



# Independent Migration Commissions in Europe: The case of Austria

*Gudrun Biffl*

Contribution to the conference on  
Expert Commissions and Migration Policy Making,  
University of California - Davis April 18, 2013  
Conference Venue: Room 2203 SSH Andrews Conference Room



## Austrian migration policy

---

- **Austrian migration policy changed from a demand driven guest worker model (1960s - 1980s) to chain migration, family reunion and refugee migration in the 1990s.**
- **Membership to the EU (1995) fuelled economic migration from other EU-member states, a consequence of free mobility of labour and faster-than-average economic growth that reduced the need for skilled migration from non-EU countries.**
- **Population ageing and insufficient investment in further education and training fuelled labour scarcities, leading to migration policy reform in 2011: gave employer demand a key role in selecting immigrants according to the point-system adapted from the Canadian and Australian models.**
- **While many elements of the Austrian system are highly developed, there is insufficient coordination among federal agencies, and Austria may look to the coordinator of integration policies as a model for improving the coordination of policies to guide skilled labour migration.**



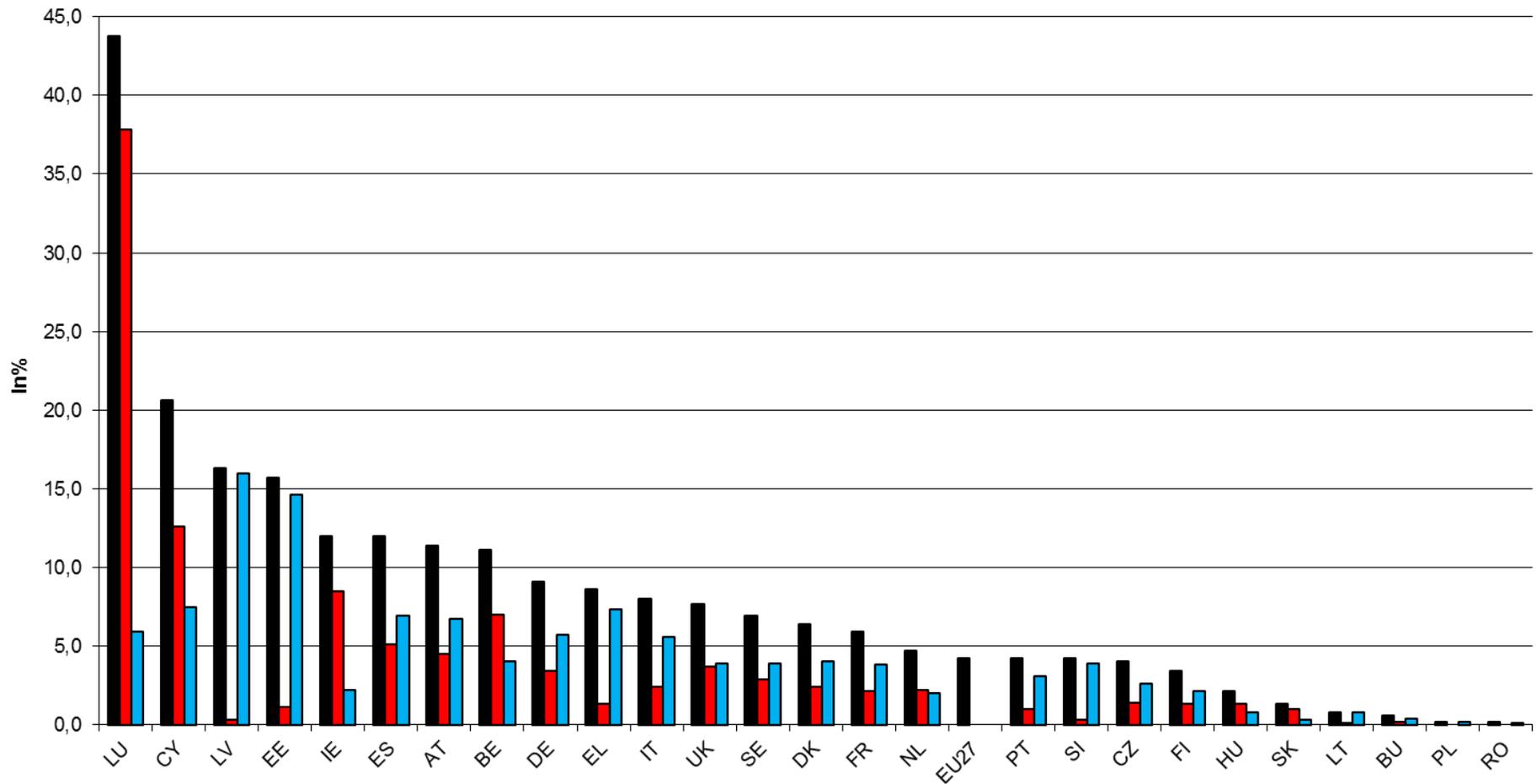
# Recent major migration policy change

---

- **Federal elections in 2013: raising migration is on the agenda to combat population ageing, to sustain economic growth and the funding of the welfare system.**
- **Objective: to raise inflow of nationals of other EU member states and to promote recruitment of third country citizens, i.e. citizens from outside the European Economic Area (EEA).**
- **In spite of the more recent increase in mobility across the EU following Eastern enlargement, EU-migration today does not exceed 3% of the resident population in most EU-MS.**
- **Exceptions are Luxembourg with 40% of its population carrying the citizenship of another EU country, followed by Cyprus (13%), Ireland (8.5%), Belgium (7%) and Austria (4.5%). The high percentages of the latter countries are the result of substantial cross - border mobility, i.e. between regions of a common cultural and/or language heritage, special case of EU-capital.**



## Foreign Citizens in % of total population from another EU-MS and from Third Countries: 2012



S. Eurostat.





## Little labour mobility across the EU – in contrast to the USA

---

- Empirical evidence suggests that economic integration of the EU has been accompanied by a gradual process of regional industrial specialization that is responsive to factor endowments, in particular to the availability of highly skilled workers (R&D intensive industry clusters) and skilled tradesmen (labour intensive industry clusters)
- Technological innovations, including computer sciences and software development, have promoted mobility of services rather than labour, while relatively small transport costs due to the geographical proximity of the trading partners increase trade in goods rather than labour mobility.
- The costs of migration to individuals remain fairly high because of language and cultural barriers, problems of skill recognition across countries as well as housing costs.



# Austria remains divided on migration policy

---

- The current government is rather divided on migration policy, reflecting the positions of the social partners who are the main drivers of migration policy.
- The employers' side want more highly skilled migrants – via increased EU mobility as well as the entry of non-EU nationals.
- The representatives of workers argue for more measures to raise labour force participation, particularly of mature age workers, and for more investment in education and training (LLL). They see skill shortages as home-made.
- However, labour agrees with employers that Austria's current migration policy and migration management system have a limited capacity to attract skilled migrants.



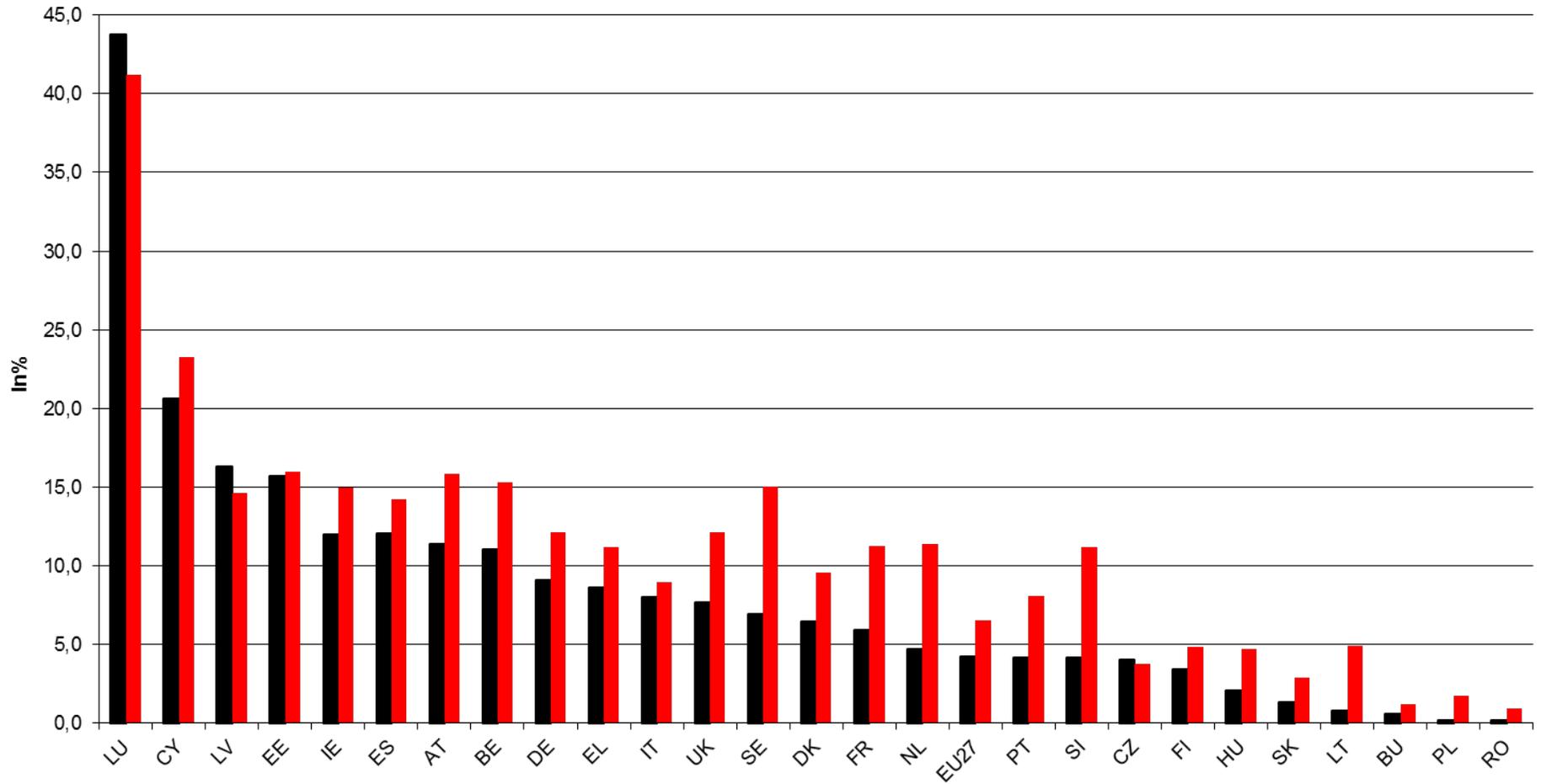
## Structural features of Austrian migration

---

- **Austria is among the EU-Member States with the highest inflow of migrants. In 2012, the 960,000 foreign citizens were 11.4% of residents, and the 1.4 million residents born outside Austria were 16% of residents.**
- **Most of the foreign-born (58 percent) were from outside the EU, followed by the 'old' EU member states EU15 (20.5%) and EU12 (20%).**
- **Most third country nationals in Austria enter on the basis of family reunion. Many are linked to guest workers who settled in Austria or to refugees and asylum seekers.**



## Foreign Citizens and foreign born in % of total population: 2012



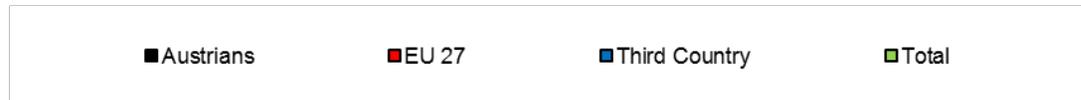
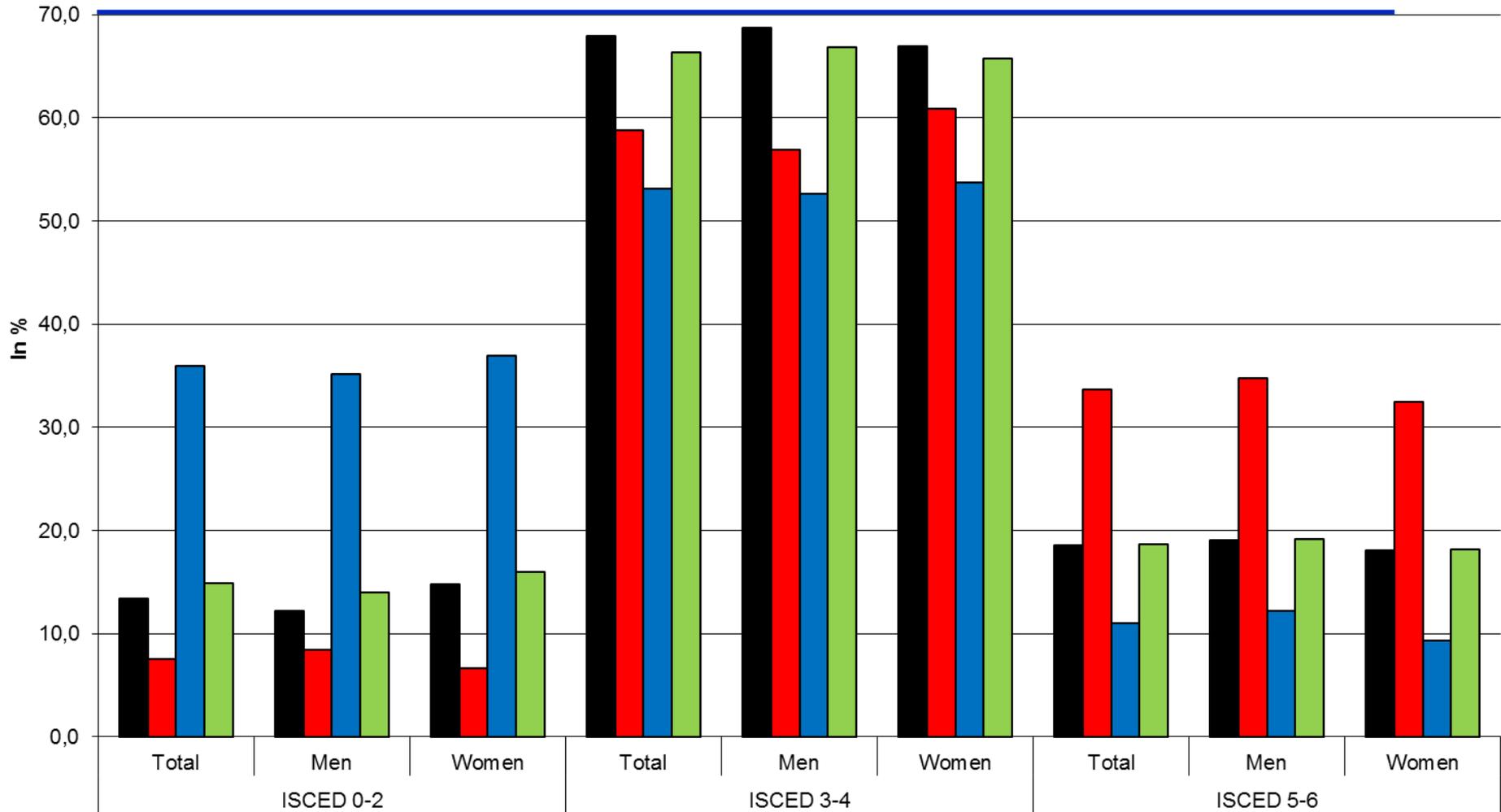
S. Eurostat.

■ foreign citizens

■ foreign born



## Educational attainment level of the population of working age by citizenship: 2011





## Annual inflow of migrants by category: Austria 2005-2011

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Annual inflow of settlers (permit data)</b>							
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Work	1.500	548	718	832	545	610	900
Family	29.400	15.628	11.750	14.384	13.569	15.322	19.259
Humanitarian	5.900	4.234	5.440	3.649	3.247	2.990	3.572
Free Movement	19.400	13.993	30.732	35.289	36.438	35.825	40.973
Others	700	6	3	8	233	218	307
<b>Total</b>	<b>56.900</b>	<b>34.409</b>	<b>48.643</b>	<b>54.162</b>	<b>54.032</b>	<b>54.965</b>	<b>65.011</b>
<b>Annual inflow of temporary migrants</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
international students	3.200	4.448	5.344	8.471	2.931	3.466	4.617
Seasonal workers	11.356	10.894	11.536	12.135	11.714	10.459	10.000
Intra-company transfers	200	186	147	150	191	261	278
Others	6.300	3831	3360	3409	2.410	2.511	2.622
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.056</b>	<b>19.359</b>	<b>20.387</b>	<b>24.165</b>	<b>17.246</b>	<b>16.697</b>	<b>17.517</b>
S. Ministry of the Interior. Free Movement data refer to E U/E E A citizens, all other data to third country citizens.							
Seasonal workers may also be from countries for which transition regulations apply.							



## Towards a coordinated migration policy

---

- **The end of the guestworker model meant the end of coordinated migrant labour policy. Instead, there is fragmentation.**
- **The Ministry of the Interior regulates residence rights while the Ministry of Labour grants work permits.**
- **As this practice is becoming increasingly complex and difficult to handle, a consensus seems to be developing on the establishment of a more coherent migration policy, possibly following the example of the integration policy.**



## The first steps

---

- The first steps toward coordination are the establishment of a government website (<http://www.migration.gv.at/en/>) for potential labour migrants.
- In 2011 a point system was introduced, referred to as “Rot-Weiss-Rot-Karte” (red-white-red or R-W-R card) and modelled after the Canadian model, after amendments to the Foreign Worker Law (AuslBG) and the Settlement and Residence Law (NAG2005).
- It replaced the key-skills quota system for third country migrants and made it easier for non-EU workers to be employed in Austria.
- The system differentiates between four types of skills, viz, highly skilled persons, persons with scarce occupational skills, persons with other (medium to higher) skills, and university graduates.



# 1st Pillar of the current migration planning model

---

- The major strength of the Austrian system of migration is the **labour market monitor**, which allows the identification of short-, medium- and long-term labour market needs.
  1. Industry-Occupation Matrices which are integrated into an Input-Output model reflect both industrial restructuring and labour demand by occupation – allow the identification of skill shortages (WIFO).
  2. The educational attainment level of the work force (by occupation and industry) is monitored, in particular the transition from school to work (Statistics Austria).
  3. Short-term labour scarcities are identified via the skills monitor of the Labour Market Service (AMS-Qualifikationsbarometer), an online service for enterprises as well as persons looking for jobs (planning instrument for education and training measures for unemployed workers, and for the recruitment of third country migrant workers).



## 2nd Pillar of the current migration planning model

- The second pillar of the migration system is the **migration monitor**, i.e. a barometer establishing the degree of satisfaction of migrants and natives with the integration of migrants in the various economic and social spheres (as part of coordinated integration policy) – to promote social cohesion. It has been established in various cities and regions with high proportions of migrants, e.g. Vienna (2010) and Vorarlberg (2001).
- The LMS has also implemented a migration monitor to assess the participation of migrants in active labour market policy measures (2012), checking whether the skills of migrants are adapted to changing labour market needs via further education and training.
- ‘Job-matching’ on an individualised basis, i.e. making sure that the migrants’ profile fits with the employment offered, remains a challenge. The LMS together with advisory councils undertakes the matching. Skills assessments are in the hands of the social partners, while the recognition of qualifications rests with the educational authorities



## 3rd and 4th Pillar of the current migration planning model

---

- The 3rd pillar of the Austrian migration system is the **asylum and migration advisory board** in the Ministry of the Interior. It is an advisory council to the Minister and the public on asylum and general migration matters, and includes representatives of the various Ministries, the social partners, the provinces, NGOs, cities and communities.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> pillar, the employer-driven search for skilled migrants and the ensuing matching system has just been established, and private recruitment agencies, which act as intermediaries between migrants and employers, play an important role in bringing migrants together with employers.
- The diplomatic services and the trade representatives are not part of a comprehensive third country migrant recruiting system, which may make migration to Austria an expensive endeavour for third country citizens, particularly if there are uncertainties about employment and career opportunities in Austria



## Need for comprehensive migration policy coordination

---

- **Migration policy aims to strike a balance between serving the needs of the labour market, thereby promoting economic growth, and promoting integration, thereby ensuring social cohesion. Both are important elements and pillars of economic growth and social wellbeing.**
- **To ensure the balance, there is a clear need for policy coordination, possibly along the lines of the recently established integration policy.**



# Thank you for your attention!

---



[gudrun.biffel@donau-uni.ac.at](mailto:gudrun.biffel@donau-uni.ac.at)

[www.donau-uni.ac.at](http://www.donau-uni.ac.at)