



## Out of the maze

Easing the path to vocational education and training for young newcomers in Europe



SVR's Research Unit: Study 2020-1

The study was funded by Stiftung Mercator

**Suggested citation:**

The Expert Council's Research Unit (SVR Research Unit) 2020: Out of the maze. Easing the path to vocational education and training for young newcomers in Europe, Berlin



## Table of contents

Executive summary.....	4
<b>1 Vocational education and training (VET) in Europe: A driver of integration for young migrants .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Case selection and methodology.....	7
1.2 Structure of the study.....	8
<b>2 VET systems in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain: Structure and attractiveness.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3 The maze of VET preparation: What helps? What hinders? .....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Regulatory and structural conditions for accessing VET.....	12
3.2 Everyday challenges: Additional obstacles blocking the path .....	20
3.3 Good practice: Providing advice continuously from arrival through to training and “one-stop” training preparation .....	26
3.4 Conclusion: Local staff as trailblazers .....	29
<b>4 Local insights: Access to education and training in eight European municipalities .....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 Decision-making discretion of staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations.....	31
4.2 Good practice: Better educational integration thanks to reliable networks.....	38
<b>5 Recommended actions: Improving educational opportunities for young migrants in Europe .....</b>	<b>40</b>
5.1 Getting training structures ready for “diversity as the norm” .....	41
5.2 Putting multi-professional educational networks on a sustainable footing .....	44
<b>6 Outlook.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>54</b>
Figure.....	54
Tables.....	56
List of figures .....	61
List of tables .....	61
List of boxes .....	61

## At a glance

- Vocational education and training (VET) opens up opportunities for young newcomers to enter skilled employment and drives social participation.
- Young newcomers' access to VET often resembles a maze. When those who want to undergo training are unable to take part in regular classes on account of their residence status, age or lack of recognised certificates, or if they do not have the necessary language skills and financial means, then their path to VET ends up getting longer.
- Staff at municipal level – for instance in advisory centres, educational establishments and public authorities – have a degree of discretion when it comes to shaping and granting access to VET and, hence, to fostering social integration.
- Preparatory and training structures should be adapted in a targeted manner to the young newcomers' needs and should also be made more flexible.
- Young newcomers should receive continuous and close guidance, and local “gatekeepers” should receive ongoing support and backing from multi-professional educational networks as well as reliable financing.

## Executive summary

Since 2014, more than five million adolescents and young people have fled or immigrated to the European Union (EU), or have moved across borders within the EU. When transitioning into adulthood, vocational education and training (VET) offers young newcomers a practice-oriented gateway to skilled employment. This may create a win-win situation for both the newcomers and countries of immigration: VET not only promotes these young people's social integration, it also contributes to filling skills shortages.

**The aim of this SVR Research Unit's study is to draw on the example of the four EU Member States – Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain – in order to identify those structures and practices which facilitate young newcomers' access to VET and thus to boost their chances of finding employment.** The four countries' national, regional and local rules and practices on granting access to VET were studied and 122 expert interviews analysed. Our analysis shows that **the path to VET often resembles a maze.** Anyone whose residence status does not permit them to take up employment, who cannot present the required certificates or is no longer under the obligation to at-

tend (vocational) school on account of their age is at a clear disadvantage and often has to navigate longer paths to achieve their educational goals. Although all four of the case-study countries deliver language and often also subject-related preparatory courses for newcomers, the range of courses available tends to be confusing and entry requirements are often as demanding as for the vocational training itself. Financial constraints, lack of knowledge about the training system, intensive language and subject-related studies, psychological, social and housing pressures, as well as discrimination place additional burdens on young newcomers.

However, the study at hand shows that **staff in advisory centres, educational establishments, public authorities and other facilities in the municipalities have a degree of discretion when it comes to shaping and granting access to VET.** Their work is crucial to the young newcomers' future life course and integration in that **they can either ease or impede the newcomers' path through the maze, depending on how they make use of the margin of discretion their job remit affords them. Often, the gatekeep-**



ers' commitment to easing newcomers' access to VET goes beyond their actual remit.

Three factors have a particular influence on the decisions taken by these staff members: perceived legal uncertainty, scarce resources and individual convictions. The latter are influenced by how much contact they have with newcomers, for instance.

VET can be an important driver for young newcomers' participation in the labour market and society as a whole. For many newcomers, especially refugees without a secure residence status, however, it is a goal which is hard to achieve – partly because of legal barriers. These barriers, not least, reflect Member States' regulatory concerns when it comes to managing and controlling immigration. At the same time, interests related to integration also need to be considered when shaping and granting access to VET. Many newcomers who initially have subordinate access to the labour market will in actual fact be able to stay permanently, and a lack of early preparation can hinder their long-term integration into the labour market. Finally, newcomers with full access rights also often encounter structural challenges on their path to VET which need to be addressed. **The work of local staff thus provides vital starting points for granting and further improving young newcomers' access to education and training.**

The SVR Research Unit's key recommendations for ensuring smooth access to VET are as follows:

- **Adapt training structures to "diversity as the norm":** Language and preparatory courses should be expanded and should focus more on the needs of the migrant target group. Vocational education and training itself should be made more flexible. Close and continuous guidance needs to be provided right from the start.
- **Put multi-professional educational networks on a sustainable footing:** In order to be able to provide "one-stop" training preparation, the staff in the municipalities who support young newcomers need structures to back them up. Educational networks have proved their worth: they provide a space for information sharing and continuous professional development and help to systematise available preparatory measures. That is why they should be expanded and put on a sustainable footing. Also, the responsible education, labour and regulatory authorities at regional and national level need to work together to promote young newcomers' integration into the training system at local level.

These courses and measures need a reliable funding basis and should – based on data and specific local needs – be supported by European and national funding programmes.

## 1 Vocational education and training (VET) in Europe: A driver of integration for young migrants<sup>1</sup>

Migration flows to the European Union (EU) and within the confederation, especially of young people, have increased significantly: **more than 5.3 million migrants who arrived in the period between 2014 and 2018 were older adolescents and young adults.**<sup>2</sup> They represent around a quarter of total EU migration (24.8%) (Eurostat 2020a). The most frequent reason for young newcomers leaving their home countries include EU-internal migration, as well as forced migration, family reunification and skilled worker migration.<sup>3</sup> Most newly arrived adolescents and young adults plan to look for work in an EU Member State and regard local education opportunities as an important step on the way; swift labour market access and the financial independence that brings with it are key aspects for many (see OECD 2019: 42–44; IAB 2019: 8; IAW/ISG/SOKO 2018: 75; SVR 2019: 112–113).

How well adolescents and young adults manage to gain access to education in their target country is often a game-changer when it comes to their integration.<sup>4</sup> Many already have school qualifications and

even vocational or academic qualifications. Others, by contrast, have no qualifications and have missed out on one or more years of schooling on account of fleeing their home countries or due to other circumstances (Eurostat 2020b). VET can represent a huge opportunity for this target group. Many newcomers recognise the importance of acquiring local qualifications and are highly motivated when it comes to continuing along their educational path (see SVR 2018: 23; IAB 2019: 8; Granato 2017: 29–31). Although higher education is an attractive option for many, only few newcomers have the necessary language and subject-related skills on arrival to pursue that path (OECD 2019: 18–19; DAAD 2018: 23; DAAD 2017: 21).<sup>5</sup> **VET, by contrast, offers young people a practice-oriented gateway to skilled employment. Being able to present a certificate of training significantly increases their chances of finding a job on the EU Member States' labour markets.**<sup>6</sup> Across Europe, unemployment among those who have completed a course of vocational training is significantly lower than among those who have not (CEDEFOP 2020b: 75–76). Especially in those sectors in which there is more demand for skilled labour – in the care sector and technical professions in many EU countries, for

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- 1 The research project in the context of which this study was written is funded by Stiftung Mercator. The study was supported by Prof. Dr Viola Georgi, member of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR). Responsibility for publication lies with the SVR Research Unit. Arguments and conclusions do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the SVR. The authors would like to thank their project partners: Judith Schnelzer, Prof. Dr Yuri Kazepov, Dr Elisabetta Mocca and Tatjana Boczy at the University of Vienna. They thank Dr Nina Perger and Assoc. Prof. Dr Andreja Vezovnik at the University of Ljubljana as well as Dr Judith Jacovkis, Dr Alejandro Montes and Prof. Dr Xavier Rambla at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. They would also like to thank Prof. Dr Marcelo Parreira do Amaral, Dr Roman Lehner, Emma Beelen, Yunus Berndt, Alyona Fedina, Malte Götte, Mai-Linh Ho Dac, Sophie Meiners, Charlotte Riedel, Jasmin Stark, Serkan Ünsal and Clara Zeeh for their support during the project. Many thanks also go to those committed individuals in the START Foundation, for example, who pointed the survey team in the direction of young newcomers who took part in the field interviews conducted in Germany. Last but not least, thank you to all the interview partners who were willing to share their insights and experiences.
  - 2 As there are no European migration data for the age group studied here, i.e. 16- to 25-year-olds, recourse is taken to data relating to 15- to 24-year-olds as an approximation.
  - 3 For the purposes of this study, “newcomers” are defined as all those who arrived in an EU Member State after January 2014 and have their (temporary) residence in that country. The study focuses on migrants from third countries, since access to vocational education and training is mostly more difficult for them than for EU migrants, whose experiences will also be addressed where relevant.
  - 4 “Access to education” in this study not only refers to the point at which they sign a training contract, but the entire phase of transitioning to VET (see Parreira do Amaral/Stauber/Barberis 2015; Wolter 2013). In the case of newcomers, this phase can encompass several preparatory courses.
  - 5 Depending on how permeable an education system is, completing a course of vocational training can open up other paths to a university degree.
  - 6 The importance of education and training courses for which participants receive a certificate on completion is not only underscored by recent strategies and funding programmes adopted at EU and national level, but also by various studies, including a study by the International Monetary Fund which was conducted in 13 EU Member States. The latter study shows that migrants are significantly more successful at finding a job if they make use of those educational opportunities which are available to them on arrival in their host country. The education they “brought with them” from abroad is, by contrast, less important (Ho/Turk-Ariss 2018: 13–15).



instance (CEDEFOP Skills Panorama 2016) – they stand a fair chance of finding a good job. Not only the migrants themselves benefit from this, the economies and social systems of EU countries do too. Educationally disadvantaged adolescents often become reliant on government transfers as adults and, on average, pay fewer taxes than those in the workforce who are on better pay (Piopiunik/Wößmann 2010). When people feel socially sidelined, this can also lead to them being less committed, to them disengaging and suffering mental or physical health issues, which in turn leads to higher government transfers for the whole of society (see Pascoe/Smart Richman 2009; Benner et al. 2015; Ensher et al. 2001). **In short, VET opens doors to social participation.** Consequently, the matter of access routes to VET is pivotal, both for young migrants and the countries they are living in (see SVR 2014: 97–116; SVR 2019: 157–173).

Nevertheless, little comparative research has been done so far into young newcomers' access to VET (Seeber et al. 2018: 55; Granato/Neises 2017: 6; SVR Research Unit 2016b: 23–28).<sup>7</sup> **The aim of this study is therefore to conduct an exploratory analysis to see what access to education and training looks like across Europe, what obstacles newcomers have to overcome, and what structures and practices will in future help to improve their educational opportunities.** Four EU Member States which have received different numbers of migrants in recent years – Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain – are analysed by way of example.<sup>8</sup> An in-depth analysis at municipal level is particularly revealing, since educational access is largely a matter for the municipal authorities (see Schammann et al. 2020). Based on a detailed analysis of the relevant national and regional<sup>9</sup> rules and regulations relating to access, 122 semi-structured expert interviews were then conducted in the following eight municipalities:

- in Vienna and Innsbruck in Austria
- in Munich and Chemnitz in Germany
- in Ljubljana and Koper in Slovenia
- in Barcelona and Terrassa in Spain.

Based on a document analysis and on practices reported in the eight municipalities, the study then goes on to investigate which paths are, in theory, open to newcomers and at which points decisions are, in practice, taken on whether they can actually access VET or not.

## 1.1 Case selection and methodology

This study takes an in-depth look at select EU Member States in order to derive lessons learned for newcomers' access to education and training within the EU. The four case-study countries were selected in a three-step process:

- (1) Comparison of data on newcomers: Drawing on migration figures published by the EU's statistical authority, Eurostat (2018), a total of 11 EU countries with particularly high numbers of arrivals from non-EU countries were first identified: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.
- (2) Comparison of select vocational training indicators: In a second step, the VET systems of the previously identified 11 EU Member States were compared on the basis of structural data provided by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). This comparison focused on the following aspects: how practice-oriented VET is, the value attached to VET in society and what is known as the "training bonus", that is the value added for young people after completing their vocational

7 Cross-country comparisons have so far tended to focus more on access to primary and secondary education (e.g. Köhler et al. 2018; PPMI 2012).

8 The field research in Austria, Spain and Slovenia was conducted in collaboration with academics at the universities of Ljubljana and Vienna and at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Perger/Vezovnik 2020; Schnelzer/Boczy/Mocca/Kazepov 2020; Jancovkis/Montes 2020).

9 For the purposes of this study "regional" is defined as the sub-national legislative level, that is the federal states in Germany and Austria and autonomous municipalities in Spain.

training compared to their peers who have not (see Table 1). Given the aim of this study, i.e. to investigate different VET systems, the number of countries was then reduced to seven contrasting case studies: Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain.

- (3) Final case selection: The economic and migration policy/political country contexts of the remaining seven countries were compared and four contrasting cases selected in analogy with the most different method which is widely applied in the political sciences (see Rohlfing 2009): Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain.

Detailed analyses were conducted in one large city and one medium-sized industrial city in each of these four countries: The cities of Vienna and Innsbruck were chosen in Austria, Munich and Chemnitz in Germany. In Slovenia the capital city Ljubljana and the port city of Koper were selected, while the two Catalan cities of Barcelona and Terrassa were chosen in Spain.

**This study is primarily based on a qualitative analysis of two sources of data: the relevant rules and regulations** (e.g. national, regional and local primary and secondary legislation and official guidance on its application) **as well as 122 semi-structured expert and newcomer interviews in the eight selected municipalities.** The interviews were conducted between July and December 2019 with young migrants and staff in local authorities, educational establishments, civil-society organisations and other facilities which pave the way for young newcomers. At the time of the interviews, and in two cases when they arrived in the country of immigration, the newcomers were aged between 16 and 25. The sampling, interviews and analysis were all done in collaboration with project partners at the universities of Ljubljana and Vienna and the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Following the first round of interviews, the interview partners' networks were used to organise further interviews (known as "snowball sampling"). Tables 4 and 5 in the Appendix provide a complete overview of all the interviews. The interviews were analysed

based on the standards of qualitative content analysis according to Philipp Mayring (1993). Details can be found in the study's methodology report, which is available at <https://www.svr-migration.de/en/publications/access-vocational-education-europe/>.

The methodology of this study is qualitative. It therefore cites no statistical data which were drawn from questionnaires. As is customary in qualitative research, the experts interviewed are not a statistically representative sample. However, the diversity of the sample and the detailed analysis of their responses permit first conclusions to be drawn from the interviews regarding practices adopted in the selected municipalities. The results are illustrated by means of quotations taken from the interviews. The content of these quotations has not been changed, although light editing has been done for ease of reading. Some sentences have been deleted if they repeat the content of previous or successive statements or refer to other matters. These elisions have been indicated by inserting "[...]". Square brackets are also used for brief explanations which are aimed at providing a better understanding of the quotations.

## 1.2 Structure of the study

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the characteristics of the four countries' VET systems and the value attached to them in society. Chapter 3 then explains how difficult it is for young newcomers to find their way around the VET system. It also presents good practice examples to show how it is often possible to facilitate access to VET at local level. Based on that, Chapter 4 then illustrates how staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations<sup>10</sup> (e.g. non-governmental organisations and associations) are involved in shaping and granting access to education and training at the local level. To what extent the often-quoted "degree of discretion" can be used in a more targeted manner through sustainable multi-professional networks and even strengthened on occasion is discussed by drawing on good practice examples. Based on the results of this

<sup>10</sup> Local intermediary organisations include social enterprises, charities, chambers of commerce and crafts, and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which support young people directly or indirectly on their path to vocational training (see 4.1).



analysis, Chapter 5 goes on to present recommendations for action for those involved in shaping and granting educational access.

## 2 VET systems in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain: Structure and attractiveness

Young newcomers' access to vocational education and training (VET) plays an important role in all four case-study countries: First, these countries have had high migration rates since 2014 (see Box 1), raising the question of how young newcomers can be integrated into education and training systems as quickly as possible. Second, all the case-study countries face a growing skilled worker shortage. Although the countries' need for skilled workers varies, in the coming years they will need to confront a shortage of young people looking for work (European Commission 2018: Table III.1.11/III.1.25).

What the four case-study countries have in common is that adolescents are required by law to complete between eight and ten years of general schooling. After leaving secondary school in these four countries (ISCED Level 2<sup>11</sup>), they can either continue in general or in vocational education (see Figure 4 in the Appendix). **However, VET systems adopt different approaches and have different advantages over other educational paths when it comes to finding a job later on. This is an important aspect when it comes to integrating newcomers into a country's VET system.**

Work-based VET involves spending part of one's time working in a company and part of one's time attending vocational school; school-based VET programmes rather focus on theory and generally include shorter phases of work-based training (work placements).<sup>12</sup> Work-based VET programmes have a number of advantages: They tend to prepare young

people for the practical side of day-to-day working life in a comparatively shorter space of time. They are oriented to the needs of the companies which provide the training and they increase trainees' chances of being hired after completing their VET (see OECD 2019: 3). Nevertheless, the share of practical elements in vocational training differs considerably across the four countries (see Table 1).

In **Germany**, the majority (87.2%) of vocational training courses are work-based VET programmes; in **Austria**, almost one in two people completing vocational training have undergone work-based VET (45.7%) (CEDEFOP 2020b: 28). Young newcomers, too, benefit from the fact that in Austria and Germany these programmes are very practical, as many have worked prior to or during their migration journey and have already acquired practical skills. The migrants and trainers who were interviewed in Austrian and German companies confirm that trainees quickly find their feet in the practical part of the training and often feel it is easier to keep up than in the theoretical lessons. **As these young people experience success in their practical work, they often feel encouraged to overcome the difficulties they experience in vocational school and to continue towards their educational goal rather than dropping out.**

In **Slovenia** and **Spain**, by contrast, trainees undergo mainly school-based VET with practical elements (up to 20% in Spain, e.g.). Both countries have in recent years created the legal option of doing work-based VET, but only few companies and trainees have so far taken up this option (Table 1; CEDEFOP 2019).

**Whether young newcomers find VET an attractive option varies from country to country, depending on whether they expect their qualification to get them a job and whether their training is highly regarded in society.** This is expressed as what is known as the "employment premium", that is the difference between the employment rates of those who have completed vocational training and of the low-skilled

11 The ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) was developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and allows national training programmes to be categorised based on a standardised scale so as to permit international comparisons. ISCED Level 3, which the study at hand focuses on, is based on the ISCED's 2011 classification (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012). In Germany, for example, work-based and school-based VET in training companies and/or vocational schools are classified as ISCED Level 3. Higher education (ISCED Levels 5 to 8) is not included in this study.

12 The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training defines "work-based VET" as all those programmes in which work-based VET accounts for between 25 and 90 per cent of the course (see also CEDEFOP 2020b: 27).

### Box 1 Migration to the four case-study countries since 2014

Like most other European Union (EU) Member States, Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain have in recent years experienced increased rates of migration – especially as a result of forced migration from third countries or EU-internal migration. The share of foreign nationals in the general population is highest in Austria and lowest in Slovenia. Since refugees<sup>13</sup> tend to regard Austria and Slovenia as important transit countries, these two countries registered significantly fewer asylum applications in 2019 than Germany and Spain did.

	Austria	Germany	Slovenia	Spain
<b>Asylum applications</b> by 18- to 34-year-olds in 2019	More than 3,000	More than 46,000	More than 2,000	More than 57,000
<b>Top 5 countries of origin</b> (all groups of newcomers, 2014–2019)	1) Germany 2) Romania 3) Afghanistan 4) Syria 5) Hungary	1) Romania 2) Poland 3) Syria 4) Bulgaria 5) Italy	1) Bosnia-Herzegovina 2) Kosovo 3) North Macedonia 4) Croatia 5) Serbia	1) Morocco 2) Romania 3) Colombia 4) Italy 5) Honduras
<b>Top 5 countries of origin of forced migrants</b> (asylum applications, 2014–2019)	1) Syria 2) Afghanistan 3) Iraq 4) Iran 5) Pakistan	1) Syria 2) Afghanistan 3) Iraq 4) Albania 5) Iran	1) Afghanistan 2) Algeria 3) Pakistan 4) Morocco 5) Syria	1) Venezuela 2) Colombia 3) Syria 4) Ukraine 5) Honduras
<b>Share of population</b> made up of foreign nationals	16.1%	12.2%	6.6%	10.3%

NB: The countries of origin cited in the above refer to the nationality of the newcomers at the time of filing their asylum application.

Source: Eurostat 2020a, 2020c, 2020d

Migration to the four case-study countries is heterogenous: In Germany and Austria, most newcomers have arrived from other EU Member States and countries with increased rates of forced migration. The majority of refugees come from countries in the Middle East and Central Asia. Many of those migrating to Slovenia come from Balkan countries; those claiming asylum tend to be from the Middle East and northern Africa. In Spain, most migrants and asylum seekers have in recent years come from non-EU countries, especially from Spanish-speaking countries in Central and Southern America and from northern Africa.

13 The term “refugee”, as used in this study, refers very generally to anyone who has arrived in an EU Member State citing humanitarian grounds. It is here used as a generic term and regardless of whether someone is still in the asylum process or what decision is taken on the application. In legal terms, however, “refugee” only refers to recognised refugees within the meaning of the Geneva Convention, the right to asylum and the right to “subsidiary protection” (esp. for refugees from civil war). The term “asylum seeker” only refers to people in the asylum process, i.e. while their application for asylum is being processed.



Table 1 Characteristics of VET in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain

Category	Austria	Germany	Slovenia	Spain	EU (median)
<b>Share of work-based VET:</b> Share of work-based VET courses of all vocational training courses (in %)	Medium 45.7	High 87.2	Low* -	Low 2.7	21.6
<b>Employment premium:</b> Difference between employment rate of trained and low-qualified workforce aged between 20 and 25 (in percentage points)	Medium 28.5	High 3.4	Medium 23.2	Low 14.1	26.8
<b>Value attached to VET in society:</b> Share of those doing vocational course at overall secondary level (ISCED 3) (in %)	High 68.6	Medium 45.6	High 70.9	Medium 35.3	45.6

Key: Low = country is in bottom 25 per cent of EU Member States in that category; High = country is in top 25 per cent of EU Member States in that category

NB: \*European Commission 2019a: 9. In Slovenia, VET is almost entirely school-based and the comparative statistics contain no data regarding the share of work-based VET courses. "Work-based VET courses" are defined as those in which the practical part makes up a share of at least 25 per cent (CEDEFOP 2020b: 27).

Source: CEDEFOP 2020b: 26–28; 76

in employment (Table 1). In Germany, young qualified specialists have much better chances of finding work than their peers who do not have a comparable vocational qualification. In Austria and Slovenia, too, trained specialists have better job prospects; in Spain, though, the value added of a vocational qualification is lower and significantly below that in other EU countries (CEDEFOP 2020b: 76). Vocational qualifications can also open up other doors, such as those to higher education, and thus other career opportunities.<sup>14</sup> **Finally, the standing which vocational education and training has in society can be measured against what proportion of adolescents and young adults in the general population take the vocational training route early on rather than choosing to move into general upper secondary school education (Table 1).** In Austria and Slovenia, young people interested in continuing their education often choose the vocational training path (CEDEFOP 2020b: 26).

### 3 The maze of VET preparation: What helps? What hinders?

In the four European Union (EU) Member States studied, many newcomers have to fulfil a number of requirements in order to access vocational education and training (VET) (see Figure 1). If they cannot meet certain legal and structural requirements – for example, they have a specific residence status without the relevant permits, they cannot present the necessary certificates or are over the age at which they are legally required to attend school (see 3.1) – newcomers and refugees often have to take long, circuitous routes before they can start VET. Sometimes their path gets blocked entirely. In addition, young newcomers have to find out about the education and training system and learn a language, for example, and at times their situation is exacerbated by discrimination (see 3.2). In all four countries, however, attempts are

14 In Austria, Germany and Slovenia, students have the option of taking a vocational qualification which is called *Fachabitur* in Germany, *Berufsmatura* in Austria and *srednje strokovno izobraževanje* (SSI) in Slovenia. It gives them both a vocational qualification and a (subject-specific) higher education entry qualification, and entitles them to go straight on to university. In Austria, Germany and Slovenia, it is also possible to go to university after completing a normal vocational training course, although there are sometimes additional requirements (e.g. an exam in Austria). In all the countries, additional vocational programmes (e.g. master craftsperson training in Germany) entitle graduates to apply to university.

made to ease newcomers' access to VET, for example by means of rules and structures which promote educational integration (see 3.3). Often, it is the staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations who provide crucial support.

### 3.1 Regulatory and structural conditions for accessing VET

When introducing legislation relating to young migrants' educational access, the legislatures in the EU Member States are required to take account of international and EU rules and regulations. There are, for example, several international agreements and EU legislative acts which establish a right to general secondary school education – regardless of residence status.<sup>15</sup> After completion of compulsory full-time schooling,<sup>16</sup> the EU sets the Member States binding requirements regarding asylum seekers. These are all linked to an employment contract (work-based VET): asylum seekers are to be granted access to VET as soon as they generally granted labour market access during the asylum process (Article 16(2) Directive 2013/33/EU, "Reception Directive").<sup>17</sup> Further, the Member States are free to grant asylum seekers and young newcomers access to VET. The Member States have introduced different rules in that regard. Various directives and regulations enacted under the EU's

Common European Asylum System (CEAS) set out what steps relating to residence status young refugees have to take. Depending on how each country structures its VET system, the different stages newcomers go through relating to residence status will have varying degrees of influence on their access to VET.

#### 3.1.1 Integration into the VET system: Access contingent on residence status

School-based VET, which predominates in Slovenia and Spain, can initially be accessed regardless of residence status **in all four countries**, that is insofar as they meet the schools' entry requirements (in Germany mostly a secondary school certificate and advanced language skills, e.g.). In **Slovenia**, the various groups of migrants are treated differently. Under a number of inter-governmental treaties, not only EU citizens but also citizens from five Balkan states are granted the same rights of access to Slovenian educational institutions as their own nationals.<sup>18</sup>

*The number of foreign students from ex-Yugoslavian countries has increased [...] because of the inter-state agreements [...]. In practice, this means that they do not need to pay the school fees.*

(Male staff member, administration, Ljubljana)

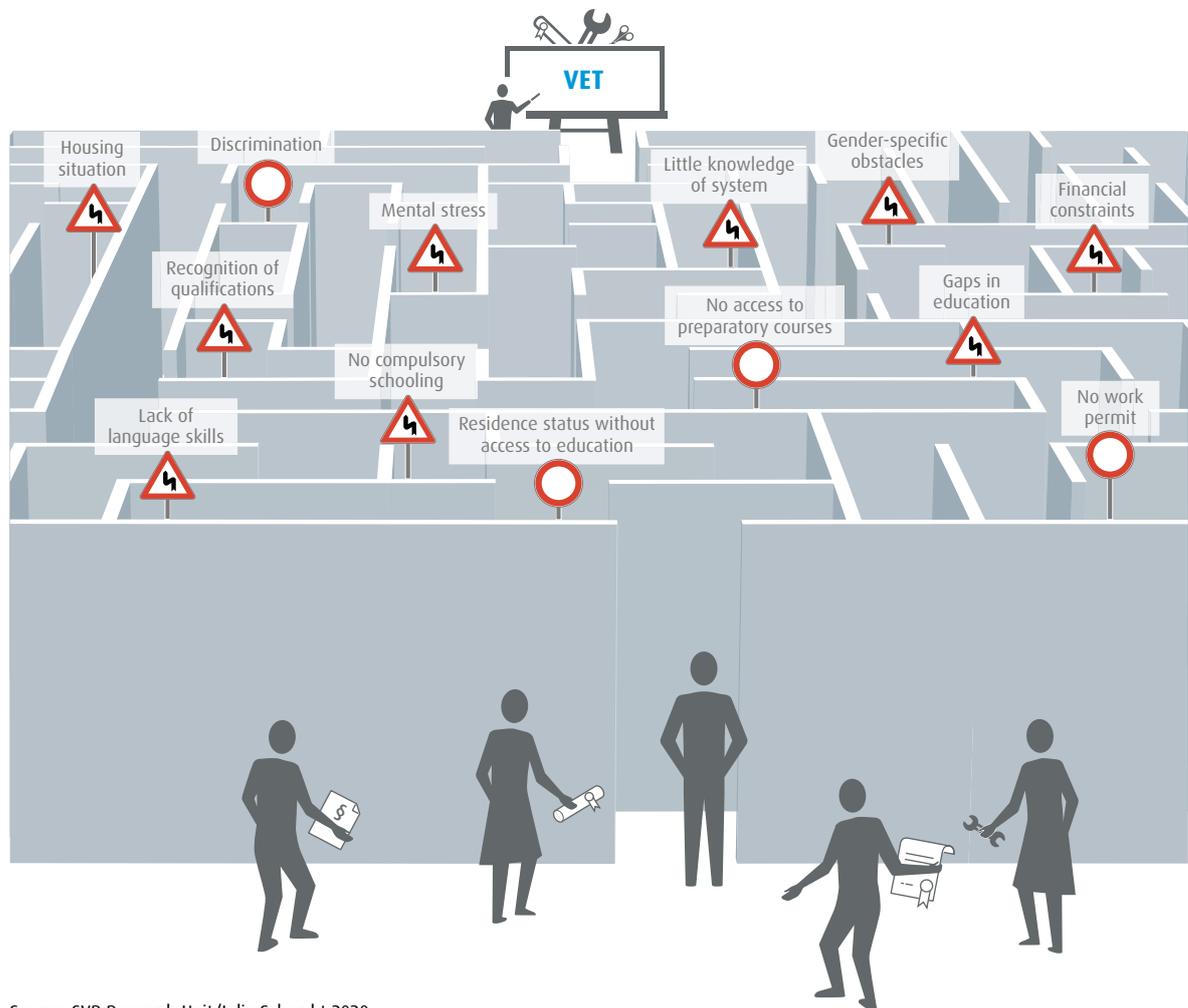
15 See, e.g., Article 26 of the General Declaration on Human Rights, Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 22 of the Geneva Convention on Refugees, Development Goal 4 of Germany's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and – specifically in regard to asylum seekers – Article 14 of Directive 2013/33/EU.

16 "Full-time education" refers to primary and lower secondary education (Vossenkuhl 2010), that is ISCED Level 2. In Slovenia, under Articles 3 and 55 of the Basic School Act, minors are required to attend school for nine years (generally between the ages of 6 and 15). Compulsory education in Spain applies to all children between the age of 6 and 16 (*Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo 1/1990*, 1990, p. 28930) who are resident there (*Ley Orgánica 4/2000, de 11 de enero, sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España y su integración social*, 2000). In Austria, too, compulsory school attendance depends on whether a child has his or her permanent residence there (section 1 (1) Compulsory Schooling Act) and also applies to asylum seekers (BMBWF 2017; Lehne 2019). Even newcomers who are staying in Austria only temporarily may go to school, without obligation (section 17 Compulsory Schooling Act). Different rules apply across Germany, as it is the federal states (*Länder*) which are responsible for legislation concerning compulsory schooling. In Bavaria and Saxony, compulsory school education lasts nine years (generally from age 6 upwards). It generally applies to anyone who has moved out of an initial reception centre and is living in a municipality (Article 35 (1) Bavarian Act on Education and Teaching; section 26 (1) School Act of the *Land* of Saxony; see SVR Research Unit 2020: 12).

17 A work permit must be issued to asylum seekers after nine months at the latest (Article 15 of Directive 2013/33/EU, see also footnote 21 on Germany).

18 Treaties have been concluded with the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Uredba o ratifikaciji Protokola med Vlado Republike Slovenije in Svetom ministrov Bosne in Hercegovine o sodelovanju na področju izobraževanja*, 2013), Montenegro (*Uredba o ratifikaciji Protokola med Ministrstvom za izobraževanje, znanost in šport Republike Slovenije in Ministrstvom za izobraževanje Črne gore o sodelovanju na področju izobraževanja*, 2015), Kosovo (*Uredba o ratifikaciji Protokola med Ministrstvom za izobraževanje, znanost in šport Republike Slovenije in Ministrstvom za izobraževanje, znanost in tehnologijo Republike Kosovo o sodelovanju na področju izobraževanja*, 2015), North Macedonia (*Uredba o ratifikaciji Protokola med Ministrstvom za izobraževanje, znanost in šport Republike Slovenije in Ministrstvom za izobraževanje in znanost Republike Makedonije o sodelovanju na področju izobraževanja*, 2016) and Serbia (*Uredba o ratifikaciji Protokola med Ministrstvom za izobraževanje, znanost in šport Republike Slovenije in Ministrstvom za izobraževanje, znanost in tehnološki razvoj Republike Srbije o sodelovanju na področju izobraževanja*, 2013).

Figure 1 The path to vocational training: A maze



Source: SVR Research Unit/Julia Schorcht 2020

The same rules apply to asylum seekers and those entitled to protection. Those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended and third-country nationals from non-Balkan states are, however, only allowed to attend vocational school if places are still available after the aforementioned groups have first been accounted for (Article 3 paragraphs 1 and 2, Rules on Enrolment in Secondary School 2018).

Access to work-based VET, by contrast, is largely dependent on young newcomers having a work permit. The reason is that as soon as the training includes

a certain share of practical elements which form part of the contract with a training company then trainees need legal permission to be able to work. However, work permits are usually restricted in the case of refugees in the asylum process or those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended<sup>19</sup> – which is not the case for recognised refugees, EU citizens and many other third-country nationals whose residence permit automatically entitles them to work. In **Spain**, newcomers with a residence permit are granted a work permit. Refugees without a residence permit

<sup>19</sup> Asylum seekers usually have a statutory right of residence during their asylum process (referred to as “*Aufenthaltsgestattung*” in Germany, section 55 Asylum Act). In Germany, Austria and Slovenia, those whose asylum application has been rejected but who stay in the country because of legal or factual (sometimes long-term) obstacles to deportation have their deportation temporarily suspended (referred to in Germany as “*Aufenthaltsduldung*”, section 60a Residence Act). Spain has no explicit residence status of that kind.

can only apply for a work permit if they are in the asylum process. Other newcomer groups (e.g. those whose asylum application has been rejected) are not usually granted labour market access. In **Austria**, how legislation relating to asylum seekers is interpreted has changed several times in recent years and is still in flux.<sup>20</sup> As this study went to press, migrants with a residence permit and, given specific preconditions, asylum seekers were granted a work permit and were therefore able to begin work-based VET. Those whose deportation has temporarily been suspended are generally not permitted to work, the exception being those people who were initially recognised as in need of protection but then have that status withdrawn again.

In **Germany**, those who have filed an asylum application and those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended have to actively apply for a work permit and present their training contract to the foreigners' authority as part of the application. In practice, it can take nine months to get permission to begin work-based vocational training.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.1.2 Complicated procedures for recognising educational qualifications

Of the young newcomers who have gained school qualifications in their countries of origin or in a transit country, it is refugees in particular who have problems

presenting the necessary documents when they apply to or register with a school. Some will not have been able to take these documents with them, others may have lost them en route (Homuth 2018; Solga/Menze 2013). **Even if they are able to present school qualifications and other necessary documents issued in their countries of origin, these are then subject to time-consuming and expensive recognition procedures.** Back in 2015 these took, on average, between one and three months, depending on the Member State (OECD 2017: 19–20), but the interviews conducted in 2019 indicate that recognition procedures can sometimes take considerably longer:

*I hope the process of recognising his [a newly arrived Afghan man] qualifications starts sooner. The certificates have to be translated, and everyone in Saxony has to send them to the certification authority in Dresden. The crux of the matter is this: it takes 16 months or more to complete the process. (Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Chemnitz)*

Further, interviewees in **Austria** report that it is difficult for those who are not in the know to find out who is responsible for what and whom they need to talk to. Sometimes getting qualifications recognised is very expensive, for instance if translations need to be certified by a notary or documents have to be obtained from one's

20 Between 2012 and 2018, asylum seekers were permitted to undergo training in shortage occupations (from 2012 up to age 18, from 2013 even up to age 25; see BMBWF 2017). They and their training company were required to actively apply to the *Arbeitsmarktservice* (Austrian Public Employment Service) for a work permit. This rule was abolished in 2018 under the right-leaning government comprising the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). In 2019 the Austrian Federal Administrative Court reversed the training ban in five cases after legal suits were filed by asylum seekers. These judgments remain the subject of controversial debate. In April 2020 the Austrian Higher Administrative Court ruled that asylum seekers must be granted a work permit for work-based VET after a three-month waiting period, provided their application has not (yet) been rejected at first instance. Once the asylum process has taken nine months, Article 15 of Directive 2013/33/EU must be considered in relation to the right to labour market access, though likewise only up the point where their asylum application is rejected (as at: Oct. 2020; VwGH 2020). It is not yet clear what consequences this judgment will have for asylum seekers in the future, since the Court emphasises that the requirement is not that "all occupations be open to an unlimited degree".

21 People seeking protection (asylum seekers) can be granted a work permit by the foreigners' authority after three months (section 61 (2) Asylum Act), unless the asylum seeker is still required to stay in a reception centre (section 61 (1) sentence 1 Asylum Act). After nine months, however, a refugee *must* be granted approval to begin work-based training, even if no decision has yet been taken on their asylum application and they are still required to stay in a reception centre (section 61 (1) sentence 2 no. 1 Asylum Act). Failed asylum seekers, by contrast, are not permitted to work until six months after the decision to temporarily suspend their deportation has been issued (section 61 (1) sentence 2 Asylum Act). In both cases, permission to begin work-based VET does not require the consent of the Federal Employment Agency (section 32 (2) no. 2 and (3) Ordinance on the Employment of Foreign Nationals). By contrast, some groups are not permitted to work at all, such as both asylum seekers and those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended from "safe countries of origin" (section 61 (1) sentence 2 no. 3 Asylum Act and section 60a (6) sentence 1 no. 3 Residence Act), those whose asylum application has been rejected and are required to leave the country (section 61 (1) sentence 2 no. 4 Asylum Act) and people whose identity has not been verified (section 60b (5) sentence 2 Residence Act).



country of origin. In **Slovenia**, the state reimburses these expenses to recognised refugees and other newcomers with a residence permit, but not to asylum seekers.

*Getting the [secondary school certificates] translated can be very expensive.*

(Female staff member, education authority,  
Koper)

The lengthy recognition procedures have negative consequences for those interested in starting vocational training. According to interviewees in **Germany**, the long waiting times can mean that the training place they were previously promised may be withdrawn:

*There have been cases where the foreigners' authorities didn't even reply to let [the newcomer] know what they needed to do next. In the end the employers withdrew their offers and said: "I can't hold the place open for you indefinitely." I had various experiences [with staff and different foreigners' authorities].*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation,  
Chemnitz)

Interviewees in **Spain** report that lack of recognition of qualifications leads to competitive disadvantages when schools fill available spaces, especially in those courses which are in high demand. Those newcomers whose education certificates are still being processed are assigned the lowest marks possible when applying for a course. Having been assigned these fictitious marks they then have to compete with applicants from within the Spanish education system. In addition, final exams can only be taken if recognition has already been obtained. As a result, some migrants have to drop out of their training course because they lack the necessary certificates and then have to retake their secondary school exams in evening classes for adults. In **Slovenia**, many newcomers are generally sent to adult education colleges at secondary school level despite them potentially being qualified to go to vocational school or even to university.

**All the case-study countries in principle allow potential trainees to take an assessment test to prove they have the required qualifications or to get them by taking adult education classes. However, the theoretical tests in particular which test professional knowledge – as is the case in Spain and Slovenia – are regarded as a huge obstacle**, as examinees have to have the necessary language skills to be able to take the test. Suitable preparatory courses are not always available or widely known about. In Austria, Germany and Spain, newcomers and refugees sometimes have the option of having their skills tested by the employment agency or as part of preparatory measures in multi-language tests or more practical skills validation procedures (e.g. Valikom in Germany).<sup>22</sup>

The newcomers interviewed notice differences in the behaviour of staff in public authorities and education establishments when it comes to residence issues and the recognition procedure, even though they are ostensibly the same in terms of country of origin, age and educational background as their friends. They cannot always understand why it is that different staff take different decisions. The young people notice that local members of staff can use their discretionary powers both to support them and to obstruct them when it comes to integration into the education system:

*Then I didn't pass the admission to the compulsory school qualification because I wasn't that good at Maths and English. But because my German was so good, the teacher said that if I promise to work hard and carry on studying then I have two months to complete it. If I pass the exams by then, I'll be able to carry on.*

(Afghan man, age 20, Vienna)

22 The Spanish education system has a regular, modular recognition procedure in which skills units in individual occupations can be tested separately. Anyone who completes all the units is awarded the *Certificado de Profesionalidad* (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional 2020). Various procedures are in use or being tested in Germany (German Bundestag 2020: 4), including "meine-berufserfahrung.de", the "MYSKILLS" test and the "Valikom" projects (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2020; BA 2020; Valikom 2020). Austria's "You Can Do It!" project adopts a similar approach (Upper Austrian Chamber of Labour 2019).

*A man at the Jobcenter found it [my training company] for me. One day he came to our school because he wanted to talk to our class [normal preparatory class with local students] about what we want to do. [...] The man explained how difficult it was to become a tailor in Saxony. But he said: "I'll look for you." After two months he contacted me and had found a company [although he wasn't responsible while the asylum application was being processed<sup>23</sup>].*

(Afghan man, age 20, Chemnitz)

*Yeah, around two and a half years ago I had my first interview at the BFA [Federal Office of Immigration and Asylum] [...]. Everything's up in the air because the official keeps contradicting himself.*

(Afghan man, age 20, Vienna)

*[The staff at the Arbeitsmarktservice] say that I should get a job, any job. When I say to them "I need training, I'm still young. If I do this training will you help me with funding?" then they say I can forget it [...] go cleaning or temping [...] with my education and my skills [higher education entry qualification from English school in Somalia].*

(Somali woman, age 23, Vienna)

### 3.1.3 Preparing for vocational training: Access not a given

Courses preparatory to vocational training are important for young newcomers. They provide career guidance, teach the necessary language and subject-related skills, and ideally can even replace those qualifications which newcomers have not yet gained or which are not recognised. Thus, these preparatory courses can indeed pave the way into VET. **However,**

**access to preparatory courses is usually dependent on different conditions, as is the case in the dual training system itself. Here, too, the case-study countries have different types of courses and entry requirements.**

Besides the aforementioned residence status and work permit, newcomers' age also determines their access to preparatory measures. As long as they are obliged to attend (vocational) school, newcomers are generally granted access to schooling in regular secondary or vocational schools. In **Austria** and **Germany**, the obligation to attend school is followed by the obligation to attend vocational school for several years, usually up to the age of 18.<sup>24</sup> This obligation opens the path to measures which prepare newcomers for VET. In **Slovenia** and **Spain**, access to preparatory measures for 16- to 25-year-olds is not dependent on age, since – apart from 16-year-olds in Spain – they are no longer obliged to attend school and are treated as adults. The interplay between these different requirements is presented in the following (see simplified presentation in Figure 2).

A range of programmes is available in **Germany** which prepare potential trainees for vocational training, a number of them run by federal agencies (esp. the Federal Employment Agency) and others by state agencies. Some of these programmes are aimed specifically at young refugees.<sup>25</sup> But it is only in a few places that newcomers are given the chance to obtain a lower secondary school qualification (*Hauptschulabschluss*), the minimum requirement for many vocational training courses (Seeber et al. 2018). In Germany, the obligation to attend vocational school usually only applies up until age 18. This rule blocks many young newcomers' path to VET.

23 Generally speaking, staff working in the German Jobcenter only work with refugees who have a resident permit, because it is the Federal Employment Agency which is responsible for them while their asylum application is being processed.

24 In 2016 Austria introduced the "obligation to undergo vocational training" under the Compulsory Vocational Training Act. This study summarises this obligation, which applies to minors in Austria, under the expression "obligation to attend vocational school". Since this study focuses on the transitions into VET, i.e. the period before beginning training, the obligation to attend vocational school which arises when someone begins VET will not be considered in any more detail.

25 The "Prospects for Young Refugees" (*Perspektiven für junge Flüchtlinge, PerjuF*) programme, for instance. The programmes combine language classes, career and personal guidance, work placements and subject-related courses. Skills assessments are often also included.



*When he's [the newcomer] 18, he won't be allowed to go to school anymore. Big mistake, that was the biggest criticism of the whole thing, how it all went in Germany. That they [the newcomers] were no longer allowed to go to school.*

(Male staff member, intermediary organisation, Chemnitz)

The rules concerning the obligation to attend vocational school were therefore changed in Bavaria in favour of those newcomers who do not have any school qualifications which are recognised in Germany, meaning that now they can attend school up to the age of 25. EU migrants and refugees alike benefit from this rule (StMUK 2020: 7). As is the case within the dual training system, access to preparatory measures outside of regular (vocational) schools, i.e. measures in the "transitional system" (*Übergangssystem*) is often dependent on having a work permit. That is why most Member States impose no restrictions on refugees with a resident permit and EU migrants when it comes to preparatory courses. By contrast, those young newcomers who do not yet have a final decision on their asylum application (esp. those with little prospect of being allowed to remain<sup>26</sup>) or those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended often have to wait several months before they can take non-school-based preparatory courses because they do not have a work permit or, in some cases, they are even excluded from them.<sup>27</sup>

Young newcomers in **Austria** have the option of taking part in language and subject-related preparatory courses which are either funded by the government and available across the whole of the country or are organised at municipal level in cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, newcomers and staff in local educational establishments report that mostly those obliged to undergo vocational training (i.e. those under the age of 18 with a residence permit)

are to be given access to preparatory courses. They are provided with advisory services by the Austrian Public Employment Service, which can grant them access to free courses in adult education colleges or courses organised by the Service. If they have the right educational background, some are also given access to secondary schools. The aim is always for them to gain the mandatory school leaving qualification if they do not already have it. Nevertheless, the obligation to attend vocational school does not apply to newcomers who are in the asylum process and over 15 years of age<sup>28</sup> – meaning that the obligation to attend vocational school does not apply up to the age of 18. Thus, young asylum seekers or those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended can only take those supplementary language or subject-related courses which are organised by local initiatives and have more generous entry requirements. As a result, whether they can prepare for VET depends on what preparatory measures are on offer, and according to our analysis this is closely linked to the size of the municipality and available resources.

In **Spain**, too, access to preparatory courses is dependent on having a work permit and thus on young people's residence status.

*For foreigners, the essential requirement is that they have an NIE [Número de Identidad de Extranjero, Identification Number] and a residence permit. If they don't, they can neither register at the work office, nor for training [preparatory course]. A passport is not enough.*

(Female staff member, employment agency, Terrassa)

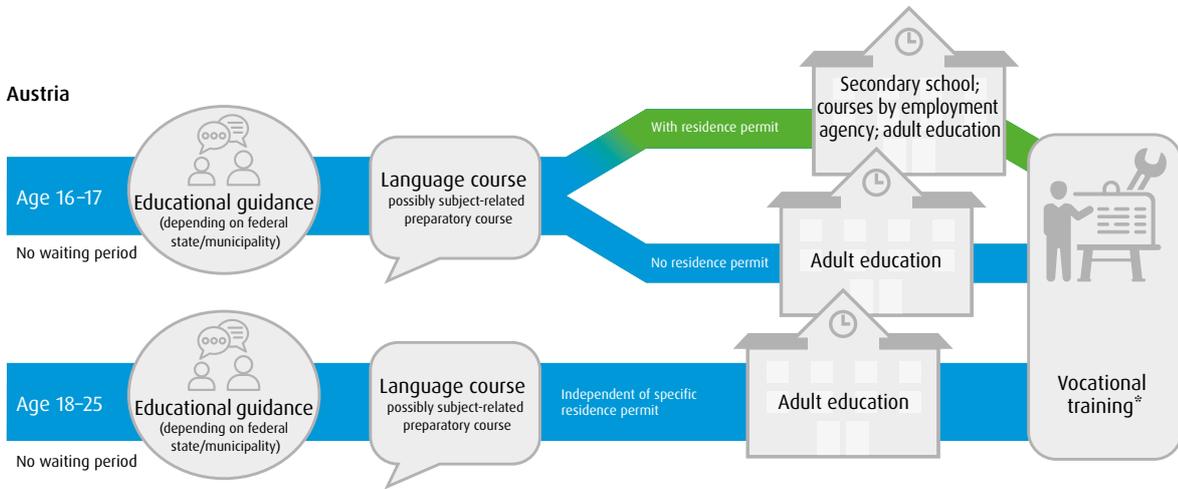
Also those who have applied for asylum are entitled to apply for a work permit. Young newcomers have difficulty accessing other educational measures on account of the admissions procedures, as places are

26 According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), those who are expected to be given legal, permanent residence within the meaning of section 44 (4) sentence 2 no. 1 of the Residence Act have good prospects of being allowed to stay. This generally applies to people from countries of origin whose nationals were granted a residence permit at least 50 per cent of the time in the previous year (known as the "protection rate"). As from August 2019 this has applied to Eritrea and Syria (BAMF 2020c).

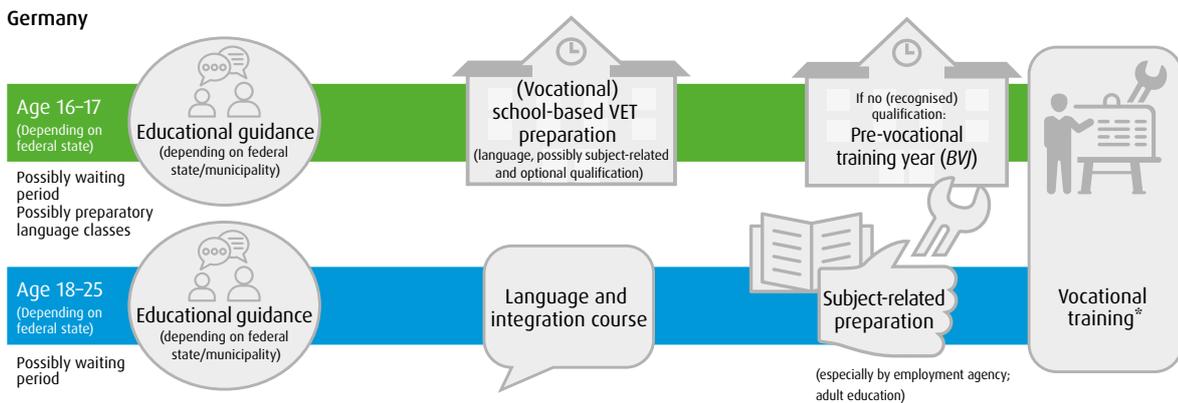
27 See footnote 21.

28 Sections 1, 3 and 17 Compulsory Schooling Act; sections 3 and 4 Compulsory Vocational Training Act; BMBWF 2017. The decisive factor is that children and adolescents who are staying in Austria only temporarily are not covered by the obligation to attend vocational school in the first place (see section 3 Compulsory Vocational Training Act). The legislature wishes asylum seekers to be included in this regulation (Lehne 2019). The obligation to attend secondary school, by contrast, also applies to those who are only temporarily resident pursuant to section 17 of the Compulsory Schooling Act (BMBWF 2017; Lehne 2019).

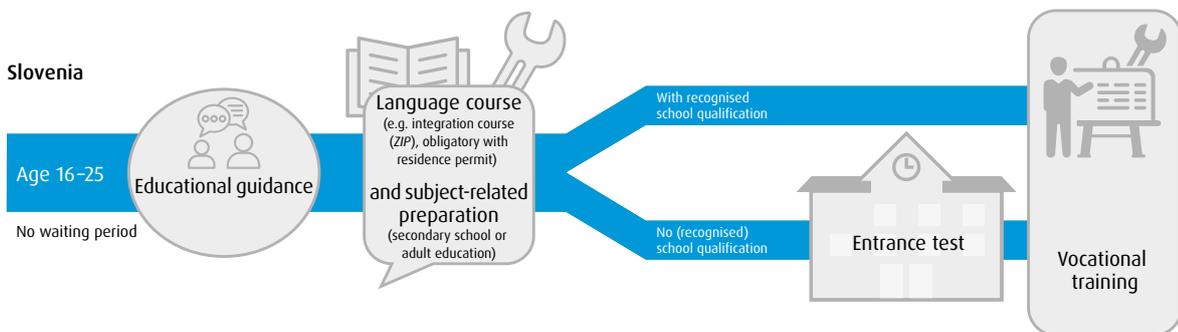
Figure 2 Ideal paths to vocational training for newcomers in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain

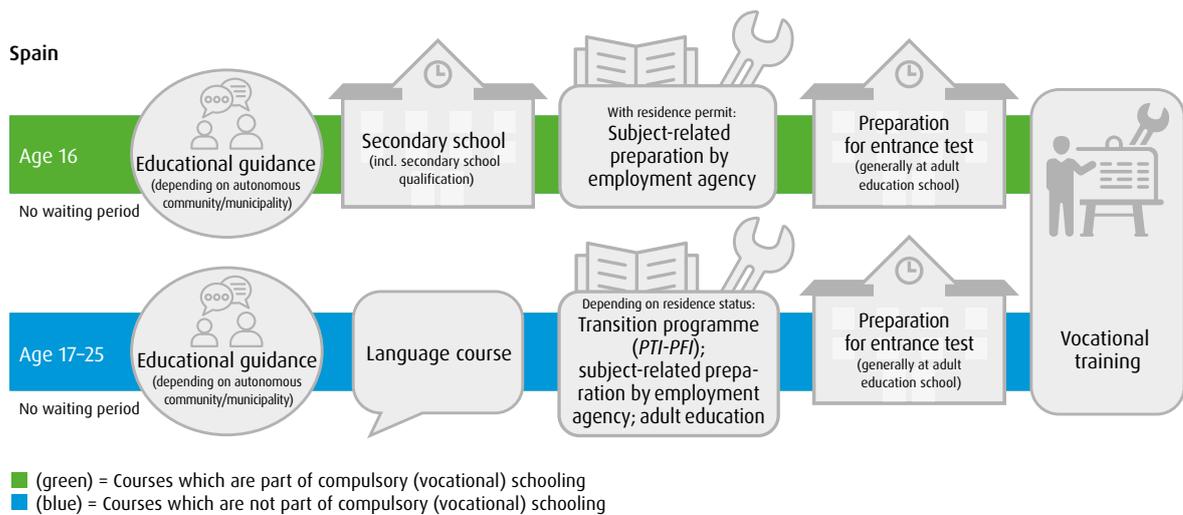


\* A work permit is required to enter work-based VET in Austria. By judgment of the Austrian Higher Administrative Court of April 2020, a work permit may be issued at the earliest three months after filing an asylum application and only until the application is rejected in the first instance (as at: Oct. 2020; VwGH 2020). Those with a residence permit have full labour market access.



\* A work permit is required to enter work-based VET in Germany. This permit may be issued to asylum seekers three months at the earliest after they file their asylum application. It must be issued after nine months at the latest, that is unless certain criteria apply (section 61 (1) and (2) Asylum Act). Those with a residence permit have full labour market access, that is unless expressly prohibited by law (section 4a (1) sentence 1 Residence Act).





NB: Although only few of the German federal states have statutory waiting periods, delays can, in practice, occur in all four Member States before newcomers can begin their first preparatory courses. In Slovenia, compulsory school ends when students turn 16, but they retain the right to attend school. The ideal paths serve to compare the four Member States and represent a simplified path of integration into VET. It is not possible to present the full complexity of course structures and access requirements here.

Source: SVR Research Unit/KALUZA+SCHMID 2020

limited and local students are given preferential treatment. Interviewees emphasise that local initiatives fill important gaps by organising additional preparatory measures (see 3.2). Vocational schools in Spain are open to all groups of migrants with any type of residence status, that is insofar as they meet the schools' language and subject-related entry requirements. Adult education schools tend to be relatively easy to access. Refugees who have not yet been issued a work permit can also take part in courses at reduced rates or free of charge:

*Some courses have a symbolic annual fee of 21 euros. Before there was a course that was completely free [...]. Then we can also ask [the authorities] for reductions [...] there are students who get a reduction of up to 75 per cent.*

(Female staff member, adult education school, Terrassa)

Some adult education schools even go so far as to incorporate new formats in order to be able to address the needs of young newcomers in a targeted manner:

*Last year we identified, in the Spanish for Foreigners course, a large number of young boys and girls coming from reception centres. This made us think of the need to ask the Education Consortium to open a new course. [...] It is a specific course for minors, [...] whose mother tongue is a "non-Romance" language, [...]. Now it's open to 16- to 20-year-olds. Previously these children were in the Spanish for Foreigners courses, which are 3-hour-a-week courses. [...] The New Opportunities Course is an 18-hour-a-week course.*

(Female staff member, adult education school, Barcelona)

In **Slovenia**, there are no target group-specific preparatory courses which focus on the needs of young migrants. Young people who want to undergo training can take language classes at a secondary school, even when they are older than age 16, or (as in the other three countries) at an adult education college, but those without a residence permit often have to pay for these courses. The employment agency only offers free places to those who have permission to remain.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Those who want to undergo VET can, for example, take free language courses as part of initial integration for migrants (*Začetna integracija priseljencev*). These are open to migrants of all ages, though, and (like most language classes) do not focus on preparing students for vocational training.

As is the case with VET as a whole, certain groups of migrants are given preferential treatment when it comes to access to courses preparing them for VET. EU citizens, the nationals of five Balkan states,<sup>30</sup> asylum seekers and those with protection status are granted the same access to Slovenian educational establishments as locals. Individuals from other newcomer groups are only permitted to attend vocational school if there are still spaces available after the aforementioned groups have been taken into consideration.<sup>31</sup> Since VET in Slovenia is generally entirely school-based, a work permit is of no immediate relevance, unlike in the other three case-study countries.

**Overall, regulatory and structural requirements in many ways often make access to VET and even to preparatory courses more difficult for young newcomers in the four case-study countries. Anyone who does not have a work permit, cannot present the required certificates or has to wait a long time for their recognition and is then too old and no longer obliged to attend (vocational) school is at a clear disadvantage and often has to take circuitous routes to vocational education and training.**

How relevant these factors are varies from country to country: In Germany the age of a migrant wanting to undergo VET is the most relevant factor which determines whether they are obliged to attend (vocational) school and are given access to regular preparatory courses which are dovetailed and closely supported. In Spain and especially in Austria, both age and residence status play a key role. As the group included in this study (16- to 25-year-olds) is no longer required to attend school in Slovenia, residence status or country of origin tends to set the path to education and training. Overall, however, the lack of language and especially subject-related support measures is the biggest hurdle for those newcomers who want to enter VET.

The next section shows which everyday challenges young newcomers often face and which make it even more difficult for them to access VET. These can be financial constraints, little knowledge of the system, insufficient language skills and gaps in education,

mental stress because of their uncertain future prospects, a stressful living situation, and discrimination.

## 3.2 Everyday challenges: Additional obstacles blocking the path

In addition to those regulatory and structural aspects of an education and training system which make access more difficult, interviewees in the four case-study countries report a number of other challenges and uncertainties which can make life harder for adolescent and young adult newcomers. Especially when such challenges build up, they can contribute to newcomers not being able to focus so much on studying or even to them dropping out. In addition, they are likely to lack sufficient information. These difficulties have probably increased on account of the Covid-19 pandemic (Box 2).

### 3.2.1 Financial constraints

**Worrying about money can be an important reason why newcomers drop out of vocational training or do not even consider starting in the first place.** Trainees in the dual training system are paid – in Germany they now receive the minimum wage (BIBB 2020), in Austria sometimes a little less. However, school-based VET, which is the norm in Spain and Slovenia (though also in Germany in the care professions, e.g.), is unpaid. This can pose an obstacle for refugees who have filed an asylum application and who do not always have any own financial resources to fall back on:

*I wasn't able to do a [preparatory] physiotherapy placement in Leipzig like I wanted to. The BAMF [Federal Office for Migration and Refugees] wouldn't pay the costs of the train tickets.*

(Afghan woman, age 22, Chemnitz)

*I didn't even take the exams, because I knew that it won't work [that I won't succeed] – because I worked and had no time to study. I had no time to rest.*

(Bosnian man, age 21, Ljubljana)

30 See footnote 18.

31 *Pravilnik o vpisu v srednje šole* 2018, Article 3(1–2).



## Box 2 The Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on educational integration

The Covid-19 pandemic, which first took hold in Europe in the spring of 2020, also affected the four EU Member States included in this study. Spain and Germany in particular had high infection rates during this initial phase (JHU 2020). Extensive measures were taken to contain the spread of the virus – which had wide-ranging consequences for schools and the world of work, as well as for young newcomers. These consequences are particularly serious for those immigrants who are still en route to education and training.

(Vocational) schools in the four case-study countries were closed for between several weeks and months and preparatory courses (e.g. vocational language courses) and exams were postponed or cancelled (e.g. BAMF 2020a, 2020b; BMDW 2020; BMBWF 2020). And even though courses moved online, many young newcomers found it particularly challenging to study when they were not in class because they did not always have an Internet connection or suitable digital devices. Getting personal support was also difficult because in-person contact was not possible. Also, many did not have a quiet space to study on account of their often cramped housing situation (see 3.2). Schools also initially had difficulty switching to online teaching due to a lack of equipment and digital skills as well as uncertainty as regards responsibilities (CEDEFOP 2020a: 3-7). As many newcomers wishing to do vocational training are under great financial pressure and therefore want to start work as soon as possible, this extended preparatory phase made it more likely that they would give up on achieving their goal of starting vocational training.

Competition on the training market also intensified for young migrants. Companies in many sectors, for example in retail, hospitality and tourism (which is particularly important in Spain and Austria) (EPRS 2014), either shut down completely or reduced their operating hours. For young newcomers that meant a smaller selection of training places was available and some lost their part-time jobs. Often that meant they lost their source of income and their situation became even more precarious.

Newcomers who are in the middle of their vocational training were also affected by the restrictions imposed. Like their local peers, newcomers suffered on account of schools closing, in the school-based VET systems in Spain and Slovenia by a ban on work placements (CEDEFOP 2020a; OECD 2020b; European Commission 2020b). In Spain, companies were each allowed to decide whether they wanted to continue employing those doing work-based VET (see GOVET 2020); there was no legal right to continue training. In Austria and Germany, by contrast, trainees were to some extent protected: in Germany, for instance, they were largely protected against their training pay being cut and from losing their training place (section 14 (1) no. 1 Vocational Training Act; see IG Metall 2020); in Austria, agreements were reached to ensure that trainees remained on full pay despite being in short-time work (CEDEFOP 2020a). In order to ensure that training courses can continue in future, many countries have introduced numerous additional measures since the start of the pandemic, such as paying training grants and applying flexible performance assessment methods (see OECD 2020a: 318-319). To date, these measures have not yet been evaluated.

Nevertheless, despite the many protective measures taken, the mental stress caused by the uncertainty of the current situation should not be underestimated. Young newcomers face this added pressure on top of their already challenging everyday lives. Refugees with uncertain residence status or a restricted residence permit in particular may be worried that delaying the preparatory phase or losing a training place will mean they also lose their chance of getting a permanent residence permit or their status as someone whose deportation has been temporarily suspended (which is linked to the training) – despite any promises which have already been made (see BMI 2020).

In Germany, EU citizens and recognised refugees are equal in law to local trainees and thus have the same access to grants such as vocational training assistance (BAB) and education and training grants (BAföG).<sup>32</sup> Asylum seekers, by contrast, only have limited access to these measures (Voigt 2020). Instead, they continue to receive basic social benefits. In Austria and Spain, though, and to some extent in Germany, training courses for adults are not free of charge. This places a double burden on trainees on account of their having to study while at the same time needing to earn money (and these two aspects are not coordinated, unlike in the dual training system). This can lead to some young adults dropping out of their courses.

*I work as a cleaner and it was too much for me [...], my batteries were empty. I kept falling asleep in school, in class [language course at adult education college]. And I still studied at home [...]. 390 euros a month is too much, I reckon, to just have fun [take things easy, as the teacher recommended].*

(Bulgarian woman, age 23, Chemnitz)

### 3.2.2 Little knowledge of system

**Newcomers often find it hard at first to understand the complex VET landscape in the four EU countries analysed.** The same goes for the social status of vocational training: as many countries of origin do not have comparable VET concepts, or these are organised differently, adolescent and young adult newcomers are often unaware when they arrive of the huge benefits of VET, especially in Austria and Germany.

*University is what everyone aspires to, that's what everyone aspires to the most! And so we try really hard to explain the diversity of the Austrian*

*education system and the opportunities available, because an apprenticeship [work-based VET] can be a very attractive option [...]. Especially because they can start much sooner and it's a much more realistic option, and it gives them very, very good opportunities.*

(Female staff member, integration authority, Innsbruck)

*The people I know and who went and got a job, work in warehouses, in restaurants or in hotels. But there's no future in that. They can get fired on the spot; you're better protected with a training qualification.*

(Sierra Leonean man, age 22, Munich)

On the other hand, it is not only the education system itself and its access routes which are difficult to understand, as it is also tricky for newcomers to fathom what advisory services are available (see SVR Research Unit 2018b: 4-5). Despite public advisory services, for instance those provided by the labour authorities, usually being accessible to all those looking for information, in Germany and Slovenia using these services is actually obligatory for recognised refugees. That does not apply to those seeking protection and to those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended; those who are no longer subject to compulsory schooling because of their age, in particular, often have to actively seek out the information they want.<sup>33</sup> As a result it is often more a matter of luck whether someone finds out about a particular course. According to the interviewees, it is especially the committed individuals in public authorities, educational establishments, civil-society and other facilities paving the newcomers' way who are an important point of contact when it comes to finding out information and being referred to other contacts:

32 The rules applicable to vocational training assistance (*Berufsausbildungsbeihilfe*) and the Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG) regulate government support for students, trainees and apprentices in Germany.

33 In Slovenia, all recognised refugees, though not newcomers in the asylum process, are normally advised by the authorities subordinate to the ministry responsible for integration (Article 106 Foreigners Act 2011; section VII, Articles 35 and 38 Decree on the Methods and Conditions for Ensuring the Rights of Persons with International Protection 2017; Article 103 IPA 2017; Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia with Regard to Migration 2019: 34). In Germany, asylum seekers and those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended are free to use the advisory services of the Federal Employment Agency, although this is voluntary (BMAS 2019: 14-15; IAB 2017: 8), while recognised refugees and EU citizens are obliged to seek advice from the Jobcenter (section 15 Second Book of the Social Code of 13.05.2011).



*After that she [a volunteer mentor] said: “[...] you won’t get anywhere in Austria without any qualifications. You won’t find work.” And I had no idea and just listened to her. I said: “OK, you know what you’re talking about. You were born here, you went to uni here, you’re a teacher.” I just said “Yes”.*

(Afghan man, age 20, Vienna)

*Our role is not just that of teacher. We are counsellors and tutors. [...] They [the newcomers] have you as a reference and ask you for help with many things.*

(Male staff member, training provider, Terrassa)

As regards access to information and advisory services, it becomes apparent that the Member States analysed do in fact aim to open up regular measures and structures to young newcomers as well. These are, however, not accessible to all groups to the same degree, and they in particular address those newcomers who are likely to be granted longer-term residence. Moreover, the fact that newcomers also need to catch up on systemic know-how about VET needs to be borne in mind. As a result, newcomers are generally less able to plan their educational path with as much foresight as their local peers, since the peers themselves and their parents know their way around the education system and already have useful networks.

### 3.2.3 Insufficient language skills and gaps in education

The interviews confirm what a key role language skills play. **Young people who do not have sufficient command of the language of their country of immigration find it more difficult to get their bearings.** They often do not have access to information about the (vocational) education and training system or about residence law. According to the interviewees, in meetings they find it more difficult to ask for help and solutions to their problems (SVR Research Unit 2017: 35; Brücker et al. 2014: 1148). Also, young people report that they feel that some of those they talk to in administration, advisory centres, companies and schools take them less seriously than their peers

who speak the local language or migrants with similar mother tongues, who can express themselves more clearly and eloquently:

*I wasn’t happy in class [at secondary school]. I was the only migrant in my class, there weren’t many in the other classes either. Sometimes I was too embarrassed to say anything.*

(Afghan woman, age 22, Chemnitz)

*Well, he [the teacher] talks and I don’t understand him [...] and they [the other students] and he laugh and I haven’t got a clue what about [...], and he knew I don’t understand the dialect.*

(Syrian man, age 20, Innsbruck)

*And here in school I have a language class, but it is, I don’t like it because it is so fast. All the students are from Bosnia, Serbia and they know a lot and the teacher speaks with them in Slovenian, and I have to learn the language!*

(Palestinian man, age 16, Ljubljana)

Moreover, in class newcomers find it more difficult to understand the course content and are at a disadvantage when it comes to tests. Ultimately, language itself represents a formal obstacle when a certain level of competence is an entry requirement to vocational training. Migrants who speak the same or a similar language as that spoken in the country of immigration (e.g. Latin Americans in Spain or people from Balkan states in Slovenia) are thus at an advantage and find it easier to get their bearings.

**Young newcomers who have gaps in their educational biographies on account of the situation in their country of origin or on account of spending years getting to their country of immigration, find it especially hard to deal with the subject-related content of a (pre-)training course.** Also, they are sometimes denied access to some preparatory courses because of gaps in their education, as is the case in Spain (see 2.2). Those who cannot present a (recognised) school certificate are often only allowed to attend regular adult education classes, which are generally not geared to migrant students (e.g. in terms of sensitivity to the use of language in class) and require good language skills. Those with gaps in

their education are under increased pressure of time as well. Those whose residence status is unclear in particular want to begin vocational training as soon as possible – in the hope that will increase their chances of being allowed to remain. Their workload is particularly high in courses which are of a fixed length and usually ambitious, because they have to catch up on subject-related know-how and acquire a school qualification. Some are lucky and meet committed individuals who help them, but others feel they are being left to fend for themselves:

*There are several people without whom I would not be here today. The first are [name of staff members in the “Noves families a Barcelona” programme] since I knew that I could always come here, without any problem, and ask them what I wanted. That they would give me everything they could give me at the Barcelona level.*

(Pakistani man, age 25, Barcelona)

*We had a good adviser in the education authority. [...] She always, well she always went with us and was happy to be able to help us.*

(Chechen man, age 23, Innsbruck)

*If school speaks with me about that? No. No one speaks with me about that [future in terms of education].*

(Palestinian man, age 16, Ljubljana)

### 3.2.4 For some groups: Mental stress due to uncertainty about future prospects

**Those seeking protection whose right to remain in the four case-study countries has not yet been clarified because they are still in the asylum process or those whose deportation has been temporarily**

**suspended often find their situation demoralising and disheartening.** Psychological stress on account of what they have been through before, during and after their forced departure as well as the threat of being deported can prevent them from integrating into the school context. Also, uncertainty about their right to remain can mean that they prefer to quickly take up (unskilled) work rather than invest in several years of training:

*I have a residence permit for three years, I'll achieve my goal [vocational training]. The others [other newcomers from Eritrea] get one year, they can't stay for long. They just work, work.*

(Eritrean man, age 27, Munich)

Germany has a legal instrument, called the “3+2 rule”, which enables trainees to complete their training and transition into employment even if their asylum application is rejected.<sup>34</sup> In many cases, this can reduce uncertainty and the associated mental stress. Nevertheless, sometimes the rule can pose the risk that asylum seekers will seek to begin VET without sufficient language or subject-related preparation in order to “earn” their right to remain (see SVR Research Unit 2020: 27). This can then also affect the success of their training.

### 3.2.5 Stressful living situation

Many stressors are linked to the young newcomers' specific living conditions. In particular, these affect refugees **who are living in shared or cramped accommodation – they mention lack of sleep and lack of a quiet space to study. Those who are not living in cities have to travel a long way to school and have to contend with at times poor local public transport systems, something they naturally share with their local peers.**<sup>35</sup>

34 Under the “3+2 rule”, those who are required to leave the country are entitled to have their deportation temporarily suspended, under certain conditions, so that they can undergo vocational training (usually for three years) (section 60c Residence Act). This rule applies to those who begin VET while they are still in the asylum process as well as to those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended for at least three months, entitling them to begin VET. After completing their VET they are entitled to a two-year residence permit if they take a job commensurate with their vocational qualification (section 19d (1a) Residence Act) as well as to have their residence permit subsequently extended (section 8 Residence Act) and, possibly, after a total of five years, to be granted permanent settlement status (section 9 Residence Act). The rule does not apply to people from “safe countries of origin”, for instance, and to those who are subject to concrete measures to terminate their residence.

35 See, among others, Schammann et al. 2020: 86–88.



[From] *my flat, my home, to the train station, it takes me half an hour on foot. Half an hour is too far, and my course began early in the morning at 8 am. I got the train at 7 am and had to leave at half past 6 to catch the train to Innsbruck, and then back again. It took two, three hours [each day].*

(Afghan woman, age 24, Innsbruck)

Overcoming other adversities costs a lot of time, too, which newcomers then cannot invest in studying. In Slovenia, for instance, access to healthcare is difficult. Some young people also feel they are under pressure from their parents to do well or spend a lot of time translating for their parents, who often take longer to learn the language (Will et al. 2018: 27).

### 3.2.6 Discrimination

The negative impact which discrimination has on newcomers' ability to focus on their studies should not be underestimated. **Again and again interviewees report about the derogatory comments other people make and even about the overt hostility in schools and training companies as well as when they are on the street:**

*When I arrived [at the school], I was the only one. And I don't think it happens to everyone, but I was bullied in high school. They [the other students] picked on me for my [Bolivian] accent [...] I think they [the teachers] helped me a lot, but I didn't know how to take advantage of it. [...] We should improve how we teach people to treat people who come from outside.*

(Bolivian woman, age 18, Barcelona)

**In addition, employers often discriminate against migrants on account of their origin or appearance and favour other applicants** (see SVR Research Unit 2014; Koopmans/Veit/Yemane 2018).<sup>36</sup> Some of the stereotypical expectations harboured by teachers against newly arrived students likewise have a negative impact on them. Some refugees, for example, feel that

teachers in regular classes expect less of them than of other newcomers or local peers, and that they attribute the bad marks they get in exams to a lack of motivation. These different expectations influence the support teachers give students in lessons as well as their actual performance (see BIM/SVR Research Unit 2017).

### 3.2.7 Additional obstacles for young women

In addition to the above-mentioned obstacles, young migrant women face gender-specific challenges, too. One possible explanation is that **young mothers spend more time looking after small children than young fathers do and that traditional values and roles stop some women from even considering vocational training as an option** (Stürner 2017: 93; IAB 2019: 16). The interviews show that migrant women often take preparatory courses or enter VET several years after migrant men:

*Often you see that women don't start training or work until their husband has completed the integration process.*

(Female staff member, federal initiative, Germany)

*[Women seek advice about VET later] because they're often much younger. And often because of their children – the problem in Chemnitz is that there aren't enough kindergarten places. We have lots of young women who want to take a language course and can't get a place for their children [...], they're lower priority than those with a job. That's the Youth Welfare Office's decision.*

(Female staff member, employment agency, Chemnitz)

*Young women in particular, we notice that they get married and then disappear.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Munich)

Studies on refugees indicate that women in this particular migrant group often have lower school

<sup>36</sup> The SVR Research Unit's study on discrimination on the VET market showed, for instance, that candidates with a German name write five applications on average before they are invited to interview, whereas applicants with a Turkish name have to write seven – even if their applications are otherwise identical (see SVR Research Unit 2014).

qualifications than men, which is another factor which makes access to VET more difficult (see Liebig 2018).

**Gender-specific discrimination such as rejecting applicants who wear a headscarf also make it difficult to find a training place:**

*I had problems because of my headscarf. After [secondary] school I applied to several [vocational] schools, but they all said “no” because of my headscarf. I stopped wearing my headscarf and everything was OK.*

(Afghan woman, age 22, Chemnitz)

### 3.3 Good practice: Providing advice continuously from arrival through to training and “one-stop” training preparation

Even though the path to vocational education and training in the four case-study countries is a maze of obstacles and pitfalls, there are also rules and regulations, structures and support services which can help prospective trainees access education and training. Those approaches which have proved useful and the conditions which need to be in place at local level are summarised in the following.

Comparing the four case-study countries shows that providing continuous guidance and support to young people who want to undergo training proves to be the key factor for successful educational integration. Many young newcomers experience a fragmented and complicated range of offers at local level (see 3.1). **That is why newcomers often have difficulty finding out what is available and directly understanding the education and training system. The experiences of both newcomers and the staff providing guidance and advice show how important it therefore is to have a central point of contact where newcomers and future cohorts of migrants can receive systematic help, where working together builds bridges to the next step along their educational path and they can be given ongoing support:**

*We always [have] this artificial break where we then lose touch with them [young newcomers] and can't support them anymore. I also think some of those who go to the Arbeitsmarktservice [Austrian*

*Public Employment Service] might actually need much more support than they can get there.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Vienna)

Professional guidance on VET can help future trainees not to be dependent on chance information given to them by their contacts, whose advice and support is not necessarily always up to date. Advice not only has to be quality-assured. The interviews clearly show that **good advice is relationship work and needs to be continuous.** That is why advisory services aimed at young migrants need to begin when they arrive and continue, over various educational stages, until they begin vocational training. That way, young people can establish a relationship of trust with those providing guidance. Providing continuous support and encouragement to carry on despite facing some huge challenges also boosts newcomers' confidence in a training system which has often been a mystery to them up until then. As a result, their chances of finding a training place increase. In those cases in which an adviser is unable to provide detailed information, they can point young newcomers in the direction of other agencies or can accompany them so that they can then themselves incorporate the newly acquired information into their ongoing advisory services. **What is important is that there needs to be a reliable point of contact or place where those who want to undergo training can go whatever their problem is.** A central point of contact can be used to establish personal contact and trust between young newcomers and staff working there. This basis of trust, in turn, is the prerequisite for young newcomers being receptive to receiving information and advice.

The case-study municipalities already have tried and tested means of providing comprehensive support to young migrants. The “New Families in Barcelona” (*Noves famílies a Barcelona*) project run by the city administration supports young newcomers right up until family reunification has been completed. It provides ongoing advice around legal, social and educational issues and also organises group activities with other newcomers. After the young migrants arrive they have an in-person meeting in which they learn about transitioning into the Spanish education system and are given a personalised integration plan. Advisers always work closely with other actors, for example in schools, and the young migrants' families are also incorporated



(Ajuntament de Barcelona 2020). The city administration in Vienna runs the “Viennese Educational Hub” (*Wiener Bildungsdrehscheibe*) project for asylum seekers who are no longer required to attend school, and combines advisory services with information about what courses are available. One particular feature of the project is that asylum seekers are helped at an early stage and supported soon after they file their asylum application; the project is, by definition, part of basic social services (*Grundversorgung*) (AWZ Soziales Wien 2020; Koordinationsstelle Jugend – Bildung – Beschäftigung 2020):

*The idea that the programme is a service and part of basic social services is, I think, a very nice idea on the part of the City of Vienna [...], so that it's not just about food, sleep, a roof over your head, but [...] that education is a part of basic social services.*  
(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Vienna)

Providing good, continuous advisory services means that attention is paid, from the outset, to the possibility of young migrants dropping out of preparatory courses or their education/training. They are at particular risk of “falling through the net”. A documentation system which records what stage of the process they are at can be useful. Such a system was established as part of the “Hamburg Training Programme” (*Hamburger Ausbildungsprogramm*) and the “Youth Career Assistance” (*Jugendberufshilfe*) projects in Hamburg (HIBB 2019: 73–75). Ideally, those providing guidance and advice remain in contact with the young newcomers and know why they drop out, which means they are in a better position to support them and, if they want, to help them return to their chosen educational path or try out a new one.

**Expanding similarly structured advisory services across other municipalities in Europe would be desirable. Ideally, the relevant changes would lead to each respective education system being able to offer newcomers “one-stop” training preparation.** Such generalised preparatory measures encompass several educational stages. They offer young newcomers support in transitioning smoothly to their training programme and enable them to obtain a recognised school qualification. Lessons are then based on uniform technical and (social) education standards, and

teaching staff provide targeted support to the young people on their path to vocational training.

*So, let's take the “Schlau” school project [in Munich], they have language support, school qualifications, careers advice, placement. And they also have transition management. That means the students stay in their educational establishment, they don't drop out of the system when school finishes. [...] They continue to receive support throughout their vocational training.*

(Female staff member, benefit authority, Munich)

In the case-study municipalities, those generalised measures which prepare young migrants for vocational training are only open to adolescents who are subject to compulsory schooling, with only few exceptions. Opening them up to young adults would ensure seamless preparation as well as enable courses to be provided which are less profitable and which private adult educational providers may possibly not be able to run:

*Many educational providers don't run any language classes anymore, as they only set them up for those with a pending asylum procedure and those whose deportation was temporarily suspended. [Once the number declined] it wasn't worth it for them.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Chemnitz)

*There shouldn't only be private providers. That's a sector I've got some experience of – they're out to make a profit. There's no way of countering [fraud and low-quality lessons].*

(Male staff member, regional authority, Saxony)

**One promising element of the “one-stop” training preparation approach is being implemented in Bavaria, for instance.** Migrants attend subject-related and language classes as part of its “Vocational Integration Classes” (*BerufsinTEGRATIONSklassen – BIK*) in preparation for vocational training. The aim is to help students gain a recognised secondary school qualification after one to two years by taking intensive language classes, subject-related courses and doing work placements:

### Box 3 EU and federal measures to help newcomers begin VET in Germany

To make it easier for young newcomers to begin VET, the EU supports local advisory services and preparatory courses, mainly through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF, as from 2021: AMIF+) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The case-study municipalities also benefit from these. In addition, the EU's Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, published in 2016, and specific initiatives such as the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) or Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) promote the educational integration of newcomers (European Commission 2016: 9–11; European Commission 2019b: 60–61; European Commission 2020a). In recent years the EU Member States have also been funding their own national and regional projects. In Germany, the Federal Government and federal states share political responsibility for VET: The Federal Government is responsible for vocational (work-based) training outside of the school system, while the federal states are responsible for vocational schools. Furthermore, municipalities are also highly relevant actors for the vocational integration process, as the 2019 Annual Report of the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration emphasises (German Bundestag 2019: 219). Reference will here only be made, by way of example, to initiatives organised by the Federal Government: The German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), for instance, funds an “Educational Chains” (*Bildungsketten*) initiative which supports young migrants transitioning to VET, for example through preparatory measures and advisory services (BMBF 2020). The “Strong at Work” (*Stark im Beruf*) programme prepares mothers with a forced migration and migrant background in particular for VET and the labour market (BMFSFJ 2019). The Alliance for Training and Further Training (*Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung*) and the Local Authority Education Management Training Initiative (*Transferinitiative Kommunales Bildungsmanagement*), also funded by the same ministry, promote the integration of young newcomers into the German training system on a sustainable basis (BMAS 2020a; Transferinitiative Kommunales Bildungsmanagement 2018). The issue is regularly on the policy agenda at the federal level on account of legislative amendments, for example to the Act to Promote the Employment of Foreign Nationals, and on account of strategies relating to and debates around skilled workers (German Bundestag 2019: 196–210).

*It's important to know that to get a training place in Bavaria you don't [by law] need to have a school qualification, but it's practically an entry requirement. That means you have to go to school first and at least get the lowest possible qualification, the “Mittelschulabschluss” [middle school qualification]. [...] That's what our students [at the BIK] do, or a “Quali” [qualified middle school qualification].*

(Male teacher, vocational school, Munich)

**Flexibility is important: As the migrant groups are heterogenous, municipalities in the EU need courses they can flexibly adapt and which address these**

**groups' different learning needs.** Language and subject-related courses need to be available at various levels and newcomers need to be able to retake courses if necessary, to be in contact with local peers as early as possible.<sup>37</sup> Further, they should be able to begin subject-related preparatory courses as swiftly as possible, regardless of age (i.e. even if they are not obliged to attend (vocational) school) or uncertain residence status. This, firstly, helps young newcomers to begin learning the language early on and thus to find their feet more quickly in their country of arrival. Secondly, their learning achievements motivate them to carry on and ensure that they can begin VET as soon as they are granted access. Given young newcomers'

37 Good examples of immediate or gradual partial integration into secondary schools can be found in the context of strategies applied in Spain as part of “Welcome Spaces” (in municipalities in Catalonia: *aula de bienvenida*) and preparatory classes in Saxony, Germany which address practical aspects of an occupation. Although these are placed within the regular school context, they can give fresh impetus to establishing vocational preparatory programmes at vocational training institutions.



language needs, uncomplicated access to regular language classes (in Germany to *Integrationskurse* and *Berufssprachkurse*) is key to integrating newcomers as soon as possible into preparatory courses and laying the foundation for their future educational path in their country of arrival. This has been implemented at national and regional level in the relevant programmes in the case-study Member States, in some cases with EU funding. Slovenia uses its “Initial Integration of Migrants” (*Začetna integracija priseljencev*) programme to do just that: each newcomer – regardless of age, country of origin and educational status – is given up to 180 hours of free language classes and courses dealing with society and everyday life in Slovenia. The programme is funded by the Slovenian Ministry of the Interior and the EU’s AMIF (European Commission 2019c; Republika Slovenija 2020). The federal state of Saxony in Germany offers language classes which are also open to new migrants regardless of residence status and which provide a first linguistic basis (Scheible/Schneider 2020: 16–17).<sup>38</sup> Bavaria’s BIK programmes are also comparatively flexible when it comes to residence status and age: they admit young migrants up to the age of 21 (and in exceptional cases even up to age 25) (StMUK 2020: 7). Interviewed staff in public authorities and educational establishments explained that adapting rules in a targeted manner can give migrants who are interested in VET easier access. One tried and tested method applied in Slovenia, for example, is to initially not award marks to young migrants in regular classes. Teaching staff and training instructors in companies also advocate having assessment tests and final exams written in easily comprehensible language<sup>39</sup> or giving young newcomers more time to complete the exams:

*Often, the problem isn’t that they [young newcomers] don’t understand – but they’re having to translate things twice in their head. That takes time. Especially during exams, during tests they don’t have the time to do it.*

(Male staff member, employment agency,  
Chemnitz)

### 3.4 Conclusion: Local staff as trailblazers

The various regulatory and structural conditions, which can at times be hard to understand and also differ according to newcomer group, as well as diverse everyday challenges make it more difficult for young newcomers to navigate their path through the maze of VET systems in their country of arrival. This in particular applies when the difficulties individuals encounter build up. Local staff in advisory centres, educational establishments, public authorities and other facilities can guide them through this process and thus play a key role (see Schammann et al. 2020). The above-mentioned good practice examples show how young newcomers can be supported, at local level, along the entire path from arrival until they begin their training and beyond. Local staff have a certain degree of discretion when it comes to shaping and granting access to education and training. As the newcomers’ experiences show, the ways in which that margin of discretion is used is decisive when it comes to whether and how quickly those who want to undergo training find their way to VET. The following chapter focuses on the question of how access to VET is shaped and granted at local level and by whom.

## 4 Local insights: Access to education and training in eight European municipalities

En route to vocational education and training (VET) young newcomers come across people who have an influence on whether the door to VET will open or remain closed. In the eight case-study municipalities, these “gatekeepers” can be found in three different types of institution:

- **Public authorities:** Staff in public authorities implement applicable education, labour, social and residence legislation at local level, for example by referring those who want to undergo training to subject-related preparatory courses, assigning them to a school or granting the requisite work permit for company-based training.

<sup>38</sup> Directive on Integrative Measures, Sec. B, Part 3 of 10 March 2020.

<sup>39</sup> See also, regarding more easily comprehensible exams for newcomers, Settlemeyer/Münchhausen/Schneider 2019: 7–9. Tried and tested methods are also drawn from vocational training for people with disabilities.

Table 2 Key players shaping and granting access to vocational training in the eight case-study municipalities

	<b>Educational establishments,</b> in particular:	<b>Public authorities,</b> in particular:	<b>Intermediary organisations,</b> in particular:
<b>Austria</b> Innsbruck Vienna	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational schools</li> <li>• Private educational providers</li> <li>• Training companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Arbeitsmarktservice</i> (Austrian Public Employment Service)</li> <li>• Education authority</li> <li>• <i>Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl</i> (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum)</li> <li>• <i>Österreichischer Integrationsfonds</i> (Austrian Integration Fund)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth coaching</li> <li>• <i>Berufsförderungsinstitut</i> (Vocational Promotion Institute)</li> <li>• Local societies/associations</li> </ul>
<b>Germany</b> Chemnitz Munich	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational schools</li> <li>• Private educational providers</li> <li>• Training companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bundesagentur für Arbeit</i> (Federal Employment Agency) and <i>Jobcenter</i></li> <li>• Education authority</li> <li>• Immigration authority and <i>Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge</i> (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charities and youth migration services</li> <li>• Refugee councils</li> <li>• Chambers of industry and commerce</li> <li>• Local societies/associations, e.g., migrant organisations</li> </ul>
<b>Slovenia</b> Koper Ljubljana	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ljudska univerza</i> (adult education school)</li> <li>• Secondary school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje</i> (Slovenian Employment Agency)</li> <li>• <i>Upravna enota</i> (regional administration)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local societies/associations, e.g. <i>Slovenska filantropija</i></li> </ul>
<b>Spain</b> Barcelona Terrassa	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Centre de Formació d'Adults</i> (adult education school)</li> <li>• Secondary school, specifically <i>aula de bienvenida</i> (Welcome Spaces)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Servei d'Ocupació Catalunya</i> (Catalan Employment Agency)</li> <li>• <i>Oficina Municipal d'Esolaritzadó</i> (local school administration)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Servei de Primer Acollida</i> (Welcome Service)</li> <li>• Local societies/associations</li> </ul>

Source: Own survey (country case studies)

• **Educational establishments:** Teaching staff in general education schools, vocational schools, adult education colleges and other public or private educational establishments<sup>40</sup> either prepare young migrants for regular VET or teach these classes

themselves. The staff includes teachers, professional (social) educators and in-company training instructors who teach practical professional skills in the context of Austria's and Germany's dual training systems.

40 Private educational institutions are gaining in importance. In recent years the German and Spanish municipalities have further outsourced public services in the social sector (e.g. work with refugees) and during the transition between school and vocational training to private-sector social and educational providers. Their aim is to save money by "buying in" services in a targeted manner and to have a more flexible mix of skills among staff members (Ascoli/Ranci 2003: 7). These flexible synergies between public and private services has often proved its worth in work with refugees in recent years. Nevertheless, the powers which the state previously had in terms of course design are also, in some places, being transferred to private-sector providers (Galera/Giannetto/Noya 2018: 4/31). The interviewed staff members in public authorities in Chemnitz and at the regional level in Saxony criticise the fact that these tend to be more profit-oriented and that the quality of their work cannot be regarded as equivalent. One interviewee in Ljubljana criticised the fact that the government had abdicated too much of its responsibility for public tasks through outsourcing. Interviewees in Barcelona note that public adult education facilities are increasingly "insourcing" those courses which had previously been outsourced to private educational providers.



- **Intermediary organisations:** Staff in social enterprises, charities, chambers of trades and crafts, and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also support young people in negotiating public authorities and the educational landscape. Volunteers working in intermediary organisations are frequently mentioned by the interviewed newcomers as being particularly important for their integration process.

Table 2 presents an overview of those public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations which have been shown to be of particular importance in the Austrian, German, Slovenian and Spanish case-study municipalities. **This chapter focuses on the staff working in these organisations, even though not all migrants will come across them to the same degree en route to VET.** While European Union (EU) migrants and third-country nationals arriving as part of family reunification are only rarely required to actively keep in touch with the regulatory authorities, refugees have to follow directions issued by staff in local authorities much more strictly throughout their asylum procedure. The case is different in regard to educational establishments and the professionals working there: teachers and social education workers are generally in close contact with all newcomers, regardless of the kind of residence status they have. By contrast, those employed in societies/associations, charities, chambers and other intermediary organisations (incl. volunteers) have a variety of roles, ranging from providing ongoing supervision throughout VET to one-off contact at a training fair.

#### 4.1 Decision-making discretion of staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations

Not only the individual involvement of those newcomers who want to undergo training plays a key role when it comes to access to VET, but also the commitment of staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations. Their

official remit and – in particular in the case of staff in authorities – statutory regulations provide a basis for staff to be involved in shaping access to VET at local level. Firstly, they have to understand the relevant rules and structures themselves and, secondly, to apply them to those who want to undergo training.<sup>41</sup> This twofold interpretative work affords them a wide margin of discretion, but it is sometimes difficult to see just how wide that margin is and how it is applied (Schultz 2020: 6; Portillo/Rudes 2014: 322–328). To discover more about how local staff use this margin of discretion, the SVR Research Unit and its project partners at the universities of Ljubljana and Vienna and the Autonomous University of Barcelona analysed what more than 40 young newcomers and 82 staff members in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations in the eight municipalities reported in relation to working practices (see Chapter 1 and Tables 4 and 5 in the Appendix).

The research findings indicate that **in all four countries, staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations have a certain amount of discretion when it comes to shaping and granting access to education and training. Often, their job requires them to take case-by-case discretionary decisions, for instance as regards whether they can approve a preparatory course in an individual case or not** (see Barberis/Buchowicz 2015: 64–65).<sup>42</sup> **In addition, some of the staff report that they go beyond what is required of them,** usually by providing very close one-to-one support to newcomers, cooperating with other facilities and referring newcomers to other offers which are available (acting as a guide) or by developing additional support services or paying the costs of those services (filling the gaps) (see Table 3). Going beyond the call of duty is generally not divorced from their actual remit, but is something which is done on top of day-to-day tasks, for example doing voluntary training in one's own free time in order to be able to better help migrants as part of one's day job. The types of discretionary decisions taken as part of one's job remit and commitment above and beyond what is required vary across the various groups of actors:

41 See Box 4 regarding these and other basic assumptions in the theoretical field research at hand.

42 For a more in-depth analysis of the different types of discretionary decisions in connection with the question of their legitimacy, see Barberis and Buchowicz (2015: 61–76).

## Box 4 Research based on institutionalism and street-level bureaucracy

This study adopts the institutionalism perspective in order to analyse how young migrants are granted access to education and training (see DiMaggio/Powell 1983; Meyer/Rowan 1991; Oliver 1991; Scott 1995). In analogy with recent research approaches – see Powell/Colyvas (2008), Wooten/Hoffman (2008) and Maitlis/Christianson (2014) – it is assumed that “customer-facing” staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations take decisions regarding access to education and training neither alone nor independently of an external influence, nor are they directed “from above”. Instead, implementing policies at local level is regarded as a process of negotiation in which members of staff are given a certain margin of discretion in their decision-making. However, that margin is limited and often has to take account of rules, structures and financial resources, as well as of social and professional norms and attitudes (Powell/Colyvas 2008: 277).

To find out more about the “balancing act” this requires of each individual required to put policies into practice at local level, research in the political and administrative sciences often studies the work of so-called street-level bureaucrats, that is those who implement (education) policies in authorities, schools and other governmental agencies (Lipsky 1980; Hupe/Hill/Bufat 2015; Stensöta 2019). The study at hand adopts this approach, too, and applies a definition which has been expanded in the course of more recent research. Accordingly, “street-level bureaucrats” not only encompass public servants, but also non-state groups of professionals who are involved in shaping and granting access to education and training and to other public goods (see Darrow 2015: 6–7/27–28; Hupe/Hill 2007: 283; Meyers/Lehmann Nielsen 2012: 306).

**Staff in authorities:** Those employed in education authorities, regulatory authorities and state-run employment agencies take decisions, among other things, on when newcomers are allowed to take a language course or go to vocational school, and whether they are entitled to work or receive a grant. Staff in the foreigners’ authority in Munich, for instance, draw on an internally compiled list of criteria when taking decisions about whether newcomers are to be granted a work permit for their work-based VET (for criteria applied at German federal level, see SVR Research Unit 2020: 20–21). Staff in the local education authority in Terrassa in northern Spain weigh up which secondary schools will get additional staff and material resources for their preparatory courses (*aulas de bienvenida*).<sup>43</sup> The discretionary decisions taken there and elsewhere have a huge influence on migrants’ access to education and training: they can help them along their educational path or else delay or entirely prevent them getting ahead. **This study shows**

**that the bandwidth of discretionary decisions taken by staff in public authorities is broad.** That is not least due to the fact that these decisions involve weighing up an individual’s entitlement to an education against regulatory considerations, such as dealing with someone who has no identity papers, and conflicting goals<sup>44</sup> may have to be resolved (see Berlin Institute for Population and Development 2019: 10–12). Although decisions which promote or hinder access to education and training can be observed in all eight of the case-study municipalities, the decisions taken by the two Slovenian municipalities and (to a lesser degree) in Chemnitz and Vienna are more restrictive, as the interviews show. In Barcelona, Innsbruck, Munich and Terrassa, by contrast, rules and support structures are often interpreted in favour of those who want to undergo training. The following two quotations show, by way of example, how differently the interviewed staff in public authorities interpret the local legal and structural framework:

43 As regards studies conducted at federal level on needs-based resource allocation in the German school system, see SVR Research Unit (2016a) and Morris-Lange (2016).

44 Conflicting goals emerge when studying, for example, the work of education authorities on the one hand and regulatory authorities on the other hand. The former generally want to get migrants into courses as quickly as possible. The latter, by contrast, have to adhere to the law on residence and asylum. Since both have a say on whether a newcomer gains access to education and training, that access may be delayed or even denied entirely (see Thym 2015).



*It [the work] is a question of standards and order – not bureaucratic barriers, but bureaucratic facts.*

(Male staff member, employment agency, Ljubljana)

*Being a good “careers adviser” is not so much a matter of training as an attitude. Knowing how to guide people.*

(Male staff member, employment agency, Barcelona)

*We cooperate well with the foreigners’ authority, which uses its degree of discretion whenever it can, within the bounds of what is legally possible. They cannot go beyond that. They can’t ignore it, of course. But at least they say: “We have some degree of discretion and use it whenever we can, as best we can.”*

(Female staff member, benefits authority, Munich)

**According to our analysis, staff in local authorities move within the bounds of local rules and regulations and within their own remits when taking their**

**discretionary decisions and in their own actions.**

Since these rules and regulations do not always give them a clear “yes” or “no” answer on whether access to education and training can be granted, the margin of discretion accorded to authorities gains in importance when they are dealing with individual cases. Hardly any mention is made when staff engage in practices which can be regarded as additional commitment to help newcomers, such as independently acquiring EU funding for additional language and preparatory courses (Table 3). Reference is significantly more frequently made to what is already available and own competences:

*You can do a great deal, but that’s not really our job, that’s not what we’re paid for. If we wanted to do everything ourselves, then a) we don’t have the expertise and b) we don’t have the time to do our day job. [...] That’s why we have to draw the line somewhere and say: “This is as far as it goes, that’s what we’re responsible for and what we can help you with.”*

(Male staff member, employment agency, Chemnitz)

**Table 3 Additional commitment of staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations shown to newcomers in eight European municipalities**

Municipality	Munich			Chemnitz			Vienna			Innsbruck			Ljubljana			Koper			Barcelona			Terrassa			
	Auth.	EE	Int.	Auth.	EE	Int.	Auth.	EE	Int.	Auth.	EE	Int.	Auth.	EE	Int.	Auth.	EE	Int.	Auth.	EE	Int.	Auth.	EE	Int.	
<b>Esp. beyond remit: advice &amp; referral to other actors, networking (guiding)</b>		X	X	x		x			X	X			X			x		x			X	X			X
<b>Esp. beyond remit: developing additional support measures (filling gaps)</b>		x				x						x			x		x	x		x					x

Auth. = authorities  
EE = educational establishments  
Int. = intermediary organisations  
X = often reported commitment  
x = occasionally reported commitment

NB: The results are tendencies which were borne out following an analysis of the content of 122 semi-structured interviews.

Source: Own presentation

*The most important thing is that people are aware that here we will not solve their lives [for them]. You are responsible for your options, and this is the main task of the counsellor.*

(Male staff member, employment agency, Barcelona)

**Staff in educational establishments:** Teachers and professional (social) educators in (vocational) schools, training companies, and other state and private educational establishments also use their margin of discretion in various ways. On the one hand, teaching staff report about additional language and preparatory courses being organised or about the fact that they try to speak more clearly in lessons and not to use their local dialect. Educational establishments in the German and Spanish municipalities in particular provide a lot of support in that regard. On the other hand, some companies do not take on trainees without a residence permit, while others consciously hire young people with a precarious residence status, as the interviews show:

[When talking to companies it helps] *to keep repeating yourself, saying: "Look at these youngsters [young newcomers], they've learned the language, give them a work placement, we can get them vocational qualifications if you give them a job." If you keep repeating the same thing over and over, then eventually it pays off.*

(Male staff member, employment agency, Chemnitz)

*The impression I get is that our company is highly accepting of migration. We're very proud of that, that we have this great diversity. [...] Of course, at the start some had reservations, that's something where I think that everything that's new, the unknown, of course people are sceptical at first. But then you realise that the more contact you have, the more the barriers are broken down.*

(Male employee, training company, Innsbruck)

*One of the trainees who got his place through me [he knew him from previous voluntary work], I said to him in late 2018: "You start your training here with us, then you'll be safe, you'll be able to*

*stay" [...], because there's always the danger that if you have nothing to show here you'll be told: "Off you go" [back to country of origin].*

(Male director, training company, Chemnitz)

Companies which take on trainees, (vocational) schools in Innsbruck and Vienna, and educational establishments in the Slovenian cities of Koper and Ljubljana tend to be more restrictive in their decision-making than the other case-study municipalities. **Unlike the staff in public authorities, the differences between the eight municipalities tend to be smaller than those within the municipalities themselves – and even within individual educational establishments:** staff in the preparatory courses and other pre-training classes in schools report, for example, that they use their discretionary powers to the migrants' advantage. Staff teaching regular classes are not perceived as doing to the same extent. This tendency is also confirmed by staff in the responsible education authorities. According to the interviewees, it is not least on account of the fact that they have had less experience dealing with newcomers that the latter appear to find it more difficult to address the newcomers' language and subject-related needs than their colleagues who are in daily contact with them:

*We give them a couple of days to do the paperwork, to buy the basics, the books, and then they begin with the welcome room schedule. We have changed this because [...] [there were students] who did not want to enter the class. They were embarrassed. They were afraid. [...] we've changed it so that this process of adaptation is more humane.*

(Female staff member, school, Barcelona)

*A lot of the time we don't even ask for documents [the school qualifications the students bring with them] to be translated if we understand the language or have someone [at the school] who speaks the language. [...] which basically means that their [the young newcomers'] costs are lowered [...]. [...] we think it's important for us to lend them a hand, because the translations can be really expensive.*

(Female staff member, school, Ljubljana)



*I think that we – the schools – are absolutely insufficiently involved. We hear something [about migration] on TV [...]. I am being hindered by the lack of motivation of others [other teachers] to do anything.*

(Male staff member, school, Ljubljana)

Such differences within schools were identified as part of a study by the SVR Research Unit of 56 secondary schools in four German federal states.<sup>45</sup> It is striking how much – then, as now – those who teach preparatory classes every day (at school or in a training company) go the extra mile for young migrants, guide them along their educational path and sometimes even fill the gaps and compensate for structural shortcomings, for instance by developing or funding their own measures (Table 3):

*Everything is based on voluntariness. We are a little Neanderthal. We have to make the tools ourselves. Maybe it would be nice to have resources for it. [...] and contact with other professionals.*

(Male staff member, educational provider, Terrassa)

*We let the young newcomers have all the added extras that were provided [by the Federal Employment Agency], like lunch, German lessons, trips into the countryside. That's all part of it.*

(Male trainer, training company, Chemnitz)

*The company pays for a language course for those trainees who lack the language skills. [...] If someone's motivated and you can tell they are, then I'm happy to give them a course that costs 200 to 300 euros. We end up benefitting much more afterwards.*

(Male trainer, training company, Munich)

**Staff in intermediary organisations:** In the case-study municipalities, full-time and volunteer staff in non-profit organisations, social enterprises, charities

and other intermediary organisations all report **how they use their resources and decision-making discretion efficiently to support as many young migrants as possible in finding their way around the local authority and educational landscape. Staff often also guide young people who want to undergo training outside of their regular working time (Table 3):**

*What we do is hold them [newcomers] so they don't fall, so they don't fall, because the system is very complex and their parents are not in a position to do it, because they are not here or because they don't have the knowledge [about the system].*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Barcelona)

*In the past, we called it the Information and Orientation Service for Welcoming People and it was almost the same as the [state] Knowledge Course on Catalan Society. And we also offered Catalan. And we did it because we believed in it.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Terrassa)

*Especially the issue of accommodation [is a challenge]. That's not really something we actually do – the emphasis being on "actually". We can't go and find accommodation for those taking part on the side, because that's a full-time job, especially in Munich. [...] But we do try to keep it on our radar and contact residential facilities specifically for trainees.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Munich)

**Newcomers themselves confirm the crucial role intermediary staff play in pointing them in the right direction.** When asked what helped them on their path to VET, young people who want to undergo training in particular mention advisory centres run by civil-society organisations and volunteers as well as support provided by various intermediary organisations:

<sup>45</sup> Newcomers who were attending regular lessons at the time were given additional language instruction, but there were reports at more than half of the schools that even those who needed the most subject-related support because they lagged far behind did not receive one-to-one assistance. By contrast, more than 75 per cent of those taking preparatory classes at the same school were receiving support. The main reasons cited for these school-internal differences were lack of time and staff not yet having taken training courses on linguistic and cultural diversity (SVR Research Unit 2018a: 28–34).

*At the beginning, it was really hard [after turning 18], although our advisers had prepared us really well. [...] But the most difficult thing were the applications we had to fill in, the laws, the deadlines. [...] Afterwards we went back into the shared accommodation [for unaccompanied minor refugees] and asked for help there. They were really nice, although we'd already moved out.*

(Afghan man, age 20, Chemnitz)

Staff working in intermediary organisations helped many of the newcomers right from the start so that they could get their bearings in the training landscape, which is complex and confusing, and then contact the right offices in the educational establishments, companies and authorities once they had set their educational goals. What staff in the intermediary organisations report indicates that their role in terms of guiding and blazing a trail for migrants is all the more important in those municipalities in which public authorities and educational establishments tend to take more restrictive decisions as regards access to education and training, as is the case in Ljubljana and Vienna.

Insights gained from the interviews with staff in the eight municipalities complement and reinforce the findings on young migrants' experiences (Chapter 3). They make it clear that access to education and training is not only dependent on what is available at local level, but also on how staff use their margin of discretion and additional commitment when it comes to shaping and granting access to what is available. What motivates them to blaze a trail (or not) for young newcomers is, of course, specific to each individual and varies. **At the same time, our analysis indicates that there are three factors which have a decisive influence on their discretionary decisions and their commitment:**

- **Perceived legal uncertainty:** Staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations are tasked with shaping or granting individual VET access at local level within a predefined legal and structural framework (see Saruis 2018: 38; Lahusen/Schneider 2017: 11). Our study shows that when access rules and structures are perceived to be complex and there is general uncertainty as to how to "correctly" apply them, then staff in public authorities in particular use their margin of discretion strictly in line with their internal remit. The situation

is different in intermediary organisations and many educational establishments, where the "legal jungle" tends to make staff go above and beyond to guide migrants on their path to education and training (Table 3). Staff employed in educational establishments in Terrassa, for instance, visit young migrants in their accommodation to find out why they are not attending class and to help them if they need it:

*We have never considered that certain tasks are outside our work. [...] They have you as a reference and ask you for help with many things. And we do everything, whatever has to be done, even risky things like going into houses. [...] The families know you and ask you for advice, for help. [...] If a boy doesn't come [to class], for example, and doesn't answer the phone, we go and knock on his door: "Hello, your son hasn't come and he's not answering the phone, what's wrong?"*

(Female staff member, vocational school, Terrassa)

Where rules and regulations are generally regarded as incomprehensible, organisations can relieve the burden on their own staff by giving them guidance or encouragement on interpreting those rules and regulations (Rice 2019: 77; Garrow/Grusky 2013: 24). A school can, for instance, suggest that its teaching staff support migrant students when they are in preparatory classes, where they are hardly or not yet involved in regular lessons (see SVR Research Unit 2018a: 28-31). A training company can issue guidance that cultural diversity is desirable in a team and take concrete steps together with its human resources department to promote diversity, for instance through more anonymised recruitment procedures (see SVR Research Unit 2014: 35-36). The management in a foreigners' authority can help its staff by giving them information on procedures to follow when taking case-by-case decisions (see Garrow/Grusky 2013: 24).

- **Scarce resources:** Many interviewed staff members – especially in intermediary organisations and educational establishments – feel that their personnel and their institution's financial resources are insufficient and restricting. They feel they are being forced to limit what they can offer and repeatedly emphasise that this means they do not meet the young migrants' needs (see Tummers/Bekkers 2020: 170; Schultz 2020: 9):



*Well, basically, we can't look after everybody, we need more courses, more hours and more teachers. Some courses have a waiting list of 80, 90 or 100 people.*

(Female staff member, education establishment, Terrassa)

*Well, it's hard in terms of resources, that we're on top of it, and have so much contact and communication [with the migrants] so that we can prevent it [them dropping out of school] as much as possible. Sometimes you do think to yourself: "If I'd asked more questions, then it might've gone the other way."*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Vienna)

Interviewees in the authorities and educational establishments in Spain and Slovenia in particular emphasise that existing financial and human resources are often not sufficient or available on a long-term basis to be able to provide adequate support to young migrants. Full-time and volunteer staff in intermediary organisations in all four countries report the same, and refer to the circular nature of funding and to funding cuts which sometimes appear to be politically motivated:

*[Acquiring] lots of resources, that takes a lot of time and effort. Then you've got the whole thing in the bag, [you're] all set for four years and then after six months the [minister] says: "Hang on, we have to review that first." It hasn't just happened to us, a whole lot of other [non-profits] were affected too. [...] We didn't see any money for three weeks. They just stopped paying it. One project that gets ESF [European Social Fund] funding and had the go-ahead for four years, it's been stopped.*

(Female staff member, educational provider, Vienna)

*Well, the FPÖ/ÖVP government made things really, really hard for us. Last year [2019] we didn't get any money from the AMS [Austrian Public Employment Service] [...], the AMS always funded a third of our work. We never found out why.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Vienna)

*Sometimes they give you a specific grant that lasts for X years. You start with doubts, not knowing if it will last a year or two or what. When you have implemented it, you have developed it throughout the territory and you have reached the whole world, BAM, they [the funding agency] cut the grant and it disappears. That is a matter of system.*

(Male staff member, intermediary organisation, Terrassa)

*Yes, the state is trying to outsource non-governmental organisations, in the context of project work, but, if you have two employees, they cannot look for an apartment for 500 people [refugees]. [...] The biggest problem is that the state is outsourcing everything and that it is trying to shift responsibility to non-governmental organisations and project work.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Ljubljana)

*Organisations without access to these working groups and networks [at state level] have a very hard time not going under, for example when it comes to financial, administrative and organisational matters.*

(Female staff member, federal state ministry, Saxony)

#### • Sensitivity to migrants' lifeworlds and needs:

Research on how policies are implemented at local level shows that decisions taken by staff working in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations are frequently influenced by personal considerations, for example whether individual migrants deserve to be given a chance or not (Will 2018: 172–175; Gonzales/Sigona/Burciaga 2016: 1531–1533). Those who have frequent contact with newcomers prove to be more "generous" than those who meet them only on rare occasions. Reports from Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain indicate that those who are in constant close contact with newcomers – such as teaching staff in preparatory courses and those working in advisory centres – get a deeper insight into the lifeworlds of and challenges faced by these young people and this knowledge motivates them to use the available

margin of discretion to the young target group's advantage (see Djuve/Kavli 2015: 235; Johannessen 2019: 19–21).<sup>46</sup>

## 4.2 Good practice: Better educational integration thanks to reliable networks

The current situation in the case-study municipalities in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain shows that the margins of discretion available within the respective structures can be used by the involved staff to promote access to education and training (and thus integration). Another key factor is that access to VET needs to be shaped and granted within a network. **The multi-professional networks which often already exist at local level are promising approaches when it comes to providing sustainable support.** Some of the staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations in the case-study municipalities already cooperate closely and regard that cooperation as extremely useful:

*We could say that networking is an ongoing task. [...] In the last few years, quite a lot of work has been done by the Council of Professional Training, and they are trying to do it with the Terrassa en Red Orienta (Terrassa Guides) network. [...] they have created a database, a directory, which facilitates [young migrants'] access to information [...] But in our opinion, there should be a lot more networking.*

(Male staff member, vocational school, Terrassa)

*What's actually pretty useful – if it works – is cooperating with the Federal Employment Agency. They have good access [...]. The Agency comes here, we can talk to them and they can respond to their [the migrants'] individual needs [...], so the more tailored the help the better.*

(Female staff member, vocational school, Munich)

*Well, we've got companies we've been cooperating with very well and for a long time.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Vienna)

*At any rate we managed that, the City of Innsbruck lets us have these rooms for free and also covers the overheads.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Innsbruck)

*We're extremely pleased that we have the Specialist Information Centre on Migration here [in the same building] [...]. It's funded by the IQ Network Saxony [a government-funded project run by a civil-society organisation]. [...] Whenever we have a question, like "What about the permit? When will it be extended? What are the chances of it being granted?" then they're our partner and they deal with everything else in connection with the foreigners' authority.*

(Male staff member, employment agency, Chemnitz)

**In what form and how intensively local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations are already cooperating primarily depends on how sustainable the network and its funding are, how much experience a municipality already has of doing integration work and how straightforward the local landscape of actors is.**

That means that the size of a municipality also has an influence on how a network works: In Innsbruck, a medium-sized city in Austria, and in Koper, a small town in Slovenia, for example, it is easier for staff to know who the other actors are in the field of training integration. That is considerably more difficult in big cities like Barcelona, Munich and Vienna, though. Although there are numerous networks there already, it is still difficult to get a complete picture:

46 The finding that regular contact with people with different backgrounds fosters an optimistic attitude to migration and integration and possibly also promotes diversity sensitivity is nothing new (and is known as the "contact hypothesis"). It is, not least, regularly confirmed in the SVR's Integration Barometer (SVR 2018: 11–12).



*[...] we set up a network, Asylum and Education, to get a really good overview of all the initiatives, what's going on right now. Asylum is a very fast-moving area where new projects are constantly "popping up", others shut down again and we have a networking meeting once a quarter with all of them, well not all of them, but a lot of the educational providers in Vienna, where [...] we give each other updates and share information, what you could do in a specific case, where we really cooperate very well. And we all benefit a lot, because we're always well informed, I think that's our core task – just to be well informed about what's out there and where you can, where you can pass someone on to with a clear conscience, yeah. Pointing out the gaps or reporting what's needed to the funding providers in the refugee aid departments.*

(Female staff member, intermediary organisation, Vienna)

Interviewees repeatedly confirm that the level of cooperation with others and thus how well-informed they are has improved and increased in recent years. There are a variety of advantages to having more well-established and sustainably financed networks:

- **Broadening institutions' horizons:** A structured network offers staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations with a space in which they can regularly share information, establish trust and find out more about those who work directly with young migrants providing guidance. By changing perspectives in this way, network partners reflect on their own established work routines and decision-making bases. Sharing information in this way improves know-how, which can be further boosted through training courses, for example on residence law. Many of those working in educational establishments, intermediary organisations and, in some cases, public authorities find it hard to stay up to date on relevant matters.<sup>47</sup>
- **Providing coordinated support to young newcomers:** Strong networks provide clarity to all those involved about what is available and who is

responsible for what. Gaps can be closed and network partners know whom they can refer migrants to if necessary. Ideally, young migrants then receive coordinated support from shortly after they arrive, across their entire educational path and up until they complete the vocational training and find a job, thus reducing the drop-out rate.

- **Saving resources:** When actors cooperate on a case-by-case basis, this can also potentially save resources because it can prevent the wrong decisions being taken and help information to be shared more rapidly. If, for example, a member of staff in a foreigners' authority talks to a social worker about a migrant they are supervising, getting a rough idea at an early stage about how long the asylum procedure will take and what the current status is can help to find possible alternatives.
- **Giving the network a voice:** More networking at local level will not solve all the challenges faced. However, a network can speak with one voice when it comes to flagging up problems at local level and calling for higher administrative levels to adapt the general framework.

Although authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations are aware of these and other benefits of working in a network, and many are already cooperating in this way, much of their potential has not yet been tapped into. Often binding structures and financial resources to enable closer networking are still lacking. There are positive examples, too, though: In Germany a total of 40 regional **IvAF networks** (Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees) support network-based advisory services and guidance for young migrants en route to a job and vocational training. The networks, which are funded by Germany's Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and by the European Social Fund (ESF), comprise those public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations which are involved in organising integration measures at local level. The work of each IvAF network is based on a binding concept with fixed goals and measures. The IvAF networks pool information about preparatory

<sup>47</sup> The SVR Research Unit's Policy Brief 2020 shows, by way of the example of the German federal states of Bavaria and Saxony, how complicated the rules and regulations on newcomers' access to education and training have become.

courses, they advise refugees and other migrants on issues around education, training and residence, and refer them to other organisations within or outside the network. **This provides custom-fit and continuous integration chains without those taking part “falling through the net” during the often difficult transitions between individual measures. Advisory services are available right up until vocational training begins and beyond.** Cooperation among the 40 IvAF networks occurs at the regional and national level, so that local solutions can be shared at supra-national level and passed on to political decision-makers (BMAS 2020b). In addition, the **IQ networks** (Integration through Qualification), which are also funded by the Federal Ministry and the ESF, provide advice on getting qualifications recognised and on upskilling newcomers. Some are affiliated to the Federal Employment Agency and can thus provide the Agency with information on complex residence-related questions (IQ Network 2020; IQ Network Saxony 2020).

## 5 Recommended actions: Improving educational opportunities for young migrants in Europe

Education is a driver of participation in the labour market and society as a whole. That is especially true of young newcomers. Investing in their vocational qualification pays off for the newcomers and, not least, for the countries of immigration, which can thus respond to the existing and impending lack of skilled workers in increasing numbers of sectors and regions. European Union (EU) legislation stipulates that even refugees in the asylum process need to have access to education and training, given that, on account of their age, they are required to attend school. The EU calls for educational access to be provided even after they come of age – though access to VET relating to an employment contract only where they have been granted labour market access.<sup>48</sup> This is reflected only to a limited extent in the rules, regulations and practices in the four case-study countries. Access routes to vocational education and training (VET) in the Austrian, German,

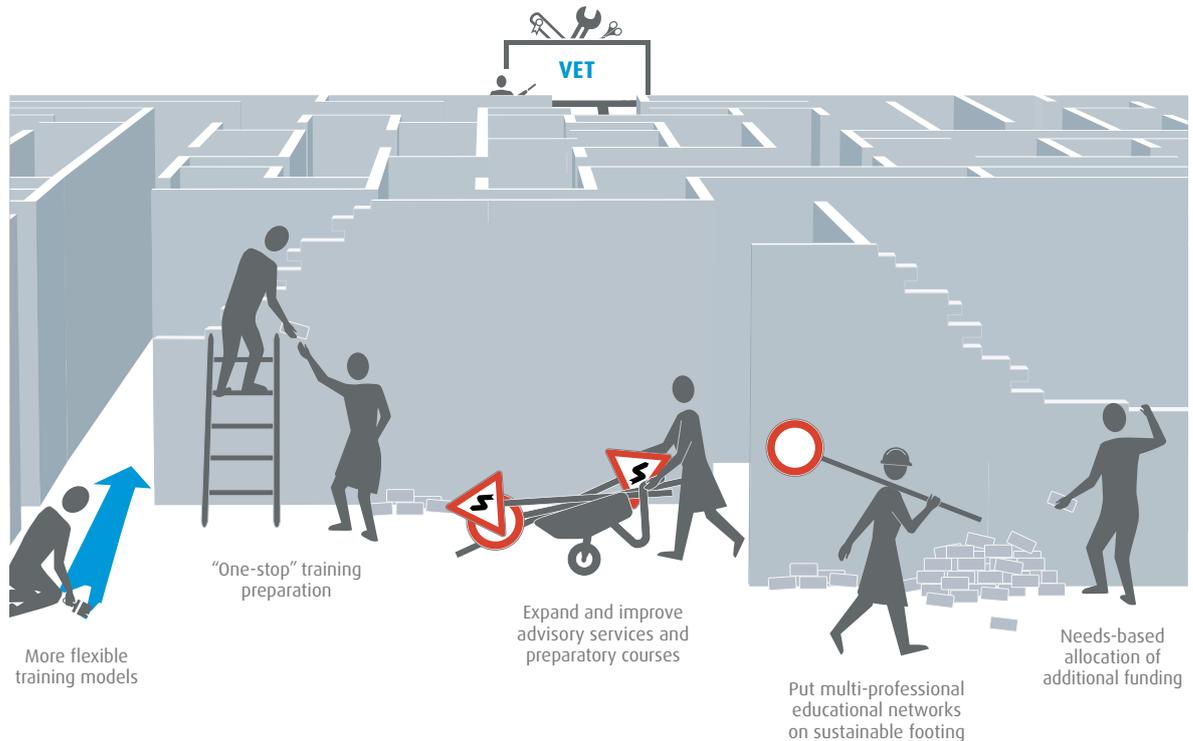
Slovenian and Spanish case-study municipalities are more of a maze. Despite the available access routes, newcomers can in actual fact be excluded on account of their age, residence status and complicated regulations. Also, users often find the range of language courses, preparatory programmes and support measures confusing and, given their existing needs, these are also often in short supply (see 3.1)

The Member States’ regulatory concerns when it comes to managing and controlling immigration are understandable – such as the interest in avoiding creating the “wrong” incentives for subsequent migration movements and, where no need for protection can be established and asylum applications are rejected, being able to enforce returns or use funding in a targeted manner. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that some groups which previously had subordinate access to the labour market are sometimes allowed to remain permanently. Failing to invest in their VET thus also has a negative impact on long-term labour market integration and does not tap into the immigration countries’ potentials. Even those who are legally entitled to full access often find themselves in a maze of structural detours on their path to VET. That is why it can be regarded as a positive development that all four case-study countries have already (to varying degrees) adopted useful structures and approaches which open up access routes and which can be further built upon in order to further ease the path to VET.

Providing advisory services and support for those who want to undergo training on a more continuous basis as well as **“one-stop” training preparation** within firmly established structures can be a great help in this respect (for good local practice examples, see 3.2; see Figure 3). This concept encompasses educational guidance for young newcomers from the moment they arrive until they begin their VET and beyond. The entire preparatory phase is thus organised by one actor or network of actors across educational stages. Ideally, migrants interested in starting VET can thus not only be prepared for a smooth transition to VET but can also be helped to acquire a recognised school leaving certificate. Especially during transitional phases, for instance between VET preparatory measures, this

48 Articles 14 and 16 Directive 2013/33/EU; see 3.1.

Figure 3 Easing the path to vocational education and training



Source: SVR Research Unit/Julia Schorcht 2020

can help build bridges so that those thinking about dropping out can be identified at any early stage and persuaded not to do so. One key factor is the work of local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations, whose staff play a decisive role when it comes to shaping and granting access to education and training. If these local "gatekeepers" work together and network available measures even more closely (for positive examples, see Chapter 4), then young newcomers will be able to navigate their way through the maze towards VET more easily. Training structures need to be adapted (5.1); what are also needed are sustainable, multi-professional networks (5.2). Both these aspects require additional "top-down" support. That is why the following recommendations focus on the authorities responsible for educational, labour and regulatory matters at regional and national level, in addition to supporting measures at EU level (see Figure 3).

### 5.1 Getting training structures ready for "diversity as the norm"

The Bologna reforms Europeanised course-based structures in the higher education sector, harmonised them to a certain extent and made them more permeable. When it comes to VET systems, by contrast, newcomers to Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Spain and other European countries have structures and traditions which still vary considerably (see Chapter 2 and 3.1). Future adaptation processes will need to take these country-specific realities into account. At the same time, many EU Member States face similar challenges when it comes to adapting their national and regional education and vocational training systems to meet the task of integrating newcomers:

**More flexible training models:** Experience gained in the eight case-study municipalities indicates that even highly motivated migrants often falter when faced with formal barriers to traditional full training. They are often not allowed to take preparatory courses

because they are too old, do not (yet) have a secure residence status or because no places are available for them on the relevant courses. And even if it looks like they may be allowed to take part, many cannot afford to do so or do not have time to: school-based VET, which is the norm in Spain and Slovenia, as well as in Austria and Germany in the care sector, for instance, is usually unpaid and adult education courses are often fee-based. Although there are a variety of education and training funding programmes, not all newcomers are eligible for such funding. As vocational training tends to be full time, opportunities for earning money are limited. Young newcomers interested in VET also face the additional burden of having to learn the local language. That in particular applies where their learning environment is not conducive to studying, as is the case in some communal accommodation, where they can neither get a good night's sleep nor find a quiet place to work (3.1). More flexible training models can, therefore, help more young migrants across Europe to begin and to complete their education and training. **In recent years language and preparatory courses in the case-study municipalities have already been geared more specifically to newcomers' needs, but access modalities should be reviewed once more (maximum age at entry, residence status etc.), as they sometimes hold back highly motivated migrants (see SVR Research Unit 2020). In addition, the rules and regulations applicable to VET should be made more flexible.** The option of doing training part time in Austria and Germany is one example (although one which is as yet being taken only relatively rarely) (see SVR 2019: 12), as it offers migrant trainees significantly more opportunity to earn money while studying for 25 to 30 hours per week, to attend a language course and thus relieve some of their financial burden and time-constraints. Staged training, an already widely applied model in the construction sector in Germany, shows similar potential: after two years of their staged training, trainees obtain a qualification and have the option of continuing for another year in which to specialise. School-based VET in Germany, for instance in the care sector, already encompasses shorter training courses for less specialised nursing assistants. These have already proved useful for young migrants. After completing their nursing assistant training, they can go on to complete full-time

nursing care training. These and other flexible training models should always apply the same standards as are applied in the traditional full training programmes and it should be very easy to transition into them to avoid ending up with a two-tier vocational training system. More flexible models like these provide migrants as well as staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations with new, target group-specific access routes to VET. These would also benefit potential local trainees, for example young parents who cannot always enter traditional full-time training for lack of time, financial resources or for personal reasons.

**Expand and improve advisory services and preparatory courses; continuous professional development for staff involved:** Practices applied in the case-study municipalities show that Slovenia and Spain in particular have gaps in their range of educational and training programmes, both in terms of language and subject-related preparations and the (often school-based) VET itself. Austria and Germany, despite their comparatively broad training landscape, also have their shortcomings, for example when it comes to access to German language classes during training or, in some cases, when it comes to the number of in-company training places, which has been dwindling in some regions and sectors for years. Further, the measures available are not always oriented to newcomers' needs and are hard to access because of restrictive entry requirements (see 3.1; see Klemm 2016: 15; Baethge/Seeber 2016: 45–46). In some places committed individuals often close these gaps, but in order to do so they do unpaid overtime (Chapter 4). However, whether and how much that happens is still too dependent on the goodwill of individuals and is thus a matter of luck. **In view of the economic recovery which will be needed after the Covid-19 pandemic subsides and to promote rapid integration, what is important now is to prioritise, at political level, the matter of access to education and training and to align local capacities more on actual needs.** Our analysis reveals the already remarkable levels of commitment when it comes to helping newcomers at local level. In order to tap into this potential in a targeted manner, however, what is needed is support from the public sector – at regional, national and EU level.



To equip those working in the network as best as possible with what they need, staff working in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations need to take courses at local level. Staff report that many questions remain unanswered: How are they supposed to find out what relevant skills newcomers already have? What are their chances of being allowed to remain permanently? What is their situation in life? What access routes into the education system does that (not) open up? Unanswered questions like these lead to uncertainty, which can, ultimately, go hand in hand with access to education and training being disproportionately restrictive (Chapter 4). For that reason, the competent authorities should invest more in promoting advanced training courses which deal with the consequences of forced migration, with issues relating to residence law and other qualification needs. The cross-sectional nature of these issues means that training courses at municipal level need to be practical and available in the long term, and that they should address a multitude of different professionals, including teaching staff, staff in intermediary organisations and possibly also staff in public authorities. As well as expanding the range of continuous professional development opportunities (incl. through multi-professional networks, see 5.2), the framework conditions should be made more conducive to such continuous professional development, for example by enabling public-sector employees in authorities and educational establishments to attend those courses by relaxing the rules on release time (see SVR Research Unit/Mercator Institute 2016: 22-23).

**More needs-based allocation of additional funding:** Europe is in the midst of another economic crisis. This was, not least, evident in the controversial debate regarding the introduction of a European Recovery Fund (“corona bonds”) in the summer of 2020. Over the coming months and years, national and EU economic stimulus packages will likely mean that the room for making those financial investments recommended in this chapter to expand local training capacities will be extremely small. That is why the additional funding, which is in limited supply, should not be distributed indiscriminately but based on data: In a first step, the regional and national funding authorities could identify those places and districts which are in particular

need of funding based on standardised, small-scale social space data, for instance the unemployment rate and the proportion of foreigners in individual districts and (strongly fluctuating) occupancy rates in refugee accommodation. Depending on the EU Member State in question, national and regional data sets could be used for that. In Germany, for example, data on social benefits provided by the Federal Employment Agency can be used. This information enables the level of migration and the social burden in individual municipalities to be determined (for more information on such calculations, see Schräpler 2009). In a second step, the municipalities would then use these data and, supplementing them with the opinions of experts working in education and labour authorities, decide where to deploy the additional national and regional funding for preparatory and training courses for newcomers. **The margins of discretion available within municipalities would thus be expanded to include a data-based decision-making basis.** This can give local staff greater certainty when they take decisions about where to deploy additional funding to support migrants and during which preparatory phases. EU funding should continue to be used *in addition* – i.e. not instead of – national efforts and on the basis of competitive procurement criteria in order to support innovative as well as tried and tested training models and preparatory programmes. The European Commission’s target group-oriented AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds) and ESF (European Social Fund, from 2021 on European Social Fund Plus) programmes should be continued and given more funding. **In principle, when allocating additional regional, national and EU funding the defined use should, on the one hand, leave sufficient room for priorities to be set at local level and, on the other hand, target groups should be defined sufficiently clearly so that funding actually leads to more targeted support for newcomers.** The positive experiences gained in applying models and structures which involve continuous “one-stop” guidance and support in the case-study municipalities serve as an important reference point in that regard (see 3.3).

## 5.2 Putting multi-professional educational networks on a sustainable footing

It will only be possible to deliver “one-stop” training preparation – that is generalised preparatory measures which encompass several educational stages and lead to a recognised secondary school qualification (e.g. a lower secondary school qualification in Germany) – if all those involved cooperate closely. What is important is that staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations are networked and regularly share information about what they are doing and what their goals are. Local networks exist in many places across Europe and they aim to provide smoother access to education and training. However, these networks are often informal in nature or geared specifically to one particular group of players (e.g. school networks) and are generally highly dependent on the commitment of individuals. Multi-professional educational networks in which teaching staff work with staff in public authorities, volunteers and other committed individuals to shape and grant access to education and training for newcomers are, to date, often only part of pilot projects which, according to interviewees, not even local specialists are sufficiently aware of. Nevertheless, the “gatekeepers” confirm that putting multi-professional networks on a sustainable footing strongly promotes access to education and training for newcomers (see 4.2). In order to be able to better tap into this promising potential across Europe, the following conditions need to be met:

- **The relevant partner organisations must be involved:** Whether an organisation joins a multi-professional network is very much dependent on local network structures and activities and on the size of the municipality. (Vocational) schools, training companies, authorities responsible for labour, education and regulatory matters, intermediary organisations, as well as, for instance, charities were identified in the case-study municipalities as key partner organisations when it comes to access to education and training. A decision needs to be taken at local level on which partner organisation will host the network. One established option is to use facilities available at municipal level, such as the benefits authority or, where available, a local integration or

welcome centre. What is important is that this facility already needs to be blazing a trail within the respective municipality when it comes to newcomers’ access to education and training.

- **Common goals and binding structures:** Partner organisations should set achievable goals as regards jointly shaping and granting access to education and training and should then put in place the relevant measures and quantifiable indicators in relation to those goals (see Innovationsbüro Fachkräfte für die Region 2012: 14–16). These should be put down in writing. Moreover, those involved should draw up joint rules on resolving internal conflicts and set these down in writing, too. A regular format, such as a round table, should provide the basis for operative implementation of these strategic goals. Participants then meet regularly to coordinate their respective activities and develop new goals. Agreeing joint targets provides a valuable point of orientation when actors are cooperating closely for the first time, especially public authorities and intermediary organisations. They also serve as a transparent point of reference for resolving conflicting goals which may arise. Instead of having to reinvent the proverbial wheel, existing formats and networks, for instance school networks or specialist initiatives, should be examined to see whether they can be expanded in terms of content and multi-professionalism.
- **Appoint coordinators (“caretakers”):** The individual partners within a network rarely have sufficient human and material resources to initiate a network and keep it running smoothly. What is needed in order to put networks on a sustainable footing is a coordination office which is responsible for organising the network, for representing the network and mediating when internal conflicts arise. This “caretaker” should, ideally, be very familiar with local structures, actors and challenges faced. Start-up financing (e.g. from the ESF) can initially be used to fund the coordination office. In the medium term, partners in the network should provide at least some of the funding, for instance through membership fees, as is already standard practice in some more institutionalised skills initiatives.



- **Maintain contact with supra-regional levels:** Not all challenges can be solved unilaterally at local level. Sometimes “top-down” structural adaptations are necessary (see 5.1) and input is needed on what solutions are applied in other municipalities. Multi-professional networks should, therefore, also be in constant contact with regional and, possibly, also national and even EU decision-makers. Jointly organised dialogue forums, including online events, can be used to that end.

The sometimes very dedicated cooperation between public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations proves the widespread popularity of multi-professional networks at municipal level. Often, though, they lack binding structures and long-term funding. That makes cooperation more difficult, as experience shows that even building mutual trust within the local training landscape – a basic requirement for long-term, effective cooperation – takes around two years (see Gogolin et al. 2011: 29). The IvAF networks which are funded by Germany’s Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs and the ESF are a good example of co-funded multi-professional education and training networks (see 4.2), although even this funding is project-based.

Previous experience of project-funded education and training projects shows the importance of having a reliable financial basis. As soon as the additional person hours allocated to taking part in a model project are cancelled, partner organisations which used to receive funding find it difficult to cope with the additional work within the established cooperation structures (Huber 2012: 6). That is why regional, national and EU funding providers should not focus exclusively on start-up financing and pilot projects, but should seek more opportunities to provide sustainable, jointly financed support to multi-professional networks within regular structures.

## 6 Outlook

Both EU-internal migration movements as well as immigration will continue to be a reality on the continent of Europe. Vocational education and training (VET) represents a huge opportunity when it comes to the economic and social integration of future migrants. In future, EU Member States should make resolute use of this opportunity – approaches are already in use in the case-study Member States and can be expanded in a targeted fashion.

VET is an important link in the educational chain, and permeability should be a key goal. Young newcomers should also be given the opportunity to pursue their personal educational goals in line with their skills and ambitions – right up to higher education and beyond. EU-wide research on the permeability of education systems shows that some EU Member States have already done a great deal to dovetail access to school-based, vocational and academic courses (CEDEFOP 2012: 3). It is important that other Member States follow suit.

Moreover, what is needed in future is not only more permeability between different educational stages in a Member State, but also more permeability in VET between Member States, and this should be based on the educational paths of migrants which practitioners have observed (see Wolter et al. 2014: 34; CEDEFOP 2012; 2020a). Previous projects in this area, such as the Copenhagen process or the development of comparable evaluation systems (e.g. the European Credit System for VET), need to be followed up and fleshed out through concrete implementation projects. EU harmonisation and the increased permeability of degree-course structures following the EU-wide Bologna reforms can provide a model for this. (Future) trainees could then more easily transfer between national education and vocational training systems. That way, young newcomers will have a “real” shot at embarking on an educational path which suits them and ultimately leads to success; that will also lead to their successful economic and social integration in their country of immigration.

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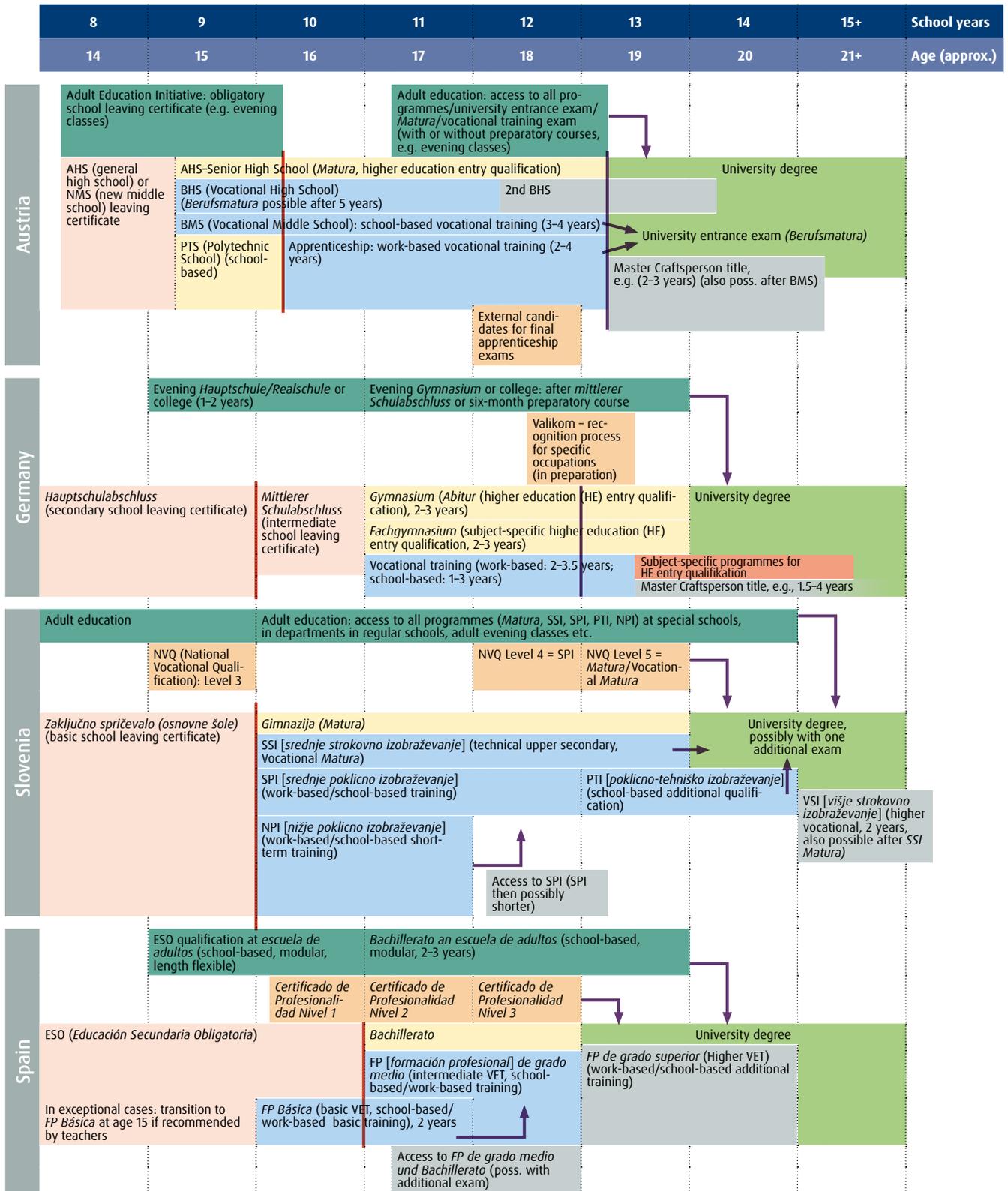


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Figure

Figure 4 Overview of education systems in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain





## Key

ISCED 2
ISCED 34 (general education)
ISCED 35 (vocational education)
ISCED 4
ISCED 5
ISCED 6-8
Adult education
Validation procedure

End of compulsory general schooling  
(Germany varies across federal states, usually after 9 to 10 years)

End of compulsory vocational training  
(Germany varies across federal states, generally at age 18, in Austria also at age 18)

NB: The above figure provides a general overview of the structure of each of the education systems. Please note that some specific sub-national regulations may not be included.

Source: CEDEFOP 2019, own compilation and presentation

## Tables

Table 4 Interviewees in the eight case-study municipalities: Newcomers

Newcomers				
Interview no.	Country of origin	Gender	Age at interview	City
<b>Austria</b>				
1	Syria	m	20	Innsbruck
2	Chechnya	m	23	Innsbruck
3	Afghanistan	f	24	Innsbruck
4	Iraq	f	21	Innsbruck
5	Afghanistan	m	24	Vienna
6	Somalia	f	23	Vienna
7	Afghanistan	m	20	Vienna
<b>Germany</b>				
1	Syria	f	19	Chemnitz
2	Afghanistan	f	22	Chemnitz
3	Afghanistan	f	22	Chemnitz
4	Bulgaria	f	23	Chemnitz
5	Afghanistan	m	26*	Chemnitz
6	Afghanistan	m	19	Chemnitz
7	Afghanistan	m	20	Chemnitz
8	Afghanistan	m	20	Chemnitz
9	Eritrea	m	27*	Munich
10	Sierra Leone	m	22	Munich
11	Iraq	m	18	Munich
12	Syria	m	21	Munich
13	Senegal	m	24	Munich
14	Afghanistan	f	21	Munich
15	Afghanistan	m	18	Munich
16	Afghanistan	m	21	Munich
<b>Slovenia</b>				
1	Bosnia-Herzegovina	m	21	Ljubljana
2	Syria	f	25	Ljubljana
3	Palestine	m	16	Ljubljana



Newcomers				
Interview no.	Country of origin	Gender	Age at interview	City
4	Russia	f	22	Ljubljana
5	Bosnia-Herzegovina	f	25	Koper
6	Serbia	f	20	Koper
7	Serbia	f	20	Koper

### Spain

1	Pakistan	m	25	Barcelona
2	Morocco	m	18	Barcelona
3	Belarus	f	19	Barcelona
4	Bolivia	f	18	Barcelona
5	Bolivia	f	23	Barcelona
6	Honduras	f	19	Barcelona
7	Venezuela	f	18	Terrassa
8	Morocco	m	18	Terrassa
9	Morocco	m	18	Terrassa
10	Colombia	f	23	Terrassa

\* arrived at age 22 and 23, respectively

Source: SVR Research Unit

**Table 5 Interviewees in the eight case-study municipalities: Local staff**

Staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations			
Interview no.	Institution	Gender	City
<b>Austria</b>			
1	Educational establishment (educational provider)	f	Innsbruck
2	Educational establishment (educational provider)	f	Innsbruck
3	Educational establishment (school)	f	Innsbruck
4	Authority	f	Innsbruck
5	Educational establishment (training company)	m	Innsbruck
6	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Innsbruck
7	Educational establishment (vocational school)	m	Innsbruck
8	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	m	Vienna
9	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Vienna

Staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations			
Interview no.	Institution	Gender	City
10	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Vienna
11	Authority	f	Vienna
12	Educational establishment (educational provider)	f	Vienna
13	Educational establishment (vocational school)	m	Vienna
14	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Vienna
15	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Vienna
<b>Germany</b>			
1	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Chemnitz
2	Intermediary organisation	m	Chemnitz
3	Educational establishment (privately funded)	m	Chemnitz
4	Authority	m	Chemnitz
5	Authority	m	Chemnitz
6	Authority	m	Chemnitz
7	Authority	f	Chemnitz
8	Educational establishment (training company)	m	Chemnitz
9	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Chemnitz
10	Authority	f	Chemnitz
11	Educational establishment (training company)	m	Chemnitz
12	Authority	m	Chemnitz
13	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Chemnitz
14	Educational establishment (training company)	m	Chemnitz
15	Educational establishment (secondary school)	m	Chemnitz
16	Educational establishment (school)	f	Chemnitz
17	Educational establishment (training company)	f	Chemnitz
18	Educational establishment (vocational school)	m	Chemnitz
19	Educational establishment (school)	m	Chemnitz
20	Authority	f	Dresden (state level)
21	Authority	m	Dresden (state level)
22	Educational establishment (vocational school)	f	Munich
23	Educational establishment (vocational school)	f	Munich
24	Educational establishment (training company)	m	Munich
25	Educational establishment (vocational school)	f	Munich



Staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations			
Interview no.	Institution	Gender	City
26	Educational establishment (vocational school)	m	Munich
27	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Munich
28	Authority	m	Munich (state level)
29	Authority	m	Munich (state level)
30	Educational establishment (training company)	m	Munich
31	Educational establishment (training company)	m	Munich
32	Authority	f	Munich
33	Authority	f	Munich
34	Authority	m	Munich
35	Authority	f	Munich
36	Educational establishment (vocational school)	f	Munich
37	Authority	f	Federal level

#### Slovenia

1	Authority	m	Ljubljana
2	Educational establishment (educational provider)	f	Ljubljana
3	Intermediary organisation	f	Ljubljana
4	Educational establishment (school)	f	Ljubljana
5	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	m	Ljubljana
6	Authority	f	Koper
7	Educational establishment (school)	f	Koper
8	Educational establishment (educational provider)	m	Koper

#### Spain

1	Authority	m	Barcelona
2	Educational establishment (vocational school)	f	Barcelona
3	Authority	f	Barcelona
4	Authority	f	Barcelona
5	Authority	f	Barcelona
6	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	m	Barcelona
7	Authority	f	Barcelona
8	Authority	f	Barcelona
9	Authority	f	Barcelona
10	Educational establishment (school)	f	Barcelona

Staff in local authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations			
Interview no.	Institution	Gender	City
11	Authority	f	Terrassa
12	Educational establishment (vocational school)	f	Terrassa
13	Educational establishment (vocational school)	f	Terrassa
14	Educational establishment (school)	f	Terrassa
15	Educational establishment (school)	f	Terrassa
16	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	m	Terrassa
17	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Terrassa
18	Educational establishment (educational provider)	m	Terrassa
19	Authority	f	Terrassa
20	Authority	f	Terrassa
21	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Terrassa
22	Intermediary organisation (NGO)	f	Terrassa

Source: SVR Research Unit



## List of figures

Figure 1	The path to vocational training: A maze .....	13
Figure 2	Ideal paths to vocational training for newcomers in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain .....	18
Figure 3	Easing the path to vocational education and training .....	41
Figure 4	Overview of education systems in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain .....	54

## List of tables

Table 1	Characteristics of VET in Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain .....	11
Table 2	Key players shaping and granting access to vocational training in the eight case-study municipalities .....	30
Table 3	Additional commitment of staff in public authorities, educational establishments and intermediary organisations shown to newcomers in eight European municipalities .....	33
Table 4	Interviewees in the eight case-study municipalities: Newcomers .....	56
Table 5	Interviewees in the eight case-study municipalities: Local staff .....	57

## List of boxes

Box 1	Migration to the four case-study countries since 2014 .....	10
Box 2	The Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on educational integration .....	21
Box 3	EU and federal measures to help newcomers begin VET in Germany .....	28
Box 4	Research based on institutionalism and street-level bureaucracy .....	32

SVR's Research Unit: Study 2020-1

**Published by**

The Expert Council's Research Unit  
Neue Promenade 6  
10178 Berlin  
Tel.: +49 (0)30 288 86 59-0  
Fax: +49 (0)30 288 86 59-11  
info@svr-migration.de  
www.svr-migration.de

**Responsibility for content under German press law**

Dr Cornelia Schu

**Designed by**

Gathmann Michaelis und Freunde, Essen · gmf-design.de

**Printed by**

KEUCK Medien GmbH & Co. KG, Straelen

© SVR GmbH, Berlin 2020

ISSN 2364-7531



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## About the Expert Council's Research Unit

The Expert Council's Research Unit conducts independent, practice-oriented research projects in the field of integration and migration. The project-based studies are dedicated to emerging trends and issues and focus mainly on the fields of education and refugees/asylum. The Research Unit complements the work of the Expert Council. The core funding is provided by Stiftung Mercator.

The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration is based on an initiative of Stiftung Mercator and the Volkswagen Foundation. The initiative further includes: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Freudenberg Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stifterverband and Vodafone Foundation Germany. The Expert Council is an independent nonprofit, monitoring, evaluating and advisory committee on integration and migration policy issues that provides action-oriented policy recommendations.

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