

# Vocational Training in the Framework of the 'Austrian Training Guarantee'

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## Abstract

When the EU designed and implemented the so-called Youth Guarantee in the context of the Youth Employment Package and the Youth Employment Initiative in 2012, Austria was chosen as a role model. Austria established a Youth Guarantee in 2008 and was very successful in reducing rates of early school-leavers and NEET. However, to fully appreciate the institutional developments in the Austrian transition system from school to vocational training and work, it is not sufficient to merely analyse these changes within the framework of social investment policy. It is part of an increasingly workfarist unemployment policy, which is accompanied by a polarizing, fragmenting style of welfare policies.

It is against this background that this contribution attempts to trace the evolution of the active labour market and vocational-education-and-training policies (= VET policies) in Austria over the last two decades, which have led to the implementation of the Training Guarantee. Secondly, by means of interview data, the paper highlights the 'Informational Basis of Judgement and Justice' (according to Amartya Sen) in order to scrutinize problems as defined by the experts and policy makers interviewed. Thirdly, we put the spotlight on some ambivalences of an increasingly polarized youth transition system of the Austrian welfare state.

Our research shows that experts legitimize and justify the emerging set of increasingly mandatory policies by emphasizing the necessity of remodelling youth subjectivities which are understood to be immature, deficient, irrational and, at times, downright crazy. In the paternalizing view of the experts, the youth guarantee (and the supra-company apprenticeships as institutional implementation) stands for rational interventions which follow the social investment model. We can highlight the slippery slope towards increasingly mandatory policies in the field of youth transition which becomes apparent in new laws which transform the Training Guarantee into a Training Obligation.

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