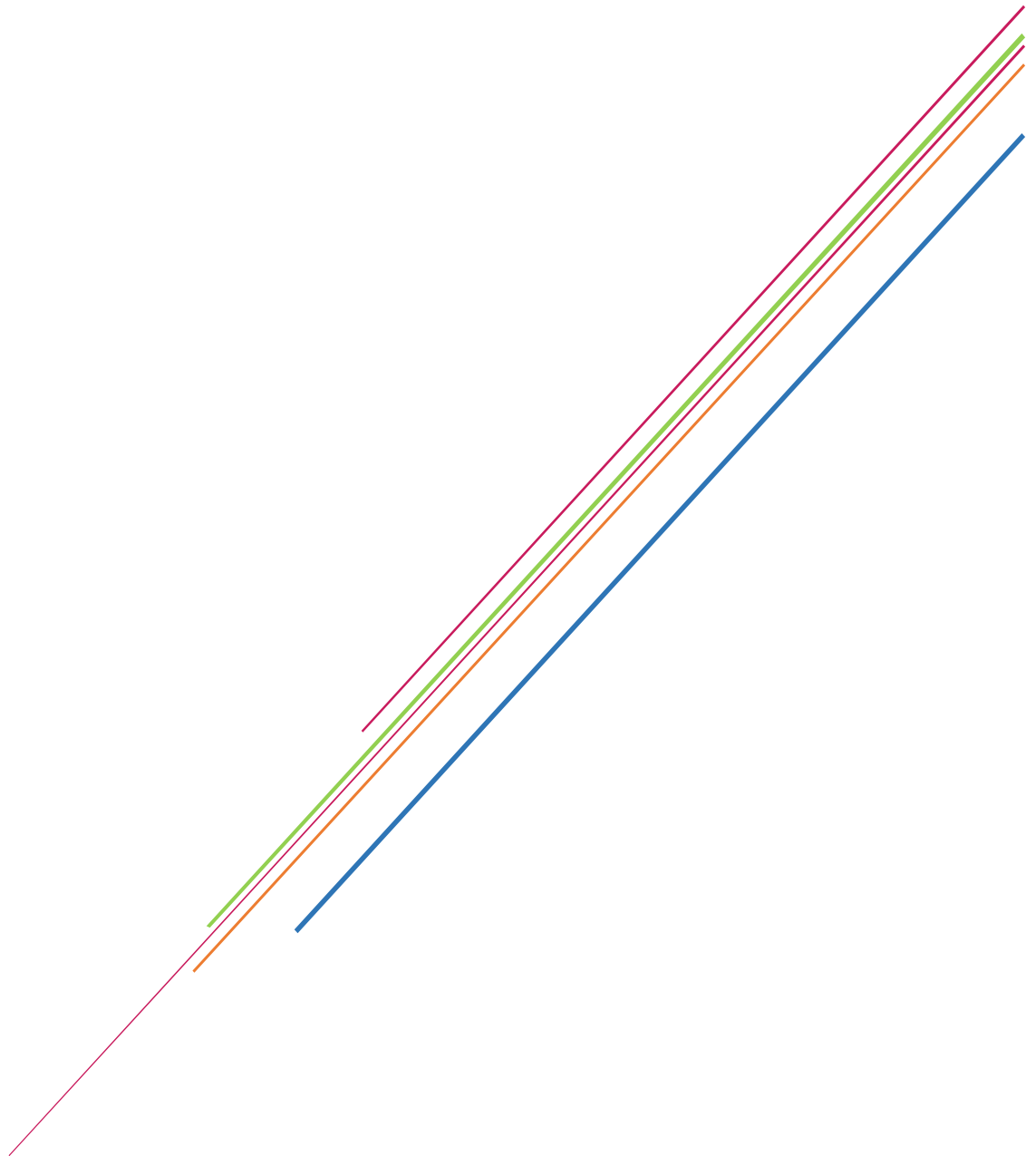


Childcare in Austria Re-Entry Model into the Labour Market After Maternity Leave.

BEST

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Introduction

This document offers a detailed approach for supporting women in re-entering the workforce after maternity leave. It focuses on:

1. **Childcare as a Prerequisite:** Emphasizes the importance of reliable childcare for women returning to work or engaging in further education, highlighting the range of childcare services in Austria.
2. **Training and Support Services:** Describes training measures, including childcare services at training locations and comprehensive information about regional childcare and financial support.
3. **Individual Coaching and Support:** Focuses on personal coaching sessions to address childcare-related queries and challenges, and to facilitate women's integration into the workforce.
4. **Balancing Family and Work:** Offers strategies for effective family and household management, increasing the involvement of partners and family members.
5. **Building Skills and Confidence:** Encourages women to recognize and utilize their competences and skills gained during maternity leave in their job applications and interviews.

This document provides a holistic approach to empower women, addressing both practical and psychological aspects of re-entering the workforce.

Childcare as a Prerequisite

An important prerequisite for re-entering the labour market after maternity leave is to have suitable childcare for the child/children. In Austria, there is a wide range of public and private childcare services for children from the age of one. Only when childcare is arranged or organised can women devote themselves fully to their return to work or to participation in further education (e.g. a training course financed by the Public Employment Service for the rapid integration into the labour market after maternity leave, e.g. WMZ project, which has been successfully carried out by BEST for many years).

Training and Support Services

In many training measures for women re-entering the labour market financed by the Public Employment Service, childcare for the participants' children is also offered directly at the training location in order to make it possible to attend the training. Women can use this offer temporarily if they have not yet arranged/organised their childcare or if there are short-term shortfalls in 'normal' childcare (e.g. kindergarten is closed for renovation, nanny/au pair is ill, etc.). In the childcare at the course location, the children are looked after and fed in groups by trained elementary teachers for the duration of the training - similar to a kindergarten in rooms equipped appropriately for children.

In order to be able to support women in organising their childcare in the best possible way, a variety of support services for women are also offered during the training. On the one hand, the participants receive comprehensive information about childcare services in the region as well as financial support options. Often, representatives of childcare facilities are invited to give lectures in which they present their organisation and the childcare services, answer questions and concerns of participants, and thus also dispel reservations about 'outside childcare'.

Individual Coaching and Support

The participants find individual support in clarifying childcare issues primarily in the individual coaching sessions offered, which are conducted by trained social education workers (coaches). Here, too, the focus is on clarifying various questions/problems related to the topic of childcare: information is passed on childcare offers and financial support offers, often the coaches also contact institutions to find out about available childcare places or support the participants in establishing contacts, if this is necessary/wanted. If necessary, the participants are motivated and encouraged to place their children in childcare in order to enable them to attend the training without any problems and subsequently to actively participate in working life.

If child care is secured, as an elementary prerequisite for a successful return to work after maternity leave, the participants are comprehensively supported by the coaches with regard to the compatibility of family and work. Together, they work out various possible solutions that will promote a future career as well as efficient time/stress management. A variety of tips and advice help the participants to 'reconcile' work and family: how can family/household management be organised and optimised? How can the partner and, if necessary, other family members, relatives, friends or neighbours be more involved in childcare, transporting children to childcare/music school, etc., various household chores, etc., in order to make it easier for the woman/mother to attend the training/future employment or to make it possible in principle?

Balancing Family and Work

Many women also have to learn (again) how to delegate. For many women it is a matter of course that they take care of children and household alone when they are at home on maternity leave. If they now want to go back to work, they have to 'dig themselves free', reallocate their time re-sources. This is hardly possible without a reorganisation of family/household management and an increased involvement of other people.

In the course of this reorganisation process, women often become aware again of how many tasks and agendas they actually took care of at home during their maternity leave. They sometimes dis-cover that they have excellent organisational skills as well as successful stress and time management strategies, Many (informal) competences become transparent in the course of the individual work with the coach and the women become aware of them (again). This conscious perception of available (informal) competences has a significant effect on self-confidence and motivation as well as on the development of confidence in the women's personal ability to learn/perform and a certain 'willingness to persevere' - essential prerequisites for the success of their (re-)integration into the labour market in the near future.

Building Skills and Confidence

The coaches support and motivate the participants to consciously deal with personal strengths, competences and available potentials. In the exercise 'Praise yourself', for example, the participants are invited to present their special skills and competences in a 3-5-minute short presentation: What am I good at? What am I proud of?

The survey of various (informal) competences in the course of a comprehensive competence survey also makes a decisive contribution to this. The respective results are discussed and reflected on together with the coach and analysed and concretised with regard to their usability for the application process as well as for future employment. The conscious perception of supposedly available (informal) competences is of decisive importance in order to be able to motivate the participants for various application activities and the active job search.

Many women can/could be observed to be plagued by self-doubt at the end of maternity leave and increasingly feel that they will not be able to re-enter the labour market. Knowledge and skills that women had before maternity leave are sometimes perceived as 'no longer available' or 'out-dated'. Important informal competences and skills that women practised continuously during their maternity leave as part of their everyday work (e.g. organising/planning different agendas in the household/celebrations/travel, administration and communication with authorities, constructive communication and dealing constructively with differences of opinion/conflicts, resilience/stress resistance in difficult/unpredictable situations, etc.) are not

perceived as valuable competences and skills. The existence or significance of these competences/skills for everyday work and life of-ten has to be made clear to women again.

In the joint work with the coach, the women are (re)made aware of their available competences, potentials and resources and the importance of these soft skills for the application process or the job search is emphasised. The women are encouraged to specifically show their (informal) competences/skills in their application documents and to consciously highlight them as 'strengths'. In the job application coaching, which prepares the participants intensively and specifically for future job interviews, the women learn to present themselves and their (informal) competences, which they were able to use and consolidate in practice during their maternity leave, in a targeted manner and to make a professional first impression with the appropriate self-confidence and motivation. This is practised in simulations/dialogues or an 'elevator pitch' and perfected through continuous reflection and feedback from the coach.

Consciously dealing with the topic of childcare and family/household management proves to be an effective means of making women (re)aware of their available competences, skills, potentials and resources. Supposed weaknesses ('I only took care of the child and the household') are trans-formed into useful strengths, which have a positive effect on the self-confidence, motivation and commitment of women re-entering the labour market. If women are (re)aware of their (informal) competences, potentials and resources, they can use them beneficially for their application activities, active job search and future employment - and skilfully 'reconcile' work and family.