Adult education and training (synonymous with continuing education and training, CET) includes

- all forms of formal, non-formal and informal goal-oriented learning by adults after completion of an initial stage of education varying in length and irrespective of the level reached in this process.
- Adult education and training/CET involves all vocational, general, political and cultural teaching and learning processes for adults which are controlled within a public, private and economic context by others and/or oneself (definition based on: Ö-Cert, General basic requirements [1]).

Adult education mainly focuses on the acquisition of knowledge and competences which are generally important and are necessary and applicable in different contexts, including professional contexts.

Adult training or CET mainly deals with the acquisition of subject-specific competences and qualifications for the labour market.

Main Goals

The main goals of adult education and training include improving access and providing opportunities of lifelong learning measures for all people, with special consideration of disadvantaged groups, as well as enhancing permeability of the education system. Essential for the attainment of these goals are the implementation of programmes appropriate to adults and the target group as well as high-quality educational counselling and career guidance. Major prerequisites are enhancing the quality and professionalisation of adult education and training as well as safeguarding basic structures of adult education and training.

Institutions and Programmes

The Austrian adult education and training landscape is characterised by a high degree of institutional diversity and an associated wide range of available programmes. Alongside the

- public sector
  - (schools,
  - universities and
  - universities of applied sciences),
- there are many non-profit as well as commercial providers (cf. chapter 8.3) [2].

The spectrum (cf. chapter 8.4) [3] of education and training ranges from

- basic skills education,
the acquisition of qualifications in second-chance education, various subject-specific courses and general-education seminars, to master’s degree programmes at higher education establishments.

Funding


Responsibilities (cf. chapter 8.1) [7] for adult education and training are also distributed widely in Austria: between the public sector (the federal government [8], provincial governments [9] and municipal governments [10]) and the respective education and training providers.

The funding of adult education and training depends on what type of programme is attended. For the largest part, adult education and training

- is funded by the public,
- but also the learners themselves
- and/or the respective companies bear (some of) the costs.

There are also a number of measures (such as the educational leave scheme) for learners to (partially) cover their expenses and financial subsidies (e.g. in the form of grants and tax relief) which adult education and training institutions can apply for as support.

For the funding of the subsidised measures, education and training programmes, and development projects, (mainly since the early 2000s) funds of the European Social Fund (ESF) [11] of the European Union have been used to a great extent. In the adult education and training sector, the ESF provides funds for projects

- aiming at the lasting integration of adults at a disadvantage into society, education and the labour market,
- the reduction of barriers and the creation of equal opportunities, as well as
- professionalisation and quality development.

Support from ESF funds is co-financed by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [4].

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