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Summary

At its core, skills anticipation in Austria consists of the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) (1) Skills Barometer and the forecasting of skills demand undertaken on behalf of the AMS by the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (Österreichische Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, WIFO) as well as other research institutes. The Skills Barometer is an online tool, which provides information on trends in skills demand and provides detailed occupational profiles related to jobs in demand in the labour market. Its output is aimed at young people, careers counsellors, AMS advisers, educational institutions, employers, jobseekers, and policymakers. Skills forecasting consists of a short- and medium-term perspective on the demand for skills in the labour market (using occupation as a proxy measure for skills).

Stakeholder involvement in skills anticipation is underpinned by the relatively high degree of social partnership in Austria. Stakeholders, including social partners, are involved in the process of skills anticipation through, for instance, their roles on the regional platforms and on the Committee for New Skills at the national level. Despite stakeholder engagement and a wide range of information relevant to skills anticipation being available, there is a degree of uncertainty about the extent to which it is used to inform decisions within the education and training system; perhaps more so in higher education than in relation to VET/apprenticeships.

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Overview of the Austrian approach

Skills anticipation in Austria

Key actors

Governance
- Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
- Federal Ministry of Education (BMB)
- Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW)
- Governments of regions (Bundesländer)
- AMS (Austrian PES)

Stakeholders
- Government (and also regional governments)
- Training providers (public/private)
- Employer federations
- Trade unions
- Chambers of economy, Chamber of Labour, etc.

Target groups
- Policy makers (political)
- Education institutions
- Young people
- Adults/jobseekers
- Guidance counsellors/AMS
Types of skills anticipation

Quantitative forecasting
- By the Austrian Institute for Economic Research (WIFO) - at national and regional level
- AMS Skills Barometer
- Regional Platforms
- AMS Standing Committee on New Skills

Skills assessments
- Ad-hoc (often thematic; initiated by Governance/Stakeholder institutions)

Foresight

Other
- None

Dissemination

Channels
- Reports from skills anticipation activities
- Web-based Skills Barometer
- Career guidance (e.g. Career Compass)
- Through stakeholder discussions (thematic; sectoral or regional)

Use
- AMS Standing Committee on New Skills makes recommendations that influence policy
- AMS uses forecasts/Skills Barometer to assist jobseekers
- Chamber of Labour uses forecasts to develop policy related to CVET

Description

There are various activities used to anticipate skills needs in Austria, namely:

- The AMS Skills Barometer, (2) which makes use of different skills anticipation tools;
- Quantitative forecasting tools, including forecasts of employment by sectors and occupations at the national as well at the regional level produced by the WIFO on behalf of the AMS, updated in 2014 for the period 2013–2020;
- Sector studies, in particular involving key stakeholders in workshops (see the Standing Committee on New Skills, or Plattform Industrie 4.0; (3)
- Projecting skills demand at the regional level, such as platforms and partnerships involving key stakeholders that use a range of data to assess future skills needs established in some of the provinces (federal state).
Stakeholders are actively involved in skills anticipation. The Standing Committee for New Skills is a key coordinator of stakeholder participation. The Committee consists of AMS representatives, social partners, business representatives, training institutions and VET experts.

**Aims**

Skills anticipation activities have the following objectives:

- To provide information to assist the AMS to better target skills training and match people to jobs;
- To improve the knowledge base to assist in offsetting the emergence of skills shortages;
- To provide skills information to policymakers at different levels, as well as educational institutions, social partners, workers, job-seekers, and education providers;
- To reduce skills mismatches starting with the provision of secondary education.

**Legal framework**

There is no legal framework for skills anticipation nor are there formal procedures to use the results. There is, however, a legal requirement to produce a list of skills shortage occupations annually that is used to identify occupations for which migrants from outside the EU are eligible (the ‘Red-white-red-card’ system).

**Governance**

There is no single recognised authority responsible for the governance of skills anticipation, though much of the skills anticipation that takes place is under the auspices of the AMS. At national level, the main actors are the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz, BMASK, or Sozialministerium), the Federal Ministry of Education (Bundesministerium für Bildung, BMB), and the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft, often BMWFW). The AMS is responsible to the BMASK.

Respectively, the regional Authorities in the nine provinces (regions/federal states) bear the responsibility for the skills anticipation activities at that level. The AMS also has a governance role in the provinces.

**The role of stakeholders**

The most important stakeholder and end-user of skills anticipation is the AMS. It also commissions studies on skills anticipation for use in assisting jobseekers. In particular, it has commissioned studies and forecasts to gather information on future skills developments and skills demands to help direct them in designing their own training courses and programmes, and also to disseminate findings for wider use.

The involvement of social partners in skills anticipation is, in general, strong. The social partners,
together with the Austrian AMS, are members of the Standing Committee for New Skills. They are also typically involved at provincial and local level skills anticipation activities. Additionally, stakeholders are involved in skills anticipation at the regional level through regional, non-governmental institutions such as the Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammern). Such institutions carry out or commission skills anticipation studies/exercises on an ad hoc basis. Although many stakeholders are involved in the different skills anticipation activities, there is no coordination amongst the different elements of skills anticipation.

There are a wide number of stakeholders engaged in skills anticipation at national and local levels, building on the well-developed system of social partnership in the country. For example, the regional platforms, and the Standing Committee for New Skills of AMS, working at the national level, bring together various stakeholders. The Standing Committee for New Skills can be seen as an example of good practice for involving relevant stakeholders in identifying current and future skills requirements and designing relevant training curricula for some occupations. The stakeholders represented in the Standing Committee for New Skills are responsible for drawing up recommendations to be used at policy level. They also advise on changes in curricula for targeted training programmes, based on the Committee’s knowledge of short- and medium-term skills requirements, taking into account underlying trends in the labour market, such as “green” technologies and skills, globalisation, and the diffusion of new technologies.

**Target groups**

Skills anticipation data are used by a variety of target groups, including AMS staff, individuals using the advisory services provided by AMS, those who are in charge of coordinating education institutions at secondary, upper-secondary and higher levels, as well as the social partners and individual employers. (9) The AMS is primarily concerned with assisting jobseekers find jobs and employers to fill vacancies. As such, educational institutions use skills anticipation results to alter their course provision; nonetheless, there is evidence that the AMS is more relevant to the design and delivery of apprenticeships than to higher education provision. (10)

The Skills Barometer (see section 2.1) was constructed by the AMS, targeting young people making decisions about their careers, careers counsellors, AMS advisers, those working in educational institutions, employers, jobseekers, and policymakers.

**Funding and resources**

Funding for the skills anticipation activities has been mainly provided by the national government. The AMS had an overall budget for research of 4.4 million Euros for 2015, while the budget for skills anticipation activities was approximately half a million Euros. European Social Fund (ESF) funding has been used to only a limited extent, mainly for activities aimed at identifying the skills demands of companies at the regional level and the development of training programmes to address these.
Skills assessment

The AMS Skills Barometer is the most comprehensive skills assessment exercise undertaken in Austria. It is conducted twice a year, providing information on general labour market trends and skills supply and demand. It compiles information from quantitative analyses of job advertisements posted over the previous two years, studies on skills demand, expert surveys, and ad hoc studies on skills demand. The data it collates are merged in a way that gives an overall picture of the current situation with respect to skills supply and demand. The AMS Skills Barometer is structured across three levels:

- Level 1, which includes 24 wider ‘occupational areas’;
- Level 2, which is comprised of 95 smaller ‘occupational fields’;
- Level 3, for which a total of 560 occupational profiles are provided.

Particular attention is paid to skills and competencies, which means that it provides information on important soft skills as well as specialist technical skills. These data are presented in tables that list the present and future importance of the qualifications and skills attached to each occupation.

Another relevant skills assessment exercise is the Standing Committee for New Skills (formed by the AMS), which follows a Delphi-style approach to its work. The Committee’s working groups were created for specific sectors comprising the social partners, education/training institutions, and VET/sector experts (e.g. in construction and building, business administration, chemicals and plastics, electrical engineering/electronics/telecommunications, energy and environmental engineering, commerce, machinery/motor vehicles/metal, tourism, and health). These groups are responsible for formulating a list of current and future sector-specific skills requirements for employees and jobseekers in their sectors. The outcomes are used by AMS for the design of training measures targeting unemployed people.

Some provinces in Austria have made arrangements for stakeholders to work together to consider issues relating to the demand for, and supply of, skills at the regional level. These regional platforms have a wide range of stakeholder involvement, including representatives of social partners, regional AMS representatives, leaders of enterprises and representatives of regional development agencies, all of whom collaborate to develop strategies and employment programmes based on analyses of skills demand and supply in sectors and occupations. General strategies are designed for future training and employment.

Skills forecasts

Forecasting activities consist of:

- A short-term (one year) and medium-term (five-year) projection for employment and unemployment. This activity is based on a database and includes disaggregated estimations according to region, sector, gender, age group, formal qualification levels, and different socio-economic traits;
• The quantitative short-term and medium-term model-based projections additionally provide forecasts at the national level for: (i) a yearly updated projection of the demand for apprenticeships and the supply of apprenticeship graduates made by Synthesis Forschung; and (ii) a predominately supply oriented forecast that provides information on the number of higher education graduates from, mainly, the university sector by Statistics Austria; (13)
• Medium-term (seven years) employment projections by sector and occupations at the regional level (produced by the WIFO on behalf of the AMS, updated in 2014 for the period 2013–2020). (14)

The above mentioned Skills Barometer of the Austrian AMS also provides short- and medium-term forecasts for occupations and broader occupational areas.

Skills foresight

The AMS carries out skills foresight exercises, but mostly on an ad hoc basis related to specific topics, for example, about the future role of women in the labour market.

Other skills anticipation practices

Ad hoc sectoral and occupational studies are also in place. These are commissioned by the AMS, federal Ministries, and regional governments to analyse labour market prospects and skills demands in different fields and sectors.

A regular enterprise survey among more than 7,000 enterprises with at least 20 employees is carried out every two years. This is commissioned by the AMS. The survey collects, amongst other things, quantitative information on the most demanded occupations and qualifications.

Dissemination and use

Use of skills anticipation in policy

The AMS Skills Barometer results are available on the AMS website. When an update of the Barometer is published, it is disseminated to the whole AMS organisation and most employees use these findings to shape their service delivery.

A major output of the AMS Skills Barometer is the Annual Skills Structure Report. This provides information on labour market and skills demand in the 24 occupational areas at Level 1 across every province.

Information from the Skills Barometer is also disseminated through the Career Compass. This is an online tool that gathers information on career advice based on labour market changes. It compiles information from a range of sources, such as the occupational information system, which presents
occupational data related to educational pathways and regularly updated job vacancies. It is linked to the AMS Skills Barometer.

The AMS, as well as its own Career Guidance Service, is one of the main users of the skills anticipation data. The AMS uses skills anticipation data to shape its policies. Although there is no formal process for making use of the data, and AMS staff are not obliged to use it, in practice the Barometer is used by counsellors in the AMS career information centres and also by those in charge of planning training programmes in the provincial AMS offices.

Representatives of social partners and advisory board members do take on board findings of the Skills Barometer as background information for their discussions.

The Standing Committee on New Skills of the AMS disseminates and uses information, namely through summarising workshop meetings, and drawing up conclusions and recommendations with respect to various stakeholders. These stakeholders include policymakers, those responsible for coordinating aspects of the education system, the AMS, and those responsible for continuing education and training provision. (15)

**Target groups’ uses of skills anticipation outputs**

The main user of skills anticipation outputs is the AMS. It uses skills intelligence as a means to achieve their main target, i.e. reducing unemployment. Ministries may also use skills data stemming from the aforementioned anticipation exercises. Other stakeholders, such as social partners, can initiate adjustments or create apprenticeship curricula, based on a number of sources and on skills anticipation results.

Schools are also using skills intelligence, such as the Skills Barometer, to provide support and advisory services to pupils and their parents. Career and guidance services are offered by various organisations (including the AMS, social partners, government ministries and associations) for different target groups ranging from adults in full time education to those in the labour market.
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Endnotes


(2) AMS Qualifications-Barometer. http://bis.ams.or.at/qualibarometer/index.php

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EEPO. 2015. Skills governance in the EU Member States developed by the European Employment Policy Observatory for the European Commission. It is important to note that steering mechanisms to implement changes in the education and training systems differ according to the specific educational sector.


At regional level several different actors cooperate. For instance, in Upper Austria, there is the regional authority itself, the economic agency, the regional office of the Public Employment Service, Cooperation Centres, Chamber of Commerce (Arbeiterkammer), regional Business Associations, regional SMEs Associations, regional trade unions, Regional Management, and Business Upper Austria.

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For an example of how skills data are used to shape the curriculum in new occupational areas see: https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Service/Bildung-und-Lehre/Lehre/Lehrberufe/Branchen/Wie_entsteht_neuer_Lehrberuf.html

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