 6,584 immediately available apprenticeship seekers on average in 2023 versus 8,998 immediately available apprenticeship vacancies notified to the public employment service.<sup>5</sup> Just compare these figures to previous years to see how quickly the dynamics have changed: as recently as 2019, there were 6,830 apprenticeship seekers versus 6,247 apprenticeship vacancies.

## 1.2 Demographic trends

On 1 Jan 2024, there were 9,158,750 people living in Austria. This is another increase by 0.6% or 53,978 people over the previous period, albeit significantly less than in 2022 (up 1.4%). Austria's population growth is driven by immigration: at roughly 7.4 million, the number of Austrians has remained virtually unchanged over the last twenty years (2004-2024), whereas the resident population has soared by 12.5%. 1,800,866 persons living in Austria on 1 Jan 2024 were of foreign nationality. This corresponds to roughly 19.7% of Austria's total population (1 Jan 2023: 19%).<sup>6</sup>

The war in Ukraine no longer had a noticeable effect on immigration in 2023. The top five countries of origin of immigrants were: Germany (22,498 persons), Romania (18,406 persons), Ukraine (15,236 persons), Hungary (14,224 persons) and Syria (14,809 persons). The migratory balance of Austrian nationals was negative in 2023, with 4,113 more Austrians moving abroad than from abroad to Austria.<sup>7</sup>

50.7% of the population are female and 49.3% male in 2024. The proportion of young people under 20 years is 19.3% in 2024 (the same as in the year before) and has continuously dropped since 2001 (22.9%). 60.9% (down 0.2 percentage points) are of working age (20-64 years). The proportion of people aged 65 and up totals 19.8% (up 0.2 percentage points), whereas in 2001 their proportion was a mere 15.4%.<sup>8</sup>

At the beginning of 2024, more than half (51.3%) of foreign nationals came from other EU countries, EFTA countries as well as the United Kingdom, the remaining 48.7% from other third countries. In the EU, EFTA and UK group, 61.8% were from the so-called 'new' Member

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<sup>5</sup> Source: National administrative data/BMAW/AMIS and AMIS database retrieved on 29 May 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Population at the beginning of the year by detailed nationality since 2002 (Austria).

<sup>7</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Population at the beginning of the year by detailed nationality since 2002 (Austria).

<sup>8</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Population by age and gender – time series.

States (which acceded the EU as of 2004) and 35.9% from other EU Member States (which acceded the EU before 2004). With 25.2%, the largest group continues to be the German group, followed by people from Romania (16.6%), Croatia (11.6%) and Hungary (11.6%) as well as Poland (7.4%). In the group of third-country nationals, with 60.2% of them coming from Europe, the largest groups are people from Turkey (14.1%), Serbia (13.9%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (11.4%) and Ukraine (9.2%). The largest group of third-country nationals from outside of Europe include Syrians accounting for 10.8% and Afghans accounting for 5.7%.<sup>9</sup>

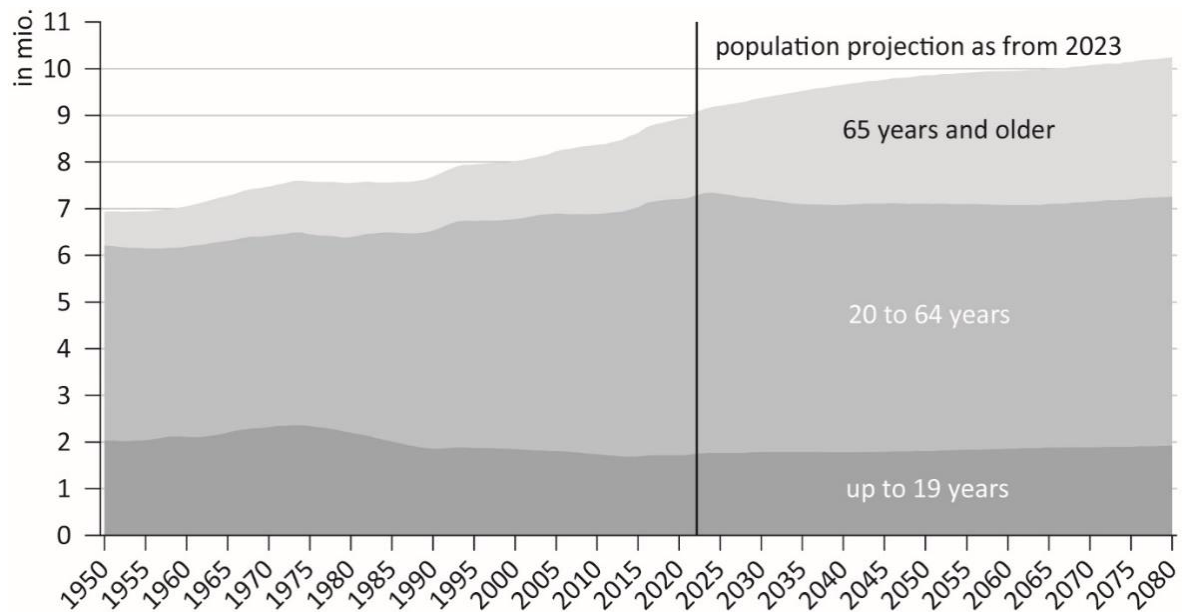
Austria will continue to grow. Estimates predict around 9.4m inhabitants for Austria in 2030 and around 10.3m in 2080. This will coincide with a significant age shift in our society towards the older end of the age spectrum.

Although the number of children and young people under 20 years of age will continue to grow, their proportion within the population will decline (from 19.3% in 2024 to 18.7% by 2080), whereas the proportion of those aged 65plus will rise substantially from 19.8% in 2024 to roughly 29.1% in 2080; (see Figure 1).

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Population at the beginning of the year by detailed nationality 2002-2024 (Austria); BMAW's own calculations.

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

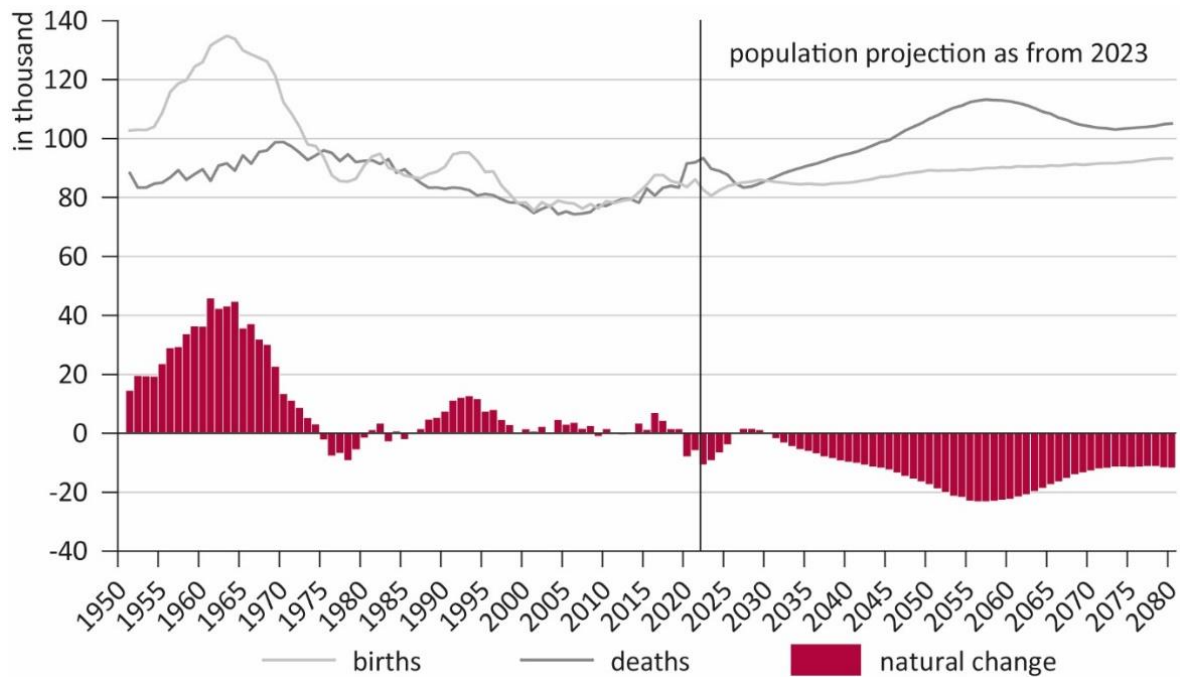


Source: Statistics Austria, population forecast 2023.

The average number of live births was 90,000 per year in the 1980s and 1990s, with figures during this period peaking in 1982 (94,840) and 1992 (95,302) (see Figure 2).



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



Source: Statistics Austria, population forecast 2023.

Since then there has been no consistent trend, with the number of new-borns varying between 70,000 and 90,000 per year. With 77,605 births according to preliminary estimates for 2023, their number fell by another 6.1% after a drop of 4.5% in 2022.<sup>10</sup> Natural population growth in 2023 was again negative: 77,605 births versus 89,760 deaths.<sup>11</sup>

The average number of children per woman (total fertility rate) fell from around 1.5 in the 1980s to around 1.39 in 2009. In 2023, this rate was 1.32 children per woman (2022: 1.41), an all-time low. In 1963 by comparison, total fertility reached a record post-war level of 2.82 and was thus more than twice as high as nowadays. According to the natural population dynamics (fertility variant) projected by Statistics Austria, however, the total fertility rate is expected to rise continuously to 1.6 in 2068 and afterwards stagnate at this level<sup>12</sup>, whereas life expectancy for both women and men will continue to rise<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Live births and still births since 2011.

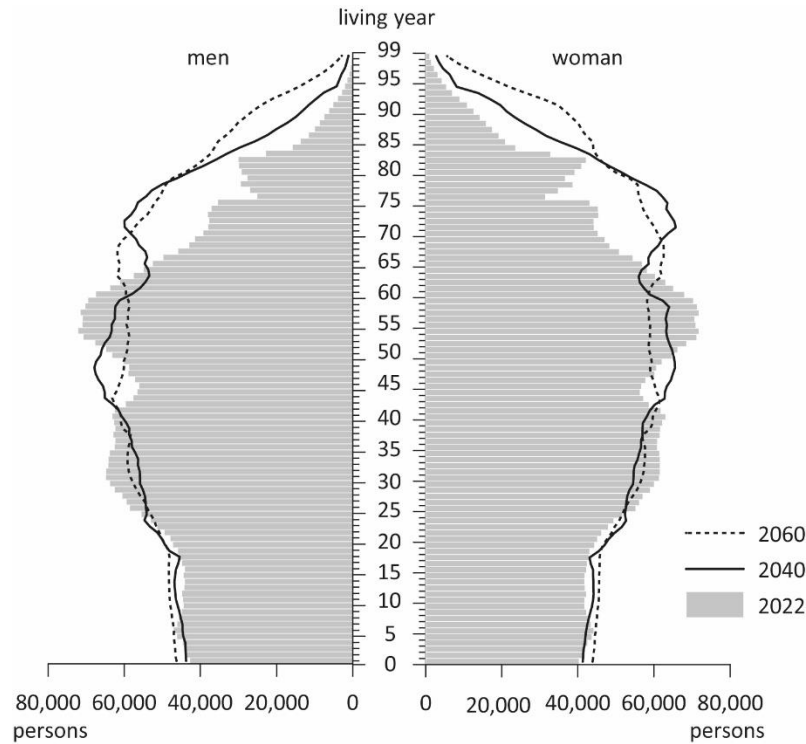
<sup>11</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Deaths by demographic characteristics since 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table: Projected natural population dynamics 2019-2100, fertility variant Austria.

<sup>13</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, table on population level and structure.

The age pyramid (see Figure 3) shows the composition of the Austrian population for 2022, 2040 and 2060<sup>14</sup>.

Figure 3: Age pyramid 2022, 2040 and 2060



Source: Statistics Austria, population forecast 2023.

### 1.3 Level of education

There has been a general increase in the educational attainment levels of Austria's resident population since 1971. Whereas in 1971 roughly 58% and in 1981 still 46% of the resident population aged 25-64 had no more than compulsory education as their highest level of educational achievement, this proportion was only 17.1% in 2022. There have been substantial increases in all continued education qualifications. Since 1981 the number of persons with intermediate- and higher-level school leaving certificates<sup>15</sup> has almost doubled and was 30.5% in 2022. In 1981, only some 4.5% of Austria's resident population had higher education credentials, while in 2022 their share was 20.4% (this percentage also includes

<sup>14</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, population level 2022.

<sup>15</sup> This is an aggregate of: BMSs, AHSs, BHSs and post-secondary VET courses.

higher education-related establishments); 32% of the resident population aged 25 to 64 in 2022 had an apprenticeship training background.<sup>16</sup>

Women in particular have caught up in recent decades. Their level of education now is much higher: in 1971, 70.4% of **all women aged 25-64** had compulsory education and only 1.3% higher (tertiary) education qualifications. This contrasts with 2022, in which a mere 18.7% of **women aged 25-64** had compulsory education (men: 15.6%). 25.2% had apprenticeship training (men: 38.8%), 15.9% were BMS graduates (men: 11.9%) and 17.4% had completed the full cycle of upper secondary education (men: 15.7%). 22.7% (men: 18.1%) had tertiary education credentials (including higher education-related establishments). 30.7% of the **younger women (25-34 years)** had completed higher (tertiary) education in 2022 versus 20.4% of the men in this age group.<sup>10</sup>

With 8.6% of **early leavers from education and training**<sup>17</sup> reported in 2023 (+0.2 percentage points on 2022) Austria is ranked in the middle of this indicator (women: 7.9% and men: 9.3%). This compares to an EU-27 average of 9.5%. The lowest proportions are recorded by Croatia (2%), Greece and Poland (3.7%), and Ireland (4.1%). Romania has the highest value for this indicator in 2023 with 16.6%, followed by Spain with 13.7%.<sup>18</sup>

Compared with other EU Member States (EU-27), Austria is in the mid-range in 2023 both for **people with at least upper secondary (secondary level II) qualifications** and for **people with tertiary level qualifications**:

85.1% (women: 87.3%, men: 82.9%) of all **20- to 24-year-olds** had **secondary II level** as their minimum educational attainment, the EU-27 average being 84.1%. Croatia boasted the highest ratio (97.3%), followed by Greece with 95.4% and Ireland with 95%. Germany had the lowest ratio with 71.4%.<sup>19</sup>

The percentage of **30- to 34-year-olds** with **tertiary education (ISCED 5-8)** in Austria was 44%<sup>20</sup> (women: 48.6%, men: 39.7%)<sup>21</sup>, the EU-27 average being 43.9%. This indicator was highest for Cyprus with 66.1%, followed by Ireland with 63.7% and Luxembourg with 61.9%.

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<sup>16</sup> Source: Statistics Austria: level of educational attainment of the population aged 25-64 years as at 31 Oct 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Percentage share of 18- to 24-year-olds with no more than lower secondary level education who did not participate in any initial or further training programme in the four weeks preceding the survey.

<sup>18</sup> Source: EUROSTAT.

<sup>19</sup> Source: EUROSTAT

<sup>20</sup> BHS colleges come under ISCED 5.

<sup>21</sup> Source: EUROSTAT.

The lowest percentages were reported for Romania with 22.8%, followed by Italy with 29.9% and Hungary with 32.2%.

## **1.4 Youth employment and unemployment**

This section is based on international and national data reflecting the labour market situation of young people in Austria in 2023. At the end, we will briefly address the current trend using the most recent monthly data available. In the wake of the economic slump in 2023 (-0.8% on 2022), youth unemployment in Austria has risen again, which is also reflected in the fact that Austria has lost ground against other European countries. However, it is still among the leaders in terms of youth employment rates.

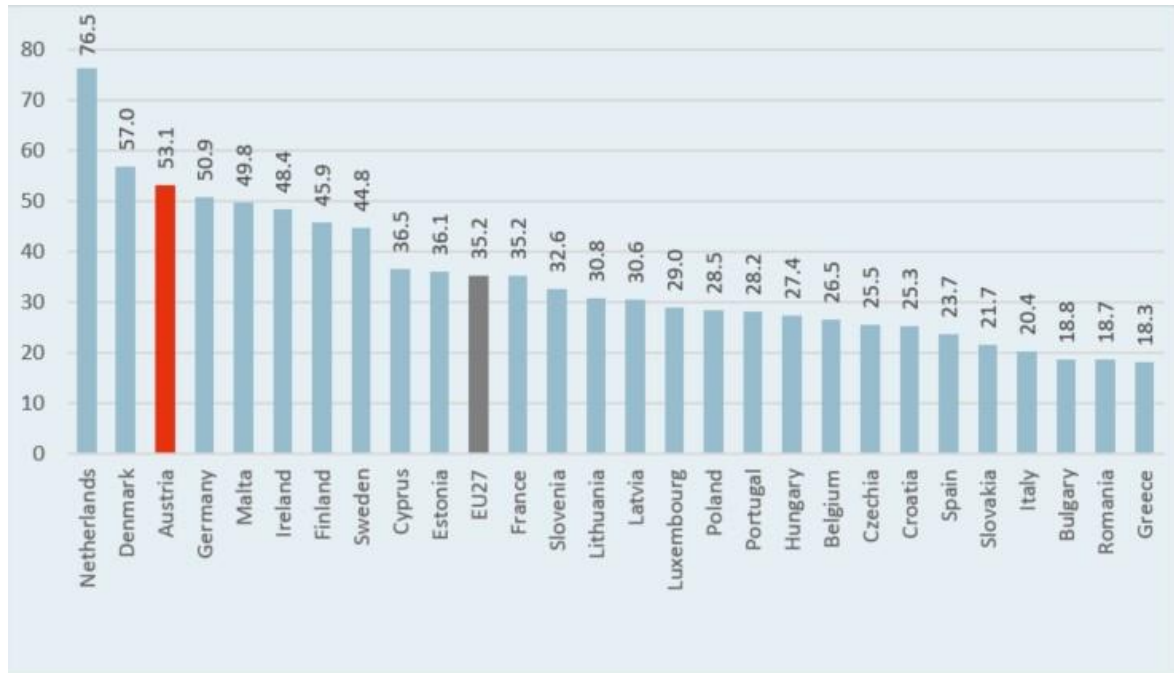
### **1.4.1 Unemployment and employment in international comparison**

According to EUROSTAT, the 2023 youth employment rate (age 15-24 years) increased by 1.2 percentage points against the previous year to 53.1% (men: 56.3% or up 0.7 percentage points, women: 49.8% or up 1.6 percentage points). Austria again ranked third within the EU in 2023 behind the Netherlands with 76.5% (up 1 percentage point) and Denmark with 57% (up 0.9 percentage points). The EU-27 average for this indicator was 35.2% (up 0.4 percentage points against 2022) – see Figure 4<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Source: BMAW; AMIS Table on the employment rate of 15- to 24-year-olds in international comparison, based on EUROSTAT data (retrieved on 23 Apr 2024).

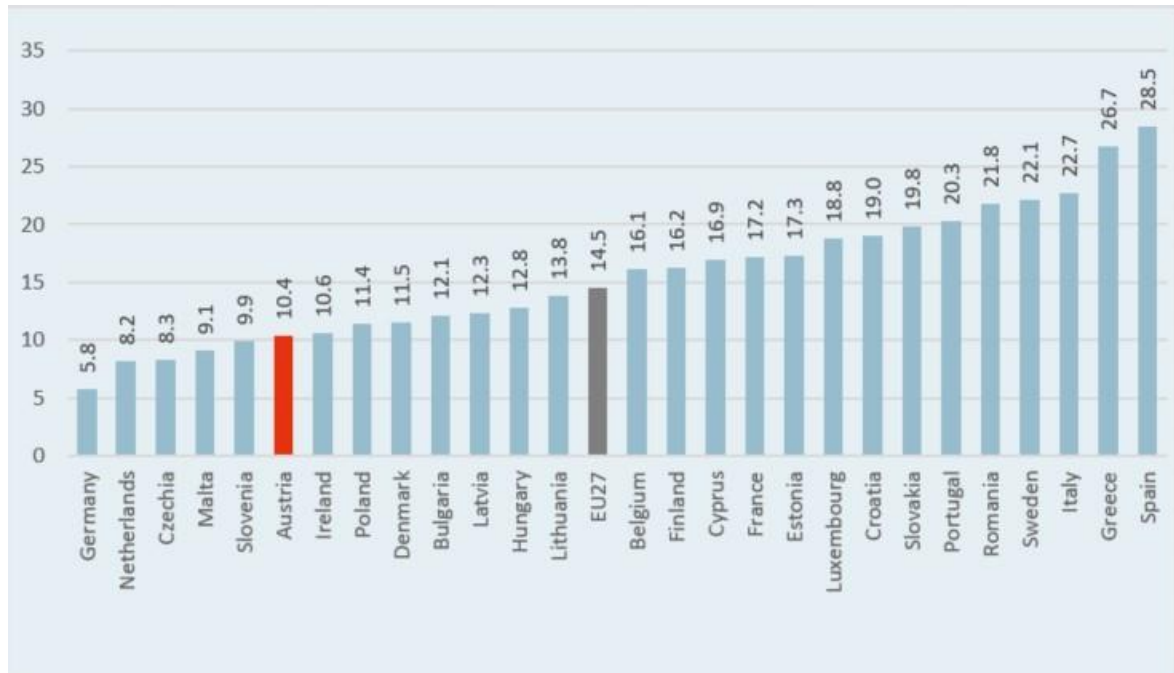
Figure 4: Employment rates of young people aged 15 to 24 – European comparison 2023



Source: BMAW-AMIS Table (EUROSTAT/retrieved on 23 Apr 2024); Note: ratio of active population aged 15-24 to corresponding resident population averaged across 2023.

Compared with other European countries, the **unemployment rate** in 2023 of 10.4% among young people aged 15-24 years – i.e. up by 0.9 percentage points on 2022 (men: 10.2% or +0.7 percentage points; women 10.7% or +1.2 percentage points) – ranks Austria sixth (versus fifth place for this indicator in 2022). The lowest unemployment rates were recorded for Germany with 5.8% (-0.2 percentage points), the Netherlands with 8.2% (+0.6 percentage points) and Czechia with 8.3% (+1.5% percentage points) – see Figure 5. The highest unemployment rates of under 25-year-olds were reported for Spain with 28.5% (-1.3 percentage points), Greece with 26.7% (-4.7 percentage points) and Italy with 22.7 % (-1 percentage point).

Figure 5: Youth unemployment rates – European comparison 2023



Source: BMAW-AMIS Table on youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) in European comparison (retrieved from EUROSTAT on 22 Apr 2024)

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

In Czechia 2.3%, in Bulgaria 2.6% and in Germany 3.2% of **all young people aged 15-24 years** were out of work in 2023. In Austria, they accounted for 6.2% or up 0.8 percentage points against 2022 (women: 5.9%, men: 6.4%), the EU-27 average being 6% (+0.6 percentage points) in 2023. Sweden had the highest proportion (12.7%), followed by Spain (9.5%) and Finland (8.8%)<sup>23</sup>.

Sweden reported the highest percentage for **'younger' young people aged 15 to 19 years** (14.5%) in 2023, followed by Finland and the Netherlands (8.9% and 8.5%, respectively), while Bulgaria and Poland boasted the lowest percentage (1.3% each), followed by Czechia

<sup>23</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 3 June 2024; Table: Youth unemployment rate by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions – from 15 to 24 years.

with 1.5%. For this indicator, Austria reported 5.4%, up 0.8 percentage points against 2022 (women: 5.4%, men: 5.4%), the EU-27 average being 3.9% (unchanged from previous year).<sup>24</sup>

For **'older' young people aged 20-24 years**, Spain recorded the highest proportion with 14.2%, followed by Greece with 12.4% and Cyprus with 11.6% as opposed to Czechia and Germany, which had the lowest proportions of 3.2% and 3.8%, respectively. With 6.9% or up 0.7 percentage points against 2022 (women: 6.4%, men: 7.3%), Austria is again eleventh within the European Union. The EU-27 average for this indicator is 8% (-0.1 percentage points).<sup>25</sup>

The 2023 **youth long-term unemployment rate (12 months or longer)** for people aged 15 to 24 years was lowest in the Netherlands (0.3%, unchanged) and highest in Slovakia (10.1%, up 0.6 percentage points on 2022). Austria reports 1.1% (unchanged) for this indicator in 2023. The EU-27 average is 2.6% (-0.3 percentage points).<sup>26</sup>

The **NEET rate** (Not in Education, Employment or Training) shows the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 years who are not in education, employment or formal training as a percentage of the resident population (15-24 years) and is thus broader in scope than the unemployment rate. This indicator was lowest in the Netherlands (3.3%, up 0.5 percentage points), Sweden (5.1%, up 0.2 percentage points) and Czechia (6.3%, -1.7 percentage points) – see Figure 6. With a NEET rate of 8.7% or up 0.6 percentage points against 2022 (women: 8.8%, men: 8.6%), Austria was in the mid-range. The EU-27 average was 9.2% in 2023, down 0.4 percentage points against the previous year (women: 9%, men: 9.4%). The highest NEET rates of 16.5% (-1 percentage point) and 13.5% (+3.8 percentage points) were recorded by Romania and Lithuania, respectively.

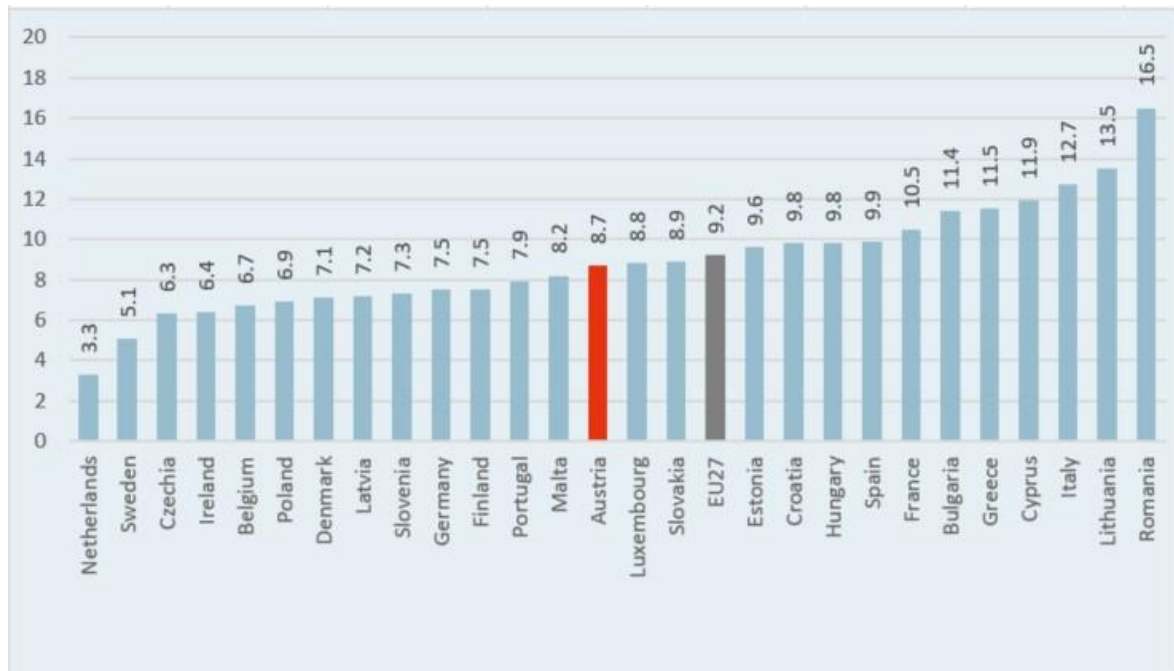
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<sup>24</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 29 May 2024; Table: Youth unemployment rate by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions – from 15 to 19 years.

<sup>25</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 29 May 2024; Table: Youth unemployment rate by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions – from 20 to 24 years.

<sup>26</sup> Source: EUROSTAT; retrieved on 1 June 2024; Youth long-term unemployment rate (12 months or longer) by sex and age – from 15 to 24 years. Attention: for this indicator no data are available for Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and Finland.

Figure 6: NEET rate, 15-24 years, 2023



Source: EUROSTAT, retrieved on 3 June 2024; the NEET rate is the proportion of young people who are neither in employment, nor education, nor training.

Across Europe as a whole, the labour market situation for young people has remained unchanged, although there are different trends per country. For instance, youth unemployment dropped in twelve countries against 2022 and rose in 15 countries over the same period.<sup>27</sup>

In June 2024, around 2,83m young people under 25 were unemployed in the EU (compared to 2.81m in June 2023). This means that the youth unemployment rate rose by 0.2 percentage points to 14.4% on an EU average in June 2024 versus June 2023. Austria's youth unemployment rate was 9.3% in June 2024, i.e. below the EU average of 14.4%, meaning that it has dropped by 1.1 percentage points compared to June 2023.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Source: BMAW; AMIS Table on the youth unemployment rate of 15- to 24-year-olds in international comparison, based on EUROSTAT data (retrieved on 22 Apr 2024).

<sup>28</sup> Source: EUROSTAT (retrieved on 2 Aug 2024).



The total unemployment rate in the EU averaged 6.0% in June 2024, thus remaining unchanged compared to June 2023. In Austria, it was 5.3% in June 2024, which corresponds to an increase of 0.2 percentage points against June 2023.<sup>29</sup>

#### 1.4.2 Youth unemployment and employment in Austria<sup>30</sup>

The stock of young employees (15 to 24 years) increased by 0.7% (+3,153 workers) in 2023 on the year before, whereof 140,067 are under 20 and 308,917 are 20 to 24 years old. There has been an increase of +2% for those under 20, whereas the figure for those aged 20-24 has remained virtually unchanged (+0.1%).

**Unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24** rose by 11% to 28,323 (+2,805 young people) on average in 2023 against the previous year. This compares with an average increase of **total unemployment** in 2023 by +2.9% or +7,652 to 270,773 persons.

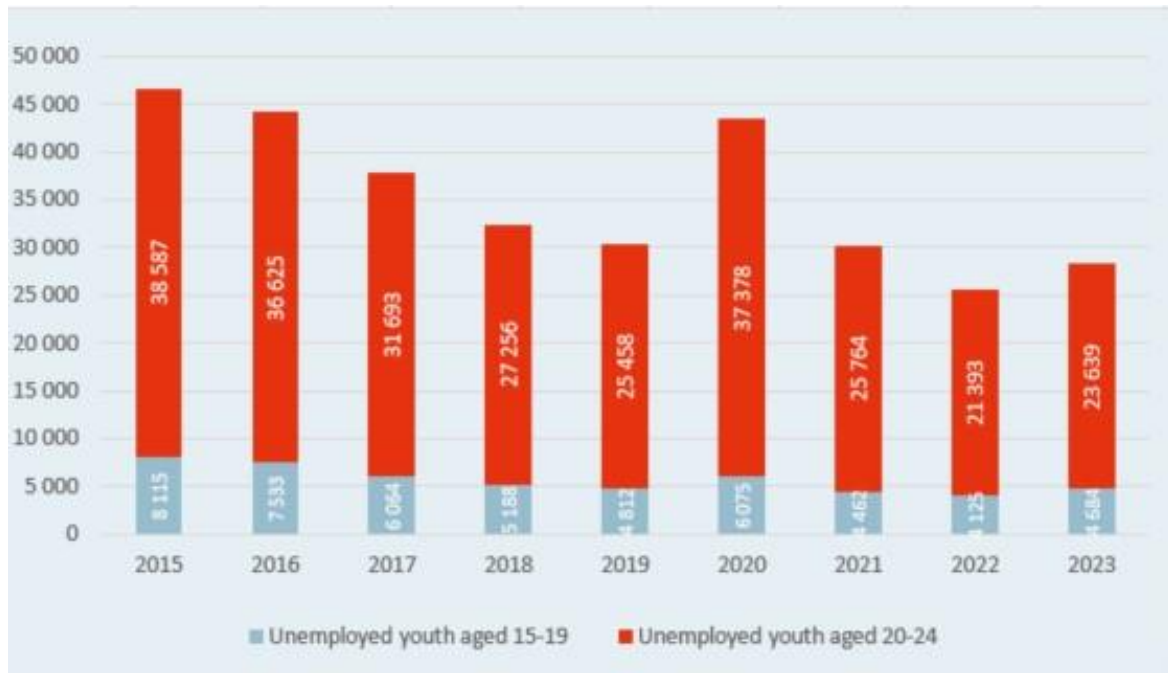
Unemployment among the under 20s rose by 13.6% (+559 young people), while the increase in unemployment among 20- to 24-year-olds was somewhat less significant (+10.5% or +2,246 young people) – see Figure 7). Broken down by gender, unemployment among young men rose more sharply (up 12% or 1,787) than among young women (up 9.6% or 1,018).

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<sup>29</sup> Source: EUROSTAT (retrieved on 2 Aug 2024).

<sup>30</sup> National administrative data/AMIS (BMAW).

Figure 7: Unemployed youth aged 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years – 2015-2023



Source: PES (national data); BMAW/AMIS, retrieved on 29 May 2024.

The 2023 unemployment rate based on registered unemployed (national definition) in the age group of 15- to 24-year-olds rose 0.5 percentage points to 5.9% over the year before. The average period of registration with the public employment service (stock) for young people (15 to 24 years) remained the same in 2023 (54 days); these are 135 days below the overall average for all unemployed people. The average duration of unemployment (until exiting from the unemployment register) was 59 days for young unemployed persons in 2023, which is 1 day more than in 2022 (men: 59 days, women: 60 days), while the overall average duration for all unemployed persons was 113 days, which is 154 days less than in the previous year (men: 113 days, women: 111 days).<sup>31</sup>

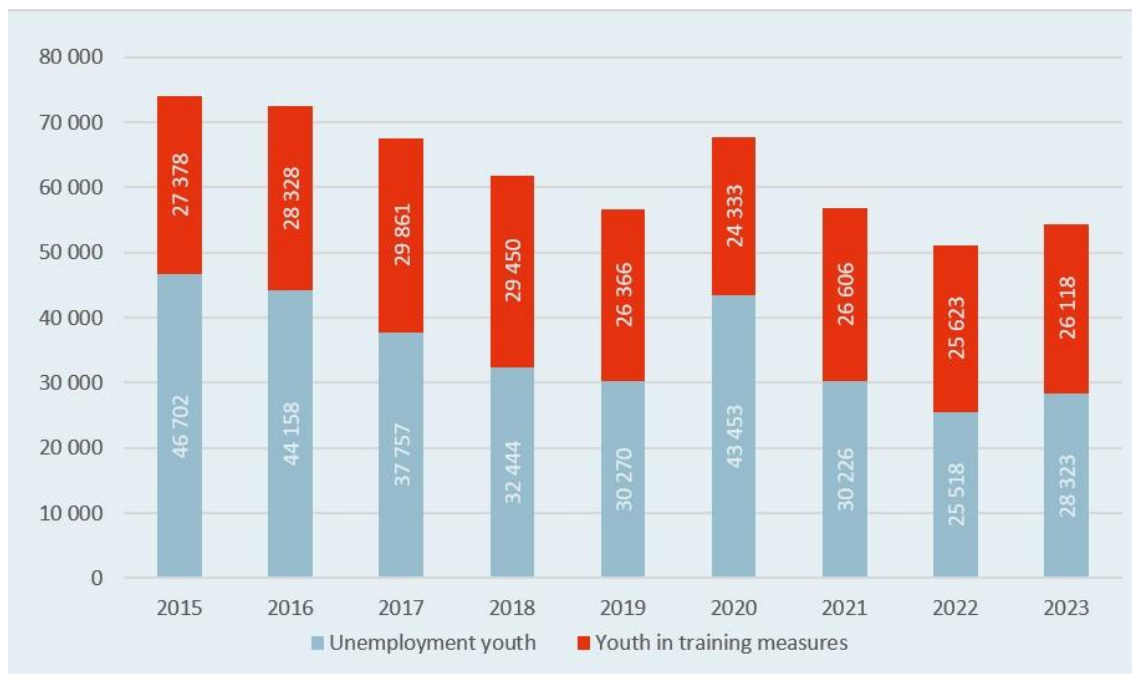
In 2023, the PES supported 105,457 young people (15-24 years), down 18.8% or 24,474 fewer than in the previous year. Of these, 7,820 (-78.6%) young people were funded with employment aid. 91,810 (+2%) young people were enrolled in skills training measures and 34,746 (-5.9%) were offered support. Of those who were offered support, 450 young people

<sup>31</sup> Source: National administrative data/BMAW/AMIS and AMIS database (retrieved on 29 May 2024).

(-0.9% on 2022) received start-up subsidies in 2023 (the remainder was supported by counselling and support services) and were included in the PES's business start-up programme.  
32

The number of all training participants rose marginally by 1.5% to 70,564.<sup>33</sup> The number of participants aged less than 25 years in PES training programmes increased by slightly more than 1.9% to 26,118 young people in 2023 on the year before (annual average stock). Young men's (under 25) participation in training remained virtually unchanged (+0.6%), while young women's rose by 3% against the previous year (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Unemployed youth aged 15 to 24 years enrolled in training measures – 2015 - 2023



Source: PES (national data); BMAW/AMIS table 'Labour market data young people (under 25) – annual average 2023'.

By Dec 2023, there were 10,066 participants (-8.5% over the year before) in supra-company apprenticeships (training contracts >25 years) – for more information on supra-company

<sup>32</sup> Source: National administrative data/BMAW/AMIS, PES subsidies and grants, 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Source: National administrative data/BMAW/AMIS/ Table: 'Labour market data for young people, annual average 2023'.

training see item 3.3.4). 6,437 young people participated in Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*) and 70,130 in Youth Coaching<sup>34</sup>, while 3,265 (+32.2%) sought assistance under the coaching programme for apprentices (*Lehrlingscoaching*) and the coaching programme for employers of apprentices (*Lehrbetriebscoaching*).<sup>35</sup>

Of the 23,639 unemployed young adults aged 20 to 24 years in 2023, 49.2% had only compulsory schooling, 27.8% had completed apprenticeships, 6.5% some form of intermediate school and 15.7% upper secondary or academic education (see Table 1).

Table 1: Unemployed youth (20-24 years) by highest level of educational attainment – 2016-2023

Educa-tion/Train-ing	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Compul-sory School</b>	15,352	13,162	11,291	10,951	16,328	11,712	10,299	11,629
<b>Appren-ticeship</b>	13,416	11,491	9,751	8,758	12,114	8,186	6,281	6,583
<b>Intermedi-ate Level</b>	2,323	2,012	1,768	1,669	2,421	1,708	1,398	1,526
<b>Higher Level</b>	5,436	4,945	4,377	4,016	6,067	3,877	3,205	3,716
<b>N/A</b>	99	82	69	64	448	282	211	185
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,625</b>	<b>31,693</b>	<b>27,256</b>	<b>25,458</b>	<b>37,378</b>	<b>25,764</b>	<b>21,393</b>	<b>23,639</b>

Source: PES-DWH, retrieved on 3 June 2024.

<sup>34</sup> Participants since the beginning of the year.

<sup>35</sup> Source: National administrative data/BMAW/AMIS/ Table: 'Implementation – active labour market policy Dec 2023 <https://www.dnet.at/amis/Tablen/taFoerderung.aspx>.

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

This compares with the following educational attainment levels for the total population of 20- to 24-year-olds (of whom many were still in training): 16.1% had compulsory education or less, 24.3% apprenticeship training, 7.5% intermediate school level and with 52.1% more than half had upper secondary or tertiary education credentials<sup>36</sup>.

Analytical data – such as those on labour turnover – illustrate that the youth labour market is characterised by above average dynamics. The annual labour turnover in this age group amounted to roughly 100% again in 2023.

## 1.5 Young people after completion of training: training-related career monitoring survey<sup>37</sup>

The training-related career monitoring survey (*bildungsbezogenes Erwerbskarrierenmonitoring* – BibEr) is used to analyse the job careers of young people after they have left a formal education or training establishment – regardless of whether they completed or discontinued education or training, thus enabling a closer look at the subsequent labour market status of these young people and their income trends. As of June 2024, the data set includes all graduates and dropouts between the 2008/09 and 2019/20 school years as well as their respective two-year follow-up periods.

After completion of their apprenticeship most young people enter employment as opposed to their peers who, after completion of compulsory education, pre-vocational schools or academic secondary schools (*allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* – AHS), largely tend to choose continuing education pathways. However, young people with compulsory school or AHS credentials who do not enter continued education or training within two years after graduation have a particularly low employment rate, which is only just 16% for those having completed compulsory or pre-vocational schools and 44% for AHS graduates.<sup>38</sup> By contrast,

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<sup>36</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, Table B 9 2023, Population aged 15 and over by highest level of educational attainment - national classification, by age categories and gender, BMAW's own calculations.

<sup>37</sup> Source: Statistics Austria; career monitoring survey (BibEr) by commission of the Social Affairs Ministry and the PES for the school years 2008/09 to 2019/20, Vienna, Dec 2023 – updated by the BMAW for the 2019/20 school year; June 2024.

<sup>38</sup> Employment rates refer to the labour market status 18 months after completion of training.

graduates of colleges of higher vocational education (BHSs) have the best chances of moving into employment without further training after graduation. Almost 85% of them are economically active 18 months after graduation, followed by apprenticeship graduates with over 82%.

Table 2: Labour market status 18 months after completion of education/training in the 2019/2020 school year

	In education/ training	Economically active	Registered with the PES	other
<b>Compulsory/pre-vocational school</b>	92.5%	0.9%	2.9%	3.8%
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	4.9%	77.8%	8.3%	9.0%
<b>School of intermediate vocational education (BMS)</b>	39.8%	43.4%	5.3%	11.6%
<b>Academic secondary school (AHS)</b>	78.1%	9.2%	0.8%	11.9%
<b>College of higher vocational education (BHS)</b>	42.5%	47.8%	2.3%	7.4%
<b>University course</b>	18.3%	72.1%	1.2%	8.4%
<b>University</b>	43.5%	44.4%	1.4%	10.8%

Source: Statistics Austria, training-related career monitoring survey (BibEr) by commission of BMAW and PES. Created on 18 Jan 2024 (retrieved on 26 July 2024).

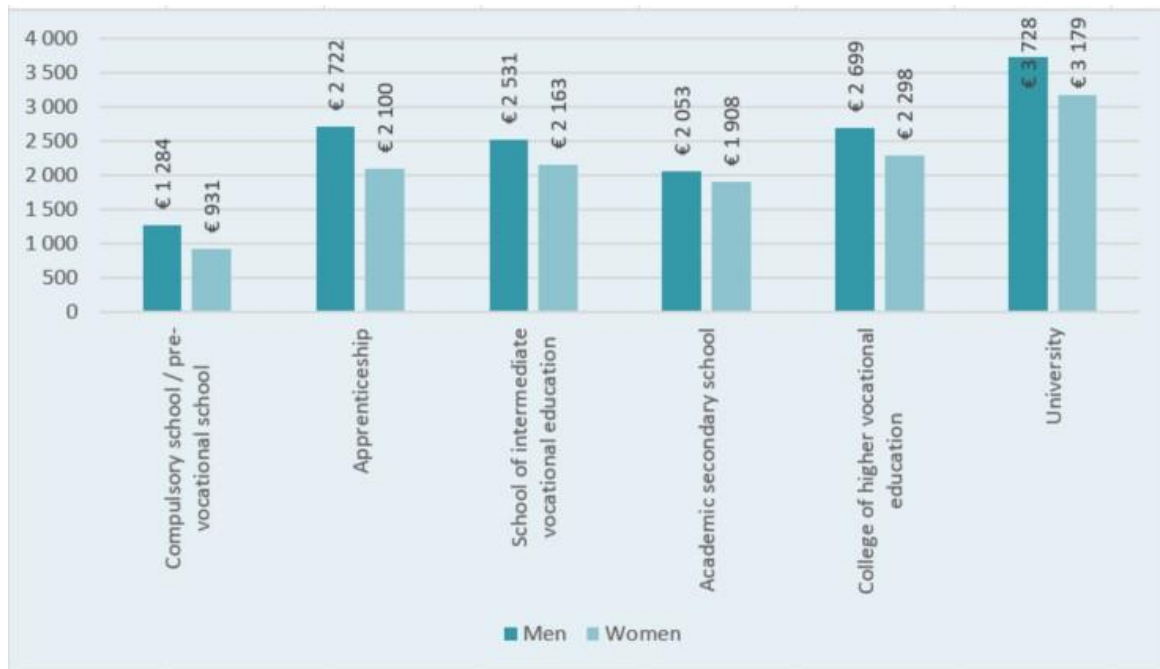
The median income 18 months after completion of education/training of 2019/20 graduates was €2,941.80 for men and €2,513.10 for women. This corresponds to a gender pay gap of around 14.6%<sup>39</sup>. By comparison, the gender pay gap for graduates of the 2018/19 cohort was around 13.6%.

The gender pay gap continues to be dependent on the level of educational attainment. The difference in income is greatest among young people who have no more than compulsory schooling, with the median income of men and women 18 months after completion of education showing a gender pay gap of 27.4% (see Figure 9). With a gender pay gap of ‘only’

<sup>39</sup> The gender pay gap is indicated as a percentage share of the median income of men.

7.1%, the difference is smallest for AHS graduates. Although some of the difference in income between women and men can be explained by different preferences in the choice of education/training fields (e.g. apprenticeships or BHS school types), a significant gender pay gap remains even after taking these differences into account.<sup>40</sup>

Figure 9: Median income 18 months after completion of education/training 2019/2020



Source: Statistics Austria; career monitoring survey (BibEr); data updated by the BMAW for the 2019/2020 school year; June 2024.

## 1.6 Apprenticeship statistics and apprenticeship market<sup>41</sup>

Apprenticeship training in Austria has always been a key component of both vocational training and career entry. As at 31 Dec 2023, a total of 108,266 apprentices (up 0.2% on 2022) were in training with 28,333 employers (including 84 training establishments under the supra-company training/ÜBA programmes). Of the 108,266 apprentices in 2023, 34,082

<sup>40</sup> The basic figure is restricted to persons who have not attended any further training within the first two years after completion of training and who have been employed for 18 months after completion of training. Income from employment is based on gross earnings minus special payments (such as holiday and Christmas bonuses). The monthly income is determined by multiplying the daily income thus calculated by 365/12.

<sup>41</sup> Source: Austrian Economic Chamber; apprenticeship statistics 2023.

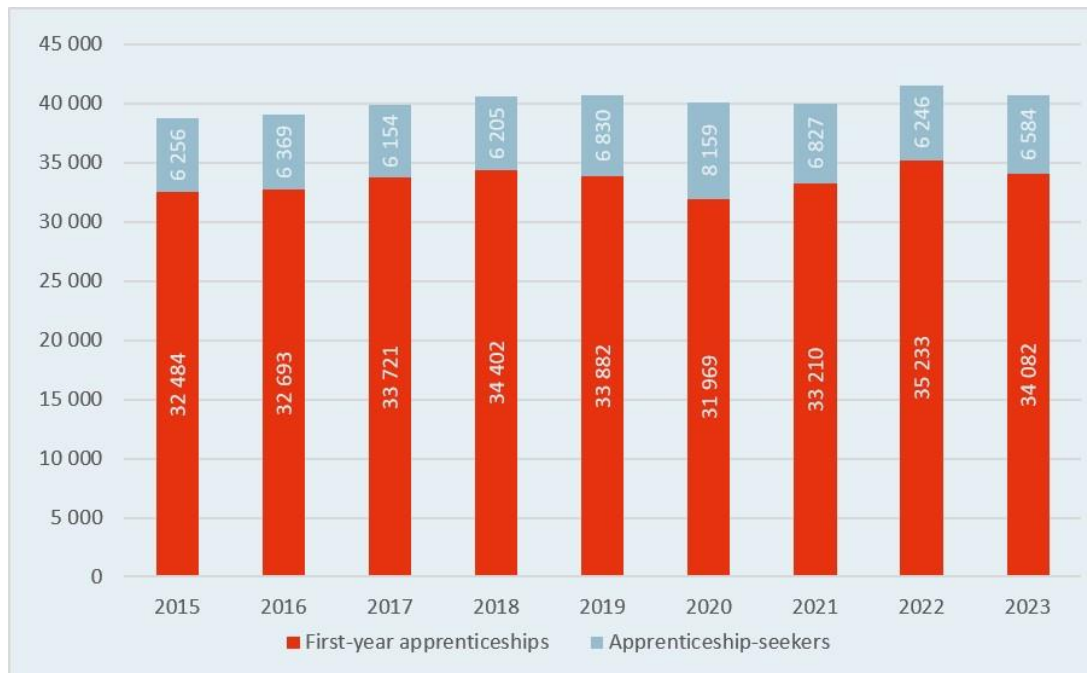
were in their first year, 33,388 in their second year and 29,520 in their third year of training. 67.3% of the apprentices were male and only 32.6% female in 2023. Of the 108,266 apprentices in this year, 5.4% or 5,869 (whereof 3,751 were male and 2,116 female) were trained under the supra-company training scheme (*Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung – ÜBA*).

8,742 of all apprentices in 2023 had vocational training slots under §8b of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG*), with 7,542 of them enrolled in apprenticeships with extended periods of training (5,937 received training within companies and 1,605 in training establishments) and 1,200 in apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills (681 received training within companies and 519 in training establishments).

In 2007, there were still 41,176 entrants into apprenticeships. Since then, this number had continued to decline and totalled only some 31,969 apprentices in 2020 (see Figure 10). As of 2021, the number of apprentices in the first year of training rose again, as it did in 2022, to 35,233 entrants into apprenticeships. The trend was reversed in 2023, when the number of apprentices in the first year of training dropped by 3.3% to 34,082, while the number of 15-year-olds went up 0.9% or 799 on average in 2023 against 2022 to 87,266.



Figure 10: Apprentices in their first year of training and apprenticeship-seekers – 2015-2023



Source: 2023 apprenticeship statistics of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and BMAW Table 'Labour market data for young people (under 25), annual average stock 2023' (stock of apprenticeship-seekers); apprentices in the first year of training as at 31 December of each year (cut-off date); annual average stock of immediately available apprenticeship-seekers without any employer's commitment to hire them.

The ratio of apprenticeship entrants to the total population of 15-year-olds (apprentice ratio) was 39.1% in 2023, or minus 1.6 percentage points on the previous year. The proportion of apprentices without Austrian citizenship in the first year of training was 17.9% in 2023<sup>42</sup>, i.e. up by 1 percentage point on 2022. By contrast, the proportion of non-Austrian nationals among all 15-year-olds was 20.6% in 2023.

A closer look at the previous educational qualifications of pupils of vocational schools within the dual training system shows that the greatest proportion completed pre-vocational schools (*polytechnische Schule* – PTS), while many of them have transferred from schools of intermediate vocational education (*berufsbildende mittlere Schule* – BMS) and colleges of higher vocational education (*berufsbildende höhere Schule* – BHS): in the 2022/23 school year, 28.2% of apprentices (pupils of vocational schools within the dual training system) had previously attended pre-vocational schools, 13.4% a BMS, 13.8% a BHS, 16.2% a compulsory secondary school, 10.2% a vocational school within the dual training system (primarily those

<sup>42</sup> Source: Austrian Economic Chamber; statistics staff unit.

repeating classes or changing their apprenticed trade), 6.7% an upper secondary AHS and 0.9% a lower secondary AHS. 5.7% had previously been enrolled in some form of continued training, whereof roughly half of the new entrants with continued training credentials had completed a BMS course lasting three or four years<sup>43</sup>.

In 2023, the stock of apprenticeship-seekers increased by 5.4% to 6,584 (+339) persons over the previous year, while the number of PES-registered apprenticeship vacancies fell by 7.2% to 8,998 (-697)<sup>44</sup>. For the year 2023, there were 2,414 more apprenticeship vacancies than demand for apprenticeship positions on average. According to estimates, roughly 7,340 young people are expected to be registered with the PES as seeking apprenticeships (and being immediately available) in 2024 – around 10% more than in 2023. The stock of (immediately available) apprenticeship vacancies notified to the PES is likely to drop by 6.2% to roughly 8,440 training slots.<sup>45</sup>

The ratio between immediately available apprenticeship-seekers registered with the public employment service and the immediately available apprenticeship vacancies notified to the employment service was 0.7 on average in 2023. PES involvement in matching the seekers and providers of apprenticeships has risen significantly since 2020 and is expected to rise further. In 2024, around 88% of apprenticeship vacancies throughout Austria will be known to the PES compared to 78.4% in 2019.<sup>46</sup>

In 2023, a total of 46,666 out of a total of 108,266 apprentices (i.e. 43.1% of all apprentices or down 0.5 percentage points on the previous year) were trained in trades and crafts (see Figure 11). 16,804 persons or +2.3 percentage points (15.5%) were trained in the industrial sector and 14,763 persons or -2.8 percentage points (13.6%) in the retail sector in 2023. The largest increase in 2023 was recorded for the banking and insurance sector with 12% growth (1,364 apprentices). The remaining sectors account for another 22.3%: 2,981 persons or 2.8% (up 4.4 percentage points) were trained in the transport sector, 7,195 or 6.6% (up 3.5 percentage points) in the tourism and leisure industry, and 2,802 or 2.6% (up 1.4 percentage points) in information and consulting. 9,822 apprentices or 9.1% (up 3.0 percentage points)

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<sup>43</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, *Bildung in Zahlen* (Education in figures) 2022/23/volume of tables; item 1.5.13.1. Table on previous education of pupils in the first grades of vocational schools 2022/23.

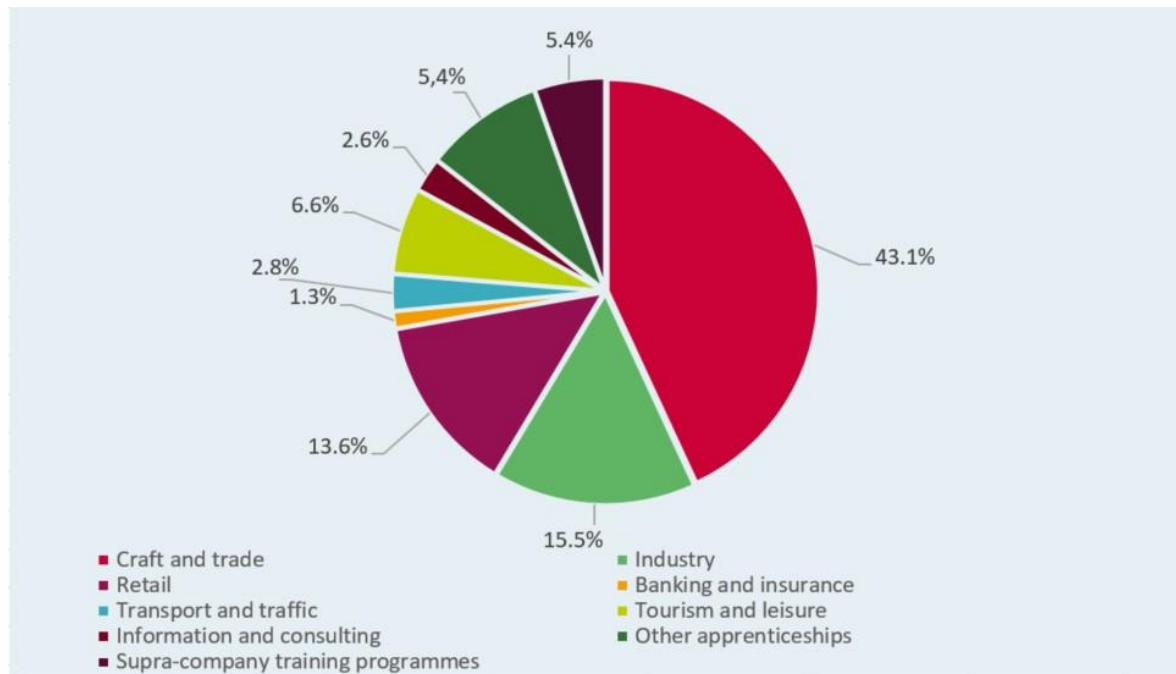
<sup>44</sup> Source: BMAW; AMIS Table on labour market data for young people (under 25), annual average stock 2023.

<sup>45</sup> Source: Schwingsmehl et.al, *Lehrlingsausbildung: Vorschau auf Angebot und Nachfrage 2024* (Apprenticeship training: projected supply and demand 2024); Synthesis Forschung, March 2024.

<sup>46</sup> Source: Schwingsmehl, M., Endel, F. & Gamper, J. (2024): *Lehrlingsausbildung: Vorschau auf Angebot und Nachfrage 2024* (Apprenticeship training: projected supply and demand 2024), PES Austria.

were trained by other authorised training providers (including lawyers, municipal departments, etc.) The biggest decline in 2023 was recorded for supra-company apprenticeships (down 5.8 percentage points). 5,869 apprentices or 5.4% were trained in this segment.

Figure 11: Percentage of apprentices by sectors in 2023



Source: 2023 apprenticeship statistics of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO).

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

In addition to personal interests and skills, the choice of apprenticed trades is influenced by the supply of available training slots on the one hand, and by the overall economic situation on the other. In Austria young people still tend to be very traditional in choosing apprenticeships. Out of all young women apprentices in 2023, 18.7% chose retail including associated fields, 10% clerical apprenticeships and 5.7% hairdressing (hair stylist). Male apprentices preferred to be trained in the modularised apprenticeships of electrical engineering (13%), metal engineering (12.1%) and automotive engineering (9.8%). 56.6% of all female apprentices were trained in the ten most popular apprenticed trades in 2023. Male

apprentices show a similar range of career choices: 62.9% were trained in the ten most popular apprenticed trades.

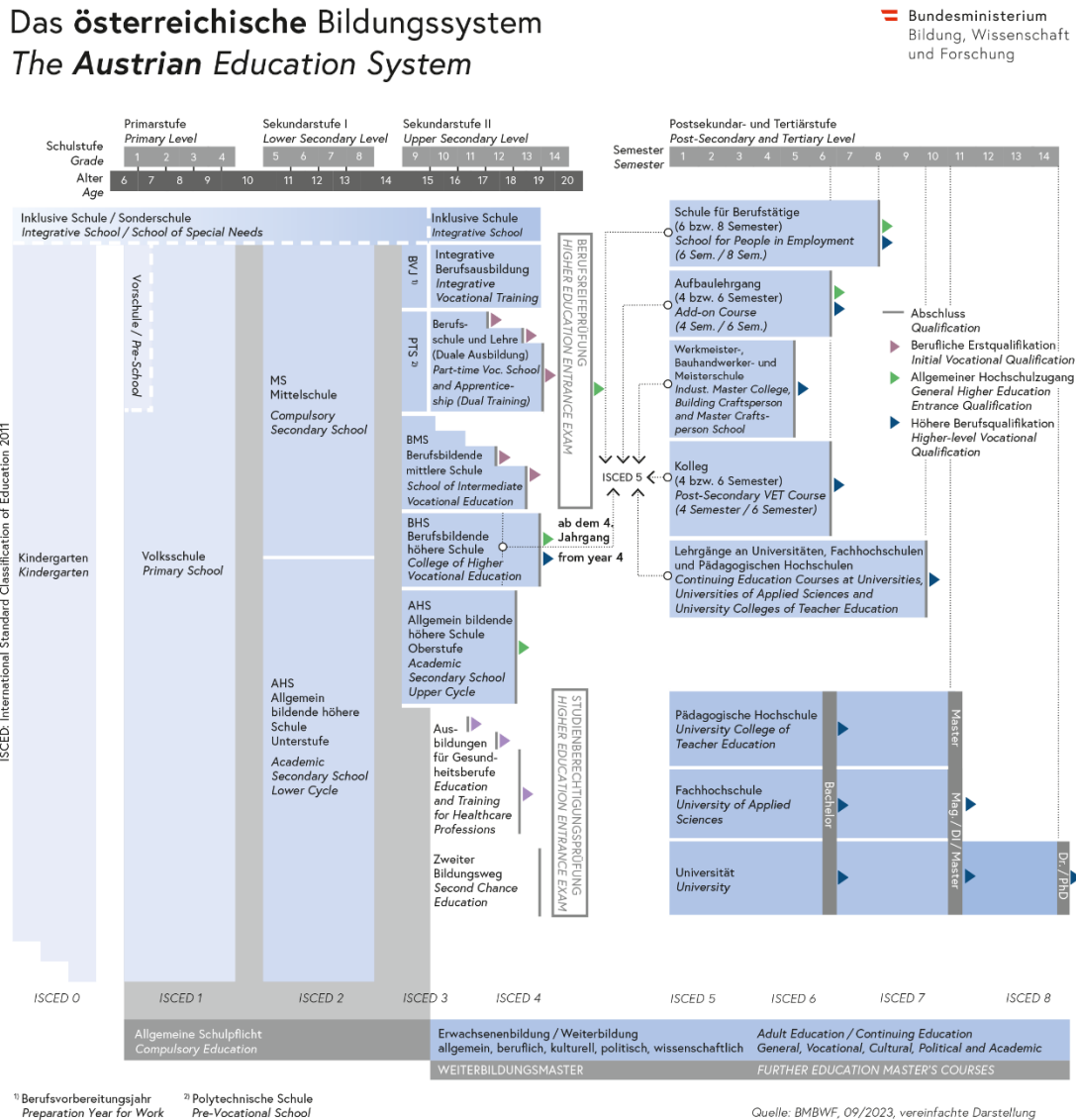
# 2 The Austrian Education and Training System

The Austrian education and training system offers a great variety of education and training options for different specialisations. The following chapter provides an overview of the education and training system from pre-school to tertiary education, including its education policy priorities.

## 2.1 Education and apprenticeship

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

Figure 12: The Austrian education system



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

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

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

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

The attendance rate of children aged three in kindergarten increased from 45.3% in 1995 to now 88.8% (kindergarten year 2022/23), while that of children aged four rose from 80.4% to 96% and of those aged five from 86.3% to 99.1% over the same period. In Austria, almost every third child under age 3 (29.1%) is in day care in the 2022/23 kindergarten year.<sup>47</sup>

The majority of school-age children attends primary school (primary level, four years). The remaining 2-3%<sup>48</sup> attend special-needs schools, other general schools with their own organisational status (such as *Waldorf* or *Montessori* schools), schools with foreign curricula or meet the requirement of compulsory schooling by attending home schooling. Children of compulsory school age who are not yet 'ready for school' are enrolled in preparatory or pre-school programmes designed to help children grow into the challenges of school life.

After primary school, as a rule at the age of ten, children move on to lower secondary level (secondary level I), which lasts four years. Here the pupils' education pathways diversify for the first time, i.e. into academic secondary schools (*allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* – AHS) or compulsory secondary schools (*Mittelschule* – MS). For admission to an AHS, children completing Year Four of primary school must have good or very good grades<sup>49</sup> in German and Mathematics or must pass an entrance examination.

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

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<sup>47</sup> Source: Statistics Austria (statistics on children's day-care centres 2022/23).

<sup>48</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, *Bildung in Zahlen* (Education in figures) 2022/23.

<sup>49</sup> If children have 'satisfactory' grades in German and/or Math, the school conference of their primary school may nevertheless determine that they qualify for an AHS.

The curriculum of MSs is identical with that of AHSs in all specialised subjects. Since the 2022/23 school year, both types of school have a new compulsory subject: Basic Digital Education. Special features of compulsory secondary schools include sound educational and vocational guidance as well as teaching practical life skills (e.g. there is the compulsory subject Nutrition and Household). Under the autonomy framework, schools may set their own priorities. Moreover, there are so-called special forms of compulsory secondary schools, including music, sports, ski MSs and, from the 2024/25 school year a special form with an English language focus. Since the 2022/23 school year, the pilot project of a MINT<sup>50</sup> MS has been introduced.

From Year Six onwards, there are two performance levels in German, Mathematics and Living Foreign Language called 'Standard' and 'Standard AHS'. The requirements of the 'Standard AHS' level correspond to those of an AHS's lower secondary level. The grades achieved in both performance levels may range from 'very good' (*sehr gut*) to 'unsatisfactory' (*nicht genügend*), with an 'adequate' (*genügend*) assessment in the Standard AHS level being equivalent to a 'good' assessment in Standard level.

In addition to the numerical school report, pupils receive a supplementary differentiated description of their performance (*ergänzende differenzierende Leistungsbeschreibung – EdL*), which records their performance strengths and learning progress. Periodical child-parent-teacher meetings (*Kind-Eltern-Lehrpersonen-Gespräche – KEL-Gespräche*) are held to discuss performance levels, learning progress, strengths and, where necessary, support measures.

Children and young people with special educational needs (*sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf – SPF*) can be taught either in an inclusive school or a special-needs school at the request of their parents or guardians. The majority of these pupils is taught in an inclusive setting. Inclusive education provides a wide range of joint learning options to children and young people with and without disabilities. Pupils with special educational needs can be taught inclusively in primary schools, compulsory secondary schools, the lower secondary level of AHSs, pre-vocational schools and one-year vocational schools for household services.

Special-needs schools comprise nine years, the last year being a vocational preparation year. Pupils with special educational needs in both inclusive schools and special-needs

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<sup>50</sup> MINT stands for mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology.



schools are subject to curricula defined in official SPF decisions for each of these school types. They include mainstream curricula as well as special-needs curricula.

Pupils with special educational needs may continue to attend inclusive or special-needs schools under a voluntary Year Eleven or Year Twelve programme with the approval of both the school provider and the competent education authority.

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

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

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

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

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

Vocational education establishments include the vocational schools of the dual training system (*Berufsschulen* – BSs) as well as schools providing education and training in the fields of engineering, technology, arts and crafts, business, commerce, household services, tourism, fashion, arts and design, product management and presentation, social services, agriculture and forestry, pre-school education, social education including all special types of schools. From the 2023/24 school year, this educational landscape is supplemented by a 5-year college of higher nursing and social care education (*höhere Lehranstalt für Pflege und Sozialbetreuung*) and a 3-year vocational school for social care professions including nursing prep programmes (*Fachschule für Sozialberufe mit Pflegevorbereitung*). Schools of vocational education can be of different types and duration (1-5 years):

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

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

on the same level as a bachelor's degree. For this, it is necessary to go through a certification procedure.

In addition to continuing their education after completion of compulsory schooling, pupils may choose to enter the dual training system, i.e. apprenticeships that involve on-the-job training (80%) plus compulsory attendance of vocational school courses (*Berufsschule* – BS, 20%). Apprenticeships involve formal training which ends with a final examination. Completion of an apprenticeship is equivalent to NQF level 4. 39.1% of young people leaving compulsory school in any given year enter apprenticeship-based training (see also items 3.3, 3.2 and 3.3.4).<sup>51</sup> There are 213 recognised apprenticeship trades. Those who have completed their apprenticeships may move on to attend schools for skilled construction workers, master craftsmen/craftswomen or foremen/forewomen, or they may take academic entrance examinations or vocational matriculation examinations enabling them to enter the tertiary education system or gain access to certain tertiary study programmes. Under the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research's funding programme for vocational matriculation examinations (*Berufsmatura: Lehre mit Reifeprüfung*), apprentices may take these examinations free of charge.

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

In the school year 2022/23, Austrian schools had 1,158,576<sup>52</sup> pupils, with 48.5% of them being female. At the beginning of lower secondary level in Year Five, 60.5% of all pupils attended a compulsory secondary school MS, 36.4% the lower level of academic secondary schools AHS, 1.8% a special needs school and 1.3% a recognised school with own statutory rights. From the lower level of AHS more than 90% of the pupils move on to the upper level of an AHS (59.4%) or to a BHS (32.2%). From MS schools roughly 40.3% move on to AHS or BHS schools, the majority to the latter type of school (32.2%).<sup>53</sup>

In Year Nine, i.e. at the beginning of the upper secondary school level, 35.5% of the pupils attend a BHS, 28.9% an AHS, 15.9% a pre-vocational year at a PTS and 16.1% a BMS school, 2.3% a special-needs school and 0.9% a general-education school of own statutory rights, meaning that more than 60% of pupils in Year Nine attend schools that are to be completed with a matriculation examination. In 1980, this ratio was only 40%. The higher the level of

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<sup>51</sup> Source: Austrian Economic Chamber, apprenticeship statistics 2023, ratio of apprenticeship entrants to the total population of 15-year-olds on an annual average in 2023.

<sup>52</sup> Including schools with their own statutory rights and organisation.

<sup>53</sup> Source: Statistics Austria on educational transitions from the 2021/22 to 2022/23 school year.

education, the greater the percentage of women<sup>54</sup> (it was 36.7% in pre-vocational schools, 32.5% in vocational schools of the dual system, 51.4% in lower level AHSs, 53.4% in BHSs and 59% in upper level AHSs<sup>55</sup>).

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

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

University education and training is provided by university colleges of teacher training, universities and universities of applied sciences. In Austria 44% of 30- to 34-year-olds (men: 39.7%, women: 48.6%) had tertiary or equivalent education attainment levels (ISCED 5-8) in 2023<sup>56</sup>.

Roughly 70% of all students are trained at the 16 science and six arts universities, all of them public universities. As part of their continuing education activities, public universities are increasingly offering university courses alongside their standard study programmes. In the winter semester 2023/24, 16,479 students attended at least one of these courses.<sup>57</sup>

Alongside these public universities, universities of applied sciences represent the second major area of tertiary training. In recent decades the number of university graduates and

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<sup>54</sup> Basis: all school levels.

<sup>55</sup> Source: Statistics Austria.

<sup>56</sup> Source: EUROSTAT.

<sup>57</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, *Bildung in Zahlen* (Education in figures) 2022/23.

students has risen substantially. In the winter semester 2023/24, 400,002 students (55% female) were in higher education (short-term courses included), whereof 287,254 studied at universities, 75,827 at universities of applied sciences, 20,920 at university colleges of teacher training and 16,001 at private universities. The proportion of foreign students is approx. 31%. In the winter semester 2022/23, 40.8% of all foreign nationals studying in Austria came from Germany, 9.8% from Italy, 6.9% from Poland, Slovakia, Czechia and Hungary, and 6% from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia and Serbia.<sup>58</sup>

**2.2.1 Universities**

Austria has 22 public universities, which currently offer more than 1,000 programmes of study to prospective students. The transition of study programmes from a two-stage system (diploma/doctorate) to three stages (bachelor/master/doctorate) is largely completed, with the exception of a few fields of study. 23% of the 293,165 students formally enrolled in the winter semester 2023/24 were in engineering, 19% in the humanities and cultural sciences, 15% in natural sciences, 15% in social studies and economics, and about 11% in law (see Table 3). In the humanities and cultural sciences, the proportion of female students is roughly 70% and in veterinary medicine programmes even 80%. At around 32%, engineering study programmes report the lowest percentages of women. In specific study programmes (such as mechatronics) female students account for less than 10%.

Table 3: Formally enrolled students in university study programmes by field of study (total), winter semester 2023 (cut-off date: 28 Feb 2024)

Groups of studies	Women	Men	Total	Proportion of women
Humanities and cultural science	39,344	16,974	56,318	69.9%
Engineering	21,605	45,028	66,633	32.4%
Interdisciplinary programmes	1,613	949	2,562	36.0%
Arts	4,523	3,481	7,941	57.0%

<sup>58</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, students in Austria.

Groups of studies	Women	Men	Total	Proportion of women
Teacher training programmes	12,042	6,589	18,631	64.6%
Medicine	9,153	7,190	16,343	56.0%
Natural sciences	26,434	18,353	44,787	59.0%
Law	17,994	12,804	30,798	58.4%
Social science and economics	22,470	22,276	44,746	50.2%
Theology	885	1,159	2,044	43.3%
Veterinary medicine	1,442	354	1,796	80.3%
Individual study programmes	290	231	521	55.7%
Other study activities	30	15	45	66.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>157,825</b>	<b>135,340</b>	<b>293,165</b>	<b>53.8%</b>

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

### 2.2.2 Universities of applied sciences

Today there are 21 universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen* – FHs) in Austria. Of the 59,136 formally enrolled FH students in the winter semester 2023, 72% were enrolled in bachelor programmes and 28% in master programmes. In the winter semester 2023, 36.3% of them chose training programmes in technology and engineering, 33.3% in economics and business and 19.5% in health sciences (see Table 4). Information technology and electronics were the most popular programmes in the technical field. Study programmes in economics mainly focus on business administration. Around four out of ten programmes are attended by part-time extra-occupational students.

Table 4: Formally enrolled students in FH study programmes by fields of training, winter semester 2023 (cut-off date: 15 Nov 2023)

Field of training	Women	Men	Total	Proportion of women
Design, arts	635	385	1,020	62.3%
Health sciences	9,346	2,204	11,550	80.9%
Cultural sciences	18		18	100.0%
Military and security	43	382	425	10.1%
Natural sciences	505	354	859	58.8%
Social sciences	3,144	947	4,091	76.9%
Technology, engineering	5,886	15,600	21,486	27.4%
Economics and business	11,713	7,974	19,687	59.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,290</b>	<b>27,846</b>	<b>59,136</b>	<b>52.9%</b>

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

### 2.2.3 University colleges of teacher training

Austria's 14 university colleges of teacher training (*pädagogische Hochschulen*) offer initial, further and in-service training in all education-related fields of work, in particular for teachers. They provide bachelor's and master's programmes for future teachers at primary level, secondary level of general education (in cooperation with universities) and secondary level of vocational education (see Table 5). Training is based on the age groups these future teachers are to teach. In order to manage the joint study programmes for the secondary level of general education, university colleges of teacher training and universities have formed four development networks for cooperation.

Table 5: Students enrolled in university colleges of teacher training by type of teacher training (Lehramt – LA) programme 2023/24

Type of teacher training programme	Women	Men	Total	Proportion of women
Programme in Music Education for lateral entrants	0	0	0	0%
Bachelor's degree programme in Pre-School Education	494	14	508	97%
Bachelor's degree programme in Social Pedagogy	31	4	35	89%
Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Primary Level	6,976	833	7,809	89%
Master's degree programme (LA) for Primary Level	3,775	396	4,171	91%
Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Elementary schools	17	4	21	81%
Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Compulsory Secondary schools	9	9	18	50%
Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Secondary vocational education	1,168	1,387	2,555	46%
Master's degree programme (LA) for Secondary vocational education	281	143	424	66%
Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Special-Needs-schools	1	1	2	50%
Bachelor's degree programme (LA) Secondary general education	3,047	1,831	4,878	62%
Master's degree programme (LA) Secondary general education	728	391	1,119	65%
Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for subject area at BMHS	6	4	10	60%
Bachelor's degree programme (LA) for Religion in compulsory schools	2	1	3	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,535</b>	<b>5,018</b>	<b>21,553</b>	<b>77%</b>



Source: Data-sharing network of universities and higher education establishments in the winter semester 2023/24 as at 29 May 2024.

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

## 2.3 Education policy priorities<sup>59</sup>

The Austrian education system is being continually developed to give young people fair education opportunities and prepare them for successful entry into the labour market. Policy measures taken in the apprenticeship system – such as modularisation of training or subsidies to apprenticeships – will be described in chapter 3, item 3.2.

### 2.3.1 Pre-school education – federal training initiative

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

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

The BMBWF estimates that roughly 20,200 pre-school educators and carers will be needed by 2030 to not only meet the current demand for skilled staff in childcare facilities but also help improve their structural quality. The federal government has therefore launched a federal training initiative, which includes – alongside providing more training places in post-secondary VET courses – creating numerous new training pathways to qualify as pre-school educators and carers. There are now nine different training routes into the profession, six of which are for lateral entrants.

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<sup>59</sup> Source: BMBWF.

Formats for lateral entrants at university colleges of teacher training, training centres for pre-school education and universities as well as special initiatives for work-based training of assistants already working in this field have opened up new target groups intended to enhance the diversity of teams in pre-school education establishments.

A continuous expansion of existing training programmes should help meet the demand for early childhood educators and carers in the long term. The ongoing *Klasse Job* campaign (see item 2.3.2) supports this endeavour.

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

### **2.3.2 Top Class Job**

The Top Class Job (*Klasse Job*) ministerial strategy comprises a wide-ranging set of measures aimed at meeting the demand for teaching staff in the long run. Facilitating lateral entry into teaching at a general education school has proven to be a particularly successful campaign policy for recruiting new teachers.

Lateral entry into general education is an alternative route into the teaching profession. Lateral entrants need to be certified by the Certification Commission (*Zertifizierungskommission – ZKQ*) for lateral entry into general education. For this purpose, candidates must have an academic background (minimum bachelor's degree) and post-graduate professional experience of 1.5 to 3 years (depending on the subject required). If all these requirements are met, ZKQ will review the conditions for admission, including pedagogical aptitude, using a selective three-stage assessment process. The admission process is based on the one used for 'classic' teacher training programmes and includes, inter alia, a personality test.

In the 2023/24 school year, roughly 700 lateral entrants were accepted into the school system under standard contracts, which is around 8% of new hires in the 2023/24 school year. 7,133 people applied to the Certification Commission for being certified as lateral entrants by June 2024, whereof 3,400 candidates have been certified. Since autumn 2023, the university course for lateral entry has been offered at all university colleges of teacher training and must be completed by lateral entrants within eight years. Evaluation of the lateral entry programme currently conducted by the University of Zurich, the Teacher Training College

of Lucerne and the Teacher Training College of St. Gallen is expected to be completed by 2026.

By integrating pre-school education into the *Klasse Job* departmental strategy, the federal government has taken a major step towards meeting the demand for skilled staff in early childhood education. The *Klasse Job* strategy for early childhood education pursues three key fields of action:

- Providing information on the 9 training pathways into pre-school education.
- Addressing new target groups for the pre-school teaching profession.
- Enhancing public awareness of early childhood education.

With the help of a training guide and its four simple steps, interested parties can find out which training programme is best suited for their individual situation (age, previous educational qualifications, etc.) and where it is available.

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

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

At the same time, the Education Package gives teachers, pupils, parents and guardians greater clarity and transparency regarding the individual school's learning goals to be achieved. Consistent assessment of, and an increased exchange on, the pupils' current state of learning and development are to provide guidance for all the parties involved so as to shape further learning processes in a targeted manner.

#### **Measures and instruments**

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

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

The **2023 curricula** for primary and lower secondary levels, which entered into force (bottom up) in the 2023/24 school year, form the basis for teaching that is in keeping with our times. They focus in equal measure on the development of those subject-specific and interdisciplinary skills that are essential for a successful and self-determined way of life. For each subject, they clearly specify which skills should be acquired by the end of each school year. At the same time, their focus on essentials offers more leeway in designing the contents of classroom teaching. Digital skills, environmental education, sustainability, economy, finance, consumer, media education and other current ‘cross-cutting themes’ are given greater importance, including a holistic view of pupils and their personal and social skills. Interdisciplinary, critical thinking, communication, cooperation and creativity (21<sup>st</sup> century skills) are promoted by the curriculum reform.

**Competence grids** (*Kompetenzraster*) specify the competence descriptions laid down in the curricula by using three competence levels to describe the skills to be acquired by pupils. They are pedagogical tools, which support teachers in planning and developing lessons, diagnostics as well as feedback to pupils and their parents or guardians. **Examples of learning tasks** illustrate how the skills described in the new curricula and competence grids can be acquired through classroom tasks.

**Individual competence measurement PLUS (iKM<sup>PLUS</sup>)** provides teachers with a comprehensive package of learning diagnostic tools. As early as Year Three, it can visualise competences in a standardised manner, meaning that the results of iKM<sup>PLUS</sup> supplement the comprehensive assessment of teachers by an external, standardised perspective. Embedded in the overall picture of the current learning status, the results of iKM<sup>PLUS</sup> are a means of providing individualised support and the basis for planning and evaluating teaching and for enhancing the quality of schools.

Finally, the Your Future (*Deine Zukunft*) **education and career guidance tool (Bildungs- und Berufsorientierungstool – BBO Tool)**, which is already used at the beginning of Year Seven, is an instrument that helps pupils find their future individual education and career pathway

on their own. Career decisions can be well prepared and made more deliberately by examining individual recommendations for action.

#### **2.3.4 New curricula in technical and vocational education<sup>60</sup>**

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

After completing their training, graduates of HLPSs have ‘dual qualification’ credentials – they are skilled nursing assistants and entitled to enter tertiary education – including various credit transfer options, for instance, when taking up a relevant FH degree course. Within the three-year programme of the vocational school for social professions and prep courses for care professions, the theoretical contents of nursing assistant training are brought forward and credited towards the subsequent nursing assistant training programme resulting in a reduction of the training period. In addition, school pilot projects and transitional curricula have been adopted into the mainstream school system. In view of ongoing multiple transformations, current priorities in vocational education include areas such as ‘green transition / green skills’, digitalisation and AI.

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

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

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

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<sup>60</sup> Source: BMBWF.

The aim is to provide more individualised support to pupils in line with their strengths, talents and interests.

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

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

The BMBWF takes targeted measures to integrate refugee pupils including, inter alia, language and psychosocial support as well as support measures for young refugees aged 15plus who are no longer required to attend school<sup>61</sup>.

As of the 2023/24 school year, language education has been integrated as an overarching topic into the curricula of primary and lower secondary levels. The promotion of German language acquisition is of great importance in all types of schools as knowledge of the language of instruction is essential for success at school, participation in social life and future integration into the labour market. Measures for the advancement of German language support have been taken since 2023, enabling teachers to assign pupils with inadequate German language skills to tailor-made support measures. Moreover, resources are made available to deploy additional teachers so that children and adolescents can be given longer-term support in German in smaller groups.

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

The model of German language support aims to enable children and young people to take part in mainstream lessons as quickly as possible by providing intensive support in learning the language of instruction. Pupils who are unable to follow lessons due to a lack of German

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<sup>61</sup> Source: BMBWF.

language skills get 15 (primary level) or 20 (secondary level) weekly hours of intensive language training in German support classes. In addition, they spend several hours learning together with pupils from mainstream classes (e.g. music, physical exercise and sports). After migration to mainstream schooling, extraordinary pupils continue to receive targeted language support in German support courses and ordinary pupils in remedial lessons.

In the 2023/24 school year, family reunifications have resulted in a significant increase in the number of children and young people who, owing to states of war, had little or no opportunity to attend an educational institution previously. These children receive intensive German language support and are assisted in finding their way around school and in acquiring literacy skills. Teachers are assisted with materials for imparting pre-literacy education.

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

Educational and career choices are still very gender-based. The dissimilarity index calculated by the BMBWF expresses this phenomenon at schools and universities in figures: it quantifies the gender imbalance in education by types of schools and at universities by types of study programmes. A dissimilarity index of 0 would represent a balanced gender ratio, while 1 would indicate a complete gender imbalance.

Computation of the overall index is weighted by headcounts in education, meaning the number of pupils in Year Ten (2022/23: 101,378), and the number of undergraduate degree programmes (bachelor and diploma) formally begun at universities<sup>62</sup> (2022/23: 47,560). Accordingly, the school education sector has more weight (68%) in the overall index than the higher education sector (32%).

Since 2027 the overall index has remained comparatively constant, fluctuating between 0.43 and 0.45 during the period of observation with only a few changes in the secondary and tertiary sectors (see Table 6). 51% of all pupils would have had to change their type of secondary school (Year Ten) in 2017/18 to achieve a balanced gender ratio in all types of school, this figure being 52% for the 2022/23 school year. This means that in 2022/23 52,661 of the 101,378 pupils in upper secondary level would have had to change their type of school to ensure gender balance. In higher education, students would have had to switch 29% of all degree programmes begun both in 2017/18 and 2022/23 to achieve a balanced

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<sup>62</sup> Excluding doctoral and incoming mobility students.

gender ratio in all study programmes. In 2022/23, this would have involved 14,022 of the 47,560 undergraduate first year students.

Table 6: Development of the dissimilarity index between 2017/18 and 2022/23

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Secondary Education</b>	0.51	0.51	0.53	0.52	0.52	0.52
<b>Tertiary Education</b>	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	0.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>0.45</b>

Source: BMBWF.

Gender differences continue to exist in the school system. Girls and young women are substantially underrepresented in technical training programmes and boys and young men in educational, social services and care-related training programmes.

In the 2021/22 school year, only 4.9% of female pupils had transferred to a technical school (BMHS – see Figure 13), with a slight, albeit very slow upward trend being recorded for the period under review.

Figure 13: Female pupils who have transferred to a technical school (BMHS) (from lower secondary level to upper secondary level – selected types of schools)



Source: Statistics Austria.



Note/explanation: Proportion of female pupils who, after completion of a compulsory secondary school or some type of lower-level AHS, have moved on to technical education at a BMHS in Year Nine.

Conversely, only 0.5% of male pupils transferred to a BMHS school type in the fields of education, care and social services (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Male pupils who have transferred to a BMHS for education, care and social services (from lower secondary level to upper secondary level – selected types of schools)



Source: Statistics Austria.

Note/explanation: Proportion of male pupils who, after completion of a compulsory secondary school or some type of lower-level AHS, have moved on to a BMHS for education, care and social services in Year Nine.

To counteract this development, new types of schools in the fields of education, care and social services were added to the standard school system in the 2023/24 school year: the vocational school for social professions (*Fachschule für Sozialberufe*), a three-year programme, and the higher vocational college for nursing and social care (*Höhere Lehranstalt für Pflege und Sozialbetreuung – HLPS*), a five-year programme.

Gender-sensitive career guidance is used to break down gender stereotypes in educational and career choices. The circular '**Reflexivity-based gender education and equality**' or **Reflexive Geschlechterpädagogik und Gleichstellung** (2018) shows ways to reduce typical gender-based education and training choices. The new curricula for primary, compulsory secondary and academic secondary schools (lower secondary level), which have been in place as of the 2023/24 school year and are being implemented bottom-up, prioritise, inter alia, the development of personal and social skills. They aim to instruct pupils at an early stage on having their own perspectives on life and career, away from ascribed roles, to shape their lives as they see fit and make them a success.

With the **MI(N)Tmachen action plan** for more MINT specialists, launched in 2023, the BMBWF is taking another major step towards promoting non-traditional types of education and training. MINT stands for education pathways in mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology, the aim being to **raise the proportion of women graduating from technical degree programmes (engineering and information technology) by 5% by 2030**. With its policies combined in eight lines of action, the MI(N)Tmachen action plan addresses the entire education chain from entry into kindergarten to graduation from university. It aims to attract young women to technical training programmes and support them on their pathway to successful completion of education and training.

In order to achieve this, the BMBWF seeks to ensure that teachers strengthen the self-confidence of young women in their MINT skills at an early stage and continue to do so throughout school. Information and counselling services at school are intended to enable all young people to pursue the kind of education and training that is in line with their gifts and talents.

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

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

## 3.1 Vocational and educational information

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

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

### 3.1.1 Vocational and educational information at school

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

on insights into working life. This great variety of consistent support is summarised under 'ibobb' (German acronym for information, counselling and guidance on education and career) and is mainly intended to enable pupils to make independent education and career choices based on their interests and abilities. Close cooperation with extra- and post-curricular entities – e.g. the PES's Vocational Info Centres (BIZ), information and advice by the social partners and the tertiary education sector – is of key importance in this context. The ibobb portal offers information and guidance materials on jobs and careers.

The '18plus – Berufs- und Studienchecker' (≈ check your job and study options at age 18plus) assists pupils in the last two years of the upper level of academic secondary schools (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades of AHSs) and of colleges of higher vocational education (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades of BHSs) in making better informed decisions about their post-secondary training and educational career in line with their interests and aptitudes. This project focuses on the pupils' individual talents, affinities, interests and strengths. In the 2023/24 school year, 367 schools participated (214 AHSs and 153 BHSs) with 23,217 pupils in the free 18plus programme, bringing the total to 400,000 pupils since the beginning of the programme<sup>63</sup>.

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

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

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

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<sup>63</sup> BMBWF (2024): *Wie junge Menschen aufblühen – Wie Positive Psychologie unseren Alltag beeinflussen kann* (How young people flourish – How positive psychology can influence our daily life), *18plus Journal*, (March).

pathways and take informed decisions on their future job and education. Information for parents and teachers completes the range of BIZ services. BIZ counsellors are thus not only instrumental in helping schools to achieve the education targets defined in the curriculum but also in strengthening the pupils' information skills.

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

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

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

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

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

Young people may access the PES job lexicon (Berufslexikon-Startseite) to view detailed descriptions of almost 1,800 jobs arranged by level of educational attainment; more than 400 online videos supplement the written texts and photographs. General information videos and 'virtual' company visits are also available. Smaller special tools highlight a variety of aspects for different target groups, such as the PES salary compass, the FiT salary calculator and the PES career videos.

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

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

## 3.2 Apprenticeship

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

### 3.2.1 Framework conditions for the dual training system

The dual training system plays an important role in Austria, as it combines practical on-the-job training and school-based theoretical education (on one or two days per week or for several weeks per school term). The duration of apprenticeship training varies according to the chosen trade and may last two, two and a half, three, three and a half or four years and is completed with a final apprenticeship examination. Sector-specific priority programmes have been introduced for a number of apprenticed trades. An apprentice's 'wage' is called *Lehrlingseinkommen*, its minimum rate being defined in the relevant collective agreement. This remuneration will increase with every year of training, and in the last year it will reach roughly 80% of a corresponding skilled worker's wage. For example, the collective agreement for employees and apprentices in the retail sector defines the remuneration of a retail apprentice to be €800 in the first year of training, €1,025 in the second year, €1,300 in the third year and €1,350 in the fourth year (applicable as of 1 Jan 2023). In 2023, 39.1%<sup>64</sup> of 15-year-olds in Austria entered an officially recognised apprenticeship after completion of compulsory education, thus making the dual system the strongest upper secondary level

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<sup>64</sup> Source: Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO), apprenticeship statistics 2023, demographic development.

education pathway in numbers. Would-be apprentices may choose from roughly 210 apprenticed trades. Based on the continuous development of training regulations and the introduction of new apprenticed trades, the dual system is able to meet the requirements of the world of business and work and provide training in tune with the needs of the market.

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

### 3.2.2 Revision of the Vocational Training Act

- The revision of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG*) in March 2020 replaced the terms '*Lehrlingsentschädigung*' (literal translation: apprentice's compensation) and '*Verwendung*' (literal translation: use of apprentices) by '*Lehrlingseinkommen*' (apprentice's remuneration) and '*Beschäftigung von Lehrlingen*' (employment of apprentices) to promote the use of an appreciative and contemporary language. Every five years all job profiles are to be subject to a mandatory analysis to ensure their ongoing modernisation and the quality of economic and technical standards.
- The 2020 BAG revision linked the supra-company training scheme (*überbetriebliche Lehre – ÜBA*) more firmly with company-based apprenticeships by involving companies entitled to train apprentices in the design of training contents and routines. The companies were also involved in the design of apprenticeships with extended periods of training and apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills according to §8c of the BAG.
- As of March 2020 people with childcare duties or health issues may enter part-time apprenticeships. The revisions stipulate the option of part-time training for apprentices with children, i.e. authorised training providers and apprentices may agree in the apprenticeship contract to reduce the normal daily or weekly working hours by 50 per cent at most. In order to reach the training goal (passing the final apprenticeship exam), the standard period of an apprenticeship may be extended by the reduced working hours, but the total period of extension may not exceed two years. A corresponding option for extension is applicable to apprenticeship relationships with extended periods of training (§8b(1)) or apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills (§8b(2)).
- Another new provision of the BAG stipulates that periods of training for apprenticeships following on completion of a school of vocational education may be extended by no

more than one year where required to ensure sufficient time for training the apprentice in question.

- With the revision of the BAG in 2020, and in view of the challenges posed by Covid-19 for the economy and the labour market, the instrument of short-time work was extended to include (with a statutory time-limit) apprentices in order to support training companies and thus preserve apprenticeship positions. Amendments in 2021 extended the possibility for apprentices to do short-time work for another period. Most recently, the time-limit of 31 Dec 2022 has been legally anchored in the 2022 amendment and not extended (the programme has now been phased out).

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

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

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

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

A revision of the Vocational Training Act (BAG) in 2003 provided the legal basis for inclusive vocational training of disadvantaged persons with special barriers to placement<sup>65</sup>.

Within extended apprenticeships, the period of training may be extended by one year or in exceptional cases, and if this is required to prepare a candidate for the final apprenticeship examination, by up to two years. Participants may also acquire partial skills within one and

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<sup>65</sup> These are individuals who could not be placed in formal-sector apprenticeships and who belong to the following groups: individuals with special educational needs at the end of compulsory education spent, at least in part, under the curriculum of a special-needs school; individuals who have not finished their schooling at general lower secondary schools or have finished schooling with too many negative grades; people with disabilities within the meaning of the Disability Employment Act (BeinstG) and/or the Länder's disability legislation; or socially disadvantaged individuals who, under vocational guidance, have been found to be unlikely to succeed in apprenticeships.



three years of training. Trainees in an extended training programme have the same status as other apprentices concerning their obligation to attend vocational school within the dual system. Extended training and the acquisition of partial skills may be provided within a company-based training scheme or within a supra-company training programme (ÜBA). It is supported by the Training Assistance programme (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*) under which support workers provide different types of support to disadvantaged and disabled young people while they are trained in a company (or by another provider) and attend vocational school.

8,742 of all **108,266** apprentices were in vocational training under §8b of the BAG (cut-off date 31 Dec 2023), whereof 7,542 apprentices were enrolled in apprenticeships with extended periods of training and 1,200 were enrolled in apprenticeships for acquiring partial skills, 6,618 being trained in companies and 2,124 by special providers.<sup>66</sup>

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

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

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

In order to take the vocational matriculation examination free of charge within the subsidised programme launched for this purpose, at least one of the required examinations must have been taken successfully while in training, whereas the other examinations may be taken free of charge no later than three or five years after completion of an apprenticeship. Within an introductory phase – including an analysis of the apprentices' potential, basic

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<sup>66</sup> Source: Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO), apprenticeship statistics 2023 (Table: Vocational training under §8b: 2002-2022).

courses in German and Mathematics as well as a counselling meeting – the apprentices are prepared for entry into the funded programme.

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

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

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

Graduates from academic secondary schools or colleges of higher vocational education may enter fast-track apprenticeships as an additional form of practical vocational training. Graduates from schools of intermediate vocational education providing three or more years of training, matriculation certificate holders as well as young people who have already completed an apprenticeship may have an(other) apprenticeship of three or more years' duration reduced by one year. Attendance of vocational school classes is condensed into shorter periods as well.

### **3.2.7 Subsidies to company-based apprenticeships**

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

increase participation in training, in particular in areas with only a few training companies or apprentices.

As of 2008 subsidies to company-based apprenticeships are available under §19c of the Vocational Training Act (BAG). The guidelines are defined by the funding committee of the Federal Advisory Board on Vocational Training (*Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat* – BBAB) composed of representatives of the then Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW), the then Federal Ministry of Labour (BMA)<sup>67</sup>, the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO) and the Chamber of Labour (AK). Certain guidelines, such as those on coaching for apprentices and their employers (*‘Lehre statt Leere’*), are now drafted exclusively by the Federal Minister of Labour and Economy following the merger of the two departments in May 2022.

Subsidies to company-based apprenticeships are processed by the Apprenticeship Offices (*Lehrlingsstellen*) of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO). In 2023, the Federal Minister of Labour and Economy made available funds of up to €270m from the labour market policy budget to the apprenticeship offices of the states’ economic chambers to help them fulfil their tasks in accordance with §19c of the Vocational Training Act (Berufsausbildungsgesetz – BAG), Federal Law Gazette no. 142/1969. As set out in §14(1) of the Labour Market Policy Finance Act (Arbeitsmarktpolitik-Finanzierungsgesetz – AMPFG), up to €280m are available in 2024 from the LMP budget.

Detailed information on subsidies to company-based apprenticeships is available on the following sites:

- BMAW on subsidising apprenticeships: [Allgemeine Informationen/Lehre- und Berufsausbildung/Lehrlingsausbildung-Duales System/Lehre fördern](#)
- WKO on subsidising apprenticeships: [Service/Bildung-Lehre/Förderungen-Lehre](#)
- Quality-related measures/activities: [Qualität der Lehre](#)

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

Basic subsidies are determined by the rate of remuneration paid to apprentices (*Lehrlingseinkommen*). In the first year of training they total three monthly gross remunerations for apprentices as defined by collective agreements, in the second year they total two

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<sup>67</sup> Now Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy.

monthly gross remunerations and in the third year and fourth year they total one such remuneration.

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

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

Subsidies may be claimed by authorised training providers whose apprentices have completed inter- or supra-company training programmes, such as training clusters, job-related additional training of apprentices going beyond their job description, preparatory courses for taking the final apprenticeship exam or preparatory courses for the vocational matriculation exam without extending the period of apprenticeship (with the time spent in these courses being counted towards working hours); the cap on funding these inter- and supra-company training programmes was already increased from €2,000 to €3,000 in 2021<sup>68</sup>.

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

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

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

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

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

Austria supports measures and projects aimed at achieving an evenly distributed access of women and men to apprenticeships. They include, inter alia, Job Coaching, programmes to

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<sup>68</sup> See also: WKO (2024), *Förderung: Zwischen- und überbetriebliche Maßnahmen* (subsidies: inter- and supra-company measures), <https://www.wko.at/lehre/foerderung-zwischen-ueberbetriebliche-massnahmen> (retrieved on 26 July 2024).

raise employers' awareness, or initiatives encouraging women to enter engineering-type apprenticeships.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This type of subsidy may be claimed for apprentices migrating to (beginning) their new apprenticeship between 1 Aug 2013 and 31 Dec 2025.

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

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

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

- Quality of training – training guidebooks

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

- Final apprenticeship examinations

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

- Support to promote the internationalisation of dual training

- In order to support internationalisation, a number of funding options are available, including: reimbursement of the apprentices' remuneration during placements abroad, financial support to apprentices for language courses in the context of placements abroad, bonuses for apprentices while staying abroad, special services to apprentices and their training companies in the context of placements in other countries as well as participation in international skills competitions.
- Employers who enrol their apprentices or apprenticeship graduates in international skills competitions (WorldSkills – international vocational skills competition, EuroSkills – European vocational skills competition) may be supported with a grant. The Apprenticeship Office pays grants in the form of prorated refunds of the apprentices' remuneration or the employee's wage or salary for the period of (external) preparation and of the competition itself.
- Digi Voucher (*Digi-Scheck*) for apprentices, training-related courses for apprentices **(new subsidy since 6 Apr 2021)**

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

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

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

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

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

the following measures are eligible for funding, their focus being on persons from migrant backgrounds as well as on persons qualifying for recognised refugee or subsidiary protection status (see also Info Box 2). Funding is based on additional resources made available under §13e of the IESG.

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

This involves the following actions:

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

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

This **coaching programme for apprentices and their employers** (Link: [Lehre statt Leere](#)) aims to reduce the number of drop-outs, increase the number of successful apprenticeship examinations and raise the quality of training by providing coaches to assist apprentices and their employers whenever problems occur. The programme was launched in summer 2012 with a pilot project in the Länder of Upper Austria, Styria, Tyrol and Vienna and extended to the whole of Austria in 2015.



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

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

In 2023, roughly 2,750 apprentices sought help under the coaching scheme. In addition, more than 515 companies used the coaching programme for employers of apprentices. Since its inception in Dec 2016 till the end of Dec 2023, a total of 13,565 apprentices and 2,088 training companies were assisted by the coaching programme for apprentices and the one for employers of apprentices.

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

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

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

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

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

Roughly 1,200 young adults aged 18-30 years with only compulsory education credentials who continue to be registered as unemployed despite the PES's efforts to place them in a job, and who show interest in completing apprenticeships and entering subsequent employment, are funded under the targeted JUST 2 JOB implacement foundation programme. It focuses on supra-regional placement in training and employment as well as on integrating returners into the labour market.

### **Info Box 4: Europass<sup>69</sup>**

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

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<sup>69</sup> Source: BMBWF.

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

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

### **Info Box 6: Apprenticeship bonus 2024 – photo, optical and medical devices retail (Vienna)**

Just as in 2023, apprenticeship bonuses are available for the Vienna area in 2024. Up to three financial subsidies can be granted to current Viennese members of the sector in the WKO (per apprentice taken on under an apprenticeship contract; start of apprenticeship period must be between 1 Jan 2024 and 31 Dec 2024; apprenticeship must be registered with the Vienna Apprenticeship Office and provided in Vienna), namely: for the admission of apprentices into the apprenticed trades of medical device salesperson or photo multimedia salesperson, a one-time start bonus of €2,500 per company; for the admission of apprentices into one of the above-mentioned apprenticeships, an additional one-time subsidy of €500 per company and apprentice; and for apprentices supported in 2024, another one-off €1,500 per company and apprentice after completion of three years of training and positive/successful completion of the apprenticeship.

For further requirements for claiming the apprenticeship bonus 2024 see the following link: [Lehrlingsbonus 2024 – Foto-, Optik- und Medizinproduktehandel \(Wien\)](#)

### 3.2.8 Apprenticeships subsidised by the public employment service

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

- Girls/women in apprenticed trades with a low proportion of women<sup>70</sup>;
- Specially disadvantaged<sup>71</sup> apprenticeship-seekers<sup>72</sup>;
- Participants in programmes offering extended apprenticeship training or the acquisition of partial skills; as well as
- Young people aged 18plus years whose inadequate skills can be addressed by apprenticeship training or who are early school leavers.

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

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

The PES spent roughly €36.7m<sup>73</sup> on individualised financial support in 2023.

## 3.3 Managing the transition from school to work

The focus of Austria's labour market policy on young people and young adults aged under 25 years is also illustrated by the public funds made available for this purpose: in 2023 the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy spent around €850m for the integration of young people into the labour market (including funds of activating labour market policy as well as

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<sup>70</sup> All apprenticed trades where the proportion of female apprentices in the total number of apprentices was below 40% in the previous year of training.

<sup>71</sup> If the Land Directorate of the public employment service includes early school leavers in the group of eligible persons, the subsidy level for employers is €400 and for training providers €453.

<sup>72</sup> e.g.: people with physical, psychological or mental impairment; people having social problems; people who spent part or all of their education in special needs schools or in general secondary/compulsory secondary schools with special needs; slow learners after completion of compulsory schooling, etc.

<sup>73</sup> Source: PES DWH data analysis, as at: 18 June 2024.

funds of company-based apprenticeship subsidies according to the Vocational Training Act [BAG] and excluding subsidies for short-time work). Of these, roughly €540m were spent on PES subsidies and grants, while €270m went towards subsidising company-based apprenticeships. Another €38m of active labour market policy funds were available for a number of programmes offered by the Social Affairs Ministry Service.

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

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

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

As of July 2017 every young person is required to continue education/training following completion of compulsory school. Compulsory school graduates may do so by moving on to upper secondary schools or colleges or by entering apprenticeships. Programmes such as Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*) or supra-company training schemes are available to disadvantaged youth.

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

This is ensured by better coordination and greater efficiency in using the many existing schemes as well as by closing the gaps in and between current programmes. The necessary (further) developments relate to the following areas: assisting young people in making ap-

appropriate education/training choices; preventing young people from dropping out of education/training; preparing disadvantaged youth for the requirements of continued training; as well as upgrading company-based and supra-company apprenticeships.

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW), the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK), the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and the Federal Chancellery (BKA) are responsible for the implementation of the EducationTraining till 18 programme. Other relevant actors involved in this process include the PES, the Social Affairs Ministry Service (SMS), the Länder, social partners, Austrian National Youth Council (BJV) and the local communities.

The Compulsory Education or Training Act (*Ausbildungspflichtgesetz – APflG*) underlying the EducationTraining till 18 programme entered into force on 1 Aug 2016; once the related measures were in place, continuing education or training became compulsory as of 1 July 2017. The Compulsory Education or Training Act has been revised to improve the data quality of the reporting system of the EducationTraining till 18 programme. This revision entered into force on 1 Jan 2021. Another revision, effective from 1 Jan 2024, included truncating the period without training from four months to three months to make an earlier offer of support to young people who have not yet met their obligation to continue education and/or training.

### **3.3.2 Youth Coaching**

Youth Coaching is targeted at all Year Nine pupils, under 19-year-olds 'staying outside the system' as well as young people under age 25 if they have been identified as having special educational needs or disabilities, individual impairments or social disadvantages or as being at risk of failing to complete lower or upper secondary levels (early school leavers). Youth Coaching takes place in three stages. Young people entering this programme may need only the first stage or proceed to stages 2 and 3 after completion of the first one. Stage 1 involves an initial interview, stage 2 more detailed counselling and stage 3 ongoing assistance of up to one year. Youth Coaching is based on counselling and guidance to outline perspectives for young people. Youth Coaches identify the young people's strengths and capabilities together with their charges, whereupon they will draft an adequate development plan.

Young people are to be empowered to take appropriate and independent decisions on how to continue training or education after completion of compulsory schooling. Youth Coaching

does not involve any form of actual training, but rather various forms of counselling to prevent young people from ending up on the streets or being dropped from the welfare system. Its ultimate goal is to ensure a successful transition to future working life.

In 2023, there were a total of 70,113 participants in Youth Coaching.<sup>74</sup> The programme is implemented within the project funding system of the Social Affairs Ministry Service.

### **3.3.3 Fit for Training**

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

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

The Fit for Training programme is intended to prepare young people for training focusing on those who are in need of assistance and whose enrolment in, or successful attendance of, continuing vocational training courses is bound to fail due to deficits in defined basic skills. For this purpose, the programme primarily addresses the participants’ lack of individual capabilities to make them fit for the next step towards vocational training. This nationwide, low-threshold standardised programme for disadvantaged young people who are not yet ready to enter training is based on consistent individual support to guide participants towards (vocational) training or into the labour market without losing precious time (to detours). As of 2019 young people with serious problems are offered prep modules to give

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<sup>74</sup> Source: Social Affairs Ministry Service, impact and activity monitoring of employment assistance programmes (*Wirkungs- und Aktivitätsmonitoring der beruflichen Assistenz – WABA*), non-personal data 2023.

them more time to stabilise, get motivated, build relationships and form a structured daily schedule. 2023 Fit for Training projects recorded a total of 6,661 participants<sup>75</sup>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 2023, a total of 10,105 young people participated in supra-company training schemes<sup>76</sup>. Funds totalling roughly €130m have been authorised for the 2023/24 training year.

Authorised training providers who have recruited a young person from the ÜBA programme may claim funding of €1,000 after the first year of training or after the end of the period of employee retention under certain conditions – for more details see item 3.2.7 h).

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<sup>75</sup>Source: Social Affairs Ministry Service, impact and activity monitoring of employment assistance programmes (*Wirkungs- und Aktivitätsmonitoring der beruflichen Assistenzen – WABA*), non-personal data 2023.

<sup>76</sup> Source: PES DWH data analysis, as at: 31 May 2024.



### 3.3.5 Training Guarantee till 25

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

In 2023, 11,554 persons received skills training under the Training Guarantee till 25, with a total of €72.5m spent on this programme. On an annual average, 13,376 young people aged 19-24 years with no more than compulsory schooling were registered as unemployed in 2023.<sup>77</sup> This is up from 11,845 young people aged 19-24 years with no more than compulsory schooling registered as unemployed in 2022. The Training Guarantee is implemented under applicable federal guidelines through funding of PES programmes which are primarily aimed at providing vocational training credentials.

The following tools are used for this purpose:

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

The Training Guarantee till 25 has been substantially expanded. The key focus is on the target group of young adults with low qualifications or with qualifications that are no longer marketable. The proportion of this age group in all unemployed workers was 11% in 2023.

In view of the number of low-skilled unemployed 20- to 30-year-olds, the then Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW) and the then Federal Ministry of Labour (BMA) agreed to establish the **Just2Job implacement foundation**<sup>78</sup>. As of Oct 2020 up to 1,000 young adults may enter this foundation programme to receive shortened training in

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<sup>77</sup> Source: PES DWH data analysis, as at: 31 May 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) since May 2022.

a company. The programme uses intensive individual support to help participants pass the extraordinary final exam for such shortened apprenticeships in a company and become integrated into the labour market through subsequent employment under a fully insured employment contract. For this purpose, 100 supra-regional placements (training and employment at least 50km away from home) are supported financially by special mobility packages (moving costs, rent, housing costs, travel costs as well as costs of special case management such as looking for a new home, dealing with authorities).

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

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

### 3.4 Programmes for certain target groups

#### 3.4.1 Policies for young people with health-related barriers to employment<sup>79</sup>

Under Austria's Public Employment Service Act (AMSG) disadvantaged persons are to be given special assistance. In order to comply with this legal duty of ensuring greater equality of opportunity in the labour market, the public employment service uses a broader definition of disability: its assistance to unemployed young people with health-related barriers to employment is based not only on their legally defined disabilities (beneficiary disabled persons according to the Austrian Disability Employment Act [*Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz* – BeinstG], the Victims Welfare Act [*Opferfürsorgegesetz*] or the Länder's disability legislation) but also on the actual possibilities they have of being integrated into the labour market. Hence it takes into account physical, psychological or mental impairment provided that this is supported by medical assessment and results in major placement difficulties or limited job opportunities for those concerned. Holders of disability passports have also been included in these measures since 2010. The average number of young people with health-

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<sup>79</sup> Disabilities of beneficiary persons are graded by official assessment (*Feststellungsbescheid*) pursuant to the Austrian Disability Employment Act (BeinstG), the Victims Welfare Act and/or similar legislation of the individual Austrian Länder (*Landesbehindertengesetze*). The public employment service, too, may grade clients as having health issues based on their restricted physical or psychological aptitude for the labour market.

related barriers to employment listed in the employment service's unemployment register in 2023 was 1,097<sup>80</sup>.

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

Approx. 7,900 young people with health-related barriers to employment received subsidies from the public employment service in 2023, roughly 1,400 of whom were assigned to employment measures and 3,000 to support measures. The number of young people with health-related barriers to employment supported by the PES with skills training measures was roughly 6,300<sup>81</sup>.

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

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

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

With the National Action Plan on Disability (NAP Disability) 2022 - 2030, strengthening labour force participation and fostering the development and continuation of existing programmes for people with disabilities remain the focus of disability policy. To this end, the

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<sup>80</sup> Source: PES DWH, cube: PST analysis (stock of unemployed) 2017-ongoing, stock.

<sup>81</sup> Source: PES DWH, cube: fdg personen, number of persons.

government and major stakeholders agreed a package of measures, which includes a mix of new enterprise-focused and person-centred programmes as well as measures to extend existing programmes in response to actual needs. The package is to be implemented in stages.

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

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

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

### **Youth Coaching**

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

## **Fit for Training**

Fit for Training (*AusbildungsFit*), including prep module, is intended to assist young people in finding their pathways to continuing training. It is described in greater detail in item 3.3.3.

## **Training Assistance**

The (vocational) Training Assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz – BAS*) programme is aimed at improving labour market participation of young people with individual impairments. The BAS scheme supports young people with disabilities and other barriers to employment through Inclusive Vocational Training (*Integrative Berufsausbildung – IBA*) as well as assistance both at the workplace and at school to ensure the sustainability of their training pathway. Suitable preparation, support and guidance measures are offered to ensure young people's successful completion of the chosen training programme. In 2023, a total of 10,975 young people (7,822 male, 3,146 female, 7 diverse) participated in this programme.<sup>82</sup>

## **(Youth) Job Assistance**

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

Job Assistance services may range from analysing the situation together with the young client to exploring individual career options, providing job-search support and special workplace assistance in the initial phase of an employment relationship. Another key function of this programme is crisis intervention to secure jobs at risk. In 2023, a total of 8,082 young people (4,818 male, 3,247 female, 17 diverse) were enrolled in this programme.<sup>83</sup>

## **NEBA company service**

As part of and as a complement to the Job Assistance programme, the NEBA company service aims to reach all sectors regardless of a company's size, including employers of the

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<sup>82</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special analysis age at entry <24 years, UeW 2023 (v12), data frozen on 31 Dec 2023.

<sup>83</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special analysis age at entry <24 years. UeW 2023 (v12), data frozen on 31 Dec 2023.

public and non-profit sectors. It should help to better discern the potential of people with disabilities and realise it for the benefit of companies. The NEBA company service provides counselling and other services tailored to the individual needs of companies. It is a central point of contact for companies to assist them in all matters relating to 'work and disability'.

### **Job Coaching**

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

Job Coaches provide direct and individual assistance in the workplace, thus promoting the professional, communicative and social skills of their charges. This is to empower young disabled workers to become independent in meeting workplace requirements. At the same time it should raise company staff awareness for disability-related issues. In 2023, a total of 1,578 young people (1,023 male and 554 female) participated in this programme.<sup>84</sup>

### **NEBA App**

Following a one-off registration process, the NEBA App serves as a central link for communication between the providers and the participants of the respective NEBA programmes. A dedicated chat within this app is available to arrange appointments, create and save documents such as CVs, and exchange messages. There is also a separate administration area for support workers. The app is barrier-free and can be used free of charge by provider organisations and participants.

### **Personal Assistance in the Workplace**

Young people with severe functional impairment often have greater difficulties finding and retaining employment even if they have adequate skills for the job. Personal Assistance in the Workplace (*Persönliche Assistenz am Arbeitsplatz*) is tailored to these workers' needs to ensure self-determined and equal participation in the labour market for this group. Workers relying on such personal assistance receive the kind of one-on-one support needed

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<sup>84</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, special analysis age at entry <24 years, UeW 2021 (v12), data frozen on 31 Dec 2023.

for doing the job or completing vocational training. In 2023, 652 young people (whereof 300 female and 352 male) benefited from this Personal Assistance scheme.<sup>85</sup>

### **Skills training**

The objective of skills training programmes is to offer, alongside Fit for Training, specific training/upskilling with due regard to the participants' individual capabilities. In addition, they offer the opportunity of getting accustomed to job situations in a free market economy. With the 'barrier-free training' pilot project, an additional fully accessible training programme for adolescents and young adults, including those with more severe disabilities, has been in place since 1 Jan 2023. In 2023, a total of 1,065 young people (626 male, 435 female, 4 diverse) were enrolled in the various skills training projects.<sup>86</sup>

### **Women with disabilities**

Women and girls with disabilities are to be specially supported by needs-based programmes, as they face multiple forms of discrimination, and the employment rate of beneficiary disabled women is still lower than that of men with disabilities. For this reason, a special working group with relevant stakeholders and experts was set up in 2022. In addition to various measures to empower women with disabilities, a successful pilot project for promoting the inclusion of women called '*InklusionsförderungPlus für Frauen*', which uses wage subsidies to motivate companies to hire women with disabilities, has become part of mainstream funding programmes. This resulted in the proportion of women rising from 38% in 2019 to 41.5% in 2023.

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

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

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<sup>85</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6, UeW 2023 (v12), data frozen on 31 Dec 2023. For technical reasons it is currently not possible to provide analyses by age of participants. The reported figures relate to the total number of persons using this programme in 2023.

<sup>86</sup> Source: BMSGPK, Division IV/A/6 special analysis age at entry < 24 years, UeW 2023 (v12), data frozen as at 31 Dec 2023.

risk of exclusion and significantly increase their future chances of participation in the general labour market.

### **#change**

The #change project is an assistance service offering free, low-threshold clinical-psychological counselling, treatment and health psychology prevention to adolescents and young adults throughout Austria to enable them to participate in projects of the Social Affairs Ministry Service and boost their chances in the labour market. In 2023, 2,585 adolescents and young adults (up to the age of 25) in need of assistance due to mental illnesses or psychosocial support needs were supported under the #change programme.<sup>87</sup> Link: [#change](#).

### **Integration enterprises**

In place for around 40 years, integration enterprises are seasoned and indispensable tools for helping people with disabilities to participate in working life and, consequently, ensure their inclusion in society. During this time, integration enterprises have evolved into modern and efficient companies with social responsibility. Integration enterprises have become reliable employers for people with disabilities and professional partners for business and industry. As at 1 Jan 2024, a total of 2,685 persons worked in integration enterprises, whereof 2,064 were people with disabilities.

As well as jobs, integration enterprises offer training slots to people with disabilities. In autumn 2015 a new priority programme was rolled out called 'Apprenticeships in Integration Enterprises' (*Integrative Betriebe Lehrausbildung – IBL*). People with disabilities are to be given not only low-threshold skills training but also access to quality training with formal credentials. Based on the infrastructure available (equipment, expert staff, etc.), integration enterprises are well placed to ensure high-quality training aimed at improving participants' employability through taking the final apprenticeship examination, thus enabling sustainable integration into the general labour market. Training is provided in the form of standard and extended apprenticeships. Since Sep 2022, participants also have the option of switching to apprenticeships for the acquisition of partial skills if there is reason to assume that they cannot complete standard or extended apprenticeships.

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<sup>87</sup> Source: Social Affairs Ministry Service (2024), #change annual report BÖP 2023.



As at 1 Jan 2024, a total of 198 people participated in the IBL programme, whereof 194 were trained in apprenticeships and four retained for the legally defined period following apprenticeships. Roughly €55.4m were spent on integration enterprises under the Compensatory Levy Fund (*Ausgleichstaxfonds*) in 2023.

# 4 Activities of the European Union

## 4.1 European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the most important and oldest (established in 1957) financial instrument of the European Union (EU) for social policy and investing in people. It aims to improve employment and educational opportunities as well as economic and social cohesion in the EU. Among other things, the ESF co-finances national, regional and local projects designed to enhance labour market integration and increase employment rates. The financial resources from the fund are managed and implemented directly through the Member States.

In the current programming period 2021-2027, Austria may claim €409m for this purpose. The priorities defined in the programme include: promoting balanced labour force participation of women and men, active ageing, active inclusion, support for young people in schools and at the transition from school to training and work, access to lifelong learning and social innovation.

**Special emphasis is placed on providing support to young people.** Adolescents and young adults who are neither in training nor in employment (NEETs) are one of the risk groups in the labour market. The aim of policies and programmes funded by the ESF is to assist them on their way back to training and to offer flanking measures to ensure stabilisation and personal development.

Early leaving from education or training will reduce future life and career opportunities and will contribute to heightened personal risks such as health hazards, social exclusion or unemployment over the course of a lifetime. In most cases, these young people have longer-lasting problems in terms of learning success, skills acquisition and motivation. There are other factors that come into play including psycho-social problems and insufficient or belated support for these young people. The measures implemented to reduce early school leaving address these problems, which occur both at the school level and at the transition from school to training and work, with the topics of sustainability and digital skills forming an important reference framework in this context.

By the end of 2023, around 93,000 trainees had already taken part in the measures implemented by the ESF to keep pupils in training by, for instance, providing learning support and advice or intensive training in German, Mathematics and Science.

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

## 4.2 European Youth Guarantee

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

The Council Recommendation '**A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee**' of autumn 2020 **extended the age group to all young people under 30** and made a **stronger distinction between temporary and longer-term NEETs**. The **focus should now be more on the second group**, which is likely to require enhanced individual support, coaching, more basic skills, etc. In addition, the role of **skills needed for transition towards a more digital and greener economy** is to be strengthened.

Youth Guarantee schemes are to be structured around four phases: stocktaking (mapping), information (outreach), preparation and offer.

- **Stocktaking/Mapping:** identifying the target group, available offers and skills needs. Enabling improved prevention through early warning systems and measures.
- **Information/Outreach:** a communication and contact strategy, in particular for members of disadvantaged groups (cf. EducationTraining till 18, open youth work).
- **Preparation:** develop individualised action plans that take into account young people's needs. Performing counselling, guidance and mentoring. Enhancing digital skills with preparatory training. Assessing, improving and validating other important skills.

- **Offer:** Is to be targeted and well designed, meet existing standards in terms of quality and equity (such as fair working conditions, access to social protection or minimum standards for internships) and ensure that young people continue to be supported after successful placement.

Austria's implementation strategy revolves around the Education Training till 18, ÜBA, Youth Coaching, Fit for Training and Training Guarantee till age 25 schemes (see item 3.3).

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

### 4.3 ERASMUS+

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027. Erasmus+ provides opportunities for adolescents and young adults to gain experiences abroad by studying, working or volunteering in other European countries.

Alongside the 27 EU Member States the following countries participate in the programme: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. Following Brexit, the United Kingdom left the programme on 1 Jan 2021. However, ongoing projects with UK participation from the old programme (2014-2020) or mobilities to the United Kingdom that had been approved before this date can still be carried out.

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

Moreover, Erasmus+ has a systemic impact by strengthening a sustainable and horizontal internationalisation of the Austrian education system, from pre-school via all forms of schools and higher education establishments to adult education, by supporting education policy priorities and by promoting instruments of transparency and recognition as well as

Europe-wide networks. The programme also includes initiatives for excellence such as the European Universities, Joint Masters, Centres of Vocational Excellence, Jean Monnet Actions (European studies) and Erasmus+ Teacher Academies.

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

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

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

## 4.4 Recovery and Resilience Facility

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is the European Union's economic policy response to the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Presented by the European Commission at the peak of the pandemic in May 2020 and adopted in February 2021, it has a total volume of up to €648bn<sup>88</sup>. The Member States had to submit so-called Recovery and Resilience Plans on how they intend to use the funds. These plans were subject to the approval of the European Commission and are currently being implemented. They include criteria that must be met by the Member States, otherwise there will be deductions or (in extreme cases) non-disbursement of the funds. Unlike agricultural and cohesion policy funds, the RRF is a temporary instrument. The funds must be spent by the end of 2026 at the latest. According to a predetermined allocation key, investments must focus on green and digital transition, i.e. on areas that improve the countries' future growth prospects

Young people in particular benefit(ed) from these efforts to stabilise and stimulate the economy as they usually are the first to be affected by unemployment during economic

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<sup>88</sup> At 2022 prices; €357bn financial assistance and €291bn loans.

crises. Young people also benefit from labour market relevant instruments already in place (training bonus, requalification and further training programmes). A programme that is explicitly co-financed by RRF funds and targeted at young people is Youth Coaching (see also item 3.3.2).

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## Abbreviations

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
AHS	Academic secondary school - <i>Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule</i>
AI	Artificial intelligence
AMIS	Labour market information system - <i>Arbeitsmarktinformationssystem</i>
AUL	Add-on course - <i>Aufbaulehrgang</i>
BABE	Disability, training, employment - <i>Behinderung, Ausbildung, Beschäftigung</i>
BAG	Vocational Training Act - <i>Berufsausbildungsgesetz</i>
BAS	(Vocational) Training Assistance - <i>Berufsausbildungsassistenz</i>
BBO-Tool	Education and vocational guidance tool - <i>Bildungs- und Berufsorientierungstool</i>
BHS	College of higher vocational education - <i>Berufsbildende höhere Schule</i>
BibEr	Education-related career monitoring survey - <i>Bildungsbezogenes Erwerbskarrierenmonitoring</i>
BJV	Youth representatives at the federal level - <i>Bundesjugendvertretung</i>
BKA	Federal Chancellery - <i>Bundeskanzleramt</i>
BMAW	Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy - <i>Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Wirtschaft</i>
BMBWF	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research - <i>Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung</i>
BMHS	Schools of intermediate and colleges of higher vocational education - <i>Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen</i>
BMS	School of intermediate vocational education - <i>Berufsbildende mittlere Schule</i>
BMSGPK	Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection - <i>Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz</i>
BS	Vocational Schools - <i>Berufsbildende Schulen</i>

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
DWH	Data Warehouse
EdL	Supplementary differentiated description of a pupil's performance - <i>Ergänzende differenzierende Leistungsbeschreibung</i>
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ERASMUS+	Funding programme of the European Union
EU	European Union
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Union
HAK	Business college - <i>Handelsakademie</i>
HAS	Business school (intermediate level) - <i>Handelsschule</i>
HLPS	Higher vocational college for nursing and social care - <i>Höhere Lehranstalt für Pflege und Sozialbetreuung</i>
Ibobb	Information, counselling and guidance on education and career - <i>Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf</i>
ICT	Information and communication technology
IESG	Act on Wage Compensation from the Insolvency Contingency Fund - <i>Insolvenz-Entgeltsicherungsgesetz</i>
IFA	International Young Workers - <i>Internationaler Fachkräfteaustausch - Exchange</i>
iKM PLUS	Individual competence measurement PLUS - <i>Individuelle Kompetenzmessung PLUS</i>
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LA	Teaching profession - <i>Lehramt</i>
LAP	Final apprenticeship examination - <i>Lehrabschlussprüfung</i>
LBVO	Performance Evaluation Ordinance - <i>Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung</i>
LFBAG	Act on Vocational Training in Agriculture and Forestry - <i>Land- und Forstwirtschaftliches Berufsausbildungsgesetz</i>
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MIT	Mobile Intercultural Team - <i>Mobiles interkulturelles Team</i>

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
MS	Compulsory secondary school - <i>Mittelschule</i>
NEBA	Employment Assistance Network - <i>Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz</i>
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PES	Public employment service
PTS	Pre-vocational school - <i>Polytechnische Schule</i>
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SPF	Special educational needs - Sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf
ÜBA	Supra-company apprenticeship training scheme - Überbetriebliche Lehre



**Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy**

Stubenring 1, A-1010 Vienna

+43 1 711 00-0

[bmaw.gv.at](http://bmaw.gv.at)