

An Innovative Public Sector in 2017 – New Solutions to Complex Challenges

EPISA2017018 Talents for Austria

Submitted by the City of Trofaiach and the Institute for Talent Development (AT)

Due to demographic trends and low birth rates in the past years, Austria faces a striking lack of apprentices and skilled workers. At the same time, a steady stream of refugees comes into the country, among them talented and motivated unaccompanied minors. In 2015, the city of Trofaiach and the Institute for Talent Development joined forces and founded the project “Talents for Austria”, to provide the missing link between the Austrian job market and migrants reaching the country, through the following model: Boarding School – Education – Job Training – Job Placement – External Job Support.

“Talents for Austria” combines primary care, education, job training and job placement for unaccompanied minor refugees (UMR). The focus areas of this model project, which is the only one of its kind in Austria, are linguistic competences (German), basic education (Mathematics, Social Studies and Science), knowledge of customs, lifestyles and culture (values), as well as a specialist job training (for construction, gastronomy, local and regional small and medium-sized enterprises) and job placement. In two “Talent for Austria” schools in Styria (Trofaiach, Niklasdorf) 75 UMRs are currently being trained and complete the programme with an official internationally renowned German language certificate (OESD; level A2 or B1). One colleague is acting as job integration coach, providing support for employers and new employees during all steps of the recruitment process and beyond the start of work, should any questions or uncertainties arise.

Since the Institute provides housing, education and job training all under one roof, the UMRs learn Austrian culture and values in all settings (accommodation, school, workplace). Thus, we provide a perspective for a self-determined and independent life in Austria. The young refugees are completely integrated (language, values/culture, work), which allows them to become valuable members of our society. The specialist job training they receive significantly increases their chances of starting an apprenticeship and entering the job market. As apprentices, the UMRs contribute to the Austrian social system. At the same time, Austrian companies can fill vacant apprenticeship positions and respond to the shortage of skilled workers.

This approach provides a solution in times of big migratory movements and a growing shortage of apprentices and skilled workers due to demographic decline. Usually, only one third of the persons entitled to asylum have found a job after 5 years. Thus, our project is a simple calculation: the federal state “saves” 10,000€ per refugee per year, if he/she is not receiving needs-based guaranteed minimum income (“Mindestsicherung”). If two thirds of our 75 students (50 persons) enter the job market, we save the state approx. 2.5 million € over the next 5 years. As of September 2017, 11 of our students have started an apprenticeship (0 drop-outs), 8 more have a preliminary apprenticeship contract and will be able to begin as soon as their asylum application has been granted. Six are attending secondary schools and we have 10 further companies that want to hire our students once their asylum application has been decided on.