



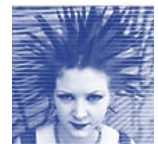
Austria 2004

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Clearing

Assistance for young persons with special needs in their transition from school to working life





1. THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY

1.a Background

The Austrian Constitution does not include specific elements referring to provisions for disabled persons or those with special needs. Because of this, a policy for this target group is a cross-departmental task of different ministries and of departments at different levels of government (national and federal) in Austria. Much of the national and federal legislation include regulations concerning handicapped persons and those with special needs. The legal basis for each law in this respect is the principle of equality contained in Article 7 of the Austrian Constitution.

The legal instrument for coordination in this field is the “Bundesbehindertengesetz - BBG” of 1990 (Federal Law regarding Persons with Disabilities). It covers the obligations of the different departments (National Government, Federal Governments, Social Security, Federal Office for Social Affairs - BSB, Labour Market Service – AMS etc.) to coordinate their activities. The ministry in charge of coordinating policies for the disabled is the National Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumers Protection (BMSG).

Whereas the School Reform Acts of 1993 and 1996 call for the integration of handicapped pupils in secondary schools, there remain today special schools for different types of mental and physical disability and Special Needs Education.

A fundamental problem is the fragmentation of administrative responsibility, leading to different definitions of disability and therefore different definitions of the target group. The “decision concerning the definitions – medical, sociological, psychological etc. – to be used are ultimately made by those granting the benefits” and/or the provision (Giedenbacher e.a., 2001, 3). Consequently, the numbers of disabled persons published by different departments is hard to assess.

The “Federal Government’s Concept for Persons with Disabilities” (Behindertenkonzept, 1992) is seen as a guideline for the policy of the National Government concerning the handicapped. This guideline contains the principles:



- Prevention,
- Integration,
- Normalization,
- Self-determination and help to help yourself,
- Aim: help is given regardless of the causes of the handicap
- Transition (different supplementary measures)
- Rehabilitation,
- Mobile/ambulant help and
- Accessibility.

On the basis of these principles, different goals and projects have been developed which have either been partially implemented, or which are still in the planning stage, including the integration of handicapped children and young people in schools, and the integration of handicapped persons in the normal/primary labour market.

Between 1999 and 2002, the proportion of the handicapped among the unemployed in Austria declined from 17.8 % to 13.4 % (men: 20.5 % to 14.9 %; woman: 14.4 % to 11.3 %). (BMSG 2003, 10) Since 2002, the total rate of unemployment is on the increase. Also, the total number of unemployed with disabilities increased by 4.3 % (m 6.1 %; w 1.2 %) in 2000-2001. Yet, despite a deterioration in the labour market in Austria, unemployment among young handicapped persons did not proportionally increase in line with overall unemployment.

The source of this data is the Labour Market Service (AMS), which means that a large number of persons seeking a job or an apprenticeship are not included in the statistics (i.e. school-leavers, persons with permanent allowance). Therefore the proportion of young unemployed persons between the age of 15 and 25 years is comparatively high (6.1 %) (BMSG 2003a, 12).

The number of pupils with special needs is constantly rising (1997/98: 7,844; 2001/02: 9,229) and their access to the labour market is declining considerably¹. Integrated and complete statistical data about handicapped young persons is not available. It is only stated that 55 % of them are poor learners, 21 % are mentally handicapped and 21 % have other handicaps (BMSG 2003a, 14)².

1 This statement is given in the "country-wide labour market disabled's programme" (Bundesweites Arbeitsmarktpolitisches Behindertenprogramm - BABE) without referring to any source and without giving specific figures.

2 These figures cannot be interpreted in relation to a definition of „Handicapped“



The same paper draws attention to inequalities and exclusion in labour market experienced by handicapped woman. For this reason it argues that 50 % of all labour market inclusion activities aimed should be applied on behalf handicapped women (14f).

In 2001, the National Government started an employment initiative "Behindertenmilliarde" (employment campaign for persons with disabilities – with annual funding of € 72.6 millions), which is spent mainly on young handicapped persons with special needs or persons from integrated educational establishments. Expenditures from this funding are also to enhance the integration of handicapped persons with special difficulties in working life, and to secure jobs for older handicapped persons.

The many different measures for young handicapped persons for this funding comprise: integration allowance, job coaching, pre-job or pre-apprenticeship measures, qualification, work- and education assistance, study and apprenticeship allowance and 'Clearing'. In addition, qualification- and employment-projects, and jobs in "Integrative Firms" are to be created and supported for those with special difficulties in joining the labour market.

Most of this broad variety of measures, apart from those in private firms, are carried out by different NGO's/NPO's (non profit making organisations).

The most important law governing the employment of persons with a disability is the Disabled Persons Employment Act (DPEA) (Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz). Its goal is to integrate *registered* persons with disabilities into working life and to secure their employment. This is implemented by:

- *Mandatory employment* (Quota Scheme) with a compensatory levy for those employers who do not comply with the quota,
- *Banning discrimination* in terms of pay,
- *Special protection* against dismissal,
- *Supportive measures* (granting individual support such as support into work, wage subsidies, subsidies for training or transport etc. from the Compensatory Levy Fund) and
- *Supported employment* (Preparation, accompaniment and support in order to enable persons with a disability to find a job on the open labour market).

There are *sheltered workshops* for those who don't seem to be in the position to fulfil even low job demands on the open labour market.



As mentioned, these provisions only apply to *registered* disabled persons. They “must fulfil the following criteria for such registration³ :

- They must have a degree of disability of at least 50%. The assessment of the degrees of disability is based a medical criteria, and is not connected with the person’s actual capacity to work (...).
- They must be Austrian citizens, EU-citizens or legal refugees.
- A person with a disability will not be registered if she/he is in education or training (with a few exceptions e.g. apprenticeship)

Unlike most other European countries, Austria and Germany have the “Dual System” in vocational training. The advantage of this system is that trainees are already in enterprises during their apprenticeship. As a result, the transition from vocational training, or an apprenticeship, to a permanent job in the firm is generally easier than in other countries, which is evident from the comparably lower unemployment rates of young persons.

On the other hand, the Dual System has the negative repercussion of functioning as a gate- keeper to active working life: if a young person does not manage to complete a vocational training (or a higher qualification), or doesn’t even manage to get the vocational training place, the risk of having insecure and bad paid jobs or even being excluded from working life more ore less permanently, is relatively high.

This highlights the importance of making good and sustainable decisions in the transition phase from school to working life.

1.b Reasons for developing the policy

Obviously the young handicapped themselves and their parents can hardly know about all the different possibilities and their respective advantages and disadvantages. Even the teachers of handicapped pupils and other experts find it hard to maintain an overview and to give good advice about the best pathway for each handicapped young person in relation to her or his potentials, competences, qualifications, interests and suitability.

Consequently, many handicapped school-leavers and graduates have not been able to access the labour market in accordance with their individual profiles. Either they failed to complete an apprenticeship, or they worked in unqualified

³ For a detailed description of the registration procedure, see Giedenbacher e.a., 10



and insecure jobs. Even if they had the potential to enter an apprenticeship, training or higher education, often they ended up in job-creation schemes and sheltered workshops which did not fulfil their potential. Or they vanished in their families without any support and perspectives for employment.

On leaving compulsory school, many handicapped school-leavers and graduates, and those with special needs, experience a break in the continuity of their support: Since the Labour Market Service Act came into force in 1994 there has been no compulsory registration of young handicapped persons at the AMS by the school administration.

“Since October 1999, the Labour Market Statistics only show persons with disabilities according to the type of registration they have (e.g. registered according to the Federal Disabled Persons Employment Act, registered according to a Provincial Disability Act). However, the largest category is the “otherwise recorded persons with disabilities by the Labour Market Service“. These are persons who are not registered according to any of the respective laws, and who have been classified as persons with a disability according to the Labour Market Service. This is quite a broad definition that does not seem to have a clear-cut assessment procedure ... The question whether a person is disabled or not is relevant for the Labour Market Service only in so far as it concerns its support measures for labour market participation. If the Labour Market Service labels somebody as being disabled, it does not have any consequences for any other area“. (Giedenbacher e.a., 21)

An institutionalised support system or safety net for young handicapped school leavers and graduates did not exist until now, especially if they are not “Registered Persons with a Disability“.

1.c. National Action plan for Social Inclusion

All EU Member States have specified their priorities in relation to the strategic objective of the Lisbon European Council to make the European Union “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion“. Furthermore, in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council of Barcelona, the Member States are obliged in their National Action Plans for Social Inclusion, to emphasise the need for a crucial reduction in the number of persons at risk of poverty and exclusion, by 2010.



The future challenges are addressed in the Austrian National Action Plan (NAP Incl.) against poverty and exclusion 2003-2005. Similar to most other Member-States, the political measures are supposed to facilitate participation in employment and in access for all to resources, rights, goods and services, to prevent the risk of exclusion, to help the most vulnerable, and to mobilise all the relevant bodies. The NAP Incl. estimates that persons with a disability have a poverty risk rate of 20% and that consequently opportunities for employment and participation should be boosted. An Equal Opportunities Act for the Handicapped shall contribute to the prevention und elimination of discrimination. Correspondingly, programmes to enhance handicapped children and young persons shall strengthen their later employability and employment opportunities. Extensive integrative measures, consultancy, support and assistance are indicated as necessary for integration in labour market and society.

Furthermore, education and training policies have to provide measures which are adapted to the personal abilities and needs of young persons, and which set out the preconditions and qualifications needed to cope with challenges in later life. Measures need to be identified and developed for the intention especially of slow learners, young persons with social behaviour problems, those who are handicapped and for those with a poor knowledge of the German language.

The Austrian Government has stated its intention to integrate handicapped persons into the normal labour market, including the creation and the safeguarding of jobs. One separate target group in this policy is young persons aged 13 and 23 years who are handicapped physically, mentally, emotionally and/or in their sensory perception. Included are also weak learners and others with any kind of special needs, including those who are at risk of criminality (BMSG 2003a, 20).

The implementation of NAP Incl 2003-2005 is based on closer collaboration between various bodies, non-profit, professional and official, and at various levels of society, with the focus on individual needs.

1.d The goals of the policy

'*Clearing*' has been highlighted in Austria's NAP Incl 2003-2005 as a good practice in giving (all) handicapped young persons qualified support in the transition from school to working life. The name of the project underlines what



'Clearing' ought to do: give young persons with disabilities or special needs, and their parents, a clear view and perspective of the best suitable steps, activities, measures and opportunities to achieve participation in working life at the highest level possible. To realise that, 'Clearing' is scheduled to clear the "jungle" of the broad variety of different measures with different definitions of disability, by different suppliers with different contents and results, and different forms of personal and financial support. One important way to do this is to strengthen the cooperation between all bodies and institutions concerned, in order to make the system more transparent and – hopefully – more consistent and clear.

For the purposes of 'Clearing', a service structure has been created at the critical interface between school and working life. It aims to guarantee, if needed, the best possible way into apprenticeship, (professional) training and inclusion into the primary labour market. Where this is not possible, for individual reasons, 'Clearing' provides guidelines for arriving at sound solutions from among the broad variety of different measures mentioned above.

'Clearing' aims to show adequate ways for compensating difficulties in employability by giving individual support packages and finding measures best suitable for each young person such as apprenticeship-assistance, work-assistance for young persons, pre-apprenticeship courses, qualification courses etc. One important task of 'Clearing' is to indicate gaps in the existing system of support, and to encourage the different bodies responsible to finance or to create the measures needed.

By indicating the individual potentials, competences, qualifications, aims and needs of every customer 'Clearing' has to act as a "signpost" for further steps, not as a case manager. This is the reason for setting a maximum limit of 6 months for the 'Clearing' process. It is made possible for the customer to attend another signpost at a later stage after certain steps have been taken,

1.e The target groups of the policy

All young persons handicapped and/or with special needs between the age of 13 and 23 form the target group. There is no predetermined definition of disability relevant for the target group of 'Clearing'. 'Clearing' has the mission to cater for all handicapped, from those with severe disabilities to those who are weak learners or those with social behaviour problems. Fixing the lower end of



the age group at 13 makes it clear, that 'Clearing' has to start its work already at the compulsory school stage.

Although the number of handicapped females and young persons with special needs is less than that of males there should be a special focus on the females in 'Clearing' according with BABE⁴, because in fact females in general have greater difficulty in finding an appropriate apprenticeship and joining labour market, especially those with a handicap (statement by the responsible person in the Federal Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumers Protection (BMSG)). They have limited choice of career and vanish in their families more often than males. This is said to be especially true for females coming from an immigrant background, as indicated in as a 1999 evaluation "Vision 99".

- > The figures shown in the annex of this paper do not yet demonstrate real success in achieving a special focus on females. Additional data indicate even less success in reaching young handicapped persons coming from an immigrant background.⁵

1.f The legal and financial provisions to implement the policy

In 2001 the Austrian Government decided to allocate 1 Billion Schilling (approx. 72.500.000 €) per year to improve the integration of handicapped persons in the labour market and society ("Behindertenmilliarde"). One of the main target groups of this employment initiative is handicapped young persons. Focal themes and measures for this target group are the following:

- Integration allowance, with payment of wages for a limited duration, as an incentive for the provision of jobs for young handicapped persons in the primary labour market;
- Development of job-coaching especially for mentally handicapped;
- Creation of vocational preparation and occupational qualification projects for handicapped school-leavers and graduates;
- Work assistance and training assistance for young handicapped;
- Establishing of 'Clearing' teams, defining together with the persons affected the package of measures most suitable for their vocational integration;
- Promoting study and apprenticeship allowances. (BMSG, o.J.)

4 Bundesweites arbeitsmarktpolitisches Behindertenprogramm 2003/2004 – Federal Labour-market Policy Programme for the Disabled. (BMSG, 2003a)

5 Comments and questions of the author appear in this form in succeeding pages



Since 2001, the money has been renewed and increased annually “following the accepted necessities”

Several guidelines have been issued by the BMSG accompanying this initiative:

- a) Promotion of *working possibilities for handicapped persons* (BMSG, 2001), with a specific focus on young persons, containing the following measures:
- Integration allowance, with loan subsidies for a restricted period of time, as an incentive for employment on primary labour market;
 - Creation of new measures for accompanying support on the job (i.e. job coaching especially for mentally disabled persons);
 - Setting up of pre-training and qualification projects for school leavers and graduates;
 - Work assistance;
 - Networking to increase the readiness of employers to employ handicapped persons:
 - Training projects for members of the works council and shop stewards for the disabled (training of disseminators).
- b) Promotion of *“accompanying support” (work assistance)*, a special guideline in addition to the latter (BMSG, 2003d), focussing on registered disabled, and on young persons with special needs education as well as socially and emotionally handicapped young persons (up to the age of 24 years). The task for the suppliers of work assistance contains:
- Consultation and accompanying persons with disabilities in obtaining jobs;
 - Consultation and accompanying persons with disabilities to safeguard endangered jobs.
- In implementing this, work assistants have the task of:
- Accompanying and checking of career prospects,
 - Consultation of employers and consultation of the company’s *sphere, (?)*
 - Cooperation with all suppliers, departments and institutions,
 - Participation in meetings convened by the Federal Office of Social Affairs (BSB),
 - Support in issues of social security beyond jobs (i.e. housing, family, leisure etc.),
 - Carrying out public relations.



c) Promotion of *apprenticeship assistance* (BMSG, 2003b). The goal of integrative apprenticeship is to improve the inclusion of disadvantaged young persons with personal difficulties into working life. Integrative apprenticeship can be performed by:

1. Prolongation of time of the apprenticeship by one year, or exceptionally by two years, if necessary for passing the examination or,
2. Contracting an apprenticeship, reduced to some parts of the job outline, or at the most accomplished by knowledge and competences outlined in other job, leading to a semi-qualification (1 –3 years).

The Integrative apprenticeship has to be accompanied and supported by apprenticeship assistance (BAS).

The target group of BAS, and those in an integrative apprenticeship, can be those for whom the Labour Market Service (AMS) was not able to find a regular apprenticeship, having one of the following preconditions:

- Persons who received special needs education at the end of their compulsory school time, or who were at least partly educated according to a special school curriculum or,
- Persons having an imperfect completion of compulsory basic secondary schooling, or none, or,
- Persons with a disability in the meaning of the Disabled Persons Employment Act or the Disabled Persons Act of the prevailing Federal Region or,
- Persons assumed unable to undertake a regular apprenticeship solely for personal reasons within a foreseeable period of time, if this has been noted in connection with a vocational orientation measure or a failed apprenticeship contract.

Preconditions to join the target group for BAS are:

- 'Clearing' recommended as a measure to improve vocational integration and
- AMS confirmed the impossibility of finding an apprenticeship for the respective person.

d) Promotion of *job possibilities for disabled persons in the framework of the employment offensive of the National Government* (BMSG, 2003c), containing four guidelines:

1. Promotion of general vocational measures, including *financial incentives for employers* to employ or to keep employees with disabilities, support measures for persons with disabilities to *run their own business*, and reimbursement of the *expenditure of interpretation* for deaf



or hearing-impaired persons. Additionally, socially and emotionally handicapped young persons, or those with learning handicaps are included in the target group.

2. Promotion of the *employers service*, aiming to convince employers to employ disabled persons by giving consultancy and support, and by developing the prevailing conditions to make employment easier.
3. Promotion of support towards independence by professional consultancy, in order to strengthen and support self-help and organisations for the disabled, and,
4. Promotion of “Clearing”.

In the sense of this guideline, ‘Clearing’ comprises consultancy, support, accompaniment and diagnosis. In detail this is:

- Drawing up of a profile of aspirations and abilities,
- Analysing weaknesses and strengths,
- ‘Clearing’ whether post-educational trainings are needed,
- Evaluating vocational prospects on the basis of the profile of aspirations inclinations and abilities,
- Drawing up a career and development schedule on the basis of the preceding points.

The career and development schedule comprises:

- ‘Clearing’ basically whether integration in working life is possible, together with the client, his/her parents and teachers,
- Referring to the analysis of weaknesses and strength and the profile of aspirations and abilities, distinguishing between those weaknesses which can be strengthened and those which cannot,
- Drawing up a schedule of post-educational training on this basis (in cooperation with the potential suppliers, and in ‘Clearing’ of potential financial support),
- A written contract about the contents and the stages of the schedule, between all the concerned parties,
- Matching the needs of the client to local/regional opportunities.
- Exploring local/regional opportunities for qualification, employment and support relevant for the client,
- Networking with those suppliers needed in further integration (i.e. for the post-educational training),
- Arranging and organizing of “taster-jobs” and work-placements in the primary and secondary labour market.
- Tests according to occupational health and industrial psychology criteria.



1.g Institutional arrangements and procedures of implementation

The department responsible

The "Bundessozialamt – BSB" (Federal Office for Social Affairs), a subordinate department of BMSG, is the clearing house for vocational rehabilitation, integration and overall consultancy of handicapped persons. It is responsible for the coordination of all activities related to the inclusion of the handicapped and therefore cooperates closely with the AMS. The BSB has a substructure in every federal region, and on this level it cooperates with the regional school inspectors, employers and the regional authorities. The latter focus their activities on handicapped persons with an individual working potential lower than 50 % and unable to participate in gainful employment.

Consequently the BMSG entrusted the BSB with the responsibility for the performance of the 'Clearing' programme.

Suppliers of 'Clearing'

The single advisory centres for 'Clearing' are run by NPO's like Caritas and others. The NPO's have been asked to send to the regional BSB their concepts of how to run the local 'Clearing' centre. The decision as to which NPO may run the centre depends primarily on the content, the cost being a secondary consideration.

- > What criteria are used in deciding whether a concept is good, or better than the others?

Working method

In the centres special trained experts cooperate closely with the young handicapped themselves, their parents, the teachers, the local authorities and the local or regional AMS. Together they try to find, on a mutual basis, the best possible vocational career for the young person having a handicap and/or special needs, which has to be laid down in a written career plan. The 'Clearing' process includes drawing up a profile of the strengths and weaknesses of the young person, and indicates her/his specific interests and further training needs. It aims to strengthen networking between schools and the local/regional labour market.

- > Is there any common curriculum for the special training of experts?

Every full-time expert in the 'Clearing' centre has to perform 50 'Clearings' a year following the guideline. But no evidence is available for this number of



'Clearings'. The present number achieved is 30 – 35 career plans in the annual promotion contracts between BSB and the NPO running the centre, which seems to reflect complaints received from the NPO's concerning the number.

–> Is there any empirical evidence or other reason to fix this amount?

Norms for qualification needed for a Clearer

There are no fixed norms for the qualification needed for a "Clearer". But there is a requirement that they should come from social or business vocations, that they should have an occupational experience, and that they should take part in a continuous further education, which is based on the modular system developed for work assistance. Some additional modules have been added for 'Clearing'. Every clearer has his/her own curriculum in his/her further education.

–> If there are no predetermined norms for the qualification needed for a "Clearer" how can it be guaranteed or safeguarded that they are able to cope with all the different disabilities and handicaps of the clients, and that they know about all the pros and cons of the broad variety of different measures available (or yet to be devised)? Is there any quality control of the advice given, besides (possible) lack of success of the client in the measure proposed?

Concept for the 'Clearing' centres

There is no common binding concept for the 'Clearing' centres, and there are no guidelines for the methods to be used. There is a common basis, but there are also strong regional differences. On the other hand, there is a "Clearing'-file" including rules and patterns for case-documentation. Use of this file is mandatory in every case.

–> Would it not have been appropriate to start with a pilot phase for 'Clearing' and, after having evaluated this, to give guidelines for the concept and/or the methods? – What have been the reasons to select this approach and what are the estimated or ascertainable results of this decision? – Has any consideration been given to reviewing conceptual and/or methodological guidelines now after several years of 'Clearing' experience?

Four times a year all project leaders of the 'Clearing' centres meet for the exchange of experiences. They elected a national spokesperson for the 'Clearing' centres.

As 'Clearing' centres have no funds and no means for creating their own measures for their clients, they have to use the means provided, which can greatly



vary between different provinces (e.g. Vienna and Vorarlberg). But the members of staff are encouraged to point out gaps in provision and unmet needs to the AMS, the BSB and the BMSG. The BMSG's official in charge stated that all departments concerned endeavour to fill the gaps and to meet needs in the framework of the budgetary possibilities.

2. THE RESULTS SO FAR

According to the European Commission's Joint Inclusion Report (2003) the idea of 'Clearing' "is not to take existing problems away from young persons and their parents, but that they should be offered the support necessary to solve issues which arise, as independently as possible, according to the principle of 'helping persons to help themselves'. An essential factor for success is the active inclusion of young persons, their parent and teachers. The needs, possibilities and interest of the young persons form the basis of the actions of the 'Clearing' offices.

'Clearing' also has an essential co-ordinating function in the existing distribution of responsibilities for support, which is not always transparent for those affected. The co-operation partners are the provincial education authority, the Public Employment Service (AMS), class teachers, parents, facilities for persons with disabilities and the Federal Social Welfare Office (BSB), with the latter playing a managing role. In 2002, 1,450 young persons successfully completed the 'Clearing' process. Having provided suitable apprenticeships, employment contracts, Public Employment Service measures or further school education for many young persons with disabilities, the 'Clearing' measures are to be further extended."

2.a Quantitative results (see also tables in the annex)

Number of persons in 'Clearing'

In 2003 the number of young persons having completed successfully the 'Clearing' process has increased to 2,497 and so has the number of 'Clearing' centres.

The goal of having a sufficient coverage with 'Clearing' centres over the whole country is not reached yet, but the creation of new centres and the increase of personnel is still going on.



Girls in 'Clearing'

As mentioned above, the number of handicapped females is smaller than the number of handicapped males. This applies also for those who are physically or mentally handicapped. Here the gender ratio is 3:2 (men : women). Of all young persons having completed the 'Clearing' process 1,536 are male, which represents 62,6%. So the proportion of handicapped females in 'Clearing' is slightly lower than it should be, compared to their proportion in the whole target group. It was stated by the BMSG to be higher than in other comparable measures, but this was not proved.

Two reasons for this phenomenon were mentioned: influence of parents (images of gender roles are quite traditional, especially in the country side) and *de facto* competition of the AMS advice centres for girls.

- > This raises the question of why at least some of the young women prefer the AMS centres and not 'Clearing', and why there is competition instead of cooperation, when cooperation is one of the main tasks of 'Clearing'?

The stated aim of having 50 % handicapped females in 'Clearing' is presently portrayed as something to be aimed at rather than a reality. As a support, NPOs running the 'Clearing' centres are offered Gender Mainstreaming workshops. It was stated by the BMSG that there are no sanctions in this context. Initially, the focus is on information and sensitisation, then on know-how and resources and – maybe later sanctions will come into the frame.

- > Is it sufficient to offer Gender Mainstreaming workshops on a voluntary basis? - What kind of information is given in this respect, and what kind of sensitisation could lead to a higher proportion of girls in 'Clearing'?

Categories of clients

The largest number of clients is categorised as emotionally and socially handicapped (992), followed by those with special needs ("sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf") (541). Together these groups represent 69 % of all clients.

- > Having made the point that there are big differences in the definition of disability and handicap the question remains: to what definitions do these figures relate?

The largest number of clients are aged 13 - 20 years (2,443), more than half of these are between 13 and 15 years (1,401 – 56 %). Only 54 (2 %) are be-



tween 21 and 24 years old. This shows very clearly that nearly all clients use 'Clearing' already during their school years or directly afterwards.

This finding corresponds with the figure of 1,899 persons (76 %) being sent to 'Clearing' by schools. 83 came from AMS, 107 from agencies of the Federal Provinces and 6 from BSB (altogether 8 %). 377 (16 %) are counted as coming from "others", meaning mostly parents and by word of mouth.

Output of 'Clearing'

Because a large proportion of the young persons take part in the 'Clearing' process during the last two years of their schooling, they have to finish school first. In the 'Clearing' process, it turns out that for some young people a prolongation of school, in combination with pre-vocational training, is the best choice. Importantly, this seems to depend on the existence of alternatives in the region. In fact 21 % chose a prolongation of school and 9 % took part in different pre-vocational trainings in 2003.

Nearly 15 % move directly to work assistance, which offers professional help to join the first labour market. In some Federal Regions 'Clearing' is seen as an integrated part of work assistance, and therefore results are not identified separately.

→ Does this mean 'Clearing' in these cases does not inform and advise about other possibilities (or does so less), and encourages the clients to join work assistance instead? – If not, how can this be guarded against?

Nearly 4 % of the young persons started a permanent job in the primary labour market, and 12 % started with an apprenticeship. 11 % are still taking part in a pre-apprenticeship training or training for a semi-skilled job, and 21 % are taking part in some kind of measures offered by the AMS or a more in-depth vocational orientation.

For nearly 7 % an occupational therapy turned out to be the best solution.

2.b Other results and achievements

Although the figures above show the output of 'Clearing' in 2003, the outcome is difficult to describe in terms of reliable data. In 2002, the Ministry started a data-based monitoring system as a control instrument, but it is still in



its infancy. The data collected are the social security number, age, sex, education/training, finished 'Clearing' yes/no, if accompanying integration support: job yes/no. The social security number proves whether the person is in employment or not. But analysis of the data is still lacking.

- > What results are estimated to flow from these data? What conclusions could be drawn?

Some information will be given by the drop-out rates from resources visited by young handicapped as a result of 'Clearing'. 'Clearing' is intended to point people in a certain direction - an allocation instrument. Therefore drop-out rates are one indicator for wrong allocation. This is a reason for not giving any quota regime for the allocations by 'Clearing'. A quota regime could endanger the success of 'Clearing' if allocation were to be primarily quota-led and to only take the clients' wishes as a secondary consideration. However, the longer 'Clearing' comes to be embedded in the whole process of integration the easier it should become to measure the outcome. 'Clearing' should not be seen as a separate activity, but in a holistic way as an instrument to contribute to a better performance of the whole "orchestra".

- > Having in mind that the range of measures available and places for allocation is necessarily limited, the question arises as to whether there isn't in any case a hidden quota system. This might be especially true if the supplier of 'Clearing' is at the same time also the supplier of other measures for disabled or handicapped persons.

All signs indicate that cooperation and networking between the different partners and actors who are working to integrate young handicapped persons into working life has improved since 'Clearing' started. Several new contracts for cooperation have been concluded. The impression is that 'Clearing' has contributed considerably to this improvement in cooperation between all persons, bodies and institutions concerned and affected, in integrating disabled young persons and those with special needs into working life.

2.c Assessment of obstacles and constraints encountered

According to data available from a variety of sources and statements, 'Clearing' has so far not been faced with any major obstacles in implementing its tasks. Even the budgeting of the programme does not seem to pose any particular problems. On the contrary, it appears that there is still money available for additional activities.



If there are no major obstacles and constraints, there remain a number of minor ones:

- One of them is the inclusion in 'Clearing' of young handicapped coming from an immigrant background. Their number does not correspond with their proportion of all such young persons in Austria. This is true especially for migrant girls. The explanation might be that migrant families tend to keep handicapped girls even more in the family, than others do.
- Another point mentioned in this context was that migrant school children are often categorised as being in special need purely because of difficulties with the German language. This is due to splitting up classes, through categorising migrant students according to language problems, because their parents admit more easily to their children's categorisation than do parents of students with behavioural disturbances.
- Parents sometimes are seen as an obstacle too: those of physically or mentally handicapped children sometimes tend to do everything by themselves and therefore don't encourage their children to take part in 'Clearing', or they come to 'Clearing' only after having experienced the failure of their own efforts. Parents of socially and emotionally handicapped children sometimes are not willing, or not able to support their children adequately and therefore ignore the 'Clearing' facility.
- In this context one obstacle mentioned is the lack of, or only occasional, cooperation with local youth and family services.
- One of the more important constraints relates to the cooperation with local or regional employers. Due to rising figures of unemployment the number of employers interested or willing to employ handicapped persons is diminishing. In 2003, enterprises indicated their willingness to employ a handicapped person in only 5 % of all vacant jobs. It is assumed that the meaning of "handicapped" in this context is taken in the broadest sense of the term, covering all persons apparently not having full labour capacity. This is a problem especially for those young persons socially and emotionally handicapped, because they often are not covered by the "Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz" (Employment Act for the Handicapped). It is hoped that an extensive information and sensitisation campaign towards employers and the public, regarding integration of the handicapped, will open the way to more successful cooperation.



- As mentioned above, the qualification of the personnel in 'Clearing' could be a critical issue. If the task is to cope with a very broad variety of disabilities and handicaps extensive knowledge of medical, social, cultural and psychological backgrounds is needed. Comparable consideration is relevant for the broad variety of measures, schemes and courses, which could be appropriate for the client. A sub-optimal placement can lead to a dead end or a failure for the client. This problem is related directly to the decision to invent 'Clearing', being a decision to generalize and centralize consultancy instead of having different and separate but specialized consultancy.
- The combination of fragmentation of the responsibilities for disabled and handicapped persons, different definitions used, and the splintering of measures for different target groups, often badly coordinated, make it very difficult to keep an informed overview.
- The experience of the last years showed the necessity of having more time for the 'Clearing' process for some young persons. This was stated by the spokesperson for the 'Clearing' centres. Some young persons with special needs deserve longer-lasting integrative accompaniment at their jobs than foreseen by the work assistance. Some model projects with fairly long-term job coaching or in-firm mentoring have been developed for this purpose, coming to play an important role as a partner for 'Clearing' staff.
- Even though, cooperation in integrating the young handicapped has improved, more, better, deeper and more extensive cooperation is sought. The best possible support of handicapped young persons in a holistic approach can only be achieved, so it was stated, by the inclusion of different areas of life, and only if more of those responsible in the BSB, the ministries, the AMS, the Federal Regions and other relevant partners really coordinate their activities. More networking between individual actors is needed. Apart from financial and personnel resources, networking fulfils the function of defining and clarifying the respective competences and areas of responsibility of the different roles and the establishment of more transparency, as stated in the draft annual report on 'Clearing' 2003 (S. 8).
- Especially in the country side, but sometimes even in the cities, the most appropriate measure for the individual needs and the best support of the young handicapped is not available or not accessible. The result is a sub-optimal allocation or even a miss-allocation, causing possibly negative consequences for the individual, and not at least at a financial level.



- A danger might arise when the NGO/NPO running the 'Clearing' centre does this as one in a range of other activities in the field. They might be more interested in supplying its own services to the client than looking for the best possible solution for the young person, which apparently is sometimes the case.

3. THE POLICY DEBATE

In 2003, the Austrian Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumers Protection (BMSG) gave the "Austrian Institute for SME Research" the task to produce a study on "Measures for Young Persons with Special Needs". Since 'Clearing' is one part or tool in policy for the handicapped, it seems that discussion of 'Clearing' is not isolated but forms part of a wider discussion about improvement of the policy of inclusion of the (young) handicapped into working life as a whole. The findings reported in this paper directly affect the work and the effectiveness of 'Clearing'.

3.a Arguments of different interest groups and main questions and areas of debate on the policy within Austria

Federal Office for Social Affairs (BSB)

The BSB looks at the implementation of the new instrument "Integrative Apprenticeship" as it's next challenge. The new legal possibility of semi-qualification needs a clear definition and has to be transferred into practice. Special measures, for example apprenticeship support, should be examined. Also, "new" vocations have to be adapted to the needs of the economy, and cooperation with and services to enterprises have to be applied. The BSB argues for basic conditions which would make employment of young handicapped persons more attractive to employers.

The intensification of cooperation with schools and educational authorities, in particular a closer networking with the vocational schools on integrative classes, is seen to be indispensable for the implementation of an integrative apprenticeship and to adapt training of young persons with special needs better to the demands of the labour market.

Finally, the Federal offices of the BSB point to the lack of common definitions and consequent lack of common statistics and target inventories. The Labour Market Service (AMS), for example, uses another definition of handicap than



the BSB. So for the time being, there are no comparable data, nor the possibility of recording the quantitative dimension of the target group. For a full planning of measures, this is seen to be necessary.

Labour Market Service (AMS)

The AMS sees possibilities for the further development of the inclusion of young handicapped by improving pre-vocational trainings and by expanding time budgets for the individual consultation. Extension of the specific consultancy for young handicapped persons ('Clearing') would be fruitful. In contrast, the existing tendency to raise rates of placements could endanger quality in consultation and support.

Having in mind the lack of suitable jobs, the AMS claims the enlargement of the secondary labour market. Furthermore, long-lasting financial benefits for firms employing handicapped are necessary for those, who need support all working life long. Severely handicapped persons should be enabled to access pre-vocational trainings for a time period of three to five years instead of one.

Federal Regions (Bundesländer)

The Federal Regions opt for better cooperation of economy, social services and educational institutions. More account needs to be taken of the individual environment of the young handicapped. Parents, who often either request too much, or who don't challenge their children enough, should be integrated in a package of measures. Moreover "technical details" like the improvement of mobility and housing possibilities should find their place in considerations of how to consolidate support measures.

It is claimed that a flexible system of employment in the second and primary labour market, including all possible profiles, and the improvement of the permeability between them, has been created. Creation of part-time jobs could enhance inclusion of handicapped young persons.

Schools

For schools, collaboration with economic partners is most important. Schools should intensify their networking activities with enterprises. Measures to change awareness in companies and to offer more financial support to those firms employing young handicapped persons, should be accompanied by an improvement in the social image of doing so. This could be a challenge for the media.



Social Partners

The social partners are striving to employ as many persons with special needs as possible in the coming years. To be able to do so, a highly qualified professional qualification of handicapped persons has greatest priority for a long-lasting integration in labour. An evaluation of the “Behindertenmilliarde”, proving the success of every single project, could be helpful in identifying suitable projects.

The possibility of integrative apprenticeships should be open to as many young handicapped persons as possible. It should in any case be targeted so as to open a prospect for the primary labour market or a job in the secondary labour market, after having completed the vocational training i.e. with a semi-qualification. It is necessary to improve acceptance for this new legal possibility of vocational training both among the public and among employers.

Employment legislation, especially the Dismissal Protection Act, is seen as a major hindrance to the employment of persons with special needs and those who are handicapped. For this reason legislation requires some adaptation.

Suppliers of measures

The *big suppliers* of measures strive to improve and to enrich their range of measures and to stabilise these over a longer period. This needs sponsoring over a period of years which would enable a certain flexibility.

Sensitisation of employers and the public should be introduced in order to reduce fear of contact and to improve acceptance to vocational integration. Cooperation, especially with larger companies should be intensified, because big firms are seen to have better means to integrate young persons with special needs. To make it easier for smaller firms to employ handicapped persons, the heavy administrative burden in managing the support should be reduced, and financial support should be given.

Longer-lasting assistance and consultation accompanying handicapped persons in the working process is needed in companies. Weak spots are seen in legislation, e.g. dismissal protection for the handicapped is seen as a problem area. It should be replaced by “positive support measures”.

Schools should focus more on practical orientation and create more flexible transitions to the labour market. Vocational training should be improved and at the same time be more modularised and become more flexible.



Some big suppliers see integrative vocational training as a positive, leading example, because it enables an apprenticeship to be extended as needed, or to train for a semi-qualification. Others are sceptical because they see the danger of exclusion of those with a semi-qualification. Moreover, this kind of vocational qualification does not take the nature of vocational training as a 'process' into consideration because the range of the qualification is pre-determined, leaving no flexibility for individual development.

Persons with special needs should have the possibility of opting between integration in the first or secondary labour market, and mixed forms between both should be created.

In addition to that, *small suppliers* of measures point out that there is a great uncertainty factor in financial support possibilities after the expiration of the "Behindertenmilliarde". They plea that annual financial budgets prevent them from guaranteeing the support over longer periods which provides the stability for young persons with special needs. Besides this, they criticise the rising pressure with regard to proportions of placement and success, coming from the financial donors.

- > How do the different organisations cooperate and to what extent of reliability and commitment? – Is there any hidden agenda behind claiming more cooperation (i.e. others should be obliged to cater for a special target group or for the financial support)?

3.b The European context

In most of the European Member States transition from (compulsory) school to work or to training/apprenticeship for young persons who are disabled or with special needs is difficult. In most of these countries a broad variety of possibilities are offered. However, in general it is very hard for the young person and his/her parents to find the most appropriate solution unaided. Even where consultancy is available, this is mostly in a special service: the labour market service, the institutions for the handicapped, the youth service or others, each of which hardly knows about the other "doors", and whether or not entrance into vocational life through another door would be more appropriate for the individual young person.

In Germany, for example, the support systems for disabled young persons and those who are disadvantaged (i.e. slow or weak learners, socially and emotion-



ally handicapped, those with minor disturbance in their behaviour, but also young migrants with an imperfect capacity in German language, etc.) are quite separate. Even today there is little “cross-border” knowledge between the systems. As in Austria, definitions of disability vary greatly between the different departments – with all the complications mentioned above in the case of Austria.

The achievement and the new approach of ‘Clearing’ can be seen in its function as a ‘signpost’ for **all** young persons with a disability or a handicap. After having evaluated the aims and wishes, the potentials and the weaknesses of the young person, and knowing about the possibilities, the advantages and the risks behind every single door, and having the possibility of influencing what is going to happen behind each door through cooperation, ‘Clearing’ has the potential to give the “best” advice and guidance.

Another advantage of the ‘Clearing’ concept is to be found in its greater independence from the different support systems. The latter always having at least a tendency to follow their own internal logics and needs rather than in the first place serving the needs of their clients.

Nevertheless, the question remains open as to whether this concentration or unification of diagnosis and counselling is counterbalanced by a loss of professional expertise, both on the side of diagnosis and anamnesis and on the side of deepened field-knowledge regarding measures and steps which are most adapted to the personal needs and abilities of each handicapped person.

Another open question is to which extent ‘Clearing’ really is in a position to influence departments, partners and suppliers, and not least employers, to provide measures, financial support and jobs. Cooperation is reported to have improved since inventing ‘Clearing’, but the outcome of the cooperation is not clear. Did the support system as a whole and the particular measures improve in the sense of being more adapted to the aims and needs of disabled and handicapped persons? – How, where and by what means can ‘Clearing’ exert leverage to get partners to improve?

Maybe the efficiency of ‘Clearing’ in this respect could be strengthened by combining it with other models, like one from the Netherlands, for example: An element of change in Dutch policy concerning pupils with special needs is the Personal Budget (Special Needs) Act. This gives parents of children with disabilities the option of choosing between an ordinary and a special school for their child. Children who require special facilities because of a sensory, physi-



cal or mental disability are awarded a personal budget, which parents may spend in either a special or mainstream school. This budget is intended to pay for staffing and equipment costs, and any adaptations that may be necessary to meet the child's needs. An individual education plan must be drawn up each year for every child with a personal budget. The child's parents must approve this plan before the school receives any funds. (European Agency, 2002b)

An interesting alternative to 'Clearing' can be found in the United Kingdom, where instead of having one agency for the transition-support of all pupils disabled and handicapped, the Careers Service for all pupils is combined with a multi-agency "transition review" for pupils with special needs:

"Transition is regarded (in the UK) as a process for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. All pupils receive a programme of careers education within the secondary school curriculum (often over an extended period - i.e. not just in the final year of statutory schooling) and specialist guidance (in the form of individual interviews) from the Careers Service. Pupils prepare a Career Action Plan, which includes their goals in education, training and employment, and the action that they need to take in order to realise these. Careers Services are independent but have a specific responsibility to consider the needs of young people with special educational needs, and each service has a specialist careers adviser for young people with special educational needs, who is familiar with the (often extremely complex) routes to getting a package of additional support and funding from one or any combination of: the Health Authority, Social Services and the Local Education Authority.

Most young people complete a period of work experience during the last two years of statutory schooling and also during post-16 pre-vocational and vocational courses; this is another aspect of transition.

Under the terms of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) those with a statement of special educational needs (those with the most severe learning difficulties and disabilities) have a Transition Review at the age of 14 in order to plan the whole transition process over their last two years of statutory education, and subsequently to whatever form of provision they choose. The review is multi-agency oriented and involves a range of professionals as appropriate to particular cases: for example, representatives of the school, college of further education, the learning support services, the educational psychology service, the Careers Service, Social Services, the Health



Authority. Parents/carers are closely involved. Students have a transition plan that states their preferences and the action to be taken by different agencies in order to facilitate progression.

As part of the transition process, many special schools (and mainstream schools with pupils with significant special educational needs) run 'link' or 'taster' courses in collaboration with colleges of further education for pupils in the final two years of statutory schooling (aged 14-16); these are pre-vocational and usually focus on independence or generic skills. These involve a regular time each week in college (link courses) or a few days (taster) during which students can become accustomed to a different learning environment, staff and activities both to help them firm up plans for their post-16 learning (to see if the college course would be suitable for them) and also to facilitate the move to the different environment if they have already chosen that option. Good practice is often indicated by close collaboration between school and college over the content and delivery of link courses." (European Agency, 2002b)

4. TABLES⁶

Table 1: Allocating departments/bodies

Fed. Regions	School	AMS	Fed. Depmts.	BSB	Others	no Details	Total
Burgenland	46	4	1	0	13		64
Kärnten	136	32	25	0	65		258
Niederösterr.	326	28	55	2	117	25	553
Oberösterr.	175	3	1	1	81		261
Salzburg	116	2	3	2	12		135
Steiermark	680	4	13	0	61		758
Tirol	29	2	3	0	8		42
Vorarlberg	126	0	0	0	0		126
Wien	265	8	6	1	20		300
Total	1,899	83	107	6	377	25	2,497

6 All tables derived from "Clearing" 2003 (BMSG 2004, 45ff)



Table 2: Division by Age and Gender

Age	13 – 15		16 – 20		21 – 24		Total		
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	
Burgenland	21	7	20	14	2	0	43	21	64
Kärnten	58	33	86	68	10	3	154	104	258
Niederösterr.	188	99	144	97	9	16	341	212	553
Oberösterr.	115	66	37	43	0	0	152	109	261
Salzburg	43	22	38	31	1	0	82	53	135
Steiermark	332	205	136	85	0	0	468	290	758
Tirol	15	10	8	9	0	0	23	19	42
Vorarlberg	0	0	86	40	0	0	86	40	126
Wien	119	68	61	39	7	6	187	113	300
Total	891	510	616	426	29	25	1,536	961	2,497

Table 3: Division by Type of Disability and Gender¹

Type	psychiatric		Sensory		mental		impaired		multiple		emotional/ social		special needs (SPS)		Total	
	M	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f		
Burgenland	1	0	0	1	24	14	2	0	3	1	13	5			64	
Kärnten	5	4													252	
Niederösterr.	9	6	5	1	10	94	4	15	17	10	30	18	138	93	456	
Oberösterr.	1	2	1	2	9	7	7	8	27	22	43	22	61	49	261	
Salzburg	3	0	1	3	57	35	4	3	0	3	17	9			135	
Steiermark	18	13	7	6	56	25	17	11	0	0	372	233			758	
Tirol	2	1	0	2	12	7	0	3	3	4	6	2			758	
Vorarlberg														86	40	126
Wien	6	3	1	0	9	10	7	5	7	3	87	64	27	10	239	
Total	45	29	15	15	195	203	51	47	57	43	607	385	396	245	2,151	

Table 4: Clearing in an Overview

	Ap-pren-tice-ship	Post-ed. trai-ning	Work assistance	Job	AMS mea-sure	Occu-patio-nal thera-pie	Voca-tional orienta-tion	Further school	others, pre-ap-prent., semi-qualific.	Total
Burgenl.	2	3	30	7	4	4	0	7	4	61
Kärnten										0
Niederö.	15	29	83	10	23	27	43	125	17	372
Oberö.	14	20	26	4	12	5	5	34	7	127
Salzb.	11	5	21	3	7	4	1	20	9	81
Steierm.	31	51	38	3	93	37	72	10	69	404
Tirol	9	2	9	6	1	1	5	8	1	42
Vorarlb.	8	0	31	0	0	20	8	36	0	103
Wien	31	4	7	3	33	10	0	68	31	187
Total	121	114	245	36	173	108	134	308	138	1,377

7 A clarification to which definitions these categories relate is not given



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