



**Günter Hefler, Jörg Markowitsch**

based on case studies provided by

Günter Hefler and Daniel Bacher

# SP 4 – Country Report Austria

Status: Version 1.0 (Last revision: 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2008)

Contact: [guenter.hefler@donau-uni.ac.at](mailto:guenter.hefler@donau-uni.ac.at)



Danube University Krems

October 2008

# 1 Introduction

In Austria, little attention has been given to the role of formal adult education within the training policy and the more general human resource development (HRD) of enterprises. Moreover, formal educational programmes, explicitly designed for employed people, are rare and have been offered rather recently in Austrian higher education. Traditionally, adults who followed the *Zweite Bildungsweg* (second-chance education) ‘went back to school’ in their evening hours to compensate for problems with their earlier education. A significant part of offers for formal adult education are provided in evening classes in regular schools responsible for initial education.

From the employee’s perspective, participating in formal education seems to limit the educational process because of lack of available time and personal energy. From the employer’s perspective, workers involved with formal education programmes are less available and flexible. So, why should enterprises be concerned with formal adult education? Do enterprises develop a specific attitude towards formal adult education in contrast to initial education or non-formal education?

In the following report, we address the significance of formal adult education from the perspectives of employers and employees in Austria, based on case studies in eight Austrian enterprises, conducted within the Sub-project 4 (SP4) of the Lifelong Learning 2010 project in the EU’s Sixth Framework Programme. Enterprises are selected in two sector families (see Markowitsch & Hefler 2008a). By using different channels (for example, educational providers, contacts during previous projects, etc.), 31 enterprises were contacted, leading to eight enterprises that fulfil the selection criteria and whose representatives are prepared to participate in the project. Interviews were conducted between April and June 2008. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed. (For further details on the methodology and the interviews, see Markowitsch & Hefler 2008a, b). Interviews with ten participants (eight men, two women) could be arranged. Table 1 in the Annex provides an overview on the enterprises surveyed and Table 2 provides an overview on the participants and their programmes.

In a first step, we discuss adult participation in formal learning in Austria. Here, we stress that the frequent use of a specific characteristic of the Austrian educational system – the opportunity to receive formal qualification by passing official examinations, while preparing elsewhere for this examination – outweighs the limitation of Austria’s still rather conservative approach towards ‘second-chance’ education. Next, in Section 3, we use two approaches to analyse patterns of formal adult education within enterprises. The one approach focuses on the integration of formal adult education within enterprises’ training policies; the second illustrates the adjustment between the interest of the individual learner and the enterprises. In Section 4, we analyse in more detail the creative ways to use the system of external examination for transforming some internal enterprise training to reflect the enterprises’ needs but also provide formal qualifications for employees. In our conclusions in Section 5, we discuss whether enterprises in Austria will become more active in the field of formal adult education. Will we see the emergence of ‘qualification-providing enterprises’?

## 2 Formal Adult Education and Its Relevance for Enterprises

In Austria, a comparatively low 2.3% of all employed<sup>1</sup> people between 25 and 64 have participated in formal adult education within the past year. This is clearly below the EU-25 average (4.0%). Countries with high participation rates in formal adult education such as Sweden, Finland or Great Britain include three times as much of their adult workforce. The 2.3% represents roughly 74,000 people, who constitutes a natural starting point for emphasising the relevance of formal adult education in enterprises. This can be seen only as a rough estimate, because there are reasons for over- and under-estimation. On the one hand, many courses that prepare for external examinations are normally not regarded as formal education. On the other hand, many traditional students finish their fulltime programmes while working and thus do not count as adult learners since they have not interrupted their initial education pathway.

Participation in formal adult education is nearly equal for men and women<sup>2</sup> and concentrated in the age groups of 25–29 and 30–34 years. People in their late twenties and early thirties make up for nearly three quarters of all identified participants. The employed participants in formal education predominately seek degrees at ISCED 5 and 6 levels.

Despite the comparatively small proportion of employed people participating in formal education, we know that formal adult education is a significant proportion of all learning activities. For Austria, we have estimated that roughly a quarter of all learning activities (teaching hours only) takes place through formal adult education (Markowitsch, J., Benda-Kahri, S. & Hefler, G. 2008, pp 8–9). For enterprises, this means that a significant part of their employees' learning activities was within formal adult education.

Formal adult learning opportunities in Austria are highly differentiated with regard to the qualification levels, target groups, the costs and financing, the providers, etc. Reforms within formal adult education have to carefully consider these differences. Markowitsch, J., Benda-Kahri, S. & Hefler, G. 2008 (p. 12) distinguish three main systems or models within 'formal adult education':

*The school system* is characterised by highly rigid schedules, a low degree of modularisation, learning in classes, a high importance on attendance and low requirement for autonomy of learners. The lengthy of study is pre-determined and counselling is not required. Examples include evening courses at colleges of engineering, colleges of business administration or academic upper secondary schools

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the definition applied within the Labour Force Survey.

<sup>2</sup> In many European countries, there are major gender differences, e.g. Sweden or Denmark.

The *higher education* system is mainly organised in a flexible course system, moderately modularised, attendance is not that important, but has high requirements for autonomy of learners. The pre-determined length of study includes some necessary counselling on choices of subjects/courses. Examples include university-level courses or university training courses.

The *system of external exams* is a prototype of the system driven by learning outcomes in which leaning outcomes are assessed independently of the way skills and knowledge have been acquired. This allows, in principle, for a very high flexibility, but also requires the learner to be very engaged and autonomous. The highly individualised length of study requires intensive counselling for participants. Examples include the external apprenticeship leave exam, university entrance qualification examination or *Berufsreifeprüfung*.

Table 1 provides an overview of participations in the main offers of formal adult education in Austria.. Below we provide more detailed description of the offers structured by ISCED levels.<sup>3</sup>

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

<i>ISCED level</i> /type of provision	Students		
	Male	Female	Total
lower secondary school*	-	-	1,000
<i>total ISCED 2</i>			<i>1,000</i>
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
<i>total ISCED 3</i>			<i>21,940</i>
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
<i>total ISCED 4</i>			<i>8,970</i>
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
<i>total ISCED 5–6</i>			<i>58,790</i>
<i>total all ISCED-levels</i>			<i>90,700</i>

Note: Programmes with less than 500 participants are not mentioned. Therefore, the partial sums do not correspond with the overall total. 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 the bfi vocational training institute 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

<sup>3</sup> This description follows (Markowitsch, J., Benda-Kahri, S. & Hefler, G. 2008)

participants, they are often paid by PES or ESF financed projects. Given the situation on the Austrian labour market, people without a formal degree (*Hauptschulabschluss*) face a high risk of long-term unemployment and social exclusion. Most participants are unemployed while attending the course (and it's almost impossible to identify those employed in small and medium enterprises).

On ISCED Level 3, the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (vocational matriculation examination) and the 'external apprenticeship leave exam' have the most participants. Together with the 'university entrance qualification examination', they are the most requested external exams in Austria. Although 'external exam' means 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.<sup>4</sup> The number of participants in courses for the *Berufsreifeprüfung* has continually increased from its start in the late 1990s to currently around 10,000 participants. Furthermore, the 'external apprenticeship leave exam' has recently become much important. Today, this alternative involves more than a fifth of all apprenticeship examinations. Both unskilled workers and those workers seeking retraining use this alternative. Skilled workers who have shifted to other sectors (with better payments or job opportunities) could gain the status of a skilled worker in the new field. For the preparation courses, participants must pay fees (most generally between approximately 1,000 Euro and 4,000 Euro but sometimes even more, depending of the provider and type of offer).

The traditional evening adult education offers the same curriculum and shares the same school as the mainstream education for young people. 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 qualification certifications they provide may also be acquired through external exams, this opportunity is rarely taken, at least in the case of the vocation-oriented colleges. The Ministry of Education supervises these schools, which are free of charge.

With regard to further education, one has to distinguish between programmes designed for the needs of adults and employed people, and those that do not explicitly address adult learners but are open, in principle, to all learners. Over the last decade, the number of adult education programmes has fortunately increased with the establishment of part-time *Fachhochschule* (advanced technical college, 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 cost up to 5,000 Euro per semester.

When considering all university programmes, it is difficult to decide who should count as an adult learner. If we use a more appropriate definition of adult learner, by including also

---

<sup>4</sup> Educational offers preparing for this kind of external examination should be regarded as formal even though official statistics do not include them as formal education. In principle, any institutions (e.g. also an enterprise for its employees) could offer preparation courses.

those younger than 25 years, 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 craftsperson courses offered in around 135 classes mainly at the WIFI (Institute for Economic Promotion of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Austria's largest CVT provider) for around 2,700 persons. The courses cover occupations that attract primarily male participants.

### 3 Patterns of Support/Non-support Identified for Formal Education in Enterprises

In Austria, most representatives of the enterprises participating in the survey clearly understand the Austrian definition of formal adult education, and they can distinguish between non-formal and formal educational offers. Four of eight managers describe activities fitting the project aims; in two cases, the managers' definition is clear in principle, but they would also regard as formal education, courses that lead to certain international certificates (for example, in project management or the use of certain IT-programmes).

*For me, we speak of formal continuing education [formale Weiterbildung], when a course leads to a certificate, acknowledged by the state, e.g. an apprenticeship, an university study – it includes any certificate that is acknowledged by a public authority. [C3-M-1: 352-354]<sup>5</sup>*

Only two cases had no clear or a distinct understanding of formal education.

*You see, [among the notion of formal adult education] I would have included all the offers of seminars, and I would have differentiated them from the informal learning, you see, when a team leader explains a work process to one team member, education in the workplace, without class room, you see... (C6-M-1: 453-473)*

Most representatives of the enterprises appreciate formal adult education's unique features not typically shared by non-formal offers. Among the features noted, the most prominent include the access to further educational offers and achieving permission (defined by different laws) to conduct certain tasks. Moreover, the systematic approach within formal educational programmes were emphasised.

*I see the main differences in the degree of initiative and commitment required for attending formal programmes, and if there is commitment, if they say 'I want that', then I will get much more by that [kind of education], then in all those cases, where I do a course, even when it is offered by an university. You see,*

---

<sup>5</sup> We use the following codes. The first two digits mark the enterprise case (1-8) (e.g. C[company] 3). Then next two digits mark the type of interviewee (M= General Management, Personnel Management; L=Line Management; P=Participant) and the number of the interviewee within the enterprise (e.g. P2= interview with participant 2 in the particular enterprise). Finally, the line numbers of the German transcript of the interviews are quoted.

*there are eight people in the course and four take an interest and the others pay little attention – so, [non-formal] courses are not of much use, their sustainability is comparatively short. [C5-M-1:477-483]*

On the contrary, two enterprises clearly state that formal adult education and certificates of any kind do not play any role for their organisation or their sector in general.

*You see, a certificate is no importance for us, only the content – so if someone finishes a training without a degree, but can handle the content of the seminar, this is fine with us. [...] On the shop floor, among blue-collar workers, who are by far the majority of our employees, qualification is not of any significance at all. A baker could turn out as the most talented forklift driver and someone holding an apprenticeship degree in logistics not able to perform at all. So, with and without qualification, if two do the same job, then both get the same pay check and none is better than the other – so I would summarise our experience. [C6-M-1, 483-497]*

Managers' views on the advantages of formal adult education compared to non-formal training activities include:

- *Overcoming shortage in qualification:* When sector-specific regulations require formal qualification, formal adult education is the only internal way to overcome these shortages. Promoting formal adult education of existing employees, well adjusted to the organisation, could be preferable to hiring new, qualified staff on the labour market.
- *Duration and setting:* Formal adult education provides a framework for substantial personal development. The processes could develop previously unavailable personal strength and competences not likely to be achieved by any other way of support.
- *Providing in-depth knowledge in demanding fields:* Especially in highly demanding fields (for example, mathematical foundations of engineering, foundations of petrol chemistry), only formal adult education could provide enough support for internalising competences. For demanding fields, many courses last one and more years and require a steady training. The same intensity could not be achieved easily by non-formal courses.
- *Adjusted, coordinated educational program:* Formal programmes are expected to offer a coordinated succession of educational input. Overlapping contents, which is usually a problem when adding a number of short courses, should be avoided.
- *High overall investments of time:* Individuals are prepared to invest large amounts of spare time to follow formal programmes. A similar workload is unlikely to be realized within non-formal (especially, internal) training programmes, which are often totally within the working hours. Even when the enterprise accepts that some working hours may be used for formal adult education, the overall investments of private time remains, so that the general efficiency is still much higher than in many non-formal programmes.
- *Acceleration of competence development:* Because formal programmes often require a high workload in a comparatively short time, they accelerate individual development processes. Individuals would not be prepared to take a similarly high number of non-formal lessons in comparably short periods.
- *Social capital of the study group:* Employers value the social capital available for their employees in non-formal, part-time programmes. As the learning groups stay together for longer periods, social relationships could become more stable.

- *Comparatively low participation costs:* Many formal adult education offers are provided for no or comparatively low tuition fees: Fees for one semester are below the average participation costs for a one-day, non-formal training course.

In the next section, we analyse, in a first step, the extent that individuals or the organisation initiate formal adult education. We further explore how the chosen educational opportunities interplay with the work place. Subsequently, we analyse enterprises' policies towards formal adult education. Finally, we bring together the employee and the employer perspective.

### 3.1 Who has taken the initiative to participate in formal adult education?

The eight small and medium enterprises reported approximately 80 employees participating in formal education. In most enterprises, participation in formal education is not explicitly reported, so the numbers rely on the personal knowledge of the general and personnel managers.

In most participation cases (Cases 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, see the overview in the annex), the initiative to participate in formal adult education comes from the individual employees. The impulse occurs in distinctively different contexts:

- The decision to participate is an individually chosen strategy to enhance the basis for job development on the *existing workplace*, clearly connected to organizational aims (three cases).
- The decision to participate and the employer's commitment to support the formal adult was central to a *retention strategy*: Here, formal adult education should lead to new positions, which were created for employees who have expressed their intention to leave the enterprise.
- Participation should expand the options for seeking a new position elsewhere, even when plans to leave the enterprise are not yet defined.

In all cases, where participants take the lead, they go for university degrees (in a university of applied studies). Decisions to attend higher education while continuing work for the present organisation are especially made by the individual employee.

In two participation cases, the initiative clearly came from the employer (Cases 3 and 4). For one case, an employee's career prospects shaped his preparation for the vocational certification examination. Already during the educational programme, he was promoted to project manager. The same company has established an in-house programme, preparing for exceptional access to the final apprenticeship examination. Participant 4 agreed to participate in this programme.

Finally, in one case, the initiative came from the job steward, who identified, exclusively for the organisation's employees, a publicly funded programme to provide a specific preparation course for the apprenticeship leave examination.

To sum up, the initiative for formal education comes more frequently from individual employees than from their employer organisation. However, one should not underestimate the importance of formal adult education initiated by enterprises. Even



when only a small number of enterprises methodically offer formal adult education (in our survey Enterprise Cases 3 and 7), the self-created, educational opportunities include a comparatively high number of participants. From 70 participation cases reported, three quarters occur in enterprises with a project-based approach.

The participation cases in Austria all share a number of basis features: In all cases, formal adult education started during the current job assignment and not before. All participants focus on their professional career; therefore, adult education is a supplementary initiative, not the focus of their activities. Moreover, in all cases, the chosen field of education overlaps significantly with the current job position or tasks of the present employers. Only the origin of the initiatives divides the participants into two groups, as already described above.

### **3.2 How do enterprises support formal adult education?**

In the following section, we discuss enterprises' support for their employees that participate in formal adult education. For analytical reasons, we describe as a distinct unit the elements and patterns of cultures of supporting adult education. However, support for formal adult education is understood as one strain of the general HRD and training culture. In this paper's outlook section, we will return to the integration of adult education support within the general HRD and training culture.

Among the eight enterprises surveyed, the following methods of supporting employees' formal adult education have been identified.

- Expressing open agreement with employee participation,
- Expressing (symbolic) acknowledgement for individual participation,
- Rearrangement of work schedules, especially in cases of shift work,
- Reducing the number of long hours,
- Temporary reduction of salaried time,
- Reducing responsibilities (for example, in project management),
- Granting educational leave,
- Allowing the use of the enterprise's infrastructure for education purposes (for example, computers, printers, copy machines, workshops),
- Agreeing to the use of enterprise cases for educational purposes,
- Actively using project work within the educational programmes for of the organisation,
- Devoting salaried time for participation in formal adult education,
- Covering fully or partially the fees for educational programmes,
- Granting rewards for completing a program,
- Offering increased wages for completing a program,
- Offering a promotion connected to the successful completion of adult education.

Enterprises do not only differ on the ways of support, but, certainly also, by the intensity of support, which could be rather different. For example, salaried time devoted to formal adult education can vary in intensity between:

- 1) accepting days off to prepare for exams,
- 2) accepting much of the time needed for the thesis or final projects as salaried time,
- 3) devoting regularly a (small) number of working hours to the programme (for example, each Friday, two hours),
- 4) accepting a substantial part or even all course hours as salaried time (while preparing exercises and examination in free time).

Normally, the adjustments of timetables and salaried time devoted to the programme are interwoven and may also change according to educational programme requirements:

*Of course, I got the support needed, you know, we had lectures on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, so that you need a day of vacation each Friday. So, there was no way out of informing the enterprise of my educational plans. However, there was an important side effect also, insofar that I received later the opportunity to write my master thesis on the topic of the internal calculation scheme of the whole group. Therefore, I was allowed to use the information available and I was also supported by the chief accountant of the whole enterprise group. As a result, when writing my thesis, I was allowed to use some salaried time, even on a rather informal basis, when I come in on Saturdays to do internal research for the project. I used the punch clock to signal that I was here. It was a gentlemen's agreement. [C5-P-3 392-400; 417-422]*

No enterprise surveyed accepted all learning activities – including activities outside the course rooms – as part of the paid working hours.

*[Question of salaried time devoted to the program] So, there is no final decision on this question now [...] but in principle, when I am off and I'm participating in the course, that's salaried time. [339–344] You see, conflicts arise with regard to salaried time. The MBA programme has four days of teaching a month, all in one week, Wednesday till Saturday, that means that you use three working days a month, and of course, I have to do work for the programme also between the sessions. I mean, at the moment, that is not the problem, but at a later stage, when it comes to writing a thesis and providing the required business plan, then, it might become stressful. [C1-P-1; 234–234]*

Accepting that most course hours could count as salaried time seems a comparatively rare phenomenon. This offer occurred either in cases of 'formal training projects' initiated by the enterprise or where participation is both an incentive and a strategic investment in a highly valued individual employee. In both cases, participation hours in formal adult education were treated as non-formal training offers in the same institutions.

However, the question of how much salaried time is allowed for formal adult education could become a matter of discussion in enterprises that extensively support learning activities. One participant argues that during his programme, he had no option but to reduce all his other company-financed, training activities; however, he is not allowed to use salaried time, normally devoted to training, for his formal studies.

*You see, for all other employees, the normal ones, who are not engaged in formal studies, they are allowed to book their training hours as salaried time. If they are out of office and attending a seminar, the time is accepted as part of their salaried time. For me, I have many subjects [in my regular program] which has clearly a value added for the enterprise. For me, it would be a great help to use the one, two weeks of salaried time, normally offered to all employees for training. [C8-P-2]*

Therefore, while the level of support for formal adult education is likely to be determined by an organisation's commitment to HRD and training in general, particular approaches for adult education have to be addressed properly.

From an analytical standpoint, even more important than differences in the intensity are differences in the regularity and the degree of formalization of support offers. However, among the cases surveyed, no enterprise had *general procedures for the support of formal adult education in place*. Even enterprises strongly engaged in formal adult education (Enterprise Cases 3 and 7) have no formalised approach that would provide rights to employees. Even when support is provided regularly, employees have no basis to make claims other than a reference to an informal culture currently in place.

Apart from the issue of current support offers, another dimension is crucial for sketching *cultures* of support for formal adult education: Do enterprises openly create opportunities for formal adult education? And, if they initiate formal adult education offers, why do they prefer formal offers compared to non-formal offers.

Offering and/or actively developing opportunities for formal adult education is a clearly distinct organisational activity. We would expect enterprises that greatly value formal adult education to take the initiative. At the same time, enterprises may take initiative only in exceptional situations or to use a particular opportunity (for example, receiving public support). So while we expect that further development of support for formal adult education would logically include enterprises actively initiating offers, we clearly see that enterprises could occasionally offer formal adult education without having an ongoing policy.

Among the case studies, three enterprises

- initiate the participation of individual employees in existing programmes (Cases 1, 3, 7),
- create opportunities for formal adult education on a project basis (Cases 6, 7), or
- stably provide, in-house or in cooperation with an educational institution, formal adult education for their employees (Case 3).

In two cases (Cases 3, 7), taking the initiative to offer formal adult education follows their general support policy. However, for two other enterprises (Cases 1,6), initiating formal adult education is more an exception than a consequence of the general support for employee learning.

When enterprises offer formal adult education, they most likely apply regulations similar to those for non-formal training offers. For any further discussion on patterns of support or non-support, a crucial issue seems to be whether or not enterprises initiate formal training offers. Therefore, we devote Section 4 to the examples identified in Austria.

### **3.3. How do individuals and enterprises interact in the field of formal adult education?**

In the most common cases in Austria,<sup>6</sup> formal adult education in the workplace differs from both employer-offered, non-formal training opportunities and from training

---

<sup>6</sup> For the argument that formal adult education means different things in social reality, see Hefler & Markowitsch 2008a.

opportunities that individuals decide to join in their spare time. In formal adult education, employer and employees depend more on each other than in most other forms of educational offers. The outcome of formal adult education has much more of an impact on the relationship between the organisation and the individual than in most other training. The following section summarises the most significant findings from the case studies.

From the perspective of the employer organisation, differences between formal adult education and non-formal training offers include:

- The employer proposes most non-formal training offers. In formal adult education, most proposals come from individuals. At the same time, rejecting a request for support for formal adult education may be a more substantial burden for the employer-employee relation than in other training activities.
- While employees could be obliged to participate in on-the-job, short-term, non-formal training opportunities, formal adult education seems to require high levels of employee commitment.
- Formal adult education offers include a broad array of subjects. Therefore, enterprises need a clear vision, where they choose to support formal adult education and to not accept offers exclusively customised for their organisational needs. At the same time, formal adult educational offers could also be highly adjusted to the enterprises' actual needs (see Section 4).

From an individual's perspective,

- Most of the formal education offers (even when part-time) require at least some support (for example, time flexibility).
- Given the efforts and time normally required for attending formal adult educational offers, an individual employee may depend more on at least some overlapping of working and learning than in cases of shorter non-formal offers.
- For many participants, because formal adult education leads to a higher level of educational achievement, the expected impact on the individual career become more crucial than in most non-formal educational offers.

Table 2 provides a first integrative overview on the interplay of organisational cultures of support for formal adult education and the origin of the initiative for formal adult education. To describe levels of support, we use a preliminary typology for support cultures for formal adult education (for the description, see the annex and Hefler & Markowitsch 2008).

*Table 2 Integration of enterprises' support for formal adult education and the starting point of the initiative to participate*

Total reported cases in enterprises on level of support culture		Starting point: individual	Starting point: organisation
Individual participation	Participation in projects		

Ignorance		(22)		P 8/C 6*
Acceptance	2		P 2/C 2	(P 1/C 1)*
Individualized support	24		P 5/C 4 P 6/C 4 P 7/C 5 P 10/C 8	
Principle support				
Principle support including projects	1	25	(P 9/C 7)*	
Systematic integration	2	20		P 3/C 3 P 4/C 3

\* Cases not typical for the enterprise support culture for formal adult education

For a first summary, we conclude:

- More supportive approaches to formal adult education clearly increase participation, even when individuals are primarily the source of the initiatives.
- When enterprises intentionally made formal educational offers adjusted to the requirements of the enterprise, a significant number of employees could participate.
- General cultures of support/non-support for formal adult education could not predict participation levels in all cases. At least 3 out of 10 participation cases do not fit in the general picture of support for formal adult education in the organisation. Therefore, for a complete understanding of formal adult education in enterprises, exceptional cases should be analysed further.

## 4 Creating Offers for Formal Education within Enterprises

In Austria, the legal and institutional framework for formal adult education provides opportunities to initiate enterprise-based training projects that lead to formal qualification. Enterprises, or educational institutions that provide service for them, could customise formal adult education similarly to the organisation's non-formal training projects. While criteria for a successful completion are set externally, enterprises could ask for any adaptation that may suit their interest.

There are two main options: Firstly, enterprises may initiate programmes that prepare for external examinations. Here, preparation for exceptional access to the final apprenticeship examination (*Außerordentliche Lehrabschlussprüfung*) is fundamentally important.

Enterprise Case 7 introduced, as a project, a course leading to the exceptional access for final apprenticeship examination in mechatronics. An 18-month programme exclusively offered part-time training in mechatronics to a group of blue-collar production workers.

The training content was shaped by the enterprise's preparation for a steep increase in automatisisation, necessary to improve productivity and remain competitive in a global market. The decision for a training offer that leads to formal qualification reflects the enterprise's nature of work and their general personnel policy building on high retention rates and lifelong employment. Participants are mainly trained blue-collar workers, who have passed at least a one-year internal training and are experienced in the enterprise's highly specific production techniques, which require much tacit knowledge not available outside the organisation. Regionally, their comparatively rare competence was only valued by their family owned employer with a clear tradition of long-lasting employee relationships. Increasing automatisisation includes reducing the number of core production workers, but accepting an expanded need for qualified technical assistance.

*We have done that this way, we have studied our strategies and have defined our requirements, that is, we need well-trained employees, who are prepared to support projects in automatisisation and optimisation of processes, so that all that matters face less resistance, and we have identified the legal requirements. We are looking for someone who could do that form of training, which was not really well-established at that moment, a part-time course in mechatronics, so we have decided to do it ourselves and to built up a cooperation with the Vocational College [X] and [another regional training provider] and the Chamber, and we have done everything needed, to provide our people with the opportunity to do an apprenticeship in mechatronics. [C7-P-2: 613-622, also responsible for that project as manager]*

By training production workers as technicians, the enterprise demonstrates available options on the internal training market. Also, the enterprise provides a substitute for the competences made redundant by the automatisisation, by offering a training that leads to a formal qualification acknowledged within the applicable collective agreement, valued within local industries. Thereby, the management expects to calm down employee opposition and gain more support for the planned innovation projects.

In Case 3, the enterprise responded to skill shortages on the regional labour market by permanently providing preparation courses for the apprenticeship exam in chemistry. Given the overall strict regulations for chemical industries, the enterprise needs qualified staff. For its production lines, the enterprise hires unskilled workers (but normally qualified in another profession). All production workers are invited to participate in an internal programme, offered by a retired supervisor, which prepares in a two-year cycle for the examination. (The same supervisor also provides introductory training for all new employees, so that they are all familiar with his educational approaches). The apprenticeship programme forms the backbone of the general personnel recruitment strategy:

*So, any new employee is employed within a public sponsored programme for half a year. During that time, he is offered a structured training on the job. Then, on a second level, we offer a regular apprenticeship training. Next, we have so many employees, who hold no qualification in chemistry, so that we offer our part-time programme preparing for the apprenticeship examination that take 1.5 to 2 years, and work is fairly intense. For each course, we generally have five people who make it until the end, who pass the exams, and we are highly interested to get as many qualified workers as possible. (C2-M-1-287-300)*

Because the comparatively small company only has a small number of trainees at one time, three enterprises in the same industrial area cooperated to reach an efficient number of participants. Lessons are offered once a week. The participating workers are excluded

from their shifts. Two-thirds of the lessons are within working hours. However, participation requires learning at home in the spare time. All costs are covered by the enterprises. The enterprise strongly promotes participation and successful completion of the external examination. The management grants successful participants the status of qualified workers, which implies a substantial wage increase and better opportunities for career development. Providing on-site preparation programme has several advantages. Internal provision allows schedules to be more easily adjusted to the shift work. Moreover, the programme could be adapted to the actual conditions in the enterprise.

Secondly, institutions of initial formal education, in particular higher education institution, could offer adapted, customized programmes for enterprises. While requirements for the intended formal qualification has to be followed (for example, the total workload), any details could be specified in an arrangement with the enterprises.

In Case 7, the enterprise has asked a profit-oriented institution of higher education, co-funded by a regional public university together with a number of business partners, to customise an MBA programme for the needs of the enterprise. The decision to set up the programme for 22 employees was connected to plans for a new site in Russia.

*We have prepared 22 employees of our company for the challenge [of going abroad], and they received a certificate, we have achieved this by cooperating with [a local provider of MBAs, attached to a public university]. That has involved a tremendous high amount of work for our employees, who have participated in training on Fridays and Saturdays, alongside their normal working hours, Friday afternoon and all of Saturday. [...] However, we harvest the fruits now, we can send the participants of the programme to Russia, the courses have strengthened their interest in working abroad. [...] [Participants] know today, why the programme was worth the efforts. It is not the content alone, and it is not the certificate, it is the confidence that they could become successful in a foreign market – we see that now, when we speak with our employees who react to our internal job announcements. (C7-M1:373-388)*

For the comparatively large and risky project or similar projects, the enterprise intends to set up a pool of qualified employees. The programme aims directly to encourage and motivate the participants to spend time abroad or accept projects that are more challenging. The content and the programme timetable were adjusted to the needs of the cooperation. The programme was substantially co-funded through public resources.

Naturally, the creating a new formal education programme requires a minimum of prospective participants that share comparable needs for formal adult education. Collecting a group of 10–24 possible participants within the own workforce, who are able to participate at the same time, is certainly an unlikely event for small or medium enterprises. However, by cooperation (for example, within qualification networks) the required number of employees could be achieved even by comparatively small enterprises. Moreover, public funds are more likely to be available for formal educational projects (particular on ISCED 3 Level) or for joint projects of several small and medium enterprises.

## 5 Conclusions and Outlook

Among enterprises participating in the study, the majority clearly understand formal adult education as distinct from any other form of non-formal training. The criteria for formal education emphasised activities leading to an acknowledged qualification within the hierarchy of educational certificates set by the initial educational training system. Study participants could also name distinctive advantages of formal adult education. Disadvantages are also expressed but are regarded mainly as acceptable costs to gain advantages. The most crucial costs were efforts to adjust work plans (shift plans, in particular) and reduced availability of those workers who were studying.

The enterprises could set up training projects that lead to formal qualification, if they experience a need for employees with certain certificates or if they intend to attract participants for their programmes by openly offering transferable skills and competencies. Moreover, they could openly encourage employees to participate in existing formal educational offers as part of their personnel development strategy, at least, in individual cases.

In cases, where individuals primarily take the initiative for formal adult education, the enterprises' overall culture of human resource development (HRD) may shape the reaction to the education initiative. In enterprises where HRD is important, individual goals to attend formal adult education may be openly supported, even when the enterprise would not have preferred that particular educational pathway. The enterprise supports transferring the educational programme to the workplace and also sees the support as part of their employee-retention strategy.

Studying the cases revealed the needs for further analysis and conceptual work. In particular, we need a more detailed understanding of the individual's perspective on the patterns and motives for participation in formal adult education. Here, we are interested in all aspects that could distinguish formal adult education from other forms of adult education. Clearly, any typology of participation events needs more cases and cases stemming from different countries. Therefore, such a typology will certainly be among the challenges of the comparative report in SP4.

Moreover, case studies demonstrate clearly that support or non-support for formal adult education is embedded in the more general training culture, human resource strategy and culture of workplace learning. Important factors for training cultures and HRD policies are also likely to influence approaches towards formal adult education. Therefore, we expect to find a link between well-developed cultures of workplace learning and training. However, perhaps enterprises with weak support for training, but strong support for formal adult education, close the gap resulting from the lack of a developed training policy. We are also interested in approaching the question, why there might be enterprises with well-developed training cultures, who do not support formal adult education. We will return to all these challenges in the comparative report.



## References

Acemoglu, D. & Pischke, J.-S. (1999) Beyond Becker: Training in Imperfect Labour Markets. *The Economic Journal*, 109, F112-42.

Backes-Gellner, U. & Mure, J. (2005) The Skill-Weights Approach on Firm Specific Human Capital: Empirical Results for Germany - Working Paper.

BMBWK (2004) Education and Training 2010. Austrian Interim Report on the Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the EU Work Programme. Available at: [http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/12627/abb2010\\_zwben.pdf](http://www.bmbwk.gv.at/medienpool/12627/abb2010_zwben.pdf) (Accessed 30th January 2008).

Fachhochschulrat (2007) Statistische Auswertungen. Available at: [http://www.fhr.ac.at/fhr\\_inhalt/00\\_dokumente/Auswertungen\\_2005-06\\_Web.xls](http://www.fhr.ac.at/fhr_inhalt/00_dokumente/Auswertungen_2005-06_Web.xls) (Accessed 15 October 2007).

Hefler, G. & J. Markowitsch (2008a): Sheet for the presentation 'The 'qualification providing enterprise?': Employers and employees perspectives, ECER Göteborg, 12.th of October 2008.

Hefler, G. & Markowitsch, J. (2008b) To Train or Not To Train - Explaining differences in average enterprise training performance in Europe - a framework approach. IN Markowitsch, J. & Hefler, G. (Eds.) *Enterprise Training in Europe - Comparative Studies on Cultures, Markets and Public Support Initiatives*. . Vienna, Lit.

Markowitsch, J., Benda-Kahri, S. & Hefler, G. (2008) The underestimated Role of Formal Adult Learning in Austria's Lifelong Learning Policy. *Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik online (bwp@)*. [http://www.bwpat.de/ATspezial/markowitsch\\_etal\\_atspezial.pdf](http://www.bwpat.de/ATspezial/markowitsch_etal_atspezial.pdf)

Markowitsch, Jörg & Hefler, Günter (2008a) Guidelines for interviews for case studies in SP 4 (Final Version 3.0 - 25th of January 2008) - Working Paper provided for the Lifelong Learning 2010 Project. IN KREMS, D. U. (Ed.) *Krems, Donau University Krems*.

Markowitsch, Jörg & Hefler, Günter (2008b) Guidelines for interviews for case studies in SP 4 (Final Version 3.0 - 25th of January 2008) - Working Paper provided for the Lifelong Learning 2010 Project. IN Krems, D. U. (Ed.) *Krems, Donau University Krems*.

Markowitsch, Jörg & Hefler, Günter (2008c) Theoretical, methodological and statistical background for SP 4 (Version 2.0 - 24th of January 2008) - Working Paper provided for the Lifelong Learning 2010 Project. IN Krems, D. U. (Ed.) *Krems, Donau University Krems*.

Statistik Austria (2006): *Hochschulstatistik 2004/05*. Wien.

WKO (2007) *Abgelegte, bestandene und nicht bestandene Lehrabschlussprüfungen nach Bundesländern und Sparten im Jahr 2005*. Available at: <http://wko.at/statistik/Extranet/Lehrling/Lehrling2005/Pr1.xls> (Accessed 15 October 2007).

## Annex: Overviews and note on research methods

*Table 2: Overview on the Case Studies*

Enterprise Case	Sector	year of foundation	Number of employees (2007)	
			local site	group
1	IT-services (Computer Games)	2001	40	-
2	business consultancy	2001	11	-
3	Chemical Industries	2002	74	-
4	broad activities, in engineering, currently mainly in the automotive sector	1972 (but significant change in 1985)	190	-
5	Electrical equipment	(1945)	120	340
6	Logistics	2004	200	900
7	Chemical industry, plastics	1956	430 <sup>7</sup>	700
8	Consultancy in engineering and technical project management	1990	170	-

Source: Own Description

*Table 2: Participants and chosen programmes*

Participant case	Enterprise	Sex	Age-group	Programme	ISCED (programme)	Content	Duration/months	Fees (whole program)	Type of provider
1	1	f	25-29	MBA	6	general management knowledge	24	approx. € 30000	private university
2	2	f	30-34	Part-time programme – University of Applied Science	5	management – business administration	48	€ 2880,-	public university
3	3	m	25-29	preparation craft master examination	5	chemistry	24	approx. 4560,-	non-profit training organisation (employer org.)
4	3	m	40-44	Preparation courses for exceptional access for final apprenticeship examination	3b	chemistry	12	no figure available	provided internal
5	4	m	25-29	Part-time programme – University of Applied Science	5	engineering	24	no figure available (more than €6000,)	private university (German provider)
6	4	m	30-34	Part-time programme – University of Applied Science	5	sales	24	no figure available (more than €6000,)	private university (German provider)
7	5	m	25-29	Part-time programme – University of Applied Science	5	engineering	24	€ 2880,-	private university
8	6	m	30-34	Preparation courses for exceptional access for final apprenticeship examination	3b	logistics	12	€ 2240,- (covered fully by local Public Employment Service)	non-profit training organisation (employee org.)
9	7	m	35-39	Fulltime programme – University of Applied Science	5	engineering	48	€ 2880,-	public university
10	8	m	25-29	Part-time programme – University of Applied Science	5	IT-management	48	€ 2880,-	public university

Source: Own Description

<sup>7</sup> Several enterprises on one local site, connected by the general manager and owner of the group and partly shared functions. Agreement on the inclusion of the case had been made originally on the basis of an isolated enterprise out of the local group, merged on the same site.

*Table 3: Classification of Training Cultures*

Type	Description
<i>Ignorance</i>	The enterprise takes no initiative to promote participation in formal adult education. The enterprise shows little support for formal adult education, which plays no role, so far, in the enterprise.
<i>Acceptance</i>	The enterprise takes no initiative to promote participation in formal adult education - In individual cases, the enterprises offers some forms of support, mainly with regard to work schedules and the permission to use actual work activities also for educational purposes.
<i>Individualised Support</i>	The enterprise supports individuals to participate in formal adult education, but does not set up projects – Support is agreed to mainly on an individual basis, is substantial at least in some cases and includes financial support and/or devotion of some salaried time to the programme.
<i>Principled Support</i>	The enterprise offers support for formal adult education in several ways. Support is agreed to within a general policy (even when concretised on an individual basis), is substantial at least in some cases and includes financial support and/or devotion of some salaried time to the programme – at least sometimes, formal adult education is initiated by the enterprise.
<i>Principled Support including Projects</i>	The enterprise offers support for formal adult education in several ways, some of them on a regular basis, including financial support and the devotion of salaried time – programmes leading to formal adult education are established for one or more groups of employees.
<i>Systematic Integration</i>	The enterprise supports formal adult education openly, conditions for support are announced to the employees; fees are refinanced in most cases, a substantial quantity of salaried time is devoted to formal education – programmes leading to formal adult education are established for one or more groups of employees.

Source: Own Description – Hefler & Markowitsch 2008a