

# Studie zu Kund\*innen des waff-Beratungszentrums für Beruf und Weiterbildung aus der Zielgruppe des Qualifikationsplans Wien 2030

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## Executive Summary (English Version)

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## Executive Summary

The report presents the findings of a research project on the clients of the waff (Vienna Employment Promotion Fund) Counselling Center for Career and Continuing Education (*Beratungszentrum für Beruf und Weiterbildung BZBW*) between 2019 and 2023. The study focuses on two key target groups identified in the Vienna Qualification Plan 2030 (Qualifikationsplan Wien waff, 2021):

- Adults whose highest completed level of formal education is compulsory education (addressed as formally low-qualified individuals, equal to ISCED11 Level 2).
- Adults who, despite having a higher level of educational attainment (ISCED11 3 and above), are employed in unskilled jobs (equal to ISCO08 9 Elementary Occupations).

These target groups represent about one-third of Vienna's working population. The group of formally low-qualified individuals is slightly increasing due to migration dynamics. Within this group, there are slightly more men than women. Approximately four out of five clients in this category have a migration background. The number of individuals employed in unskilled jobs despite holding higher levels of educational attainment is also increasing due to migration dynamics. Around 60% of this group are men, and approximately 70% have a migration background.

The BZBW offers a diverse range of support measures developed over the years to assist these target groups. Two key elements stand out: extended flexible career counselling and a generous co-funding scheme (called *Chancen-Scheck*), which serves as a crucial financial support instrument. As of 2023, the *Chancen-Scheck* provides financial support of up to €5,000 with a co-financing rate of 90 % (up to 100 % upon completion of a defined set of vocational qualifications). It is specifically designed to support the attainment of a formal apprenticeship qualification (*Lehrabschluss*) via a route designated for adults, as well as other formal and non-formal qualifications, and recognition of foreign qualifications (*Nostrifizierung*). Additionally, as part of career counselling, an approach supporting the preparation for attaining an apprenticeship as an adult (*Qualifikationsspass Wien*) can be utilized, facilitating clients' access to cross-organizational support (waff, AMS, other counselling institutions, and the Apprenticeship Office of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce).

The study examines the development of the target groups, their engagement with waff services, client perspectives on these services, and the impact of the support provided. It also identifies key areas for improvement to enhance outreach, support career development steps, and reduce dropout rates in education and training programs. Based on relevant literature, analytical steps were defined, including an exploration of administrative data, an analysis of 30 in-depth qualitative interviews with waff clients, an online survey addressing all target group clients from 2019, 2022, and 2023, as well as expert interviews.

## Findings

### Growth in Client Numbers

Between 2019 and 2023, the number of BZBW clients in the target groups analysed in this study increased by about one-third. The subgroup with the highest growth consisted of formally low-qualified individuals. Additionally, the group of individuals with qualifications attained abroad who are employed in unskilled jobs also experienced significant growth.

## **Significance of the *Chancen-Scheck***

The *Chancen-Scheck*, in combination with career counselling services, represents the most comprehensive demand-side funding option available at the EU level for the identified target groups. Together with career counselling and based on structured educational plans, the *Chancen-Scheck* significantly reduces financial barriers to participating in further education.

## **Role of Counselling**

Career counselling was utilized by the large majority of BZBW clients, often across multiple sessions and over extended periods. This support enabled clients to plan and implement their career development goals effectively. For individuals with a migration background, counselling played a particularly important role in providing orientation. Satisfaction with the counselling services was high: more than half of the survey participants stated that they would definitely use counselling services again in the future, while another third would do so as needed.

## **Success in Obtaining Formal Qualifications**

Career counselling and demand-side training funding play a significant role in achieving the Vienna Qualification Plan objectives. Approximately 900 clients in 2022 and 2023 prepared for the extraordinary apprenticeship examination, with two-thirds of this group being men. The required work experience for admission to the exam is predominantly gained in Austria. Work experience acquired abroad plays a minor role in access, primarily due to challenges in providing formal proof.

## **Higher Competency Levels in German as a Second Language**

German as a Second Language is essential for a large portion of the target groups, as language proficiency forms the foundation for further education, vocational qualifications, and access to higher-skilled jobs. Clients often combine German courses with other courses providing vocational skills. Achieving higher German proficiency levels—particularly those required for skilled employment—is a time-intensive process that must be pursued over several years. waff funding plays a crucial role in financing these courses alongside other public funding options (ÖIF, AMS, Start Wien, Level Up).

## **Impact on Participation in Continuing Education**

Client assessments indicate a high effectiveness of the support measures, particularly for the target groups of the Vienna Qualification Plan. 88 % of men and 96 % of women among formally low-skilled adults reported that financial support was the key enabler for their participation in further education. Similar figures were observed for individuals working in unskilled jobs despite holding a higher level of educational attainment (83 % of men, 86 % of women).

In terms of employment outcomes, approximately one-third of formally low qualified adults reported finding a (better) job. Two-thirds of this group saw a direct link between funding/counselling, further education and employment improvement. Similar results were observed for individuals working in unskilled jobs despite holding qualifications. Four out of five respondents perceived counselling and (funded) education or training as instrumental in their career advancement.

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