



**Analysis on the existing coaching programmes on
soft skill in social competence in AUSTRIA**

Partnership

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0. Introduction

While in Greece and Spain, more than half of the young people are unemployed the labour market in Austria is comporting reasonably well. In Austria the latest figures from the EU statistics office Eurostat in June presented a youth unemployment rate of 8.8 percent. This is behind Germany (7.9 percent) at the second-lowest in the EU. In third place, the Netherlands is at 9.3 percent. By comparison, even before the economic crisis, the youth unemployment rate in April 2008 was of 22 percent in Greece and of 22.3 percent in Spain. But also in Austria the trend in youth unemployment is rising. One year ago Austria had a youth unemployment rate of 7.9 percent. In May this year it was 8.5 percent. In the Euro area, the unemployment rate rose for the under-25s within twelve months of 20 per cent in June last year to 22 percent in June this year. Only in Germany, Malta and Finland the rate declined. That is why it becomes more important every day to find measures in order to counteract the continuous rising of the general and especially the youth unemployment rate.

On the other hand and due to the influence of information and communication technologies the world of work decisively and permanently changed. These changes also affected the qualifications required from workers. In addition to technical skills - the so-called hard skills - which form the basis of any professional activity, also non-professional skills or soft skills are becoming more and more important. These are skills and abilities considered to be "key competences" for successfully managing the various tasks in the world of economy of these days. That is why the teaching and learning of these soft skills is becoming more and more important. Also in the Austrian apprenticeship the importance of these skills is recognized since 1999 through a provision in the training regulations.

Even if these are points already known by the labour market the Austrian learning system does not provide sufficient courses on the teaching of soft skills yet. In most of the cases this is only a small part of other bigger programmes foreseen to improve the situation of young unemployed people. Nevertheless there are some programmes and courses offering the teaching of soft skills to young people and making easier their transition from school to work.

1. Presentation of best practice 1 – “Clearing”

1.1 Short introduction to the programme

Transitions and changes are generally for all people - and especially for young people - coupled with "mixed" feelings. The transition from school to work is particularly hard to do.

Especially for young people with educational, health and / or social handicaps, the first after education is a major challenge. Often these young people have little knowledge of their ability and do not really know which profession or employment they should choose.

CLEARING offers opportunities and support to this group of young people in their transition from school to career.

CLEARING is offered where the young people can easily be reached: in the schools. The employees of the CLEARING programme get in contact and support young people in their professional orientation. The needs, interests, strengths and talents are worked out together and a plan for the future is created. This plan shows the implementation of career goals after school and shows the support measures to be taken.

The experience of the past 10 years has shown that the chances of the young people are twice as high as for young people without support.

1.2 Target group

The programme CLEARING is open to all young people with disabilities or special educational needs and those with learning disabilities or social and emotional impairments, especially when they are at the transition point from school to the professional life.

The degree of a learning disability or a social and emotional impairment has to be of at least thirty per cent. CLEARING can be offered to both girls and boys disposing of great cognitive weaknesses. Furthermore, this measure will benefit young people who have behavioural problems in school or will (presumably) have negative notes. These factors have to be confirmed by the school.

Also parents or the AMS (Austrian employment centre) or the training companies can also apply for the CLEARING programme in the name of the young people. In general the age of the target group is from 13 to 24 years.

1.3 Partners

The regional focus of the CLEARING programme is characterized by a close collaboration between schools and the world of business. Particularly the special taking into consideration of special needs of young people by the CLEARING content makes the big success of this programme.

Of course, usually parents and schools are at the beginning of the efforts. If, after the initial information the CLEARING programme is considered to fit, the whole organization can start. Finally, a career choice is a very important affair. Due to a constructive partnership with enterprises in the region, internships can be organized, but also more appropriate schooling opportunities are open to these young people. Furthermore also experts supporting the development of the personality of these young people and advising them in their upcoming employment interviews are included in this programme.

The CLEARING partners in the past 10 years built up a successful network in order to help young people and teenagers in this very difficult transition period that is crucial for their professional life.

1.4 Procedure of “Clearing”

Normally the CLEARING workers get in contact with young people via the schools in the regions. For young people who have finished school, there are different approaches to this service (social workers / , psychologists / psychologists, employment centre etc.).

The CLEARING workers get in contact with young people and parents and the first meeting of information and consultation is either in school or in the advice centres. The parents are informed about the performance and services of the programme and in consultations with the young people (and the parents) a first analysis of the individual situation is developed.

Purpose of this meeting is to speak about the expectations and wishes of young people and to get them in line with the offers of the CLEARING programme in order to agree the way to go. This can be on the one hand the information and mediation to other offers and actions, or this could be the beginning of a care process.

Before the programme starts, an agreement is signed by the CLEARING worker, the young people and the parents. In this agreement are fixed the content of the performances of CLEARING, the liabilities and the use of personal data.

An important part of the CLEARING is to create a profile of skills and abilities. At this point of CLEARING it is not about creating a plan, but rather an analysis of the personality of the young people that should include the following:

- Ideas of work
- Interests / personality
- General intellectual ability
- Social skills
- Practical life skills
- Work ethic
- Physical capabilities and limitations

During this clarification also the type of data collection is documented: How? Who? Persons involved? Using which methods? This method is particularly indicated when the opinions of the various people involved are different, and what are exactly those differences.

1.5 CLEARING map

All documents and notes of the CLEARING process are collected in this map. At the end, the CLEARING map will be a kind of portfolio for the young people and contains the CLEARING report including the profile of interests, the strength analysis and the development plan.

This intensive support can take several months. During this time, there is also the opportunity to do different work experience in companies.

2. Presentation of best practice 2 – “Youth Coaching”

2.1 Short introduction to the programme

To improve the level of education and the labour market opportunities for young people, it is necessary to prevent early dropouts. Especially in such a difficult decision phase concerning the further education and employment situation young people and their parents need professional assistance and help. The programme called „Youth-Coaching“ is based on the principle of voluntariness of all parties and may be used free of charge. Based on the strengths and abilities of young people the goal is to plan the ideal next steps based on the strengths and abilities of young people and thus to enable the successful transition into future careers.

The „Youth-Coaching“ is also a significant contribution to personal and social stabilization of the young people.

Sometimes problems like family problems, addiction, debt, housing problems, etc. impede access to higher qualifications.

Especially young people with an immigrant background who are not so familiar with the Austrian labour market and training opportunities as well as young people with learning disabilities should profit from the „Youth-Coaching“ programme in order to be able to use their potential. It is important to offer a personal future planning to these young people in order to decide about another school, a training measure or a permanent job.

2.2 Target group

The „Youth-Coaching“ programme is foreseen for young people finished their last year of compulsory education (9 years) and for young people up to the age of 19 years who are not yet registered with the Employment Service. Young people with a disability or special needs can use the program up to their 25th birthday.

Particular support will be offered to young people who are at risk of drop out of school or who cannot obtain any school leaving certificate. The „Youth-Coaching“ programme is also accompanying the young people when they are searching an apprenticeship or a working place.

Often it is only temporary problems which lead to a difficult personal situation. But sometimes you need to change structures in the environment and to create opportunities for positive management of these problems or offer special training programs. It is possible that young people only need more time or psychological support to eliminate deficits and strengthen their self-esteem.

The range of supporting measures is very wide and should be completely exploited. With the help of the „Youth-Coaching“ programme a network of family, school, and business should take place. This can help those young people who need help in this time of transition in order to realise a successful personal planning of the future.

2.3 Partners

Young people with low qualifications are often threatened by unemployment. Thus, they may also be vulnerable, marginalized and excluded of society. The cooperation with the parents, therefore, plays an important role in „Youth-Coaching“. Another major partner is the school. Teachers have a direct and very close contact with the young people. Thus they are able to find out young people with weak learning outcomes or increased absenteeism, which can be a sign of excessive demands.

After the school had nominated the young people for the „Youth-Coaching“ programme, all people involved, i.e. the young people, the legal guardians as well as the programme consultants of youth coaching have to give their approval by signing an agreement on the objectives.

In the spirit of a good partnership throughout the whole „Youth-Coaching“ process, the contact with the parents or guardians and the school is to maintain and to further develop positively. If after an investigation of the situation, the next step for the young people is not to go to school anymore, but to opt for a transfer to a working place, also the employment service (AMS), external consulting enterprises and education agencies as well as business enterprises will get involved in the partnership.

2.4 Procedure of „Youth-Coaching“

The „Youth-Coaching“ programme foresees three levels of support:

Level 1 includes advisory initial interviews totalling about 3 hours. This is about the distribution of general information. The primary target group are young people who can use that information for making the next steps relatively independently.

The level 1 finishes by creating a short report called "opinion of a specialist". If more support is required a passage into stage 2 or stage 3 can be planned.

In level 2 a more detailed advice is given to young people who need not only a targeted career guidance but also help with personal decision-making and organization of support services. The completion of the level 2 - after about 8 hours - is also seen as a prerequisite for young people who want to undertake an apprenticeship in the context of "integrated vocational training". At the end of level 2 also a short report called "opinion of a specialist" is dressed.

Level 3 is for young people who need intensive support in the sense of "case management". Based on the individual situation of young people a SWOT analysis and a clearing report (including a development plan) based on an inclination and ability profile are dressed. This plan contains concrete support measures, qualification steps and medium-and long-term goals.

The duration of level 3 can be up to a year. In terms of sustainability of the „Youth-Coaching“ also a follow-up of young people is foreseen. It is also possible to get once again in contact with the young people after this period.

3. Presentation of further best practices

In Austria there is no special course or programme offering the teaching of soft skills to young people who are in between school and a working situation. That is why we analyzed in our first part two programmes especially foreseen for young people in order to help them to overcome the difficult transition from school situation into the labour market. These two programmes analyzed above (“clearing” and “youth coaching”) also offer some elements of “soft skills teaching” but are not that much concentrated on this topic.

In Austria the teaching of “soft skills” is organized in some special courses offered to all kind of people, mostly not distinguishing between ages, personal situations etc. Therefore these special courses will be evaluated separately in the following chapter:

3.1 Courses offered by BFI

Owned by the Chambers of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation, the bfi vocational training institute is the largest educational institution for workers in Austria. Their activities focus on vocational education and (continuing) training for workers as well as educational and occupational schemes for unemployed persons and workers threatened with unemployment.

The objective is to promote the personal and occupational development of the persons enrolled in the courses, by providing high-quality education and training at a reasonable cost. The courses are targeted at the actual demands of the labour market and also provide orientation in a world of change.

The high level of our courses is maintained by means of an internal quality management system, continual further training for bfi employees and an international transfer of know-how. Most of the education and training courses are based on modular systems, so individually tailored and thus highly efficient forms of learning are possible. The bfi is certified according to the international standard EN ISO 9001:2008.

3.1.1 Presentation of the course “The most important things about personality”

This course is about thinking about oneself and about the other person in order to increase social skills. Things that should be improved with this course are: communication, teamwork, dealing with critical situations and conflicts, leadership and influence, responsibility and self-confidence.

This course is foreseen to be organised in 8 units (during one day) and is offered at a continuous basis.

3.1.2. Presentation of the course “Business Behaviour for apprentices”

The target group of this course is the group of apprentices yet working in an enterprise. The apprentice will learn about expectations and standards when dealing with colleagues, business partners or with people in many other situations. He/she will train the behaviour and specialized skills in the areas of greeting, eating, appearance, communication etc. A further training is the teaching of how to behave on different occasions at home and abroad. At the end of the course there will be a common business lunch where the apprentices can show the skills learned and put them into practice.

Therefore the main contents of this course are:

- * Human knowledge: social intelligence
- * Dress Code
- * Business (behaviour and background knowledge)
- * Small Talk
- * Behaviour in work and private life (expectations, norms and rules)

This course is split in 12 units organized on two days and is offered on a continuous basis. At the end of the course the apprentices will receive a course confirmation.

3.1.3. Presentation of the course “Etiquette in business and self presentation”

Nowadays not only knowledge and performances are important for assessing persons in the workplace. The individual image and the convincing appearance are becoming more and more important. The awareness of the impact on others and the resulting behavioural changes contribute significantly to the development of personality.

In this seminar, the participants will train to use body, voice and speech. They will learn how to dress consciously, how to use techniques of self-presentation and how to deal with people and situations. They will develop their personal presentation style in order to have an appropriate appearance when getting in contact with others. Based on their individual potential performance they will improve their situation in their work and personal life, increase their authenticity, strengthen their confidence and increase their persuasiveness.

The content of this course is:

- Perception and experience positions, self-perception and social perception.
Reflecting about which images somebody creates consciously and also unconsciously to the outside?
- Interpreting of body language signals, open and hidden messages of the counterpart.
- Interpretation of their own body language and targeted use. Using gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice as a personal means of expression.
- The persuasive speaking style: be aware of the effect of breathing and voice, voice-optimized applications, what are you saying and things to avoid?
- Modern manners that can open doors in everyday business.
- Rules of etiquette in everyday life and work. Showing positive qualities.
- Dos and Don'ts in the business styling. Learning about the "language" of clothing and business colours.
- Optimal self-presentation - the personal presentation style, tips and tricks for important conversations such as job interviews.
- Reflect on their own understanding of work and the impact on the outside (on clients, coaches and participants of business meetings).

The target groups of this course are persons who intend to improve their self-presentation in professional practice, in meetings, in training or at job interviews. This course is offered as week-end course but also as a course organized on two days during the week. At the end of the course the participants will receive a confirmation of the course attendance.

3.1.4. Presentation of the course “Your appearance please”

Each person necessarily plays different roles in his/her life. The more aware somebody is of his own behavior the safer and more successful he will be in his meeting with other people. This will also help to strengthen the self-confidence and competence in the professional and private lives. The perception and the targeted use of the own role in the behaviour will increase the authenticity in self-presentation.

Using various methods (role-playing exercises and various communications) this seminar offers the possibility to optimize the role of behaviour in different situations.

Identifying certain scenes that are represented by a comedian in a parodistic way, the participant will learn to filter out different roles, to describe and to evaluate. Through the use of role-playing and various exercises the participants learn the conscious handling of the roles in professional and private life. This exercise will contribute to the authenticity and credibility of the respective role and will teach how to gain self confidence and competence.

The content of this course is:

- Roles and diverse role models
- Perception and selective use of role models
- Comparison of various roles and their impact
- Communication Exercises
- Representation of realistic scenes

The target groups of this course are people who want to strengthen their self-confidence and learn about their own role behaviour in work, leisure and family. The course is offered on a continuous basis and is organized during a whole weekend.

3.2 Courses offered by WIFI

The Institute for Economic Promotion – WIFI for short – is the largest education and advanced education institution in the Economic Chamber organisation for its members and their staff, as well as the largest provider of vocational training and advanced education in Austria.

With 31,400 courses and training courses as well as 365,000 participants every year, WIFI has a market share of 20% and is consequently the leader on the vocational further training market in Austria. Its annual sales revenue amounts to EUR 155 million. Nine regional WIFIs and 80 branches offer an extensive spectrum of services: ranging from sector-specific and vocational courses and seminars through sophisticated management training and foreign language courses to specialist academies and university-type courses. WIFI deploys 12,000 top-quality trainers from the business community. They guarantee practical know-how, teaching competence and theoretically sound expertise, thus ensuring that the know-how gained in WIFI can be applied directly in one's profession. WIFI certificates and diplomas are recognised by the business community.

The WIFI is a modern and future-oriented service organisation in the training and development sector that supports Austria's economy. The task is to provide success- and performance-oriented persons with opportunities that allow them to obtain substantiated, global and tried and tested knowledge that is needed to meet the social, economic and occupational challenges of tomorrow. To achieve this objective, the WIFI cultivates the constant exchange with entrepreneurs and human resource managers. Based on this permanent feedback governing the economic process as well as the labour- and occupational markets, WIFI continuously develops innovative educational products that are consistent with the economy's ever-changing demand. Every course year around 20 percent of the WIFI offers are newly developed programmes. The WIFI stands for learning from practice to practice and the gaining of knowledge on a high and internationally recognised level.

3.2.1. Presentation of the course “Successful apprentices”

In addition to the technical content that are taught within the framework of apprenticeship training, the promotion of social competence becomes increasingly important. Only with these competences young people can be successful in an ever-changing world of work. This seminar is dedicated to the needs of apprentices and includes the following:

- Self-confidence
- Good manners and appearance as basis for a successful career
- Polite communication with superiors and colleagues
- Competent communication with adults
- The attitude of successful people (winner-thinking)
- Dealing with internal conflicts during the late pubertal stage
- Mental strength in difficult situations
- Conflict prevention

This course is dedicated to all apprentices who want to continue their education in the field of social competence. The course foresees 8 units of training on one day.

3.3 Courses offered by AMS

The Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) is Austria's leading provider of labor-market related services. AMS matches candidates with job openings and assists jobseekers and companies who turn to AMS by offering advice, information, qualification opportunities and financial assistance. Within the framework of the Federal Government's policy of full employment, the AMS renders a major contribution to Preventing and Eradicating unemployment in Austria. Commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer protection the AMS assumes its role as to enterprise under public law in close cooperation with labor and employers' organizations.

Under the Public Employment Service Act of July 1, 1994, the Labour Market Administration Authority AMV was spun off from the Federal Ministry of Employment, Health and Social Affairs, and the new Public Employment Service AMS was set up as a service agency under public law.

The services of AMS are open to all persons and enterprises seeking advice on a voluntary basis. Services are provided free of charge. The AMS is bound to confidentiality, protection

of privacy and impartiality. Target groups of the Public Employment Service are job-seekers (unemployed job-seekers, employed job-seekers, young people looking for apprenticeships or school-leavers facing a career choice) and enterprises who want to co-operate with the AMS in exchanging information about labour demand and supply, canvassing and filling of vacancies and preventing unemployment.

3.3.1. Presentation of the course “Social Skills License - reflective conversation and certification - social skills at work”

The acquisition of social skills (skills that we need to deal with and in communication with other people) remains in apprenticeships usually omitted or is only taught beside the job. As part of the Social Skills License students follow the courses "how to lead discussions actively and in a comprehensive way", "Communication", "Your impact on others," "Use conflict - Conflict Management", "Team culture" and "Successful negotiation" and other personal development seminars. This reflective discussion summarizes the learning outcomes from these seminars and enhances the effectiveness of the acquired skills. On the way to social skills license the students will develop their personal potential. The students will learn about different forms of communication. At the end they will have basic and key skills qualifications shown by a certification of participation

The target group of this course are people who are interested in the sustainable development of their social skills and in the certificate "Social Skills License" of the European Education and Training Institute of Communications - EAK. This course is offered on a continuous basis a by institutions collaborating with the AMS.

3.3.2 Presentation of the course “Fit for live”

The course „Fit for Live“ is a course dedicated only to young people who want to improve their social competence in different fields. The course is offered on a regular basis and lasts one evening. It is organized by a partner institution of AMS.

3.3.3 Presentation of the course “How to communicate”

The course „How to negotiate“ is a course dedicated to those who want to expand their soft skills and to improve their skills in communication. The course is offered on a regular basis and lasts half a day (Sunday). It is organized by a partner institution of AMS.

The aim of this course is to reach a higher level of communication skills in order to enrich the lives and be more successful not only on a private but also on a professional basis.

3.3.4. Presentation of the course “Perspective workshop”

The “perspective workshop” is a professional orientation course for young people aged between 15 and 25 years. Within six weeks, young people will be able to find out what are their interests and abilities.

Who can attend the workshop perspective?

- young people between 15 and 25 years
- who are applying for apprenticeship
- who have finished compulsory school (it doesn't matter if they finished it positively or not)
- who have given up a continuative school
- who have given up an apprenticeship
- who are unable to find an apprenticeship due to learning insufficiencies or to other reasons

During an average stay of six weeks (20 hours per week), the participants are working on the following objectives:

- Clarification of different training options
- Preparing for a company training place or a job
- Creation of a personal training plan
- Clarify what form of training (apprenticeships, training workshops, vocational integration work training, integrative vocational training) will be appropriate

After an initial consultation about clarification of wishes and ideas, several modules can be attended.

The counselling office is the contact point for all young people who are assigned by the regional offices of the AMS. There, the young people will get informed in a first meeting about all possibilities they have. Then they can decide whether to take the possibility of individual advice or whether they will get into the group action. The modules to be recommended depend on the particular requirements and previous knowledge.

The following modules are available:

Career choice:

- Analysis of their own interests
- Education requirements, knowledge, skills and abilities
- Groups of professions and occupations
- Development of professional perspectives and broadening of perspectives in non-traditional occupations for girls
- Labor market, apprenticeship market
- Rights and responsibilities of an apprentice

Application training:

- Creation of application documents
- Preparing for interviews
- Exploration and observation of the employment and apprenticeship market
- Competence training in professional, social and gender affairs

Jobfinding:

- Search for apprenticeships
- Active job search

Workshops/training:

- Internship in a workshop
- Internship organization in enterprises in the private sector
- Work placement
- Internship accompaniment
- Reflection of internships

Individual coaching:

- Social Education accompaniment
- Clarification of career aspirations, professional and personal requirements
- Interviews with guardians
- Establishing professional desires corresponding to reality

The prerequisite for the participation in the workshop perspective is the application for an apprenticeship at the AMS.

4. Conclusions: SWOT analysis at national level

4.1 Strengths of the Austrian system:

- * The two big programmes “Clearing” and “Youth Coaching” offered to young people in transition from school to the working world both emphasize on the personality and individuality of the young people participating in these programmes. In fact, the preparation time of the programme as well as the time spent with the young people during the programme permit to get to know exactly their personality and all their strong and weak points. In this way it is possible to work exactly on the weaknesses of the young people and to support them in all fields where they need help.
- * The two programmes presented above also foresee the inclusion of not only the young people but also of all persons playing a role in the everyday’s life of them. Therefore all parties – young people, coach, parents, school....- are constantly and closely related with each other and are able to participate actively in the preparation of the best way to enter into the working life.
- * Both programmes also include specialists that guarantee that a high quality standard can be kept.
- * All programmes (also the smaller courses destined at the teaching of soft skills) are profiting from some kind of funding permitting everybody to have access as well to the two large youth programmes as well as to the smaller soft skills courses.

4.2 Weaknesses of the Austrian system:

- * The most important and striking weakness is the fact that there is no single programme or course for young people dealing with the teaching of soft skills. In fact, there are two different possibilities for the young people: if they participate in the “Clearing” or “Youth Coaching” programme, they will be able to prepare their transition from school to working life. In these programmes the teaching of soft skills is only included in a very marginal way but does not constitute an independent part of the programme’s content. On the other hand there are several different courses concerning “soft skills” available for young people. But they are of smaller size, they are not especially targeted to young people and they only deal

with one aspect of soft skills (communication, self-presentation....) as there is no course offering the whole complex of soft skills.

* The bigger programmes “Clearing” and “Youth Coaching” are destined to young people suffering from any kind of deficiency as there are special conditions for being admitted to these programmes. This means that “normal” young people who also encounter different problems when finishing school and entering in the working life do not have the possibility to find support in these programmes.

* During the apprenticeship done within different companies the young people are taught many professional and technical things concerning their future profession, but there is no course foreseen in the training programme dealing with soft skills. Maybe it would be wise to include these topics in the curriculum of every single apprenticeship as soft skills are global and can be useful for all kind of apprentices.

5. Links for further information:

- <http://www.neba.at/clearing/warum.html>
- <http://www.neba.at/jugendcoaching/warum.html>
- [http://www.bundessozialamt.gv.at/basb/Kinder, Jugendliche & Studierende/Clearing](http://www.bundessozialamt.gv.at/basb/Kinder,_Jugendliche_&_Studierende/Clearing)
- <http://www.bfi.at/>
- <http://www.wifi.at/>
- <http://www.ams.at/>