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Education and Training MONITOR 2018 Austria



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Education and Training Monitor 2018

Austria

Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2018 includes twenty-eight individual country reports. It builds on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence to present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy measures in each EU Member State, with a focus on developments since mid-2017. It therefore complements other sources of information which offer descriptions of national education and training systems.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 briefly identifies the main strengths and challenges of the country's education and training system. Section 3 looks at investment in education and training. Section 4 focuses on citizenship education. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise school education. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and training, while section 8 covers adult learning.

The manuscript was completed on 1 September 2018.

Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)

1. Key indicators

		Austria		EU average		
		2014	2017	2014	2017	
Education and training 2020 benchmarks						
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)		7.0%	7.4%	11.2%	10.6%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)		40.0%	40.8%	37.9%	39.9%	
Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)		94.0% ¹³	94.9% ¹⁶	94.2% ¹³	95.3% ¹⁶	
Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:	Reading	19.5% ¹²	22.5% ¹⁵	17.8% ¹²	19.7% ¹⁵	
	Maths	18.7% ¹²	21.8% ¹⁵	22.1% ¹²	22.2% ¹⁵	
	Science	15.8% ¹²	20.8% ¹⁵	16.6% ¹²	20.6% ¹⁵	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-8 (total)	87.2%	89.4%	76.0%	80.2%	
Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	14.3%	15.8%	10.8%	10.9%	
Learning mobility	Degree mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	4.6% ¹⁶	:	3.1% ¹⁶	
	Credit mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	9.8% ¹⁶	:	7.6% ¹⁶	
Other contextual indicators						
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		4.9%	4.9% ¹⁶	4.9%	4.7% ¹⁶
	Expenditure on public and private institutions per student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€9 637	€10 266 ¹⁵	€6 494 ^d	: ¹⁵
		ISCED 3-4	€10 547	€11 096 ¹⁵	€7 741 ^d	: ¹⁵
		ISCED 5-8	€12 433	€13 256 ¹⁵	€11 187 ^d	: ¹⁵
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	5.7%	5.3%	10.4%	9.6%	
	Foreign-born	14.9%	18.4%	20.2%	19.4%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	41.8%	42.5%	38.6%	40.6%	
	Foreign-born	35.0%	36.8%	34.3%	36.3%	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4	86.0%	87.6%	70.7%	74.1%	
	ISCED 5-8	88.5%	91.3%	80.5%	84.9%	

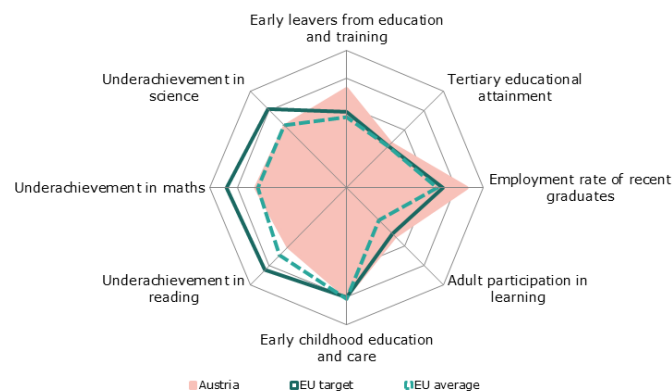
Sources: Eurostat (see section 10 for more details); OECD (PISA).

Notes: data refer to weighted EU averages, covering different numbers of Member States depending on the source; d = definition differs, 12 = 2012, 13 = 2013, 15 = 2015, 16 = 2016.

On credit graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by DG EAC on the available countries; on degree graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by JRC over Eurostat and OECD data.

Further information can be found in the relevant section of Volume 1 (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor).

Figure 1. Position in relation to strongest (outer ring) and weakest performers (centre)



Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2017, UOE 2016) and OECD (PISA 2015). Note: all scores are set between a maximum (the strongest performers by the outer ring) and a minimum (the weakest performers by the centre of the figure).

2. Highlights

- Austria has an ambitious new reform programme, although it does not always directly build on previous reforms.
- Austria has recently invested heavily in higher education, reforming its funding system to boost quality.
- Austria has a comprehensive approach to citizenship education and aims to promote a holistic concept of citizenship.
- While Austria continues to spend 5 % of GDP on education, the outcomes do not match the spending levels yet.
- Those from poorer socio-economic and/or migrant backgrounds continue to have weak education outcomes.

3. Investing in education and training

Austria's spending on education remains relatively stable, in line with the EU average.

The share of general government expenditure stood at 9.7 % in 2013 and 9.8 % in 2016. Between 2007 and 2016, the share of local spending increased from 1.1 % to 1.4 % of GDP, while spending by the provinces (Länder) has remained stable at 1.6 % and at national level at 3.3 %¹. The allocation of funding to different educational levels has also remained rather stable². Austria spends a much smaller share on pre-primary education than comparable countries such as Sweden or Denmark. The share of expenditure on secondary and tertiary education is about half that of the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland³. The new government's reform programme envisages reviewing the formula for distributing funds to different education levels (see Box 1). Based on Purchasing Power Parity, Austria outspends both the EU and the OECD average by about one third⁴. This is considerably more than most other EU countries, on a par with traditionally high-spending countries such as Denmark and Sweden but more than the Netherlands and Finland. However, while Austria is among the countries with the highest education expenditures, it achieves only moderate education outcomes in an international comparison of basic skills (European Commission, 2017).

Austria is expected to see both its school population and the proportion of pupils with a migrant background increase. Austria's school-age population (6-18 year-olds) is forecast to increase by 17 % between 2015 and 2040 – an increase from the 1.09 million pupils in this age category in 2017 to about 200 000 by 2040. Net migration is expected to remain high⁵; a large proportion of the increase in the school-age population will be from children with a migrant background.

¹ General government expenditure by function (COFOG) [gov_10a_exp].

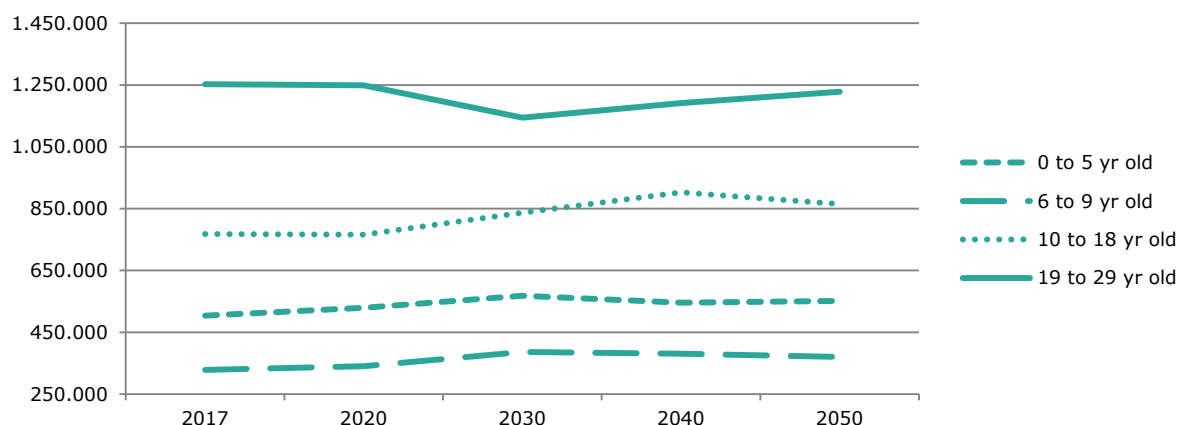
² General government expenditure by function (COFOG) [gov_10a_exp], deflated.

³ In comparison to the EU average, Austria has a higher share of the population aged 15-64 with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, but a smaller proportion with tertiary education.

⁴ Austria USD 14 549; EU USD 10 897; OECD USD 10 759; Denmark USD 12 785; Sweden USD 13 219, Netherlands 12 495 and Finland 11 381 (OECD Education at a Glance 2017, Table B1.1).

⁵ It is expected to decrease however from about 45 000 in 2020 to 27 000 in 2040 according to Eurostat [proj_15nanmig]

Figure 1. Demographic projections of young in education age (0-29 years) 2017 – 2050



Source: DG EAC, based on data from Eurostat. Online data code [proj_15npms](#).

4. Citizenship education

Citizenship education is taught both as a separate subject and as a cross-curricular theme. Introduced as a cross-curricular principle 40 years ago⁶, citizenship education was brought more explicitly into an integrated subject known as 'history, social sciences and citizenship education' in 2008 following the lowering of the voting age to 16 in 2007. In the 2016 amended regulation, four out of nine compulsory modules under this subject cover citizenship fully or predominantly (Eurydice, 2017). Furthermore teaching citizenship has been advanced from eighth grade to sixth grade to ensure the timely education of young voters.

Austria delivers citizenship education in a form common to other EU countries. The 2017 Eurydice study shows that the Austrian curricula for primary, secondary and school-based vocational education and training (VET) are similar to those of most other EU countries. They cover such issues as 'interacting effectively and constructively with others' and 'thinking critically'. Some issues, including 'emotional awareness', 'flexibility/adaptability' and 'inter-cultural skills', are treated less fully. To encourage students to act in a socially responsible manner, Austria concentrates mainly on solidarity and respect, both for human beings and for human rights and non-discrimination at all levels (ISCED 1, 2 and 3). Competences for acting democratically are comprehensively covered. Parents are fully included in school governance structures.

Based on national guidelines, testing is conducted at school level and teachers are not specifically trained for citizenship. The central authorities have issued guidelines on classroom assessment in citizenship education at primary and secondary levels. It focuses on knowledge and skills but not on attitudes. There are no national tests. As citizenship is not a stand-alone subject, the approach is to promote these competences to all teachers. In this context, the government has established a Federal Centre of Societal Learning to improve the quality of teaching and enrich research into teacher education⁷. Teachers in initial teacher training have to take citizenship, but citizenship teachers normally have bachelor or master degrees in 'History, social studies and citizenship education'.

The last major reform of citizenship education, in 2013, aimed to promote a holistic concept of citizenship. The reform was based on the findings of an expert group representing stakeholders⁸. The new curriculum was first tested in the academic year 2015/2016 in 40 lower secondary education schools in all nine provinces with support from the Ministry of Education and the Austrian Centre for Citizenship Education in Schools ('Polis'). It was then made part of the

⁶ General Ordinance 'Citizenship education as a cross-curricular educational principle', Bundesministerium für Unterricht und Kunst 1978.

⁷ Established in 2013, the 'Bundeszentrum für Gesellschaftliches Lernen' has influenced initial and continued teacher training at all levels and in all school types through its didactic and basic scientific research. It is at the centre of a network including all institutions involved in teacher training, and communicates among other things through conferences with teachers and by developing competence-oriented teaching material.

⁸ These stakeholders represented central and provincial government, teachers, head teachers, the Austrian Centre for Citizenship Education in Schools, the National Youth Council and key university professors actually writing the curriculum.

policy mainstream with only minor amendments. Teaching of citizenship and history are closely linked, the approach to both subjects being based on shared principles (Eurydice, 2017). The current government is promoting as integration measure mandatory education in values during reception education of migrants and refugees.

5. Modernising school education

Austria's early school leaving rate fell continuously between 2007 and 2016, but increased again by 0.5 percentage point in 2017 to 7.4 %. While this remains well below the EU average and the national target for 2020 of 9.5 %, analysis of the increase shows that it has occurred particularly in towns and suburbs. While the rate among foreign-born pupils has continued to drop, in 2017 they were still more than three times more likely to leave school early than native-born pupils (18.4 % vs 5.3 %).

Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) has increased in Austria but quality issues remain. Attendance by 4 year-olds reached 94.9 % in 2016, close to the EU average of 95.3 %; for 5 year-olds it has already surpassed the EU average, reaching 97 %. Participation by under 3 year-olds increased between 2010 and 2016 by 8 pps. ECEC is administered at local level, but the provinces and federal governments also have responsibilities. The new government has announced a series of measures to improve both participation in ECEC and its quality. In September 2018 it intends to establish a compulsory framework through an agreement between the federal and the provincial level, and to include clear definitions of education goals. These will cover preparation for further education, standardised key competences in the German language, and a definition of common values. Learning German is central: there will be a standardised survey of each child at the age of 4, which will be followed by 2 years of compulsory German language training and further support, if required. Sanctions against parents are envisaged if compulsory measures are not complied with. The government programme also includes setting standards for infrastructure, group size, the qualification of different staff categories and initial and continued training of staff (Austrian government, 2017a).

Socio-economic status continues to have an important influence on education outcomes. Recent national and international test results, in particular from the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) on the reading competences of 10 year-olds, confirm significant performance gaps. The difference in test results between those from the wealthiest and poorest socio-economic backgrounds has continuously widened since 2006 (BIFI&BMBWF, 2017). While overall test results and those of native-born pupils have improved, the results of those with a migrant background have remained static. Moreover, national testing of the 'education standards' (Bildungsstandards) continues to show that socio-economic and/or migrant backgrounds have a marked influence on education outcomes (BIFI&BMBWF, 2018)⁹. Austria received the following country-specific recommendation from the Council of the European Union in 2018: 'improve basic skills for disadvantaged young people and people with a migrant background' (Council of the European Union, 2018).

Box 1: Vienna to set up college for 1 000 young refugees

Vienna, Austria's capital, has in 2016 established a college for young refugees aged 15-21 to ease their transition into the regular education and vocational training system. The college has been co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

'We don't let young people down irrespective of their origin. The Viennese Youth College is a unique education offer in Austria providing opportunities and a perspective for young people to make them independent quickly either through education or a job'. says councillor Jürgen Czernohorsky, who is in charge of integration.

The college has been designed to accommodate a total of 1 002 and offers actually 750 places. The training is a highly modular — and thus flexible — system on a monthly basis. In addition to

⁹ Socio-economic background contributes overall about 40 % (25 percentage points) to the performance gap of migrant or non-German-speaking students (BIFI&BMBWF, 2018). According to Breit/Schneider, at 40 score points this corresponds to about one school year or grade.

career counselling, the syllabus includes German, English, mathematics and basic IT classes in small groups of 15 students.

The cost of the project amounted in the first year to EUR 6 million, going down to 4.8 million in the third year. The ESF co-finances 50%. Since the start around 2 000 young people were trained and more than 700 could successfully be integrated into a regular school, work place, other education or a labour market programme.

Information under <https://www.vhs.at/de/projekte/jugendcollege>

Only a small fraction of pupils aged 10-15 attend separate schools for pupils with special education needs. Numbers in segregated education at fifth grade fell from 4 600 in 1980/1981 to 1 500 in 2015/2016, or from 3.9 % of enrolments to 1.8 %. The underlying philosophy regarding education of those with special educational needs changed over this period to reflect the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which calls for fully inclusive education. Austria ratified it in 2008. However, the current government programme calls for strengthening special needs schools and reintroducing specialised training for teachers.

Digital skills in Austria have continuously improved and are above the EU average, though below the level of the Nordic countries. Austria is part of the cluster of EU countries with average performance on the adult population's digital skills (European Commission, 2018b). Even so, Eurostat's composite indicator on digital skills for 16-74 year-olds improved by 2 pps in 2018 over the previous year. Austria remained in eighth position in the EU. The digital skills of those in jobs or looking for work have not shown any progression over the last 3 years, in line with the overall EU trend. Though it has a higher proportion of people with 'above-average' basic skills (the highest category) than the rest of the EU, Austria still trails considerably behind the Nordic countries and the Netherlands.

A new Master Plan for Digitisation, announced in September 2018, builds on actions under the previous digitalisation strategy, 'School 4.0'. Under the latter various actions have already been implemented: (1) a new subject 'basic digital education' was introduced at lower secondary level this year, (2) a pilot project started in primary school providing an initial programming experience, (3) a modular teacher training on digital skills and digital didactics ('digi.folio') was set up combined with peer learning in 400 schools on the use of tablets while the school development network 'eEducation' was expanded, (4) teacher training is reinforced through the setting up of 'Education Innovation Centers' as virtual learning areas in teacher training colleges, and (5) digital text books in secondary school became e-books. The new Master Plan for Digitisation in education has three areas of intervention. Under 'Software –pedagogy, teaching and learning content' digitalisation will be introduced into all subject areas and systematically incorporated into revised curricula. Second, infrastructure and availability of mobile end devices is brought up to a unified and comparable standard allowing nationwide use in schools. And, thirdly, under 'Teachers - training and further education', e-content and innovation is systematically introduced into teacher training.¹⁰

Box 2: Education reform agenda of the new government

The government's wide-ranging reform agenda partially reverses the direction of previous reforms, placing a particular focus on standardised testing and use of tracking and changing the approach to inclusion. The government programme contains 115 measures specifically on education. Measures to strengthen ECEC are described above. Access to primary school will depend on standardised testing of school readiness, with a particular focus on German: if pupils fail, they get German lessons in separate classes before they can enter the regular school system.

Standardised testing, previously undertaken in fourth and eighth grades, is brought forward to third and seventh grades. Such testing will determine the need for intensified support, but may

¹⁰ For more information: <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/presseunterlagen/masterplan-digitalisierung/>.

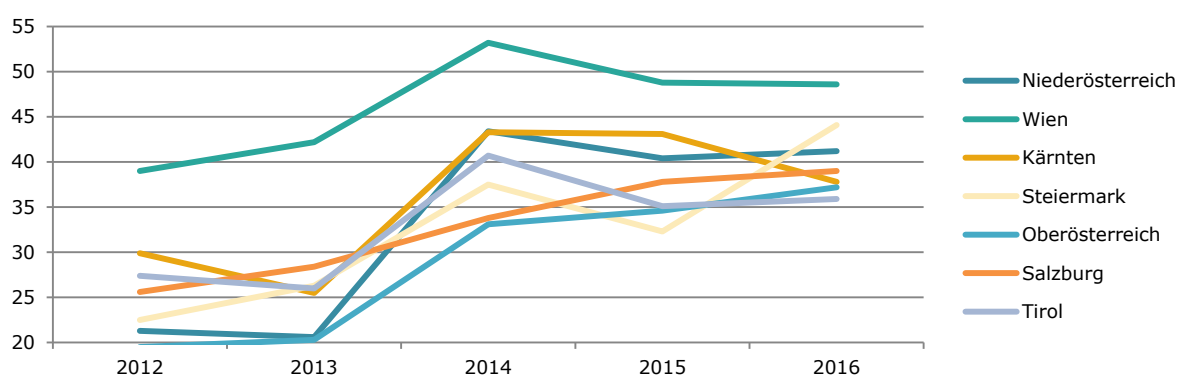
also have an influence on subsequent tracking decisions. To supplement the central standardised school leaving examination (Matura), standardised regular testing based on curricula to document progress is also envisaged. The New Secondary School, the main lower secondary school leading mainly to VET education which was only recently introduced, will be reformed. The reform will reintroduce a 'performance group' approach within classes and abandon structural team teaching — a crucial element of the previous reform — in core subjects. Training of teachers for special educational needs will be strengthened, while new schools for the exceptionally gifted will be introduced.

The government programme announces a comprehensive review of all legislation and all curricula. All legislation in force should be reviewed and, as quickly as possible, all administrative acts checked to verify if they are necessary and practical. All curricula are to be reviewed and updated. A new comprehensive law for all teaching staff will be drawn up covering both federal and regional responsibilities. Common legislation and definitions should in particular be extended to staff in ECEC. Harmonised criteria and a new formula for distributing resources to different school types will be developed.

6. Modernising higher education

Austria has reached the national and EU targets for tertiary attainment but there are still wide participation gaps: between men and women, foreign- and native-born students and those from privileged and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Austria already reached the EU 2020 target of 40 % in 2014 and in 2017 its tertiary educational attainment rate was 40.6 %. While both male and female participation have improved considerably, the gender gap has widened from 0.2 pps in 2008 to 6.3 pps in 2017. Similarly, between 2010 and 2017 the gap between native- and foreign-born students increased from 1.1 pps to 5.7 pps, even though on average across the EU it narrowed considerably from 10.5 pps to 3.8 pps. Relatively few graduates come from poorer socio-economic backgrounds (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018b). Graduation rates in Austria's provinces have converged, with Styria showing the most impressive increase, from 22.5 % in 2012 to 44.1 % in 2016¹¹ (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Tertiary attainment by NUTS 2 region in per cent



Source: DG EAC, based on data from Eurostat. Online data code: edat_ifse_12. Burgenland and Vorarlberg have been excluded since no figures are available for 2012 and 2013.

Austria has more graduates in business/law and social sciences and fewer in health and welfare. Austria has a larger share of graduates than the EU average at:

- bachelor level, particularly in social sciences;
- master level in social sciences, business, law, and information and communications technology (ICT); and
- doctorate level in business and law, ICT and engineering.

Compared to the EU average and some reference countries, Austria has a significantly smaller share of PhD graduates in natural sciences/mathematics.

¹¹ There is a big increase between 2013 and 2014 due to the reclassification of a part of upper secondary VET from ISCED 4 to ISCED 5 or short-cycle tertiary education. This explains part of the sharp overall increase between 2012 and 2016.

Austria is increasingly attractive for foreign students. Austria is becoming more attractive to study and obtain a degree in. The share of students enrolled from abroad remains stable at about 16 %, one of the highest in the EU. Those enrolled in degree programmes increased from 10.7 % in 2013 to 12.1 % in 2015. Only the UK, the Netherlands and Luxembourg showed higher shares.

More resources, better targeting of students and structural reforms including improved career opportunities for scientific university staff are meant to improve higher education. The new government has considerably increased resources for higher education, which had remained little changed over recent years. It also introduced capacity-based financing¹² in February 2018, an initiative already prepared by the previous government. This will better match funding directly to the number of study places offered, which universities no longer have full autonomy to determine. The government programme envisages additional measures to improve study conditions, expand access to higher education for talent from all backgrounds, and introduce fees, grants and an orientation service.

7. Modernising vocational education and training

With participation in VET declining, Austria is pursuing intensive efforts to make the dual vocational pathway more attractive for both companies and young people by better aligning it with the evolving needs of the economy, notably digitalisation. Even if the proportion of upper secondary students (ISCED 3) in VET has been declining slightly in recent years (from 70.2 % in 2013 to 68.8 % in 2016), it remains high, at 20 pps above the EU average. The employment rate of recent VET graduates is among the highest in the EU (89.2 % in 2017). The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber has announced a programme of 'Digitalisation of apprenticeship training' (Wirtschaftskammer, 2018), financed by the Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs. The programme includes measures to increase the digital skills of learners and trainers in dual VET. The necessary tools are being developed and implementation started in spring 2018. In addition, the job profiles and training regulations in dual VET are being updated and adapted to new requirements to prepare for digital change, Industry 4.0 and other developments. The 2017 apprenticeship occupation package (Lehrberufspaket) comprises eight modernised apprenticeships. By 2020, it is planned that another 50 apprenticeship occupations (one quarter of all dual VET programmes) will be adapted or newly introduced to better match apprenticeship programmes to digitalisation (Cedefop, 2018).

VET is crucial to getting people with a migrant background into work. Ongoing initiatives and programmes integrate refugees into formal VET by assessing and validating their skills and qualifications gained abroad. An essential aspect is to help young refugees gain an apprenticeship diploma and choose the appropriate occupation.

8. Promoting adult learning

In line with the Council of the EU's 2016 Recommendation on upskilling pathways, Austria is implementing its Adult Education Initiative (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung). The initiative, entering its third programming period (2018-2021), enables adults who lack basic skills or never graduated from lower secondary education to continue and finish their education free of charge. Overall participation in adult learning in Austria is above the EU average (15.8 % vs 10.9 %). In 2017, 70 % of those aged 25-64 possessed basic or above-basic overall digital skills, above the EU average of 59 %.

To underline the importance of skills acquired in all learning contexts and to foster adult participation in learning, in November 2017 the government published its strategy for validating non-formal and informal learning. The national strategy is in line with the Council of the EU's 2012 Recommendation on this issue¹³. For the first time, it offers a strategic framework for developing and coordinating these offers and related network-building. It aims to promote quality and trust, raise awareness and increase use of validation measures. The validation strategy will be developed and implemented (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 2017b)

¹² The new funding formula is a mix of basic and competitive indicators in three categories: (1) infrastructure and strategic development (39%), (2) teaching (32%) and (3) research (29%).

¹³ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

in close coordination with the 'Strategy for lifelong learning in Austria' and the 'Federal Act on the National Qualifications Framework in Austria'. The focus in 2018 and 2019 will be on promoting, disseminating and implementing the strategy. Four thematic working groups have already been established (on quality assurance, professionalisation, development of an online portal and system synergies) that should deliver results by the end of 2018. In 2019, the results should be put into practice before new working priorities are defined.

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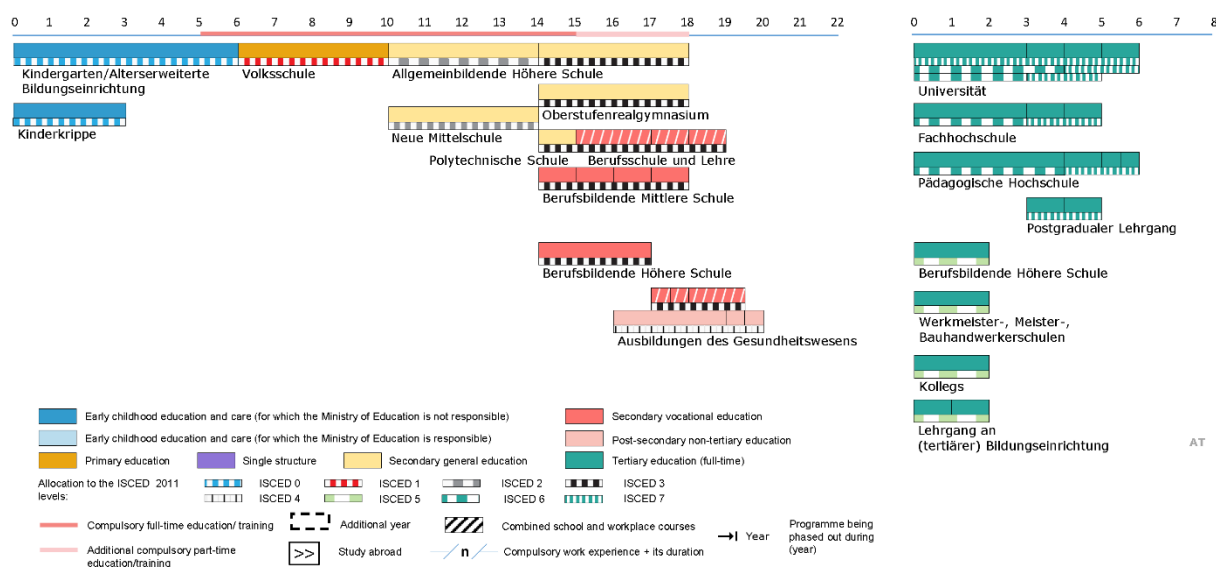
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10. Annex I: Key indicator sources

Indicator	Eurostat online data code
Early leavers from education and training	edat_lfse_14 + edat_lfse_02
Tertiary educational attainment	edat_lfse_03 + edat_lfs_9912
Early childhood education and care	educ_uoe_enra10
Underachievement in reading, maths, science	OECD (PISA)
Employment rate of recent graduates	edat_lfse_24
Adult participation in learning	trng_lfse_03
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	gov_10a_exp
Expenditure on public and private institutions per student	educ_uoe_fini04
Learning mobility: Degree mobile graduates	JRC computation based on Eurostat / UIS / OECD data
Credit mobile graduates	educ_uoe_mobc02

11. Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017. *The Structure of the European Education Systems 2017/18: Schematic Diagrams*. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Comments and questions on this report are welcome and can be sent by email to:
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