

VET Study visit Graz, Austria 7 – 9 June 2011

Visit details

Study visit participants:

- Ms Liv Frilseth (expert from Norway)
- Ms Regina Labiniene (Representative Board Member and expert from Lithuania)
- Ms Ursula Ortner (expert from Austria and host)
- Mr Dietmar Vollmann (expert from Austria and host)
- Mr Harald Weber, European Agency staff member

Programme:

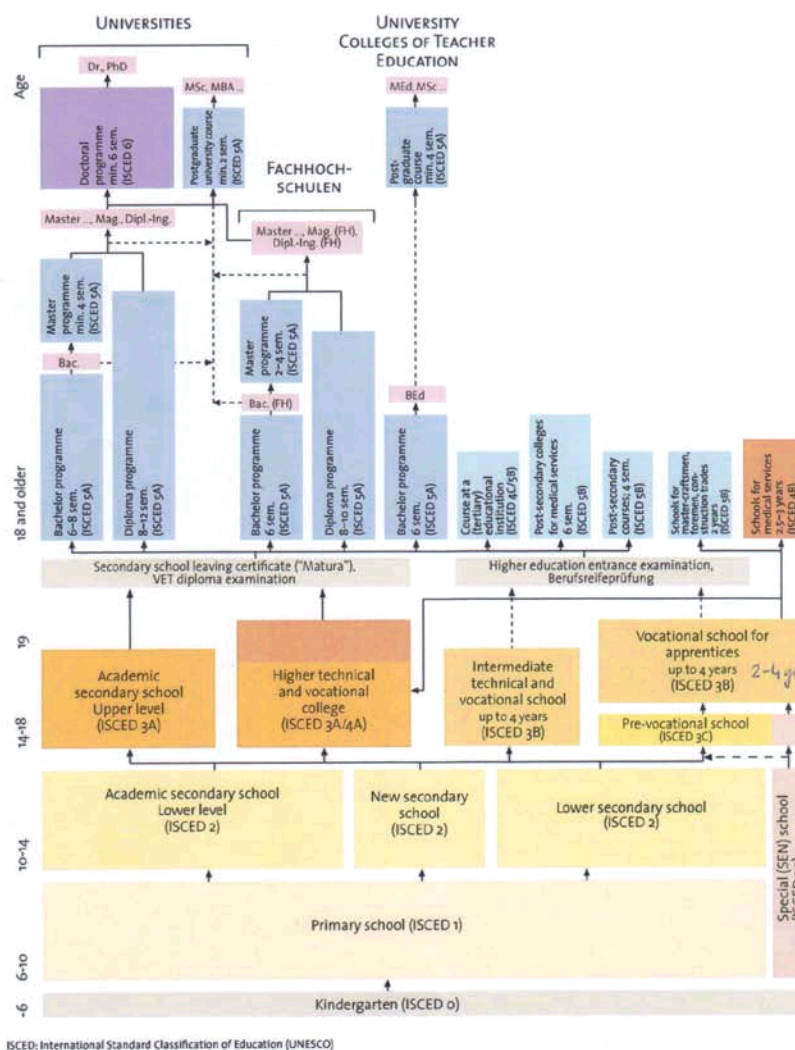
1st day morning

Office of the Styrian School Authority for Vocational Schools

Presentation by Dietmar “VET in Austria” (see presentation [VET-in-AT.pdf](#))

Austria has an unemployment rate of 4.2% in May 2011 with a 7.8% youth unemployment rate at the same time. About 139,000 apprentices joined part time vocational schools who have about 5000 teachers. In most cases they stay 3 years (2 – 4 years) and go to the vocational school for 8 to 10 weeks each year. Education is about 1/3 general education and 2/3 occupation related technical tuition. In 2003 the “Inclusive (integrative) Vocational Training” was introduced, providing two additional options: a prolongation of the apprenticeship period, and the acquisition of a partial qualification.

Austrian Educational System



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Presentation by Ursula “3. Clearing” (see clearing-AT.pdf)

Clearing is an offer for the support of young people between 13 and 24 years of age who are on the threshold between school and work as long as (at least) one of the following criteria applies to them:

- Special educational needs in at least one subject at school
- Young people with a physical impairment or disability, or an impairment of the senses or cognitive skills
- Mental illness
- Socio-emotional difficulties
- Candidates for integrative Career Training who are being referred to Clearing.

Clearing is voluntary and is provided at no cost to young people.

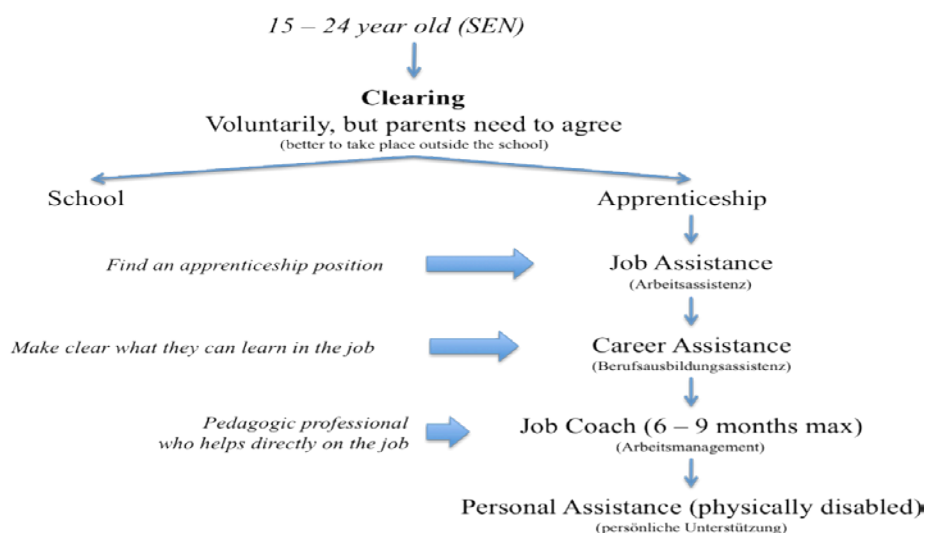
Clearing was introduced in 2001 with the financial aid of the Austrian Federal Government's employment initiatives. Clearing represents a special service for young people in the transition from school to work as they explore their professional options and try to get a clearer perspective for themselves. Within the framework of the Clearing process youths with disabilities receive support in their efforts to become familiar with their own strengths and interests and their professional orientation. Clearing offers significant help with their orientation as they find themselves on the threshold between school and earning a living and provides a foundation for their further integration into the open labor market.

Parents/guardians and relatives, teachers and businesses (e.g. those offering practical training) are involved in the Clearing process as well, in order to provide individual support tailored to the specific needs and capacities of the young people as they enter the professional world. A member of the job center in Graz will inform about the financial incentives for companies, which put vocational apprenticeship for people with special needs into praxis.

Clearing is tasked with showing young people various perspectives and thus aims to help them make realistic decisions about their professional futures. Clearing also helps them with exploring their needs before entering into Integrative Career Training.

Clearing services can be accessed through schools, counseling services, the AMS or directly by the young people or their parents/guardians. As a rule, a preliminary interview precedes the Clearing process, where the options and the services of Clearing are discussed.

For further reference Ursula sketched the system as follows:



Information by Mrs Vogrin from the Federal Social Security Office (“Bundessozialamt”), which is the office financing the supporting measures for the young people with special needs, and by Mr Wurtzinger from the Job Center (“Arbeitsmarktservice”)

Mrs Vogrin reports in the training centers for those young people who cannot find an apprenticeship. Job assistance and job coaching are often working together for an overlap of 2 to 3 months. Young people prefer to have one person only as a contact instead of many. All these services are provided by NGOs.

Mr Wurtzinger is one of the officers working for people with disabilities in the job center. About 8 to 10% of all unemployed (14.300) are disabled people. As a precondition to support people with disabilities is a threshold of 50% of the work capacity / capabilities of a non-disabled worker.

“You are looking for an apprentice? Then you use the support offered by the Employment Service. Companies or educational institutions can provide for the education of young people and adults a lump-sum subsidy to the cost of training or teaching of integrative vocational training.

Who?

This support enables companies and training institutions that are authorized under the vocational training law (BAG) and the Agriculture and Forestry Vocational Training Act (LFBAG), apprentices and participants form of an integrative vocational training obtained.

How much?

The promotion will be paid as a monthly contribution to the costs of apprenticeship training and the Integrative training (apprenticeship pay, personnel and operating expenses) in lump-sum form.” (taken from handout “Förderung der Lehrerausbildung”)

1st day afternoon

Visit a center for apprenticeship training

Welcome by Michaela Meier (Head of Center/Department) and Sigrid Carbonara (Coordination of the Center / Department) of “Jugend am Werk”

General information on “Jugend am Werk” Steiermark GmbH

Jugend am Werk is one of the biggest social services organisations in the Province of Styria. Together with their customers, about 620 employees in 59 locations throughout the Province of Styria work to create life perspectives and to take chances in the areas of care and integration for persons with disabilities, training for young adults, employment, early intervention, and crisis intervention. Custom-fit and innovative services, customer-focussed acting, many years of experience, and best-trained and motivated employees characterise the work of Jugend am Werk. Jugend am Werk Steiermark GmbH is a non-profit organisation and certified to the European ISO 9001:2008 standard.



Locations

- 25 establishments in the areas of training, work and employment services
- 34 establishments in the areas of care, leisure and accommodation services

Business areas

- Care for persons with disabilities: Stationary, partly stationary and mobile services according to the Styrian Provincial law on the care for persons with disabilities: workshops, company integration, supported accommodation, early intervention, family support, supported living, leisure support.
- Youth welfare services: Early intervention, educational counselling, socio-pedagogical family care, apartment-sharing communities, mobile supported living, crisis accommodation.
- Labour Market Service and Federal Office For Social Services: (Apprenticeship) training, integrative vocational training, part qualification apprenticeship, clearing, work assistance, JobAllianz, mentoring.
- ESF as of 2010: Production schools.

Turnover

- 2008: €25.5 m.
- 2009: €25.8 m.

WEB: www.jaw.or.at



The visited establishment hosts 15 – 25 years old people with learning disabilities who do not yet have the chance for an apprenticeship in a company. They go through a one-year phase of orientation and preparation (socio-pedagogical training) to know what to do and to test different activities. The center has different workshops dealing with wood, metal, electronics, cleaning, cooking. The students stay about one month in each of these workshops. They also participate about 4,5 h per week in school. This phase is followed by an apprenticeship in a company, yet the apprenticeship contract is between the student and the organisation (i.e. not with the company).

The center hosts every week applicants for the training; they are then accepted for a practical phase inside, then they choose what to do.

Currently, the center has about 50 persons in companies and 25 in training/ orientation/ preparation at maximum. About 38-40 people per year enter this system. There is competition among NGOs, and the center has a waiting list of up to one year.

80% of the participants in average find a job on the labour market (minimum is 60%) after the apprenticeship. Information and communication technology does not play a big role in that process; it might, however, help them to write applications.

Supervision needs to be bought in externally, as it is not automatically provided.

Those students / apprentices who have a contract with the center instead of a company get some extra hours of training per week in the center, so the company has to pay less.



Visit of the pastry shop “Café Famoos”

The study visit team went to the pastry shop which did not show by any sign that it is an institution giving opportunities to people with disabilities. The pleasant outside and inside was accompanied by pastry of high quality and a warm atmosphere.

The shop was founded to give people with disabilities an opportunity to work. The decision for a coffee / pastry shop was based upon the following reasons:

- acceptance as a normal coffee shop
- positive response in public
- positive response in media
- people with disabilities had asked for work
- a place to host the shop was provided in an excellent location.

The target group were people with disabilities who else would not have the chance to get a job on the open labour market. Three different categories of young people belong to that target group:

- young people who are able to make a special kind of vocational training (supported by the Federal Office of Social Affairs)
- people with mental disabilities, who can work, but a vocational training is not possible now (they perform a kind of preparation course, funded by the provincial government)
- people with mental disabilities, who cannot make a vocational training (supported by the provincial government)

Vocational training opportunities cover pastry cooks and waiter/waitresses. The working team is multiprofessional and has waiter/waitresses, pastry cooks and educational specialists. Work and training strategies contain: training on the job, attend theory, practical training in other companies, outplacements, jobcoaching.



Therefore, a special solution was found, providing a 1:2 teacher-student ratio.



Institution-wise Famoos is considered a sheltered workshop with 24 people, of which 21 are people with disabilities. They have additionally 3 apprentices with SEN. About 1/3 of the costs are covered by the State government, 1/3 by the provincial government and 1/3 by its earnings/income. Famoos is open 7 days a week. The employees earn 190 Euro plus 50 Euro fix. Two days per week, the apprentices join the vocational school, yet in an own class (due to the fact that the school is too distant).

2nd day morning

Meeting with representatives of the Austrian “Chamber of Trade, Commerce and Industry” and the “Chamber of Employment”

Presentation by Ursula Strohmeier and Christine Pucher

Apprenticeship office of the Chamber of Commerce

Tasks:

- Assessing companies whether they are suitable for hosting apprentices (companies need to be able to carry out certain required tasks and should have the capacity and competence for hosting apprentices)
- Ensuring that apprenticeship contracts fulfil formal requirements; all contracts are documented at the office as well
- Content organisation of the final examination of teachers/trainers

Another task is to check the capability of companies for partial qualification. Some companies can only do partial qualification, but these usually already work in the field of qualifying people with disabilities.

About 5000 companies are allowed to train apprentices, with a total of about 19,000 to 20,000 apprentices currently. Of these, about 1,000 integrative VET apprentices per year are split into about >700 who follow the prolonged version (usually in companies), while <400 who follow the partial qualification (mainly in institutions).

Styria is at the forefront in the field of IVET, due to experiences in the past (“Anlehre”). A law in 2003 (“Berufsbildungsgesetz”) led the way to IVET. The east of Austria was always ahead of the developments regarding inclusive education, compared to the west. It started with providing financial means as incentives, but also involving key representatives as “door openers” and awarding companies for their initiatives. Inclusive education in primary and secondary education is considered as a very important factor, as students and parents are then used to inclusive settings and expect this to continue during VET. Throughout Austria, about 50% are in inclusive settings, while still 50% are in special settings. In Styria, however, more than 80% are in inclusive settings. Asked what the reason for this disparity could be, the lack of a National parents organisation was mentioned, which perhaps could have worked towards less differences between the regions.

Visit of a gardening company



The study visit team met a trainee with special needs (Hannah), her mother, the head of the company and the vocational trainer. The company grows plants for the city of Graz, with different plants throughout the seasons / year. It employs currently 14 people plus 10 apprentices.

Hannah introduced the study visit team herself into her tasks and explained in detail what she has already learned (e.g. latin names of plants, instructions how to treat different plants, gardening processes). The vocational trainer tests out new tasks with her and see what Hannah can do and what not. In this respect, the contents of the partial

qualification are defined.

The head of the company reported that he had another student with SEN before, but the experiences were not good. Still, he was open for another student with SEN, and he is very satisfied with Hannah's work and energy. He also pointed out the positive influence Hannah's character has on the whole team. Hannah herself said that she gets help from others, but sometimes that she helps the others as well.

Hannah's mother spoke about past experiences to find out what her daughter will do after school. After some negative experiences they found the company, and they are both very happy.

2nd day afternoon

Visit of the vocational school for food trade in Bad Radkersburg (South of Styria) and joining a lesson for apprentices

After that the study team was welcomed in the vocational school for food trade and was invited to visit the school building and the theoretical training for apprentices in the classroom, talk to teachers and students.

Inclusive (integrative) vocational training aims at enabling the acquisition of a vocational qualification and integration into working life for the following groups of people:

- People with special educational needs at the end of compulsory schooling. They were at least taught partly according to the curriculum of a special needs school.
- People with disabilities according to the meaning of the Act on the employment of people with disabilities (Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz)
- People who will in the foreseeable future not be possible to find any apprenticeship vacancy and the reason for it is exclusively related to themselves.
- People who did not acquire any qualification at lower secondary level or obtained a negative assessment in the final exam.

There are two possibilities for integrative VET:

- Prolongation of the apprenticeship period - these apprentices have to fulfill the whole curricula and teaching aims at school and the occupational profile at their company. The regular period of the apprenticeship is prolonged by one year and in exceptional cases by two years. The attendance of the part time vocational school is compulsory. And at the end of their training period they will take the regular apprenticeship leave exam.
- Acquisition of partial qualification - these apprentices are taught what is agreed in their training contract - mostly some elements of the occupational profile at work and of the curricula and teaching aims at school. According to that they have their own curricula and teaching aims based on a clearing report, which are retrieved from the career guidance usually before the pupils come for the first time. They are marked after these aims according to the normal marking system. The duration differs between one and three years.

Apprentices are obliged or entitled to attend part-time vocational school. They have their individual final exam.

Providing the best education for both - prolongation of apprenticeship period and acquisition of partial qualification is a hard task concerning the VET organization. Normally the school has three apprentices with any of the two possibilities in the classes. The school has a pool of lessons where two teachers are in the class. This depends on the type of the integrative status - maximum 18 lessons per week - minimum 3 lessons per week in one class. The amount of lessons per week per class is 49. The teachers do team-teaching and are there to help all the pupils of the class if necessary. That means that in quite a few lessons only one teacher deals with the whole class. Therefore he/she has to be very careful with preparing his/her lessons. Individualizing is very important.

Another problem is the variability of the duration for the partial qualification. An apprentice may only attend the first class (form) or the first and the second and sometimes even the third. The school mostly gets short notice from the career guidance on that. So the school stays in very close contact with the career guidance and at the end of every year it tries to figure out how useful it will be for the apprentice to come again. To ensure an appropriate leave exam for the partial qualified apprentices the documentation is very important. The school has separate folders for the prolonged apprenticeships and for the partial ones, also for every class (form). So the school is always able to check what the pupils learnt so far. To provide best education sometimes pupils can change between the partial qualification and the prolongation system, according to their possibilities, which may change due to their psychological and physical development.

Lots of communication is needed - between the career guidance, the company and the parents. So the school has two team-leaders who are responsible for the communication. They also have an -“open day” where everybody is invited to come and all teachers are reachable at the same time.

A real shop with state-of-the-art cash machines and interiors was set up in the school. The food available in that shop is sponsored by companies. This provides students with a realistic environment to experience and train the tasks necessary at a later position (e.g. understanding menu prompts of the merchandising planning and controlling system, invoicing things sold on credit, proceed payments, interpretation of lists of outstanding invoices).



In the discussion with school head and staff, the flexibility of the system was highlighted. For instance, people with psychological handicaps no neither require a prolongation nor a reduced set of learning contents for a partial qualification. Still, they get access to the support portfolio (at least in Syria) although no particular stipulation exists for these cases.

Asked regarding the process to get all teachers on-board, they reported on a transition phase from 2003 onwards for teachers to adapt, but meanwhile all teachers are open and willing to accept IVET. Since 2009, a project led by the Ministry provides peer reviews by assessors on headmaster level to learn from each other. It is planned to expand this to teacher level, also the rotation of teachers is a new idea. Schools perform a self-review, then 2 – 3 externals assess the institution. From the school's point of view, the self-report seems to be the most important part, while the external review just helps to see how distant the self-perception is from reality.