

Further training is a concern of both the company and the employed person and is usually implemented individually without state influence. To a major extent, the range of further training possibilities is oriented towards the requirements of the companies with the labour market policy playing a supporting role.

The increasing importance of further vocational training makes it necessary to reconsider the schools' curricula. The reasons for necessary restrictions in initial education are manifold e.g. the danger of overstrain in time and contents.

The idea of „general education“ is to be fundamentally reviewed. A modern vocational training depends, among other things, on the instruction of key qualifications, e.g. the application of information technologies, the intensification of foreign language instruction and the introduction of autonomous school regulations. Further vocational training can then directly relate to the basic knowledge acquired at school.

2.1.7. Vocational Counseling

A basic prerequisite for an efficient educational policy is the detailed and comprehensive vocational orientation of youth as well as information for adults on the broad range of further training possibilities (by means of data banks and central information facilities).

The choice of education and vocation still seems to be based more on current individual interests and preferences than on long-term vocational prospects. Free education orientated on private interests with subsequent free re-training means an inefficient use of available resources from an overall economic and social point of view.

Improving the vocational guidance for graduates from high-school continues to be a topical task, though some progress has been achieved by expanding study and vocational counselling activities (e.g. fairs) as well as of career guidance centers. The vocational counselling centers should be increasingly oriented also toward the needs of adults seeking advice.

The social partners have developed a concept for restructuring vocational and educational counselling for the first grades of secondary and higher secondary education. The working group of the Ministry of Education should advance its implementation.

2.1.8. Apprenticeship Training

The dual vocational training certainly deserves merits for the integration of young people into the working world. It has definitely contributed, in past decades, to improving the skilled labour supply for the enterprises and to keeping youth unemployment low.

However, reforms are necessary also in this field: Only a broadly defined initial vocational training that concentrates increasingly on the instruction of social and communicative skills which become of greater importance will be

able to contribute to Austria's competitiveness and motivate further vocational training.

Apprenticeship training should be a demand-oriented training in more broadly defined trades. The social partners, therefore, agreed on establishing „Gruppenlehrberufe“ (comprehensive apprenticeships teaching several vocational skills which enable the graduate to work in various related occupations) with various technical disciplines.

Moreover, the number of apprenticeships of higher technical grade is to be increased. Young people must be better motivated to start apprenticeships in vocations of a high technical grade and apprenticeship places in these fields should be particularly promoted. Among other things, the social partners agreed on a promotion of apprentice workshops. In vocations with a less demanding apprenticeship the rate of drift-away is often very high and retraining for other fields is not unusual.

The possibility for those having finished an apprenticeship to attain university entrance level through adequate study courses („Berufsreife“) represents a major step toward upgrading the skilled worker image.

In the field of dual vocational training, not only qualitative improvements are required but also acute quantitative problems have to be solved. There is an urgent need to counter the consequences of a decreasing supply of apprenticeships, a problem aggravated by the decreasing possibilities of access to the vocational education sector.

In view of the broad distribution of competencies for matters of Austrian and foreign young people, the Advisory Council regards overlapping cooperation as indispensable in order to develop and efficiently implement the necessary countermeasures: An initiative „Training of Youth“ involving all public authorities and the social partners should be created.

2.2. Working Time and Employment

Regulation of working time represents an instrument of economic policy that is to be used to improve competitiveness, satisfy the interests of the employed and attain the maximum employment effects. The employment effects of the three basic forms of regulation of working time discussed – i.e. decoupling production time and working time, adjustment of working time to production fluctuations and reduction of working hours – cannot be generally classified as negative or positive. Neither more flexible working times nor reduction of working hours automatically create new jobs, but they can contribute to increasing or maintaining employment. To achieve the optimum employment effect it is necessary to agree on specific solutions, taking into account the specific problems and framework conditions.

The recommendations of the Advisory Council thus concern general assumptions of the effects on an overall economic level (2.2.1-2.2.4) on the one hand and on a branch-specific level (2.2.5-2.2.7) on the other hand.