

Material 2.3.3m

REGIONAL EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING NETWORKS

Cooperation Networks - Benefits of regional education and counselling networks

Aim of a Network

The aim of a “network” is the creation of a social network of persons who are in relation to each other and support each other.

Another appropriate term is “cluster”: A cluster is “a group of similar things that are close together in a small area” (<https://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de>).

Both explanations characterize the essence of Regional Education and Career Counselling Networks/Clusters, coming up more and more and concentrate education and counselling services.

Just as examples, three regional Education and Counselling Networks, being initiated in Austria, are being presented here.

You may as well explore networks having been implemented in your country.

While reading the examples you may consider:

- *Who are altogether the beneficiaries of such a network?*

Concentrate on one of the examples and try to analyze the following key aspects:

- *Which are the strengths of this network?*
- *Which may be weaknesses of the network?*
- *Which are expected opportunities?*
- *Which are possible threats?*

Exchange your findings with some colleagues sitting close to you.

Example 1: Netzwerk der Bildungs- und Berufsberatung NÖ (bbn) (= Network of Education and Career Counselling in Lower Austria)

"Innovative Cluster (Network)" within the sectors of continuing education, in-service training, education, vocational training, guidance, career guidance

The following description has been delivered by the persons responsible for the network, answering some questions having been posed to them by the Austrian Connect! project partners.

1. Which organizations/institutions/enterprises/independent consultants form the network?
Please name all and characterize:

Type of organization	Name and short characteristic
Public counselling service	
School	
University/College/University of Applied Sciences	
Adult education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BhW Niederösterreich („Bildung hat Wert“): BhW Lower Austria Ltd. (= a company for Education – close to municipalities and people) • Verband Niederösterreichischer Volkshochschulen (VHS) (=Association of Adult Educations Centers in Lower Austria)
Professional representative of interest, e.g. Chamber, Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte für Niederösterreich (AK Niederösterreich) (= Lower Austrian Chamber of Labour)
Independent institution of education and career counselling / human resources consulting	
Institution of the social sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jugendservice Ybbstal (JUSY) (= Youth service Ybbstal) • Diakonie Flüchtlingsdienst (= non profit organisation for refugees of the protestant church)
Business enterprise	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAG Menschen und Arbeit GmbH (MAG) (= People and work Ltd) • ABZ*AUSTRIA – Verein zur Förderung von Arbeit, Bildung und Zukunft von Frauen (ABZ*AUSTRIA)

	(= Association for the promotion of occupation, education and future of women), <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRANSJOB – Verein für Wirtschafts- und Beschäftigungsinitiativen (TRANSJOB) (= Association for initiatives concerning economy and employment)
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2. Who coordinates the network?

Ms. DIⁱⁿ Rosemarie Pichler is responsible for the coordination and sponsorship of the network "MAG Menschen und Arbeit GmbH" as overall project manager
A tandem of "MAG" and the "AK Niederösterreich" executes the content management.

3. Who initiated the network?

In its current composition, the network operates since 2015 and before that, a smaller educational counselling network existed in Lower Austria. The network came about due to ESF-Calls.

4. What was / is the objective?

The network of educational counselling in Lower Austria provides education and career counselling for all adults in Lower Austria. Far more than 20 educational consultants annually offer around 10,000 consultations at more than 90 locations all over Lower Austria. The consulting service is customer-oriented, confidential, independent and free of charge. "We support and encourage people, to better realize their chances in the society and at the labor market, while we together with them reflect on their personal strengths, abilities and development options, so that they can in a self-determined way plan their next steps." (Excerpt from the bbn mission statement).

It is intended, to make the project "Bildungsberatung Österreich – Netzwerk Niederösterreich" (Educational counselling Austria – network Lower Austria), Schwerpunkt "Zielgruppenorientierte Weiterentwicklung der anbieterneutralen Bildungsberatungsangebote" (Target group oriented advancement of vendor neutral educational counselling offers) 2018 - 2021 (shortly "Educational counselling Lower Austria" [Bildungsberatung NÖ]) succeed concerning content, organization and financial management. Therefore, fundamentals consist of the submitted and approved project concept together with the working plan, the contract with the BMBWF (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research) and the partnership agreement. Essential measures of the ESF-project are:

- Realization of about 36,000 counselling in various forms (individual, group, online, video, chat and competence consultation, telephone consultation, native-speaker consultation) in different characteristics, for the whole area of Lower Austria
- Group oriented advancement of vendor neutral educational counselling offers and consulting formats
- Optimization in accessibility of the prioritized target groups: Older people, low-skilled, people with a migrant background, persons not in employment and regionally disadvantaged people
- Support and advancement of the Lower Austria-wide educational counselling hotline: +43 (0)2742/25025
- Intensive networking activities with counselling and target groups opening partners as well as with multipliers, gatekeepers, relevant organizations and institutions on local, regional and nation-wide level
- Publicly-effective measures for the opening of target groups
- Advancement of the quality of advice, quality management and quality assurance
- Observance and implementation of diversity and gender standards

5. Which Steps have been/are taken?

In addition to the professional provision and advancement of the counselling and networking activities, addressing to the target group and the joint network products (website, digital booking platform, counselling hotline) as a network, we invest a lot in the quality development and undergo the Austria-wide IBOBB-process (information, counselling and orientation for education and vocation) for external quality assurance concerning vendor neutral educational counselling. By means of closed meetings, workshops and working groups currently we work on the "bbn-Qualitätskonzept" ("bbn-quality concept") in a participatory process incl. quality standards, competency profile and quality circle.

Based on this we continuously deepen concrete consulting-relevant subjects, e.g. "bbn-Hospitationskonzept" ("conception of work shadowing") or the bbn-conception "Mobile und aufsuchende Beratung in NÖ" (= "Mobile and visiting counselling in Lower Austria"), wherein the wide range of our regional counselling offers is shown and analyzed and wherein minimum standards and concrete measures are given.

In June 2019, with the umbrella brand "bbn" we achieved a high-grade breakthrough. By means of our corporate identity, we are always trying to improve, to remain professional, innovative and attractive and continue to be a key requirement for educational and vocational subjects in Lower Austria towards the exterior.

Within a research study, we are about to evaluate our network activities. The goal is to deduce measures towards the long-term strengthening of the network of the Lower Austrian educational counselling. The research questions is "Which factors contribute to long-term establishment of

the Lower Austrian educational network and which measures could be taken in the future to optimize the structure of the network?" This is based on the following hypothesis: There is a common understanding of networking activities going well as success factor for the Lower Austrian educational network.

6. How does a typical process occur within the network?

The network has three central panels, which make up the **most important internal communication structures**.

Meeting of project managers: At least quarterly the subproject managers of the network partners meet for substantive exchange, for information exchange to federal, state and local authorities, network to coordinate the project execution (finances, administration, reporting) and for the content-related and quality-oriented development. Decisions are made democratically within the respective competences.

Tandem session: The substantial tandem management (AK Niederösterreich and MAG) meets prior to each Managers (PL)-Meeting with the following agenda: control of the content-related project progress, realization of project aims and of the project work plan, preparation of PL-Meetings, proposals for the content-related development of the project and preparation and processing of content and subjects for the quality development.

Counsellor Meetings: 2-4x per annum counsellors of NWP (and interested PL's) meet for information / concerns from the network activities, for mutual exchange of the counsellors, for cooperation concerning the quality development of the counselling offers, for lectures and workshops to specialist topics, for networking with strategic partners and for regular needs assessment and evaluation.

In addition to the panels within the network, following measures are realized, to grant a useful communication and quality assurance. These include regular "Info-Mails" to the counsellors, the "bbn"-Cloud as common and unlimited tool for knowledge assurance, the information papers of the Lower Austrian education and vocation counselling for essential counselling issues and demand-oriented network-internal continuing education programs and workshops.

Concerning the following main products the network communicates externally: bbn-website "www.bildungsberatung-noe.at" with administration of appointments and an appointment booking online-tool for customers, bbn-counselling hotline +43 (0)2742 25025, advertising materials, trade fair appearances, ...

7. How does cooperation with business enterprises take place?

Business enterprises are not members of the network, but important partners. This will be demonstrated by a few examples:

- Consulting services for enterprises concerning: parents' leaves and improving the work-life balance; making-up for apprenticeship for elder employees
- Contacts with HR-departments of enterprises and counselling concerning further vocational development
- Cooperation with departments of the Economic chamber in certain projects

8. Which outcome has been/should be achieved?

See section 4 above, objectives of the project.

9. What are the next steps?

At the end of 2021 calendar year, the ESF-project deadline expires, an application for the next ESF-call is planned and will be prepared network-based from the beginning of 2021 regarding content and organization.

We consider ourselves as a vivacious and learning network and for the next years intend to do the following steps:

Establishing a regional Lower Austrian advisory board/think tank with the participation of different institutions/organizations e.g. from the business world and the educational sector (science and research, educational providers, etc.). The interlinking with relevant strategic partners like AMS (= "Public Employment Service Austria"), etc. is supposed to be intensified.

10. Other aspects?

We appreciate the activities within a diverse network and take the chances, which the structure of the network provides all concerned. In this way, the acting persons and organizations in addition to their specialist competencies as well acquire competencies for cooperation, project management and capacity for teamwork. Synergies result from joint trainings, funding handling, reporting, etc. The mutual assistance and the regular knowledge transfer enhance the own activities, the diversity respective to the differentiation of the players create added value for all participants.

Example 2: Bildungsnetzwerk Steiermark (= Network of Education and Career Counselling in Styria)

"Innovative Cluster (Network)" within the sectors of continuing education, in-service training, education, vocational training, guidance, career guidance

The following description has been delivered by the persons responsible for the network, answering some questions having been posed to them by the Austrian Connect! project partners.

1. Which organizations/institutions/enterprises/independent consultants form the network?
Please name all and characterize:

Type of organization	Name and short characteristic
Public counselling service	
School	
University/College/University of Applied Sciences	
Adult education	<p>Education and Career counselling, including all questions of further education and training as well as vocational orientation are offered by the network of education and career counselling Styria in cooperation with the career counselling service of the Chamber of Labour and the career information centers (BerufsinfoZentren BIZ) of the Public Employment Service</p> <p>Further partners of the network of education and career counselling in Styria are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 82 institutes of adult education, being member of the working group "Steirische Erwachsenenbildung" (Styrian Adult education) - 130 adult education Institutes of the "Weiterbildungsnavi Styria" (Styrian further education navigation system) - Regional structures (like regional management, network for career competences) - Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences - Interregional: federal state network, EU level – relevant thematic working teams and projects

Professional representative of interest, e.g. Chamber, Union	
Independent institution of education and career counselling/human resources consulting	The network of education and career counselling in Styria is itself an independent institution which offers education and career counselling in cooperation with further educational institutes
Institution of the social sector	
Business enterprise	
Other	

2. Who coordinates the network?

Role of the network:

The network of education and career counselling in Styria is the competence center and service point of the adult education in Styria. We facilitate knowledge exchange and networking of organizations being actively engaged in lifelong learning. We work together in networks on regional, national and European level. Beyond that we develop basis principles for the strategic and operative enhancements of adult education and show the plurality of lifelong learning by offering guidance and counselling, presentations, discourses and public relations information. The network of education and career counselling in Styria acts as lobby of the non-profit adult education and as catalyzer between the organizations and the policy.

Monitoring the Styrian adult education:

Delivering valid data and facts allow us to give an overview on the qualitative everyday work in the Styrian educational institutions and open opportunities for active networking. Since 2019 every year key data are collected and analyzed, providing apart from information to the status-quo of lifelong learning the monitoring of future developments.

Navigation System for Lifelong Learning in Styria:

The network of education and career counselling in Styria has developed and serves the “Weiterbildungsnavi Steiermark” (navigation system for lifelong learning in Styria). People interested in further education and training receive overview and orientation concerning the diversity of the lifelong learning activities in Styria and learn by single clicks about 1000 up-to-date offers from over 130 quality certified Education and training institutes.

Career guidance, counselling and information:

All citizens in Styria who still wonder about their further education and training options may benefit from career guidance and counselling free of charge. Comprehensive counselling is offered by the network of education and career counselling in Styria, the career counselling service of the Chamber of Labour and the career information centers of the Public Employment Service.

3. Who initiated the network?

After having finished in summer 2019 the project from the ESF-Call, we initiated the network of education and career counselling in Styria in cooperation with the counselling of the Chamber of Labour and the career information centers of the Public Employment Service.

4. What was/is the objective?

The objective was offering to the Styrian citizens free of charge career guidance and career counselling even beyond the deadline of the ESF project.

5. Which steps have been/are taken?

6. How does a typical process occur within the network?

Information and Counselling is provided by the Styrian continuing education phone, per e-mail and face to face talks

7. How does cooperation with business enterprises take place?

There is currently no cooperation with business enterprises

8. Which outcome has been/should be achieved?

The counselling contacts have been documented.

Based on the frequently experienced counselling requests (themes, focal points), we shall provide fundamental information on our website, e.g. to particular vocations or the opportunities to catch up educational diploma.

9. What are the next steps?

10. Other aspects?

Example 3: Further Education and Career Counselling Network of the Chamber of Commerce Austria

„Innovative Cluster“ (Network) within the sectors vocational education, further vocational training, in-company training, career guidance and counselling

The following description has been delivered by the persons responsible for the network, answering some questions having been posed to them by the Austrian Connect! project partners

1. Which organizations/institutions /enterprises/independent consultants form the network?

Please name all and characterize:

Type of organization	Name and short characteristic
Public counselling service	
School	
University/College/University of Applied Sciences	
Adult Education	
Professional representative of interest, e.g. Chamber, Union	Department for education policy of the Austrian Economic Chamber (coordinator of the network)
Independent institution of education and career counselling / human resources consulting	<p>11 Educational and counselling centers, career counselling centers, talent centers of the Economic Chambers and the Economic Development Institutes in the 9 Federal States</p> <p>These institutions are in principle independent counselling establishments which belong to the particular Economic Chamber of each Federal State, thus being a part of the representation of interest. But they operate as independent counselling establishment.</p> <p>Some of these institutions are also in the co-ownership of the Federal State or being co-financed by the Federal State (e.g. the BIFO Center for Education and Vocation in the State Vorarlberg or the TalentsCheck in Salzburg.</p>
Institution of the social sector	
Business enterprise	

Other	Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft – ibw (Institute for Research and Development of the Austrian Economic Chamber (Co-ordinator of the network)
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2. Who coordinates the network?

The Department for education policy of the Austrian Economic Chamber

together with

ibw - Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft (Institute for Research and Development of the Austrian Economic Chamber

3. Who initiated the network?

The Department for education policy of the Austrian Economic Chamber

4. What was/is the objective?

- Continuous networking and exchange of experience between the institutions for career guidance and counselling of the Federal Economic Chambers and the Federal Institutes for Research and Development in Austria
- Learning from good practice examples of the network partners' institutes
- Development of common products and services for career guidance and counselling
- Organizing joint measures for further training and events
- Common financing and use of resources
- Improvement of the public presence and appearance vis-à-vis the most important stakeholders and ministries

5. Which steps have been/are taken?

- Continuous networking and exchange of experience between the institutions for career guidance and counselling of the Federal Economic Chambers and the Federal Institutes for Research and Development in Austria
- Establishment of thematic task forces for the elaboration of common products and services
- Joint development of internal quality standards for the services of career guidance and counselling

- Establishment of frequent further training events for counsellors, psychologists and administrators in accordance with the needs and themes - about two per year
- Harmonization of the services, which are offered in several federal states in similar way
- Development of common diagnostic tests being adopted in educational and career counselling
- Development of the feature of a common counselling product being used for the population of 13- to 14 years old ("Talent Check" of the Austrian Economic Chamber)
- Development of the feature of a common counselling product being used for the population "Young Adults", 17+ ("Career Check" of the Austrian Economic chamber)
- Joint financing of the educational and career guidance platform BIC.at (www.bic.at), which is configured by the Institute for Research and Development of the Austrian Economic Chamber in cooperation with the network partners
- Joint development and financing of booklets to support the career choice of various target groups
- Development of a common quality framework for analyzing the potential capacity of adults
- Joint development of a platform for presenting the possibility for the virtual exploration of vocational options (Austrian Economic Chamber-VR: <https://berufe-vr.at/>). The platform shows interactive 360°-videos to various vocations and vocational fields by free use. These may be watched in the career guidance and counselling centers of the network partners via VR-glasses as virtual reality experiences in augmented mode.
- Representation of the network by the network coordinators vis-à-vis the stakeholders like ministries and in relevant networks like the national IBOBB Forum (vocational orientation and training for pupils in schools)

6. How does a typical process occur within the network?

- One network-partner develops an idea/proposal for an innovative/modified product resp. service or a tool. Such idea arise generally from current challenges of the counselling practice, from discovering of new target groups or changes in the target groups, from concrete requests or suggestions of regional partners in schools, businesses or even as suggestion or concerns of political decision makers or lobbyists.
Idea/proposals may also result from the fact that existing services /products need to be updated. Using resources efficiently, it makes sense to start a common initiative instead of developing it separately by the partners.
- The idea/proposal is introduced in one of the two yearly Network-Meetings. It is evaluated whether there is a common need and if a joint development will be possible.

- Subsequently a task force is being established by the network-partners which further develops and implements the idea/proposal together with external partners (software engineers, test specialists, agencies etc.). Normally a concrete proposal or a prototype is being elaborated (according to the idea/product) which is presented to the other network-partners.
- Continuous reports are given to the network-partners during the network meetings or in a different way (e.g. online) in alignment with the partners.
- Finalizing the products/tools/services and integrating them into the relevant institutes of career guidance and counselling; if necessary individual adaptation to regional needs
- If required training of the partners (for instance in the case of an innovative tool like the “Berufe-VR”/virtual reality presentation of vocations)
- If the matter is a concrete innovative product/tool/service (like “Berufe-VR”), common public relations (PR) activities are provided by the network coordinator and regional press relations by the partner organizations

7. How does cooperation with business enterprises take place?

- Enterprises (or comparable institutions) are not formally members of the network but in many respects partners in implementation processes of counselling and information services. Partly enterprises act as stimulators for the development of new activities.
- The cooperation with enterprises does mostly not happen through the network itself, but directly on regional/ local level by the network partners. The enterprises are included in various activities like presentations of special trade branches, fairs, application trainings. In fact, the counselling institutes have built up since many years their contacts with enterprises and representatives of trade branches. These contact persons are then invited to participate in certain activities and to present themselves. The establishment of contacts often happens via the representatives of the trade (guild, federal economic chamber). Also, the network-partners may use their affiliation to the Economic Chamber to provide the contacts.
- In return the counselling institutes support the enterprises, e.g. in the recruitment of apprentices, offering talent checks.
- Sometimes enterprises receive assistance in the organization of vocational practice days.
- Often enterprises are partners in the development of common products (for instance being the place for video recording, demonstrating the vocations). The network coordinator organizes the cooperation in accordance with the network-partners.

8. Which outcome has been/should be achieved?

The outcomes are manifold and are sometimes identical with the steps being described in point 5. Among these are:

- Joint online platform for vocational information: BIC.at
- Common brochures and publications (“Apprenticeship options in Austria”, “Accompanying vocational choices”, “Education as Chance – securing your future” etc.)
- Development of common quality standards for counselling offers and services, particularly talent checks and potential analysis
- “Berufe-VR”/virtual reality presentation of vocations – joint offer for the virtual exploration of vocations
- Common further training courses for counsellors and administrative personnel
- About every two years, organization of a “Counsellors’ Day” to update the knowledge of the career counsellors concerning current developments in career guidance and counselling
- Strengthening the harmonization of the public presence of the network partners
- Representation of the network via the coordinators in inter-institutional networks, task forces and vis-à-vis the ministries and other public institutions

9. What are the next steps?

- Continuing exchange of experience and the initiation of common offers and services
- Updating and further development of common products, tools and services, particularly extension of the online platform BIC.at
- Further development of the common platform Berufe-VR

10. Other aspects?

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