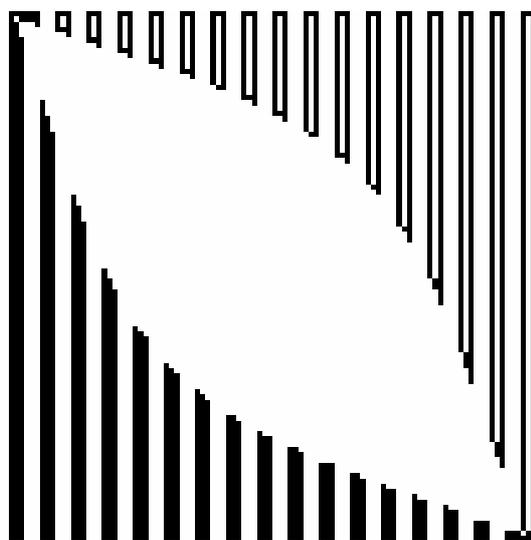


THEMATIC REVIEW ON ADULT LEARNING



AUSTRIA

COUNTRY NOTE

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1. INTRODUCTION: OBJECTIVES AND ORGANISATION OF THE THEMATIC REVIEW

The main purpose of the thematic review on adult learning is to understand adults' access and participation in education and training and to enhance policies and approaches to increase incentives for adults to undertake learning activities in OECD countries. It is a joint activity undertaken by the OECD Education Committee (EDC) and the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC) in response to the need to make lifelong learning a reality for all, to improve learning opportunities of low skilled and disadvantaged adults and to sustain and increase employability.

A total of 17 countries participate in the two rounds of the thematic review. All related documents, Background Reports and Country Notes are publicly available on the OECD adult learning website (<http://www.oecd.org/edu/adultlearning>) and constitute a valuable source of information for international comparison. A comparative report providing an analysis of adult learning participation and policies as well as good practices and recommendations in the first-round review countries was published in 2003 (OECD, *Beyond rhetoric: Adult learning policies and practices*, Paris).

Countries participating in the second round of the thematic review have chosen between two options: A full-scale review covering adult learning in a comprehensive view, or a focused review addressing adult learning of the low-skilled and disadvantaged adults. From the nine countries participating in the second round, four have opted for the full-scale review (Austria, Hungary, Mexico, Poland), and five for the focused review (Germany, Korea, Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States).

The thematic review methodology includes national analysis and cross-country comparison. Countries prepare a descriptive Background Report on the status of adult learning in the country. This is followed by an OECD review team visit to the country that enables the reviewers to analyse adult learning on the basis of the Background report, discussions with representatives of government, administration, employers, trade unions, practitioners and site visits. After each country visit, the team rapporteur, with the help of the review team, prepares a Country Note analysing the main issues concerning adult learning and policy responses in the country under review. A final comparative report will address some of the different issues and policy responses in a comparative perspective, including the insights gathered from the participating countries.

This Country Note starts by outlining some of the economic, demographic, and cultural conditions in Austria that are important to adult education. Section 3 describes existing programs briefly, first presenting existing data on overall participation levels and then outlining the main forms of adult education. Section 4 examines four underlying themes of the Thematic Review of Adult Learning: the purposes and priorities for adult education; the ways in which Austria has tried to make learning more attractive and accessible to adults; the quality and the effectiveness of learning; and finally the coherence of policy. Section 5 concludes by presenting a series of issues about the current provision of adult education in Austria, suggesting some potential direction for the future.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR ADULT EDUCATION IN AUSTRIA

Austria is a country with a population of just over 8 million, located in the centre of Europe. Its economic conditions have been relatively good compared to other OECD countries: its GDP per capita was US\$28 800 in 2001, compared to an OECD average of US\$25000, and its growth rate has been somewhat higher than that of the OECD as a whole. The standardised unemployment rate in 2002 was 4.3%, well below the OECD average of 6.9% and the European Union average of 7.6%. Its long-term unemployment rate is also quite low: the rate of unemployment over 12 months was under one percent (0.8%) compared to an OECD average of 2.0% and a European average of 3.1%. The low unemployment rates “have many fathers”, according to the Minister of Labour, and include fiscal policy in the 1970s and 1980s designed to avoid high unemployment rates, the second-chance programs of the education system, and the relatively low average age of retirement opening more employment places for young people. In turn, the low unemployment rate reduces the burden on certain types of adult education, including labour market and education programs to retraining unemployed workers. In addition, Austria’s relative stability in the occupational structure compared to many other countries is a factor that may affect the country’s priorities and its apparent lack of concern with the transformations of the knowledge revolution (see Section 4.1).

Despite its relatively strong economic conditions, Austria (like virtually all OECD countries) has suffered an economic downturn since 2001. As a result there are unlikely to be more revenues for education in the short run; this is equally true for adult education where increasing emphasis is now being put on efficiency of programmes and returns on investment. Companies are also less likely to invest in training during recessions.

Several demographic conditions have influenced or will influence education in general and adult education in particular. Immigration has been increasing, and currently over 9% of the population is composed of immigrants¹; this generates the need for more language programs in adult education. The population has been ageing, and there is real concern that Austria may be unable to supply enough skilled labour unless more young people are well-educated or the effective age of retirement – now one of the lowest in Europe, at about 58 on average – is increased.² Although the population is concentrated in the cities – and particularly in the urban centres, by far the biggest being Vienna – Austria has many rural areas, which are often isolated from the rest of the country and have relatively fewer programs and services available.

Austria has a federal structure, in which the nine *Länder* retain significant power. Indeed, as in several other OECD countries with federal arrangements, the authority for elementary-secondary education rests with the *Länder*, although teachers are paid by the national government. The national government³ is responsible for the academic secondary schools (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schulen*, AHS or “Gymnasium”), for the Technical and Vocational Schools and Colleges (BMHS), the universities, and the *Fachhochschulen* (FHS) established in 1994.⁴ It also pays for half the costs of the teachers of the

¹ The proportion of the foreign-born is among the highest among OECD countries, and has increased by over 50 % since 1990 (see OECD 2002a, Charts GE3.1 and 2).

² Note that the old-age dependency ratio - the ratio of those over 65 to those age 16 - 64 – in Austria is only slightly above the OECD average; what is more of a concern than the age structure is the early age of retirement.

³ We use the term “national” government for the *Bund*, which is sometimes translated as the “federal government” and sometimes as the “state government”, running into confusion with the *Länder* that are also sometimes referred to as federal *Länder*.

⁴ The abbreviations used in this Country Note are listed in the Glossary (p.43).

Vocational Schools for Apprentices (*Berufsschulen*), while the *Länder* pay the rest of the expenditure for these schools. Adult education is therefore an area where responsibilities are somewhat unclear and distinctly mixed: adult students in regular university studies are supported by the national government, but adult students in postgraduate courses have to pay tuition fees; adult students in FHS are mainly supported by the national government, but partly also by the *Länder* and in some cases also by private organisations which run FHS programs; labour market programs are supported by the national government; the *Länder* have established small Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), usually referred to as *Bildungskonto*; the *Volkshochschulen* (VHS, especially in Vienna), *Bildungshäuser*, and other adult education institutions, described in Section 3.4 are supported by *Länder* and municipal governments, but also by the BMBWK. It is not easy to get an overall listing of the funding for adult education by sources of revenue, and to establish the relative contributions of the national, *Land*, and municipal governments — and of adult students themselves and of employers — (as is true in most countries). The Austrian Background Report does provide an overview of financial resources devoted to adult learning in Austria (Table 1-3). However, it is clear that the federal structure in Austria complicates adult education substantially because programs vary considerably among the *Länder*, because *Land* and national government funds are commingled in various ways, and because it is impossible to speak of a single approach to adult learning policy.

A number of social and cultural conditions prove to influence adult education substantially. Perhaps the most important of these is the concept of a *Beruf*, a way to describe an occupation that has no precise equivalent in English. A *Beruf* is more than simply a job or an occupation; it is a source of both personal and social identity, of deep meaning and pride; it provides a clear contribution to society, requires exceptional skill and therefore preparation, and applies equally to high-level professional positions (like lawyers and doctors) and to lower-level positions like technical workers, sales personnel, or bakers. It is closer to the English concept of a vocation or calling, or the French term *métier*; the idea of a *Beruf* is also linked to the practice of having a high-skills approach to growth and development, rather than the low-skills approach of the U.S. or the U.K.⁵ The implication for adult education is that *Berufsbildung*, or the development of a *Beruf*, requires an extensive process and a considerable amount of time, compared to programs in countries without the tradition of the *Beruf*. Many of the adult education programs, especially the second-chance programs (*zweiter Bildungsweg* or second ways to learning) follow the tradition of *Berufsbildung* and are therefore longer and more arduous than comparable program in other countries. In contrast, some programs — particularly the labour market programs aiming to get individuals back into employment as quickly as possible — stand out because they do not adhere to the philosophy of *Berufsbildung*. In addition, the OECD review team did not hear too much about recognizing prior learning (or PLAR, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition), the effort in many countries to recognize experience and informal learning on the job or in other settings, and to provide academic credit or qualifications for such forms of experienced-based learning. PLAR may be inconsistent with *Berufsbildung*, which stresses instead the amount of time needed to develop the expertise for a *Beruf* rather than finding short-cuts.

Second, there is a high level of social dialogue on all issues. All workers are required to belong to Chambers of Labour, and all employers belong to Economic Chambers. Chambers exist at the national, *Land*, and municipal level and are always available for consultation on public issues. There are many commissions and coordination councils which the social partners belong to, as well as other public and private providers of education and training. This is all part of creating a culture of consensus, in which different groups meet until they arrive at some common understanding of a problem and how to resolve it. However, the culture of consensus is hostile to dissent and to idiosyncratic ways of doing things, and it may keep “outsiders” on the margins, as several private providers of adult education complained. A culture

⁵ An extensive literature contrasts countries with a high skills strategy with those following a low skills strategy; see for example, Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (1990) clarifying two different routes for the U.S.; and Bierhof and Prais (1997) comparing the U.K. and Switzerland.

of consensus effectively gives veto power to all participants, which may render innovation and change more difficult.

Third, and perhaps because of the culture of consensus, there has been little reliance on market-like mechanisms in Austrian education – for example, on creating competition among providers on the theory that competition generates responsiveness and innovation. Instead, there is generally a division of labour among institutions, with institutions serving different groups of students, or different fields of study, or different geographic areas. There have been some market-like mechanisms used, like the ILAs or vouchers supported by the different *Länder*, but these are used more to give adults a wide range of choice among a large number of alternatives rather than to stimulate competition among providers. In addition, only a few private providers are motivated by profit; other providers – including most of the vast number offering upgrade training, reviewed in Section 3.2 – view themselves as serving more general goals rather than simply increasing profits or enrolments.

One aspect of Austria's elementary-secondary education system strongly influences adult education. Overall, there are relatively high rates of completing upper secondary education: about 85% of each cohort completes some type of upper secondary credential, while the remaining 15% lack such credentials and are clearly candidates for second-chance offerings.⁶ However, many upper secondary schools experience a certain amount of shifting among specific programs, particularly from higher-level programs to lower-level programs in vocational schools or the apprenticeship system (sometimes referred to as “drop-down”); so many of the 85% of students completing upper secondary education have lower-level credentials than they would like, and are again candidates for higher credentials in second chance institutions.⁷ In addition, the drop-out rate from the *Hauptschule*, the less-selective lower secondary schools, has been increasing in recent years, leading to more individuals without any qualifications or upper-secondary education. Finally, the apprenticeship system, the dual system combining school-based with work-based learning, has been under some pressure recently, and the number of apprenticeship positions was reduced by 20% during the 1990s; this too may lead to more young people without qualifications (Schneeberger, 2002). Concern about these trends have led Austria to construct a number of second-chance programs, in which individuals who did not obtain the qualifications they need during their initial education have second chances to do so. We review these second-chance programs in Section 3.1.

Finally, Austrians are quite conscious of developments in other countries, particularly in the European Union, and want to integrate into the large “system” emerging in Europe. The Bologna process, one of making higher education qualifications more consistent across Europe, has been of great concern to universities. Many institutions have participated in the education projects of the European Union like Socrates and Leonardo and are also using the European Social Fund (ESF) for education programs; indeed, such projects have often been used to stimulate innovation. Austria has participated in a number of OECD education reviews, as part of the process of evaluation and learning from other countries' experiences.⁸ In general, Austrian professionals in the adult education system, while proud of their traditions, tend to be interested in thinking about improvements and learning from practices elsewhere.

⁶ See also the OECD data on completion of upper secondary schools (OECD 2002a, Table A1.2): these figures indicate that 83% of Austrians aged 25 – 34 have completed at least upper secondary education, compared to an OECD average of 74%.

⁷ One guess was that 40% of all students have received either no upper secondary credential or one lower than they would like, but this figure is probably a serious over-estimate.

⁸ Austria has participated in the Review of Career Guidance Policies, which has generated results useful for this Country Note (OECD, 2003a); it also participated in earlier activities on *Financing lifelong learning* and on *Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*.

3. ADULT LEARNING IN AUSTRIA: PARTICIPATION AND KEY PROGRAMS

Compared to other OECD countries, participation in adult learning in Austria seems to be about average. For example, the Eurostat Labour Force surveys show monthly participation rates in adult training of about 7.5 percent in 2002, in the middle of the distribution of all European Union countries but low compared to figures of 16 to 24% among the Nordic countries. On occasion Austrians cited these data to say that participation in adult learning is too low, meaning that they would like to be nearer the top of the OECD countries. But a careful look at the participation data, with all their imperfections, suggests that the countries with particularly high participation rates in adult learning are largely Scandinavian countries, with long traditions of well-supported folk high schools and course-taking for non-vocational purposes. These kinds of institutions exist in Austria too, in the form of *Volkshochschulen* (VHS) and other adult education institutions described later in this section, though these non-vocational forms of adult education appear not to be thriving as well in Austria as they are in Scandinavia. If it were possible to disaggregate the data, therefore, we suspect that Austria has a relatively high level of participation in vocationally-oriented adult education, and a more average participation rate in non-vocational forms of adult learning.

As in other countries, a great deal of adult learning is now accessed through employment, including the kinds of upgrade training we describe in Section 3.2. In fact, aside from reading specialist books and magazines on one's own, the most frequent form of continuing education in Austria is special training in the companies where individuals are employed.⁹ As a result participation rates tend to be higher for well-educated individuals than for those with less education, and higher for individuals in larger companies that provide more training. Conversely, those in low-wage jobs, and those working for small and marginal employers are less likely to participate in adult education.

A related question is whether Austrians themselves perceive that there is too little adult learning, or just about the right amounts. The employers interviewed by the review team agreed that there was sufficient adult education for their purposes — particularly for the upgrade training of the labour force — though they acknowledged that rural areas and small firms might not have sufficient access to training. The various second-chance programs seem not to be over-enrolled — for example, we did not hear about problems where too many students apply for the places available. There were substantial complaints from the providers of non-vocational adult education that this area has ceased to be a government priority, as we explore in Section 4.1, but again there is no evidence of excess demand for the classes.

We did hear about shortages in four areas: in nursing, travel and tourism, information technology (IT) during the late 1990s, and in rural areas. But the first two of these stem largely from demand-side problems, not from inadequate supply. Nursing is a highly stressful occupation and not especially well paid. Tourism seems an attractive occupation but is also poorly paid with long working hours, and so large numbers of entrants leave within a few years because of demanding working conditions. These are problems that should be resolved by improving pay and working conditions, not flooding the market with more nurses or workers in tourism. Similarly, the IT problem of the late 1990s was caused by a sudden spike in demand, and it is difficult to imagine any kind of adult learning system that could have reacted that quickly to demand. By and large, then, we could detect no evidence of sustained shortages, except possibly in rural areas — a familiar problem with diseconomies of small size. For example, the *Land of Styria* has been successful in building an industrial cluster and attracting foreign investment; as a result a number of skill shortages developed in the late 1990s.¹⁰

⁹ See the Country Background Report, Table 2-8.

¹⁰ See the Country Background Report, section 3.2.

In addition, the review uncovered an area where there is probably a dire shortage of programs — programs for adults with very low levels of literacy, often called the *Bildungsfernen* (those distant from education) — which we examine more carefully in Section 4.1. While the review team did not observe many learning opportunities for immigrants, the Federal Ministry of the Interior sponsors a variety of programs for them, focusing on learning German; the Ministry of Education supports courses to earn the lower-secondary school qualification in which many immigrants enrol, as well as special programs for female immigrants. By and large, then, with just some exceptions, there do not seem to be serious shortages of opportunities for adult learning in Austria, and particularly not in the area of upgrade training for the labour force.

Austria has numerous sources of adult learning. Taken altogether, they present a complex picture of different programs, providers for various purposes, offerings both within the education system and outside of it, and groups who serve as intermediaries and sources of coordination. Indeed, the substantial attention to coordination may arise precisely from the fact that there are so many different programs and providers. However, for our purposes the main providers of adult education include the following six categories, reviewed in sections 3.1 to 3.6.

3.1 Second-chance programs

Austria has created a number of second-chance programs to allow individuals to complete upper-secondary qualifications and, if they want, to proceed to tertiary education the most important of these are the following:

- Evening schools for adults are provided at the upper secondary level. They allow students to attend after work, since nearly all of their students work full-time. Some of them are academic programs, and end in the *Reifeprüfung* of the academic secondary school (AHS) or the *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* of the Technical and Vocational Colleges allowing for admission to university or FHS. They follow the Austrian tradition of *Berufsbildung*, and therefore these are lengthy and demanding programs; they typically meet for four hours per evening, five days a week, over a four-year period; the courses of study include language, math, foreign languages, science, and subjects like business, electrical engineering, electronics, mechanical engineering, and other technical fields in the Technical and Vocational Colleges. There are multiple entry and exit points, with the entry point determined by the level of secondary education completed; some students (of a Secondary Technical and Vocational School) leave after the fourth semester with a final examination but most stay four years and receive a *Reifeprüfung*, or *Reife- und Diplomprüfung*, respectively. Thus there is substantial flexibility in these programs, according to the goals and students and the amount of education they have already completed. Enrolments seem to be growing substantially, although the data are incomplete.
- An Intensive Apprenticeship program is parallel to the apprenticeship system, providing both on-the-job training and school-based learning. In contrast to the conventional apprenticeship, which usually lasts three years, the Intensive Apprenticeship lasts one year; the average age of students is 33, in contrast to conventional apprenticeships which enrol students age 15 to 18. The qualification at the end of the Intensive Apprenticeship is the *Facharbeiter* certificate, the same credential as in conventional apprenticeships.
- In addition, there is also the possibility of an exceptional admission to the final apprenticeship examination for all persons, who have not passed a formal apprenticeship training programme, but have acquired their competences in an informal way (e.g. through courses, occupational practice, experience in semi-skilled occupations). In 2002, about 5300 persons

have thus acquired apprenticeship leaving certificates. In case that the acquired knowledge does not cover all necessary competences to pass this exam, a shortening of the apprenticeship period up to two-thirds of the regular duration of the respective apprenticeship training is also possible.

- The *Volkshochschulen* have some second-chance programs, though varying from school to school. The VHS in Vienna, for example, has 10% of their students enrolled in second-chance programs, though the dropout rate is high (with a guess of 20 – 25%). These are provided in institutions that are less “school-like” than the evening schools, and it is likely that they can attract students who have been alienated from conventional schools. Indeed, one of the arguments for maintaining VHS is that they can reach, through second-chance programs and other offerings, many of the individuals who have left the conventional schooling system (see Section 4.1 below). In addition, some providers of upgrade training described in Section 3.2 provide second-chance opportunities; for example the BFI, WIFI and other adult education centres offer programs preparing for the *Berufsreifeprüfung*, one of the exams permitting entry into the university or FHS.
- The emphasis of second chance education was for a long time on providing upper-secondary programs. But recently the lower secondary qualification (*Hauptschul-Abschluss*, the qualification reached after 8 years of successful compulsory schooling) has also become a major challenge. Due to immigration and other social changes, this basic qualification cannot be assumed anymore. Therefore the efforts to integrate young or adult individuals in related second chance programs at the lower-secondary level have been increased considerably. Courses for *Hauptschul-Abschluss* are provided in lower secondary schools (*Hauptschule*) and Pre-Vocational Schools (*Polytechnische Schule*) for young persons up to the age of 18, or in adult education institutions both for youths and adults.

Overall, then, Austria has created a number of second-chance routes, following both standard academic forms of schooling, the dual system, and non-traditional education. What is less clear, is how effective these are in getting individuals back into the educational and economic mainstream. Most programs admit that dropout rates are high, particularly in the first year of a program when students learn how time-consuming they are; it is typical to cite dropout rates of 20 – 25%, although these data are not systematically collected and the dropout rates could be much higher. As part of the more general issue of evaluating adult education programs (taken up in Sections 4.3 and 5.3), there could be more attention to the magnitude of dropout rates in second-chance programs.

3.2 Upgrade Training for Employed Workers

One of the remarkable features of Austrian adult education is the provision of large amounts of upgrade training, for workers who want to upgrade their skills. These are offered by the Vocational Training Institutes of the Economic Chambers (the WIFI); by the Training Institutes of the Chambers of Labour (the BFI); and in rural areas by the Training Institutes of the Chambers of Agriculture (the LFI). Typically each of these has a central building in which many different types of courses are provided; the fact of having a building, rather than spreading courses in many sites around a community, helps define these centres and promote awareness of the offerings. (See, for example, the description of the Vienna WIFI in Box 1.) The courses provided are typically quite short, ranging from several hours to several weeks; they result in informal certificates, although employers are likely to accept these certificates as evidence of competence because they i) are familiar with local offerings, ii) participate in the governing boards of WIFI and LFI, and iii) often send their employees to particular courses. The courses range in cost from token amounts to several thousand Euro, as in the case for certain up-market and long-term programs; they are sometimes

paid for by individuals (often supported by the ILAs provided by the *Länder*), sometimes by employers, and sometimes by public labour market programs.

Box 1: The WIFI Centre for Economy Promotion, Vienna

The WIFI in Vienna maintains a centralised learning facility, a large modern building, occupying about half of a city block near the centre of Vienna. It is supported by the 90,000 enterprises in Vienna, via membership fees to the Economic Chamber. The general goals of the training facility are to provide further training; enhance business administration practices; promote business in Vienna through trade fairs and exhibitions; and provide training in other countries. The Vienna Centre illustrates the wide range of adult training activities that the employer associations support.

The slogan of the Centre is *Du wirst was du lernst* — you become what you learn, a succinct statement of *Berufsbildung*. Many students know precisely what courses they want to take; for those who do not, a one-hour consultation is available. Psychological testing and a personal skills assessment are also offered for a fee to get students into the “right” kind of training, “because time is money, and there’s no time to waste”.

The Centre offers an enormous variety of courses, all listed in a 3-centimetre thick catalogue, ranging from several hours to several weeks. The subjects include management and business administration, soft skills like communication, languages, various courses aimed at IT exams, various trades and crafts, technical courses in materials like wood and plastics. Most of these courses take place in the evenings and on weekends. They claim to use adult methods of teaching including small groups and workshops, but no lectures. It is also possible to take courses to prepare for the *Berufsreifeprüfung*, one of the exams which provides entrance into the university or FHS, so this provides a second-chance opportunity for those who have left secondary school without this exam.

Some of the courses incorporate electronic learning, following a three stage approach: an initial beginning in person; then a period of self-study, when coaches are available on line and on the telephone; and then periodic face-to-face meetings to engage in group exercises, speech practice, role playing, and presentations. Many e-learning courses are in accounting, electronics, and IT.

The Centre also provides internship training for small companies who do not have their own training program. These are always customised to the needs of the individual company.

In addition, a FHS is located within the Centre, run by WIFI, with about 500 students per year completing degrees in business, real estate, automatic production methods, and information management. Most of these students are over 25, and they can complete the program in evenings and weekends.

Although representatives of the Centre maintain that second-chance programs and courses for the unemployed are not their responsibility, about 10% of their enrolments are in courses for unemployed persons paid through the Public Employment Service (AMS).

The Centre is directed by a board composed of employers, and this helps make it demand-centred. In addition, most courses must be self-supporting, so if there is not enough demand, courses will be closed; conversely new sections of courses are opened if there is enough demand.

Source: OECD Review team meeting WIFI, Vienna (March 10, 2003).

There is no question that these short courses are responsive to demand, for two reasons. First, the boards of the organisations providing them include representatives of employers, labour, and agriculture, who can specify what demands for skills are. Second, these are self-supporting institutions, which therefore need to tailor their offerings to the demands of prospective adult students. In most of these centres there appear to be an enormous amount of computer and IT courses, many language courses, plus more specialized courses for particular occupations. For these reasons, it’s hard to imagine shortages in upgrade training

lasting very long, since these are highly responsive organisations. WIFI concentrates on employers' needs, and only a small fraction of courses (about 10%) are paid by labour market programs for the unemployed; in contrast, BFI represents more the interests of workers, and a much larger fraction (about 70 %) are for unemployed workers. While there is some competition among these different sources of upgrade training, particularly in areas where they all offer training (like IT and *Berufsreifeproofung* courses), in practice competition is not particularly acute because each of these organisations tend to concentrate on different needs.

The roles of the WIFI, BFI, and LFI are quite interesting, from a market perspective. In our interpretation, they constitute market-making mechanisms, bringing together potential sources of demand for upgrade training (workers and employers) with potential providers of training, the individuals with the skills and willingness to provide training. In addition, through their boards they can help organize demand, for example by identifying trends in production processes that will require additional training. Without a market-making organisation, first creating a market and then publicising its existence, potential demand and potential supply might never come together — as is the case in many countries where employers (small employers in particular) are unorganized and cannot represent their demand in any market, resulting in shortages of upgrade training.

Finally, there are possibilities for having a training leave— a leave from employment for training purposes — and a number of individuals mentioned this as a practice facilitating upgrade training. However, such training leaves are not by any means a right; they must be negotiated with individual employers, and only few employers actually approve them. The main scheme (the *Bildungskarenz*) allows individuals to take leave for 3 – 12 months in order to undergo training, during which time they receive a modest stipend from the AMS¹¹. According to government figures, 5.600 employees in 2001 and 2300 in 2002 took advantage of this training leave allowance — relatively small numbers in a country with a workforce of 3.1 million. In practice, then, it seems that training leave is not a widespread practice in Austria, and for extensive retraining most workers have to be able to find the time on their own.

3.3 Labour Market Programmes for the Unemployed

As in many countries, the ministry of Labour is responsible for a set of labour market programs (through the *Arbeitsmarktservice*, or AMS) aimed at returning the unemployed to employment, and emphasizing in particular the long-term unemployed, women returning to the labour force, and other groups who have problems in the labour market, including employed persons at risk of redundancy. Overall, the purpose of these programmes, as in other countries, is to correct imbalances in the labour market, particularly when unemployment co-exists with excess demand in certain sectors.

The Ministry is responsible for policy-setting and supervision (with the advice of the social partners), and the AMS administers the programmes with a degree of independence. There are separate administrative bodies in each *Land*, again with the cooperation of the social partners. There is a great deal of local autonomy, subject to monitoring by the central office, so that the specific services provided vary substantially among the *Länder* and AMS districts.

While the offerings of the AMS include vocational education and other forms of skill training, they also emphasize social competence, communications skills, and other “soft skills” necessary both to get and keep employment. For example, in 2002 about 205,000 individuals took part in qualification programmes. Of these, over 40% were unemployed individuals who participated in vocational and further training

¹¹ People up to 45 years of age get 14,5€ per day. Those over 45 years of age receive the amount of unemployment benefit, but at least 14,5€ per day.

courses, 22% took part in active job search schemes, and another 9% participated in career counselling. There was also a large group (almost a quarter of all participants) of employed individuals threatened by job loss who participated in skills training. The intensity of the offerings vary considerably; the average length in 2002 was 70 days, but there are also 1 to 2 year programmes leading to formal qualifications and even longer re-training programmes organized by so-called labour foundations, particularly for older individuals and those threatened by restructuring. As in other countries, the Public Employment Service does not provide these services directly, but contracts to other groups — largely private non-governmental organisations, including BFI, LFI (in rural areas particularly), and (less often) WIFI — through a competitive bidding process, where the results are then judged according to placement rates and satisfaction ratings by employers and clients.

At the local level, services are typically provided in a three-stage process. The first stage (of perhaps three months) is designed to help the client engage in a period of job search. Then individuals who are considered job-ready but who have not yet found a job move into the second stage of counselling, again with the goal of re-integration into the labour force. If a person does not find employment at this stage, there's an assessment of the person's skills and needs, and an "integration plan" is developed that might include specific kinds of training. In general, there is an effort to provide services appropriate to an individual's needs and goals, but also to steer individuals toward occupational areas where there are openings and where wages are relatively higher. However, the three-stage system in effect reduces the amount of training provided since it encourages job-ready individuals to find employment on their own or with the help of a counsellor.

Finally, labour market programs are exceptions to the adherence in Austria to *Berufsbildung* since they stress short, quick solutions to the problem of unemployment rather than supporting the longer education necessary for a *Beruf* or the upgrade training necessary to advance the competencies necessary for a *Beruf*. As the Minister of Labour stressed, these labour market programs have a "placement mandate, not an education mandate", consistent with the AMS legislation that lists a placement objective before retraining. Although expenditure for active labour market programs is comparatively low¹², the perception of the Ministry of Labour is that the Austrian labour market programs are quite effective in their placement mandate.

While labour market programs provide some skill training, and therefore overlap somewhat with the offerings in the educational system, there are few links with educational institutions. AMS labour market programs may send individuals to education institutions including evening schools and FHS, but i) AMS programs are prohibited from providing support to individuals for earning educational qualifications, and ii) the orientation of AMS toward short programs for immediate employment conflicts with the orientation of educational institutions around longer qualifications and *Berufsbildung*. For example, staff at one FHS noted that their programs for older individuals required a work-related thesis written at work, but the AMS wanted its clients to work immediately without finishing the thesis. As the Economics and Labour Ministry pointed out repeatedly, Austrian labour market programmes does not have the resources to assume, in any substantial way, functions of education policy. In practice, then, as in many other OECD countries the labour market programs and the educational system are independent of one another. There are virtually no bridges from short-term AMS programs into longer educational programs, even when these might make sense for individuals trying to get access to a *Beruf* rather than low-skilled work.

¹² According to the OECD Labour market policies database, it was the third-lowest in the EU in 2002, after the United Kingdom and Greece (OECD, 2003b). This is mainly because unemployment levels are low.

3.4 Non-Vocational Adult Education

There are several organized sources of non-vocational adult education in Austria. The *Volkshochschule* (VHS) or “folk high schools” have existed since the 19th century; like similar institutions in Scandinavian countries, they provide a variety of courses in a variety of areas of self-development including languages, non-vocational courses in areas like art and music, courses in political developments, and IT and computer courses and many other hobby-related areas. The VHS are sponsored in various ways, by the federal level (the BMBWK), the *Länder*, municipalities or the Chamber of Labour, while over half of their income comes from fees paid by individual course participants. Because VHS have been in existence for long periods of time, and because they almost always have a physical building in which most of their activities take place, they are relatively visible in their communities. One example is highlighted in Box 2, describing the VHS in Krems.

Box 2: The Adult Learning Centre (*Volkshochschule*), Krems

VHS are sponsored in several different ways; this particular example is run by the municipality of Krems. Physically, it takes place in a beautiful Italianate building built in 1619; the rent is paid by the town council. This VHS has a long tradition: it was established in 1885 and continued until the Nazi period; after the war it continued to provide cultural education until 1955, when it became a VHS.

Currently it provides a substantial list of courses, both non-vocational and semi-vocational. They include many language courses, especially English; arts programs; computer courses in programs like Word and Excel; health and wellness courses; sports, dancing, and a course in rock ‘n roll. This particular VHS does not provide any literacy efforts, and has not carried out a survey of literacy needs, although some individuals claim that literacy programmes are the responsibility of the VHS.

There are no standard rules for who pays for VHS, so financial support depends on what the sponsor — in this case the municipal council — can raise. This particular VHS receives 77% of its revenue from fees, with the remainder from the municipality, the national government, and occasional private donations. It no longer gets resources from the Chamber of Labour, since the Chamber has in the meantime established an individual training voucher, some of which is used to pay for VHS courses. In addition, there is some funding for a second chance program preparing people to earn a *Berufsreifeprüfung*, one of the exams permitting entry into the university or FHS.

Source: OECD Review team meeting VHS Krems (March 10, 2003).

The “houses” (*Bildungshäuser*) represent another way of organizing a variety of adult education.¹³ The “house” movement originated in Denmark, where it organized small farmers and provided them understanding of culture and history so they could act politically, and some of the Austrian *Bildungshäuser* are based on the Danish model. In Austria, the houses are buildings in which a variety of non-profit organisations can offer their courses, again ranging across a broad spectrum. Box 3 describes the variety of activities that take place in the Education Centre *Raiffeisenhof* in Graz. Some of these are tangentially linked with vocational goals and *Berufsbildung*, for example by preparing farm wives to make additional money so that their families can remain on their farms, but most offerings are non-vocational.

¹³

The general term *Bildungshaus* is used to refer to institutions that provide space to a variety of adult education activities. It should not be mixed up with the KEBÖ institution “*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Bildungshäuser Österreichs*” (Working Group of Austrian Education and Training Centres).

Box 3: The Education Centre Raiffeisenhof, Graz

This centre is a physical building near the centre of Graz, with conventional classrooms, specialised classrooms for art and cooking, a weaving workshop with 8 looms as well as spinning equipment, and other facilities like a large cafeteria. This *Bildungshaus*, which is a member of the *Working Group of Austrian Education and Training Centres (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Bildungshäuser Österreichs)*, developed from a cooperative of farmers which built banks, insurance agencies, and education centres. A number of relatively independent activities take place within the facility, and a *Bildungshaus* therefore presents a physical location and identity for a variety of adult education. There are currently two such houses in Graz and two more in Styria. Despite the value of having central locations for adult education, for some organisations a *Bildungshaus* has become a liability since it requires individuals to travel to Graz for any education. Each *Bildungshaus* caters to the needs of a specific community; for example, the Education Centre Raiffeisenhof specialises in issues related to farming and forestry, including those that can be considered to help develop the economy.

In addition, various other adult education organisations in the Graz area use the Centre as a place to provide classes and individual businesses can rent rooms to provide training. Therefore the Centre funds its activities mainly through fees for courses, from renting out their rooms and sports facilities, and from providing a few courses funded by the AMS for unemployed individuals. A grant of about 10 % comes from the Styrian Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry; BMBWK funding has been reduced to about 6 - 8% of overall funding.

The Raiffeisenhof also co-operates closely with the LFI Styria, which provides education on various aspects of farming and foresters, as well as political education for the representatives of farmers and foresters. In addition, this institute is trying to help farmers and their wives stay on their farms by providing training in ways to make additional money from farm-related activities like organic farming, farm tourism, weaving to take advantage of wool, canning, baking, and various other arts and crafts. This is part of the mission of preserving the *Beruf* of farming.

Source: OECD Review team meeting Education Centre Raiffeisenhof and LFI Styria, Graz (March 6, 2003).

Finally, as in most countries non-vocational adult education is provided by a wide variety of voluntary and non-governmental organisations including religious groups, advocates for specific groups within the population like women, arts organisations, and the like. In Austria the big non-profit adult education institutions are members of an umbrella group called KEBÖ, which includes BFI, WIFI and LFI, the Forum of Catholic Adult Education Institutions, the VHS and the working group of Austrian education and training centres. KEBÖ is a good illustration of the tendency within Austria to organize programs for the sake of information-sharing and consensus-building. It can also represent the interests of the non-governmental sector to government policy-makers and serve as sources of policy advice, although compared to other countries (like Switzerland) the KEBÖ seems not to be particularly aggressive in advocating for adult education.

Overall it is difficult to estimate the extent of non-vocational adult education in Austria, since the appropriate data are unavailable. However, there is little question that vocationally-oriented adult education has grown enormously in the past few decades, and particularly since the early 1990s, so that non-vocational programs are surely a smaller fraction of overall adult education than they were – as is true in most countries. In addition, it is clear (as we will examine further in Section 4.1) that non-vocational programs are no longer a high priority of the national or *Land* governments, and that in several ways funding has been cut over the past decade.

3.5 *Fachhochschulen* and Universities

The *Fachhochschulen* (FHS) are new institutions, established in 1994 to expand tertiary education in more occupationally-oriented forms than universities provided. For the most part, FHS are oriented towards conventional-age full-time students preparing for employment. However, several FHS have developed programs for part-time working students, who attend in the evenings while they work full-time during the day; the institutions with such programs appear to have roughly one-third of their students in such evening programs. As in other parts of the *Beruf*-oriented system, these are extensive programs lasting four years. In addition, the FHS have been designed to work extensively with employers: their programs generally combine classroom work with on-the-job experience, as in the dual system, and they work with employers in establishing their curricula (see Box 4 on the relationship between one large company and the local FHS). In these ways FHS do participate in adult education, understood to include the retraining of older workers, as well as in initial preparation for employment. About 5,900 part-time students were enrolled in Austrian FHS in the winter term 2003/2004, which represents 27% of all FHS students. The national target is to continue increasing enrolments in FHS, including part-time enrolments, to one third of all students entering tertiary education.

Most universities, on the other hand, play only a small role in adult education (although of course some adults may enrol). They have only in the last two or three years started to recognize the potential of continuing education, or the education of professionals to keep up with developments in their field. Some universities are beginning to provide programs like master's degree programs for alumni, summer programs in areas like medicine and health, law, media, psychology and psychotherapy, philosophy, and other academically-oriented areas. There is also an association of university continuing education centres, the Austrian Universities Continuing Education and Staff Development Network (AUCEN). But these efforts are so far very small; for example, the University of Vienna, with 60,000 – 70,000 students and 10,000 staff, established an office of continuing education only in 2000, staffed by 2 people. A recent law gives universities autonomy, and it is possible that some universities will choose to stress continuing education as part of carrying out a distinctive identity. However, most universities seem currently preoccupied with the Bologna process, of making their degrees conform to the sequence of bachelor's/master's/doctorate degrees, in the spirit of harmonising the degree structure within the European Union. While this may mean that universities accept older students, it seems unlikely that, given the preoccupation with the Bologna changes, they will substantially increase their participation in traditional adult education.

Nevertheless, universities currently offer over 300 courses targeted at adults, mainly in the evening, in block form, and during the weekend. The major example of university participation in adult education is the Danube University at Krems, which provides post-baccalaureate and post-graduate programs for experienced working students. This public institution was created in 1994, when a secondary vocational institution supported by the Land wanted to expand and gain university status. Most students have a university degree; they attend in intensive blocks of 9 days including two weekends, meeting for 10 – 12 hours per day, in subjects including law, new media management, journalism, social work, and an executive MBA program. There are usually 5 or 6 of these blocks over a two-year period, although students sometimes take only one or two blocks depending on their interests. Between these sessions, students return to their normal work. Virtually all students have the support of their employers, though a few take these blocks on vacation time. This university is interesting for the unusual model of adult education it provides, mixing many elements of advanced university programs with a non-standard schedule designed for working adults. But the market for this kind of adult education does not seem particularly large: there are around 2,000 students per year, which is about one quarter of students in post-graduate courses in Austria, but still a small number compared to other forms of adult education. The admissions rates to most programs are close to 100% (except for the executive MBA program, which is quite selective), so there does not seem to be any excess demand.

Box 4: Magna Steyr

Magna Steyr in the *Land* of Styria is a good example of how a large employer — one with a workforce of 6,500 — makes use of many different sources of adult education and training. The company manufactures cars for a number of companies including BMW, Mercedes, Chrysler, and Saab, and has begun to move into the development of the cars themselves; it therefore employs a large number of skilled technicians, engineers, and designers as well as production-line workers. The company uses a number of sources of education and training:

- (1) About half of its production-line workers come from the Austrian apprenticeship program; at any one time there are about 200 apprentices at the company, mostly in technical areas rather than white-collar jobs.
- (2) About 2,500 employees come from the local university or the FHS; the company participates in the development of the curriculum to make sure graduates have the requisite competencies.
- (3) Magna-Steyr cooperates with the Public Employment Service in training unemployed clients, where the AMS selects individuals with appropriate characteristics; the company then places them in a company-based training program.
- (4) On its own the firm trains non-skilled workers for skilled positions, particularly by taking individuals with skills but lacking formal qualifications; this program lasts perhaps 14 – 16 months. Individuals then get the *Facharbeiter* qualification (the qualification that an individual usually receives after completing an apprenticeship program) and earn the higher wages of a *Facharbeiter*.
- (5) All employees within the firm receive an average of 4.5 training days per year. The company maintains a catalogue of training opportunities, and local suppliers of training can apply to provide the more general types of training, while the employer provides firm-specific training.
- (6) Workers can, on their own time, take courses in English and in German (for immigrants); all other training is provided on company time.
- (7) The company will pay up to 50% of fees at the University or FHS, depending on how important the training is for the company. The firm has participated in developing training programmes at the FHS, and the company's trainers also teach at the FHS. In addition, there is a kind of "dual" FHS study- programme, where individuals spend half their time at the FHS and half at the firm, in internships.

However, this firm does not seem to make use of the 20% additional training allowance, and the director of human resources did not seem well-informed about this tax scheme. Overall, there are no shortages of education and training, partly because of the multiple sources of expertise at the University, the FHS, and in the apprenticeship system, and partly because of the large amounts of training the company provides partly with subsidies from the AMS.

Source: OECD Review team meeting, Magna Steyr Director of Education/Training Division (March 6, 2003).

3.6 Firm-based Education and Training

Employers in Austria provide a great deal of training. Of all enterprises covered by Eurostat's Continuing Vocational Training Survey (with ten employees or more), 32% provided continuing education and training events for their employees, the most important formal source of training (Background Report, Table 2.1). Although there is no direct evidence, in general large firms provide considerably more training than do small and medium-size firms (SMEs). In general, then, one pattern is for large employers to provide a great deal of their own training, while SMEs turn to WIFI and other providers for upgrade training.

The large employers seem to be able to combine a variety of training, some provided by their own human resource departments, some by publicly-subsidized educational institutions like universities and FHS, and even some for the long-term unemployed funded by the labour market service. Box 4 describes the various forms of education and training used by a large firm in the *Land* of Styria, and other large employers visited by the review team seem to follow the same pattern. In many ways, then, these large employers may be the most effective co-ordinators of different forms of adult education for their own particular needs, and for them there is certainly no short of adult education.

3.7 Subsidies: Individual Learning Accounts and Tax Incentives

Many sources of adult education are heavily subsidized by different levels of government. The evening schools are funded by the national government, and there are no costs to students (except in private schools); the FHS and Universities are subsidized by the national government, and tuition is only about 360 EUR per semester for EU-members (about 720 EUR for others). The exceptions are the post-graduate courses at all universities and the university at Krems, which are free to set their fees and where enrolment costs can total up to 28.000 EUR, as well as the private universities. Courses offered by the VHS, and other non-vocational, non-profit adult education institutions of the KEBÖ are relatively low-cost. The labour market programmes for the unemployed are also free. However, upgrade training programmes described in Section 3.1 above are largely paid for through fees, and even the low costs of FHS may be difficult for some students.

There are several mechanisms of subsidizing students who take such courses. Individuals can profit from tax write-offs for their training costs. Further, all of the *Länder* except Salzburg provide vouchers or Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), that individuals can use to subsidize the costs of adult education. The amounts and conditions vary from Land to Land: In Vienna each individual can receive up to 150 EUR, or 300 EUR for those registered with the Employment Service, or 450 EUR for those in second-chance programs. The amount per person is 50 EUR in Styria; and in Upper Austria (around Linz) up to 50% of training costs can be reimbursed up to a maximum of 730 EUR – even more for older workers and those without a vocational qualification. Because these subsidies are paid by the *Länder* to their citizens, they are not effective for individuals who want to move to another Land to take advantage of education and training there. However, they do provide a way of subsidizing the costs of various kinds of upgrade training and non-vocational training.

Starting in 2002 the Chamber of Labour has also provided a “learning voucher” (the *AK Bildungsgutschein*) that is worth 100 EUR (and 150 EUR for those on parental leave) for specially-defined courses at selected training providers. Starting in fall 2003 the voucher can also be used in longer programmes leading to higher formal qualifications. The purpose was to offset the increasing cost of training, and to provide increasing amounts of training to the less-qualified and lower-income workers. An initial evaluation suggests that 45% of participants would not have received training without the voucher, and that many participants plan to take part in additional courses.

In addition, the national government is offering special tax incentives for training by firms. There is now a tax allowance of 20% of training costs, which was originally directed at training in external institutions. However, since 2003 expenditures by employers for internal training are eligible for the tax allowance.¹⁴ Employer associations had supported this tax credit, partly as a way of providing them more flexibility in funding training and partly to get smaller enterprises into training. However, because the current credit has been in place for only a limited time period, it is too early to know what its overall effect will be. None of

¹⁴ There is also a tax credit of 6% of training expenses for firms with low profits or losses that cannot make use of the allowance in a given year (see OECD 2003b, Chapter 5).

the firms visited by the review team were using the credit, which may reflect the recent start of this allowance and a lack of publicity of the scheme. The government estimates that the loss of revenue due to the scheme is 22 million EUR annually, which seems a moderate amount compared to direct spending by the national government on adult education of perhaps 250 million EUR.¹⁵ In general, however, some scepticism may be called for about the value of such tax mechanisms as a way of promoting additional training, since in many countries such subsidies have merely provided public revenues for training that large firms would have undertaken anyway, without the subsidy. In addition, a good deal of firm-based training supports high-level and professional employees, so that there are limited equity effects of such tax subsidies. Austria should closely monitor the effects of this tax credit, to ascertain both its overall effectiveness in promoting new training and its effects across different types of workers and different types of firms.

In conclusion, however, Austria has not made extensive use of voucher-like mechanisms or other market-like mechanisms including competition among providers. The tradition in Austria is instead to improve the quality of public and private institutions, and to use consultation and consensus rather than competition as the basis of improvement. Given the problems with using quasi-markets in education,¹⁶ we suspect that the Austrian policy — supporting public institutions, with vouchers limited to providing adults some choice among sources of short-term adult education — is quite appropriate.

3.8 Information and Guidance

There are, then, many different sources of adult learning in Austria, particularly in the area of upgrade training. In general, having many different sources of adult education is a good thing, giving individuals greater choice and assuring that the system as a whole is responsive to demands from both individuals and from firms. But a problem with having so many different offerings is that potential consumers may be overwhelmed by the choices and may not know which are most appropriate for their needs. The usual solution to this problem is to provide information and guidance about the choice of programs to prospective students, and indeed we found a high level of consciousness in Austria about the need for information about adult offerings.

Information and guidance are available to adults in several distinct ways. First, the organisations sponsoring upgrade training like WIFI, BFI and LFI all publish extensive catalogues about their offerings, and make this information available on the web. Similarly the VHS and the *Bildungshäuser* publicize their offerings extensively. Second, a number of coordinating organisations have put together websites with extensive information; for example, the Territorial Employment Pact in Vienna claims to have a site describing 15,000 courses, and the AMS in Graz has put together a website of 16,500 courses there. The Federal Ministry of Education has compiled a meta-website (www.eduvista.com) that provides links to regional and institutional websites providing information about courses and programs. Third, the labour market programs provide information about job listing and training alternatives; these forms of “self-service” information are available to all citizens (although it appears that relatively few use them because the labour market programs are seen as services for the unemployed only). Fourth, the “Job and Education Fair” (BeSt), an annual event of information for all individuals 16 years and older has recently started covering adult learning as well, trying to reach a broader adult audience and to include information and stands about adult learning in different contexts.

¹⁵ See Austrian Background Report, Table 1-3.

¹⁶ On the problems with quasi-markets in New Zealand, see Fiske and Ladd (2000); on the failures of quasi-markets in the U.K. see Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe (1995) and Finkelstein and Grubb (2000).

Finally, a special form of information is available through education and cultural advisors of the works councils (*Betriebsrat*) in many large firms. These advisors provide a first level of information about further education opportunities; they themselves are trained at the training centres of the Association of Austrian Trade Union Education (VÖGB). For individuals who know what they want, and have access to the web, there is more than enough information in the system.

However, there is relatively little guidance available for those individuals who are unsure of what they want to do or which courses they need to complete, i.e. the individuals for whom even vast amounts of information are insufficient.¹⁷ Most guidance and counselling in Austria is concentrated in secondary schools; guidance and counselling in tertiary education is quite weak (OECD, 2003), and there is information and counselling available by the AMS and BMBWK for individuals outside the education system. Oddly enough, in a country driven by the conception of *Beruf* and by qualifications, the occupation of counsellor is one of the few that lacks a professional qualification; most programs to prepare counsellors are quite new. Because everything in Austria is so institutionally driven, those individuals who have not become part of an education or training institution — the *Bildungsfernen* — have little access to guidance or counselling (although the labour market information provided by the AMS is in principle open to everyone); the individuals who have left schooling without qualifications, and who are most in need of second-chance alternatives, are particularly likely to have fewer sources of counselling, and may not know about the multiple sources of information. We are concerned, therefore, that some of the adults most in need of adult education and training may be unable to formulate what they want and find what they need — a point to which we return in Section 5.1.6 and in the Conclusions.

3.9 Some measures of overall participation

Overall, total participation in the education sectors outlined above is difficult to determine. *KEBÖ* claims 3.3 million participation units in 2000/2001, including 970.000 in WIFI, BFI, and LFI, but these represent enrolments in different courses and individuals may be included more than once. The AMS programs serve about 200 000 individuals annually, but many of these are in extremely short programmes. The universities distinguish between adults in regular undergraduate studies, in regular postgraduate studies like master and doctoral programs and in postgraduate courses. They may be serving around 1.000 adult new entrants (older than 25) in a study year, and about 8,000 adult participants in postgraduate studies in evenings and on weekends. The FHS serves around 6,000 employed adults, and there are evening programs for an additional 11.000.¹⁸ It appears that a great deal of training is provided by private companies, particularly by large firms like Magna Steyr (Box 4) – although the 32% of enterprises providing training reported by the CVTS is somewhat below the European country average. What is obvious, however, is that Austria has a number of large providers of adult education, each of which serves a somewhat different role for a different population.

¹⁷ On the conditions under which information itself is inadequate for decision-making, see Grubb (2002).

¹⁸ These figures are from the Austrian Background Report, Tables 2-9b, 2-9c and 2.10, and from AMS.

4. POLICY ISSUES IN THE SYSTEM OF ADULT EDUCATION IN AUSTRIA

The Thematic Review on Adult Learning has concentrated on four analytic issues, reviewed in the next four sections. The questions posed in these sections allow us to see where there are special strengths in the Austrian system, and also where there may be some areas for improvement.

4.1 The Purposes and Priorities for Adult Learning

One crucial question is what kinds of priorities have directed recent changes in adult education in Austria. Many changes in Austria took place around 1994, on the eve of its entrance into the European Union, so many developments in adult education are quite recent. By and large it is quite straightforward to see what the priorities of different governments have been and, by the absence of funding or other support, what aspects have been of relatively low priority.

A ubiquitous concern in Austria is the age structure of the population, with the population ageing and with many older individuals leaving the labour force at an early age. As a result, there is substantial concern that there will not be enough workers as the population continues to age. Therefore drawing more women into the workforce,¹⁹ and allowing older workers to stay in employment through upgrade training, is a high priority. Virtually every program in the Ministry of Education and of Labour includes women as a special target; while it remains unclear how effective these programs are, at least there are activities consistent with this priority. In addition, the training of older workers is consistent with a relatively recent interest in lifelong learning (LLL) in Austria, mentioned by many providers and policy-makers. The emergence of large amounts of upgrade training, and of various subsidies provided by *Länder* governments and active labour market programs is a clear manifestation of this concern with continuing training. While there are no doubt shortages in specific niches — for example, in rural areas, or in highly specialized technical areas — we did not hear about any substantial shortages of skills; what shortages exist (in nursing and tourism, for example) are demand-side problems rather than issues of inadequate supply.

Compared to the rising interest in LLL, there is much less attention in Austria to another development that is often related to LLL — the emergence of a knowledge economy, a topic of substantial discussion in many countries.²⁰ While a few national government officials mentioned the emergence of an economy based on more education and knowledge, this was not an important theme among employers and providers around the country. In large part this may be due to the fact that the Austrian occupational structure has been relative stable, and it does not have an especially large high-tech sector that might drive discussions of the Knowledge Economy. There is, of course, a general concern with well-educated workers, as part of the overall belief in *Berufsbildung*, but this is a concern of long standing, not a recent response to changes in occupations.

Within the education system, the priorities have been the expansion of tertiary education, partly because Austria has had a relatively low level of tertiary education compared to other European countries.²¹ Over

¹⁹ The employment/population ratio for women in Austria stands at around 60%, above the OECD and European Union averages of 55%.

²⁰ See, for example, OECD (2001a, 2002a), and CERI (2001). See Grubb and Lazerson (2004) for a more critical review of U.S. developments; and Lloyd and Payne (2002) and other papers of the Centre on Skills, Knowledge, and Organisation at the Universities of Oxford and Warwick, on developments in the UK.

²¹ Table A2.1 in OECD (2002a) indicates that completion rates in tertiary type A programmes represented 16% of the appropriate age group in 2000, compared to an OECD average of 25.9%.

the last decade, expansion has occurred especially in the FHS, rather than in universities. FHS are generally seen as more responsive to labour market conditions and as working more closely with employers than are universities, who are often described as rigid and somewhat aloof. Another advantage is that FHS have more structure than do University programs, a fact that helps students finish them in appropriate amounts of time. The FHS now constitute 8.3% of enrolments in tertiary education, with a target of expanding them to the point where one-third of entering students are in these institutions. For our purposes, the importance of expanding the FHS is that at least some of them provide part-time programs suitable for adults.

The creation of second-chance programs has been another priority of the education system, linked to the belief in *Berufsbildung* and the determination to reduce the share of *Bildungsfernen*. While statistics on the growth of second-chance programs are incomplete, there is little doubt that they have expanded over the last decade.²² However, dropout rates of these programs seem relatively high (though the figures are not known with any precision at the program level), and therefore their overall effectiveness is unclear. As part of a general recommendation to improve evaluation within adult education (see Section 5.3), the outcomes of these programs should be evaluated with the purpose of enhancing their effectiveness.

Within the Ministry of Education, target groups have included women; older workers; young adults without qualifications, the targets of second-chance programs; migrants, particularly those needing to learn German; and those with special needs including the handicapped. These are largely consistent with issues we have already mentioned, including the concerns about demographic change, a new-found interest in LLL, and the problems caused by immigration, a common issue in all of Europe. Within labour market programs, the priorities are obviously to return the unemployed (especially the long-term unemployed) to employment. This task is made easier by the fact that unemployment rates in Austria are relatively low, although many Austrians believe that unemployment is still unacceptably high and should be further reduced.

Finally, we note again the large amounts of upgrade training available through organisations like the WIFI, BFI, and LFI. There appears to be a sufficient amount of such training, some of which is paid by individuals and some of which is supported by companies, and sufficient responsiveness to demand. There is no sign of any shortages of upgrade training, or of individuals who cannot afford such training. Perhaps because there don't appear to be any supply problems, upgrade training has not been a special priority of either the national government or the *Länder*. There are, as mentioned in previous sections--, the new employer credit from the national government, and the Individual Learning Accounts set up by the *Länder*. While there are some problems related to variation in the amounts of these ILAs among *Länder*, and to the transfer of ILAs from one *Land* to another, this appears to be a minor problem.

In general, then, programme priorities are quite consistent with the country's needs as most people understand them, and they are consistent with the patterns of funding and expansion over the past decade. However, there are two areas of adult education that have *not* been priorities. The most obvious of these is low-literacy adults and the *Bildungsfernen*. Austria did not participate in the International Adult Literacy Survey, so it is impossible to know how much low-level literacy there is. However, even the country with the highest levels of literacy (Sweden) has about one-quarter of its population at the lowest levels of literacy, and many other OECD countries have between 30% and 40% of their populations at this level (OECD, 2001b, Chart A11.1).

Austria has many of the same conditions that lead to low literacy levels in other countries, including considerable numbers of individuals who have not completed upper secondary education, a substantial

²² It is known that participation in BRP courses (not the number of BRP graduates) has increased from the introduction of the BRP in 1997 to about 7000 persons in 2002.

rural population, and recent immigrants. It is likely, therefore, that Austria has a problem of adults whose literacy levels are too low for them to work at anything except highly unskilled jobs, and who are unlikely to benefit from further education unless their literacy is first improved. However, we heard almost nothing about the issue of low literacy throughout Austria, and most people denied that any problem exists. We came across only one program addressed to this problem, operated by two adult learning centres in Vienna through *Volkshochschulen* (there seem to be two other projects in Graz and Salzburg). This program was starting to train teachers for literacy programs, to prepare instructors in the methods generally associated with adult education — a particular sensitivity toward adults and barriers to learning, guidance and consulting through the learning process, teaching in ways suitable for adults, including using adult materials and integrating life experiences into the basic skills preparation. The individuals running the program declared that illiteracy had been a taboo topic, and declared the need for a widespread information and outreach campaign: “To be illiterate should no longer be taboo”.

In addition, non-vocational adult education has not been a priority. The non-vocational KEBO institutions like the VHS, support the idea that adult education should include political, civic, and cultural education, not simply forms of vocational preparation. They have complained that funding for their programs has been reduced; while some funding is available through ILAs provided by the *Länder*, these are relatively small sources of revenue. In a move that may have been more symbolic than real, the national government, after agreement with the *Länder*, dissolved its regional promotion units for adult education; still, the review team heard some complaints to the effect that these offices were eliminated without provision for other organisations to take over their responsibilities, so the community of traditional adult educators felt particularly affronted by this development. Several representatives of the KEBÖ organisations complained that funding has declined to the point where the infrastructure necessary for non-vocational adult education — the small number of staff who organize and publicize the courses offered — could no longer be maintained without raising fees and thereby reducing the offerings available. Overall, as interest in vocational forms of adult education grow, they (and we) fear that non-vocational forms of adult education may become weaker.

These two issues — the relative decline of non-vocational adult education, and the neglect of low-literacy adults — are linked. Low literacy adults are likely to have had poor experiences in schools, and they may resist entering programs that are associated with schools, or with conventional school-like pedagogies. Programs like the VHS are more likely to be welcoming to these individuals, and indeed two of the programs we heard of were in VHS. One way, therefore, to address the issue of low-literacy adults would be to start an outreach campaign, to work through the network of the KEBÖ to reach these *Bildungsfernen*, and thereby to both strengthen the non-vocational adult programs and address the needs of low-literacy adults.

Overall, Austria has established the same priorities for adult education as many other countries have: It has been principally concerned with vocational forms of adult learning over non-vocational forms, and with programs to integrate various groups with employment problems — women, young people without qualifications, the unemployed, migrants — into employment. The only serious question is whether a broad enough range of adult education is being supported, and whether literacy programs and non-vocational forms of adult education that have such a long history in Austria should be given higher priority.

4.2 Making Learning More Attractive and Accessible to Adults

Given a consensus in many countries that adult education is increasingly important, and given the feeling in Austria that lifelong learning is a priority, an obvious question is what has been done to make adult learning more attractive to and accessible to adults. The issue of accessibility includes questions of the

volume of offerings available, the hours and conditions under which they are offered (including the crucial issue of teaching programs in the evenings to accommodate the schedules of adults), as well as affordability. In addition, the attractiveness of adult learning opportunities may be seriously affected by the pedagogy of teaching, since one of the central beliefs among many adult educators is that the materials and methods used with younger students are inappropriate for older learners.

In general, as we have mentioned several times, the supply of adult learning seems adequate to the demand. Second-chance programs have expanded, and there does not seem to be excess demand for the places available. These programs are generally provided in the evenings, accommodating the schedules of working people. There are several routes available through evening schools including conventional academic programs, a more occupationally-oriented program via technical colleges, as well as programs — the Intensive Apprenticeships — following the practices of the dual system. The FHS have started to offer more part-time programs geared to adults, providing the equivalent of a university education. There is a broad variety of upgrade training, available from several different providers, given at many different times of the day and the weekend. Even though non-vocational programs have not been a priority of government, there are still more courses available through VHS, and other adult education institutions than in many OECD countries, and these are also designed for and accessible to adults. Many of these programs are free (as in the case of FHS and upgrade training) or low cost, and the subsidies in the system have been increasing with ILAs. In all these ways, there seems to be enough education in Austria, designed with the conditions and schedules of adults in mind, and affordable to a large proportion of the population. In addition, survey evidence indicates that the most important barriers to adults participating in education relate to age and a lack of time (Background Report, Table 3-6) – conditions that cannot be improved by changing adult programs themselves.

Austria has also sponsored Adult Learners Weeks (ALW), a good way to motivate adults for learning. Austria has organised four ALW, in which hundreds of events and workshops have attracted all kind of people, young and old. ALW is one of the most powerful events bringing people and learning (and even celebrating) together. Adult Learners Weeks are organised by almost 40 countries, and are also supported by UNESCO.

However, there are other dimensions of the current system that provide reason for concern. The first is a consequence of the commitment to *Beruf* and to *Berufsbildung*: students in the second-chance system (including FHS for adults) have to complete both a relatively long period of time in education *and* then pass a qualifications exam. This requires a long and arduous process — four years in the case of evening schools and FHS. Because there is little modularization of courses within the regular education system, it is often not possible to spread these programs over longer periods of time, or to accumulate the necessary learning at different times (for example, during slack periods in the economy). There is little use of recognition of prior learning or PLAR, so any knowledge that individuals have developed on the job may need to be repeated through coursework. Obviously there are high drop-out rates in second-chance programs, which is not surprising in view of the pressures involved in combining adult education with full-time employment. Now, perhaps the commitment to *Berufsbildung* and the length of these programs are features that Austrians generally support, but they can make certain adult learning routes unattractive for potential beneficiaries, and some steps might be taken to make these long programs less forbidding and thus contribute to reducing drop-out rates.

However, some efforts to opening up the system have been noted. For example, evening schools are trying to cater to adults in a more flexible manner with the possibility of interrupting the course programme for a certain time and some recognition of prior learning. Students can join evening school programmes in the second or third year if they can prove previous experience or studies in other types of schools. The school itself decides in a flexible way which subjects and courses the students will have to take to achieve the required knowledge for the *Reife und Diplomprüfung*. There is also the possibility of recognising foreign

occupational certificates as the equivalent of the Austrian apprenticeship-leave examination, resulting in a vocational qualification without the need for passing an examination in Austria²³. Another feature of recognition of prior learning is embodied in the *Gewerbeordnung* (Industrial Code), which can grant individual applicants permission to run a company based on their relevant knowledge without them having gone through the traditional exam routes (e.g. via a master craftsman exam).

Also, distance learning has been promoted by the Education Ministry, *inter alia* with a view to cost reduction. Usually, the decision for a course to be taught through distance learning is taken by the Teachers and Students Council (*Schulgemeinschaftsausschuss*), and this possibility has been opted for in rural areas, with the rest of schools opting for traditional classroom teaching. Finally,

Second, we found little evidence of pedagogical innovation or of the pedagogical techniques most appropriate for adults. The second-chance schools we visited looked like conventional schooling, with evening hours but with teaching otherwise quite traditional. Indeed, the combination of long hours over many years with the conventional classroom setting and pedagogy made these programs look relatively unattractive to the review team — although the commitment of students in them to completing their education was remarkable. It was difficult to get individuals running programs to talk about changing pedagogy to fit adults, except in terms of offering flexible hours — which is not an issue of pedagogy but rather of scheduling. We suspect that the teaching in many upgrade training courses is quite conventional; for example, one program that a BFI in Upper Austria created was a failure because it was too “school-like”, suggesting that the sponsors had not thought about the pedagogies appropriate for adults. We did not observe labour market programs at any length, but these programs are everywhere concerned about returning individuals to employment as quickly as possible; there is no reason to suspect that there is any pedagogical innovation in this component of adult education. Indeed, one teacher training college we visited is planning a 6-semester course to train teachers for adult education, partly to develop more appropriate instructional methods – implicitly acknowledging that teaching in most adult education is quite conventional.²⁴

The main exceptions to the lack of pedagogical innovation were several VHS. These are generally learner-centred institutions, and directors talked quite convincingly about incorporating adult experiences into teaching and about the need for a different kind of teacher training. In addition, teachers of vocational subjects have a combination of both practical experience and academic training, and the development of vocational teaching in the German-speaking countries has been quite complex (Achtenhagen and Grubb, 2001). It is of course possible that the review team simply did not see enough innovative classes, or talked to the wrong kinds of people;²⁵ but we are concerned that the kinds of learner-centred, constructivist, and

²³ A person may apply to have their foreign vocational training programme recognised and equated to an apprenticeship-leave examination, if the skills and knowledge acquired in the foreign country are equivalent to that of the Austrian training required for the apprenticeship leave examination. There is also the recognition of foreign certificates and foreign traineeships in health-related occupations.

²⁴ We should point out that in vocational schools, all teachers have to have up to 6 years practical work experience and are thus used to working with adults.

²⁵ The methodology of thematic reviews does not lend itself to examining teaching methods because it is difficult to spend enough time observing in classrooms. In addition, the individuals interviewed in most sessions are those who administer programs, rather than instructors who are closer to classroom practices. A different method, with more observation, would be necessary to examine pedagogy more carefully. On the other hand, in institutions that pay attention to pedagogy, there is usually distinctive teacher training (such as that the Adult Learning Centre in Vienna is trying to create for literacy instructors), and even administrators are able to speak knowledgeably about pedagogy, so the lack of any such discussions in Austria is a cause for concern.

activity-based pedagogies generally recommended for adults — indeed, for all kinds of students — have been neglected in Austria, and that adult offerings are less motivating as a result.

Third, there is a concern about the effectiveness in training of the labour market programs provided by the AMS. In these programs the current legal mandate and financial framework of getting individuals back into employment is clearly more important than the interests of individuals in getting access to broad forms of training that might provide them with skills for the long run. It seems that there is some directiveness in the system, pointing individuals to high-demand areas of the economy even if these are not attractive jobs (for example, in tourism). By design the labour market programs depart substantially from the Austrian commitment to *Berufsbildung*; the average duration of courses commissioned by the AMS in 2002 was 70 days, a little more than three months of training. There are few linkages between AMS programs and education programs that would allow the unemployed to have their AMS training count toward conventional educational qualifications.

Both in the U.S. and Europe, active labour market programs have sometimes been found to be quite *ineffective* and at best have a mixed record (e.g., Grubb and Ryan, 1999; Ryan, 2001; Heckman *et al.* 1999; Martin and Grubb, 2001). An increasing number of recent studies from various countries view the benefits of job subsidies and training measures, for example, rather pessimistically. These studies often make the point that programs have to be designed more carefully, need to be tightly targeted and need to be accompanied by rigorous evaluation of effects. Also, many studies have found low or even negative rates of return when the programme effects are compared to their costs, while some relatively inexpensive policies (notably job search assistance) have been found to be among the most cost-effective for substantial numbers of the unemployed (Martin and Grubb, 2001).

A few evaluation studies have recently become available in Austria that compare the labour market outcomes of participants with those of non-participants, or participants in other types of measures, while controlling for variation in socio-economic characteristics and selection bias in programme participation. Some of them show quite positive outcomes. For example, a 1999 study of training subsidies provided by the Territorial Employment Pact in Vienna showed that on average participants were employed 20 more days during the year following the measure than a control group of non-participants (AMS, 2003). Another study by Riesenfelder (2002), which measured the effects of participation in training courses in electronic data processing and accounting in Burgenland, found that days spent in employment during the six months after training doubled compared to the six months preceding the measure, with an increase in earnings of about 20% compared to a control group. A comparative study by Weber and Hofer (2003) of the respective effects of job search assistance and continuing training courses was less encouraging about training courses financed by the AMS: it showed that entry into the latter programme prolonged unemployment considerably when compared to entry to the first type of programme. However, when not taking count of the time actually spent in training, the authors found considerable positive effects for all types of training – a somewhat unique result when compared with other international evidence. It must be noted that these are short-run evaluations. In countries with long-run evaluations of their labour market programs, short-run benefits usually come from enhancing hours of employment rather than wage rates, which is precisely what efforts to return individuals to employment quickly should accomplish; the amount of employment then tends to deteriorate over time so that over five or six years individuals with short-term training are no better off than control groups without such training (e.g., Friedlander and Burtless, 1995)²⁶.

²⁶

In this context, it needs to be pointed out that the AMS and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour have developed a new monitoring system which aims at following the employment experience of all persons profiting from job and training subsidies. This has become possible mainly through new linkages between AMS and social insurance data.

Fourth, distance learning and e-learning are not well-developed in Austria, with a few important exceptions. While there have been many exaggerated claims for distance learning, and many abuses of its pedagogy, when used in the right way it can provide adults with the flexibility to spend some of the learning time at home, rather than having to attend formal classrooms for long hours in the evenings. One example of the sensitive use of distance learning came in the WIFI centre in Vienna, where there is a particular approach to e-learning (see Box 1). All courses follow a three-stage approach: a kick-off process, where students and instructors meet in person; self-study via distance methods, during which there is always a coach available on line; and periodic meetings in person every week or two, concerned with speech practice, group exercises and role plays presentations. Therefore face-to-face teaching is integrated with distance methods, with support both on-line and in-person from instructors. As noted above, Teachers and Students Councils have opted for distance learning approaches in evening schools in rural areas; furthermore, there are pilot projects in some VHS. But apart from these exceptions, e-learning has not been extensively used.

Fifth, as in most countries, participation in adult education is strongly related to employment patterns. Those who are employed in small firms or temporary jobs are less likely to enrol in adult programs. Resolving this problem will require some combination of more active outreach to these individuals including better information about learning opportunities, and perhaps increased funding through ILAs or other voucher-like mechanisms that are independent of employment. Also, any effort to increase non-vocational forms of adult education should weaken the link between employment and rates of participation in adult education.

Sixth, we note once again the problem of the *Bildungsfernen*, including low-literacy adults. These are individuals for whom conventional approaches to education are distinctly unattractive, because many of them have had poor experiences in their prior schooling. To make adult learning more attractive to these individuals, some alternative approach is necessary. These alternatives are more readily available in Austria, with its VHS and other adult education institutions, their community-based approaches and their integration into the local community, than they are in most countries. These institutions could be readily used to make learning more attractive to individuals who are suspicious of conventional schooling. The BFI has also similar programs for *Bildungsfernen*.

Finally, while information in the system of adult learning seems to have increased through the development of enormous data-bases of course offerings, there is little counselling for those adults who are unsure of what they want to do. The second-chance opportunities, the part-time FHS, and the vast amount of upgrade training all assume that individuals know precisely what courses of study they need and want. But the assumptions underlying the provision of substantial amounts of information — that individuals wanting adult learning need only information to make decisions on their own behalf — are unlikely to be met, particularly for the least sophisticated of these individuals, for women who have little experience in the labour force, for those who are not already part of educational institutions, and for immigrants who are new to Austria — precisely the groups that are often the targets of government policy. Additional efforts to provide guidance and counselling might be necessary to open up the existing system of adult learning to such individuals.

Overall, Austria is in a relatively strong position compared to other countries. It does have a vast amount of adult learning opportunities, provided at times when adults can attend, there appear to be sufficient subsidies in the system so that almost everyone who needs adult education can get it in some form. But the dimensions of making adult learning more attractive and accessible extend to other, more subtle dimensions of programs than just availability and cost, and in these other areas — the length of programs, recognition of prior learning, the use of pedagogical innovations and distance learning, the availability of counselling to help individuals access the adult education system — there are opportunities for improvement.

4.3 The quality and effectiveness of adult learning

Given the existence of so much adult learning in Austria, and the new priority which it seems to have, an obvious next question is how effective these programs are. The assessment of effectiveness is one of the most challenging issues for adult education in many countries, partly because there has been little attention given to this dimension, and partly because the goals of adult education are more varied and idiosyncratic than those of conventional education and therefore more difficult to evaluate. Nonetheless, without some way to examine effectiveness, it is possible for a country to invest a great deal in adult education, and even to feel good about its efforts in the sense that participants express themselves to be satisfied, but without achieving either the public goals or the private ambitions for adult learning.

Box 5: The Quality Seal in Upper Austria

The *Land* of Upper Austria has established an Individual Learning Account, the *Bildungskonto*, to support training for employees, women on maternity leave, other individuals who return to an occupation after a period of non-employment, older workers, and individuals lacking qualifications at the level of Matura or higher — but not to support non-vocational adult education. Because the government wanted to ensure that its funds are spent on high-quality training, it has established the Quality Seal, available for all training organisations, and requires the *Bildungskonto* to be used only for training provided by organisations with the Quality Seal.

The Quality Seal process started with 15 organisations, all members of the Adult Education Forum. They developed a catalogue of criteria related to the nature of training, the qualifications of management and instructors, the curriculum, physical facilities, and feedback from students. Based on these criteria, certified auditors examine different aspects of any organisation that wants to have a quality seal. Certified auditors from the Institute for Vocational and Adult Education Research carry out the audits for these institutions. All the original 15 members of the Adult Education Forum have passed these audits, as have 260 regional and local institutions affiliated with these 15 organisations; since the pass rate has been almost 100%, the Quality Seal operates not by denying seals of approval but by providing criteria that organisations should meet. Since January 2000 adult education institutions who are not members of the Adult Education Forum can also pass these audits and earn the Quality Seal, as 75 non-member institutions have done.

However, the coverage of the Adult Education Forum and of the quality seal is quite incomplete. While a few institutes of the University of Linz have received a seal, the university itself is not a member of the Forum; similarly the local FHS are not members because “this is not adult education”. Overall, the process of establishing the quality seal and its criteria provides an excellent example of basing quality on consensus among members of a particular (and limited) group, rather than on evidence of outcomes or external accreditation.

Source: OECD Review team meeting with representatives of the Office of the Upper Austria Land Government (March 11, 2003).

In Austria, there appear to be two dominant ways of thinking about assuring quality. One is the consensus of the social partners: if there is agreement among labour, employers, and educators themselves that a program is appropriate to all their needs, or of high quality, then it is considered effective. This reflects in part the culture of consensus in Austria. A good example of this approach is the Quality Seal in Upper Austria (see Box 5). The second way, as in other countries with elaborate qualifications systems, is the achievement of qualifications: if a program leads to qualifications, and if substantial numbers of students achieve these qualifications, then it must be effective. As a result, most programs in the education system are built around formal qualifications. On the other hand, upgrade training and labour market programs provide informal certificates — though they are usually created with the social partners or other advisory groups, again returning to the criterion of consensus about quality among the social partners.

In addition, there are some other quality standards within certain segments of adult education. Large employers often rely on ISO standards or EFQM (European Foundation for Quality) standards from the

European Union; however, like the Quality Seal, these standards are once again input standards rather than based on outputs.

A more comprehensive approach to thinking about quality may be the one adopted for the labour market programmes operated by AMS. The courses commissioned have to meet both input standards, including those related to the qualifications of personnel and the resources of training providers, and performance standards. Thus, course providers are selected on the basis of market-like criteria. While the Review team was unable to learn enough about the use of performance measures in monitoring and regulating quality, this is a promising departure from the practices used in most educational programs.

There are also some other efforts to improve quality. One includes the effort to professionalize instructors — that is, to provide additional instruction in the methods of teaching adults, so that more instructors are effective at the classroom level. Examples are the increasing number of training programmes for literacy instructors, and the creation of a teacher training program specifically for adult educators. In addition, the second-chance efforts in evening schools and FHS are all taught by instructors who have been certified by the education system in conventional ways. So there is some attention to assuring that instructors in adult education are well-qualified to teach, although for some segments — the VHS with their volunteer instructors, a great deal of upgrade training, the running of active labour market programs — there is still little attention to the qualifications of instructors.

Yet another effort to improve quality has taken place in the VHS in Vienna, which has developed a method of instructors observing one another, a method that can lead to broader discussions about teaching methods once knowledge of what goes on in classrooms is more widespread. However, there is relatively little observation of teachers in Austria, perhaps as part of the lack of curiosity about classroom practices and pedagogy in general.

In general, there has been little use made of competition among providers or other market-like mechanisms to enhance quality, although there are some examples of performance-based funding — where rewards for better performance presumably cause programs to enhance whatever measures generate more revenues. For example, the labour market programs are funded in part based on placement rates in employment, but otherwise performance-based funding is rare.

Thus, there are many different ways to enhance the quality of education and training programs, but the dominant approaches to quality in Austria remain the two mentioned at the outset: consensus among social partners, and achievement of qualifications. Examining the outcomes of adult programs is comparatively rare²⁷, while anecdotal information is more easily available. For example, individuals report that non-completion in second-chance programs is high, but they have no numbers to indicate how high it is, or whether it is worse for some students (e.g., mothers with young children) than for others. They have no way to examine why individuals drop out of the second-chance system, and therefore no way to understand how completion could be improved.

Similarly, even in cases where unambiguous measures of outcomes exist, in the part-time FHS and the intensive apprenticeship system, we were unable to find outcome evaluations indicating what proportion of students completed the appropriate qualifications, what proportion found employment related to the field of their qualifications, and what their employment and earnings record was subsequently. There is ubiquitous belief that qualifications are rewarded in the labour market, and therefore that the various adult programs leading to qualifications enhance employment and earnings. The available statistics provide some confirmation of the widespread belief in qualifications. On average, apprenticeship training and

²⁷ See, for example Section 2.4. on “Economic and Social Returns from Adult Learning” in the Background Report, which declares that benefits exist but without citing many studies.

secondary technical and vocational schools all enhance earnings, compared to those who complete only compulsory school up to year 9, as does the completion of academic secondary schools and universities. However, it might be useful to control these results for other personal and economic attributes that might affect earnings - personal dimensions of competence, for example, or the nature of regional labour markets, and also to focus on the returns to specific types of credentials like those earned in evening schools and second-chance programs.

In the case of the KEBÖ institutions, where the antipathy toward bureaucratization may also have contributed to a distrust of formal evaluation, we saw little evidence of thinking about effectiveness in terms of outcomes. Instead many adult educators rely on enrolment itself, which is often taken as self-evident confirmation of student satisfaction and therefore effectiveness — without, for example, asking students themselves whether adult programs have met their needs.

Labour market programmes have had a more systematic approach to evaluation. In recent years, Austria seems to have made some progress in evaluating its active labour market programmes, including training efforts. As in many other OECD countries, the bulk of evaluation studies measure the proportion of participants found in employment or having left unemployment a certain time after the end of the program. However, this approach to evaluation does not necessarily show “what works” and whether measures have indeed been cost-effective. To demonstrate this, programme outcomes need to be judged against the experience of a benchmark or control group of similar individuals who did not participate. It is also important to include in the analysis a measure of the net effects on employment and unemployment by estimating substitution and displacement effects – that is, the extent to which individuals trained in labour market programs are hired in place of workers who then become unemployed. Finally, it is important to measure effects over a long period of time - say 5 to 6 years - because of evidence that immediate benefits of labour market programmes in getting individuals back to work tend to decline over time. As noted further above, the AMS and the Economics Ministry are now trying to lay the basis for longitudinal studies through linking up various administrative data sets.

Finally, evidence of outcomes appears not to be routinely used in deciding whether to develop new programs or not. There is not, with a few exceptions, a practice of trying new programs with initial pilot programs, and then evaluating the results before proceeding with large-scale implementation.²⁸ Instead, the development of new programs is carried out nation-wide without initial piloting or experimentation. For example, the development of the *Fachhochschule* after 1994 was accomplished through a gradual implementation, but without initial piloting or experimentation.

Overall, a culture of outcome evaluation has not yet fully developed in Austria, at least around adult programs.²⁹ Some more general remarks may be in order here. A “culture of evaluation” would usually imply that a variety of outcomes are routinely measured, for at least two purposes. Short-term measures (including forms of process evaluation) can be developed to guide the current administration of a program, to improve its quality in progress. Second, longer-term outcomes measures can be developed, using more sophisticated statistical measures, to judge effectiveness and guide policy, including decisions about eliminating, improving, or extending specific programs. If outcomes measures become broadly known and widely accepted, then they can be used in performance-based funding; but without well-established

²⁸ One exception to this is the effort to develop a regional services for adult guidance in Burgenland, a pilot program which was evaluated before replication; see OECD (2003a), Box 2, p. 11.

²⁹ The FHS may be a partial exception, since they must apply for re-accreditation every four years with evaluation evidence. Private universities also have to apply for re-accreditation every three or four years. It is interesting to note that FHS were introduced in Austria not the least because of an OECD recommendation in the OECD review on “Diversification of Higher Education in Austria”, carried out in 1993.

measures, performance-based funding is all too likely to lead to undesirable consequences — for example, efforts to select only the most able of those who are eligible (“creaming”), or cheating on measures of performance. Within a culture of evaluation there should normally be extensive debate about what outcome measures to use, since overly-narrow measures will cause programs to be concerned only with a narrow range of outcomes, potentially to the detriment of participants over the long run. Finally, in an evaluation culture policy-makers should base their decisions on evidence about effectiveness and outcomes rather than on purely political decisions — for example, responding to the pressures of local institutions that want to expand, or to local politicians who want a university or other institution in their area — and pilot projects should normally be tried and evaluated before creating new programs of unknown effectiveness.

Creating a culture of evaluation is not an easy task. It requires the development of specialized expertise among researchers, sustained funding for evaluation research, and — in particular — an acceptance of the desirability of evaluation among all participants. Both the need for short-term process evaluations and the desirability of discussions about outcome measures implies that a culture of evaluation should be developed with the participation of researchers, practitioners in adult education programs, and policy-makers, since each has something to contribute. When used carefully, the results of an evaluation culture can clarify where programs can be improved, where they should be extended to new regions and new groups, and where they need to be abandoned in favour of other approaches.

An overall policy to improve the quality and effectiveness of adult learning would have many strands to it. It would pay attention both to inputs and outcomes, rather than focusing on one or the other. Among inputs, the preparation and qualifications of adult instructors would require greater attention (and these might be affected by wage levels and working conditions as well as teacher training programs). The nature of teaching, and the use of a wide variety of pedagogical techniques suitable for adults would constitute another strand; and a system of classroom observations, to make teaching the subject of a more public discussion might be a third. Procedures like Upper Austria’s Quality Seal are also mechanisms of examining adult programs in more holistic ways. Furthermore, the development of a culture of evaluation would generate more information about outcomes, which could then be used in various ways to improve the quality of adult learning. This is, to be sure, a large agenda, and Austria might not want to undertake such a diverse set of improvements at the moment, when resources seem scarce because of an economic downturn. But over the long run the development of a quality agenda might be part of improving the quality of adult programs overall, as well as establishing coherent policy for adult education.

4.4 Coherence of policy

A final question about a country’s policies for adult learning is whether policies are coherent or not — whether they are more or less consistent with one another, whether they are consistent throughout the country and at all levels of government, whether the different institutions and programs providing adult opportunities are easily understood by those in need of learning, and whether programs are connected with one another in ways that make sense. A coherent system of adult education would try to provide the different types of adult education — for example, second-chance programs, upgrade training, retraining for individuals who want to change their careers, non-vocational as well as vocational forms of adult education — in ways that are attractive to adults (Section 3.2) as well as effective in reaching the goals of participants, employers (where appropriate), and the country as a whole. Analyzing the coherence of adult education policy presumes that coherence is a desirable quality, of course, and there may be times when pressures for coherence impose too much uniformity and conformity on educational programs. But with some exceptions coherent policies are preferable to incoherent approaches.

Austria seems to be characterized by a number of discrete areas within which policies are relatively coherent, but with an obvious lack of relationships among them.. There are at least four such areas:

- There have been considerable efforts to create more routes through upper-secondary education, in order to increase completion. More specifically, there have been more programs to respond to the substantial number of students without upper-secondary credentials, following a conventional academic route, a vocational route, or the pattern of the dual system. Whether these programs work as well as they could or not, they are connected to one another in numerous ways, and they provide a clear upward extension of the secondary education system to programs designed for adults. The development of part-time *Fachhochschule* programs for older adults is another obvious extension of the tertiary sector, connected to the upper secondary system through the usual set of qualifications. However, these programs are completely independent of other sources of adult education.
- In upgrade training, there is a vast amount of courses provided through intermediaries (or market-making institutions) like WIFI, BFI, and LFI. This system, driven by demand from individuals as well as employers, seems to serve its specific purpose well, and provide the flexibility that the Austrian economy needs as it goes through changes. But — aside from BFI providing some courses for AMS — it too is disconnected from the other sources of adult learning.
- Labour market programs constitute a world of their own, with a more or less coherent set of priorities and better evaluation than the rest of the system. But — aside from contracting some programs to BFI in particular (less often to WIFI) — there are few relations with the rest of the adult system. Although the FHS are well-connected with employers, labour market programs do not work much with FHS; even where it might benefit individuals to move from a short-term training program to a longer-term education program, these linkages have not been created.
- Non-vocational programs are provided in a myriad of small private and voluntary providers, often represented by umbrella organisations like KEBÖ. But again they do not participate with other areas of adult education even in cases where there might be benefits to collaboration. For example, it is likely that many individuals in labour market programs lack adequate basic academic skills, and these could be taught in VHS that have developed expertise in teaching the low-literacy population. Conversely, the VHS have a better record for working with the *Bildungsfernen* who are distrustful of conventional schooling; but there are no ways for VHS to articulate their efforts with other second-chance programs in case such adults want to re-enter the education system.

In addition, a large number of coordination councils exist in Austria, as part of the culture of collaboration and consensus noted above; and there is widespread consultation throughout the system, particularly with the social partners. In addition, there are some small-scale examples of different sectors of policy coordinating through local councils. For example, in Graz agriculture policies — particularly policies to keep farmers on the land — have been incorporated into one of the local *Bildungshäuser* (Box3), which provides training to enable farmers to operate farm holidays and prepare foods for the market as sources of supplementary income. Similarly, the collaboration of FHS with employers allows them to participate in what might be seen as economic development efforts, for example when specific employers are expanding or need a particular type of workers (see the example of Magna Steyr in Box 4). Under normal conditions, various coordination councils can be relied upon to promote more coherent policy throughout the country.

However, usually these coordination councils have incomplete representation, and therefore cannot operate to connect the four independent areas of adult learning. For example, KEBÖ includes non-profit organisations, but not the FHS or other education institutions. In *Upper Austria*, members of the Adult Education Forum found it hard to believe that the Review Team asked whether labour market programs

were included; they simply assumed that these programmes are not part of adult education. The FHS create strong working relationships with local employers, but they do not participate with labour market programs or upgrade training, and therefore do not share the information from their employer relationships with labour market programs or upgrade training. In some of these co-ordination councils there appears to be money spent for various non-training activities when it might be better spent for training itself.

In the hierarchy of purposes for coordination,³⁰ most of the Austrian coordination councils exist for the purposes of sharing information with a narrow range of similar programs, and with prospective students, about what specific courses or programs are being offered. They also serve as mechanisms for consultation with government and therefore for exerting political pressure. Much less often, there is some coordination in the form of referring individuals from one program to another; this happens, for example, where AMS subcontracts with BFI to provide short courses to the unemployed, but these subcontracts are for limited purposes and do not substantially widen the alternatives available to the clients of labour market programs. Furthermore, the creation of articulation mechanisms — from AMS to second-chance programs, for example, or from second-chance programs to FHS — have been limited to non-existent.

Finally, the review team did not encounter the most complex form of coordination in adult learning: where different programs and agencies collaborate in providing services jointly. One might envision, for example, a coordinated program in which a VHS provides basic skills education, an evening technical college provides occupational instruction, an intensive apprenticeship program arranges for periods of learning on the job, and a labour market program provides information and counselling about different occupations, where each program contributes its own strengths. But the independence of different areas of adult education, and the fact that coordination councils usually include only one kind of program, makes these complex forms of coordination difficult, if not impossible, and Austria might be well-advised to pay some attention to developing such complex forms of co-ordination in the future.

An example of effective coordination relevant to the adult learning field in Austria are the Territorial Employment Pacts (TEP). The Territorial Employment Pacts are intended to create partnerships at the local and regional levels to tackle a range of issues such as economic development, employment and social welfare. They bring together key players, such as the regional government, labour market and social services and the social partners, to combine resources and focus on regional needs. They operate in all Austrian *Länder* and have many associated partners. In Vienna, the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (WAFF) has developed into an instrument of active labour market and economic policies for the promotion of human resources in the area. The coordination of resources has allowed targeting the objectives of reintegration of unemployed persons, promotion of equal chances between men and women and economic improvement with different tools: training, counselling or job placement. Training provision is supported by a “training account” that reimburses between 50 and 80 % of course costs. WAFF assists firms to improve their workers’ skills, helps unemployed set up businesses and has even set up a non-profit temporary employment agency “Flexwork” for older employees and long term unemployed.

Another mechanism that can contribute to creating more coherent adult learning policies is the provision of career information and guidance. This kind of service provides individuals with information about their career options, and about the education and training programs necessary to enter such occupations, and thereby makes the adult learning system more coherent by creating more sophisticated consumers. However, career information and guidance in Austria are not particularly strong, at least for adults.³¹ While there are numerous sources of both information and guidance in the secondary schools, these are much

³⁰ see Grubb *et al.* (1999) for a rough hierarchy of co-ordination efforts (sharing of information; programme referral; and joint service delivery).

³¹ This section draws on OECD (2003a), in addition to the review mission to Austria in March 2002. The Burgenland adult guidance centre is profiled in Box 2, p. 11 of that publication.

weaker in tertiary education including the FHS. The various sources of upgrade training — WIFI, BFI, LFI, and others — provide listings of their offerings in both print form and on the web, but these are not particularly user-friendly and seem not very useful to individuals who are unsure of what they need.

Most information is available from organisations who themselves provide education and training, but they usually provide information about their own programs only — so that individuals have a difficult time learning about the full range of options available. The lack of information about continuing education and training options is much higher among unskilled workers than among more educated workers (Background Report, Table 3-4), so that the individuals who most need further training are less likely to receive it. There are too many data bases in the system for individuals to sift through all of them; possibly the current efforts of the Ministry of Education to create a meta-data base will alleviate this problem. The Public Employment Service (AMS) provides a three-tiered model of information and services, and everyone can access information in a “self-service” approach; but there is some evidence that many people do not access AMS services because they think of them as intended for the unemployed. And while the system seems saturated with information — even if it is not well-organized and sometimes difficult to use — there is little counselling aside from AMS services for those who are unsophisticated in the use of data, or who have no clear ideas about what they want to do.

There is, to be sure, an interesting pilot program in *Burgenland*, where the *Land* has established a regional service for adult guidance, independent of any of the providers of adult learning and therefore presumably unbiased among various offerings. It provides guidance face-to-face, through e-mail, over the telephone, and through counsellors visiting smaller communities in mobile vans, thereby trying to overcome the problems of access in rural areas. It is committed to using data to improve services; it has surveyed adults in the *Land*, and shared this information with adult providers, and it is using the University of Graz to evaluate the quality of services. In many ways it operates as the kind of market-making mechanism that WIFI and BFI are, but it takes care to help individuals become more sophisticated consumers of services as well as stimulating providers to offer what adults in the region say they need. As a pilot program this model has been evaluated and replicated in other *Länder*.

One further issue creates special problems for Austria. As in other countries with federal systems, there is not one centralized agency that designs policy in adult education. The national government is responsible for some aspects of policies, particularly through FHS and labour market programs. But the *Länder* have responsibility for other programs and the ILAs they have created; there is substantial variation among the *Länder* in their practices and funding levels. Private organisations like WIFI, BFI, and LFI in effect create other aspects of policy; the VHS and *Bildungshäuser*, some of which are public and some of which are private, create their own policy for non-vocational forms of adult education; and many local and private organisation contribute their own offerings. So policy is being made by many governmental and non-governmental bodies, and it is difficult to establish a coherent approach or an overall national policy.

In this situation, there is another current development with some promise. The current government, which took office in February 2003, is intending to convene a national taskforce, to serve as a policy advisory board and for coordinating lifelong learning opportunities (taskforce LLL). Particularly given the culture of consultation and consensus in Austria, we think that an effort to convene a council with all participants of adult education — rather than the distinct subsets of participants who now participate in small coordination councils — is a step in the right direction. And in a country that will continue to have strong *Länder* in addition to a national government, a process of consultation is virtually the only way to create a coherent country-wide policy, while still respecting the autonomy of the *Länder*. In the concluding section we will present some issues for Austria and its governments to consider as they continue to work with such a supra-council in developing lifelong learning policies; but we note at this point that the existing fragmentation of policy suggests that such a step is precisely the right thing to do.

The lack of coherence in adult education policy is hardly a problem unique to Austria. Many — probably most — OECD countries suffer from fragmented offerings and inconsistent options. The underlying problem in most cases — and certainly in Austria — is that adult education first emerged in informal, voluntary organisations, for whom the notion of a coherent national policy was antithetical to their informal and local ways of working. But as adult education has become a larger enterprise, with more public funding, and with greater importance of vocational programs for re-incorporating various groups into the economic mainstream, the informal approaches appropriate for earlier forms of adult education are no longer adequate. The transition to a new and more systematic approach to policy is therefore necessary, at the same time as it may be desirable to keep some of the informal arrangements that used to characterize most of adult education.

5. ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

There are many elements of Austria's adult education that work quite well. The large amount of upgrade training is particularly admirable, since it gives the country the ability to re-skill and up-skill as the economy and labour market changes. The expansion of second-chance programs is another improvement of the past decade providing ways of re-integrating individuals into the mainstream of the economy. And Austria has developed institutions, including coordination councils and umbrella organisations, for all of the major elements of adult education - labour market programs, programs in schools and colleges, *Fachhochschulen*, non-vocational programs as well as vocational programs and upgrade training. In contrast, many OECD countries still do not have an infrastructure of adult programs, and their challenges are much greater.

However, in contemplating the next decade or two, there are some issues that Austria might consider, in order to further improve its current offerings in adult education. The principal issue, both in our estimation and in the thinking of researchers and policy-makers in Austria³², is the need for an overall policy, which is examined more fully in Section 5.1. In addition, there are certain specific needs within adult education that Austria might consider, identified in Section 5.2. Finally, Section 5.3 turns to an issue that many countries have found particularly difficult, the development of research and evaluation for adult learning.

5.1 The creation of a national policy

As noted above, the different spheres of adult education in Austria are largely independent of one another, with different funding streams, different target groups of students or clients, different offerings, and different policies affecting them. These differences are in some ways exacerbated in a federal system, where variation in funding levels and policies among the *Länder* make the adult education "system" even less consistent and harder to integrate. To some extent the different types of adult education will continue to remain independent of one another, since needs among adults are so different: a 25-year old without qualifications, a 35-year old immigrant needing to learn German, an employee with twenty years experience needing a course in new IT techniques, and a 55-year old looking for courses on political developments or personal hobbies all want quite different types of adult education.

One difficulty in creating a truly national policy is that many representatives of the national government seem to think it does not have enough financial resources to guarantee its influence. One noted that the "*Länder* tend to have their own little kingdoms" independent of national influence, and making coherence difficult. But we should point out that the national government funds labour market programs, the FHS and universities; it has in the past funded a series of Federal Centres for the Promotion of Adult Education in most of the *Länder*; and it maintains its convening role to try to develop consensus about adult education policy. Thus, the federal government does spend considerable sums on adult education, and it can influence policy in ways other than spending money.

In developing a more coherent national policy, there are at least six areas of priority to consider:

³²

On the last day of the country review, the Review Team met with a panel of researchers in adult education and with the steering committee for the review. Both groups agreed about the need for an overall policy. In addition, the new government's plan to convene an overall co-ordination committee on life-long learning (taskforce LLL) is consistent with the effort to develop an overall policy.

5.1.1 The balance between education and labour market programs

Even though labour market programs provide some of the same kinds of training as do upgrade training and some second-chance programs, they are almost completely independent of one another. (There are exceptions, particularly when AMS contracts for services from BFI or WIFI, but these are comparatively small examples.) Arguably, stronger ties between the programs of the Ministry of Education and those of the Ministry of Labour would benefit both groups. In particular, the creation of mechanisms that can link labour market programs to later educational opportunities – for example, by devising a sequence of skills that start in a short-term labour market program, and can then be further developed in an upgrade education program provided by an organisation like BFI, and then continuing with part-time programs in *Fachhochschulen* – could enable the unemployed to move not just into relatively unskilled employment (which makes them vulnerable to cyclical and secular changes), but into a *Beruf* with greater stability of employment. Conversely, the experience that AMS has developed with its active labour market programs, adjusting the services offered to individuals with different types of labour market problems, might be useful in education programs where prospective students enter with different needs. We believe that career-related information, guidance, and counselling services could be shared by both labour market and education programs. And certainly coordination councils at the local and *Land* level should include both kinds of programs.

In addition, the current system – where labour market programs are developed and funded in the Ministry of Labour, and education programs are funded through *Länder* and the Ministry of Education – makes it impossible to see whether the balance of funding between the two types of programs is appropriate. No one in Austria is currently in a position to judge whether there is, for example, too much being spent on labour market programs, and not enough in part-time FHS or evening schools, or whether instead there are many more students seeking entry into evening programs who drop out and would be better served in shorter labour market programs (particularly programs that then allow re-entry into the educational system) – because there is no group that gathers information and makes deliberative decisions about the large array of programs. Is it appropriate, for example, for the national government to spend up to 465 million EUR on labour market programs, but only 24 million EUR in FHS programs for employed individuals and 20 million EUR on subsidies for adult learning?³³ Should there be increased spending on Territorial Employment Pacts, while there is reduced spending for KEBÖ and other adult education institutions? Until there is some mechanism that can judge the relative effectiveness of different types of education and labour market programs, and the possibilities of either switching funds between the two or developing coordination mechanisms between them, these elements of adult education policy will remain uncoordinated.

5.1.2 The balance between vocational and non-vocational adult education

Vocational forms of adult education have become a higher priority in the past decade, and the non-vocational learning that takes place in the KEBÖ and other adult education institutions has been a relatively lower priority of governments. These priorities are reasonable: the decision to focus on training for individuals who have been unemployed for a long while, or women needing to support themselves and their children, are in many ways more important than supporting non-vocational cooking or art classes. But the history of the VHS, *Bildungshäuser*, and other adult education institutions is a special one, and the courses offered by these organisations are part of a rich set of adult offerings. We think it would be undesirable for the country as a whole if these organisations started to dwindle.

³³ See spending figures in Background Report, Table 1-3.

One issue for Austria to consider, therefore, is how the country might provide enough funding for these organisations to maintain themselves, even as most of their offerings remain self-supporting through fees. One way would simply be to provide a set amount of funding for non-vocational adult learning to each *Land*, letting the individual *Länder* decide how to use the funds. Another would be to use the KEBÖ and other adult education institutions to provide particular types of adult education which now seem in short supply – for example, programs for low-literacy adults (see Section 5.2.1) who are more likely to go to a local VHS, or overall guidance and counselling about adult education (Section 5.1.6), or programs in rural areas like those funded by LFI in the *Bildungszentrum Raiffeisenhof* (Box 3). This kind of policy would take advantage of the comparative strengths of these organisations on the community level, provide them a core of funding to maintain their organisational infrastructures, and allow them to play a more integrated role in the adult system.³⁴

Like the balance between education programs and labour market programs, it is difficult to see whether the balance in Austria is right or not. The levels of spending and enrolments in vocational versus non-vocational programs are not known, and the ways of making trade-offs between the two are unclear. Without some kind of government mechanism to evaluate both, it too will continue to be an area of potential imbalance.

5.1.3 *The balance between national and Land priorities and funding*

Every federal system wrestles with the balance of power between national, regional and local governments, and Austria is no exception – though national-*Land* relations seem more cordial than they are in certain other OECD countries. An overall national policy needs to establish clear roles and funding responsibilities for different levels of government, recognizing areas where the *Länder* have priority and balancing their rights against the need for national goals. In particular, we are concerned with the differences among *Länder*, for example in the levels of Individual Learning Accounts or vouchers, and in spending levels for the KEBÖ and other adult education institutions. One priority for national policy might therefore be to obtain better information about differences among *Länder*, and then devise corrective policies (including potential funding or regulatory policies) to moderate those differences that seem too large.

Mobility among *Länder* may lead to instances where the differences in policies – for example, differences in what ILAs or vouchers can be used for create problems for individuals who move. There is currently a good deal of anecdote about such problems. The challenge for national policy would be to diagnose what problems are caused by mobility, and to recommend corrective policies.

5.1.4 *The Priorities for FHS and Universities*

Since their creation in 1994, some FHS have offered evening programs for part-time students, who represented 27% of all FHS students enrolled in the 2003/2004 term. In fact, the 5-year development plans for FHS aim at having around one third of all FHS students enrolled in part-time programmes. This is not the case for universities, which play a smaller role in adult learning. A question of consideration would be whether similar targets should be set for universities and then both targets integrated within the broader adult learning policy. Such a policy would have to consider the need for such part-time programmes in the regions around existing FHS and universities, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of FHS and universities compared to other providers of adult education. (For example, given the late entry of universities into continuing education and their research focus, it might make sense to focus such efforts on

³⁴ As pointed out by Austrian policy makers, this latter proposal would currently not seem feasible under federal legislation, which does not allow interference in the programs of supported institutions.

FHS rather than universities.) Then financial incentives to establish adult programs could expand the supply without limiting institutional autonomy too much.

5.1.5 *The roles of coordination councils*

Section 2 has noted the prevalence of coordination councils and umbrella groups in Austria, and the current government intends to convene yet another coordination council (taskforce LLL) with representatives of all major players in adult education. In general, these groups seem to provide more information within the adult education system, as well as opportunities to develop consensus. However, there is a concern that convening coordination councils may become a reflexive activity, without sufficiently clarifying their objectives. For example, we had difficulty understanding what some coordination councils did, and this suggests that there may be resources in coordination that are not particularly effective.

The solution to this potential problem is to think carefully about what coordination councils should accomplish, and then to make sure that they carry out these tasks. For example, the taskforce on lifelong learning might establish national priorities for the balance of education and labour market programs, the balance of vocational and non-vocational programs, the relative roles of national and *Länder* governments, the priorities among specific groups like women and immigrants, and the priorities among potential new programs and services. This new coordination council would then become a body identifying policy issues and potential solutions including legislative recommendations, rather than simply a body for sharing information and trading perspectives. Alternatively, the council could be limited to specific tasks, like devising a better information and guidance system. But whatever the approach taken, the point is that coordination councils should serve clear goals. Similarly, at the local level coordination councils could develop mechanisms for joint delivery where appropriate, improve information and counselling, or set up better evaluation efforts, rather than simply providing a forum for providers to share information about their activities. The overall question is whether coordination is part of the effort to improve the system of adult learning, or whether it serves simply as a mechanism for keeping the current system in place by reaffirming what providers are already doing.

5.1.6 *The need for system-wide information and counselling*

One way to create a more coherent system of adult learning opportunities is to let consumers decide what they need, and then to provide them the information and the counselling to enable them to find it. While supply-side reforms are necessary as well, we believe — based in part on the OECD review of career guidance policies — that reforms to help students/consumers become more sophisticated choosers would be helpful. The relative weakness of information and guidance in postsecondary education (where adults are more likely to be), the lack of information about a broad range of programs rather than information about specific providers, and the lack of guidance and counselling as distinct from information are among the features that might benefit from some improvement.

Again, there are different solutions, with different costs and organisational requirements. Devising a meta-data base might provide more raw information, but would probably not add much to information that currently exists without a great deal more attention to making information user-friendly. The pilot project in *Burgenland* mentioned in Section 4.4 is a more promising approach because it is independent of any one provider, actively seeks to reach isolated individuals, it provides counselling as well as information, and offers its services in several different formats (face to face, electronic, and by telephone). It helps stimulate the supply of appropriate services and uses client survey data to enhance quality. All of these imply a greater commitment to a culture of evaluation and improvement. Indeed, depending on the evaluation of

this pilot project, this kind of organisation could substitute for some of the coordination councils that now exist. Then a network of such organisations would be useful in feeding information about the adult education system at the local level, where adults experience it, to a national coordination council like that outlined above. But whatever the specific mechanism, additional information and counselling specifically for adults would contribute to a more coherent system of adult learning. The promotion of Adult Learners Weeks might be one way to increase information about education offerings to a variety of adults.

5.2 Specific Needs in Adult Education

In addition to creating a more coherent system of adult learning, there are some specific needs that might be considered when trying to improve adult learning in Austria.

5.2.1 Basic Literacy Programs

Based on what some other countries have determined, there is possibly a much larger problem of low-literacy adults than Austria has acknowledged. The program dedicated to these needs that the Review team was able to see confirmed the suspicion that this subject has been taboo. There is probably a need for many more programs of basic literacy – reading and writing – as well as basic math skills necessary for an advanced society. The teaching of such programs is one of the most difficult issues in all of education, since the conditions leading to low literacy are often complex, or shrouded in shame, or rooted in organic learning problems (e.g., dyslexia) that may be difficult to detect. But efforts to develop such programs would benefit one of the most difficult-to-reach groups, the *Bildungsfernen*, who are otherwise isolated in every way from current developments and from other strands of adult education. In addition, we suspect that developing such programs would benefit other education providers – particularly evening schools and other second-chance programs – since they surely must cope with a certain number of students with inadequate basic skills.

5.2.2 The Need for Pedagogical Change

The review team had the impression that most teaching in adult education is quite ordinary, using the teacher-centred and behaviourist methods associated with conventional elementary and secondary schools rather than the learner-centred and constructivist approaches championed by many adult educators. This issue merits more analysis than we could give it during this thematic review, but it would be a worthy subject for further study. Changing approaches to teaching, if that proves to be what is necessary, is often a difficult task, and involves both re-training existing instructors as well as reforming teacher training programs aimed at adult instructors. However, the benefits would probably be substantial, and might include an improvement in the attractiveness of programs to adults, a reduction in dropout rates from second-chance programs, and a greater ability of adults to master the conceptual thinking that is required in many advanced jobs.

5.2.3 Other Innovations

The review team saw little distance learning in Austria, even though other countries have found it useful for reaching adults – particularly adults in remote or rural areas, which is quite an important issue in Austria. The point is not to substitute distance learning for all forms of face-to-face learning, on the mistaken assumption that distance learning is cheaper and just as effective. The issue is instead the more subtle one of determining how to combine face-to-face teaching with distance methods – along the lines of the WIFI e-learning courses mentioned in Box 1 – in order to economize on the time adults must spend in

school settings, but without losing the benefits of face-to-face instruction. Similarly, there has been little focus on recognition of prior learning, even though under the right circumstances this can help adults continue their education without having to repeat what they already know.

Austria has on the whole been wise not to rush into these innovations in the mindless ways one sometimes sees elsewhere. However, as part of a careful and experimental approach to adult education, it might consider setting up some pilot projects that draw on the experiences of other countries, to see which kinds of innovations might be consistent with the goals of Austrian policy and with its particular educational values. For example, one possibility would be to develop some experimental modular systems, so that individuals can join the complex system of *Berufsbildung* in a more flexible way.

5.3 Creating a Culture of Research and Evaluation

Finally, we turn to the difficult issue of research and evaluation, which is neglected in most national systems of adult education. The rare programs in Austria that have been evaluated in the sense of examining outcomes are mainly labour market programs run by the AMS. Recent evaluations have shown quite positive effects, but they are usually incomplete in the sense that they do not reveal benefits over the long run and tend not to address the difficult question of displacement and substitution effects.

As noted above, establishing a culture of evaluation is not trivial, and involves more than simply allocating more funds for research purposes. It also requires creating the right climate, in which evaluation is viewed not as a threat to existing programs but rather as an opportunity to develop more information about them, to improve them, and under the right circumstances to extend them. Different forms of technical expertise are then necessary, including the statistical and data gathering expertise necessary for outcome evaluations, and the qualitative techniques necessary for learning more about the conduct of programs. But evaluation requires more than technical expertise; it also requires a change in attitudes, a willingness to base decisions on the best available research – rather than on purely political considerations, for example. One obvious target for evaluation includes the second-chance programs which have been considerably expanded over the last decade. Measures of completion rates and of what kinds of employment students find after graduation, would help establish the effectiveness of these programs and suggest possible forms of improvement. Another obvious area for evaluation includes the part-time programs provided by FHS: whether there are special barriers to completion among older students, what completion rates are, and what kind of subsequent employment experiences tend to develop. One can also imagine an evaluation agenda for upgrade training, particularly in examining the employment of individuals after receiving different types of training, although this may be less urgent than the other forms of evaluation. Furthermore, any evaluation effort should also acknowledge that there are some types of adult learning that are extremely difficult to evaluate, especially non-vocational forms of adult learning, and that evaluation needs to be undertaken only where there are clear indications of problems that evaluation can help fix.

Creating a culture of evaluation is part of creating a more coherent approach to adult education. If policy is to consider the trade-offs necessary – for example, between education policies and labour market programs, between vocational and non-vocational forms of adult education, between reliance on upgrade training versus longer second-chance programs – this requires appropriate information about what these different programs accomplish. Without careful evaluation such information can only come from anecdotes and informal evidence, and the possibilities that such sources are biased in one way or another is substantial. Thus, as part of creating a more coherent set of adult programs, Austria might be well put to consider the further development of systematic efforts to evaluate the existing variety of adult learning programs.

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GLOSSARY

AMS:	<i>Arbeitsmarktservice</i> , the Austrian public employment service
BFI:	<i>Berufsförderungsinstitut Österreich</i> , the Vocational Training Institute of the Chamber of Labour
BMBWK:	Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture
BMWA:	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour
BMSG:	Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generation Relations
BMF:	Federal Ministry for Finance
FHS:	<i>Fachhochschule</i> , the non-university form of tertiary education.
ILA:	Individual Learning Accounts.
KEBÖ:	Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions, the organisation of non-governmental providers of adult education.
LFI:	<i>Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut</i> , the Institute for Adult Education in Rural Areas
PLAR:	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
VHS:	<i>Volkshochschule</i> , Adult Education Centre(s) providing mainly non-vocational adult education.
VÖV:	<i>Verband Österr. Volkshochschulen</i> , Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres
VWV :	<i>Verband Wiener Volksbildung</i> , Regional umbrella organisation (Vienna) of VÖV
WIFI:	<i>Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut</i> , the Institute of Economy Promotion of the Austrian Economic Chamber to which all employers belong.

ANNEX 1:

STEERING GROUP, BACKGROUND AUTHORS AND CO-ORDINATION

National Steering Committee

Representatives of

Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture

Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour

Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generation Relations

Federal Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management

Federal Ministry for Finance

Public Employment Service

Social Partners

Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions

Statistics Austria

Background Report Authors

Peter Schlögl, *Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training*

Arthur Schneeberger, *Institute for Research and Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw)*

Co-ordination

Ernst Koller, *Director, Department for Adult Education (BMBW)*

Helmut Höpflinger, *Department for International Employment Policy (BMWA)*

ANNEX 2:

OECD REVIEW TEAM

Mr. W. Norton Grubb (Rapporteur)	Professor and David Gardner Chair in Higher Education, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A.
Mr. André Schlaefli	Swiss Federation of Adult Education (<i>SVEB – FSEA</i>)
Ms. Hanne Shapiro	Director of the Technological Institute, Centre for Competence, IT & Analysis, Denmark
Ms. Beatriz Pont	Education and Training Policy Division, Directorate for Education (EDU), OECD, Paris, France
Mr. Peter Tergeist	Employment Analysis and Policy Division, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (ELSA), OECD, Paris, France

ANNEX 3:

PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

Tuesday 4 March - Vienna

08.30 *Welcome for OECD-review team by BMBWK and BMWA:*

From BMBWK

Mr. Heinz Gruber, Director General GD V

Mr. Ernst Koller, Director Department for Adult Education

Mr. Josef Neumüller, Director Department for International Relations

From BMWA

Mr. Helmut Höpflinger, Department for International Employment Policy

09.00 Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture

From the Minister's office

Mrs. Elisabeth Gehrler

Mr. Martin Netzer

From BMBWK

Mr. Heinz Gruber

Mr. Ernst Koller

10.00 *Meeting with BMBWK officials: Adult Education Policy in the school, tertiary and general adult education sector*

Mr. Heinz Gruber

Mr. Ernst Koller

Mr. Fred Burda, representing Director General GD II

Ms. Edith Winkler, representing Director General GD VII

Ms. Regina Barth, Department for Adult Education

Mr. Reinhard Nöbauer, Department for International Relations/GD II

11.00 *Meeting with Authors of the Background Report*

Authors of Background Report

Mr. Peter Schlögl, Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (*ÖIBF*)

Mr. Arthur Schneeberger, Institute for Research and Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy (*ibw*)

13.30 *Meeting with the Steering Group of Background Report*

Representatives from

Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK)

Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour (BMWA)

Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generation Relations

Federal Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management

Federal Ministry for Finance

Public Employment Service
Social Partners
Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions
Statistics Austria

15.00 *Meeting on Training policy of public employment service and Training in enterprises*

From BMWA

Mr. Josef Horvath, Department for Employment Policy
Mr. Johannes Edlinger, Department for Employment Policy
Ms. Gudrun Nachtschatt, Office of the Board of Directors
Mr. Walter Sitek, representing the Director General GD II
Mr. Helmut Höpflinger

From AMS

Mr. Karl Wiczorek, representing the Director General GD I
Ms. Gabriele Schmid, Department for Vocational Training in Enterprises

16.00 *Meeting to discuss training for the health and agricultural sector; adult education for young adults (including training for voluntary workers) and senior citizens; tax allowances for further education/training*

From BMSG

Ms. Susanne Weiss, representing the Director General GD VI
Ms. Marina Hahn-Bleibtreu, representing the Director General GD V

From BMLFUW

Ms. Getraud Pichler, representing the Director General GD II

From BMF

Mr. Heinrich Treer, representing the Director General GD IV
Mr. Anton Rainer, Department IV/15

Wednesday 5 March - Vienna

09.00 *Meeting to discuss Regional Adult Education policy, Vienna City Council and Regional organisation of Austrian Adult Education Centres (VWV)*

From Department for Education and Youth Work

Mr. Anton Krottke, representing the Director General of City Council

From Association of Viennese Adult Education Centres (VWV)

Mr. Oswald Bazant, General Manager
Ms. Elisabeth Brugger, Pedagogical Manager
Mr. Thomas Fritz, Pedagogical Expert

10.30 *Meeting to discuss second chance education/open access, basic training, literacy programmes, ODL, inter-cultural learning/integration of migrants, learning centres/cross-institutional learning, gender mainstreaming*

From Federation of Austrian Adult Education Centres (VÖV)

Mr. Wilhelm Filla, General Secretary
Mr. Stefan Vater, Pedagogical expert

From Adult Learning Centres Vienna
Ms. Michaela Judy, Director VHS 16
Mr. Gerhard Bisovsky, Director VHS 12
Ms. Antje Doberer-Bey, Course coordinator VHS 21
Mr. Wolfgang Brückner, Course coordinator VHS 21
Ms. Judith Veichtlbauer, Coordinator of second chance education

13.30 *Training platform of the Austrian Trade Union Federation*

Ms. Sabine Letz, Director Department for Training and Culture of the Austrian Trade Union Federation and the Association of Austrian Trade Union Education
Mr. Michael Vlastos, Association of Austrian Trade Union Education

14.00 *Meeting with the Social Partners*

Mr. Georg Piskaty, Austrian Federal Economic Chamber
Mr. Michael Tölle, Chamber of Labour
Ms. Sabine Letz, Austrian Trade Union Federation
Mr Gerfried Gruber, Chamber of Agriculture
Mr. Holger Heller, Federation of Austrian Industry

16.00 *Regional labour market policy and qualification strategies: Territorial Employment Pact Vienna (WAFF)*

From Labour Market and Economic Affairs Department

Ms. Silvia Vidmar, Head of the Department
Mr. Robert Schwarz
Ms. Elfriede Harrer

Ms. Anette Scoppetta, Coordinator of TEP-Austria
Ms. Andrea Schmon, Social Welfare Office, Vienna

18.00 *Meeting to discuss school/college/post-secondary course for employed persons*

Representatives from the International Business College Hetzendorf (BHAK Wien 12)

Mr. Dieter Wlcek, Headmaster
Ms. Anne Fusko-Pohl, Teacher
Ms. Verena Bernegger, Students' Representative
Students

Thursday 6 March - Graz

12.00 *In-service training at Vögele, Austria Incorporated*

Representatives from Vögele Austria

Mr. Franz Meyer, Head of Human Resources
Mr. Gernot Pagger, Economic Society Styria

14.15 *Vocational and technical training in the agriculture and forestry sector, Education Centre Raiffeisenhof*

Mr. Franz Riebenbauer, President of Association of Austrian Residential Education Centres and Director of Raiffeisenhof

Mr. Altmann, Director Evangelisches *Bildungshaus Dt. Feistritz*

15.15 Institute for Further Education in Rural Areas Styria (LFI Styria); Schools for Agriculture
LFI-Styria

Mr. Heiner Herzog, General Manager
Ms. Sabina Cimerman

Mr. Othmar Tauschmann, Inspector of Schools for Agriculture of the Land Styria
Ms. Theresia Krammer, Head of Secondary School for Agriculture (*Fachschule Haidegg*)

16.00 Economic Society Styria

Mr. Gernot Pagger, representing the General Manager
Mr. Franz-Werner Karner
Ms. Renate Kremser

18.15 *In-service training and Human Resources management at MAGNA STEYR car production*

Mr. Armin Kreuzthaler, Director of Education/Training Division

Friday 7 March, Graz, Vienna

08.30 *Meeting to discuss Regional training policy, Directorate of Labour Market Service, Styria*

Mr. Peter Astner, member of the Board of Directors for the Chamber of Labour

From AMS-Styria

Mr. Karl Snobe, Deputy General Manager
Mr. Friedrich Uitz, Director of Promotion Department

Client counselling and planning; local training policy, Local employment office

Mr. Karl Snobe, Deputy General Manager AMS-Styria
Mr. Gerhard Schaffner, representing the Director, AMS Graz
Mr. Alexander Wippel, IT Competence Center, AMS Graz

14.45 *FHS-courses for employed students*

Ms. Edith Winkler, Department for University Continuing Education, the Danube University and Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education/*BMBWK*
Ms. Ingrid Kausl, Management Center Innsbruck (*MCI*), Assistant for the *Fachhochschulprogramme* Tourism and Leisure-Time Economics
Mr. Christian Kollmitzer, *Dir. Technikum Wien*, Head of the Study Programme for Employed Persons
Mr. Rudolf Stickler, *Fachhochschule of BFI-Wien*, Head of the Study Programme for Employed Persons

15.15 *Meeting with Commercial providers of Adult Education and Training*

Ms. Eva Braunstein, Director of *Humboldt Maturaschulen* and HFL (Institute for Distance Learning)
Mrs. Martina Ernst, Area Director of Berlitz Austria
Ms. Ingeborg Kühling-Garfield, Director of *Europa-Wirtschaftsschulen* (private schools in

the business sector)
Ms. Barbara Skoda, SAE Technology Institute

16.00 *Counselling and guidance in adult education*

From BMBWK

Ms. Regina Barth

Ms. Andrea Gintensterfer, Department for Guidance and Counselling in Technical and Vocational Schools and Colleges

Ms. Edith Winkler

Mr. Johann Steinringer, Senior Expert of Economic Chamber

16.45 *Open and Distance Learning in the University sector*

Mr. Franz Palank, Director of Centre for ODL Linz

17.00 *Job and Education Fair, BeSt (Exhibition Occupation, Studies and Continuing Education)*

Mr. Horst Hundegger, Organizer of BeSt

From BMBWK

Ms. Eva Knollmayr, Director of the Department for Statistics, Research in Higher Education and Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

Ms. Edith Winkler

Monday 10 March – Vienna, Krems

09.00 *Courses for and in enterprises, Fachhochschul-courses for employed persons, WIFI specialist academy (Fachakademie); e-learning, etc.*

Institute for Economy Promotion Vienna (WIFI-Wien)

From WIFI-Wien

Ms. Andrea Martinschitz, representing General Manager and Director Department for Education and Training

Mr. Franz Stadler, Department for Guidance and Counselling

Ms. Julia Michl, Coordinator and Head of *Fachhochschul*-courses

Mr. Roman Augustin, Department for e-Learning, FIT

11.00 *Continuing education in universities; continuing education in staff development*

From Austrian Universities Continuing Education Network (AUCEN)

Ms. Ada Pellert, Vice-Rector of the University of Graz and speaker of AUCEN

Ms. Alexandra Waxenegger, Department for Continuing Education, University of Graz

Ms. Petra Aigner, Continuing Education Center/University for Economics, Vienna and all other members of AUCEN

University of Vienna:

Mr. Arthur Mettinger, Vice-Rector of

Ms. Gabriele Moser, Vice-Rector

Mr. Franz Reichl, Extension Center of the Technical University of Vienna

Ms. Gerda Mraczansky, Department for Personnel and Staff Development

- 14.15 *University for Continuing Education, Danube University, Krems (DUK)*
From Danube University, Krems (DUK)
 Mr. Dieter Falkenhagen, representing the President and Rector, Chairman of Kollegium
 Ms. Andrea Henzel, Director
 Ms. Sabine Siegl, Department for Finance and Controlling
 Mr. Roman Brandtweiner, Deputy Head of the Department for Economics and Management (Business School)
 Mr. Siegfried Fina, Deputy Head of the Department for European Integration (Law School)
 Ms. Hanna Risku, Head of the Center of Knowledge and Information Management
- 15.00 *Meeting with the students of Danube University, Krems*
- 15.30 *Coordination and funding (federal-regional-local) of tertiary and adult education, City of Krems:*
From BMBWK
 Ms. Edith Winkler
 Mr. Franz Delapina, representing the General Manager of the Education Society of Lower Austria Ltd. for *Fachhochschulen* and Universities
 Ms. Angela Apel, Department for Culture and Science (including Adult Education) for Lower Austria
 Mr. Helmut Haberfellner, Deputy Chairman of the Forum for Adult Education of Lower Austria (F.E.N.)
- 16.30 *Adult Learning Centre, Krems (VHS Krems)*
 Mr. Herwig Rabl, Second Chairman of the Managing Board
 Mr. Andreas Kompek, representing the Director of VHS-Krems
 Ms. Hildegard Krims, Head of English Department

Tuesday 11 March, Strobl, Linz

- 09.00 *Discussion about Regional learning at Regional Education Centre, Special coaching programme at local AMS, in-service training at Salinen Austria Ltd.*
 Mr. Stefan Enter, director of Education Center *Salzkammergut*, Ebensee
 Mr. Richard Schatzl, Institute for Education and Job Counselling (*IAB*), Gmunden
 Mr. Harald Egger, Salinen Austria Ltd., Bad Ischl
- 10.00 *Meeting to discuss the training of teachers/trainers/counsellors and personnel of adult education institutions*
Federal Institute for Adult Education (BifEB), St. Wolfgang
 Mr. Ernst Gattol, Director
 Ms. Ingeborg Melter, Supervision and counselling
 Ms. Dagmar Heidecker, Public libraries and senior citizens
 Mr. Christian Kloyber, Languages and evaluation
 Ms. Claudia Tanzer, Manager of the Working Group on Educational Management

Mr. Christian Ocenasek, Manager of the Working Group, Further Education System (*EB-Profi*)

13.30 *Visit to Technical School/College for employed persons, Linzer Technikum (LITEC) and Foreman courses (BFI Linz)*

Mr. Franz Brandl, Headmaster of LITEC
Mr. Edmund Nitsche, Head of Department for Electrical Engineering (evening school)
Mr. Karl Wiesbauer, Head of Department for Mechanical Engineering (evening school)
Mr. Manfred Deil, BFI - qualification of adults (master craftsmen courses)

14.30 *Courses for adult education, Teacher Training Colleges*

PA (Teacher Training College), Linz:

Mr. Josef Fragner, Headmaster
Mr. Peter Schürz, Head of the Study Commission
Mr. Siegfried Kiefer, international coordinator

15.30 *Allowances for persons in further education/training, Bildungskonto OÖ*

Mr. Uwe Deutschbauer, Deputy Governor's Office
Mr. Hermann Felbermayr, Director of the Department for Trade at the Office of the Land Government of Upper Austria
Ms. Christine Herz, Department for Trade at the Office of the Land Government

16.00 *Forum on Adult Education Upper Austria (regional KEBÖ); regional adult education policy*

From the Office of the Land Government of Upper Austria

Mr. Walter Aichinger, Member of the Land Government for Adult Education
Mr. Günter Brandstetter, Department for Adult Education at the Office of the Land Government of Upper Austria
Ms. Manuela Jachs-Wagner, acting chairperson of the Forum Adult Education Upper Austria, Director of LFI Upper Austria
Mr. Hubert Hummer, Director of VHS Linz
Mr. Reinhard Wolfsegger, representing the General Manager of WIFI Upper Austria
Mr. Fritz Bauer, Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria, Department of Education and Training

Wednesday 12 March – Linz, Vienna

09.00 Vocational Training Institute (BFI) and the Centre for Vocational Training and Rehabilitation (BBRZ), Linz

Mr. Walter Brunner, representing the General Director of BFI/BBRZ Upper Austria
Mr. Konrad Mager, Director of BBRZ-Linz
Ms. Hannelore Handlbauer, representing the Director of Department of Adult Education of BFI Upper A.
Ms. Iris Ratzenböck, Institute for Research on VET a. Adult Education (IBE), Linz

- 15.00 Federal Minister of Economic Affairs and Labour:
 Mr. Martin Bartenstein
 Mr. Wilhelm Koprivnika, Director General GD I
 Mr. Walter Sitek, representing the Director General GD II
 Mr. Helmut Höpflinger
 Mr. Herbert Buchinger, Director of the Board of AMS-Austria
- 16.00 *Voluntary commitment in adult learning, etc.*
 KEBÖ-presidency, Forum of Catholic Adult Education Institutions; Federation of Austrian Adult Education Associations (*Ring Österr. Bildungswerke*)
 Mr. Hubert Petrasch, Acting Chairman of KEBÖ, President of Forum of Catholic Adult Education Institutions in Austria
 Mr. Wolfgang Kellner, representing the General Secretary of the Federation of Austrian Adult Education Associations (*Ring Österr. Bildungswerke*)

Thursday 13 March

- 09.00 *Meeting with Academics/ Researchers*
 Mr. Rudolf Egger, Institute for Education at the University of Graz
 Mr. Lorenz Lassnigg, Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS)
 Mr. Hans Pechar, Institute for Interdisciplinary Research (IFF), University of Vienna
 Mr. Wolfgang Pauli, Statistics Austria
 Mr. Jörg Markowitsch, General Manager of 3s“ (private company)
- 11.00 *Evaluation meeting*
BMBWK
 Mr. Heinz Gruber
 Mr. Ernst Koller
 Mr. Reinhard Nöbauer, representing the Director General GD II
 Mr. Friedrich Faulhammer, representing the Director General GD VII
 Mr. Josef Neumüller
 Mr. Wilhelm Koprivnikar, Director General GD I
 Mr. Walter Sitek, representing the Director General GD II
 Mr. Helmut Höpflinger
 Mr. Josef Resch, Director of Department II/2/BMLFUW
 Mr. Marius Wilk, Office of the Board of Directors/AMS
 Ms. Elisabeth Altrichter, Austrian Federal Economic Chamber
 Mr. Holger Heller, Federation of Austrian Industry
 Mr. Michael Tölle, Austrian Chamber of Labour
 Mr. Thomas Mayr, General Manager of the Institute for Research on Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy (ibw)
 Mr. Hubert Petrasch, acting President of the Conference of Adult Education (KEBÖ)
 Members of the Steering Group