

Erasmus+ -project
„European Qualification Concept –
Specialist for Vocational Orientation”



Guideline for Implementation
of the European Qualification Concept
in Austria
(Birgit Winkler)

**Developed by the Austrian partner
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Introduction

The present implementation guideline of the European qualification concept “vocational orientation specialist“ (BOQua) gives an overview of implementation and financing options in Austria for the developed qualification concept. First of all, a brief description of the vocational and training system in Austria is provided in order to place the given suggestions for implementation and financing options of the qualification concept in Austria in the right context.

1. Description of the VET system in Austria

In Austria children at the age of approximately six years start attending primary school (school levels 1 to 4). Directly after primary school Austria's school system is characterised by an early tracking into different school types. At school levels 5 to 8 (lower secondary level) pupils can attend the so called “Neue Mittelschule” (New Middle School / lower secondary school) or the “Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule (AHS)” (secondary academic school – lower cycle).

After grade 8 Austria's educational system leads into further differentiation. Apart from the possibility to attend the higher cycle of the secondary academic school (school levels 9 to 12) there is a wide variety of vocational schools and training opportunities:

- **Polytechnic schools (PTS)** are a one-year school type (school level 9) which can be understood as transitional stage for further vocational education (especially apprenticeships) and put an emphasis on vocational orientation and preparation.
- **Apprenticeships (Lehre):** Apprenticeships are vocational trainings which last two to four years and take place at training companies and special vocational schools for apprentices. In Austria there are currently more than 200 different apprenticeships which can be taken up after having completed compulsory schooling¹.
- **Medium-level VET schools (BMS)** offer merely school-based vocational education in many different training areas (i. e. technical, commercial, environmental specialisations / school types) and last three to four years (school level 9 up to school level 12).
- **VET colleges (BHS)** offer merely school-based vocational education in many different training areas (i. e. technical, commercial, environmental specialisations / school types), last five years (school level 9 to 13) and culminate in a final examination (“Matura“), the passing of which is a proof of professional competence which serves as a certificate of qualification for university entrance.

Compulsory schooling lasts nine years. However, there is no certain (standardised) school-leaving examination at the end of compulsory schooling. Since 2016 a duty of training

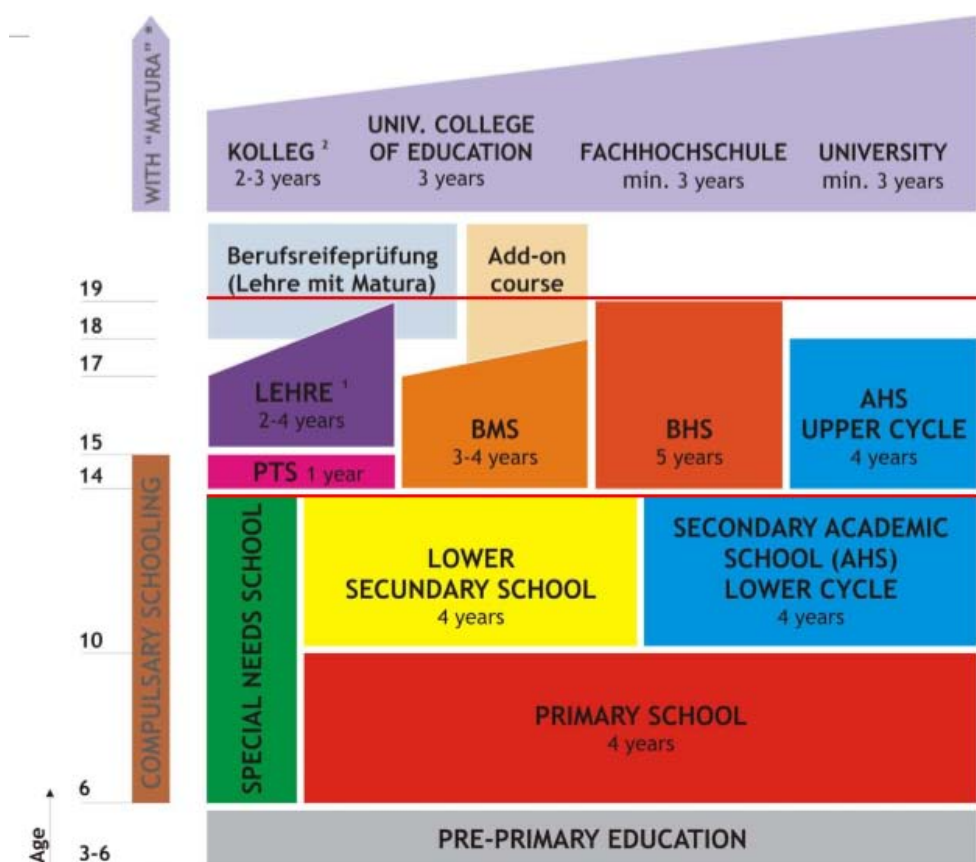
¹ After having completed apprenticeship training the so called „Berufsreifeprüfung“, which also serves as a certificate of qualification for university entrance, can be acquired. This possibility also exists for people who have (amongst other things) completed a medium-level VET school or have completed a maximum of three years of a VET college. Furthermore the training model “Apprenticeship and Matura” offers the possibility to combine an apprenticeship with obtaining the secondary school leaving certificate (“Berufsreifeprüfung”).

Cf.: https://erwachsenenbildung.at/bildungsinfo/zweiter_bildungsweg/berufsreifepreuefung.php

until the age of eighteen, which ensures the continuation of education activities until this very age, was legally consolidated.

As far as Austria's tertiary education sector is concerned, there are currently four main university types: **Public universities**, **private universities**, **universities of applied science** („Fachhochschulen“, which are strongly practice-oriented, only have a limited number of study places as well as admission procedures) and **colleges of education**, which offer teacher training. Apart from these university types there are a large number of different post-secondary trainings (i. e. so called occupation-oriented “Kollegs”) and formal as well as non-formal further training possibilities. In the course of **higher vocational education and training** a mastership or qualification examination can, inter alia, be obtained.

Illustration 1 Overview of Austria's education system



Source: ibw, own illustration

Vocational orientation within Austria's educational system

At school **formalized vocational orientation** starts in grade 7 by means of vocational orientation classes at lower secondary level for pupils at the age of approximately 13 years. Nevertheless multiple vocational orientation measures are offered at schools – however unsystematically – before grade 7. At all schools at lower and higher secondary level (grade 5 to 13) teachers with relevant qualifications offer vocational orientation / education counselling services. One of these **vocational orientation counsellors'** core tasks is providing information regarding educational and qualification opportunities. Furthermore some other functions with regard to vocational orientation, such as **vocational orientation teachers** and **vocational orientation coordinators** exist at schools.

Apart from vocational orientation at Austria's schools, which systematically starts at grade 7, many other vocational measures outside the school context start for the target group of pupils at the age of 13 or more. It is legally consolidated in Austria, that the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) is, inter alia, responsible for offering information about the labour market, the world of work, job profiles as well as for offering advisory service regarding career choice². In so called „Vocational Information Centers“ (Berufsinformationszentren – BIZ³) the Public Employment Service offers information and advisory services for all interested parties, regardless of age, level of education etc. Some of those approximately 70 centres across Austria are explicitly designed as centres for young people. Supporting vocational education at schools from grade 7 onwards by means of class lectures at the centres, school visits, teacher information, parents' evenings or individual advisory services for young people and their parents as well as individual interest and aptitude tests are the key tasks of the Vocational Information Centres.

Similar vocational orientation measures, however without legal consolidation, are offered by counselling services of Austria's social partners. These measures consist of individual consultation, class information, carrying out potential analyses, talent checks and skill assessments, providing materials, websites, application trainings etc. and aim at pupils / young people, parents as well as teachers / schools.

Furthermore there are many special counselling and social support centres which aim at certain target groups such as girls/women, people from a migrant background, unaccompanied minor refugees, people with handicaps, people who are at risk of dropping out of the education system etc. and in many cases also cooperate with schools⁴.

2. Proposals for implementation of the European qualification concept in Austria

The manifold possibilities for implementation of the European qualification concept „Specialist for Vocational Orientation“ include inter alia the integration of the European qualification concept into academic education (i. e. teacher training) as well as implementing it as educational programme in the (private) training sector.

An integration of the European qualification concept “Specialist for Vocational Orientation“ into the academic system (i. e. teacher training) constitutes a significant implementation option since especially teachers are entrusted with the task of offering vocational orientation (i. e. in the function of vocational orientation counsellors or by giving vocational orientation classes and organising vocational orientation measures / activities at school). Integrating (selected) modules of the European qualification concept into the curricula for teacher training at Colleges of Education or universities can be regarded as relevant, particularly as teacher training curricula currently do not necessarily have to cover vocational orientation aspects. Nonetheless, qualifications for vocational orientation teachers, vocational orientation coordinators and counsellors are offered in the form of special academic training courses at Colleges of Education in Austria at present. The European Qualification Concept could

² Cf.: <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/Bundesnormen/NOR40066208/NOR40066208.pdf>

³ Cf.: <http://www.ams.at/berufsinfo-weiterbildung/biz-berufsinfozentren>

⁴ Further information on target groups and structural elements as regards vocational orientation in Austria can be obtained in the “Annex to the guideline: Investigation results status quo - good practice“ (<http://www.boqua.eu/downloads/>).

therefore also complement or rather extend the existing offers of academic training courses in the field of vocational orientation:

- In Austria **further teacher training** is organised to a high degree by the Colleges of Education in the different federal states. For all kinds of subjects thematically related **courses** which take place **over a short period of time** are offered and are especially adapted to classroom situations or other school relevant issues.
- **Further teacher training** can be organised as **postgraduate training, master or doctoral programs**. In some federal states in Austria – i. e. at Lower Austria's College of Education – there are already master programs with regard to vocational orientation (cf.: www.ph-noe.ac.at). Implementing the European qualification concept or rather some of the concept's modules might be of special interest in further teacher training.

As a matter of course, teachers are not the only ones that offer vocational guidance and orientation for young people. Therefore, implementing the European qualification concept can also be regarded as relevant for other academic studies, such as „social work“ since social workers who are concerned with youth work inevitably also have to deal with vocational orientation even if vocational orientation might not be a social worker's main task. Furthermore, putting the European qualification concept into practice can also be regarded as relevant in other studies (i. e. pedagogy, psychology etc.) and could be implemented in the form of optional subjects.

Moreover, vocational orientation specialists also work for various different organisations and institutions, i. e. at Vocational Information Centres of Austria's Public Employment Service (AMS), at educational counselling and career guidance institutions of the Austrian Economic Chambers and Institutes for Economic Promotion (“Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitute – WIFIs”), at consulting institutions of the Austrian Chamber of Labour and vocational training institutes (“Berufsförderungsinstitute – BFI”). Qualification measures for vocational orientation specialists who work at these organisations / institutions partly are organised as internally regulated trainings / further trainings and/or as on-the-job training. The European qualification concept or some of its modules could also be implemented in the form of an additional qualification or further training option for this target group.

Beyond that, the present European qualification concept might also be offered in Austria's private training sector in the form of courses/seminars/further trainings for all people that work or want to work in the field of vocational orientation. Referring to the design of the European qualification concept and its developed training modules, new and innovative seminar concepts in the field of vocational orientation could be offered which i. e. might focus on specific vocational sectors or professional areas (i. e. focus on professions in the craft sector: Which jobs are there? What are current trends in these jobs? Are there new jobs emerging? How does digitalisation affect certain job profiles? etc.).

There are currently some training courses for educational counselling and vocational orientation, which are offered by universities (for professional development and training) and by private institutions of further education (i. e. training course on educational counselling and vocational guidance at the Federal Institute of Adult Education, master course of study on educational counselling and vocational guidance at the Danube University Krems). Since these training courses are constantly under revision and new training courses will emerge,

an implementation of (some modules of) the European qualification concept might also be an option in this very field.

Implementing (parts of) the European qualification concept, i. e. in the form of additional training courses for those who participate in the training courses to become “life and social counsellors” and would like to work in the field of vocational orientation can be regarded as another option since being self-employed in the field of vocational orientation requires having completed training as a “life and social counsellor”. These training courses for “life and social counsellors” must be certified by Austria’s Economic Chamber in the function of trade authority and can be offered by various institutions. So far, specific contents with regard to vocational orientation within the training courses to become “life and social counsellors” play a tangential role⁵.

⁵ Further information on target groups, qualification possibilities and structural elements as regards vocational orientation in Austria can be obtained in the “Annex to the guideline: Investigation results status quo - good practice“ (<http://www.boqua.eu/downloads/>).

3. Proposals for financing the European qualification concept in Austria

The presented implementation options of the European qualification concept in Austria in the previous chapter come along with corresponding financing possibilities. In the case of integrating the European qualification concept into academic education at public universities, universities of applied science and Colleges of Education financing would be mainly provided via public funds (slightly supplemented i. e. by tuition fees which must be paid under certain conditions). If students at public universities and Colleges of Education have to pay tuition fees currently depends on their citizenship and the duration of study. The providing bodies of universities of applied science are entitled to choose whether or not tuition fees up to a maximum of 363,36€ per semester are charged, even though most make use of it⁶.

At private universities comparatively higher tuition fees are charged for (further training) courses since private universities can determine the fees they charge freely. According to a study conducted by Kurt Schmid et al. (2017)⁷ Austria's private universities finance themselves mainly (to the extent of 49%), through tuition / course fees whereas the remaining budget is derived by public supporters / sponsors, third-party-funded projects, donations / sponsoring etc. (cf. Schmid et al 2017).

Seminars / training courses for (prospective) vocational orientation specialists which are implemented in the (private) training sector would also have to be mainly financed by course fees which would have to be paid by the participants. Nevertheless, in this context it has to be mentioned that in Austria there are various options to receive financial support for (further) education⁸.

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/>

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