
Case studies on the prevention of racial discrimination and xenophobia and the promotion of equal treatment in the workplace

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**CASE STUDIES ON
THE PREVENTION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
AND XENOPHOBIA AND THE PROMOTION OF EQUAL
TREATMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

AUSTRIA

by

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On expressions used

Throughout the report I use "foreign" to denote persons of non-Austrian and non-EEA citizenship. I use "immigrant" sometimes loosely synonymous with "foreign" but usually to denote all immigrants regardless of whether they have since been naturalised or not.

CHAPTER 1

Racism in the explanation of poverty

Educational measures can only help with certain aspects of racism, sexism etc. They can help the subject to reflect on the adequacy of the criteria it applies in judging persons it does not know personally. But education does not remove the causes inviting and inciting the subject to make categorical distinctions between, for instance, long settled immigrants and natives. It may at times be useful to address the symptoms of racism, and to do so educationally, but it must not be overlooked that much racism has its origin in economic inequality. In combating racism it is crucial that this be understood and addressed adequately. Since in Austria economic inequalities between natives and settled immigrants are on the one hand striking and on the other completely ignored by policy makers this report addresses them foremost.

There can be little doubt that differences in wealth foster exclusion. They can become ethnicised or racialised, if wealth strata are largely homogeneous in language or complexion etc. Ethnicisation or racialisation consist in attributing the wealth difference to differences between people instead of the other way around. Rather than outright racialisation, culturalisation has become most common in Europe. Differences in wealth and behaviour are attributed to differences in culture, i.e. in values and outlook, rather than attributing behavioural and cultural particularities to differences in wealth or at least to differential social positions (as between the sexes).

How do differences in wealth become visible? Among the most obvious, and also statistically accessible markers are the housing conditions. There are, however, many other signs, such as housing concentration, dress, language use and speech behaviour, resource allocation, and so on. For most of the markers it is crucial and yet, especially for the untrained observer, difficult to make out whether they are cause or effect of poverty. Most common, in fact, is that they are not being associated with poverty at all but are seen as direct effects of the people's culture.

In Austria, there is very little awareness of differences in wealth between immigrants and natives. Nor is there much awareness of their causes, or of the racism they cause. If it were better understood that racism is one (inadequate) form of explaining differences in wealth, this might help to motivate greater efforts to reduce them. Better understanding of the real causes of differences in wealth might help to choose an adequate course of action. I will here outline how great the economic differences between foreign nationals and Austrians are.

The immigrant population

Population data on immigrants are not very reliable. The Central Statistical Office estimates there to be about 725,000 resident foreign nationals. At the last census, in May 1991, the figure stood at 517,700. It is likely that independent labour migration since 1991 was negative, so that more than the entire increase since then is accounted for by family reunification and war refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

Table 1: The estimated resident foreign population at the beginning of 1996

	total	Yugoslav	Turkish	other
population				
men and women	726,000	332,000	142,000	252,000
men	402,000	182,000	84,000	137,000
women	324,000	151,000	58,000	115,000
of working age				
men and women	553,000	255,000	101,000	197,000
men	319,000	145,000	63,000	111,000
women	234,000	110,000	38,000	86,000
share of working age				
men and women	76%	77%	71%	78%
men	79%	80%	75%	81%
women	72%	73%	64%	75%

Source: Central Statistical Office.

The immigrant population also includes an unknown number of naturalised Austrian citizens. Very rough estimates made in 1994 point to the likelihood that the naturalised population may amount to about half the size of the foreign one. However, for all that is known the composition of the naturalised population is substantially different from the foreign population. It includes a fairly large number of native German speakers, of pensioners, and of people who arrived as refugees and therefore have a different demographic and educational structure than labour immigrants (Gächter 1996a).

The Central Statistical Office's June 1992 population survey included a question on the duration of residence. On the basis of a revised estimate it would seem that of the foreign population 15 years old and older about one eighth of the then foreign population had immigrated before 1970, one third between 1970 and 1981, one seventh between 1982 and 1987, and another third since 1988. A further 6.5% were resident since birth. It is uncertain whether respondents answered with the begin of their first or their current residence spell.

Foreign nationals require a residence permit unless they are citizens of EEA member countries or have been granted permanent asylum. It is unknown how large a share of the resident foreign population has a residence permit. The ministry of the interior's data do not include many of the persons holding an open ended permit issued before July 1993. It is estimated, though with little reliability, that around 610,000 foreign nationals are permit holders. These, in order to be active in the labour market, require a labour permit. On annual average there were 317,824 labour permit holders in 1996. 15% thereof had an Employment Permit (Beschäftigungsbewilligung) good for at maximum 12 months. There can be more than one

Employment Permit per person resulting in some double counting. This permit is actually issued to the employer, not the employee. The latter does not hold a labour permit during this time. 35% were holders of a Work Permit (Arbeitserlaubnis) good for at maximum two years. It enables the holder to accept any position but is usually restricted to only one of Austria's nine provinces. Half the labour permit holders in 1996 had a Licence of Release (Befreiungsschein) which enables them to accept any employment without restriction. It is good for five years. All permits are renewable (cf Gächter 1995b).

Not all permit holders were in the registered labour force. In 1996 there were on average 256,259 employees and 61,564 not employed. Only one third of the latter are registered unemployed.

Incomes

There is one piece of evidence which captures very well the position of foreign nationals in Austrian society. Recent research has shown that the household per capita income of foreign nationals, adjusted for household composition, is only around 55% of Austrian nationals. At the same time it was shown that there is no discernible catching up (Gächter 1997a).

Why is this so? The standard answer is: low qualifications, many children, concentration in low wage branches of the economy. However, the research referred to has shown that:

- 49% of the household per capita income difference is due to a lower share of employed among the working age population, and to a different share of women;
- 18% of the difference is due to the much larger share of waged (rather than salaried) workers among foreign nationals;
- 17% of the difference arises from differences in the hourly rates of waged and of salaried foreign nationals, from a different number of hours paid per day, and from a different share of the hours attracting extra payments; these three influences cannot be separated in the available data; the first of the three captures real and supposed differences in qualification;
- 13% is due to less working days per year, i.e. to the seasonality of employment, especially among immigrant men;
- 3% of the difference is due to differential family size and structure.

In all this an estimate of children and spouses not living in Austria but having to be paid for, at least partially, from income earned in Austria, is taken into account.

It is important to see that most of these influences on the wealth or poverty of immigrant households can be explained in terms of legal distinctions. I will go through the five points successively.

Employment share. The labour force participation rate is the share of employed plus unemployed in the working age population. It is considerably higher for Austrians than for foreign nationals. This is true for both sexes, but more so for women. The reasons are partly statistical, partly legal, and partly cultural. There are currently between 20,000 and 30,000 foreign unemployed who for some reason do not register with the Public Employment Service (most of them even foregoing unemployment benefits). Consequently they do not appear in the

unemployment statistics. This number has grown from around 13,000 at the time of the 1991 population census. Further, there are between 60,000 and 70,000 foreign nationals who would be willing to work but remain legally excluded from access to the labour market. This number has also grown from around 10,000 in 1991 (Gächter 1996).

Table 2: Labour force participation rates by nationality and sex, 1991 and 1995

	<i>1991</i>	<i>1995</i>
Austrians	<i>62.3</i>	<i>62.1</i>
foreigners	<i>53.7</i>	<i>51.8</i>
Austrian men	<i>69.7</i>	<i>69.2</i>
foreign men	<i>62.2</i>	<i>59.6</i>
Austrian women	<i>54.3</i>	<i>54.6</i>
foreign women	<i>41.8</i>	<i>41.1</i>

Source: AK; HSV; own computations.

The statistical and the legal causes together explain most of the difference between Austrians and foreigners. The cultural reason can be invoked for the extra gap among women. Turkish women still have a very low participation rate. Overall, this is a minor share in the differential participation rate.

Normally, participation rates are very stable. For Austrians it changed 0.2 percentage points between 1991 and 1995 rising 0.3 percentage point among women and declining 0.5 percentage points among men. Both these trends are long established. Men continue what Joan Smith (1993) called their "disappearance act", and women gradually increase their labour market participation. Changes among foreign nationals were much greater. Among men there was a decline by 2.6 percentage points. Even among women there was a decline, although only by 0.7 percentage points. These declines cannot be attributed to choice. Rather they reflect political intervention, namely the growing legal exclusion from the labour market referred to above.

Differences in the labour force participation rate account for 49% of the difference in household wealth. More than half of these 49% arise from legal exclusion from the labour market. This alone accounts for one quarter or more of the total difference in wealth. It is easily the largest single cause of poverty and thus of perceived difference between natives and immigrants.

Wage contracts and salary contracts. In 1996 46% of Austrian men were employed for wages but 87% of foreign men. The respective percentages for women were 30% and 74%, for men and women together 39% and 83%. The median annual gross income of waged employees in 1995 was ATS 197,025 but that of salaried employees (excluding civil servants) was ATS 265,463, or 35% more.

The share of waged employees among foreign nationals fell from 86% in 1991 to 83% in 1995, and among Austrians from 42% to 39%. There is in both cases a gradual transfer of employees from wage to salary contracts. The transfer is especially slow among foreign men whose share declined only from 88% to 87% (Austrian: 48% to 46%), and especially fast among foreign women whose share declined from 82% to 74% (Austrian: 33% to 30%). This reflects the recent greater accessibility of low-paid salaried employment in retailing to young women of non-EEA nationality.

At 18% of the total difference in wealth the relegation to wage contracts is a fairly large part. The question is, why do enterprises feel so little compelled to transfer immigrants to salary contracts. For Austrians this is often an acknowledgement of long and faithful service to the company. Apparently no such bonus is forthcoming for immigrants.

Hourly rates and hours per day. Every two years the Central Statistical Office includes an income question in its population survey. At the time of writing 1995 data are not yet available. The results are quite stable over time. The median net income per hour of foreign waged employees tends to be about 12% below that of Austrian male waged employees. The difference is smaller (and less stable) among the women, where it was 3% in 1993 (Bauer 1995). About half of the difference is due to lower grading in terms of qualifications, and half to lower pay within the same grade of worker. (These differences are considerably smaller than the ones between male and female waged employees regardless of nationality. Women workers receive median net hourly wages between 18% and 30% below those of men).

The situation is shown very dramatically in the next table. It shows that only 8.1% of all men receiving wages were among the bottom ten percent of the distribution of all hourly net incomes (but that the same was true of nearly one third of all women receiving wages). Yugoslav waged employees did not fare much worse but Turkish waged employees did. There a quarter of the men and nearly two thirds of the women received hourly wages belonging to the lowest ten percent of hourly incomes.

Table 3: Shares of various groups of waged employees belonging to the bottom 10% of all net hourly wages; population survey June 1993

	<i>men</i>	<i>women</i>	<i>total</i>
all waged	8.1	31.3	14.8
foreign waged	14.5	32.8	20.4
Yugoslav waged	10.5	30.7	17.6
Turkish waged	25.4	64.7	33.3
other waged	12.0	22.4	15.7

Source: Bauer 1995:288f.

To some degree foreign waged employees compensate the lower wage rates by working longer hours or inconvenient shifts attracting extra payments. Turkish employees, in spite of lower hourly rates, receive monthly wages very close to those of Yugoslavs because they are more likely to work night shifts. In Austria this option is not available for women. They work less part-time and more overhours than Austrian women (Wolf 1993:995).

At 17% of the total, the remuneration, number, and distribution of daily hours is also a remarkably large influence on the difference in wealth. Partly it reflects real differences in qualification. In part it reflects the fact that immigrant workers are in danger of being graded unskilled when in reality they are skilled craftsmen or have long served with the same company having become part of their core personnel. The question is, why do immigrant workers tolerate these injustices rather than to bargain for more adequate grading and thus for a better pay deal individually or through the works council.

Working days per year. In 1995, Austrians on average were employed for 299 days of the year (men: 304; women: 294). Foreign nationals were employed for 278 days (men: 285; women: 266). The difference accounts for 13% of the wealth gap. It reflects part of the differential unemployment pattern. Foreign nationals, at an official 7.7% (by local definition) in 1996, have a higher rate of unemployment than Austrians (6.6%), but a lower one than Austrian wage workers (9.9%). Specifically, the share of long term unemployed among the foreign unemployed is remarkably low. In 1994 only 4% of unemployed immigrants under the guestworker system had been unemployed for more than one year as opposed to 16% among refugees granted asylum and 20% of Austrians (Gächter 1995b). The registered unemployment of foreign nationals is much more short term than that of Austrians. This is also reflected in another set of data. The average duration of unemployment during 1995 was 122.5 days among Austrian unemployed, but only 83 days among foreign nationals. This is nearly one third less. On the other hand, immigrants were much more likely to become unemployed at all. 37.1% of the foreign labour force had at least one spell of registered unemployment during the year while the same was true of only 17.6% of the Austrian labour force.

This highly different pattern is partly accounted for by the concentration of foreign men in seasonal industries. Around 40% of them are employed in construction, tourism, and agriculture. At 10% to 15% this is much less true of the women. However, the concentration itself begs explanation. It is not self-evident that a settled population (of immigrants or otherwise) would engage in industries that offer only seasonal employment putting them on the dole at regular intervals thus diminishing their annual incomes. In fact, Austrians have sought every escape from these industries, especially from tourism since it is also low paying, or have focused on the year-round niches in them. The question is why settled immigrants remain arrested in these industries.

Family size and structure. In 1993 Austrian families with children under the age of 15 had on average 1.6 children. This was unchanged in relation to 1989. Foreign families on average had 1.5 children, down from 1.8. While Yugoslav families had 1.4 children (down from 1.7), Turkish families had 1.8 children (down from 2.2), and families of other nationalities had 1.2 children (down from 1.6). While 23% of Turkish families had no children under 15, the same was true of 44% of Yugoslav families, 48% of the families of other nationalities, and of 63% of Austrian families (Hammer 1994:917). Non-family households, i.e. singles, make up 24% of foreign households, almost all of them of working age. Among Austrian households there are 30% singles, but most of these are pensioners, especially women (Bauer 1996, 1997). However, these figures do not include spouses and children living outside Austria. It is difficult

to estimate their number and to weigh them correctly. On the basis of other work (Gächter 1997b; Hofinger/Waldrauch 1997) they were assumed to amount to roughly 35,000 adult equivalents. However, within the range of plausibility changes in this number do not greatly affect the result. In all cases differential family size and structure account for only a few percent of the total weighted household per capita difference in wealth. As an influence it is very nearly negligible.

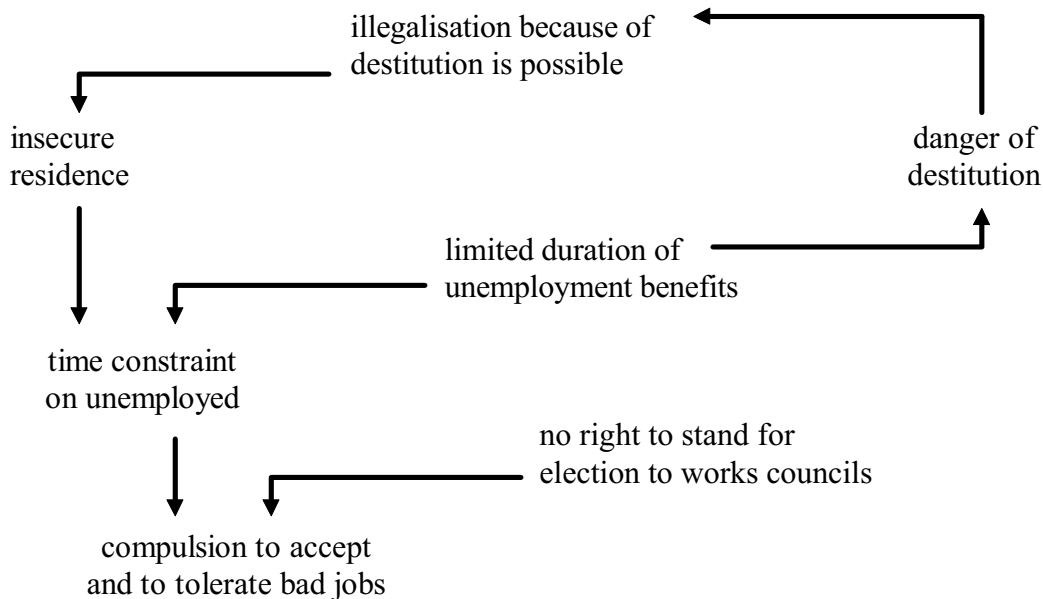
The system of "forced complementarity"

This section offers an answer to the above questions.

The "guestworker" system is still fully operational in Austria. This has not kept immigrants from settling. In fact, the legal mechanism that was meant to facilitate the removal of workers who could no longer perform in the labour market, has been having little effect. In 1995, only 1,303 of the 7,195 expulsion orders invoked the relevant clause (lack of subsistence) (Biffel 1996), and most of these orders were probably not served to settled immigrants but to asylum seekers and to tourists. Nonetheless the system as such remains in effect. The aim of any "guestworker" system is to retain for the authorities the right to end a person's stay. The aim is to ensure through the application of state force that immigrant workers remain entirely complementary to native workers, i.e. that no immigrant is ever in a position to even endanger a native's employment chances or the qualities of any native's employment relationship (wage, working conditions etc.) (Gächter 1995c). In such a system residence is basically insecure. The proof thereof lies not in the frequency of expulsions. People learn to cope with the system and to avoid its intended outcome. This produces unintended outcomes, and these have not been reflected by policy makers.

There are two elements of the law, the shortened duration of unemployment insurance benefits and the consequent lack of legal income it leads to (Gächter 1995a, 1995b), that pave the way for expulsion. This puts serious pressure on foreign workers. In the first instance they put a time constraint on the unemployed. Regardless of the kind of permit they hold they are under pressure to find new employment quickly in order to escape the threat of illegalisation. Thus they have to accept whatever conditions are offered in order not to remain unemployed too long. The result is the absence of long-term unemployment we observed, but also a systematic allocation to the worst occupations - i.e. lowest paid by hour or over the year, direct subordination, poor working conditions, without upward mobility into better jobs over time.

Figure 1: The cumulative causation of a compulsion to accept and to tolerate bad jobs in Austria



In the second instance employed foreign workers are affected. They need to try and hold on to the job they have as long as possible in order to avoid the dangers unemployment holds for them. This in itself would tend to force them into compliance. In addition, they are deprived of the opportunity to bargain - in one sense or another - with management over workplace and pay issues. This is normally done through works councils elected by a plant's workforce or by individual negotiations. Foreign workers can vote in works council elections but they cannot become members of a works council.

Therefore, foreign workers are not only under pressure to accept jobs with poor working conditions, arbitrary hours and low (and late) pay, but they also have to remain compliant in them and tolerate their further deterioration over time. Seen from the perspective of management all this imbues them with greater flexibility and a greater willingness to work than can be expected from Austrian nationals. Consequently, foreign nationals are a preferred category of employees for unskilled and semi-skilled occupations without customer contact. Austrian nationals have become "unsuitable" for these jobs.

Citizens of EEA-countries, since the beginning of 1994, but not before, enjoy basically the same rights as Austrian workers. Refugees granted permanent asylum are secure as far as their residence rights are concerned and have also become equal in regard to insurance benefit payments but are also excluded from workplace representation.

The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs has been charged with the task to suggest amendments that will permit third country nationals to stand for election to works councils and the Chamber of Labour. By the end of 1997 draft legislation is expected. However, the Ministry was unsuccessful at least twice before. In 1986 it stumbled over resistance from the trade unions (Bauböck 1990), and in 1993 over the social partners' inability to agree on the measure.

Housing

The effects of the low per capita income of foreign households are readily visible in the statistics on housing. The Central Statistical Institute's quarterly population survey in March 1993 showed that in Vienna the average Austrian household has 35 m² per capita, the average Yugoslav household 14 m² per capita, and the average Turkish household 9 m² per capita (Troper 1994). Only 1.3% of Austrians lived in accommodation that did not have the toilet inside the flat or apartment. Most of them were old people, mostly in Vienna, who had been living in the same place for decades. At the same time, 23.5% of Yugoslav citizens, 16.3% of Turkish citizens, and 4.4% of citizens of other countries lived in such circumstances (Hammer 1994:922).

At the same time prices foreign nationals had to pay were much higher. Rented accommodation with a (shared) toilet down the hall cost on average between 65% and 111% more per square meter for foreign nationals than for Austrians. To an unknown but probably large degree this is the result of the Austrians' rent contracts being very old and protected. In part this will also explain why average rents per square meter between 1989 and 1993 rose much faster for foreign nationals than for Austrians. Since the foreign population grew rapidly during this period, many new contracts were made, and entry prices rose much faster than incumbent prices. However, as the same survey showed, foreign nationals are much less likely to have a protected contract than Austrians. This means that their rents are upwardly mobile, even if they do not move, but it also means that they have to move more often and therefore are more exposed to the rise in entry prices. All in all, the rents per square meter of foreign nationals do rise faster than those of Austrians, and from a higher level.

Table 4: Rented accommodation without toilet inside the apartment or flat: average price per square metre and month; average size in square meters; average price of rented accommodation per month (Austrian Shillings, ATS) by nationality

ATS per m² & month	1989	1993	change
Austrian	23.0	28.2	22.6%
Yugoslav	37.4	46.4	24.1%
Turkish	33.2	47.0	41.6%
other	40.2	59.4	47.8%
difference to Austrian			
Yugoslav	62.6%	64.5%	
Turkish	44.3%	66.7%	
other	74.8%	110.6%	
size m²	1989	1993	change
Austrian	40.8	40.5	- 0.6%
Yugoslav	31.6	32.2	1.8%
Turkish	37.6	33.7	- 10.4%
other	29.5	46.7	58.2%
difference to Austrian			
Yugoslav	- 22.5%	- 20.6%	
Turkish	- 7.9%	- 17.0%	
other	- 27.7%	15.1%	
ATS per month	1989	1993	change
Austrian	938	1.143	21.9%
Yugoslav	1.182	1.493	26.3%
Turkish	1.247	1.582	26.9%
other	1.186	2.772	133.7%
difference to Austrian			
Yugoslav	26.0%	30.6%	
Turkish	32.9%	38.4%	
other	26.4%	142.5%	

Source: Hammer 1994:922; own computations.

The higher prices per square meter translate into smaller apartments. Rented housing without toilet of Yugoslavs was 21%, and that of Turks 17% smaller than that of Austrians. At the same time they had larger families which reduced the per capita space available even further.

Table 5: All rented accommodation: average price per square metre and month; average size in square meters; average price of rented accommodation per month (Austrian Shillings, ATS) by nationality

ATS per m² & month	1989	1993	change
Austrian	35.5	43.8	23.4%
Yugoslav	40.4	56.8	40.6%
Turkish	35.3	49.5	40.2%
other	51.1	61.2	19.8%
difference to Austrian			
Yugoslav	13.8%	29.7%	
Turkish	- 0.6%	13.0%	
other	43.9%	39.7%	
size m²	1989	1993	change
Austrian	66.6	67.8	1.8%
Yugoslav	40.9	46.6	13.8%
Turkish	48.3	52.8	9.4%
other	66.6	63.1	- 5.3%
difference to Austrian			
Yugoslav	- 38.5%	- 31.3%	
Turkish	- 27.4%	- 22.0%	
other	0.0%	- 6.9%	
ATS per month	1989	1993	change
Austrian	2.363	2.968	25.6%
Yugoslav	1.653	2.645	60.0%
Turkish	1.705	2.616	53.4%
other	3.402	3.859	13.4%
difference to Austrian			
Yugoslav	- 30.0%	- 10.9%	
Turkish	- 27.8%	- 11.9%	
other	44.0%	30.0%	

Source: Hammer 1994:922; own computations.

The survey from which this data is taken does not report refundable or non-refundable down payments. They are widespread, especially in the low standard segment, and in Vienna. The refundable payments usually amount to two or three monthly rents, but the non-refundable payments are always much larger, easily in the range of between 20 and 50 monthly rents. There is usually a trade-off between the down payment and the rent.

The reasons for the high prices per square meter are not difficult to find. As already noted, especially in the low standard segment, the recency of the contracts is likely to explain a large part of the difference. In addition, though, foreign nationals are excluded from most subsidised housing in Austria. This is especially noteworthy in Vienna, where city-owned housing makes up a very large part of the total market. As a result, foreign nationals have to operate in a smaller market which makes for higher prices.

The low incomes themselves also contribute to higher prices. Because they force immigrants to rent less space per capita the wear and tear on the apartment is greater. Landlords do take this into account and raise the price accordingly - either the rent or the non-refundable down payment.

Housing concentration. In Vienna, half the foreign population lives in only six of the 23 urban districts. This concentration is a relatively recent development. As in other parts of Austria, immigrants in Vienna used to be relatively dispersed (Leitner 1983). The distribution of low cost housing stock is thought to be a major influence. As older apartments were joined together in order to upgrade them, the pockets of small, low quality apartments became smaller and more concentrated. Housing concentration can affect language use and speech behaviour, dress code, personal aspirations etc., in other words, it can help to create cultural particularities. These are then likely to be interpreted as specifics of the culture the immigrants were raised in rather than as a largely local "culture of the poor".

Lower incomes, higher prices

Substantially lower incomes combine with substantially higher housing prices to produce a strata of working poor of immigrant origin. Such poverty is of course visible and audible and can also be smelled, all of this mostly because of the cramped housing. For the surrounding middle class - according to the 1993 Social Survey around 75% of the Austrian population consider themselves middle class - a population that uses housing and public space differently, i.e. with less respect, signals danger. A survey of 997 telephone interviews in Vienna in March 1996 showed there to be a clear connection between the share of foreign nationals in the population of each of Vienna's 23 administrative districts and the sense of security of the district's native population. There was also a clear connection between the sense of security and party preference: the greater the sense of security the more liberal the vote.

Table 6: Sense of security, share of foreign nationals in the district population, and party preference; March 1996; percentage distribution of answers

	<i>Population share</i>			<i>Preferred party</i>		
	<i>below 10%</i>	<i>10-15%</i>	<i>over 15%</i>	<i>SPÖ ÖVP</i>	<i>FPÖ</i>	<i>Green LIF</i>
rather secure	87	79	59	77	54	85
not so secure	13	18	39	21	42	14
other	0	2	1	2	0	1
no answer	0	2	1	0	4	0
sum	100	100	100	100	100	100
answers	340	363	294	515	372	110

Key: SPÖ = Austrian Social Democratic Party
 ÖVP = Austrian People's Party

FDÖ = Austrian Liberal Party
 LIF = Liberal Forum

Source: Standard-OGM Österreichradar.

This makes quiet obvious the way in which the poverty of immigrants also becomes a political problem. The sense of insecurity, by the way, does not stem from any real danger. Controlling for age and sex, the settled foreign population commits less reported crimes per capita than the Austrians (Pilgram 1992). Neither can this sense of insecurity be modified by transmitting crime data because the daily experience of those affected is that young immigrant males behave differently in public space. And further, while they may not use the word "poor" it is still visible to them that immigrants are considerably less well off economically. From this stems both, the middle class's notion that immigrants are a heavy burden on welfare and the fear for its possessions. Consequently they will vote for any party clearly promising to cut down on welfare fraud and to increase security.

Against this background, the case studies

This whole exposition started from the assumption that objective economic difference, by facilitating differential spending patterns, produces visible traits which untrained observers will be likely to interpret not as caused economically but to be signs of character differences. These, in turn, lend themselves to be linked back to cultural differences (in a conception of culture divorcing it, both, from economic causation and from change). As was shown subsequently, there are indeed large economic differences and a simultaneous sense of insecurity that are linked to each other in reality, though not in the minds of the observers. The sense of insecurity fosters anti-immigrant as well as anti-immigration sentiments. Folk explanations of the immigrants' public and private behaviour usually operate in terms of the culture of origin (rather than, for instance, a "culture of poverty" as would be no less racist but would no doubt be the case, if the poor were not immigrants). In order to remove the insecurity it is necessary to enable immigrants to advance economically to the ranks of the middle class. This can only happen, if forced complementarity is removed.

It is parliament upon whom this duty rests. Enterprises, if they wish to pursue non-discriminatory or anti-discriminatory activities can only do so within the constraints of the given system. Non-discriminatory action can mean that laws requiring discrimination have to be disregarded or circumvented, as is shown by the case study of the textiles and garment enterprise. This amounts to a highly local alteration of the legal structure of social positioning. Positive action can mean overcoming, against the odds, the resistance from laws and enforcement agencies requiring or facilitating exclusion. The case study of the home helping association illustrates this. This, too, amounts to a very limited alteration of the processes and conditions of social positioning. Positive action, as in the case of the in-plant language measures, can proceed largely unaware of the structural impediments, or consciously in spite of them, and will then be frustrated.

Available case study research on good practice

There are no other studies on good, and few on unsatisfactory practice in Austria. A 1991 study of employer attitudes to the unemployed also covered attitudes to immigrant job seekers and, inadvertently, to immigrant employees (Zilian/Malle 1994). In a 1988 study of working time rules in five enterprises in Upper Austria the issue of ethnic relations within the context of industrial relations arose in one case (Meggeneder/Ranftl 1992).

There is no research at all on the situation of the naturalised and of convention refugees in the labour process. Study of their situation in the labour market was touched upon by previous research of my own (Gächter 1995b) but is hampered by a lack of data. There are no labour related case studies of these two categories of immigrants.

CHAPTER 2

THE 1970 GENERAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

1. Content

On 17 December 1970, a "Collective agreement regulating certain terms of employment for foreign workers" (1970 General Collective Agreement, GKV 1970) was concluded between the ÖGB [Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund - Austrian Federation of Trade Unions] and the Federal Chamber of Commerce. The agreement entered into force on 1 January 1971 for an unlimited period. Its field of application extends in principle to all companies in Austria which employ foreign workers requiring work permits. It contains five articles. Article I specifies the field of application. Articles II and III were effectively rendered obsolete by the entry into force on 1 January 1976 of the Employment of Aliens Act (AuslBG). Article V regulates a mere technicality. What remains of relevance today are the provisions of Article IV.

Article IV of the collective agreement states the following:

"If a foreign employee recognised by management and by the works council as the spokesman for foreign employees within a company takes part in a works council meeting at the works council's invitation, no deduction shall be made from his remuneration in respect of such time as is required for the discussion of foreign workers' problems."

The provisions specify a spokesman. His mandate is effectively granted by the works council, subject to approval by management. His sole function under the terms of these provisions is to respond to invitations from the works council. Where no works council exists, therefore, a spokesman can be neither nominated nor elected, or would have neither a role nor a mandate. Management is under no obligation to give a hearing to a spokesman. The spokesman enjoys no right of protection against termination of his employment contract, dismissal or discriminatory treatment, has no entitlement to time off for training, receives no reimbursement of expenses, and the time he is allowed off work is restricted exclusively to certain parts of the works council meeting.

2. Implementation

During the 1970s, the nomination of spokesmen was keenly encouraged in several federal provinces, principally Upper Austria and the Vorarlberg. The instrument was also used in the Tyrol at that time. An ÖGB survey of the eight provincial authorities, excluding Vienna, conducted in the first half of 1996 revealed that "most of them do not know of the existence of this general collective agreement" (Linska 1996:1). The survey showed that there were about 280 spokesmen in Upper Austria in 1996. In the Vorarlberg, there was an unknown number which was probably decreasing. The remaining federal provinces either had none, or were not familiar with the concept (Linska 1996:2). (The same survey also asked whether there were any foreign works councillors from non-EEA countries. This question was answered in the affirmative in Upper Austria and the Vorarlberg. In the case of the Vorarlberg, however, this answer was incorrect since the individuals concerned had either already acquired Austrian

citizenship at the time of their election, or they had done so subsequently. In Upper Austria, the foreign works council member was employed by the Foreigners' Counselling Association.)

Additional information about implementation is available only with respect to the Vorarlberg from 1976 onwards. In 1976 the Chamber of Labour began providing training courses for spokesmen there. At that time, there were still hardly any spokesmen. Initially, a minimum of four courses were organised each year for both Turks and Yugoslavs. The courses dealt with about ten set topics, including social security law, tax law, the legislation on holidays, the Employment of Aliens Act, unemployment insurance and qualifying periods, rights in respect of pay, continued remuneration, consumer protection, and maternity entitlements. There were usually 30 to 40 participants, but sometimes 70 to 80. By 1981, between 200 and 300 people had attended one or more courses. Forty to 50 people had attended courses repeatedly. Turkish workers showed particular interest, and discussions during training were always very lively. After 1981, the frequency of courses declined, since the guest worker section's time was eaten up by a marked increase in the number of enquiries in the wake of the cuts in workforce numbers between 1981 and 1984.

At that time, at least 20 companies had appointed spokesmen at one or more of their sites. Most were relatively large companies by local standards, since only larger companies have works councils and are unionised. In such companies, the duration of employment tends to be longer, and management acceptance of spokesmen greater. In practice, the appointment of spokesmen was only attempted where no resistance from company management was anticipated.

It was rare for there to be only one spokesman, because few companies had employees solely from Yugoslavia or solely from Turkey. There were times when Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Turks and Kurds each wanted their own spokesman. In many cases, proper elections were held. One large construction company is reported to have transported workers from the building site to their hostel for the election. Almost all the companies belonged to the metalworking or textile industry. The procedure for the appointment of spokesmen was nearly always the same. In the first instance, the works council contacted the head of the guest-worker section of the Vorarlberg Chamber of Labour. The works council usually did this because it needed a contact person from among the foreign staff, or an interpreter. Within one or two months, the works council and the head of the guest-worker section would then arrange an information evening in the form of a "partial meeting", i.e. a company meeting confined to a single site, not involving the company as a whole. Workers were invited to a meal. Often the works manager would give a talk. Alternatively, an information meeting would be held on the company's premises. In either case, the works council would propose individuals it thought suitable as spokesman, and these were then confirmed in office by the meeting, through an informal procedure such as a show of hands or by acclamation. In most cases they were good workers, thus ensuring that they would be accepted by company management.

The cases studied suggest that in some companies, particularly in the construction industry, there were "unofficial" spokesmen, i.e. people who had simply "grown into" this role without ever being formally appointed by anybody. The general rule seems to have been that anyone who had attended a spokesman's course was considered to be a spokesman.

In practice, spokesmen were required to deal with a fairly specific list of continually recurring problems, such as:

- the situation with regard to holidays, and their duration,
- company flats,
- requests for the works council to help with the authorities responsible for residence permits,
- requests for the works council to straighten out a worker's relationship with his immediate superior,
- working conditions,
- accommodation,
- recreational facilities (e.g. use of football pitches),
- wage rates and overtime payments,
- dealing with the tax office in respect of family benefits or the annual wage-tax adjustment,
- dealing with the tax office regarding maternity benefit (which then had to be pursued through the courts, up to the level of the higher administrative court),
- problems with landlords.

The involvement of spokesmen in the activities of the works council varied. In some cases they were contacted only informally and did not participate in meetings. In others, they attended the whole of every works council meeting. Actual practice depended largely on the inclination of the spokesman concerned, on the attitude of company management, and on the current workload.

CHAPTER 3

THE TEXTILE COMPANY

1. The project

Austria is the only country in the EU, EEA, or EFTA in which employees are excluded from rights of representation at company level on the grounds of nationality, and specifically from the right to be elected to a works council. In the private sector, only a single instance is recorded where this ban was circumvented, and it is this instance with which we shall concern ourselves here. Despite the ban, in October 1991 a Turkish citizen was brought into the waged-workers' works council in a company with 1150 employees. To accomplish this, a somewhat elaborate procedure was required which avoided a direct election but nevertheless ensured democratic legitimacy. What is more, it had to be ensured that the works council member concerned would subsequently be acknowledged and respected as such by company management. This was achieved via a company agreement. When new elections to the works council were held in 1994, the member concerned stood directly for election for the first time, and remains in office today.

2. The reason

Within the company, it has long been the custom for each department to be represented on the waged-workers' works council. At the 1991 elections, the problem arose that no suitable Austrian candidate was available in the finishing department. At the time, fewer than ten per cent of staff in the department were Austrian nationals. To maintain representation of all departments, it was thus necessary to find a way around the statutory ban.

§53 (1) of the Employment Regulations Act (*Arbeitsverfassungsgesetz*) (*ArbVG*) specifies that only Austrian or EEA nationals are eligible for election to works councils. The Chamber of Labour Act makes essentially the same stipulation with respect to elections to the Chamber's council. In other words, third-country nationals - even recognised refugees - cannot become works council members. Because of the high concentration of third-country nationals within a few sectors (half of all foreign nationals are employed in construction, tourism, the metalworking industry and the distributive trades), this means that in a number of companies no works council can now be elected. Furthermore, the concentration of foreign nationals within certain types of work within industries and companies also means that some company departments are no longer represented on established works councils.

§64 (4) *ArbVG* provides a loophole through which foreign nationals may nevertheless become works council members. If all procedural rules have been strictly observed and in this way a person is elected to the works council who was not actually eligible for election, such a person may remain a works council member provided he has not been deprived of his membership by a court of law. Such membership may be challenged in court by the owner of the company, the works council or an individual works council member. Several foreign nationals have been elected works council members in this way, but all these instances occurred not in commercial companies, but in associations, mostly those involved directly in the legal affairs of foreign nationals, typically counselling agencies. Clearly, the position of works council members elected in this way remains precarious. They are dependent on the continuing approval of their

membership by both the company owner and the other members of the works council. In certain circumstances, this can jeopardise the member's willingness and ability to express views which conflict with those of other works council members, or may even have the same effect on the works council as a whole in its dealings with company management.

In one case, an action of this kind was brought with the specific objective of challenging the ban on works council membership by every legal means and ultimately having it overturned. The case concerned was *Polak v Karakurt*. The case was brought before the Linz Provincial Court in 1994. At the time, Mr Karakurt had already been elected to the works council for a second term. It had originally been intended to bring the case during his first term of office. The plan had failed because the ÖGB took an extremely long time to decide that it was willing to bear the legal costs. Originally, the plaintiff and the respondent had turned to the local branch of the Union of Salaried Employees (GPA), which had stated its willingness in principle to bear the costs provided the ÖGB Provincial Executive gave its approval. However, the Provincial Executive was willing to grant its approval only if the President of the ÖGB gave his personal approval. The latter did not express his view on the matter for eighteen months, probably in the hope that time would resolve the problem by the expiry of the respondent's mandate. Without doubt the competent court would have adopted a similar attitude, had a case been brought. Following Mr Karakurt's re-election and the lengthy silence of the President, the Provincial Executive and the local branch finally declared themselves willing to bear the costs. The plaintiff has since pursued his case through all the courts. His action is now awaiting the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Where works councils exist, they are not always accessible to third-country nationals. This is partly because the works councils themselves are opposed to foreign members, and partly because company management would not necessarily accept the demands of the works council. Here is an example: in a study of rules on working hours in companies with works councils in Upper Austria, a series of regulatory breaches were discovered in a Linz hotel. The works council had devoted most of its energy to disputing these issues for two years. Its chairman put this down to the fact that "the proportion of unskilled and foreign staff has risen sharply, and these employees are extremely anxious about losing their jobs" (Meggeneder et al 1992:44). At the same time, the works council clearly did virtually nothing to represent this section of the staff or even to establish any contact with it:

"Thorough research has shown that the company investigated has a relatively small group of core employees (about one fifth of all staff) and a group of peripheral staff making up more than half of all staff. The chairman of the works council, himself a member of the core staff, has no proper contact with the staff in the peripheral group, and he does not concern himself particularly with their problems. The staff in the peripheral group perform mainly duties requiring a minimum of skills and have the worst working conditions. Because of their insecure position within the workforce, they do not dare to stand up for their own interests, and are also not really prepared to support the works council in its activities." (Meggeneder et al 1992:50)

This background needs to be taken into account in considering the initiative of the works council chairman and the important example set by the appointment of a Turkish works council member.

3. From idea to implementation

When no candidate could be found in the finishing department for election to the waged-workers' works council in 1991, the chairman of the works council took the initiative. He promised his colleagues that though the election would proceed without a candidate from the finishing department, a worker from the department would subsequently be co-opted onto the works council. The chairman has been with the company since 1985 and, as a member of the works council, has been exempted from work duties since 1987. He is also chairman of the central works council and a member of the supervisory board.

The number of staff in the finishing department at the time in question was 67. Because of the three-shift system, there were never more than 14 to 18 at work at any one time. Of the 67 staff, 90% were foreigners, of whom 60% were from Turkey (Kurds and Turks) and 10% each from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia.

With this in mind, following the works council election on 21 November 1991, a vote was held in finishing to choose the co-opted member. There was only one candidate, a Kurd. There were 67 electors, of whom 60 voted. One vote was invalid, 56 were in favour of, and three against, the candidate. At the time he had been in the company's employ for 14 years, and had acted as spokesman for foreign workers in finishing since 1987. In the 1987 election for a spokesman, he had beaten two other candidates, including the previous spokesman, who had been promoted to a white-collar post, but was also regarded by the workers as insufficiently active. At the suggestion of the workers, the works council had therefore organised a meeting one Saturday afternoon, at which the three candidates spoke. A secret ballot was then held. It should be noted that the Collective Agreement does not stipulate any electoral procedure. The works council could simply have nominated a spokesman. The same applies in respect of the 1991 election.

Following the election of the works council and the co-opted candidate, a company agreement was concluded on 15 January 1992, which stated:

"He shall have the same rights in respect of his duties as representative of the foreign employees in the dyeing/finishing department as he would have if he were a regularly elected works council member; the provisions of §§ 115, 116, 118 ArbVG in particular shall apply.

"In the event of notice or dismissal by the employer, a company mediation panel comprising the head of personnel, the competent head of department, and the chairman and deputy chairman of the waged-workers' works council shall be assembled prior to any final decision. In the event that no majority decision is reached by the mediation panel, a fifth person to be appointed by both parties shall be called in as arbitrator."

The agreement was valid until the expiry of the appointment, or until 8 October 1995 at the latest. It was signed by the head of personnel, the chairman of the waged-workers' works council and the co-opted party himself.

§§ 115,116 and 118 ArbVG regulate three important matters:

§115 reimbursement of expenses, freedom from direction, prohibition of restriction and discrimination, duty to observe secrecy;

§116 granting of time off with pay to perform works council duties;

§118 three weeks' paid leave for training during a period of office in companies with at least 20 employees.

At the time, the works council had ten members, so it was possible to allocate 30 weeks per annum to release individual members for training. While he was spokesman, the co-optee had already attended relevant courses which had still been available in the province in the early 1980s.

Instead of the protection against notice and dismissal which would have been provided under §120 ArbVG, the agreement adopted a different formulation which was somewhat more flexible, but nevertheless provided a very high degree of protection. The fact that §120 was not directly mentioned arose from the opinion of the head of department - a person who otherwise demonstrated a very positive attitude - that not everything should be tied down in law. His inclination was to be free to deal with any problems that arose within the company without having to involve a court of law and subsequently the public in the matter. The head of personnel also wished to keep everything within the company as far as possible. Since he was new and young, and himself an immigrant, he was afraid that if the model became known, this would not be welcomed by the managers of other companies. This he made sure to prevent.

The chairman of the group's management board was informed about the agreement and approved it. One detail should not be underestimated: the head of personnel had joined the company in 1991. He was relatively young and was from Germany, where the right to be elected to the works council had existed since 1972, so that the whole idea did not strike him as at all threatening. At most he regarded the ban itself and the elaborate route required to circumvent it as somewhat bizarre. His attitude undoubtedly helped to further the whole project.

Because of a marked decrease in members, fresh elections to the waged-workers' works council were held as early as June 1994. The finishing department candidate co-opted in October 1991, together with three or four other members of the works council, wanted to stand for re-election. This time, a more direct route to membership was selected. He was simply presented as an ordinary candidate. Reliance was placed on the text of §64 Paragraph 4 ArbVG without any prior consultation with other candidates or with management. However, this direct procedure was chosen for one reason only, namely that the candidate's application for naturalisation had by then already been officially approved. Thus nothing could now go wrong. (He had applied for naturalisation for the sake of his children, not because he felt it appropriate to his own needs.) The newly elected works council has nine members, of whom six are women. One of the newly elected substitute members was a naturalised woman of Slovenian origin who worked in the sewing shop. She has lived in Austria for a long time, and speaks perfect German, in addition to Slovene and Serbo-Croat. She has since joined the works council.

4. Target group

The project was not fundamentally about the representation of immigrants within the company. It concerned the representation of one of the company's departments, namely finishing. However, because 90% of the staff in this department were foreign nationals, it became a question of including a third-country national on the works council. The fact that this opportunity arose was most welcome to the chairman of the waged-workers' works council. The foreign works council member was thereafter perceived both formally and informally as the immigrants' representative, and was deliberately treated as such. His situation is still the same today, following his naturalisation.

The fact that foreign nationals have special interests is not always acknowledged by Austrian works council members. At the end of 1983, only a quarter of foreign workers believed that the works council would stand up for their interests. Amongst Turkish workers, as few as 14 per cent believed this (Wimmer 1986:260). The situation was somewhat better in larger companies, yet the higher the proportion of foreigners, the worse it became. In companies where fewer than 25% of workers were foreign, 20.5% of foreign workers questioned had the feeling that the works council represented only Austrian nationals. However, in companies where more than 25% of workers were foreign, 28.5% of them had this feeling. In the first category of companies, 26.2% felt that the works council represented the interests of company management only, but in the second category, no fewer than 43.4% felt this. Irrespective of the proportion of foreign workers, some 23% of foreigners questioned felt that the works council was unaware of their specific problems and needs, and did not, therefore, represent them (Wimmer 1986:262). Experience to date indicates that aspects of working-time regulation in particular, especially holidays and weekend working, are the subjects most often raised by foreign employees, if given the chance. Naturalised employees appear more likely to have problems with their grading in the pay structure and with promotion prospects, and have the impression that they are more severely reprimanded for errors than Austrian nationals.

In the province in question, there are, according to observers, companies with 80% foreign workers and a works council made up entirely of Austrian nationals. The idea of including foreigners on the works council has already been discussed in four or five factories, but in no case implemented. Naturalised workers have been elected in a few instances. Before 1987, for instance, there was a female works council member from the sewing shop at this textile factory who came from Croatia and was naturalised. Her name was put forward and she was elected without there being any intention of providing immigrants with a representative, however. The situation was different in a ski company about 20 km from the textile company. In 1995 a naturalised Kurd was elected to the works council there to act as a representative for immigrants in the company. Only a few months later he was dismissed following a dispute with company management about holiday arrangements. He was dismissed on the grounds that he was responsible for 2000 pairs of faulty skis. Until the 1990s it was generally difficult to elect naturalised people to works councils in this province because the authorities there imposed very restrictive criteria on naturalisation. Until 1991, for persons not of German mother tongue they regarded 20 years' residence as a requirement for naturalisation, and advised others not to apply. The limit has since been lowered to 15 years. Hence there were only a few naturalised citizens, originating from Turkey or Yugoslavia, the two main countries of origin for immigrant workers.

At a metalworking factory in the neighbouring province, on 11 October 1995, the waged-workers' works council organised a referendum on granting third-country nationals the right to

be elected. The attitude of company management to the plan was positive. If the outcome of the vote had been favourable, management would have concluded a company agreement with the works council granting third-country nationals the right to be elected. At the time of the vote, there were 198 third-country nationals in the company, all blue-collar workers, and accounting for about 18% of the company's blue-collar workers. The question asked in the poll was: "Should non-Austrians and non-EU citizens be eligible for election to the works council?" The polling station was in a dining-room, and was open from 6 am to 11 p.m. All blue-collar workers were entitled to vote, irrespective of their nationality. Some 58.9% of Austrian and EEA nationals voted, and 56.1% of third-country nationals. Of 636 votes cast, only 126 (19.8%) were in favour. The chairman of the works council subsequently calculated that 111 votes cast by third-country nationals plus 14 votes cast by the works council already totalled 125, and that the number of Austrian and EEA nationals in favour must therefore have been extremely low. He saw a link with the imminent National Assembly elections, which had not been foreseeable when the date was set for the poll. He believed that the company vote did not really reflect views about the right of election to the works council, but rather the general heated and polarised atmosphere.

A referendum of this kind would, in the view of the works council chairman, have failed in the textile company also, and would still fail today. An individual is accepted and excepted from the general hostile attitude, but voting on a group always arouses resistance.

5. *The company*

The group is an Aktiengesellschaft [public limited company] structured as a holding company, and embracing seven companies with manufacturing sites in Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Portugal and Hungary. It markets its products mainly in high-price sectors of the textile industry under six brand names. In 1993, with just under 2000 employees, its turnover was ATS 2087 million. In 1996, turnover was approximately the same with some 1800 employees.

In 1994, the company with the works council under discussion here had 1150 employees at six sites in Austria. Since then, several sewing shops in Austria have been closed and a new one opened in Győr (Hungary) with 200 employees. In 1995 it also purchased a sewing works in Portugal from another textile company close to the original company factory. Its turnover in 1996 was just over ATS 1 billion. Today, the company still employs about 800 workers in Austria and between 400 and 420 in Hungary, Portugal and Switzerland. It regularly makes a profit. Since 1991 it has had a six-man supervisory board, to which two members of the central works council belong. In 1996 the company was reorganised and it is now divided into a fabric division and a garment division.

At some of the company's sites, there are or used to be spokesmen as defined by the 1970 General Collective Agreement. For example, foreign workers make up 40% of the workforce of the one remaining sewing shop in Austria, located about 10 kilometres from the original factory, and it has a spokeswoman who is a Turkish citizen. She is young, speaks perfect German, but has very protective parents, which means that she is not permitted to attend many functions. Other sewing works in the immediate area, which also used to have spokeswomen, were closed between 1986 and 1993.

Only a small proportion of the employees are now skilled workers. Almost all are semi-skilled. One gets the impression that now only apprentices unable to secure alternative employment

join the textile industry. This may be linked to the fact that it does not look like an industry with a very promising future. Employment levels in the industry have been declining steadily, a fact repeatedly emphasised in the public eye by bankruptcies. The finishing department now takes only one apprentice a year. Two months' training is now sufficient for practically all duties.

6. Success

As a result of the circumstances of the 1991 works council election, foreign workers acquired somebody to represent their interests. Almost all the workers accept him. He is also fully recognised by company management and is valued as a contact whenever the subject under discussion relates to the needs of immigrants.

From the outset, he took an active part in meetings, and soon became a member of the local branch of the Textile, Clothing and Leather Industry Trade Union and of the ÖGB's Guest Worker Committee. Since June 1992, he has attended three one-week courses. He has shown little interest in higher positions within the ÖGB, but that may be from politeness and modesty. His principal argument is that his knowledge of German is not sufficient for him to work effectively. Moreover, the chairman of the works council has always tended to arrange for women to be delegated or elected to official positions, because two-thirds of the textile company's works council are women, and women are significantly under-represented on the committees of the ÖGB.

Since his re-election and naturalisation, he adopts a much more aggressive approach at the factory. Yet he still exhibits a marked sense of gratitude towards the company and the works council.

A number of personal factors were crucial to the success of his admission to the works council in 1991. One was the enthusiasm of the works council chairman, another was the eminent suitability and acceptability of the candidate, and a third was the unstinting support of the head of personnel. Had only two of these factors been present, they would probably not have sufficed to get the show on the road.

The example has not been followed elsewhere.

7. Brief note on a second project

In 1992, at one of the company's production units located near the original factory, three small blocks of flats were built to accommodate a total of 22 families. Willingness to accept neighbours of a different ethnic origin was an explicit condition of residence. There were about 50 applicants, including two Austrians. Only one Croatian citizen was not willing to accept that he might have Turkish neighbours. Finally, 22 families were selected on the basis of need. The waged-workers works council chairman personally inspected the living conditions of all those concerned, reported to company management and indicated his own preferences, and company management made the final decision, taking the recommendations of the salaried employees' works council chairman also into account. The two Austrians did not end up amongst the occupants, as their living conditions were relatively good. It was coincidental that all 22 families also included employees of the neighbouring factory.

Twenty-one of the 22 families still live in the three blocks of flats. One had to move out after a stabbing incident motivated by jealousy. Another family is currently looking for a new flat because the head of the family started a brawl. There have been hardly any other obvious problems, but the atmosphere is not harmonious. Interventions by the works council and explicit warnings by company management have been needed to ensure that political, ethnic and personal conflicts do not erupt into violence either in the flats or at the workplace.

CHAPTER 4

THE VIDEO FACTORY

1. The project

Using the slogan "talking together - working together", the company initiated German courses for employees. The courses comprised three principal elements: grammar, communication skills, and information of relevance to work and the company. The latter element covered five subject areas: quality assurance, company ideals, safety at work, job specifications, and texts and topics from the company magazine. It was assumed that most immigrant workers already possessed an adequate passive vocabulary but had little knowledge of complex German grammar or in any case little confidence about grammar, which had an adverse effect on their ability to express themselves and their effectiveness in production. The courses attached great importance to the spoken language. All the participants were encouraged not only to speak in class but also regularly to practise what they had learned at home, and to repeat sentences and phrases over and over again. Participants were also given homework. This included grammar exercises, practical language tasks, learning vocabulary and also factory notices. The objective was to achieve a lasting increase in familiarity not only with the language but also with the environment in which it was used.

The idea was to allow participants to enter at the level appropriate to their needs, then to teach them until they had reached a satisfactory standard at the highest level. In the event, only two levels were offered, but even this could not be sustained. Although most people participated in two courses, the longer the course programme lasted, the less uniform the mastery of German amongst the various participants became. The reason was simple: participants increasingly preferred to remain in those groups to which they belonged at work, irrespective of any differences in their mastery of the German language. This desire also supported the ultimate aim. In this way, the course not only provided language and content relevant to work, but also directly formed a situation for experimenting with communication between precisely those people who needed to understand each other perfectly at work. A possible drawback was that of course the entire work group never attended the course, so that those who spoke good German or dialect, whose cooperation was just as essential for successful communication, were always missing.

Each course was concluded with a test, held more to monitor results for future planning than as an examination. All reasonably committed participants were awarded a language certificate, irrespective of their degree of success at learning. During the first few courses in the autumn of 1994, this was marked by festive occasions attended by representatives of management. The waged-workers' works council chairman always attended award ceremonies personally, even later ones. About five per cent of participants received no certificate, usually because of frequent absence.

The company is part of a large group, but at the plant in question no similar measures within other parts of the group were known which might have served as models.

Teaching costs amounted to ATS 6,000 per course, equivalent to ATS 750 per person with eight participants or ATS 864 per person given the number attending in practice (see below). It was planned to hold 68 courses during the first "school year", and this would have incurred

teaching costs of ATS 408,000. Imputed administration costs, (scheduling, information events, applications, grading, course planning, course design, preparation of course materials, recruitment and training of tutors, organisation and staging of award ceremonies) were estimated at an additional ATS 96,000. The latter amount did not represent extra expenditure as it formed part of the cost the plant had to bear by employing a training manager in the first place. The likewise imputed cost of premises was not calculated.

Except for a grant of ATS 30 000 from the Vienna Integration Fund, the entire cost was borne by the company itself. Efforts were made to obtain funds from various other bodies, such as the AMS (Public Employment Service), but without any success. The grant from the Integration Fund was really just a token contribution, but it was valued by the company as a sign of recognition.

The original intention was that the German courses would become a permanent institution, but this did not succeed. No further courses are planned at present.

2. Target group

In 1994, the company employed about 2,000 workers, of whom 15% were immigrants. Many of the latter had only been taken on in 1992. Most were men, principally from Yugoslavia, Turkey, the Philippines and Poland. Men are employed on the night shift in particular, whilst women work only during the day. Because they are slender, the company employs Philippine men mainly on the night shift for work performed during the day by women. According to the works council chairman, the night shift pays about ATS 60,000 a year more than the day shift. Operators need three to four months' training in order to be able to resolve minor problems with machinery themselves, as is necessary on the night shift. Adequate command of the German language is vital for this purpose. Immigrants are employed mainly as semi-skilled operatives providing manual labour in a production process dominated by complex machinery.

There were roughly 180 employees whose knowledge of German was considered inadequate for them to work effectively in work teams (see below). Most of them were third-country nationals, although a small number were naturalised.

Participation was, in principle, voluntary. Posters (in German) were displayed throughout the company, inviting attendance at the courses. Leaflets were distributed and information events held. The latter were timed to take place immediately before or after shifts, and lasted 45 minutes. Representatives of company management and the works council spoke, as did the training manager herself. It was also made clear, however, that improved knowledge of the language might prove necessary for retaining one's job. This was reinforced by the placing of a copy of the certificate in the individual's personnel file. Some supervisors exerted a degree of influence over applications, but it appears that there was only one instance of a shift foreman bullying a worker into attending the course. The matter was clarified in an interview with the foreman, and the worker was released from the course - his German was well above the level of the courses. Some other people who had applied voluntarily also proved to be too good, in the grading tests. Others had to be persuaded to take part despite their poor knowledge of the language. This was sometimes done by the chairman of the works council.

When applying, every employee had to take both a written and an oral grading test. The written test consisted of a number of sentences in which a word needed to be inserted in its

grammatically correct form at 27 points. In the oral test, several pictures had to be described and various items of information provided.

3. *Administration and procedure*

Courses were not run continuously but in several rounds. The first round took place in October and November 1994, and comprised four daytime courses and six evening courses. The second round, in December 1994 and January 1995, consisted of eight daytime courses and five evening courses. In February and March 1995, a third round was held with seven daytime and six evening courses. That is a total of 36 courses. Up to that point, 250 participants were counted. This implies the participation of between 120 and 130 people in one, two, or three courses.

In April and May 1995, a fourth round of courses was held, and in autumn 1995, a fifth.

The number attending a course was limited to eight. The average number of participants at the first 36 courses, up to March 1995, was seven. This allowed work to be geared very much to individual participants.

Evening courses were held from 8 p.m. to 9.45 p.m., and day courses in even-numbered weeks from 12.15 p.m. to 1.45 p.m., and in odd-numbered weeks from 2.15 p.m. to 3.45 p.m.. This fitted in with the times when shifts began and ended. Classes were held twice a week and initially lasted six weeks, then eight weeks during the final round in autumn 1995. All classes were held in the factory itself, to keep costs to a minimum on the one hand and, on the other, to keep down the time involved for participants.

The greatest problem was the logistics, since several factors had to be taken into account. Some people worked on different shifts, so that they were free in the morning in one week and in the afternoon in the next. Initially, there was also the problem of grading according to ability. Finally, a multitude of individual time problems had to be taken into account, mostly to do with child care and similar matters. Sometimes this meant that as many as ten courses ran in parallel. Even so, a number of workers were still unable to take part in a course for time reasons, even though they would have liked to.

The training manager knew the tutors from her previous position as a teacher of German as a foreign language. Nevertheless, she conducted the first course herself in order to gain experience for further planning.

4. *The reason*

In March 1994 the company engaged a new training manager. She was trained as a Germanist, and had worked with German as a foreign language in France and Vienna. In Vienna, her clients had always been foreigners of diverse origin and social status. In discussions with individual department managers, shift foremen, members of works councils, etc., at the video works, she was struck by constant complaints about foreign workers' inadequate knowledge of German. When new employees were taken on in 1992 and 1993, little attention had been paid to their knowledge of German. The interview consisted largely of a formal test which provided almost no information on the candidate's language skills. Lack of understanding can lead to accidents, operating errors and quality defects, and also to personal misunderstandings. This

has an adverse effect on the working environment, and also means that immigrant workers are at risk of being replaced by others with a better knowledge of German.

Another factor was that, during the same period, production was being restructured. Work teams were being formed with the authority to make semi-autonomous decisions about the production process, the organisation of time and the allocation of duties within the team. It was a variant of what has become widely known as lean production. It is mainly directed at making the best use of the creative capacities of all workers, in order to achieve continuous improvement in the manufacturing process. The change to lean production, or, as it was known by German industrial sociologists as long ago as the mid-1980s, the reorientation to "systemic rationalisation", strikes at the very core of the culture of every company. The challenge is normally only confronted as a result of high external cost pressures, as it was in the present instance.

Work teams make it essential to keep staff turnover to a minimum, which means that motivation becomes extremely important. If the company dismisses people, it destabilises the work team. It then takes some time before productivity (taking into account the quality level) is fully restored. The marked reduction in sales in 1994 and their recovery in 1996 had this sort of consequences, some of which lingered on well into 1997.

Work teams solve problems jointly and share responsibility for success and failure. This has created new linguistic challenges. It was no longer sufficient for a production worker to be able passively to understand instructions. He or she had to communicate actively within the team, in order to contribute to the team's success. A document prepared by the training manager for the project under discussion states that "Only someone with a reasonable command of the German language can be an effective member of a work team". However, work teams represented an entirely new situation for workers in other ways, too. A clear company hierarchy creates relative equality amongst all those of the same rank. In formal terms, the teams replaced earlier hierarchical structures, but it would be unrealistic to suppose that each team would not establish its own informal internal hierarchy. Within the informal hierarchy of a team whose whole environment means that it cannot afford internal disputes, but must aim to cooperate uncompromisingly, rank and promotion prospects depend to a significant extent on active linguistic skill. This means that the relative equality within levels of the former hierarchical system has disappeared. If they wanted to avoid loss of status, it became important for individual workers to be able to make their presence felt by what they said. Loss of status is harmful to a worker's motivation if it appears to be irrevocable. Provided it remains possible for the individual to regain authority within the team, no lasting loss of motivation need result from loss of status. It was with this in mind that company management also came to attach great importance to equipping all workers with the linguistic capability needed to prosper within the social structure of the work team. Loss of motivation would have jeopardised the attainment of the production targets aimed at in two ways: firstly, the work team concerned would have achieved less than if all its members had been fully motivated; secondly, loss of motivation leads to the departure of those affected, and thus to changes in the work team and falls in productivity whose avoidance is definitely among the objectives of company management.

Ensuring workplace safety was a specific aim of the courses. There is a statutory requirement to inform workers about safety regulations and hazards, and to ensure that the information has

been understood. The latter in particular is notoriously difficult. The language courses were therefore used to consolidate employees' awareness of the safety regulations.

5. *From idea to implementation*

The new training manager took the first steps to improve workers' knowledge of German as early as April 1994. She designed teaching programmes and presented them to the various management teams. Her proposals were well received within the company, and the works council supported the project. Management recognised its own objectives in the key words - cooperation, improvement and motivation - and felt that the project would help to achieve them. The training manager's background as a teacher of German as a foreign language played an important part in making the project credible within the company. Consideration had already been given to bringing external course providers into the company, as with previous English courses. This had not been done, primarily for logistical reasons. The practice had thus continued to be to recommend enrolling in a GFL course at a language school outside working hours.

The shift foremen also supported the German courses. As all the shift foremen were Austrian nationals, they saw the courses as confirming their own position. They probably regarded the courses less as an opportunity for the immigrants than as a demand that they should finally get to grips with the local language, or in other words submit themselves to local customs (and thus to the local people).

6. *Success*

The courses definitely improved knowledge of German and thus communication skills. It is impossible to establish whether it was a lasting improvement, and whether it laid the foundation for a self-perpetuating process of language acquisition. The fact that the locals speak to each other in dialect and to their immigrant colleagues in a kind of pidgin is not a good sign. It proved impossible to break through this language culture. Any future course programmes should aim to improve the language culture of all concerned, rather than simply the language ability of immigrants, but that would be much harder to organise and also much harder to achieve.

The extent to which the courses improved staff motivation is also unknown.

Staff numbers were reduced at the factory in 1994-1995. Little or no account was taken of whether employees had language certificates in their personnel file in determining who was to be made redundant. The courses may, nevertheless, have helped management to distinguish committed workers more clearly from the others and thus to assure their continued employment.

In 1996, several hundred staff were taken on, although the factory did not recruit directly from the labour market. Instead, the services of manpower agencies were used. This reduced the problem of German for the factory. In the first place, agencies may supply foreign nationals requiring work permits only if the individuals concerned already hold an exemption certificate. Exemption certificates are obtained in a variety of ways, mainly by having worked for five of the last eight years, or by having received half one's compulsory schooling in Austria including its completion. Holders of exemption certificates therefore probably speak better German than

other immigrants. Secondly, the factory is not obliged to take on permanently agency workers whose language skills are deficient, and may simply ask for them to be replaced. The views of work team spokesmen and foremen, as well as self-assessments, are all taken into account in assessing language skills. In practice, this results in grading into one of three levels. Hired workers at the lowest level are not taken on permanently. In principle, people can be taken on permanently after a minimum of three months.

According to the works council chairman, tolerance cannot be taken for granted at the factory. Determined intervention on his part is repeatedly needed to prevent conflicts from escalating. Sometimes these arise out of resentment and hostility to foreigners on the part of Austrian nationals, and sometimes out of animosity between the immigrants themselves, for instance between Turks and Kurds or between people from different parts of Yugoslavia. The works council always tries to get the following message across: "Here we are all Philips workers and nothing else".

7. *Wider dissemination*

In the course of the project, a fairly detailed report on it was broadcast on Austrian television.

The programme developed in the video factory could in principle be implemented in any company operating on a shiftwork basis and with a high proportion of immigrants. Efforts have been made to use it in at least two other cases.

7.1 The steel trading company

At the end of 1994 and beginning of 1995, the concept from the video factory was applied for three months in a steel trading company. Contact with the video factory was made via the works council. The project was implemented by the personnel manager in conjunction with the video factory's training manager, however.

The company employs around 100 people, half blue-collar workers and half white-collar workers. About half the blue-collar workers are immigrants from Yugoslavia, Turkey and Rumania. Several of them have now become naturalised. Shiftwork is used on a seasonal basis.

Employees are not required to possess great language skills, but they must be able to read a delivery note. If they want to take a course in crane-driving, they need a knowledge of German because the courses are only offered in German. As crane-drivers, they must also be able to communicate without difficulty for safety reasons. For this reason, the company had always offered, either directly through company management or via the works council, to pay for German courses. These offers were not taken up, however. When the example of the video factory became known, management decided that they would also provide courses within the company itself and would more or less compel the workers concerned to attend them, making it clear that future pay increases might depend on participation.

The courses were arranged at the end of working hours, and were only for those not on shiftwork. The working day is 8½ hours. At first there were 20 to 25 participants in three groups. Many dropped out at a relatively early stage. Participants were divided by the training manager from the video factory into three groups, according to ability. The teachers were the same as those at the video factory too. A major problem was that some participants had poor

reading and writing skills. This prevented them from learning successfully and caused them to lose motivation.

Good workers improved their skills further on the course, but it was not a success overall. Only a few of the people with a poorer knowledge of German are still with the company, whilst those with a better knowledge of German are all still there.

7.2 The television factory

From September 1995 to January 1997, a largely identical project was carried out at a television factory in Vienna. In this instance, the initiative came from the head of personnel development and training. She joined the company at the beginning of 1994 after graduating in business sciences and economics and working for a time in vocational and career planning, and then in the office of a federal minister. The reason for her initiative was that department managers and foremen said that measures to increase productivity were difficult to implement because workers' knowledge of German was inadequate. The company had adopted the principle of involving workers more closely in efforts to increase productivity. On the one hand, this made better communication necessary in production and, on the other, an attempt was made to involve workers more closely in a suggestion scheme designed to identify potential improvements to operational procedures. Both of these called for higher levels of language skill. Further innovations, such as the introduction of work teams, are currently under discussion.

The company currently has about 1500 employees, the majority women, of whom 14% are foreign nationals. If naturalised staff are included, about one-fifth of the staff are of foreign origin. Two-thirds of the workforce are classified as blue-collar workers and one-third as white-collar workers. Because all the immigrants are blue-collar workers, the proportion of blue-collar workers who are foreign nationals is around 20%, while the proportion of immigrants as a whole among the blue-collar workers is around 30%. Recently, the workforce has been reduced by about 200 workers a year. Following modest losses in recent years, the company is likely to return to profit in 1997. At the same time as wage and materials costs are rising, it is having to cope with a very rapid fall in prices averaging 7% a year. The project's corporate environment was thus unfavourable from the outset. Nevertheless, management viewed the idea favourably. It was regarded as an investment in higher productivity and a foundation for restoring profitability. Once positive messages had been received from company management, the head of personnel development and training contacted the training manager at the video factory, with whom she had already cooperated in other matters. The documentary evidence from the video factory was so convincing that she decided to adopt both the programme and its teaching staff. This involved no costs. Her presentation to technical management staff resulted in authorisation to go ahead with the project, which was also supported by the works council.

The German courses began in September 1995. There were 80 applicants, 60% of whom were women. Most participants originally came from Yugoslavia, Turkey and the Philippines. The programme was an almost exact replica of that at the video factory. Classes were held twice a week immediately before or immediately after the shift. Initially, there were eight daytime courses and two courses for the night shift. Participants were tested and graded into three ability levels. The first round of courses lasted until the end of January 1996. No courses were held over the Christmas period or during the school holidays in February and at Easter. Classes

were also cancelled when the workload in production was high, or when participants did not have time for other reasons. Consequently, although they ran over several months, each course consisted of only about twenty lessons.

A second round of courses ran from March to June 1996, and a third from September 1996 to January 1997. They were then halted because of a lack of participants. At the end there were still three parallel courses, each with four participants, but they attended only intermittently. The courses for the night shift had already been abandoned during the first round owing to a shortage of participants. Declining participation by women was probably linked to difficulties with child care and the desire of husbands to have their wives at home. In total, 93 workers took part in one or more courses, so that 177 course participants were recorded.

The head of personnel development and training considers that skilled, committed female staff with average to good knowledge of German benefited from the courses, yet for a substantial number of those concerned, they were too demanding. It needs to be remembered that virtually all the participants had little experience of study. They had to begin by learning how to study once more. Secondly, it is a major challenge to concentrate on an hour and a half or two hours of instruction before or, worse still, after eight hours of demanding work on the production line. Thirdly, the personal circumstances of some participants were unfavourable. Fourthly, very few must have been aware of the importance of a good knowledge of German in a labour market with rising unemployment.

The head of personnel development and training considers that three factors are crucial to success:

- parameters which facilitate regular attendance as far as is possible,
- support from supervisors and families,
- demonstrating that staff themselves have something to gain.

CHAPTER 5

THE HOME HELP ASSOCIATION

1. The project

Between 27 September 1993 and 14 January 1994, 14 women who had fled from Bosnia were trained in Vienna as home helps, then employed in this capacity. The aim was to provide more challenging work for women who, because of their origin and poor knowledge of German, would otherwise have ended up only in cleaning jobs. A special training programme had to be developed and financed. It also had to be ensured in advance that the women would subsequently be granted a labour permit.

The women were trained as home helps. The job consists mainly of assisting older people with household tasks.

The costs of the course amounted to between ATS 270,000 and ATS 300,000. Of this total, ATS 90,000 was contributed in kind by the Vienna AMS (Labour Market Service) in the form of teaching materials, travel passes, external tutors and room rental. A further ATS 90,000 was contributed by the Vienna Integration Fund in respect of the language-related aspects of the course. The balance was funded by the Association itself in the form of the paid working time of Association staff. This included project management on the one hand and, on the other, the many teaching sessions conducted by staff. In addition, the AMS paid an allowance to participants for the duration of the course.

2. The profession of home help and the Association

The profession of home help is a demanding and responsible activity performed almost entirely by women, mostly on a part-time basis. Until the early 1990s, most home helps were women returning to the labour market after a career break. This meant that they were more mature, had a family and experience of running their own household, but also that they had commitments in the evenings and at weekends and were not really available at those times. There have since been some changes in this field. Evening and weekend work has multiplied and become the norm. The main reason for this is probably that it was made legally impossible to place elderly people under guardianship and to commit them to a home. At the same time, increasing numbers of younger women were accepted for training as home helps. The entry requirements are a school leaving certificate and attainment of the age of majority (19). The majority of applicants actually have no education or training beyond their compulsory schooling. They include many single mothers. However, today, in contrast with earlier practice, applicants are selected according to suitability. Courses normally have 20 to 24 participants and are financed entirely by AMS. Previously, training was normally given not by Association staff but by external specialists. Since the introduction of a training curriculum in 1994, just over half the training has been given by Association staff. In addition, the course now concludes with an examination. The course attended by the Bosnians was the last one without an examination, although this implies neither an advantage nor a disadvantage. Home helps are given eight hours of continuing training each year while they remain in the profession.

Today, about one in five of all course participants is a member of an immigrant family. The Association never normally accepts for training anyone on whose behalf a labour permit has yet to be sought. The principal reason for this is the difficulty of obtaining a labour permit. Furthermore, the courses are funded by the Vienna Public Employment Service, and this also rules out the participation of women who would require a labour permit. Since 1 January 1994, the only cases where no new labour permit is required by a woman who is a citizen of a third country are if she is married to an Austrian citizen, or has been granted indefinite asylum, or has been in employment for 12 out of 14 months or for 18 out of 24 months within the past two years, or has been employed for five out of the past eight years, or if one of her parents resided continuously and legally in Austria for five years prior to her 19th birthday and she herself completed half her compulsory schooling period and obtained a school leaving certificate in Austria. In the context of accepting foreign women for training, these requirements lead in practice to the selection of those with a longer period of residence, and particularly those who have grown up in Austria.

Trained home helps have opportunities for promotion, but personal commitment is required, *inter alia*. Within the Association it is possible to become a stand-by help and then a team leader. A high degree of flexibility is demanded of stand-by helps, who are called upon to perform a wide range of tasks at varying times of day. In recompense, they are paid a full-time salary irrespective of the actual hours worked, and receive appropriate premiums for overtime, and evening and weekend work. Because they also have to deputise for team leaders, office work is also involved. The duties of stand-by helps include quality control, i.e. they have a monitoring function. One way in which this function is fulfilled is that their home visits bring them into contact with clients who are normally looked after by a different home help. Thus, stand-by helps are the people to whom clients address complaints and to whom departures from proper practice become apparent. They also make selective home visits to review the provision of services. Each stand-by help is responsible for a specific district, to ensure that clients know her. Stand-by helps can gain promotion to team leaders, and thus become the supervisor of some 25 home helps. This post consists largely of office work, for which there is a written job specification. Because the job increasingly requires writing and analytical skills, it has now become rarer for stand-by helps to become team leaders. Outsiders are recruited instead.

The Association cares for some 3,800 clients on average, of whom 3,100 are women living alone. The acquisition of a home help is often a difficult adjustment for them, and there are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, they often refuse to accept their need for help. They have always been able to look after themselves, and it is hard to admit that this is no longer the case. Secondly, it is problematical for them to admit someone into their personal space, their private life. At first, they tend to see home helps as intruders, particularly since many clients have lived alone for years or even decades. The problem is exacerbated if for some reason they regard the home help as not very trustworthy, perhaps because they are prejudiced against young people or immigrants, or if the home help smells of something, such as cigarette smoke or garlic, which the client finds unpleasant. Thirdly, when an immigrant turns up as the home help, there is a real danger that people think they are being treated as second-class citizens. They claim the right to be cared for by "their own kind", i.e. by staff drawn from the middle classes of well-to-do societies and not by people from poorer backgrounds or countries. Here the question of trust is linked with the question of being taken seriously as a person or as a client, and of receiving the kind of service to which one is entitled. In practice, once the home help has made several visits, these misgivings persist only in a minority of cases.

The Association has been in existence since the late 1950s. It currently employs nearly 2,000 staff, almost all women, and has an annual turnover of ATS 400 million. Nowadays it refers to itself in its annual report as an enterprise. It is active in several fields, of which home help services were the first. Ten years later, a meals-on-wheels service was added, followed in the mid-1970s by home visiting and home cleaning services. In the mid-1980s, two family counselling centres were added, together with a home nursing service for children. The latter service was extended in 1995 to include child minding at home. The services established prior to the mid-1970s are used mainly by older people, whilst those dating from the 1980s are aimed at younger families. Today, the Association employs around 940 home helps, who carry out 1.1 million hours of work a year - a third of all home help work in Vienna. The home visiting service employs approximately 400 women, and does about 162,000 hours of work a year, two-thirds of all home visiting in Vienna. For meals on wheels, about 60 teams currently deliver some 900,000 meals a year. One hour of a home help's time now costs ATS 310 on weekdays and ATS 450 (including VAT) at weekends or on national holidays.

Figures based on past experience are available, but it is never possible to predict with certainty how demand will evolve in the future. That is why most domiciliary staff are guaranteed only 90 hours of paid work per month. In practice they normally average 120 to 125. Because work is performed every day of the week, evening and weekend premiums are paid in respect of some of the hours.

Most of the domiciliary staff are educated only to school leaving certificate level. The opportunities available to them on the labour market are therefore limited. When they begin the course, many of them have been unemployed for a lengthy period, and require the support of a social worker in order to become suitable for employment in a company again and recover their social skills. Most of them work part-time, and many have a child but lack a second household income. They are thus the much talked about single mothers with very low incomes, who, along with immigrant families, constitute one of the largest poverty groups in Austria.

3. Course participants

Advance notice was given at the various refugee hostels in both printed and spoken form. About 30 women subsequently applied. These were then interviewed at their places of residence by the project manager and a social worker who spoke their language, to assess their suitability and motivation. At the same time they were told about the difficulties and demanding nature of work as a home help. The objective was to recruit not more than 15 course participants. Finally, 13 were selected. A fourteenth participant - a doctor qualified in neuropsychiatry - later joined the course.

Nine of the participants were born between 1969 and 1972, two in 1962-63, and three in the mid-1950s. Three were students, four had completed technical secondary school courses, two commercial secondary school courses, and two were retail saleswomen. One had owned her own business, and two were fully trained doctors. Thirteen were Islamic, and one Christian. Most originated from the urban middle classes and possessed an appropriately broad outlook on life. Their good education and relatively low age made them stand out from typical course participants.

Two of the participants were cousins, whilst the others do not appear to have known each other beforehand. Several had other members of their family with them, in some cases parents, and were partly responsible for their support.

In Austria, the majority lived in refugee hostels at eight different addresses in the Vienna area. Ten had already been in Austria for about a year, while four had arrived in 1993.

4. Organisation and procedure

A project manager was responsible for running the course. She was aided by a contact person who herself came from Bosnia and thus spoke the language. Both were qualified social workers.

Thirteen Bosnian women attended the preparatory German course from 27 September 1993 to 19 November 1993. It comprised 120 hours of lessons. Ten of the women had already attended German courses, three had not. This meant that the level of existing knowledge varied very widely. Particular emphasis was placed on vocabulary specific to the job. Many things were also tried out in practice, such as using the underground with a wheelchair, and exchanging pleasantries with Viennese people. An urgent need became apparent for practice in the completion of forms and dealing with authorities, and as a result this became a permanent subject, not only in the German course. A basic vocabulary of words in the Viennese dialect was also taught. The preparatory German course was held daily, in the mornings.

The specialist training which began on 22 November 1993 was accompanied by a further German course comprising 32 teaching units. This concentrated in particular on current language problems and factual misunderstandings arising from the specialist training. To some extent, the private problems of participants were also discussed. For a further 26 lessons, the group was subdivided into six more advanced students and eight whose knowledge of German had not progressed as far. This enabled the participants to be coached more individually and more intensively. The accompanying German course was held on two or three afternoons a week.

After the completion of the specialist training, and when they were already working as home helps, several of the women attended an intermediate/advanced German course run by another organisation.

Specialist training lasted eight weeks, from 22 November 1993 to 14 January 1994. It covered 12 subjects and 155 teaching units. Since it helps to give a general picture of the home help profession, I shall list the subjects, followed in brackets by the actual and planned number of teaching units in each case: professional knowledge and ethics (11/9); basic principles of hygiene and infectious diseases (9/6); basic principles of caring for the sick (24/30); first aid (16/16); basic principles of nutrition and dietetics (8/25); physically safe working methods, basic principles of mobility for the infirm, wheelchair course (16/24); household management, safety in the home, accident prevention and environmental protection (22/26); planning and record-keeping, organising work procedures, division of work (11/18); psychology, psychiatry with special emphasis on the nursing and care of elderly, disabled and sick people (18/33); communication, conflict management, teamwork (16/94); professions and facilities in the health and social welfare services (5/4); welfare services (2/19). In addition to purely job-related subjects, four additional areas were included in the course: learning techniques (3),

mother-tongue support (15); "follow-up" (23); and excursions (7). The training thus comprised 203 teaching units overall.

A total of 307 units had originally been planned for the purely job-related area. The 155 units actually delivered represent only slightly over half, with the main reduction occurring in the field of communication, conflict management and teamwork, where only 16 out of 94 planned units were included. It should be pointed out, however, that mother-tongue support (15 units) and the follow-up sessions with the project manager (23 units) were also part of this subject area, so that a total of 54 units were delivered on the subject of communication, conflict management and teamwork. A number of factors were responsible for the reduction. Firstly, the women proved to be far better educated, more capable of learning and professional than anticipated. Secondly, it was relatively important to the participants to start earning an income as soon as possible. It was therefore eventually decided to omit the second eight-week part of the course. It had, in any case, been planned to hold it only in the event that the training objectives were not adequately achieved in the first part.

The mother-tongue support sessions followed a 14-day pattern. They were led by a qualified social worker who herself originated from Bosnia and who knew most of the participants before the start of the course. She was also familiar with the nature of home help work.

In both the language-based and vocational parts of the training, much of the instruction was dedicated to conveying the lifestyle of older people in Vienna. For instance, the participants practised shopping, an important aspect of which is understanding what clients want to buy. There are many colloquial and dialect expressions in this field, which means that shopping skills cannot be mastered without previous practical experience. Cookery practice was also organised, to give the participants an insight into the principal elements of traditional Viennese cuisine. It was also important to study the living conditions of elderly people in Vienna. In some instances they are appalling, yet they may be regarded by those concerned as normal and not worth changing because they have spent their whole life or at least many years in the same flat. There may be no running water in the flat or the heating system may be very antiquated, not just in technological terms, but also in terms of its condition. The home helps all had to be trained to light a coke stove, and to be made aware of the hazards of old, worn-out stoves.

The fact that old people in Austria were frequently not cared for by their families but instead placed in homes aroused amazement and moral indignation. One particular point included in the training was the significance and form of Christian festivals, particularly Christmas, Easter and birthdays.

Apart from the language and specifically job-related aspects, the job of home help can present personal difficulties. Not everyone is suited to the task of attending to the personal hygiene of elderly people, and particularly their most intimate needs. If they are incontinent, it is necessary to clean them up and put pads in place. Most clients are women, but there are some men, so that sexual reactions also have to be expected. In this area, the participants proved to be completely professional. The same applied to areas which might have proved problematical for them as Moslems, such as relationships between the sexes, the use of alcohol and the cooking of pork.

The professional approach of the participants was also apparent when they faced xenophobia. Most had encountered it before the course. A psychologist helped them to develop personal strategies for coping with this kind of rejection. Amongst other things, the difference between self-image and the way others see one was discussed. It must be remembered that this was the period of a first series of letter bombs. The women saw this as a real danger that their right to reside in Austria could be called into question to an even greater extent. They continually raised the subject of the extreme right-wing political movement. Ongoing experience of rejection certainly remained a regular topic even after the end of the course. During the practical sessions it was discussed within the team, rather than in direct arguments with clients or colleagues. During the first six months of work as a home help, discussions were held with the project manager every two weeks. The topic was still constantly in the air there, not merely as a problem with clients but also within the team and in everyday life. Even today, when the former trainees meet the project manager every three months or so, the situation remains the same. The problem was anticipated, with the result that a psychotherapist continued to provide regular counselling throughout 1994. (The psychotherapist donated her services free of charge on condition that the women were remunerated for the hours spent in counselling.)

The project manager had to devote particular attention to the danger of xenophobic behaviour during the practical training. The practical training represented the first contact between clients, colleagues and team leaders and the Bosnian women. It is not in itself unusual for immigrant women to take part in the courses. However, in the first place they are usually women who have already lived in Vienna for some time, so that they have a relatively good knowledge of Viennese life and are familiar with the language and dialect and, secondly, there are only a few in each course, so that integration into the team is unlikely to present a problem. In the present case, however, the women had not been in Vienna long and were still uncertain about the language, despite the courses, and there were suddenly 14 to be introduced into teams all at once. Close attention was therefore paid to three groups of people. Firstly, the team leaders were carefully selected; secondly, the practical instructor for each team was also carefully selected and, finally, an effort was also made, especially at the start, to select clients who would not make an issue of the women's national origin or knowledge of German.

Practical instructors are a designated category of home helps, but do not receive special training. Because almost every course contains several immigrants, xenophobia is an explicit subject on every course, and the practical instructors are also necessarily familiar with it. In the case of the practical training for the Bosnian women, however, the designated practical instructors were not automatically selected. Instead, experienced home helps were chosen of whom it could be assumed that they themselves had a positive attitude towards accepting the Bosnian women into the team, and would communicate this to the other team members. Teams usually consist of about 25 home helps who look after a particular district. Team leaders are obliged to hold regular team meetings at which they coordinate the team, advise individual members and draw their attention to new developments. The project manager personally selected the team leaders for the Bosnian women's practical training, and instructed them about what was required from practical instructors in this instance. The team leaders were responsible for selecting the practical instructors (and the clients). The project manager then trained the instructors selected. Among other things, they were asked to make allowances for language difficulties, i.e. to speak slowly, clearly and not in dialect. In practice, however, this instruction was not heeded by either team leaders or practical instructors.

5. *The reason*

From April 1992 onwards, there had been a relatively large influx of war refugees from the former Yugoslavia. This continued in 1993. According to official figures, by 1995 some 90,000 refugees had arrived from Bosnia. They were dispersed throughout the country and accommodated in very cramped quarters at some 200 locations, unless they could be housed by relatives. Incorporating them into the labour market presented a particularly large problem. Firstly, Austria had experienced heavy immigration as recently as 1988-91, so that the authorities were reluctant to admit more immigrants into the labour market, even if they were refugees. Secondly, 1993 was a poor year for economic growth, so that demand was depressed and unemployment high.

6. *From idea to implementation*

The initiative came from three women, all of whom are deeply involved in the Vienna SPÖ (Austrian Social Democratic Party). They all held senior posts in the Association at the time. Today they have leading positions in local politics, in the City Administration and in the construction of cooperative housing. Approximately six months elapsed between the first discussion of the idea and the start of the course. The women's section of the Vienna SPÖ had already taken up the cause of women in Bosnia on earlier occasions.

The Association's works council took a rather sceptical view of the project. Its principal function is to represent the interests of the 900 to 1000 female staff in the domiciliary service. At the time, they were facing shorter hours and thus lower incomes. The reason was the introduction of a new statutory social security benefit, the care allowance. This led to a different form of accounting between the Association and the Vienna City Authorities, and also to a fall in demand. Both factors caused a reduction in the number of paid hours and could not be offset in the short term by acquiring new customers or clients. The works council therefore saw little justification for a fourth course in 1993, and would have preferred to leave it at the three already held. (In 1996, the number of courses was reduced to two.) The works council did not wish to impose a sacrifice on the Association's staff in the name of solidarity with the Bosnian refugees.

Taking on the Bosnian women met with a degree of resistance from team leaders, and this focused around four points:

- they already had foreigners in the teams and could not integrate any more;
- the extent to which they could be sent to clients was limited, which would create excessive team coordination problems;
- the terrible experiences suffered by the Bosnian women in the war could give rise to mental instability;
- frequent absences could be expected, not only because of mental problems but also for many other reasons, and particularly because most of the women were relatively young.

In practice, these fears proved to be unfounded. The feedback from team leaders and indeed from clients turned out to be more positive than expected. The motivation and commitment of the Bosnian women proved to be much higher than anticipated. With young women from other courses, team leaders had always said that in their experience they were not willing to work as hard as required. They had expected the same in this instance.

Nor was there great enthusiasm for the idea at the Vienna Public Employment Service. Given that the rate of unemployment in Vienna was above the Austrian average, especially among women, it was not felt to be really necessary to help up to 15 Bosnian women to enter the labour market and to finance a course for this purpose. Today, subsidising a course exclusively for foreign participants possessing neither a labour permit nor an entitlement to unemployment benefit would be completely out of the question. Even at the time, the Association had to provide an assurance that no Austrian women were available for the posts.

The difficult position of the project within the Association is also reflected in the fact that the Association's newsletter contained no report on it. Even the 1993 and 1994 annual reports mention it only briefly and from a functional point of view. The fact that it was implemented was, in the end, due to the determination of the Association's directors and management, and their valuable connections with the Vienna Public Employment Service through their positions in the Social Democratic Party.

The significant preconditions for success were a clear definition of the objectives, careful preparation of the environment, and the guarantee in advance of subsequent incorporation into working life. One of the key tasks of project management was, above all, preparation of the environment in the teams and amongst the team leaders. The administrative parameters proved to be a problem, however. Managing the project proved to be highly labour-intensive, partly because no secretarial assistance was provided, and because there was not even a computer which was permanently available. Moreover, the division of responsibility among the board, managers and project management rendered all decision-making processes relatively labour-intensive and time-consuming.

7. Success

The principal success of the project was that the 14 Bosnian women became employed as home helps as from 17 January 1994. This assured both their livelihood and their definitive integration into the labour market. However, the success of the project can also be measured in terms of the continuing career progress of the participants. The following is known about the situations of the 14 participants in the spring of 1997:

- two have emigrated to the USA;
- the general practitioner returned to Bosnia in 1996;
- the specialist doctor is working in a private nursing home in Vienna;
- two attended a book-keeping course, and one of them is today employed in that field (at the Association itself) as a wages clerk; she is currently training to be an accountant;
- two are currently on maternity leave;
- seven are working as home helps, although two are simultaneously training to become auxiliary nurses. Auxiliary nurses can do more than home helps, but less than nurses.

Several of the women have since married, to Bosnians as far as is known.

Little is known about other successes achieved by the project. It is reasonably certain that clients who were initially sceptical or dismissive subsequently came to accept the Bosnian women, although this is not an aspect that can really be documented. The same applies to their acceptance within the Association.

8. *Wider dissemination*

An apparently rather unsuccessful attempt was made by another association to imitate the model. The intention was to retrain cleaning women as home helps in 1995-1996. However, it seems that there were only about 20 applicants, and there was consequently inadequate scope for selection. The course was then abandoned.

Even at the time, the project was only really possible because Bosnians were involved and the war was still in progress. It could not be repeated today even with Bosnian women, not because the legal situation would be an obstacle, but because the competent office of the Vienna Public Employment Service does not permit new foreign workers to enter the regular labour market.

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