

"AusbildungsFit": Springboard or Side Track?

The Impact of Labour Market Programmes for Youth on Social Equality

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"AusbildungsFit": Springboard or Side Track?

Evaluation AusbildungsFit

- Duration 2022 to 2023
- On behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs (BMSGPK)

We are focusing on the following points today:

- How do labour market programmes like „AusbildungsFit“ support the youth?
- To what extent do these programmes impact social equality?

"AusbildungsFit": Springboard or Side Track?

Evaluation AusbildungsFit (2022 – 2023)

- Literature research and statistical analysis of secondary data (AMP, WABA)
- 24 qualitative interviews with experts at the interfaces (AMS, SMS, NEBA); 15 with partner companies
- Case studies in seven selected projects: 24 interviews with staff, seven focus groups with youth (90 participants in total) and 14 interviews with former participants
- Four workshops and five reflection meetings (BMSGPK, BMAW, SMS BundesKost)

Background – Inequality in the Educational System

Social and economic inequality continues to be reinforced by the Austrian education system: early segregation leads to differing educational paths and opportunities

- More than half of Austrian university students have at least one parent with a university degree; 3% have parents with a compulsory school leaving certificate (Statistik Austria, 2023a)
- Early school leavers most likely come from households with a lower education level (Bacher et al., 2013)
- Youth who do not attend further education after secondary school often have unstable employment careers, precarious jobs and a higher risk of unemployment (Statistik Austria, 2023b)

Labour Market Programmes for Youth

- To keep young people in the education or training system there is a law in Austria requiring mandatory training until the age of 18 (“Ausbildungspflichtgesetz”, APfIG, since 2017)
- Due to this law, new labour market programmes were developed, focusing on youth at risk of social exclusion and unemployment (NEETs – Not in Education, Employment or Training and Early School Leavers)

“AusbildungsFit” (AFit)

- A programme in a wider network for vocational assistance (“NEBA”) funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs (BMSGPK) and the Ministry of Labour and Economy (BMAW) and implemented by the Social Ministry Service (SMS)
- Supports youth experiencing difficulty finding regular apprenticeships or unable to attend and complete further school education

AusbildungsFIT – Project Landscape

AusbildungsFit (+ Vormodul) Projektträger in Österreich 2024

www.neba.at/ausbildungsfitt/

bundesweit: 46 Projektträger / 67 Projekte (davon 56 + Vormodul)



NEBA NETZWERK BERUFLICHE ASSISTENZ
AUSBILDUNGSFIT
Kulturforum der Stadt Salzburg
NEBA ist eine Initiative des Sozialministeriumservice.

Sozialministeriumservice

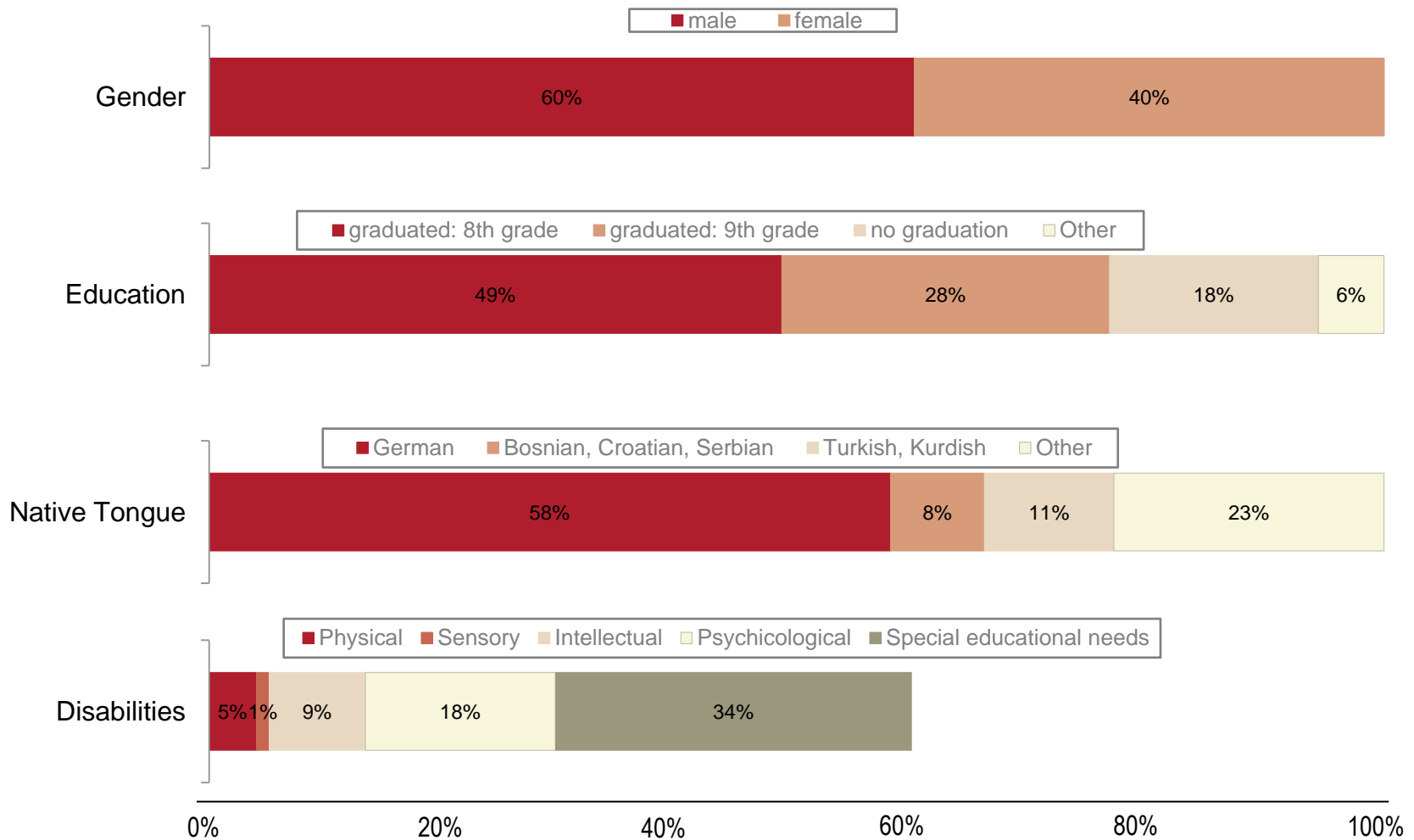
BundesKOST
Ausbildung – Beruf

Abbildung: BundesKOST
Quelle: Sozialministeriumservice
Stand: Jänner 2024
www.bundeskost.at

* Bewertungsgemeinschaft

<https://www.bundeskost.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/AusbildungsFit-Projekttraeger-in-Oesterreich-2023.pdf>

The participants in „AusbildungsFit“

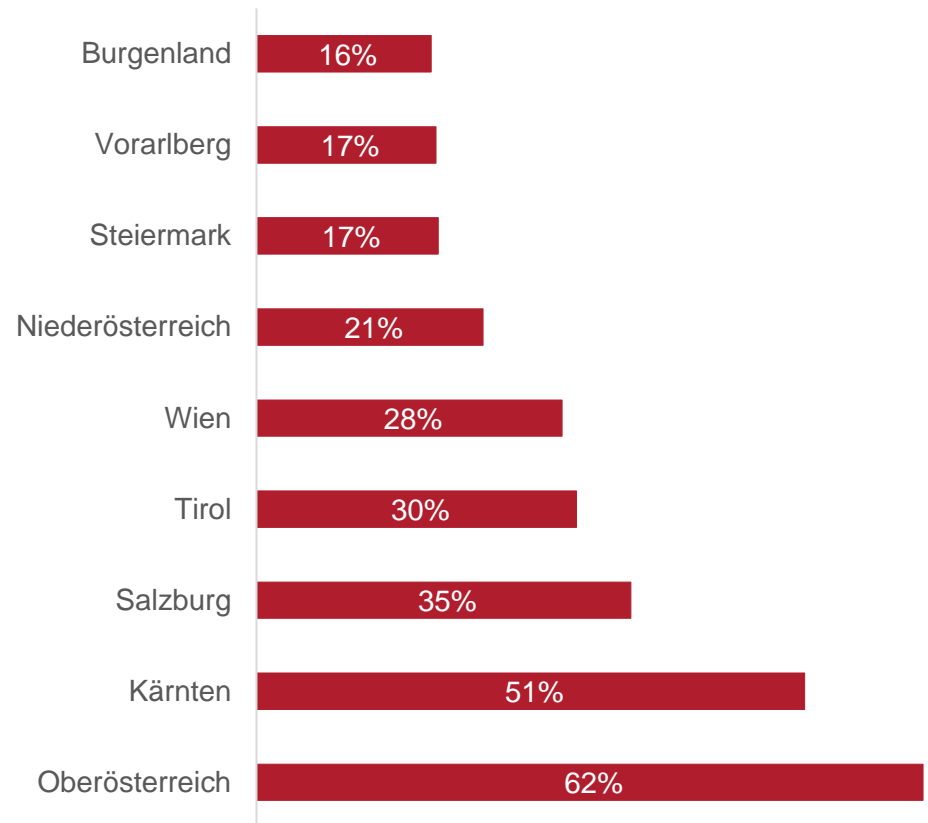


Source: SMS, WABA-Daten, Beendigungen AFit 2018 bis 2021, n= 10.842;

Socio-emotional Impairment

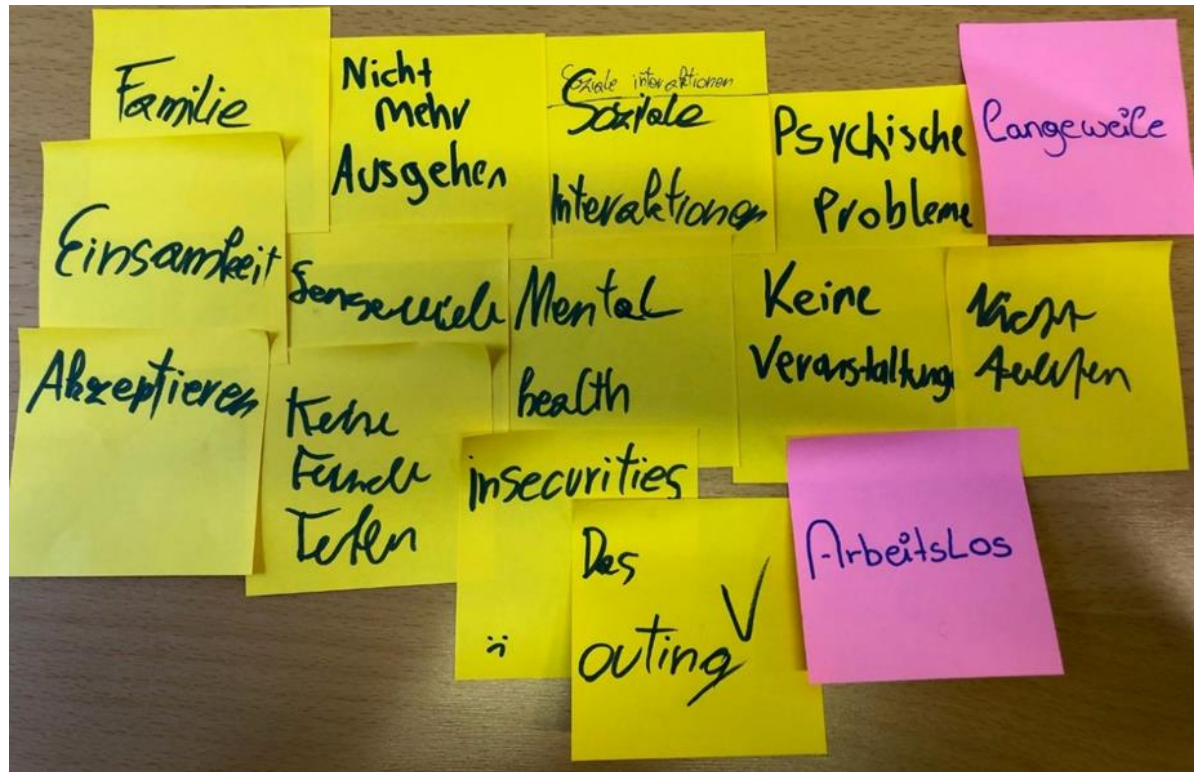
- Criminal activity (by participant or family member(s))
- Experiences of violence/bullying
- Addiction (either participant or family member(s))
- Dropping out of school/training
- Homeless or precarious housing
- Financial burdens
- Caring responsibilities/young carers

...



Source: SMS, WABA-Daten, Beendigungen AFit 2018 bis 2021, n= 10.842;

Issues and burdens – during and after Covid-19



Source: L&R Sozialforschung, evaluation
AusbildungsFit focus groups with AFit participants

Assisting Youth at Risk of Social Exclusion

- **Gain knowledge** and expand **practical skills** in protected environments
- Support in **exploring diverse job possibilities** through collaboration with companies
- Putting less pressure on participants and better enabling positive experience
- **Individual coaching**: taking personal circumstances, particular situations and competences into account
- **More sustainable stabilisation** and **development** achieved due to the lengthy duration (up to two years)

Considerable variation within the programme

- Practical training opportunities
- Spatial arrangements and workspaces and how they are used
- Interaction with companies and vocational orientation

Obstacles and Challenges

School system deficits: Some participants have significant gaps in knowledge and skills which can not be fully compensated for.

Gaps in mental health services: Psychological stress and disease are perceived to have increased: a lack of services and specialised staff leads often to inadequate and insufficient assistance.

Lack of barrier-free accessibility: Inclusion is vital and youth with disabilities are a main target group but financial and human resources for barrier-free accessibility are still lacking.

Pressure from labour markets: Many participants still have difficulty in integrating into regular labour markets upon successful completion of AFit. Societal normative standards and pressure to perform continue to hinder youth graduates.

Conclusion I: Social Equality Impact?

Given the current situation, AFit is an important programme which supports youth with disadvantageous backgrounds experiencing difficulty in life, but ...

"The difficult life situation of young people encounters an education system that is not forgiving if someone (even temporarily) does not "function" as intended."

(Ebner-Zarl et al., 2023, p. 6, Translation by the authors)

- Punishing weakness in school fosters dropping out (Steiner et al., 2015)
- Early dropping out is the main cause of exclusion (Bacher et al., 2013)
- Existing separation in the education system encourages inequality and elitist structure (Lassnigg, 2015)

Conclusion II: Social Equality Impact?

Stigmatisation in social and political discourse

- Existing prejudice against social policy measures (Nauschnigg, 2020)
- Uneducated youth are seen as a "future expense" to society which must be avoided (Atzmüller & Knecht, 2016)
- Labelling of participants as being "at risk of exclusion": youth believe that they are responsible for their "failure" (Dobischat et al., 2012)

Youth in AFit themselves strongly criticise the existing mechanisms of exclusion and inequality (Sorger et al., 2023; Wöhrer & Gündüz, 2023)



Both the educational system and the labour market need to ensure that youth are not excluded – this requires the development of a more integrative system

Further Information and Contacts

Project Report (German):

Sorger, C.; Meyer, L.; Nikolatti, R. and Willsberger B. (2023): Evaluierung von AusbildungsFit (AFit) und dem Vormodul. Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz (BMSGPK)(Hg.), Wien.

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