

The Information, Guidance and Counselling System in Austria

Status of the country

Austria is a EU Member State.

Brief description of how the information, guidance and counselling services are organised. Ministers in charge / Umbrella organisations. Networks for different target groups

Career information, guidance and counselling services in the sectors of school, universities, Fachhochschul-courses and adult education are provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK).

The Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour is responsible for the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS). The AMS provides a great variety of career information and counseling services, often in relation with its central task of job placement. AMS careers counseling services are centered around the Vocational Guidance Centres (BIZ).

The social partners run their own information and counseling centres which offer information, counseling and orientation services not only to the organisations' members.

There are also initiatives in the field of special social issues, such as gender-specific career issues or counseling persons with disabilities.

Additionally, there is a range of private services in the field of guidance and counselling. Private organizations are often commissioned with carrying out public contracts including career information, guidance and counseling services by the authorities, also by the AMS.

Professional associations in the field

A national association for guidance does not exist in Austria. The regional association of guidance counsellors "Wiener Verband für Berufsberatung" has been established in 2001 and is member of the AIOSP.

Evolution of the information, guidance and counselling services

Since the Employment Service Act (AMSG) came in force in 1994 the Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS, (formerly Arbeitsmarktverwaltung) was established as a public-law service enterprise and autonomous legal entity outside immediate federal authority, and is responsible for the execution of government labour market policy which also includes providing various career information, guidance and counseling services.

The first BIZ was established 1988 in Linz. By 1994 there were already 32 BIZ, today there are 52 locations throughout Austria.

Since Austria's entry into the EU in 1995 the significance of information about career opportunities throughout Europe has been essentially growing, information centres such as Euroguidance Austria are serving as information platforms for mobility opportunities within Europe.

A significant element of the developments in the last five years was the exponentially growing use of the medium Internet and electronic media which have become common in practically all areas of career information, guidance and counseling services.

Legal framework - Role and status of the guidance counsellors

There are several institutions offering training and further training for educational and vocational counselors (BMBWK, AMS, Economic Chambers, Chambers of Labour, Vocational Training Institute (bfi), St. Wolfgang Federal Institute for Adult Education, University of Klagenfurt).

Teachers and counsellors at the Public Employment Service usually acquire their training as part of their employment and carry out their counselling activities in the framework of their institutions.

Working as a life and social counselor is a regulated trade that is subject to a licence. (Freelance) Psychologists or psychotherapists work in accordance with Psychologists Act and Psychotherapists Act.

Communication between the practitioners

Several internal and open communication platforms.

Most widely used open platform for guidance counsellors: <http://www.bib-infonet.at/>

Qualification of the school counsellors

Starting with secondary school level, students' counselling is an integral part of the school system. The Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK) offers a curriculum for the training and further training of school counsellors; College Course School Counselling at Lower Secondary Schools and Secondary Colleges; Basic training and examinations for public service in psychological student counselling and higher-level school psychology service (school psychology educational guidance); Educational guidance at the federal promotion agencies for adult education.

Extension of the counselling services in your country

- All figures as of 2001, data covers selective fields of counseling and is not comprehensive.
- More than 2300 students' counsellors with relevant additional qualifications in lower secondary schools, special needs schools, pre-vocational schools and secondary academic schools.
- At secondary technical and vocational schools and colleges (BMHS) at least one careers counselor must be employed, larger BMHS must employ 2 or more counselors. (in all ca. 300 schools in Austria)
- Pre-vocational schools: ca 500 careers guidance teachers.
- Tertiary level: 37 psychological students counselors among other employees working in the field of guidance.
- Public Employment Service: 2460 persons employed in the area of counseling and placement services (5/2001)
- Social Partners: 70-80 persons involved in information and counseling tasks besides other tasks.

Sources:

Peter Härtel: OECD National Report – Austria / Career Information, Guidance and Counselling, Services, Developments, Policies. BMBWK, November 2001

Steinringer, Johann and Elisabeth Schwarzmayr: Qualifications of Educational and Vocational Counsellors, IBW Study commissioned by Euroguidance Austria, May 2001.