Responsible Bodies

Adult education and training in Austria comprises a wide range of educational establishments with different objectives and programmes on offer. Their programmes range from

- general education,
- basic education,
- acquisition and extension of qualifications in second-chance education and vocational programmes onto
- management courses,
- personal development programmes,
- higher education and university-level programmes.

Essential for participation and CET success are the development and implementation of a range of services appropriate to adults and oriented towards the target groups as well as high-quality educational counselling and career guidance.

At the federal level, general adult education falls within the sphere of competence of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research but other ministries are also responsible for specific agendas of adult education. At the level of associations, adult education is organised via the Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions, which comprises the ten largest CET associations. University-based and non-university research establishments are another category here. Finally, a large number of NGOs and registered societies are active in non-profit and commercial adult education.

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research: With the support of the European Social Fund, BMBWF- and here in particular the Adult Education Department - finances projects which support quality development and assurance in the Austrian adult education and training sector. The Adult Education Department coordinates and organises cooperation with the St. Wolfgang Federal Institute for Adult Education and the associations and institutions of adult education to safeguard permanent educational work and the enhancement of the quality of educational programmes. The Ministry also played a major role in the development of the Ö-CERT initiative - Quality framework for the adult education sector in Austria. This Ministry is responsible for company-based education and training.

- The St. Wolfgang Federal Institute for Adult Education: A service department of BMB, sees itself as a competence centre for professionalisation, quality development and expert discourse. BIFEB is an innovative partner in national and international networks and projects and, at the same time, a seminar centre for all actors in adult education and training.

- Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection: BMASK is responsible for labour market policy qualifications.
• **Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions** [2] is the working group of ten nationwide umbrella associations of the Austrian non-profit adult education institutions.

• **Federal provinces** [3]: They were involved in developing the Ö-CERT initiative, representatives of all nine provinces are in the steering group of Ö-CERT.

### Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance

- With the **Ö-CERT initiative** [6] – Quality framework for the adult education sector in Austria – a supraregional scheme to recognise quality-assuring measures of educational organisations was created in 2011. This has the goal of ensuring mutual recognition of quality assurance measures of educational organisations between the individual Austrian provinces and between the Federal Government and the provinces.

- The **Austrian Academy of Continuing Education** [7] is a certification and recognition body for adult educators. It aims to professionalise the field of trainers in adult education and training and therefore contribute to improving quality.

- The **St. Wolfgang Federal Institute for Adult Education** [3] focuses, among other matters, on professionalisation and quality development in the Austrian adult education sector and offers a wide variety of training and further training measures for the sector’s employees.

- The **Adult Education Initiative** [8] provides funds to implement educational programmes and creates a high quality standard for these programme areas with quality-related framework guidelines valid nationwide.

- Specific training and continuing education and training programmes for trainers in the field of company-based training and CET and adult education promote the professionalisation of the specialist training staff and therefore contribute to safeguarding the quality of the Austrian adult education and training sector.

### External Quality Assurance

**Ö-CERT** [9] – an overall framework of quality for adult learning institutions in Austria – started in December 2011. It is a nationwide model for the recognition of quality assurance and improvement measures of educational organisations and providers. The Austrian Ö-CERT addresses a diversity of providers of adult learning with many different, often regionally developed, quality labels. Ö-CERT was set up to improve transparency regarding the quality of adult education providers for customers, learners and public authorities. To be awarded an Ö-CERT, providers must hold one of the valid quality management systems or quality assurance procedures listed on the Ö-CERT website. Ö-CERT only recognises quality management systems which include an external audit and have a limited validity period. Apart from having a valid QMS, providers must fulfil general basic requirements concerning organisation, offers, quality assurance and compliance with democratic and ethical principles. Benefits of Ö-CERT include its light-touch administration and the fact that, at only EUR 100, application costs for an Ö-CERT accreditation are low and therefore do not present a financial barrier for small organisations.

The **Federal Institute for Adult Education** [3] plays a major role as a competence centre for adult learning. BIFEB is part of BMB and is dedicated to the principles of lifelong learning and equal access to education. The close national and international cooperation with affiliate organisations of adult education and other research institutions ensures the professionalisation of continuing education as well as the setting of new quality standards in lifelong learning. Their offers in the field of continuing education are especially aimed at teachers and trainers, counsellors, education managers and communication managers and librarians. The contents covered in courses, workshops and university-level courses are delivered by Austrian as well as international experts. In addition new learning modes are introduced. All these measures aim at ensuring and/or raising the quality of adult
education and training in Austria.

BIFEB [3] closely cooperates with the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education [10], who runs a system for the qualification and recognition of adult educators by checking and validating skills according to defined standards by recognition of existing qualifications. A two-part modular curriculum at WBA [10] based on competence profiles leads to two obtainable certificates: certified adult educator and graduate adult educator. The WBA programmes aim to professionalise the field of trainers in adult education and training and therefore contribute to improving quality assurance. In addition, WBA ensures quality assurance and transparency with binding training and CET standards.

A five-semester CET university course on ‘Adult Education/Continuing Education’ (MA) at Klagenfurt University [11] is offered in cooperation with BIFEB [3]. It provides insights into the latest findings of adult learning and CET research as well as the relevant individual sciences, an overview of (inter)national socio-political and educational policy connections and developments, and widens as well as deepens the specialist and methodical competence on adult education questions and problems on an academic basis. With the programme “Professional Teaching and Training”, Danube University Krems [12] also offers a CET option for trainers in company-based training and CET and adult education. All of the mentioned programmes play a major role in the further professionalisation of the training personnel in the adult education sector and therefore contribute to continual quality assurance in this area. This is also in line with the Austrian Lifelong Learning strategy (LLL:2020) [13]. In this strategy the professionalisation of educational counsellors constitutes an important goal. According to this strategy, counsellors, trainers and teachers who are active in educational and career information, counselling and guidance at schools or have been commissioned by Public Employment Service Austria or the public sector are obliged to prove professional qualifications and regular attendance of CET measures.

The Adult Education Initiative [14] is an initiative of the Federal Government and provincial governments to promote basic educational qualifications for adults. It provides funds to put educational programmes into practice and guarantees a high quality standard for these programme areas by creating quality-related framework guidelines valid nationwide. Institutions active in adult education benefit by safeguarding basic programme areas, by having quality-related framework guidelines with considerable scope for designing a target group-specific educational offer as well as equal framework conditions in all provinces.

**Internal Quality Assurance**

The Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institution [2] is the working group of ten nationwide umbrella associations of the Austrian non-profit adult education institutions.

KEBÖ [2] serves as a platform for discussion and cooperation. The quality and sustainability of educational offers provided by the KEBÖ associations is safeguarded thanks to the existence of quality assurance procedures of the individual institutions and the introduction and implementation of the Ö-CERT [9] quality framework for adult education, which has been co-developed by KEBÖ and is valid nationwide. In addition, continual and practice-oriented staff training and CET is provided in the individual KEBÖ institutions and thus guarantees the professionalisation of all full-time, part-time and voluntary employees in educational and organisational fields of activity.

The QA procedures which are used internally by adult education providers and have been recognised as part of the Ö-CERT [9] initiative described above include the following:

- EduQua, a Swiss quality certificate for CET institutions
- CERT-NÖ, a certification procedure for training and CET providers
The **EFQM model**, a quality management system for total quality management, which has been developed by the **European Foundation for Quality Management** [15] (EFQM)

- **ISO 29990:2010**
- **LQW, learner-oriented quality testing** [16] in CET
- **ÖÖ-EBQS**, the quality seal of Upper Austrian adult education and CET establishments (awarded across Austria)
- **ÖNORM EN ISO 9001:2008**
- **QVB, quality development in a network of educational establishments** [17], a quality development and certification procedure
- **S-QS**, Salzburg quality assurance/quality development procedure (only for providers in the province of Salzburg)
- **UZB, Austrian eco-label for educational establishments** [18], distinguishes institutions which fulfil the principles of education for sustainable development and serve as examples for quality and environmental management
- **wien-cert** [19], a quality award for Viennese education providers.

The adult education providers themselves apply **various strategies of internal quality assurance**. As well as ISO certifications, participant surveys and specific quality development approaches for education providers (such as in the form of the above mentioned LQW) have gained in importance.

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