



BEST INSTITUT FÜR BERUFSBEZOGENE WEITERBILDUNG UND PERSONALTRAINING GMBH

Fast Lane to the Labour Market and VET

State of the Art Report Austria

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1 Overview of situation in Austria

In 2015, Austria was affected by the greatest refugee movements since the disintegration of Yugoslavia over twenty years ago. In this year, Austria received as many applications as in the last five years (2010-2014) and three times as many as in 2014.

Country of origin

In 2015, 29 percent of all asylum seekers in Austria came originally from Afghanistan, 28 percent from Syria and 15 percent from Iraq.¹

Age

Average age of people from Afghanistan is 22.9 years, from Syria 24.8 years and people from Iraq are on average 26.6 years old.

Sex

Table 1 *Gender distribution from application for asylum 2014-2016*

Year of application	Total number of applications	Male	Female
2014 ²	28,064	75.83 %	24.17%
2015 ³	88,340	72.29%	27.71%
2016 (incl. Nov.) ⁴	39,618	67.34 %	32.66%

Educational level

Table 2 *Educational level of people with migration background (2015)⁵*

Educational level	Percentage
Compulsory school	24.6 %
Apprenticeship	33.1 %
High school	18.6 %
University	23.7 %

¹ Integrationsbericht 2016 (BMEIA), Retrieved from <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/das-ministerium/presse/aussendungen/2016/08/integrationsbericht-2016/>, p. 22

² Federal ministry of the Interior, section III-law (2014): ASYLSTATISTIK 2014, Retrieved from http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asywesen/statistik/files/Asyl_Jahresstatistik_2014.pdf, p. 4

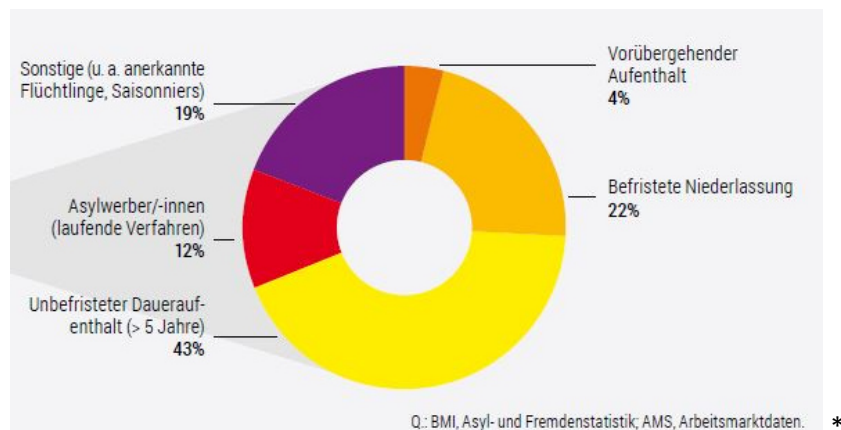
³ Federal ministry of the Interior, section III-law (2015): ASYLSTATISTIK 2015, Retrieved from http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asywesen/statistik/files/Asyl_Jahresstatistik_2015.pdf, p. 4

⁴ Federal ministry of the Interior, section III-law (2016): Vorläufige ASYLSTATISTIK November 2016, Retrieved from http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asywesen/statistik/files/2016/Asylstatistik_November_2016.pdf, p. 4

⁵ Österreichischer Integrationsfonds. Migration & Integration – Zahlen, Daten, Fakten 2016. Erstellt von Statistik Austria (Wien 2016). Retrieved from <http://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/content/migrationintegration-2016.pdf>, p. 51

Different residence permit status (1.1.2016)

Figure 1 *Residence status of third-country nationals (01.01.2016)*⁶



*orange: temporary residence

light orange: time-limited residence

yellow: permanent residence

red: asylum seekers (ongoing proceedings)

purple: Others (i.e. recognised refugees, seasonal workers)

Work permission

In 40.5 percent of all asylum decisions of 2015 asylum seekers have been granted asylum, seven percent got subsidiary protection. These two groups have automatically work permission and access to the labour market.⁷

Duration asylum procedures

The duration of the process varies depending on the country of origin and the individual situation. In 2015 the average duration of asylum procedures in Austria was six months.⁸

⁶ Österreichischer Integrationsfonds. Migration & Integration – Zahlen, Daten, Fakten 2016. Erstellt von Statistik Austria (Wien 2016). Retrieved from <http://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/content/migrationintegration-2016.pdf>, p. 41

⁷ Integrationsbericht 2016 (BMEIA), Retrieved from <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/das-ministerium/presse/aussendungen/2016/08/integrationsbericht-2016/>, p. 22

⁸ Integrationsbericht 2016 (BMEIA), Retrieved from <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/das-ministerium/presse/aussendungen/2016/08/integrationsbericht-2016/>, p. 75

2 Policy trends regarding integration of refugees and access to the labour market and VET

2.1 Description of the policy trends

The trend in Austrian politics is primarily to avoid high numbers of asylum seekers as experienced in 2015. Because of this high number, the speed of asylum procedures is accelerated (approximately six months). The responsible entities are at that point the ministry of the interior and the federal states.

Asylum seekers, who are expected to receive a positive asylum decision, may receive German courses in some federal provinces (but not in other than from volunteers). After the positive asylum decision, the process of work and social integration of beneficiaries of asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection continues with (further) German courses, integration courses and various labour market programmes although it has to be noted that the waiting time to start these might take some weeks to months these days due to low coverage or gaps in remote areas). For this target groups, the responsible entities are the AMS (Public Employment Service Austria), the BMEIA (Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs) and the ÖIF (Austrian Integration Fund).

2.2 Best practice

Best practice 1 *“BEST Startpaket Deutsch & Integration” (BEST Starter Package German & Integration)*

Duration of measure in weeks	Project duration for participants: 12 weeks Total project duration: 44 weeks
Share of language lessons in hours per weeks	15 hours per week
Certification of qualification	Official language certificate „A1 – Fit für Österreich“
Participant Structure (age, gender, low, middle or higher education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beneficiaries of asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection; • literate (Latin alphabet) • no German language certificate • Heterogeneous target group concerning age, gender, education, social background, nationality etc.)
Integrational quota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100%
Procedure of determination of competence (method and extent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and oral assessment of the language competence at the beginning in order to assign the participants to an adequate course • Continuous learning objectives tests during the project (various methods: written and oral exams, presentations, projects, quiz, role plays etc.) • Final assessment of the language competence: official exam of language certificate
Innovative approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combination of language and Integration • Content and language integrated learning
Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free of charge for the participants (financed by the Austrian Integration Fund) • Focus on practical needs of the participants
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very heterogeneous groups concerning previous German knowledge

2.3 Strengths and weaknesses

- The process of recognition of foreign formal qualifications (if possible), including a practical assessment of competences, is driven forward in frame of integration in the labour market, which can be seen as progress, if not even as opportunity.
- There are fundamental cultural differences of the European/Austrian culture and the culture of Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq etc. that public authorities started to consider (offering training, help and other support).
- VET does not well cover approaches like CLIL.
- There is a high number of refugees to be integrated.
- Some of them have only got low education level (even if from what experience they describe, competence checks show that they are not comparable to qualification levels in our system).
- There are differences in educational and professional systems and procedures of prior education recognitions are not sufficiently developed so far (also in this case, support is not well covered, understaffed and a cumbersome process, still).
- Austrian authorities are overburdened and integration procedures and structures are not well equipped in regards of resources nor clear.
- NGOs with volunteers are at the risk of becoming exhausted.
- Political processes are partly slowed down due to different interests of political parties and different approaches in different federal provinces.

3.1 Description of the system

The usual steps of integration in the labour market are organized by the AMS and partially by the ÖIF. Language courses are offered (see previous chapter) and skills evaluated. One of the latest/ current measures other than plain language training is the following: The so-called “Kompetenzcheck” is a project for recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection with native trainers and coaches. In frame of this initiative, theoretical and practical competences are assessed in order to support the recognition of (foreign) qualifications. Further, the approach includes integration workshops, case management in particular. With completion of the programme, participants are supposed to have a specific plan of how to proceed on the way to the integration on the labour market.

With a positive (asylum request) result, recognised refugees also receive a work permit and have access to further German courses, qualification programmes, application trainings etc. The AMS currently provides companies with a subsidy to the labour costs to support recognised refugees to enter the labour market. In the case of recruitment of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, who are registered at the AMS for a job search, it is possible to subsidise wage and salary costs in the amount of 50 percent of the assessment base. The funding period is five months and funding is carried out in retrospect.

As an alternative, a voluntary integration year for recognised refugees and beneficiaries subsidiary protection is possible. The AMS and the Ministry of Social Affairs grants the needs'-oriented minimum allowance within two years. The voluntary integration year is not an employment relationship, but a type of work-training for a period of six to twelve months, mixing educational activities and practical activities in potential employment sites. In addition to the non-profit activities in the organisation, low-threshold training and integration measures are planned for a minimum of 150 hours (German courses, instruction in the activities, cultural principles of cohabitation, etc.).⁹ However, as mentioned before, federal differences in regulations might have to be taken into consideration; even more, since changes are expected for the upcoming months (starting 2017).

⁹ <http://www.jku.at/content/e213/e63/e58/e57?apath=e32681/e292394/e309536/e309735>

Best practice 2 “Kompetenzcheck” (checking competences; organised by BEST)

Assignment to occupational area	<p>The cooperating institutions cover all occupational areas. BEST is responsible for the practical assessments of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gastronomy (kitchen, service) • IT • Office management • Facility management
Duration of measure in weeks	<p>Project duration for the participants: 5 weeks; Project duration in total: 58 weeks</p>
Share of language lessons in hours per weeks	No language lessons
Certification of qualification	Certificate of participation, report of confirmed competences, recognition of foreign qualifications if possible
Participant Structure (age, gender, low, middle or higher education)	<p>beneficiaries of asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection; 25 and older; job seeking; German level: A1 or higher</p>
Integrational quota	100%
Procedure of determination of competence (method and extent)	<p>The aim of this project is to determine and document the qualifications and competences. Methods are interviews and individual talks, written exams, group workshops, practical assessments in real workplaces etc. In the end, the results (competences and qualifications) get documented and a specific plan for the professional future of the participants is being worked out.</p>
Innovative approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native teachers (i.e. Arabian, Dari/Farsi etc. in order to get realistic results) • Confirming/assessing the “real” competences in a practical way (e.g. in a mechanical workshop, in a professional kitchen etc.)
Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make use of the experiences, foreign qualifications and “real” competences of immigrants • Individual support • Practical experience in a real working place ->motivation
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restriction on certain nationalities because of native trainers (e.g. Arabian) • Separation of male and female participants (demanded by the contracting authority)

3.3 Strengths and weaknesses

- The described system of integration in the labour market, determination of competences and recognition of competences and qualifications allows refugees to keep working in their field on the same (or at least a similar) level. Furthermore, it supports the participants to adapt their competences to the needs of the European/Austrian economy.
- A strength is the determination and assessment of practical competences and recognition of formal qualifications, where possible.
- A weakness is, however, that the recognition of foreign qualifications is not always possible (nor hardly easy) due to different educational and professional systems, lack of proof (in some cases) even.
- Support measures, e.g. reduced price for tickets need to be realised in order to promote mobility of apprentices with recognised refugee status and on the long term, recognised refugees' labour market integration.

4 Integration system

4.1 Description of the system

The Ministry of the Interior of Austria is responsible for (arriving) asylum seekers till the end of the asylum procedure. In cooperation with the federal states and municipalities, the ministry organises housing and care of the asylum seekers. The public authorities are strongly supported by NGOs like “Caritas”, “Diakonie”, “Red Cross” and other.

All school-aged children have to join the public school system. In some cases, schools are provided with additional teaching staff in order to be able to offer extra German lessons to those pupils; also bridge years are added where possible to help them integrate. For adult asylum seekers, German courses are offered by numerous NGOs. Public authorities are planning to offer German courses to asylum seekers, but those courses have not been opened/ got approved budget yet.

There is no other offer of public education or integration at that point. Regarding the realisation of public language courses, it is foreseen to provide people with a high expectation of receiving a positive result, with a “basic education” of German language (A1) conducted by the Federal ministry of the Interior or the Federal states. After completion of the asylum procedure, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection will have further A1 (responsibility of Federal ministry for Asylum) and A2 (responsibility of the Austrian Employment Service) course possibilities.¹⁰ Recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have access to:

- the Austrian social system (financial support by the needs’ based minimum benefit system – different from federal province to province),
- the Austrian labour market,
- programmes and courses offered by the ÖIF (Austrian Integration Fund) concerning culture, values, democracy, language, social integration etc.,
- programmes and courses offered by the AMS (Public Employment Service Austria) or regional funds (like WAFF) concerning language, qualification, professional orientation and training, labour market etc.

Furthermore, there are offers of numerous NGOs regarding training of language, values, etc. But due to the lack of consistent offer for all over Austria, the scope of the German courses offered differs. To give two examples: The organisation ISOP offers German courses covering eight language levels: Beginner to advanced: A1 - B2. The courses usually last 12 weeks and comprise 4 to 6 lessons per week. The German integration courses (obligatory) are conducted as intensive courses which last 12 weeks and comprise 12 to 16 lessons (45 minutes). 50 percent of the costs (for a maximum of 300 lessons) are refunded by the Austrian Integration Fund if the integration agreement is fulfilled within 18 months.¹¹ Many German

¹⁰ Integrationsbericht 2016 (BMEIA), Retrieved from <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/das-ministerium/presse/aussendungen/2016/08/integrationsbericht-2016/>, p. 80

¹¹ <http://www.isop.at/tatigkeitsfelder/qualifizierung-bildung/deutschkurse-fur-migrantinnen/>

courses are also free of charge for those target learners. In most cases, an official proof of language skills is given as needed for the fulfilment of the integration agreement.

4.2 Best practice

Best practice 3 “Mama learns German!”

The initiative “Mama learns German!” is an offer specifically addressed to women. It includes basic education courses combined with childcare which comprise 3 teaching units twice a week, summing up to a total of 170 teaching units. The participation, including childcare, is free of charge.¹²

4.3 Strengths and weaknesses

- A strength is that children are integrated in the school system and receive additional language courses provided in schools. In the case of school-age children, there is no different treatment of those seeking asylum to others.
- For adults, especially mothers, it is harder to participate at language courses but there are some initiatives. However, no public (publically funded) German courses for asylum seekers are provided so far. There is noticeable lack of resources, especially a lack of educational staff and course offers in rural areas.
- A weakness is that there are different regulations regarding work and financial support in the federal states. Many people want to leave areas where they do not get as good support as in other area.
- A major weakness is curricula are hardly adapted to grown-ups’ teaching a combination of work related issues on a CLIL basis to learn both in one, language and vocational issues.
- The Federal Ministry of the Interior of Austria is planning to fund public German courses for all asylum seekers in cooperation with the federal states, but those are not realized yet.
- On the other side, NGOs are offering free German classes for this target group. The teachers are volunteers.
- Volunteers work in buddy-programmes or sponsorships. In frame of these programmes, people are familiarised with the Austrian culture as well. Further leisure time activities foster intercultural exchange.
- Politics and public administration have difficulties in shifting budget to offer expensive programmes for asylum seekers. As a result, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection do often not speak adequate German after having received their asylum title.
- Fear of declining salaries in case of asylum seekers on the job market.
- Fear by industry/ business of having problems with authorities regarding permits
- Asylum seekers have only restricted access to the labour market¹³: e.g. temporary (low paid) voluntary work, seasonal work (tourism, agriculture, etc.), independent work, and others but in

¹² Stadt Wien, MA17 - Integration und Diversität: <https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/pdf/mama-lernt-deutsch-folder.pdf>, p.2

¹³ AMS OÖ (2015): Arbeitsmöglichkeiten für Asylwerberinnen und Asylwerber, http://www.ams.at/_docs/400_Asyl-Folder_DEUTSCH.pdf, p.2 et seq.



some they even might not be allowed. The situation is complex partly also due to the amount of conditions, regulations and restrictions different from federal province to federal province one has to consider. This is a fact which discourages asylum seekers who want to work, companies who would accept their work.

5 VET-system and other related vocational training forms

5.1 Description of the system

The dual education system in Austria, with parallel on-the-job and vocational school training, offers industry-specific and practice-oriented training in one.

The VET system takes up a large part of secondary level II and higher. Initial (formal) vocational education and training (IVET) is mainly carried out by VET-schools and by a strong apprenticeship-system.

In Austria, in addition to the formal education from the ninth grade on, both VET schools (i.e. BMS) and colleges (i.e. BHS) provide different programmes and paths at various levels. They include part-time vocational schools or schools and colleges with different focus (e.g. engineering, arts and crafts, business administration, tourism, social occupations, agriculture and forestry, nursery teaching, social pedagogy).

Students get generic subjects, namely German, Maths and English in VET-schools. Courses of CVET usually include topics on soft-skills and job orientation, especially those for unemployed people. The actual implementation depends on the institution, focus and intensity on the grade (The higher/ closer to accomplishing the school type, the more job orientation they are.)

Depending on the age of migrants, those who still have to attend formal schooling are included in the system. Sometimes they get additional support in German.

Asylum seekers have a sectorial restricted access to the labour market and can, under certain conditions, do an apprenticeship. Due to the dual training system (vocational school and company), a valid employment permit is required. In addition, learners may not yet be older than 25 years for being accepted in an apprenticeship. Another prerequisite is a proven lack of apprenticeship in the sector concerned for this target group.

Young recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, as well as other legal immigrants with work permit have access to the “normal”, i.e. traditional dual VET-system and can go on an apprenticeship. Additionally, there are other options to achieve an apprenticeship certificate independent from the age of the participant in the non-formal field, as there are “Kompetenz mit System” (see chapter on “Best practices”) and “FacharbeiterInnenausbildung” (FIA, FIA+). Depending on formal qualifications, professional experience and competences gained in the country of origin or in Austria, and their recognition, the participants have to run through a series of modules and take a theoretical and practical exam to obtain the certificate in the end.¹⁴

Since educational systems and professional realities (e.g. other tools and tasks etc.) are quite different in the common countries of origin, the recognition of qualifications and competences is a challenge. A

¹⁴ AMS: “Systemlandkarte – Wege zur Lehrabschlussprüfung (LAP)”, http://docs.ams.at/wien/sfa/bildungstraeger/systemlandkarte_wege_zur_lap/systemlandkarte_wege_zur_lap.pdf

professional from another country might have to take some theoretical and practical extra training and take the exam to obtain the certificate and work in his/her profession in Austria.

5.2 Best practices

Best practice 4 *“Mentoring for migrants”*

“Mentoring for migrants” is a programme initiated by the WKO (Austrian chamber of commerce) in cooperation with diverse enterprises. First, a mentoring partnership between an unemployed migrant and a representative from a company is established. Within this partnership, the mentees are supported (e.g. through preparation for discussion talks, etc.) in job search corresponding to their training. They are familiarised with the Austrian society and work culture and get insights into the structures of the professional world. The mentors transfer the respective technical terminology and help to establish contacts or introduce the mentee to networks. They give assistance in the recognition of qualifications or professional experiences acquired abroad. The mentors support the mentees so that they can gain confidence in their new environment - society, culture, the labour market or with creation of a company.¹⁵

Best practice 5 *“We create opportunities!”*

The WKO initiated the project “We create opportunities!” together with the AMS and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMASK) for over-regional apprenticeship placement of refugees. The project seeks to improve young recognised refugees’ chances as well as national mobility of those who are looking for an apprenticeship: They are sent where there are open apprenticeships and attractive job opportunities in their area of interest. The challenge is to provide the target group with matching companies and the provision of a longer-term support structure, which can be addressed by both, young people and businesses. This is ensured in the WKÖ pilot project through teaching and coaching.

5.3 Strengths and weaknesses

- Strong points are particularly the strong links between theoretical training and training in the workplace throughout the (formal & non-formal) system – valid for all learners embedded in the qualification system.
- Weak points are certainly those, where it comes to matching needs and swift qualification procedures for those migrants experienced in their job profile, as well as having a severe system within the apprenticeship which is less and less attractive to many companies (latter valid for all involved), difficult to enter for those having accomplished the formal qualification on paper.
- The image of those having passed through the ‘traditional’ apprenticeship pathway is still not high as it used to be.
- There are few free apprenticeship places in the traditional dual system available for immigrants.

¹⁵ https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Mentoring/MigrantInnen/Ablauf_der_Mentorenpartnerschaft.html

6 Important reports and sources

Public Austrian Employment Service: www.ams.at

http://www.ams.at/docs/400_Asy-Folder_DEUTSCH.pdf

http://docs.ams.at/wien/sfa/bildungstraeger/systemlandkarte_wege_zur_lap/systemlandkarte_wege_zur_lap.pdf

Website on Asylum: <http://www.asyl.at/>

Federal office for asylum: <http://www.bfa.gv.at/>

Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs: <http://www.bmeia.gv.at>

“Integrationsbericht”-Integration report 2016 by BMEIA:

https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Integration/Integrationsbericht_2016/Integrationsbericht_2016_WEB.pdf

Federal Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.bmi.gv.at>

Federal ministry of the Interior, Asylum statistics:

http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asywesen/statistik/files/2016/Asylstatistik_November_2016.pdf

http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asywesen/statistik/files/Asyl_Jahresstatistik_2015.pdf

http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asywesen/statistik/files/Asyl_Jahresstatistik_2014.pdf

NGO “Caritas”: <https://www.caritas.at/>

“Migration&Integration” Report by the “integrationsfond”, developed by Statistik Austria:

<http://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/content/migrationintegration-2016.pdf>

German courses by the organisation ISOP: <http://www.isop.at/tatigkeitsfelder/qualifizierung-bildung/deutschkurse-fur-migrantinnen/>

Johannes Kepler University Linz:

<http://www.jku.at/content/e213/e63/e58/e57?apath=e32681/e292394/e309536/e309735>

Austrian Integration Fund: <http://www.oif.at>

“Refugee Guide” of the Federal Ministry of the Interior: <http://www.refugee-guide.at/>

Official statistics of Austria: <http://www.statistik.at>

Government of Vienna, „Mama lernt Deutsch!“:

<https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/pdf/mama-lernt-deutsch-folder.pdf>

Austrian Chamber of Commerce:

https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Mentoring/MigrantInnen/Ablauf_der_Mentorenpartnerschaft.html