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The underestimated Role of Formal
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**Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik in
Österreich. Oder: Wer „macht“ die
berufliche Bildung in AT?**

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ABSTRACT (MARKOWITSCH/ BENDA-KAHRI/ HEFLER 2008 in *bwp@*
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Debates on lifelong learning (LLL) both on the national and European levels tend to oscillate between two meanings of LLL. On the one hand, LLL is seen as a guiding principle for all different forms of learning at any age ('from the cradle to the grave'). On the other hand, LLL is often used only as a synonym for adult education. The article shows that even if we focus on the narrower meaning of LLL, discussions remain complex. We address questions such as: How are key concepts of LLL reflected in the national discourse on LLL? Why do certain critics see little progress in Austria's LLL policy while others praise it? Why can we not expect any substantial results from Austria's LLL policy coordinated by the Ministry of Education? Does formal adult education really play only an insignificant role as indicated by European statistics? How could a more informed look on formal adult education trigger new discussions on LLL? And finally: How has formal adult learning developed in Austria and which changes can we expect in future? The analysis draws upon a comparative review of LLL policies in 13 European countries and a new survey on participants in formal adult education in Austria.

Die unterschätzte Bedeutung der formalen Erwachsenenbildung in der österreichischen Politik des Lebenslangen Lernens

Nationale und europäische Debatten über lebenslanges Lernen (LLL) pendeln häufig zwischen zwei Bedeutungen von LLL: Zum einen wird LLL als ein Leitprinzip für alle erdenklichen Formen von Lernen in jedem Alter („Von der Wiege bis zur Bahre“) gesehen; zum anderen wird LLL häufig einfach als Synonym für Erwachsenenbildung verwendet. Der Artikel zeigt, dass selbst wenn wir uns auf diese zweite, engere Bedeutung konzentrieren, die Diskussionen nicht weniger komplex werden, und erörtert Fragen wie: Wie werden Schlüsselkonzepte des LLL im nationalen Diskurs wiedergespiegelt? Warum sehen bestimmte Kritiker wenig Fortschritt in Österreichs' Politik des LLL, während andere voll des Lobes dafür sind? Warum dürfen wir keine substantiellen Effekte von Österreichs' LLL Politik erwarten? Spielt formale Erwachsenenbildung tatsächlich eine derart unbedeutende Rolle, wie es die Europäische Statistik andeutet? Oder, könnte ein sachkundiger Blick auf die formale Erwachsenenbildung neue LLL Diskussionen auslösen? Und schließlich: Wie hat sich die formale Erwachsenenbildung in Österreich entwickelt und welche Änderungen können wir in Zukunft erwarten? Die Analyse bezieht sich auf eine vergleichende Beurteilung der LLL Politik in 13 europäischen Ländern und eine neue Erhebung bei TeilnehmerInnen an formaler Erwachsenenbildung in Österreich.

The underestimated Role of Formal Adult Learning in Austria's Lifelong Learning Policy

1 Introduction: The two meanings of lifelong learning

Until now, there has been no overall or systematic scientific discussion about lifelong learning in Austria. As in many other countries, the discussion about education can be found in different disciplines ranging from sociology (e. g. KOLLAND 2005), pedagogy (e.g. LENZ 2003, GRUBER 2007a), psychology (e. g. SPIEL 2006), informatics (e. g. DERNTL 2005) and to political science or economy (e.g. LASSNIGG 2000, LASSNIGG 2007a). Beside the disciplinary borders, there is an additional borderline between academic and non-university research (LASSNIGG 2005, LASSNIGG 2007b, GRUBER 2007b). Recent developments give reason to believe that this situation will change in the near future: The Danube University Krems has established a new department on LLL (see <http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/departament/wbbm/index.php>); a national research network on adult learning came into being based on previous works by JÜTTE (2005) (see <http://www.oieb.at/master.htm?http://www.oieb.at/themen/Forschungsnetzwerk.htm>); three Austrian universities have established a joint doctoral programme in lifelong learning; and the Ministry of Education has started an online journal on adult education (see <http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/>). All of that happened in the last two years.

The political debates on lifelong learning in Austria were and are mainly held in the context of a human capital perspective, which strongly links lifelong learning to economic issues. Although the “European Year of Lifelong Learning 1996” addressed a wide range of topics from “the importance of high-quality general education” to “the promotion of vocational training leading to qualifications for all young people”, the activities in Austria were mainly used to underline the importance of further education and training for economic growth, supporting competitiveness in a global economy, meeting the requirements of an aging workforce and securing employability. In the ‘Memorandum of Lifelong Learning’ (hereafter: Memorandum) the European Commission once more confirmed a broader concept of lifelong learning by stating: “learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts” (EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2000).

In the Austrian consultation process to the Memorandum, a shift of focus to adult education can be observed. This might be because the process was co-ordinated by the department responsible for adult education in the Ministry of Education and the main contributions came from adult education providers or their umbrella organisations (BMBWK 2001, 5 & 9). Lifelong learning in Austria therefore has at least two different meanings, which we can also

find to a great extent in other countries and on the European level (see HOLFORD et. al. forthcoming, 56):

1. Lifelong learning denotes “a guiding principle for all different characteristics of learning at any age” (“from the cradle to the grave”).
2. Lifelong learning denotes “adult learning”.

This situation has continued up to now. Therefore, when the Austrian Ministry of Education contracted an expert group to develop a strategy for a LLL policy, they had to first decide which of the two meanings of LLL should provide the foundations of their common work. Their compromise was to look at the overall education systems, but focus on adult learning, a compromise still visible in the final recommendations document (DONAU UNIVERSITÄT KREMS 2006).

In the following section, we will address the first meaning of LLL, assessing the use of key concepts in the Austrian debate and argue that although it is a valuable approach for developing a more comprehensive and coherent picture of an education systems, it is hard to put it into political practice (Section 2). In the subsequent sections, we therefore set our hope on the second meaning of LLL in looking for a coherent policy in Austria for adult education. By introducing LLL into the historically developed structures and the different political responsibilities that have emerged for adult education, it becomes evident that this field’s complex structures and conflicting political interests means “good governance is hardly achievable” (Section 3). Finally, we focus on formal adult education as the clear territory of the Ministry responsible for education and explore its role within Austria’s lifelong learning policy. We address questions such as: Does formal adult education really play only an insignificant role as indicated by European statistics? (Section 4) How could a more informed look on formal adult education trigger new discussions on LLL? Does formal adult education have the potential to become the driving force behind Austria’s LLL policy? (Section 5 and 6)

2 Key concepts and the discourse on lifelong learning

In the last decade, “knowledge society” has certainly been and still is the central concept in arguing for the necessity of lifelong learning in Austria. At a conference during the Memorandum consultation process in 2001, the general director and national co-ordinator of the consultation process titled his opening speech, “Towards the Knowledge Society: Lifelong learning in Austria” (GRUBER 2001). Consequently, the conceptual linking of knowledge society and lifelong learning has been strengthened. In their 2004 strategy paper on lifelong learning, the Industriellenvereinigung Österreich (Federation of Austrian Industry) introduced lifelong learning mainly by referring to the *wissensgesellschaft* (which they translated “knowledge-based economy”) (INDUSTRIELLENVEREINIGUNG ÖSTERREICH 2005) and the notion is still very strong in the most recent paper on lifelong learning by the social partners (CHANCE BILDUNG 2007).

In contrast, labour representatives explicitly stressed in the consultation to the Memorandum that orientation towards active citizenship and social inclusion should be as equally important as employability (BAUER 2001). Beside “knowledge society” often the terms *lernende gesellschaft* and *bildungsgesellschaft* (learning society) are used, presumably if the economic dimension should be less emphasized. In the 1998 Austrian EU Presidency, the Ministry emphasised that education is not only about employability and promoted the slogan “Education is More” (BMBWK 2001, 10). Education was considered as seeking complete personal development by supporting individuals with education in general knowledge, skills, competence, values, creativity and music. During the 2006 Austrian EU Presidency, education was discussed in a broader context as well: “Education is more than employability, it conveys values and social skills that are required for citizens to become actively involved in our democratic society” (<http://eu2006.bmbwk.gv.at/en/education.htm>). Considering education as more than an instrument for employability obviously shifts towards the idea of strengthening civil society.

Although most political documents on lifelong learning argue that “Education is More” (BMBWK 2001, BMBWK 2005), the main focus within policy and practice is still on employability. The concepts of active citizenship and personal development are often mentioned but mostly unrealised. This ambivalent relation between the two key concept of active citizenship and employability is not only to be found in the Austrian discourse, but also strongly reflects the European Commission’s approach to these concepts where „...the notion of active citizenship deployed in the Memorandum has employability at its core’ (HOLFORD et al, forthcoming, 52).

A comparison of national LLL policies in thirteen European countries noted that Austria is far from being the only country to emphasise primarily, with regard to LLL, the concept of knowledge society: “There are differences in the extent to which the various concepts appear in national policies. The knowledge society features strongly in all thirteen countries. [...] There is less evidence for the learning citizen and learning cities/regions feature least in policies.” (HOLFORD et al, forthcoming, 72). The same report’s general conclusion for 13 countries reads as if it would have been written only for Austria: “Throughout the countries, lifelong learning has been promoted as a key way to address large-scale economic and social changes. In many cases, however, the reality is that it has been implemented with a relatively narrow focus, and that the broader principles espoused within policy discourses have more seldom been followed by concrete initiatives. This narrow focus makes it very hard for all the objectives of lifelong learning to be achieved. However, in many countries, the development of lifelong learning policy – and therefore many specific initiatives – are very much in their infancy.” (HOLFORD et al, forthcoming, 123)

Important influences on and developments for lifelong learning in Austria are actually initiated in other policy areas such as finance, economics or labour policy without any deliberate intentions to shape lifelong learning policy. This makes it extremely difficult to judge from the official policy documents whether an initiative stems from deliberate concern for lifelong learning or from other areas not actively co-ordinated or linked with lifelong

learning policy (see also MARKOWITSCH et al 2007). In the following section, we will better see the reasons for this by looking at the structure and responsibilities for adult learning in Austria.

3 The structure, characteristics and responsibilities of adult learning in Austria

In the following section, we distinguish between the ‘liberal’ adult education with an established history for more than 100 years; the training and further learning opportunities that employer organisations began to provide or at least finance in the 1970s (currently the most important adult learning); the training and further education offers within the active labour market policy that first appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s but become an all dominating policy field by the middle of the 1990s; and finally, the field of formal adult education, traditionally referred to as ‘second chance’ education and developed step by step alongside the expansion of higher secondary education in the late 1960s and in the 1970s. Therefore, the main structure of adult learning in Austria generally encompasses the following categories and providers (see also SCHNEEBERGER/ SCHLÖGL 2001, MARKOWITSCH 2005, LENZ 2005):

- A. vocational and non-vocational adult education (often strictly separated), mainly financed by the individuals and offered by private training providers as WIFI, BFI, Volkshochschulen);
- B. training in enterprises (mainly financed by the enterprises and offered by the enterprises themselves or by private training providers, above all the WIFI);
- C. labour market programmes for the unemployed (financed by the Public Employment Service, known as PES, and offered by private training providers, above all the BFI); and
- D. second-chance programmes, and courses at universities of applied sciences and universities (financed mainly by the Ministry of Education and offered by schools, universities of applied sciences and universities).

Only Category D provides formal training with certificates recognized in the national qualification system. With respect to the number of participants and financing, this is the smallest part of adult learning in Austria and is almost totally independent of the other categories. In addition, the other categories (except A and B) are rather independent from each other due to different financing structures (private, public, PES). The estimated expenditure on adult education in Austria for 2004 is 1,480,000 Euro. This sum is spent by the employers (46 per cent), by the public (20 per cent), by private households (17 per cent) and by the PES (17 per cent) (MARKOWITSCH/ HEFLER 2006). We will briefly characterise the historical-political context of these segments of adult education in Austria before going into detail about formal adult education in the next section.

- A. In 1975, when the only existing law on general adult education was enacted (Erwachsenenbildungs-Förderungsgesetz, Law for Promotion Measures in Adult Education), its main function was to provide a legal basis for the central state's financial support for general adult education. Autonomy of the traditional adult education sector was secured by designating an umbrella organisation, the 'KEBÖ' (see above) to allocate public funds among individual institutions. In 1975, adult education funding was part of the increasing state support for cultural activities in general and political education in particular (e.g. by initiating, in 1972, funding for educational institutions of the political parties). As a result of this law and for historical reasons, a rather complex structure of actors and networks in adult education can be found. Above all, non-governmental organisations are of central importance both in vocational and general further education and training. These organisations include the Volkshochschulen, social partner organisations (e.g. BFI, WIFI) as well as churches. In the past two decades, in addition to the big traditional organisations, a large number of for-profit and non-profit training providers have entered the scene (MARKOWITSCH/ HEFLER 2006).
- B. If one talks about adult education (*erwachsenenbildung*) in Austria one would think first and foremost on short courses for individuals offered by traditional training providers as described above. Training in enterprises (mainly referred to as *betriebliche Weiterbildung*) has neither appeared on the political nor research landscape until very recently. Surveys and studies which revealed the importance of this sector both in terms of investments as well as in regards to its possible effect on the European benchmark on LLL have not yet led to a rethinking of the national LLL policy (MARKOWITSCH/ HEFLER 2003, 2005). This is partly due to the lack of clear political responsibility for training in enterprises. A Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour unit responsible for the enterprise training in the dual system is also in charge of continuous vocational training in enterprises, but this specific policy field has been rather neglected so far.
- C. From the 1970s until the middle of the 1980s, labour market policy has been understood within the so-called "Austro-Keynesianism" framework that primarily fights against unemployment with anti-cyclical enlargement of public investments. Originally, because retraining programs were offered mainly for employed and unemployed in declining occupations (e.g. mining), specific enabling laws were enacted (e.g. in 1968: Arbeitsmarktförderungsgesetz, Labour Market Promotion Act). In the 1980s, programmes were established to reduce long-term unemployment. When Austria joined the EU active labour market policy, the major factor within employment policy became, step by step, a focus on the employability and activation of the unemployed. Therefore, further training of unemployed is crucial. Austria is completely in line with European Labour Market Policy (MISEP 2002) and, as a result, the annual average of people in training measures has increased from 12,000 in 1990 to 49,000 in 2005. Given the number of participants, training of the unemployed has become a major point of reference for lifelong learning in the public discourse. The responsible ministry and the independently organised Public Employment Service, therefore have the potential to become, by far, the most important

actors in lifelong learning policy. However, a broader lifelong learning policy does not influence the labour market policy that shapes actual training.

D. The Federal Ministry for Education, Art and Culture (subsequently: Ministry of Education) is responsible for general adult education as described for Category A. Within the Ministry, the Adult Education Department is responsible for that activity. Another ministry activity in the field of adult education is the provision of second chance programs (normally evening classes) within the federal school system. One must notice that the responsibilities for evening schools is not part of the “Adult Education” department, but belong to a different general directorate (general or vocational) also responsible for education of young people. The responsibility for adult education provided by higher education institutions such as the universities and the *fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) is part of the Federal Ministry for Science and Research.

Considering the limited influence of the adult education department within the Ministry of Education, it is not at all surprising that despite ambitious goals, this department that, since its beginning, coordinates Austria LLL policy has initiatives that remain ‘very much in their infancy’. Without blaming this unit for the current situation, one should ask: Is the Ministry of Education the right body to coordinate LLL policies “to address large-scale economic and social changes”? The preceding section clearly indicated ‘No’ and this section showed that it is even more unlikely to expect a coordinated adult learning policy. This brings us further to the questions: Is there a chance that formal adult education, mainly financed and steered by the ministries responsible for education, is able to become the driving force for lifelong learning?

4 The role of formal adult learning in Austria

4.1 The European figures

In 2005, EUROSTAT published figures on participation in different forms of lifelong learning for all EU member states. Austrian participation rate in formal adult education, i.e. those 25–64 years old, was only 3 per cent and below the EU average of 4.5 per cent (see Figure 1). The participation in non-formal learning activities in Austria (25.3 per cent) was above the EU-average (16.5 per cent). This comparatively good position is mainly because various national statistical offices only gradually introduced a new survey concept. In addition, the new concept covers different learning activities in leisure courses, e.g. sports, music. In Austria, this change in the survey led to a 100 per cent increase in participation from March 2003 (old survey) to June 2003 (new survey concept).

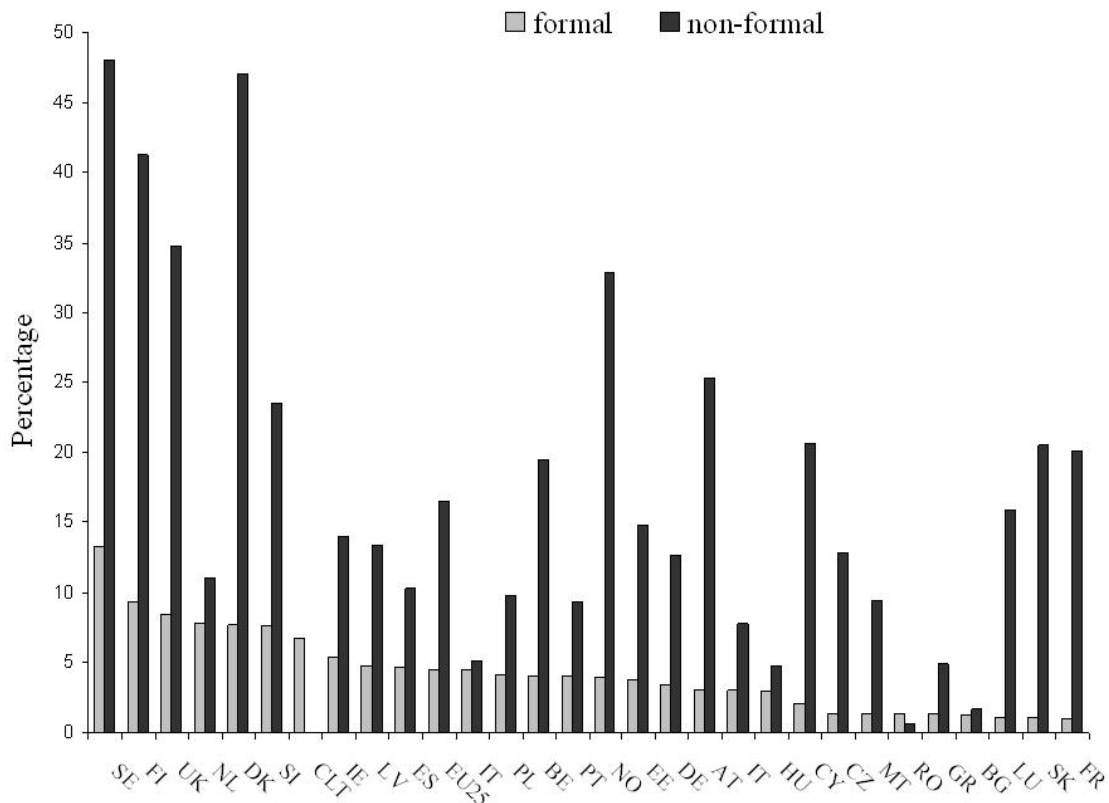


Figure 1: Participation in formal and non-formal learning in the last 12 month (25–64 years old) in Europe (Source: EUROSTAT 2006)

Furthermore, two aspects must be considered when interpreting these figures, which can be best explained by looking closer at the different types of formal learning covered by the survey (see Figure 2). Firstly, the high number of students in academic study programmes as shown in Figure 2 does not represent adult learners in the narrower sense. It includes all students from the age of 25 (until 64) irrespective of the fact as to whether they see their learning as part of initial education or further education. Secondly, Figure 2 does apparently not include certain preparatory courses which led to formal qualifications, because they are only offered as external exams, e.g. the *berufsbereifungsprüfung* (examination providing general access to higher education for skilled workers and graduates of three- to four-year full-time VET schools), the *studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance qualification examination) or the *außerordentliche Lehrabschlussprüfung* (external apprenticeship leave exam). Nevertheless, we would be inclined to see these courses also as formal education.

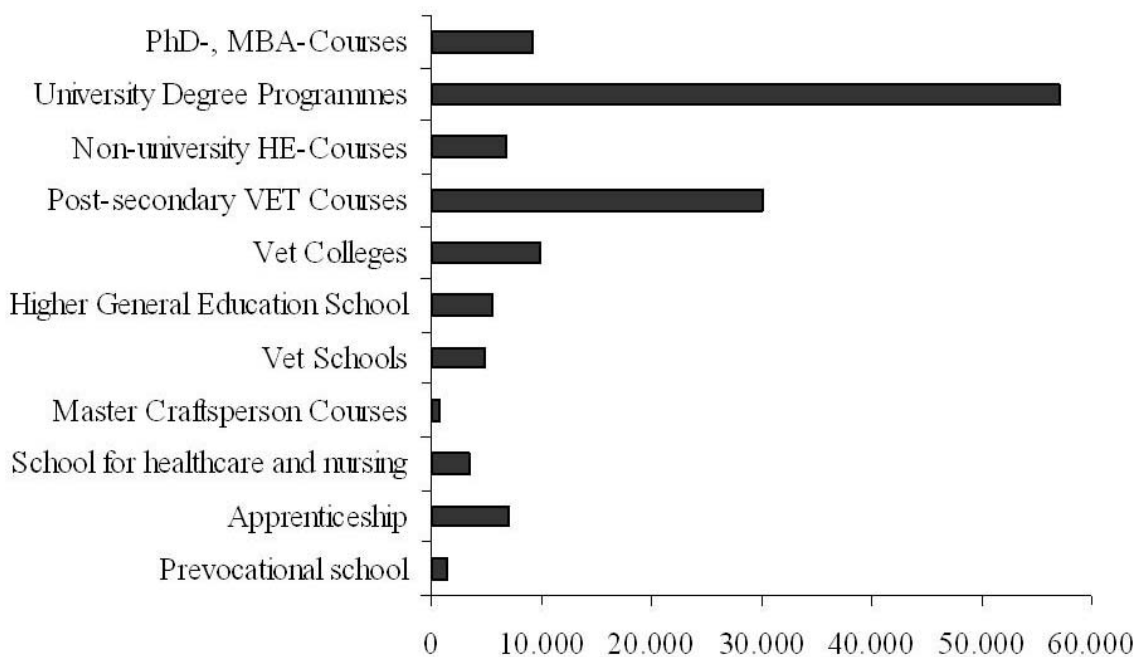


Figure 2: Participation in formal learning in the last 12 month (25–64 years old) in Austria (Source: EUROSTAT 2006)

4.2 Participation rates and ‘learning intensity’

We would like to shed more light on the role of formal adult education by looking at the intensity instead of the participation rate of adult education. Figure 3 illustrates that the very small number of participants in formal education (5 per cent on the basis of those 15 and older) holds more than 25 per cent of all the hours spend on learning (both formal and non-formal). That is to say, in Austria, around 40 million hours a year are spent in formal learning, and around 96 million in non-formal learning. Although this is far from an exact calculation, it confirms what we certainly know about formal and non-formal learning without having been able to grasp it: on the average, a participant in non-formal learning spends 67 hours in learning a year, whereas a participant in a course in formal learning spends 540 hours.

Hours and Participants in formal and non-formal learning

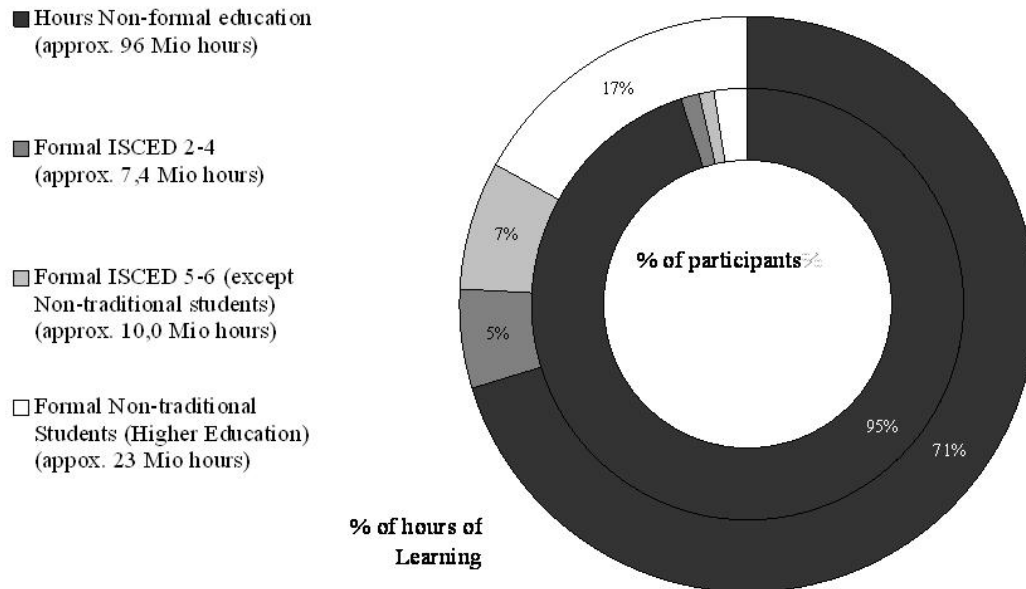


Figure 3: Participants and hours spent in formal and non-formal learning
(Source: EUROSTAT 2006, own estimations)

This comparison of hours spent on learning instead of the participation rates is highly relevant for those interested in an overall picture of formal learning. Only this perspective can reveal the predominant role of formal learning, which otherwise is seen as insignificant. We can conclude that to understand the importance of formal learning in contrast to non-formal or even informal learning, we should look at the intensity and sustainability of learning, instead of restricting our analysis to participation rates.

4.3 Details on providing formal adult learning in Austria

In section 4.1, we mentioned both an overestimation of the overall figures on formal learning in regards to university students and underestimation in regards to preparatory courses for external examinations leading to a formal qualification. In this section, we try to correct this picture by providing a full overview on the different forms of formal adult education in Austria.

Table 1: **Formal Adult Education in Austria (different sources, different years)**

ISCED level	type of provision	students		
		Male	Female	Total
	lower secondary school*	-	-	1,000
	total ISCED 2			1,000
	external apprenticeship leave exam	3,310	3,480	6,790
	academic upper secondary schools	1,480	2,080	3,560
	university entrance qualification examination*	460	540	1,000
	<i>berufsreifeprüfung*</i>	4,700	5,300	10,000
	total ISCED 3			21,940
	university-level courses (post-secondary)	460	380	840
	colleges of engineering	4,460	450	4,910
	college of business administration	930	1,820	2,750
	total ISCED 4			8,970
	part-time FH degree programmes	4,110	3,110	7,220
	master craftsperson courses	2,590	100	2,690
	university-level courses (postgraduate)	770	430	1,200
	university training courses	4,180	4,110	8,290
	adult learners at universities (\approx non traditional students)*	23,620	14,860	38,480
	total ISCED 5–6			58,790
	total all ISCED-levels			90,700

Note: Programmes with less than 500 participants are not mentioned. Therefore, the partial sums do not correspond with the overall sum. For a full list see MARKOWITSCH et al (forthcoming)

Sources: WKO 2007, STATISTIK AUSTRIA 2006, FACHHOCHSCHULRAT 2007, BMBWK 2004, estimations

On the lowest level of formal qualification (lower secondary school, ISCED 2) around 30 providers (mainly the traditional private training providers such as BFI or Volkshochschulen) offer courses for approximately 1,000 adults, many of them with a migrant background. Although the courses are not free of charge for the participants, they are often paid by PES or ESF financed projects.

On ISCED Level 3, the *berufsreifeprüfung* and the external apprenticeship leave exam are the most relevant offers in terms of numbers of participants. Together with the ‘university entrance qualification examination’ they form the most requested external exams in Austria. Although ‘external exam’ means that there is no obligation to participate in a preparatory course, a widespread market of different training offers, again primarily by the big private training providers, has evolved. The number of participants in courses for the *berufsreifeprüfung* has continually increased from its start in the late 1990s to around 10,000 participants currently. At the same time, the university entrance qualification examination has lost its influence, as it offers only restricted access to universities, whereas the *berufsreifeprüfung* is

formally equivalent to the upper secondary school leaving exam, which provides general access to higher education.

The traditional evening schools for adults are offered in the same forms as in the mainstream education for young people and are usually part of the same school. There are 23 colleges of engineering and 14 college of business administration (both at ISCED 4) with about 7,500 adult learners and 8 academic upper secondary schools (ISCED 3) with approximately 3,500 participants. Although the qualifications they provide are also offered as external exams, this opportunity is rarely taken, at least in the case of the vocation-oriented colleges. These schools are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and are free of charge.

With regard to further education, one has to discern between programmes designed for the needs of adults and people employed, and those open in principle to all learners although they do not explicitly address adult learners. The first group has fortunately increased over the last decade with the establishment of part-time *fachhochschule* (FH) degree programmes (bachelor and master) and university training courses (primarily masters programmes), of which the Danube University Krems is the largest provider. Both possibilities only started in the mid-1990s and have expanded to around 7,000 students at FH courses (representing one third of all FH students) and 8,000 students at university training courses. In FH programmes, the usual student fee is 380 Euro per semester; in contrast, fees for the university training courses vary enormously and go up to 5,000 Euro per semester.

The second group includes all university programmes and it is hard to decide who should count as an adult learner. If we use a more appropriate definition of adult learner, by including also those younger than 25, but who have had at least a two-year break in their learning biography after their initial education, we would have to reduce the Eurostat numbers for those in university degree programmes (see Figure 2) from around 60,000 to 40,000.

A specific non-academic training at ISCED level 5 is the so-called master craftsman courses offered in around 135 classes mainly at the WIFI for around 2,700 persons. The particular occupations covered in the courses attract mainly male participants.

4.4 Different systems of formal adult education

The above overview of different offers of formal adult learning shows that although this sector has fewer participants than other forms of adult learning and initial educations, it is highly differentiated. This is not only true with regard to the qualification levels, but certainly also to the target groups, the costs and financing, the providers, etc. Reforms within formal adult education have to carefully consider these differences. In Table 2, we suggest distinguishing at least three different systems or paradigms within the ‘system of formal adult education’ which we have partly mentioned in the proceeding section and which we try to describe further in this concluding section before addressing current and upcoming reforms.

Table 2: Systems of formal adult education in Austria

The school system	The higher education system	The system of external exams
is characterised by highly rigid schedules, a low degree of modularisation, learning in classes, a high importance on attendance and rather low requirements with regard to the autonomy of learners. The duration of study is pre-determined and counselling is not really required.	is mainly organised in a flexible course system, moderately modularised, attendance is not that relevant, but requirements with regard to the autonomy of learners are high. The duration of study is predetermined, some counselling is necessary because of choices of subjects/courses.	is a prototype of the learning outcome driven system in which the assessment of learning outcomes is independent of the way skills and knowledge have been acquired. This allows, in principle, for a very high flexibility, but also requires outstanding engagement and autonomy by the learner. The duration of study is highly individual, counselling needs are intensive.
e.g. evening courses at colleges of engineering, colleges of business administration or academic upper secondary schools	e.g. university-level course or university training courses	e.g. external apprenticeship leave exam, university entrance qualification examination or <i>berufsberechtigungsprüfung</i>

Source: a full version of this table can be found in MARKOWITSCH et al (forthcoming)

We do not claim that this structure of adult education programmes in Austria is applicable to other countries. Furthermore, we are aware that the lines drawn between the systems are not always that clear. For example, it is hard to decide whether the part-time FH degree programmes fit into the school or the higher education system, as they show features of both. Nevertheless, what is highly relevant by looking at the Austrian formal adult education system is that reforms have to consider these different systems. Promoting modularisation (to better address the need of adult learners) has a completely different meaning for the schools system than for the systems of external exams. Modularisation has been started only recently by pilot projects at evening schools, whereas it is taken for granted in preparation for external exams. Recognition of prior learning can be handled quite easily by the systems of external exams, whereas currently there is no chance to achieve a higher education degree without attending a course.

5 Outlook

From this tour d'horizon of the Austrian LLL policy and the different views on formal adult education, we can now conclude the following.

- A LLL policy that aims at economical and social change has to shift its current focus and responsibility from educational policy to labour market policy (training for unemployed) and training policy in enterprises.
- The formal adult education system does not have the means to influence the European benchmark for participation in LLL, but if it could develop a coherent policy and insight on learning at all qualification levels and the different needs of learners, it could demonstrate a clear vision of LLL which finally also affects other areas.
- Furthermore, the formal adult education system can function as the main ‘elevator’, ‘lifting’ learners from a lower to a higher qualification level (as envisaged by qualification frameworks) and provide new learning (and income) opportunities.
- Finally, innovation within the formal adult education systems can be expected both in cooperation between the different systems (school, higher education and external exams) and the relevant providers as well as of the mutual exchange of elements in the respective systems.

Much homework needs to be done before we can even think of such a coherent picture of formal adult education: Gaps in education provision have to be closed (e.g. introducing a formal qualification for basic education and between the levels of lower secondary school and upper secondary school); better integrated supply of private training providers and school providers (e.g. integrating the *berufsreifepprüfung* into the VET colleges) must be developed; the evening schools should be modernised by promoting modularisation and providing individual pathways; and most importantly, regular part-time study programmes be provided at the universities.

Some of this work has already started in several governmental working groups and we can expect improved supply in the coming years at least in the non-university sector. For the reform of university courses to the needs of adult learners, we probably have to wait on further implementation of the Bologna Process towards the European Higher Education Area. Progress towards a coherent picture of formal adult education and LLL policy will be recognizable by how far the diagram at the website <http://www.bildungssystem.at/> (which presents the Austrian education systems) has broadened its overview to include adult learners.

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