This report reflects the point of view of literacy professionals assembled in this network. It is still a work in progress since we continue to gather and update information on literacy in Romania up to the year 2015. The contents of this publication may be reproduced in part, except for commercial purposes, provided the extract is preceded by a reference to “ELINET”, followed by the date of publication of the document.

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A PERFORMANCE IN LITERACY
This section of the report draws on data from PIAAC the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills, to describe the reading performance of adults in Austria. Our focus is on low achievers, those who scored on the lower levels of the survey: Level 1 (scores from 176 points to fewer than 226 points) and below Level 1 (scores below 176 points).

**At Level 1,** adults can read relatively short digital or print continuous, non-continuous, or mixed texts to locate a single piece of information, which is identical to or synonymous with the information given in the question or directive. These texts contain little competing information. Adults performing at this level can complete simple forms, understand basic vocabulary, determine the meaning of sentences, and read continuous texts with a degree of fluency.

**Below Level 1,** individuals can read brief texts on familiar topics and locate a single piece of specific information identical in form to information in the question or directive. They are not required to understand the structure of sentences or paragraphs and only basic vocabulary knowledge is required.

In this report results are compared to the average of the 17 EU countries which took part in PIAAC.

### 1 Average Performance in Literacy

Austria performs slightly but significantly below the EU-17 average of 271 scoring an average of 269.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Literacy Performance</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Average Literacy Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in <strong>bold</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The lowest 10 percent of Austrian participants perform better than the lowest 10 percent of the EU-17 average, and the best perform significantly worse. Accordingly the gap between top and bottom performers is 110 points in Austria (110), smaller than the EU-17 average of 117.

Table 1.2 presents the spread of literacy achievement of adults in Austria and EU-17 countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.2 Spread of Literacy Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th Percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**
2 Gaps - Low Literate Population

13% of the employed and 22% of the unemployed perform at Level 1 and below. The proportion of adults performing at Level 1 or below is slightly bigger among women than among men. The proportion is bigger among those who live with a spouse or partner than among those living alone. The gap between speakers of other languages and those whose home language is the same as the test language is greater than on EU-17 average.

2.1 Language

Migration has no causal relation with literacy. What is significant however is the oral language competence of the migrant. As part of the survey participants were asked if their native language is the same as the test language. 38% of those with a different test language scored at Level 1 or below compared to only 12% whose native language was the same as the test language. The comparable figures for the EU-17 average are 34% and 14%.

Table 2.1 Test language and Native Language at Level 1 or below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 or below</th>
<th>Test language not same as native language</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Test language same as native language</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>34 %</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

2.2 Age

The percentage of Austrians scoring at or below Level 1 increases with age: from 12% among the age group 24 and below to nearly 25% among those aged 55 plus. The international average is similar. Only in the age group of 45-54 year-olds the proportion of those performing at Level 1 or below is significantly smaller than in the comparable EU-17 group (16% vs. 18%).

Table 2.2 Age at Level 1 or below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>EU-17</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 or less</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 plus</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**
2.3 Gender

In the EU-17 average the sexes show nearly no significant differences, but in Austria they do. 15% of men and 16% of women scored at or below Level 1. The comparable figures for the EU-17 average are nearly 17% of men and 16% of women.

Table 2.3 Gender at Level 1 or below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

2.4 Family

In Austria 16% of those living with a spouse or partner scored at or below Level 1 compared to 14% of those living alone, which is a significant difference. The international average is similar.

Table 2.4 Living with spouse or partner among those who scored at or below Level 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living with spouse or partner</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria Yes</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17 Yes</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

2.5 Employment

13% of the employed in Austria perform at or below Level 1, as do 21% of the unemployed, and 23% of those out of the labour force. The differences between the group of employed to the other both groups are significant to each other. In the EU-17 average as well, the differences between all these groups are significant to each other.

Table 2.5 Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Out of the labour force</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>21 %</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>23 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>22 %</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**
## 3 Skills Use

Participants in the Survey of Adult Skills were asked about their writing and reading at home, and at work, if employed. In the table below a higher score shows more frequent use.

### Table 3 Literacy Skills Used At Home and At Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Writing Skills</th>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Skills</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at Home</td>
<td></td>
<td>at Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index of Use</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Index of Use</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>at Work</th>
<th></th>
<th>at Work</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index of Use</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Index of Use</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

With regard to the use of *writing skills at home*, adults in Austria performed like the average across EU-17 countries, but differ significantly from the EU-17 average index of use of *writing skills at work*. Use of *reading skills at home* and *at work* also differ significantly and positively from the corresponding indexes of EU-17 average. These higher indexes reveal that adults in Austria use their literacy skills more often than the average across EU-17 countries, with the exception of the use of writing skills at home.
4 Literacy Gaps

4.1 Parental Education

Table 4.1 presents the spread of literacy achievement by adults reporting their parents’ highest education level. Parental level of education is a significant factor in Austria as in the rest of the EU countries that took part in PIAAC.

In Austria there is a difference of 25 points between those reporting that neither parent attained upper secondary and those reporting that at least one parent attained secondary (249 vs. 274). Furthermore, those reporting that at least one parent completed tertiary level education perform significantly better than those whose parents attained secondary (289 vs. 274). The same pattern repeats itself in the EU-17 average (253 vs. 277 vs. 294).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lower Secondary or Below</th>
<th>At least one parent secondary/post-secondary</th>
<th>At least one parent tertiary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

4.2 Books at Home

Table 4.2 shows the spread of achievement of adults by reported number of books at home. This is a common measure of cultural capital.

In Austria, 65% of adults report having fewer than 100 books at home. On average these achieve 258 points in PIAAC, 32 points below the Austrian adults reporting that they have more than 100 books at home (258 vs. 290). This gap is similar to the categories in EU-17 average (31), but there are 5% more adults reporting having less than 100 books in Austria than on average across EU countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average score of those with fewer than 100 books</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Average score of those with more than 100 books</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**
4.3 Language

In Austria, there are 5 percent points more adults reporting that the test language is not their native language than on average across EU countries. These Austrian adults, who don’t speak German as their native language, achieve significantly fewer points in the PIAAC test than those who report that their native language is the same as the test language (239 vs. 274).

Table 4.3 shows the spread of literacy achievement referring to the test language and adults’ native language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language of the Test and Native Language</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-17</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant differences between the country and EU-17 in **bold**

The distribution in Austria of native-speaking and non-native-speaking participants is similar to the EU-17 average. Those Austrian participants whose native language is the same as the test language perform like native speakers on EU-17. Those whose native language is not the same scored significantly worse than the average across EU-17 countries (239 vs. 246). Accordingly the Austrian gap between the native and non-native speakers is 35 points, bigger than comparable EU-17 average (28 points).
5 Participation in Adult Education - Low Literate Population

In Austria the rate of participation in formal or non-formal adult education by adults on Level 1 or below is slightly but significantly smaller than the average across the OECD-Countries.

Table 5.1 Participation Rates in Formal and Non-Formal Adult Education on Level 1 or below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participation Rates</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>29 %</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD-Average*</td>
<td>31 %</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For technical reasons we report the OECD average here.

The non-formal education index incorporates participation in seminars and workshops, private lessons and open or e-learning formats. Table 5.2 shows the percentage of low literate and high literate adults participating in all four types of non-formal education.

Table 5.2 Percentages of Low and High Literate Adults Participating in Non-Formal Education and Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Open or distance education</th>
<th>Seminars or workshops</th>
<th>Private lessons</th>
<th>On the job training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1 or Below</td>
<td>Level 1 or Below</td>
<td>Level 1 or Below</td>
<td>Level 1 or Below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8 %</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD-Average*</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* see above

Austrian adults at Level 1 and below are most likely to participate in seminars or workshops or enter on the job training (organised by supervisors or similar facilitators). The participation rate of low literate Austrians is above OECD average regarding seminars or workshops (12% vs. 9%), it is below OECD average regarding on the job training (11% vs. 17%). Open or distance education does not seem to play a major role for those performing on Level 1 and below.
B LITERACY POLICY
1 Provision

1.1 What types of adult literacy provision are there? What do you consider to be adult literacy provision in your country?

Adult literacy provision has been available in Austria since the late 1980s. Initially only reading and writing courses were offered, with courses in mathematics and ICT skills, as well as autonomous learning, added to the offer in the late 90s.

Basic skills provision in Austria is offered in two streams: provision for people for speakers of other languages and provision for people with German as their first language. Courses for speakers of other languages aim to combine German-language content with training in literacy and numeracy, whereas the basic skills offer for German native speakers contains no content on language acquisition.

Basic education has gained in importance as social conditions have changed. The level of education that was needed to function in the workplace of 30 years ago is now inadequate. Lifelong learning has become extremely important to finding a job and keeping it. To get access to lifelong learning functional skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are essential.

According to the European Commission, the OECD and in accordance with national implementation concepts (such as the definition of “Skills for Life” in the UK), the partners of the network basic skills and literacy in Austria consider the following competencies as elements of basic skills:

Writing, reading, oral language skills, listening, arithmetic, dealing with data and figures, dealing with dimensions and shapes; ICT (information technology) and the key skills: communication, problem solving, working with others and autonomous learning, GSOL (German for speakers of other languages)

Basic skills – reading, writing, numeracy, ICT – are considered a prerequisite foundation for the acquisition of additional skills.

1.2 How is adult literacy provision funded?

The majority of basic skills provision is offered free of charge to participants. Costs are met by the State, through funding bodies including the Federal Ministry of Education and Women, the states and municipalities. The Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection delivers basic skills courses via the labour market service. Since 2012, basic skills offers have been provided through the Austrian initiative for adult education. This initiative is part of the action lines for Lifelong Learning strategy in Austria. Basic skills provision and lower secondary education are promoted in this initiative’s framework. The target group of the basic skills programme area consists of those people who never had the opportunity to gain such skills, irrespective of language, birth or completed compulsory education. The target group of the lower secondary education programme area consists of people without a graduation in this level. The costs are covered equally by the nine Austrian provinces and the Federal government.

1.3 Is there a statutory entitlement to literacy provision up to a certain level?

On September 1st, 2012, the Federal Law on the Acquisition of compulsory school education came into force. Adults who have not finished compulsory school have the right to complete compulsory
school (e.g. the successful completion of the 8th grade) free of charge. This law should facilitate the step into Lifelong Learning and career pathways.

1.4 What is the rate of participation in adult learning, workplace training and liberal adult education?

The structural indicator “lifelong learning” has been developed to measure the further training activities of adults in Austria. This indicator measures the proportion of the population aged 25-64 years participating in further education and training.

Participation in further training activities in the form of courses and training has increased significantly in recent years. Participation is linked to level of education: the higher the individual’s level of education the more likely he or she is to participate in further training.

Data show that in 2013 an annual average of 13.9% of adults participated in learning. About 9% of the total population aged 15 years or above participated in a further training or course in the 4 week reference period\(^1\).

According to the Adult Education Survey, 45.5% of the population attended further education and training in adult education. In comparison, 5.9% of the population aged 25 to 64 years old had attended training offered by the public schools and universities.

1.5 Are studies available on factors that inhibit or prevent participation in literacy education and in using literacy outside educational contexts? If yes, what are the factors?

A number of relevant studies are available:

- Statistik Austria (2013): Erwachsenenbildungserhebung 2011/12. Ergebnisse des Adult Education Survey (AES), Wien\(^2\)

According to Statistik Austria (2013) (p. 38-39), the most commonly cited barriers to participation are:

- No time due to family commitments (12.9%)
- Training is not compatible with working hours/takes place at an inconvenient time (11.8 %)
- No appropriate training provision within walking distance (7.7%)
- Education too expensive (7.2%).

---

\(^1\) Adult Education Survey: file:///C:/Users/berndl.INTERN/Desktop/erwachsenenbildung_201112_ergebnisse_des_aes.pdf, accessed on 02.10.2015
\(^2\) See file:///C:/Users/berndl.INTERN/Desktop/erwachsenenbildung_201112_ergebnisse_des_aes.pdf, accessed on 02.10.2015
\(^3\) See http://www.forba.at/data/downloads/file/383-FB%202010%20LLEGQUA.pdf, accessed on 02.10.2015
\(^4\) See http://www.peripherie.ac.at/_lccms_/downloadarchive/00069/Empirischeuntersuchung.pdf, accessed on 02.10.2015
Breaking these figures down by gender shows that women (17.5%) find it harder to balance education with work and family life than men (8.2%). For unemployed people, cited barriers include:

- Training too expensive (25.5%)
- No support from public administration (e.g. labour market service) (19.7%)
- No appropriate training provision within reach (12.4%)
- No suitable education (11.2%)
- Unable to meet entry conditions (11.1%)

1.6 What progression routes are there from adult basic education courses to VET/HE courses?

Basic skills courses are not part of a formal qualification path within the Austrian Adult Education system. They are used by adults as an entry to Lifelong Learning. Completion of a basic skills course is the first positive learning experience for many participants. Basic skills offers are a gate opener to regular offers in adult education. Participants gain more self-esteem with learning, they try out things, they are not afraid of entering training or a course any more. Participants use the acquired security in the literacy, numeracy and computing skills in different ways:

- As a prerequisite to attend more and different further training or courses
- To refresh basic knowledge and to complete a formal qualification (i.e. compulsory school)
- As individual knowledge acquisition without further training.

People who finished compulsory school are entitled to attend the upper secondary school and study at a University later on.

1.7 Does a right to information, advice and guidance (IAG) regarding educational opportunities exist? If yes, who provides this IAG?

There is an Austria-wide educational and career counselling system. Educational and career counselling networks are established in all provinces and these serve as the initial contact points for those interested in education.

The aim is to build a powerful, comprehensive and independent educational and career counselling system in Austria that is easy to access. It is necessary to establish quality standards and professionalisation Austria-wide in cooperation with all organisations offering education and career counselling. A process of external quality assurance for counselling institutions has been developed.

Access to information: the implementation of virtual one-stop shops for educational and career information was developed on the portal www.erwachsenenbildung.at. The Course Funding Database is a nationwide database where individuals can find funding for further training. The bib-atlas provides an overview of the wide variety of information, guidance and counselling services for education and professions. Eduard (EDUcation Austria Resource Directory) – the Austria wide search service for education programmes in adult education – facilitates the search for further education.

Networking and sustainability: the existing know-how of education counsellors should be made more accessible. Concrete measures are: networking at www.bib-infonet.at, regional networking meetings, newsletters and Expert workshops.

5 See http://erwachsenenbildung.at/themen/eb_in_oesterreich/praxisbeispiele/projekte_bildungsberatung.php #projekte, accessed on 02.10.2015
Knowledge Management 2.0: The Bib Wiki – the wiki for education counselling – represents a new way forward. It aims to develop a professional and cross-organisational tool for knowledge management.

Professionalisation: In this context the Federal Institute of Adult Education, as a competence centre, plays a crucial role. The graduation to an education and career counsellor as part of the training academy Austria will ensure a uniform qualification level in the coming years.

2 Quality monitoring

2.1 Is there an inspection service to monitor the quality of adult literacy providers (including classroom practice)?

Most basic skills offers are promoted and handled by the Austrian Initiative for Adult Education. An accreditation group, consisting of six adult education experts, surveys the quality of applications for basic skills provision with reference to the initiative's quality guidelines. In the case of a successful accreditation, the institution then applies for funding from its provincial department with responsibility for adult education. Approval from the departments is dependent on the balance of the various courses in different programme areas and the different target groups in the particular region.

Institutions taking part in the initiative commit themselves to continuous monitoring and evaluation. A monitoring group, consisting of six experts, supervises this process and the results. By this procedure it is expected that further knowledge about the specific problems and advancements of adult education will be gained. In addition to these groups, the office of the Initiative serves as a communication platform and supports all partners. A steering committee consisting of the region's and the ministry's representatives supervises the project's strategy and design.

In practice, there is an online monitoring database for all successfully accredited providers. Information is collected about the measures, administrative data on participants (such as migration background, highest completed education and vocational education, marital status, etc.) and exit data.

Who is involved in monitoring?: The training provider delivers quarterly participant and measurement data (October, January, April and July) and the data must be entered in each case completely. The Monitoring Group evaluates the data and, in collaboration with the office, produces quarterly and annual reports. The control group rates the results. The federal data centre, the IT department of the Federal Ministry of Education and Women and an external database company are involved in the monitoring process.

Access to the Monitoring database: All successfully accredited providers obtain access to the monitoring database.

2.2 Are there national quality standards for the quality of adult literacy providers?

In Motion-Network basic skills and literacy in Austria is an Austrian-wide project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs that has developed quality standards on three levels: (1) quality standards for the training of trainers, (2) quality standards for the offers, and (3) standards for the provider of basic skills measures. These quality standards were incorporated into the curriculum ("programme planning document") of the Initiative for Adult Education. Providers of basic skills courses must meet these quality standards in order to receive funding. Where standards are not
achieved in some subsections, providers can try to achieve these standards over a predetermined period of time. For example, providers may submit a plan for ensuring the adequate training of trainers.

2.3 Are there national benchmarks/standards for adult literacy performance? How are adults’ progress in reading and writing assessed/monitored?

The learning progress in basic skills is determined based on feedback meetings between the trainers and participants. The description of the learning progress of participants comes from a one-to-one discussion between the trainer and the participant and is not shared.

The Integration Agreement is intended to enable the integration of immigrants lawfully settled in Austria. Its purpose is to provide in-depth German language skills, in particular reading and writing skills, with the aim of enabling third-country nationals to participate in the social, economic and cultural life in Austria.

The Integration Agreement is comprised of two sequential Modules. Only Module 1 is mandatory when certain residence titles have been granted. Module 2 is not mandatory, but is required for obtaining a long-term residence title (“Long-term Resident – EU”) as well as for obtaining citizenship.

Module 1 is intended to provide German language skills for in-depth basic language use (i.e. language skills at A2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Third-country nationals are obliged to complete Module 1 when first granted one of the following residence titles:

- “Red-White-Red – Card” (The Red-White-Red Card is issued for a period of twelve months and entitles the holder to fixed-term settlement and employment by a specified employer.)
- “Red-White-Red – Card Plus”
- “Settlement Permit”
- “Settlement Permit – gainful employment excluded”
- “Settlement Permit – Dependant”
- “Family Member”

The compliance term starts when a residence title is first granted and lasts for two years.

Module 2 is intended to provide German language skills for in-depth autonomous language use (i.e. German language skills at B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Third-country nationals applying for a residence title “Long-term Resident – EU” must have completed Module 2 of the Integration Agreement when filing the application.

There is no general obligation to complete Module 2 for holders of certain residence titles and no sanctions are imposed in case of non-completion, but a long-term residence title or citizenship can only be obtained when Module 2 has been completed.

2.4 What accountability measures are in place for adult education providers?

The type of project funding determines the accounting management. For projects funded by the European Social Fund and by Federal Ministries, there is a specially appointed monitoring organisation which checks all documents in consultation with the Ministry. For national projects, the funding authority checks all accounts.
3 Literacy curricula/reading instruction

3.1 Is there a national literacy curriculum framework for adults? How is this linked to school curricula?

An Austrian-wide accepted curriculum of basic education does not exist. Instead, basic skills programmes follow the individual needs of the participants. All training plans are prepared jointly by trainers and participants, and all learning objectives are jointly agreed. The individual learning goals of the participants are the most important criteria for teaching. Teaching materials are re-developed or adapted by the trainers.

There are textbooks in German as a second language (GSOL) programmes that move participants forward to their desired or required language goals. In 2006, the Department of German as a foreign language at the University of Vienna, the Association of Viennese Adult Education and the Literacy Centre for Migrants of the Adult Education centre Ottakring created a framework curriculum for GSOL and literacy for migrants. The framework curriculum refers to the “Common European Framework of Reference for Language”. This Curriculum seeks to define Austrian-specific objectives within the very generally defined objectives, levels and courses of action for the target group of migrants. The framework curriculum refers mainly to the levels A1 and A2 of the reference frame6.

3.2 What is the accepted methodology for the teaching of literacy to adults?

Practical experience of the last two decades has identified some successful methods in literacy teaching:

- Use a knowledge and competencies assessment as a starting point. Participants are tested with the aim of finding out their level of knowledge in the different learning areas.
- Individual lessons: face-to-face training is given at the beginning of the learning process. As people with few formal qualifications have often had very few positive educational experiences, individual training helps to reduce fears of failure and increase participants’ self-confidence. This is the first positive learning experience for many participants.
- Group lessons: Social factors are also important for learning processes. Mutual support, to learn from each other.
- Reflection: Reflection on learning outcomes is very important for the motivation and self esteem of participants, especially people with low qualifications who are often not aware of the learning progress. Trainers and participants reflect together the learning outcomes, learning experiences and progress made so far. Trainers see themselves as facilitators or moderators of the learning processes.

3.3 How do curricula and learning materials cater for diversity of learner groups and learning needs?

In practice we see that participants on basic skills programmes have a wide range of learning needs. To meet the expectations of learners who have no positive experiences with schooling, individualisation plays a key role. Basic skills offers funded by the Initiative for Adult Education are aligned individually. There are no more than six participants per trainer, learning materials are tailored to the needs of

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individual participants, and learning plans are tailored to the individual resources of the participants. This individualisation of basic skills offers allow lessons that focus on the needs of the participants.

3.4 Is there a specific focus on literacy in VET provision for adults?

A focus on basic skills is included in the training of apprentices. Young people receive basic skills classes as needed. This offer applies mainly to apprentices of extraordinary apprenticeships. According to the Federal Law on the Acquisition of Compulsory School Education, apprentices also have a statutory entitlement to get support free of charge to pass their final exams of the apprenticeship.

4 Screenings/assessments/support

4.1 How are adults with literacy needs identified?

People with low basic skills are often made aware of their literacy needs by intermediaries known as “multipliers”, that is, individuals or institutions that are in contact with the target group in other contexts. Multipliers can be public bodies and authorities, adult education institutions, or even friends and family of people in need of basic skills. Multipliers recognise the needs of the target group and recommend or send them to basic skills organisations.

Many people can assess themselves very well. They know exactly about their lack of basic skills. Normally people with low literacy hide their deficits very well and manage their life more or less successfully. There are certain motives to start a course: the loss of a job, their own children start school and need support, the loss of the partner who has previously done all written communication. To target these triggers helps providers to motivate people to start a course.

Education and careers counsellors refer people to basic skills providers; counsellors from the public labour services know about basic skills offers and send people.

4.2 How are adults’ prior literacy knowledge and skills recognised and validated?

Foreign educational and professional experience may be accepted in Austria through certain mechanisms (validation of documents, recognition of competencies). People who have not obtained their degrees in Austria often face problems in finding employment and in accessing further education. It is often not possible for immigrants to obtain formal recognition of their qualifications due to costs and bureaucratic hurdles. A person, for example, who fled their home country because of political persecution, can experience difficulties obtaining the required confirmations of local authorities and universities.

In 2013, five points of contact were set up to offer advice to people with foreign qualifications.

In the initial phase at the beginning of the course, trainers and participants sit face to face and clarify the scope of the possibilities of the course. Participants talk about their motives and reasons for starting a course and they talk about their schooling experiences. Trainers provide information about basic skills offers, the process in these offers and the learning opportunities. If participants agree to start, trainers assess their knowledge and competencies. An individual learning plan is developed by trainers and participants with specific learning goals and outcomes. The content of the learning plan can be changed as soon as goals are reached or have changed. There is a reflection of learning outcomes at regular intervals between trainers and participants to show the progress for the learners.
Courses normally have no fixed length; duration is dependent on the learning needs of participants and how fast goals are reached. Participants get a confirmation certificate at the end of the course. This certificate is issued by the organisations, it does not count as a formal qualification.

4.3 Are there any standard tests to assess literacy needs or learning progress in literacy programmes?
Standard tests exist but are not used uniformly in Austria. Many organisations rely on the expertise of trainers to raise the educational level of the participants.

4.4 How are adults with dyslexia identified and supported?
Dyslexia and dyscalculia are diagnosed at the beginning of the basic educational programme through a detailed assessment of the competencies and knowledge of every participant. If dyslexia or dyscalculia is identified, this will be recognised in the creation of the learning plan. Because instruction is individualised, it is possible to accommodate these people in the course.

5 Special support for second-language learners/migrants

5.1 Is there literacy provision for adult migrants whose home language is not the official language of the host country?
Yes, courses in German for speakers of other languages (GSOL) are run all over Austria.

5.2 Who pays for this provision?
The 2011 Integration Agreement (IA) covers the linguistic integration of migrants who want to settle permanently in Austria. This currently applies to migrants (third country nationals, i.e. non-EU citizens) who came into the country after July 1 2011. By signing the Integration Agreement, migrants commit to acquiring sufficient German language skills within two years. The ÖIF (Austrian Integration Fund) is responsible for complying with the Integration Agreement. Migrants can receive financial support in the form of the blue ÖIF federal voucher. The responsible authorities – the municipal authority or administrative district authority – issue the voucher to family members under certain circumstances. In this case, family members are spouses or under-age children of Austrians, Swiss, EEA citizens, and third country nationals.

Participants who have successfully completed a certified German course at level A2 with an ÖIF test within 18 months after the voucher was issued receive compensation for a maximum of 300 class hours or 50% of the course costs, to a maximum of €750.

5.3 Does this provision employ specialist teachers?
Trainers who teach recognised GSOL courses have to be qualified to teach the subject.
5.4 **Is there specialist provision for those who have poor literacy skills in their L1?**

Yes, German courses that have a literacy component exist in Austria. In these courses language learning, literacy and numeracy are linked.

5.5 **Is there a separate national curriculum framework for this type of provision?**

No, the individual organisation’s teaching is determined by their experience: many of the organisations have decades of know-how in this area.

6 **Reading environments to stimulate reading motivation**

6.1 **Are there schemes to promote reading and writing for pleasure among adults?**

Austrian libraries are very active in this field. For the past nine years, the literature festival “Austria reads, meeting point library” has taken place. The aim of the campaign is to increase the importance of reading and libraries in society. Libraries in all nine provinces (including municipal and parish libraries, school libraries, city and state libraries, university libraries and the Austrian national library) hold events to inspire people to read. Readings, literary walks, storybook cinema, reading nights, literary cafes, book exhibitions and many other activities encourage people to visit libraries. The initiative is supported by a wide-ranging advertising campaign in the Austrian media. Numerous prominent supporters campaign for reading and libraries. Donors include the Federal Chancellery (main sponsor), the provinces, the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs and big Austrian enterprises. The Austrian library association initiated the action and is responsible for organisation and coordination. The media partner is the Austrian broadcasting company (ORF).

6.2 **Is there systematic cooperation with civil society – e.g. libraries, bookstores, literature institutions, theatres, media, newspapers, publishers etc. in reading and writing promotion for adults?**

An online platform (www.wirlesen.org) promotes reading for children and adults. There are occasional projects to promote reading for adults, but there is no systematic cooperation behind this.

6.3 **Are there family literacy programmes with a focus on supporting adult literacy?**

There is just one basic skills project running that focuses on family literacy. It is called FLiEg (family learning in Graz).  

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8 See www.isop.at/tätigkeitsfelder/qualifizierung-bildung/flieg, accessed on 02.10.2015.
7 Digital environments/use of technology in education

7.1 Is there a digital gap? How are adults supported in acquiring literacy and digital skills?

Data from PIAAC show that there are 3 main groups at risk to lack digital literacy:

- Persons older than 45
- Persons with no higher qualification than compulsory schooling
- Persons with German as a second language

Since the beginning of this millennium, mathematics and the use of new media have been included in the basic skills offer. Digital skills and digital literacy is a normal part of the offer.

7.2 Which population groups are excluded from access to ICT due to lack of literacy skills?

According to PIAAC, the group most at risk of exclusion from ICT access is people with low socio-economic status who cannot afford a PC or access to the internet. People with low basic skills are excluded, as they cannot read and understand manuals, and cannot follow the instructions their electronic device demands.

7.3 Are there any web-based or mobile-based programmes for adults to improve their literacy & numeracy skills?


7.4 What classroom resources (E-books, notebooks, internet, mobile phones…) are used to support the development of adults’ literacy?

Classrooms are usually equipped with laptops or PCs with Internet access and a printer. Smartphones are brought by the participants themselves, they work on their equipment. Trainers explain simple functions and practise the use with the participants. Tablet PCs are used by some providers, but this has not been generally applied.

8 Teachers

8.1 What are the professional roles within adult literacy education?

Professional roles in adult basic skills education include:

- Literacy trainer
- Numeracy trainer
- ICT and new media trainer
- Socio-pedagogical counsellor
- German trainer
Basic skills trainers see themselves as facilitators and moderators of learning processes. It is important that they have a respect-based interaction with the participants. Trainers have to remove fears of failure, they have to bring learning into a positive connotation for the learners. An important part of the respect-based interaction with participants is addressing the education needs of the learners. An individually designed learning plan considers very much the learning objectives of the participants.

8.2 What is the status/reputation of teachers and other professionals who work in adult literacy education?

There are now opportunities to be accredited as a certified adult trainer by the Austrian academy of continuing education (WBA), and this has led to the professionalisation of the profession of trainers. WBA ("Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich"/ Austrian Academy of Continuing Education) is a system for the qualification and recognition/accreditation of adult educators. Adult educators receive qualifications with set standards which are based on a curriculum. Launched in 2007 after a three-year-conceptual phase, WBA has a new approach to recognising acquired competences of adult educators. It accredits prior learning and offers guidance on how to plug skills gaps.

Adult educators can submit competences and practical experience acquired in various ways and with different types of proof. These supporting documents are assessed on the basis of the wba-curriculum and then acknowledged. Lack of competences can be made up by attending further courses or by submitting further evidence. WBA graduates receive a recognised wba-certificate or wba-diploma. Whilst adult education in Austria is still a heterogeneous field and difficult to compare, wba sets standards and fosters the professionalisation of the Austrian adult education.

8.3 What are their working conditions?

The job satisfaction of coaches is very high, as far as working with learners is concerned, and also their collegial relationships and the meaningfulness of the activity. The aspect of their job that trainers dislike most is the low salary, followed by poor work safety and the lack of opportunity for promotion.

The MIKA-study shows that the profession is a good satisfaction prevails: 49.2% of trainers are "somewhat satisfied". However, this satisfaction is produced primarily by so-called "relationship variables" That means working with clients, their relationship with colleagues and the activity of teaching gives trainers satisfaction. The study highlights the importance to job satisfaction with regard to the autonomy which trainers have, to develop their own initiatives in their work: 87.3% of respondents said this was an important aspect of their employment.

8.4 How do salaries compare to the national average?

Trainers are either self employed with a contract for work or are employed in their organisations. For those who are self-employed, there is no standard level of earnings. Different organisations pay different fees to their trainers. Where trainers are employed, they are working for a collective agreement approximately equal to the national average wage. However, basic skills trainers are at a higher than average level of formal qualifications.

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9 Teacher education

9.1 What are the statutory qualification requirements for adult literacy teachers?
There are no legal requirements for formal qualifications. For trainers working in the Austrian initiative for adult education, fulfilment of the following qualifications are required:

- Specialised training or successful completion of the portfolio process for the recognition of professional skills regarding basic skills;
- Experience as a basic skills trainer (to the extent of at least 30 units, or job shadowing instead);
- Mandatory participation in training, at least once per year.

9.2 Are there specialist qualification routes for adult literacy teachers?
The federal education centre in Strobl (bifeb) offers initial training for basic skills trainers. Adult education centres offer basic skills train-the-trainer courses. Most further education offered to trainers is in-house training. Two focus groups organised by the Share IT project collected Good Practice examples for the informal professional exchange for trainers:

- Team-meetings;
- Job-shadowing: preparation, sitting in on classes, post-processing, reflection;
- Online exchange on a platform that was designed especially for basic skills trainers (praxis-basisbildung.at).

In addition to this internal training, there are further training programmes for adult literacy teachers. Public training courses in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics are offered by adult education centres.

9.3 What are the entry requirements for Initial Teacher Education for adult literacy teachers?
Many trainers have many years of practical experience in the field of basic education. A prerequisite for work as basic education trainer is the completion of subject-specific vocational training, such as a pedagogical qualification, training as a social worker or a specialist training as an adult educator.

The federal adult education centre offers a diploma course: “basic skills and literacy trainer”. This course is aimed at social workers, people with a pedagogical qualification and education and career counsellors, as well as newcomers who want to become basic skills trainers. All participants have to apply for this further education.

9.4 Who pays for initial teacher education?
Some organisations have scheduled training for their staff in their budgets. Some training is funded by public bodies, and offered free of charge to participants. Only a few training courses are paid for by the participants themselves.

9.5 Is there a curriculum framework for adult literacy initial teacher training?
Two different courses are conducted, both of which are recognised as a qualification as a basic skills trainer, and both have a curriculum.
The first is a specific training for trainers who work in courses funded by the Austrian initiative for adult education. Offered in six weekend modules, there are 90 lessons to complete overall, as well as one practical day, including job shadowing.

The second course takes three semesters to complete and takes place in the Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifeb Strobl). The workload of 600 work units of 50 minutes includes:

- Participation in workshops and at least one specialisation workshop “German for speakers of other languages”;
- Participation in peer group meetings, self-study (literature study, Moodle e-learning platform);
- Written reflections and protocols, portfolio items, practice and final colloquium.

9.6 Are there compulsory (or optional) language and literacy modules in all adult education ITE?

No, a trainer who is interested in basic skills provision must complete one of the two available courses.

9.7 What is the length of the required initial teacher training?

See 9.5. The diploma course on literacy and basic skills takes three semesters and takes place in the Federal Institute for Adult Education (bifeb Strobl). The specific basic skills course required for trainers working in courses of the Austrian initiative for adult education takes six weekends.

9.8 Are there quality standards for ITE?

There are internal evaluations.

9.9 Is there continuous professional development (in-service training) for teachers which focuses on literacy development?

No.

9.10 What is the take-up among teachers?

Not applicable.

9.11 Who delivers this training?

Not applicable.

9.12 How is it quality assured?

Not applicable.
10 Policy-making

10.1 Who is involved in policy-making for adult literacy education?

The Federal Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs, the nine provinces, the conference of adult Education in Austria and individual experts are all involved in policy making. The Federal Ministry sets up task groups to discuss specific topics within basic skills. The above mentioned bodies send representatives to these task groups.

10.2 How is inter-sectoral and interministerial cooperation promoted and coordinated?

The Ministry of Education and Women’s Affair is responsible for adult education in Austria. There are interfaces to the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection in the field of basic skills and poverty and to the Ministry of Science Research and Economy in the field of vocational training and basic skills.

10.3 What financing mechanisms exist that facilitate inter-sectoral cooperation?

All basic skills measures are funded through the Federal Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs.

10.4 Which policies promote for the provision of broad and varied access to adult literacy education?

Basic skills offers always have to find a different approach to reach the target group, as participants very often feel ashamed of their low skills and have a distrust of formal education courses. The project “in.motion-network basic skills and literacy in Austria” has worked on behalf of the Ministry since 2003 on different approaches to basic skills provision.

10.5 How are the motivation, interests and needs of adults taken into account in the policy-making processes?

Policy making happens within the above mentioned task forces, nominated by the Ministry. Basic skills experts and basic skills organisations, which are both members in these task forces, take the motivation, interests and needs of adults into account.

10.6 Does government promote adult literacy in its lifelong learning policy?

Yes, adult literacy is promoted in action line 3 of the Lifelong Learning strategy, i.e. free catching up on lower secondary level schooling and provision of basic skills for adults. The actions of the strategy are:

- Implementation of the initiative for adult education and to ensure basic skills free of charge and the later completion of compulsory school education
- Implementation of offers for the free of charge preparation for apprenticeship
- Development of counselling services for low skilled individuals.