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Paper

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Country Report - Austria

Work Package II, Part 2, Phase II

[2013-10-31]

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List of Abbreviations

AHS	Allgemein bildende höhere Schulen Secondary Academic Schools
AMS	Arbeitsmarktservice Public Employment Service Austria
BAG	Berufsausbildungsgesetz Vocational Training Act
BIFIE	Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens Federal Institute for Education Research, Innovation & Development of the Austrian School System
bfi	Berufsförderungsinstitut Vocational Training Institute
BAS	Berufsausbildungsassistenz Vocational Education and Training Assistance
BHS	Berufsbildende höhere Schulen Higher Technical and Vocational Schools
BMASK	Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
BMBWK	Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur (jetzt: BMUKK und BMWF) Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (now: BMUKK and BMWF)
BMHS	Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen Intermediate and Higher Technical and Vocational Schools
BMUKK	Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
BMWA	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit (jetzt: BMWFJ) Austrian Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (now: BMWFJ)
BMWF	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Forschung Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research
BMWFJ	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend Austrian Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth
BZÖ	Bündnis Zukunft Österreich Alliance for the Future of Austria
ESF	Europäischer Sozialfonds European Social Fund

FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs Freedom Party of Austria
IVT	Integrative Berufsausbildung Integrated Vocational Training
IBOBB	Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf Information, Advice and Guidance for Education and Career
IFES	Institut für empirische Sozialforschung Institute for Empirical Social Studies
ISCED	Bildungsklassifikation International Standard Classification of Education
JASG	Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz Youth Training Guarantee Act
KEBÖ	Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreich Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions
KEG	Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaft Commission of the European Communities
LLL	Lebensbegleitendes Lernen Lifelong Learning
LSR	Landesschulrat Regional Education Board
NRP	Nationales Reformprogramm National Reform Programme
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei Austrian People's Party
OLF	Out of Labour Force
ORG	Oberstufen-Realgymnasium Upper Level Secondary Academic School
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QIBB	Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung Vocational Education and Training Quality Initiative
SILC	Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs Social Democratic Party of Austria
SSR	Stadtschulrat Vienna Board of Education

SQA	Schulqualität Allgemeinbildung School Quality in General Education
TEPs	Territoriale Beschäftigungspakte Territorial Employment Pacts
UB	Umsetzungsbericht Implementation Report
SCT	Überbetriebliche Ausbildung Supra-company training
VHS	Volkshochschule [Adult Education Centre]
WIFI	Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut [Continuing Education Institution in Austria]
WKO	Wirtschaftskammer Österreich Austrian Economic Chambers
WUK	Werkstätten- und Kulturhaus [Workshops and Culture Venue in Vienna]

Interviewees:

Representative of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture

Representative of the Federation of Austrian Industry

Representative of the Federal Ministry of the Interior

Representative of the Austrian Economic Chambers

Representative of Vienna City Council

Representative of the Austrian National Bureau for Employment and Training

Representative of the Vienna Education Board

Introduction

Austria has been paying particular attention to the topic of early school leaving (ESL; German: *früher Schulabgang*) in recent years and, in doing so, has been closely monitoring the impetus coming from the European Commission. The various policy and research documents on this topic deal with the difficulties faced by those young people whose educational capital and job market qualifications are below the expected standard in today's knowledge-based society.

This Country Report presents the measures that have been developed in Austria since 2000 to prevent, intervene in and compensate for ESL. In the preparation of this report, national policy documents (49) and research papers (27) were studied in detail with regard to different aspects (e.g. drivers and rationales, EU policy influence, processes of implementation, good practices) and supplemented by the opinions of key stakeholders from the fields of politics, the economy, education and the labour market. More specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, the national bureau for employment and training, two local education authorities and two local industry and commerce associations.

The report is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the measures to reduce ESL that have been implemented in Austria since 2000. For this purpose, the current national reform programmes (*Nationale Reformprogramme*; NRP) and corresponding implementation reports (*Umsetzungsberichte*; UB) were carefully analysed. Attention was also given to the so-called drivers and rationales behind the respective implementation processes. The analysis shows that Austria has followed and, to a large extent, implemented the European Commission's country-specific recommendations. However, the recommendation by both the European Commission and the OECD that Austria should implement comprehensive schools for 10-14-year-olds has so far not been followed. Section 1.2 presents the content, aims and levels of impact of the 30 measures that have been implemented in Austria to date. Section 1.3 provides more information about local measures financed through the European Social Fund (ESF). In Chapter 2, the official minutes taken during sessions of the Austrian parliament (*Nationalrat*) are used to reconstruct how the different political parties approach EU initiatives to fight ESL and youth unemployment ("Youth Employment Initiative" and "Youth on the Move"). The reconstruction shows that the Social Democratic Party of Austria (one of the two parties in the governing coalition) strongly approves of and supports the EU initiatives and measures. The Austrian People's Party (second coalition party) and one of the opposition parties (The Greens) agree in principle that these initiatives and measures are important, but prioritise different aspects. Resistance to the EU initiatives is voiced by the remaining two opposition parties (The Freedom Party of Austria and the Alliance for the Future of Austria). Further signs of resistance at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels are identified by analysing the answers provided by the seven stakeholders interviewed for the purposes of this study. Chapter 3 looks at good practices in education and social policy and deals primarily with measures that have been implemented on the recommendation of the EU and have yielded positive evaluations. The information provided in this chapter is drawn from the analysis of 42 evaluation reports.

1. Drivers and rationales of education and social policies related to ESL

Like other European countries, Austria is clearly affected by contemporary socio-economic and cultural changes, such as globalisation, technological progress (from an agricultural to a post-industrial service society), immigration and income distribution. However, the employment situation in Austria is fairly good in comparison to other EU countries. This positive assessment of this key socio-economic determinant is confirmed by recent data, which indicates an unemployment rate of 4.9 % (EUROSTAT; 31 May 2013). Closer analysis of the development of the Austrian labour market indicates a high level of integration of qualified “prime-age” (25-54-year-old) workers. However, gaining access to the labour market is more difficult for unqualified and older workers, and in particular for women with children.

According to the Austrian public employment service (*Arbeitsmarktservice*; AMS), the unemployment rate is highest (20.2 %) among people who have only completed compulsory schooling and/or have no qualifications; their situation has been aggravated by the recent economic crises (AMS; April 2013). Accordingly, a nationwide adult education initiative (*Länder-Bund-Initiative zur Förderung grundlegender Bildungsabschlüsse für Erwachsene*) was introduced to integrate people with low education qualifications into the labour market (see 1.2.2.1).

Income is another determinant of socio-economic status. The OECD’s *Economic Survey of Austria (2013)* points out that increasing differences in income distribution across social groups are responsible for the gap in income between people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and the rest of the population. Based on EU-SILC¹ data for 2011, a report published by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK 2013: 13f.) suggests that 1.4 million people are at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Austria. Since the EU-SILC dataset instrument was first introduced in 2003, specific measures have been taken to fight poverty and inequality of opportunities in Austria. From an education perspective, these include the introduction of the so-called new middle school (*Neue Mittelschule*; NMS; see 1.2.2.4) in 2012 and a compulsory kindergarten year prior to primary school (see 1.2.1.1).

Socio-economic changes have also affected the transition from school to work. Increasing demands by employers for better basic qualifications have made this transition more and more difficult for school leavers (see Christe 2009: 77-78). School leavers are now expected to have comprehensive knowledge of information technologies, specific qualifications relating to their chosen occupation and to embrace the challenge of lifelong learning. These developments make it particularly difficult for less qualified school leavers to find their place in the labour market, further education and training systems (see Christe 2009: 77f.; Nairz-Wirth et al. 2011). According to a study by ibw Austria (*Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft*), a research institute which focuses on VET research and development, 71 % of companies in Vienna report difficulties in finding suitable apprentices (Dornmayr/Wieser 2010: 21). The reason they give for this is that most applicants have insufficient cognitive abilities and a general lack of social skills. This phenomenon is seen as a side effect of educational expansion and the accompanying homogenization of the student population in certain types of schools (Becker 2009: 92). Despite the increasing demands young people face when they move from school to vocational training, youth unemployment in Austria is still significantly lower

¹ European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (see also Statistics Austria: http://www.statistik.at/web_de/frageboegen/private_haushalte/eu_silc/index.html#index1 (in German).

than the EU average (8.7 % compared to 22.8 % in 2012). Of the EU countries, only Germany has a lower youth unemployment rate (see Figure 1).

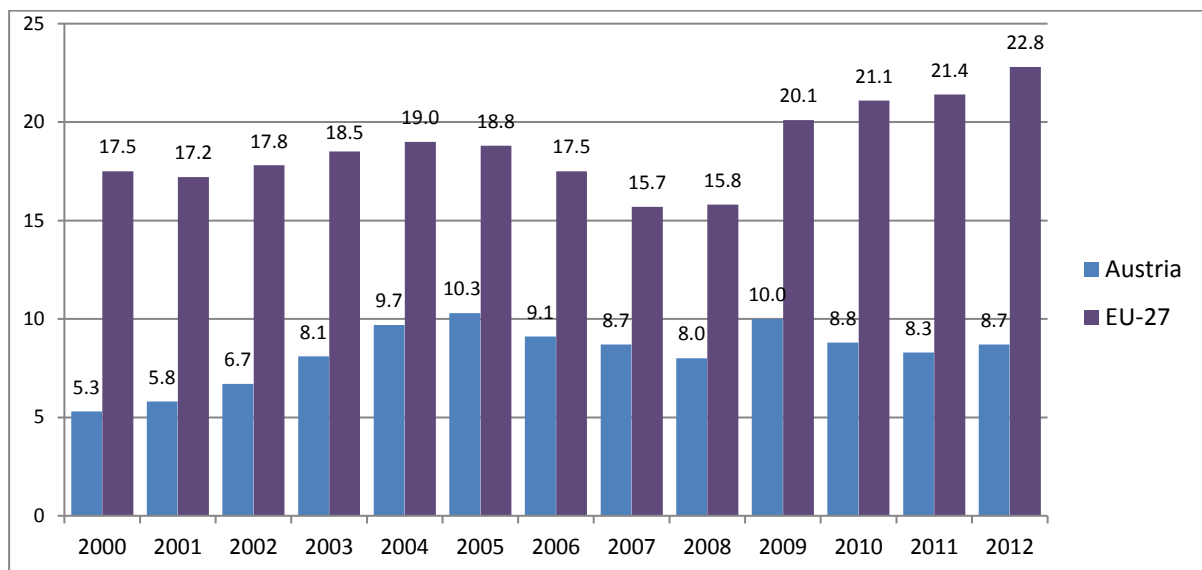


Figure 1: Youth unemployment in percent and over time
(Graph compiled by the authors using EUROSTAT 2013 data).

The relatively low youth unemployment rate in Austria can be primarily attributed to the country's dual vocational training system (or "dual system" for short) and the integration of young people into different school and training programmes (see 1.2.3 for a detailed description of the principles on which these integration programmes are based).

In 2012, Austria had about 8.4 million inhabitants, of whom 18.9 % had an immigrant background (1st generation: 73.89 %; 2nd generation: 26.11 %). The percentage of the population with an immigrant background was markedly higher in Vienna (38.4 %) than in the other eight federal states² (*Bundesländer*), with the lowest rate (10 %) being found in Carinthia.³ The percentage of students who do not speak German at home is also highest in Vienna: primary schools (54.6 %), secondary modern schools (67.9 %), new middle schools (62.6 %), pre-vocational schools (66.2 %), intermediate technical and vocational schools (54.8 %), special schools (55.6 %) (see Statistik Austria 2013a). A special survey carried out during the 2009-2010 school year shows that the percentage of children and young people who did not speak German at home was particularly high (over 90 %) at secondary schools in some districts of Vienna (e.g. Hernals, Margareten) (see Statistik Austria 2011). Attainment levels for children and young people with an immigrant background are markedly lower than those for their native Austrian classmates, a fact that applies to all levels of schooling. At the end of compulsory schooling (i.e. at age 15), school attainment levels for students with an immigrant background are, on average, significantly lower than for native Austrians. Within this group of students with an immigrant background, second generation youth have even lower attainment levels than their first generation counterparts (see Nusche et al. 2009: 8). A set of measures has been introduced to tackle this problem (see 1.2.6).

² Austria is made up of nine individual states (or provinces), 95 districts and 2,354 municipalities.

³ Annual average; figures provided by Statistics Austria (see Statistik Austria 2012).

In general, the stakeholders interviewed consider the implementation of measures to counter ESL to be important for two main reasons: firstly young people with low qualifications are at risk of being excluded from the labour market and secondly the labour market demands more and better qualifications and skills. Some interviewees argue that it is necessary to introduce education standards which result in greater employability. In line with the PISA reports and EU recommendations, all interviewees agree that basic competences should be fostered.

1.1. Policies, measures and instruments in direct response to EU recommendations and concerns

One of the aims of the Lisbon 2000 strategy, namely to cut national ESL rates by half by 2010, had to be redefined five years later to lowering the average ESL rate within the EU to below 10 % (European Commission 2014). The EU Commission asked the Member States to establish National Reform Programmes (NRP) with concrete measures to promote economic growth and employment (BMUKK 2013g). Austria's first NRP (for 2005, 2006 and 2007) already included several measures and initiatives to reduce ESL, which are described in detail in Section 1.2 of this report (see NRP 2005 – Part 3: 69-70.): the promotion of vocational education and training (“Jobs4You(th)” initiative; “Blum-Bonus”⁴); a safety net for youth in the form of the Youth Training Guarantee Act (*Jugendausbildungssicherungsgesetz*); a combined apprenticeship/upper secondary school leaving certificate scheme (*Lehre mit Matura*); the use of a modular design in apprentice training; free courses for early school leavers who subsequently want to take the compulsory school leaving exams; initiatives to promote reading skills among low achievers (*Lesen fördern*; *LESEFIT*); orientation classes for 9th graders at vocational schools; a VET quality initiative (*Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung*; QIBB); individual coaching; integrated vocational training for youth with special educational needs and German language support classes for youth with an immigrant background.

With regard to this NRP, the European Council recommended that, by 2007, all unemployed school leavers should be offered a job, an apprenticeship or a place on a further education/training program or some other pre-vocational initiative opportunity within six months of leaving school (UB 2006: 24f.). Austria responded to this recommendation with the introduction of an intensified early intervention strategy, job-coaching projects like “Giving Youth a Chance” (*Der Jugend eine Chance*), more childcare facilities, the introduction of a supra-company apprenticeship, the provision of professional training for teachers and educators, the implementation of educational standards, and the establishment of educational/vocational orientation classes (ibid.: 24-26).

In response to the European Commission's December 2006 recommendation that lifelong learning (LLL) programmes should include further education options for adults, Austria introduced the following measures (UB 2006: 27f.): the promotion of less-qualified people through ESF projects, education and career counselling and a strategy paper on the implementation of a coherent LLL strategy developed by the various stakeholders which included a variety of measures to reduce ESL.

⁴ The so-called Blum-Bonus, named after the former Government Commissioner for Youth Employment and Apprentice Training, subsidised companies and organisations which employed additional apprentices (to the tune of 400 euros per month in the first year, 200 euros in the second year and 100 euros in the third year).

The European Commission also recommended that Austria extends its childcare facilities and day care centres for 6-14-year-olds. The opening hours at these facilities should better suit the needs of the population, while affordable care centres should be made available during school vacations (ibid.: 31f.).

On the basis of the above-mentioned implementation report – and with due consideration to further country-specific recommendations and information on progress made so far – the European Commission called upon Austria to work on improving the skills and qualifications of disadvantaged youth and youth with special educational needs (KEG 2007: 31). Austria subsequently wrote another implementation report relating to NRP 2005-2007 (UB 2007) in which it expanded the existing measures and introduced some additional measures. These included labour assistance options, joint teaching of children and youth with special educational needs from grade 1 to grade 8, 12 years of special schooling, an “integrated classes” pilot project at polytechnic schools, the inclusion of compulsory career guidance in grade 7 and 8 curricula at special schools, the introduction of a 9th grade at special schools to provide pre-vocational training, youth job assistance and clearing, vocational training assistance as well as the expansion of integrated vocational training options (UB 2007: 42f.).

In order to fulfil the European Commission’s recommendation (KEG 2008: 148) to improve education and training for disadvantaged youth, Austria focused in its NRP 2008-2010 in particular on measures to assist children and youth with an immigrant background. These measures included a compulsory kindergarten year for children with language deficits, language classes for children who are not proficient enough to be taught in German, the “Improving Learning Success” (*Lernerfolgsverbesserung*) project, an ESF Target 3 project to systematically prevent ESL with the help of specific measures (coaching, tutoring, additional classes or division of classes for core subjects), the removal of language and social barriers, an improvement in German literacy (as the language of instruction) for 9th graders at vocational schools where more than 30 % of students have an immigrant background, the provision of instruction in the mother tongue and an education and training guarantee up to the age of 18 (NRP 2008: 39f.).

In response to the European Commission’s recommendation (KEG 2009: 43) to further improve education opportunities for disadvantaged youth, Austria introduced the following new measures: the use of ESF funding for measures to provide qualifications to youth who are difficult to place in work, particularly those with an immigrant background, a combined apprenticeship/upper secondary school leaving certificate scheme (*Lehre mit Matura*), the establishment of the legal basis for the introduction of education standards, voluntary language training assistance, classes with a maximum of 25 students and the implementation of the new middle school (*Neue Mittelschule*) (UB 2009: 20-23).

To improve education levels and reduce the ESL rate, Austria’s NRP 2011 explicitly includes measures like language skill assessments, the provision of individual assistance at kindergarten, the launch of the new middle school (*Neue Mittelschule*), a new teacher training programme (*PädagogInnenbildung NEU*), full-day care facilities and social work in schools and the promotion of courses in core subjects (NRP 2011: 26f.).

In response to its NRP 2011, the European Council recommended that Austria should expand the availability of full-day care in schools and continue to build on what had already been achieved

in the country in the field of education and in the reduction or prevention of ESL. The EC also criticised the fact that full-day schools for 10-14-year-olds had not yet been established, pointing out that this would improve equal opportunities in the education system and help reduce the ESL rate (KEG 2011: 9ff.).

Against the background of the 2011 Euro Plus Pact, the measures proposed in Austria's NRP 2012 focused on youth employment and included: the coaching of youth and apprentices, an education and training "guarantee", support tools for apprentice training in companies, "Jobtalks" youth career workshops, the "*Just NEU*" work placement scheme and support for so-called production schools (*Produktionsschulen*) which focus on learning by producing (NRP 2012: 15f.). The 2012 programme also included provisions to significantly extend full-day care facilities at schools by 2016, for instance by providing qualified tutoring, supervised learning, afternoon child-care, school lunches and leisure activities (NRP 2012: 19). To improve on what had already been achieved in this area and to prevent ESL, NRP 2012 also introduced the following: a new approach to teaching and learning in the upper grades at schools (*Oberstufe NEU*), a nationwide adult education initiative designed to provide students with free access to basic education courses and qualifications, an early warning system, professional training for teachers, school principals and school board members, assistance for parents with an immigrant background and a new upper secondary (*Matura*) and school diploma exam concept (NRP 2012: 35-40).

In July 2012, the European Council responded to Austria's NRP 2012 by recommending the implementation of further measures to improve the status quo, in particular with regard to disadvantaged youth. Predicting that the employable population would decrease after 2020, the Council also recommended that Austria make every effort to utilise the potential in its labour force and to solve the problems it still faced. The Council also noted that the inherent potential in the migrant population was still not being used sufficiently due to low formal levels of education or difficulties in obtaining full recognition for qualifications acquired outside Austria. According to the PISA reports, the level of education in Austria is below the EU average, with socio-economic background having a particularly strong impact on educational success (KEG 2012: 7f.).

To accommodate these recommendations, NRP 2013 introduced the following measures: scholarships for skilled labour, full-day care in schools, additional childcare places, education standards, competence-based instruction and a school quality in general education initiative (*Schulqualität Allgemeinbildung*; SQA) (NRP 2013: 13).

Our analysis of Austria's NRPs showed that many of the EU's recommendations for tackling ESL have been not only followed but also implemented. This is mentioned by the interviewees as well in their references to recommendations and initiatives in the EU Policy Framework Programme, early childhood education and development and LLL strategy contexts. While some interviewees explicitly pointed out that the three pillars of the EU Policy Framework Programme ("prevention", "intervention" and "compensation") had been acted upon, others did call attention to the findings of more recent evaluations of implemented measures, which indicate that work is still needed in the prevention sector. While substantial resources have been – and will continue to be – invested in intervention (e.g. youth coaching) and compensation (e.g. school leaving qualifications obtained in later life), the emphasis in future should clearly be shifted to prevention. Several interviewees mentioned that EU initiatives to enhance early childhood education and development had influenced the introduction of a compulsory, free kindergarten year prior to primary school,

and that EU suggestions for early language support and for assessing language skills prior to school had also been taken on board. They also indicated that the EU's Lifelong learning (LLL) strategy had significantly encouraged activities in this field.

Two interviewees argued that since Austria's ESL rate was low compared to that of other EU Member States not all stakeholders considered the recommendation to lower it further to be equally relevant. Furthermore, one interviewee perceived a need for consistency in the evaluation of implemented measures. The (not yet implemented) recommendation of the European Commission and the OECD, to abolish early tracking (at age 10) was explicitly mentioned by only one interviewee in the context of what would essentially contribute to equal opportunities for all.

1.2. Policies, measures and instruments to address national priorities

Measures to tackle ESL in Austria have been implemented at all levels in the education system. These measures were targeted at pre-primary education (ISCED Level 0), compulsory schooling (ISCED Levels 1, 2, 3c) and upper secondary education (ISCED Levels 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b). Additional measures have been developed for people with special educational needs and for children and youth from families with immigrant background. Descriptions of the measures developed are provided in the following sections.

1.2.1. Kindergarten/pre-school measures(from ISCED 0 upwards)

1.2.1.1. Compulsory, free kindergarten year (from ISCED 0 upwards)

A compulsory kindergarten year for children with language deficits was introduced in September 2008 (see NRP 2008: 10). Children are tested to assess their language skills level and determine whether they need special support prior to starting school (see Stanzel-Tischler 2011a: 7). An education plan and education standards have been established to support children in line with their specific needs. The compulsory kindergarten year has been offered free-of-charge to all five-year-olds since 2009 (UB 2009: 7, 23). This ongoing "labour market and employment" policy measure (NRP 2008: 10) should serve to improve education and training for disadvantaged youth (see UB 2007: 6 and 42), offer equal education opportunities to all, enhance the inclusion of women in the labour force (see NRP 2011: 28) and combat child poverty. The relevant stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMWFJ), the individual federal states, municipalities and districts, and BIFIE (the Federal Institute for Education Research, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School System).

1.2.1.2. Language support (ISCED 0, 1, 2, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A)

Every kindergarten is obliged by law to provide early language assistance and prepare children for school. Since kindergartens lie under the jurisdiction of the individual federal states, the BMUKK established a steering group in 2007 to introduce the following early language support measures in all states: education plans, defined standards of German for entering compulsory education, language skills assessments for four-year-olds attending kindergarten and further education for kindergarten teachers (de Cillia/Krumm 2009: 5f.). From 2013 onwards, language support will be enhanced through professional training for teachers and educators and the provision of special assistance for children in the transition from kindergarten to school. When a child starts primary school, his/her language skills will be retested (BMUKK 2013d). Schools also plan to

introduce native language instruction, implement education standards, promote German language skills and provide high-quality further education for teachers and educators (de Cillia/Krumm 2009: 5f.). This “labour market and employment” policy measure (UB 2006: 22) addresses the “investment in human capital – general education and further education” (UB 2006: 25) and the “lifelong learning strategy” recommendations (BMWF 2011: 15). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), the individual federal states and the steering group for nationwide measures.

1.2.1.3. Promoting reading skills (ISCED 1, 2, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A)

To help pupils understand, use and reflect on a written text (see BMUKK 2007) and provide general support to low achievers (ibid.), specific measures to promote reading skills are being implemented at all levels of the school system. In primary schools, these include the “Reliable Primary Schools – Fostering Reading Skills” (*Verlässliche Volksschule – Aktion Lesen*) initiative that was introduced in 1999 or the “Being able to read means being able to learn” initiative (*LESEFIT – Lesen können heißt lernen können*) introduced in 2002. Secondary school level measures include the establishment of a nationwide group of coordinators to improve reading skills (since 2003) and the introduction of reading skills screening tests for 5th graders at secondary academic schools from 2005 (BMBWK no publication date, b: 14f.). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (UB 2006: 22), the call for reading skills (*Leseerziehung*) initiative was the subject of a 1999 official decree (BMBWK no publication date: 34) and addresses the “more and more effective investment in human capital” recommendation (UB 2006: 25). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMWF, BMUKK), school inspectors, pedagogic institutions and school principals.

1.2.1.4. Full-day care in schools (ISCED 0, 1, 2, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A)

Full-day care in schools (*Tagesbetreuung Neu*) is to be made available at more and more schools (NRP 2013: 32) and should combine leisure activities with learning and teaching in music, art, natural sciences, computer science and sports (see BMUKK 2011b). The new and improved full-day care programme was launched at the start of the 2011/12 school year and has since been expanded to enhance the quality of the school system and make it easier for parents to combine their family and career commitments (NRP 2013: 34). This “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 42) addresses the “lifelong learning strategy” recommendation (BMWF 2011: 19). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), regional education boards (*Landesschulräte*) and the Vienna Education Board (*Stadtschulrat Wien*).

1.2.1.5. Social work in schools (ISCED 0, 1, 2, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A)

To meet the changing conditions in society (NRP 2011: 27), students are now given access to on-the-spot counselling, care and assistance in schools (see *Verein Jugend und Kultur*, no publication date). Until 2010, these services fell under the responsibility of youth welfare organisations, school authorities and private agencies, but a number of pilot projects have since been carried out with the support of BMUKK. As an “education” policy measure (NRP 2011: 24), social work in school addresses the “improved education and reduced ESL rate” recommendations (NRP 2011: 26). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), ESF, the individual federal states, the *Volkshilfe* public aid organisation, associations and clubs.

1.2.1.6. Lifelong learning (from ISCED 0 upwards)

This measure is an example of “labour market and employment” policy (NRP 2008: 32) and is intended to improve the permeability of the education system, establish equality of opportunities and increase the professionalism of teachers and educators (BMWF 2011: 10f.). In 2007, the guidelines for a coherent lifelong learning strategy were substantiated. (UB 2007: 39). The “Knowledge-Opportunities-Competences” (*Wissen-Chancen-Kompetenzen*) strategy plan was developed in 2008 (NRP 2008: 38) and was followed by the enactment of the Austrian strategy for lifelong learning in 2011. The latter sets a number of targets which are to be implemented by 2020 (see BMUKK 2011a). Annual progress reports have been available since 2012 (NRP 2013: 16). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK, BMWF), employer and employee associations and researchers.

1.2.2. Measures for compulsory level schools (ISCED 1, 2, 3C)

1.2.2.1. Obtaining school leaving qualifications in later life (ISCED 1, 2, 3C)

In 2008, a cost model for the free completion of education was developed (see BMUKK 2008a). Modular evening classes were subsequently introduced as an additional option in 2010/11 (see BMUKK 2012a). Since 2012, the national government and the individual federal states have been offering free courses for people who want to complete compulsory education (BMUKK 2012g: 44). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 42), this initiative addresses the “promotion of a lifecycle-based approach to employment policies” (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 47) and “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWF 2011: 23) recommendations. Offering less-qualified people more and better education opportunities should improve social permeability, enhance education levels and make access to the labour market easier (BMUKK 2012g: 44). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), individual federal state governors and expert groups (researchers, employer and employee associations, and representatives of the *Ländernetzwerk Weiterbildung* regional further education network, KEBÖ and AMS).

1.2.2.2. IBOBB (ISCED 2)

IBOBB (*Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf*) is a comprehensive education and career guidance plan (BMUKK 2012) and the official, mandatory replacement for what had previously already been provided to 7th and 8th grade students in all types of schools in the form of career guidance classes (*Berufsorientierungsunterricht*) (UB 2006: 26). Among other things, the new plan is implemented locally, coordinates the different measures available, provides up-to-date documentation and includes parents or guardians in the process (see BMUKK 2012f). The provision of career guidance and information on education options in Austrian schools has either been integrated into another subject or provided as an independent subject in lower secondary education since 1998 (IBOBB no publication date: 32). As an ongoing “labour market and employment” policy measure (UB 2006: 22), the provision of career guidance – both in its previous and new forms – (IBOBB no publication date: 32) addresses the “more effective investment in human capital” recommendation (UB 2006: 25). Stakeholders include government ministries (e.g. BMUKK, BMASK), colleges, schools, school authorities and the ESF. The main objectives are to provide students with guidance for their future careers and lives and promote their ability to be self-critical and make prudent decisions (IBOBB 2010: 2).

1.2.2.3. 25plus initiative (ISCED 1, 2)

Since the school year 2007/08, resources have been being made available to primary, secondary, and polytechnic schools as well as to the lower grades in secondary academic schools (see Statistik Austria 2013b) to reduce the size of classes to a maximum of 25 students or even fewer for some subjects (UB 2009: 23). As an ongoing “labour market and employment” policy measure (UB 2007: 6), the 25plus initiative was launched in 2007 (UB 2009: 23) and addresses the recommendation to “improve general education and further education” (UB 2007: 6). The main objectives are to provide personalised instruction, reduce dropout rates, improve the integration of children from immigrant backgrounds (UB 2009: 23) and provide high-quality education and training (NRP 2008: 38). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), BIFIE, school authorities and schools.

1.2.2.4. New middle school (ISCED 2)

The new middle school (*Neue Mittelschule*; NMS) is an achievement-oriented school that focuses on providing individual learning assistance to 10-14-year-olds (see BMUKK 2013b). Its curriculum seeks to introduce new learning cultures (e.g. personalised learning plans) in the lower grades at secondary academic schools (*AHS Unterstufe*). Students with different skills and abilities are taught together to avoid early tracking or predetermination of educational choices (see *Neue Mittelschule*, no publication date). Accordingly, ESL rates should be reduced and equal education opportunities should be provided for all (NRP 2011: 26). First presented in 2007 as the legal basis for the NMS project (NRP 2008: 38), the new middle school concept was implemented in 2008 in five states across Austria (NRP 2008: 38) and has been being extended nationwide since April 2012 through the School Organisation Act (*Schulorganisationsgesetz*) (NRP 2013 15f.). According to this act, all secondary schools in Austria should change into new middle schools by the 2015-2016 school year, whereby the change is optional for the lower grades at secondary academic schools (*AHS Unterstufe*) (see BMUKK 2013b). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2008: 7), the NMS addresses the recommendation for “improved education/training conditions for disadvantaged youth” (NRP 2008: 7). The stakeholders include government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), teacher training colleges, the National Centre for Learning Schools (*Bundeszentrum für lernende Schulen*), regional competence teams, BIFIE, the new middle school project team in BMUKK, and school boards in the individual federal states.

1.2.2.5. Education standards (ISCED 1,2)

Education standards define the competences to be mastered by students by the end of a given period of time. In Austria, education standards are checked at the end of 4th grade (in Mathematics and German/Reading/Writing) and at the end of the 8th grade (in Mathematics, German, and English) (BMUKK 2012c: 2f.). The 2011 NRP also proposes standards for vocational education and training (NRP 2011: 27). The development of the measure to provide uniform qualifications and comparability of educational levels (UB 2006: 25f.) began in 2001, when the results of the PISA study recommended education standards for primary and lower secondary schools (in German, Mathematics and English). The first pilot tests were conducted in 2002. The new education standards became mandatory in 2009, when the corresponding amendment to the School Education Act (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz*) came into force. In that year, initial baseline tests assessed the status quo (benchmark for testing the standard). The first standard tests for the 8th grade took

place in 2012, followed a year later by the first testing of standards for the 4th grade (see Grafendorfer/Längauer-Hohengaßer 2010). As an “education” policy measure (NRP 2011: 24), this initiative addresses the “improved education level and reduced ESL rate” recommendation (NRP 2011: 25). The stakeholders include government ministries, the individual federal states, the Commission for the Future (*Zukunftskommission*) and various working groups in specific fields.

1.2.3. Measures for upper secondary schools (ISCED 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B)

1.2.3.1. Modular apprenticeship training (ISCED 3B)

The main goal of this initiative is to further the flexibility and transparency of the dual system (NRP 2008: 38). The Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*), as amended, establishes the legal basis for modular apprenticeship training in Austria (UB 2007: 41). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2008: 32), modular apprenticeship training addresses the recommendations for an “investment in human capital – general education and further education” (UB 2006: 25) and for a “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWF 2011: 19). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMASK, BMWFJ), employer and employee associations, representatives of the individual federal states and companies. This ongoing measure, which was first implemented in 2006, also seeks to satisfy industry demands and to increase the number of companies that offer an apprenticeship training programme (UB 2007: 41).

1.2.3.2. Mandatory education and formation (ISCED 3B)

Since the 2016-2017 school year every young person must, after completing compulsory schooling, participate in some kind of further education or training programme by attending a full-time secondary school or doing an apprenticeship (*Jugendausbildungsgesetz*). Disadvantaged youth can participate in special programmes, such as supra-company training schemes or production schools (BMASK, 2015a).

1.2.3.3. Supra-company apprenticeship (ISCED 3B)

The supra-company apprenticeship is a training programme that provides publicly-funded apprenticeship places for young people who cannot find apprenticeships in companies (AK 2009: 5). The measure was introduced in 1998 to serve as a safety net (Bergmann et al. 2011: 3) and to promote vocational education and training for young people (NRP 2011: 14). In 2008, it became part of the country’s VET guarantee for young people under the age of 18 and was acknowledged as equivalent to corresponding training in a corporate setting (NRP 2008: 10, 39f.). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2008: 5), it addresses the recommendation for “improved education/training conditions for disadvantaged youth” (NRP 2008: 5). The stakeholders are the employer and employee associations, the federal government and AMS.

1.2.3.4. Youth coaching (ISCED 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A)

Youth coaching is an ongoing measure (NRP 2012: 15) that was first introduced in 2012 and adopts a three-stage case-based approach (provision of assistance on an individual case basis). The coaching is optional and is offered to 9th graders and, in some cases, also to young people in later grades. Professionally trained coaches (e.g. social workers or psychologists) provide information and advice to young people and may even supervise them for a certain period of time.

Responsibility for implementation of this measure lies with external partners (project manager/associations) of the Federal Social Office (*Bundessozialamt*), who work in close cooperation with schools (BMUKK 2012g: 38f.). Predecessors to this measure include the “c’mon 14” and “move on” initiatives (ESF, no publication date). Pilot youth coaching projects were launched in 2012 in Vienna and Styria, and the provision of youth coaching is to be extended nationwide (NRP 2012: 15) by 2014. As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2012: 11), it addresses the recommendation for “improved labour market participation of specific target groups” (NRP 2012: 15). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), the Federal Social Office (*Bundessozialamt*), AMS, the individual federal states, project initiators and other organisations (e.g. WUK and VHS). The aim of youth coaching is to improve labour market integration (NRP 2012: 14f.) and education/training conditions for young people (UB 2007: 42f.).

1.2.3.5. Coaching for apprentices (ISCED 3B)

The coaching for apprentices scheme also involves the parents, the training company and the vocational school, but focuses primarily on mediating between the training company and the apprentice in the event of a conflict. Parents or guardians are only involved when absolutely necessary. The scheme was introduced in 2012 with several limited-range pilot projects in Upper Austria, Styria, Tyrol and Vienna (BMUKK 2012g: 40f.), all of which are still running (NRP 2012: 16). It aims to improve labour market integration (NRP 2012: 14f.) and education/training conditions (UB 2007: 42f.) for young people. Coaching is offered to apprentices whose training is jeopardised in some way by personal, social or other problems as well as to young people who quit an apprenticeship or whose apprenticeship contract is terminated prematurely by their employer. It also provides support to companies when problems occur during training (BMUKK 2012g: 40f.). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2012: 11), it addresses the recommendation for “improved labour market participation of specific target groups” (NRP 2012: 15). The stakeholders are employer and employee associations and government ministries (e.g. BMASK, BMWFJ).

1.2.3.6. Combined apprenticeship/upper secondary school leaving certificate (ISCED 3B)

The combined apprenticeship with upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Lehre mit Matura*) allows apprentices to prepare for the upper secondary school leaving certificate exam during their regular apprenticeship training by attending half-day classes (integrated model) or evening classes (accompanying model). Students must take exams in German, Mathematics, a foreign language and their chosen apprenticeship field. To help students prepare for the exam, (vocational and higher education) schools and adult education institutions across Austria all offer such courses free of charge. The vocational upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Berufsmatura*) serves as a university entrance qualification (BMUKK 2013e). The scheme was introduced in 2008 and aims to make apprenticeships more attractive, to offer more and better opportunities for young people to obtain higher qualifications, and to enhance social permeability (NRP 2008: 41). Initially financed by the Tyrol Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Tirol*), the ongoing scheme (NRP 2008: 41f.) has been publicly funded and made available to all Austrians since 2009 (see BMUKK 2013e). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 42), it addresses the recommendation for “more and more effective investment in human capital” (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 68). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), WKO, BIFIE, WIFI, bfi and VHS.

1.2.3.7. Production schools (ISCED 3B)

Production schools seek to improve a young person's chances of acquiring basic competences and becoming (re-)integrated into the mainstream VET system (NRP 2011: 15). As such, they endeavour to bridge the worlds of school and work for early school leavers and for young people who cannot find an apprenticeship (BMUKK 2012g: 48). Pupils at production schools gain practical and theoretical know-how by working in a workshop setting. To raise motivation levels, most of these workshops also accept actual orders from customers (Bergmann/Schelepa 2010: 24). The first production school in Austria was established in Linz in 2001, with several more introduced in 2010 using ESF funding (Bergmann/Schelepa 2010: 3). As a "labour market and employment" policy measure (NRP 2011 – Erläuterungen: 38), production schools address the recommendation for "improved labour market participation of specific target groups" (NRP 2011: 38). The stakeholders include government ministries (e.g. BMASK), the individual federal states, AMS and ESF.

1.2.3.8. New approach to upper-level schooling (ISCED 3A, 3B, 4A)

The new approach to upper-level schooling (*Oberstufe NEU*) focuses on providing personalised learning assistance to upper-level students. This approach is designed to prepare these students for tertiary education, to help them plan their education and career paths more effectively and to promote autonomy and personal responsibility (NRP 2012: 38). Teaching materials are distributed in so-called competence modules for the whole term to allow students to work on a continuous, step-by-step basis (BMUKK 2012g: 22f.). An expanded early warning system with concrete target agreements is also in place (NRP 2012: 37f.). This new upper-level schooling model was introduced in 2004 and has since been tested at a large number of schools. It will be introduced in schools in all federal states in the 2013/14 school year, and will become obligatory for AHS and BMHS schools from 2017 (see BMUKK 2012 b: 22f.). As an "education" policy measure (NRP 2012: 33), it addresses the recommendation for an "improved education level and reduced ESL rate" (NRP 2012: 37). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK) and schools.

1.2.3.9. Standardised, competence-based school leaving and diploma exams (ISCED 3A, 4A, 4B)

The new school leaving and new diploma exams (*Reifeprüfung Neu*) seek to establish a uniform set of basic competences and conditions for all students and to make Austrian school leaving certificates comparable on both a national and an international level (see BIFIE no publication date; BMUKK 2013c). The new exams can be implemented in schools in the 2013/14 (AHS) and 2014/15 (BHS) school years either as a whole or in the form of pilot projects. These exams will become obligatory at AHS schools from 2014/15 and at BHS schools from 2015/16 (see BMUKK 2013c). As an "education" policy measure (NRP 2012: 33), the new exam model addresses the recommendations for an "improved education level and reduced ESL rate" (NRP 2012: 37) and a "lifelong learning strategy" (BMWF 2011: 19). The stakeholders are BIFIE, government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), national and international experts, school administrations and teachers.

1.2.3.10. Small-group instruction in 9th grade (ISCED 3A, 3B, 4A)

To prevent and reduce the dropout rate among 9th graders at vocational middle and higher schools (BMHS) and upper level secondary academic schools (ORG), more instruction is provided in small group settings and more student-centred teaching methods are used (NRP 2008:

38). Class sizes are to be reduced for German, Mathematics or Accounting and one additional main subject (see BMUKK 2008b). As an ongoing “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2008: 5), small-group instruction was launched in 2008 (see BMUKK 2008b) and addresses the recommendation for “improved education/training conditions for disadvantaged youth” (NRP 2008: 5). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK) and schools.

1.2.3.11. QIBB - Vocational education and training quality initiative (ISCED 3B, 4A)

QIBB (QualitätsInitiative BerufsBildung) is a quality management system for vocational middle and higher schools at all control levels (schools, school boards, education authorities). This system corresponds to EU reference guidelines and serves to secure high-quality vocational education and further education (NRP 2013: 17). Development of the QIBB system began in 2004. After a pilot quality report project which was conducted from 2009 to 2011, the system was evaluated in schools from 2005/06 onwards. The QIBB quality evaluation procedure has been implemented at schools across Austria since 2009 (NRP 2011 – Erläuterungen: 178) and was enhanced by the development of competence profiles and a model curriculum in the period from 2011 to 2013 (NRP 2012: 40). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 42), it addresses the recommendations for “more and more effective investment in human capital” (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 68) and a “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWF 2011: 19). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), school boards, BMHS, LSR and SSR.

1.2.3.12. SQA – School quality in general education (ISCED 3A)

The *SQA (Schulqualität Allgemeinbildung)* initiative aims to ensure the provision and development of high quality general education at all levels of the school system. The legal basis for this initiative are provided by Art. 56 of the School Education Act (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz*, §56) and Art. 18 of the Federal School Inspectorate Act (*Bundes-Schulaufsichtsgesetz*, §18) (NRP 2013: 17). Following a pilot project in 2012, nationwide implementation of this measure began in the 2013/14 school year (NRP 2013: 17). Designed to raise both the quality and the level of education/training (NRP 2013: 17), SQA addresses the recommendation for a “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWF 2011: 19). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK), school boards, SQA coordinators in the individual federal states, etc.

1.2.3.13. JUST Neu (ISCED 3B)

The *JUST Neu (Jugendstiftung)* youth foundation scheme assists and supervises young job seekers in the transition to the job market and seeks to raise their interest in obtaining better qualifications (see WKO 2012a). The JUST scheme was launched in 2009 and was revised in 2011 by AMS, when it was renamed the *JUST Implacementstiftung* (“JUST Placement Foundation”; see BMASK, no access date). This ongoing measure (see BMASK, no access date) helps young people to integrate into the labour market (see WKO 2012a) and offers them job-related qualification options (NRP 2011: 14). As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2011: 12), *JUST Neu* addresses the recommendation for “measures for less qualified youth and people with an immigrant background” (NRP 2011: 14). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMASK), AMS, the individual federal states, the Insolvency Remuneration Fund (*Insolvenz-Entgelt-Fonds*) and WKO.

1.2.3.14. Scholarships for skilled labour (ISCED 3B)

In 2013, three-year education scholarships were introduced for members of the skilled labour force and for occupations with a labour shortage (NRP 2013: 15). As a “poverty and social exclusion” policy measure (NRP 2013: 33) aimed at providing less qualified and unemployed people with access to education/training, this measure addresses the recommendation for a “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWf 2011: 31). The stakeholders are employers and the employer and employee associations.

1.2.3.15. Second-chance education (ISCED 3A, 3B, 4A, possibly also 4B)

Second chance schools offer people with low formal qualifications the chance to obtain a compulsory school leaving certificate (see 1.2.2.1). Under this programme, people who have not completed lower or upper secondary schooling can enrol in an AHS (academic secondary school) or full-time intermediate technical/vocational school for adults/people in employment. The following second-chance education options are available, depending on the level of education previously attained (see BMUKK 2012e):

- *Berufsreifepfprüfung* (vocational university entrance qualification) for people with lower education qualifications (usually apprenticeships); partly implemented in the non-formal system; provides the qualifications needed to enter university/tertiary education.
- *Berufsmatura* (apprenticeship with vocational upper secondary school leaving certificate); allows apprentices to study for and take the vocational upper secondary school leaving certificate during their apprenticeship.
- *Matura* (upper secondary school leaving certificate) from a vocational higher school or college obtained through evening classes.
- *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance examination) entitles students to a university place in a specific discipline.
- *Externistenreifepfprüfung* (external university entrance qualification taken at a private school or college); exams are taken under the supervision of an external commission; students who pass can study any subject at university.
- *Gaining the compulsory school leaving certificate in later life* (see 1.2.2.1)

As a core “labour market and employment” policy measure (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 42), the second-chance scheme is designed to raise social permeability and equality of opportunities and addresses the recommendations for a “lifecycle-based approach in employment policy” (NRP 2005 – Part 3: 47) and a “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWf 2011: 23). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK) and AMS.

1.2.4. Measures in tertiary education (ISCED 5A, 5B)

1.2.4.1. Professionalisation of teachers and school principals (ISCED 5A, 5B)

Efforts to raise the professional level of teachers and educators in Austria have increased continuously since the signing of the 2000 and 2020 Lisbon Strategies:

- 2006: the NRP 2005-2007 implementation report focuses on promoting entrepreneurship concepts in further education programmes for teachers (UB 2006: 17);
- 2011: the NRP 2011 recommends that teacher training programmes should be adapted to social and technological changes (NRP 2012: 39);
- 2012: teachers should become more sensitive to the problem of ESL and dropout (a 2013 brochure provides valuable background information) (NRP 2012: 38); multilingualism, intercultural competences and migrant education are also seen as important for teachers (NRP 2012: 39f.); efforts to raise the professional level of school principals and school inspectors should be expanded (NRP 2012: 39);
- June 2013: the new Teacher Education Act (*Pädagog/innenbildung NEU*) comes into force (see BMUKK 2013a).

As “labour market and employment” policy measures (UB 2006: 22), these initiatives to provide “high-quality teacher training” (NRP 2012: 39) address the recommendations for “more and more effective investment in human capital” (UB 2006: 25) and for a “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWF 2011: 19). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK, BMWF), experts (teacher training colleges, universities and teachers), the individual federal states, interest groups and the Development Council (Entwicklungsrat).

1.2.5. Measures addressing people with special educational needs

1.2.5.1. Education and job counselling for youth with special education needs

The workplace assistance (*Jugendarbeitsassistenz*) and *Clearing* schemes are counselling and care initiatives which assist young people with special educational needs and, if necessary, transfer them to professional institutions outside the school system (UB 2007: 43). They also provide their young clients with occupational education assistance (UB 2007: 43). In 2012, the *Clearing* scheme was replaced by a new *Youth Coaching* scheme (NRP 2012: 15). The “Jobtalks” career workshops scheme provides job orientation to young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who are disabled, come from an immigrant background and/or have problems at school (UB 2007: 43). As “labour market and employment” policy measures (UB 2007: 32), these schemes seek to improve education/training conditions (UB 2007: 42f.) and provide better integration into the labour market (NRP 2012: 14f.). They address the recommendations for “improved education/training conditions for disadvantaged youth” (UB 2007: 41) and for a “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWF 2011: 15).

1.2.5.2. Integrated vocational training

Integrated vocational training offers initial vocational education/training across Austria to young people with special educational needs or learning difficulties after they leave compulsory education (UB 2007: 43). The scheme focuses on VET assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*, BAS) (see WKO 2012b) and can be completed in two ways:

- Prolonged apprenticeship training (up to two years) with vocational school leaving exam.
- Vocational training with partial qualifications in the chosen occupation in combination with partial qualifications in other occupations; final exams can be taken at the end of the first year or at the latest after three years (see WKO 2012b).

As a “labour market and employment” policy measure (UB 2007: 32), the integrated vocational training scheme seeks to support the integration of young people into the labour market. The ongoing scheme was introduced in 2003 and addresses the recommendation for “improved education/training conditions for disadvantaged youth” (UB 2007: 41). The stakeholders are the ESF and the Federal Social Office (*Bundessozialamt*).

1.2.6. Measures addressing people with an immigrant background

- Language support in kindergarten: children are tested to assess their language skills level and receive, if necessary, assistance through appropriate support programmes (NRP 2012: 38f.).
- Language support in school: German language skills are continually improved in general education and vocational schools (NRP 2012: 38f.).
- Teacher training: multilingualism, inter-cultural competences and migration pedagogy are increasingly included in the new teacher training programme (*Pädagog/innenbildung Neu*); diversity in educational professions (educators and teachers from immigrant backgrounds; German as a second language; etc.) (NRP 2012: 39).

These “education” policy measures (NRP 2012: 33) are aimed at improving education/training conditions (UB 2007: 41) and address the EU recommendations for an “improved education level and reduced ESL rate” (NRP 2012: 37) and a “lifelong learning strategy” (BMWF 2011: 15). The stakeholders are government ministries (e.g. BMUKK, BMWF), experts (teaching colleges, universities and teachers), the individual federal states, interest groups and the Development Council (Entwicklungsrat).

1.3. Local policies designed to address local and institutional ESL-related issues

Alongside the measures that are being implemented in all nine Austrian states in response to new national legislation and laws (e.g. *Oberstufe Neu* or *Neue Mittelschule*), there are also several regional projects in place to help increase youth employment and reduce ESL. A few of these measures are described in this chapter, including the “Territorial Employment Pact” (TEP) projects to “integrate people far from the labour market” established under the ESF “Employment Austria 2007-2013” programme (see *Territoriale Beschäftigungspakte in Österreich 2013*).

(1) Vorarlberg: *ABI – Aufbauen, Bilden, Integrieren* (“Prepare, Educate, Integrate”) is targeted at young people up to the age of 22 years. Role models, mentors and coaches are used to motivate youth to (re-)integrate into the labour market. *Alb@tros* is an innovative lower secondary school leaving project for early school leavers under the age of 25 years who have not yet completed 8th grade. Its modular format allows individualised learning and means that students can join the programme at any time throughout the year. One of the project’s success factors lies in its co-operation with the low-threshold *Job Ahoi!* employment project. This project is oriented at young people aged 15 to 25 who are not in education or training, have been unemployed for some time, are socially disadvantaged and/or have left an apprenticeship or school without qualification. It

provides participants with career guidance, coaching and support in the job application process in order to prepare them for (re-)entry into the labour market. Alongside the support in their efforts to find work, participants can also work on a voluntary and paid basis in two projects (1) the renovation and refurbishment of old and valuable wooden boats in an old boat factory under the instruction of a boat builder and a carpenter, or (2) the sewing of garments under the instruction of a seamstress in a “design workshop”. The products are then sold via a web shop.

(2) Styria: The project *BerufsFindungsBegleitung – Übergangsmanagement* (“Career Identification Supervision – Transition Management”) supervises and supports young people (13-15-year-olds at all types of schools) who are looking for an apprenticeship place or have to make a decision on their future occupation or educational careers. The *heidenspass* (“Great fun”) project is targeted at young people up to the age of 25 who are faced with difficult circumstances. Participation in the project is voluntary; participants are paid by the hour for making and selling products from recycling materials. They can later transfer to the *heidenspass plus* (“More great fun”) project, where attendance is compulsory and employment is on a part-time basis. In this project, social workers assist the young people in embracing the concepts of work and setting out their career.

(3) Carinthia: *MOWJOB* is a comprehensive scheme designed particularly to support people with an immigrant background and the unemployed. This scheme allows participants to complete their formal education or training (basic competences, formal qualifications, vocational qualifications) at a later stage in life and provides them with socio-pedagogical mentoring. The *Works Wolfsberg* project provides young people with the qualifications to begin working as a cook. The time spent on the course can be credited to a subsequent apprenticeship. The project also provides participants with career planning assistance, integration support and follow-up help.

(4) Salzburg: The *Step by Step* project organises qualification weeks, job coaching and individual coaching to help young people gain entry to the job market. Other permanent components of the project include counselling and orientation, the preparation of a concrete career and training plan and practical training in a company setting.

(5) Tyrol: *Mei VorSprung* (“My Head Start”) is a mentoring project which helps polytechnic students find appropriate apprenticeship places. The project provides young people with access to experienced mentors who can pass on their own vocational skills and life experience.

(6) Vienna: *Spacellab* is a low-threshold project for young people between the ages of 15 and 25 who need special assistance in planning their education and career. The project has two locations in Vienna and was awarded the ESF innovation prize in 2013. *C'mon17* is a case management scheme for 17-year-olds that has been running in Vienna since 2009 and in (7) Upper Austria since 2012. This project offers additional and long-term support to young people looking for a job or an apprenticeship.

(8) Burgenland: the *Jugend am Werk* (“Youth at Work”) facility offers supra-company vocational training (completed with a final apprenticeship exam) and trains about 70 young people in metal working and mechanical engineering trades. The participants sign a training contract, go to vocational school and complete their practical training working at modern machines in a company or a special publicly-funded training workshop. They can also participate in the free “apprenticeship

with upper secondary school leaving certificate" (*Lehre mit Matura*) programme and finish their training with a vocational secondary academic school leaving certificate (*Berufsreifeprüfung*).

In Vienna and (9) Lower Austria, Caritas *Lerncafés* ("learning cafés") offer free afternoon tutoring and learning support to young people between the ages of 6 and 15 from immigrant backgrounds.

bOJA is a nationwide competence centre that functions as an *Offene Jugendarbeit* ("open youth work") service or network unit and contributes significantly to enhancing youth assistance by offering a range of targeted programmes, measures and initiatives.

The interviewees generally showed a positive attitude towards the regional measures. One of them was convinced that the success of such projects is to be attributed to the small size of the area involved, which facilitates cooperation between the labour market and the different institutions in the education system. Other local measures explicitly mentioned in the interviews were *Space!lab*, *Lerncafés* and *Ausbildungsfit* ("Fit for Training"). The latter is a programme designed to prevent the marginalisation of young people in the transition from compulsory schooling to further education or the labour market. Its goal is to provide all young people with prior support in developing the necessary competences to cope with this transition.

Many of the local measures described above are targeted at young people who left school with very low qualifications (if any) and struggle to find an apprenticeship place. Accordingly, many of these measures provide young people with basic social and cognitive qualifications as well as education and career guidance. Others are aimed at stabilizing young people who have been out of the system for a long period of time. From a scientific point of view, it is crucial that such measures also provide post-care support and continue to help youngsters after they have finished the programme. If this were not the case, the youngsters would be at risk of becoming disoriented and unemployed again.

2. Evaluation of EU ESL initiatives by actors and signs of resistance

The Austrian government (an SPÖ⁵/ÖVP⁶ coalition since 2008) has welcomed the EU initiatives to reduce youth unemployment and the ESL rate. The stakeholders interviewed for the purposes of this study also welcomed the EU initiatives and attributed them the positive side effects of drawing attention to ESL and launching goal-oriented processes to reduce the ESL rate at a national level. The analysis of the parliamentary debates on the “Youth Employment Initiative” (minutes of the parliamentary session on 13 March 2013) and “Youth on the Move” (minutes of the parliamentary session on 15 November 2011) initiatives shows a differentiated picture. The various political parties in Austria have different opinions on how to implement the EU recommendations.

2.1. EU initiatives “Youth Employment Initiative” and “Youth on the Move” in parliamentary debates

In accordance with EU policies, the SPÖ (Social Democratic Party of Austria) is convinced that top priority should be given to fighting youth unemployment. They agree with the EU recommendations to improve youth employment and consider unpaid traineeships and any forms of precarious employment contracts to be problematic. The SPÖ recognises the importance of ESF youth employment initiatives, but is convinced that more measures and more funding are needed to increase youth employment. They therefore advise against austerity programmes that would hit youth, and the SPÖ Minister of Social Affairs has drawn up a proposal outlining the initiatives that are to be implemented in Austria and which could also serve as a model for other EU countries: the provision of a training and employment guarantee for 15-24-year-olds, the establishment of the “Youth Future” (*Zukunft Jugend*) fund, the upgrading of the image of teachers and a scheme to encourage apprentices who have failed their final exams to retake them. The SPÖ also advocates the definition of an unemployment ceiling and calls for EU Member States who reach this ceiling to be obliged to take immediate countermeasures (see Stenographisches Protokoll 2011: 46-51; see Stenographisches Protokoll – Beilage 2013: 5).

The ÖVP (Austrian People’s Party) considers youth employment to be an important issue, but also attaches priority to tackling other challenges (such as the euro crisis or the introduction of a debt ceiling). They view a stable economy as crucial and maintain that this also constitutes a first step towards (improved) youth employment. They are also of the opinion that the causes of the high ESL rate should be studied in greater depth. With regard to the furthering of mobility (another EU recommendation), the ÖVP emphasises the importance of language courses and cultural education; they also suggest improving the quality of exchange programmes, reducing bureaucracy and increasing the number of university graduates. They consider lowering the ESL rate to be the biggest challenge in this field (see Stenographisches Protokoll 2011: 52f.; 59f.; see Stenographisches Protokoll – Beilage 2013: 5).

The Greens agree in principle with the EU initiatives, but consider them to have come rather late and without adequate funding provisions. The party points out that employment measures alone are not the only key to a self-determined future of young people and advocates the implementation of education and training reforms. They also criticise the fact that the original Lisbon target of

⁵ SPÖ = Social Democratic Party of Austria

⁶ ÖVP = Austrian People’s Party

reducing the ESL rate by half by 2010 has not been enforced. In addition, the Greens advocate the expansion of high-quality childcare facilities, the improvement of the school system and the provision of free access to top-quality higher education. They also feel that efforts to transfer existing know-how should be intensified since many EU Member States lack both the money and the knowledge to implement the necessary measures (see Stenographisches Protokoll 2011: 55f.; see Stenographisches Protokoll – Beilage 2013: 6).

The interviewees provided additional information on the above-mentioned party considerations; two of them think that the EU's 2020 Strategy requirements are more binding and more relevant than those in the Lisbon Strategy 2000 and that the LLL strategy is an important incentive for lifelong learning as such. Two interviewees feel that the EU Policy Framework Programme (with its three pillars of “prevention”, “intervention” and “compensation”) supports the measures and programmes that are already in place in Austria. They see EU initiatives to improve early childhood education and development as an important step in the field of prevention along with early language support and early language skills assessment. However, one interviewee did feel that there was a lack of detailed information on how this systematic language support would be implemented. The EU's know-how transfer policy, which has led to the successful establishment of measures to reduce ESL in other Member States, is also seen as a positive aspect. The same applies to the “Accreditation of Prior Learning” initiative, which one interviewee anticipates would contribute to establishing greater permeability in the education system. One interviewee criticises the fact that EU initiatives are non-committal and inadequate for shaping public opinion.

2.2. Signs of resistance

One of the opposition parties pessimistically argues that while the proposed programmes are all right in general, it doubts whether the programmes alone can provide the necessary support for unemployed youth. It views youth unemployment as a European not a national problem. According to this party, Austria should support apprenticeship programmes and start an education and training offensive in cooperation with commerce and industry. The party also advocates the reintroduction of the “Blum-Bonus” (see footnote 5) and, last but not least, the promotion of parity of esteem for apprenticeships and academic qualifications (see Stenographisches Protokoll 2011: 53ff.; 60ff.; see Stenographisches Protokoll – Beilage 2013: 5f.).

Another opposition party views social and labour market policies primarily as national matters for which the individual EU Member States should establish their own key requirements (see Stenographisches Protokoll 2011: 56f.; 63f.; see Stenographisches Protokoll – Beilage 2013: 6).

One interviewee draws attention in this context to the EU-critical attitude of stakeholders who consider the field of education to be primarily a national matter and adds that ministries seize EU stimuli, but do not always make clear that the incentive came from the EU.

Further causes of resistance could be reconstructed by analysing the interviews conducted with stakeholders (see footnote 1). At the **macro level**, resistance was attributed to links between the structure of society and the structure of the education system, federalist structures, budget shortfalls and the influence exerted by politics on the education system. Several interviewees feel that the structure of the Austrian education system contributes to maintaining and perpetuating social power structures. To illustrate party political resistance to change, one interviewee mentions the

common school for 10-14-year-olds, which had still had not been implemented.⁷ Others note that meritocratic ideas are simply played off against social awareness.

Several of the interviewees explicitly point to the disadvantages of the federalist decision-making structures in the Austrian political system and indicate that this often causes resistance to changes at both a state and a regional level. The (as yet not implemented) tertiarisation of training for kindergarten teachers and the professionalisation of teachers are both mentioned as examples. The majority of the interviewees note that the education policy practiced in the individual federal states in Austria was one of the central causes of resistance to change in the education system; they explicitly demanded more central requirements. They criticise the fact that budget shortfalls were frequently used to legitimise the non-implementation of reforms in the education sector. Several interviewees feel that party political interests should come second to implementing reasonable reforms. Conflicting interests are mentioned in this context with reference to the fact that investing in education has long-term effects. Since Austria's ESL rate is relatively low in comparison to other countries, some interviewees note that ESL is not accorded the same level of attention by the various political decision makers.

At the **meso level**, some interviewees are particularly critical of the teachers' unions as barriers to reforms.

From a **micro level** perspective, one interviewee claims that teachers frequently do not see themselves as "change agents", but instead tend to "put up with" a situation that they see as unchangeable.

3. Good practices in education and social policy measures

This chapter compares the practices/instruments recommended by the EU with those practices/instruments that have actually been developed and implemented in Austria. All measures presented in this chapter have been positively evaluated by independent agencies.

3.1. Supra-company training (SCT)

In its response to NRP 2005, the European Council recommended that by 2007 all unemployed school leavers should be offered a job, an apprenticeship or a place on a further education/training programme within six months of leaving school (UB 2006: 24f.). Austria responded to this recommendation by intensifying its supra-company apprenticeship scheme (ibid.: 24-26).

SCT is available in two different forms. In SCT 1, the entire training is provided in a supra-company workshop in cooperation with a regular company. SCT 2 offers a shorter contract with a supra-company training institution. Evaluations of both forms of SCT in the school years 2008/09 and 2009/10 show that 23 % of all apprentices left the training scheme prematurely (Bergmann et al. 2011: 142). The dropout rate was higher for SCT 1 (with a longer supra-company training period) than for SCT 2. Furthermore, three quarters of participants in the SCT 2 scheme (with a shorter supra-company training period) found an apprenticeship place within six months of finishing their SCT training, compared to only one third of SCT 1 scheme participants (ibid.).

⁷ These ideological conflicts date back to an education debate that has been going on for almost a century (see Pfeiffle 1986).

Evaluations show that on the one hand this measure serves as a safety net for disadvantaged youth (particularly those without a compulsory school leaving certificate and/or from immigrant background). On the other hand, it is important to note that this group had a higher dropout risk than any other group. This is a fact which could indicate that SCT might be a high-threshold form of training for this group of young people. SCT apparently cannot compensate for social or personal disadvantages and lack of school qualifications. Bergmann et al. (2011) therefore recommend additional measures or some kind of pre-programme preparation. On a positive note, they report negligible socio-economic differences within the group of successful participants (ibid.: 145).

3.2. Full-day care in schools

The European Commission also recommended that Austria extend the availability of childcare facilities and day care centres for 6-14-year-olds. Opening hours at these facilities should suit the needs of the population, while affordable care centres should be made available during school vacations (UB 2006: 31f.). This recommendation is being followed: full-day care in schools will be implemented on a step-by-step basis across the whole of Austria.

In the course of a survey of full-day care in schools, parents with children in grades 1 to 8 were interviewed at the end of 2009. Around 17 % of these parents were making use of the full-day care options available in schools. Most schools which offer full-day care also offer school lunches, help with homework in the afternoons as well as sports and leisure activities for the children involved. Of the parents who make use of such care facilities, 73 % are content with the services provided. They place most importance on the availability learning support options, the provision of a well-balanced lunch and the completion of homework. The number of available full-day care places (120,000) is by no means sufficient; estimates show that some 230,000 places are required (see Wasserbacher 2010).

3.3. Integrated vocational training (IVT)

Another country-specific recommendation made by the EU (KEG 2007: 31) centres on improving the skills and qualifications of disadvantaged youth and youth with special educational needs. In response to this recommendation, Austria expanded its integrated vocational training scheme.

An evaluation of the IVT scheme with respect to the integration of graduates into the labour market indicated positive results for the 2003-2011 period: one month after finishing IVT, 52 % of IVT graduates had found a job, 10 % had a new (partially "regular") apprenticeship place, 22 % were registered as unemployed and 8 % were participating in an AMS qualification programme (Dornmayr et al. 2012: 37).

3.4. Early language support

To meet the European Commission's recommendation (KEG 2008: 148) to improve the education and training of disadvantaged youth, Austria's NRP 2008-2010 focuses in particular on measures to promote children and youth with an immigrant background (NRP 2008: 39f.).

Evaluations of early language support measures show that the provision of professional training to kindergarten teachers and educators is very important; their attitude towards the assessment of a child's language skills was more positive after they had participated in a further education

programme which covered such matters. During the evaluations, kindergarten teachers and educators, heads of kindergartens and primary school teachers were all asked their views on early language skills promotion; they all reported that they had noticed the positive effects of such training measures. Furthermore, 42 % of the interviewees thought that early language support made it easier for children to start school, while 22 % felt that it made work easier for teachers (see Stanzel-Tischler 2011b).

3.5. Apprenticeship with upper secondary school leaving certificate

When the European Commission (KEG 2009: 43) recommended further improving the educational opportunities available to disadvantaged youth, Austria decided to introduce the following (and other) new measures (UB 2009: 20-23): apprenticeship with upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Lehre mit Matura*) and the so-called new middle school (*Neue Mittelschule*; see 3.6).

Empirical studies show that the *Lehre mit Matura* option is more popular with apprentices who had left school (AHS or BHS) prematurely and is less relevant for students who had successfully completed secondary or polytechnic schools (Lachmayr 2012: 128). Aside from the four main subjects studied, the *Lehre mit Matura* programme also includes 15 units of coaching, an aspect that is accepted and considered helpful by 43 % of participating apprentices. Lachmayr (ibid.: 138) concludes that this programme must be well accepted, since 7 % of all apprentices in Austria take advantage of it. He also remarks that the great majority of participants assess the measure positively and appreciate the fact that it offers them the opportunity to finish upper secondary school (with *Matura*) free-of-charge. They also describe the huge workload and the additional courses as challenges (ibid.: 138).

3.6. New middle school

Austria introduced the so-called new middle school (*Neue Mittelschule*) as an additional measure to improve the educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth (KEG 2009: 43).

According to a study by the Institute for Empirical Social Studies (IFES), which interviewed the parents of new middle school pupils in 2013, the participants are content with this new type of school. The majority of parents consider the commitment shown by the teachers, the learning environment, the team teaching method and the classroom activities to be good or very good. Around two thirds of parents feel that the performance demands are adequate and that the number of children passing exams has improved: in the 2012/13 school year, 7,940 of a total of 13,413 pupils (i.e. 49.20 %) at 243 locations completed the year with a certificate that entitled them to transfer to an AHS or BHS. When compared to the numbers of pupils who had completed school at these locations in the previous year, i.e. when the schools were either still secondary schools or had just had a class graduating from the new middle school model for the first time, this represents an increase of 11.39 % (see BMUKK 2013f).

3.7. Social work in schools

In response to Austria's 2011 NRP, the European Council recommended the introduction of measures to expand full-day care in schools, to improve what has already been achieved in the field of education and to reduce or prevent early school leaving. Austria followed these recommendations by establishing a scheme to provide social work in schools.

A recent online survey of 20 providers of social work in schools indicates that the social work option is used most frequently in the following types of schools: secondary modern/cooperative secondary schools (43.2 %); new middle schools (16 %); primary schools (13.2 %) and polytechnic schools (13.2 %) (Adamowitsch et al. 2011: 18).

In the 2010/11 school year, only 256 schools in Austria offered full-day care facilities, this corresponds to 4 % of the 6,000 schools in the mainstream education system. The supervisor-student ratio, which ranges between 301 and 1,953 pupils/students per full-time equivalent supervisor depending on the region, is often disadvantageous (ibid.: 19).

Adamowitsch et al. (2012) also examined the potential strengths and weaknesses of the different providers of social school work (ibid.: 35f.) and established a corresponding quality management and evaluation model in cooperation with BMUKK on the basis of their findings.

3.8. Youth coaching

Against the background of the Euro Plus Pact, Austria focused in its NRP 2012 on youth employment by presenting the following measures (NRP 2012: 15f.): coaching for youth and apprentices, education and training guarantee and production schools. (NRP 2012: 19).

Evaluators generally concur that the introduction of youth coaching in 2012 was a step in the right direction. However, they also agree that the facts that 6.7 % of the young people who take advantage of this measure quit prematurely (Steiner et al. 2013: 150) and 8.7 % could not work out a clear career path are less successful indicators (ibid., 154). No noteworthy differences could be observed with regard to gender and immigrant background, which might imply that youth coaching does not have different effects for different social groups. 68 % of participants were able to firm up their career plans, 33 % gained motivation and 31 % developed a more positive self-image, with the latter particularly evident for young people from an immigrant background (Steiner et al. 2013: 165). Three quarters of the young people studied said that their situation had improved after the coaching (ibid.: 164).

3.9. Production schools

In response to the Euro Plus Pact, more production schools were implemented in Austria as an further measure in addition to the supra-company training (3.1.) and youth coaching (3.8.) schemes (NRP 2012: 19).

An evaluation of production schools with respect to the integration of graduates into the labour market shows that 30 % of students become unemployed when they leave such schools, 30 % find employment (subsidised employment: 13 %; integration into the “primary labour market”: 17 %), 7% start an AMS course and one third are registered as “Out of Labour Force (OLF)” (Bergmann/Schelepa 2011: 61). However, the integration of production school graduates into the labour market does improve over time: the number who are unemployed is reduced by half after one year. The labour market status of those in employment and those registered as OLF remains relatively constant over time (ibid.: 61f.). Bergmann and Schelepa conclude that attending a production school is a promising option in terms of subsequent entry into the labour market or the (further) education system and as a long-term stabilisation measure (ibid.: 62).

When asked to name good practices in tackling and reducing ESL, the interviewees mention the compulsory kindergarten year, the dual system and the supra-company training scheme most frequently. Several of them feel that the compulsory kindergarten year (see 1.2.1.1) will significantly reduce ESL in the future. The dual system is seen as a factor that is largely responsible for Austria's relatively low youth unemployment rates. For this reason, employer organisations in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and The Netherlands have launched an initiative to provide information on the benefits of the dual training system in cooperation with the European Commission. Some of the interviewees also think that the training guarantee (see 1.2.3.2) in combination with the supra-company training scheme (see 1.2.3.3) could help to reduce ESL. It was, however, remarked that the dual system should be given priority over supra-company training. Additional good practices examples mentioned by the interviewees are youth coaching, language support and local initiatives.

Three interviewees feel that a comprehensive, universal concept to reduce ESL has yet to be developed, and that, from an employer's perspective, the individual measures are incoherent and uncoordinated.

Concluding Remarks

Austria has been paying particular attention to the issue of early school leaving since the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) and, in doing so, has closely observed the impulses coming from the European Commission and the OECD. Although the early school leaving rate in Austria is low in comparison to the EU-28 average, the high risk of labour market exclusion for the country's early school leavers meant that there was an urgent need for action. Austria recognises the severe consequences of this problem and has implemented a number of measures to prevent, intervene in and compensate for early school leaving. These measures have been described and analysed in this country report. For this purpose, national policy documents, research papers and official minutes taken during sessions of the Austrian parliament (Nationalrat) and interviews with experts in the field of politics, education and economics were conducted and analyzed with regard to different aspects. The analysis of this data provided valuable information and pointers on the macro-, meso- and micro-levels with regard to EU policy influence, implementation processes, good practices, drivers and rationales as well as resistance to EU policies.

In this report, we describe the measures that have been implemented in Austria since 2000. The analysis of the current national reform programmes and the respective implementation reports shows that Austria has followed and, to a large extent, implemented the European Commission's country-specific recommendations. The EU Commission compliments Austria on its well-established dual system, which is considered responsible for the relatively low youth unemployment rate. Aside from this dual system, a range of different school and training programmes have also been established to integrate young people (e.g. the apprenticeship training guarantee, supra-company apprenticeship, production schools, coaching for apprentices, apprenticeship with upper secondary school leaving certificate, modular apprenticeship training, integrated vocational training for youth with special educational needs and many more). However, what has not been implemented so far – and Austria has been criticized for this by the EU Commission – is the recommended introduction of a common school for 10-14-year-olds.

The main target groups of the measures to tackle ESL since 2000 are young people without compulsory or lower secondary schooling, young people leaving education at the end of compulsory schooling, dropouts from upper-secondary education, early school leavers, young people with low competencies in reading, writing and mathematics, young people (15-24-year olds) outside the education and employment systems, adults whose educational capital and job-market qualifications are below the required standard, 9th graders (i.e. students in their last year of compulsory schooling) and youth with special needs who have difficulties in finding employment.

Measures have been implemented in Austria at all levels in the education system, thus targeting pre-primary education (ISCED Level 0), compulsory schooling (ISCED Levels 1, 2, 3c) and upper secondary education (ISCED Levels 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b). Additional measures have been developed for people with special educational needs and for children and youth from families with an immigrant background. On the whole, the emphasis has tended to be on compensatory rather than preventive measures, a fact that is often criticized by educational researchers in Austria. Of the 30 measures described in this report, 9 were given a positive evaluation and selected as good practice examples. Based on their intended effect, the measures introduced can be sub-divided into compensatory (supra-company training, production schools), intervening (social work in

schools) and preventive (youth coaching, new middle schools, early language support, full-day care in schools) measures. Of note is the lack of sustainability of some of the measures, a point that is indicated by the fact that many of them disappear fairly quickly.

Attention was also given to the so-called drivers and rationales of state and private sector local stakeholders behind the respective implementation processes. While educational stakeholders in Austria emphasize the introduction of education standards and the promotion of basic competences and preventive measures to facilitate educational and social inclusion and employability, economic stakeholders advocate educational policies that improve and adapt the qualification of young people to the labour market and also promote basic competences to prevent them from labour market exclusion. Political stakeholders focus more on the implementation of structural education reforms, strengthening the economy and enhancing early childhood education to increase youth employment and social and educational quality. The reconstruction of the official minutes of parliamentary sessions shows that the governing parties approve of and support EU initiatives and measures but prioritise different aspects, e.g. strengthening the labour market or enhancing early childhood education. The disadvantages of the federalist decision-making structures in the Austrian political system are evident at the macro level, where they often produce resistance to changes at both the individual state and the regional level. Attention is also drawn to the positions adopted by the teachers' unions, which are seen by some to constitute more of a hindrance to reform than those of other professional groups. The situation that school leadership and teachers frequently do not see themselves as "change agents", but instead put up with a situation that seems unchangeable to them, can be interpreted as a sign of a lack of professionalisation in the education sector.

In conclusion, it can be said that many measures to counter early school leaving have been implemented in Austria, whereby the focus tends to lie on compensation and intervention. The majority of these measures focus on preparing youth for the labour market and integrating them into the dual education system. A few measures are targeted at obtaining the *Matura* and the subsequent access to university education. Until recently, the individual measures were insufficiently aligned from a strategic perspective, with only limited cooperation between the different players, funding agencies and target group authorities. The introduction of the so-called youth coaching initiatives can be regarded here as an attempt to establish greater transparency.

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