

Erasmus+ - project “BOQua digital”



Guideline for the implementation of the EU-wide uniform qualification modules for further training of vocational orientation specialists in Austria

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Introduction

In the following, a guideline for the implementation of the European qualification modules for vocational orientation specialists (BOQua digital) will be described, which is to show possibilities and suggestions for the implementation and financing of the developed new qualification modules in Austria. The first chapter will first explain the relevance of such a qualification module for the target group of experts in career guidance, especially with regard to the topic of digitalization and crafts. In the second chapter, options for implementing the training module and, finally, financing options will be presented.

1. Description of the need of specific qualifications concerning digitisation

The world of work is undergoing rapid and comprehensive change, which is being shaped by various trends. One particularly strong influencing factor of the comprehensive changes in the world of work is advancing technologization, which is often associated with the buzzwords digitization, Industry 4.0 and automation. The developments surrounding the digitalization of the world of work are having a major impact on job profiles, activities and required competencies in the respective occupations in all sectors, both in Austria and at international level. Professionals in career guidance are therefore required to keep abreast of these effects at all times. Keeping the level of knowledge up to date in such a fast changing world of work is an enormous challenge for professionals.

For this reason, within the framework of the Erasmus+ project "BOQua digital", all five project partners from Slovenia, Spain, Scotland (UK) and Austria, under the leadership of the University of Teachers Education Schwäbisch Gmünd, developed training modules for career guidance professionals. These further training modules were developed on the basis of case studies, for which experts from vocational orientation were interviewed within the framework of the project. The interviewed professionals were asked how the world of work has changed in the course of digitalisation in general and in various occupational areas in particular, and how these changes have affected the requirements for the competencies of employees in the world of work. Taking this change into account, the interviewees were also asked to talk about the framework conditions and challenges that young people are currently facing in the career orientation process and how this has changed the demands on those working in career orientation. The focus of the interviews was ultimately on the knowledge, skills and competencies required of career guidance professionals in general, and this in the context of the digital transformation of the world of work and the various manifestations in the respective occupational areas.

The following occupational areas were elaborated in the five modules:

- Qualification module "Digitalisation in the crafts sector"
- Qualification module "Digitalized production occupations"
- Qualification module "Commercial professions in the course of digitalization"
- Qualification module "Digitalisation in nursing/healthcare professions"
- Qualification module "The challenge of Digitalisation for training and work"

In the following, we will discuss the implementation of the module that aims to train actors in vocational orientation on the topic of digitalisation in the skilled crafts sector in Austria. Compared to Germany and other countries, Austria's economy is characterized by a large landscape of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (2019: 99.6%)¹, which also include most craft enterprises. In addition, Austria has a school-based and company-based vocational training system with a large number of

¹<https://www.bmdw.gv.at/Services/Zahlen-Daten-Fakten/KMU-in-%C3%96sterreich.html>

skilled craft professions, especially in apprenticeship training, the majority of which takes place in the companies themselves. Contrary to the sometimes prevailing perception, it is becoming apparent that craft activities and occupations are also undergoing massive digital change, for example in the ancillary construction trade.²³This change is sometimes also reflected in the ongoing technological modernization of apprenticeships and the associated job profiles.⁴ The partly outdated image of craft professions continues to lag behind this change, sometimes also among young people, who should benefit just as indirectly from the further training of experts in career orientation as adults who are (re)orienting themselves professionally.

Based on the focus of the expert interviews that mentioned before and against the background of digitalization and the use of new technologies, especially in the skilled trades, the objectives of the qualification module are to provide further training for skilled workers in career orientation with regard to:

- ... the expansion and promotion of knowledge on professions, activities, training and further training, the labour market and career paths,
- ... the promotion of the examination of changes in the world of work in different skilled crafts occupations and the respective occupation-specific work context,
- ...reflecting on the changing requirements for knowledge, skills and competences for current and future skilled workers in the skilled crafts sector,
- ...the expansion and promotion of knowledge, skills and competences for the activity in vocational guidance and counselling in view of this change,
- ...promoting the use of various innovative and practical career guidance methods, measures and activities, using digital tools where appropriate,
- ... promoting guidance-seekers' self-instruction in career guidance, including with the support of digital tools,
- ... the promotion of a high-quality career guidance process,
- ... the promotion of practical experience and concrete insights into different professions, including through the use of digital tools and virtual exploration opportunities.

2. Proposals for implementation of the specific qualifications in Austria

There are different options for the implementation of the “European qualification modules for vocational orientation specialists”, ranging from integration into an academic education (e.g. teacher training) to implementation as an open (further) education offer for professionals in career guidance.

The qualification modules should primarily be integrated into academic training (e.g. teacher training). After all, teachers are entrusted with many agendas of career orientation for students: For example, in the role of student and educational advisors and at lower secondary schools through the implementation of career orientation lessons from the 7th grade and the design of diverse career orientation measures. Therefore, it would be helpful to integrate selected modules into the curricula of **teacher training** at teacher training colleges and universities, especially since the teacher training program does not currently necessarily include a focus on career orientation.

At present, the qualification of vocational guidance teachers and coordinators and educational -coordinators as well as educational and school counsellors are carried out within the framework of special courses at teacher training colleges in Austria. This already existing offer of teacher training and further training in the field of vocational orientation could supplement or extend the European qualification of VO specialists with new contents and modules:

²cf. https://nachhaltigwirtschaften.at/resources/sdz_pdf/schriftenreihe-2021-15-forba-studie-digitalisierung_bf.pdf

³cf. <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/dam/jcr:52f52bc1-f8fe-4297-b252-bfdb0474aad5/Projektbericht%20-%20Digitale%20Kompetenzen%20in%20%C3%B6sterreichischen%20KMUs.pdf>

⁴cf. https://www.bic.at/downloads/de/broschueren/lehrberufe_in_oesterreich_2021.pdf

- In Austria, **teacher training** is largely organized by the teacher training colleges in the individual federal states. For the various subjects, thematically selected courses are offered, which are specifically tailored to the teaching situations and the respective subjects.
- **Teacher training** can also take the form of university courses, master's courses or doctoral studies. In some federal states - for example at the University of Teacher Education Lower Austria - there are already (master) courses in the field of "career orientation" (see e.g. www.ph-noe.ac.at). Therefore, an implementation of all modules or individual modules is conceivable, especially in teacher training.

Teachers are not the only ones who deal with career counselling and guidance for young people. Thus, an implementation of the five qualification modules is also conceivable for the study program "Social Work". After all, social workers in youth work also deal with questions of career orientation, even if these are not usually part of their direct area of responsibility. Also for further relevant studies (e.g. pedagogy, psychology etc.) an integration of the present qualification modules into the academic education can be an option, conceivably also in the form of (free) elective subjects/modules.

Career guidance specialists are also active in many different organizations and institutions, for example in the career information centres of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), in career and educational counselling institutions of the Chambers of Commerce and WIFIs (business development institutes), in counselling institutions of the Chamber of Labour and vocational training institutes (BFI). The qualification of these career guidance specialists takes place through training and further education courses, some of which are internally regulated on a binding basis, and/or through on-the-job training. For this target group, the whole qualification modules or parts/modules of it could be implemented, for example, in the form of a supplementary qualification or further training offer.

In addition, the qualification modules in question can also be offered as a free and open (further) education program for all persons involved in career guidance, for example in the form of seminars and further education courses. Through the implementation of the qualification modules, new, innovative seminar formats could be created in which, for example, occupations of a specific occupational field (e.g. focus on craft occupations: What occupations are there? Are new occupations emerging? What are the trends in these occupations? How does digitalisation affect the areas of activity in these professions?) are made the subject of discussion and are specifically geared to people who are already involved in career guidance or would like to be in the future.

Currently, there are already some courses for educational and career guidance offered by universities (for further education) and adult education institutions (e.g. course for educational and career guidance at the Federal Institute for Adult Education, Master Course for Educational and Career Guidance at the Danube University Krems). Since these courses are continuously revised, an implementation of the qualification modules in total, respectively of single modules/ parts, can be an option in this field as well. This is all the more true since new (master) courses in the field of career and educational guidance are also being developed, for example at the University of Klagenfurt, which will offer a course for educational and career counsellors starting in the summer semester of 2023.

As a further implementation option, the qualification modules could be interesting as an extension of the training "Dipl. Lebens- und Sozialberatung" for people who would like to work in the fields of educational, vocational and career counselling as well as career orientation. The independent practice of a profession as an educational and career counsellor is subject to the trade law and is tied to the proof of a completed training "Dipl. Lebens- und Sozialberatung". These courses must be certified by the Chamber of Commerce as the trade authority and are offered by a wide variety of providers, although specific content from educational and career counselling or career guidance has so far played a rather subordinate role.⁵

⁵ For further information on target groups, qualification options and the design of career guidance in Austria, see also: <https://www.boqua.eu/>

3. Proposals for financing the specific qualifications in Austria

The options for the implementation of the qualification modules are accompanied by specific possibilities for financing. If the European Qualification Framework were to be integrated into an academic education, the financing of public universities, universities of teacher education and universities of applied sciences would be predominantly based on public funds (supplemented, for example, by tuition fees, which have to be paid by students under certain conditions). Whether students at universities and colleges of education have to pay tuition fees currently depends on the students' citizenship and the duration of their studies. The providers of universities of applied sciences, on the other hand, are completely free to charge tuition fees up to a defined maximum of 363.36€ per semester, which is also used by the majority.⁶

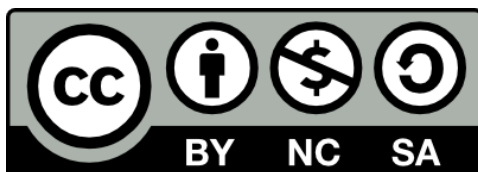
Students as course participants have to reckon with comparatively higher costs when they attend (continuing) education programs at private universities, because it is at the discretion of the private universities to set the level of tuition/course fees. According to a study by Kurt Schmid et al (2017)⁷, 49% of private universities in Austria are financed by tuition/course fees, with the remainder financed by public sponsors/funders, third-party projects, donations/sponsorships/foundations, etc (cf. Schmid et al 2017).

Also to be financed largely via cost price would be seminar, course and courses that would be available to (future) career guidance specialists as free/open (continuing) education offerings. In this context, reference can be made to the multiple possibilities of taking advantage of subsidies for training and further education⁸, which could also be used in the implementation of the qualification modules as a free/open (further) education offer.

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⁶ cf. <https://www.oeh.ac.at/studiengebuehren>

⁷ cf. <https://www.ibw.at/resource/download/1442/ibw-researchbrief-98-de.pdf>

⁸ cf. <https://erwachsenenbildung.at/bildungsinfo/kursfoerderung/>