



Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills

Full Country Report – Austria

Written by Gerhard Bisovsky
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CONTENTS

1.0	COUNTRY OVERVIEW	6
1.1	Trends for the entire population	6
1.2	Trends for low qualified adults	9
2.0	BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM	12
2.1	Main features and a concise summary of historic development	12
2.2	Provision	15
3.0	ADULT LEARNING POLICIES.....	20
3.1	Context.....	20
3.2	Adult learning policy framework	22
3.3	National quantitative policy targets.....	28
3.4	Quality assurance.....	31
3.5	Future policy developments	31
4.0	INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS	34
4.1	Total investment in adult learning and change over time	34
4.2	Public national investment.....	35
4.3	EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)	36
4.4	Effectiveness of investment	37
5.0	ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY	39
5.1	Develop learners' interest in learning	42
5.2	Increase employers' investment in learning	42
5.3	Improve equity of access for all.....	43
5.4	Deliver learning that is relevant	43
5.5	Deliver learning of high quality.....	43
5.6	Ensure coherent policy.....	43
6.0	STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM	45
6.1	Strengths	45
6.2	Weaknesses.....	46
7.0	FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED.....	47
8.0	SUMMARY.....	49
9.0	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	52
	ANNEXES	57
	Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws	57
	Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions.....	58

1.0 COUNTRY OVERVIEW

1.1 Trends for the entire population

1.1.1 Employment rate – entire population

Table 1.1: Evolution of employment rate - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

Geographical area	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	67.9	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70	71	75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment	77-78
Member State	70.7	70.4	73.9	74.2	74.4	74.6	74.2	74.3	74.8		

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa_ergaed*, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the average employment rate of the population (ISCED all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given Member State over the period 2000-2016 to EU targets and average, including the EU2020 target, national 2020 targets and the average EU employment rate for 2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

The employment rate was 74.8% in Austria in 2016 compared a EU2020 target of 75%. The EU 2020 target of 75% employment rate is expected to be reached in the next year. The economic data underlines this development: GDP growth is expected to rise up to 1.7% in 2017 and to continue at this level in 2018. The employment rate is expected to increase to 1.0% in 2017 and 0.9% in 2018 (DG ECFIN 2017, WKO 2017).

-Comparison to National 2020 target

The national employment rate at 74.8% for 2016 is below the national 2020 target of 77-78%.

It is still a major challenge to reach this ambitious national target by 2020 (77-78%). At the same time, the employment rate of older workers is increasing as a result of previous pension reforms. The labour supply is also due to the increasing participation of women in the labour market. Furthermore, a constant flow of foreign workers caused by traditional migration is to be expected, too. Whether these developments are supported by economic growth ultimately depends on the development of the global economy on the one hand, and how much Austria can strengthen its export quota on the other hand. Actually, the main growth drivers, private consumption and investment, as well as the effects of the tax reform contribute to the growth of economy (WKO 2017). The West-South-East divide in

the production of material goods seems problematic in this context because it has led to stronger economic growth in the West and South than in the East. There is also a West-East divide concerning the employment market. In the West, the number of employees has risen more than in the East. In the West, the unemployment rate has dropped, whereas in Vienna, the unemployment rate has increased (East) (WIFO 2017).

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The national data 2016 shows a good performance compared to the EU-28 average. The employment rate was 74.8% in Austria in 2016 compared to 71% for EU-28.

-Evolution over time

Despite some gentle fluctuations, the employment rate increased overall between 2000 and 2016, from 70.7% to 74.8%.

The employment rate reached a temporary peak in 2013, and, after a decrease in the past two years, there was again an increase supported by the economic growth and by the positive effects of the tax reform, reaching the highest level so far.

1.1.2 Participation rate – entire population

Table 1.2: Evolution of participation rate in education and training - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

Geographical area	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	9.6	9.3	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.7	10.8		
Member State	8.3	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.2	14.1	14.3	14.4	14.9	15% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL)	20

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and age (%), Eurostat code trng_lfse_01, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 to EU data over the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

At 14.9% in 2016, participation in lifelong learning in Austria is very close to the EU2020 target of 15% for 2020. It is to expect that the EU2020 target will be reached by 2017 or 2018 at the latest. The increase of 0.5 percentage points from 2015 until 2016 is due to

an increase of groups with lower educational attainment (ISCED 0-2 + 0.6 percentage points) and middle educational attainment (ISCED 3-4 + 0.7 percentage points).¹

- *Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016*

The difference between the Austrian figures (14.9% in 2016) and the EU-28 average (10.8%) of 4.1 percentage points shows that participation in education and training in Austria has grown disproportionately high. This is because of:

- *The Austrian adult education landscape, e.g. the high degree of institutionalisation, combined with a cooperative adult education policy that focuses on qualification, upskilling measurements and on personal education;*
- *The Adult Education Initiative with its free courses for basic education and compulsory education for adults;*
- *Second chance education programmes like General Higher Education Entrance Exam (Berufsreifeprüfung);*
- *The Public Employment Service with its programmes and courses for unemployed and*
- *The many courses for refugees.*
- *Evolution over time*

The participation rate has increased from 8.3% in 2000 to 14.9% in 2016.

The time scale shows a slight increase in participation in education and training. From 2015 until 2016, people with lower and intermediate educational attainment have increased their participation in a remarkable way². The author is of the opinion that this growth is the result of various educational measures such as the basic education programme (Basisbildung) and the compulsory education programme within the Adult Education Initiative for people with an educational level below ISCED 2). In addition to that, the General Higher Education Entrance Exam (Berufsreifeprüfung) enables people, with a certificate of Vocational Schools and of the School for Intermediate Vocational Education, to access the tertiary sector.

Within the frame of the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy (LLL: 2020), the ambitious target has been set to achieve a participation rate of 20% by 2020, but it is not expected that this goal can be achieved, as this would mean growth rates of 1.3 percentage points per year.

¹ <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

² Eurostat. Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and educational attainment level

1.2 Trends for low qualified adults

1.2.1 Share of low qualified adults

Table 1.3: Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	30.6	27.3	26.6	25.8	24.8	24.1	23.5	23
Member State	:	19.6	17.6	17.6	17.1	17	16.1	15.4	15.5

Source: Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%), Eurostat edat_lfse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: this table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) in 2016 to the EU-28 average for 2016 and the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

15.5% of the population had low qualifications (ISCED 0-2) in Austria in 2016 compared to 23% at EU-28 according to Table 1.4. The difference to the EU-28 average has decreased from 8.1 percentage points in 2015 to 7.5 points in 2016. The slight growth of 0.1 percent points of the rate of lowly qualified adults has to be seen in view of the low qualification level of many refugees.³

- Evolution over time

The educational level of the Austrian population has steadily risen over the last decade, while the proportion of low-skilled people has declined. The share of low qualified adults has increased from 19.6% in 2005 to 15.5% in 2016. The slight growth of the rate of low qualified people is affected by the low qualification level of many refugees. Women still have a particularly strong upturn in terms of their levels of qualification, however, there is still the gender gap: in 2014, 22.7% of women only had compulsory education, while in men the figure was 15.5% (Statistik Austria).⁴ According to the author, these figures still depend on the prevalent conservative role models in Austrian society. Women in rural regions and women with migrant background have more often a low educational attainment (cf. Women's Report 2010).⁵

³ ECO Austria. Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung. Press release. Tuesday, 4th April 2017

⁴ Statistik Austria (2013). p 130

http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bildung_und_kultur/bildungsstand_der_bevoelkerung/index.html [accessed 05.10.2016]

⁵ <https://www.bmb.gv.at/frauen/publikationen/frauenbericht2010.html> [accessed 05.10.2016]

1.2.2 Employment rate of low skilled adults

Table 1.4: Employment rates of low skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	55.7	53.8	53.4	52.7	52	52.6	53.2	54.3
Member State	52.8	51.9	54.8	55.1	54.7	54.1	53	52.9	53.9

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code Ifsa_ergaed, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the EU average over the period 2010-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The employment rate of low-skilled adults (53.9% in 2016) is 0.4 percentage points below the EU-28 average (54.3% in 2016). Germany, which is partially comparable to Austria, is also significantly better off with a 59.5 per cent employment rate for low-qualified adults. The integration of older people, many of whom have low skills, is still a challenge for labour market policy. Many first-generation and second-generation migrants have low qualifications and have not improved them over the years by continuing education. This means that they are replaced by young and better-qualified migrants on the labour market. Austria is currently working on an employment programme that provides 20,000 jobs for the older unemployed.⁶

-Evolution over time

Tale 1.4 shows a general increase in the employment rates of low-skilled adults up until the year 2011, where it reached its highest peak (52.8% in 2000, compared to 55.1% in 2011). Since then, the rate has fallen slightly to its current rate of 53.9% in. Additionally, a low participation rate in adult education and training is another factor. The economic growth has shown an increase in the employment rate in general, but this growth has not led to a substantial reduction in the unemployment rate of low-skilled people. Part-time employment mainly for low-skilled people has increased.⁷ The new employment programme currently under way might improve this situation within the job market.

⁶https://www.sozialministerium.at/site/Service_Medien/News_Veranstaltungen/News/Sozialminister_Stoeger_s_tellt_Aktion_20_000_vor [29-05-2017]

⁷ See: http://bis.ams.or.at/qualibarometer/berufsbereich.php?id=93&show_detail=1&query= [22-10-2017]

1.2.3 Participation rate of low skilled adults

Table 1.5: Participation rate of low skilled adults – EU average in comparison to national average

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	3.7	3.9	4	3.9	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.2
Member State	2.5	4.5	4.6	4.3	5.1	4.8	5	4.5	5.1

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and educational attainment (%), Eurostat code and trng_ifse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 with low qualification levels (ISCED levels 0-2) to EU data and over the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

Participation rates in education and training of low skilled adults was 5.1% in 2016 at the national level, above the rate seen for EU-28 (4.2%).

The increase of the participation rate of people with lower educational attainment has been at a higher rate than the increase at the EU-28 average in recent years. Austria showed a remarkable growth in the participation in adult education and training of people with an educational attainment level ISCED 0-2 and ISCED 3-4 from 2015 until 2016. This growth was due to the Adult Education Initiative (programmes for basic education and compulsory education) and by the General Higher Education Entrance Exam (Berufsreifeprüfung). These measures offered people, with a certificate of Vocational Schools and of School for Intermediate Vocational Education, access to the tertiary sector.

-Evolution over time

There was an increase in the participation rate of low qualified adults overall between 2.5% in 2000 and 5.1% in 2016, although the rate has fluctuated somewhat over this time. When the Adult Education Initiative started, the educational programmes were expanded in the following years in a way that meant that the level of 5.1% participation could be maintained.

2.0 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

2.1 Main features and a concise summary of historic development

Terminology

Adult education is generally understood as permanent and continuing education in Austria. The common terms "adult education" (Erwachsenenbildung) and "continuing education" (Weiterbildung) are used synonymously in Austria.⁸ Adult Education is defined in the agreement between the federal state and the provinces for the Quality Framework "AT-Cert". The term adult education begins after the completion of a first education phase, and encompasses a broad spectrum of topics. These topics include general and academic education, vocational training, health education, creative education, basic education as well as education for the acquisition of school degrees or for university entrance (called Second Chance Courses, in German: Zweiter Bildungsweg). Organisational actions are based on educational policies, social responsibility, and legal and financial foundations.

The Adult Education Landscape

Quantitatively speaking, adult education is the largest, most diverse and most changing part of education in Austria. The adult education landscape which is marked by a variety of organisations, institutions and agencies is governed by public funding and educational requirements and also includes an educational market which is controlled by supply and demand. The increasing importance of lifelong learning corresponds to a growth of providers in the public and private sectors.

Formal sector

In the formal sector of education, Adult Education is operated by schools and universities: schools for working people, Evening Academic Secondary Schools (Abendgymnasien) and postgraduate offers of universities. The Danube University Krems, Austria, focuses on postgraduate adult education.

Furthermore, the final examinations for apprentices (Lehrabschlussprüfungen) in the field of adult education are taken at the Chamber of Commerce, similarly to the final examinations in the field of agriculture, forestry and the industrial master examination for adults (Werkmeisterprüfung).

Both university entrance exams, the General Higher Education Entrance Examination for Leavers of the Apprenticeship Training and VET Schools (Berufsbereifungsprüfung) and the Limited Higher Education Entrance Examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfung) enable people without Matura (general or specific qualification for university entrance, A-levels)

⁸ Gruber, E., Maschinda, A., Schlager, J. (2012). Der Begriff der „Erwachsenenbildung“ im ASVG. Hat der Verwaltungsgerichtshof dafür eine zutreffende Auslegung gefunden? In: Die Österreichische Volkshochschule Nr. 244. P 4-8. http://magazin.vhs.or.at/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/OVH_Magazin_244_02_2012.pdf [accessed 03.09.2016]

to access the tertiary sector. The Berufsreifeprüfung consists of three academic examinations (German, a foreign language and mathematics) as well as an examination in a subject area, which includes the recognition of the competencies acquired in the profession. In principle, it entitles the holder to study any discipline at university level, while the Studienberechtigungsprüfung qualifies the holder for a specific and defined course of study. The external examination for university entrance (Externistenreifeprüfung) is a full A-level exam, which also allows access to all fields of study. Some of these exams and most of the exam preparation are offered by organisations of adult education that are attributed to the non-formal sector where a legally defined cooperation between formal and non-formal takes place.

These activities are regulated by the law. In some cases, they are financed entirely by the state (e.g. evening schools for working people, Abendgymnasien). A mixed financing that includes public subsidies and fees paid by participants is also possible.

The non-formal sector

A wide range of organisations and institutions operate in the non-formal sector. In addition to many private organisations (schools, management schools, training institutes and single person businesses) and in-company trainings, non-profit adult education institutions members in the Conference of Adult Education (KEBÖ) constitute the core of the Austrian adult education system.

Overall ten non-profit federal institutions are active in the KEBÖ.

Attributed to the social partners:

- The Austrian Vocational Training Institute – Employees (Berufsförderungsinstitut);
- The Austrian Chamber of Commerce’s Institute for Economic Promotion – Employers (Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut); and the
- Rural Continuing Education Institute – (Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut). The biggest provider of adult Education in Austria:
- The Austrian Association of Adult Education Centres (Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen), is the biggest provider of adult education in Austria.

Other typical general education institutions in KEBÖ are:

- The Working Group of Austrian Residential Colleges (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bildungshäuser);
- The Network of Austrian Adult Education Institutes (Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke); and
- The Forum of Catholic Adult Education (Forum Katholischer Erwachsenenbildung).

Other members of the KEBÖ are:

- The Economic Society of Austria (Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft Österreichs) which is devoted to economic education; and the

- Association of Austrian Trade Union Education (Verband Österreichischer Gewerkschaftlicher Bildung).

Moreover, the Austrian Library Association (Büchereiverband Österreichs) is another member of KEBÖ. The Austrian Library Association is the umbrella organisation of 2,600 public libraries⁹ through which informal learning is also represented.

The Federal Institute for Adult Education - Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung (bifeb) plays an important role in the Austrian adult education system. It is a unit of the Ministry of Education entrusted with the task of development and professionalisation of adult education, based on the Austrian law for the Promotion of Adult Education.

Numerous smaller organisations have emerged. They operate with expertise and specialise in the Austrian adult education system as part of the expansion of project activities, especially in the area of the European Social Fund.

The Public Employment Service

A substantial part of the Austrian adult education landscape is covered by the activities and measures of the Public Employment Service (AMS)¹⁰ Adult education institutions as well as numerous private organisations and associations, many of which are active throughout the country, run on behalf of the Public Employment Service. These organisations offer training to the unemployed as well as numerous consulting activities that target labour market integration. The Employment Service also promotes individual training of employees, e.g., for long term unemployed, for women over 45, etc. The Public Employment Service is funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the measures for the unemployed and job seekers are free of charge for participants.

Vouchers and Individual Learning Accounts

Educational vouchers and individual learning accounts also play an important role in fostering participation in adult education. These forms of individual training promotion are awarded by the Chambers of Labour in all nine provinces of Austria. The provinces themselves also support the training of people to varying degrees.¹¹ A more recent study by Hefler et al¹² identified about 245 measures for supporting individuals into further education.

⁹ <https://www.bvoe.at/epaper/leitbild/>

¹⁰ The coverage of formal and informal training by the Public Employment Service (AMS) is estimated at 9,65 % measured by the participation rate. If we look only to the unemployed persons the coverage rate is counted at 25,13 % (Steiner/Vogtenhuber 2014, p 15)

¹¹ Wagner, E. (2007). Die österreichische Förderlandschaft: ausgewählte Instrumente zur Unterstützung individueller Weiterbildungsaktivitäten. http://erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/07-2/meb07-2_12_wagner.pdf [accessed 03.09.2016]

¹² Hefler, G., Markowitsch, J. & Fleischer, V. (2013). Diffusion und Handlungslogiken nach-frageorientierter Kofinanzierung individueller beruflicher Weiterbildung in Österreich. In: Bernd Käßplinger, Rosemarie Klein & Erik Haberzeth (Hrsg.), Weiterbildungsgutscheine. Wirkungen eines Finanzierungsmodells in vier europäischen Ländern (S. 347–377). Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.

The latest figures from Eurostat also in terms of participation in formal education and training are presented in table 2.1 below. The figures offer a breakdown by educational level, and indicates that over 25 year olds engaged in formal adult learning, are mostly participating at a Masters or equivalent level.

Table 2.1 Number of participants in formal education and training by level of education and age

	Age 20-24	Age 25+	Total
Level of education (i.e. basic, vocational, higher)			
Primary	0	0	0
Lower secondary	1	0	
Upper secondary	21,304	10,342	31,646
Post-secondary non-tertiary education		9,179	
Short-cycle tertiary education		16,776	
Bachelor's or equivalent level		67,037	
Master's or equivalent level		88,159	
Doctoral or equivalent level		23,534	

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat database table "Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ_uoe_enra02)", accessed 2017.08.21

2.2 Provision

2.2.1 Helps adults improve their Basic Skills

Both basic education and compulsory education for adults are carried out within the framework of the Adult Education Initiative. Both program areas are implemented free of charge in a cooperation between the state and the provinces. The basic education program includes learning German, foreign language skills (mainly English) as well as mathematical and digital skill.

From 2012 until autumn 2014 8,983 people participated in the basic education programme.¹³

¹³ Stoppacher, P. and Edler, M. under cooperation of Reinbacher-Fahrner, K. (2014). Evaluation der ersten Periode der Initiative Erwachsenenbildung. Institut für Arbeitsmarktbetreuung und Forschung. https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/Evaluation_Abschlussbericht.pdf [accessed 03-09-2016]

2.2.2 *Helps adults achieve a Recognised Qualification*

The programme for compulsory education in the Initiative is based on the Federal Law on the Acquisition of Compulsory Education by Adolescents and Adults, and comprises four fields of competence: German, English, mathematics and professional orientation and at least two optional modules: Creativity and Design, Health and Social, Nature and Technology.

From 2012 until autumn 2014, 4,708 people participated in the compulsory education programme.¹⁴

Second Chance Education includes the Higher Education Entrance Examination (Berufsreifeprüfung) or the Limited Higher Education Entrance Examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfung).¹⁵

The most attractive form in the Second Chance Education is the Berufsreifeprüfung, which accounts for two thirds of the Second Chance Education. In 2016, 6% of the university students in the first semester completed a Berufsreifeprüfung.¹⁶

Not all graduates in Second Chance Education begin a study programme. According to the estimates of the author only about one third will proceed to further academic education. All forms mentioned above are offered by the adult education system, both by the non-formal and the formal sector as well as by private schools.

2.2.3 *Helps adults develop other knowledge and skills, not for vocational purposes*

The provision of adult education, which is not directly vocationally oriented, amounts to approximately 48% of the total portfolio of the KEBÖ¹⁷ and focus mainly on the following subject areas: basic education; society, policy and science; languages; personality and communication; life orientation; health, wellness and sports as well as art and creativity. General education and civic education are of great importance, as is health. The two most important disciplines related to the entire range of non-vocational adult education are society, politics and science (29.84%) and health, wellness and sports (28.33%). The subject area of art and creativity comprises just over 16% of the provision, and personality and communication slightly more than 11%. However, it should be emphasised that there

¹⁴ Stoppacher, P. and Edler, M. under cooperation of Reinbacher-Fahrner, K. (2014). Evaluation der ersten Periode der Initiative Erwachsenenbildung. Institut für Arbeitsmarktbetreuung und Forschung. https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/Evaluation_Abschlussbericht.pdf [accessed 03-09-2016]

¹⁵ Definitions see chapter 2.1

¹⁶ Zaussinger, S., Unger, M., Thaler, B., Dibiasi, A., Grabher, A., Terzieva, B., Litofcenko, J., Binder, D., Brenner, J., Stjepanovic, S., Mathä, P., Kulhanek, A., with the cooperation of Fochler, G. and Schwarzenbacher, I. (2016). Studierenden- Sozialerhebung 2015. Bericht zur sozialen Lage der Studierenden. Band 1: Hochschulzugang und StudienanfängerInnen. Studie im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft (BMFWF). Wien: Institute for Advanced Studies

¹⁷ Reference is made here to the available data from the statistics of the Conference on Adult Education in Austria (KEBÖ).

are also numerous offers in these categories which are relevant to the working world as well as to specific professions.¹⁸

2.2.4 Facilitates Transition to the Labour Market for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)

The labour market service is responsible for the transition of unemployed people into the labour market and for the training of risk groups. In August 2017, a total of 63,300 people were involved in training measures by the labour market service, i.e. 20% of all people registered as unemployed. These training courses are carried out by adult education institutions and private training organisations.

A large number of measures are being implemented for refugees, as a result of which statistics on the labour market service show an increase of 26.6% in the "foreigners" category of the participants' figures.

2.2.5 Opens up Higher Education to adults

The Austrian Law for the Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz) prescribes the general university entrance qualification or a relevant professional qualification as entrance requirements. Thus, the Universities of Applied Sciences offer basic access to Higher Education (ISCED 6) without an A-level exam.

The Danube University Krems¹⁹ is the only Austrian university, which focused on further education. In cooperation with companies, it offers numerous master courses for further education, which have specific access requirements and, above all, build on relevant professional competences.

The study courses are designed to accompany participants' jobs and take account of adult-oriented learning through a specific didactic concept.²⁰

Almost a tenth of the 53,000 new students annually (9%) come to the university through the Second Chance Education²¹ described in chapter 2.2.2.

2.2.6 Enables adult employees to develop their work-related skills

A wide range of adult education supports professionals to improve and develop their skills. A little more than half (51.45%) of the non-formal adult education provided by the

¹⁸ Vater, S., Zwiehler, P. (2016). Berufliche Bildung an Volkshochschulen. In: Die Österreichische Volkshochschule. Online: <http://magazin.vhs.or.at/magazin/2016-2/258-april-2016/schwerpunkt-berufliche-und-berufsbezogene-bildung/berufliche-bildung-an-volkshochschulen/> [accessed 16.09.2017]

¹⁹ <https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/index.php>

²⁰ <https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/universitaet/ueberuns/didaktisches-leitbild/index.php>

²¹ Zaussinger, S., Unger, M., Thaler, B., Dibiasi, A., Grabher, A., Terzieva, B., Litofcenko, J., Binder, D., Brenner, J., Stjepanovic, S., Mathä, P., Kulhanek, A., with the cooperation of Fochler, G. and Schwarzenbacher, I. (2016). Studierenden- Sozialerhebung 2015. Bericht zur sozialen Lage der Studierenden. Band 1: Hochschulzugang und StudienanfängerInnen. Studie im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft (BMWFW). Wien: Institute for Advanced Studies. p.62.

Conference of Adult Education of Austria (KEBÖ) constitutes of continuing vocational training in these fields: second chance education ; languages; IT; health, wellness, sports; business, services and train-the-trainer.²²

The micro-census workforce survey 2016 shows the demand for vocational adult education: the most popular fields of training are services with 26%; business, administration and law (15%); as well as health and social services (14%).

Table 2.2 Participation in courses and trainings in the past 4 weeks to fields of qualifications

Participation in courses and trainings in the past 4 weeks to fields of qualifications (ISCED-F 2013) – Average of year 2016	25-65 yrs. old					
	Total	Male	Female	Total in %		
Total	541,7	232,6	309,1			
Social Sciences, Journalism and Information	6,5	(x)	(3,9)	1,21%		
Economics, Administration and Law	82,0	44,5	37,5	15,13 %		
Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	(5,0)	(x)	(x)	0,92%		
IT and Communication technologies	22,4	14,4	8,0	4,13%		
Engineering, Manufacturing Industries and Construction Industry	29,8	23,8	(6,0)	5,50%		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing Industry and Veterinary Medicine	18,6	12,0	6,7	3,44%		
Health and Social Services	74,4	19,9	54,4	13,73 %		
Service Sector	141,2	62,0	79,2	26,07 %		

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, Mikrozensus-Arbeitskräfteerhebung (Jahresdurchschnitt über alle Wochen). Erstellt am 29.03.2017. Bevölkerung in Privathaushalten ohne Präsenz- und Zivildienst. - Hochgerechnete Zahlen aus einer 0,6%-Quartalsstichprobe. - () Werte mit weniger als hochgerechnet 6.000 Personen sind sehr stark zufallsbehaftet. - (x) Werte mit weniger als 3.000 Personen sind statistisch nicht interpretierbar.

²² 29. KEBÖ-Statistik 2014 und Fachbereiche KEBÖ 29. Statistik, own calculations.
<http://www.adulteducation.at/de/struktur/keboe/auswertungen/> [accessed 19.09.2017]

Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills
Full country report - Austria

The Adult Education Survey demonstrates the importance of training offered by employers. Almost the same proportion of people have participated in non-formal adult education (25.3%) or in education provided by their own employer (26.9%) (Statistik Austria 2013, p.83-84). Women participate significantly less in training provided by their own employer than men (23.7%vs. 29.9%), whereas women are more frequently enrolled in formal institutions of adult education (26.2%vs. 24.4%).

3.0 ADULT LEARNING POLICIES

3.1 Context

3.1.1 Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning

At the federal level, several ministries partake in adult education policy. Among them, the Ministry of Education with its Department II/ 5 (Adult Education Department) is the most important.

The Ministry of Education governs adult education in particular through grants, projects and programme management but also through the creation of legislative proposals.

Furthermore, the provinces and the municipalities also play an important role in adult education. On the one hand, the municipalities are responsible for community education, on the other hand, the provinces take care of the funding of adult education by subsidising participants' fees through individual learning accounts.

The Social Partners are also major players in the adult education system. They are increasingly involved in educational initiatives by working in monitoring groups. Moreover, they play a very important role in the legislative process, and are involved in the most crucial national policy developments, e.g. the National Qualifications Framework, the Validation strategy and the Lifelong Learning Strategy. In addition, they are also responsible for adult education organisations.

Adult education institutions and organisations are directly and indirectly involved in many different educational programmes. Numerous experts are active in various working groups of the Lifelong Learning Strategy. The Conference of Adult Education (KEBÖ) as an umbrella organisation plays an important role in the representation of adult education in Austria.

Expert organisations and research institutions, universities and private research institutes are involved in an array of control mechanisms and evaluation processes, thus regularly advising adult education institutions and the government in the development of adult education programmes and measures. The evaluations of measures also contribute significantly to a multi-level governance and should therefore not be underestimated.

Finally, the media play an important role in the governance process, in particular the Internet portal, www.erwachsenenbildung.at, and "Die Österreichische Volkshochschule"²³.

²³ <http://magazin.vhs.or.at/>

Since joining the European Union, recommendations and policy papers as well as projects have brought decisive impulses for adult education and have enhanced cooperation, and thus convey the partial integration of adult education in the education system.

3.1.2 Major national socio-economic strategies governing the provision of Adult Learning

The most important policy document for Austrian adult education is, without a doubt, the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy (LLL: 2020), which is based on educational and socio-economic developments and challenges. The LLL: 2020 strategy was adopted in 2011 by the Austrian federal government. It is remarkable that it was developed under the leadership of four ministries: education, science, business and social affairs.

The strategy includes five guidelines: life-orientation; learner-centered approach; lifelong guidance; competency orientation; and participation in lifelong learning. Furthermore, the strategy encompasses four basic principles, namely, gender and diversity, equity and social mobility, quality and sustainability as well as performance and innovation. The European key competencies for lifelong learning are the continuous reference framework. Of the total of ten action lines, seven relate to adult education (Republik Österreich 2011):

- Action line 3: Free access to basic degrees and basic skills by adults;
- Action line 4: Extension of alternative transitional systems for young people to enter working life;
- Action line 5: Measures for a better reorientation in education and employment, taking into account an appropriate work-life balance;
- Action line 6: Reinforcement of community-education approaches by local authorities and organized civil society;
- Action line 7: Promotion of learn-friendly work environments;
- Action line 8: Continuing education to ensure employability and competitiveness;
- Action line 9: Enriching the quality of life through education in the –post-working life phase; and
- Action line 10: Procedures for the recognition of non-formal and informally acquired knowledge and skills in all education sectors.

The components of each action line are objectives and measures to be implemented. In the years following the adaptation, several provinces have developed LLL strategies which refer to LLL: 2020.

In increasing economic growth and improving employability, the Austrian federal government is focusing on further qualification and an increase in the participation in adult education and LLL.

Risk groups are receiving a lot of attention in several government programs. The Federal Government's 2013-2018 program provides concrete figures. According to the program a special challenge is the approximately 10,000 adolescents of each year who do not have any further training. The early school leaver rate is 7.6% and the rate of persons aged 15-24 with the status of "not in education employment or training" (NEETs) is 6.5%.

All experts agree that an essential basis for the reduction of unemployment is the improvement of the qualifications of the people. People with low educational levels, adolescents and young adults constitute special risk groups in the labour market. It is therefore a declared objective of education and employment policy to raise their level of qualification.

The 'Adult Education Initiative' is the core of the Austrian skills strategy and was launched after several successful projects were evaluated. The 'Initiative' includes standardised free courses for basic education as well as compulsory education for adults, which was introduced by a federal law in 2012.

The aim of the Initiative Educational Guidance and Counselling for adults (Initiative Bildungsberatung Österreich) is to enable more people, than would have otherwise, to gain access to adult education, and to reach especially those with educational and social disadvantages through appropriate approaches such as outreach activities.

In order to make adult education more attractive and more accessible, the state administration is committed to improving quality, transparency and professionalisation. The strategy is carried out with the state supported AT-Cert and the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education, which is funded by the Ministry of Education and the ESF.

3.2 Adult learning policy framework

3.2.1 *A summary of major developments/ changes since 2010*

Policy developments and reforms between September 2013 and September 2017

The following adult education projects can be found in the government programme 2013-2018:

- Extending the existing § 15a²⁴ agreement to complete educational qualifications (basic and compulsory education) and the expansion of educational information and education advice;
- The improvement of the basic skills in professional life and the increase of the participation of all age groups;
- Different measures to raise the employment of women and older people, e.g. further education in the context of retirement or counselling for the re-entry into the labour market and
- The recognition of qualifications and skills.

Basic Skills and Compulsory Education: 'Adult Education Initiative'

The 'Initiative' enables adults who lack basic skills or have never graduated from lower secondary education to continue and finish their education free of charge. The related joint

²⁴ § 15a of the Austrian Federal Constitution foresees a contractual legislation between the federal state and the provinces.

funding programme, financed by the Federal State and the provinces and co-financed by the ESF, aimed at a quantitative expansion and a qualitative development of education programmes concerning compulsory education certificates and literacy/ numeracy/ basic education between 2012 and 2014. The 'Initiative' is based on a common Austrian-wide curriculum and a quality framework for the accreditation of providers, concepts and teachers.

The council of the ministers (Ministerrat) prolonged the 'Initiative' for a period of four years (2018-2021) in June 2017. It is expected to reach some 27,000 people - of which 18,000 are in basic education and 9,000 in compulsory education.²⁵

Guidance and Counselling

The extension of guidance and counselling (Bildungsberatung) for adults has become vital as strategic partnerships in all provinces have been formed with social partners, regional governments, the public employment service and other stakeholders

The 'Initiative Education Counselling Austria' was set up by the Ministry of Education in 2011. Free guidance for adults as a first contact point for those interested in education is offered in a comprehensive and provider-neutral information and guidance system. The guidance services offered by networks of projects have been formed in each province. These offers are implemented in different formats and settings. Different target groups are supported through outreach counselling work and various guidance formats.²⁶

Professionalisation: Continuation of the Continuing Education Academy

The Austrian Continuing Education Academy²⁷, which validates the competences of adult educators, is co-financed by ESF until 2018, and a further continuation within the existing ESF-period is expected. The present project includes a research part which deals with the validity of the processes and will contribute to the quality development of the Academy.

Recognition of qualification and skills

The Austrian validation strategy is at the core of this task. The strategy exists in form of a policy paper and work is continued in groups in the fields of quality, professionalisation and system synergies. The adult education sector is directly involved in the processes of putting the strategy into life and could contribute a double perspective on validation, namely on summative validation and on formative validation.

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

The law for the NQF has been adopted by the federal parliament in 2016.

²⁵ https://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten_details.php?nid=11642

²⁶ See http://erwachsenenbildung.at/themen/bildungsberatung/angebot/initiative_eb.php#gesamtinitiative

²⁷ See chapter 3.

Safeguarding the basic structures of adult education

The three-year contracts with the federal institutions of adult education represented by the Conference of Austrian Adult Education (KEBÖ) have been extended from 2016 to 2018.

Contribution to the four priorities of the European Agenda for adult learning

The four priorities of the European Agenda for adult learning are:

Governance, with regard to coherence with other policy areas and improved coordination and effectiveness

Supply and Take up, to gain high quality, especially in basic skills, but also in terms of outreach strategies, counseling and strategies to reach the disadvantaged

Flexibility and Access, for a wider access to lifelong learning. Work-place-learning and the use of digital skills are addressed as well as second chance opportunities to reach persons whose qualifications are below EQF level 4

Quality, with the emphasis on quality improvement and professionalisation, but also on the collection of data to create target group-specific offers.

Governance

The LLL: 2020 strategy includes areas of action in which stock recordings are made as well as areas of action in which strategies are developed, such as the validation strategy.

In addition, the three-year performance contracts of the Ministry of Education with the institutions of adult education can be seen as an instrument of governance. The service contracts include binding targets and operational objectives for the federal associations of adult education, taking into account the specific characteristics of the associations.

The 'Adult Education Initiative', which includes basic and compulsory education, is governed by the cooperation between the federal government and the provinces.

Supply and take up

The measures of the 'Adult Education Initiative' are based on compulsory curricula throughout Austria. The development of the programme is monitored through the involvement of stakeholders and experts.

Outreach strategies have been developed and implemented within the scope of the Austrian Guidance and Counseling Projects.

Flexibility and access

Non-formal and informal learning outcomes are validated by projects such as "You can do it" (Du kannst was) and the Austrian Academy for Continuing Education (Wba). The Austrian Validation Strategy has a special focus on formative as well as on summative validation. Second-chance opportunities for people with qualifications lower than EQF level 4 are provided by the General Higher Education Entrance Examination for Leavers of the Apprenticeship Training and VET (Berufsreifeprüfung) which enables open access to Higher Education for apprentices and people with VET qualifications

Quality

The quality framework for adult education, AT-Cert, aims to ensure the recognition of quality management systems and quality assurance procedures in adult education among the provinces, as well as between the federal government and the provinces. This framework is intended to provide clarity for participants in education measures, for sponsors, and for adult education organisations on the quality management systems and quality assurance procedures recognised in adult education by the contracting parties. In addition, sponsors and adult education organisations should benefit from administrative simplification as a result of the quality framework.

The Austrian Academy for Continuing Education (Wba) also contributes to the professionalisation of individual adult educators by validating their competences in four different adult education areas.

3.2.2 Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning

Law on the National Qualifications Framework

The law on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that came into force on March 15, 2016, regulates the allocation and recognition procedures of qualifications. The structures for the implementation of the NQF and for the recognition procedures are defined by law; adult education is also represented in the governance structure. The assignments of the formal sector are now largely completed; as a next step, the non-formal sector is to be assigned. NQF service bodies will be established, which will advise and support the educational institutions in the process of assigning qualifications.

Integration of Higher Education Entrance Examination (Berufsreifeprüfung) into the standardised High School Exit Exam.

The Higher Education Entrance Examination for Leavers of the Apprenticeship Training and VET (Berufsreifeprüfung) is based on an Austrian-wide obligatory skills-based curriculum and is mainly offered by adult education institutions that are allowed to perform three of four tests themselves, after they have been accredited. The Berufsreifeprüfung has been converted into the standardised Austrian High School Exit Exam (Matura) successfully in the 2017 term.

Limited Higher Education Entrance Examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfung) for all HE institutions

The Limited Higher Education Entrance Examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfung) was regulated for all tertiary institutions in the three respective laws: the University law, the law for the Universities of applied science and the law for Higher Education Act. The study qualification examination prepares for a specific study program. However, the definition of concrete requirements and the content to be tested is decided by the tertiary institutions autonomously.

Training Obligations Act (Ausbildungspflichtgesetz)

This new law which was adopted on June, 30th 2016, regulates a compulsory education until the age of 18. It states that young people should not only obtain compulsory education, but also complete vocational training. This law intends to reduce the number of Early School Leavers and Early Dropouts. Another component of the Trainings Obligations Act is the Adult Education Initiative's compulsory education certificate.²⁸

Guaranteed Training until the Age of 25

The training guarantee was adopted in the summer of 2016, and is aimed at 19-24 year-olds who do not have any qualifications. The Public Employment Service guarantees post-qualification modules to all those who have been registered as unemployed for more than four months.

Prolongation of the Adult Education Initiative

The 'Adult Education Initiative' comprises of two programs, "basic education" and "adult compulsory education". The 'Initiative' is implemented in a co-operation between the federal states and the nine provinces, and is carried out through an agreement in accordance with § 15a of the Austrian Federal Constitution in the form of a uniform legislation between the state and the provinces. In June 2017, the federal government decided to continue the 'Initiative' over a period of four years until 2021. The preceding periods were only three years in each case, with the decision in the council of ministers the duration of the Initiative was extended to four years for the first time. The aim is to reach 18,000 people in the area of basic education and 9,000 in the field of compulsory education. The federal government, the provinces and the European Social Fund provide more than EUR 111.5 million.

Reform of Nursing

The amendment of the Nursing Act from August 2016 includes broad changes within the education and training of the nursing profession.²⁹ Education and training for qualified nursing care provision will be available within bachelor programmes at universities of

²⁸ Steiner et al 2015, p. 68

²⁹ https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160614_OTS0081/oberhauser-pflege-ausbildungsreform-durch-den-ministerrat [accessed 20-09-2017]

applied sciences from 2024 onwards. At the same time, special basic education and training in pediatric nursing and psychiatric nursing will expire in favour of a more generalistic education and training in nursing in general care. The "qualified assistant nurse" is introduced with a two-years' education and training at the Schools of Nursing. The training for the "Care Assistance" lasts one year and is carried out as extra-occupational education by adult education providers.

3.2.3 *Main strategy(-ies)*

Skills strategy

The Austrian skills strategy has been implemented together with the 'Adult Education Initiative' since 2012. The two programmes, namely basic and compulsory education, are offered free of charge. Basic education or measures against functional illiteracy have been carried out in Austria since 1990. Since 2006, there is a central counseling center for basic education, which runs an Austria-wide Alfa telephone. Until the founding of the 'Adult Education Initiative', basic education and compulsory education were financed from project funds. The initiative has resulted in the transition from project funding to programme funding. The aim of the 'Initiative' is to enable young people and adults to acquire basic skills and educational qualifications free of charge - even after completing the school education phase.³⁰

Professionalisation and Quality Assurance

In 2007, the Continuing Education Academy was established by the then Federal Minister of Education and Culture. The Academy was developed jointly by institutions of Austrian adult education with subsidies from the Ministry of Education and the European Social Fund. The Continuing Education Academy validates and accredits the competencies of adult educators, regardless of where they have acquired them. The basic pre-requisite is practical experience in adult education, but non-formal and informally acquired competences are taken into account in the recognition process as well. The Academy is based on a jointly developed curriculum (today: qualification profile) for teaching, counseling, education management and information management and librarianship.

In December 2011, AT-Cert was founded. AT-Cert was developed by scientists, including representatives of the provinces and of the adult education sector. AT-Cert is an supra-regional model for the recognition of quality assurance measures of adult education organisations. AT-Cert recognizes different quality certificates and creates uniform quality standards for education providers all over Austria.

Educational guidance and counseling

In 2011, the Ministry of Education set up the Education Guidance and Counseling Initiative (Initiative Bildungsberatung Österreich). It was based on previous initiatives in all provinces, which were supported by the Ministry of Education and ESF funds. The aim of

³⁰ <https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/initiative-erwachsenenbildung/was-ist-das/>

the Guidance and Counseling Initiative is to offer free advice for adults as a first starting point for educational interests in a nationwide and non-proprietary educational information and counseling system. These consultancy services are offered by project networks set up in each province.³¹

Austrian Validation Strategy

The validation strategy was developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders as well as adult education representatives. The validation strategy provides both summative and formative procedures, which also accounts for practical experience in adult education. Working groups dealing with quality, professionalization, communication and system synergies are working on the implementation of the strategy.

3.2.4 Main implementing act(s)

The Austrian system of adult education with a large number of non-formal providers of adult education generally reacts rapidly and very well to market demand. State intervention is necessary where educational needs cannot be covered by the market. This is especially the case where there are social groups which are exposed to various forms of discrimination, such as those with low educational attainment or those lacking basic skills and qualifications.

The expansion of the 'Adult Education initiative' has succeeded in doubling the number of course places for the period of 2015 to 2017 in comparison with the previous 2-year period. In order to implement the funded measures, training courses for teachers of basic education were also carried out through subsidized projects.

Given the enormous influx of refugees from the summer of 2015 onwards, the federal state as well as the provinces provided additional funds for conducting German courses. The Ministry of Education also provided funds for adult education to offer basic education and compulsory education, as well as counselling and guidance to refugees.

The Recognition Act adopted by Parliament in July 2016 allows for a quicker recognition of the qualifications of refugees.

The Austrian skills strategy will continue to be supported by the educational guidance and counselling projects in all provinces for the years 2015 to 2017 and probably also for the following years. It is co-funded by the ESF.

3.3 National quantitative policy targets

The reintroduction of the specialist grant (Fachkräftestipendium) in 2017 allows the unemployed or people who are qualified for a planned training to acquire skills needed in

³¹ https://erwachsenenbildung.at/themen/bildungsberatung/angebot/initiative_eb.php

areas where a labour shortage prevails. These objectives can be found in the government program 2013-2018 and concern adult education directly or indirectly.

Table 3.1 Targets linked to Adult Learning in broader economic policies/LLL strategies/framework or implementing act

General information		Progress toward target		
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g. 31/03/2018)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against target
Training up to 18. All under 18-year-olds should, if possible, complete an education beyond the compulsory school-leaving certificate.	July 2017	Approx. 5,000 young people leave the training system in Austria each year without having a qualification beyond the compulsory school-leaving certificate.		
Training of all age groups. Increase the participation of all age groups in the training and improvement of basic skills in the professional life by means of further training measures, especially for low-skilled and older workers.	Government program 2013-2018	Numerous measures to improve the basic skills and for the low-skilled implemented by the AMS		A total of € 718 million has been earmarked for the qualification of 239,676 persons who were newly promoted in 2016. This was around 58% of the total funding budget. (Arbeitsmarktservice 2017)
50% of the Public Employment Service funding for women (for example, the development of career guidance and offers for	Government programme 2013-2018		2016: For some 169,000 unemployed or employed women, € 561	Genderbudgeting: The target of 50% has only been reached twice in a period of seven years between 2004 and 2011. (Lutz et.al. 2013)

Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills
Full country report - Austria

professional qualifications) Gender budgeting: at least 50% of the funding for women			million, i.e. 46.2% of the total funding budget, was spent.	
Integration: Acquired qualifications and skills are recognized by Austria, which is the subject of a separate recognition law	12/07/2016	Recognition Act allows a faster accreditation of the qualifications of refugees	Several measures to compile and record the qualifications of refugees by the Public Employment Service.	
2,400 course places for basic education of refugees within the framework of the government's refugee bill	2016 and 2017			2,400 Course places are currently being set up by various Adult Education organizations throughout Austria.
Access to adult education: Extension of the existing agreement pursuant to article 15a of the Austrian constitution for the purpose of completing educational qualifications (basic and compulsory education)	Government programme 2013-2018	18,000 people in basic education and 9,000 in compulsory education.		The 15a agreement has been extended for the period 2015 to 2017.
Expansion of educational guidance and counselling in the field of adult education.	Government programme 2013-2018			In the period 2015-2017, the guidance and counselling projects in all nine provinces will be expanded with additional partners in the networks.

3.4 Quality assurance

Quality management systems are standards in the Austrian adult education landscape that are applied by most organizations. In addition to ISO certificates and TQM certificates, LQW (learner-oriented quality assessment in education and training) is predominantly applied in Austrian adult education. The starting point of LQW is a definition of successful learning, which is the reason why this Quality Management System (QMS) is also preferred by many providers in adult education. Over the last five years there has also been an increase in the number of so-called province certificates (Ländertestate), which regulate the recognition of adult education organisations in the provinces. These certificates are not quality management systems per se, but they can be after several repetitions.

Quality Management Systems are one part of quality assurance. Quality is implemented by the staff members and the teachers, so the quality is also determined by the skills of the staff and instructors in adult education. Quality assurance and quality development are therefore closely related to professionalization. The Academy of Continuing Education is based on a qualification profile (formerly a curriculum) developed specifically for adult education, and validates and certifies the skills of adult educators, thereby contributing to the professionalisation of adult education.

The Austrian-wide test certificate AT-Cert recognises various quality management systems and asks for further proofs from the educational organizations, such as the pedagogical expertise, which can be achieved through various qualifications, including through the Academy of Continuing Education.

In the institutions of adult education, work is also being done to improve the quality of the training staff. For example, the model of classroom observation has been implemented in the Vienna adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) ³², in addition, methods of peer review gain importance. ³³

3.5 Future policy developments

The following topics are discussed at political level as well as in administration and in adult education.

Digitalisation strategy for adult education

Education is one field of action in the Austrian digitization campaign "digital roadmap". Competent management of digital technologies and media is seen as a key qualification for participation in society, for lifelong learning and for increasing the opportunities on the labour market, and thus also as a prerequisite for counteracting the digital divide.³⁴

³² Cf the contributions to classroom observation in:

http://magazin.vhs.or.at/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/OVH_Magazin_251_01_2014.pdf

³³ <http://www.praline-project.eu/>

³⁴ <https://www.digitalroadmap.gv.at/handlungsfelder-und-massnahmen/bildung/>

The measures are, however, exclusively for the school setting; the area of adult education requires an explicit strategy, since the digital gap is not only a question of age but also a social issue.

A first project in the adult education sector, financed by the Ministry of Education, was launched in spring 2017 with the first Adult Education MOOC (massive open online course). This MOOC supported teachers in adult education in acquiring appropriate digital skills and was attended by 3,000 people³⁵. The next Adult Education MOOC will start in October 2017.

A digital strategy for Adult Education should go hand in hand with a strategy on media skills to help people evaluate the character of information offered in the media and to support people in forming an opinion. The "Cooperative System of Adult Education in Austria" which encompasses the AE-Institutions in the Conference for Austrian Adult Education and the Federal Institute for Adult Education is currently working on a profile for media skills within the Continuing Education Academy.

Implementation of the National Qualification Framework (NQF)

The qualifications of the formal sector will be assigned first, this will be followed by the assignment of non-formal qualifications. The question is to what extent the NQF is relevant not only to vocational education and training but to the general adult education sector.

Democracy education and education for Europe

There is a lot of evidence in recently published studies that the acceptance of democracy is slowly declining. While the acceptance is still higher than 50 %, it is further declining. As democracy is a central European value, this question is also connected to education in Europe. There are many small- and middle-scaled projects running in Austria, most of them for pupils. People with low educational attainment and a low skill level according to the PIAAC-study feel powerlessness when participating in political processes. They also talk about mistrust in political institutions and feel very distant to Europe.

The American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859–1952), who significantly influenced adult education, wrote: "Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife."³⁶ This is also valid for adult education and experts demonstrate the big need of adult education in democracy education in scientific studies.³⁷

Pathways in Second Chance Education

Basic education and the access of educational qualifications for adults are referred to as the Second Chance Education. A gap between the compulsory school leaving certificate

³⁵ <https://erwachsenenbildung.at/ebmooc/>

³⁶ Dewey, J. (1916). The Need of an industrial Education in an industrial Society. In: Bodston, Jo Ann: John Dewey. The middle Works 1899-1924. Journal articles, essays and miscellany published in the 1916-1917 period. Volume 10 1916-1917. First published in Manual Training and Vocational Education 17 (1916), p.139.

³⁷ Osztovcics, W., Kovar, A., Fernsebner-Kokert, B. (2017). *Arena Analyse 2017*. Demokratie neu starten. Wien

and the Berufsreifeprüfung or the Studienberechtigungsprüfung remains. This raises the question as to whether this gap can be closed by means of adult education. Can curricula be developed that close the gap between compulsory education and preparation for university entrance?

4.0 INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS

4.1 Total investment in adult learning and change over time

Adult and Continuing Education in Austria is financed by companies, public bodies and participants.

The Adult Education Report 2011 published an analysis of expenditure on adult education based on data from 2006. The total expenditure amounts to EUR 2,390 million, of which the public expenditure of the federal government, the provinces and the municipalities accounts for EUR 293 million (12.3%), the labour market service accounts for EUR 903 million (37.8%) for qualification and employment the enterprises according to CVTS 2 (2005) EUR 728 million (30.5%) and the expenditure of the private persons are estimated at EUR 466 million (19.5%). (Statistik Austria 2012, p 98)

This list still contains many uncertainties. For example, the estimation of the expenditure of private individuals includes only the non-formal adult education and in the CVTS the expenditure of the enterprises under 10 employees is merely an estimation. The federal funding for adult education in the Ministry of Education's budget has more than doubled over the last years, from EUR 20.4 million in 2009³⁸ to EUR 47.2 million in 2016.³⁹ However, the funding for adult education represents only 0.58% of the total Austrian education budget in 2016, which is still far from the long-standing demand of the Conference of Adult Education Institutions (KEBÖ) that at least 1% of the education budget should be spent on adult education.

According to the 2016 annual report, the public employment service has spent EUR 1287 million on employment promotion (Arbeitsmarktservice 2017, p 37). In 2009, almost 1246 million were spent on qualification and activation measures (Arbeitsmarktservice, p 31).

According to CVTS 4 (2010), the company's expenditure on continuing education and training without payroll costs is EUR 749 million.

The CEDEFOP database lists many cost-sharing schemes for financing adult learning. These incentives include: tax incentives for companies or individuals, grants for companies or individuals, vouchers/ individual learning accounts, loans and saving schemes, training leave and payback clauses.

There are many estimates concerning the financial volume of each of these schemes, but, unfortunately, only very few reliable data can be found today (cf. Wagner 2015). The training leave, for example, was used during the financial and economic crisis to maintain the level of employees.

³⁸http://www.rechnungshof.gv.at/fileadmin/downloads/2010/berichte/bundesrechnungsabschluss/BRA_2009_B_and_2.pdf [accessed 26-10-2016]

³⁹ https://service.bmf.gv.at/BUDGET/Budgets/2016/bfg/teilhefte/UG30/UG30_Teilheft_2016.pdf [accessed 26-10-2016]

Based on the experiences of the author as a former director of a big adult education center training vouchers/grants for individuals/individual learning accounts play an important role in increasing participation in adult education.

In 2011, slightly more than 290 offers were raised to promote adult education and training in Austria. The majority were offers to support individuals, namely 245, and the remainder was directed at businesses. The vast majority of funding offers were education savings, learner loans or the deductibility of training (9 of 245 models). In programmes to support companies, there were tax breaks or placement⁴⁰/ personnel leasing⁴¹ (6 out of 4)⁴².

High priority is given to the skills development of refugees. Funds are made available by the federal government to several ministries for various measures. Further funds are also available from the provinces as well as the municipalities.

4.2 Public national investment

Table 4.1 Breakdown of public national investment

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Start/ end date
AE funding Ministry of Education	Federal budget	EUR 47.2 Million			2016
Labour Market Service	Federal budget	EUR 1287 Million			2016
AE expenses of the provinces		EUR 59.7 Million			2009 ⁴³
AE expenses of the communities		EUR 47.9 Million			2009
Integration Agreement	Federal budget	EUR 2.8 Million			2009
Administration Academy of the federal state		EUR 0.9 Million			2009
Danube University		EUR 8.8 Million			2009

⁴⁰ Implacement is offered by the Public Employment Service and means the demand-oriented and workplace-oriented qualification and integration of unemployed. See for example: http://www.ams.at/docs/500_Implacement-Produktblatt_022007.pdf

⁴¹ Companies lease personnel from special personnel leasing firms.

⁴² Fleischer/Hefler/Markowitsch 2011

⁴³ Source for the following expenses: Lassnigg, Vogtenhuber (2013)

4.3 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)

According to the data on financial support to the Member States between 2014 and 2020, available in July 2016 the planned financial support from the European Union for the investment priority directly targeting adult learning, i.e. Investment priority 10.3 – Enhancing access to lifelong learning, was EUR 68.6 million.

Priorities for investment are: to promote equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in the formal, non-formal and informal framework; to increase knowledge; skills and competences of the workforce; and to promote flexible pathways through, inter alia, vocational guidance and the recognition of acquired skills.

The acquisition of a (formal) higher qualification of disadvantaged and/or low-skilled persons was meant to be facilitated by education guidance, counselling and by a wide range of basic training courses as well as model testing of qualification programmes to ensure the transition from compulsory to higher education.

4.3.1 Structural fund support planned as part of 2014-2020 financial framework

The funding available for the period 2014-2020 in Austria is EUR 876 million. Approximately half of the costs (more than 442 million euros) is from the European Social Funds (ESF). The national co-financing rate is 50% for all Austrian provinces except Burgenland. In Burgenland, a "transitional region", 60% of the project costs are paid out of ESF. The Operational Program for Austria defines the following priority axes:

- Promotion of sustainable and high-quality employment and support the mobility of workers;
- Promotion of social inclusion and combating poverty and all forms of discrimination;
- Investment in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning; and
- ESF-funding in the transitional region Burgenland.

4.3.2 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of 2007-2013 financial framework

The ESF co-funding figures shows that there was an enormous increase lifelong learning strand in the period 2007 -2013. Between 2010 and 2013, there was an increase of 25%. This strand includes schools and adult education.

Table 4.2 ESF Annual Implementation Report Period 2007-2013 Support for Lifelong Learning

	In Million EUR
Year	ESF & National
2007*	n/a
2008	7,352
2009	11,495
2010	34,789
2011	44,498
2012	49,872
2013	121,996
* no detailed figures available	

4.4 Effectiveness of investment

4.4.1 Table 4.3 shows the number of adult education related ESF funded projects :

Table 4.3 Participation in ESF-co-funded projects in Adult Education

	2007	2013
Education and training	1.520	2.513
Information, Guidance and Counselling	8.317	53.417
Certification of Adult Educators	18	142
Total	9.855	56.072
ESF Annual Implementation Report 2013		

Basic Education (under "education and training") is of great importance, which means skills improvement and Guidance and Counselling. Both are national policy priorities and fit into the Agenda for Adult Learning very well.

Concerning ESF projects, sustainable effects have been achieved, as the evaluation of the measures in the area of adult education shows. The vast majority of people are in education or employment. Training (in terms of their duration and the educational certificates acquired) are quite relevant, and the employment is not precarious. In addition, the ESF program contributes significantly to reducing discrimination. The significant contribution to the reduction of discrimination is already demonstrated by the fact that a free offer is made available, but is by no means limited to this measure.⁴⁴

The coverage rate of only around 2% of the target group should motivate a massive expansion of the programme.

⁴⁴ Steiner/Wagner/Pessl 2015

A central pre-requisite for success is a wide range of educational offers, because participants, in the vast majority of cases, have multiple problems, and an intervention based purely on a one-dimensional knowledge transfer does not meet the needs of the target group. In addition to the qualification aspect, it is therefore necessary, to address practical life dimensions and quality-related problem dimensions (for example self-value).

Effectiveness of investment: the Adult Education Initiative as an example

The aim of an evaluation of the effectiveness of a policy is to measure how well the planned measures have been implemented, and whether the target groups have been reached and how adequately the funding has been distributed.

The two measures of the 'Adult Education Initiative', basic education and compulsory education, have been successfully implemented. The financial resources available were doubled from 2015 onwards through additional funding from ESF.

However, additional funds would be necessary to meet the even higher demand. The PIAAC survey shows that more than 970,000 people have low reading skills. In the programming document of the 'Initiative' for Adult Education 2015-2017, the actual target audience is 243,000 people for basic education and 220,000 people for compulsory education. This comes to a total of 463,000 people, which leaves out 507,000 people.⁴⁵ About 14.000 people participated in the first programming period from 2012 to 2014, this figure is anticipated to double in the second period from 2015 to 2017.⁴⁶ 42.000 people became beneficiaries over the programme period, i.e. 9% of the target group.

⁴⁵ https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/PPD_2015-2017_Stand_11_12_2015.pdf
[accessed 03.09.2016]

⁴⁶ Stoppacher / Edler 2014

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY

General considerations

A typical feature of the Austrian Adult Education Policy is that the maintenance of structures is made possible by public support. The Austrian Adult Education Policy is characterised by a consistent integration of adult education in social tasks and programmes.⁴⁷

The Austrian adult and continuing education policy is based on the following pillars:

- Education and training for employability is financed by the public employment service;
- Skills strategy with basic education und compulsory education;
- Educational guidance and counselling to improve the access to adult education with different methodologies of guidance and counselling;
- Professionalisation through the validation and accreditation of the competencies of adult educators based on a qualification profile for teachers, counsellors, programme managers and information managers; and
- Quality assurance and quality development with AT-Cert enabling transparency.

A key element of education policy and adult education policy in Austria is the Lifelong Learning Strategy (LLL): 2020. Four ministries have signed the strategy: Education, Economy, Labour and Social welfare and Science. This strategy is based on a broad approach that takes into consideration multilevel governance. The LLL: 2020 strategy has given a greater focus to adult education. Although many of the goals are very ambitious, it is important to have such goals to which adult education can refer to.

To measure the success, 12 strategic goals and benchmarks have been defined which are to be achieved by 2020. For adult education, the objectives discussed in the following are directly or indirectly relevant. They will be evaluated in this fifth report on the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2015⁴⁸

Goal 4: Increase the share of apprentices and trainee graduates from the Higher Education Entrance Examination (Berufsreifeprüfung) from around 2% in 2008 to 10% by 2020. Within the scope of the "Teaching with Matura" program, apprentices can take three of four examinations free of charge during their apprenticeship. The realized value for 2015 is 4%, the target value for 2015 should be 6.7%. Today, we can assume that this quantitative target will not be achieved by 2020⁴⁹.

Goal 7: Increase the participation rate in non-formal training in sparsely populated areas, which is 35.7% according to the Adult Education Survey 2007, to the level of the participation rate of areas with an average population density, which is at least 45%. The

⁴⁷ Filla 2014

⁴⁸ Bmbf et al 2016.

⁴⁹ ibid, p 12-13

target value for 2015 was 41.4%; the realised value in 2011 was 44% according to the Adult Education Survey. It can therefore be assumed that this target value can be achieved by 2020⁵⁰.

Goal 8: Increasing the share of employees who benefit from continuing training during working hours and whose highest level of adult education is only compulsory education, from 5.6% in 2007, according to the Adult Education Survey 2007, to at least 15% by 2020. In 2011, the participation rate of employees with a compulsory school-leaving certificate as their highest level of education was 10.8%. The Monitoring Report states that further efforts are needed to achieve this objective in 2020. (ibid, p 16)

Goal 10: Increase the participation rate as measured by the LLL structural indicator from 13.7 % in 2010 to 20 % by 2020. As already argued in Chapter 1.1.2, it appears highly unlikely that the target will be met by 2020.

Goal 11: Establish quality standards for educational offers and qualifications of trainers in the post-vocational education phase by 2015. In order to achieve this qualitative goal, projects have been undertaken which deal with quality assurance measures in the educational work with elderly people. (ibid, 18)

Goal 12: Implement the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by 2012 and implement a validation strategy for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning by 2015. The law on the National Qualifications Framework was adopted in 2016 (see also chapter 3.2.1) and the implementation of both the NQF and the validation strategy is currently underway (see 3.2.3).

A critical review of the goals relevant to adult education shows in the opinion of the author problems especially where other systems are affected. For example, in the continuing training of low skilled employees during the work time but also in the National Qualification Framework. The delay in its implementation is, according to the author, due to the dominance of the formal system. Cross-sectorial cooperation will have to be pushed forward, and at the NQF the integration of the non-formal sector has to be speeded up.

The action lines contain further partial targets and measures and/or projects for implementation. The following action lines are relevant for adult education, as are their sub targets which are to be met by 2020. The evaluation is based on the bmbf report and is evaluated by the author at the end.

Action line 3 covers the free access to basic qualifications and the safeguarding of basic skills in adulthood. Out of six sub-goals, several have been met partially, and the 'Adult Education Initiative' has made great progress in the promotion of the acquisition of basic skills in for adults.

Action line 5 deals with measures for better reorientation in education and work, and takes into account work-life balance. Several projects will support the realization of seven sub-

⁵⁰ ibid, p 15

targets. Projects such as "You can do it" (Du kannst was) are aimed at people with handicraft skills who do not have an apprenticeship certificate. Skills and knowledge can be acquired through individually compiled offers and a graduation certificate is granted following a review of the learning results. With subsidies from the Ministry of Social Affairs contact points were established in some cities for recognition counselling services for people with qualifications acquired abroad. Customers are also advised on education and training. Most of these recognition counselling services are provided by women, about two-thirds of the advisors have completed higher education or high school with matriculation⁵¹

Action Line 6 aims at reinforcing Community Education approaches, which are to be implemented through communal institutions and organized civil society. The achievement of the six sub-goals is to be ensured by eight measures which contain many proposals for cooperation and coordination. (ibid, 44) The inclusion or enhancement of community education-based approaches was integrated into the service agreements of non-profit federations of adult education. Working groups and conferences continue to work on the subject.

Action Line 7 aims to promote learning-friendly working environments. Of the 6 sub-goals, 3 are particularly relevant for adult education, namely strategic partnerships between enterprises and their associations and educational institutions, promotion of steering effects through direct and indirect CVET support and the documentation and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes to facilitate the mobility of employees and increase the educational permeability. With the "Competence with System" (Kompetenz mit System) measure, work-seeking people have been given the opportunity to acquire basic knowledge and skills for a qualification through a number of training modules⁵².

The scope of Action Line 8 is training to secure employability and competitiveness. The three sub-objectives address system-related tasks such as consistent principles of educational funding for local authorities, individuals and businesses to jointly finance lifelong learning in accordance with transparent criteria. A further sub-goal is the clear division of tasks between vocational training and retraining of the unemployed for whom the public employment service is responsible for, while initial training and basic education are to be financed through the budgets of responsible ministries. Finally, the National Qualifications Framework should also be applied to measures of the public employment service⁵³. The latter is currently being worked on while there is no progress in measures on the structural level.

Action Line 9 aims to enrich the quality of life through education in the post-working life phase. Efforts include the creation of a number of model projects, such as the exploration of special requirements of educational counselling in the post-working life phase or on projects for the development of low-threshold education facilities for the elderly⁵⁴. Some of the proposed projects are on the way.

⁵¹ ibid, p.44

⁵² ibid, p.52

⁵³ Ibid, p.53

⁵⁴ ibid, p.62-63

Action Line 10, addressing "Procedures for the recognition of non-formal and informally acquired knowledge and competencies in all education sectors" is already relatively well developed with the two main measures of the National Qualification Framework and the Validation Strategy, with implementation now being carried out in both cases.

All in all the already implemented measures of the goal fulfilment are useful in the area of adult education. The Adult Education Initiative or the Austrian-wide educational guidance and counselling and the measures in the area of the promotion of transparency, quality assurance and professionalization like AT-Cert and the Continuing Education Academy Austria constitute good examples of successful policies. Several other measures to achieve the targets are only in the beginning, such as the creation of structures for organized and coordinated cooperation between enterprises and educational institutions. We are only at the beginning of the structurally effective measures which are aimed at optimizing and coordinating coherent funding structures. These are intended to improve effectiveness and target group fulfilment.

The following sub-sections assess the existing policy through the lens of the six key success factors for effective adult learning policy that have been identified in a recent study.⁵⁵

5.1 Develop learners' interest in learning

The network of Educational Guidance and Counselling provides guidance for learners about learning options. The social partners are to some extent engaged in the planning, promotion and recruitment of adult learners as they "own" their adult education institutions. An important part of a general strategy of lifelong learning is currently missing. Such a strategy should also include broad campaigns for lifelong learning, and a focus on the learner's disposition towards learning has to include an interest-based approach. A narrow view of adult education which mainly focuses on employability damages adult education in the end. Therefore general adult education should be strengthened as well.

5.2 Increase employers' investment in learning

There is no sufficient policy attention devoted to assist employers to upskill and retrain their workforce. Big enterprises have their own departments for human resources, but small and middle-sized enterprises mostly show a lack of such structures. Many of them cannot afford for their staff members to leave for further training. Again, a coherent strategy with appropriate campaigns would help in these cases. The LLL:2020 Strategy provides as a measure in the Action Line 7 (promotion of learner-friendly learning

⁵⁵ Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all languages): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>; Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe" by EC (2015): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

environments) that support for further training for enterprises and tax instruments focused on target groups that are underrepresented in adult and continuing education.

5.3 Improve equity of access for all

The 'Initiative' with the strands of free basic education and free compulsory education is a good practice example of paying attention to disadvantaged and difficult-to-engage groups. This positive example is also supported by the many activities of the network Educational Guidance and Counselling, which does a lot of work to reach the right people. Nevertheless, and as mentioned above, there is a great need to at least double the funds for basic education. There is also a great need to train teachers for basic education to fulfil the needs of the target groups.

Outreach activities also help to reach groups that are underrepresented in adult education. In the field of educational guidance and counselling, public places are visited for counselling activities, at which educational disadvantaged can be found, such as parks, railway stations or shopping centers.

5.4 Deliver learning that is relevant

Many studies exist regarding barriers to access adult education institutions. The author has the impression that the prevailing policy is not sufficient to promote appropriate approaches and to develop programmes with which a heterogeneous group of disadvantaged people can be reached successfully. The existing programmes and projects are good, but many of them are stand-alone projects and are not embedded in a greater systemic approach. The LLL 2020 strategy foresees as a measure in Action Line 7 (promoting learning-friendly working environments), the development of strategic partnerships between companies, their associations and the educational institutions.

5.5 Deliver learning of high quality

An awareness of quality development forms an integral part of adult education institutions and the author has the impression that a lot of policy attention is devoted to this important issue. Initiatives such as the Austrian Academy for Continuing Education (wba), which validates the competences and qualifications of adult educators and is still supported by the Ministry of Education and ESF-funds, provides a good example of how much attention is paid to quality development. Additionally, more well-trained teachers for basic education are needed in order to be able to make the programme accessible to a greater number of beneficiaries.

5.6 Ensure coherent policy

Coordination functions smoothly when programmes run like the 'Initiative' or in the networks of Educational Guidance and Counselling. Mechanisms of policy coordination have to be established on the local and regional levels in order to deal with local and

Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills
Full country report - Austria

regional advantages. Adult education can play a key role in such a coordination agenda. In the LLL: 2020 Strategy, several proposals are formulated for measures that include a coherent and managed policy of public support.

6.0 STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

6.1 Strengths

Strong institutionalisation

One of the outstanding strengths of adult education in Austria is its long-standing and strong historical tradition.⁵⁶ In the case of the Adult Education Centres (Volkshochschulen), this tradition dates back to 130 years. Many other institutions were built after the Second World War. In the 1950s, there was also an intensive phase of institutionalisation, in which local and regional adult education institutions joined together to form associations. With its institutions, adult education is publicly visible; large institutions are especially well known in Austria. Moreover, these institutions have a broad geographical coverage and are also largely accessible. An institutionalised platform for cooperation exists with the Conference of Austrian Adult Education (KEBÖ). This Conference benefits from legal protection, falling under the scope of the law for the promotion of adult education. The geographic coverage as well as the entire offer is supported by the private sector of adult education which has developed around the 1980s. The overall offer is very broad and can address people with different needs in their different living conditions.

Governance through co-operative processes

Governance in adult education in Austria is characterised by cooperative processes that correspond to multi-level governance.⁵⁷ Relevant stakeholders and experts are involved in state-controlled programmes and measures. Institutions of adult education, in particular the Conference on Adult Education in Austria (KEBÖ) are involved in educational policy processes and decisions. This involvement at the level of the development of programmes and measures also enables their implementation. This fact is also reflected by labour market policy which is governed by the Public Employment Service and implemented together with institutions of adult education and private providers.

Innovative measures and projects

Several innovative measures and projects were developed and implemented in Austrian adult education over the years. These measures contribute to the improvement of quality and professionalism of the institutions and providers of adult education, but also raises standards at the systemic level⁵⁸. The Austrian Academy of Education (wba) constitutes such an example. Wba was developed by the institutions of adult education, and, among other objectives and tasks, validates the qualifications of adult educators. Another good example is the Austria-wide network of educational guidance and counseling whose structure was developed by adult education institutions. The development of the Academy and network of guidance and counseling, in addition to other minor measures and projects,

⁵⁶ cf. Filla 2014.

⁵⁷ cf. Gruber/ Lenz 2016, pp. 44-46

⁵⁸ cf. Bisovsky 2015

demonstrate the high degree of innovation in the Austrian adult education landscape, which has been further fostered by the accession of Austria to the European Union.

6.2 Weaknesses

The following section deals with the complexity, the lack of comprehensive strategies and the limited research in Austria's adult education.

Complexity

The heterogeneous and diverse landscape of adult education with a large number of providers, which can only be estimated, is characterised by a high degree of complexity. This complexity is particularly evident in metropolitan areas where a large number of adult education providers are active, which in most cases act rather uncoordinated.⁵⁹ The authors of this work highly recommend the expansion of cooperation between both general and professional adult education. They also recommend the development of an up-to-date governance and funding structure by tying both the agendas of general and vocational adult education into one single department.

Lack of extensive and comprehensive strategies

There are numerous good and innovative measures and projects in Austria, many of which are not implemented on a large scale. One exception is clearly the 'Initiative' which is implemented throughout Austria but not put into practice in a need-oriented way because of the lack of funding. A thorough concept would have to be developed in this initiative in which people with German as a primary language and low basic skills could be better supported. Furthermore, there is a lack of coordinated exchange of local experiences with examples of good practice that could then be implemented over a wider area or region. The new strategies could also include broad awareness campaigns for the target groups.

Low use of research projects in the development of education provision

Evaluation and research are increasingly used to plan Austrian-wide programmes and measures, but there are very few research projects that provide sufficient evidence on the impact of educational provision at the institutional level. This gives rise to the question of how knowledge is generated in and about adult education. Therefore, researchers, educational practitioners and education policy could also promote the development of target group-specific provision on equal terms.

⁵⁹ cf. the province of Styria: Gruber/ Brünner/ Huss 2009

7.0 FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED

The need to further develop target group-specific programmes can be derived from the existing strategies in the field of basic skills (skills strategy). Particular attention should be paid to target groups which are low-qualified and exposed to disadvantages in their participation in the labour market and in society as well as in their participation in lifelong learning. A topic which has not yet been explicitly dealt with in this report is digitalisation which is also strongly influenced by the social partners and industry in Austria. Eventually, the experience today gained with a number of innovative projects in this area shows that a comprehensive implementation requires large-scale solutions and strategies.

Programmes oriented towards specific target groups guarantee an Austria-wide access and include recognition of prior knowledge

Low-qualified young adults, women, migrants and the elderly have to be mentioned in this section as important target groups. Particular attention has to be paid to persons who dropped out of the labour force.⁶⁰ Therefore, target-group-specific offers need to be developed based on evidence by a good interplay of research and practice. By recognising prior learning outcomes, learning processes have to start where and when they are needed, and detours have to be avoided. The European key competencies for lifelong learning which form the basis of the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy, LLL:2020, are both the basis and the goal of further education. From this perspective, basic education requires a new definition. The Adult Education Initiative in Austria needs to be developed in line with the needs of local target groups. A new strategy has to be developed, especially for young people without a migration background.

Digitalisation of education: digital strategy for adult education and media competency

The Austrian social partners agree that rising digitalisation in all social and professional areas increases the importance of non-formal and informal learning processes at all levels.⁶¹ These learning processes are also to be recognised by validation. Access to education content, teaching and learning materials, and freely available information must be feasible and affordable for all people. The task of education is to enable people to participate in a digital and networked society, based on the key competences of lifelong learning. This participation has to be independent, self-determined, equally accessible and handled responsibly. Teaching and learning are increasingly digitalised, and "learning how to learn" is of great importance to promote independent, responsible, networked thinking and taking action together with others. Digitalisation is also the subject of dealing with the media in society. In terms of content, this means that digital competence must be viewed in the context of media competency.⁶²

⁶⁰ Steiner/ Vogtenhuber 2014.

⁶¹ Sozialpartner 2015

⁶² Baumgartner et al 2015.

The Austrian digitalisation strategy "digital roadmap" has to be accomplished through a digital strategy for adult education.

Education for democracy and for Europe

As mentioned in chapter 3.5, a nationwide strategy of democratic education is necessary to counteract existing prejudices against democracy and feelings of helplessness, especially among people with low skills and low qualifications. In this context, European political education is also necessary.

Large-scale solutions require matching strategies⁶³

The "real system of adult education in Austria"⁶⁴, as demanded by the leader of the Public Employment Service, requires large-scale solutions and matching strategies. Good and valid data on the needs and evaluations of good practice examples form a good basis for the development of large and effective strategies. Additionally, the transfer of projects also has to be assessed and successful implementation ensured. The promotion of cooperation between the various actors within the adult education sector as well as cross-sectoral cooperation support the broadest possible implementation. Matching strategies require coordination and cooperation on all levels. More governance at the local level through coordination and cooperation would also be appropriate. In order to implement such strategies with the relevant actors, a debureaucratisation is necessary. European Social Fund projects are characterised by an over-arching administration and bureaucracy. In this context, a topical issue is migration and integration which shapes qualification, social cohesion and fundamental values in Europe⁶⁵.

Furthermore, we need a broader, holistic and more interest-based approach in adult education.

Data on adult education in the European Semester

In the European Semester, data on adult education should be included. Examples of meaningful additions are data on participation in lifelong learning, participation of people with a migration background in lifelong learning, measures for educationally disadvantaged persons, expenditure on adult education, and additional indicators which measure inclusion and the acceptance of democracy and European values.

⁶³ Cf also: A great education reform has to include Adult Education
<http://derstandard.at/2000026256241/Eine-grosse-Bildungsreform-fuer-Hans-und-Hadiyah> [accessed 21-10-2016]

⁶⁴ The leader of the Public Employment Service criticises the lack of a „real system of adult education“ in Austria. Cf <http://derstandard.at/2000045433560/AMS-Chef-Millionen-Menschen-werden-ihren-Job-verlieren> [accessed 21-10-2016]

⁶⁵ Industriellenvereinigung 2016, Sozialpartner 2016.

8.0 SUMMARY

Country performance statistics evaluated

Today, Austria shows good results in both employment and in participation in lifelong learning, but there are also some current challenges to be specified.

Despite rising employment, unemployment has increased. The reason for this development is on the one hand the increased labour supply and, on the other hand, the economic growth which recovered this year. In order to stimulate economic growth further, it is necessary to push forward structural reforms that include further investment in research, education and the environment; the reduction of the tax rate (especially wage costs); the reduction of regulatory density and the reduction of bureaucracy; and the promotion of highly qualified and low-skilled people. Migrants and refugees, the elderly, long-term unemployed and low-skilled people are deeply affected by unemployment. The unemployment rate for women has risen in Austria, therefore the all-day childcare in the provinces has to be extended to reduce this rate. Additionally, it is also necessary to work on the change of the still traditional social role models of men and women in Austria.

It is particularly evident that there is a need for adequate action in lifelong learning where disadvantaged groups and low-qualified as well as older people are involved. Another underrepresented group in the participation in lifelong learning is constituted by people with migration backgrounds, especially refugees. Similar patterns can be identified in the latest survey of basic competences of adults in Austria. In addition to the level of initial education, the following factors can be identified in relation to low performance: a first language other than German and a higher age and parents with low educational backgrounds. In order to deal with these challenges, target group-specific programmes and Austria-wide strategies are to be further developed and extended. Last but not least, it is crucial that there should still be a strong focus on adult education that is mainly based on intrinsic motivation and broad content only.

The following sections mainly deal with some reforms, adaptations and challenges in adult education.

Policy reforms in CSR/ NRP

The Country Specific Recommendation Number 2 refers to education and advocates to: "Strengthen measures to increase the labor market participation of older workers and women, including by improving the provision of childcare and long-term care services. Take steps to improve the educational achievement of disadvantaged young people."

All in all, some progress has been made in the areas mentioned in the above quotation. A number of programmes and projects have been implemented, in particular in the area of improving the educational level of disadvantaged young people. The recently passed Training Obligations Act (Ausbildungspflichtgesetz) is expected to have an additional impact on Early School Leavers and NEETs, together with the new project of Youth Coaching.

Multiple measures already undertaken show some progress. Good projects and single measures have already been or are currently being implemented. However, broad-based concepts and strategies to improve the employment situation of women and the elderly are still missing. With regard to the improvement of the "educational achievement of disadvantaged young people", there are several measures that are implemented all over Austria. Nevertheless, a new strategy has to be developed, especially for young people without a migration background.

More specific data on adult education should be included in the European Semester, for example regarding participation in lifelong learning, the participation of persons with migration background in lifelong learning, measures for educationally disadvantaged persons, expenditure on adult education, and also more indicators which measure inclusion and the acceptance of democracy and European values.

Key challenges

The strengths of the Austrian adult education landscape are illustrated by its pronounced institutionalisation that allows a wide geographical coverage and encompasses many co-operations and a very broad educational offer, all of which are addressed to different people in different living conditions. Governance through cooperative processes and the involvement of many stakeholders ensures the implementation of further valuable Austrian-wide measures and programmes. An important role is also played by the Public Employment Service that services a large number of unemployed persons. On the one hand, numerous innovative measures and projects testify a relatively high degree of innovation in Austria's adult education. On the other hand, the weaknesses of this system are represented by the existing complexity of the numerous adult education institutions, the lack of new strategies and limited research going on to develop appropriate education provision.

The main challenges lie in the development of further target-group-specific programmes that ensure an Austria-wide access of learners and include the recognition of their previous learning outcomes. Special attention has additionally be paid to people outside of the labour force. Target group-specific offer should be developed based on evidence and developed the efficient collaboration of research and practice.

Policy reforms

Large-scale solutions require strategies to be developed based on valid data and examples of good or best practice. Cooperation and coordination with all stakeholders at all levels greatly support broad implementation. The current issue of migration and integration requires adequate education and training and multiple measures to consolidate social cohesion and the integration of basic European values.

Finally, another central topic is the digitalisation of education. Non-formal and informal learning processes will gain importance, and the validation of learning outcomes, qualifications and partial qualifications becomes more and more important. With appropriate and well-targeted education programmes, a large number of people are empowered to be able to participate independently, self-determinedly, equally and

responsibly in our digital and networked society. An additional digitalisation strategy for adult education has to be developed.

To promote the acceptance of democracy, a programme on democracy learning for adults should be launched. This programme should also contain measures to increase media competence and learning Europe.

The European key competences for lifelong learning which are also the basis of the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy are without doubt excellent foundations for further necessary reforms. Finally, constant collaboration among stakeholders, more and better networking between research and practice as well as permanent evaluation and adaption are key issues of adult education in Austria.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
Law on the National Qualifications Framework	15-03-2016	Regulates the structures for the implementation of the NQF and for the recognition procedures
Training Obligations Act (Ausbildungspflichtgesetz)	30-06-2016	AE focus: compulsory education until the age of 18
Amendment of the Nursing Act	01-08-2016	The training for the "Care Assistance" lasts one year and can be carried out as extra-occupational education by adult education providers.
Guaranteed Training until the Age of 25	01-01-2017	The Public Employment Service guarantees qualification modules to all unqualified 19-24 year-olds
Amendment of the law for the Higher Education Entrance Examination (Berufsreifeprüfung)	24-04-2017	Adoption for the centralized Higher Education Entrance Examination
Limited Higher Education Entrance Examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfung)	21-09-2017	Regulation of the Limited Higher Education Entrance Examination in the University Law (§ 64) as well as in the laws for the Universities of Applied Sciences and the Pedagogical Universities

Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions

Name of intervention	Source (with hyperlink)	Budget	Outputs	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity etc.)
				Fosters learners' interest in learning	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
AT Cert	https://oe-cert.at/		Provides clarity for participants, for sponsors, and for adult education organisation					X		

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			ns on quality and recognizes all learning vouchers all over Austria							
Adult Education Initiative	https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/initiative-erwachsenenbildung/was-ist-das/	More than EUR 111,5 Million 2018 - 2021	The Adult Education Initiative comprises the two programs "basic education" and "compulsory education for adults".			X				
Continuing Education Academy	https://wba.or.at/	450 000 p.a.	The Continuing Education Academy supports the professionalisation in adult education. It validates and					x		

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			accredits the competencies of adult educators, regardless of where they have acquired them.							
Educational Guidance and Counselling	https://erwachsenenbildung.at/themen/bildungsberatung/angebot/initiative_eb.php		To widen the access to guidance and counselling and the access to adult education and to reach especially those with educational and social disadvantages through appropriate approaches such as	X						

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			outreach activities.							
Lifelong Learning Strategy LLL:2020	http://www.aucen.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/p_aucen/III_arbeitspapier_ebook_gross.pdf		To ensure that Austria maintains its high standard of living and social cohesion, it is necessary to further enhance citizens' high levels of qualification and to draw less educated people into the modern knowledge society. Austria's Lifelong Learning Strategy is guided by five core	X	X	X	X	X	X	<p>Adopted by four Ministries in 2011</p> <p>Relevant for Adult Education are the following action lines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing second-chance education free of charge, helping to ensure basic competences for adults; - Expanding alternative transition systems to the world of work for

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			<p>principles: life phase orientation (all ages), placing learners at the centre (flexibility of learning), lifelong guidance (facilitating the learning process), competence orientation (recognition of informal learning), and promotion of participatio n in lifelong learning (enhancing the motivation to learn).</p>						<p>young people;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offering guidance to improve work-life balance; - Strengthenin g 'community education' approaches through community services and civil society organizations ; - Promoting learner- friendly work environments ; - Providing continuing education to
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										<p>promote employability and competitiveness;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Enriching quality of life through education in the post-occupational phase of life;- Introducing procedures for validation of non-formal and informal competences in all educational sectors.
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