

# INTEGRATION REPORT 2024

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# FOREWORD

by the Federal Minister for Women, Family,  
Integration and Media



Austria provides a comprehensive range of support measures and structures to help immigrants integrate quickly into our society. Between 2020 and the spring of 2024, 195,600 places in German courses were made available, 874,000 consultations were held in the integration centres of the Austrian Integration Fund and 49,200 integration declarations were signed. Almost 46,000 participants have successfully completed values and orientation courses. In recent years, integration structures in Austria have been further strengthened, expanded and adapted to the needs of different groups of immigrants.

However, for the integration process to succeed, it is crucial that immigrants take on an active role – such as learning German, entering the labour market, and engaging in social and cultural activities in the Austrian society. While the vast majority of migrants fulfil this obligation, the high number of beneficiaries of protection, the diversity of groups of origin and the geographical concentration of immigrants in Vienna pose a challenge to the established integration structures. Of course, successful integration depends on the number of people to be integrated, which is why combating illegal immigration is also crucial for integration.

The Austrian integration system continues to see particularly great challenges in the area of refugee migration. At over 59,000, the number of asylum applications submitted in Austria in 2023 still remains high, but at the same time this represents a decrease of 48 per cent compared to the previous year. In addition, the educational level of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection has been declining for years, which has massively increased the need for literacy and basic education courses in particular, and thus necessitated the adaptation and expansion of existing integration structures.

The integration of the approximately 70,000 displaced Ukrainians still living in Austria also ties up additional capacity. In view of the uncertain outcome and end of the Russian war of aggression, their successful integration is crucial in order to be able to offer them long-term prospects in our society. Here, too, the Austrian Integration Fund has responded by expanding its education, language and gainful employment programmes for this specific target group.

Given the severe shortage of skilled workers, the domestic labour market offers particularly good opportunities for skilled migrants who come to Austria with the “Red-White-Red Card” to utilise their professional qualifications and experience. At the same time, access to higher-skilled jobs usually requires better German language skills and accompanying tailor-made integration measures to tie them and their families to Austria in the long term.

Against this background, the Expert Council for Integration’s report provides a differentiated overview of the integration needs and pathways for different groups, in addition to the proven monitoring of the current integration situation in the areas of demographics, the labour market and education. Following last year’s focus chapter on the integration of young people, this year’s report focuses on the initial integration and German language acquisition of adults. With refugees, Ukrainian displaced

persons and qualified skilled workers, the chapter is dedicated to the language acquisition processes and integration-specific characteristics of these three relevant integration target groups as well as the resulting challenges for integration.

In view of the increasing proportion of the population with a migrant background, it is essential to ensure the preservation of our open democratic society based on Austrian and European values and norms and to prevent the formation of segregated milieus. An intensive dialogue with the provinces, cities and municipalities and joint efforts are of crucial importance in order to be able to identify segregative developments at an early stage and to combat them. The primary goal is to secure a democratic, tolerant Austria and to combat segregative, extremist and anti-Semitic tendencies, which have become more pronounced since 7 October 2023, as well as to establish a common foundation of values that must be learned and practiced for successful integration and the proper functioning of society.

Integration measures are therefore not limited to the federal level, as this can often only set the framework conditions. Successful integration can only be achieved through comprehensive cooperation between the federal government, the provinces and the municipalities.

The described developments and challenges in integration underline again that we must consistently pursue the path of stopping illegal immigration to Austria. Not only the integration of immigrants, but also the social cohesion of our country can and will only succeed in the long term if we limit the number of immigrants.

I would like to thank the Chairwoman of the Expert Council for Integration, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Katharina Pabel. This year's Integration Report once again provides in-depth analyses and the basis for evidence-based integration policy through the scientific treatment of integration-related topics. I would also like to thank all the people who have been involved in the report for their work, and I hope all readers find it informative.



MMag. Dr. Susanne Raab  
Federal Minister for Women, Family, Integration and Media

Vienna, 2024





# FOREWORD

by the Chairwoman of the Expert Council  
for Integration



Migration to Austria continued at a high level in 2023, even though a slight decline can be observed in some areas, such as refugee migration. The target group for integration measures is therefore constantly growing, especially as new immigrants join those who have already been living in Austria for some time but are still in the process of integrating. Integration will therefore remain an important topic on the political agenda in the future. In Austria, migrants find themselves in a labour market that primarily requires skilled workers, but there is also room for less qualified workers. Successful integration into the labour market is often a key to successful integration. However, not all immigrants have the capacity for rapid integration into the labour market. In addition to education and qualifications that are not suitable for the Austrian labour market, they often lack sufficient knowledge of the German language to be able to take up appropriate employment. For integration to be successful, it is therefore necessary to identify the various integration needs as precisely as possible and to develop the integration offer – in particular ways to learn the German language and for post-qualification – in a way that is tailored to both the migrants and the requirements of the labour market. Analysis of the impact of the support measures on offer also helps to continuously improve their effectiveness.

This year's Integration Report is again based on the figures, data and facts collected as part of the integration monitoring process, as well as a large number of other statistics and studies. The report focuses on the priority area of the initial integration of adults, distinguishing between refugee migration, the immigration of displaced persons from Ukraine and that of skilled workers in terms of their different integration needs. This year's integration report also places special emphasis on describing and assessing the federal government's German language support model.

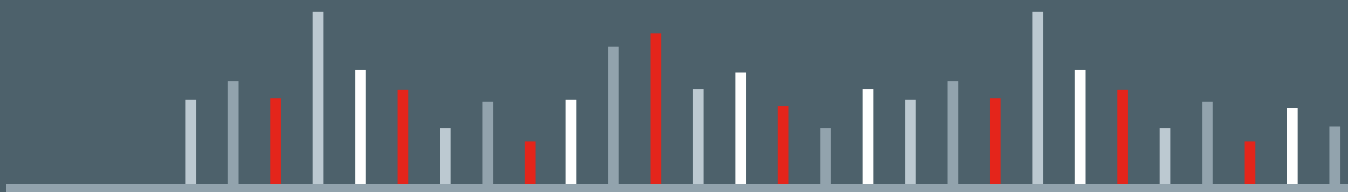
Once again this year, the integration report was prepared by the members of the Expert Council. As Chairwoman of the Expert Council, I would like to thank all my colleagues for their hard work on this report. I would also like to thank the members of the Advisory Committee on Integration for the on-going provision of data in the context of the integration monitoring, which is the most important basis for preparing the report and, above all, for an integration policy based on facts. The staff of the Directorate General for Integration of the Federal Chancellery provided reliable organisational support in the preparation of the integration report, without which it could not be published in this form. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to them as well.

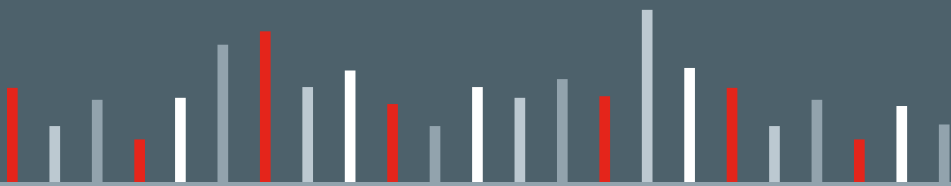
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katharina Pabel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Katharina Pabel  
Chairwoman of the Expert Council for Integration

Vienna, 2024







# CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

# CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

The goal of integration policy is the rapid integration of all persons with foreign citizenship who are legally resident in Austria into Austrian society, in particular through measures that make it possible for them to participate in social, economic and cultural life.<sup>1</sup> Key areas of this participation relate to gainful employment and the rapid achievement of self-sufficiency, access to and acceptance of educational opportunities and gender equality.<sup>2</sup>

The systematic provision of integration measures (integration support) and the obligation to actively participate in the integration process (integration obligation) are laid down in the Integration Act and apply for a growing number of people from third countries who are legally resident in Austria. The data and facts presented and contextualised in the chapter “Integration in numbers” show once again that immigration to Austria is still happening, resulting in an increasing proportion of non-Austrian citizens who are at least somewhat likely to be in need of integration. In addition, the integration process takes time, so that people who are to be newly integrated join those already living in Austria, and all of them have a continued need for integration. The target group of integration measures, which is made up of persons entitled to asylum, persons entitled to subsidiary protection and other third-country nationals, is therefore growing.

In recent years, integration policy has established resilient and expandable structures, in particular to facilitate learning German as a prerequisite for successful participation in the labour market in Austria and for integration into society as a whole. Values and orientation courses provide knowledge about the basics and rules of social coexistence in Austria and thus offer another building block for successful integration. The course programme is open to all immigrants, but is mandatory for certain groups of people in terms of their integration obligation. It covers the whole of Austria and meets the demand for course places.<sup>3</sup> The range of German courses as well as values and orientation courses is complemented by a large number of other integration measures offered by various public organisations, private initiatives and institutions with different contents and specific integration goals. Austria thus has a viable structure to ensure the conditions for successfully integrating immigrants.

The target group for integration measures is heterogeneous in many respects: Not only do immigrants differ in terms of sex, age and origin, but also in terms of their motivation for leaving their respective country of origin and immigrating to Austria. The individual need for integration therefor depends on many factors. Integration measures can be more effective and achieve rapid integration more quickly when they are precisely tailored to the diverse needs of those being integrated. In order to provide and, where necessary, (further) develop well-targeted support measures, it is important to gain precise knowledge about the different target groups of integration measures. Corresponding figures, data and facts can be found in this Integration Report and in the Statistical Yearbook “Migration & Integration” by Statistics Austria. A successful and sustainable integration policy also requires an accompanying evaluation and an impact analysis of the measures implemented.

<sup>1</sup> The integration policy applies to foreign nationals who are not citizens of the European Economic Area or Switzerland.

<sup>2</sup> Section 2 (2) of the Integration Act (IntG), Federal Law Gazette I No. 68/2017.

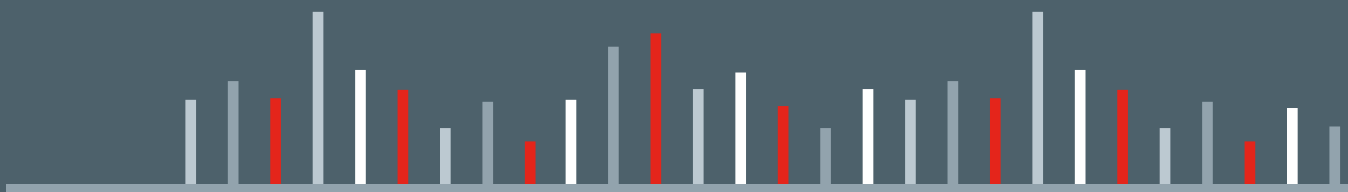
<sup>3</sup> In 2023, the Austrian Integration Fund (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds – ÖIF) funded up to 74,000 German course places at around 220 locations throughout Austria.

Looking at current migration to Austria in terms of (likely) integration needs, Ukrainians who had to leave their country due to the Russian attack on Ukraine form the largest single national group. Another, particularly heterogeneous group is made up of people from refugee countries of origin, mainly from Syria and Afghanistan, who are granted permanent residence status or the right to stay after the asylum procedure has been completed, and for whom there is also the possibility of family reunification after a certain period of time<sup>4</sup>. A third group that has so far received less attention in the context of integration are highly qualified people from third countries, possibly with their family members, who come to Austria either on their own or as a result of a targeted recruitment policy in order to take up employment. The analyses in the following chapters show that, due to a number of factors, the prerequisites for successful integration differ in the respective immigration groups. The organisation and further development of integration measures must be geared to this. It is also important not to forget those target groups of integration measures who, as members or descendants of earlier migration cohorts, have been living in Austria for some time but still have varying degrees of need for integration. Even if the integration policy sometimes focuses on the most recent immigrants to Austria, there is still a need to catch up and support people with a migrant background who have been living in Austria for a long time, in some cases since birth, in terms of German language skills, success in obtaining educational qualifications and participation in the labour market.

In addition, there are far-reaching changes in the labour market. It has been stated many times that the labour market in Austria is developing from an employer's market to an employee's market. In some sectors, the labour market has shifted in favour of employees, giving more and more candidates the opportunity to choose the job they want – a trend that is set to intensify as demographics change. This generally improves the chances of immigrants in the labour market, as can be seen from the corresponding figures and data (see the chapter "Integration in numbers"). Integration policy should reflect this by promoting the potential for rapid integration into the labour market, without compromising German language learning or development prospects.

For this reason, this year's integration report focuses on the topic of the initial integration of adults. Building on the information we have on immigration, this section of the report looks at immigration in both its homogeneity and diversity. It also addresses how both rapid labour market integration and progress in learning the German language, as well as the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, can be achieved.

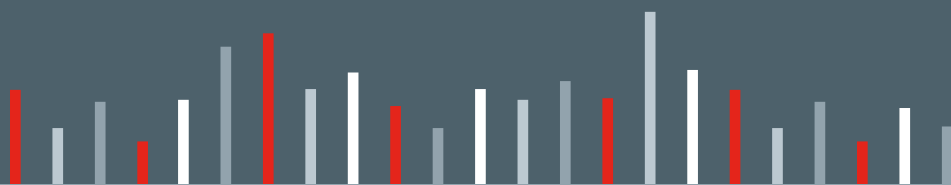
<sup>4</sup> In this report, the topic of "family reunification" focussed on the current challenges in the area of asylum; however, from a holistic integration perspective, marriage migration to immigrant groups who have already been in Austria for some time should also be examined according to their integration needs (see Expert Council for Integration (2019), *Integration Report 2019*, pp. 80–85).



Immigration and population structure

Education and language

Work and social assistance



# INTEGRATION IN NUMBERS

# IMMIGRATION AND POPULATION STRUCTURE

*At the beginning of 2024, Austria already had around 9,160,000 inhabitants. Since 2020, there have been more deaths than births, but the population is still growing. This population growth is due to international migrations, as significantly more people are coming into the country than are emigrating abroad. Many of these immigrants later have children in Austria, which also increases the number and proportion of people with a migrant background.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the local population is shrinking. Society is thus becoming more diverse, and the need for integration is increasing.*

## Immigration to Austria in 2023 – a comparison

After the “exceptional year” of 2022 with the highest immigration since the post-war period, migration normalised in 2023. However, it remained above the level of 2021 and the last few years before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2023, a total of 195,000 people settled in Austria for the first time or returned, 67,000 fewer than in the previous year (immigration 2022: 261,900). Most immigrants were foreign nationals (2023: 181,600, 2022: 246,300).

With 128,300 people emigrating over the same period, total net migration amounted to +66,600 people in 2023 (2022: +137,000). As in the past years, net migration 2023 was positive in the case of foreign nationals (+71,900) but negative for Austrian citizens (-5,300). In recent years, more male than female immigrants have come to Austria. In 2022, gender relations were balanced to a large extent, which can be explained by the high proportion of women among those displaced by the war in the Ukraine. In 2023, more men (107,000) than women (88,000) came to the country again.

## Origin and whereabouts of immigrants

Citizens of other EU/EFTA states make up the largest group of immigrants to Austria. They do not require a residence permit. This influx amounted to altogether 94,000 people in 2023 (2022: 100,700).<sup>6</sup> As in previous years, it was mainly people from EU states before 2004 and EFTA states (2023: 35,100; in particular from Germany: 19,800) and from EU accession states since 2007 (2023: 32,100; in particular from Romania: 19,300) who came to the country. The second most important region of origin for immigration to Austria in 2023 were the main countries of origin of asylum seekers (19,300) – in particular Syria (15,200) and Afghanistan (3,500).

<sup>5</sup> According to the definition of Statistics Austria, the population with a migrant background includes (a) people born in Austria whose parents were both born outside Austria and (b) people born abroad whose parents were also born outside Austria. This is collected on the basis of Microcensus data. Eurostat and the OECD also show the proportion of people living in Austria who have only one parent born abroad.

<sup>6</sup> In contrast, 64,400 people emigrated, resulting in a balance of 29,600 (2022: 36,300).

# IMMIGRATION FROM ABROAD

2020–2023 by nationality and sex

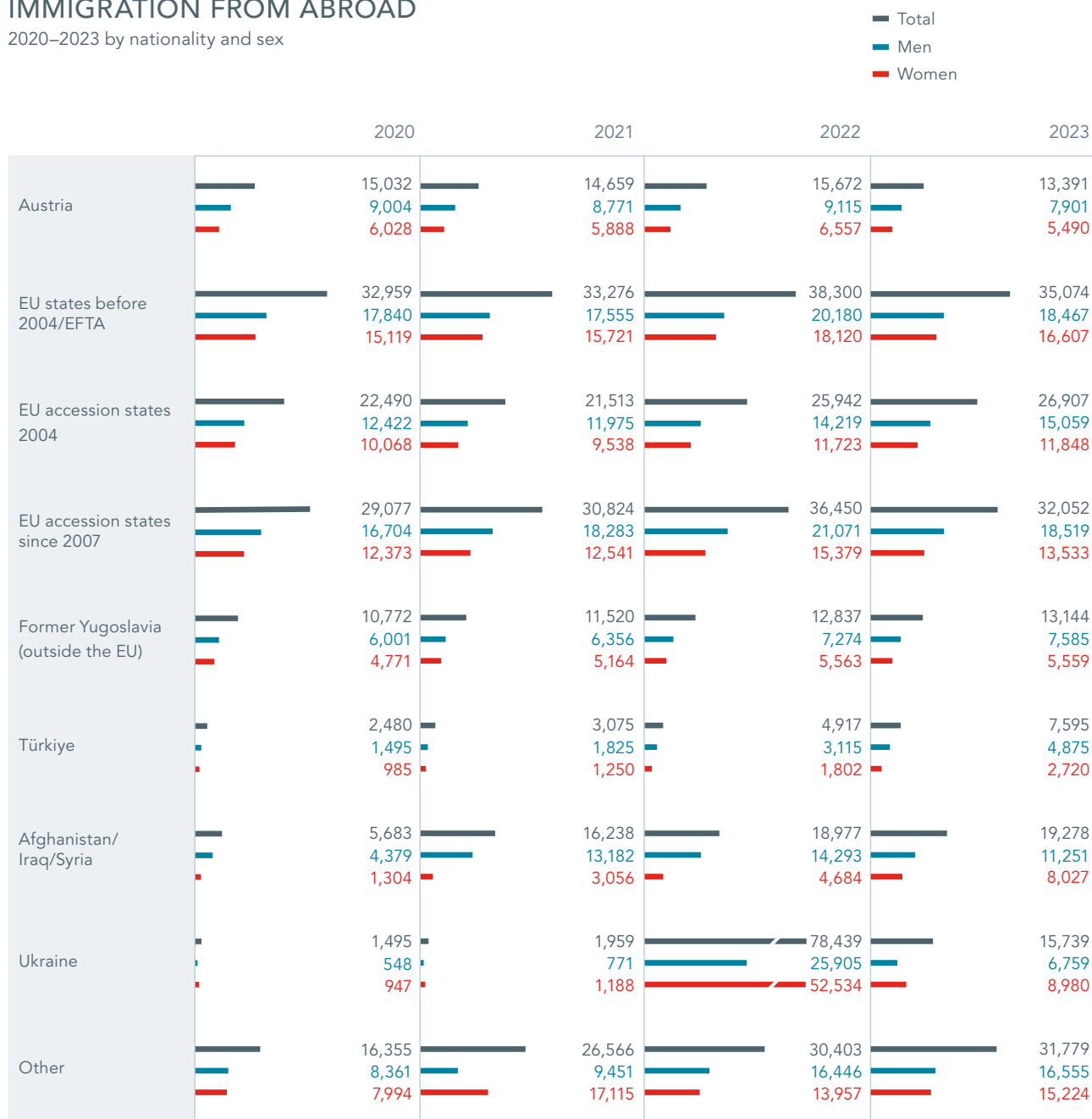


Fig. 1; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Migration statistics; own presentation.

In contrast to 2022 (approx. 91,000), significantly fewer Ukrainian nationals were admitted with temporary protection in 2023 (approx. 17,000). The protection status has since been extended until 2026.<sup>7</sup> As an end to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is not in sight, it remains unclear how many of the displaced persons will remain in Austria for a longer period of time or permanently (see chapter “Initial integration of displaced Ukrainians”). In third place are regularly immigrated third-country nationals from other parts of Europe (mainly from the successor states of Yugoslavia outside the EU 2023: 13,100, 2022: 12,800; and about half as many

7 On 21 June 2024, the Council of the European Union adopted the European Commission’s proposal to extend temporary protection for people fleeing Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine until 4 March 2026. See Council Implementing Decision extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, [data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11031-2024-INIT/en/pdf](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11031-2024-INIT/en/pdf). For more information, see European Parliament (2024), *When EU temporary protection for displaced people from Ukraine ends. Possible scenarios*.



from Türkiye<sup>8</sup>) and from other parts of the world. In 2023, total regular immigration from third countries amounted to 71,800 people.<sup>9</sup>

No complete information is available on people's reasons for immigrating to Austria. It is known that the vast majority of adults who immigrate from other EU/EFTA states are relatively quick to take up employment<sup>10</sup> or study in Austria. More detailed information is available for the group of immigrants from third countries, as they are issued different individual residence permits depending on the type, reason and duration of their immigration.

## FIRST-TIME RIGHT OF RESIDENCE

2013–2023 by reason for immigration

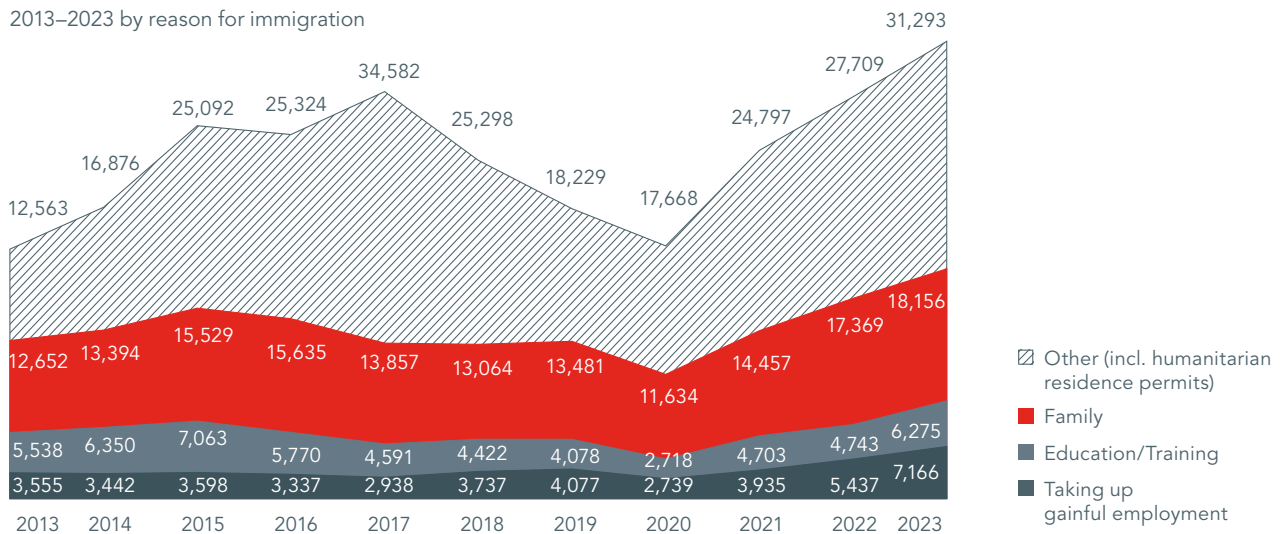


Fig. 2; Source: Eurostat (2024), First residence permits issued, by reason; own presentation.

A total of 62,900 third-country nationals<sup>11</sup> were granted their first-ever residence permit in 2023 (2022: 55,300). The most common reason for this was humanitarian grounds (refugee status, subsidiary protection; approx. 31,300 people in 2023). This included almost 9,200 relatives of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection who were permitted to enter the country in 2023 as part of family reunification.<sup>12</sup> In addition, around 17,000 Ukrainian nationals were granted temporary protection for the first time.<sup>13</sup> Residence permits were also issued to a fairly large number of people who gained the right to settle due to marriage or family reunification (2023: 18,200; 2022: 17,400).

Next by some margin were third-country nationals who received a residence permit for the first time to take up gainful employment (2023: 7,200; 2022: 5,400) or study (2023: 6,300; 2022: 4,700). This included 3,500 new immigrants who received a Red-White-Red Card for the first time and thus gained access to the labour market. This means that, as in the past few years, only very few people from third countries received their residence permit on account of their specific qualifications and professional experience. Labour-related migration therefore does not play a central role for people immigrating from third countries to Austria.

<sup>8</sup> It can be observed that there is also a growing number of Turkish asylum seekers (in third place after Syria and Afghanistan with 7,769 in 2023). The majority of these are original asylum applications.

<sup>9</sup> Excluding asylum seekers who remained in the country and Ukrainian nationals who were taken in.

<sup>10</sup> See Endel, Florian et al. (2022), *Erwerbsverläufe von Migrant/innen III*.

<sup>11</sup> Eurostat (2024), *Erstmals erteilte Aufenthaltstitel nach dem Grund für die Erteilung; ohne ukrainische Staatsangehörige*.

<sup>12</sup> For reasons of formality, these persons must apply for asylum when entering Austria so they are not included in the statistics on the right to stay as "family members", but are registered in the asylum statistics.

<sup>13</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) (2024), special report.

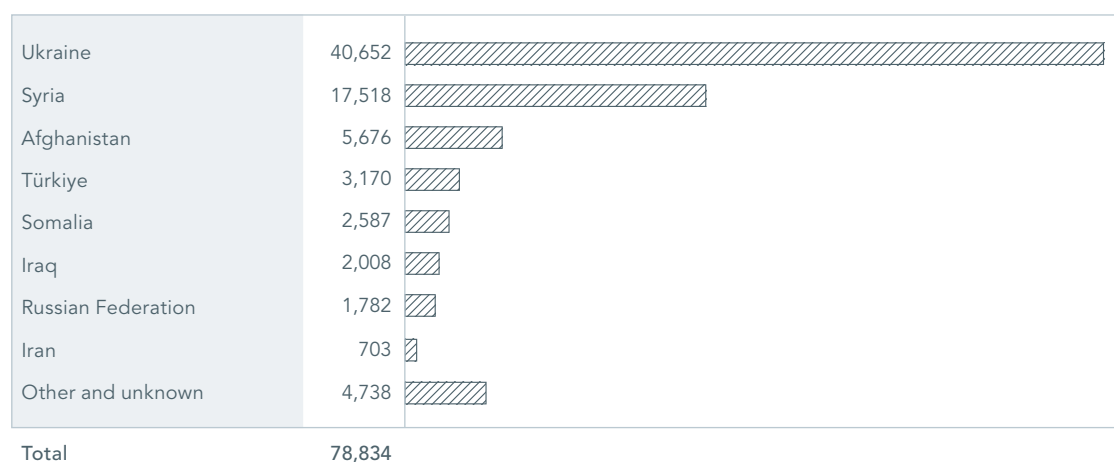
## Asylum seekers, persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection

After an initial peak in 2015/16 and a strong decline in the following years, the number of first-time asylum applications submitted in Austria rose sharply in 2022 (112,300). In 2023, the number of asylum applications dropped again (first-time applications: 56,200). However, the number of asylum applications cannot be used as a direct indicator of actual immigration. Of those who applied for asylum in Austria in 2022, the vast majority (approx. 80%) moved on to another European country within a few hours or days.

In 2023, also, many people made an application and moved on, although there were fewer original asylum applications in 2023. Instead, asylum statistics increasingly reflect family reunification on the one hand (2023: 9,200; 2022: 4,200); on the other hand, children born in Austria to persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection are also included in the asylum statistics (2023: 3,400; 2022: 3,200).<sup>14</sup> As in most cases both the family reunification members and the newborn children are granted asylum, the number of positive asylum decisions increased (2023: 27,300; 2022: 22,000) despite a significant drop in the number of asylum applications. In 2023, 17,300 people were granted asylum, a further 8,200 subsidiary protection and 1,800 the right to stay on humanitarian grounds. Syrian nationals accounted for three quarters of the positive asylum decisions and two thirds of the grants of subsidiary protection.

### PERSONS RECEIVING BASIC WELFARE SUPPORT

31 Dec. 2023 by most common nationalities\*



\* including 1,885 unaccompanied minors.

Fig. 3; Source: BMI (2024), Asylstatistik 2023; own presentation.

Of greater relevance from an integration policy perspective than the number of asylum applications is hence the number of people who are granted refugee status, subsidiary or temporary protection, or the right of residence on humanitarian grounds and who stay in Austria for a longer period of time. Evidence of this can be found both in the Central Register of Residents (ZMR) and in the data on recipients of financial benefits as part of the federal government's provision of basic welfare support to refugees. At the beginning of 2023, there were 92,900 such people. By the beginning of 2024, the number of people in basic welfare support had fallen to 78,800 (-14,100). Just over half of them were Ukrainian nationals. Another large group consisted of refugees from the main countries of origin (Afghanistan, Iraq,

<sup>14</sup> BMI (2024), Asyl-Statistik 2023, pp. I–II and 20. In the first months of 2024, more than 50% of all asylum applications were already related to family reunification members and newborn children in Austria; BMI (2024), special analysis.

Somalia, Syria: 27,800). In contrast, the number of people from other refugee countries of origin receiving basic welfare support was significantly lower (Iran, Russia, Türkiye, etc.: 10,400). Compared with the total number, unaccompanied minors form a small group (around 2.4% or 1,900 people), and their number fell by 400 compared to the previous year.

## Impact of immigration on Austria's population

Over the last 10 years, Austria's population has increased by +652,200 to 9,160,000 people. In the 2010s the increase was predominantly, and from 2020 onwards exclusively, attributable to migration gains.

Immigration led to a sharp increase in the population born abroad (1 January 2024: 2,039,400; +624,700 compared to 1 January 2014), while the population born in Austria remained almost the same. This means that the proportion of the population born abroad has grown from 16.6% to 22.3% in the last 10 years. Three quarters of the population born abroad came to Austria as adults, one quarter as children or young people.<sup>15</sup>



\* Figures for migrant background in the annual average of the respective earlier year, figures for nationality and country of birth in each case on 1 Jan. of the later year.

Fig. 4; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Population structure / Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

By far the most important country of origin of the immigrant population in Austria was and remains Germany (2024: 265,200), followed by Bosnia-Herzegovina (178,900), Türkiye (165,200), Romania (148,500) and Serbia (144,700). The strongest growth between 2014 and 2024 was in immigrants from Ukraine (+72,800), Romania (+69,200) and Syria (+80,900). This was followed at some distance by increases in immigrants from Germany (+54,400), Hungary (+39,800) and Afghanistan (+28,700). While some of these increases were spread over the entire period, the increase in immigrants from Afghanistan and Syria was mainly concentrated in the years following 2015, and in those from Ukraine in 2022 and 2023.

15 OECD, European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, Fig. 1.1.

## IMMIGRANT POPULATION (FIRST GENERATION)

2014 and 2024, by most common countries of birth

	2014		2024
Germany	210,735	Germany	265,152
Türkiye	159,958	Bosnia and Herzegovina	178,860
Bosnia and Herzegovina	155,050	Türkiye	165,218
Serbia	132,553	Romania	148,470
Romania	79,264	Serbia	144,658
Poland	66,802	Hungary	94,835
Hungary	55,038	Syria	85,033
Czechia	40,833	Ukraine	81,567
Croatia	39,782	Poland	77,479
Slovakia	32,633	Croatia	58,634
Russian Federation	30,249	Slovakia	47,885
Kosovo	29,162	Afghanistan	46,963
Italy	27,720	Russian Federation	42,713
Other	354,845	Other	601,899
Total	1,416,638	Total	2,039,366

Fig. 5; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Population at the beginning of the year detailed by country of birth; own presentation.

The population with a migrant background<sup>16</sup> has also grown very significantly in the last 10 years – from 1,622,400 (annual average 2013) to 2,448,800 people (annual average 2023): an increase of 826,400 people compared to 2013. Over the same period, this group's share of the total population grew from 19.4% (2013) to 27.2% (2023).

This means that by 2023, more than a quarter of all people living in Austria were either born abroad themselves<sup>17</sup> or had two parents born abroad. A further 620,000 people born in Austria had one parent born abroad and one parent born in Austria (6.8% of the population).<sup>18</sup> If we add all these people together, we see that, biographically, more than a third of Austria's population already has a migration connection. The proportion of the population with a migrant background is highest in most of Austria's urban regions. But also in many rural regions characterised by tourism and in some municipalities close to the border<sup>19</sup>, the proportion of people with a migrant background is significantly higher than the national average.

16 As this is an extrapolation from the Microcensus, persons with a migrant background who live in institutional households are not shown (e.g. foreign schoolchildren in boarding schools, foreign students in student residences, foreign prisoners). The 200,000 or so people who were born abroad but whose mother or father were born in Austria also do not count towards the population with a migrant background.

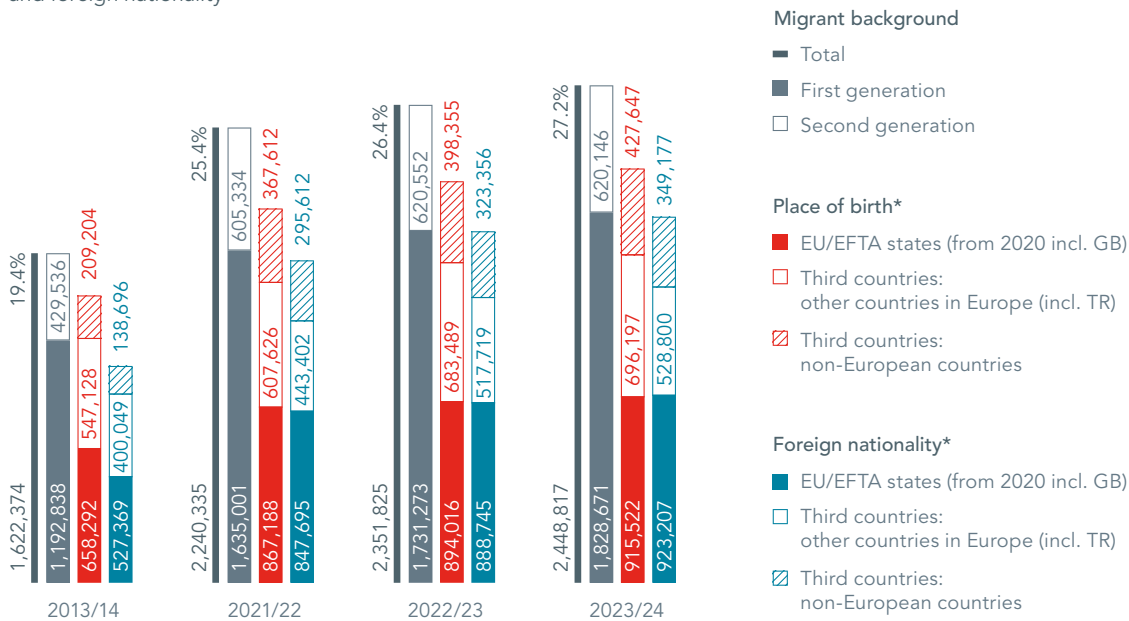
17 According to the definition of Statistics Austria, the population born abroad with a migrant background only includes persons whose both parents were also born outside Austria. In addition, there are around 2% of the population who were born abroad and later immigrated, but have at least one Austrian parent.

18 OECD, European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, Fig. 1.1.

19 Mainly in the north of Tyrol, the Innviertel region of Upper Austria, northern Burgenland and eastern Lower Austria.

# POPULATION

by migrant background, place of birth abroad and foreign nationality\*



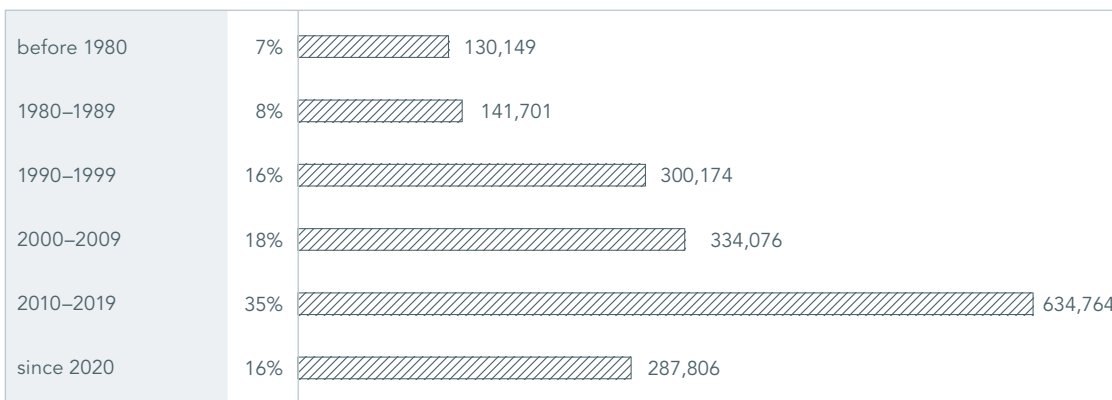
\* Figures for migrant background in the annual average of the respective previous year. Figures for nationality and country of birth on 1 Jan. of the later year in each case.

Fig. 6; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Population structure / Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

In 2023, 1,828,700 people belonged to the first generation of immigrants. They were born abroad to non-Austrian parents (= first generation). Of these, 271,900 immigrated to Austria before 1990 (15%). 634.300 arrived between 1990 and 2009 (35%). A further 634,800 came between 2010 and 2019 (35%). The remaining 287,800 came between 2020 and 2023 (16%). Of the first-generation immigrants, 416,900 had Austrian citizenship (22.8%). Around three quarters of this first generation (77.2%) still had only foreign citizenship (2023: 1,411,800). From an integration policy perspective, this proportion is comparatively high. However, it should be borne in mind that half of the foreign nationals are citizens of another EU/EFTA country. They are much less likely to settle permanently in Austria than third-country nationals.

## IMMIGRANT POPULATION WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND

2023 by year of immigration\*



\* The figures for the older immigration categories differ slightly from the previous year due to the nature of the data in the Microcensus.

Fig. 7; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

A further 620,100 people (2023) were born in Austria but had parents who were both born abroad (= second generation). Most (59.7%) of these second generation immigrants had Austrian citizenship (370,300). Yet there was a considerable minority (40.3%) of the second generation with foreign citizenship (2022: 249,800).

## Citizenship and naturalisation

As there were more births than deaths among the foreign population in Austria in the last decade and significantly more immigration than emigration/return migration, both the number of foreign nationals increased (1 January 2024: 1,801,200; +735,100 compared to 1 January 2014) as well as their share of the total population (1 January 2024: 19.7%; 1 January 2014: 12.5%).

Four-fifths of people living in Austria with foreign citizenship were nationals of another European country (1,452,000).<sup>20</sup> Most of these were citizens of another EU/EFTA state or the United Kingdom (923,200). One fifth had the citizenship of a non-European country (349,200).

In contrast to the foreign population, the domestic population with Austrian citizenship decreased (start of 2024 compared to 2014: -82,900). This is due to the fact that the number of deaths of Austrian nationals is higher than the number of births (domestic birth deficit 2023: -24,000) and more Austrian nationals emigrate from Austria than return (negative domestic net migration: -5,300). The number of naturalisations in Austria cannot fully compensate for this negative development. This means: a growing minority of the population living permanently in Austria is not entitled to vote and cannot participate in the political decision-making process at federal and provincial level. EU/EFTA nationals are entitled to vote in municipal elections (in Vienna in district council elections) and in European elections. There are no such participation opportunities for third-country nationals.

Attaining citizenship is a key indicator of how integrated foreign migrants and their Austrian-born children have become.<sup>21</sup> In 2023, 11,900 persons living in Austria were naturalised (2022: 10,900).<sup>22</sup> These included 7,800 adults and 4,100 minors who were granted Austrian citizenship together with their parents. One third of the people naturalised in Austria were born in Austria (3,800). Two thirds were born abroad (8,100).

<sup>20</sup> Other EU/EFTA states, South Caucasus, Western Balkans, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Türkiye.

<sup>21</sup> Attainment of citizenship through naturalisation in accordance with Sections 10 to 25, 57, 58c and 64a of the Austrian Citizenship Act (StbG) 1985 as amended.

<sup>22</sup> A total of 19,939 people were naturalised (2022: 20,606). However, 8,041 of these naturalisations (40.3%) involved people living abroad permanently (2022: 9,707). The possibility to naturalisation granted since September 2020 to the victims of political persecution under National Socialism (who lived in Austria or another successor state to the Austro-Hungarian Empire during National Socialism) and to their descendants resulted in a very sharp rise in naturalisations of people living abroad (particularly in the United Kingdom, Israel and the USA) from 2021 onwards.

The people who became naturalised Austrian citizens (11,900 in total) came from a wide range of countries. A fair percentage (in each case more than 5% of all naturalised people in Austria) were nationals of Syria (1,900), Türkiye (1,100), Bosnia-Herzegovina (800) and Afghanistan (800). The naturalisation of 0.7%<sup>23</sup> of the foreign population living in Austria is clearly below the EU average of 2.2% of all foreign nationals legally resident in the EU27. The number of naturalisations in Sweden, Luxembourg, Belgium, Spain and Italy has recently been well above this average.<sup>24</sup>

## NATURALISATIONS IN AUSTRIA

2019–2023

■ Total □ under 17 years of age □ over 18 years of age

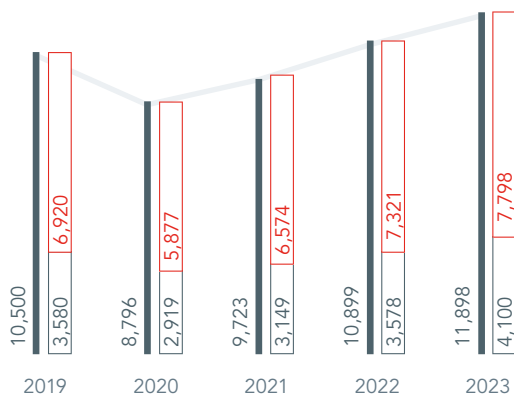


Fig. 8; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Naturalised persons by selected characteristics; own presentation.

The naturalisations in Austria in 2023 correspond to about 1.1% of the foreign population that is in principle eligible for naturalisation and that fulfils the minimum residence criteria.<sup>25</sup> Successful integration should not only include the acquisition of the German language, a successful educational qualification and the ability to support oneself by pursuing a professional activity, but also a positive identification with Austria. The Austrian Integration Act defines naturalisation as the “end point of a comprehensive integration process”.<sup>26</sup> Measured against this normative requirement, it is desirable for the majority of the foreign population remaining in Austria long term to actually reach this goal. This applies in particular to children born in Austria with foreign citizenship.

23 Unadjusted naturalisation rate in relation to all foreign nationals registered as living in Austria (some of whom will not meet the minimum criteria for naturalisation).

24 Eurostat (2024), [Acquisition of citizenship statistics](#).

25 Effective naturalisation rate based on 1.1 million foreign nationals who have either lived in Austria for more than 6 years or were born in Austria in 2023.

26 Section 2 (2) of the Integration Act (IntG), Federal Law Gazette I No. 68/2017.

# EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE

*As a result of immigration, the number and proportion of pupils with a migrant background and non-German everyday language is increasing in Austria. On average, these children and young people leave the education system earlier and with measurable skills deficits. Young people with a migrant background are therefore significantly underrepresented in the lower levels of academic secondary schools, apprenticeships and higher level schools. Recording and classifying integration-related data on education can help to determine targeted measures for children and young people with a migrant background.*

## Results of international performance assessment studies

In empirical assessments of their performance levels, pupils with a migrant background or who speak a non-German everyday language lag considerably behind those without a migrant background on average. This general finding was recently confirmed by two international studies, the results of which were published in 2023.

PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) analysed reading skills at the end of the fourth grade. The last round in 2021 showed a clear performance gap between pupils with and without a migrant background in the final year of primary school in Austria. According to PIRLS 2021, the performance level of children with a migrant background is 52 points below that of native children. If social background is also taken into account, the performance deficit is reduced to 26 points. In other words, roughly half of this performance difference is attributable to the socio-economic situation facing the children with a migrant background.<sup>27</sup> Children who speak a language other than German at home showed a similar gap in reading skills.<sup>28</sup> Overall, the lower average reading and writing skills of children with a migrant background hardly changed compared to 2016.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses the skills of 15-year olds in mathematics, reading and science at regular intervals. The results of the last PISA round in 2022, published in December 2023, show that the proportion of pupils with a migrant background in Austria has risen in recent years (proportion in 2022: 26.6%; 2018: 22.7%). This corresponds to the proportion of the total population with a migrant background and is more than double the OECD average (2022: 12.9%).<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the study results also show that the performance of pupils with a migrant background lags behind that of pupils without a migrant background in all three areas.

<sup>27</sup> Schmich, Juliane et al. (Eds.) (2023), *PIRLS 2021*, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44. In PIRLS, these children are labelled as "multilingual".

<sup>29</sup> PISA (2023), *PISA 2022 Results. Factsheet Austria*, p. 5 f.



Overall, the PISA study reveals major differences between young people of high and low social status. These differences have increased further since the last survey in 2018. This negative development is primarily attributed to the disruption to teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, which particularly affected pupils from families with a low socio-economic status.<sup>30</sup> Studies have confirmed a loss of skills, particularly among the latter group, as a result of cancelled lessons or distance learning, which would have exacerbated the already existing social differences in educational success.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, the socio-economic background and everyday language of pupils with a migrant background have a particularly strong influence on performance in Austria. In Austria, 15-/16-year olds with a low social status are significantly behind their peers with a high social status in all three PISA areas. Austria is therefore one of the participating countries with the greatest performance differences correlated to social background:<sup>32</sup> 49% of pupils with a migrant background have a low socio-economic status according to the PISA definition, 75% speak a language other than German at home. If these two factors are taken into account when analysing performance levels, the performance gap relative to pupils without a migrant background is reduced. After statistical adjustment for socio-economic background, the gap between the two groups in mathematics skills narrows from 58 to 25 points. If the influence of a non-German everyday language is also taken into account, the difference is only 5 points and is therefore no longer significant. Language and social background are therefore the dominant factors and not simply having a migrant background. A similar picture emerges for reading skills. Here, pupils with a migrant background achieve a score 65 points lower. After adjusting for socio-economic background, the gap narrows to 30 points. An everyday language other than German is responsible for the difference of a further 25 points.

These results suggest that an everyday language that is not identical to the language of instruction can become a barrier to integration. This can be seen, for example, in the number of pupils transferring to schools that teach for the school leaving exam (Matura). In 2021/22, 85,700 pupils attended the 8th grade (final year of the lower secondary level). 48,600 or 56.7% of these young people transferred to an academic secondary school or higher vocational school in the 2022/23 school year. After lower secondary level, 62.6% of young people with German as their everyday language attended an upper cycle academic secondary school or higher vocational school; young people with a non-German everyday language did so at a significantly lower rate (43.0%). Conversely, the proportion of young people who dropped out of school after the lower secondary level was 11.2% for young people with a non-German everyday language and only 3.0% for young people with German as their everyday language.

30 Toferer, Bettina et al. (2023), PISA 2022. *International comparison of competence in mathematics, reading and science at the end of compulsory schooling*, p. 124.

31 Steiner, Mario et al. (2021), *Lehren und Lernen unter Pandemiebedingungen*, p. 60.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

For mathematics competence, the difference in points between pupils with a migrant background and those without is 26 points greater in Austria than the OECD average (Austria 58 points, OECD average 32 points). However, the results in the area of mathematics of pupils with a migrant background are in line with the OECD average. In reading (Austria 65 points, OECD average 39 points) and science (Austria 78 points, OECD average 38 points), the difference in points (26 and 40 points, respectively) between the two groups is also above the OECD average. However, these figures are only meaningful to a limited extent as the migration situation in the respective OECD countries (proportion, level of education, language) differs greatly in some cases.

## RESULTS OF THE PISA STUDY

Score 2022

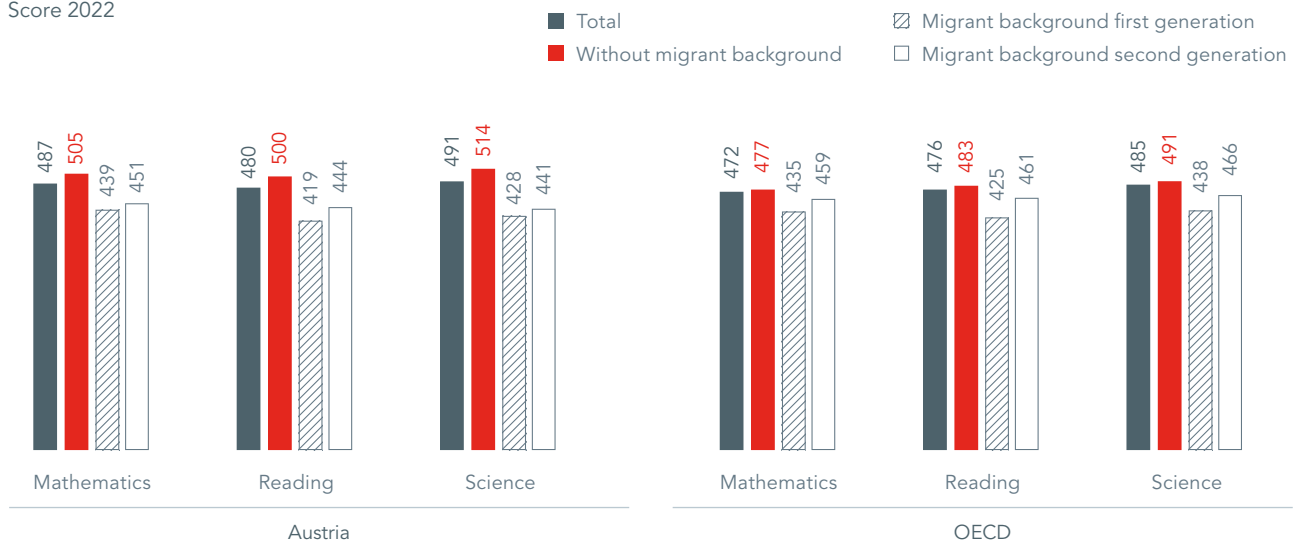


Fig. 9; Source: OECD (2024), PISA Data Explorer; own presentation.

Compared to PISA 2018, the differences in performance between pupils with and without a migrant background have hardly changed. The results of the latest round show that there is still a need for special measures in elementary and primary education to improve the language skills of children with a migrant background at an early age, especially where low socio-economic status intersects with a lack of German language skills. In addition to early language support in kindergarten, the compulsory kindergarten year before the start of compulsory schooling was introduced in 2010. German support classes and training courses were also set up in 2019 to improve the German skills of pupils who are unable to sufficiently follow lessons in German.<sup>33</sup> While the introduction of the free compulsory kindergarten year improved the German language skills of children with an everyday language other than German, which made it easier for them to transfer to primary school, the influx of older children with an everyday language other than German into the school system (lateral entrants) is posing an increasing challenge.

33 For a detailed analysis of the Austrian German language support model, see p. 34 ff.

## Breakdown of pupils by integration-related characteristics

Of the 1,158,600 children and young people who attended school in the 2022/23 school year, 27% spoke a language other than German in everyday life. The trend of a slight decline in the use of German as everyday language observed in recent years did not continue – the proportion of pupils with a non-German everyday language hardly changed compared to the previous year. Although a different everyday language does not necessarily go hand in hand with inadequate German language skills, it can be an indicator of a corresponding need to catch up and – as the PISA results presented above suggest – also of disadvantages in the acquisition of the content of other school subjects.

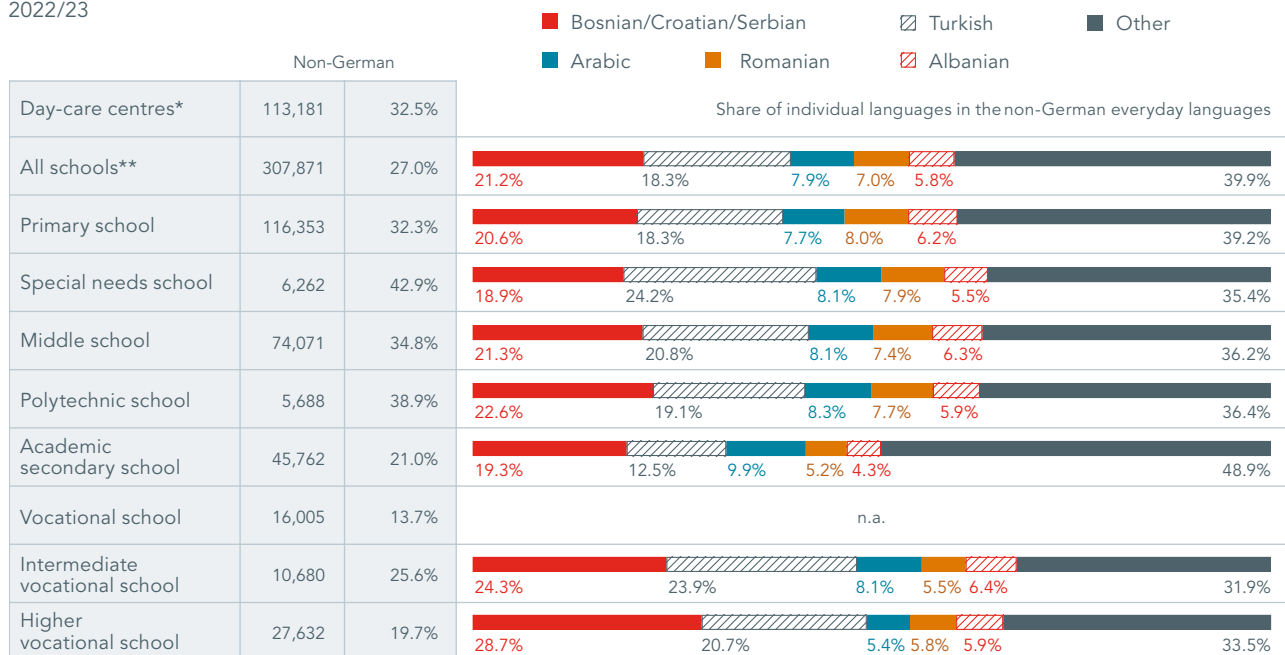
Among the non-German everyday languages, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian with a share of 21% and Turkish with 19% remained the most widespread languages. However, their share among the non-German everyday languages declined slightly. Arabic followed next with an unchanged share of 8%. A new addition was Ukrainian, which was spoken by 4% of pupils with a non-German everyday language. The continued high proportion of “other languages” (40%) used by pupils as everyday languages is also an expression of the recent increase in the diversity of countries of origin. In view of the increasing importance of refugee migration in the migration process in recent years, the increase in the proportion of “Arabic” and, to a lesser extent, “other languages” will continue in the future, not least due to family reunification.

The proportion of pupils with a non-German everyday language continued to vary depending on the type of school, with particularly high proportions at primary schools (32%),<sup>34</sup> special needs schools (43%), polytechnic schools (39%) and middle schools (35%). At academic secondary schools, on the other hand, the proportion was only 21%. Vocational schools had the lowest proportion (14%). These figures show that children with a migrant background growing up in Austria are less likely to continue their education at higher level schools than children without a migrant background. Young people with a migrant background are also significantly less likely to start an apprenticeship training than those without such a background. This has a negative impact on further professional integration. Young people without a qualification beyond compulsory schooling have considerably fewer opportunities on the labour market and, on average, achieve significantly lower income levels when they begin working than those with an apprenticeship qualification. However, it is also evident that under favourable circumstances, certain groups of children with a migrant background can advance in education in some types of school. For example, pupils with a non-German everyday language who have already attended the lower level of academic secondary school make the transition to the upper level just as easily as their peers with German as an everyday language.

<sup>34</sup> In kindergartens, the proportion was 0.2 percentage points higher.

# EVERYDAY LANGUAGE OF SCHOOLCHILDREN AND CHILDREN IN DAY-CARE CENTRES

2022/23



\* Excluding Styria, the day-care centres include: crèches, toddler care groups, kindergarten and after-school care groups.

\*\* Including Austrian Federal Sports Academies as well as other general and vocational schools with their own organisational charters, not including schools and academies in health care.

Fig. 10; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), School and day care centre statistics; own presentation.

Although the everyday language spoken by pupils is not a determinant of their overall educational progress, it does influence their likelihood of attending a particular type of school. This is also evident at the interface with schools that teach for the school leaving exam (Matura). In the 2022/23 school year, 85,800 pupils attended the 8th grade (the last year of lower secondary level) and then moved on to upper secondary level. In total, 57% of the young people transferred to an academic secondary school or higher vocational school. The proportion of young people whose everyday language is German was just under 63%, while it was significantly lower for those with another everyday language at 43%. Pupils with Chechen (35% transfer rate) and Turkish (38% transfer rate) as their everyday language had below-average transfer rates to a school that teaches for the school leaving exam (Matura). Pupils with Ukrainian as their first everyday language had the lowest transfer rate at 21%; however, this was mainly due to the fact that many of them only entered the Austrian education system in the current school year 2022/23. While the transfer rates of all other groups with a non-German everyday language fell by one to two per cent compared to the previous year, those of pupils with Farsi/Dari as their everyday language rose by two per cent to 42%.<sup>35</sup>

35 The indicated language says nothing about the pupils' German language skills. Schools can specify up to three languages for all pupils without prioritising the order. Only the first everyday language mentioned was used in this evaluation.

The proportion of special needs pupils in the group of early school leavers with a non-German everyday language was 22.0% in 2022/23 and thus remained high. At the same time, it was again shown that pupils with a non-German everyday language who had already attended lower academic secondary school level were almost as likely as their peers with German as an everyday language to make the leap to the upper level (93% of young people with German as an everyday language; 87% of young people with a non-German everyday language). Both findings indicate that the course for successful educational biographies is set very early on and that it is difficult to compensate for initial disadvantages in later phases.

Another integration-relevant indicator is the number of non-regular pupils. This refers to those pupils who, due to insufficient German language skills, are taught in separate German support classes or in parallel German training courses for a maximum period of four semesters.<sup>36</sup> In the 2022/23 school year, a total of 49,200 children and young people were listed as non-regular pupils. Their share of all pupils was 4.4%, an increase of 44.1% compared to the previous year. A total of 45,700 or 93.9% of all non-regular pupils attended a general compulsory school. Of these, 25,900 attended a German support class (56.7%) and 19,800 attended a German training course parallel to lessons (43.3%). This corresponds to a significant increase of 40.1% compared to the previous year, a consequence of the arrival of a large number of Ukrainian pupils. German support classes (for inadequate German language skills) and German training courses (for unsatisfactory German skills) are important instruments of language support, especially at primary schools (36,500) and middle schools (8,200). They play a comparatively minor role at other types of school. The number of non-regular pupils in polytechnic schools, the lower level of academic secondary schools, higher vocational schools, intermediate vocational schools and special needs schools totalled 4,000, which represents only 8.2% of all non-regular pupils.

The number of Austrian nationals among the non-regular pupils was 11,200, corresponding to 1.2% of all Austrian pupils. The share of non-regular pupils among those with foreign nationality remained significantly higher (17.2%). The nationality with the highest proportion of non-regular pupils was Ukrainian (11,300 or 82.8%). This was followed by those with Romanian (3,500 or 18.5%), Syrian (2,900 or 18.0%), Turkish (2,200 or 14.5%), Afghan (1,400 or 13.7%), Iraqi (300 or 11.7%), Serbian (1,400 or 9.9%) and Bosnian (900 or 9.6%) citizenship.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Austrian German language support model, see p. 34 ff.

Considerable difference can be observed when examining the shares of non-regular pupils in the individual federal provinces as a result of differing proportions of migrants among the general populations. While around 6.9% of pupils were identified as non-regular in the federal capital of Vienna, the same figure for Carinthia was only 2.4%. Tyrol and Burgenland also had comparatively low percentages of pupils in German support classes and courses at 2.8% and 2.9%, respectively.

## NON-REGULAR PUPILS

2022/23 by nationality

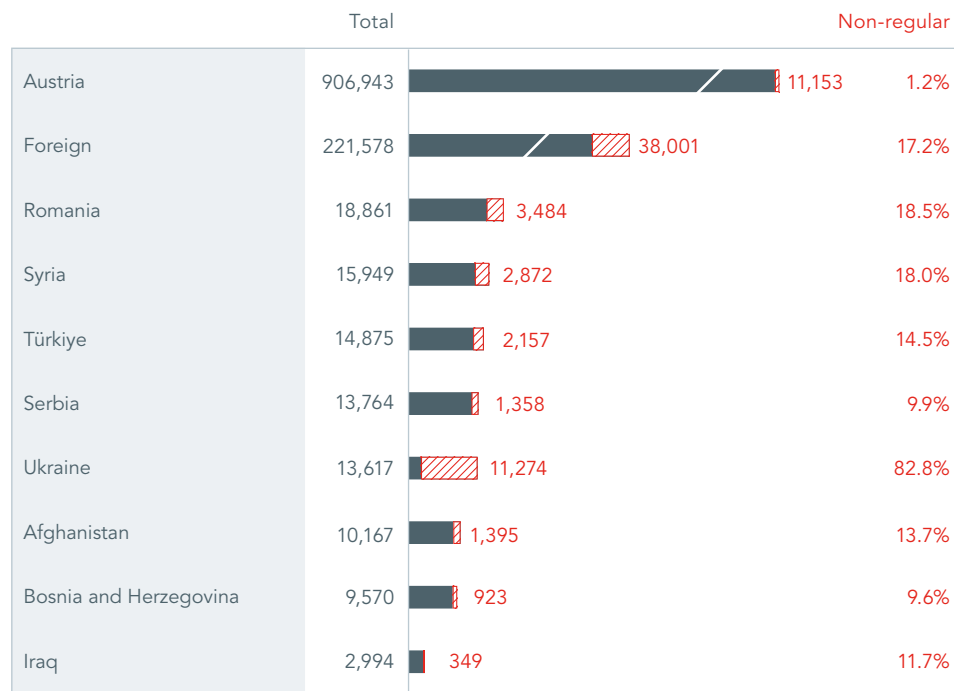


Fig. 11; Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

## Educational measures in the area of integrating persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection

The Integration Act 2017 obliges persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection who are 15 years of age or older to complete a values and orientation course. The values and orientation courses are interpreted into the respective languages of origin to ensure that the content taught in German is understood despite the participants' differing levels of language competence.

The previously one-day courses were expanded to a three-day format in 2022 and include content on three major topic blocks: 1.) German language acquisition, education and the labour market; in 2024, a new priority was added in this respect, which focuses on the possibility of entering the labour market with low German language skills, 2.) Voluntary engagement and cultural aspects of social coexistence, including a special focus on combating anti-Semitism, 3.) Constitutional values and legal integration. The programme also offers the opportunity to visit sights and central institutions of the democratic political system in Austria.

In 2023, 10,900 people took part in a values and orientation course. This represented a slight decrease of -3.4% compared to the previous year. Of the participants, 8,100 (74.3%) were Syrian nationals (-3.1% compared to the previous year). This was followed at a considerable distance by 1,100 (10.3%) Afghan nationals (-15.1% compared to 2022). It should be emphasised that the number of courses completed by Somali nationals rose by 200 to reach 500 in 2023. Overall, however, there are only minor changes in the countries of origin compared to 2022. As in the previous year, there was a clear preponderance of male participants (75.5%).<sup>37</sup>

### PARTICIPANTS IN VALUES AND ORIENTATION COURSES

2023 by most common nationalities and sex



\* Incl. one non-binary person.

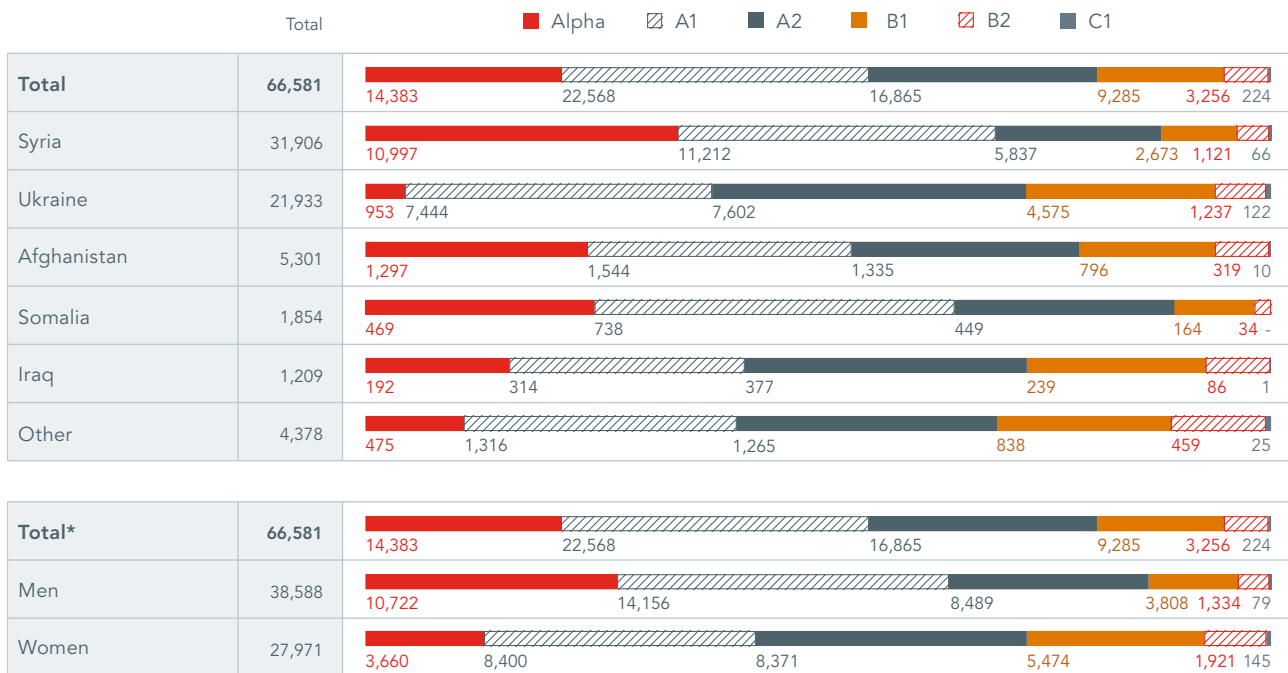
Fig. 12; Source: Integration monitoring according to the Integration Act; own presentation.

<sup>37</sup> Third-country nationals who have a temporary right of residence for displaced persons, on the other hand, are not obliged to attend a values and orientation course. However, they can voluntarily attend orientation courses in which important questions about living and working in Austria are answered.

In addition to organising the values and orientation courses, the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) supports the acquisition of German language skills. In 2023, the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) funded a total of 66,600 places in German courses (+3.1% compared to the previous year). 57.9% of the places were taken up by men in 2023, a significant increase compared to the previous year (52.9%). The course spots used by the target group of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection were predominantly at the lower competence levels (A1: 33.9%, A2: 25.3%). At levels B1 and B2, 13.9% and 4.9% of places were taken up, respectively, and at C1 only 0.3%. Most places were taken up by Syrian nationals (31,900, +8.6%), followed by Ukrainian (21,900, +9.8%) and Afghan (5,300, -20.5%) nationals. A further 7,400 course places were used by people with other nationalities. Compared to the previous year, a significant increase was observed in particular at the B1 course level from 7,000 to 9,300 (+32.9%), which can primarily be attributed to Ukrainians. At 49.3%, they took up almost half of all B1 course places in 2023. Similarly, they made up more than half of the participants at level C1.

## GERMAN LESSONS TAKEN

2023 by most common nationalities, course levels and sex



\* 22 spots were used by non-binary persons or persons of unknown sex.

Fig. 13; Source: Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) (2024), special evaluation; own presentation.

Alphabetisation courses accounted for a fifth of German course places in 2023. The Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) subsidised a total of 14,400 places in alphabetisation courses. This corresponds to an increase of around 10.7% compared to the previous year, in which a total of around 13,000 places were made available in alphabetisation courses. The majority of spots in these courses were also taken up by Syrian nationals (11,000), followed by people with Afghan (1,300) and Ukrainian (1,000) citizenship. The Ukrainian nationals participating in these courses were primarily people learning a second script.



## NEETs

Another integration-relevant indicator relates to the number and composition of the group of 15- to 24-year olds who are not in employment, education or training (so-called NEETs). According to the Microcensus Labour Force Survey (household survey by Statistics Austria), 78,900 young people fell into this group in 2023. People with a migrant background made up 47.6% of NEETs and were therefore once again significantly overrepresented compared to their share of the population.

NEETs are a relatively small proportion of the total group of 15- to 24-year olds, both among young people without a migrant background and those with a migrant background. The proportion of NEETs among young people without a migrant background was 6.7% (41,300) compared with 13.0% (37,600) among those with a migrant background. Within the latter group, the share among first generation migrants (14.2%) was higher than that among second generation migrants (11.6%). There were clear differences depending on origin: The highest proportion of NEETs was found among people with a migrant background from the EU accession states since 2007 (18.3%), followed by people with a Turkish migrant background (15.4%). At 13.9%, people in this age group with fleeing experience made up a slightly lower share than those from countries of the former Yugoslavia outside the EU (14.9%).

### NEETs

2023 by migrant background

	15–24-year olds total	Proportion of NEETs in group of origin	NEETs total	Proportion of NEETs total
Without migrant background	620,265	6.7%	41,315	52.4%
With migrant background	288,009	13.0%	37,580	47.6%
First generation	156,078	14.2%	22,235	28.2%
Second generation	131,931	11.6%	15,345	19.4%
EU states before 2007/EFTA/GB	51,117	7.7%**	3,916**	5.0%**
EU accession states since 2007	35,329	18.3%	6,475	8.2%
Former Yugoslavia (outside the EU)	69,737	14.9%	10,358	13.1%
Türkiye	46,626	15.4%	7,169	9.1%
Refugee countries of origin*	39,724	13.9%**	5,528**	7.0%**
Other third countries	45,476	9.1%**	4,133**	5.2%**

\* Refugee countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria, Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. This is an approximation: on the one hand, not all nationals of these countries are refugees, on the other hand, some refugees with other nationalities were not included.

\*\* Figures with less than an extrapolated 6,000 persons are very much subject to random fluctuations.

Fig. 14; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

The figures presented show that there is a fundamental need for close coordination between the education and employment systems and actors with particular experience in supporting young people from refugee countries of origin as well as from traditional immigration countries in order to enable the successful integration of these groups into the education system and the labour market. Extracurricular youth work programmes remain of particular importance in this context.

## Apprenticeship training

In the 2022/23 school year, there were a total of 125,800 apprentices in Austria, with Austrian nationals representing by far the largest group at 84.2% (105,900), as in the previous year. The number of apprentices with foreign citizenship remained similarly constant at 19,900 (15.8%). While the proportion of nationals from another pre-2004 EU state increased only slightly (+1.5%), the proportion of nationals from post-2004 EU accession states and third countries increased by 7.8% and 8.3%, respectively. A slight decline was recorded only among apprentices with Austrian citizenship (-0.5% or -500).

Overall, more men than women were in an apprenticeship (66.6% vs. 33.4%), with the difference being particularly marked for nationals of refugee countries of origin (72.8% vs. 27.2%). 3.6% (4,500) of the apprentices were nationals of one of the six most important refugee countries of origin, 2.7% (3,400) of a successor state of the former Yugoslavia (outside the EU). The number of Ukrainian apprentices rose from 74 to 127 last year. In total, 8,400 people (6.6%) dropped out of an apprenticeship in 2022/23, which was the same as the previous year's average. While only 5.7% of Austrian apprentices dropped out of training, the proportion of foreign nationals was more than twice as high at 11.9%. At 14.8%, apprentices from a refugee country of origin had the highest drop-out rate. Studies on youth employment and apprenticeship training as a whole identify a number of reasons that make dropping out of apprenticeship training (more) likely and that apply more frequently to young people with a migrant background, such as insufficient language skills, a lower (recognised) qualification level<sup>38</sup>, a difficult family and social environment, an older age at the start of apprenticeship training or the completion of an inter-company apprenticeship training. However, misconceptions about the respective apprenticeship occupation and a general lack of career guidance and knowledge of the Austrian training system also contribute to the comparatively higher drop-out rates of young people with a migrant background.<sup>39</sup>

The overall low and further decreasing proportion of pupils with a non-German everyday language at vocational schools (school year 2022/23: 13.7%; school year 2021/22: 14.1%) also shows that there is still potential for improvement in the area of young people with a migrant background utilising the opportunities offered by apprenticeship training.

<sup>38</sup> This refers mainly to cases of compulsory school completion.

<sup>39</sup> Dornmayer, Helmut; Löffler, Roland (2022), *Bericht zur Situation der Jugendbeschäftigung und Lehrlingsausbildung in Österreich 2020–2021*.

## Side note:

### The Austrian German language support model:

#### Description, status, assessment

In its current guidelines (2024) on German language support in Austrian schools, the Austrian Ministry of Education (BMBWF) emphasises that many pupils are multilingual but that those who speak German as a second language do not automatically have a need for support in German.<sup>40</sup> This is an important clarification for understanding the educational situation in a society characterised by immigration. The number of children and young people growing up multilingual and the number of those with a first or everyday language other than German is increasing. However, not all of them need German language support because they are new immigrants or were unable to adequately develop their German language skills during their first years in Austria. In principle, the increasing number of children growing up multilingual points to a potential added value for Austrian society, provided they can educate themselves and continue improving their skills in these languages accordingly. In Austria and other European countries, however, the migration-related multilingual situation usually represents a considerable educational policy challenge.

The declared aim of the two support formats, German support classes and German training courses, is to quickly improve the children's language skills to such an extent that as many as possible can switch to regular lessons before the end of the four-semester period. Figures on the participation of the non-regular pupils in German support classes and the status of this group in the following school year provide information on the extent to which this objective is achieved. Of the total of 10,564 beginners in German support classes in the 2018/2019 school year, 27% were registered with regular status in the third semester and 53% attended a German training course. In the fourth and final semester of the maximum duration of attendance, 52% of this group were registered with regular status and 37% attended a German training course.<sup>41</sup> In other words, two trends have emerged here: On the one hand, the ability to participate in regular classes increased significantly after the third semester, while on the other, a considerable number of pupils in German support classes continued to need support even after the maximum period of attendance.

## PUPILS IN GERMAN SUPPORT CLASSES AND COURSES

Shares of total number 2022/23 by federal province

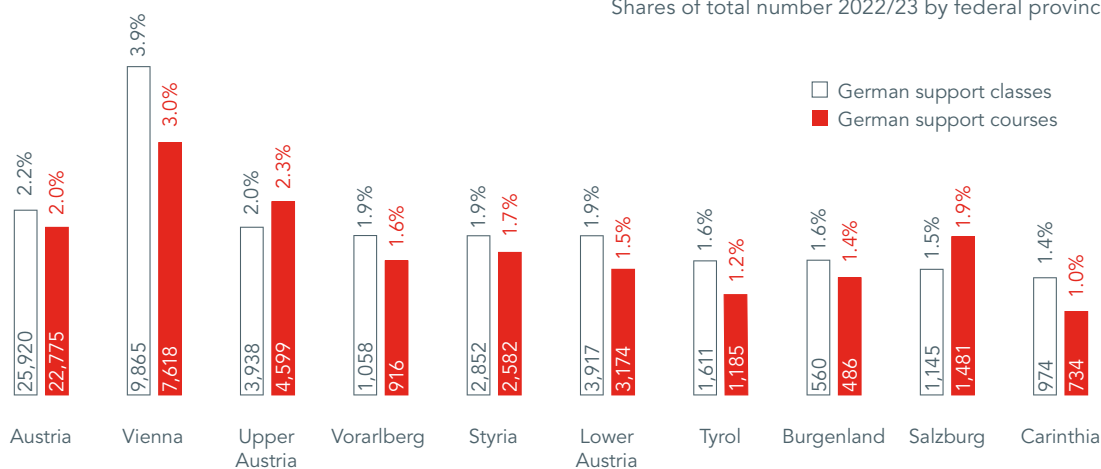


Fig. 15; Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

<sup>40</sup> BMBWF (2024), *Deutschförderung an österreichischen Schulen. Leitfaden für Schulleiterinnen und Schulleiter*, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Response 10236/AB to written parliamentary enquiry no. 10487/J-NR/2022 concerning early childhood language support and German support classes.

In the 2022/23 school year, 48,700 pupils attended German support classes (25,900) and German training courses (22,800) because their ability to follow lessons was “inadequate” or “unsatisfactory” due to their German language skills. When they enter the school system, they must first receive targeted support in German to the extent that they can follow lessons in regular classes (subsequently as “regular” pupils).

The acquisition or knowledge of German as a language of instruction and education is the basis for participation in all educational processes; it is therefore an essential prerequisite for success at school and later integration into the labour market as well as for participation in social, cultural, economic and political life in Austria. German language support in Austrian schools is therefore an important element of the national education strategy.<sup>42</sup>

## Presentation of the German language support model of Austrian schools

Since the 2018/19 school year, the so-called “German language support model” has been implemented in all Austrian schools<sup>43</sup>. The target group comprises children and young people entering the Austrian school system who do not at this stage have an adequate command of German as the language of instruction. They are given the status of “non-regular” pupils and are supported within the framework of this model for a period ranging from one to four semesters (withdrawal according to acquired ability or automatically after four semesters). The aim of the German language support model with respect to non-regular pupils is to enable their intensive learning of German as the language of instruction in order that they can transfer as quickly as possible to regular lessons and participate in lessons according to the curriculum of the type and level of school concerned. Building on this, German language support for “regular” pupils – who have mastered the German language of instruction to the extent that they can follow the lessons – aims to consolidate and further develop their everyday and educational language skills.

Whether children and young people have the appropriate knowledge of German to be able to follow lessons has only been tested in a structured and standardised way throughout Austria (MIKA-D test, a measuring instrument for competence analysis – German) since the introduction of the German language support model in the narrower sense (in relation to those with non-regular status). On the basis of these tests, children and young people with a lack of knowledge of the language of instruction are assigned “non-regular” status. The children and young people are allocated based on the findings of the MIKA-D test to the specific support formats of the German language support model: German support classes (if the MIKA-D results are “inadequate”), German training courses (if the MIKA-D results are “unsatisfactory”) and integrative German language support (if there are fewer than 8 pupils with a MIKA-D test result of “inadequate” or “unsatisfactory”). In German support classes, pupils receive extensive periods of intensive language training in their own group, outside of the core class to which they belong. They remain with their core class in subjects such as physical and music education. In contrast, pupils receive German training courses or integrative German language support in their core classes in

42 *The national and international performance assessments of Austrian pupils also show that a first or everyday language other than German is a critical factor: Children and young people with this profile are more likely to attend schools with lower formal qualifications, and they are more likely to perform less well in the competence measurements. Statistical controlling for socio-economic family background shows that a lack of German language skills provides an additional explanatory factor for the differences in performance between the groups. In practice, however, this insight does not diminish the challenge of immigration for the education system since immigrants are overrepresented in socio-economically disadvantaged groups in Austrian society.*

43 *The term “German language support model” is generally used in common language as well as research contexts to refer only to the instruments and formats of support for non-regular pupils. See Spiel, Christiane et al. (2022), *Evaluation der Implementierung des Deutschfördermodells. Abschlussbericht*. In the publications of the Ministry of Education, the term is applied to the formats and instruments of supporting German skills in Austrian schools as a whole, i.e. it also includes the German language support among of children and young people who have the status of “regular” pupils. See BMBWF (2024), *Deutschförderung an österreichischen Schulen. Leitfaden für Schulleiterinnen und Schulleiter*, p. 6.*

parallel to the regular lessons.<sup>44</sup> The time spent in such courses is lower than in the German support class format.

The learning progress of children with non-regular status is regularly monitored using the MIKA-D test. If it is established that they can follow lessons in German as the language of instruction, they are given the status of a “regular” pupil. Schools can also call on additional resources to support these children and young people in learning German. One of the measures taken by the Ministry of Education in response to the evaluation of the model it commissioned and published in 2022 was to increase resources for the necessary further support of children and young people after the transition to “regular” pupil status.<sup>45</sup> In addition, other support formats for promoting German exist in all types of schools in the Austrian education system that can be implemented within the framework of school autonomy. In its current guidelines for German language support at Austrian schools, the Ministry of Education explicitly recommends the scientifically recognised method of “language-sensitive instruction in all subjects” as well as the ongoing use of diagnostic tools (such as in-lesson linguistic proficiency monitoring for German as a second language (USB DaZ)<sup>46</sup> or the like).

Language-sensitive teaching in all subjects is very relevant for education systems in multilingual societies due to migration because effective and comprehensive second language acquisition, especially of the educational variant of German, takes several years. The language of education is built up gradually and becomes more and more abstract and complex from primary school onwards as the level of schooling progresses. In order to be able to express themselves properly and appropriately, pupils must be given the opportunity to acquire subject-relevant language skills, i.e. educational language skills, in all subjects. This has consequences for subject-based instruction – which is also language instruction – and therefore also for the demands placed on subject teachers. Appropriate training and further education is required for this reason but, above all, practical experience in the classroom.

Such methodological approaches must be anchored in the language support and pedagogical concepts of the school as a whole and must not be left to the decision of the individual teacher. It is essential that children and young people can benefit from such widely available and effective methods by improving their language skills. The diagnostic tool of in-lesson linguistic proficiency monitoring for German as a second language (USB DaZ) and related introductory and continuing education programmes are made available to schools free of charge by the Ministry of Education. Such instruments make it possible to monitor the language learning development of children and young people and are an important basis for the customised planning of language support measures. They also provide language support staff with feedback on the impact of their support and are an important tool for the ongoing development of language support methodology. This kind of “learning” approach to language support, which includes continuous evaluation of its own impact, is inherent in the Austrian model. Instruments and formats are also available for this, but in Austria the implementation is largely left to schools and teachers.

However, there are no mandatory requirements for a structured and regular approach to assessing the impact of the support measures, as is already the case in other countries, including in Austria’s neighbouring countries. One of the key

44 In the interests of flexibility, German support classes can also be set up across classes, school levels and school types.

45 Spiel, Christiane et al. (2022), *Evaluation der Implementierung des Deutschfördermodells. Abschlussbericht.* and Schwab, Susanne et al. (2022), *Deutschförderklassen und Deutschförderkurse - Ergebnisse zur Befragung von Lehrer\*innen. Regarding the additional resources provided, see BMBWF (2024), Deutschförderung an österreichischen Schulen. Leitfaden für Schulleiterinnen und Schulleiter, p. 36.*

46 *In-Lesson Linguistic Proficiency Monitoring for German as a Second Language (USB DaZ) is an instrument for the observation and targeted support of pupils with German as a second language. The instrument can be used in regular lessons and in German support classes or courses.*

factors for a successful education system is to be a “learning” – and in particular “co-operative learning” – system that observes and improves on its facilitating effect, especially as regards the objective of greater equity in education. The city-state of Hamburg is considered an example of an education system in which, among other things, language learning assessments at the preschool and school levels have a demonstrably positive effect when used regularly and on a mandatory basis. This system has been built up over the last 20 years. It initially met with resistance from educational institutions but is now recognised, accepted and successful. The multiple learning progress observation measures are seen as instruments for co-operatively improving the quality of the support.<sup>47</sup> The responsibility taken by school leaders and teachers for learning outcomes through impact monitoring and a consistent focus on teaching quality are now also considered well-documented success factors in Austrian research projects on how to turn around so-called “hotspot schools” and bring pupils to a good level of education despite difficult starting conditions.<sup>48</sup>

## Assessment of the German language support model: Criticism, evaluation results, proposals from the Expert Council

The comprehensive model of German language support introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2018/19 with its standardisation of the assignment of non-regular status (MIKA-D test) and the nationwide specification of support formats (German support classes, German training courses, integrative German support) met with widespread criticism from schools, university experts and boards of education. The format of the German support classes was criticised in particular on the basis that they are segregating. There were also objections to the restrictions on the freedom allowed to schools in implementing language support since strict federal guidelines cannot do justice to the many different local situations. Critics have disparaged the format of the German support classes for excluding children with special requirements from the mainstream classes, which segregates and stigmatises them too much and also deprives them of important German input from German-speaking children. In principle, such critics believe, support should only be provided on an integrative basis in mixed classes. Those in favour of the model emphasise that there are already many classes with very few German-speaking children, especially in Austria’s cities, and that even the children in these classes have had to learn German as the language of instruction for a long time. They further argue that the assistance provided in German support classes can be focussed and intensive, that it is both possible and desirable for children to be brought together in common regular classes in certain subjects and that, after four semesters at the most, the pupils once again receive all their instruction in regular classes.

The implementation of language support in classrooms with a heterogeneous composition of pupils, a heterogeneous teaching staff and a wide range of prerequisites, which nevertheless had to meet the federal requirements, was a challenge for many schools. The evaluation by the Ministry of Education conducted three to

47 There have been many positive reports in recent years about language support in the city state of Hamburg since the German language skills of pupils there have improved continuously, in some cases against the overall German trend and in comparison to other German states. Data-supported school and teaching development, which has been continuously built up over the years, even in the face of resistance, is considered a factor in this success. See, for example, among many other reports, the interview with educational researcher Petra Stanat, who heads the German Institute for Educational Quality Improvement (Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen, IQB). The IQB is a key player in quality development in the German education system on behalf of the German federal states. See Stanat, Petra (2022), “Die Schere geht weiter auseinander”. Educational researcher Anne Sliwka at the University of Heidelberg, who has for years been investigating innovation factors in school systems that lead to better learning outcomes for many children, not just those from families with strong educational backgrounds, draws similar conclusions. She identifies the factor of being a “learning” school system (as opposed to an “administrative” one) as central to success, meaning systems where schools and educators take structured responsibility for their results and learn from them. See OECD (2024), *Tête-à-Tête #19 mit der Bildungsforscherin Anne Sliwka*, in: *Mitgeschnitten: Debatten, Daten, Dokumente*.

48 For more information on the project “School Quality and Teacher Education” (SQTE) funded by the Austrian Science Fund (Österreichischer Wissenschaftsfonds, FWF) and led by Roland Bernhard, Professor at the University College of Christian Churches of Teacher Education Vienna/Krems (Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule Wien/Krems), see [sqte.at](http://sqte.at).

four years after the introduction of the model also captured feedback that reflected the challenges. More flexibility in implementation was one of the requests for improvement that was received. At the same time, it must be noted that these federal requirements resulted in a certain basic quality of implementation throughout Austria. Only since the introduction of the model, for example, has the assignment of non-regular status been standardised throughout Austria, providing more reliable figures for longer-term monitoring of how the number of non-regular pupils is changing and what their German language support needs are.

Unfortunately, no evaluation of the model has so far included an impact measurement at the level of the pupils' language skills development, which would be an important dimension for an objective assessment of the model. The pupils remain in the support programmes for a maximum of four semesters. They are then transferred to mainstream classes, where they receive the German language support available in that context, regardless of the level achieved in the MIKA-D test. The evaluations to date, including those commissioned by the Ministry of Education itself, are based on qualitative surveys and feedback from language support and teaching staff as well as school management. The evaluation commissioned by the ministry<sup>49</sup> attempted to identify positive support factors, at least on the basis of this qualitative empirical data. By analysing "extreme groups" (schools that differ in the length of time children remain in non-regular status but are comparable in other criteria), an attempt was made to find out which implementation factors lead to children remaining in non-regular status for longer or shorter periods. However, no systematic differences were found in the response behaviour between the two "extreme groups", which means that no conclusions can be drawn about the effects of different implementation practices in this evaluation. According to the teachers interviewed for this evaluation, around 65% to 70% of pupils can follow lessons in German at the end of the non-regular status and have thus achieved the goal of the support model. Depending on the survey group and position (language support or teaching staff, school management, etc.), between 80% and 98% of respondents see a need to optimise the current German language support model - primarily at the level of the Ministry and the boards of education, less so at the school level where the respondents in the evaluation are employed. The ministry responded to the evaluation with changes and improvements in line with the evaluation results.

With regard to the criticism of the format of segregated German support classes, additive language support, for example in the afternoons and during holiday periods, could give the children more opportunity to learn with the other children in everyday language situations during mainstream classes in the mornings. Furthermore, the Expert Council sees ongoing structured feedback loops and good communication between the management levels and the implementing schools as an important lever for consistent further development and improvement of the model. This is to be achieved through regular nationwide performative evaluations and, above all, through ongoing supportive monitoring of the schools by the regional boards of education. Objective, critical monitoring of the model through scientific research on the impact of formats and methods for good language support is a second important pillar of ongoing improvement of language support in Austria's schools. In order to impart this knowledge, it needs to be integrated into the core education, the corresponding further training and the framework available to teachers for continuously working on their language support skills. The growing shortage of teaching staff could increasingly work against this important factor of good language support, however, and it is likely to be a greater challenge for effective language support in Austria's schools than matters involving support formats.

49 Spiel, Christiane et al. (2022), *Evaluation der Implementierung des Deutschfördermodells. Abschlussbericht.*



An evidence-based approach to assessing the impact of support measures should also be further established in Austria. This does not necessarily have to take place in nationwide impact evaluations. Rather, it is about educators taking a structured look at the results of their support, developing target group-specific or individualised learning plans for the children and thus continuously improving the quality of their support and teaching. If schools form “learning and quality circles” for language support among their own staff – or even better, in co-operation with other schools – such as with the support of boards of education and/or teacher training colleges, this serves to improve the quality of support at the individual school locations and drive improvements in the overall system. In the field of artificial intelligence, the Ministry of Education has initiated a programme in which schools develop a constructive approach to these new tools while providing a structure for evaluating and relaying experiences and insights to inform the overall response to this topic within the educational system. Such an approach would also be fruitful for the topic of language support. Educational researchers have long pointed out that a consistent focus on the quality of teaching is key to successfully promoting the education of children and young people, especially when schools have a high proportion of pupils with a low socio-economic status.

Effective language support, especially in the language of instruction for children growing up with other first and everyday languages as well as low socio-economic status, must be thoroughly and consistently integrated into the education system in order to achieve positive results. Although the (critical) public debate in Austria has focussed in recent years on the German language support model in the narrower sense, i.e. the phase when children are just starting school, this element – as important as it is – can only have a limited effect on good language support. High quality language support in the pre-school sector is a key factor that has been well documented by educational research. The quality is relevant here, but so is the amount of time children spend in an environment where they are exposed to language inputs and can benefit in particular from language support provided by educational staff that is integrated into daily activities. A stronger focus should be placed on this area in Austria. At school, on the other hand, the promotion of language development must be geared towards the prospect of a school career, as it pursues the goal of acquiring not only everyday German but also German as an educational language. The Austrian school system provides resources for this and recommends effective methods that have been proven by research, such as “language-sensitive teaching in all subjects” and the provision of a diagnostic tool such as the USB DaZ. However, the effectiveness is crucially dependent on consistent, comprehensive implementation over a prolonged time period. This is certainly a matter of the resources made available as well as the training and further education of teachers, but there is more to it even than that. It is also about the local approaches and management of the schools as well as the willingness to consistently and continuously develop the school policies and teaching methods. This is one of the reasons why children and young people need a support framework that goes beyond the classroom, such as in the afternoons and during school holidays (see, for example, summer German courses in Vienna and other cities and municipalities)<sup>50</sup> as well as through a wide variety of actors (e.g. volunteer work such as in the Caritas learning cafés). This is an area in which municipalities can provide crucial support to their schools in overcoming this challenge.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> For more information on the summer German courses in Vienna, see [wiensommerdeutschkurse.at](http://wiensommerdeutschkurse.at).

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, the programme “Netzwerk mehr Sprache – Kooperationsplattform für einen chancengerechten Zugang zu Bildung in Gemeinden” in Vorarlberg. See *okay.zusammen.leben* (2017), *mehr Sprache*, pp. 57–66. The City of Vienna is also involved in extensive activities to support the promotion of German. See City of Vienna (2024), *Deutschoffensive für Kinder und Jugendliche*.



# WORK AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

*The ongoing shortage of skilled workers in recent years, but also the impending waves of retirements that will further increase the demand for labour, has recently highlighted the importance of integrating immigrants into the labour market. These framework conditions represent an opportunity to bring new immigrants and long-term residents with a migrant background into gainful employment. Successful labour market integration not only enables economic self-sufficiency, it also boosts self-esteem, facilitates German language acquisition through employment and promotes the development of relationships with the local population. It is therefore a key component of integration. Targeted support for immigrants in gaining employment is becoming increasingly important from both an integration and a labour market policy perspective. The following sections provide an overview of the labour market situation in the context of migration and integration.*

## Labour market integration and employment

In 2023, there were a total of 4,458,000 employed and self-employed persons in Austria, an increase of 43,300 persons or just under 1.0% compared with the previous year. The proportion of foreign nationals was 24.8% (1,103,600), with 88.9% employed and 11.1% self-employed. This figure also includes 148,000 employed persons (+9,100, +6.6% compared to 2022) who commute to Austria for work. Their numbers have remained relatively stable for a long time, a sign of the robust integration of labour markets across Austrian borders. However, cross-border commuters are not the focus of Austrian integration policy, as they are mainly nationals of Austria's neighbouring countries, and integration policy is primarily directed at third-country nationals residing in Austria. They account for just under 15.1% of foreign employed persons. According to social insurance data from the labour market information system (AMIS), the proportion of foreigners who are gainfully employed and resident in Austria was 22.3% in 2023, 1.3 percentage points higher than in 2022.

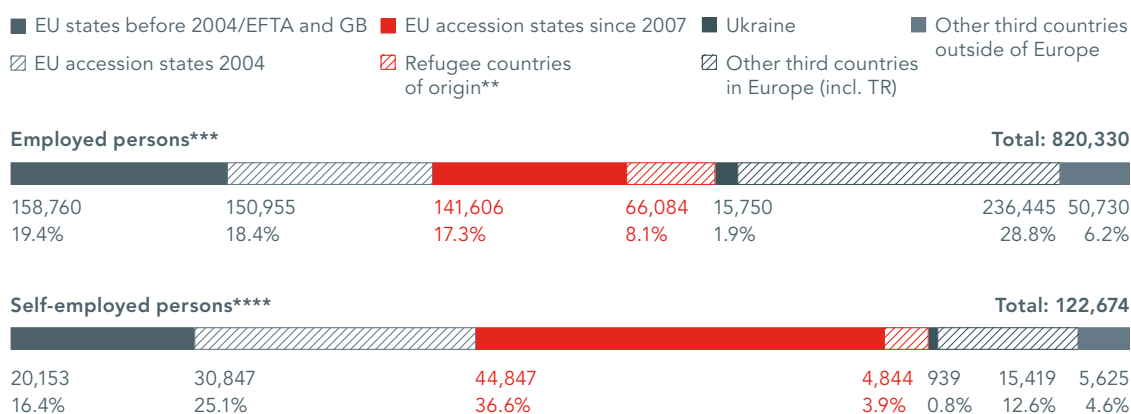
Another data source for recording employment is the Microcensus, a labour force survey of Austrian households (self-declaration). It not only collects data on nationality, but also on the respondent's country of birth. According to this data, the number of persons employed in 2023 increased by 40,400 (0.9%) compared to the previous year. This corresponds to a similarly high increase in gainful employment as that of the labour force residing in Austria on an annual average in 2023, according to social insurance data (+34,000, +0.8% vs. 2022). However, at 19.9%, the proportion of foreign nationals in gainful employment was slightly lower than according to social insurance data. By contrast, on the annual average for 2023, the proportion of immigrants (first-generation) was considerably higher at 23.3% (women 23.1%; men 23.5%). Compared to the previous year, this meant a slight increase of 0.7 percentage points in the proportion of immigrants (first-generation) who are gainfully employed.<sup>52</sup> At 27.9%, the proportion of people with a migrant background in gainful employment was significantly above this level, and hence slightly higher than in the previous year (+0.8 percentage points).

<sup>52</sup> Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey. Differences between the proportion of foreign nationals in gainful employment and the social insurance data result from the fact that the first-generation also includes naturalised persons born abroad, while the number of foreign nationals includes persons who either immigrated to Austria or were born in Austria but kept their citizenship.

According to social insurance data, an annual average of 3,808,200 people were resident and employed in Austria in 2023, which corresponds to a slight increase of 33,500 or 0.9% compared to the previous year.<sup>53</sup> Foreign employed persons permanently residing in Austria accounted for 820,300 employees in 2023, or<sup>54</sup> 21.5% of all employed persons. At 53.6%, nationals of another EU country made up the majority, with 19.4% or 158,800 nationals of EU states before 2004/EFTA and the United Kingdom (GB), 18.4% or 151,000 nationals of EU accession states in 2004 and 17.3% or 141,600 being Bulgarian, Romanian and Croatian nationals (EU accession states since 2007). 236,400 or 28.8% of foreign employees were nationals of another European non-member country. The number of employed persons who were citizens of a major country of refugee origin<sup>55</sup> totalled 66,100 (8.1%), while 50,700 (6.2%) were nationals of other non-European countries. The approximately 15,800 Ukrainian nationals (30% men and 70% women) accounted for only 1.9% of all employed persons. 62.8% of the jobs held by Ukrainians were in six sectors, led by tourism and trade, followed by health and social work, freelance scientific and technical services and other business-related services, but also in the industrial and commercial production sector. The majority of employed Ukrainians live and work in Vienna (36.0%), followed by Upper Austria (17.5%) and Lower Austria (12.7%).

## FOREIGN EMPLOYEES AND SELF-EMPLOYED PERSONS

Annual average 2023 by nationality\*



\* Excluding 7,055 other and unknown employed persons and 119 self-employed persons.

\*\* Refugee countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria, Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. This is an approximation: on the one hand, not all nationals of these countries are refugees, on the other hand, some refugees with other nationalities were not included.

\*\*\* Calculation with main residence in Austria, excl. "not specified".

\*\*\*\* Incl. commuters with their principle residence abroad.

Fig. 16; Source: BMAW (2024), Online Labour Market Information System AMIS; own presentation.

In 2023, 501,700 people were self-employed throughout Austria, with the proportion of foreigners at just over 122,800 people, as in the previous year, at around a quarter (24.5%).<sup>56</sup> Bulgarian, Romanian and Croatian nationals made up the largest category with 36.6% (44,800). The main reason for this is the high number of women who have been working as self-employed persons in Austria since the legalisation of the 24-hour home care in the Home Care Act (HbeG) in 2007, which created the non-regulated "free" trades of personal care services<sup>57</sup>. This was followed by 30,800

53 Including the category "not specified".

54 Excluding 7,055 other and unknown employed persons. This means only limited comparisons can be made with the data in the 2023 Integration Report.

55 Afghanistan, Syria, Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. This is an approximation: on the one hand, not all nationals of these countries are persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection; on the other hand, nationals of other countries with a refugee background were not included.

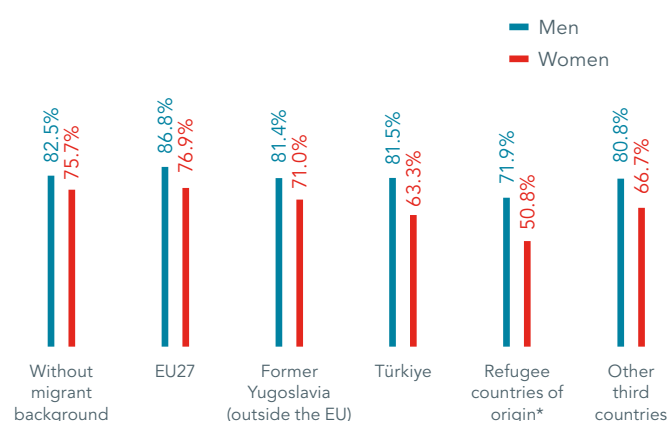
56 Self-employed persons are stated including commuters with their principle residence abroad (in the main 24-hour caregiver).

57 Federal Act creating provisions for the care of persons in private households (Home Care Act – HBeG) and amending the Industrial Code (GewO) 1994, Federal Law Gazette I 33/2007.

or 25.1% self-employed nationals from EU accession states in 2004 and 20,200 or 16.4% nationals from EU states before 2004/EFTA/GB. The proportion of self-employed Ukrainians was comparatively low at 0.8%. However, this number increased by 254 persons to 938 (+37.1%) compared to the previous year as a result of the influx of refugees. 15,400 or 12.6% of the employed persons were nationals of other European third countries. At just 3.9% (4,800), the proportion of nationals from refugee countries of origin was clearly lower among self-employed persons than in the category of employed persons. 5,600 or 4.6% of foreign self-employed persons were nationals of another non-European third country.

## ACTIVITY RATE

2023 by sex and migrant background, 15–64-year olds



\* Refugee countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria, Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. This is an approximation: on the one hand, not all nationals of these countries are refugees, on the other hand, some refugees with other nationalities were not included.

Fig. 17; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

In addition to the employment figures, the activity rate is an important indicator that provides insights into the labour market integration of different age and origin groups. Based on Statistics Austria's Labour Force Survey (Microcensus), it is calculated as a proportion of the total number of employed and self-employed persons and the total number of unemployed persons in the population. They can be used to determine what proportion of people in an age group are working or actively looking for work. For the 15–64 age group, this proportion was 78.2% in 2023, a slight increase compared to the previous year (77.8%).

In some cases, the labour market integration of the groups studied varies considerably according to sex and origin. For people without a migrant background, the activity rate in<sup>58</sup> 2023, for example, was slightly above average at 79.1%, while for people with a migrant background it was slightly below average at 76.4% (first-generation) and 73.3% (second-generation). As in the previous year, men with a migrant background from EU Member States had a particularly high activity rate of 86.8%, while the rate for women from Türkiye and refugee countries of origin was again the lowest at 63.3% and 50.8% respectively. The gender gap was particularly large for people with a migrant background from refugee countries of origin, where the activity rate for men was 71.9%, 21.1 percentage points higher than that of women. Similarly, there were clear differences between the sexes among people with a Turkish migrant background (women 63.3%; men 81.5%) and from other third countries (women 66.7%; men 80.8%). The differences were somewhat lower for people with a migrant background from a successor state of the former Yugoslavia outside the EU (women 71.0%; men 81.4%). Among people without a migrant background, women had a labour force participation rate that was six percentage points lower than men.

58 Definition: Share of the labour force (gainfully employed and unemployed) in the population (15-64 years). In contrast to the employment rate, the activity rate also includes the unemployed.

## Educational background of gainfully employed persons

The level of education of first-generation persons in work shows a significantly higher proportion of basic qualifications than that of people without a migrant background (20% compared to 8.8%), whereas the proportion of highly qualified people with a university degree hardly differs between the two groups (37.8% compared to 38.1%). The major difference lies in the intermediate and higher qualifications, i.e. skilled workers with intermediate and higher technical colleges or apprenticeships: this is the fundamental educational level of people without a migrant background at 53.2% in 2022 (latest available data), while the proportion of first-generation immigrants is “only” 42.2%. This means that the majority of immigrants also have intermediate to higher qualifications, although the proportion is lower than among people without a migrant background.

If the second generation is also taken into account<sup>59</sup> the role of the Austrian education system in providing higher qualifications that increase employment opportunities becomes clear: the proportion of gainfully employed persons with at most a compulsory school leaving certification falls to 15.8% within the second-generation, while the proportion with intermediate and higher qualifications, i.e. apprenticeships, intermediate and higher technical colleges and colleges, rises to 49.5%. On the other hand, it is less common for second-generation young people to complete a university education. The comparatively high proportion of first-generation university graduates is therefore predominantly due to the immigration of foreign students. This fact illustrates how important the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad is for adequate employment and for filling the shortage of skilled workers in Austria.

### EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE

2022 by level of education and migrant background

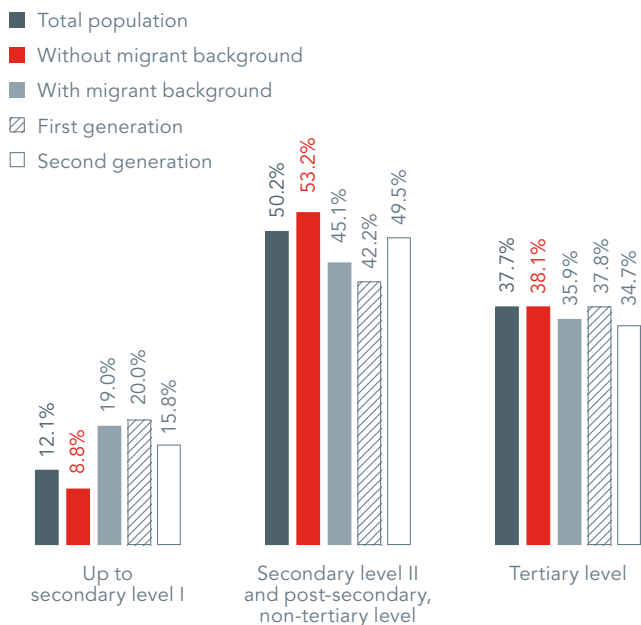


Fig. 18; Source: Eurostat (2024), Employment by sex, age, migration status, occupation and educational level; own presentation.

<sup>59</sup> In the EU statistics, the second-generation group also includes persons of whom only one parent was born abroad, while Statistics Austria only counts children born in Austria as second-generation if both parents immigrated from abroad.

## Unemployment and transitions into employment

Data on unemployment, transitions from unemployment to employment and the educational background of immigrants allow important conclusions to be drawn about labour market integration. This is based on the number of unemployed persons registered with the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS). In total, their number increased by 7,700 (+2.9%) to 270,800 in 2023 compared to the previous year. While the number of unemployed Austrian nationals fell slightly by 3,200 (-1.9%) to 167,200, the number of unemployed foreign nationals rose by 10,800 (+11.7%) to 103,600. As a result, the unemployment rate of the economy as a whole rose slightly to 6.4% (+0.1 percentage points) in 2023 and to 9.6% for foreign nationals. In contrast, it has fallen to 5.3% among Austrian nationals. Thus, the difference in unemployment rates between Austrian and foreign nationals rose to 4.3 percentage points (+0.6 percentage points compared to the previous year).

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

2023 by sex and nationality

Nationality	Total	Men	Women
Syria	36.7 %	34.6 %	45.0 %
Iraq	23.5 %	20.2 %	32.6 %
Afghanistan	21.6 %	17.2 %	37.0 %
Serbia	20.2 %	21.3 %	18.9 %
Russian Federation	19.6 %	23.0 %	16.9 %
Türkiye	14.4 %	12.6 %	17.2 %
Ukraine	14.1 %	12.2 %	14.9 %
Bulgaria	13.8 %	13.2 %	14.4 %
Romania	10.1 %	9.5 %	10.9 %
Croatia	8.4 %	8.7 %	8.1 %
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8.3 %	8.6 %	7.8 %
Poland	7.3 %	6.8 %	8.1 %
Austria	5.3 %	5.8 %	4.8 %
Germany	4.5 %	4.6 %	4.4 %

Fig. 19; Source: BMAW (2024), Online Labour Market Information System AMIS; own presentation.

As in the previous year, Syrian (36.7%) and Iraqi (23.5%) nationals had particularly high unemployment rates. There were major differences by sex, particularly among Afghan nationals. While the unemployment rate for Afghan men was 17.2% in 2023, it was more than twice as high for Afghan women at 37.0%, meaning that, as in 2022, the gender-specific differences were most pronounced in this group.

As in the previous year, Syrian women had the highest unemployment rate at 45.0%. The fact that their rate was also distinctly higher than that of Afghan women (37.0%) can be explained, among other things, by the fact that Syrian women registered as jobseekers much more frequently. Similarly, the unemployment rate for Afghan and Syrian men showed similar differences, with 17.2% compared to 34.6%. For men, these differences are probably not only the result of a greater willingness to register as job-

seekers with the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), but are also primarily due to the fact that Syrian nationals frequently have higher qualifications than Afghan nationals, which prolongs the latter's search for appropriate employment, e.g. through participation in training courses or the recognition procedure for qualifications. For Afghan nationals with fleeing experience, however, who usually have a lower level of education, entering the Austrian labour market in the area of unskilled jobs often proved to be easier. Overall, however, it has become apparent in recent years that more and more immigrant Syrian nationals have little or no previous education or work experience and are increasingly in need of alphabetisation.<sup>60</sup> At 14.1%, the unemployment rate for Ukrainian nationals in 2023 was similar to that for Turkish (14.4%) or Bulgarian (13.8%) nationals. Here, too, the search for a suitable job can take longer, partly because of the sometimes lengthy duration of the recognition procedures for qualifications, and partly because the job matching is

<sup>60</sup> ÖIF (2023), ÖIF-Faktencheck: Alphabetisierungsbedarf unter Flüchtlingen im Fokus.

more time-consuming for higher qualifications than for simple jobs or standardised professional qualifications. In addition, Ukrainian nationals are increasingly deciding to stay in Austria in the medium to long term, as the end of the war in Ukraine is not yet in sight.<sup>61</sup> As a result, they increasingly registered as jobseekers, causing the unemployment rate to jump in 2023.

In 2023, in addition to the 270,800 registered unemployed persons who were immediately employable, a further 70,500 were still in training. Compared to the previous year, the total number of registered unemployed and training participants rose by 8,700 people or 2.6%. Almost 90% of this increase were registered unemployed, but the number of training participants also increased by 1,000 people (+1.5%). While the number of Austrian registered unemployed and Austrian training participants fell by a total of 4,100 people (-2%), the number of foreign registered unemployed and foreign training participants rose (by a total of 12,800 people, +10%).

The largest group of registered unemployed persons were those who had no more than a compulsory school leaving certification (45%). Among Austrians, the proportion was 35% (58,600). Among the 33,700 Austrian participants in training, the proportion of people with low qualifications was even higher at just under 48% (16,200). Among foreign nationals, the proportion of low-skilled unemployed was 61% and just above that, among training participants, it was 66%.

Among jobseekers from the EU14 before 2004, excluding Austria, the proportion of people with at most a compulsory school leaving certification was at the lower end at 26%. The proportion of low-skilled workers was particularly high among nationals of the main refugee countries of origin in recent years (Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Russian Federation, Somalia), at 70%, and among third-country nationals in general, at 68%.

The largest group of Austrian nationals seeking employment in 2023 were again people with intermediate education (apprenticeship and intermediate technical college), at 44%. Proportionately, however, distinctly fewer Austrian jobseekers with intermediate qualifications were in training (34%) than people with basic qualifications (48%). Obviously, increased attention is being paid to improving the qualifications of jobseekers with no more than compulsory school leaving certification. The situation is somewhat different for nationals of other EU Member States. Only a quarter of these jobseekers have an intermediate qualification, and here too, more people with low qualifications have received training. In all groups (with the exception of Ukrainians), people with a university degree made up the smallest percentage of unemployed jobseekers or those registered for training. As in the previous year, only in the group of nationals of EU states before 2004/EFTA/GB was their share significantly higher at 23%, surpassed only by Ukrainian nationals at 35.5%. This shows that university graduates often have to search longer for a suitable job due to the complexity of the job requirements.

61 *Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja et al. (2022), Aktuelle Situation und Zukunftsperspektiven von Ukraine-Vertriebenen in Österreich.*

## UNEMPLOYED OR REGISTERED JOBSEEKERS IN TRAINING

2023 by nationality or residence status and level of education

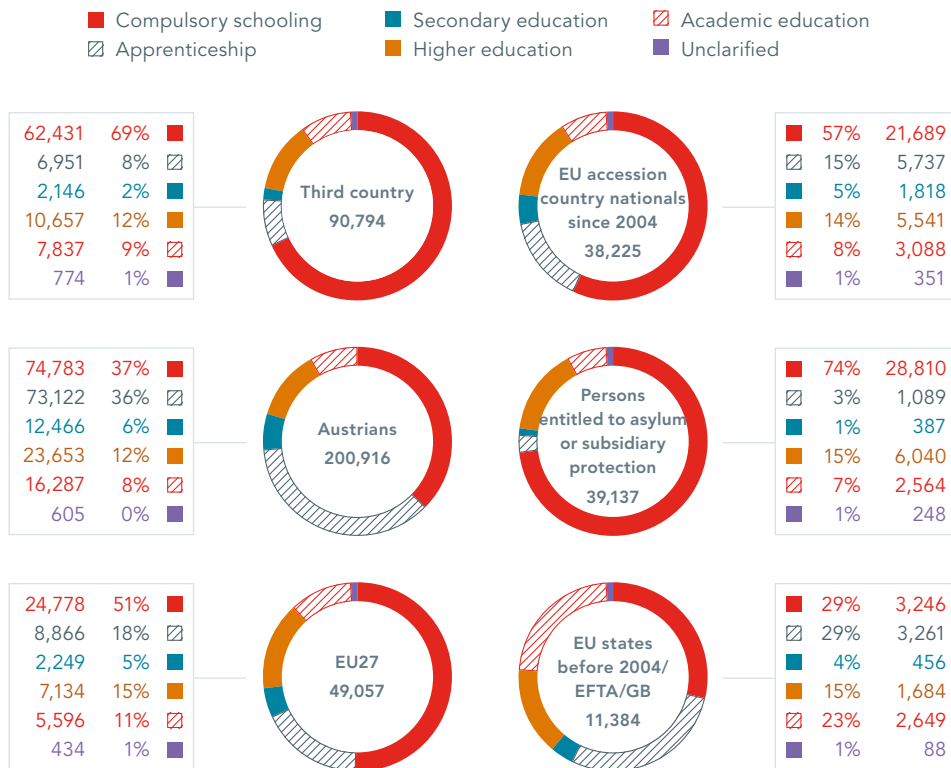


Fig. 20; Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

The number of unemployed Ukrainians rose sharply in 2023, as they increasingly looked for work - with a view to long-term prospects in the country if they successfully integrated into the labour market through access to the Red-White-Red Card. An annual average of 2,700 Ukrainians were registered as unemployed in 2023, 74% of whom were women, compared to 500 in the previous year (75% women). The educational structure was polarised, with a very high percentage (37%) having an academic education and an almost equal portion (35.5%) having completed only compulsory education.

Leaving unemployment can mean different things: taking up a job, giving up work in favour of caring responsibilities, retiring or moving abroad. It therefore makes sense, for a policy-relevant interpretation of exits from unemployment, to take into account the various types of transition. In 2023, for example, the total number of people leaving unemployment fell by 9,300 (-0.9%) compared to the previous year. This can be interpreted as an indicator that it became somewhat more difficult on average to find a suitable job (exit into employment) - or that more registered unemployed persons withdrew from working life (exit into being not gainfully employed).



The transition rate from unemployment into employment, calculated as the proportion of people leaving unemployment, is another important ratio that can be used to analyse the labour market integration and employment opportunities of immigrants. At 58%, the transition rate for Austrian nationals remained constant in 2023. There were also no changes when broken down by sex. Among the groups analysed, the transition rate was highest for people from EU Member States before 2004 at 65% and lowest for Syrian nationals at 25%. As in the previous year, there were particularly large differences between Syrian and Afghan men (28% compared to 55%), meaning that the transition rate of Syrian men continues to stagnate at a comparatively low level. The differences between Syrian and Afghan women, on the other hand, were significantly smaller (18% compared to 19%). The transition rates for Russian and Turkish nationals fell slightly compared to 2022 to 38% and 40% respectively. The greatest differences between men and women were found among Afghan nationals (55% compared to 19%).

## TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT

2023 by sex and nationality as a percentage of all outflows from unemployment

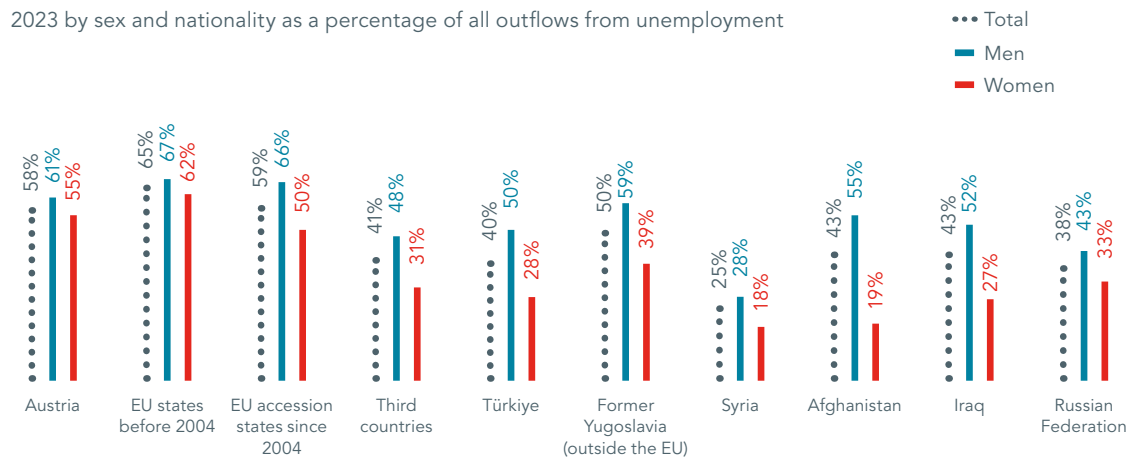


Fig. 21; Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; BMAW (2024), Online Labour Market Information System AMIS; own presentation.

The duration of unemployment fell in 2023 compared to the previous year, by 18.5% to 189 days, which may be a result of the ongoing shortage of skilled workers. Austrian nationals are unemployed for around 2.5 months longer than foreign nationals. This may mean that Austrians – who on average have higher and more specific qualifications – find it more difficult to find a suitable job. However, it may also mean that foreign workers feel greater pressure to accept a job as quickly as possible, even if it does not exactly match their qualifications. As a result, foreign workers are more likely to be overqualified for their jobs than domestic workers. For example, in 2022, 24.9% of employed Austrian nationals aged 20–64 with a university degree were in an occupation for which they were overqualified, compared to 34.8% of nationals of another EU country and 48.7% of third-country nationals.<sup>62</sup>

62 Eurostat (2023), *Migrant integration statistics – over-qualification*.



In 2023, the shortest duration of unemployment was among nationals of non-European third countries (112 days), followed by unemployed persons from the 2007 EU enlargement countries. In 2023, Ukrainians registered with the Public Employment Service had a particularly short period of unemployment, at 60 days (compared to 95 in the previous year), just about half as long as Austrian nationals. The length of time for Afghan and Somali (82 days) and Syrian (84 days) nationals was also shorter than the average for foreign nationals.

## Social assistance

In addition to unemployment benefits and unemployment assistance, there is also social assistance. Eligibility for unemployment benefits depends on having worked for 52 weeks in the past two years – 26 weeks is enough for young people under 25. Unemployment benefits are generally granted for 20 weeks – a longer period may be possible under certain circumstances (such as age or a vocational rehabilitation programme). It is then possible to apply for unemployment assistance, which is granted for a period of one year, but can be extended. Recipients of unemployment benefits and unemployment assistance are always required to be available to work in the labour market. If the criteria for receiving unemployment benefits or unemployment assistance are not met, an entitlement to social assistance may be considered.

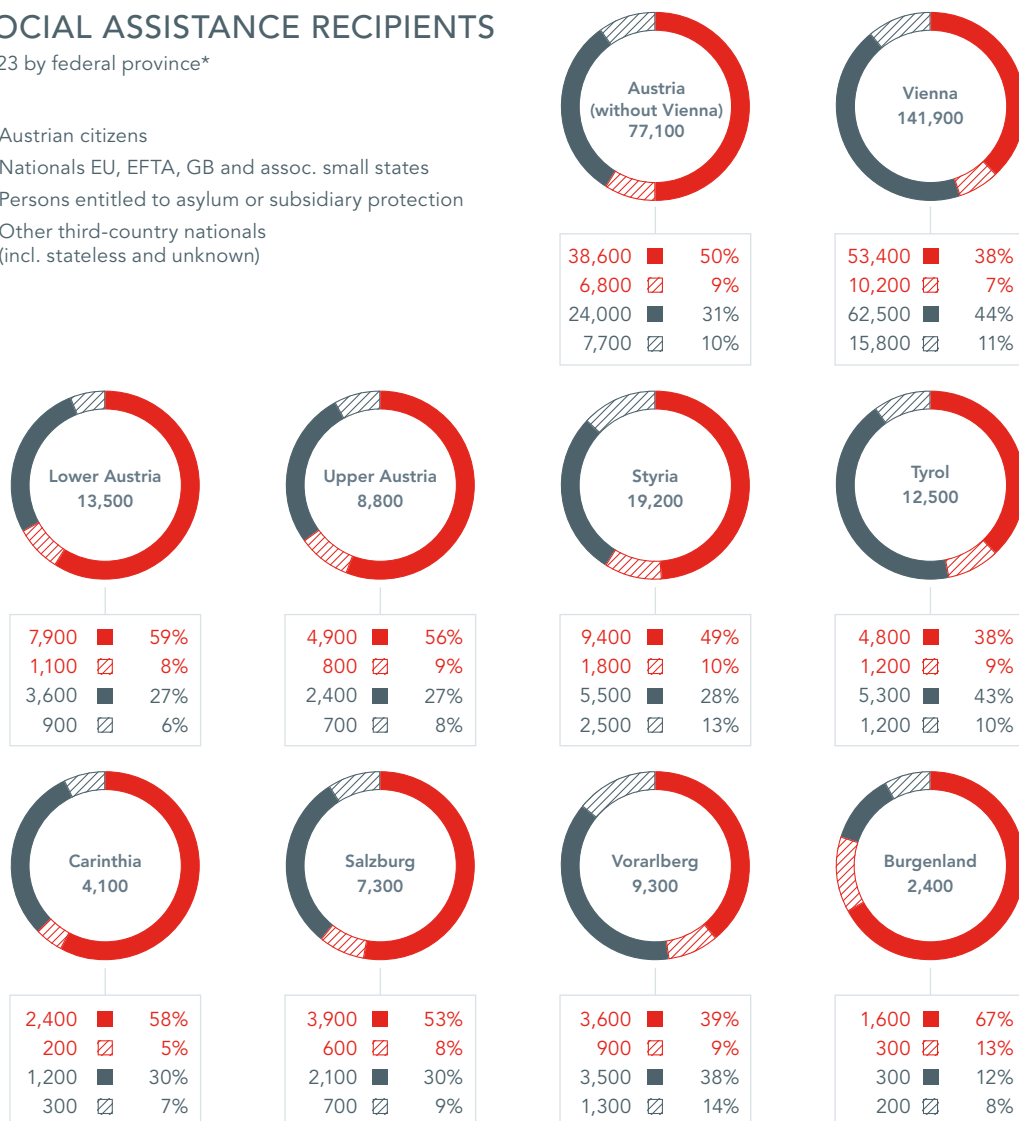
Social assistance includes all benefits made available as financial support to entitled persons with low or no income to secure their living and housing costs outside of residential care facilities. A key component of this is statutory health insurance. In principle, an entitlement to benefits from social assistance only exists when one's own assets have been exhausted. In addition to Austrians, the following groups of people are entitled to receive social assistance benefits: Citizens of the EU or the EEA if they are employed in Austria or have been living in Austria for more than five years, as well as third-country nationals who have actually and legally lived in Austria for more than five years. Persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection receive social assistance from the time their status is recognised, whereby they are only granted core social assistance benefits, which are limited to the level of basic welfare support.<sup>63</sup> To avoid cases of particular hardship, social assistance benefits can also be extended to persons who are not entitled to them. Asylum seekers and displaced persons from Ukraine, on the other hand, are not supported as part of social assistance, but through basic welfare support.

<sup>63</sup> In some federal provinces, including Vienna, the laws on means-tested minimum income (BMS) are still in force. As a result, there may be deviations from the services described above.

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

2023 by federal province\*

- Austrian citizens
- ▨ Nationals EU, EFTA, GB and assoc. small states
- Persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection
- ▨ Other third-country nationals (incl. stateless and unknown)



\* Vienna based on annual average figures, other federal provinces based on annual totals.

Ukrainian nationals are not included in this figure because, as displaced persons, they are entitled to basic welfare support and not social assistance.

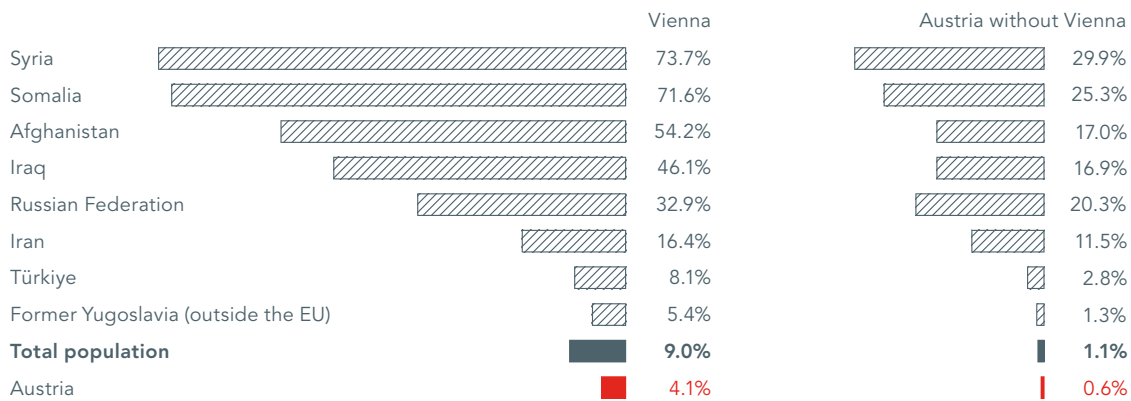
Fig. 22; Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

In 2023, 256,800 people received social assistance benefits at least once, a slight increase compared to 2022. This was due to an increase in Vienna (+7,600, +6%), while it fell slightly in the federal provinces excluding Vienna (-1,900, -2%). In 2023, as in the previous year, the majority of social assistance recipients lived in Vienna (70%), followed in second, third and fourth place by Styria, Lower Austria and Tyrol. Burgenland had the lowest proportion of foreigners among social assistance recipients. In Vienna, the significantly higher influx of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection plays a substantial role. They make up 44% of all social assistance recipients in Vienna. Similarly high proportions are found in Tyrol, where persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection account for 43% of all social assistance recipients, while in Lower Austria Austrian nationals have the highest share of social assistance recipients at 59%.

As in the previous year, the social assistance receipt rates of nationals from refugee countries of origin were high, which can be explained, among others by the fact that many of them have only been in Austria for a few months or years. In Vienna, Syrian nationals were the most frequent recipients of social assistance in 2023 (73.7%), followed by Somali, Afghan and Iraqi nationals on an annual average. In the other eight federal provinces, Syrian nationals were also in first place with 29.9%. Compared to the previous year, a slight decrease in the social assistance receipt rate among nationals from refugee countries of origin can be observed.

## RATIO OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

2023 by nationality\*

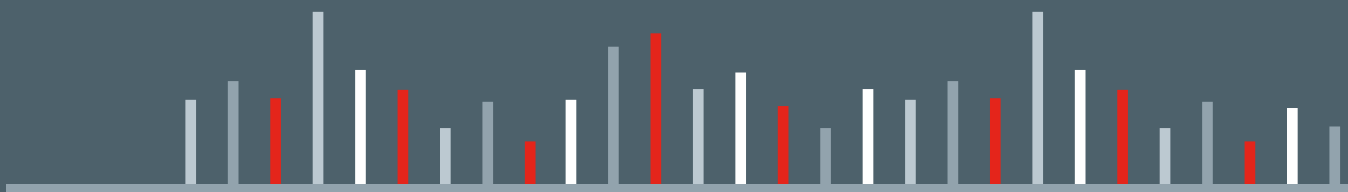


\* Vienna based on annual average figures, other federal provinces based on annual totals.

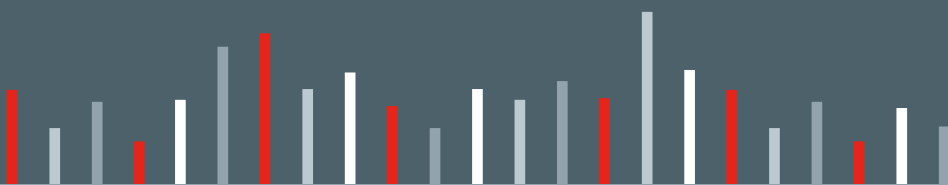
Ukrainian nationals do not appear in this chart because, as displaced persons, they are entitled to basic welfare support and not social assistance.

Fig. 23; Source: Data of the federal provinces recorded in the course of the integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.





Initial integration and  
language acquisition of adults



FOCUS CHAPTER

# INITIAL INTEGRATION AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF ADULTS

*The outstanding importance of German language acquisition for participation in economic and social life in Austria is undisputed. The development of effective language training measures for immigrants has therefore been the focus of integration policy for some time.<sup>64</sup>*

For adults, German language skills are a key factor for rapid entry into the labour market. A lack of those languages skills, on the other hand, can lead to a delay in taking up employment. Although a good command of the German language remains an important prerequisite for long-term professional development and for taking up more demanding jobs, the noticeable shortage of personnel in many sectors means that there are opportunities to enter the labour market even with little or no language skills. A special analysis of the 2023 migration survey shows that as many as 29% of immigrants without any language skills have already gained work experience in Austria.<sup>65</sup> For this reason, the ÖIF has expanded its offers for learning German in parallel to gainful employment, for example in the form of online courses.<sup>66</sup> The interlinking of labour market entry and German language acquisition can ultimately also prevent immigrants from remaining at a low language level, which makes integration more difficult in the long term.

However, German language skills are not only of great benefit on the labour market. Knowledge of the German language is useful for contacts with public institutions and for orientation in the health care system. For immigrants with children, it is particularly important to have as smooth a communication as possible with educational institutions. Effective communication between parents and teachers helps to overcome individual challenges in education. In an education system that does not explicitly aim to compensate for disadvantages due to origin and in which parents play an important role in their children's education,<sup>67</sup> parents' German language skills can also have a positive effect on their children's educational success.

Last but not least, German language skills are also important in the private sphere, as it makes it easier to establish social contacts outside of one's own group of origin and thus contributes to feeling at home in Austria in the long term. Learning German as early as possible should therefore also be seen as an initial preventative measure against segregation. Against the background of an increasing diversity of countries of origin and the languages spoken by immigrants, German is also gaining in importance as a lingua franca for everyday communication between different groups of origin.

64 In the National Action Plan for Integration, the area of "Language and Education" is named as the first of a total of seven fields of action in integration policy.

65 ÖIF (2024) *Erwerbsintegration in Österreich*, p. 21. The employment biographies of people from the 11 countries of origin Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Türkiye, Afghanistan, Maghreb states (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia), the Russian Federation, Syria, Romania and Ukraine were analysed here.

66 For more information, see [sprachportal.at](https://sprachportal.at). The offer also includes courses that provide general information about entry opportunities for German beginners.

67 Statistics Austria (2018), *Statistics Brief. Vererbung von Bildungschancen*, p. 4.

Successful language acquisition is not just a question of the individual motivation of the learners. In general, factors such as the disparity between the language of origin and German, educational background, age and literacy level play a role.<sup>68</sup> Language acquisition programmes must therefore take into account the specific prerequisites and the resulting needs and challenges of different target groups. This chapter will therefore focus on the different needs of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, displaced Ukrainians and skilled workers in learning German.

In the ÖIF courses for persons with recognised status, a steadily increasing proportion of participants with alphabetisation needs was recorded until 2022. 65% of people with recognised status who attended an ÖIF course for the first time in 2023 had alphabetisation needs. 63% of this group were people learning a second script. Adults who need to be literate for the first time face a double challenge. They have to learn a new language and at the same time develop the basic cognitive skills necessary for reading and writing (association between letters and sounds, motor skills). In many cases, this leads to slower learning of German and difficulties in achieving higher levels of competence.<sup>69</sup>

People learning a second script, such as those displaced from Ukraine, on the other hand, can draw on these basic skills when learning another script. They are therefore generally literate more quickly in the new language and are also more successful in further language acquisition.<sup>70</sup> The low proportion of primary illiterates who pass the test, even at lower levels of competence, illustrates the difficult situation of this group: only 13% of primary illiterates (persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection) in the period from 2021 passed an exam at A2 level or higher by March 2024. By contrast, the success rate of people learning a second script with Ukrainian citizenship and first-time measures in 2022 was significantly higher (29%).

First-time literate persons and people learning a second script should therefore be regarded as different groups, each with their own needs. The ÖIF's framework curriculum for alphabetisation courses also takes this into account by generally providing separate types of course for the different target groups. The introductory literacy course is designed for primary illiterates and people learning a second script with a low level of learning socialisation. The standard course Alpha is aimed at people learning a second script with a high level of learning socialisation and graduates of the introductory course.<sup>71</sup>

The situation is quite different for the group of prospective or already employed skilled workers. In general, the search for a suitable job is more time-consuming for people with higher educational qualifications than for those with lower qualifications. Insufficient German language skills is a particularly frequent obstacle to taking up employment. In 2021, almost a third (31.3%) of people born abroad with a university degree in Austria had problems finding a job, with insufficient German language skills being the biggest obstacle (37.5%).<sup>72</sup> The results of the special evaluation of the 2023 migration survey also show that immigrants with a university degree are more frequently reporting difficulties in finding a suitable job than those with a lower level of education. One reason for this could also be that the existing German language skills of many of the higher-qualified workers are not sufficient for the job in question.<sup>73</sup>

68 Rocca, Lorenzo et al. (2020), *Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants: Requirements and Learning Opportunities*, p. 43.

69 Minuz, Fernanda et al. (2022), *Literacy and second language learning for the linguistic integration of adult migrants*, p. 25.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

71 Feldmeier García, Alexis (2022), *ÖIF-Rahmencurriculum für Alphabetisierungskurse*, p. 2.

72 Statistics Austria (2022), *Arbeitsmarktsituation von Migrant:innen in Österreich. Modul der Mikrozensus-Arbeitskräfteerhebung 2021*.

73 ÖIF (2024), *Erwerbsintegration in Österreich. Erwerbsbiografien und Einflussfaktoren auf die Erwerbsbeteiligung von Migrant:innen und Flüchtlingen*, p. 39.



Tailored forms of language training in terms of content should therefore also be developed for this group of higher-qualified individuals.<sup>74</sup> These can also already start before immigration to Austria.<sup>75</sup> In addition to the general promotion of language skills, this includes above all the targeted teaching of the specialised language of the respective occupational field. One example of this is the specialised online language course “Deutsch für die Pflege” (German for nursing and personal care) offered free of charge by the ÖIF.<sup>76</sup> This includes, in particular, medical vocabulary and phrases relevant for work-related communication with persons in need of care and their relatives. In order to reconcile language acquisition and professional activity, the course consists of flexibly accessible content for self-study and regular online live units. Similar courses are also available for the hotel and restaurant industry as well as the food retail sector.<sup>77</sup> In addition, the Integration Service for Professionals<sup>78</sup>, which was established at the end of October 2023, also offers information and support in improving German language skills as part of its comprehensive counselling service. In addition to immigrants with a Red-White-Red Card, the target groups of this service also include qualified individuals who already live in Austria and skilled workers who are interested in taking up employment in Austria. In the following sections of this chapter, the situation of the groups described above (persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, displaced Ukrainians, skilled workers) is discussed in more detail, with the focus in each case being on the role of German language acquisition in initial integration.

74 Skribot, Mischa (2023), *Deutsch Lernen für ein Leben in Deutschland*, p. 4.

75 Ebner, Prisca et al. (2023), *Skills-Mobilitäts-Partnerschaften in Österreich*, p. 26.

76 ÖIF (2023), *Ausländische Fachkräfte in Österreich*, p. 13.

77 Corresponding job-related German courses are offered on the “*Sprachportal Deutsch lernen*”.

78 ÖIF (2024), *Das Integrationservice für Fachkräfte*.

# INITIAL INTEGRATION OF PERSONS ENTITLED TO ASYLUM OR SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION

*Even though significantly fewer asylum applications were made in Austria in 2023 compared to the previous year,<sup>79</sup> the number of protections granted rose sharply again, reaching the highest level in recent years at 27,300.<sup>80</sup> The last time there were more positive decisions was in 2017, when 30,400 protections were granted. In addition to the high number of people to be integrated, the declining level of education of arriving adults<sup>81</sup> with a refugee background over the years has put additional strain on the Austrian integration system. In particular, the persistently high proportion of non-literate persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection whose language acquisition is usually relatively slow and requires additional resources poses a major challenge.*

As active participation in social and economic life in Austria is closely linked to sufficient German language skills, the rapid acquisition of German is one of the most important foundations for a successful integration process. In particular, it is often only possible to take up employment which promotes both the self-sustainability of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection as well as their social integration if they have adequate German language skills. In view of the many vacancies on the Austrian labour market and the possibility of deepening German language skills acquired in language courses in the workplace, language acquisition and labour market entry should not take place separately, but ideally in parallel. Studies have sufficiently proven that good German language skills in particular can offer persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection long-term prospects on the Austrian labour market and in Austrian society.<sup>82</sup> The following section will therefore focus in particular on the process of German language acquisition and the associated challenges.

## German language acquisition and gainful employment

Whether and when new immigrants in Austria become gainfully employed depends, among other things, on how quickly they acquire the German language skills necessary for successful labour market integration. One indicator that can be used to track the gainful employment of different groups is the employment rate, which measures the proportion of non-self-employed and self-employed persons in the population able to participate in gainful employment. Studies on the employment histories of migrants show, on the one hand, that women take up employment significantly less often or later than men – not least because of the issues related to child care.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, they show that the labour market integration of

79 Asylum: 17,293, subsidiary protection: 8,222, humanitarian protection: 1,797 (total: 27,312). A growing number of cases involve the granting of protection or asylum to family reunification members and children born in Austria.

80 BMI (2024), *Asyl-Statistik*.

81 The same applies to children and young people who have caught up with family members and have only attended school for a short time or not at all.

82 For example, an analysis of the labour market situation of migrants in 2021 showed that the employment rate for people with fluent German language skills was 72.4%, while the rate for people with only marginal German language skills was only 40.5%. See Statistics Austria (2022), *Arbeitsmarktsituation von Migrant:innen in Österreich. Modul der Mikrozensus-Arbeitskräfteerhebung 2021*, p. 26.

83 Saal, Marlene; Volkert, Jürgen (2019), *Labour Market Integration of Refugees in Germany*, pp. 425–438 and Biffl, Gudrun et al. (2021), *Selbstwahrnehmung von Frauen mit Fluchterfahrung im Spiegel von Integrationserwartungen*, pp. 165–183.

different groups of origin can sometimes be quite different and is also influenced by the length of immigrants' stay.<sup>84</sup>

The employment rate of Syrian refugees who came to Austria in 2019 was only 15.5% in 2021. In contrast, it was 53.5% for Syrian refugees who had been in the country since 2015. In addition to differences in length of stay, these differences can be attributed to changes in the composition of the group, which in recent years has included significantly more women with children in need of care. A similar picture emerged for the employment rates of Afghan refugees – 19.0% of Afghan refugees who came to Austria in 2019 were in employment in 2021, compared to 52.4% of the 2015 immigrant cohort. Chechen refugees recently had by far the lowest employment rates. Only 8.2% of Chechens who arrived in 2019 and 27.7% of Chechens who arrived in 2015 were registered as employed or self-employed in 2021. The labour market integration of people from refugee countries of origin has therefore been significantly slower overall than that of Turkish nationals or people from the former Yugoslavia, for example, who have mainly come to Austria on a 'regular' basis (i.e. not as asylum seekers) in recent years. One of the reasons for this is likely to be the frequently lower level of education of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, which – particularly in the case of persons with alphabetisation needs – significantly prolongs the German language acquisition, which in turn prevents them from entering the labour market quickly.<sup>85</sup>

The importance of German language skills for gainful employment and the employment histories for the group of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection in Austria is also confirmed by the results of the FIMAS project series, among others.<sup>86</sup> The panel survey launched in 2016 collects the experiences of members of the target group using standardised interviews and at annual to biennial intervals in order to track and present integration processes over time. The focus lies on labour market integration and the factors that facilitate or hinder it. The data available are taken from the cross-sectional dataset of the current sixth wave of the survey in 2023/2024. Of the total of 3,017 respondents, 42% stated that they were gainfully employed, 36% were unemployed and 22% were not part of the labour force. Male respondents were integrated in the labour market (45%) to a greater extent than female respondents (38%). For the respondents as a whole, it was found that language skills – alongside length of stay – had the greatest positive influence on the labour status. People who rated their knowledge of German as "good" or "very good" were gainfully employed at a rate of 49%, compared with only 29% of those who assessed their command of the German language as "very poor" or "rather poor". In contrast, there was no significant correlation between the level of education acquired in the home country and the respective labour status. Respondents who rated their level of education as "higher" were only slightly more frequently gainfully employed than those who had only a "low" level of education. The self-assessment of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection suggests that higher educational qualifications acquired in their home country cannot be directly utilised on the Austrian labour market, that good German language skills can play a decisive role with regard to labour market participation, and that the will to integrate as quickly as possible influences gainful employment regardless of the level of education.

<sup>84</sup> *Endel, Florian et al. (2022), Erwerbsverläufe von Migrant/innen III.*

<sup>85</sup> *Statistics Austria (2014), Schlüsselkompetenzen von Erwachsenen – Vertiefende Analysen der PIAAC-Erhebung 2011/12.*

<sup>86</sup> *FIMAS is the short title of the research project "processes of labour market integration of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Austria", see [Processes of labour market integration of young refugees in Austria – ICMPI](#).*

## Basic education/catching up on compulsory school leaving certification

In order to give adults with no or little formal education better access to the Austrian labour market, they can engage in a comprehensive range of courses and training programmes in accordance with Art. 15a of the Federal Constitutional Law Agreement (B-VG) on basic education and catching up on compulsory school leaving certification. Participation in the support programme, which has been running since 2012, is free of charge and is furthermore intended to strengthen the social integration of participants. To this end, standardised courses are available throughout Austria in the areas of “basic education” and “catching up on compulsory school leaving certification”. The target group for the basic education courses are people who have basic educational needs in the areas of learning skills, written and oral communication in the German language, basic foreign language skills, mathematics and digital skills. The programme area “catching up on compulsory school leaving certification” is intended to enable people without a positive 8th grade qualification to gain access to secondary or higher schools or an apprenticeship and includes the compulsory subjects German, English, mathematics, vocational orientation and two elective subjects.

The support programme is an important addition to the literacy and German training courses for adults with fleeing experience who frequently have a particularly high need for catch-up education or training due to interrupted educational biographies. A total of 7,931 persons took part in the support programme in the 2022/23 school year, with courses in the area of “basic education” again being taken up significantly more frequently at 78%. In contrast to the previous year, however, the gender ratio changed significantly: while women made up two thirds of all participants in 2021/22, their share fell to 38% in 2022/23. Broken down by nationality, the distribution remained almost the same, with foreign nationals making up the majority of participants at 85%. In absolute numbers, Syrian (1,224) and Afghan (1,218) nationals made up the largest groups, followed by Austrians<sup>87</sup> (1,184) as well as Somali (597) and Ukrainian (514) nationals. The latter recorded the largest increase (+474 persons) in view of the displaced persons who newly arrived in Austria.

## PARTICIPANTS IN THE ADULT EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME

2022/23 by most common nationalities and sex

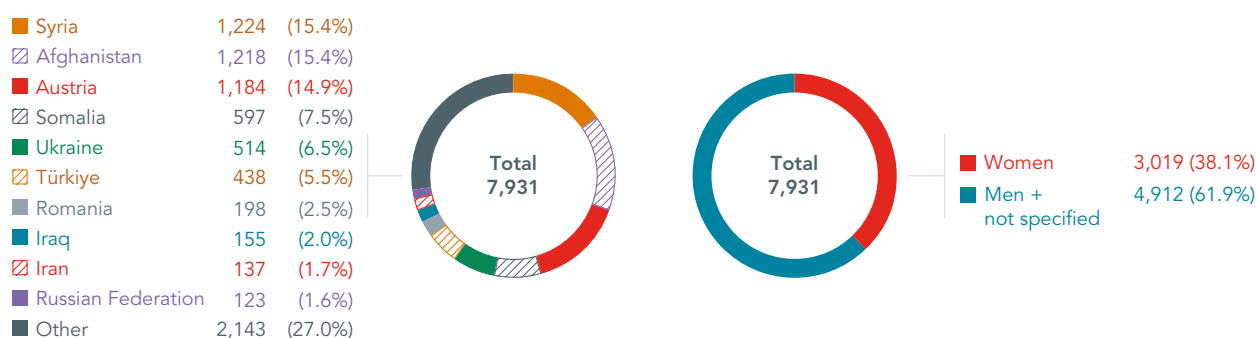


Fig. 24; Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

87 Among these were also naturalised citizens with a refugee background.

## Learning prerequisites and German acquisition processes for persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection

### Alphabetisation needs

In recent years, the proportion of newly arrived refugees with a very low level of education has risen significantly. In 2023, 65% of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection with status recognition had alphabetisation needs. While this was a slight decrease compared to 2022 (68%), the alphabetisation needs in 2023 were still more than a third higher than in 2020, when only around one in two people with newly recognised protection (49%) were not literate. As in previous years, people with Syrian nationality (71%) had the greatest alphabetisation needs in 2023, followed by stateless people (54%) and Afghan nationals (50%). The increase in the alphabetisation needs of people with Syrian nationality can be explained, among other things, by the many years of war that have interrupted their schooling in their home country, either partially or completely. On the other hand, an increasing number of asylum seekers have recently come from refugee camps in Syria's neighbouring countries, where there is often hardly any access to school and work. While men were more likely to have alphabetisation needs than women in previous years, the proportions of both sexes were roughly equal in 2023 (women: 64%, men: 65%)<sup>88</sup>.

People with alphabetisation needs are divided into those who cannot read and write sufficiently in any language, including their respective first language (commonly referred to as "primary illiteracy"), and people learning a second script who do not have sufficient knowledge of the Latin alphabet. Among those granted asylum, the proportion of primary illiterates of persons to be made literate peaked at 52% in 2021 and fell to 37% in 2023. Women who were granted asylum in 2023 and with alphabetisation needs were slightly more frequently unable to read and write sufficiently in any language than men (42% vs. 35%). At 48%, primary illiteracy was distinctly more common among Afghan Alpha course participants who were granted asylum in 2023 than among Syrian participants at 36%. As explained in the subchapter "Education and language", alphabetisation courses already accounted for a fifth of German course places in 2023. The number of alphabetisation course places increased by 11% compared to the previous year.

### German language acquisition processes

Of the persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection who were granted asylum for the first time in 2021, around 2,700 were considered primarily illiterate when they took the first ÖIF course. By the beginning of March 2024, 30% of these people had reached language level Alpha by attending a course or taking an exam, 38% had reached A1 level and 26% A2 level. The proportions of people with B1 and B2 levels of German were low at 5% and 1% respectively. More than half (57%) of people with initial status recognition in 2021 and primary alphabetisation needs had not passed a language test by March 2024. 30% had passed an A1 exam and 11% an A2 exam, while very few people had passed B1 or B2 exams (2% and <1% respectively).

<sup>88</sup> The statements below are based on a special evaluation by the ÖIF (2024). In order to avoid overlaps with the target group of Ukrainian displaced persons, persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection with Ukrainian citizenship were not included in the following analyses.

Around 2,400 persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection with status recognition in 2021 were categorised as people learning a second script on their first ÖIF course. Of these, 12% reached the Alpha language level by the beginning of March 2024 by attending a course or taking an exam, 30% reached A1 level and 38% A2 level. Compared to the group with primary alphabetisation needs, the proportions of those who reached B1 and B2 levels were notably higher at 15% and 5% respectively. In addition, the proportion of people learning a second script who had not yet passed an exam was also clearly lower at 35%. By March 2024, 30% of people learning a second script who were granted asylum in 2021 had passed at most an A1 exam, 25% an A2 exam and 9% a B1 exam. Only 1% of people have passed a B2 exam so far.

Of around 2,800 persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection who were granted asylum in 2021 who had no alphabetisation needs at the first ÖIF course, 14% reached the A1 language level by March 2024 (in the form of course attendance or examination), a third reached A2 level and a third reached B1 level. The fact that people without alphabetisation needs are learning German much more quickly or successfully is shown not least by the fact that one in five people from this group had even reached language level B2 or C1 by March 2024. Although 19% of these people had not passed any exams by March 2024, a third had passed an A2 exam as the highest level exam. A further 27% had passed at most a B1 exam and 7% had even passed a B2 or C1 exam.

Altogether, 72% of all persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection successfully completed their courses in 2023. The higher the course level, the higher the completion rate, which was 75% or higher for all levels from B1 upwards. Two out of three persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection passed A2 exams in 2023 after the first A2 German course, 19% after a first repetition of the course. In contrast, exam successes were only rarely achieved after first repetitions following premature course cancellations and multiple course repetitions (6% and 8% respectively).

The reasons for dropping out and repeating courses are varied. In addition to taking up employment, relocations, health reasons and pregnancies, caring responsibilities or precarious living and income conditions, high drop-out and repeat rates can also indicate a lack of commitment to learning German. The proportion of repeated and cancelled courses in 2023 was again high among people from refugee countries of origin and stateless persons. Around a quarter of alphabetisation introductory course attended by Afghans (24%) were repeats, while the figure was around a fifth (19%) for Syrian participants. For A1 level courses, the proportion of repeats was even higher at 38% and 37% respectively.

In 2023, one in three people who attended an alphabetisation course dropped out. The highest drop-out rates in alphabetisation introductory courses were recorded among Russian and Ukrainian participants (75% and 57% respectively). Around one in three participants of Syrian or Afghan nationality also dropped out of the alphabetisation introductory course prematurely. The higher the course level, the less frequently German courses were ended. The numerous course cancellations and repetitions by persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection are also a consequence of relocations across federal province borders, which lead to temporary interruptions in German language acquisition and course cancellations and make it necessary to repeat the course at a later date.

## Frequent relocations to Vienna after status recognition

One challenge of the initial integration of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection is their geographical concentration in Vienna. The ÖIF has residential data for just over 23,000 of all persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection who were granted asylum in 2022-2023. A quarter of these people moved to another federal province after first registering with the ÖIF, with 87% of these people moving to Vienna. Analyses of the relocation behaviour of the approximately 11,000 persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection who did not live in Vienna from the outset show that almost every second person in this group (46%) moved from the federal provinces to Vienna from 2022 onwards. Regionally, there is a pronounced east-west divide: while people with their first place of residence in Carinthia (64%), Burgenland (61%), Upper Austria (59%) and Styria (57%) moved to Vienna particularly frequently, such moves were clearly less common among people with their first place of residence in Vorarlberg (12%) or Tyrol (10%).

Altogether, the proportion of people with newly recognised protection who moved from other federal provinces to Vienna doubled in recent years, from 23% in 2018 to 48% in 2023. Syrian nationals granted asylum from 2020 onwards were particularly relevant for the increase. While Syrians entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection who were granted asylum moved to Vienna less frequently than other groups of origin until 2019, their share rose sharply from 2020 onwards. In 2023, 60% of Syrians who were granted asylum moved to Vienna in the same year. In contrast, relocations were less common for other groups (Afghan nationals granted asylum in 2023: 11%, other groups: 15%).

There are many reasons for the high number of relocations to the federal capital, such as the hope of supposedly better employment opportunities, the desire to connect with the (larger) local community, better infrastructure for low-income groups and the prospect of higher support benefits. In view of the fact that in 2023 the unemployment rate of all foreign nationals in Vienna was almost twice as high as in the other federal provinces at 15.5% on average, this trend not only results in a clear imbalance within the social insurance systems, but also in a structural reduction in employment opportunities for the group of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection as a whole. There is also a risk that the target group's German language acquisition will be slowed down by frequent contact within their own community in urban centres.



# INITIAL INTEGRATION OF DISPLACED UKRAINIANS

*Since the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, around 4.3 million Ukrainians have sought protection in other European countries.<sup>89</sup> In order to relieve the burden on national asylum systems given these high numbers and to guarantee the protection of arriving persons, the EU decided in March 2022 to activate the so-called Temporary Protection Directive, which grants refugees from Ukraine temporary protection as displaced persons in a harmonised manner throughout the EU. On this basis, which has since been extended until March 2026, Ukrainian refugees were also granted the residence permit as displaced persons in Austria and thus access to the labour market, education, medical care and housing.<sup>90</sup>*

As an end to the conflict is not yet in sight, and many Ukrainian displaced persons are therefore expected to remain in Austria, they form a new group of third-country nationals whose successful integration is of central importance. Due to their high number, their legal status and their uncertain whereabouts, Ukrainian displaced persons represent a special case in the Austrian integration system. The following chapter examines the integration of adult displaced persons from Ukraine and the associated opportunities and challenges, focussing on German language acquisition.

Since the beginning of the war, around 108,000 Ukrainian displaced persons have been registered in Austria, and around 70,000 were still recorded in the Central Register of Residents (ZMR) at the beginning of 2024. More than half of the displaced persons registered in Austria (42,000) are in the 18-64 age group, which is the focus of this chapter as people who can be integrated into the labour market.<sup>91</sup> Since the beginning of the war, most displaced persons are living in Vienna (43.5%). While larger groups of adult displaced persons from Ukraine also live in Lower Austria (16.0%), Upper Austria (9.9%) and Styria (9.6%), the proportions in the remaining federal provinces are relatively low.<sup>92</sup> On the one hand, the pronounced concentration in urban areas can be attributed to the fact that Ukrainian displaced persons frequently also lived in cities before fleeing, where the infrastructure tends to be better and educational and leisure facilities are more easily accessible. On the other hand, women with children in particular often settled in the city where they arrived in Austria (usually by train) and were able to make their first contacts, which to a certain extent explains the high number of displaced persons living in Vienna. The clear majority of Ukrainian displaced persons are still female (approx. 70%), as men aged 18-60 have only been allowed to leave Ukraine in exceptional cases since the imposition of martial law.<sup>93</sup>

89 UNHCR (2024), *Ukraine Refugee Situation*.

90 On 21 June 2024, the Council of the European Union adopted the European Commission's proposal to extend temporary protection for people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine until 4 March 2026. As with the last two extensions of the status of displaced persons, the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA) will automatically deliver the ID card for displaced persons to all those with permanent residence in Austria.

91 BMAW (2024), *Sonderauswertung*.

92 *Ibid.*

93 Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja; Kaindl, Markus (2023), *Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn*.



Compared to people from the main refugee countries of origin, displaced persons from Ukraine have a significantly higher level of education; according to studies, more than two thirds of all adult displaced persons are likely to have a university degree.<sup>94</sup> This means that displaced Ukrainians living in Austria are considerably more likely to be academically educated than the Ukrainian population as a whole or displaced persons living in Poland. One explanation for this is the pronounced self-selection of Ukrainian displaced persons, which results from the fact that more highly educated people were able to use their socio-economic background as well as foreign language skills and existing social networks to flee to more distant countries.<sup>95</sup>

## Integration offers for Ukrainian displaced persons

While the large number of displaced persons arriving at the beginning of the war posed challenges for the Austrian integration system, the need for special measures quickly became apparent due to the demographic composition of the group and their uncertain whereabouts. Existing integration structures have therefore been continuously supplemented and expanded since March 2022 in order to support displaced persons from Ukraine in their everyday lives and their integration in Austria. In addition to German language acquisition, the focus from the outset has been on integration into the labour market to promote self-sufficiency.

To support this effort, the ÖIF and the AMS provided multilingual information materials on topics relevant to the labour market or enclosed them with the “Blue Card” (ID card for displaced persons).<sup>96</sup> In addition, (mobile) ServicePoints, integration centres and the ÖIF’s wide range of online services served as important points of contact. To provide further information, for example, the online course “Erste Schritte in Österreich” (first steps in Austria) was created, which has so far provided more than 16,000 people with essential information on life in Austria and initial German language skills. Furthermore, special orientation courses for Ukrainian displaced persons as well as advice and courses for women were provided at the ÖIF Women’s Centres.<sup>97</sup> A direct exchange between volunteers, Austrian associations and members of the Ukrainian community was facilitated by the ÖIF’s “Treffpunkt Ukraine” (meeting point Ukraine) as well as numerous offers from NGOs and charitable institutions.

Due to the particular importance of sufficient German language skills for the integration process, displaced persons from Ukraine have been able to take advantage of free language courses since spring 2022. Since February 2022, the capacity has been continuously expanded to provide a wide range of German courses for levels A1 to C1 to displaced persons throughout Austria. This offer was supplemented by online courses and materials, which were also developed in cooperation with Ukrainian universities.<sup>98</sup> In total, more than 15,000 Ukrainian nationals took part in an ÖIF German course in 2023. Compared to the previous year, the number of participants in B1 and B2 courses in particular rose sharply, which indicates that Ukrainian displaced persons have already successfully completed A1 and A2 courses.<sup>99</sup>

94 Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja; Kaindl, Markus (2023), *Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn*; IOM (2023), *Vertriebene aus der Ukraine in Österreich – Risikofaktoren im Bereich des Wohnens*.

95 Kohlenberger, Judith et al. (2023), *High self-selection of Ukrainian refugees into Europe: Evidence from Kraków and Vienna*.

96 ÖIF (2024), *Angebote des ÖIF für vertriebene Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainer*.

97 ÖIF (2024), *Sonderauswertung*.

98 ÖIF (2024), *Angebote des ÖIF für vertriebene Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainer*.

99 ÖIF (2024), *Sonderauswertung*.

## Labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians

As an end to the war in Ukraine is not in sight, which increases the intention to stay, the labour market integration of displaced persons able to work came increasingly into focus in 2023.<sup>100</sup> In view of the shortage of labour and skilled workers on the Austrian labour market, the integration of workers in roles appropriate to their level of qualification is of great importance, not only for the Ukrainian displaced persons, but also for the domestic economy.

The unclear length of stay in Austria due to the uncertain course and outcome of the war makes labour market integration more difficult for Ukrainian displaced persons. At the same time, they benefit from a wide range of support from the political and civil society arenas, as well as free access to the labour market.<sup>101</sup> In most of Austria – as in most European host countries – the participation of Ukrainian displaced persons in labour market integration measures is voluntary. A certain economic incentive is provided by the obligation to make an effort in Upper Austria, which links benefits from basic welfare support to a registration with the AMS or participation in job fairs.<sup>102</sup> In 2023, the surveyed displaced persons also showed a generally high and sustained willingness to work; the majority of adult displaced persons (79%) were gainfully employed in Ukraine immediately before fleeing. The majority are also planning to take up gainful employment in Austria in the near future, if they have not already done so.<sup>103</sup> Surveys by the OECD and EUAA have shown that the needs of Ukrainian displaced persons throughout Europe are increasingly focussed on preparing for long-term settlement and thus also on taking up employment. However, the actual labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians varies greatly between the individual member states.<sup>104</sup>

In Austria, the number of gainfully employed displaced persons rose by more than a quarter (26%) in 2023. In addition to the more than 17,000 gainfully employed persons from Ukraine, there were a further 1,000 self-employed persons and around 3,500 persons in marginal employment at the end of 2023. The number of Ukrainians registered with the AMS as jobseekers and therefore available for the labour market also increased significantly.<sup>105</sup> According to the responsible Ministry of Labour, the employment rate of displaced Ukrainians rose to around 38% by the end of 2023, which means that Austria is performing significantly better than Germany or Switzerland, for example, with around 20% each.<sup>106</sup> However, according to a European comparison by the European Migration Network, the employment rate of displaced Ukrainians in Austria was only 21% in September 2023, slightly lower than in Germany at 25%.<sup>107</sup> It should be noted in this context that these surveys and the individual countries use different definitions and data bases to calculate the ratios, which makes comparisons between countries difficult. However, labour market integration is more advanced in the Netherlands in particular, but also in eastern EU states, especially in Ukraine's neighbouring countries. Displaced persons are gainfully employed more quickly and more frequently there than in Austria. However, displaced persons in these countries – similar to Austria – work primarily in low-skilled positions (often in the cleaning industry), regardless of their educational background. This can favour deskilling and loss of skills and have negative long-term consequences both for the displaced persons themselves and for the host

100 *Expert Council for Integration (2023), Integration Report 2023, pp. 10 and 68.*

101 *Federal Institute for Population Research (Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung) (2023), Geflüchtete aus der Ukraine in Deutschland – Ergebnisse der ersten Welle der IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Befragung.*

102 *EMN (2024), Labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine.*

103 *Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) (2024), Statistische Broschüre zu Migration & Integration – Arbeitsmarkt Issue 2024; Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja and Kaindl, Markus (2023), Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn.*

104 *OECD/EUAA (2024), Voices in Europe: Experiences, hopes and aspirations of forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine.*

105 *BMAW (2024), Online Labour Market Information System AMIS.*

106 *BMAW (2024), Sonderauswertung; Statistisches Bundesamt (2023), Press Release No. 476 from 13 December 2023; SEM (2023), Angaben zum Erwerb der Personen mit Schutzstatus.*

107 *European Migration Network (2024), Labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine.*

country.<sup>108</sup> The higher activity rates in Denmark and the Netherlands can be explained primarily by the existence of comprehensive child care and the fact that it is comparatively simple to find employment with knowledge of English. While this is more difficult in Austria, and taking up employment requires a certain level of German language skills, these skills eventually open up a significantly broader selection of jobs for the displaced persons and thereby better perspectives for them and for Austrian society.

Compared with other groups of refugees, the labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians in Austria (as throughout Europe) is progressing exceptionally quickly and successfully – also because more qualified persons generally receive more and longer qualification measures. For instance, despite their brief time in Austria, the activity rate of displaced Ukrainians in 2023 was only a few percentage points behind that of women from other refugee countries of origin. The employment rate of female refugees from Syria and Afghanistan after two years was only half the rate of the displaced Ukrainian women. However, it must be considered that the former were only permitted to work after conclusion of the asylum procedure and were gainfully employed at a lower rate in their countries of origin prior to fleeing.<sup>109</sup> Noticeable differences can also be seen in a regional comparison within Austria. The activity rates of displaced Ukrainians are significantly higher in the western Austrian provinces than in the eastern region. This is due above all to the high employment rates in the tourism sector, which developed into the most important industry for displaced Ukrainians in 2023. While Austria-wide almost a quarter (24.3%) of the gainfully employed Ukrainians are working in this sector, the numbers in Austria's western provinces, where tourism features heavily in the economy, are significantly higher still, reaching as much as 41% in Vorarlberg.<sup>110</sup>

In summary, it can be seen that the labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians improved considerably over the past year. Also the fact that displaced persons focus on language acquisition before and/or at the start of their employment activity can be viewed positively in consideration of their high level of education since they require German language skills at a higher level to attain positions as skilled workers and thereby live up to their full potential on the Austrian labour market. This benefits both displaced persons, for whom integration into the labour market offers long-term prospects in Austria, and the Austrian economy, which the qualified personnel helps to combat the shortage of skilled workers.<sup>111</sup>

108 OECD/EUAA (2024), *Voices in Europe: Experiences, hopes and aspirations of forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine*; Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja; Kaindl, Markus (2023), *Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn*; Kohlenberger, Judith et al. (2023), *High self-selection of Ukrainian refugees into Europe: Evidence from Kraków and Vienna*.

109 OECD/EUAA (2024), *Voices in Europe: Experiences, hopes and aspirations of forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine*; Endel, Florian et al. (2022), *Erwerbsverläufe von Migrant/innen III*.

110 BMAW (2024), *Sonderauswertung*.

111 Regarding the status of labour market integration for Ukrainian nationals, see the chapter "Work and social assistance".

## Social safety net

Currently, displaced persons in Austria are entitled to basic welfare support but cannot draw on any social assistance. In December 2023, there were approximately 40,000 displaced persons from Ukraine receiving basic welfare support, making up the largest nationality group in this regard (at the start of 2023, there were still roughly 55,000 Ukrainians collecting basic welfare support).<sup>112</sup> The model providing basic welfare support to refugees was developed for asylum seekers to cover their basic needs for daily life until their asylum decision is issued, in other words to support a group of persons who do not have unrestricted access to the labour market. The basic welfare support model is linked to an additional income limit which can represent an obstacle for displaced Ukrainians with regard to taking on employment. Studies indicate that many displaced persons are currently not taking on employment due to a fear of losing the financial support or the accommodations provided.<sup>113</sup> For this reason, some non-governmental organisations have called for provision of the necessary support to displaced person by means of social assistance. This would require a prior registration with the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), which could accelerate the labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians.<sup>114</sup> In Germany, however, where this system has been in place for a longer period, the integration of displaced Ukrainians into the social assistance system did not lead to the desired results with respect to labour market integration.<sup>115</sup>

An increase to the additional income limit has been discussed as an alternative solution. Most federal provinces have now raised the additional income limit. Only in Lower Austria and Salzburg has this measure been neither planned nor implemented.<sup>116</sup> The increase allows displaced persons to gain a foothold in the labour market without having to cover their entire living expenses immediately with their initial, and generally low, employment incomes. Displaced persons are frequently faced with the difficulty that taking on employment is directly associated with the loss of basic welfare support. To cover their living expenses, they would therefore need to directly attain a sufficiently well paid full-time position, which is often difficult due to care obligations.<sup>117</sup>

## Future outlook for displaced Ukrainians

In addition to labour market integration, the intentions of displaced Ukrainians with respect to the future and a possible return to Ukraine are influenced by their life satisfaction and their social integration in Austria. Although displaced persons worry about relatives as well of the loss of their home in Ukraine, a positive trend in the area of general life satisfaction was observed in 2023 compared with the year before. A large majority of those surveyed who were living in Austria felt safe, welcome and well cared for. Displaced Ukrainians gave particularly positive ratings to the education and care offerings for children and the support for adults in need of assistance. The satisfaction levels in the areas of living situation, professional recognition and financial situation were significantly lower.<sup>118</sup> The dissatisfaction of displaced

<sup>112</sup> BMI (2024), *Sonderauswertung*; ÖIF (2022), *Ukrainische Bevölkerung in Österreich*; BMI (2023), *Asylstatistik Dezember 2023*.

<sup>113</sup> EMN (2024), *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive in Austria: Challenges and good practices in 2023*.

<sup>114</sup> IOM (2023), *Vertriebene aus der Ukraine in Österreich – Risikofaktoren im Bereich des Wohnens*; AMS (2023), *Daten und Fakten zur Arbeitsmarktsituation von Vertriebenen aus der Ukraine*; EMN (2024), *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive in Austria: Challenges and good practices in 2023*.

<sup>115</sup> Federal Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt) (2023), *Press Release No. 476 from 13 December 2023*.

<sup>116</sup> EMN Österreich (2024), *Vertriebene aus der Ukraine. Zusammenfassender Überblick der österreichischen Maßnahmen im Zeitraum Februar 2022 bis Juni 2023*.

<sup>117</sup> IOM (2023), *Vertriebene aus der Ukraine in Österreich – Risikofaktoren im Bereich des Wohnens*; EMN (2024), *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive in Austria: Challenges and good practices in 2023*.

<sup>118</sup> Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja; Kaindl, Markus (2023), *Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn*; Glantschnigg, Christian (2024), *Presseunterlage Kurzbefragung Ukrainer:innen*.

Ukrainians with their living situation applies not only in Austria but across Europe. Above all, access to privately rented living space and its affordability posed challenges to the displaced persons (as to the general population).<sup>119</sup> With increasing labour market integration and the associated improvement in the financial situation of displaced Ukrainians, their satisfaction in this area may also rise.<sup>120</sup>

Due to their high life satisfaction, increasing integration in the receiving countries and the fact that there is no end in sight to the war in Ukraine, the number of displaced persons planning to return to Ukraine is consistently decreasing. The continuation of the war and its uncertain outcome as well as the extent of destruction and the political and economic situation in Ukraine were the main factors leading to no more than one third of all displaced Ukrainians surveyed in 2023 expressing a wish to return to Ukraine in the foreseeable future.<sup>121</sup> Since improved language skills, gainful employment, integration of children into schools and a prolonged stay in Austria diminish the intentions to return of displaced persons in Austria (as throughout Europe), it can be assumed that many displaced persons will end up not returning to Ukraine.<sup>122</sup>

This outlook raises questions concerning the long-term handling of displaced Ukrainians. Based on the Temporary Protection Directive, such persons have a temporary residence permit in Austria until March 2026. The maximum duration of the directive will be fundamentally exhausted at that time. If the residence permit is extended through a legal amendment at the EU level, this would also apply in Austria. At least those displaced persons who were in Austria for a minimum of twelve months during the last two years and had prospects for an income in the amount of the compensation allowance<sup>123</sup> can presumably apply for a Red-White-Red Card Plus as of summer 2024. This grants third-country nationals the right – initially for three years but with the option of extension – to settle in Austria and access the labour market without a restriction to a specific employer. Access to the Red-White-Red Card Plus gives gainfully employed displaced persons and their relatives as well as their employers in Austria a greater level of certainty and long-term perspectives, but it is also intended as an incentive for quick labour market integration for those displaced persons who have thus far not been gainfully employed. According to forecasts from April 2024, more than 7,000 displaced Ukrainians could directly benefit from approval for the Red-White-Red Card Plus.<sup>124</sup> This must be considered in the planning for the necessary administrative resources to ensure timely processing of the corresponding applications. For those displaced Ukrainians who cannot (yet) benefit from the Red-White-Red Card Plus, the potential for a temporarily secure stay in Austria should be developed.

119 OECD/EUAA (2024), *Voices in Europe: Experiences, hopes and aspirations of forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine*; Federal Institute for Population Research (Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung, BiB) (2023), *Geflüchtete aus der Ukraine in Deutschland – Ergebnisse der ersten Welle der IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP Befragung*; IOM (2023), *Vertriebene aus der Ukraine in Österreich – Risikofaktoren im Bereich des Wohnens*.

120 Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja; Kaindl, Markus (2023), *Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn*.

121 Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja; Kaindl, Markus (2023), *Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn*; Düvell, Franck (2022), *The war in Ukraine: Post-war scenarios and migration repercussions*; Glantschnigg, Christian (2024), *Presseunterlage Kurzbefragung Ukrainer:innen*.

122 Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja; Kaindl, Markus (2023), *Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn*; OECD/EUAA (2024), *Voices in Europe: Experiences, hopes and aspirations of forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine*.

123 For single adults about €1,218/month and for married or registered couples together about €1,921/month. An additional €188/month is added per child, where the child care allowance is offset but the family allowance is not.

124 Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services (Bundesagentur für Betreuungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen, BBU) (2024), *Rot-Weiß-Rot-Karte plus für ukrainische Vertriebene*; Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) (2024), *Informationen zum Umstieg auf eine Rot-Weiß-Rot-Karte plus*.

## Learning prerequisites and German acquisition processes for displaced Ukrainians

Similar to the consideration of the learning prerequisites and German acquisition processes for persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, the figures from the ÖIF data warehouse described in the previous subchapter serve as the basis for following discussion of the numbers pertaining to displaced Ukrainians.<sup>125</sup>

### Alphabetisation needs

In contrast to persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, displaced Ukrainians who attended a German course in the years 2022–2023 only rarely had the need for alphabetisation (7%). Valid analyses of the group of displaced Ukrainians with primary alphabetisation needs were not possible due to the insufficient number of cases. A total of 665 Ukrainian nationals were classified as people learning a second script in 2022, making this group the majority (88%) of displaced persons with alphabetisation needs. By the beginning of March 2024, 20% of these people had reached language level Alpha by attending a course or taking an exam, 26% had reached level A1 and 32% level A2. Roughly every fifth displaced person (21%) reached level B1 or higher by this point. However, two-thirds of all Ukrainian second script learners had not passed an exam by March 2024, while for the rest, successfully completed A2 exams made up by far the largest proportion.

Of the roughly 13,100 displaced Ukrainians who completed their first German course in 2022 and had no alphabetisation needs, 28% reached language level A1 by the start of March 2024 (via course attendance or exam). Furthermore, 35% reached level A2, 26% reached level B1 and 11% reached level B2 or higher. In this group as well, over half of the displaced persons (55%) had not passed an exam by March 2024; nevertheless, every fourth displaced person had passed an A2 exam as their highest level. By March 2024, 18% had already passed a B1 or B2 exam.

### German language acquisition processes

In 2023, 81% of the displaced Ukrainians successfully completed their courses, which means they attended the courses to the end with an attendance rate of 80%. As with the persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, the completion rate increased for Ukrainian participants at a higher course level and was, for levels B1 and above at least 85%. With the exception of the alphabetisation courses, the completion rates of displaced Ukrainians at all course levels was five to ten percentage points higher than those of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection.

In total, approximately 6,400 displaced Ukrainians attended a German course for the first time in 2023 with a target level of A2, and 70% of them successfully completed the course. The success rate for B1 exams was somewhat higher at 74% of roughly 2,700 first attempts. Only about every second displaced person passed the B2 exam on the first attempt. The number of first attempts was also considerably lower at 362. Compared with persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, the success rates of Ukrainians at all course levels as of A2 were at least 30 percentage points higher. Course repetitions due to cancellation or too many hours missed were rare among displaced Ukrainians in 2023. The majority of the passed A2 exams were taken immediately after the first German course at this level.

<sup>125</sup> The statements below are based entirely on a special evaluation by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) (2024) since only the ÖIF collects concrete data on course completions and examinations taken.

## Relocations

In contrast to the persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, displaced Ukrainians only rarely relocated to a different federal province after their initial registration with the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF). Out of over 28,000 displaced persons who arrived in Austria as of 2022 and for which the ÖIF has information on place of residence, only a small portion (3%) relocated to another federal province after their initial registration. The lower frequency of relocations by displaced Ukrainians to other federal provinces may have a number of causes. Firstly, in contrast to asylum seekers, they have their choice of which federal province to move to first after their arrival in Austria. In other words, they can immediately choose their preferred federal province, where they may already have relatives or acquaintances or where they expect to find better opportunities for education or work. Secondly, Ukrainians living in collective housing within the framework of the basic welfare support for refugees have a difficult time moving to a different federal province since they would lose their accommodations and be placed initially on a wait list for collective housing in the new federal province.



# INITIAL INTEGRATION OF QUALIFIED SKILLED WORKERS

For demographic reasons, it is becoming more and more important to obtain workers from abroad to fill the demand for workers in Austria. Accordingly, this group of immigrants is also increasingly a focus of measures for integration into the Austrian labour market. Only on the basis of a detailed specification and quantification of the shortage of and demand for skilled workers is it possible to establish adequate measures for activating the potential of skilled workers in Austria and attracting suitable individuals from outside the EU. With regard to the latter group, integration measures such as learning the German language should be initiated, if possible, even before their arrival in Austria.

Looking several years into the future, it is not possible to accurately estimate what qualifications will be needed. For the present and the next few years, however, the list of shortage occupations offers a good basis for orientation. This involves comparing the demand for jobs in the individual professions with the number of open positions.<sup>126</sup> On one hand, there are professions for which a shortage of workers has been identified throughout Austria. On the other hand, there are professions for which a shortage has only been identified on a regional basis.<sup>127</sup> Such lists offer a basis for deciding on the admission of foreign workers by means of the Red-White-Red Card.

In an initial analysis, it can be seen that female migrants from third countries exhibit significantly lower labour market integration than Austrian women or women from the EU. This unutilised resource of women from third countries should be addressed in a targeted fashion. Activation measures in Austria include education and training as well as facilities such as child care and care for the elderly and the ill, which make it easier for women in particular to be gainfully employed.

## ACTIVITY RATE

2023 by sex and country of birth, 15–64-year olds

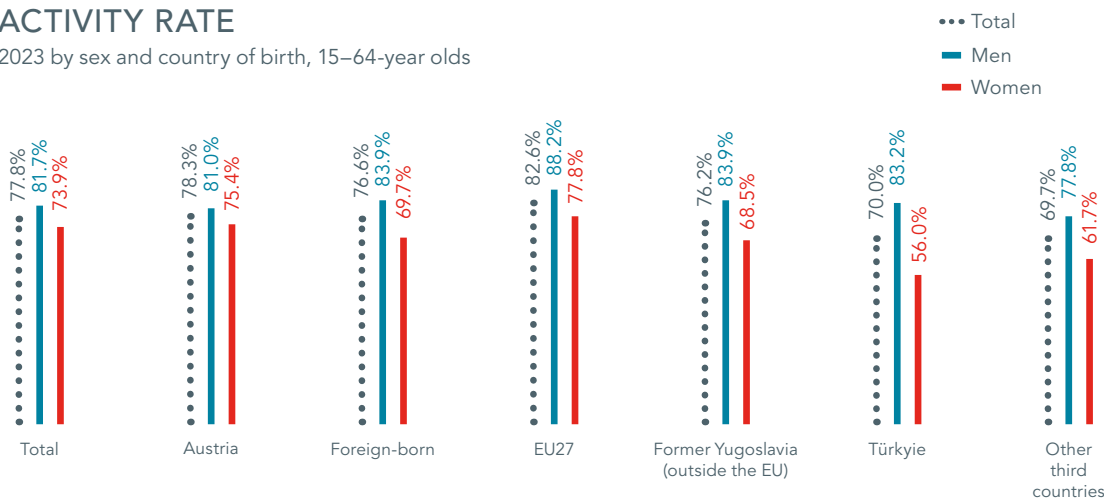


Fig. 25; Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

126 The concept of job competition (open positions vs. registered unemployed persons in the same profession in the provincial level) is used as the measurement instrument here.

127 See the list of nationwide and regional shortage occupations at [migration.gv.at](https://migration.gv.at).



However, the swift and predictable recognition or assessment<sup>128</sup> of qualifications attained abroad also represents an important measure for ensuring the gainful employment of third-country nationals in accordance with their level of education and training. It can be observed in Austria that immigrants more frequently have a higher formal level of education than is required for the job they hold, meaning that they are more likely than Austrians to be overqualified for their job.<sup>129</sup> According to the Work Climate Index data for 2019, which are based on self-assessments, 18% of those surveyed were overqualified for their jobs, while this figure for persons with a migration background was 26%.<sup>130</sup> The value for the latter group is somewhat higher than the value for immigrants in the special module of the Labour Force Survey from 2014 carried out by Statistics Austria (2015).<sup>131</sup> According to these data, 23.5% of the 15- to 64-year old immigrants were overqualified for their jobs in 2014, compared to an average for the entire economy of 11.4%. The extent of the perceived overqualification increases with rising education level.

An analysis of the rates of overqualification of gainfully employed persons born in Austria compared with those born outside Austria based on the labour force survey<sup>132</sup> in the EU member states as part of the "European Year of Skills 2023" shows that the overqualification rate among 20 to 64-year old gainfully employed persons in Austria lies above the EU average, both for those born in Austria and those born abroad, particularly those from third countries. In the EU-wide survey, the definition of overqualification differs from that of the Work Climate Index and the special survey by Statistics Austria in the year 2014 in that it calculates the extent to which gainfully employed persons with a university degree are working in a profession where a basic or mid-level qualification is sufficient. According to these calculations, the overqualification rate of employed persons by country of birth in the year 2022 for migrants from within the EU averaged 28.8% in the EU as a whole compared to 33.1% in Austria, while for employed persons from third countries this figure was 34.8% in the EU compared to 45.5% in Austria. The overqualification rate of native-born people was on average 20.7% in the EU and 24.2% in Austria. Viewed in this way, the discrepancy in Austria between persons born in Austria and those born in other EU countries was 8.9 percentage points (EU: 8.1 percentage points), whereas the same discrepancy for persons born in third countries was 21.3 percentage points (EU: 14.1 percentage points).

This pronounced difference in Austria can be attributed in part to the sometimes insufficient German language skills as well as to a lower knowledge and understanding of how the Austrian labour market functions. The difficult process of recognition and assessment of higher qualifications attained abroad, especially in third countries, also poses a particular challenge. In view of the shortage of skilled workers in Austria, attention should be given both to more rapid recognition of qualifications attained abroad and to the development of tailored offerings for retraining and further training in order to achieve equivalency and thereby educationally adequate employment in Austria as quickly as possible.

128 The Recognition and Assessment Act (Anerkennungs- und Bewertungsgesetz, AuBG) regulates the complex procedure for recognition and assessment since this procedure varies by profession and level of education. For more information, see [burufenanerkennung.at](https://www.burufenanerkennung.at).

129 Biffl, Gudrun (2019), *Anschlussfähigkeit sicherstellen, Beschäftigungs- und Einkommenschancen verbessern*.

130 Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer) (2019), *Work Climate Index 2019*.

131 Statistics Austria (2015), *Arbeitsmarktsituation von Migrantinnen und Migranten in Österreich. Modul der Arbeitskräfteerhebung 2014*.

132 Eurostat (2023), *Migrant integration statistics – over-qualification*.

Between October 2021 and 2022, recognition was granted to 7,149 persons for at least one qualification attained abroad. Of these, 48% were from EU/EFTA countries, while another 20% were from European third countries. The recognition by sectors differs markedly between nationals of EU/EFTA countries and of third countries: while the former obtained 53% of all recognitions in the health and social sector, followed at a wide margin by engineering, trades and construction (15%), the distribution among third-country nationals was wider at 22.1% in engineering, trades and construction, 21.3% in the health and social sector and 5.1% in business, administration and legal. The number of annual recognitions issued for qualifications attained abroad is very low compared with the annual immigration of over 100,000 persons. However, it can be observed that out of the 1.4 million 15- to 64-year old persons born abroad and present in Austria in the year 2021, only 73% had attained training and education abroad. Of these, 13.3% (135,300) applied for recognition of these foreign qualifications. The recognition quota was therefore relatively high at around 80%.<sup>133</sup>

Why recognition of qualifications attained abroad is so rarely applied for remains an open question. However, lack of recognition is not an obstacle to gainful employment, although it can contribute to receiving a job that is not educationally adequate. It should nevertheless be considered in this regard that the matching of supply and demand, in other words aligning specific worker qualifications with the requirements of the available jobs, is also becoming an increasingly complex affair in Austria. The result is that standardised profession profiles are no longer adequate. On the one hand, the requirements applicable to the professions must be expanded to include technology-specific skills (digitalisation and AI), while on the other hand, higher qualifications are increasingly important in all professions. As an additional complication, regional matching is becoming ever more difficult since immigration is concentrated primarily in Vienna and other large cities, while rural regions are calling out for workers. Additional efforts and services on the part of companies and brokering agencies are required here, supplemented by support from immigration associations. Well working examples of this include the collaboration between the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and ZeMiT (the Centre for Migrants in Tyrol)<sup>134</sup> in Tyrol and Vorarlberg as well as migrare (the Centre for Migrants)<sup>135</sup> in Upper Austria, all with the goal of supporting the labour market integration of immigrants.

## Shortage of skilled workers and recruitment

It is clearly necessary to attain a more differentiated picture of the economic orientations and future expectations of businesses, which frequently differ significantly by region, and to understand the regional availability of workers with appropriate qualifications. If the local initial and further education system is not capable of supplying the necessary qualifications to a sufficient extent, with sufficient differentiation and at the required speed and if the options for activating unutilised local resources reach their limits, immigration from abroad can also be considered. This requires, however, that institutional conditions be established both in Austria and abroad to support the recruiting measures, ensure adequate employment and enable integration into Austria in general.

<sup>133</sup> Statistics Austria (2022), *Arbeitsmarktsituation von Migrant:innen in Österreich. Modul der Mikrozensus-Arbeitskräfteerhebung 2021*.

<sup>134</sup> Online-Magazin für Arbeit und Beschäftigung des AMS Vorarlberg (2022), *Strukturen für Integration schaffen*.

<sup>135</sup> For more information, see [migrare.at](https://migrare.at).

On the basis of such considerations, Austria signed an agreement with India in 2023 concerning a comprehensive partnership for migration and mobility.<sup>136</sup> India was selected because it has a large population of young people with good qualifications in the areas where Austria is experiencing a shortage of workers. According to an Austria-wide survey of over 4,200 businesses (Skilled Workers Radar)<sup>137</sup>, this includes persons trained in health services and care of the ill and elderly as well as in the area of information, communication and technology, specifically at the middle and high levels of qualification as well as at the highest qualification level. However, the survey of businesses also revealed an unmet need in trade and construction professions, with businesses particularly emphasising a shortage of persons who have completed apprenticeships. One reason for the latter is that relatively few young people with a migrant background undertake apprenticeship trainings. The reasons for this should be studied further with regard to the decisions on the part of the companies and on the part of the young people with migrant background.<sup>138</sup> The east-west difference in terms of the demand for apprentices is worthy of particular attention (more shortages are observed in the west compared with eastern Austria) as are the specific professions and industries concerned.

Although it is difficult to derive precise numbers for the unmet need from business surveys, they do offer some valuable indications of the extent and structure of the shortage in the various professions, industries and training levels. It would also be recommendable to analyse the demand for skilled workers based on the economic indicators of scarcity.<sup>139</sup> According to the most recent analysis in this regard by the Institute for Advanced Studies (Institut für Höhere Studien, IHS), the indicators clearly point to a shortage of skilled workers in multiple occupational groups, such as in technical professions (system analysis, software development, electrical and mechanical engineering as well as in several other areas of engineering), in construction professions and in nursing and caregiving.

It is more difficult to estimate the shortage of skilled workers in professions and activities subject to significant seasonal fluctuations. In such industries and areas of activity, high levels of unemployment are often observed on an annual average, while shortages arise seasonally. It is therefore worth differentiating between a continuous shortage of skilled workers in specific professions and activities and a temporary shortage of skilled workers in seasonal professions.

A review of the current monitoring systems for the skilled worker shortage, such as the Skilled Workers Radar of the Austrian Economic Chambers (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKO)<sup>140</sup> as well as the skilled workers monitoring systems of Upper Austria<sup>141</sup> and Tyrol<sup>142</sup>, reveals that a comprehensive and regional screening of the demand for skilled workers would be useful as a basis for making predictions. This would provide valuable assistance to the current matching institutions, such as the public employment service (AMS in Austria, EURES across Europe), alongside the Ministry of Labour and the Economy and the Ministry of the Interior and of Integration, which play lead roles in the planning of immigration and the labour market integration of third-country nationals in Austria. In any case, a considerable improvement in the available data (such as expanded employment data from the social insurance administration to include professions and qualifications) would aid in more reliable planning and offer a basis for differentiated forecasts.

136 Abkommen zwischen der österreichischen Bundesregierung und der Regierung der Republik Indien über eine Umfassende Partnerschaft für Migration und Mobilität, Federal Law Gazette III 60/2015.

137 FASresearch (2022), *Potenziale und Fachkräftebedarf in Österreich. Ein systemisches Lagebild*.

138 See Forschungsbereich beim Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration (2020), *Heraus aus dem Labyrinth. Jungen Neuzugewanderten in Europa den Weg zur Berufsbildung erleichtern*; Biffi, Gudrun and Skrivaneck, Isabella (2015), *Jugendliche mit Migrationshintergrund in der Lehre. Strukturen, Barrieren, Potentiale*.

139 Mühlböck, Monika et al. (2023), *Analyse des Fachkräftebedarfs in Österreich anhand ökonomischer Knappheitsindikatoren*.

140 For more information, see [wko.at/fachkraeftesicherung/fachkraefteradar](https://wko.at/fachkraeftesicherung/fachkraefteradar).

141 Fachkräfte Monitor Oberösterreich, see [fkm-ooe.at](https://fkm-ooe.at).

142 Fachkräfte Monitor Tirol, see [fkm-tirol.at](https://fkm-tirol.at).

## The Red-White-Red Card and the impact of the most recent reforms

While immigration from the EU due to freedom of movement is possible without bureaucratic hurdles, skilled workers from third countries can only immigrate if they are issued a Red-White-Red Card. The latter enables professionally or academically qualified persons from outside the EU to work in Austria or to come to Austria for half a year to search for an appropriate job. The Red-White-Red Card was introduced in mid-2011 as an administrative instrument for the long-term immigration of qualified workers from third countries. Continuous reforms have been rolled out since its introduction because it was not possible to attract the desired numbers of qualified workers willing to immigrate. The reforms encompassed, on the one hand, a reduction of the bureaucratic burden (such as by establishing a service point for companies for facilitating the required procedures),<sup>143</sup> and, on the other hand, an easing of the requirements for companies to hire a worker (such as lowering of the minimum income) and for the potential immigrant by eliminating the obligation to prove adequate housing even before moving to Austria. In addition, the upper age limit for skilled workers in shortage occupations was raised to 50 (in all other categories, 40 years was retained as the upper limit), the range of languages given preferential treatment for immigration (differing by categories) was increased, and greater weight was afforded to professional experience.

Additional changes to the issuing of a Red-White-Red Card entered into effect in 2022, which are intended, in part, to simplify and accelerate the admission procedure by means of digitalisation. The various categories of the Red-White-Red Card were also expanded to include regular seasonal workers. This change enables long-standing seasonal workers in the tourism industry to settle long-term in Austria on the basis of a term-unlimited assurance of employment by the business. As with all other categories of the Red-White-Red Card, the workers are bound to the specific business for a period of 2 years. After this time, the workers can apply for a Red-White-Red Card Plus, which allows them to change employers and take a job in a different federal province.

The reforms to the Red-White-Red Card led to an increase in annual immigration by qualified workers from third countries, from an initial 1,200 in the year 2012 to roughly 4,400 in 2023 (4,043 first-time approvals and 319 extensions). In the year 2023, another 1,800 persons were able to obtain a Red-White-Red Card via a repurposing of their residence permit, bringing the total number of issued/extended or transitioned Red-White-Red Cards in 2023 to over 6,000.<sup>144</sup>

To date, the reforms have been focused on decreasing bureaucracy and simplifying the entry conditions, which are reflected primarily in the point system. However, it still remains difficult for jobseekers in third countries to find an appropriate employer in Austria. More intensive integration of the trade delegations and of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the form of skills mobility partnerships, combined with a strategic focus on partner regions with skilled workers who could find Austria attractive, should facilitate the recruiting of skilled workers from abroad.<sup>145</sup>

143 For more information, see [aba.gv.at/services/work-in-austria/ABA](https://aba.gv.at/services/work-in-austria/ABA).

144 BMI (2024), *Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsstatistik*.

145 Ebner, Prisca et al. (2023), *Skills-Mobilitäts-Partnerschaften in Österreich, eine Machbarkeitsstudie*, IOM Österreich.

The promotion of qualified immigration by this group of persons is currently focused on access to employment. A broader spectrum of integration measures needs to be considered at the latest upon arrival of family members. These measures address social coexistence in the living environment and German language acquisition, potentially expanded by measures to promote integration already in the country of origin based on the example of the pre-arrival services established by Canada. These services provide future immigrants with valuable information already before they arrive, such as concerning the Canadian labour and housing market or the health and education system. A number of offerings are dedicated primarily to rapid labour market integration, including job application training, online career platforms with potential employers and consulting sessions on the recognition of previously attained qualifications. Special programmes exist for highly sought-after occupational groups, such as in the field of nursing and the construction industry.<sup>146</sup> At the same time, such measures enable a more precise prediction of the future demand for services in Austria even before immigrants arrive, such as how many pupils with integration needs can be expected in the school system.

## Relevance of German language acquisition for highly qualified persons

The special module of the 2021 Labour Force Survey by Statistics Austria<sup>147</sup> shows that a quarter of 15- to 64-year olds (24.9%) born abroad had difficulties finding a suitable job, with almost half (43.6%) citing insufficient German language skills as the main reason. The higher the level of education, the more difficult it was to find a suitable job. Just under a third of people with a university degree (31.3%) had problems finding a job, with insufficient German language skills also being the biggest obstacle here (37.5%), followed by unrecognised education or training (21.6%). Persons from third countries found it particularly difficult to find a suitable job, with a lack of German language skills again being the main obstacle.

In Germany, a survey of highly qualified immigrants from third countries<sup>148</sup> shows that one third needed a good knowledge of German to practise their profession. The others only needed intermediate to no knowledge of German. On the other hand, they had a good to very good command of English, which means that they were able to do their work with a good command of English and were able to communicate in English with colleagues who spoke other languages. This experience shows that good German language skills are not necessarily a prerequisite for an educationally adequate job. However, integration into the wider Austrian society is likely to be difficult without knowledge of German.

<sup>146</sup> For more information, see [prearrivalcanada.ca/home/about-how-it-works](http://prearrivalcanada.ca/home/about-how-it-works).

<sup>147</sup> Statistics Austria (2021), *Arbeitsmarktsituation von Migrant:innen in Österreich. Modul der Mikrozensus-Arbeitskräfteerhebung 2021*.

<sup>148</sup> Heß, Barbara (2009), *Zuwanderung von Hochqualifizierten aus Drittstaaten nach Deutschland. Third-country nationals with a residence permit in accordance with Section 19 Residence Act (AufenthG) were surveyed, as these persons are all highly qualified*.

## Integration offerings for foreign skilled workers

In order to provide the best possible support for the process of integrating skilled workers, the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) created the Integration Service for Professionals<sup>149</sup> in 2023, which can serve as a first point of contact for qualified third-country nationals and their families as well as for companies on the search for skilled workers. The newly created service also supports networking with existing integration and assistance programmes in the federal provinces.<sup>150</sup> It offers qualified immigrants and key workers a comprehensive, target group-specific range of information, counselling and German language courses. Skilled workers who want to move to Austria, or who have already done so, receive the necessary information about living and working in Austria. To date, over 2,000 personal counselling sessions have been held on individual issues as well as group sessions on topics such as language acquisition or educational and employment opportunities for relatives. In addition, five contact offices throughout Austria funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) offer free, multilingual counselling and support in the recognition, nostrification and assessment process for qualifications acquired abroad.<sup>151</sup>

The Integration Service supports companies in their search for qualified personnel by means of informational events and career platforms and also assists their foreign employees with further training and German courses. In sectors particularly affected by the shortage of skilled workers, on-site German courses at companies are also offered in which foreign skilled workers are assisted in learning German directly at the workplace. Since March 2023, 45 such courses for various language levels have been conducted in cooperation with employers in the caregiving, tourism and primary education sectors. To live up to the changing requirements, the range of support is also being continuously improved through regular meetings of an “expert forum”, which brings together the expertise of regional, national and international organisations.

In addition to the on-site German courses at companies, the ÖIF offers special language courses on behalf of the Ministry of Integration that prepare immigrants for starting a career or taking up work in the caregiving and support sector. Alongside the online courses “Deutsch für den Beruf” (German for work) and “Deutsch lernen für die Pflege” (learn German for caregiving), the specialised language course “migrants care - Deutsch für den Pflegebereich” (German skills for caregiving) was also created, which prepares people with a non-German mother tongue for training in the nursing and caregiving sector and also finds them training positions in cooperation with relevant organisations and associations.<sup>152</sup>

Skilled labour agreements by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) exert their effect even one stage sooner. In addition to recruiting skilled workers from third countries, they are intended to prepare those workers as well as possible for life in Austria even before they enter the country. The BMAW works with selected countries, including Albania, Brazil, Indonesia and the Philippines, to meet the requirements of the Austrian labour market. In addition to demographic factors, the selection of the countries<sup>153</sup> is based heavily on the educational infrastructure and the local level of education.

149 For more information, see [integrationsfonds.at/integrationservice](https://integrationsfonds.at/integrationservice).

150 Regional organisations and associations also provide valuable support services, such as Club International (CINT) in Styria. For more information, see [cint.at](https://cint.at).

151 For more information, see [anlaufstelle-erkennung.at](https://anlaufstelle-erkennung.at).

152 For more information, see [integrationsfonds.at/kurse/deutschkurs-einstieg-in-die-pflege](https://integrationsfonds.at/kurse/deutschkurs-einstieg-in-die-pflege); [sprachportal.at](https://sprachportal.at).

153 For more information on the selection criteria, see [bmaw.gv.at](https://bmaw.gv.at).

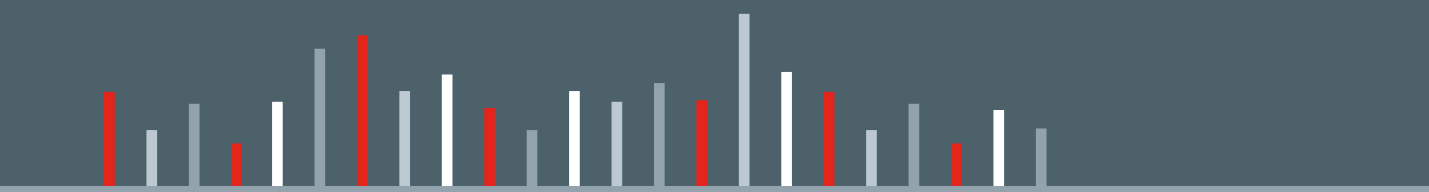
So far, skilled labour agreements in the form of memoranda of understanding have been concluded with Indonesia and the Philippines. These are intended to support cooperation in the recruitment of skilled workers for Austria. In addition to exchanging information and promoting Austria as a place to work, concrete measures are planned in the partner countries, such as cooperation in vocational training and the acquisition of German language skills. The plans also include accelerated processing of applications for Red-White-Red Cards.<sup>154</sup> These agreements and partnerships are not only about the targeted recruitment of qualified labour. They also aim at establishing practices similar to Canada's pre-arrival services and beginning the integration process already in the country of origin by providing initial German language skills and information about working and living in Austria.

Assistance is available to potential immigrants in Ankara before they enter Austria as part of the project "Integration von Anfang an" (integration from the start). An integration representative assigned by Austria to the embassy offers personal counselling and information sessions to interested persons, such as visa applicants or people moving to Austria to reunite with their families, informing them about integration measures and the Austrian legal, educational, health and social systems. Skilled workers also benefit from the experience and networking of the integration representative by receiving valuable information about the Austrian labour market and potential employment opportunities when applying for a Red-White-Red Card.

In view of the continuing high demand for skilled workers on the Austrian labour market and the positive experiences with integration efforts in the country of origin, the expansion of such pre-arrival measures and the extension to include several countries - in line with the Canadian model - could promote the influx and integration of qualified immigrants and their families. Alongside such informational events and counselling by Austrian representatives, German language courses in the countries of origin, such as those offered at the Goethe Institutes (funded by the German Federal Foreign Office), could be of particular value in significantly accelerating the integration process of immigrants.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>154</sup> BMAW (2024), *Memorandum of understanding between the government of the Republic of Austria and the government of the Republic of Indonesia on the recruitment of key and skilled workers*; BMAW (2024), *Memorandum of understanding between the government of the Republic of Austria and the government of the Republic of the Philippines on the recruitment of professionals and skilled workers*.

<sup>155</sup> For further information, see [goethe.de](https://www.goethe.de).



# CONCLUSIONS



# CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions for the further development of integration measures can be drawn from the analyses described in this year's focus on the initial integration of immigrants. In the process, the different integration needs of the various immigrant groups must be taken into account. In order to be able to offer and further develop well targeted integration measures, it is therefore necessary to have a sound knowledge of the specific requirements and the resulting needs and challenges of the various target groups. The situation of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, displaced persons from Ukraine, family reunification members and skilled workers also differs with regard to German language acquisition and their needs for labour market integration.

Perhaps the most important development in connection with the initial integration and language acquisition of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection is the increase in primary illiterates and people learning a second script observed in recent years. On the one hand, this can be explained by the collapse of the education systems in some countries of origin, such as Afghanistan. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the majority of people currently receiving asylum or subsidiary protection in Austria have been in transit countries for a long time and have not received sufficient or any education, training or language support there. This applies in particular to those who come to Austria in the context of family reunification. This trend means, on the one hand, a greater burden on the German and integration course system in Austria and, on the other hand, an increasing time gap between starting a course and achieving a minimum level of written and spoken German. Although in times of demographic ageing the labour market increasingly offers opportunities to the low-skilled, there is also a significant correlation between German language skills and employment opportunities in this case.

Language competence is also an indispensable prerequisite for social mobility, i.e. advancement over time into better employment relationships and income groups, and for social integration, i.e. the peaceful coexistence and functioning interaction with other social groups. The systematic learning of the German language should therefore remain an independent pillar of integration policy and not only be seen against the background of successful labour market participation. At the same time, however, attention should also be paid to aspects of better linking long-term language acquisition with successful employment. In accordance with the principle of "early engagement in work and consistent effort in language development", the objective should be a reasonable flexibility, for example through adjustments to additional income limits that permit course attendance and employment simultaneously, or through individually tailored support programmes. A further expansion of company language courses, mentoring programmes and work foundations, which focus their support specifically on the group of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, could make an important contribution in this regard. In this context, particular reference should be made to the ÖIF career platforms, which are already bringing companies directly together with persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection as well as displaced Ukrainians who are also taking part in ÖIF German courses or other integration measures. Job interviews held directly on site have already led to numerous placements and the expansion of the programme with additional companies.<sup>156</sup> Finally, targeted "pre-departure measures" are also required prior to family reunification in Austria, in particular German or alphabetisa

<sup>156</sup> For more information, see [integrationsfonds.at/karriereplattform](https://integrationsfonds.at/karriereplattform).

tion courses in the countries of origin or transit, which improve the initial level of the participants and reduce the time spent on courses after immigration.

With regard to the language acquisition of displaced persons from Ukraine, the picture is different from that of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection. The exam pass rates of the ÖIF show that displaced persons from Ukraine successfully complete German courses quite frequently and have a pass rate of at least 30 percentage points higher than persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection in courses at A2 level and above. This successful performance can be explained above all by the educational background of Ukrainian displaced persons: While Syrian or Afghan persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, for example, are increasingly in need of alphabetisations, this is hardly the case for displaced persons from Ukraine. Even people learning a second script, who need to be trained in the Latin writing system, have much more favourable starting conditions due to their previous educational experience. A positive side effect of good language skills for displaced persons is that they can use them not only in Austria, but also if they return to Ukraine. The career platforms organised by the ÖIF can also be an opportunity for displaced persons from Ukraine to get in touch with a potential employer as quickly as possible and find out about job opportunities and entry possibilities.

Due to their high level of education and professional qualifications, displaced Ukrainians have great potential for the Austrian labour market. Before fleeing, they were particularly often employed in the financial sector, but also in education, healthcare, trade or administration and can therefore make a contribution (at least in the medium term) to combating the shortage of skilled workers in these sectors.<sup>157</sup> A broad range of information and support services for displaced persons from Ukraine was created as early as 2022, which was expanded and extended in 2023 to accelerate labour market entry. The offer includes, for example, native-language counselling at the AMS, information events on topics relevant to the labour market and administrative and financial support for the recognition of education and qualifications acquired abroad.<sup>158</sup>

One challenge on the labour market for many Ukrainian women is that, due to the ban on Ukrainian men leaving the country, they are often unable to take on a full-time job as a single parent due to caring responsibilities.<sup>159</sup> The further expansion of childcare capacities is therefore particularly important, as children also benefit from better integration and increased self-sufficiency. Additional resources are also needed to speed up the recognition of Ukrainian certificates and education so that skilled workers can quickly enter the labour market in line with their qualifications. Around half of the displaced persons who are able to work (46%) state that they would like to have their educational levels recognised before taking up employment. As good German language skills are usually required to take up skilled work, many displaced persons are currently prioritising language acquisition in order to be able to assume positions in the future that correspond to their qualification level or previous employment.<sup>160</sup> In an online survey conducted in January 2024, the majority of displaced persons surveyed (59%) rated their German language skills as “not particularly good” and a further 19% as “not good at all”. The majority of displaced persons not gainfully employed cited a lack of German language skills as the main reason for their own unemployment.<sup>161</sup> Investments in language acquisition measures, but also comprehensive child care and the acceleration of recognition

157 ÖIF (2024), *Statistische Broschüre zu Migration & Integration – Arbeitsmarkt Issue 2024*.

158 For more information, see [integrationsfonds.at/ukraine](https://integrationsfonds.at/ukraine).

159 Glantschnigg, Christian (2024), *Presseunterlage Kurzbefragung Ukrainer:innen*.

160 Dörfler-Bolt, Sonja und Kaindl, Markus (2023), *Ukraine-Vertriebene in Österreich ein Jahr nach Kriegsbeginn*; UNHCR National Office in Austria (2023), *Intentions and perspectives of refugees from Ukraine in Austria*.

161 Glantschnigg, Christian (2024), *Presseunterlage Kurzbefragung Ukrainer:innen*. Due to the study design and the associated self-selection processes, the survey is not representative of all displaced persons from Ukraine in Austria.

processes are therefore the most important measures for avoiding de-qualification and for sustained labour market integration.

It was made materially easier for displaced Ukrainians to take up employment when employment permits were abolished in April 2023. Since then, companies have been able to employ people with an ID card for displaced persons without first obtaining authorisation from the AMS.<sup>162</sup> The general effectiveness of the offers made can be seen in the increasing number of Ukrainian displaced persons who are active on the Austrian labour market. It is therefore important to continue these offers and, where necessary, to adapt or supplement them.

Many of the measures mentioned to promote the gainful employment of Ukrainians are also measures to counter the shortage of skilled workers in Austria. A combination of measures and instruments should be used to mitigate this shortage of skilled workers, with the promotion of migrant labour resources in Austria being the top priority. This particularly affects those displaced from Ukraine, as they tend to be highly educated and professionally qualified. Due to the large proportion of women among the displaced persons, measures that primarily facilitate or even enable the labour market participation of women – such as the care of children and young people during the working day – are of particular relevance. In order to promote educationally adequate employment, the institutionalised recognition of qualifications acquired abroad should be accelerated and streamlined, coupled with follow-up training to bring the professional skills acquired abroad into line with the needs of companies in Austria. Furthermore, in view of the very different regional industry and company structures, a system of targeted pooling of professional qualifications and competences should be considered in order to overcome the current marked regional mismatch of supply and demand. However, measures for the targeted recruitment of qualified personnel in third countries should also be implemented, whereby these groups of people should also be linked to existing integration measures in Austria, supplemented – following the Canadian model – by integration measures in the country of origin<sup>163</sup>. This also applies to family members who come to Austria with the recruited skilled workers.

Rapid integration into the labour market is in the interests of migrants: In this way, they gain the opportunity for self-sustainability and thus a basis for a self-determined life. At the same time, it should be noted that labour market integration also promotes social integration. The rapid labour market integration of immigrants is also in the interests of employers, who have a need for additional workers in many sectors of the economy in view of demographic developments.

Even if the labour market can absorb people with low German language skills, early integration into the labour market must not lead to working migrants not systematically improving their German language skills. In addition to the existing programmes, opportunities must therefore be created to take part in suitable German courses while working. Advanced German language skills are necessary for the personal development and the continuation of the integration process as well as for further qualification and career advancement. It is thus by no means a question of dismantling the existing structures for acquiring German language skills, but rather of further differentiating them – where necessary – in order to cover the specific need for German courses.

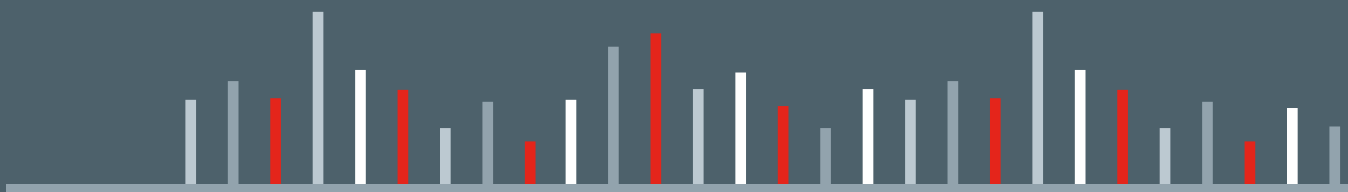
<sup>162</sup> AMS (2024), *Geflüchtete Personen aus der Ukraine einstellen*.

<sup>163</sup> Pre-arrival services modelled on Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/new-life-canada/pre-arrival-services.html>.

The report emphasised the importance of evaluation instruments and continuous impact analysis. The impact of the German language support model should also be measured at the level of language skills development. This is linked to the long-standing demand for better data availability and a closer exchange of data in the area of integration affairs. In this context, the establishment of data interfaces between the regional and federal offices is welcomed, also in order to be able to respond more specifically to the various regional needs. The analysis possibilities of the ÖIF data warehouse should be used more intensively and linked with other data in order to further develop individual measures on the basis of the effectiveness analysis.

In this context, the interlinking of various state systems that have an influence on the quickest possible labour market integration of immigrants should be fundamentally expanded. This includes the aforementioned institutionalised recognition of qualifications acquired abroad and the coordination of the placement efforts of the AMS with the language courses of the ÖIF and other providers. The effectiveness of support measures will be increased if the different institutions complement each other by means of good management of the interfaces. If the labour market also accepts people with low language skills, placement efforts can also begin without formal completion of a German course at a certain language level. This applies all the more if - as shown - some people have difficulties passing a language course within a reasonable period of time.

The education system faces particular challenges in dealing with a growing proportion of pupils whose everyday language is not German and a large proportion of pupils with insufficient German language skills. They are therefore lacking an essential prerequisite for being able to follow lessons. Educational institutions must be prepared for the fact that these proportions will continue to rise not only as a result of primary immigration (which is expected to continue) but also as a result of family reunification - whether by relatives of persons already living in the country who are entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, or by family members of newly recruited skilled workers. Schools, child care facilities and all other educational institutions should be seen as an opportunity to improve the chances of every pupil to lead a self-determined life in Austria, as well as to create the conditions for successful co-existence in society as a whole.



From the National Action Plan  
to the Integration Report 2024

The members of the Expert Council  
for Integration

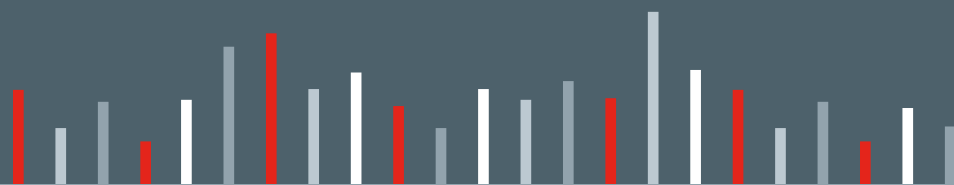
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2. EXPERT TALKS
3. TALKS WITH CITIZENS
4. STEERING GROUP

National Action Plan on Integration (NAPI)		
EXPERT COUNCIL FOR INTEGRATION WORKING PROGRAMME Volume 1	STATISTICAL YEARBOOK REPORT ON INDICATORS Volume 2	ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON INTEGRATION ESTABLISHMENT Volume 3
Integration Report 2024	migration & integration 2024	Integration database
Integration Report 2023	migration & integration 2023	Integration database
Integration Report 2022	migration & integration 2022	Integration database
<b>Integration Report 2021</b> Integration in the context of the COVID pandemic	migration & integration 2021	Integration database
<b>Integration Report 2020</b> 10 years of the Expert Council for Integration - 10 years of the Integration Report	migration & integration 2020	Integration database
<b>Integration Reports for the years 2016 – 2019</b>	migration & integration 2016–2019	Integration database
<b>Integration Report 2015</b> 50 Action Points towards the integra- tion of persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection in Austria	migration & integration 2015	Integration database
<b>Integration Reports for the years 2012 – 2014</b>	migration & integration 2012–2014	Integration database
<b>Integration Report 2011</b> 20-point programme	migration & integration 2011	Conclusion about previous measures

# THE MEMBERS OF THE EXPERT COUNCIL FOR INTEGRATION

## Chairwoman



Univ.-Prof. Dr. Katharina Pabel

After holding positions at the universities of Bonn, Graz and Vienna University of Economics and Business, from 2010 to 2020 Dr. Pabel was university professor for public law at the University of Linz and (from 2015 to 2019) Dean of the Faculty of Law. Since 2020 she has been university professor at the Institute for European and International Law at Vienna University of Economics and Business. She has been Chair of the University Council of the University of Linz since 2023. She is the author of numerous specialist publications on various fields of constitutional and administrative law, with a special research focus on national and international human rights protection. Since February 2018 she has chaired the Expert Council for Integration.

## Members



Univ.-Prof. iR. Mag. Dr. habil. Gudrun Biffl

Prof. Biffl is an associate member of the Department for Migration and Globalisation at the Danube University Krems. From 2008 to September 2017 she was the Chair of Migration Research, Head of the Department of Migration and Globalisation, and she was Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Globalisation from 2010 to 2015. From 1975 to 2009 she worked as an economic researcher at the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO). Her research focuses on the labour market, education, migration, gender, industrial relations and institutional change as well as work-related sickness. Prof. Biffl has been a member of the Statistics Council at Statistics Austria since 2010 (and was the Chairwoman from 2015 to 2020), she is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board at the Sir Peter Ustinov Institute for Prejudice Research and Prevention, and member of the "Expert group on migration" at the OECD.



Rasha Corti

Rasha Corti, born 20 July, 1982 in Raqqa. After graduating from high school in Raqqa, she studied literature in Aleppo and trained as a television presenter in Cairo. While studying she worked at the French Cultural Centre in Damascus and produced documentaries about Syria for various broadcasting services (BBC, Al Jazeera). She moved to Vienna in 2009, where she now works as a tour guide and translator. She is also actively involved in various integration projects and as a fellow at the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP).





### Mag. Dr. Eva Grabherr

Mag. Dr. Grabherr majored in history and Jewish studies at the universities of Innsbruck and Vienna and completed her doctorate at the Department for Hebrew and Jewish Studies of the University College London. From 1989 to 1990, she was a university lecturer at the University of Hull (GB) and from 1990 to 1996 she was director for the setup of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. Between 1996 and 2001 she conducted research, taught in Vienna, London and Innsbruck and organised exhibitions and projects on the subjects of Jewish studies, museology, Austrian history and contemporary politics. She has served as the director of the project office "okay.zusammen leben" for immigration and integration in Vorarlberg since 2001. Furthermore, she holds lectures and seminars, also in the context of the migration management course at the Danube University Krems.



### Mag. Nalan Gündüz

Mag. Gündüz studied law at the University of Innsbruck and held various positions in public service between 2008 and 2022: as an officer at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, as the first integration representative at the Austrian Embassy in Ankara, and as head of unit in the Integration Section at the Federal Chancellery. In addition, Nalan Gündüz was involved in various integration projects in Vienna and Graz (priorities: education, young people, women, people of Turkish origin in Austria) and moderated various discussion events. Since March 2022, she has been the director of the Austrian fund to strengthen and promote women and girls, which was founded in the same year.



### Dipl.-Soz. wiss. Kenan Güngör

Kenan Güngör, Dipl. Soz., is the owner of the office for society, organisation and development [think.difference] in Vienna. As one of the most renowned experts on integration and diversity issues in Austria, he advises and supports governmental and non-governmental organisations on a federal, state and municipal level. Among other things, he has headed multiple studies and integration-related model processes at the federal province and city levels. As a strategic consultant he advised, among others, the City of Vienna for several years on integration and diversity-related issues and was visiting professor at the University of Vienna. He was the chairman of the Expert\_Forum Prevention, De-radicalisation & Democratic Culture of the City of Vienna and in this role supervises a comprehensive prevention programme to make schools in Vienna free from violence and fear. Primary areas of focus: social shift, integration, participation, diversity, integration policy strategic development & communication, organisational development, urban sociology, youth, identity, conflict analysis, devaluation and radicalisation.



#### Mag. Martin Hofmann

Martin Hofmann is an expert on migration research and policy development at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) based in Vienna. He is an advisor to the Director General of ICMPD on migration policy and development. Prior to that, he coordinated the ICMPD programmes on legal migration and integration. He has been part of a variety of EU and national projects in the fields of migration, migration management and integration. His work focuses on comparative studies and publications in the areas of immigration, irregular migration, people smuggling, integration, asylum and migration policy development in the national and European context.



#### Univ.-Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Mazal

Prof. Mazal was born in Vienna, studied law at the University of Vienna, where he received his doctorate in 1981 and has been a professor at the Institute of Labour and Social Law since 1992. In addition to wide-ranging teaching, research and publication activities amongst others in Vienna, Graz, Linz, Innsbruck, Beijing and Kyoto on topics of labour law, social law, medical law and family matters, Prof. Mazal is currently Vice Chairman of the Institute for Labour and Social Law at the University of Vienna, Head of the Austrian Institute for Family Studies (OIF) at the University of Vienna.



#### Dr. Arno Melitopoulos-Daum

Dr Melitopoulos has been head of the health care system and economics division at the Austrian Health Insurance Fund (ÖGK) since 2020. From 2011 to 2019, he was Director of the Tyrolean regional health insurance fund (TGKK). Previously he was Managing Director of Gesundheit Österreich GmbH (GÖG) in Vienna from 2008 to 2011. He is also coordinator of Zielsteuerung Gesundheit (monitoring health targets) in Tyrol. Dr. Melitopoulos has been a member of the Expert Council for Integration at the Federal Chancellery since 2011 and a member of the Standing Committee at the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. As of 2023, he is a member of the University Council of the Medical University of Innsbruck.



#### Univ.-Prof. Dr. Rainer Münz

Rainer Münz currently teaches at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and at the Central European University Vienna. From 2015 to 2019 he was Senior Advisor for Migration and Demographics at the European Political Strategy Centre, the think tank of EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. From 2015 to 2019 he was Chairman of the Migration Advisory Board of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) and since 2014 he is one of the people responsible for the World Bank programme "Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development" (KNOMAD) Prior to this, Rainer Münz headed the research department of Erste Group and was a senior fellow at the Brussels-based Think Tank Bruegel, at the Hamburg In

stitute of International Economics (HWWI), and at the Migration Policy Institute (Washington DC). In the years 2000 and 2001, he was a member of the commission to reform the immigration policy of the German federal government (Süssmuth Kommission). From 2008 to 2010, Rainer Münz was a member of the reflection group "Horizon 2020 - 2030" of the European Union (known as the "EU-Group of Wise Men").



#### Prof. Emina Saric, MA

Prof. Emina Saric, MA, born in 1969 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, studied German philology in Sarajevo, completed Montessori training at the University College of Teacher Education Styria, and gender studies at the University of Graz. Chairwoman of the supervisory board of the Austrian Fund for the documentation of religiously motivated political extremism. Many years of project work in German as a second/foreign language and in intercultural learning. In 2011 she cofounded the women-focused counselling centre Diwan, where she worked until 2018 as counsellor and deputy director. She currently teaches at the Training Centre for Social Professions (Ausbildungszentrum für Sozialberufe), works as a lecturer and education manager at the Private University College of Teacher Education Augustinum in Graz and is active in the association for men and gender issues in Graz as head of the project "Heroes Steiermark". For her work she received the Intercultural Achievement Award 2020, the special prize "Integration in Austria", the Human Rights Award of the Federal Province of Styria 2021 and the Golden Award of the Province of Styria as well as the Austrian State Prize for Women 2022.



#### Dr. Hans Winkler

Hans Winkler is an independent journalist and columnist for the daily newspaper Die Presse and guest columnist for the Kleine Zeitung and other media. From 1995 to 2007 he was head of the Vienna editorial office as well as deputy editor-in-chief of the Kleine Zeitung. He studied law at the University of Graz.



#### Mag. Renate Winter

Mag. Renate Winter became a judge in Austria in 1981. Her areas of expertise include women's and youth rights, war crimes, crimes against humanity, gender issues, organised crime and restorative justice. As part of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mag. Winter served as an international judge at the Supreme Court of Kosovo. In 2002, she was appointed to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, of which she was President. In 2013, she was appointed a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and elected its President. Mag. Winter has worked in more than 40 countries as a judicial advisor to governments and international bodies. Until February 2021 she was Vice-President of the CRC and team leader of an EU project to promote the rule of law in Georgia. Mag. Winter is a member of the Residual Court of Sierra Leone (RSCSL) and is once again working on an EU project in Georgia to harmonise legal regulations with EU standards.

# THE EXPERT COUNCIL'S CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION

The Expert Council considers integration in a society characterised by immigration to be empirically measurable and consciously promoted participation in the central areas of social life which must be based on equality as much as possible. This includes in pre-school institutions, school education, vocational training, employment and housing, in voluntary work, in politics and in the various protection and welfare systems in the legal and welfare state, as well as in the recognition of and identification with Austrian values.

Integration-promoting measures are considered to be all efforts made to facilitate equal opportunities for participation and to counter-act existing fears and prejudices. Knowledge of German, school and professional qualifications, but also educational and symbolic political measures are essential in order to increase the participation chances of immigrants. On the other hand, the Expert Council for Integration regards the increasing integration competence of the government's basic institutional structures (which must also be consciously promoted) as another important prerequisite for successful integration. Schools, the Public Employment Service (AMS), the authorities, hospitals, civil society and other important institutions should be increasingly empowered to develop intercultural (communication) competence.

Thus, on a conceptual scale, the Expert Council does not place the concept of integration between assimilation on the one hand and integration as a patchwork of different population groups that possess and live their own systems of culture and values on the other, but rather sees integration as a concept that overrides these ideas. In its understanding of the term, the Expert Council also rejects a vaguely defined and ideologically loaded idea of culture. A static and essentialist concept of culture would not do justice to the reality of a pluralistic and changing society characterised by immigration. At the "end of the road" there is neither a perfectly assimilated society, nor a patchwork of different social groups that has become alien to itself, but rather a plural coexistence that has to be constantly renegotiated. Both sides of this society characterised by immigration must therefore develop not only skills of receiving and integrating, but also a sort of competence of plurality, as society will become more similar and yet more diverse over time. Accordingly, integration continues to be seen as a two-way process, and it takes effort to make it work.

The immigrants are just as responsible for successful integration as the receiving population. Both sides of the society characterised by immigration operate within a politically stipulated integration framework that can promote and prevent processes. The necessary adjustment efforts are not symmetrically distributed, because the logic of quantities alone places more demands on the immigrant population than on the receiving society. This should be clarified in order to avoid false expectations and misunderstandings. Nevertheless, this also applies to the receiving society: "making space" as a prerequisite for "taking space". The integration process cannot function without a mutual willingness to open up and without mutual acceptance of the supposed "others". A constructive integration policy must always take this into account.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AHS</b> Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule (Academic secondary school)	<b>EU</b> European Union
<b>AMIS</b> Arbeitsmarktinformationssystem (Labour market information system)	<b>EUROSTAT</b> European Statistical Office
<b>AMS</b> Arbeitsmarktservice (Austrian Public Employment Service)	<b>EEA</b> European Economic Area
<b>BHS</b> Berufsbildende höhere Schule (Higher vocational school)	<b>GB</b> United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Def.: ISO 3166-2- Code)
<b>BKA</b> Bundeskanzleramt (Austrian Federal Chancellery)	<b>ICMPD</b> International Centre for Migration Policy Development
<b>BMAW</b> Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Wirtschaft (Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy)	<b>IntG</b> Integrationsgesetz (Integration Act)
<b>BMBWF</b> Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)	<b>MIKA-D</b> Messinstrument zur Kompetenzanal- yse - Deutsch (Competence Analysis Measuring Instrument - German)
<b>BMI</b> Bundesministerium für Inneres (Federal Ministry of the Interior)	<b>NAPI</b> Nationaler Aktionsplan für Integration (Austrian National Action Plan on Integration)
<b>BMS</b> Berufsbildende mittlere Schule (Intermediate vocational school)	<b>NEET</b> Not in Education, Employment or Training
<b>Covid-19</b> Coronavirus disease 2019	<b>OECD</b> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>EFTA</b> European Free Trade Association	<b>ÖIF</b> Österreichischer Integrationsfonds (Austrian Integration Fund)

**PIRLS**

Progress in International Reading  
Literacy Study

**PISA**

Programme for International Student  
Assessment

**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner  
for Refugees

**USB-DaZ**

Unterrichtsbegleitende Sprach-  
standsbeobachtung Deutsch als  
Zweitsprache (In-Lesson Linguistic  
Proficiency Monitoring for German  
as a Second Language)

# GLOSSARY

## Asylum procedure

The first step in the asylum procedure is to determine whether Austria or another EU state is responsible for dealing with the asylum application (admission procedure or Dublin procedure). If Austria's responsibility is confirmed, the procedure must be continued in Austria. An accelerated procedure ("fast-track procedure") is used when an asylum seeker submits an asylum application from a safe country of origin. Safe countries of origin are countries in which no political persecution or inhuman or degrading punishments take place.<sup>164</sup>

## Asylum Seekers

The term asylum seeker refers to a person in an ongoing asylum procedure. Asylum seekers are legal residents of Austria for the duration of the proceedings, although they generally have to stay within the district area assigned to them during the admission procedure.

## Austrian Integration Act (IntG)

The Integration Act regulates the central framework conditions in the areas of language and orientation for integrating persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection, for legally settled third-country nationals and displaced persons. It governs integration offerings and obligations to cooperate. Integration offers for persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection include German training and values courses; legally settled third-country nationals must prove their knowledge of German within the framework of the Integration Agreement and displaced persons can attend German and orientation courses.

## Displaced persons

Displaced persons, within the meaning of Austrian law, are persons who are granted temporary residence on the federal territory for the duration of an armed conflict or other circumstances affecting the safety of entire population groups. In the wake of the war in Ukraine, and to implement the EU's Temporary Protection Directive, displaced persons from Ukraine are granted such temporary protection, which is documented after registration with an ID card for displaced persons (Blue Card).

<sup>164</sup> Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA) (no year) *Information brochure "Asylum procedure in Austria"*, p. 18.

## Educational aspirations

Educational aspirations are understood to be the expectations of parents and young people regarding success at school, school-leaving qualifications and future careers. Young people's educational and career decisions are strongly influenced by their parents. It can be assumed that educational paths depend on both socio-demographic and motivational factors.<sup>165</sup>

## German support classes and training courses

For pupils who are unable to follow lessons due to a lack of knowledge of the language of instruction, the status "non-regular pupil" can be assigned following a standardised test procedure. Classification as a non-regular pupil is allowed for a maximum of two years. Non-regular pupils with insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction receive intensive language training during this period based on an individual curriculum, but at the same time attend regular classes in selected subjects (e.g. sports, art, music, etc.) depending on specific and organisational requirements. After the first semester of such a German support class, the language level is re-evaluated

## Integration monitoring

The Integration Act introduced integration monitoring in 2017, according to which the responsible members of the Advisory Committee on Integration make legally mandated, non-personal data available annually for the purpose of enabling cross-competency linkages. The data includes the areas: asylum and residence, school education and adult education, apprenticeship training, welfare benefits, labour market, German lessons, values and orientation courses, and science. In the Integration Report, the Expert Council for Integration discusses and contextualises annual developments on the basis of the integration monitoring.

## Migrant background first and second generation

According to Statistics Austria, persons have a migrant background when both parents were born abroad. This group can then be divided into an immigrating generation, or first generation, i.e. persons who themselves were born abroad, and a second generation (i.e. children of two parents born abroad but who themselves were born in Austria). This definition of migrant background follows the "Recommendations for the 2020 censuses of population and housing" of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).<sup>166</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Kuschej, Hermann et al. (2023), *Bildungsaspirationen junger Migrant/innen*, pp. 13–14.

<sup>166</sup> Statistics Austria (2023), *Population in private households by foreign background*.



## National Action Plan on Integration (NAP.I)

The NAP.I represents the overall integration strategy of the Austrian government. Its aim is to optimise, pool and systematically develop the measures for successful integration of the Republic of Austria, the federal provinces, cities, municipalities, employers and industry associations, and civil society organisations. The National Action Plan is the basis for further measures in the seven key areas of action: Language and education, work and employment, rule of law and values, health and social issues, intercultural dialogue, sport and leisure, housing and the regional dimension of integration.

## Naturalisations

Austrian citizenship can be obtained by birth, by conferral, or by extension of the conferral. For Austrian citizenship to be conferred, at a minimum the general conditions for naturalisation must be fulfilled and an application submitted. The additional conditions for conferral depend on whether the citizenship is conferred based on a legal claim or whether the decision is at the discretion of the competent authority.

## Non-regular pupils

See German support classes and German training courses.

## Persons entitled to asylum or recognised refugees

Persons entitled to asylum or recognised (Convention) refugees are persons whose asylum application has been approved. Asylum applications must be approved if the requirements of the Geneva Refugee Convention (GRC) are fulfilled. If asylum seekers can demonstrate that they are facing individual persecution in their country of origin on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political conviction and that they are unable to rely on the protection of their country of origin, they are entitled to asylum. They are granted a residence permit in Austria, initially limited to three years ("temporary asylum"). This is extended indefinitely if the requirements for revocation proceedings are not met, or if such proceedings are discontinued. For example, the asylum status must be revoked if the reasons for flight are no longer applicable or if the individual has committed a serious crime. Persons entitled to asylum are equated in many respects with Austrian citizens; they have access to the labour market, to welfare benefits and to higher education.

## Persons entitled to Subsidiary Protection

When a person cannot establish a persecution within the meaning of the GRC (see entitled to asylum and recognised refugees), his or her asylum application shall be rejected. According to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which has been ratified by Austria and even has constitutional status, a person cannot be deported if his or her life or health is threatened in the country of origin as a result of war or torture ("refoulement ban"). These persons are designated as persons entitled to subsidiary protection and receive a one-year temporary right of residence, which can be extended (several times) by two years in each case. The status may be deprived under certain circumstances (e. g. due to a crime). Persons entitled to subsidiary protection do not have to have the same rights as those entitled to asylum, in some cases they may be worse off.

## Residence permit

Third-country nationals who reside or wish to reside in Austria for longer than six months or as holders of an "ICT" residence permit from another member state require a residence permit. However, if they are entitled to residence under European Union law, they do not require a residence permit. Nationals of an EU/EEA state or of Switzerland do not require a residence permit. However, they must apply for a confirmation of registration within four months of their arrival. Residence permits are always granted for a specific purpose.

## Temporary Protection Directive

On 3 March 2022, the member states of the EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC) for the first time to provide protection to refugees from Ukraine. Temporary protection is a mechanism that can be applied in the event of a mass movement of people in order to immediately and collectively (i.e. without prior verification of individual applications) grant protection to persons who cannot return to their country of origin. In Austria, the Temporary Protection Directive was implemented through the federal government's regulation on a temporary right of residence for displaced persons from Ukraine (Displaced Persons Ordinance).

## Third-country nationals

Third-country nationals are persons who are neither EU citizens, citizens of other EEA states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), nor Swiss.

## Values and orientation courses

At the centre of the values and orientation courses is the transfer of Austrian values and lifestyle to third-country nationals - in recent years especially persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection from the refugee cohort of 2015/2016. The taught contents include the fundamental values of the Austrian constitution, such as equal rights for men and women, human dignity, the separation of religion and state, democracy, freedom of opinion, the rule of law, but also everyday knowledge of life in Austria. Since June 2017 participation is obligatory by law. The three-day values and orientation courses are held in all federal provinces in the nine integration centres of the Austrian Integration Fund.

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# DATA TABLES

Data table 1:

## Immigration from abroad 2020 to 2023 by nationality and sex

Nationality	2020			2021			2022			2023		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Austria	15,032	9,004	6,028	14,659	8,771	5,888	15,672	9,115	6,557	13,391	7,901	5,490
EU states before 2004/EFTA	32,959	17,840	15,119	33,276	17,555	15,721	38,300	20,180	18,120	35,074	18,467	16,607
EU accession states 2004	22,490	12,422	10,068	21,513	11,975	9,538	25,942	14,219	11,723	26,907	15,059	11,848
EU accession states since 2007	29,077	16,704	12,373	30,824	18,283	12,541	36,450	21,071	15,379	32,052	18,519	13,533
Former Yugoslavia (outside the EU)	10,772	6,001	4,771	11,520	6,356	5,164	12,837	7,274	5,563	13,144	7,585	5,559
Türkiye	2,480	1,495	985	3,075	1,825	1,250	4,917	3,115	1,802	7,595	4,875	2,720
Afghanistan/Iraq/Syria	5,683	4,379	1,304	16,238	13,182	3,056	18,977	14,293	4,684	19,278	11,251	8,027
Ukraine	1,495	548	947	1,959	771	1,188	78,439	25,905	52,534	15,739	6,759	8,980
Other	16,355	8,361	7,994	26,566	9,451	17,115	30,403	16,446	13,957	31,779	16,555	15,224

Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Migration statistics; own presentation.

Data table 2:

## First-time right of residence 2013 to 2023 by reason for immigration

Reason for immigration	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Taking up gainful employment	3,555	3,442	3,598	3,337	2,938	3,737	4,077	2,739	3,935	5,437	7,166
Education/Training	5,538	6,350	7,063	5,770	4,591	4,422	4,078	2,718	4,703	4,743	6,275
Family	12,652	13,394	15,529	15,635	13,857	13,064	13,481	11,634	14,457	17,369	18,156
Other (incl. humanitarian residence permits)	12,563	16,876	25,092	25,324	34,582	25,298	18,229	17,668	24,797	27,709	31,293

Source: Eurostat (2024), First residence permits issued, by reason; own presentation.

Data table 3:

**Persons receiving basic welfare support on 31 Dec. 2023 by most common nationalities\***

Nationality	Number
Ukraine	40,652
Syria	17,518
Afghanistan	5,676
Türkiye	3,170
Somalia	2,587
Iraq	2,008
Russian Federation	1,782
Iran	703
Other and unknown	4,738
Total	78,834

\* including 1,885 unaccompanied minors. Source: BMI (2024), Asylstatistik 2023; own presentation.

Data table 4:

**Population by place of birth, nationality and migrant background\***

Place of birth, nationality and migrant background*	2013/14		2023/24		Change	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
Total population	8,507,786	-	9,159,993	-	+652,207	-
Born in Austria	7,093,162	-	7,120,627	-	+27,465	-
Born abroad	1,414,624	16.6%	2,039,366	22.3%	+624,742	+5.7PP
With Austrian nationality	7,441,672	-	7,358,809	-	-82,863	-
With foreign nationality	1,066,114	12.5%	1,801,184	19.7%	+735,070	+7.1PP
Population with a migrant background	1,622,374	19.4%	2,448,817	27.2%	+826,443	+7.8PP

\* Figures for migrant background in the annual average of the respective earlier year, figures for nationality and country of birth in each case on 1 Jan. of the later year. Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Population structure / Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.



Data table 5a:

**Immigrant population (first generation), 2014 by most common countries of birth**

Country of birth	2014
Germany	210,735
Türkiye	159,958
Bosnia and Herzegovina	155,050
Serbia	132,553
Romania	79,264
Poland	66,802
Hungary	55,038
Czechia	40,833
Croatia	39,782
Slovakia	32,633
Russian Federation	30,249
Kosovo	29,162
Italy	27,720
Other	354,845
Total	1,416,638

Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Population at the beginning of the year detailed by country of birth; own presentation.

Data table 5b:

**Immigrant population (first generation), 2024 by most common countries of birth**

Country of birth	2024
Germany	265,152
Bosnia and Herzegovina	178,860
Türkiye	165,218
Romania	148,470
Serbia	144,658
Hungary	94,835
Syria	85,033
Ukraine	81,567
Poland	77,479
Croatia	58,634
Slovakia	47,885
Afghanistan	46,963
Russian Federation	42,713
Other	601,899
Total	2,039,366

Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Population at the beginning of the year detailed by country of birth; own presentation.

Data table 6:

**Population by migrant background, place of birth abroad and foreign nationality\***

Migrant background, place of birth abroad and foreign nationality*	2013/14	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Migrant background total number	1,622,374	2,240,335	2,351,823	2,448,817
Migrant background total share	19.4%	25.4%	26.4%	27.2%
Migrant background first generation	1,192,838	1,635,001	1,731,273	1,828,671
Migrant background second generation	429,536	605,334	620,552	620,146
Place of birth* EU/EFTA states (from 2020 incl. GB)	658,292	867,188	894,016	915,522
Place of birth* Third countries: other countries in Europe (incl. TR)	547,128	607,626	683,489	696,197
Place of birth* Third countries: non-European countries	209,204	367,612	398,355	427,647
Foreign nationality* EU/EFTA states (from 2020 incl. GB)	527,369	847,695	888,745	923,207
Foreign nationality* Third countries: other countries in Europe (incl. TR)	400,049	443,402	517,719	528,800
Foreign nationality* Third countries: non-European countries	138,696	295,612	323,356	349,177

\* Figures for migrant background in the annual average of the respective previous year. Figures for nationality and country of birth on 1 Jan. of the later year in each case. Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Population structure / Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

Data table 7:

**Immigrant population with a migrant background 2023 by year of immigration\***

before 1980	1980–1989	1990–1999	2000–2009	2010–2019	from 2020
130,149	141,701	300,174	334,076	634,764	287,806
7%	8%	16%	18%	35%	16%

\* The figures for the older immigration categories differ slightly from the previous year due to the nature of the data in the Microcensus. Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

Data table 8:

**Naturalisations in Austria 2019 to 2023**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	10,500	8,796	9,723	10,899	11,898
under 17 years of age	3,580	2,919	3,149	3,578	4,100
over 18 years of age	6,920	5,877	6,574	7,321	7,798

Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Naturalised persons by selected characteristics; own presentation.

Data table 9a:

**Results of the Pisa Study, score 2022 for Austria**

Nationality	Mathematics	Reading	Science
Total	487	480	491
Without migrant background	505	500	514
Migrant background first generation	439	419	428
Migrant background second generation	451	444	441

Source: OECD (2024), PISA Data Explorer; own presentation.

Data table 9b:

**Results of the Pisa Study, score 2022 for OECD**

Nationality	Mathematics	Reading	Science
Total	472	476	485
Without migrant background	477	483	491
Migrant background first generation	435	425	438
Migrant background second generation	459	461	466

Source: OECD (2024), PISA Data Explorer; own presentation.

Data table 10:

**Everyday language of schoolchildren and kindergarten children 2022/23**

Kindergarten/School type	Non-German		Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian	Turkish	Arabic	Romanian	Albanian	Other
	Number	Share	Share	Share	Share	Share	Share	Share
Day-care centres*	113,181	32.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-
All schools**	307,871	27.0%	21.2%	18.3%	7.9%	7.0%	5.8%	39.9%
Primary school	116,353	32.3%	20.6%	18.3%	7.7%	8.0%	6.2%	39.2%
Special needs school	6,262	42.9%	18.9%	24.2%	8.1%	7.9%	5.5%	35.4%
Middle school	74,071	34.8%	21.3%	20.8%	8.1%	7.4%	6.3%	36.2%
Polytechnic school	5,688	38.9%	22.6%	19.1%	8.3%	7.7%	5.9%	36.4%
Academic secondary school	45,762	21.0%	19.3%	12.5%	9.9%	5.2%	4.3%	48.9%
Vocational school	16,005	13.7%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Intermediate vocational school	10,680	25.6%	24.3%	23.9%	8.1%	5.5%	6.4%	31.9%
Higher vocational school	27,632	19.7%	28.7%	20.7%	5.4%	5.8%	5.9%	33.5%

\* Excluding Styria, the day-care centres include: crèches, toddler care groups, kindergarten and after-school care groups. \*\* Including Austrian Federal Sports Academies as well as other general and vocational schools with their own organisational charters, not including schools and academies in health care. Source: Statistics Austria (2024), School and day care centre statistics; own presentation.

Data table 11:

**Non-regular pupils 2022/23 by nationality**

Nationality	Total	Non-regular total	Non-regular share
Austria	906,943	11,153	1.2%
Foreign	221,578	38,001	17.2%
Romania	18,861	3,484	18.5%
Syria	15,949	2,872	18.0%
Türkiye	14,875	2,157	14.5%
Serbia	13,764	1,358	9.9%
Ukraine	13,617	11,274	82.8%
Afghanistan	10,167	1,395	13.7%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9,570	923	9.6%
Iraq	2,994	349	11.7%

Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

Data table 12a:

**Participants in values and orientation courses, 2023 by most common nationalities**

Nationality	Number	Share
Syria	8,120	74.3%
Afghanistan	1,130	10.3%
Somalia	542	5.0%
Iraq	193	1.8%
Iran	192	1.8%
Other	748	6.8%
Total	10,925	100%

Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

Data table 12b:

**Participants in values and orientation courses, 2023 by sex**

Sex	Number	Share
Women	2,671	24.4%
Men	8,253	75.5%
Total*	10,925	100%

\* Incl. one non-binary person. Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

Data table 13a:

### German lessons taken in 2023 by most common nationalities and course levels

Nationality	Total	Alpha	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1
Syria	31,906	10,997	11,212	5,837	2,673	1,121	66
Ukraine	21,933	953	7,444	7,602	4,575	1,237	122
Afghanistan	5,301	1,297	1,544	1,335	796	319	10
Somalia	1,854	469	738	449	164	34	-
Iraq	1,209	192	314	377	239	86	1
Other	4,378	475	1,316	1,265	838	459	25
Total	66,581	14,383	22,568	16,865	9,285	3,256	224

Source: Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) (2024), special evaluation; own presentation.

Data table 13b:

### German lessons taken in 2023 by sex and course levels

Sex	Total	Alpha	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1
Men	38,588	10,722	14,156	8,489	3,808	1,334	79
Women	27,971	3,660	8,400	8,371	5,474	1,921	145
Total*	66,581	14,383	22,568	16,865	9,285	3,256	224

\* 22 spots were used by non-binary persons or persons of unknown sex. Source: Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) (2024), special evaluation; own presentation.

Data table 14:

### NEETs 2023 by migrant background

Migrant background	15–24-year olds total	Proportion of NEETs in group of origin	NEETs total	Proportion of NEETs total
Without migrant background	620,265	6.7%	41,315	52.4%
With migrant background	288,009	13.0%	37,580	47.6%
First generation	156,078	14.2%	22,235	28.2%
Second generation	131,931	11.6%	15,345	19.4%
EU states before 2007/EFTA/GB	51,117	7.7%**	3,916**	5.0%**
EU accession states since 2007	35,329	18.3%**	6,475**	8.2%**
Former Yugoslavia (outside the EU)	69,737	14.9%	10,358	13.1%
Türkiye	46,626	15.4%	7,169	9.1%
Refugee countries of origin*	39,724	13.9%**	5,528**	7.0%**
Other third countries	45,476	9.1%**	4,133**	5.2%**

\* Refugee countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria, Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. This is an approximation: on the one hand, not all nationals of these countries are refugees, on the other hand, some refugees with other nationalities were not included. \*\* Figures with less than an extrapolated 6,000 persons are very much subject to random fluctuations. Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

Data table 15:

### Pupils in German support classes and courses, shares of total number 2022/23 by federal province

Federal province	German support classes		German support courses	
	Number	Share	Number	Share
Austria	25,920	2.2%	22,775	2.0%
Vienna	9,865	3.9%	7,618	3.0%
Upper Austria	3,938	2.0%	4,599	2.3%
Vorarlberg	1,058	1.9%	916	1.6%
Styria	2,852	1.9%	2,582	1.7%
Lower Austria	3,917	1.9%	3,174	1.5%
Tyrol	1,611	1.6%	1,185	1.2%
Burgenland	560	1.6%	486	1.4%
Salzburg	1,145	1.5%	1,481	1.9%
Carinthia	974	1.4%	734	1.0%

Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

Data table 16:

### Foreign employees and self-employed persons, annual average 2023 by nationality\*

Nationality	Employed persons***		Self-employed persons****	
	Number	Share	Number	Share
EU states before 2004/EFTA and GB	158,760	19.4%	20,153	16.4%
EU accession states 2004	150,955	18.4%	30,847	25.1%
EU accession states since 2007	141,606	17.3%	44,847	36.6%
Refugee countries of origin**	66,084	8.1%	4,844	3.9%
Ukraine	15,750	1.9%	930	0.8%
Other third countries in Europe (incl. TR)	236,445	28.8%	15,419	12.6%
Other third countries outside of Europe	50,730	6.2%	5,625	4.6%
Total	820,330	100%	122,674	100%

\* Excluding 7,055 other and unknown employed persons and 119 self-employed persons.\*\* Refugee countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria, Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. This is an approximation: on the one hand, not all nationals of these countries are refugees, on the other hand, some refugees with other nationalities were not included.\*\*\* Calculation with main residence in Austria, excl. "not specified".\*\*\*\* Incl. commuters with their principle residence abroad. Source: BMAW (2024), Online Labour Market Information System AMIS; own presentation.

Data table 17:

### Activity rate 2023 by sex and migrant background, 15–64-year olds

Migrant background	Men	Women
Without migrant background	82.5%	75.7%
EU27	86.8%	76.9%
Former Yugoslavia (outside the EU)	81.4%	71.0%
Türkiye	81.5%	63.3%
Refugee countries of origin*	71.9%	50.8%
Other third countries	80.8%	66.7%

\* Refugee countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria, Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. This is an approximation: on the one hand, not all nationals of these countries are refugees, on the other hand, some refugees with other nationalities were not included. Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

Data table 18:

### Employment structure 2022 by level of education and migrant background

Migrant background	Up to secondary level I	Secondary level II and post-secondary, non-tertiary level	Tertiary level
Total population	12.1%	50.2%	37.7%
Without migrant background	8.8%	53.2%	38.1%
With migrant background	19.0%	45.1%	35.9%
Migrant background first generation	20.0%	42.2%	37.8%
Migrant background second generation	15.8%	49.5%	34.7%

Source: Eurostat (2024), *Employment by sex, age, migration status, occupation and educational level; own presentation.*

Data table 19:

### Unemployment rates 2023 by sex and nationality

Nationality	Total	Men	Women
Syria	36.7%	34.6%	45.0%
Iraq	23.5%	20.2%	32.6%
Afghanistan	21.6%	17.2%	37.0%
Serbia	20.2%	21.3%	18.9%
Russian Federation	19.6%	23.0%	16.9%
Türkiye	14.4%	12.6%	17.2%
Ukraine	14.1%	12.2%	14.9%
Bulgaria	13.8%	13.2%	14.4%
Romania	10.1%	9.5%	10.9%
Croatia	8.4%	8.7%	8.1%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8.3%	8.6%	7.8%
Poland	7.3%	6.8%	8.1%
Austria	5.3%	5.8%	4.8%
Germany	4.5%	4.6%	4.4%

Source: BMAW (2024), *Online Labour Market Information System AMIS; own presentation.*

Data table 20:

### Unemployed or registered jobseekers in training 2023 by nationality or residence status and level of education

Nationality	Total		Compulsory schooling		Apprenticeship		Secondary education		Higher education		Academic education		Unclassified	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
Third-country nationals	90,794	69%	62,431	69%	6,951	8%	2,146	2%	10,657	12%	7,837	9%	774	1%
Austrians	200,916	37%	74,783	37%	73,122	36%	12,466	6%	23,653	12%	16,287	8%	605	0%
EU27	49,057	51%	24,778	51%	8,866	18%	2,249	5%	7,134	15%	5,596	11%	434	1%
EU accession states since 2004	38,225	57%	21,689	57%	5,737	15%	1,818	5%	5,541	14%	3,088	8%	351	1%
Persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection	39,137	74%	28,810	74%	1,089	3%	387	1%	6,040	15%	2,564	7%	248	1%
EU states before 2004/EFTA/GB	11,384	29%	3,246	29%	3,261	29%	456	4%	1,684	15%	2,649	23%	88	1%

Source: *Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.*

Data table 21:

**Transition to employment 2023 by sex and nationality as a percentage of all outflows from unemployment**

Nationality	Total	Men	Women
Austria	58%	61%	55%
EU states before 2004	65%	67%	62%
EU accession states since 2004	59%	66%	50%
Third countries	41%	48%	31%
Türkiye	40%	50%	28%
Former Yugoslavia (outside the EU)	50%	59%	39%
Syria	25%	28%	18%
Afghanistan	43%	55%	19%
Iraq	43%	52%	27%
Russian Federation	38%	43%	33%

Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; BMAW (2024), Online Labour Market Information System AMIS; own presentation.

Data table 22:

**Social assistance recipients 2023 by federal province\***

Federal province	Total Number	Austrian citizens		Nationals EU, EFTA, GB and assoc. small states		Persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection		Other third-country nationals (incl. stateless and unknown)	
		Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
Austria (without Vienna)	77,100	38,600	50%	6,800	9%	24,000	31%	7,700	10%
Vienna	141,900	53,400	38%	10,200	7%	62,500	44%	15,800	11%
Lower Austria	13,500	7,900	59%	1,100	8%	3,600	27%	900	6%
Upper Austria	8,800	4,900	56%	800	9%	2,400	27%	700	8%
Styria	19,200	9,400	49%	1,800	10%	5,500	28%	2,500	13%
Tyrol	12,500	4,800	38%	1,200	9%	5,300	43%	1,200	10%
Carinthia	4,100	2,400	58%	200	5%	1,200	30%	300	7%
Salzburg	7,300	3,900	53%	600	8%	2,100	30%	700	9%
Vorarlberg	9,300	3,600	39%	900	9%	3,500	38%	1,300	14%
Burgenland	2,400	1,600	67%	300	13%	300	12%	200	8%

\* Vienna based on annual average figures, other federal provinces based on annual totals. Ukrainian nationals are not included in this figure because, as displaced persons, they are entitled to basic welfare support and not social assistance. Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.



Data table 23:

**Ratio of social assistance recipients 2023 by nationality\***

Nationality	Vienna	Austria without Vienna
Syria	73.7%	29.9%
Somalia	71.6%	25.3%
Afghanistan	54.2%	17.0%
Iraq	46.1%	16.9%
Russian Federation	32.9%	20.3%
Iran	16.4%	11.5%
Türkiye	8.1%	2.8%
Former Yugoslavia (outside the EU)	5.4%	1.3%
Total population	9.0%	1.1%
Austria	4.1%	0.6%

\* Vienna based on annual average figures, other federal provinces based on annual totals. Ukrainian nationals are not included in this figure because, as displaced persons, they are entitled to basic welfare support and not social assistance. Source: Data of the federal provinces recorded in the course of the integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

Data table 24a:

**Participants in the adult education support programme, 2022/23 by most common nationalities**

Nationality	Number	Share
Syria	1,224	15.4%
Afghanistan	1,218	15.4%
Austria	1,184	14.9%
Somalia	597	7.5%
Ukraine	514	6.5%
Türkiye	438	5.5%
Romania	198	2.5%
Iraq	155	2.0%
Iran	137	1.7%
Russian Federation	123	1.6%
Other	2,143	27.0%
Total	7,931	100%

Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

Data table 24b:

**Participants in the adult education support programme, 2022/23 by sex**

Sex	Number	Share
Women	3,019	38.1%
Men + not specified	4,912	61.9%
Total	7,931	100%

Source: Integration monitoring according to the IntG; own presentation.

Data table 25:

**Activity Rate 2023 by sex and country of birth, 15 to 64-year olds**

Nationality	Total	Men	Women
Total	77.8%	81.7%	73.9%
Austria	78.3%	81.0%	75.4%
Foreign-born	76.6%	83.9%	69.7%
EU27	82.6%	88.2%	77.8%
Former Yugoslavia (outside the EU)	76.2%	83.9%	68.5%
Türkyie	70.0%	83.2%	56.0%
Other third countries	69.7%	77.8%	61.7%

Source: Statistics Austria (2024), Microcensus Labour Force Survey; own presentation.

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