



Identification and Documentation of Competencies to Familiarise Refugees with Regional Labour Markets

Host Country Discussion Paper – Austria

**Peer Review on
'Competence Check for the Labour Market
Integration of Female Refugees'**

Vienna (Austria), 26-27 June 2017

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



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1 SUMMARY

The influx of large numbers of refugees to Austria in 2015/16 created information deficits on two sides. On the one hand, labour market authorities did not know how to assess and what to expect from this new target group. On the other hand, refugees did not know how to locate themselves and their competencies in their new host country, especially on the Austrian labour market. Therefore, a new labour market measure, the Competence Check for refugees, was created.

The following text will describe the emergence of the Competence Check in the Austrian context and analyse the implementation of a particular version of the measure, the Competence Check for the Professional Integration of Women 18+ provided by abz*austria. It will analyse the results of this measure and its innovative potential as a way to validate non-formal and informal competencies, both with respect to difficulties and constraints, and with respect to success factors and transferability of this measure.

The purpose of this exercise is to present a successful measure from Austria that can be regarded as good practice for the labour market integration of vulnerable groups of refugees with a high amount of transferability to other countries, but also to gain feedback on the Competence Check and to compare it with functional alternatives in other countries.

2 BACKGROUND

By 1st January 2016, 15% (1,267,674) of the total Austrian population held foreign citizenship. From this group, 49% came from EU member states, and 51% (642,186) from third countries. Citizens from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Syria, who currently account for the vast majority of refugees in Austria, represented 94,452 or 15% of all third country citizens (Statistik Austria, 2017). While migration in the early years of the 2000s mostly originated from (new) EU Member States, the strong increase in migration during the last three years can be attributed to the influx of refugees.

Table 1. *Refugees and Competence Checks in Austria (2016)*

	male	female	% female	total
Applications for asylum ^a	28,328	13,957	31%	42,285
Recognised refugees ^b	17,857	11,241	39%	29,098
Unemployed refugees registered with the public employment service (AMS) ^c	18,715	6,311	25%	25,026
Competence Checks started, all ^d	--	--	--	7,144
Competence Checks completed, all ^e	4,498	1,484	25%	5,982
Competence Checks for female refugees completed by abz*austria ^f	--	714	100%	714

^a) Applications for asylum in 2016 (without cases of resettlement); BMI, 2017

^b) Refugees recognised in 2016 (comprising positive decisions on asylum, subsidiary protection and humanitarian residence); BMI, 2017

^c) Averaged stock of recognised refugees and people with subsidiary protection, registered as unemployed or as in AMS-training 2016; AMS Datawarehouse

^d) All Competence Checks started in 2016, AMS, 2017, based on reports by the providers

^e) All Competence Checks completed in 2016; AMS, 2017, based on reports by the providers

^f) Data for 2015-2017, including participants from the pilot project in 2015, and participants, who completed their Competence Check in early 2017; abz*austria

In 2016 (see Table 1), 42,285 applications for asylum were registered in Austria (BMI, 2017). This is a huge decline from the peak of 89,098 applications in 2015, but still much more than the 28,064 applications in 2014 (BMI, 2016). In 2016, 29,098 received refugee status, which comprises positive decisions on asylum, subsidiary protection and humanitarian residence (BMI, 2017).

Nationally, 7,144 refugees, who had registered with the AMS, started the Competence Check in 2016. 5,982 refugees completed the Competence Check in the same year, the rest followed in 2017. As highlighted in Table 1, the participation rate of female refugees in the Competence Check (25%) equals the share of unemployed female refugees registered with the AMS.

2.1 Refugees at the Austrian labour market

In 2016 about two thirds (63%) of all 25,026 unemployed refugees in Austria were registered with the employment service in Vienna. As a result, 11% of the unemployed in Vienna were refugees which is the highest share in Austria (AMS, 2017).

In early 2015, the rapid increase in the number of recognised refugees and of people granted subsidiary protection became obvious for the main authorities responsible for the Austrian labour market, namely the Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMAK) and the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS).

Generally speaking, the labour market situation at this time was difficult, especially for migrant workers with foreign citizenship. Austria faced the highest unemployment rate since the financial crisis of 2008/09. In the first half of 2015 the overall unemployment rate was 9% and 14% for migrant workers. 71% of the registered unemployed foreigners had only completed lower secondary education (compulsory school leaving exams) or had no formal qualification at all (BaliWeb 2017). A lack of recognition of prior learning and work experiences would have had devastating consequences for refugees who registered with the AMS in increasing numbers in terms of finding employment in Austria. As such, urgent action was needed to avoid de-qualification and demotivation of refugees.

The task of identifying and documenting the competencies and qualifications of refugees has been particularly difficult since these new clients have qualification backgrounds the AMS was unexperienced with. In addition, refugees may not be able to provide documents of their formal qualifications due to the circumstances of their journey to the host country.

However, the Competence Check is only one of several measures offered by the AMS, which are aimed at integrating refugees into the Austrian labour market. Employment measures (e.g. integration benefits, non-commercial employment measures), qualification measures (e.g. language courses, vocational training for apprenticeship exam) or other support measures (e.g. in counselling and support centres) are also available to refugees.

2.2 The emergence of the Competence Check for refugees

Initiated by the BMASK, the regional office of the AMS in Vienna invited four providers of labour market measures in order to collect ideas on how to gain viable information about the competencies and needs of large numbers of refugees which will ultimately increase their chances for integration into the labour market. The result was a pilot project for a Competence Check for refugees which was piloted during the second half of 2015. In the first pilot stage, six groups - each consisting of 150 people - were set up and distinguished by language and gender, i.e. two gender-homogeneous (male/female) groups for courses in Arabic, two homogeneous groups for Farsi, one gender-heterogeneous (mixed) group for Russian and one mixed group for French.

The second pilot stage took place between the end of 2015 and May 2016. The second stage had only five groups since it did not prove to be necessary to offer Competence Checks in French. According to AMS Vienna most of its clients from the Maghreb region, for whom the French group had been created in the first place, tend to understand Arabic as well.

Based on the evaluation results of the two pilot stages, AMS Vienna started to roll out the Competence Check in May 2016 by contracting larger projects for the following four target groups: women older than 18 years, men between 18-25 years and two groups for men older than 25 years. This structure follows the demography of the entire target group and has the following functional reasons: about a quarter of all unemployed refugees are women who differ with respect to qualifications (higher) and work experiences (less) from men. For men between 18-25 years the focus is more on vocational and educational orientation and training, while men over 25 years, the majority among unemployed refugees, have to enter the labour market in a more direct way.

In parallel to these developments in Vienna, the Competence Check was rolled out to the AMS branches in all other regions of Austria. These branches do not necessarily follow the concept developed in Vienna and have the freedom to develop their own instruments. This is needed in order to adapt to regional circumstances (e.g. difficulties in mobility, varying group sizes, capacity of regional providers, etc.). However, the nationwide use of measures for the identification and documentation of

qualifications, skills and competences of refugees is reflected in the national reporting system and in the national budget of the AMS since 2016.

3 COMPETENCE CHECK

The target group of the Competence Check are unemployed refugees older than 18 years.¹

3.1 Aims and objectives of the Competence Check

At its core, the Competence Check aims at identifying and documenting the competencies of a refugee to inform the AMS about the individual's employability and/or needs for further training and support measures.

AMS requires from all providers of the Competence Checks deliverables per client, which have to be documented as part of the Results Report ('Ergebnisbericht') in the national IT-system of AMS. These deliverables can also be regarded as the formal objectives of the Competence Check:

1. Summary of educational career and work experiences, current employment prospects (job opportunities on the labour market)
2. Summary of development perspective, training needs, future employment prospects (job opportunities after completion of training)
3. Description of vocational experiences
4. Exercise and Expert Statement on competencies for a distinct vocation ('Kompetenzcheck Expertise')
5. Tentative statement on other competencies (language, IT)
6. Description of formal qualifications
7. Status on recognition of formal qualification
8. Trial Internship
9. Documentation of competencies and work experiences for external use (e.g. curriculum vitae, letter of application, Portfolio)
10. Personal information (e.g. name, nationality, social security number, residence status, etc.)

In addition to its core function, the Competence Check also aims at providing information for the individual refugee about job opportunities in the Austrian labour market along his or her competencies and to develop individual development plans. However, these additional tasks are less standardised.

3.2 Aims and objectives of the Competence Check for female refugees by abz*austria

While only 9% of the native Austrian employees feel overqualified in their jobs, 24% of the foreign workers do. However, the danger of overqualification/de-qualification of foreign workers is much higher for women (28%) than for men (19%). (Statistik Austria 2015, p. 71) To combat this gender specific inequality, a gender sensitive Competence Check for female refugees was developed.

The particular aims of the *Competence Check for the Professional Integration of Women 18+*, provided by abz*austria, is to contribute to the empowerment of female refugees and to overcome gender specific barriers in accessing the Austrian labour

¹ For younger refugees, who are above compulsory schooling age, other measures have been developed (e.g. 'Youth College', which prepares young refugees between 16-21 years for upper secondary education or apprenticeship training).

market. In order to reach these aims adaptable and customisable measures in the respective native language are necessary.

abz*austria is an experienced provider of labour market measures with a strong focus on the labour market integration of women and migrants. It also is one of the four providers that contributed to the development of the general concept for the Competence Check in cooperation with AMS Vienna. abz*austria was part of the first and second pilot project of the Competence Check and tested its own version of the Competence Check for female refugees in Farsi/Dari. Following a public tender by the AMS Vienna in 2016, abz*austria became part of a consortium of providers that was contracted to roll out the *Competence Check for the Professional Integration of Women 18+*, a project that caters for language groups in Farsi/Dari, Arabic and German.

3.3 Curriculum and implementation of the Competence Check for female refugees by abz*austria

According to the initial concept, the Competence Check lasts for five weeks. However, experience during the pilot has shown that female refugees need more time to open up for this kind of procedure and should not be pushed through the programme. As a result, the consortium providing the Competence Check for female refugees could agree with AMS Vienna to expand the Competence Check for women to seven weeks.

The project Competence Check for the Professional Integration of Women 18+ caters for language groups in Farsi/Dari, Arabic and German. After AMS Vienna assigned a woman to the project, she participates in an individual clearance, before she is assigned to a particular language group. The groups are led by trainers who are native speakers.

The Competence Check is implemented in groups of approximately 12 participants. Each week comprises 10 hours of group sessions (workshops) and one hour for individual coaching. These 11 hours are split over 1.5 days per week and have to be coordinated with the obligatory language courses which are run by other training providers. To accommodate for different time preferences, abz*austria offers three different time slots per week for parallel groups.

Each week is composed of three modules held in a workshop setting, plus the individual coaching session. Normally, the composition of modules per week covers different topics.

With respect to the course content about half of the modules aim to inform the participants about fundamental principles (e.g. welfare system, public health, housing in Vienna), common practices (e.g. dealing with diversity, communal life in Vienna) and the qualification and employment system (e.g. (vocational) qualifications in Austria, formal education and training, labour market regulations).

The rest of the modules focus on labour market orientation (e.g. women and employment, job orientation and development perspective), identifying and documenting skills, competences and qualifications of participants and preparation for job search (e.g. application documents, preparation for recruitment processes).

These modules are of particular relevance for the deliverables defined in the template for the Results Report (see chapter 3.1) which has to be sent to AMS Vienna. For example, abz*austria can refer individuals to special contact points² or support female

² The contact points for people with qualifications gained abroad ('Anlaufstellen für Personen mit im Ausland erworbenen Qualifikationen - AST') in five Austrian regions are funded by the BMASK.

refugees in applying for formal recognition or expert evaluation³ (by ENIC-NARIC) of their academic degrees, if applicable. In any case, abz*austria documents the status and/or the results of such an application.

In case a refugee has vocational experiences and competencies, which might be useful for an Austrian profession, abz*austria arranges an exercise with an employer or a specialised training institute.⁴ This brief exercise identifies practical and theoretical competencies of a client and produces an Expert Statement ('Kompetenzcheck Expertise') which weighs the competencies on a scale from 1-4 (inadequate-excellent) and recommends potential steps towards formal recognition, e.g. referral to the final apprenticeship examination. Exercise and Expert Statement are for internal use only and must not be confused with formal assessment or certification.

If a participant is interested in a new vocational field or has no vocational experience so far abz*austria tries to arrange Trial Internships ('Schnupperpraktika') with an employer in order to give the participant a realistic impression about this profession. However, in both cases, it seems to become increasingly difficult to find employers who are willing to offer competence tests or trial internships.

Finally, abz*austria also supports the preparation of documents for external use, in addition to the internal reporting to AMS Vienna. Each participant is obliged to prepare a curriculum vitae and an application letter. In addition, a portfolio of qualifications, competencies and work experiences ('Qualifikationspass Wien')⁵ can be prepared during the Competence Check by abz*austria. This portfolio supports clients, who only have compulsory education or who cannot use their foreign qualification at the Austrian labour market, on their way towards a formal Austrian qualification, preferably an apprenticeship exam. The portfolio documents existing qualifications and further training needs, but can also be used as a tool for self-presentation towards employers as well.

While many of these elements are common for other Competence Checks as well, there are also some particular, gender specific features of the Competence Checks for women:

- They last longer compared to those directed at male refugees. Trainers of the pilot frequently reported that their female clients need more time to open up for being able to reflect on their experiences and competences. Five weeks was not enough to fully detect all competences and trainers often ran out of time for organising Expert Statements or Trial Internships, etc. The longer duration is an attempt to overcome this challenge.
- They are conducted by female trainers, who speak the native language of their clients, but who are also knowledgeable with the Austrian labour market. This makes it easier for female refugees to gain trust and to connect culturally.
- They explicitly address the role of women at the Austrian labour market, and the expectation of the Austrian welfare state towards women as part of the labour force. This is crucial for several reasons. On the one hand, many female refugees have never worked outside their families before and need to adapt to

³ This expert evaluation has the status of a legally non-binding expertise. In contrast to that, a formal recognition is a legally binding, official decision that often comes with entitlements (Pfeffer & Skrivanek 2017).

⁴ E.g. it might be useful to test a tailor, even if she never used a sewing machine, but it probably is not very reasonable to test the maker of knotted carpets, since this is no vocation in Austria.

⁵ The format of the 'Qualifikationspass Wien' has been jointly developed by AMS Vienna and the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund ('waff – Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds'), an institution of the City of Vienna.

the idea of formal employment. This also involves a cautious introduction into legal regulations and the topic of equal opportunities. On the other hand, the lack of employment experience also makes it necessary for many female refugees to understand, which of their formal qualifications or of their experiences in domestic work might be translated into competencies for the Austrian labour market.

- They also address topics related to the compatibility of family and work, and of organising their life in a city like Vienna. These topics are addressed in modules on community life and housing, and on the health care infrastructure.

3.4 Referral before, during and after the Competence Check

The usual referral process in the context of the Competence Check in Vienna follows the sequence listed here:

1. After having received a positive decision on asylum or subsidiary protection, refugees have to contact a regional integration centre of the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF).
2. In counselling interviews, the ÖIF identifies the needs for integration measures. In most cases the ÖIF refers individuals to basic German language courses (A1, beginner) which are offered by providers accredited by the ÖIF.
3. Basic language competencies are a prerequisite for the first consultation and registration with AMS. AMS usually refers clients to two parallel measures: a second basic language course (A2, elementary) and to the Competence Check of one of the contracted providers.
4. During the Competence Check a Results Report (past experiences, current competencies) and a development plan (for the next 1.5 years) are elaborated. A second basic language course (A2, elementary) is completed in parallel.
5. The provider of the respective Competence Check often refers participants to other institutions which are responsible for the formal recognition of qualifications, expert opinions and/or tests on competencies.
6. When returning to the AMS with these documents, the AMS case worker can integrate the client into the regular consultancy process and decide on immediate placement opportunities or on further placement or training measures (e.g. step2Austria or step2business).

However, there can be cases that deviate from this sequence, e.g. when clients have already better language skills, when their competencies are so obvious that they have a clear path towards recognition, or when they can be placed right away.

4 RESULTS

Regular AMS case workers who usually deal with native clients do neither have the capacity, nor the competencies to identify, interpret, assess and document competencies and (often undocumented) qualifications of refugees. Therefore, the AMS as an institution needed an instrument to gain better information about individual clients from this new target group. That was the main rationale for the development and use of the Competence Check.

In terms of the efficiency of gaining relevant information about refugees, the success of the Competence Check already became clear following the first pilot stage in 2015. The Competence Check found surprisingly high qualification levels among these first cohorts of refugees.⁶

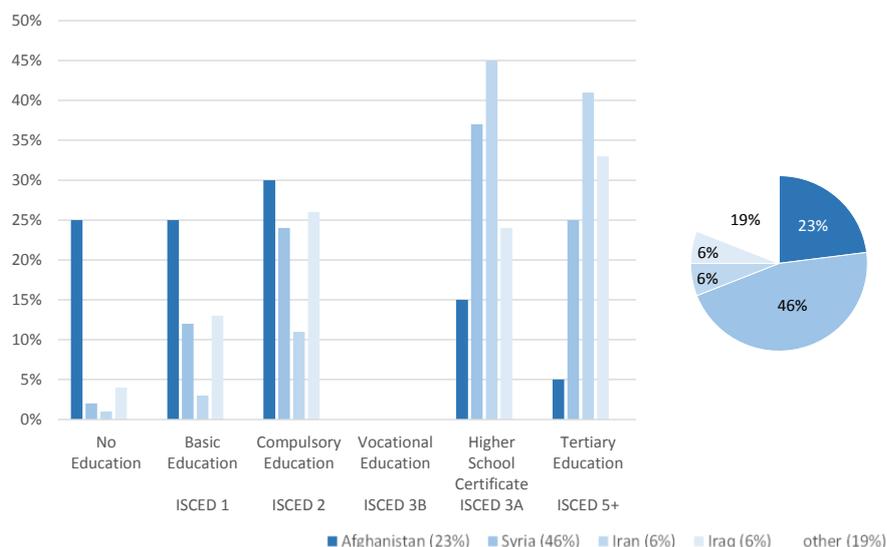
In addition, differences between segments of the new target group became more apparent, especially between different home countries, but also between male and female participants. Based on the findings of the Competence Check, AMS could diversify and adjust its portfolio of measures, e.g. by creating support for recognition of qualifications for higher qualified refugees and intense forms of basic education for clients with lower skills (AMS 2016).

With regard to the individual participant the Competence Check also informs about the society in Austria in general, the welfare system and the labour market in particular. Especially the last element is of particular importance for the individual to locate her or his competences in the Austrian context.

4.1 Results of all completed Competence Checks in 2016

Across Austria, 7,144 refugees started with their Competence Checks in 2016. However, only 5,982 of them completed the Competence Checks within the same year (AMS, 2017) and can therefore be counted for a further quantitative analysis of the results.

Figure 1. Completed Competence Checks in Austria 2016, highest qualification level by country of origin (N=5,982)



Source: AMS 2017, own chart.

⁶ The observations for these groups were confirmed by the insights the Austrian Academy of Science gained in an independent, parallel study on refugees in Austria at that time (ÖAW 2016), a lucky coincidence, which contributed to the legitimacy of the competence check for gathering valid information.

As shown in figure 1 the biggest group among all participants, who completed their Competence Checks in 2016, is from Syria (46%), followed by Afghanistan (23%), Iran (6%), and Iraq (6%). 19% of the participants came from other countries.

The results of 2016 confirm the preliminary impressions gained in the first pilot stage in 2015. The majority of participants from three countries reported to have completed at least higher school certificates (the equivalent for entrance requirement to tertiary education) or even tertiary education: 62% of all participants from Syria, 85% from Iran, and 57% from Iraq are in this group. However, in the case of Afghanistan, only 20% of all participants had a higher qualification, 30% completed compulsory education, 25% basic education and 25% had no formal education at all.

Another remarkable result is the high amount of tertiary qualifications among women, especially in comparison with their male counterparts. 29% of all women hold university degrees, compared to 19% of the men. With regard to home countries, 36% of all female participants from Syria hold a tertiary qualification (male: 21%), the share for female participants from Iran is 42% (male: 26%), for Iraq 44% (male 31%), for Afghanistan 11% (male 5%) and for other countries 34% (male 16%).

However, many of these highly qualified women lack of work experience. This fact calls for specific measures for the advancement of women. (AMS, 2016)

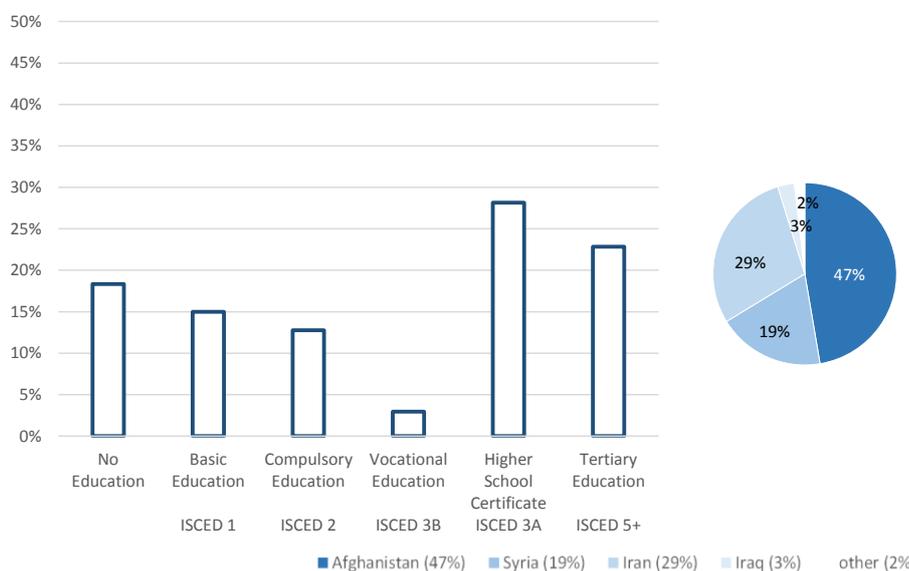
Apart from these quantitative results on qualifications, AMS also gets more familiar with the qualification systems of the respective home countries, e.g. with the wide range of quality of educational qualifications, even if they come from the same country.

The top priority of the Competence Check is orientation, not placement. Internal data of the AMS show that participants of the Competence Check are more likely to participate in qualification measures, compared to those that do not participate in the Competence Checks.

It is difficult to isolate the placement effect of the Competence Check, particularly as several measures are conducted in parallel. However, it is possible to tentatively describe the impact of the entire bundle of labour market measures for refugees as follows: among those that received their residence status in 2015, 9,523 individuals, were registered with AMS between January 2015 and June 2016. By December 2016, 15% of this group were employed (44% unemployed, 23% in AMS training and 18% out of labour force). For the entire period, January 2015 to December 2016, 19% from this group were employed for at least 62 days (AMS, 2017).

4.2 Results of Competence Checks for female refugees by abz*Austria

Figure 2. Completed Competence Checks for female refugees by abz*austria (2015-2017) (N=714)



Source: abz*austria, own chart. Data include participants from the pilot project in 2015, and participants, who completed their Competence Check in early 2017.

With respect to nationality, the composition of participants in the Competence Checks for female refugees by abz*austria differs strongly from the entire group of all Competence Checks in 2016. This is caused by the fact that abz*austria predominantly has offered Competence Checks in Farsi/Dari which attracted female refugees mainly from Afghanistan (47%) and Iran (29%). abz*austria has offered only a few Competence Checks in Arabic which tend to attract female refugees from Syria (19%) and Iraq (2%).

Nevertheless, participants with higher qualifications form a majority of 51%, since 28% hold higher school certificates, and 23% a university degree. However, 28% completed lower education (15% basic education and 13% compulsory education) only. 18% have no formal education at all.

In this context, it is also relevant to note that 39% of all participants, who completed the Competence Check for female refugees with abz*austria, had no work experience so far.

abz*austria made the experience that the peer group and its diversity is of particular importance for the empowerment of women, especially for opening them up to self-reflection, self-presentation and self-esteem. The group situation also helps in interpreting the Austrian environment, to understand the regulations and expectations of the host country, and sometimes also to adjust the own attitude towards employment which is going to be a new experience for many participants.

abz*austria also appreciates the confidentiality of individual coaching sessions between trainers and participants which are particularly useful for overcoming individual barriers and hindrances in accessing the labour market or in organising daily life. These individual sessions are also crucial for addressing other, more private topics, e.g. indicators for traumatisation or for abuse. About 30% of the participants of the Competence Check for female refugees are referred to women's shelters or other specialised institutions.

4.3 Legislative results

In May 2017, new legislation on a so-called compulsory Integration Year for refugees was passed by the Austrian parliament. The Integration Year will be modularly composed of different integration measures (Republik Österreich, 2017a). The law lists the following measures:

1. Competence clearing
2. Language courses
3. Clearing of qualifications and certificates, support for their recognition
4. Acculturation classes in cooperation with the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF)
5. Job orientation and application training
6. Job preparation measures
7. Job training
8. Other measures

The module 'competence clearance', a distinct cornerstone of the Integration Year, is clearly based on the positive experiences made with the Competence Check (Republik Österreich 2017b, p. 2).

4.4 Competence Check as measure for formative validation

Applying the terminology of the Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the European Union, 2012), the Competence Check focuses on the identification and documentation of competences and refers to potential routes towards the formal assessment and certification of these competences. However, the Competence Check does not assess or certify itself. This form of dealing with competencies can be defined as a formative type of validation of non-formal and informal competencies (Pfeffer & Skrivanek, 2017).

At least in Austria, but probably in other countries as well, there do not exist other examples of formative validation, which are institutionalised at such a scale. The Competence Check therefore constitutes a new format, in which individual competencies can be communicated. To increase the value of the Competence Check, results of the identification and documentation procedure should not only be communicated internally (via the Results Report to the AMS), but also externally (e.g. via the 'Qualifikationspass' to prospective employers). Maybe this external communication to other stakeholders could be stressed more than it is done currently.

The Competence Check is not just a very useful measure for the labour market integration of refugees. In addition, it has the potential to contribute to the strategy of the European Union on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, as stated in the Council conclusion on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) (Council of the European Union, 2009) and in the Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the European Union, 2012).

5 DIFFICULTIES AND CONSTRAINTS

5.1 Difficulties

- Competent providers and trainers for Competence Checks:
Both with respect to providing institutions and to individual trainers, it is a challenge to find actors who can combine labour market competencies with skills in the native language of the respective target groups. Currently, it is more difficult to find competent trainers who speak Farsi/Dari than those who speak Arabic.
- External partners for Expert Statements and Trial Internships:
It is difficult to find external partners who provide tests and Expert Statements on vocational competences or who are willing to offer places for Trial Internships. This applies especially to private employers (often small and medium enterprises), while training institutions seem to be easier to deal with.
- Discrepancy between planned and used capacity:
The planning of capacities for the Competence Checks is based on asylum applications and expected consequences for the labour market. Delays in decision making procedures or high rejection rates for asylum applications can lead to vacancies at providing institutions.

5.2 Constraints

- No formal recognition, assessment or certification:
The Competence Check is a valuable tool for identifying and documenting competencies. However, it is no equivalent or substitute for the formal recognition, assessment or certification of competencies.
- No cure for qualification deficits or tense labour market situation:
The Competence Check can help to identify existing competencies and qualifications and to communicate them to the labour market. It is however no cure for qualification deficits or tense labour market situations.
- No long-term measure:
The Competence Check itself only lasts for five or seven weeks. In this time, clients open up and work together with the provider, the AMS and the institutional infrastructure in Austria. However, after completion of the measure, the contact to these clients can get lost.
- No treatment for traumata:
Traumata can become visible during a Competence Check. However, the Competence Check itself is no treatment for traumata.

6 SUCCESS FACTORS AND TRANSFERABILITY

6.1 Success factors

- Taking identification and documentation of competencies seriously:
Competencies are often regarded as tangible goods which just have to be formally assessed and certified. In contrast to that, the Competence Check acknowledges the different context of competencies and takes the identification and documentation of competencies seriously, and as a distinct task in its own right. This makes it an innovative measure for the labour market integration of refugees, but also for the formative validation of non-formal and informal competencies in general.
- Broad search for competencies and their exploitation:
The Competence Check is not limited to directly marketable competencies, nor to immediate placement as the only form of application. Rather, the Competence Check performs a broad search for competencies, but also for various forms of their exploitation (e.g. placement, training, vocational education, recognition).
- Combining individual and institutional needs and perspectives:
The Competence Check does not just collect information from the client, but also provides the client with expectations from the AMS (and the Austrian labour market/society at large). This is crucial since the interaction between the two perspectives creates mutual understanding and improves the information on both sides.
- Mediation and referral:
Rather than doing everything on its own, the Competence Check allows the AMS to refer their clients to different experts (e.g. for recognition, exercise or Trial Internship). There also exist feedback loops between these experts and the AMS, which keeps track of all results.
- Combination of workshop setting, individual coaching and native language provision:
At least for Vienna one can say that the combination of workshop setting (for using the peer group), individual coaching (for confidential and customised consultation) and native language provision has proven to be successful.
- Gender/diversity perspective:
At least for Vienna one can say that the gender, but also the diversity perspective (not just considering gender, but also age and language) is very reasonable and allows to cater for the needs of different target groups.

6.2 Transferability

At its core, the Competence Check is a tool for the identification and documentation of competencies. In this core function, the Competence Check is highly standardised, but only with respect to its objectives, namely the deliverables that should be produced (which are defined in the template for the Results Report, as has been described in 3.1). These standards with respect to objectives allow for much variation in conducting this measure.

- Variation of format:
The Competence Check can be conducted either as a training measure (in classes of about 12 participants) or as individual consultation measure (via counselling and support centres). This variation is caused by regional differences: training measures in classes make sense in cities, when group sizes can easily be achieved and mobility is not a major issue. Individual consultation measures are more appropriate in sparsely populated regions, and allow for more individual treatment.

- Variation of contents:
There also exist regional differences with respect to the content. The core of the Competence Check (identification and documentation of competencies) can be combined with various additional measures, e.g. language courses, acculturation classes, placement training, etc. In Austria, each regional AMS can determine which additional measures to include in their Competence Checks. This also allows for dealing with peculiarities of the regional labour market.
- Variation of target groups:
The adaptability of the curricula also makes it possible to cater for different target groups. In Vienna, for example, there exists the distinction between Competence Checks for female refugees, for male refugees aged 18-25, and for male refugees 25+.

In principle, the Competence Check is a rather compact measure (5-7 weeks duration), with potential interfaces to a variety of other measures (e.g. in the context of the Integration Year) and actors (e.g. in the context of the Trial Internship, or for the recognition of qualifications). It is also highly transferable adaptable to various contexts, as the Austrian experience in rolling out this measure has shown.

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