Academic Guidance

Areas of Guidance

The Austrian school system has extensive and differentiated guidance offers. This guidance is provided either by teachers with a corresponding additional qualification or by special experts. The aim of guidance is, generally, to ensure smooth processes at school, to intervene in the event of conflict situations or problematic circumstances, to develop proposals for solutions together with those who are affected and to enable appropriate help and individual support for pupils in case of need. Guidance can concern the following areas:

- **Education and training pathways**: Youths, in particular at the interfaces in the education system, face the challenge of making the right decisions for their further personal education, training and career pathway. A requirement here is that they deal with their own interests, strengths and potential and also with possibilities and offers of school-based and vocational education and training. Youths also need information about specific support options and contact points for guidance. In addition, however, it is also a matter of improving all those personal competences which are essential for preparing young people and making decisions about education and training pathways. Here they are given support by career guidance teachers, students’ counsellors and educational counsellors, youth coaches and also educational psychologists.

- **Everyday life (at school)**: pupils have to deal with many different development tasks. Not all challenges in the family, school or social environment can be managed by the young people alone. Young people need to be accompanied and supported in particular when they have difficulties at school or social difficulties and during developmental crises. Here they can be supported by students’ counsellors and educational counsellors, counselling teachers and tutors and also psychagogues, educational psychologists, mediators (peer coaches and school mediators), school social workers and youth coaches.

- **Learning**: learning and teaching are key elements of school. To ensure that these processes succeed, additional guidance is sometimes needed in addition to dedicated teachers. Pupils need support and guidance in particular if they have learning difficulties and learning crises. They are given these by educational psychologists and learning facilitators.

- **Health**: Learning and teaching succeed when learners and teachers are healthy in a broad sense and feel good physically and mentally. Sometimes there are indications of health problems at school - these need to be recognised in good time. Initial support at school can also be provided for eating disorders, early pregnancy, alcohol abuse, addictions, etc. School doctors and educational psychologists are available to offer advice to pupils in these areas and to give them support. [More] [1]
Staff offering Guidance

In the following, the guidance offers for pupils are described briefly from the perspective of the responsible people [More] [2]:

- **Counselling teachers and tutors and psychagogues** (Beratungs- und Betreuungslehrer/innen und Psychagog/innen, BBP): These provide pupils at all compulsory schools (with the exception of part-time vocational schools) with guidance and support in emotionally and socially challenging development stages. BBP develop individual support concepts for pupils and classes with learning and behavioural problems, also accompany teachers and parents in difficult social situations, cooperate in the design of development-promoting learning conditions, intervene in crisis and conflict situations and prevent violence.

- **Students’ counsellors and educational counsellors**: Students’ counsellors (at compulsory and general education schools) and educational counsellors (at VET schools) provide all pupils at secondary schools and their parents with information on education programmes, entry requirements and possible final qualifications. Cf. chapter 10.3 [3].

- **Career guidance/IBOBB teachers**: In 1998 “career guidance” (Berufsorientierung, BO) became compulsory for all pupils in seventh and eighth grade at lower secondary level. In 2009 the term was extended to “information, advice and guidance for education and work” (Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf, IBOBB). IBOBB teachers support pupils to help them deal with their own career aspirations, provide information on school-based and company-based education and training pathways, indicate possibilities and occupational fields, create job profiles and connect the world of training with the world of work. Cf. chapter 10.3 [4].

- **Learning facilitators at upper secondary level**: Individual learning support (individuelle Lernbegleitung, ILB) is a support measure which became legally enshrined as part of the upper cycle (cf. chapter 12.3 [5]). Pupils who, from the tenth grade on, receive an early warning (cf. chapter 12.3 [5]) can voluntarily make use of an ILB if this is considered appropriate by the instructing teacher and the pupil, and the parents or legal guardians, the form teacher and the school management agree to this measure. Learning facilitators accompany pupils with learning deficits during an agreed period in order to support them, for example, so they can develop individual learning strategies, motivation to learn and personal responsibility for their learning process, develop self-confidence, assess and manage their learning/exam competence and use their powers of concentration or also improve their perseverance.

- **Peer mediators**: Peer mediators are pupils who are trained to constructively resolve current conflicts at the level of pupils. Peer mediation is based on the realisation that conflict settlement is often accepted better by the parties to the dispute if it is carried out by (older) fellow pupils than if adults intervene. Many years of experience show that this creates better cooperation and that the self-esteem of the youths is also increased by the training. For the school, peer mediation provides the opportunity to develop a new conflict and communication culture and therefore help prevent violence. The teachers who are trained to become peer coaches train and support the peer mediators at the school.

- **Educational psychologists**: Educational psychologists are contact partners for psychological questions and problems of pupils, parents, legal guardians and teachers. Cf. “Psychological Counselling”.

- **School doctors**: They ensure that health impairments and needs of pupils at all schools are recognised and that corresponding responses are taken. Cf. chapter 10.4 [6].

- **School social workers**: School social work is available as a low-threshold offer and network for pupils (mainly at secondary schools) but also for parents and teachers with the aim of carrying
out preventive measures. Cf. chapter 10.3 [7].

- **Youth coaches:** Youth coaching (cf. also chapter 12.3 [8]) is an offer of the Social Ministry Service, which is implemented by many establishments throughout the country. The target group of youth coaching includes youths who attend school and also so-called out-of-school youths. Youth coaches advise and guide pupils starting from the individual ninth year of school attendance with the aim of keeping these in an educational establishment until they graduate, if possible, and giving the pupils advice and guidance if they are about to drop out from their educational career. Cf. chapter 10.3 [9].

**Offers for Refugees**

As a consequence of the refugee crisis, a special support and guidance offer was launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research [10]: it consists of “mobile intercultural teams” which are made up of multilingual pedagogues, social workers or psychologists and act as a hub for establishing a regional network with authorities from the social area, aid for children and youths and also the asylum system and aid organisations [More] [11]. Their tasks include

- integration of refugee children at Austrian schools,
- targeted support of schools and teaching staff to help them incorporate and integrate refugee children and youths in the school and classroom community,
- advising parents and supporting the family environment of refugee children,
- prevention of marginalisation and (ethnic) conflicts,
- ensuring adequate (German language) support for refugee children in schools,
- supporting and complementing educational psychology and also other support systems at schools

**Psychological Counselling**

The School Psychological and Educational Counselling Service Unit is a psychological establishment integrated in the school system which is available to pupils, their parents, teachers and officials from the school supervisory authorities to help them in their search for problem-preventing, problem-reducing and problem-solving insights, experiences and their implementation in the respective field. In addition it promotes individual, social and organisational development at school as an area of life by providing psychological information, counselling, support and treatment. The use of all services is voluntary, confidential, unbureaucratic and free of charge for the beneficiaries. [More] [12]

The School Psychological and Educational Counselling Service Unit employs around 150 psychologists, who are available at the 76 guidance centres set up throughout Austria for all people and institutions involved in the school-based education process. The tasks of the School Psychological and Educational Counselling Service Unit are regulated in a decree from 1993 [13] and comprise

- psychological counselling, analysis and expert activity in the problem and question area school (e.g. choice of school pathway, integration, questions connected with special educational needs measures, readiness for school, learning problems, behavioural problems, personal difficulties and crises);
- psychological support, psychological care and psychological treatment (and here – according to the particular possibilities and requirements – psychotherapeutic methods are also used); objective: personality development, prevention, intervention, rehabilitation;
- promotion of cooperation in the area of school;
- psychological research in the area of school;
- cooperation in the planning and coordination of initial, continuing and further education offers in
the school system;
- informing the public about significant psychological findings and their practical application and also about important service offers and contributions of the School Psychological and Educational Counselling Service Unit

**Educational psychologists** are psychologists with a university degree in psychology who are employed at the boards of education as part of a service relationship with the Federal Government. The place of employment is the respective educational psychology guidance centre. Training to become an educational psychologist is done in-service by means of an in-house training programme at the workplace and also a training course which has to be completed.

**Career Guidance**

In Austria youths have many options for career guidance available both inside and also outside the school system.

**Inside the school system career guidance is based on three pillars**

- **Career guidance class (Berufsorientierung, BO class):** This became mandatory in 1998 as a “compulsory exercise” for a total of 32 lessons in the seventh and eighth grade (cf. also “Academic Guidance”). BO can be taught either as a cross-curricular subject (i.e. the curriculum contents are taught as part of instruction in the other compulsory subjects), in project form or as its own subject. Since 2009 BO has been understood more holistically as “information, advice and guidance for education and work” (Information, Beratung, und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf, IBOBB). Here the school has to support pupils in many different ways for education/training and career choice processes. The pupils need to gain practical insights into the world of work and employment in particular via so-called **“real-life encounters”** (i.e. days or weeks of practical work experience, company visits, etc.).

- **Student counselling:** pupils have to be supported in their decision-making process by means of individual information, guidance and supervision (cf. also “Academic Guidance”).

- **Work placements and excursions:** the pupils need to be given as many opportunities as possible to gather practical experiences in the world of work and employment, e.g. with real-life encounters.

**Outside the school system there are many establishments which offer career guidance**

- **Public Employment Service Austria (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS):** AMS provides educational counselling and career guidance for anyone who is interested and in particular for unemployed people. In its own career guidance centres (Berufsinformationszentren, BIZ) extensive information on the world of work and employment is offered. As well as printed brochures and information material, AMS also provides online information databases for various target groups (e.g. matriculation certificate holders, apprenticeship post seekers, people interested in continuing education and training, older people, women). In cooperation with the **Ministry of Education, Science and Research**, every year AMS organises three major information fairs (BeST) where visitors can find out about job, study and continuing education and training opportunities. Information about job offers and working conditions in other European countries is provided by the EURES database and special EURES advisors.
Social partners: The Chambers of Labour and trade unions mainly offer educational counselling and career guidance via their adult learning institutions: the Vocational Training Institutes (Berufsförderungsinstitute, bfi). The economic chambers and their CET establishments, the Institutes for Economic Promotion (Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitute, WIFI) also have their own educational counselling and career guidance centres (Bildungs- und Berufsinformationszentren, BIZ) which offer advice on education and job questions. These offers are aimed at youths and increasingly also at adults and in most cases are free of charge. As well as personal advice, all social partners also publish well prepared printed and online materials on important topics of career guidance, set up informative websites (e.g. the career guidance tool of the economic chambers), participate in job information fairs and undertake special initiatives, e.g. in order to persuade girls to take up technical professions.

The apprenticeship offices, located at the economic chamber in every province, also have to undertake educational counselling and career guidance tasks according to the Vocational Training Act. Their activities in this field mainly concern information about apprenticeship training options.

Career guidance services for the 7th/8th school year are also provided by the Federation of Austrian Industries through its regional groups. These services include seminars and company visits for pupils and teachers in companies of the region, support courses to promote interest in technical and scientific careers, company practice for teachers of career guidance, information about training schemes and apprenticeship places in industry, appearances at various career information fairs, etc.

The focuses of the Austrian Association for Education and Economics (Österreichische Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft) are the interfaces and transitions between school, training and work, career guidance and support in the job-finding process, in particular also in future-oriented and innovative occupational fields, business know-how and entrepreneurship.

Euroguidance Austria is part of the European Euroguidance network. The centre provides information for education and career guidance counsellors on current issues in the field of guidance in Austria and Europe; the Austrian education system; training and further education opportunities in Austria and Europe; mobility options under the Erasmus+ Programme for guidance counsellors; successful European guidance projects.

Many other establishments provide educational counselling and career guidance for specific target groups, e.g. the guidance centres for women and girls set up in the provinces, various information and guidance services for people with disabilities and for migrants.

In Austria there are also an increasing number of private, commercial guidance centres which provide educational counselling, information on jobs and career guidance often in conjunction with job exchanges, training for job applications and other services.
submissions.

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