

# **GOOD PRACTICE**

## **AMS STANDING COMMITTEE ON NEW SKILLS**



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Title
<p><b>AMS Standing Committee on New Skills</b></p> <p>In cooperation with the Austrian social partners, the Austrian Public Employment Service established an “AMS Standing Committee on New Skills” aimed at determining the short- to medium-term qualification needs.</p>
Location / geographic coverage
<p>The <b>AMS Standing Committee on New Skills</b> was established on an Austrian national level at the AMS national headquarters. Experts from different occupational fields (“clusters”) identify short- to medium-term qualification requirements. These investigations are carried out separately for the individual occupational fields on an overall national and economic level. In a next phase, curricular proposals were developed as an orientation guide for the planning of the AMS course offerings based on the specialist groups’ results. The <b>specialist courses of the so-called “New Skills” programme</b> are implemented by the AMS branch offices in the individual federal states in cooperation with the respective educational establishments.</p>
Summary
<p>In October 2009, the Board of Directors of the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) established an “AMS Standing Committee on New Skills” for Austria. Within this committee, specialist groups (clusters) for the determination of the short- to medium-term qualification requirements were formed on a national level. The objective is to initiate new programmes offering continued education for job-seekers and employees with short implementation lead times, which address the identified qualification requirements.</p>
Type of the good practice
<p><b>Standing committee</b> for the determination of the short- to medium-term qualification requirements per industry (cluster) on a national level. The results are documented in reports, and the publications are made available by download via the AMS research network.</p>
Stakeholders and partners
<p>The “AMS Standing Committee on New Skills” was established in cooperation with the Austrian social partners. For the <b>workshops</b>, operational experts, cluster managers, representatives of education and training facilities, the Public Employment Service, social partner organisations and consulting institutes were invited. Based on the results, curricular proposals for further education offerings were prepared. The primary target group of the <b>specialist courses of the “New Skills” programme</b> includes persons who have already worked in a certain occupational area and are trained with respect to current requirements of the labour market in this field, in order to improve their occupational opportunities and allow a re-entry into the labour market. A particular focus is on the target group of persons above the age of 45.</p>
Issue / challenge and goals / assumptions

The initial situation prompting the establishment of the AMS Standing Committee on New Skills in the year 2009 was the economic and financial crisis the country was going through at the time. This development made it clear that changes and developments that were already ongoing before the crisis were further accelerating within the companies. The standing committee was therefore established with the objective of making the most of periods of operational under-utilisation combined with labour market policy support measures, in order to prepare the workforce (employees and persons seeking work) for upcoming changes and requirements in a timely manner. The **main goal** of the AMS Standing Committee on New Skills therefore is to keep pace with the **required qualifications** through an **early anticipation of developments**. The objective is to initiate new programmes offering continued education for job-seekers and employees with short implementation lead times, which address the identified qualification requirements. As an assumption and theoretical model, the AMS Standing Committee on New Skills relies on the EU sector analysis. Upon the initiative and with the support of the European Commission, **18 sector analyses** have been performed at **EU level** since 2007 within the **“European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007 to 2013)”**.

#### How does it work?

Within the “Standing Committee”, so-called **“specialist groups”** were established, within which experts from different occupational fields (“clusters”) identified concrete short- and medium-term qualification requirements over the course of several **sessions**. Apart from the first work phase 2009/2010, three work sessions were held for each corporate cluster during the second work phase 2010/2011. The determination of the clusters was carried out within the standing committee’s steering group in coordination with the AMS leadership teams in the individual states. (Cluster “Electrical engineering, electronics, telecommunications”; Cluster “Energy and environmental engineering”; Cluster “Health and care”; Cluster “Trade”).

For the **workshops** held during the work phases, operational experts, cluster managers, representatives of education and training facilities, the Public Employment Service, social partner organisations and consulting institutes were invited.

- **1<sup>st</sup> Workshop:** Collaborative establishment of the changes and developments to be expected within the cluster over the next three to five years. Here, the main focus was on developments (e.g. regarding technology, materials, equipment, logistics, forms of collaboration, framework conditions, etc.).
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop:** Determination of the qualifications, the competencies and the knowledge required to address the identified changes and developments. This resulted in an overall summary of the main changes currently characterizing the individual clusters, as well as the qualification requirements which will become more and more important over the next years.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Workshop:** Elaboration of initial proposals and approaches for further education offerings provided by education and training facilities. Apart from the presentation of the existing offerings, which in the view of the participating representatives of the further education and training facilities already very well match the established qualification requirements, first considerations regarding new offerings to be developed were presented and discussed.

With the input of industry experts, operational change processes which are already known

due to the current developments or which can be foreseen with a considerable degree of certainty were determined. Such changes can include both technological and organisational changes. Significant changes regarding basic materials can also play an important role, as can changes due to different customer behaviour or taste preferences.

## Results

Within the scope of the two work phases completed so far, AMS has made first steps in implementing the development of new training offerings. At the same time, the insights gained during the workshops are on the one hand made accessible to a broader audience and on the other hand further expanded and corroborated within the scope of a series of accompanying measures.

**Curricular proposals:** Based on the results of the first and second work phase, curricular proposals for further education offerings targeted at job-seekers were prepared for each cluster. The AMS branch offices use these as the basis for their tenders for specialist courses. Within a first pilot phase, specialist courses ("New Skills" programme) have been held on the basis of this framework curriculum since the autumn of 2011. The experiences gained are being evaluated and used for the continued development of the curricular proposals.

**Adaptation of existing course offerings:** In addition to this, modules included in the curricular proposals, as well as other results established within the workshops are being used to adapt existing AMS course offerings.

**Standing committee information flyer:** For each cluster, a flyer summarizing the core messages and results of the workshop activities was developed. This in particular aims at sensitizing small- and medium-sized companies regarding the importance of further education and training for their own employees and providing them with important contact options.

**AMS research network:** Within the AMS research network ([www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at](http://www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at)), a separate area was established for the collective results of the work groups. It includes, *inter alia*, all short reports on the corporate clusters, the reports on the work phases, and the flyer contents.

Focus groups with employees and persons seeking work: As a complementary activity, focus groups were organised to identify the aspects regarding future qualification requirements which are important to employees. The results were summarized in a separate report.

## Lessons learned

**Updating competencies and skills through New Skills courses:** Based on the results of the work performed by the individual corporate clusters, New Skills courses were developed and offered in particular for persons (employees and persons seeking jobs) whose training or last further education course ended a while ago and who therefore are no longer up-to-date with the latest developments and technologies. This can facilitate their re-entry into the workforce and contribute to their employability.

**Collaboration and network formation:** One major recommendation points to the necessary intensification of the **collaboration between providers of further education offerings** and companies, in order to use resources (know-how, workshops, specialised instructors) as efficiently as possible and to improve the flow of information, but above all also to optimize the content and the timing of further education offerings.

Furthermore, the communication and exchange of ideas between AMS, centres for vocational training, companies, job-seekers and employees regarding existing and required further educational offerings should be improved, and the collaboration should be intensified on all levels.

The cluster experts expect more innovation regarding the development of new offerings and a stronger inclusion of the companies by local partners for training and education.

### **Sustainability and transferability**

The establishment of a standing committee at the national headquarters of the Austrian Labour Market Administration promotes a continued engagement and further development of the issue. The results serve as the basis for strategic considerations and recommendations to the Board of Directors of the AMS, which includes employee and employer representatives, as well as government officials.

**Introduction of the insights into the education system:** During the second work phase, representatives of (further) education and training facilities were included more intensively in the discussion process. On the one hand, the participation of representatives of vocational schools, technical colleges and universities makes the educational system aware of the insights gained within the work groups. On the other, it also ensures that the education facilities' perspectives and experiences are immediately included in the work process.

**Continuation of the discussion process:** With the availability of the first implementation results and implementation experiences gained during the development of the educational offerings it becomes necessary to revive and continue the discussion within the existing corporate clusters. The participating company representatives need to be informed about the implementation steps and the implementation results, and the remaining development potential needs to be exploited.

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### **Sources:**

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