



APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING AND THE TRAINING GUARANTEE IN AUSTRIA

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MICHAEL TRINKO

Austria is continually moving back into the centre of interest on account of its dual training system and a low level of unemployment among young people compared with Europe's extremely high level of unemployment among young people combined with its present economic situation. Continually more European countries want to know exactly how the apprenticeship training is set up in Austria and what the training guarantee is.

It appears to be practical to begin by briefly outlining the Austrian model of industrial, dual, vocational training in order to give a review of the training guarantee for young people in Austria.

The training in an apprenticeship is basically open to all young people who have completed the nine years of compulsory schooling. The dual training combines the following two areas:

- » training in a company,
- » vocational college.

Young people who will be trained spend about 80 percent of their learning time in practice. This time serves for conveying specific knowledge and proficiency of a certain profession. Furthermore, the young people spend about 20 percent of their learning time in a vocational college which has the task of conveying specialized, theoretical, basic knowledge as well as expanding general education.

About 40 percent of young men and women begin an apprenticeship after completing compulsory schooling. Young people have the opportunity of choosing from about 200 commercial, industrial and service-oriented apprenticed professions. The training period lasts for two, two and a half, three and a half or four years according to the apprenticed profession.

THE NUMBER OF APPRENTICES IN AUSTRIA

The Austrian Economic Chamber's statistics on apprentices as of 31st December 2013 reported a total number of 120,579 apprentices who were completing their training in 33,594 training companies. According to sector: most of the apprentices (55.6 per cent) were trained in commerce and skilled trades in 2013; 4.1 per cent completed their apprenticeship in industry and 14.9 percent in commerce. If one compares the statistics on apprentices in 2013 with those in 1980 (194,069 apprentices), then it can be established that over 70,000 less apprenticeships have been available in Austria since 1980.

APPRENTICESHIP COMBINED WITH AN ORDINARY GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION (G.C.E. O LEVELS)

The apprenticeship also offers a good basis for tertiary education combined with an ordinary or advanced general certificate of education (G.C.E. O or A levels). All apprentices have been able to study for the ordinary general certificate of education free of charge since autumn of 2008 parallel with the apprenticeship itself. The examination for the advanced general certificate of education, as it is called in the legal text, offers the general entrance qualification to university and it entitles the student who passes it in Austria to study in those universities, polytechnic colleges, teaching colleges, other colleges and other educational establishments at the post-secondary level which require the equivalent of G.C.E. A levels or a school-leaving certificate as the case may be. Four partial examinations must be passed within the framework of the advanced general certificate of education: namely, one in the German language, one in mathematics, one in a living foreign language and one in a specialized area according to the apprentice's professional field.

INTEGRATED VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Moreover, the legal basis was created in Austria during 2003 for integrated vocational training to suit "disadvantaged persons with personal learning difficulties". The matter in this case particularly concerns persons who have a special need for educational support, or those with disabilities or other social disadvantages who cannot be taught in vocational training courses. This type of training course is either arranged for a longer apprenticeship or it is offered via partial qualifications that enable the apprentice to enter the job market whenever it is not possible to achieve an apprenticeship certificate.

The integrated vocational training (IBA) course is accompanied by a vocational training assistant who has the task of attending to the young people and supporting them during the training or schooling as the case may be. There were 6,152 apprentices enrolled in an integrated vocational training course at the end of December 2013. Most young people were indeed enrolled in training courses offered by companies during 2013 while doing so (61 per cent). However, an integrated vocational training course can also be completed at a vocational supra-company training establishment in principle. About 76 per cent of the IBA apprentices completed the integrated vocational training course during 2013 in the form of a prolonged apprenticeship and the remaining 24 per cent of them did so in the form of a partial qualification.

THE AUSTRIAN TRAINING GUARANTEE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUPRA-COMPANY APPRENTICESHIP (ÜBA)

Training places that are organized throughout industry have been provided on a nationally standardized legal basis since 1998 (for the first time), during the process of implementing a "safety net" unsuccessful young people who were seeking apprenticeships after the crisis in apprenticeships had peaked. The law for training young people (JASG) was enacted during the course of the National Action Plan for Employment (NAP) and a form of dual training was set up throughout industry. The amendment of the Vocational Training Law (BAG) in 2008 then created the new legal basis for apprenticeship training outside of

the companies. The specific measures of the Public Employment Service Austria have been applied since 1st January 2009 within the framework of apprenticeship training (Article 30b of the BAG). Vocational training at supra-company level had now been established to supplement the offer of apprenticeships that are available from companies and which continue to be given priority: they are considered to be an element of the training guarantee for young people who are up to 18 years of age or younger.

One can currently choose between two models of the vocational training course throughout industry. The objective of both models is to offer industrial training to young people. One model (the vocational training's educational course model no. 1) certainly represents a course that enables the entire apprenticeship training to be completed in one training establishment at supra-company level with practical phases in companies and by cooperating with a company's training workshop if necessary. On the other hand, the training in the vocational training's practical course model no. 2 takes place by cooperating with practising companies and on the basis of training contracts which do not have to comprise the entire training period.

One of these courses is completed in the usual way by means of offering a company apprenticeship or a normal training certificate. It is obligatory to attend a vocational college during the course. The participants receive a training grant that covers the costs of sustenance: this grant is € 294 in the first and second year; it rises to € 679.50 from the third year onwards. The participants are considered to be apprentices according to state insurance system covering sickness, accident and pension (ASVG).

THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING'S EDUCATIONAL COURSE MODEL NO. 1 AT SUPRA –COMPANY LEVEL (TRAINING CONTRACT FOR THE ENTIRE APPRENTICED PERIOD)

Certain preliminary steps are an integrated part of the measure in the case of most courses that are offered according to the vocational training educational course model no. 1. These preliminary steps last from one week to two months depending on the respective federal state, e.g., the measure of vocational orientation and coaching (referred to briefly as the BOCO measure) that has been established in Vienna lasts for eight weeks. The BOCO measure's task is to find out the vocational wishes of the participants regarding the vocational training, as well as to create the personal and intellectual prerequisites for the vocational training itself. The measure's contents are divided into four groups (introduction and clearing; vocational orientation and defining objectives; a preparatory phase for the apprenticeship training; supplementary modules).

The basic task of the four phases is to ensure that the young people will be informed about the measure's sequence and that a realistic vocational wish can be defined together with them on the basis of their abilities. The young people will also be informed about the possible training paths, in addition to being given intensive training with how to draw up the job applications. The BOCO measure is accompanied by especially supportive measures for the young women.

IN-COMPANY PRACTICAL TRAINING COURSE

The main tasks of practical training courses in principle is to put the young people in contact with industrial working sequences and to expose them to regular working conditions , or to place them in the respective practical training company as the case may be. The practical training course's duration is stipulated according to the Austrian employment agency's specification of the respective vocational groups and it varies from one federal state to another.

A typical example in this case is the specification for apprenticeship training in training establishments throughout industry for the professional groups of metal technology and mechanical engineering, which foresees a practical training course for the relevant discipline. This course must be taken for between four and twelve weeks in the first training year and for between twelve and sixteen weeks in the second and third years respectively in one or several companies where the apprenticeship is not separated from the other practical sequences.

THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING'S PRACTICAL COURSE MODEL NO. 2 THROUGHOUT INDUSTRY (TRAINING CONTRACT SHORTER THAN THE APPRENTICED PERIOD)

The objective of the vocational training's practical course model no. 2 is to train young people for up to twelve months in an apprenticed profession by cooperating with companies and then to place them in a company after their training period and apprenticeship. The vocational training's practical course model no. 2 is divided into three modules in principle. Training in the practising company represents the main module. The apprentices will be specially prepared for the interview in the company and they will receive special training with how to A further module prepares them for attending the vocational college: this is coordinated with the practical training company among others. The third area is training with the educational establishment where at least 20 per cent of the training's entire time shall be spent. This element serves to accompany the apprentices and it has an important stabilizing function for them. A range of activities is offered in this case, which provide young people with coaching in order to eliminate any deficits in the vocational college, as well as with specialized evening classes.

THE INDUSTRY-WIDE TRAINING IN FIGURES

The number of participants in training courses throughout industry totalled 11,329 persons during the training year of 2013 / 2014. 9,183 participants were trained via supra-company apprenticeship in one of the aforementioned vocational training's academic and practical course models 1 and 2, whereas 2,332 participants took an integrated vocational training course in a training establishment. If one considers the participants in the training courses at supra-company level according to the gender and citizenship, then it turns out that not only the proportion of women (41.7 per cent) but also the proportion of non-Austrian citizens (20.3 percent) are higher than in apprenticeship training (32.4 per cent proportion of women and 8.7 per cent proportion of non-Austrian female citizens). The supra-company apprenticeship is being offered particularly well in the federal states of

Vienna and Lower Austria. About 29 per cent of the participants across Austria come from Vienna and about 28 per cent of them come from Lower Austria during the training year of 2013 to 2014. The Public Employment Service Austria is providing roughly € 150,000,000 per training year for training courses throughout industry.

APPRAISAL BY THE AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION

The implementation of apprenticeship supra-company apprenticeship continues to be an important step for young people who do not find an apprenticeship in the first apprenticeship market but who can complete a training course despite that. The Austrian Trade Union Federation has participated in developing the model and it is convinced that this measure is one of the reasons for the low level of unemployment among young people in Austria.

However, the Austrian Trade Union Federation considers that the top priority must be to enable young people to complete a training course in a company instead of offering them a supra-company apprenticeship. Therefore, the training course at supra-company level should not be viewed as a replacement for the practical training nor as a competitor. It should be considered as an 'alternative' for young people who are not able to find an apprenticeship.

Problems arise whenever firms are not prepared to offer training because young people who take a training course at supra-company level can indeed complete the entire high-quality apprenticeship training. They then have to wait to be recruited by a company later on. The cost of the apprenticeship training will therefore be turned over to the state. The Austrian Trade Union Federation prefers the academic course model 1 because it gives young people an opportunity to be accompanied continuously until the final vocational examination, compared with the practising company model (vocational training's practical course model 2) which does not do so.

The Austrian Association of Trade Unions is unable to understand why a lack of skilled workers is being discussed in Austria on the one hand, whereas approximately 10,000 young people who would be ready to accept an apprenticeship with a company immediately are taking training courses at supra-company level instead on the other hand.

The Austrian Trade Union Federation demands a "billion for skilled workers" who are struggling to obtain subsidies for training courses and further training courses indicates that the cost of about €150,000,000 for the training courses throughout industry should be paid out of the industry's own pocket, by means of the entrepreneurs or owners of companies contributing a percentage of the total gross wages. This arrangement would counteract the risk of companies reducing their preparedness to offer training courses to the state and the risk of the training costs being shifted from the companies to the state.

Michael Trinko is the Federal Secretary for Youth at the Austrian Trade Union Federation and he is the Head of the Youth Department at the Austrian Association of Trade Unions.

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>>>> SOZIAL >>>> GERECHT

DEIN PARTNER IN DER ARBEITSWELT. OGB

STARK >>>>> SOZIAL

Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund

1020 Wien, Johann-Böhm-Platz 1

E-Mail: oegb@oegb.at

WWW.OEGB.AT



SOZIALE SICHERHEIT MITBESTIMMUNG CHANCENGLEICHHEIT VERTEILUNGSGERECHTIGKEIT