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Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency

Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

AUSTRIA

School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 6 and 15. It includes primary education *(Volksschule)*, lower secondary education and the first year of upper secondary. After four years of primary level, children aged 10 go on to lower secondary education for four years depending on their results in the last year of *Volksschule*. There are two possibilities: *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (academic general lower secondary school) or *Hauptschule* (general lower secondary school). They may then move on to the different types of upper secondary school (general, technical or vocational). The first year of upper secondary education (age 15) is compulsory. The organisation of vocational guidance during this year is not covered by this description. We have decided not to include it for the countries where compulsory education extends beyond lower secondary (as it is difficult to find precise information for a single year and for the different pathways of upper secondary).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The Education law (School Education Act 1974 – SchUG) stipulates that all young people must receive an education and training in the perspective of their future professional career. The preparation of pupils for decision-making in terms of their future career choice is defined by the law as an educational task of schools. It also stipulates that all schools have the obligation to provide counselling to pupils, specifically in the 4th and 8th year (in both types of secondary school), on the existing and recommendable pathways according to young people's interests and performance.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture defines the legislative framework and the mechanisms to be implemented in terms of vocational guidance education. The provinces and the regions are responsible for the realisation of this policy and for the implementation of different guidance services according to their needs. According to the type of activity provided by these services, they depend on the regional economic and social council, regional education or health authorities, etc.

It is the responsibility of the Federal Employment Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich* – AMS) to implement the national employment policy of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, as well as to provide young people with information, guidance and counselling services. Access to these services is free of charge for everyone, including young people in compulsory education. This office outsources some guidance services to various organisms, which in turn may subcontract to private counsellors.

Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, offer young people many information services regarding apprenticeships and training, jobs during the holidays and support programmes.

The ministries concerned cooperate and the services they offer are coordinated.

In the schools, the implementation of other measures related to vocational guidance education and its quality are under the responsibility of the school heads and the competent authorities (for example, the heads of the regional education councils or regional inspectors).

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

For all pupils in the 7th and 8th year of school (lower secondary level), 'vocational guidance education' is an integral part of the national curriculum. Schools are free to offer it as a separate subject or to integrate it into other compulsory subjects such as German, geography and economics, foreign languages, mathematics, science, religion, etc.

The amount of time devoted to this subject is 32 hours per year. It is taught by regular teachers who are not specialised in guidance. Pupils are not evaluated in this subject.

The objective is to help pupils develop the necessary skills to take decisions concerning their future career choice and to provide them with information on their possibilities and higher education pathways. This subject also supports pupils' reflections on their centres of interest and their skills as well as their ideas on their future personal and professional lives.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

The curriculum also gives pupils the possibility to make contact with the professional world through traineeships in companies or through encounters with representatives from the professional world. (Up to five days per year can be allocated to individual professional orientation activities of pupils outside school. The permission of the class head is required – SCHUG §13b, in force since 1 January 2005.)

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

See above.

Guidance services at school

In addition to vocational guidance education integrated into the curriculum, all secondary schools employ counsellors (teachers who have received special training). They provide pupils and their parents with individualised help, combining vocational guidance and assistance in the area of educational psychology, and information on existing pathways.

Counselling is offered to pupils free of charge and on a voluntary basis. The guidance hours are communicated and young people may make use of the services according to their individual needs, without having to make an appointment or a phone call.

In addition to the individual contact with pupils, the counsellors organise seminars and present projects in the classroom.

The counsellors may rely on assistance from the regional/central educational psychology/vocational guidance service *(Schulpsychologie-Bildungsberatung).* These services are integrated into the schools and are offered by qualified psychologists who deal with the personal, emotional and educational difficulties of pupils as well as their problems in terms of guidance. These staff members offer pupils psychological counselling, make diagnoses and give consultations in the case of difficulties related to decision-making in terms of choosing a career. They also provide information on the possible pathways within the framework of the education system.

Furthermore, secondary schools may organise different activities and rely on specific bodies to meet the special needs of pupils in terms of vocational guidance (this concerns more specific groups such as girls, pupils whose mother tongue is not German, or students with special needs).

Guidance services outside school

Vocational guidance in the employment sector is provided in the offices of the Federal Employment Service (AMS) and by a network of 52 specialised vocational guidance centres (*Berufsinformationszentren* – BIZ) managed by the AMS. The AMS staff combine vocational guidance and other forms of employment assistance such as work placements. Some guidance services are outsourced to various organisations, which in turn may subcontract to private counsellors. These services organise guidance courses for groups, centred on job search techniques and on career planning as well as on personal and social skills. Regular students rely on this service in order to receive guidance for their future career.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

The teachers in charge of the subject ‘vocational guidance’ do not receive specific training but must have a knowledge of the existing educational pathways at regional level, use information and communication technologies, have good communication skills, demonstrate an openness towards pupils and be capable of motivating young people.

The counsellors are teachers who receive special training at the *Pädagogische Hochschulen* (University Colleges of Education) amounting to 12 ECTS credits (4-5 semesters of training on the job).

The quality assurance of their work is guaranteed by the existence of official standards describing the tasks, the content of the curriculum and the obligation to participate in continuing education. Its content varies according to the provinces. The educational psychology service *(Schulpsychologie-Bildungsberatung)* also provides training and continuing education as well as professional support to counsellors.

For those who provide an educational psychology service, qualifications in psychology or education are required, without specific requirements for training in vocational guidance.

In other guidance services

All AMS guidance staff (part-time) receive initial in-service training (six months full-time), with a section on vocational guidance, completed by ongoing training for one and a half weeks per year (which does not have to concern vocational guidance directly).

An association of counselling professionals, with a voluntary code of ethics, was established in 2001 to improve the quality assurance of vocational guidance provided by the AMS subcontractor.

A platform of guidance practitioners (www.bib-infonet.at) was created to facilitate exchanges and the sharing of experiences between the staff involved in this field at national level.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The schools often cooperate with parents, former students, representatives of higher education institutions and employers. This type of initiative does not have a legal basis but often finds explicit expression in educational projects and in the quality assurance policy of each school.

In the province of Styria for example, a regional network was set up to facilitate the vocational integration of young people. It gathers representatives of the provincial government of Styria, educational establishments, employer organisations, various companies, unions and public employment services.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Information on vocational guidance for young people and adults is generally distributed via all the usual means (such as information brochures, summaries of the training programmes, videos, films, CD-ROMs, interactive computer-based services, databases on the labour markets and the possibilities for online training, as well as many websites). This information is prepared and disseminated under the responsibility of national and regional authorities. A platform was set up at the Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture for the coordination of information production on vocational guidance.

The vocational information centres (BIZ) of the AMS offer their users access to individual self-testing as well as information on careers via websites (www.learn4life.at, www.berufsinfo.at). For example, the vocational information centres (BIZ) of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce run a project which offers a vast amount of printed information which is also available in digital format for a wide range of professions (www.biwi.at). In order to add to it and make it easily available to young people, the centre established a network of employers with whom young people may have a one-on-one discussion.

The ‘Find a Job’ project *(Berufsfindungsbegleiter)* is aimed at improving young people’s access to information on vocational schools and on possible traineeships, as well as facilitating their contacts with companies.

Internet references

Federal Employment Service: www.ams.or.at

Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour: www.bmwa.gv.at

Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture: www.bmukk.gv.at

Department for educational psychology and guidance:
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3. Eurybase; Eurydice.
4. Career Guidance and Public Policy. Bridging the gap. OECD 2004.