



The Education and Career Start Panel („Ausbildungs- und Berufseinstiegspanel“) - ABEP)

Fifth Survey 2017

Final Report - Executive Summary

Daniel Schönherr / Martina Zandonella / Corinna Mayerl

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Executive Summary

Young people in school-to-work transitions

A successful entry into the labour market after leaving school remains a central prerequisite for social participation. In that regard, young people are increasingly experiencing problems and disruptions during their transitions into the adult age. At the same time, the responsibilities for their educational paths have increasingly been placed into the hands of the young people themselves. Due to a diversification of possible paths within and outside the formal education system, social requirements and limitations decreased. On the one hand, this increases the scope for flexibility and freedom, but on the other hand, uncertainties, miss-steps and re-orientations are also increasing, and frequently young people have to bear the risks of unsuccessful educational and career trajectories. For young people leaving the 'Hauptschule' (lower secondary school, 8th grade), these developments usually start earlier.

„Where do you go?": The Education and Career Start Panel

Therefore, the "The Education and Career Start Panel" (ABEP), which was conducted by SORA from 2011 to 2017, focused on young people and their transitions after leaving the lower secondary school. The main goal was to analyse these transitions up to the end of the Secondary Level II, mainly from the young people's point of view. The first survey started in May 2011 with about 4,000 pupils from the 8th grade participating. In 2012, 2013, 2015 and January 2017, those respondents were interviewed again by telephone, resulting in 941 interviews carried out in the last panel wave.

About 8 out of 10 have now finished their education

Out of these 941 adolescents (most of them now 19 or 20 years old), 82% have finished their education and left the education system: 36% have completed a vocational or academic education at a VET college (BHS) or Academic secondary school (AHS) (but mostly a vocational matura). One third finished their apprenticeship training and 12% have completed a VET school (BMS). The remaining young people are usually still in their initial education (mostly apprenticeship trainings or VET college), a few work unskilled (3%) or are unemployed (2%). Some (11%) of those who have completed their education are currently undergoing another education at Secondary Level II (mostly an apprenticeship training after leaving a VET school/BMS).

Most of the young respondents have therefore finished their education. 15% are currently doing their compulsory military / community service or completing a voluntary social year. 12% went to a university to study. 7% attend training or are currently not in education, training or employment.

Almost half of the ABEP cohort currently employed

Almost six years after leaving the lower secondary school, 45% are in employment. Almost all of them have finished an apprenticeship training or school education, boys more often an apprenticeship training, while girls more often completed a middle or higher vocational education. The employment situation differs significantly by gender, with young women being less integrated into the labour market than young men. While 93% of young men are employed in a standard employment (full time and unlimited employment, “Normalarbeitsverhältnis”), approximately one-fifth of all young women work part-time, more than 10% are underemployed, have fixed-term contracts or work as temporary workers. The sectoral distribution also shows strong gender segregation among young people. The extent of these gender-specific differences is surprising considering the fact that these differences didn't show in their career motives or occupational expectations. These differences between young men and woman do, however, point to structural changes which lower the chances for young people with intermediate vocational training or a vocational or academic matura.

Young people with migrant backgrounds more likely to experience problems when looking for employment

About 25% of the young respondents who are already employed indicate that they had problems finding a job. Young women and young people with migrant backgrounds indicate that more frequently. The most common problem was getting any answers on applications - 27% of the respondents with migrant backgrounds shared this experience. A lack of professional experience, a demand for special knowledge, and occasionally discriminatory experiences are also more frequently reported by young adults with migrant backgrounds. The duration between leaving school and finding a job also varies: while 65% of young men and 63% of young people without migrant backgrounds were employed within one month after finishing their education, only 53% of women and 43% of young people from immigrant families found a job within one month.

Positive assessment of exam period

18% have not passed their final exam on their first try. Out of these, 86% have achieved their degree when repeating their final exam. But nevertheless, 9 out of 10 retrospectively assess their exam period positively. The overwhelming majority (89%) felt well prepared for their exam. In large parts, understanding and applying and not simply memorizing were the main focus, the young people report. In terms of the exam itself, however, about a third of the respondents were afraid to fail, girls more frequently. 15% had the impression that things were asked of them that were not taught during their education.

Young people with migrant backgrounds are experiencing a more difficult and stressful exam period: from their point of view they often have to learn more extensively than most of their colleagues, they are more afraid to fail and they more often believe that they have been graded unfairly.

Approximately one-quarter of the students are experiencing difficulties during their final apprenticeship examination

One third of the ABEP cohort has completed an apprenticeship training, and one fifth of them had to repeat their final apprenticeship examination. Nearly all (92%) of them shared the impression that it was important for their company that they pass the final apprenticeship examination. 61% retrospectively estimate their abilities higher than the examination requirements. However, about a quarter of young people (27%) consider the support of their trainers or superiors as not helpful at all. Likewise, just over a quarter (28%) did not know the exact requirements. One-fifth (21%) did not know how the final apprenticeship examination would proceed.

High relevance of vocational training in the Austrian educational system

The educational pathways after leaving lower secondary school show that vocational trainings still play a major role in Austria's educational system. In their first year after leaving lower secondary school, about a quarter of the ABEP cohort went to a Polytechnic School, 6% began an apprenticeship training. Furthermore, 17% went to a VET school (BMS) and 39% attended a VET college (BHS). Only 7% chose a secondary academic school (AHS). The number of young people in a vocational training even increased in the second year. The cross-section analysis indicates a high degree of stability in the educational paths. The longitudinal analysis, however, shows how complex and unstable many transitions are, taking into account possible status changes and dropouts.

Unstable educational pathways: Only 60% of the ABEP cohort experienced continuous pathways

27% experienced one, 13% multiple delays and interruptions in their educational pathways during the six years after leaving lower secondary school, meaning that they changed their education altogether. In addition, 19% have not changed the education but changed schools during this six-year-period. Dropouts more often occur in VET schools (BMS): only 69% of the young students who transitioned into a VET school (BMS) in 2012 continued their education there a year later. A lack of learning motivation, bad grades, problems with teachers or fellow pupils and a lack of interest were the main motives for dropping out. There are hardly any significant differences between woman and men or young people with or without migrant backgrounds. Only young people from families with lower educational backgrounds experienced

such dropouts more frequently. Early indicators for a higher risk of changing education are lower initial educational goals and bad grades in lower secondary school: young people who named an apprenticeship training or a VET school (BMS) as their highest educational goal as well as pupils with bad grades at the end of lower secondary school experienced much more interruptions during their further education.

Almost every sixth experienced dropouts, most of the time involuntary

With every year after leaving lower secondary school, more young people were neither in education, employment nor training. 17% say that they have not been in education, employment or training at least once over the course of the six years after the lower secondary school, most of them only once. Girls (20%), migrants (27%) and young people living in Vienna (31%) have a higher risk of being in NEET-status. Lower educational goals at the end of lower secondary school (mostly just to finish Secondary Level I) and bad grades are significant risk factors for later dropouts. In most instances, these NEET-phases are involuntary and refer to absorption problems on the apprenticeship and labour market. Most of these young people have been actively looking for apprenticeships, jobs or internships during this period, mostly with help from the AMS. Being denied apprenticeship positions or not getting a job were the main reasons cited by the young NEETs themselves.

Four types of transitions

One central result of the study is the identification of different types of educational pathways. The individual transitional paths of the young respondents can thus be viewed in a longitudinal perspective as a succession of educational and employment statuses. A sequence pattern analysis showed four different types of transitional patterns, each one characteristic for the Austrian educational system:

▪ Type 1 „Apprenticeship training and labour market entry“ (37%)

The first type often includes male adolescents, who usually entered apprenticeship trainings and successively transitioned into the labour market afterwards. They usually stayed steadily in their apprenticeship training, although a rising number of unemployment can be counted at the end of their education. Other key characteristics of this type are: a strong orientation towards work (also from the parents' side), bad grades, a low learning motivation and school satisfaction in lower secondary school, as well as an initially low level of ambition which then increased over the years.

▪ Type 2 „Delayed vocational education and dropouts“ (17%)

The second type has the most problematic transition processes: These young people are also oriented towards a vocational training, yet not in apprentice-

ship training, but mostly in VET schools (BMS), which only more than half of them successfully complete. A quarter of these then begin a second education in the form of apprenticeship trainings. Only one third has continuous transitions, 30% experience dropouts. Other characteristics are similar to the first type: bad grades, lower ambitions (but not increasing over time), and less learning motivation in lower secondary school. There are also somatization disorders and a lower self-confidence with regard to handicrafts. However, school satisfaction and educational orientation are higher than in the first type. Compared to the first type, these young people therefore initially aim for a school education in a VET school (BMS), which for various reasons has to be abandoned in the following years. A detailed analysis has also shown: For young people with high educational plans due to a strong aspiration to climb the social ladder, but poor grades in the lower secondary school and parents without a matura, this combination of factors oftentimes leads to delayed vocational education. For young people with lower educational plans and a strong security motive, it is the combination of bad grades, low ambitions and unsuccessful transitions into apprenticeship trainings that puts them in type 2. And for young people with the aim of completing a BMS, it is a poor school performance in combination with migration backgrounds and parents without matura, which increases the likelihood of falling into type 2.

- **Type 3 „VET college“ (36%)**

36% of the adolescents can be classified as a third type, who usually attends a five-year-long VET college (BHS). Delays or drop outs only occur occasionally. Also, educations in other vocational schools, which do not lead to the Matura, are very rare. Young people of this type also rarely exhibit any time periods without being in education or training. One third starts to work after VET college, one-fifth starts to pursue university studies.

- **Type 4 „Secondary academic schools“ (10%)**

About 10% fall into the fourth and last type, who usually completes a secondary academic school at an AHS to pursue university studies afterwards. These transitions are also quite stable, although one-fifth of the young people enter an AHS in the second year, after they initially attended a VET college. It is also noticeable that one tenth of the young people are not in education or in employment after the Matura.

Need for support after lower secondary school

Overall, the young people reflect positively on their transition periods, 88% rate it as successful. The transition period is more positively evaluated by young people who completed their education than by those who do not yet have a degree. Young people who do not have a degree yet would prefer to have attended a different education or school; this also shows more frequently

for young women and migrants. Young people without a degree and young people with migrant backgrounds are also particularly self-critical about their own efforts. However, a successful transition not only depends on one's own efforts. The social background, the social environment and the institutional support of teachers and trainers are just as important. Various needs for support can therefore be identified. About one fifth would have needed more knowledge how to access information about the educational system, a better assessment of their interests and skills and more practical experiences with regards to their educational possibilities and choices.