

**Good practice
in validation of learning outcomes**

Austria

Qualification "Certified Nurse"



Good practise in validation of learning outcomes. Austria. Qualification "Certified Nurse"

Based on the expertise by Aleksandra Panek

Editors:

Roksana Pierwieniecka, Barbara Fijałkowska, Barbara Przybylska

Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych

ul. Górczewska 8

01-180 Warszawa

tel. (22) 241 71 00; www.ibe.edu.pl

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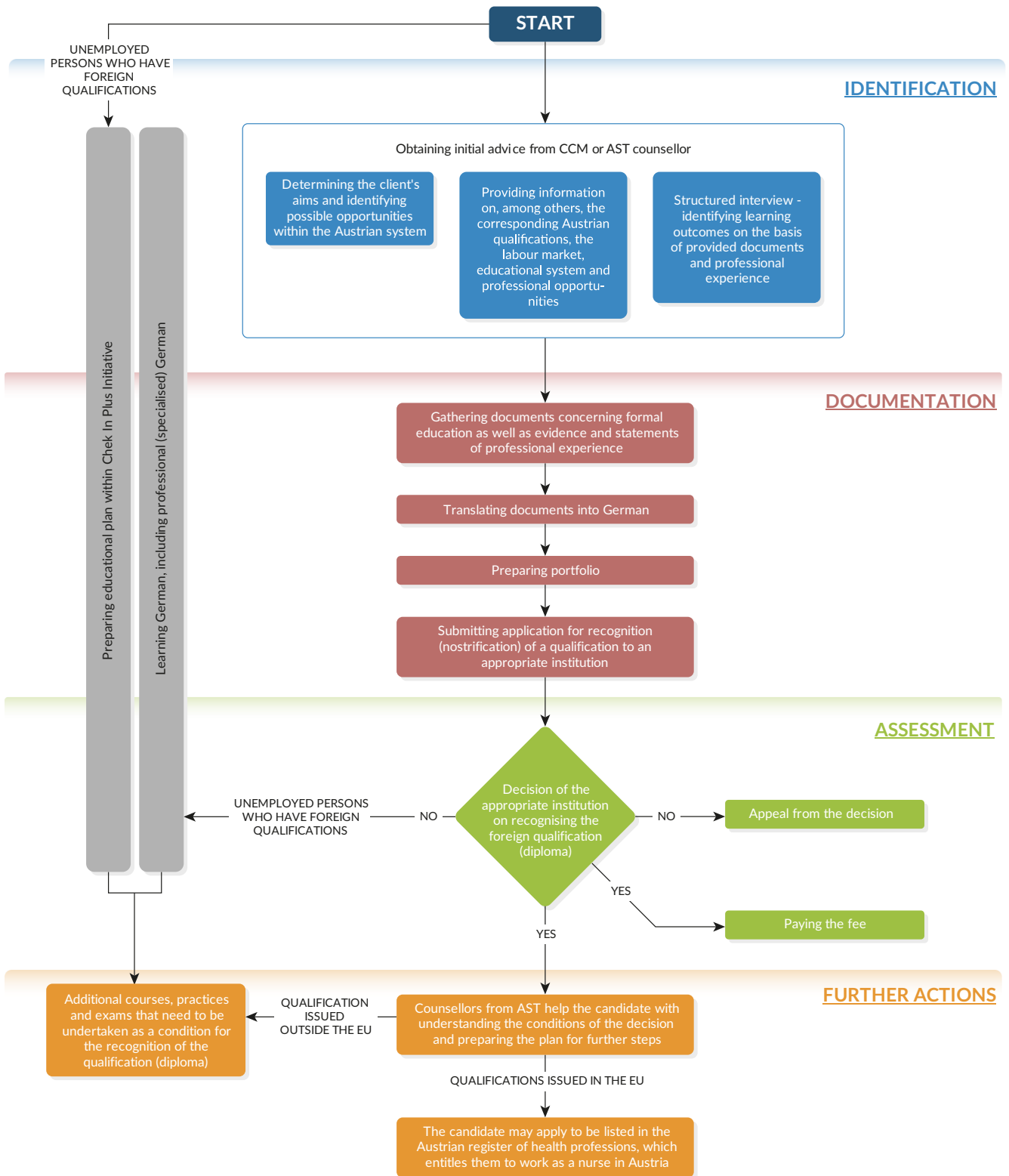
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1. Country, institution name

- Austria
- Beratungszentrum für Migranten und Migrantinnen in Wien

2. Institution website

<https://www.migrant.at>

3. Qualifications

Comment

Certified Nurse (German: Diplomierte/r Gesundheits- und KrankenpflegerIn)

Level 4 of The National Qualifications Framework for Vocational and Professional Qualifications – NQF VPQ (hereinafter, the Austrian Qualifications Framework)

(German: Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Berufsbildung – NQR)

Level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

4. Short description of the validation process

Comment

The validation process of this good practice is part of the nostrification process of a diploma in nursing. The Beratungszentrum für Migranten und Migrantinnen in Wien (Counselling Centre for Migrants in Vienna – CCM) is responsible for conducting validation. CCM is an NGO operating as part of a network of counselling centres for persons with foreign qualifications (Anlaufstelle, AST).

The AST centres are intended for persons living in Austria with foreign professional qualifications.

Validation and nostrification are legally regulated in Austria. They are regulated, among others, by the federal Recognition and Evaluation Act for qualifications, federal laws on the recognition of specific professions (e.g., the Law on Nursing Professions), and the Länder laws on the recognition of specific qualifications.

The nostrification of the diploma in nursing is conducted in several stages, some of which (identification and documentation of learning outcomes – validation) take place at CCM and some (the decision on nostrification) at the relevant university.

These stages consist of:

1. obtaining initial advice from CCM or another AST counselling centre
 - This includes determining which qualifications have been attained abroad and what needs to be done to apply for their nostrification, as well as identifying the competences gained through professional experience.
2. preparing a portfolio with the help of a counsellor from the AST centre, which contains documents that confirm qualifications and professional experience (including translation into German)
3. preparing a nostrification application and submitting it to the appropriate university together with the prepared portfolio
 - The relevant university then reviews the submitted documents and issues a decision on nostrification.
4. the candidate obtains the decision on nostrification from the university

- In the case of diplomas obtained in the European Union, the candidate may now apply for the right to practice his/her profession. In the case of diplomas from outside the EU, the university may impose additional obligations on the candidate, such as taking a German language course or doing an internship in the profession.

CCM can assist the candidate by explaining the university's decisions and developing a plan of further steps (e.g. by helping to choose the right courses). This is the latest stage in which the candidate can use the "Check In Plus" offer to obtain funding for the courses, examinations and internships included in the nostrification decision.

5. in the case of a qualification attained outside the European Union – completing courses and internships or passing the examinations included in the nostrification decision

The last step for the candidate – which occurs outside CCM and the university – is to gain the right to perform his/her profession by being entered into the Austrian register of health professions.

5. Detailed description of the validation process

Comment

A person interested in nostrifying a diploma obtained outside of Austria can contact one of AST's counselling centres for information and advice, including those at CCM. However, the following conditions must be met:

- the person seeking advice and validation must have a work permit in Austria,
- the qualifications must be professional in nature.

Using CCM or other AST network centres is voluntary and can take place at any stage of the nostrification procedure. Often clients come forward at the identification or documentation stage, but there are cases of individuals contacting AST when a decision has been issued – when the decision is conditional and requires additional action to be undertaken by the individual.

5.1. Identification of learning outcomes

The validation process at CCM or other AST network counselling centres starts with the provision of initial advice in a meeting lasting at least one hour. Its purpose is to determine which qualification a person can seek to attain. This includes determining the client's education, the corresponding Austrian professions (qualifications) and the documents he/she has confirming foreign qualifications.

On this basis, the counsellor helps to assess whether or not the client should apply for nostrification (e.g. if a large number of documents are missing or the qualification has no equivalent in Austria, formal education may be a better solution, as it is known in advance that the nostrifying institution will issue a negative decision).

If the candidate has a good chance of having the diploma nostrified, subsequent meetings will determine precisely his/her competences, professional experience and qualifications. The number of meetings is not fixed in advance, but it is assumed that there should be about 3–4 meetings.

In addition, the options for having the diploma recognised and the necessary steps to achieve this, funding options and additional documents are discussed at this time. An action plan is also established in case the nostrification process is not successful.

Box 1. "Check In Plus" Initiative

The Vienna Employment Office and CCM developed the "Check In Plus" (CIP) counselling centre in 2012. It provides counselling and services to unemployed persons who are undergoing the nostrification process or who want to be trained in other sectors. CIP is a non-governmental organisation. CIP services are only offered to persons with foreign qualifications.

Clients can contact CIP on their own or are referred to it by the labour office. This can take place at any time – before, during and even after a positive (or negative) nostrification decision. CIP services are voluntary and free of charge.

CIP works with each client and the labour office to prepare a specific educational plan. This is done on the basis of a written agreement for services during the process of having qualifications recognised. The education plan contains instructions and the sequence of financing specific instruments leading to the recognition of the diploma (in accordance with the results of the nostrification decision) from labour office funds. In the case of nurses, these are German language courses, German vocational courses, reimbursement of fees incurred during the nostrification process and financing for supplementary courses and internships. Where recognition of a diploma involves additional costs that cannot be incurred by the labour office, CIP counsellors help to find other funding sources.

CIP has a contract with the Labour Office in Vienna, which is renewed annually. On its basis, CIP takes on part of the Labour Office's responsibilities for providing services to specific client groups. This makes it possible to respond flexibly to the needs of the labour market and the clients of the counselling centres. This means that CCM and CIP must meet the expectations of the Labour Office, but they can also co-decide on the service offered.

It is worth noting that the Labour Office in Vienna often transfers competencies and tasks concerning counselling for specific beneficiary groups to non-governmental organisations – providing financing for a specific service. This is because, on one hand, these organisations specialise in responding to the needs of specific groups. On the other hand, labour offices do not have time to address every case, especially in the context of having diplomas recognised.

5.2. Documentation of Learning Outcomes

During the stage of documenting learning outcomes, the candidate prepares a portfolio containing documents on the basis of which the university will then decide on the nostrification of the diploma.

In the case of the "Certified Nurse" qualification, the portfolio contains documents concerning formal education, evidence and statements of professional experience and other information (more about the portfolio in the chapter on methods).

All documents in the portfolio must be translated into German. The CCM and other AST network centres have a budget for sworn translations – clients are not charged for this.

It takes an average of 12 weeks to prepare a portfolio.

5.3. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

In the case under discussion, assessment means evaluating the content of the portfolio and determining if a given diploma can be nostrified, and if so, to what extent and under which conditions. This is usually done by the university.

To this end, the candidate prepares an application to which his/her portfolio is attached. a CCM counsellor or other AST network counselling centre can assist with this. The application is submitted by CCM/AST in order to avoid pointless or misdirected applications.

In the case under discussion, a candidate can turn to one of the 10 offices (the ministry and 9 Länder offices) that issue decisions on recognising foreign nursing qualifications. The choice of institution depends on the level and type of education, the country where the diploma was obtained and where the candidate lives in Austria.

The portfolio is assessed in reference to the curriculum of certified nurses in Austrian nursing schools. However, it should be stressed that the programmes are not written in the language of learning outcomes; only new nursing programme curricula are presented in this way. Foreign study programmes also rarely contain more than just a list of classes. For this reason, the older the qualification, the more likely it is that the diploma will be recognised at a lower level than expected.

5.4. Certification

Depending on whether the diploma was originally issued in an EU country or not, the nostrification process (including validation and counselling in CCM/AST) takes different amounts of time. The recognition of a diploma issued outside the EU takes from several to eighteen months, while the recognition of a diploma from an EU country takes from one day (the so-called One Stop procedure, conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Protection) to four months.

The purpose of recognising a diploma may be to take up employment in a profession, continue education or enrol in a university.

Recognition of a Qualification Awarded in a Country outside the European Union

The decision to recognise the qualification of “Certified Nurse” from outside an EU country is usually conditional – it involves additional internships or courses and passing exams. a list of these is provided in the decision issued to the candidate. The type and number of additional conditions depend on the candidate’s competences.

Counsellors working at CCM, AST or “Check In Plus” help a candidate select specific training institutions and courses, and identify possible sources of funding. This is all the more important because meeting the requirements imposed in the nostrification decision involves an average cost of EUR 1,000–3,000. The basic source of financing for the candidate are funds from the labour office.

After completing all courses and internships, and after passing the exams specified in the nostrification decision, the candidate’s diploma is recognised and the procedure is completed.

6. Validation methods

During validation, CCM/AST counsellors use the following validation methods:

- structured interview – conducted with a special CCM form

During the interview, information about the candidate’s education and previous employment (competences acquired at work) is mainly collected. In addition, the counsellors attempt to determine the socio-economic situation of the client – the nostrification process and obtaining the right to practice one’s profession in Austria can be fairly long, so the time and financial resources and family situation of the client must be taken into account during counselling.

The interview should enable the counsellor to determine the knowledge, skills and social competences the client has; however, because of the purpose of the validation, this is limited to learning outcomes relating to the nursing qualification.

In addition, the counsellor should have a good enough understanding of the client's situation to advise them on further steps, including, for example, the courses that need to be taken to successfully complete the nostrification process.

- analysis of evidence and statements – portfolio

For the qualification of “Certified Nurse”, the most important information in the portfolio include:

- documents on formal education, e.g. diplomas and certificates, reports from specific subjects, educational programmes, and
- evidence and statements on professional experience as well as skills and social competence, e.g. attestations from work, CV, the opinions of employers.

In addition, the portfolio presented in the nostrification process includes such documents as the Austrian residency registration or a certificate confirming the candidate's right to practice his/her profession in his/her home country.

All documents in the portfolio must be translated into German and certified.

Preparing the portfolio correctly is important, because the university deciding on the nostrification of the diploma will be making decisions only on the basis of its content – no additional methods are used.

Counsellors and those undertaking validation can use additional sources of information to help determine the next steps and perform a self-diagnosis. These are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Sources of information that can be used during validation	
Tool	Description
Berufsanerkennung.at	<p>This is a tool providing initial information on the nostrification process. It is designed as a simple questionnaire – after answering several questions, the person completing the questionnaire receives information about the nostrification process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ whether the diploma needs to be nostrified and, if so, why ▪ which institution is authorised to issue the decision to recognise the qualification ▪ the documents needed ▪ costs ▪ the approximate waiting time for a decision to be issued by the relevant institution ▪ AST network counselling centres ▪ possible funding sources <p>This online tool is available to the public.</p>

<p>Berufsinformationscomputer</p>	<p>An interactive portal containing information about all professional qualifications, occupations and sectors in Austria. The content is available in six languages and can be searched using many different criteria.</p> <p>This Internet portal is available to the public.</p>
<p>Databases on international education systems</p>	<p>The databases are used to compare foreign diplomas (education programmes) with Austrian ones. This enables the best counselling to be provided and can facilitate the preparation of the portfolio.</p> <p>The databases are available to counsellors.</p>

7. Validation results

The result of validation at CCM/AST is the preparation of a nostrification application by:

- identifying the individual's qualifications and competences, and
- developing a portfolio (including translation of documents into German).

Additionally, the CCM/AST counsellors:

- send documents to be translated,
- assist candidates in finding the appropriate university that can nostrify their diplomas,
- obtain and explain the nostrification decision, especially if it is conditional (i.e. requires the candidate to take additional action),
- if needed, help choose the right courses and sites for additional internships,
- organise financial support (as part of the "Check in Plus" initiative),
- provide legal advice,
- help prepare an appeal of the decision issued by the nostrification institution,
- develop an action plan for the candidate in the case of a negative nostrification decision.

The relevant university decides whether or not to nostrify a given qualification (and with which procedure) based on the contents of the portfolio. The following results are possible:

- unconditional recognition of the diploma – confirmation of the equivalence of the given qualification with a similar Austrian qualification;
- recognition after the candidate completes additional internships or passes additional examinations – the list is included in the nostrification decision; the candidate can search for specific training or examination institutions with the help of a counsellor working at CCM/AST;
- the diploma is nostrified at a lower level or in a related profession (e.g. if the qualification "Certified Nurse" from the candidate's country of origin is not equivalent to an Austrian qualification, a decision may be made to recognise the diploma of nursing assistant instead); the decision to recognise the qualification at

a lower level or in a related profession may be either unconditional, or may be made conditional upon completion of additional training or passing the exams indicated in the decision of the university.

After the diploma has been nostrified, the candidate may apply to be listed in the Austrian register of health professions. This entitles the candidate to work as a nurse in Austria.

Nostrification also makes it possible to change jobs (take up employment that is more relevant to one's education) and undertake further training (further specialisation within the profession or studies).

8. Human resources

In order to provide counselling at CCM/AST and in the "Check In Plus" initiative, a person must:

- have a higher education degree in the social sciences (e.g. education, social work) or foreign languages, and
- have at least one year of professional practice in a social field, usually in counselling.

In addition, it is recommended that counsellors have the following competences:

- knowledge about adult education,
- the ability to work with others,
- communication skills,
- didactic skills,
- a readiness to learn on an ongoing basis.

Persons working in the "Check In Plus" initiative must also be familiar with the courses that are offered by the labour office, the offer of commercial training firms in the fields relating to the counselling being offered, and the conditions and procedures for obtaining financing from the Austrian labour office for the nostrification of foreign qualifications.

Counsellors employed at AST are required to attend continuing education courses and to update their knowledge on counselling and the fields relating to the counselling being offered.

9. Organizational and material conditions

The validation and counselling process takes place in individual rooms, ensuring quiet and the conditions to build a relationship of trust between the counsellor and client, which is particularly important for the interview. The counsellor should have access to a computer and the Internet during this time, for the eventual use of the sources of information indicated above.

The duration of validation is not predetermined and depends on both the qualification and the country in which it was awarded as well as the candidate's situation. For example, identification and documentation for the purpose of confirming medical and dental qualifications awarded in non-EU countries can take up to 10 meetings with an AST counsellor – and simultaneously up to 15 meetings with counsellors from the "Check In Plus" centre. As a rule, however, the process takes about 4–5 meetings at the AST centre (including at least one hour of preliminary meetings). Portfolio preparation takes an average of 12 weeks; this time includes the collection of documents from abroad and their translation into German.

The time taken by persons from the university to assess the portfolio in order to nostrify the diploma is also not specified. It depends on the qualification, the portfolio's contents (e.g. whether the documents are complete and exhaustive) and whether the diploma was issued in an EU Member State. , the process is longer because the university must indicate what additional steps the candidate is to take – the diploma will only be recognised once the candidate has completed all the courses or passed all the exams listed in the nostrification decision.

10. Quality assurance

Counsellors working at CCM, AST or "Check In Plus" are required to adhere to the following principles:

- transparency, confidentiality, respect and the equal treatment of clients,
- easy access to services,
- cooperation with other institutions.

The work of the counselling centres is regulated, among others, by AST statutes and the Austrian Recognition and Evaluation Act for qualifications (AuBG 2016). Furthermore, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) also applies here.

The counselling centres are externally evaluated. The last evaluation, conducted at the initiative of the Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Protection, was published in 2017 and came to the following conclusions, in brief:

- 90% of clients were satisfied or very satisfied with the counselling offer and the competence of the counsellors,
- 55% of the clients regard the counselling as an important element in labour market integration.

"Check In Plus" centres conduct surveys on their clients' satisfaction with services.

In addition, the activities of CCM, AST and "Check In Plus" counsellors are subject to an annual financial audit performed by the funding provider.

11. Financing

Validation in CCM/AST, i.e. the identification and documentation of competences, is free of charge.

Table 2. Funding sources for the counselling centres	
Counselling centre	Funding source
AST counselling centres (and AST Coordination)	Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Protection (BMASGK)
AST centres in Vienna (located at CCM)	Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Protection (BMASGK) and Vienna Fund for Financing Employees (WAFF) Vienna Magistrate for Integration and Diversity (MA 17)
"Check In Plus" counselling centre (located at CCM)	Vienna Labour Office (AMS Wien)

There is a charge for the nostrification process and its amount depends on the university. Counsellors can assist the candidate in finding sources of funding for this.

12. Context of good practice

Comment

The Counselling Centre for Migrants in Vienna (CCM) has been operating since 1983. It is one of the first and largest associations (NGOs) in Austria providing advice services to migrants.

The board members of the CCM are volunteers. The association has two secretaries-general, who at the same time direct subgroups and make strategic decisions after consultations with individual CCM branches.

CCM currently employs more than 50 counsellors in 6 branches. In addition to advice, CCM is involved in lobbying on migration issues in Austria and, in particular, the AST network in the field of the recognition of foreign qualifications.

The AST network of counselling centres is the only one in Austria to offer advice services on the recognition of qualifications. This advice is regulated by the Recognition and Evaluation Act of 2016 for qualifications.

Annual AST statistics show that women make up about 60% of AST clients. The largest group of clients are persons aged 30–39. 60% of clients have been educated outside the European Union. Moreover, 60% of the individuals seeking advice from AST have a degree from a higher education institution.

Austria adopted a national validation strategy in 2017, and also has a number of initiatives, programmes and instruments in this area.

Table 3. Examples of Austrian initiatives and tools pertaining to validation

Initiative	Brief description
Weiterbildungsakademie (wba) – Austrian Academy of Continuing Education	wba validates competences and awards qualifications in the counselling, training and social sectors. The majority of people working in continuing education in Austria have very diverse education and work experiences. wba provides opportunities to combine these experiences and certification. wba is financed by the Austrian Ministry of Education and EU funds.
Austrian Employment Services (AMS)	The Austrian Employment Services offer various instruments for assessing professional competences in various industries and crafts, and also provide supplementary courses (including the opportunity to take a vocational exam). It is worth noting that in Austria, it is possible to take a vocational exam only on the basis of professional experience, without having a specific qualification.
“Du kannst was!” – “You know something!”	“Du kannst was!” enables people with professional experience to continue their education and attain qualifications. The initiative is financed by individual federal states in cooperation with employee associations.

<p>More than one perspective (MTOPI)</p>	<p>This is an initiative for highly qualified refugees. It enables competences obtained outside formal education to be validated and contacts to be established with companies seeking employees with such competences.</p>
<p>Wiener Bildungspass – Vienna Education Card Vienna Magistrate for Integration and Diversity (MA 17)</p>	<p>Wiener Bildungspass is a document confirming a person’s attendance in German language courses, participation in thematic modules, counselling and educational events. It can be presented wherever there are questions about language skills, professional qualifications, education and additional qualifications.</p> <p>The education card contains vouchers for German language courses, which can be redeemed at any certified language course provider in Vienna.</p>

Comments

Level 4 of the Austrian Qualifications Framework

Level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

In Austria, the qualification “Certified Nurse” can be obtained by completing a 3-year nursing programme after finishing 10 years of education and passing the entrance exam. In the International Standard Classification of Education ISCED, this is level 4 (post-secondary non-tertiary education), corresponding to level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework. Reforms are currently being introduced that will result in the ability to attain this qualification only through higher education as of 2024, which will, among other things, change its level in the Austrian Qualifications Framework.

a network of counselling centres for persons with foreign qualifications

a network of counselling centres for persons with foreign qualifications

The AST network consists of ten counselling centres in Vienna, Innsbruck, Gratz and Linz. The centres are operated by non-governmental organisations. The network has been operating since 2013 and is coordinated by AST Coordination – with headquarters at the Counselling Centre for Migrants in Vienna (CCM). CCM has two AST centres and a “Check In Plus” office (offering services to unemployed persons who have foreign qualifications).

university

university

In accordance with the 1993 Federal Law on the Organisation of Universities, public institutions of higher education in Austria are official bodies. This means, among other things, that they can decide for themselves whether or not to enrol students with a secondary school completion diploma / matriculation diploma awarded in a country outside the European Union.

“the corresponding Austrian professions (qualifications)”

the corresponding Austrian professions (qualifications)

Austria has five qualifications in the nursing profession: ● semi-nursing assistance in the home ● nursing assistant ● professional nursing assistant ● certified nurse ● higher education certified nurse

on “branches”

branches

CCM has 6 branches, each of which addresses different categories of issues: ● laws on residence and work, citizenship, insurance, employment and all social issues; special emphasis is placed on advice for unemployed migrants ● specialised advice for migrant women ● AST-Vienna: advice for persons with foreign qualifications living in Vienna ● AST-Lower Austria and northern Burgenland: advice for persons with foreign qualifications living in the federal states of Lower Austria and the northern part of Burgenland ● “Check In Plus”: advice on further education, recognition of foreign diplomas and financing for education (only for unemployed persons) ● Coordination of the counselling centres (AST Coordination)