



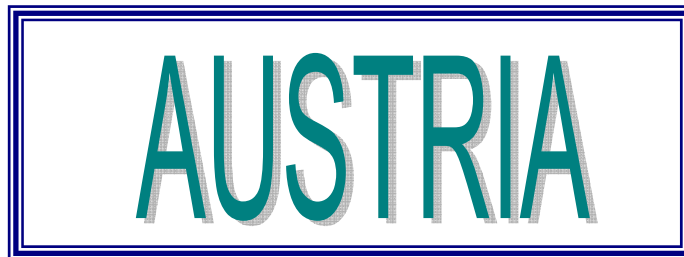
EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Education and Culture

Lifelong Learning: Education and Training policies
Coordination of Lifelong Learning Policies

Brussels, December 2005

IMPLEMENTING THE 'EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010' WORK PROGRAMME

2005 Progress Report



National Contact Person:

Mr Bernhard Chabera (bernhard.chabera@bmbwk.gv.at)

Commission Contact Persons:

Ms Luce Pépin (Luce.Pepin@cec.eu.int)

Mr Sebastian Volkers (Sebastian.Volkers@cec.eu.int)

Education and Training 2010

Austrian Interim Report

*on the Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the
EU Work Programme*

Vienna, October 2005

Abstract: Austrian Interim Report on the Progress Achieved in the implementation of the EU Work Programme ‘Education and Training 2010’

The Austrian Interim Report to the European Commission, which has been prepared as the national contribution for the Second Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the work programme Education and Training 2010, is divided up into six sections:

1. The Austrian reform policy and the Lisbon objectives
2. Investing more and more efficiently in education and training: key areas of the reform
3. Implementation of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies
4. Higher education reform
5. Increasing the quality and attractiveness of VET
6. The consolidation of the European dimension of education

The first section deals with the changes brought about by the Lisbon strategy in the Austrian education system (such as action plans, Educational Strategy 2010, orientation towards benchmarks) and specifies the national measures to implement the Lisbon strategy.

The second section provides a focussed presentation of the priorities in the modernisation and reform process of the Austrian education system during the 2005 and 2006 working years. In this context, the role of EU finances in the implementation of reform goals is explained. Another point concerns the creation of incentives to increase investment in education and training (employee’s training allowance, individual support of CVET measures) and the development of financing mechanisms which lead to an increase of private investment in education and training by enterprises, households and families.

The third section describes the level of Austrian developments regarding the design and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy. Both the general Austrian approach towards the LLL strategy is analysed and reform priorities to implement lifelong learning in the entire education system (e.g. investments in the training of teachers and trainers, prolongation of the motivation to learn in the individual biography). Another major topic is the role of the European benchmark in the implementation of the LLL strategy.

The fourth section describes the main political activities and measures in the tertiary sector. In this connection, the status of implementation of the Bologna process is documented. There follows a detailed presentation of the 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act as a measure to promote structural change at universities for the purpose of enhancing teaching and research achievements and to improve management structures. Another focus is on quality assurance measures and activities aiming at an improved adjustment of study offers to the needs of LLL and non-traditional students.

The fifth section covers the main political activities and measures in the field of VET. Measures to implement the instruments developed in the framework of the Copenhagen process at the national level are described, as well as reform priorities in this area (linking VET to the requirements of the labour market, reducing barriers between education and training).

The sixth section highlights measures to increase mobility. This includes, on the one hand, the breaking down of administrative and legal barriers to mobility, mainly regarding the transparency of qualifications and their recognition. Another major point are measures increasing the quality of mobility and creating virtual mobility in the school sector. Measures to strengthen the European dimension in various areas (secondary level, teacher training) are described.

1. THE AUSTRIAN REFORM POLICY AND THE LISBON OBJECTIVES	6
1.1 Changes in the Austrian Education System Triggered by the Lisbon Strategy. (Which Measures Are Used to Check the Extent Austria Is Starting to Fulfil the Lisbon Objectives?)	6
1.2 Which Difficulties/Problems Have Been Encountered in Converting the European Objectives (Education and Training 2010) to National Reform Measures?	8
2. HIGHER AND MORE EFFICIENT INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING: KEY AREAS OF THE REFORM	8
2.1 National Priorities for Reform and Investment	8
2.1.1 <i>What Are Currently the Priorities for Modernisation and Reform of Austria's Education and Training System?</i>	8
2.1.2 <i>To what Extent Are more/more Efficient Education and Training Investments a Key Factor in Achieving the Reform Objectives?</i>	10
2.1.3 <i>What Role Do EU Funds Play in the Realisation of the Reform Objectives?</i>	10
2.2 To what Extent Do the Austrian Reform Objectives Correlate with the European Reform Objectives?	10
2.2.1 <i>Reforms in the Structure of Education/Training Institutions</i>	10
2.2.2 <i>Development of Incentives to Invest More in Education and Training</i>	11
2.2.3 <i>Funding Mechanisms to Increase Private Education Investment from Enterprises, Households and Families</i>	12
2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of Education Policies	13
3. IMPLEMENTATION OF COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES	13
3.1 Main Policies/Measures	13
3.1.1 <i>State of Development of Austria vis-à-vis the Design and Implementation of a Coherent and Comprehensive Lifelong Learning (LLL) Strategy</i>	13
3.1.2 <i>The General Austrian Access to the Policy of the LLL Strategy</i>	14
3.1.3 <i>Identification of Priority Reforms for the Implementation of Lifelong Learning across the Systems</i>	15
3.1.4 <i>Use and Implementation of Instruments that Have Been Developed under the European Work Programme (Objectives, Copenhagen Process) in the Context of Putting in Place the LLL Strategy</i>	20
3.2 Next Steps and Challenges for Future Reforms	20
4. HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM	20

4.1 Main Policies and Measures	21
4.1.1 <i>Increasing the European Compatibility in the Structure and Organisation of Degrees</i>	<i>21</i>
4.1.2 <i>Enhancing the Competitiveness and Attractiveness of European Higher Education in the Rest of the World</i>	<i>21</i>
4.1.3 <i>Promoting Advanced Learning and Innovation</i>	<i>21</i>
4.1.4 <i>Promoting Structural Change at Universities with a View to Enhancing Learning and Research Processes as well as Internal Management Structures.....</i>	<i>22</i>
4.1.5 <i>Promoting Quality Assurance and/or Accreditation at Institution and/or System Level.....</i>	<i>23</i>
4.1.6 <i>Making Higher Education More Responsive to the Needs of LLL Learners and Non-Traditional Students.....</i>	<i>23</i>
4.1.7 <i>Participation of Higher Education and Research Institutions in Technological Partnerships with the Economy as well as in Co-operation with Enterprises and Social Partners</i>	<i>24</i>
4.2 Challenges for Future Reforms.....	24
5. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET	25
5.1 Main Policies/Measures	25
5.1.1 <i>The Implementation at National Level of the Tools developed under the Copenhagen Process.....</i>	<i>25</i>
5.1.2 <i>The Needs of Low-Skilled and Disadvantaged Groups.....</i>	<i>25</i>
5.1.3 <i>The Image and Attractiveness of VET.....</i>	<i>26</i>
5.1.4 <i>Linking VET with the Requirements of the Labour Market.....</i>	<i>26</i>
5.1.5 <i>The Competence Development of Older Workers</i>	<i>26</i>
5.1.6 <i>The Reduction of Barriers between VET and General Education and Increased Progression into Higher Education.....</i>	<i>27</i>
5.1.7 <i>Learning Needs and the Changing Role of Vocational Teachers and Trainers</i>	<i>27</i>
5.1.8 <i>Anticipation of Qualification Requirements.....</i>	<i>27</i>
5.2 Challenges for Future Reforms.....	27
6. THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION.....	28
6.1 Increased Mobility through Removing Obstacles and Active Promotion.....	28
6.1.1 <i>Administrative and Legal Obstacles to Mobility, Especially in Relation to the Transparency of Qualifications and their Recognition.....</i>	<i>28</i>
6.1.2 <i>Main Measures taken to Develop an Organisational Framework to Improve the Quality of Mobility and Develop Virtual Mobility in Schools.....</i>	<i>29</i>

6.1.3 <i>Policies Aimed at Increasing the Mobility of Teachers and Trainers</i>	29
6.1.4 <i>The Promotion of Mobility of People in Vocational Education and Training</i>	29
6.1.5 <i>Obstacles in the Promotion of Mobility</i>	30
6.2 The Consolidation of the European Dimension of Education	30
6.2.1 <i>Measures to Consolidate the European Dimension up until the End of Secondary Education</i>	30
6.2.2 <i>Measures to Consolidate the European Dimension in the Training of Teachers</i>	30
6.2.3 <i>Problems in the Consolidation of the European Dimension of Education</i>	31

Education and Training 2010

Austrian Interim Report on the Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the Work Programme

1. The Austrian Reform Policy and the Lisbon Objectives

1.1 Changes in the Austrian Education System Triggered by the Lisbon Strategy. (Which Measures Are Used to Check the Extent Austria Is Starting to Fulfil the Lisbon Objectives?)

- **Have the European Reference Values with Regard to Education and Training Been Translated into National/Regional Targets, or Otherwise Contributed to the Framing of National Initiatives? (the Role of the European Reference Values for the Austrian Education Policy)**

Based on the European benchmarks, action plans were devised, which are already being implemented and in which national targets have been defined. They have been integrated in the draft of a national “*Bildungsstrategie 2010*” [“Education Strategy 2010”]. In most areas, Austria has already achieved the objectives of the European benchmarks and has defined higher targets on a national level.

For example, Austria has set itself a higher target in the context of the EU benchmark for reading, i.e. to halve the number of pupils with reading weaknesses. For the implementation of this target the initiative “*Lesen fördern!*” [“Promote Reading!”] has now been launched in addition to the campaign LESEFIT¹ [“FIT TO READ”]. “*Lesen fördern*” comprises the extension of the LESEFIT campaign to the 5th and 6th school year, various material to promote reading as well as a large number of further training events for teachers.

Based on the action programme for languages, development fields have been defined and medium-term objectives determined.

- **Have the Objectives of Education and Training Systems Agreed by the Council, and/or the Priorities Agreed under the Copenhagen and Bologna Processes Been Used to Guide Development of National Policies and Systems?**

Austria immediately created the legal and organisational general conditions for the implementation of the Bologna process and thus its implementation has progressed accordingly. As early as 1999, an Austrian Bologna follow-up group² was established for co-ordination purposes in which all major actors are represented. Meanwhile (winter semester 2005) just under 50% of courses at universities and the universities of applied sciences will be adapted to the Bachelor and Master system. All new courses at universities must conform to the two-cycle higher education system. The ECTS is compulsory for all studies at universities and the universities of applied sciences and students are entitled to continuous student grants for a study period abroad of up to 4 semesters.

¹ <http://www.lesefit.at/>

² http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/europa/kontakte/bol_followgruppe.xml

The Bruges/Copenhagen process was implemented with the same determination. Austria is among the member states, which are implementing the Europass Training consistently and have thus made a contribution to the promotion of mobility. In 2005, this concept will also be extended to cover the other areas of education – Europass Training will be replaced by Europass Mobility. For all apprenticeships and the offers of VET schools and colleges, certificate supplements have been developed, which are made transparent via an information unit³. A special portal⁴ is dedicated to information and dissemination of transparency instruments for the promotion of mobility in Europe. Furthermore, steps were taken to develop a common quality assurance framework for vocational education and training and for the recognition of informally acquired qualifications (cf. 5.1.1). Above and beyond this, preparations are underway for the implementation of a common qualification framework (EQF) as well as a European credit transfer system (ECVET) (cf. Chapter 5)

▪ **Have Inter-ministerial Structures Been Set Up in order to Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Education and Training Elements of the Lisbon Strategy?**

In December 2002, the national debate was launched in a “kick off” event with the title “National Education and Training Policy in a European Learning Area: Education Policy Objectives of the European Union until 2010”. Consequently, a work programme has been developed for the implementation of the Lisbon process. These activities are being co-ordinated by the Ministry for Education, but are carried out with the involvement, consultation and co-operation of all participating national ministries, social partners and representatives.

▪ **To what Extent Have International Comparative Studies and Data Been Influential in Shaping National Measures for the Implementation of the Lisbon Strategy?**

Since the 1990s, the participation in international studies has provided a continuous input for national planning and reforms. The exact analysis of the acquired data by researchers and other experts is directly incorporated in planning. This process is based on the “*Weißbuch zur Qualitätsentwicklung und Qualitätssicherung im österreichischen Schulwesen*” (“White Book for Quality Development and Quality Assurance in the Austrian System of Education”), which defines the necessary general conditions.

For example, the PISA Study attaches great value to sustainability, which can only be generated by high-quality lessons. In order to assure and further enhance the quality of lessons, measures have duly been established, such as:

- Streamlining of curricula from grade 5 to 12 by splitting the curriculum into core and additional areas or in sixth form into a core area and an autonomous creative scope.
- Introduction of education and training standards in Mathematics, German and English as new forms of comparability of learning results at the interfaces of pupils’ academic career (grades 4 and 8)⁵.

³ <http://www.zeugnisinfo.at/>

⁴ <http://www.chance-europa.at>

⁵ http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/12093/bildungsstandards_folder.pdf

- Initiative LESEFIT [“FIT TO READ”] at primary schools and the initiative “*Lesen fördern!*” [“Promote Reading!”].

In the wake of the TIMSS study, due to the poor results the project IMST (Innovations in Mathematics, Science and Technology Teaching) has been launched based on a comprehensive analysis of TIMSS. The aim is the nation-wide support of schools in their efforts to improve Mathematics and Natural Sciences lessons. The project is currently being expanded to form a broader support system, is now targeted at the lower secondary level and is planned to be extended to primary schools. Now the focus lies directly in training and further training of teachers and, in particular, existing professionalisation programmes are being expanded or newly designed.

1.2 Which Difficulties/Problems Have Been Encountered in Converting the European Objectives (Education and Training 2010) to National Reform Measures?

The Lisbon strategy makes high demands of the national education policy, thus making a broad information campaign necessary. Many of those involved find the process to be too complex and feel that it required a clearer structure. In view of the high complexity of the process, it will be necessary to provide appropriate resources for accompanying research. Furthermore, attempts must be made to separate the co-ordination and reform processes from the pure expert level and to win broader public for the implementation of the European objectives. However, it is a fact that the national education policy has been given important development impulses from the European level (Bruges/Copenhagen process, Bologna process, quality development).

2. Higher and More Efficient Investments in Education and Training: Key Areas of the Reform

2.1 National Priorities for Reform and Investment

2.1.1 What Are Currently the Priorities for Modernisation and Reform of Austria’s Education and Training System?

All levels of the Austrian education and training system are subject to radical reform processes.

In the area of school education, in April 2005 the so called “*Zukunftskommission*” (committee for the future development of the Austrian system of education), which was established in 2003, submitted a final report. Based on these proposals, the Minister for Education has passed 8 working packages for the further development of quality in schools, which will be implemented between 2005 and 2006:

Working Year 2005

- Measures of “*Schulpaket I*” [“School Package I”] are the following:
 - Introduction of the 5-day week for all 6 to 14-year-olds and extension of day-care for all 6 to 14-year-olds.
 - Safeguarding of standards for the university entrance matriculation examination.

- Early language promotion, pilot phase from autumn 2005.
 - Increase of individualisation and of needs-oriented support classes.
 - Binding reading tests and reading promotion from April 2005.
 - Continuation of the Leadership Academy (qualification of the management, cf. Chapter 3.1.3)
- Furthermore, in the form of “*Schulpaket II*”, statutory changes are being drawn up for the extension of the location autonomy (lesson time, year-related calculations and autonomous distribution, lesson guarantee of schools, optimised usage of school-year lesson time).
 - As part of the reform process, the “*Zentrum für Schulentwicklung*” [“Centre for School Development”] is being converted to a “*Bundesinstitut für Schulentwicklung*” [“Federal Institute for School Development”]. It is the task of this federal institute to support the quality assurance process and, in co-operation with the universities and future teacher-training universities, to promote practice-relevant research and optimisation of the support systems.
 - The resolution on the new Law on Teacher-Training Universities which can be used for institutional and qualitative improvement of existing teacher training colleges.
 - A new teacher employment act “*Lehrerdienstrecht*”) has been introduced, on the one hand for a redistribution of the active lifetime income, on the other hand in order to introduce different career models as well as elements of performance-based payment.
 - The quality label “*klasse:zukunft*” [“class:future”] will be awarded to schools which present corresponding development plans and have already taken pioneering steps in their own fields of action.

Working Year 2006

- In two further work packages, measures will be passed for achieving greater autonomy in schools. This includes the strengthening of regional, staff and financial autonomy by further extending central regulations. The strengthening of the school partnership will be achieved by establishing a modern culture of reaching agreements.
- By the end of 2006 the Ministry for Education will submit a progress report on quality development and assurance (“White Book”). Furthermore, in the field of school development, work will be carried out on the implementation of supra-regional inspectorates for quality assurance. From school year 2005/06, pilot projects will be implemented and, in the long term, a redefinition of the entire school supervisory field will take place.

Higher education is characterised by a large variety of courses. For public universities, the focus of reforms lies in the development of adequate steering and controlling instruments in accordance with the 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act (cf. 4.1.4.). The qualitative further development of the sector of the universities of applied sciences is described in the University of Applied Sciences Development and Financing Plan III (2005/06-2009/10), which is to be implemented consistently. From 2007, the training of teachers and the “Universities for the Training of the Teaching Profession” (“*Pädagogische Hochschulen*”) will be reorganised. Moreover, all measures focus on the implementation of the Bologna goals and will lead to a further extension of the two-cycle study system (Bachelor and Master courses).

Reform priorities in CVET focus on increasing the participation quotas in programmes of basic education and training and programmes for adult students, extending education and

training information and consulting, and achieving quality development and the extension of training and further training schemes for professionalisation of staff in adult learning institutions.

2.1.2 To what Extent Are more/more Efficient Education and Training Investments a Key Factor in Achieving the Reform Objectives?

More funding does not necessarily mean better quality in schools. A major goal, which has been pursued since 1995, is the creation of stable framework conditions:

- Justice in resources allocation between the federal provinces.
- Certainty in resource allocation through clear and transparent criteria.
- Rationalisation potential from the administration is used for projects such as “Computermilliarde” [“Computer Billion”], “Qualitätsmilliarde” [“Quality Billion”].
- School construction offensive (since 1995, 255 schools have been built with 28,760 training places for a total of €1.3 billion).
- New annual working-hours standards for teachers of the “Länder” (“Provinces”).
- Good ratio of pupils to teachers.
- Increase of the school budget (1995: € 4.8 billion, 2005: € 6 billion, which is an increase of €1.2 billion or 25%).

The strengthening of the management structures at universities and the changes in their financing (global budget) are a prerequisite for the increase of efficiency in the use of funding. The implementation of the Bologna objectives will result in a reduction of study durations and the dropout quota and thus increase the efficiency in the use of funding. In the sector of the universities of applied sciences, due to growth in size and synergy effects, an increase in the standard cost rates (subsidy per study place) has not been required.

For the area of further training, additional funds are required in order to increase the number of participants, particularly from disadvantaged groups.

2.1.3 What Role Do EU Funds Play in the Realisation of the Reform Objectives?

Since 2000, the Ministry for Education has been participating in the European Social Fund within the framework of the “ESF Objective 3” programme. Austria has used these funds to effectively counter the challenge of qualifications becoming obsolete at an increasing tempo. By interlinking IVET and CVET, the adjustments to technological change, which are necessary in a dynamic society, have been taken into account.

Already since 1992, Austria has been participating very successfully in the EU education programmes. Thus Austria succeeded, also through national additional financing, in supporting education policy strategies and reform endeavours in a targeted manner (internationalisation of the institutes of higher education, ECTS, etc). Through the funds provided by the EU, which in the field of ERASMUS student mobility must be topped up with national funds from the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, up until today more than 34,000 students have been able to complete part of their studies abroad.

2.2 To what Extent Do the Austrian Reform Objectives Correlate with the European Reform Objectives?

2.2.1 Reforms in the Structure of Education/Training Institutions

One focus of the Austrian education and training reform is the widespread introduction of an internal quality management in schools (Q.I.S.)⁶. A further focus is the decentralisation of the education and training financing and the strengthening of the decision-making responsibility on a local/institutional level:

- In federal schools the school's own financial responsibility has been strengthened in three ways: For low amounts up to €3,600 the individual school has authority over the budget. Furthermore, schools can, to a large extent, decide on the use of current funds (but not on personnel costs). In addition, schools are entitled to generate their own earnings (e.g. via sponsoring or the hiring of rooms outside of lesson time).
- Universities receive the public funds in the form of a three-year global budget, which is composed of a basic budget negotiated in service agreements between the Federal Government and each individual university and a flexible criteria-based part of the budget (20% of the university budget). At the universities of applied sciences the budget is defined on the basis of the number of study places (standard costing model). The standard costs are made up of personnel costs and running operating expenses, 90% of which are borne by the Federal Government and the remaining costs of which are provided by the owners of the universities of applied sciences from other sources.
- The flexibility clause has been in force since 1 Jan. 2004 at the "St Wolfgang Federal Institute for Adult Education and Training". This clause gives the Federal Institute increased curricular and budgetary autonomy.

2.2.2 Development of Incentives to Invest More in Education and Training

Since 2000, employers have been able to claim a "tax-free allowance for training"⁷ of 9% of the costs they have spent on external training and CVET of the employees in the interest of the company. This allowance can also be claimed as an off-balance-sheet cost and is therefore available for earnings-expenditure calculations. Initially, it could not be claimed for in-house training measures, but only for training and CVET costs of an institute which, for the most part, offers training and CVET services. In 2002, the tax deduction was increased to 20% and can, subject to certain conditions, also be claimed for in-house training. In addition, a third option was introduced in the form of an education and training bonus of 6%, which is of particular interest for companies with low profits or losses, above all for start-ups.

The conditions for external tax deductions (and education and training bonuses) are:

- The expenses must be related directly to the CVET of employees.
- The CVET measure is in the business interest of the company.
- The training is held at an officially recognised CVET institute.
- Only the company expenses are subsidised.

Conditions for in-house tax deductions are:

- The training is held at an in-house institute of the company (with own accounting department), which does not offer CVET for third parties.
- A formalised CVET in the form of courses or seminars is held.
- The training must be proven (e.g. list of participants).
- The maximum tax deduction is €400 per day and training measure (for less than four hours the maximum is €200).

⁶ <http://www.qis.at/start.htm>

⁷ <http://www.bag.at/upload/bag/bildungsfreibetrag.pdf>

In addition to the subsidy of company further training costs, there are also individual subsidies of CVET measures in the form of further training accounts. The participants in the recognised courses are subsequently reimbursed part of their privately financed training investments. This subsidy measure is paid for by the provinces and is subject to varying provincial provisions. In Upper Austria, for instance, an “education and training account for employees” (“*Bildungskonto für ArbeitnehmerInnen*”) has been set up, through which up to 50% of costs for courses of vocational further training can be financed⁸. The maximum subsidy is €1,460. In addition to that for specific target groups (employees without a vocational qualification, employees over 40) the subsidy percentage can be as much as 80% and a maximum of €1,830. Subsidies are also granted to career-break returners (registered as job-seekers with the Public Employment Service Austria⁹), as well as to those on an educational leave. The course must generally be taken at a provider that has been granted the “Quality Label of the Upper Austrian Adult Education and CVET Establishments”.

2.2.3 Funding Mechanisms to Increase Private Education Investment from Enterprises, Households and Families

Generally, CVET costs (for the improvement of knowledge in the previously practised profession), training costs (in the actually practised profession or in a related profession) or retraining costs (for entering a new profession) are tax-deductible by employees as part of their annual wage tax re-computation. Costs for education and training measures for the acquisition of basic commercial or clerical knowledge (e.g. computer courses for beginners) as well as language courses and specialist literature are also tax-deductible if they are in connection with the practised profession.

Since the winter semester of 2001, public universities and the universities of applied sciences have been charging tuition fees¹⁰. The fee for citizens of a member state of the European Economic Area is €363.36 per semester; for citizens of other states it is €726.72. The tuition fees must be paid once a semester by all students, irrespective of the number of enrolled studies or universities. Since 2004, employed students have been able to deduct tuition fees from tax.

So that no financial barriers are erected for students from low-income families, student subsidies¹¹ have been introduced which, if required, partially or completely reimburse the tuition fees. Students who claim a state student grant based on the income of their parental household receive a complete refund of the tuition fees in the form of a student subsidy. But also students who are not entitled to a student grant can receive a small student subsidy. Approximately a quarter of all students receive a student subsidy.

Due to this financing measure, the introduction of tuition fees has not led to a decline in the number of enrolments. Although the number of students in official statistics decreased by 20% immediately after the introduction of tuition fees, this was due to the fact that inactive students had not renewed their registration. In the case of new entrants, only a decline in the winter semester 2001 was observed, which was made up for in the

⁸ <http://www.eb-ooe.at/foerderungen.asp>

⁹ Arbeitsmarktservice - AMS

¹⁰ <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/universitaeten/studieren/studienbeitrag/studienbeitrag.xml>

¹¹ <http://www.stipendium.at/stbh/163.html>

following years, so that the number of students is now above the level prior to the introduction of tuition fees.¹²

2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of Education Policies

In the form of a study conducted in addition to the PISA study, the progress of Q.I.S. is being checked on an ongoing basis. The latest data from 2003 show a considerable increase in schools implementing quality development policies¹³. One third of pupils attend schools in which a QD cycle has already been completely implemented, only 9% of schools have not implemented any independent quality development policies. A national reporting system for the entire school system is currently being devised; there are plans for a first interim report for the end of 2005.

The development of universities is portrayed in a three-year cycle in a national university report on the basis of annual performance reports of the universities¹⁴. In autumn 2005, the next report will be submitted to the National Council. The Council for Science acts as a consulting body and devises proposals on the further development of the university and academic system. The University of Applied Sciences Council (FHR) reports on the status of development in the sector of the universities of applied sciences, as well as on its short-term and long-term requirements. The Accreditation Council observes the development in the sector of private universities.

In 2003, the OECD carried out a “Thematic Review on Adult Learning”¹⁵ (cf. 3.1.1).

In order to improve the empirical basis for evaluations, based on the Education Documentation Act (“*Bildungsdokumentationsgesetz*”), Statistik Austria has developed a National Educational Attainment Register (“*Bildungsstandregister*”) and the Federal Statistics on the Education and Training System (“*Bundesstatistik zum Bildungswesen*”).

3. Implementation of Coherent and Comprehensive Lifelong Learning Strategies

3.1 Main Policies/Measures

3.1.1 State of Development of Austria vis-à-vis the Design and Implementation of a Coherent and Comprehensive Lifelong Learning (LLL) Strategy

The high priority of LLL in Austria is expressed in a decision of the Austrian National Council “for the strengthening of lifelong learning”¹⁶. It corresponds to the increase of the budget for general adult learning by 28% for 2005. In the Government Statement of the Federal Government¹⁷ it was decided to establish a national expert group for the co-ordination of LLL concepts and measures.

Important ideas and foundations of the Austrian strategic development of LLL have been

¹² http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/universitaeten/pm/publ/Projekte_Materialien_Mon9595.xml;
<http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/universitaeten/stats/uebersicht.xml>

¹³ Cf. Haider, Günter/Reiter, Claudia (publisher.) (2004): PISA 2003. National Report. Graz: Leykam, p. 150ff

¹⁴ Previous report of institutes of higher education (last submitted in 2002).

http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/universitaeten/uw/hsb/Hochschulbericht_20028329.xml

¹⁵ http://www.oecd.org/document/3/0,2340,en_33873108_33873245_11997955_1_1_1_1,00.html

¹⁶ Decision of the National Council of 9 July 2004, E 67-NR/XXII.GP (22)

¹⁷ Programme of the Austrian Federal Government for the 21st legislation period, Chapter 11 Education and Training, p. 24.

- The implementation of the consultation process for the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, taking into account all relevant actors and groups and the conclusions and consequences of this learning process¹⁸
- The concrete definition of objectives by the European benchmark passed in May 2003: “by 2010, the average level of participation in Lifelong Learning should be at least 12.5% of the adult working age population (group of 25 to 64-year-olds)”; Austria has already reached this benchmark.
- The 2003 preliminary work (“Country Background Report”)¹⁹ with generally accepted conclusions on a strategy for adult learning and discussions as part of the OECD Country Review on Adult Learning.
- The discussion and conclusions from the OECD Country Note²⁰ on Adult Learning²¹ since July 2004, from an event of the BMBWK on the same topic in June 2005, and the Synthesis Report of the OECD on all participating countries (Promoting Adult Learning, published in Aug. 2005);
- The reception and discussion of European surveys (such as CVTS-2, Eurobarometer 2003) and indicators of LLL in education policy and academic discussions.
- The commissioning of Statistik Austria with the implementation of an ad-hoc module on lifelong learning within the framework of the microcensus in June 2003 by the BMBWK, in addition to the required EU-wide Labour Force Survey and the publication of this module by EUROSTAT for all participating countries.
- Production of an “Education and Training Strategy 2010” (2004), which includes considerations on school, pre-school and adult learning.

3.1.2 The General Austrian Access to the Policy of the LLL Strategy²²

The concept of the Austrian lifelong learning strategy²³ is based on the main principles of the Austrian education policy. Such already long-term effective principles with regard to the LLL strategy are:

- The permeability and inter-accessibility of all education and training courses.
- Equal opportunities and securing of standards by nationally binding curricula and professional images.
- Legal possibilities and funds in order to allow for the possibility attain all school graduations and apprenticeship qualifications in second-chance education.
- Promotion of a wide range of training after completion of compulsory education in order to do justice to all talents and interests of young people.
- Constant adaptation of vocational education and training in the dual and full-time school system with the social partners, based on relevant research and development.
- In case problems arise on the apprenticeship market, ensuring regional flexible reactions so that all young persons can be guaranteed training in schools or colleges,

¹⁸ Workshops on special topics were held, as well as a final event have been held. The results have been documented and presented on the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK) website for discussion.

¹⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/51/19/25603759.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/19/32303060.pdf>.

²¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/19/32303060.pdf>.

²² Major documents and websites: www.lebenslangeslernen.at, www.unternehmen-bildung.at, www.bildung.at

²³ Measures and strategy approaches have already been outlined in previous documents (cf. Implementation for the LLL in Europe, report on the implementation of the Council decision of 2002 – Austria, December or June 2003 ; www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/lll_en.html

in the apprenticeship training system or in the “safety net” (“Auffangnetz”) of the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS).

- Promotion of adult learning by the Federal Government and the governments of the Austrian “Länder” (general and vocational adult learning) and the social partners (with a focus on vocational adult learning); in addition, individual promotion models, mainly in the form of reimbursement of course costs, are being offered in the “Länder”.
- Formation of partnerships on a federal, regional and local level (e.g. learning clusters, since 2001; or the JUNIOR²⁴ project).

These basic principles are co-ordinated between the responsible ministries in the Council of Ministers. The development of a “comprehensive and coherent” strategy of lifelong learning will be tackled in a “Task force LLL” (cf. 3.2). Another expert meeting on this topic was organised by the University of Continuing Education in Krems in September 2005.

Particularly in the field of basic school education, a commission (consisting of university educational researchers) was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK) to make proposals for measures to improve quality in the field of basic education.

3.1.3 Identification of Priority Reforms for the Implementation of Lifelong Learning across the Systems

- Systematic Involvement of All Key Actors through Developing Partnerships on a National, Regional and Local Level

The key actors (involved federal ministries, the Public Employment Service Austria - AMS, social partners, adult learning institutions, provinces) were actively involved in the previous process for the development of a strategy for lifelong learning on a national level in the LLL consultation process, in working groups and in public events as well as in the preparation of the OECD country analysis on adult learning. This was demonstrated by widely approved conclusions at the end of the country background report, which were generally accepted as the basis of further discussion on priorities and measures.

On a regional level, so far there have mainly been activities on the co-ordination of the territorial employment pacts. In the federal provinces the Public Employment Service Austria has set up bodies in which the social partners and the provinces formulate priorities for the active labour market policy and vocational qualifications.

The introduction of a “one desk shop” for SOCRATES And LEONARDO projects in the national agencies (2004), which allocates the funds of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK), the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, the Environment and

²⁴ The JUNIOR project, run by the Adult Education Association (VWG), attempts to establish partnerships on a regional level. Already in 2001/02, 100 “junior companies” were founded in Austria and via these general secondary education pupils acquired knowledge and experience as entrepreneurs as well as in production and services (e.g. market research, advertising, sales). Due to its great success, the project was extended to colleges, the universities of applied sciences and universities (JUNIOR CAMPUS).

Water Management (BMLFUW), facilitates and improves the participation in European education and training programmes.

The launching of information campaigns within the framework of the *Adult Learners' Week* of UNESCO (1999- 2003) and of a media initiative on adult learning (2005)²⁵ in co-operation with the *Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions (KEBÖ)* was intended to involve also other key actors and, in particular, to raise the interest in CVET among people who had hardly been addressed before and to motivate them to take part.

- Developing the Foundations for Further Learning at the Earliest Possible Stage in the Education System

An increasing number of courses is being offered for the later completion of compulsory school education (“secondary school graduation”). Over the past few years, the Education Ministry has substantially increased funding for related course offers in adult education institutions with ESF support (Objective 3).

Since 1996, every year in autumn a “screening process” has been carried out in the form of course places or other training possibilities in order to keep the number of young people without access to training and training qualifications as low as possible. In the recent past, above all pre-school financing, particularly for children whose first language is not German, has been discussed. Here work is already being carried out on the implementation of a concept.

- Definition of the Objectives and Curricula from Pre-School to Upper-Secondary Education in Terms of the Attainment of Key Qualifications

The matter of the definition of objectives of courses and the curricula in terms of the attainment of key qualifications received various responses in all forms of school education as well as the dual apprenticeships. Social skills, basic computer skills and basic school qualifications were included in all curricula. The relatively new concept of “education standards” aims to ensure the teaching of basic school qualifications. This is currently in its trial phase in primary and lower secondary schools.

In December 2003, the *Austrian Language Committee (Österreichisches Sprachengremium - ÖSKO)* was officially set up by the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK). The Committee’s first and foremost task is to make proposals with regard to lifelong language learning and to dedicate itself to the promotion of language learning. Since the 2003/04 school year, the teaching of a modern foreign language has already been compulsory in the 1st grade of Austrian elementary schools.

- Recognition and Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

In the field of vocational education and training, the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning has a long-standing tradition and quantitative significance (cf. Chapter 5). More recent approaches include the admission to the universities of

²⁵ www.lernen-bringt.at

applied sciences without a school-leaving examination (cf. Chapter 5.6.1). In the *Universities of Applied Sciences Development and Financing Plan III for the Period 2005/06-2009/10*, which was submitted in 2004, the increased recognition of non-formal subject qualifications of employees is quoted as an objective.

- Development of Diverse Learning Pathways and Open Learning Environments

The principle of the diversity of learning and training pathways is a basic principle of the Austrian educational system: VET schools and colleges with various work placements and dual training courses co-exist as various options. The diversity is being further increased via the definition of focuses within vocational training courses.

- Investment in Teachers' and Trainers' Training to enable them to play their New Role in the Knowledge-based Society

The subject and general teacher further training is, above all, organised by the teacher training colleges. Many teachers, however, organise their own training, both at external education and training providers as well as in the form of specialist reading or computer or web-based measures. In the sector comparison, all available data (e.g. microcensus LLL of June 2003) show the highest participation in LLL for employees in the teaching sector.

The previous teacher training colleges are upgraded in institutional and qualitative terms to teacher-training universities, whereby – based on the Bologna model – special focuses are placed on Bachelor and Master courses, the information and competence-based selection of students as well as the quality assurance of training institutions.

For the future, substantial improvements are expected by the institutional upgrading of pedagogic colleges to teacher-training universities as well as by the establishment of a “Leadership Academy”²⁶. The Leadership Academy is a nation-wide project across all institutions for the qualification of leaders in the pedagogic field. Its principle consists in a high skills potential of managers which must be used and developed in networked school development projects. In October 2005 the first generation of Leadership Academies was certified, the second is currently running until October 2006, a third will be launched in October 2005, a fourth generation is currently in the planning stage due to the high level of interest.

In 2003 the BMBWK increased its financial support for train-the-trainers projects for trainers and training managers in not-for-profit adult education institutions with ESF and national funds. Several skills training projects for teachers are currently being carried out.

- Integrated Use of ICT in Education and Training Systems

The integration of ICT in education and training has been a priority of the lesson administration since the mid-1990s and is conceived and promoted by a department and working group of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK). Since the end of the 1990s, ICT has not only been integrated in VET schools and colleges through new special training focuses within existing subjects, but above all across all disciplines in adjusted cross-curricular changes of the curricula. The IT

²⁶ <http://www.leadershipacademy.at/statisch/leadership/de/startseite.ihtml>

initiative “eFit-Austria”²⁷ has existed since 2000. This initiative’s goal is to increase access to education, improve quality of education for the individual and of the entire education system by the sustainable use of modern information and communication technologies. As part of eFit-Austria, in the field of “eEducation”, special skills training programmes are being implemented for pupils, and in the field “eTraining” CVET programmes, particularly for people who need to be integrated in the labour market.

In higher education, as part of the initiative “New Media in Teaching at Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences”, between 2000 and 2003²⁸, 25 project developments with a budget of approximately € 8 million were commissioned. These project developments reached 44,000 students, 2,000 graduates, 4,500 teachers and 36,000 people who were interested in CVET as defined by LLL. This basis is expanded with the strategy call for tender²⁹ to the tune of € 3 million between 2005 and 2007 in which universities and the universities of applied sciences can submit their application with their e-Learning/e-Teaching models and implementation projects.

- Focus on Disadvantaged Groups

For a long time, the focus on disadvantaged groups in Austria has been placed on the initial training of young people. Supplying all young people interested in training with a training place is an education and labour market policy priority since approximately 1996.

The statutory possibility of “inclusive vocational training” was anchored in the Vocational Training Act 2003 (“*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*”, BAG). This concept, based on principles of social pedagogy and VET-training, is aimed at young people with a disadvantage and integration problems on the apprenticeship training market and combines financial subsidies by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), needs-oriented extendable apprenticeship terms and graduated qualification possibilities. The allocation of young people in no way implies a reduction of later possibilities, as it is designed in an open and flexible manner.

The AMS further expanded the labour market promotion scheme for unemployed young people (with the focus on 19 to 24-year-olds) JOBS FORYOU(TH)’04 in 2004 and thus created qualification and employment opportunities for at least 10,400 people.

The AMS further expanded the JOBS FORYOU(TH)’04 labour market promotion scheme for unemployed young people (with the focus on 19- to 24-year-olds) in 2004 and thus created qualification and employment opportunities for at least 10,400 people. Programme priorities include the repeated increase of JOBS FORYOU(TH) funds, the promotion of additional apprenticeship vacancies (Project ’06), and the acquisition of the lower secondary school qualification by adults.

In the field of adult education, the Education Ministry with the support of the European Social Fund has been supporting measures for basic education / literacy enhancement within the framework of second-chance education and other projects for disadvantaged people (women, immigrants, disabled people, etc.; also in connection with the National

²⁷ www.efit-austria.at

²⁸ www.nml.at

²⁹ <http://strategie.nml.at>

Action Plan on Social Inclusion) as well as two major Equal Development Partnerships (DPs) in the same areas.

- Prolonging the Habit of Learning Throughout Life and Enhancing Learning Access and Opportunities for Older Citizens and Workers

Older groups of people with disadvantaged access to LLL were previously not focused on as much as young people without a training place. Part of the OECD Country Review focused on the problem of “unreached” adults and on adults with deficits in their basic education, reference was also made to the significance of adult education centres which are easily accessible for all. In May 2004, the social partners organised an enquiry on the topic of “Age-appropriate World of Work”³⁰, in which the participation in CVET played an important role.

- Developing Flexibility within and between all Sectors of Education and Training

One focus of the past years has been the promotion of permeability and the recognition of already completed services in the transition between education and training levels. For a long time, there have been “add-on apprenticeships” in vocational training for graduates of a VET school (BMS) to acquire the qualification of a VET college (BHS). For secondary education graduates, colleges are set up at VET colleges (BHS), where pupils can attend full-time and part-time courses. For graduates of apprenticeships, there have long since been VET schools and colleges for employees in employment, which are mainly attended in the evenings (generally part-time while in employment).

Since the amendment to the University of Applied Sciences Study Law 2003, not only the universities but also the universities of applied sciences have been entitled to offer CVET courses. As the universities of applied sciences, due to the large number and needs-oriented foundation of locations, offer regionally widespread business-oriented and vocationally oriented training, the development of an additional attractive CVET offer was initiated.

The goal of the University of Applied Sciences Development and Financing Plan III for the years 2005/06-2009/10 is to increase the number of students registering with a university entrance and vocational qualification (cf. Chapter 5.1.6), increase the recognition of non-formally acquired subject qualifications of employees in employment as well as increase the significance of distance learning in courses of the universities of applied sciences.

- Improvements in Curricula, Learning Tools and Methods

The adjustment of curricula, learning tools and methods in schools and learning institutes is a continuous challenge. Thus, since the mid-1990s, more than 150 apprenticeships have either been modernised or completely recreated. In the VET schools and colleges (BMHS), via internal differentiation based on special focuses, not only the diversity of the offer was increased, but also and rather considerably the percentage of teaching of information and communication technologies and other basic qualifications. In general

³⁰ Age-appropriate World of Work, Talks and Discussions of the Expert Hearings of the Social Partners, 27 to 28 May 2002, www.arbeitundalter.at

education, the entire curricula of lower secondary level and upper secondary level have been updated continuously since 2000.

- Promotion of Lifelong Learning through National or Regional Economic and Social Partnerships and through Civil Society

Austrian adult learning is characterised by a range of networks right across the Austrian provinces. Thus, the major general education adult learning institutions, such as the adult education centres VHS and the Catholic educational associations as well as CVET providers such as the Economic Promotion Institute WIFI, the Vocational Training Institute Vienna (BFI) or the *Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut* (LFI) each have a large number of regional locations and a national network. The Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions (KEBÖ) also functions as an interface between the non-profit adult learning providers.

A good example for the promotion of LLL by partnerships is the University of Continuing Education in Krems, a co-operation between the Federal Government and the provincial government of Lower Austria (cf. Chapter 4).

3.1.4 Use and Implementation of Instruments that Have Been Developed under the European Work Programme (Objectives, Copenhagen Process) in the Context of Putting in Place the LLL Strategy

The European benchmarks for general and vocational training have gained a central orientation function for education policy in Austria. For the more effective use of the LLL structural indicator, the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture financed a survey in 2003 (ad-hoc module on lifelong learning), which was carried out by “*Statistik-Austria*” and which offers differentiated and empirically well-founded insights into the structure and financing of the LLL and, among other things, showed that in the sector of the LLL structural indicator the 2010 target value for training and CVET was already attained with 12.5% in June 2003. Both with regard to this indicator and in the successful integration of young people in training in lower secondary level, the values should be maintained or improved.

The working groups of the Copenhagen process provided important suggestions, which are currently being intensively discussed by the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, with the involvement of the social partners and the education providers (e.g. EQF and ECVET; cf. Chapter 5).

3.2 Next Steps and Challenges for Future Reforms

The next central step is the formation of a “Task Force LLL” commissioned to elaborate more detailed targets – both thematically and time-wise – until 2010 and to co-ordinate their implementation.

The orientation towards European benchmarks and goals is an important input for the Austrian education policy and, in connection with Eurostat surveys of “*Statistik-Austria*”, has led to improved insights into the structure of participation, interests and financing of LLL. Based on this, the strategic key points should be developed step by step in the form of a broad consultation and discussion process.

4. Higher Education Reform

4.1 Main Policies and Measures

4.1.1 Increasing the European Compatibility in the Structure and Organisation of Degrees

The implementation of the Bologna goals is making good progress in Austria. Nearly 50% of the regular first-degree programmes provided by universities and universities of applied sciences in the winter semester 2005 are offered as Bachelor/Master courses. The Diploma Supplement is automatically issued at universities (since July 2005); in the sector of universities of applied sciences an analogous obligation has been in force since the beginning of 2005. ECTS is compulsory for all university courses, but not all instruments are used in the same way (e.g. range of marks). In the sector of universities of applied sciences, the use of ECTS is an auditing criterion in the (re)accreditation.

4.1.2 Enhancing the Competitiveness and Attractiveness of European Higher Education in the Rest of the World

The Austrian institutes of higher education take a very active and successful part in the EU education programmes. For example, over 34,000 Austrian students are already making use of the opportunity to study at another European institute of higher education with ERASMUS grants. The development of double-degree programmes is being promoted as part of CEEPUS. Special mention should be made here of the international considerable percentage of over 18% foreign students at Austrian universities.

4.1.3 Promoting Advanced Learning and Innovation

Austria is striving towards the establishment of national centres of excellence, which focus on the thematic strengths of the national innovation system³¹. For the coming ten years, three excellence centres will be proposed in the field of basic research or experimental development and approx. five to seven centres of excellence in applied research. A model case would be a 30-strong research team with annual research expenses of €3 million and approx. 50% of the expenses financed from public funds.

In the Bologna process, attempts are being made to strengthen doctoral studies in the form of PhD programmes. On this matter, Austria, in co-operation with the European University Association and Germany, held the Bologna seminar “Doctoral Studies in the Knowledge Society” in the run-up to the education ministers’ conference in Bergen. There are also discussions on a grant reform³², which will in the future provide for the promotion of Bachelor, Master, PhD and professorship programmes. The doctoral programme should be structured in a way that it also improves employment prospects for researchers on the non-academic labour market.

Finally, activities focus on the establishment of a university of excellence. In summer 2005, the concept for an Austrian Institute of Advanced Science and Technology was presented. It is planned to create financial and legal prerequisites for starting operation by autumn 2006. This institution should attract young, highly talented junior scientists, who will be given the opportunity to complete a top-level PhD or Post Doc and to do

³¹ A feasibility study commissioned by the Council for Research and Technology Development has been conducted: http://www.rat-fte.at/files/studie_centres_of_excellence.pdf

³² “Recommendation on the Reform of Government Grants” of the “Council for Research and Technology Development” http://www.rat-fte.at/files/empfang_050118_stipendien.pdf

research under optimum working conditions. The results of innovative research should, above all, be usable for the economy. A connection to the planned “European Institute of Technology” is desirable.

4.1.4 Promoting Structural Change at Universities with a View to Enhancing Learning and Research Processes as well as Internal Management Structures

With the 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act (UG 2002) a several-year reform process was drawn to a provisional close, the aim of which consisted in increasing the autonomy of public universities and giving the steering possibilities of politics and administration a new basis. The key points of the University Organisation and Studies Act are:³³

- The universities shall embody legal entities of public law with complete legal capacity. In the organisation of the university, decision and responsibility were brought together.
- The Federal Budget Law shall no longer apply to universities, which shall henceforth receive three-year global budgets, based on output and outcome (cf. 2.2.1), which give universities the necessary security for the forming of their courses.
- The 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act shall govern general decision-making processes, but not the internal structure of universities. The details of the organisation shall be defined in articles of incorporation, which shall be resolved by the Academic Senate.
- Every university shall have a University Council, which shall act as a supervisory body and make strategic decisions. Half of its members shall be appointed by the Academic Senate and half by the Minister.
- The university shall be governed by a Collegiate Rectorate which shall be headed by a Rector. He/she shall be elected by the University Council, based on a proposal of the Academic Senate.
- The university shall be the employer of all personnel. New personnel shall in general be hired on the basis of private law service contracts. The umbrella association of universities and the trade union are currently negotiating the collective contract for personnel at universities.
- In addition to the operational accounting, the 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act prescribes the establishment of a knowledge balance, which shall serve as the basis for the payment agreements between the ministry and the universities. The first knowledge balance will be for the year 2005 and must be submitted in spring 2006.

What about the first experiences with the implementation of the 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act?

- The opening balances presented in 2004 showed that the universities have sufficient equity capital.
- In their organisation plans the universities have introduced mostly fairly large organisational units and thus paved the way for increased efficiency.
- The universities are devising development plans and strategies, which must be approved by the university councils. In spring 2005, universities have submitted their

³³ <http://www.weltklasse-uni.at/>

first Reports on Activities concerning their entire service spectrum and annual accounts, which provide further insights on the state of development.

- The 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act contains the legal basis for instruments for the promotion of women and for the eradication of structural inequalities. To strengthen the professional positions of women in universities, as part of an ESF objective 3 measure, initiatives were launched with the aim of establishing female infrastructure institutions, to promote the compatibility of professional and private life, as well as to support academic careers at the universities. For the improvement of women's situation, particularly in natural sciences and technology, the programme promotes "fFORTE – Women in Research and Technology"³⁴ which promotes women in all stages of their education and their career. A further measure is "excellentia"³⁵, a financial incentive programme which rewards the hiring of female professors and improves professional practice in favour of women.

4.1.5 Promoting Quality Assurance and/or Accreditation at Institution and/or System Level

With the introduction of the sector for universities of applied sciences (in 1993), for the first time ever in Austria an accreditation institution was established in the form of the Council of Universities of Applied Sciences³⁶, whose task is the quality assurance of courses at universities of applied sciences. In 1999, the Austrian Accreditation Council³⁷ was established with the task of accrediting private universities. Public universities are not obliged to be accredited, but must establish their own internal quality management (2002 University Organisation and Studies Act, §14).

In 2004, the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance³⁸ (AQA), a service institution for quality assurance and evaluation at universities and universities of applied sciences, was founded on the joint initiative of the Austrian Rectors' Conference, the Conference of the Universities of Applied Sciences, the Association of Private Universities, the Student Union and the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture.

4.1.6 Making Higher Education More Responsive to the Needs of LLL Learners and Non-Traditional Students

In several different ways, the sector of universities of applied sciences takes into account the needs of non-traditional students. Universities of applied sciences facilitate alternative forms of access as well as part-time courses and reduce regional disparities in access to higher education. In comparison to the universities, they enable students to acquire a de facto qualification in the normal course duration and offer a broad economically oriented qualification profile.³⁹ The University of Applied Sciences Development and Financing Plan III⁴⁰ (2005/06-2009/10) plans to create 300 new study places a year for this sector.

³⁴ http://wwwapp.bmbwk.gv.at/womenscience/d/fforte_01.htm

³⁵ <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/excellentia>

³⁶ <http://www.fhr.ac.at/>

³⁷ <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.at/>

³⁸ <http://www.aqa.ac.at/>

³⁹ http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/universitaeten/pm/publ/Review_des_Auf- und_Ausb9814.xml

⁴⁰ http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/11630/fhef_III.pdf

Both public and private universities and universities of applied sciences offer further training courses with academic degrees and/or qualifications. The Danube University Krems specialises in continuing education courses. It is jointly financed by the Federal Government and the Province of Lower Austria; a large part of the financing comes from tuition fees. The adjustment of the University Krems to the 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act will be completed in mid-2005.

In the first courses of study, numerous learning events are held in the evenings or in blocks as well as with online support in order to facilitate participation for students who are in employment, have care obligations or who suffer from health problems. The further training offer of universities and universities of applied sciences is geared towards part-time students thanks to the intensive use of ICT. Since 2003, there have been 13 further training programmes with ICT use, particularly for people in need of integration in the labour market as well as for the opening of new potential in university further training, e.g. development of new professional fields (knowledge experts) and further training of teachers.

4.1.7 Participation of Higher Education and Research Institutions in Technological Partnerships with the Economy as well as in Co-operation with Enterprises and Social Partners

The Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG)⁴¹ offers a range of measures for the promotion of co-operations between enterprises, universities, research institutions, universities of applied sciences and technology and founder centres, which aim to strengthen the technology infrastructure, improve the co-operation between science and economy and increase the regional innovation. Mention should be made of the “Kplus” programme, which promotes research institutions developed in co-operation between universities or contract research institutions with the economy (currently 18 centres of competence) in order to operate long-term, internationally competitive R&E in fields which are highly relevant with regard to both academics and economics. The impulse programme “AplusB”⁴² supports the founding of companies from the academic sector. There are currently six centres at which almost all universities are represented, as well as universities of applied sciences, research institutions, promotion agencies and private companies. The impulse programme *FHplus* promotes the increase of R&D capacity and competence at universities of applied sciences. The number of endowed professors at universities has almost tripled in the past two years.

4.2 Challenges for Future Reforms

A focus of the coming years will be to form the payment agreements with the universities and to develop indicators for the formally defined budget. The continuation of the Bologna process and the conversion to the Bachelor/Master courses is a further focus. A particular challenge is presented by the implementation of ECTS, as the calculation of credits based on students’ workloads is not yet generally established in universities.

⁴¹ <http://www.tig.or.at/>

⁴² <http://www.tig.or.at/foerderungen/aplusb/programm/>

5. Increasing the Quality and Attractiveness of VET

5.1 Main Policies/Measures

5.1.1 The Implementation at National Level of the Tools developed under the Copenhagen Process

The quality assurance of VET is a prime political goal. With the introduction of Q.I.S (Quality in Schools), Austria ranks among the member states that have already introduced quality assurance systems, which correspond to the joint quality assurance framework for VET, passed by the European Council in May 2004 (cf. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – CEDEFOP – p. 29f, Maastricht p. 21).

In the field of VET, the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning has a long-standing tradition and quantitative significance:

- For credibly portrayed professional experience, there is the possibility to be admitted to the course examination without taking the course or there is a reduction of the examination syllabus.
- People who have graduated from a college of engineering (HTL) and have at least 3 years relevant practical experience are conferred the professional title “HTL-Ingenieur”. Graduates of the secondary colleges for agriculture, forestry and home economics are conferred the professional title “HBLA-Ingenieur”.
- The university entrance matriculation examination (cf. 5.1.6) enables the recognition of professional practical experience.

On 15 December 2004 it was resolved that “Europass vocational education and training” should be expanded to include other fields of education and training. In connection with the introduction of the new Europass documents, the Leonardo da Vinci National Agency was nominated as a “National Europass Centre” (NEC). Austria is already providing the Europass documents (report explanations and the Europass vocational education and training) via databases on the Internet⁴³.

In all Austrian schools, but above all in interfaces to CVET routes, vocational and educational guidance are offered. For the co-ordination of the work, a permanent working group was introduced in March 2005, with the involvement of all stakeholders, whose initiatives are based on the EU Commission handbook “Career Guidance”.

5.1.2 The Needs of Low-Skilled and Disadvantaged Groups

In the Maastricht study, four packages of measures related to this target group were decided and Austria was listed in all four cases among the active states:

- Labour market and employment policy measures: An active labour market policy with a training component, policies for the fields of human resources, income and pensions.

⁴³ www.zeugnisinfo.at, www.europass.at

- CVET for older workers, e.g. recognition of their non-formal and informal learning success, skills training programmes.
- A broad range of lifelong learning in order to remain active, such as computer courses, adult learning.
- Offers in the field of training or lifelong learning for those without jobs:
E.g. programmes for people over 50.
- Inclusive Vocational Training, which was introduced in September 2003, is geared towards people who, due to personal reasons or learning problems in compulsory school, are unable to acquire a qualification via the normal route.

5.1.3 The Image and Attractiveness of VET

Austria ranks among the states with the highest level of young people who acquire VET at the upper secondary level. For men this proportion is over 70%, for women 60-69%. Furthermore, Austria belongs to the group of states in which this proportion increased between 1998 and 2002, both among men and women. The percentage of 16-year-olds who are currently undergoing VET is 80%. The high attractiveness of VET is one of the reasons why Austria traditionally ranks among the European states with a low rate of youth employment. This is also expressed by the fact that 86.5% of 22-year-olds in Austria have already acquired a qualification at upper secondary level and Austria has thus already reached the European benchmark (=85%). Graduates of an apprenticeship are given the opportunity to attend a so-called add-on course in order to acquire the qualification at a VET college.

In order to further increase the attractiveness of VET, the possible transitions to higher education were facilitated (cf. 5.1.6) and the flexibility and professional and business mobility were increased by including broad vocational qualifications in the curricula and learning concepts (CEDEFOP, p. 45f). The double qualification – general education and highly qualified VET – enables graduates the direct entry to an adequate position on the labour market and allows them access to higher education.

5.1.4 Linking VET with the Requirements of the Labour Market

The dual system of vocational apprenticeship combines the learning locations company and vocational school and thus enables professional skills to be acquired at the workplace. For the remaining vocationally-oriented forms of training, in many cases the school or higher education lessons are supplemented by a work placement in a company.

Cf. 5.1.8 for instruments for the anticipation of qualification requirements.

5.1.5 The Competence Development of Older Workers

Austria's active labour market policy places emphasis on preventative measures for maintaining employability. In 2002 36,000 people participated in training measures of the Public Employment Service Austria. Since 2004, unemployed people over 50 have been entitled to training or reintegration measures if the Public Employment Service Austria is unable to offer them an acceptable job within three months. In the education

and training institutions of adult learning there are no age limits. As part of add-on courses, older workers can acquire the same qualifications as young people.

5.1.6 The Reduction of Barriers between VET and General Education and Increased Progression into Higher Education

In the VET colleges students can acquire both a vocational qualification and general admission to the higher education sector. By guaranteeing a transition to higher education and training, this type of school increases the attractiveness and the status of VET. Furthermore, the transition from vocational to higher education is facilitated by the integration of VET elements in higher education. This route was mainly taken in the sector of universities of applied sciences. Since 1997, apprenticeship graduates who have successfully passed their apprenticeship examination or have attended a VET schools school for at least three years are allowed to take the university entrance matriculation examination. This corresponds to the Certificate of Secondary Education from secondary academic school and the Certificate of Secondary Education and VET Diploma from VET college and thus includes the general admission to a course of study and entitles the candidate to exercise a job in the higher level of the public services.

5.1.7 Learning Needs and the Changing Role of Vocational Teachers and Trainers

For some of the teaching staff at the VET schools and colleges in Austria, professional experience is compulsory. This is regarded as a decisive prerequisite for high quality and practical orientation in VET. In the dual system a certain pedagogic training is compulsory for the company trainers. The teacher training colleges offer an extensive further training programme for teachers (particularly in the IT sector).

5.1.8 Anticipation of Qualification Requirements

Austria has taken measures for the early identification of future qualification requirements and to take these into account in reforms for the curricula of initial vocational training and CVET. With the “qualification barometer”⁴⁴ Austria introduced a private information system on expected qualification requirements, which was commissioned by the Austrian Government. Through the intensive co-operation of all stakeholders in VET, several projects have already been initiated to analyse and increase qualification requirements and steering, while taking into account international developments.

5.2 Challenges for Future Reforms

- The previous measures taken to determine and recognise non-formal and informal learning must be continued and expanded.
- A decisive challenge for the education and training and labour market policy is the development of incentives for increasing the companies’ willingness to act as training providers.
- The development of a comprehensive strategy of LLL represents one of the most important challenges up until 2006. The introduction of the education and training vouchers is already an important step for Austria.

⁴⁴ <http://www.ams.or.at/neu/2339>

Measures subsequent to Maastricht:

1) 2004 was the beginning of the QUIBB project, which aims to introduce a quality management system in all fields of VET.

2) In the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK) learning standards for the subjects German, English and Mathematics are currently being developed (cf. 2.1.1.). With regard to the introduction of a credit point system, these standards should form the basis for the definition of credits and units, based on which credit points will subsequently be awarded. In the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK), on 14 March 2005 an event was held on the preparation of the implementation of ECVET and the development of a national qualification framework.

6. The Consolidation of the European Dimension of Education

6.1 Increased Mobility through Removing Obstacles and Active Promotion

6.1.1 Administrative and Legal Obstacles to Mobility, Especially in Relation to the Transparency of Qualifications and their Recognition

The measures resolved as part of the Bologna process for the increase of transparency of qualifications have duly been implemented. Since 2003 universities have issued a Diploma Supplement (DS) in German and English on request. Since January 2005, the issuing of this Diploma Supplement is compulsory at the universities of applied sciences and since July 2005 at universities.

ECTS was also introduced in a large number of institutes of higher education. Since 1999, ECTS was compulsory for Bachelor/Master programmes. The 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act extended this obligation to include all courses. The 2002 University Organisation and Studies Act no longer defines a minimum study duration in semesters, but a workload in ECTS credits. In 2004, the Graz University of Technology was among one of ten European universities to be awarded the ECTS label by the European Commission; in 2005 the Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences was also awarded the ECTS label. In the sector of universities of applied sciences, the implementation of ECTS has been a criterion for the accreditation of courses since 2002.

In order to break down social and mobility barriers, the promotional measures have been expanded. Students at universities who participate in mobility programmes are exempted from tuition fees. As part of SOCRATES/ERASMUS, the funds provided by the European Commission for student mobility were topped up by national funds of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture BMBWK, in order to offer as many students as possible the opportunity to spend a subsidised period of study abroad. Students are entitled to national grants in accordance with the Student Support Act for up to two years of study abroad. In addition, there is a national subsidy for participants in exchange programmes and there are language subsidies for studies abroad.

In the school sector, too, there is a recognition of the competences acquired as part of the mobility. For the decision on whether the pupil should pass to the next school year, school attendance in a foreign country with a foreign language (between five months and a year) is equivalent to successful school attendance in Austria (§ 25 Para. 9 SchUG – School Instruction Act). As part of the Europass, Certificate Supplements have been

developed for increasing the transparency of VET (ECVET) and a credit point system is being prepared.

6.1.2 Main Measures taken to Develop an Organisational Framework to Improve the Quality of Mobility and Develop Virtual Mobility in Schools

The Austrian Information Centre for National Academic Recognition (ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA) guarantees a rapid first assessment of foreign qualifications and the necessary consulting on the most suitable recognition routes. With the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance⁴⁵, which is incorporated in all European quality networks, Austria has a good infrastructure for quality assurance in mobility in higher education.

In the school sector, the quality of mobility programmes is assured by the quality network Q.I.S.⁴⁶. Furthermore, as part of the initiative “Quality in Mobility”, an international jury confers annual awards to selected LEONARDO-DA-VINCI mobility projects.

The award of the “Socrates quality label” to institutions from schools, higher education and adult learning places emphasis on quality in the implementation of particularly successful projects/mobility activities. In 2004, this Austrian initiative was turned into a European project: Under Austrian co-ordination, seven national agencies developed a European quality label in the dissemination project “E-Quality” and awarded this on a national level for outstanding decentral projects/mobility activities. In May 2005, the other Socrates national agencies will be provided with the online-based tools for participation in E-Quality. The aim is to expand E-Quality to all states participating in the programme in the future. Mentioned several times over in connection with the discussion on the new action programme E-Quality as Good Practice Example; Austria has thus adopted a pioneering role among the national agencies.

6.1.3 Policies Aimed at Increasing the Mobility of Teachers and Trainers

Teacher further training seminars are constantly offered for the training of the “mobility actors”. The participants in these seminars pass on their know-how to schools and act as advisors and co-ordinators. Language teachers are given the opportunity to spend one to several years in schools in another country as part of bilateral exchange programmes. As part of study visit programmes, teaching staff are given the opportunity to become familiar with the VET systems of other European states and to establish contacts for future co-operations. As part of the co-operation project “Bilingual Schools” in Central and East European neighbour states, Austria sends teaching staff for German and German language teaching to selected bilingual schools in these states⁴⁷. For foreign language assistants and exchange teachers there exist subsidy measures (social benefits, special prices, etc).

6.1.4 The Promotion of Mobility of People in Vocational Education and Training

Austria has been able to constantly increase its participation in the EU programme LEONARDO DA VINCI and, thanks to the high quality of project applications, has become one of the European leaders (76% increase of subsidies between 2003 and 2004).

⁴⁵ <http://www.aqa.ac.at/>

⁴⁶ <http://www.qis.at/start.htm>

⁴⁷ http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/schulen/lehr/lla/bilingual_schulen_ausland.xml

As part of international partnerships, projects focused on the development of European vocational education and training, innovative curricula and subject-didactic approaches in various fields of professions and for various target groups.

6.1.5 Obstacles in the Promotion of Mobility

The main problems are seen as lying in the administrative processes, the lengthy and complicated application procedure, the preliminary services which must be carried out during the concept phase as well as often at the beginning of the project, the lack of co-ordination between the European Commission and the national states, but also in the low remuneration of the programme. For example, the participation in exchange programmes for trainers in the non-profit institutions of adult learning has proven difficult. In the mobility sector, the existing programme means are insufficient to carry out all high-quality projects in the extent planned.

6.2 The Consolidation of the European Dimension of Education

6.2.1 Measures to Consolidate the European Dimension up until the End of Secondary Education

The emphasis of the European dimension is defined in the curricula⁴⁸. The Austrian school development gives high priority to increasing multilingualism:

- Depending on school type, up to three foreign languages are compulsory.
- Increase of bilingual classes and foreign languages as working language in specific subject areas.
- Numerous schools successfully participated in the campaign “European Label for Innovative Projects in Language Teaching and Learning”⁴⁹.
- For pupils whose native language is not German bilingualism is promoted by additional lessons in the respective native language, which during the course of the EU expansion is an important contribution to the European dimension.

The “Campaign Days Citizenship through Education”⁵⁰ is an Austrian contribution to the “European Year of Citizenship through Education”. In addition, the participation of schools in the “European Springday” (60 registered schools in 2005) is also being promoted. In VET as well as in general education, there are numerous joint school projects with Austria’s neighbouring new member states in order to raise awareness for a joint European perspective.

6.2.2 Measures to Consolidate the European Dimension in the Training of Teachers

The foreign language assistant exchange⁵¹ based on a bilateral culture agreement gives participants the opportunity to acquire language and local knowledge. Students, particularly those who want to become teachers from the second section of their course, those requiring work placement of lessons and teachers up to the age of 30 can acquire experience abroad in a practical context.

⁴⁸ http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/11858/lp_neu_ahs_06.pdf,
http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/11857/lp_neu_ahs_05.pdf

⁴⁹ <http://www.sprachen.ac.at>

⁵⁰ <http://www.politische-bildung.at/goto/sep/C240/>

⁵¹ http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/schulen/service/bi_fsa_bewerb.xml

6.2.3 Problems in the Consolidation of the European Dimension of Education

In the past few years, the emphasis of the European dimension has gradually been anchored in Austrian curricula. In the broadening of basic skills, it seems important to also take into account those competences which are necessary for an active citizenship in order to enable increased participation on a European level as well as analysis of the contents of European issues.

In order to strengthen the European dimension in teacher training, the mobility of teachers and teacher trainees as well as those doing work placements in lessons must be increased (cf. 6.1.5). This should above all promote the acquisition of foreign languages in order to be able to offer an increasing number of bilingual lessons in educational institutions.

In the sector of foreign language learning, it is, in spite of previous good progress, uncertain whether the high goals can be fully achieved. A certain strained relationship has been caused by the broad concentration on learning English as a “lingua franca”. Thus, there is a need to additionally promote the learning of more foreign languages in order to do justice to the cultural diversity of Europe and prepare for lifelong multilingualism.