



# Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe

Austria

2009/10 Edition

European Commission





# STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

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## AUSTRIA

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If you wish to obtain more details on education systems in Europe, please consult the EURYBASE database ([http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php)), the Cedefop database ([http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information\\_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/)) and the website of the European Training Foundation (<http://www.etf.europa.eu/>)



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## INTRODUCTION: GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

Austria is a federal state with a total area of 83 872 square kilometres, consisting of nine provinces (*Länder*). In 2008 Austria's population was 8 336 549. In 2007, 1 664 146 people lived in Vienna, the federal capital.

A monarchy until 1918, Austria is now a parliamentary republic with a federal constitution established in the period between 1920 and 1929, based on democratic, federal and legal principles, as well as on the principle of the separation of powers.

The Federal President is the supreme representative of the state, elected directly by the people for a six-year term. The *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* (National and Federal Councils) are the legislative bodies of the republic, the latter being made up of representatives of the provinces, which guarantees their participation in federal legislation. The members of the Federal Council are appointed by the parliaments of the nine provinces.

The federal government consists of the Federal Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Ministers. The provincial parliaments are the legislative bodies of the provinces. The provincial administration is headed by the provincial government.

The municipalities enjoy a constitutionally guaranteed right to self-administration, being subject only to the legal supervision by the respective province. They have an elected municipal council headed by a mayor, who is elected either by the municipal council or, depending on the legislative provisions of the respective province, by popular vote.

The 24th general elections in Austria were held on 28 September 2008. Due to an amendment to the electoral law made during the preceding 23rd legislative term, the minimum voting age was 16 for the first time and the legislative term had been extended to five years. The largest share of votes was won by the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) coming second: SPÖ 29.3 %; ÖVP 26.0 %; FPÖ 17.5 %, BZÖ 10.7 %; Green Party 10.4 %. After coalition negotiations lasting some 56 days, the outcome led to a continuation of the grand coalition, headed by the new Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Vice-Chancellor Josef Pröll.

In Austria there is an organisational and institutional separation of church and state. Religion is taught at schools, a dispensation from instruction being possible. The numerically predominant religion is Roman Catholicism.

The official language in Austria is German. The legal system guarantees the rights of local ethnic groups (Slovenians, Croats, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Roma and Sinti). This guarantee also covers their education.

In the academic year 2007/08, approximately 80 % of all 15 to 19-year olds as well as 30 % of the 20 to 24-year olds were in education and training, and the number of children of compulsory schooling age was 810 840. About 91 % of pupils/students attended public education institutions. German is the teaching language. In the mixed-lingual regions of Carinthia and Burgenland, there are bilingual primary schools where pupils are taught both in German and in the language of the respective ethnic group, which is Slovenian for Carinthia, and for Burgenland Croatian, Hungarian or Romani.

In 2005, as part of an amendment to the *Bundesverfassungsgesetz* ('B-VG', Federal Constitutional Law), the task of the school, which had, up to that time, only been defined in the *Schulorganisationsgesetz* ('SchOG', School Organisation Act), was given constitutional status. According to this amendment, the fundamental values of the school are democracy, humaneness, solidarity, peace and justice, as well as open-mindedness and tolerance. Having due regard to these principles, the school has to provide the highest possible level of education for all. In doing so, it must

not prejudice anybody on the basis of origin, social status and parents' and pupils' financial background.

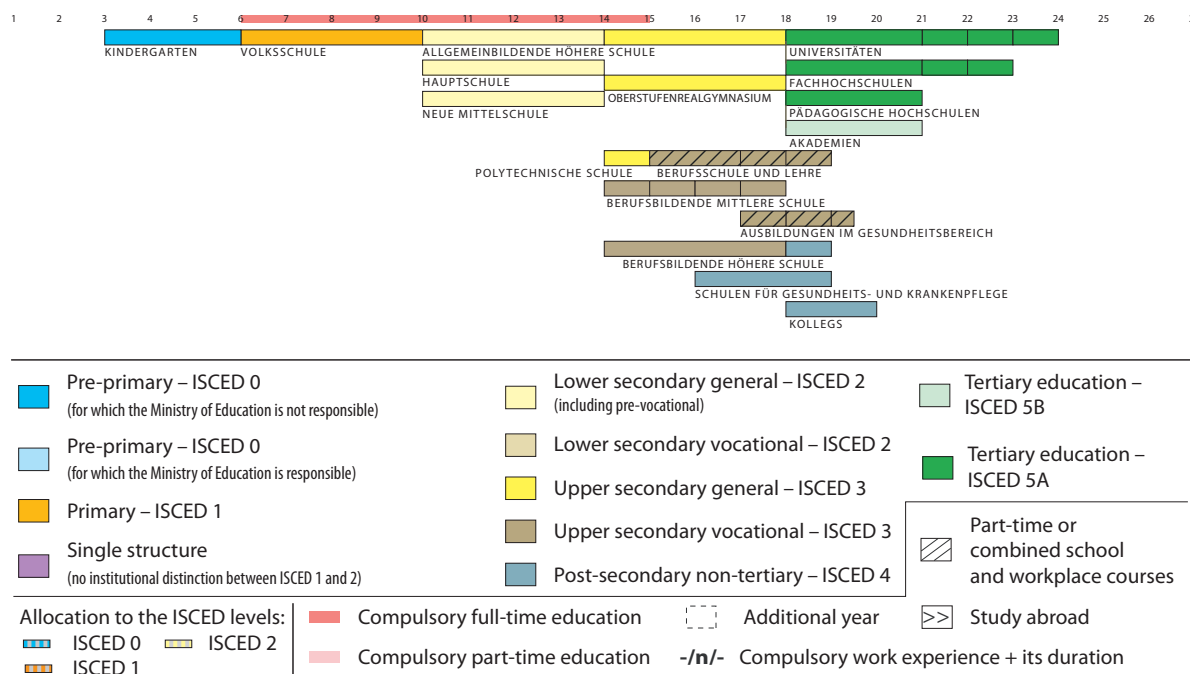
This means that the Constitution now explicitly guarantees general access to public schools without prejudice as to birth, gender, ethnic group, status, class, language or religion, a guarantee which, up to 2005, had only existed on the basis of a simple statute. Since, however, it only relates to public schools, private schools may continue to select pupils according to such criteria as religion, language or gender, although such selection is rarely applied in practice.

In Austria, education has always been a most sensitive area, heavily disputed among political decision-makers. This explains the extremely casuistic distribution of responsibilities among different bodies and entities in education. Until the passing of the above-mentioned amendment to the Federal Constitutional Law almost all education acts required a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in the National Council. Since 2005 such a majority has been required only for regulations concerning exemption from school fees, school/church relations, compulsory school attendance, as well as differentiation in the fundamental areas of the school system.

Pursuant to the Austrian Federal Constitution, legislation and execution concerning universities and higher education are a federal matter. Constitutional law guarantees the freedom of knowledge and its teaching as well as freedom of art.

# 1. INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ORGANISATION, FUNDING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

## 1.1 Organisation of the initial education and training system



**Kindergarten** (nursery school) is the traditional form of pre-primary education for children aged three to six in Austria. However, it does not form part of the school system. Kindergarten is optional and children attend at their parents' initiative.

**Compulsory schooling** in Austria lasts nine years. It extends to all children permanently residing in Austria regardless of their nationality. Compulsory schooling begins on 1 September following the child's sixth birthday.

The **Volksschule** (*Grundschule* or primary school) is charged with imparting basic education for all. The social integration of children with disabilities is to be taken into account.

The **Sonderschule** (special school) may be attended during the entire period of compulsory schooling (age 6 to 15) and consists of levels I and II, as well as an upper-cycle form. Pupils/students with special educational needs may be educated either in a special school geared to their disablement or in inclusive classes at primary schools, *Hauptschule* (general secondary school) or the lower cycle of *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (academic secondary school).

In **secondary stage I** (years 5 to 8) a first differentiation takes place at the organisational level comprising the following school types:

- *Hauptschule* (general secondary school);
- *Neue Mittelschule* (new secondary school, pilot schools);
- *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (academic secondary school, lower cycle).

In **secondary stage II** (years 9 to 13) a further differentiation takes place depending on students' talents and interests:

- *Polytechnische Schule* (pre-vocational school; is used as ninth school year by those students aged 14-15 who aim to enter working life as soon as they have completed compulsory schooling);
- *Berufsschule* (part-time compulsory vocational school, years 10 to 13 at maximum) – parallel to in-company vocational training ('dual system'). A requirement for starting apprenticeship training is completion of nine years of compulsory schooling; apprentices are at least 15 years old;
- *Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen* (medium level technical and vocational schools, years 9 to 12 at maximum);
- *Berufsbildende höhere Schulen* (higher level technical and vocational schools, years 9 to 13);
- *Oberstufe der Allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule* (academic secondary school, upper cycle, years 9 to 12).

In addition to the eight-year type of academic secondary school, there is the *Oberstufenrealgymnasium*, which is a separate type of upper level academic secondary school (years 9 to 12; entered on completion of eight years of general education).

- *Bildungsanstalten für Sozialpädagogik* and *Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik* (training schools for educators and for kindergarten teachers, years 9 to 13);
- Schools and other training programmes for health professions.

In the **tertiary sector** there are the following training institutions:

- *Medizinisch-technische Akademien* (paramedical college) and *Hebammenakademien* (midwifery college) (Full-time training at one of these colleges lasts three years). Since 2006, some *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) have provided bachelor's degree programmes for paramedic practice and midwifery;
- Universities and accredited private universities;
- *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences);
- *Pädagogische Hochschulen* (university colleges of teacher education).

## 1.2 Distribution of responsibilities

### 1. Primary and secondary education

The Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (<http://www.bmukk.gv.at/>) is the supreme supervisory body for the whole of primary and secondary education, which includes academic secondary schools and technical and vocational schools, as well as colleges of teacher education. The work experience part of initial vocational education is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth (<http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/>).

As is the case with government administration in general, responsibilities for legislation and implementation in school education are split between federal and provincial governments. This split is based on the principles outlined below:

- The federal government has exclusive responsibility for legislation and implementation: this applies particularly to the entire field of academic secondary education (secondary levels I and II), but also to medium level and higher level technical and vocational schools (secondary level II), training schools for educators and training schools for kindergarten teachers, and to the conditions of service and staff representation of teachers at these schools.

- The federal government is responsible for legislation, whereas the provinces are responsible for implementation: this applies, among others, to the conditions of service and staff representation of teachers at public compulsory schools.
- The federal government is responsible for fundamental legislation, while the provinces are responsible for issuing and implementing by-laws: this particularly applies to the organisational structure of federal education authorities or the external organisation of public compulsory schools. The term 'external organisation' refers to the development, construction, maintenance and closing of schools, but also to the fixing of pupil numbers per class and teaching periods. All fundamental legislation is in the nature of a framework which has to be filled in by implementing by-laws promulgated by the respective provincial parliaments, the legislative bodies at provincial level.
- The provinces are responsible for legislation and implementation as, for example, with regard to kindergartens.

Separate federal bodies have been established wherever the federal government is responsible for implementation. These are:

- *Bezirksschulräte* (district school boards) at the level of political districts;
- *Landesschulräte* (provincial school boards) at the level of the provinces; and
- the Federal Minister for all of Austria.

Customarily the federal government introduces draft laws as government bills in the *Nationalrat* (National Council). Such a draft produced by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture will first have been submitted to a number of relevant authorities (collegiate councils in the district and provincial school boards, provincial governments, various interest groups, churches, etc.) for an expert opinion.

Fundamental laws enacted by the federal government will normally prescribe a deadline by which the provinces must issue the necessary implementing laws (six months to one year). These implementing laws are passed by the provincial governments. More detailed provisions are contained in the individual provincial constitutions.

Austria's education system is characterised by a well developed system of school inspection. Federal school authorities in the provinces are responsible for primary and secondary education (district school boards, provincial school boards). At the level of the provinces, school inspection is carried out by provincial school inspectors who are responsible for specific school types. At compulsory school level, provincial school inspectors are assisted by district school inspectors, and in medium and higher-level secondary education by subject inspectors. In addition to the inspection of individual schools, the school inspectorate also performs comprehensive functions across schools. At district level, this especially refers to regional educational planning. Regional educational planning aims to ensure

- a diversity and balance of educational options,
- comparability of educational options,
- school and instruction planning oriented towards quality,
- personnel and organisational development,
- providing the schools with personnel and material resources,
- infrastructure for school development counselling and in-service training for teachers.

In the academic year 1993/94 *Schulautonomie* (school autonomy) entered the mainstream education system. Flexibility of Austrian schools has gradually increased since and was put on a new legal basis. (The following applies only to a limited extent to years 1 to 4 of primary schools, with only two weekly lessons and optional exercises under school autonomy.)

Individual schools are now allowed to decide certain school matters independently. A school may develop a certain profile, e.g. by specialising in foreign languages, ecology, intercultural focal points, information technology or generally by extending or supplementing curricular content.

## 2. Tertiary education

The Federal Ministry of Science and Research (<http://www.bmwf.gv.at/>) is the state authority responsible for the whole higher education sector (except the Colleges of Teacher Education). The provinces have no statutory competence in university matters. Tertiary education at universities, *Fachhochschule* (university of applied sciences) and private universities is governed by federal law, all institutions being organised largely by self-administration. The universities come under the supervisory control of the Federal Minister of Science and Research. The individual universities are furthermore subject to legal and economic supervision by their university councils.

Matters pertaining to universities, *Fachhochschule*, students' interest representation, study grants and assistance, funding for the construction of student residences, as well as university-relevant research funding, lie within the competence of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research pursuant to the 2007 Act on Federal Ministries.

The Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture is the competent authority responsible for the university colleges of teacher education.

Starting with the *Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz* (Universities of Applied Sciences Studies Act; *Fachhochschulrat*, Universities of Applied Sciences Council), the *Universitäts-Akkreditierungsgesetz* (University Accreditation Act; *Akkreditierungsrat*, Accreditation Council) and more recently the *Universitätsgesetz 2002* (Universities Act 2002; *Universitätsräte*, University Councils), the system of councils was introduced to complement implementation and administration by the Federal Ministry.

The Universities Act 2002 provides for internal decision-making concentrated at the university's governance level. The senior governing bodies of the university are the *Rektorat* (rectorate), the *Senat* (senate) and the University Council. The university councils were established as bodies of the university not bound by ministerial directions. Decentralised collegial bodies, with or without decision-making powers, may be established by the senate. The decisions are subject to approval at any rate. Obligatory curricular and appointment committees have to be established.

The university council is charged with strategic and supervisory functions and the task of selecting and dismissing the rector and the vice-rector. Its strategic duties include: development planning, the internal university organisation structure (organisation plan), performance agreements with the federal government (approval), external evaluations (commissioning), and involvement in preparing curricula and course offerings (opinion). Its supervisory functions including legal and economic supervision cover the universities' performance reports, intellectual capital reports and financial statements.

By an Amendment to the Universities Act in 2009 the distribution of responsibilities among the rectorate, the senate and the university council were more clearly defined, the works council was granted rights to participate in university council decision-making and the role of research, art and teaching staff was strengthened.

For consulting on university programmes, the Universities Act 2002 created the Science Council which advises the Minister, the legislature and the universities on the higher education and research system and its further development.



The *Fachhochschule*, like the entire higher education sector, is governed by federal law (*Bundesgesetz über Fachhochschul-Studiengänge* of 1993, Federal Act on University of Applied Sciences Degree Programmes). *Fachhochschulen* may be maintained by the federal government, other public law corporations or legal entities governed by private law. The universities of applied sciences council, as the accreditation authority not bound by ministerial directions, is the central body in this sector. It is responsible for the accreditation of university of applied sciences degree programmes and the entire quality assurance within the sector, for which the university of applied sciences council issues guidelines. The universities of applied sciences are run by the providers of university of applied sciences degree programmes according to the applicable legal provisions and the guidelines of the university of applied sciences council.

The *Bundesgesetz über die Akkreditierung von Bildungseinrichtungen als Privatuniversitäten* (Federal Act on the Accreditation of Educational Institutions as Private Universities, University Accreditation Act) regulates state accreditation as private universities of educational institutions. It defines the principles of the accreditation procedure and the composition of the accreditation council in charge of the procedure. Furthermore, the requirements for and effects of the accreditation as private university are laid down.

### 1.3 Financing

Schools of compulsory education (primary schools, general secondary schools, special schools, pre-vocational schools and vocational schools) are maintained by the provinces, municipalities or municipal associations. While most of the schools in general compulsory education are maintained by municipalities or municipal associations, part-time compulsory vocational schools are maintained by the provinces.

Maintaining and operating a school includes the establishment, maintenance and repair of the school buildings, payment of overheads, purchase of equipment and teaching aids, provisions for the school doctor, and the employment of the necessary auxiliary staff (caretakers, maintenance staff, etc.). The employment of teachers at compulsory schools is exclusively the responsibility of the provinces. Teachers in public sector schools of compulsory education are employed by the provinces, which pay the cost of their salaries. However, the provinces are fully compensated for this cost by the Federation in the process of fiscal adjustment. (The sole exception being teachers at compulsory vocational schools, where this refund is granted only up to 50 %.)

Public sector schools of compulsory education are not allowed to charge tuition fees. Transport to and from school using public transport facilities is free. Textbooks are provided to pupils free of charge, and they are entitled to keep them. In recent years, a contribution of 10 % from the pupils has been introduced both for transport to and from school and for textbooks.

Medium level and higher secondary schools are established and maintained by the Federation, which bears the full cost, including teachers' salaries. Teachers do not enter into an employment contract with the school in this case either, but with the Federation. The same is true for medium level and higher secondary schools with respect to the absence of tuition fees, free transport and textbooks as for compulsory education.

In 1996 the legal basis for extending the financial autonomy of schools was established. On certain conditions laid down by law, schools can rent out school rooms or parts of school property (e.g. gymnasium or sports grounds) to third parties and allocate the respective income at their own discretion as long as it is used for school purposes. The same applies to external funding received from sponsoring or commercial activities at school. Since 1998 federal schools have been entitled to establish quasi legal bodies which are authorised to perform certain activities in their own name (e.g. organisation and staging of certain events for third parties).

Austrian schools may, in a limited way, also choose how to use the funds allocated to them by the school authorities. For medium and higher level technical and vocational schools this can facilitate the procurement of computers and technical equipment (financial autonomy). This makes it easier to implement occupation-oriented forms of education centred on students (e.g. training firms).

The 22 public universities have been established by operation of law. They are funded primarily through the federal budget (85 to 90 % of their funds). The university budget is defined for a three-year period in advance, 80 % of which are negotiated under the performance agreements (current period 2007-2009) between the respective university and the Federal Minister of Science and Research and 20 % are distributed among universities based on a fixed formula. In addition to these federal funds, the universities can avail themselves monies provided by third parties (for instance for research projects) as well as income from tuition fees.

Universities of applied sciences are maintained by private bodies organised under private law and subsidised by the federal government according to a standard cost model. Depending on the respective study course, this subsidy varies between 5 810 euro and 6 900 euro per study place.

The private universities are not funded with federal funds, but by tuition fees and other financial means.

## 1.4 Quality assurance

The **Federal Institute for Research on Education, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School System** (*Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens*, BIFIE) is responsible for the following areas:

- Applied research on education,
- Education monitoring,
- Quality development,
- Regular reports on Austrian education.

In addition, the BIFIE is responsible for advising, on the basis of evidence collected, the decision-makers of Austrian education policy (<http://www.bifie.at>).

The BIFIE is headquartered in Salzburg where it focuses on education monitoring and education standards. The Salzburg centre mainly conducts international assessments such as PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS, etc. and reviews education standards. Furthermore the BIFIE's central service areas, i.e. the central management and the centre for data management and statistics, are located in Salzburg.

The Graz location mainly deals with educational research and evaluation, carrying out specific projects such as the evaluation of the 'new secondary school' and research-based projects on topics such as 'early language support'.

The BIFIE Vienna location ('innovation & quality development') concentrates particularly on the development and implementation of innovations in the school area. Model projects are the development and implementation of a standardised *Reifeprüfung* (matriculation examination) and further development and implementation of education standards.

Tasks are coordinated between the Ministry for Education and BIFIE based on a revolving three-year plan. A two-member board of management, a nine-member supervisory board and the scientific board consisting of renowned Austrian and international scientists and scholars are the bodies of the BIFIE, which is a legal entity under public law.



### Introducing national education standards into the general education system

Introducing national education standards into the general education system ultimately aims to improve the pupils'/students' core competences in selected subjects and to secure returns to education in the long run. This is to be achieved especially through: changing didactics and focussing on results in the planning and performance of school instruction (standards serve as orientation); improving teachers' capabilities in diagnostics and remedial instruction (remedial function), as well as feedback concerning the proficiency level and targeted site-related quality development (evaluation function).

An amendment of the School Instruction Act of August 2008 provided the legal basis for the introduction of education standards: [http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/recht/erk/novelle\\_schug.xml](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/recht/erk/novelle_schug.xml).

The pertinent statutory regulation sets out the subject-specific proficiency pupils/students are expected to acquire upon completion of the 4th and the 8th grades. The standards were introduced in primary and general secondary (level I) schools on 1/1/2009: [http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/recht/erk/vo\\_bildungsstandards.xml](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/recht/erk/vo_bildungsstandards.xml).

Baseline surveys were conducted in spring 2009 (8th grade) and/or 2010 (4th grade).

The first reassessments at grade 8 are scheduled to start as of 2012, at grade 4 as of 2013. The periodic reappraisal of the standards both guarantees and optimises the quality of classroom work, and provides feedback for teachers on the learning outcomes of pupils/students.

### Introduction of a standardised, competence-oriented *Reifeprüfung* (matriculation examination)

The new matriculation examination, which will be launched for academic secondary schools in the academic year 2013/14 and for the vocational and technical schools in the following year, consists of three pillars: standardised written examinations, compulsory pre-scientific paper and oral examinations.

Standardised written examinations: all students in Austria take these standardised competence-oriented written examinations at the same time. Examinations in German, mathematics (taking account of curricular differences), English and foreign languages (Italian, French, Spanish, Latin and Greek) are centrally defined. Teachers' corrections and assessments are carried out locally at the school location in compliance with a set formula. The results are therefore comparable throughout Austria.

Pre-scientific Paper: in the second half of year seven, students, in agreement with their teachers, will select a topic for a paper they will prepare as part of the matriculation examination. Students then prepare this paper in a subject of their choice during year eight to demonstrate their capability to carry out independent academic work and to go on to university. The paper is presented by the student during the matriculation examination, similar to examinations at university.

Oral examinations: in addition to the written examinations, a student will have to take oral examinations in 2 or 3 subjects. Tasks and assessments of the oral examinations are not centrally defined, but lay within the scope of responsibility of the teacher in charge of the examination. Teachers at the location are required to identify up to a maximum of 24 subject areas per subject, which are presented to the students. Students are assigned one subject area, for which questions are formulated by the examiner.

To evaluate the new matriculation examination, a federal matriculation commission with advisory functions will be established. It is composed of school partners, representatives of the provincial school boards, 'Universities Austria', the Ministry of Science and experts. It is chaired by the Federal Minister for Education.

### Quality assurance at schools

The Quality in Schools (Q.I.S.) initiative was launched by the Federal Ministry for Education to promote school development and quality assurance within the respective schools. Individual schools are stimulated and encouraged to monitor, check and further develop their quality standards themselves. The concept centres around preparing and implementing a school programme, which contains a model policy and development plans (actual situation, targets, actions, evaluation) for the school's specific projects. The background consists of four quality areas:

- teaching and learning,
- classroom and school as living environment,
- school management,
- school partnership and external relations,
- professionalism and human resources development.

The initiative addresses all school types and highlights the importance of cooperation between teachers, pupils/students and parents. Internet: <http://www.qis.at>

The Quality Initiative for Vocational Education and Training (*Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung*, QIBB) is a further development, extending the concept to cover all levels of the education system ([www.qibb.at](http://www.qibb.at)).

In 2009 the first National Education report prepared by the Austrian Federal Institute for Education Research, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School System was published (<http://www.bifie.at/nationaler-bildungsbericht>).

### Quality assurance in the tertiary sector

Developing quality management systems at universities and *Fachhochschule* (universities of applied sciences), as well as implementing 'European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area' (ESG) in the entire university sector, are the priorities of evaluation and quality assurance.

The Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences, private universities and university colleges of teacher education have prime responsibility for assuring quality in teaching, research and organisation. Austrian higher education legislation requires universities to develop internal quality assurance processes and systems. This is in line with the international trend towards a large degree of autonomy of higher education institutions in questions of quality assurance. External quality assurance for the individual types of higher education institutions is organised according to the respective sector.

Pursuant to section 14 of the Universities Act 2002, the universities shall develop their own quality management systems in order to assure quality and the attainment of their performance objectives. The subject of an evaluation is the university's entire spectrum of services. The areas to be evaluated are laid down in the performance agreements, which are three-year agreements in public law between the university and the Ministry of Science establishing the objectives and duties of each university for various performance areas.

The performance of university professors, lecturers, and other research, art and teaching staff shall be regularly evaluated, at least once every five years. Evaluations shall be conducted in accordance with subject based international evaluation standards. The results of all evaluations shall be the basis for decisions of the governing bodies of the universities. External evaluations shall take place at the instigation of the university council or rectorate of the university in question.

All universities have concluded performance agreements with the federal government concerning

projects and objectives of quality assurance and evaluation. The universities report on their quality assurance measures within their annual reporting duty. In addition, the first report of a performance agreement period includes a report on the structure of the quality management system. The first report was published in 2008.

([http://www.bmwf.gv.at/uploads/tx\\_bmwfcontent/Universitaetsbericht\\_2008.pdf](http://www.bmwf.gv.at/uploads/tx_bmwfcontent/Universitaetsbericht_2008.pdf)).

In 2009, the Federal Ministry of Science and Research and the public universities conducted negotiations concerning the second performance agreement period, 2010 to 2012.

*Fachhochschule* (universities of applied sciences) study programmes require accreditation by a national authority, the *Fachhochschulrat* (FHR, universities of applied sciences council) (<http://www.fhr.ac.at>). To safeguard an Austrian standard for evaluation procedures to be used at all universities of applied sciences as well as comparability of the required evaluation reports, rules were established which were last changed by the universities of applied sciences council in 2006. Pursuant to the University of Applied Sciences Studies Act, the providers have to establish a quality management system for the purposes of service and quality assurance. The courses shall be subjected to an evaluation by the students; the results of the evaluation shall serve for quality assurance.

All private universities and the study courses offered by them are subject to an accreditation procedure by the Austrian Accreditation Council in compliance with international standards ([www.akkreditierungsrat.at](http://www.akkreditierungsrat.at)). The accreditation decision of the Accreditation Council is based on an external expert opinion by a group of experts. The decision of the Accreditation Council requires the approval of the Federal Minister of Science and Research in order to be effective. Accreditation is granted for a limited period of 5 to 10 years in each case. The Accreditation Council is charged with conducting and monitoring ongoing quality control of the accredited private university. In line with legal requirements, the institutions need to present an annual work report, containing development data in addition to the results of evaluation procedures.

University Colleges of Teacher Education will be subject to an approval procedure by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture.

In 2004 the *Österreichische Qualitätssicherungsagentur* – AQA (Austrian Quality Assurance Agency) (<http://www.aqa.ac.at/>) was established for the entire field of tertiary education as a result of a joint initiative of the University Rectors' Conference, the Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences, the Association of Private Universities and the Education Ministry. This independent agency develops and carries out quality assurance procedures based on national and European standards. In doing so it provides international know-how, supporting universities and universities of applied sciences in the development of quality assurance processes and quality management systems. An internationally staffed control group ensures the scientific character and independence of quality assurance processes.

The Agency developed and conducted several procedures for quality assurance which can be put to use in all higher education sectors. For public universities, it developed an audit procedure for monitoring and auditing quality management.

Based on the universities' prior developments in establishing their quality management systems, the Agency elaborated two types of procedure: the focus audit, which looks at a selected performance area of the university, and the advanced audit, which considers the university's quality management system across all performance areas. 12 universities participated with various performance areas in the pilot project funded by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research. The AQA audit is a peer-review procedure encompassing a structured self-documentation, an external evaluation with an on-site visit by the peer team and a follow-up process. If the AQA audit is successful, the higher education institution will be certified for a period of 6 years receiving the AQA label. The certification

by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research is recognised as proof that the respective university has complied with the required statutory mandate of establishing a working quality management system.

The Agency carries out thematic evaluations, higher education institution comparisons and benchmarking procedures as well as information measures and events.

In 2007 the AQA, the universities of applied sciences council and the accreditation council were evaluated by three international expert panels. The panel investigated how and to what extent the European Standards and Guidelines for External Quality Assurance Agencies (ESG) and the Membership Criteria of the ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) have been met. The evaluations found that the agencies met the international review standards in an adequate manner.

## 2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Pre-primary education in Austria is a responsibility of the provinces and not governed by nationwide regulations. All provinces have their own kindergarten education law providing for e.g. different types of institutions and their tasks, external and internal organisation, supervision and staffing matters. All matters pertaining to the training of kindergarten teachers and the professional qualifications they have to meet for service fall within the competence of the federal government.

Generally children start kindergarten at the age of three (however, the number of under-three-year old children in kindergarten is increasing). Kindergarten is optional and children attend at their parents' initiative.

The general objectives in the provinces' kindergarten education laws are more or less identical:

Crèches are to complement and support education afforded within the family and give supervision, care, social rooting and educational furtherance to children aged one to three.

Kindergarten is to:

- support and complement education within the family (special emphasis is placed on co-operation with parents and guardians),
- promote individual development through appropriate measures as well as social interaction of peers,
- prepare children for school life (by involving parents and school).

In some provinces, the law explicitly states that these aims are to be reached 'by using valid methods of early childhood education' and 'by excluding any form of school-like instruction'.

In addition to the general aims, ortho-therapeutic kindergartens aim particularly at fostering and giving care to 'children with special needs' (suffering from developmental impairments, disabilities, partial underachievement) according to tested scientific and therapeutic educational methods.

In addition to public kindergartens, a large number of private kindergarten establishments exist. The conditions for setting up kindergartens are laid down in provincial legislation. Generally, public providers (the federal government, the provinces, a local authority, an association of local authorities), or private providers, e.g. churches, religious groups, health care providers, business enterprises or private persons meeting certain requirements, may maintain a kindergarten.

Staff and operational costs are generally borne by the maintaining body. The contributions made by the provinces to the cost of the establishment and operation of a kindergarten can vary considerably; this applies to private kindergartens in particular.

Private kindergartens run by private associations, churches or religious orders receive, on certain conditions, subsidies to help them cover the cost of staff and overheads, either on a discretionary basis or according to a fixed percentage in accordance with the applicable Kindergarten Act. Private kindergartens run by bodies other than the above-mentioned generally do not receive any financial support.

*Tagesmütter/-väter* (family day care providers or child minders) mainly look after small children, usually along with their own children, in a private household. This type of childcare has increased in the past few years because on the one hand the number of day care children has grown, and on the other hand the level of qualification of child minders has improved. In some provinces formal training for child minders has become compulsory.

Other organisational models and alternative structures:

Integrative/inclusive groups: children with special needs who generally would not be admitted to a mainstream kindergarten because of physical, mental or psychological inaptitude may be integrated in a general kindergarten.

Peripatetic, ortho-therapeutic kindergartens: admit children with special needs.

About 30 % of all childcare facilities are maintained by parishes, family organisations, non-profit associations, business enterprises and private persons. About 70 % are maintained by public corporations (in particular local authorities).

Parents receive a family allowance for all children. In addition, they receive childcare benefits for all children up to the age of three years.

The amount to be paid, or whether parents need to pay fees at all, primarily depends on the subsidy provided by the respective province. Individual provinces currently plan to abolish, or have already abolished, fees to a varying extent (full day, half day or only last year in kindergarten).

More than 90 percent of all children under the age of five currently attend kindergarten in Austria. As a comparison, the share in the beginning of the 1960s was only 24 percent. Introducing 'a compulsory kindergarten year' in all provinces is planned.

## **2.1 Admission**

Kindergarten attendance is optional; however, nobody is entitled to a place in kindergarten. Children are admitted, subject to capacity, at the request of their parents.

The requirements for admission are laid down in the province kindergarten education acts. Kindergarten is, as a rule, open to children from the age of three until they have reached compulsory schooling age (no longer than until the beginning of the school year following the child's seventh birthday). Kindergarten legislation spells out physical, mental and psychological fitness as admission requirements; special (province) regulations apply to the admission to an ortho-therapeutic kindergarten.

In response to general social trends, kindergartens increasingly admit children who have not yet reached three years of age. Therefore appropriate educational and organisational measures need to be adopted in kindergarten groups.

## **2.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue**

### **Groups**

There are infant crèches, baby crèches and nurseries for children under the age of 3.

Austrian kindergartens generally cater to children aged three to six and are organised in small groups, either as 'age groups' (e.g. all those aged four) and 'mixed-age groups' (children of different ages in one group).

### **Organisation of time**

Kindergartens are either full day or half day.

## **2.3 Curriculum**

Kindergarten education focuses on developing the child's personality as a whole, but it is also concerned with preparing children for school.

Although kindergarten teachers act situationally (i.e. by responding in their educational work to given situations), they base their activities on medium and long-term plans.

Since autumn 2009 the 'Educational Framework Curriculum' prepared by all provinces, together with the federal government, has provided an orientation framework for Austria, which is implemented by the individual provinces according to their specific needs. The framework curriculum is applied at training kindergarten run by the *Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik* (training schools for kindergarten teachers) (Compare Section 4.7.3).

## 2.4 Assessment

There is no school-like assessment. In order to be able to take appropriate educational measures, kindergarten teachers monitor, analyse and optimise progress

- by consciously observing their own work or by making use of the support and guidance offered by the kindergarten inspectorate;
- by jointly evaluating kindergarten teachers in staff meetings or supervision meetings and by exchanging ideas during further-education events;
- by co-operating with parents/guardians ('parents' night', joint festivities) and with schools (school maturity test to identify the presence or absence of skills and aptitudes appropriate to the respective age);
- by conducting health check-ups (e.g. dental check-ups, postural anomalies, malnutrition, logopaedic tests);
- by adopting new scientific findings and discussing findings with scientists/researchers.

There is close co-operating with medical and therapeutic professionals in special and inclusive kindergartens.

## 2.5 Teachers

### Initial training

The *Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik* (training schools for kindergarten teachers) (ISCED 4A) train prospective kindergarten teachers. (For details, see Section 4.7)

### In-service training

In-service training for kindergarten teachers is mandatory in almost all of the provinces. The amount of time which has to be devoted to further training varies, however, and ranges from three to five days per year.

In-service training activities are offered by:

- those units within the province governments' further-education departments responsible for kindergarten teachers;
- kindergarten providers (e.g. charitable organisation like 'Caritas', municipalities, dioceses); or
- Colleges of Teacher Education.

As a rule, further-training activities are financed by the institutions offering them. Contributory fees may, however, be charged.



### 3. PRIMARY EDUCATION

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#### **Primary school / special education**

*Volksschule* (primary school) comprises

- Grundschule consisting of  
primary level I (pre-school class; years 1 and 2) and  
primary level II (years 3 and 4), and if required
- *Oberstufe* (upper bracket of primary school) (years 5 to 8)

Compulsory schooling begins on 1 September following the child's sixth birthday. The primary levels I and II include children aged 6 to 10 years.

The pre-school stage may be organised as part of the school system. It is designed to foster children who have attained compulsory schooling age, but are not yet mature for schooling. The pre-school stage can be organised together with years 1 and 2, or separately.

The upper bracket of primary school is run at very few locations today.

Parallel to primary school, there are *Sonderschulen* (special schools) which educate pupils with special educational needs geared to their respective disabilities. The special school is split into primary levels I and II – except the special school for severely disabled children.

Pupils may attend special school during the entire period of compulsory schooling (age 6 to 15) and under certain circumstances even beyond.

The integration of children with special educational needs in mainstream education was laid down by law in 1993/94. 100 % of all pupils fit for schooling attend these school types.

#### **Legal framework**

The main legal bases of primary education are found in the *Schulorganisationsgesetz* (School Organisation Act) and in the *Schulunterrichtsgesetz* (School Education Act).

Education of minorities is subject to specific provisions. Schools for minorities or ethnic groups are operated in Burgenland (Croatian and Hungarian) and Carinthia (Slovenian). In these schools, primary instruction is usually bilingual.

#### **General objectives**

The objective of *Volksschule* (primary school) at the pre-school stage is to foster the development of children so that they can reach the level of maturity required for year 1. In this context, the social integration of children with disabilities is to be taken into account.

In the following four years of *Grundschule* (levels I and II of primary school or special school), all children, taking the social integration of children with disabilities into account, should be provided with a common basic and balanced education for their social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

The comprehensive educational mandate of *Volksschule* (primary school) aims at individually fostering each and every child. It is to take account of pupils' individual needs and educability, and to initiate a process of continuous learning. In doing so, primary school is to lay the basis for a successful learning experience in secondary education.

*Sonderschule* (special school) in its different specialisations is to assist physically and/or mentally disabled children with special educational needs in a way that is geared to their handicap, to convey



educational contents corresponding to the curricula of primary school, *Hauptschule* (general secondary school) or *Polytechnische Schule* (pre-vocational school). (Compare **Chapter 4**)

### Private schools

Around 90 % of all pupils in Austria go to state schools, while 10 % attend private educational institutions.

Compared to other European countries, Austria's network of private schools is loosely meshed. Schools may be maintained by legal entities or natural persons. The most significant providers of private schools are the churches, notably the Catholic church.

If a private school is granted *Öffentlichkeitsrecht* (public-law status), the exams taken at the school will have the same validity as those taken at its public-sector counterpart. If children accomplish their compulsory education at a private primary school with public-law status, they do not have to take separate examinations at the end of the school year before a board of examiners (examination for external pupils), which they would have to if the school had not been granted public-law status.

## 3.1 Admission

All children of compulsory school age who are mature enough to attend school are admitted to the first year. Compulsory schooling begins on 1 September following the child's sixth birthday.

Children should be present 'as far as possible' when registering for the first grade. It is up to the head teacher to decide whether the child will be able to follow instruction in the first year without being subject to excessive physical or mental exertion, or whether it would be better for the child to receive support in a pre-school class.

Children who are not yet compelled to attend primary school can, upon an application by their parents, be admitted to the first form at the beginning of the school year, if they complete their sixth year of life by 1 March of the following calendar year, are mature for school and show the degree of social competence necessary for school attendance. The premature attendance of the first grade of primary school is taken into account when determining the length of compulsory school attendance if the child attends the first grade throughout the entire school year. If, after such premature admission to the first school year, a child is found unable to cope, the permission for early attendance is to be revoked. In this case, the child's parents or guardian may register the child for attending a pre-school class.

A pupil's special educational needs may be determined if a child is unable to follow instruction in primary school, because of physical and/or psychological disabilities, without special educational assistance. The decision is taken by the district school board based on the expert opinion of the responsible *Sonderpädagogisches Zentrum* (expert advisory panel on special education). Additional expert opinions may be obtained whenever this is deemed necessary or desired by the pupil's parents.

There are two forms of instruction for pupils with special educational needs:

- integrative/inclusive instruction in a primary school,
- attendance of a special school.

Parents have the right to choose between these two forms of organisation.

## 3.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

### Organisation of time

Instruction at compulsory schools is mainly restricted to the morning hours. Classes of primary school usually start at 8 A.M. With some exceptions, there are no classes on Saturday. A lesson generally

lasts 50 minutes. Between the lessons there are breaks of 5 to 15 minutes. If possible, the total number of weekly lessons should be evenly spread on all days of the week.

At schools with all-day instruction in compulsory education, out-of-hours provision must be offered until at least 4 P.M., Mondays to Fridays. All-day school types are divided into an instruction part and an attendant part. The attendant part consists of subject matter oriented and individual learning periods, recreation and mealtimes. Instruction and attendant parts may be consecutive or interlinked.

### Organisation of classes / grouping of pupils

Classes are coeducational. The approximate number of pupils per class should be 25 and not less than 10. Deviating is possible only for important reasons. In general special school, the maximum number of pupils is 13. Each primary school year corresponds to one class in so far as this is possible on the basis of pupils' numbers. If pupils' numbers are too small several years may be combined in one class. The pre-school stage can be organised as a separate class or integrated into level I of primary school. The number of pupils in a pre-school class must not be less than 10 and not exceed 20.

## 3.3 Curriculum

The curriculum is decreed by the Federal Minister for Education, the Arts and Culture on the basis of the *Schulorganisationsgesetz* (School Organisation Act) and to be implemented by the schools. Experts make significant material contributions to the drafting of the curricula.

### Educational contents / timetable

#### Pre-school year:

The timetable for the pre-school year comprises compulsory exercises in the following subjects (totalling 20 weekly hours): religious instruction, language and speech, reading and writing preparatory, early mathematics, first science, road safety, art, singing and music, rhythmic/musical education, playing, handicraft, physical activity and sport.

Primary school years 1 to 4: since the 2003/04 school year, a timetable for primary schools (years 1 to 4) has given schools the option of partly deciding autonomously the number of hours taught per week. The total number of hours for years 1 to 4 is 90.

Compulsory subjects	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Total
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2	
Local history, geography and biology	3	3	3	3	
German, reading, writing	7	7	7	7	
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	
Music	1	1	1	1	
Arts	1	1	1	1	
Technical/textile work	1	1	2	2	
Physical activity, sport	3	3	2	2	
<b>Compulsory exercises</b>					
Modern foreign language	X 2)	X 2)	1	1	
Road safety	X 3)	X 3)	X 3)	X 3)	

Total number of weekly hours 1)	20-23	20-23	22-25	22-25	90
Remedial instruction	1	1	1	1	

1) By allowing schools to make their own decisions on curricula within the given framework, the number of hours allotted to compulsory subjects (with the exception of compulsory 'religious instruction') and to the compulsory exercise 'modern foreign language' may be increased or decreased by a maximum of one hour per week each, resulting in a maximum total of two hours per week for each year group. A subject that has to be taught in a year may not be dropped entirely.

2) 32 hours per year which have to be considered in connection with the total number of weekly hours available for all subjects. The total number of hours per week will remain unchanged.

3) 10 hours per year which have to be considered in connection with the total number of weekly hours available for all subjects. The total number of hours per week will remain unchanged.

Foreign language instruction in years 1 and 2 is integrative, i.e. taught across the board. Daily foreign language sequences are provided for the individual subjects. The focus is on listening comprehension skills and speaking. In years 3 and 4 of primary school, a one-weekly-hour foreign language class is taught as a compulsory exercise.

If necessary, one hour a week of remedial classes in languages and mathematics will be offered.

Children whose mother tongue is not German are integrated in the class unit and may receive remedial help in German, the language used in the classroom, and attend classes in their mother tongue.

#### Special school / integrative class

Pupils with special educational needs are taught according to the curricula of primary school as far as they are generally able to attain the objectives of instruction without undue exertion. In other respects, the curriculum of a special school geared to the pupils' special disabilities is to be applied.

Special curricula apply to the *Allgemeine Sonderschule* (general special school) (for children with learning difficulties and impaired performance), the special school for blind children, special school for deaf children and the special school for severely disabled children.

#### **Teachings methods and materials**

Teachers are basically free to decide on the teaching methods and materials they use. However, form and content must comply with the curriculum for the particular year and be suited to children of that year.

For instruction at *Grundschule* (levels I and II of primary school or special school) to be child-oriented, lively and stimulating, the curriculum allows for different forms of learning to negotiate the transition from the play-oriented forms of learning in pre-school education to a conscious, independent and target-oriented learning process. This learning process is stimulated by the following forms of learning at primary level: learning by playing, open learning, project-oriented learning, learning by discovery, learning by investigation, by repetition, by practising.

Computers are to be used as vehicles for independent, target-oriented and individualised learning and for creative work.

### **3.4 Assessment, progression and certification**

#### **General provisions**

As a general rule, performance assessment should be spread as evenly as possible over the respective period reviewed. Teachers, who are responsible for all assessments, generally assess skills and capabilities in individual subjects.

Both compulsory and optional subjects are graded. School reports are something like shortened expert opinions on pupils' achievements. Schools issue reports (at the end of the first semester), end-of-year reports (at the end of the year) and certificates (after successful completion of a particular school type).

The end-of-year report reflects pupils' achievements during the entire year, with particular attention being paid to the most recent assessments. For assessment purposes the following grades are used: very good (1), good (2), satisfactory (3), sufficient (4), and insufficient (5).

As a general rule, all pupils are entitled to be transferred to the next higher year if they have been graded in all compulsory subjects and have not received a grade of 'insufficient'. However, the law provides for the possibility of pupils progressing to the next year with one 'insufficient' grade. In addition, pupils whose performance has been deemed 'insufficient' in no more than two compulsory subjects may sit a test in these subjects at the beginning of the following school year (resit test). If they fail they have to repeat the year in question.

### **Specific provisions for primary schools**

In pre-school classes no marks are given. The report simply contains a record of the child's participation.

The first two years of primary education constitute one single cycle. This means that all first-year pupils are entitled to enter the second year regardless of their assessment in the year-end-report.

Primary school pupils having been assessed 'insufficient' in a compulsory subject in the end-of-year report may nevertheless move on to the next higher grade if the staff council found the pupil's achievements in the other compulsory subjects satisfactory enough for him/her to be able to attend the next higher grade successfully. Pupils who are not entitled to move on to the next higher grade may repeat the grade in which they failed. There are no *Wiederholungsprüfungen* (repeat examination sittings) at *Grundschule* (levels I and II of primary school or special school).

## **3.5 Guidance and counselling**

All children having attained the age of compulsory schooling are admitted to primary schooling. Subject to parental consent, an educational psychologist may be consulted if there seems to be a need for specific assistance measures. See Section 4.1.5.

## **3.6 Teachers**

### **Initial training of teachers for accreditation at primary school and for accreditation at special schools**

Initial training for acquiring the teaching qualification at primary schools and special schools is received at university colleges of teacher education (ISCED 5, tertiary level). (Compare Chapter 6)

### **In-service training for primary and special school teachers**

Teachers receive in-service training primarily by attending training events at university colleges of teacher education, with 15 hours of such training being compulsory. These in-service training events can be attended during working hours and partly in the teacher's free time.

In the framework of further training, teachers may also extend their teaching qualification or acquire an additional teaching qualification. Special school teachers, for example, may acquire the necessary qualifications to teach pupils with specific disabilities (hearing or sight impaired pupils).

## 4. SECONDARY EDUCATION

### Legal framework

The school legislation of 1962 comprises the *Schulorganisationsgesetz* (School Organisation Act), the *Pflichtschulgesetz* (Compulsory Schooling Act), the *Schulzeitgesetz* (School Periods Act), the *Bundes-Schulaufsichtsgesetz* (Federal-School Inspection Act), the *Privatschulgesetz* (Private School Act), the *Religionsunterrichtsgesetz* (Religious Instruction Act), and the *Schulunterrichtsgesetz* (School Education Act). Together with its various amendments and pertaining ordinances it contains a comprehensive description and systematic regulation of the Austrian school system. Based thereon, the nine Federal provinces have adopted separate implementing statutes with a view to school organisation, school time and school inspection.

The legal basis for *Neue Mittelschule* (New Secondary School) is section 7(7) and section 7a of the School Organisation Act as amended.

Regarding minority schooling there are specific provisions in the minority schooling laws of Carinthia and Burgenland.

### General

General compulsory schooling in Austria lasts nine years and is accomplished in the following institutions:

#### Grades 1 to 4 (primary education)

- *Grundschule* or *Volksschule* (primary school)
- *Sonderschule* (special school)

#### Grades 5 to 8 (secondary level I)

- *Hauptschule* (general school) or
- Lower cycle of *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (academic secondary school) or
- *Neue Mittelschule* (new secondary school) (pilot projects) or
- *Sonderschuloberstufe* (upper bracket of special school)

#### Grade 9 (secondary level II)

- *Polytechnische Schule* (pre-vocational school) or
- *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (AHS-Oberstufe, upper cycle) or
- *Berufsbildende mittlere or höhere Schule* (BMS or BHS, medium-level or higher-level technical and vocational schools) or
- Continuation of primary school or general secondary school or
- Pre-vocational year at special schools

Compulsory schooling may be accomplished also at a private school not enjoying *Öffentlichkeitsrecht* (public law status, e.g. 'alternative schools') or by private tuition – as long as the education is at least equivalent to that of a public school.

## 4.1 Hauptschule (General secondary school)

### 4.1.1 Admission

In order to be admitted to *Hauptschule* (general secondary school) pupils must have successfully completed the fourth year of primary school, i.e. the certificate must not contain a grade of 'insufficient' in a compulsory subject.

### 4.1.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

General secondary school covers grades 5 to 8 (students aged 10 to 14) and is organised in coeducational classes according to age. The number of students per class must not exceed 25 as provided by law.

After an observation period of at least 2 weeks, students are allocated to one of three ability groups in German, mathematics and modern foreign language. Educational requirements in the top ability group correspond to those of *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (academic secondary school). In all other subjects there is mixed ability teaching within established classes. Individual schools can lay down special dates at which pupils are transferred to the next higher or next lower ability group, even though this is not a must. Compulsory preparatory/remedial teaching is provided to pupils preparing for being upgraded to a higher group or those facing downgrading, respectively.

### 4.1.3 Curriculum

General secondary school provides general education to students. In doing so, the principles of social integration have to be taken into account.

The curriculum of general secondary school is basically identical with that of the lower cycle of academic secondary school (*Realgymnasium* – science branch) (compare Section 4.3.3). As far as compulsory subjects and compulsory exercises are concerned, the curriculum distinguishes between core contents and extended contents. The contents of the core area are officially decreed. The extended contents are planned for at school level, or according to autonomous curricular provisions.

Under school autonomy provisions, schools are free to define around 15 weekly hours. Autonomous curricular provisions may be issued for all or individual classes/years.

New forms of general secondary school with a broad range of specialisations have been established in Austria.

#### Educational contents / timetable

The timetable of general schools constitutes a framework which can be filled in, at the schools' discretion, by autonomous decisions. Where such decisions are not taken, the officially decreed number of hours applies.

Compulsory subjects	Year and number of weekly hours				Total	Autonomy
	5	6	7	8		
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2	8	8
German	5	4	4	4	17	15-21
Modern foreign language	4	4	3	3	14	12-18
History and social studies	-	2	2	2	6	5-10

Geography and economics	2	1	2	2	7	7-12
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	16	14-20
Geometric drawing	-	-	-	2	2	2-6
Biology and environmental education	2	2	1	2	7	7-12
Chemistry	-	-	-	2	2	1,5-4
Physics	-	1	2	2	5	5-10
Music	2	2	1	1	6	6-11
Art	2	2	2	1	7	7-12
Technical shop / textile shop (as compulsory alternative subjects)	2	1	2	2	7	7-12
Nutrition and home economics	-	1.5	1.5	-	3	2-6
Physical activity and sports	4	3	3	3	13	12-18
<b>Total number of weekly hours</b>	29	29.5	29.5	32	120	120

In addition, vocational guidance is provided integratively as a compulsory exercise. There are also optional subjects and exercises.

#### Special forms

The Austrian *Hauptschule* (general secondary school) knows three special types catering to particular talents and inclinations of pupils. They are organised as separate schools or as separate forms within a school: *Hauptschule* with a special focus on music education, on sports, and on skiing. These special forms have a higher total number of hours than the standard general secondary school (131 and 137 respectively).

#### **Teaching methods and materials**

Teachers are generally free to decide on the teaching methods and materials they use. However, form and content must comply with the curriculum for the particular year and be suited to children of that year. Both head teachers and school inspectors are entitled to issue directives to teachers on this matter.

#### **4.1.4 Assessment, progression and certification**

The general rules for assessment procedures, marking and reports are described in Section 3.4.

Students are generally allowed to move up to the next higher year if they have been graded in all compulsory subjects and have not received a mark of 'insufficient' in their year-end report. Special provisions with regard to the marking system apply to classes with ability grouping.

At the end of *Hauptschule* (general secondary school) students receive a *Hauptschulabschlusszeugnis* (school-leaving certificate). Students who have successfully completed general secondary school may be admitted to *Polytechnische Schule* (pre-vocational school) (see Section 4.4), *Berufsbildende mittlere oder höhere Schule* (medium or higher level technical and vocational school) (see Section 4.6), or *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (academic secondary school) (see Section 4.3). Students with good results in general secondary school may transfer directly to an academic secondary school or higher technical and vocational school without having to pass an admission test.



#### 4.1.5 Guidance and counselling

Approximately 2 500 school guidance counsellors and educational consultants provide counselling services at all Austrian schools with the exception of primary schools and *Berufsschulen* (part-time compulsory vocational schools). These counsellors are full-time teachers partly released from their normal teaching duties in order to provide counselling.

These tasks require close cooperation with educational psychologists, other educational institutions and the information and counselling facilities of the *Arbeitsmarktservice* (Labour Market Service) and the social partners (employers' and employees' representative bodies).

Some 70 regional centres offer psychological advice and educational guidance provided by around 150 educational psychologists throughout Austria (see <http://www.schulpsychologie.at>). The educational psychologists advise the students' and career counsellors on technicalities, and they provide supervision and practical assistance in difficult cases.

In order to ensure the quality of 'vocational guidance instruction' in alignment with other measures provided by the school to prepare students for decisions on possible educational and vocational careers (information and counselling by students' counsellors, practical experience, school projects, involvement of external partners), schools must meet a 'catalogue of binding measures concerning information, counselling, orientation in years 7 and 8' and develop a specific concept for school-based implementation (see [www.bmukk.gv.at/bo](http://www.bmukk.gv.at/bo)).

Schemes run by the Labour Market Service and the social partners (economic chamber, chamber of labour) offer additional vocational counselling (start of working life).

#### 4.1.6 Teachers and trainers

##### **Initial training of teachers for accreditation at general secondary schools**

General secondary school teachers, just like primary and special school teachers, follow tertiary-level training at university colleges of teacher education (see Chapter 6).

##### **In-service training of general secondary school teachers**

General secondary school teachers organise their in-service training independently and in coordination with or on behalf of the school heads (personnel development responsibility of school head and supervising authorities). In-service training events can be attended during working hours and partly in the teacher's free time, however, efforts are being made to increasingly offer INSET events outside school hours.

In the framework of INSET, teachers may also extend their teaching qualification or acquire an additional teaching qualification. Other qualifications as provided by law, such as for school heads (school management training), for coaching teachers for trainee teacher training, for administrators or school librarians, may be acquired.

University colleges of teacher education offer in-service training for teachers, subject to supplementing ordinances and decrees pursuant to the 2005 Act on University Colleges of Teacher Education. The university colleges of teacher education are required to provide offers according to national priorities in terms of content and strategy defined by the Federal Ministry for Education, while considering regional needs together with regional school authorities in the respective province.

The events for in-service training are organised as follows: individual events in the form of seminars and workshops, seminar and workshop series, study courses for 6-30 ECTS, continuing education courses also from 30 to 60 ECTS, as well as internal events at schools, which are shaped by parts or all members of a school team in line with internal school developments and focal points. Increasingly



online phases and IT-supported phases (learning with web platforms) are integrated in the course offers.

Further offers refer to advising and supporting school development processes of individual schools and networks of schools. In the future university colleges of teacher education are to play a co-leading role in implementing innovation in the school sector.

## **4.2 Neue Mittelschule (New secondary school) (pilot projects)**

The *Neue Mittelschule* (new secondary school) is a comprehensive school for 10 to 14-year-olds, which has existed since the 2008/09 school year as an alternative to the other two secondary level I types, i.e. *Hauptschule* (general secondary school) and *Unterstufe der Allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule* (lower cycle of academic secondary school). Since the 2009/10 school year, this new school type has been offered at 244 locations throughout Austria.

The new secondary school follows year 4 of primary school and comprises years 5 to 8; in one province, namely Lower Austria, the new secondary school is limited to years 5 and 6.

The basic objective in developing and implementing the new secondary school is educational and organisational reform of common education for 10 to 14-year-olds. Preventing premature educational tracking of children is one of the central pillars on which this development work rests, which translates into supporting and encouraging all children, regardless of their social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds or the level of their individual performance at the end of year 4. Shifting the decision on the further educational career path of young people towards the end of secondary level I (in Lower Austria, the end of year 6) allows for better integration of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with special educational needs.

In order to document the performance of the new secondary school pilot projects, the development work carried out by the pilot schools has been scientifically monitored and evaluated by the *Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens* (BIFIE, Federal Institute for Research on Education, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School System). (See also Section 1.4.). The evaluation accompanying the process will present annual progress reports and results starting from the end of 2009, which will enable an educational policy decision based on facts regarding a possible inclusion of this school type into mainstream schooling.

Detailed information on the Internet: [www.neuemittelschule.at](http://www.neuemittelschule.at)

### **4.2.1 Admission**

In order to be admitted to a new secondary school, pupils must have successfully completed the fourth year of primary school, i.e. the certificate must not contain a grade of 'insufficient' in a compulsory subject. Pupils with special needs must furnish proof of having attended primary school.

### **4.2.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue**

The new secondary school covers grades 5 to 8 (students aged 10 to 14) and is organised in coeducational classes according to age. The maximum statutory number of students per class is 25. All subjects are taught in heterogeneous classes without ability streaming. Temporarily remedial and development activities in small groups based on different interests may be provided. Moreover, projects across classes and school years may be offered.

### 4.2.3 Curriculum

#### Educational priorities

As a comprehensive school for all 10 to 14-year-olds, the new secondary school is not broken down into types; however, flexible internal differentiation is possible in that educational and content-related focuses may be set in line with regional conditions and location-specific needs.

Individualisation and internal differentiation ensure that all students at new secondary pilot schools are supported in the best possible way, enabling them to make the most of their talents and abilities. The essential pillars of a new learning culture that centres on the individual child with individual talents are inextricably linked with a new quality of learning, in which open forms of learning, exploratory learning, self-learning, learning in and from projects as well as competence learning and an enhanced imparting of key skills, such as independence, responsibility, creativity, flexibility, ability to communicate, ability to cope with conflict and team spirit, are of particular importance.

Measures introduced in the area of art education and cultural encounters, eLearning and sports are targeted at the opening up of schools to the outside world. Further core concepts aim at promoting girls and boys without gender role assignments and restrictions, social learning as a basis for active and self-determined participation in democratic life, providing intensified professional and educational career guidance and continuing school support in the afternoon through an increased offer of all-day school types.

#### Curriculum and autonomy

General curricular provisions for general schools are described in Section 4.1.3.

New secondary school instruction is based on the curriculum of *Allgemeinbildenden höheren Schulen* (AHS) / *Unterstufe* (academic secondary schools, lower cycle, years 5 to 8) (see Section 4.3.3), in conjunction with autonomous curricular provisions and existing education standards (see Section 1.4 'National education standards in the general education system').

#### Educational contents / timetable

The timetable corresponds to the standard timetable of the lower cycle of academic secondary school. The majority of new secondary schools apply the timetable of *Realgymnasium* (science branch of academic secondary school) (cf. Section 4.3.3). Schools have the possibility to deviate autonomously by offering fields or subjects not contained in the timetable of the lower cycle of academic secondary school.

#### Teaching methods and materials

Generally the provisions for the lower cycle of academic secondary school apply also to new secondary school. All schools are required to implement the individualisation of teaching as a central concern of development work.

Special attention is to be paid to the concept of remedial education and development, supporting students with learning difficulties, as well as the gifted and talented, students with a migration background, and those with special needs.

### 4.2.4 Assessment, progression and certification

The general rules for assessment procedures, marking and reports are described in Section 3.4.

Generally the information given in the section on the lower cycle of academic secondary school applies (compare Section 4.3.4). In addition to marks, new secondary schools must also provide an

alternative type of assessment twice a school year to motivate students (verbal assessment, work quota book, portfolios).

As regards the students' transfer to the next higher grade, generally the rules for the lower cycle of academic secondary school described above apply to new secondary school. In addition guardians may file an application to the school head if a child, despite making use of all possibilities of remedial instruction, is to be prohibited from moving on to the next higher grade, asking the school head to grade the subjects deemed insufficient according to the regulations applicable to general secondary school (like in the second or third ability group). This application, as well as an application for reversal, i.e. grade the student again according to the regulations applicable to the lower cycle of academic secondary school, can be filed by guardians for the last time by the first half of year 8.

Students who have successfully completed new secondary school receive an end-of-year report and certificate at the end of grade 4, which entitles them to be admitted to schools leading to higher forms of education (upper cycle of academic secondary school, pre-vocational school, medium level technical and vocational schools, higher level technical and vocational schools).

#### **4.2.5 Guidance and counselling**

In grades 3 and 4 of new secondary school (equivalent to years 7 and 8), the curriculum provides for 32 annual hours of 'vocational orientation' as a compulsory exercise. In addition, 'vocational orientation' is offered as an optional subject or optional exercise at secondary level I.

A description of educational counselling and vocational guidance covering all secondary school types is found in Section 4.1.5.

#### **4.2.6 Teachers and trainers**

New secondary school instruction is jointly provided by teams of teachers who hold certificates in academic secondary school education and teachers who hold certificates in general secondary school education. Furthermore integration teachers are available to assist children and young people with special needs in classes. At many locations with a high rate of children with a migration background, teachers teach classes in their mother tongue.

The number of teaching staff depends on the main focal points and particularities specific to locations, the number of students with special educational needs or a mother tongue other than German, and is supplemented by 6 weekly teacher hours per class for team teaching.

#### **Initial training of teachers for accreditation at new secondary schools**

Compare Sections 4.3.6 and 4.1.6.

#### **In-service training of new secondary school teachers**

See Section 4.1.6.

### **4.3 Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule (Academic secondary school)**

#### **4.3.1 Admission**

To be admitted to the first grade of an *Allgemein bildende höhere Schule* (academic secondary school), pupils must have successfully completed grade four of primary school and have been assessed 'very good' or 'good' in German, reading, and mathematics. If they have been assessed 'satisfactory' in these subjects, they may still be admitted to an academic secondary school if the staff council at *Volksschule* (primary school) determines that the pupil will most probably be able to meet the requirements of the academic secondary school on the grounds of his/her other achievements. Pupils that do not fulfil these requirements have to pass an admission test.

The *Oberstufenrealgymnasium* as a separate upper-cycle form of academic secondary school (years 9 to 12, entry after year 8) has made the upper level of secondary education accessible to students from regions where upper secondary schools have so far not existed (in particular for general secondary school leavers).

### 4.3.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

The lower cycle (years 5 to 8) and the upper cycle (years 9 to 12) of academic secondary school are organised in coeducational classes according to age. The number of students per class must not exceed 25 in the lower cycle and 30 in the upper cycle and must not be less than 20 in each case. To avoid that students are rejected, the maximum number of students per class may be exceeded by 20 %.

### 4.3.3 Curriculum

#### Education target

It is the task of academic secondary school to give students a comprehensive and in-depth general education and to prepare them for university studies.

In the lower cycle, the principle of social integration of students with special educational needs has to be taken into account.

#### Curriculum and autonomy

General curricular provisions for academic secondary schools are described in Section 4.1.3.

As far as compulsory subjects and compulsory exercises are concerned, the curriculum distinguishes between core contents and extended contents. The contents of the core area are officially decreed. The extended contents are planned for at school level, or according to autonomous curricular provisions. The extended contents should be defined taking the following aspects into account: regional and local conditions; the needs, interests and talents of students; progress made by the class; individual priorities of teachers; material and human resources; autonomous curricular provisions.

In the framework of school autonomy, the lower cycles of academic secondary school are free to define around 15 weekly hours autonomously.

In the upper cycle, academic secondary schools have room for autonomous decisions to the extent of 18 to 22 weekly hours depending on the basic form. In the various basic forms, the schools may offer students an autonomous choice of four to ten weekly hours. The other hours available may be used autonomously selecting certain points of emphasis or extending the subject matter.

For the upper cycle of academic secondary school new curricula are being developed. Compulsory subjects will be reduced to an indispensable core curriculum. The schools will be free to decide autonomously about the weekly hours thus released.

#### Educational content / timetable

The first two years (5 and 6) are uniformly organised, run according to a curriculum and serve as a period of observation and orientation. The curriculum corresponds to that of general secondary school. A modern foreign language is taught from the first year on.

From the third year onward, various points of emphasis are set. There is no ability grouping.

Gymnasium (academic secondary school): from the 3rd year onward, students learn a second modern foreign language or Latin. In addition to Latin, students from the 5th year onward learn either Greek or a second modern foreign language; or Latin, in addition to the second modern foreign language (started in the 3rd year).

*Realgymnasium (science branch)*: generally students take more classes in mathematics and there is an emphasis on science subjects. Technical workshop/textile workshop are still offered in years 3 and 4, in addition to geometric drawing in year 4. In the upper cycle, students choose between descriptive geometry or more biology and environmental education, chemistry and physics. From the 5th year onward a second modern foreign language or Latin is offered.

*Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium (home economics branch)*: additional instruction is provided in chemistry and technical workshop or textile workshop, and in the upper cycle also in geography and economics, as well as psychology and philosophy including practical training. In addition, all students take domestic science and nutrition. From year 5 onward students may choose between a second modern foreign language and Latin.

*Oberstufenrealgymnasium (special type of upper cycle secondary academic school, years 9 to 12)*

Students learn a second modern foreign language or Latin from the 5th year onward.

They may choose between three orientations:

- a special emphasis on science subjects,
- musical instrument playing, or
- art.

The following compulsory subjects are provided in all forms of academic secondary schools: religious instruction, German, a modern foreign language, history and social studies/civic education, geography and economics, mathematics, biology and environmental education, chemistry, physics, music, art, physical exercise; in addition, in the lower cycle technical or textile workshop and vocational guidance, and information technology as well as psychology and philosophy in the upper cycle.

In the upper cycle students may furthermore select different educational options within the form of academic secondary school they have chosen depending on their individual interests. A number of alternative compulsory subjects and electives are provided. All students are free to decide which alternative compulsory subjects to take (e.g. a second modern foreign language or Latin). In addition they may decide whether they prefer to widen and deepen learning in compulsory subjects or learn another foreign language.

In all three types mentioned, as well as *Oberstufenrealgymnasium* (special type of upper cycle academic secondary school), elective compulsory subjects amounting to 6 weekly hours (*Gymnasium*, *Oberstufenrealgymnasium*), 8 weekly hours (*Realgymnasium*) and 10 weekly hours (*Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium*) must be chosen in grades 6 to 8 (years 10 to 12).

Timetable for *Realgymnasium* / lower cycle (years 5 to 8)

The timetable has the structure shown below. Schools have the possibility to deviate from this timetable autonomously if certain prescribed guidelines are observed and to set priorities in terms of a specific profile.

Compulsory subjects	Years and weekly hours				Total	Autonomy
	5th	6th	7th	8th		
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2	8	8
German	4	4	4	4	16	15-21
Modern foreign language	4	4	3	3	14	12-18
History and social studies	-	2	2	2	6	5-10

Geography and economics	2	1	2	2	7	7-12
Mathematics	4	4	4	3	15	14-20
Geometric drawing	-	-	0	2	2	2-5
Biology and environmental education	2	2	2	2	8	7-12
Chemistry	-	-	-	2	2	2-4
Physics	-	1	2	2	5	5-9
Music	2	2	2	1	7	6-11
Art	2	2	2	2	8	7-12
Technical / textile workshop	2	2	2	2	8	6-12
Movement and sports	4	4	3	3	14	13-19
Vocational guidance as a compulsory exercise	-	-	x	x	x	1-4
Total number of weekly hours	28	30	30	32	120	
<b>Total number of weekly hours, autonomous</b>	26-30	29-32	28-32	30-34		<b>120</b>

In addition, there are also optional subjects and practical exercises.

### Teaching methods and materials

Teachers are free to decide on the teaching methods and materials they use. However, form and content must comply with the curriculum for the particular year and be suited to young people of that year. Both school heads and school inspectors are entitled to issue directives to teachers on this matter.

### 4.3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

The general rules for assessment procedures, marking and reports are described in Section 3.4.

Students are generally allowed to move up to the next year if they have been assessed in all compulsory subjects and do not have a grade of 'insufficient' in the end-of-year report. Students with an 'insufficient' grade in one or two compulsory subjects may sit a repeat examination at the beginning of the next school year and, provided that they pass, may move on to the next year. (Under certain clearly defined conditions it is possible to advance to the next year with one 'insufficient' grade). Students not entitled to move up to the next year may repeat the year they failed.

#### **Reifeprüfung (matriculation examination)**

Compare Section 1.4 'Introduction of a standardised, competence-oriented matriculation examination'.

Academic secondary school/the upper cycle type of academic secondary school ends with a *Reifeprüfung*, also called *Matura* (matriculation examination or secondary school leaving examination).

All candidates who have completed the last year successfully, or who have received a grade of 'insufficient' in no more than one compulsory subject, are entitled to sit the examination at the main examination date (within the last ten weeks of the instruction year).

As of the school year 1992/93, the *Reifeprüfung* (matriculation examination) was reformed, the new matriculation examination at academic secondary schools now providing for two equivalent options:

- seven part examinations (some written, some oral) in at least four different subject areas, or



- the submission of a *Fachbereichsarbeit* (paper on a specialised field of study) as 'preliminary examination' instead of a written examination.

The student must write this paper independently during the first semester of the eighth year under the supervision of the responsible teacher.

Students who have passed this examination and obtained the *Reifeprüfungszeugnis* (matriculation examination certificate) are called *Maturantinnen/Maturanten* (depending on the gender, higher-level secondary school graduates). The matriculation examination certificate attests the qualification to enter university and provides access to studies at universities, *Fachhochschule* (universities of applied sciences), *Kollegs* (special type of higher level technical and vocational schools) and colleges. Individual degree programmes may require the passing of aptitude or additional examinations.

### 4.3.5 Guidance and counselling

In grades 3 and 4 of the lower cycle of academic secondary school (equivalent to years 7 and 8), the curriculum provides for 32 annual hours of 'vocational orientation' as a compulsory exercise. In addition, 'vocational orientation' is offered as an optional subject or optional exercise at secondary level I.

A description of educational counselling and vocational guidance covering all secondary school types is found in Section 4.1.5.

### 4.3.6 Teachers and trainers

#### Initial training of teachers for accreditation at academic secondary schools

Teachers at academic secondary schools are trained at universities. Courses for qualifying as a teacher are defined as diploma programmes. They last at least nine semesters (four-and-a-half years). Students must pass two diploma examinations and submit a diploma dissertation in order to graduate with an academic degree (*Magister*). The programme includes academic training in two subjects, pedagogical training and a term of school practice comprising a four-week introductory phase and eight weeks of teaching practice.

Prior to being employed graduates have to successfully complete a year of teaching at a school, which consists of two parallel areas of activity:

- 1) Traineeship at a school, i.e. teach a class guided and monitored by a specifically trained coaching teacher in the respective subjects.
- 2) Completion of a course earning 10 ECTS according to the *Unterrichtspraktikumsgesetz* (School Traineeship Act) at a university college of teacher education.

Teachers at academic secondary schools are federal employees under either a private-law contract or a public-law contract (tenured civil servants). Part-time employment is possible.

#### In-service training of academic secondary school teachers

See Section 4.1.6.

## 4.4 Polytechnische Schule (Pre-vocational school)

### 4.4.1 Admission

All students in the ninth year of compulsory schooling, or a tenth voluntary year, may attend a *Polytechnische Schule* (pre-vocational school). Students attending another type of secondary level II school in year 9 may transfer to pre-vocational school by 31 December of the respective school year.

Pre-vocational schools are located in the general vicinity of residential areas. The schools are generally easily reached by public transport or school bus.

#### **4.4.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue**

Pre-vocational school succeeds the 8th year of schooling at general secondary school or academic secondary school and constitutes the ninth year of schooling. Instruction is differentiated by interests and/or ability. Two or three ability groups are formed for the compulsory subjects German, mathematics and modern foreign language.

#### **4.4.3 Curriculum**

Pre-vocational school is to provide in-depth general education and thorough vocational guidance as well as basic vocational training to students building on the first eight years of schooling.

The number of weekly hours compulsory for all students is 32. Of these, 18 hours are devoted to general compulsory subjects (under autonomy provisions a range from 16-19) and 14 to alternative compulsory subjects within the specialist area (under autonomy provisions a range from 12-16).

Compulsory subjects include religious instruction, vocational orientation and practical life skills, German, modern foreign language, mathematics, civic education and economics, environmental education and ecology/health studies, as well as physical activity and sports. There are ability/interest-based groups for the compulsory subjects German, modern foreign language and mathematics. Additional German instruction is provided for students with mother tongue other than German.

Students receive 14 weekly hours (12-16 under school autonomy provisions) of basic vocational training in the form of specialist areas corresponding to major vocational fields of the economy. Each student must select a specialist area from the ones offered at the respective school. The specialist areas promote the acquisition of abilities, skills and knowledge (key qualifications).

These specialist areas correspond to major vocational fields of the economy and are divided into:

- technical areas
- and commercial/social/communication areas

#### **Teaching methods and materials**

According to the freedom of method and adequacy of method laid down by law, the teaching of the subject matters and contents defined in the curriculum is the sole responsibility of the individual teacher.

#### **4.4.4 Assessment, progression and certification**

Performance assessment and marking at pre-vocational school is subject to the same provisions as those governing general secondary school (compare Section 4.1.4). The general rules for assessment procedures, marking and reports are described in Section 3.4.

#### **Final certificate**

Upon successful completion of pre-vocational school (i.e. no compulsory subject must have been assessed 'insufficient'), the students are given an end-of-year report cum final certificate. Failing which, the student receives only an end-of-year report. The end-of-year report cum final certificate also bears a statement confirming the completion of nine years of schooling.

The pre-vocational school is primarily attended by students who wish to enter working life immediately after completion of compulsory schooling (apprenticeship training in the 'dual system', compare Section 4.5).



#### **4.4.5 Guidance and counselling**

Vocational orientation is a compulsory subject provided (vocational orientation and practical life skills) on the one hand, and on the other hand a teaching principle implemented in all subjects and in particular in the specialist areas at pre-vocational school.

#### **4.4.6 Teachers and trainers**

##### **Initial training of teachers for accreditation at pre-vocational school**

The same rules as those governing secondary general school teachers apply (see Section 4.1.6)

##### **In-service training of pre-vocational school teachers**

See Section 4.1.6.

### **4.5 *Berufbildende Pflichtschule (Berufsschule)* – Compulsory vocational school (part-time compulsory vocational school)**

#### **4.5.1 Admission**

In order to be admitted to apprenticeship training, young people must have completed nine years of compulsory education; apprentices are therefore at least 15 years of age. Part-time compulsory schooling begins when the student enters an apprenticeship relationship (making of an apprenticeship contract).

#### **4.5.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue**

##### **Organisation of time**

Apprentices attend part-time compulsory vocational school at least one day per week for nine hours throughout the year, or in module form of at least eight to ten weeks per school year. A seasonal vocational school is also available with lessons being concentrated on a particular season of the year.

Part-time compulsory vocational schooling begins when the student enters an apprenticeship relationship and lasts until completed, i.e. at the most until the successful passing of the final apprenticeship examination. Apprenticeship training and, thus, part-time compulsory vocational schooling can last two, two-and-a-half, three, three-and-a-half or four years. Most apprenticeships last three years.

##### **Organisation**

The number of grades – year 10 to 13 at maximum – depends on the duration of the apprenticeship (up to 4 years). One year corresponds to one form.

There are two ability groups for one compulsory subject in business management and for two compulsory subjects in specialised theory.

##### **Dual system**

The dual system is characterised by practical training in business and industry, combined with a theoretical course at a part-time compulsory vocational school. While apprenticeship is based on an apprenticeship contract under labour law, apprentices are still considered to be in compulsory education because they must enrol in a part-time compulsory vocational school.

### 4.5.3 Curriculum

#### Curriculum

Part-time compulsory vocational schools complement practical training in an enterprise by giving apprentices the theoretical knowledge necessary for their respective occupations. Their general aim is to promote and accompany the apprenticeship training period in business and industry and to broaden general education.

The curriculum in all part-time compulsory vocational schools includes general subjects such as civic education, German and communication, occupation-related foreign language, as well as business management subjects. Theoretical and practical subjects specific to individual apprenticeships constitute the remaining subjects. The latter is required because several small and medium-sized enterprises cannot offer specialist training in every required area. More than two thirds of the training at part-time compulsory vocational school is devoted to general education subjects, business management and technical theory subjects. A maximum of one third of the teaching units is spent in state-of-the art workshops to complement practical, company-based training.

Furthermore, special remedial classes may be envisaged for students who want to join a higher ability group as well as for students who are in danger of being transferred to a lower ability group.

Measures for students with a mother tongue other than German (classes with a high share of migrants) may be offered under school autonomy provisions.

#### Teaching methods and materials

The different subjects taught at part-time compulsory vocational school require a wide range of methods. Teachers are free to adopt their own methods of teaching (methodological freedom). However, their teaching must be age-oriented, subject-oriented and practically-oriented. Students are to be led to self-reliance and to attaining the best possible achievements in line with their talents and abilities.

### 4.5.4 Assessment, progression and certification

The general rules for assessment procedures, marking and reports are described in Section 3.4. As for all other school types, the provisions governing evaluation are laid down in the pertinent *Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung* (Performance Assessment Ordinance).

Students attending part-time compulsory vocational school are evaluated through continuous monitoring of progress and in written, graphic, practical and oral tests. The examinations and assignments are prepared and evaluated by the class teacher. Graphic, practical and combined forms of evaluation are more frequent in technical and vocational than in general education.

Specific provisions apply to apprentices during practical training in business and industry: they are evaluated by the trainer. Large companies with separate apprentice workshops often use examination and evaluation systems which are similar to those used by schools.

Apprenticeship training ends with an end-of-apprenticeship examination before a board of examiners, which is made up of the chairpersons of the trade associations and members of the legally recognised representative bodies of employers and employees (social partners). After the successful completion of the vocational school course, students are awarded a final certificate which exempts them from sitting the theoretical part of the end-of-apprenticeship examination pursuant to section 23 of the *Berufsausbildungsgesetzes* (Vocational Training Act).

After the final apprenticeship examination, preparatory and extension programmes or schools for working people, respectively, allow apprentices to take the *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation

and diploma examination). In addition, since 1997 it has been possible, after passing the final apprenticeship examination, to sit a *Berufsreifeprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students or special matriculation examination for working people), which was specially designed for newly qualified apprentices and carries with it the qualification for general higher education.

Since the 2008/09 school year, *Berufsmatura* schemes (apprenticeship combined with a special matriculation examination for external students) have been offered to all apprentices in order to improve their education and career opportunities.

Alternatively, they have the possibility of taking *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance examinations), in which case university access is limited to a specific field of studies. At *Fachhochschule* (university of applied sciences) applicants are only admitted to programmes in the same field as their apprenticeship, unless they take additional entrance examinations.

Higher-level qualifications can also be attained by schools for foremen and skilled workers (*Werkmeisterschulen*, *Meisterschulen*) as well as by examinations taken to become a master craftsman (*Meister*) or to demonstrate advanced skills (*Befähigungsnachweis*), which open up access to carrying on a craft or trade.

#### 4.5.5 Guidance and counselling

A description of educational counselling and vocational guidance covering all secondary school types is found in Section 4.1.5.

#### 4.5.6 Teachers and trainers

##### Initial training of teachers for accreditation at part-time compulsory vocational school

Tertiary-level *Pädagogischen Hochschulen* (university colleges of teacher education) offer training for the teaching qualification for part-time compulsory vocational schools. Admission to a university college of teacher education depends on the successful passing of the matriculation examination. Admission will also be granted if the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance examination) or *Berufsreifeprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students) has been successfully passed.

These study courses at university colleges of teacher education last at least six semesters (three years) and are completed by the award of the degree Bachelor of Education (BEd) (see section 38, *Hochschulgesetz 2005*, Federal Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education).

Teachers of the subject area 'technology and trades' at part-time compulsory vocational schools must show proof of having successfully passed the matriculation examination in addition to their vocational qualification as well as vocational experience.

##### In-service training of part-time compulsory vocational school teachers

See Section 4.1.6.

#### 4.6 *Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen (BMS) and Berufsbildende höhere Schulen (BHS) (medium and higher level technical and vocational schools)*

##### 4.6.1 Admission

To attend a medium level technical and vocational school lasting at least three years, applicants must have successfully completed the eighth school year (with the exception of applicants in the third ability group in *Hauptschule* (general secondary school) who must sit an admission test in the respective compulsory subjects or have successfully completed pre-vocational school in the ninth year.

The prerequisite for admission to a higher level technical and vocational school is the successful completion of the eighth year. General secondary school students who were part of the third ability group have to sit an admission test in the subjects German, mathematics, modern foreign language, while general secondary school students who were part of the second ability group will only have to take this test if they received a mark lower than 'good' in these compulsory subjects. Higher level technical and vocational schools with an artistic orientation also require a positive result in an aptitude test as a further precondition for admission.

If a medium or higher level technical and vocational school is unable to accept all applicants, the school will autonomously establish certain selection criteria. These will usually be based on students' achievements in year 8 as evidenced by school reports.

#### **4.6.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue**

##### **Organisation of time**

Medium and higher level technical and vocational schools are full-time schools. Depending on the respective specialisation they last one to two years (preparatory vocational training) or three to four years (advanced vocational training).

Higher level technical and vocational schools are full-time and last five years.

At schools for tourism and for domestic science and commercial occupations and at higher level secondary schools for agriculture and forestry, which last five years, the school year in year 3 ends 4 to 10 weeks earlier and starts 4 to 5 weeks later in year 4. During this period students must take part in compulsory practical training in business and industry.

Many training courses at higher level technical and vocational schools are also offered as 4 to 6-semester *Kollegs* (special type of higher level technical and vocational schools) and 6 to 8-semester schools for working people.

##### **Organisation**

*Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen* (medium level technical and vocational schools) and *Berufsbildende höhere Schulen* (higher level technical and vocational schools) are frequently located at the same site for technical reasons, and teachers teach at both schools.

Medium level technical and vocational schools last four years at maximum (year 9 to year 12 at maximum), and higher level technical and vocational schools last 5 years (year 9 to 13); one year corresponds to one form.

*Fachschulen* (special kind of medium level secondary schools) with a trade, technical or arts and crafts orientation offering several branches are divided into departments headed by department heads (subject head). The school head is the educational head. Instruction is provided by specialist-subject teachers (one specialist teacher teaches one or several subjects), and one teacher is appointed as *Klassenvorstand* (class head teacher) or *Jahrgangsvorstand/-vorständin* (as class head teachers are called at higher level schools). Teachers may stay with one class for several years if possible.

Practice-oriented subjects (e.g. workshop, laboratory, kitchen) are taught in small groups, and several other subjects (e.g. German, foreign languages, IT, subject of special focus) may also be taught in groups.

### 4.6.3 Curriculum

#### Education target

The general educational objectives are laid down in the *Schulorganisationsgesetz* (School Organisation Act). The specific objectives of the different branches are defined in the respective curricula.

The educational objectives of *Fachschulen* (special kind of medium level secondary schools) for agriculture and forestry are defined in the *Bundesgesetz für land- und forstwirtschaftliche Fachschulen* (Federal Act on *Fachschulen* for Agriculture and Forestry). The educational objectives of *Höhere land- und forstwirtschaftliche Lehranstalten* (higher level secondary schools for agriculture and forestry) are defined in section 9 of the *land- und forstwirtschaftlichen Bundesschulgesetzes* (Act on Federal Schools for Agriculture and Forestry).

#### Curriculum

Medium level technical and vocational schools provide not only a thorough general education but also preparatory and advanced practical vocational training for specific occupations. Courses focus on practical training in school workshops, laboratories, kitchens and practice firms. Students of most three to four-year medium level technical and vocational schools must take part in compulsory practical training in business and industry during the summer holidays.

Higher level technical and vocational schools provide advanced general as well as technical and vocational education, which will enable students to pursue more sophisticated occupations on the one hand, and to take up university studies on the other (dual qualification).

The curriculum is divided into three equal parts: general education, vocational theory and vocational practice. The training in specialised theory in the upper years is complemented by practice-oriented projects and working methods in laboratories, drafting practice, practice firms, etc. Due to the combination of these three areas, the duration of training at higher level technical and vocational schools is one year longer than that at academic secondary school. Weekly hours, in particular at schools for engineering, commerce and agriculture, amount to 37 per school year in compulsory subjects (without time spent on homework). Students on most courses at higher level technical and vocational schools have to take part in compulsory practical training in business and industry during the summer holidays.

Within the individual school types, different branches are provided (e.g. the branches provided in technical, trade, arts and crafts schools are: construction engineering, interior design and wood engineering, electrical engineering, electronics, mechanical engineering, data processing and information technology, business and engineering, plant management, art and design, etc.).

In the individual school types and in some branches, a choice of training foci is offered. Training branches or foci are areas leading to vocational specialisation.

Since the introduction of school autonomy, the schools may define the special curricular foci within the various branches autonomously. Schools are permitted to modify up to 33 % of the subjects. However, branches are defined by curricular ordinances issued by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture.

Training careers at higher level technical and vocational schools may be compared to a tree. The specialist area is comparable to a tree trunk from which branches ramify after the third year, i.e. the training foci. In the first two years all training courses within one area thus have a uniform curriculum. Starting with the third year, the curricula vary according to the fields of specialisation (electrical engineering branch, training foci: e.g. power engineering and industrial electronics, control engineering, information technology).

### Teaching methods and materials

The different subjects taught at medium level technical and vocational schools and at higher level technical and vocational schools require a wide range of methods. Teachers are free to adopt their own methods of teaching (methodological freedom).

Technical theory is also taught in laboratories and specially equipped rooms (IT, practice firms). For practical vocational training, schools are equipped with workshops, training kitchens, etc. Both technical theory and practical exercises are taught by teachers with business experience.

Project-oriented, cross-curricular forms of instruction are increasingly being adopted to promote holistic thinking.

In the final classes of the secondary schools for technology, agriculture and forestry, student teams work on a wide range of class and diploma projects. They chose a topic from their specialist field and cover planning, the necessary calculations, design, accounting and production. Preparing a project paper on a business management subject is one of the essential examination elements at *Handelsakademien* (higher level commercial schools) and *Handelsschulen* (commercial schools), and also at higher level secondary schools for occupations in the service industries sector and tourism. All these projects are carried out in close cooperation with (regional) business.

At some higher level technical and agricultural schools, applied research institutes have been set up, where teachers from the respective schools also work. These institutes are commissioned by companies, thus achieving a positive impact on both the quality of teaching and the work of the institute.

### Practice firms

The concept of practice firms, which has been tested for several years, is part of the curriculum of commercial and higher level secondary schools for agriculture and forestry.

A practice firm is a virtual business silhouetting a real firm's business procedures. Each firm is organised in departments like a real business. The students rotate jobs in the various departments where they carry out specific tasks. International practice firm networks and fairs provide ample opportunity to see different business cultures. Students learn how responsible executives and staff act, and they develop entrepreneurial skills. Teachers are more like consultants at the enterprise. More than 70 % of all practice firms cooperate with real businesses. In commercial and business schools, there is a practice firm link in the curriculum to link the various subjects to the practice firm. Participation of the existing network of domestic and international practice firms also affords a good opportunity to practise foreign languages in a professional context.

To support the nearly 1,000 practice firms, the Austrian Centre for Training Firms (ACT) has been active since 1993 providing online the authorities and institutions required for the practice firm market. ACT is a coordinating centre for the Austrian practice firm market and serves as a tie between the national and international networks of practice firms (EUROPEN PEN International) and supports the practice firms in their daily work.

### **KOLLEGS (special types of higher level technical and vocational schools) for technological, trade and commercial occupations**

It is the objective of a *Kolleg* to provide graduates of other higher level secondary schools with the education of a *Höheren technischen und gewerblichen Lehranstalt* (higher level school of technology and trade) or *Höheren Lehranstalt* (higher level school) for occupations in the service industries sector, tourism or fashion or a *Handelsakademie* (higher level commercial school). (Sections 73c, 75c, 77c *Schulorganisationsgesetz*, School Organisation Act), complementing their previous training (*Kollegs* for working people see also Chapter 7).



The curricula are decreed by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture. The compulsory subjects in the curriculum (including mandatory traineeship) are based on those of *Berufsbildende höhere Schulen* (higher level technical and vocational schools). Generally, the curriculum will cover only those subjects which were not included in the curriculum of the previously completed higher level secondary school. The syllabi of *Kollegs* emphasise vocationally oriented subjects. The subjects listed in the curriculum may be selected as complementary courses.

#### 4.6.4 Assessment, progression and certification

##### Assessment

The general rules for assessment procedures, marking and reports are described in Section 3.4.

Students are evaluated through continuous monitoring of progress and in written (papers, tests), graphic, practical or oral forms of assessments (e.g. oral examinations). The examinations and tests are prepared and evaluated by the class teacher (also for the final examinations and *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* [matriculation and diploma examination]). As with other school types, the provisions governing evaluation are laid down in the pertinent *Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung* (Performance Assessment Ordinance). Graphic, practical or combined forms of evaluation are more frequent in technical and vocational than in general education.

##### Progression to the next year

Students are entitled to move up to the next year if they have successfully completed the previous year, i.e. they have been assessed in all compulsory subjects and do not have a grade of 'insufficient' in the end-of-year report. The staff council may decide, however, to promote the student in spite of an 'insufficient', if the student's end-of-year report of the preceding year did not show a grade of 'insufficient' for the same subject, and if the rest of the student's performance is such that his or her successful participation in the next year's instruction is to be expected.

##### Repeat examination

Students with an 'insufficient' grade in one or two compulsory subjects may sit a repeat examination at the beginning of the next school year.

##### Transition to a different type of school

The curriculum for the first grade of *Fachschulen* (special kind of medium level secondary school) is designed to allow transition after one year from a *Berufsbildende mittlere Schule* (medium level technical and vocational school) to a related *Berufsbildende höhere Schule* (higher level technical and vocational school). If students want to transfer later, they usually have to take examinations in a number of subjects. It is relatively easy to change from a higher level school to a medium level school (usually on the grounds of underachievement).

Dropouts from medium level technical and vocational schools and higher level technical and vocational schools often change over to the apprenticeship system, provided they find a training place in an enterprise (contract). Credits are given for school training according to the provisions of the *Berufsausbildungsgesetz* (Vocational Training Act).

##### Certification

##### *Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen* (medium level technical and vocational schools)

To complete a course of study successfully, students must have successfully passed in all compulsory subjects laid down in the curriculum in all years and in all subjects in the final examination. The final examination is a public and state-recognised examination held before a board of examiners chaired by a school inspector (written and graphic/practical examinations: general education, specific project work or final paper, oral examination).

Students successfully completing at least three years at a medium level technical and vocational school have access to regulated trades. The certificate evidencing successful completion is considered to be in line with the requirements of Article 11(b) of the Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications (EU recognition).

After completing at least three years at a medium level technical and vocational school students may acquire the qualification to take up university studies by sitting the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students). This examination comprises four parts: mathematics, German, modern foreign language, and an in-depth examination in the specialisation selected at the medium level technical and vocational school. The examination is for external students, no school attendance is required. Students completing a three-year add-on programme will be able to sit the *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation and diploma examination) of the respective higher level technical and vocational school. Alternatively, they have the possibility to take a *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance examination) (limited access to certain fields of study).

Graduates may also take up studies in their field at a *Fachhochschule* (university of applied sciences); in some cases, supplementary examinations may be required.

#### *Berufsbildende höhere Schulen* (higher level technical and vocational schools)

To complete a course of study successfully, students must have successfully passed in all compulsory subjects laid down in the curriculum in all years and in all subjects in the *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation and diploma examination). In some training courses, study of the practical vocational subjects is completed with preliminary examinations at the end of grade 12 (year 4).

The *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation and diploma examination) is a public and state-recognised examination before a board of examiners chaired by a school inspector (general-education and technical, written and oral examinations) providing access to university studies and professional qualifications (dual qualification).

E.g. at *Höhere technische und gewerbliche Lehranstalt* (higher level school of technology and trade) (matriculation and diploma examinations are organised similarly in the other types of school in line with the respective training targets):

- 3 written examinations: German or modern foreign language; applied mathematics or technical theory; 35-hour written examination (project) or diploma project
- 3 oral examinations: general education subject; a subject of special focus (project, diploma project), complementary subject.

In addition to subject knowledge, students prove their presentation skills, foreign language skills and their abilities to prepare documentation.

In the final year at a *Berufsbildende höhere Schule* (higher level technical and vocational school) a project paper or diploma project is to be prepared within and outside school hours, in the course of which teams of students adequately cover a vocational field specific to their branch. Many of these projects are carried out cooperating with, or commissioned by, business and industry. This concept has proven particularly successful because students not only gain basic vocational experience but also make first contacts for a start of vocational life.

EU recognition: According to Directive 2005/36/EC (Article 13, paragraph 2, subparagraph 3 and Annex III), education and training at higher level technical and vocational schools, as well as at special forms of these schools, is equivalent to a diploma level study. Therefore, the respective certificate is considered a diploma as understood by Article 11(c) of the Directive 2005/36/EC. The directive expressly mentions that, on the basis of this certificate, the respective graduate will have access to a regulated trade in another member state that requires, as a prerequisite for such access, the



successful completion of a higher education or university study of (up to) four years. The directive therefore opens up the access to trades but does not regulate the equality of academic degrees.

Graduates who have completed *Höhere technische Lehranstalten* (higher level schools of technology) or *Höhere land- und forstwirtschaftliche Lehranstalten* (higher level secondary schools for agriculture and forestry) mostly have the right to use the vocational title *Ingenieur/Ingenieurin* (depending on the gender) after three years of professional experience in their respective specialisations.

Students successfully completing higher level technical and vocational schools are entitled to practise their own trade after two years of professional experience. They also have access to the regulated trades.

Owing to special legal provisions, the specialist knowledge and skills of graduates from a higher level technical and vocational school may be credited to a subsequent study at a *Fachhochschule* (university of applied sciences).

#### 4.6.5 Guidance and counselling

A description of educational counselling and vocational guidance covering all secondary school types is found in Section 4.1.5.

Measures to facilitate the transition from school to vocational life provided at medium level technical and vocational schools and at higher level technical and vocational schools:

- practical experience included in curricula,
- mandatory and voluntary placements laid down in the curriculum,
- work in practice firms, participation in practice firm fairs,
- implementation of projects commissioned by companies or other institutions,
- teachers with professional experience or who have their own businesses,
- representatives from business and industry on the boards (expanded school community),
- industry representatives attend final examinations and *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation and diploma examination),
- associations of former students – cooperation with industry and business firms,
- curricula tailored to the needs of industry,
- career counsellors organise information events in cooperation with universities and industry representatives,
- the vocational qualifications obtained in school education are officially recognised in the *Berufsausbildungsgesetz* (Vocational Training Act) and the *Gewerbeordnung* (Trade Regulations Act),
- entrepreneurship education as teaching principle.

Successful completion of a medium or higher level technical and vocational school lasting at least three years ensures minimum standards regarding labour law, collective wage agreements and social insurance legislation. Graduates also have access to occupations which usually require successful completion of a final apprenticeship examination in the respective apprenticeable trade. Dropouts of technical and vocational courses may be given credit for their previous periods of training. Successful completion of a medium or higher level technical and vocational school open up the access to a number of regulated trades and crafts.

Graduates of higher level technical and vocational schools are qualified to take up a wide range of specialised occupations, which require independence, organisational skills and self-reliance. The collective wage agreement for industrial employees places graduates of higher-level technical and vocational schools in the category of management-level employees.

#### **4.6.6 Teachers and trainers**

##### **Initial training of teachers for accreditation at medium and higher level technical and vocational schools**

The training of teachers of general subjects at medium and higher level technical and vocational schools is the same as that of academic secondary school teachers (see Section 4.3.6).

Teachers of practical subjects and teachers of theoretical subjects at technical and vocational schools receive special training at university colleges of teacher education (tertiary level education).

Admission depends on the successful passing of the *Reifeprüfung* (matriculation examination). Admission will also be granted if the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance examination) or *Berufsreifeprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students) has been successfully passed.

There are specific admission requirements for entry into the programmes. Teachers of special subjects/theoretical part at technical and vocational schools must have professional experience in their respective subjects in addition to a relevant university training. Teacher candidates in the technology and trade areas receive training only if they have entered into an employment contract with the respective province.

The study courses last at least six semesters (three years) and are completed by the award of the degree Bachelor of Education (BEd) (see section 38, *Hochschulgesetz 2005*, Act on University Colleges of Teacher Education).

##### **In-service training of teachers at medium and higher level technical and vocational schools**

See Section 4.1.6.

#### **4.7 *Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik* (training schools for kindergarten teachers) and *Bildungsanstalten für Sozialpädagogik* (training schools for educators)**

##### **4.7.1 Admission**

Admission to *Bildungsanstalt für Kindergartenpädagogik* (training schools for kindergarten teachers) and to *Bildungsanstalt für Sozialpädagogik* (training schools for educators) is conditional upon successful completion of the 8th year and the passing of an aptitude test.

*Kollegs* (special types of higher level technical and vocational schools) cater to persons who have passed the *Reifeprüfung* (matriculation examination) or *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation and diploma examination) at an academic secondary school or a different type of higher level technical and vocational school, or who have passed the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance examination) or *Berufsreifeprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students) (see Sections 4.3.4 and 4.6.4).

##### **4.7.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue**

Courses at *Bildungsanstalt für Kindergartenpädagogik* (training schools for kindergarten teachers) and at *Bildungsanstalt für Sozialpädagogik* (training schools for educators) last five years.

### 4.7.3 Curriculum

#### Education target

##### Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik (training schools for kindergarten teachers)

In addition to qualifications as a kindergarten teacher, these schools also offer training to become an educator at boarding schools or, as a pilot project (since 1999) students have been able to acquire an additional specialisation for early childhood-education (geared to working with children younger than three). Furthermore, there are four- to six-semester courses for special kindergarten teachers (compare Section 4.7.4).

As educational experts for the entire pre-school (early childhood) area, kindergarten teachers provide a service which is characterised by being a role model, being ready to take educational decisions, and displaying the didactic skills required for kindergarten teaching. This also requires a furthering of personality development during the training.

In addition to the above objectives, students may acquire additional qualifications for educational work in day-care centre. Day-care centres are mostly half-day facilities for pupils of compulsory school age, attended outside school.

Students who wish to work in the field of special kindergartens and early furtherance must acquire qualifications for work in kindergartens with children with special needs, regarding the physical and psychological care, or for work in inclusive kindergartens, as well as for early furtherance of very young children.

##### Bildungsanstalten für Sozialpädagogik (training schools for educators)

These schools train educators for day-care centres and boarding establishments for children and young people, as well as for youth work outside school. Training courses for educators in special education last four semesters, or up to six semesters for working adults; admission is conditional upon the successful completion of the *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation and diploma examination) for educators (compare Section 4.7.4).

As experts in education, primarily for compulsory school age and adolescence, educators provide a service which is characterised by being a role model, being prepared to take educational decisions, and displaying the didactic skills required for kindergarten teaching. This also requires a furthering of personality development as part of the training.

Students who wish to work in the field of special educational institutions must undertake supplementary training in educational work with children and young people with special needs, regarding their physical and psychological care.

#### Curriculum

The curriculum for both schools comprises general education with subjects such as German, modern foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, music, physical activity and sports, as well as vocation-oriented subjects. The theoretical part takes place at the schools, while the practical part is in the various types of educational and care establishments for children from 0-6 years of age, or other educational establishments. This practical part is under the supervision of specially trained kindergarten teachers or educators.

##### Training schools for kindergarten teachers

In the third year of the five-year course at training schools for kindergarten teachers, the students may decide whether they wish to train in education for day-care centres (supplementary qualification) or early childhood education (pilot project) in addition to their basic training as kindergarten teachers.

Students who choose a special focus on 'kindergartens and day-care centres' have additional weekly lessons in education, didactics, practice work, German (learning assistance) and modern foreign language (learning assistance). This additional training is currently not offered in the form of *Kolleg*.

Training in the field of 'kindergarten and early childhood education', offered in years 3 to 5 in addition to standard training, follows a syllabus of optional subjects and optional exercises consisting of a theory part, didactics and practical work.

The course for 'special kindergarten education and early furtherance' may be attended following the diploma examination for kindergarten teachers and consists of a theory part, didactics and practical subjects in special education.

#### Training schools for educators

The course for 'special establishments' may be attended following the diploma examination for day-care centres and consists of a theory part, didactics and practical subjects in special education.

### **Teaching methods and materials**

#### Training schools for kindergarten teachers

Theoretical and practical learning interlink. Special training facilities (practice kindergartens affiliated to training schools for kindergarten teachers or kindergartens for training excursions) serve to train students during visits and traineeships under the guidance of experienced kindergarten educators (further) training in this type of work, and under the professional guidance of practice teachers.

#### Training schools for educators

At these schools, theoretical and practical training interlink to qualify the students for their vocational aims. Practical training periods are designed to translate socio-educational knowledge into practice. Practice periods are provided under the guidance of specially trained educators and practice teachers.

### **4.7.4 Assessment, progression and certification**

The provisions of the *Schulunterrichtsgesetzes* (School Organisation Act) and the *Leistungsbeurteilungsverordnung* (Performance Assessment Ordinance) apply. (See Chapter 4 'Legal Framework' and Section 3.4 'General rules for assessment procedures, marking and reports'). In addition, practice periods are used by practice teachers or educators to observe and monitor the student. This is where desirable educational attitudes are established.

As all students receive end-of-year (or end-of-term) reports, they may easily transfer to a new school location of the same type as their old school (training school for kindergarten teachers). Owing to school autonomy some subjects might be taught at different age levels at individual schools of the same type, and therefore possibly specific examinations need to be taken in order to be able to transfer.

Transferring to another type might require the successful passing of an aptitude test or completing individual parts provided earlier at the new school.

Training school for kindergarten teachers and training school for educators ends with a *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation and diploma examination) entitling the student to enrol in university studies.

After the successful passing of the matriculation and diploma examination for kindergarten teachers, students may attend a course for special kindergarten education, which ends with the diploma examination for 'special kindergarten education and early furtherance'.

After the successful passing of the matriculation and diploma examination for educators, students may attend a course for educators' training in special education. The diploma examination for special educators qualifies students for work at special educational establishments.

#### **4.7.5 Guidance and counselling**

A description of educational counselling and vocational guidance covering all secondary school types is found in Section 4.1.5.

#### **4.7.6 Teachers and trainers**

See Section 4.6.6 and Section 4.1.6.

## 5. POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

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Even though the respective final year of training at *Berufsbildende höhere Schulen* (higher level technical and vocational schools), *Lehranstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik* (training schools for kindergarten teachers) and at *Lehranstalten für Sozialpädagogik* (training schools for educators) as well as the Kollegs at these institutions correspond to ISCED level 4, these schools have been covered in Section 4.

### EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR NURSES

#### Legislation

*Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegegesetz* (Health Care and Nursing Act), BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) I No. 108/1997

*Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege-Ausbildungsverordnung* (Ordinance on Training in Health Care and Nursing), BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) II No. 179/1999

*Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege-Spezialaufgabenverordnung* (Ordinance on Specialised Courses in Health Care and Nursing), BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) II Nr. 452/2005

*Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege-Teilzeitausbildungsverordnung* (Ordinance on Part-time Training in Health Care and Nursing), BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) II Nr. 455/2006

#### Main types of programmes

Educational institutions for nurses provide vocational education and training and entitle their graduates to work as qualified general nurses (*Diplomierte Gesundheits- und Krankenschwester/Diplomierter Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger*), paediatric nurses (*Diplomierte Kinderkrankenschwester/Diplomierter Kinderkrankenpfleger*) or psychiatric nurses (*Diplomierte psychiatrische Gesundheits- und Krankenschwester/Diplomierter psychiatrischer Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger*) (completion: written paper in a specialised field – *Fachbereichsarbeit* – and diploma examination). The programme takes three years and is offered at numerous sites in Austria. Theoretical instruction takes place at the school, practical training at hospitals or other institutions offering acute care in the field of surgery; acute care in conservative treatment, long-term care/rehabilitative care; extramural nursing, care and counselling. The minimum age for training is 16 or 18 years. The education is free of charge. Students are entitled to receive a monthly allowance.

#### Main types of institutions

Educational institutions for nurses responsible for general care (*Schulen für allgemeine Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege*)

Educational institutions for paediatric nurses (*Schulen für Kinder- und Jugendlichenpflege*)

Specialised courses for paediatric nurses (*Sonderausbildung in der Kinder- und Jugendlichenpflege*)

Educational institutions for psychiatric nurses (*Schulen für psychiatrische Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege*)

Specialised courses for psychiatric nurses (*Sonderausbildungen in der psychiatrischen Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege*)

The providers of educational institutions for nurses are both public and private institutions.

## EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR CLINICAL ASSISTANTS

### Legislation

*Bundesgesetz über die Regelung des medizinisch-technischen Fachdienstes und der Sanitätshilfsdienste* ('MTF-SHD-G' — Federal Act Regulating Clinical Assistants and Health Care Support Workers), BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) No. 102/1961

*Ausbildungs- und Prüfungsordnung für die medizinisch-technischen Dienste* (Training and Examination Regulations for Clinical-technical Professions), BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) No. 560/1974

### Main types of programmes

Educational institutions for clinical assistants (*Schulen für den medizinisch-technischen Fachdienst*) provide vocational training and entitle their graduates to work as clinical assistants (*Diplomierte medizinisch-technische Fachkraft*) (completion: diploma examination). The programme takes thirty months and is offered at five sites in Austria. Theoretical education takes place at school, practical training at hospitals and other institutions. The minimum age for training is 17 years. The education and training is free of charge.

### Main types of institutions

Educational institutions for clinical assistants

The providers of educational institutions for clinical assistants are both public and private institutions.

## 5.1 Admission

### Educational institutions for nurses

The admission criteria are as follows:

- physical and mental fitness
- good character
- successful completion of ten years of schooling
- minimum age of 18 years (only for psychiatric nursing)
- admission test or interview

A board decides on admission.

### Educational institutions for clinical assistants

The admission criteria are as follows:

- minimum age of 17 years
- physical and mental fitness
- good character and standing
- successful completion of compulsory schooling

A board decides on admission.



## **5.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue**

### **Educational institutions for nurses**

The education and training for general nursing and the specialised basic training for paediatric nursing and psychiatric nursing takes three years and includes at least 4 600 hours of theoretical and practical training. At least 50 % of these hours must be devoted to practical training and at least one third has to be theoretical instruction.

The training is divided into three years, each of which lasts twelve months. The commencement of the training year (first year) is determined by the school head.

The instruction time at educational institutions for nurses is limited to 40 hours in all three years. A theory lesson lasts from a minimum of 45 minutes to a maximum of 50 minutes. A practical training session lasts 60 minutes.

Educational institutions for nurses may only be set up at (or in association with) hospitals which can provide the necessary general or special wards and other organisational units required for practical instruction, sufficient teaching staff and other health care professionals as well as the teaching materials necessary for the attainment of training objectives, and adequate rooms for instruction. The establishment of an educational institution for nurses must be authorised by the responsible province governor.

Educational and organisational management as well as the supervision of teaching staff at educational institutions for nurses lie with school heads who must hold professional as well as pedagogical qualifications, i.e. qualified nurses who have successfully completed special training for nursing educators and who have at least three years experience as nursing educators. The academic supervision of medical aspects is the responsibility of doctors who have the necessary professional and pedagogical qualifications.

School heads are responsible for laying down internal codes of conduct at their schools and ensuring that these are abided by. Students' representatives play an important part in shaping nursing education.

Prospective nurses are trained by nursing educators, which may be supported by other health care professionals. Individual subjects are taught in groups (up to 18 participants). During practical sessions, a maximum of four students may be instructed at the same time.

### **Educational institutions for clinical assistants**

Education and training for clinical assistants takes 30 months. It consists of practical as well as theoretical instruction. In addition to general basic training, practical and technical training is provided in three sections: clinical-technical part, radiological-technical part and physiotherapeutic part.

Education and training for clinical assistants may only take place at educational institutions for clinical assistants. These are only to be set up at hospitals which can provide the necessary special wards and other organisational units required for practical instruction, as well as the teaching materials, teaching and non-teaching staff necessary for the attainment of training objectives. Educational institutions for clinical assistants have to be managed in a way that ensures the achievement of educational objectives. The establishment and maintenance of an educational institution for clinical assistants has to be authorised by the responsible province governor.

The academic/medical supervision of an educational institution for clinical assistants is carried out by a medical doctor with the necessary professional qualifications. Educational and organisational management as well as the supervision of teaching staff at an educational institution for clinical

assistants lie with a school head who has professional as well as pedagogical qualifications, is licensed to work in the clinical-technical field and has a high degree of practical job experience.

### 5.3 Curriculum

#### **Educational institutions for nurses**

Education and training at educational institutions for nurses is subject to uniform federal regulations.

Education and training for nurses requires mandatory attendance in theoretical and practical courses. The pertinent training regulations lay down the details of the methods of teaching, etc. Part-time training programmes may be held and electronically supported forms of teaching and learning are permitted under certain conditions.

Training at educational institutions for nurses is guided by the following educational principles:

- 1) Instruction is based on methodological variety, practical orientation, demonstration, student self-reliance and responsibility. Promoting a fundamental understanding of crucial educational contents is to be considered more important than broad, superficial knowledge acquisition.
- 2) Social learning is to be encouraged in all subjects by conveying communicative skills, by promoting self-reliance as well as tolerant behaviour, and by putting students in the position to develop independent strategies for problem-solving (i.a. by teaching them to make optimal use of all available resources). This educational process has to be organised in a way which allows active participation on part of the students during the entire training programme.
- 3) Students shall be endowed with a sense of equality and a responsible approach towards their colleagues, and encouraged to treat all human beings with respect. (This, of course, also implies the promotion of gender equality.)
- 4) Tension and problems which may arise owing to the nature and structure of the professional field are to be discussed in order to put students in the position to constructively deal with work-related problems.
- 5) Students are to be endowed with a sense of self-awareness which is supposed to help them develop a professional outlook that is marked by innovation, utmost tolerance, acceptance and open-mindedness towards the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds they will be confronted with in their work.
- 6) Instruction is to be complemented by additional school activities (e.g. study trips) which are to help students develop a basic understanding of the complex interfaces between health-related, social, economic, political and cultural spheres.
- 7) Practical training is to be based on continuity in order to allow students to monitor and experience the results of their care. Feedback processes and retrospective analyses are to support positive assimilation of practically acquired knowledge.
- 8) Training is also to include a relevant share of interdisciplinary teaching, seminars and project-based training; it is to react to current developments in the nursing sector and to incorporate a variety of teaching materials (including a comprehensive range of literature), which are to cater to and deepen individual students' interests and to endow students with the capability to perceive, deal with and solve complex problems on their own.
- 9) The curriculum provides a basis for training measures which allows nursing educators to react to new nursing-related, medical, social, economic and cultural developments.

#### **Educational institutions for clinical assistants**

Education and training at educational institutions for clinical assistants is subject to uniform federal regulations.

Training is divided into three stages (eleven months, ten months, six months).

## 5.4 Assessment, progression and certification

### Educational institutions for nurses

Each student's performance in the individual examinations (oral examination, written examination or project work) is assessed by the teachers of the respective subjects.

Assessment of theoretical instruction: very good; good; satisfactory; sufficient; insufficient.

Assessment of practical training: pass with distinction; good pass; pass; fail.

All exams or exam parts that are marked 'insufficient' may be repeated once with the same teacher. Repeat exam sittings are also possible during the first two weeks of the following year of training or four weeks prior to final diploma examinations (*Diplomprüfung*). Each year of training may be repeated under certain circumstances, but no more than once.

The diploma examination consists of a written paper in a specialised field (*Fachbereichsarbeit*), the practical part and an oral part. The oral diploma examination is conducted in front of a board of examiners, which includes a discussion of the written paper in a specialised field.

Overall assessment of the performance at the final examination: pass with distinction; good pass; pass; fail.

Students who have passed the diploma examination successfully receive a diploma showing the result and conferred professional title. They are entitled to work as nurses. Furthermore, graduates will be admitted to specialised courses, the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students), *Universitätslehrgänge* (continuing education courses), the degree programme in nursing science upon successful completion of the matriculation examination, as well as to training programmes for higher-level paramedical professions and midwifery.

### Educational institutions for clinical assistants

For assessment purposes the following grades are used: very good (1); good (2); satisfactory (3); sufficient (4); insufficient (5).

Overall assessment of the performance at the final examination: pass with distinction; good pass.

Students who have passed the diploma examination successfully receive a diploma and are entitled to work as clinical assistants. Furthermore admission to the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students), and to the training for laboratory technologists, radiological technologists or physiotherapists will be granted upon the presentation of a diploma for clinical assistants.

## 5.5 Guidance and counselling

The large share of practical training (at hospitals or other health care establishments) which has to be completed in the course of training ensures that students learn to translate theoretical know-how into professional action. Transition between training programmes and working life, thus, takes place immediately following the professionals' training.

## 5.6 Teachers and trainers

Teachers at educational institutions for nurses must have a minimum of two years of work experience as nurses and must have completed a specialised course for teaching tasks which lasts one year (1 600 hours) and is mainly organised as continuing education course at universities and *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences). Admission is conditional upon the presentation of a diploma for nurses. The specialised course for teaching tasks ends with a diploma.

## 6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

### Legal framework

Medizinisch-technische Akademien (Paramedical College): Bundesgesetz über die Regelung der gehobenen medizinisch-technischen Dienste (MTD-Gesetz), (Federal Act Governing Higher-level Paramedical Professions) BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) No. 460/1992, as amended

Hebammenakademien (Midwifery College): Bundesgesetz über den Hebammenberuf (Hebammengesetz – HebG) (Federal Act on Midwifery), BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) No. 310/1994, as amended

The *Gesundheitsberufe-Rechtsänderungsgesetz 2007* (Act Amending the Laws on Health Occupations) created the legal basis for *Fachhochschule* bachelor's degree programmes to train nurses responsible for general care. The first degree programmes started in the winter semester 2008.

Universities / Fachhochschulen (Universities of Applied Sciences)

Under the *Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz* (Federal Constitutional Law), legislation and execution of all matters relating to universities and *Fachhochschulen* are a federal responsibility. The Federation is the statutory provider for universities and *Fachhochschulen*, and training institutions in this sector not maintained by the Federation are private universities.

The *Universitätsgesetz 2002* (*Bundesgesetz über die Organisation der Universitäten und ihre Studien – UG'*, Universities Act, University Organisation and Studies Act) entered into full force on 1 January 2004. In July 2009 the Federal Act amending the Universities Act 2002 entered into force.

On 1 April 2004, the *Bundesgesetz über die Universität für Weiterbildung Krems* (Donau-Universität Krems) (Federal Act on the University for Continuing Education) entered into force, largely aligning its structures to the Universities Act 2002.

The Universities of Applied Sciences and their degree programmes operate within the legal framework of the *Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz* ('FHSTG', Universities of Applied Sciences Studies Act) of 1993; the private universities within the framework of the *Universitäts-Akkreditierungsgesetz* ('UniAkkG', University Accreditation Act) of 1999, and the *Pädagogischen Hochschulen* (University Colleges of Teacher Education) within the *Hochschulgesetz 2005* (Federal Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education).

The *Hochschülerschaftsgesetz 1998* ('HSG', Students' Self-Governing Act) regulates the organisation and responsibilities of *Österreichische Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaft* (the Austrian Union of Students) and those of the students' unions at the individual universities, as well as the representation of students in *Fachhochschule* degree programmes, private universities and colleges.

The *Studienförderungsgesetz 1992* ('StudFG', Student Support Act) governs the granting of study grants and other supporting measures in order to provide a sound financial backing for students and to avoid the need for a part-time job.

Pädagogische Hochschulen (University Colleges of Teacher Education): Hochschulgesetz 2005 (Federal Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education).

### Implementing the Bologna process in the university sector

During the implementation of the Bologna process at national level, existing statutory possibilities and the actual conditions of the Bologna objectives for universities had to be aligned under one common denominator. Firstly with the 1999 Amendment to the University Studies Act and subsequently with the 2002 Universities Act, Austria provided the university sector with a the legal framework for introducing bachelor and master degree programmes, for application of the ECTS, for the Diploma Supplement,

for setting up Joint Degree and Double Degree Programmes together with other universities, and for upgraded doctoral programmes similar to PhD programmes. The 2006 amendment to the Universities Act laid down a standard minimum duration for doctoral programmes of three years, thus aligning it to European developments. The Austrian NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) prepared samples and forms for the Diploma Supplement to be issued at Austrian higher education institutions.

In 2005, Austria, with the support of the European Union, assembled a national team of Bologna experts. The five selected experts from the tertiary sector are funded by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme. They advise higher education institutions on the implementation of the Bologna objectives, in particular with regard to quality assurance, implementation of the ECTS system, issues of recognition and the introduction of the three-tier architecture of studies. In 2005, five Bologna Expert visits were offered, and since 2006 up to ten advisory visits to institutions of higher education have been funded annually.

Furthermore, all universities and *Fachhochschule* institutions have appointed a Bologna coordinator charged with promoting and supporting the implementation of the Bologna objectives within the respective scope of competence. The Austrian Bologna follow-up centre in the Federal Ministry of Science and Research acting as an interface to the Bologna process, organises seminars on various thematic foci or on behalf of institutions of higher education from special areas of the tertiary education sector.

The statutory provision under section 54, paragraph 2 of the 2002 Universities Act warrants that new degree programmes are normally only instituted as bachelor or master degree programmes. Certain programmes, programmes conferring secondary teacher accreditation and medical and dental medicine studies were excluded from the change to the two-tier system of bachelor and master; however, this regulation was repealed by the 2009 amendment to the Act. According to information given in their respective reports, several universities plan to implement the change in certain fields of study only once certain conditions have been met. This particularly refers to a flexible duration of study to obtain a bachelor degree in connection with the holding of certain professional qualifications (e.g. law studies).

In the winter semester 2008/09, the bachelor and master programmes already accounted for 84.4 % of all degree programmes at universities (without programmes conferring secondary teacher accreditation and medical and dental medicine studies). Another 7.5 % were doctoral studies. This means that only 8.1 % of all programmes do not yet follow the Bologna architecture of studies.

Establishing the new degrees of bachelor and master appropriately in working life – i.a. in public service – will be one of the next steps. The amendment to the 2002 Universities Act that came into force in summer 2009 provided the opportunity for introducing a four-year bachelor degree programme on the condition that an expert opinion attested that the duration be required to ensure employability.

Efforts to eliminate mobility impediments for students, teachers and researchers play a central role in the Bologna process. The introduction of the Bologna bachelor/master architecture of studies has also entailed new challenges regarding mobility. Against the backdrop of shorter cycles of the two-tier system of studies, the mobility of students has increasingly come under pressure. Austria has recently witnessed a decreasing tendency with regard to outgoing students. A working group was specifically set up at the 'Universities Austria' association to deal with this problem. By contrast, Austria as a study host country has seen an increasing number of incoming students within international mobility programmes and amongst foreign students.

In addition to promoting student mobility, the Austrian universities also support the mobility of their employees. Staff mobility has shown an upward tendency, and teachers and researchers increasingly use the opportunities offered by mobility programmes and networks.

## Educational options in the tertiary sector:

### 1. *Medizinisch-technische Akademien* (Paramedical colleges) and *Hebammenakademien* (Midwifery colleges)

The following courses are offered:

- Training for physiotherapists
- Training for laboratory technicians
- Training for radiological technologists
- Training for dieticians and nutrition consultants
- Training for occupational therapists
- Training for speech therapists, phoniatricians, audiologists
- Training for orthoptists
- Midwifery training

The training courses listed above last three years each in the case of a full-time study. The training courses for medical/biomedical laboratory technicians and for midwifery may also be completed as part of a bachelor study at a *Fachhochschule* (university of applied sciences).

### 2. Universities

Austria has 22 universities, six of which are art universities, three are medical universities, and one is a university for continuing education (in the postgraduate area). Private universities have existed in Austria since 1999, and in 2009 11 private universities were accredited.

University programmes primarily aim at offering young people an academic education combined with a scholarly career preparation. In the past this aim was attained by a two-level system completed by the award of an academic degree, i.e. there were diploma programmes and doctoral programmes. Since 1999 it has been possible to replace these two-level programmes by three-level programmes (bachelor, master, doctorate). Since the 2002 Universities Act came into force, new degree programmes may only be instituted as bachelor and master degree programmes. There were exceptions for programmes conferring secondary teacher accreditation and medical and dental medicine studies. Since the 2009 amendment to the Universities Act came into force, it has also been possible to change the system of these studies to a system of bachelor/master programmes. (Compare: Bologna process above)

In the winter semester 2008, Austrian universities organised 298 bachelor programmes, 455 master programmes, 93 diploma programmes, 67 doctoral programmes, as well as a total of 718 continuing education courses (of which 268 were provided at the Krems University for Continuing Education).

Under the 2002 Universities Act, universities have almost full responsibility for any rules and regulations governing programmes offered. They have to decide on the courses they provide, respecting European directives where such EU legislation exists. The change from hours per semester to a points system using the European Credit Transfer System is opening up better chances for national and international student mobility.

Teaching staff at universities and universities of applied sciences are free to decide on the form, methods and content of their classes based on the constitutionally-laid down principle of freedom of science and its teaching. On the whole the range of class types offered has not changed in the last decades. In addition to lectures, there are seminars, introductory seminars, practice-oriented exercises, forms of practical training, excursions, tutorials, etc. Express permission has been given for



distance learning units to be incorporated in study courses. At art universities, the artistic development of individual students is supported by one-to-one lessons.

### **3. Fachhochschulen (Universities of applied sciences)**

Since the 1994/95 academic year, *Fachhochschule* degree programmes have been provided in Austria on the basis of the *Bundesgesetz über Fachhochschul-Studiengänge* ('FHStG', Universities of Applied Sciences Studies Act) which was adopted in 1993. They provide scientifically founded and vocation-oriented programmes at the higher education level.

Funding is received both from the government and the private sector and depends on the number of places on offer.

In the winter semester 2007/08, 276 universities of applied science degree programmes were offered throughout Austria, mainly in the areas of technology and economics but also in the humanities. Several programmes are of an interdisciplinary character, and there are also a couple of programmes in administration, as well as in agriculture and forestry. About 40 % of the degree programmes are organised as in-service training (compare Section 7.4). Further programmes mainly focusing on social work and health studies have been added (in particular higher-level paramedical professions, midwifery and general nursing).

Programmes at universities of applied sciences are mainly offered as bachelor programmes (190), master programmes (89), as well as diploma programmes (7) which will be discontinued in the next few years, and include a period of practical training.

Time spent on studies is credited in the form of ECTS points. Distance learning elements are also being used.

### **4. Pädagogische Hochschulen (University colleges of teacher education)**

Study programmes last six semesters.

University colleges of teacher education train prospective teachers at *Volksschule* (primary schools), *Hauptschule* (general secondary schools), *Sonderschule* (special schools), *Polytechnische Schule* (pre-vocational school), *Berufsschulen* (part-time compulsory vocational schools) as well as teachers of theoretical and practical subjects at *Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen* (medium and higher level technical and vocational schools).

Tertiary-level training of prospective teachers of Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox or Old Catholic religion at compulsory schools is offered by private university colleges of teacher education. The training of prospective teachers of Islamic or Jewish religion at compulsory schools is ensured by study courses offered by private institutions (Islamic Religious Community in Austria, or Lauder Chabad Foundation, respectively).

The *Hochschule für Agrar- und Umweltpädagogik* (university college of education for prospective teachers of agriculture and environment) is the only Austrian institution that trains teachers for the part-time vocational schools and medium level schools of agriculture as well as the higher level schools of agriculture.

University colleges of teacher education also focus on a wide range of continuing and in-service training courses for teachers. (See Sections 2.5, 3.6, 4.1.6, 4.2.6, 4.3.6, 4.4.6, 4.5.6, 4.6.6, 4.7.6).



## **6.1 Medizinisch-technische Akademien (Paramedical colleges) and Hebammenakademien (Midwifery colleges)**

### **6.1.1 Admission**

Admission to these training courses is dependent on the successful passing of the *Reifeprüfung* (matriculation examination) or an equivalent examination; admission will also be granted upon the presentation of a diploma for qualified nurses. Before admission to college an aptitude test will have to be passed.

### **6.1.2 Students' contributions and financial support**

Studies at the colleges are in most cases free of charge. Students who prove social need and appropriate academic success may apply for financial assistance.

### **6.1.3 Organisation of the academic year**

The academic year at paramedical colleges begins on the first Monday in October. Training courses go on without interruption. The academic year at midwifery colleges begins on the first Monday in October or on the first Monday in March.

### **6.1.4 Assessment, progression and certification**

Training at paramedical colleges and midwifery colleges is based on the provisions of the respective ordinances on training (legal framework), containing in particular regulations with regard to theoretical and practical instruction, as well as the carrying out and assessing of examinations. There are curricula for all training courses. Theoretical and practical training have to be based on one curriculum.

Training is terminated by a written diploma paper and a diploma examination.

Graduates from these tertiary training courses possess specific vocational qualifications.

### **6.1.5 Guidance and counselling**

Educational counselling is provided as part of general career counselling at secondary higher level schools or in the form of targeted educational campaigns.

As the imparting of theoretical knowledge is intertwined with the development of practical skills and abilities, students of these health occupations can make a direct transition to the working world after graduation.

### **6.1.6 Academic staff**

Teachers at paramedical colleges and midwifery colleges are typically doctors of medicine as well as members of the respective professions (e.g. physiotherapists, midwives) or other qualified persons with the necessary training and experience.

## **6.2 Universities**

### **6.2.1 Admission**

In order to be admitted to a bachelor or diploma programme, students must have a higher education entrance qualification: *Reifeprüfung* (matriculation examination), *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* (matriculation and diploma examination), *Berufsreifeprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students), *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance examination) for the respective programme. Students apply to a specific university for admission to the programme chosen,

subsequently having to enrol each semester as long as they continue this programme. In some cases, supplementary examinations may be required. Students who do not meet some of the formal admission requirements for the chosen programme have to pass supplementary examinations before being admitted to the respective programme (e.g. biology for the study of medicine) or within the first semesters. Art universities require the matriculation examination only for some of their courses; admission is subject to an entrance examination in which artistic talent is assessed.

Candidates who have not passed a matriculation examination may sit a *Studienberechtigungsprüfung*, which provides access to university studies in a limited range of subjects.

People who have completed vocational training in the form of an apprenticeship can also meet university entrance requirements by taking a *Berufsreifeprüfung*.

In addition to matriculation examinations taken outside Austria, the completion of a programme of at least three years' duration at an officially recognised non-Austrian post-secondary institution also provides access to university studies. Candidates need to prove that they have sufficient German-language skills and access to the chosen university study in the country in which the matriculation examination was issued.

Until 2005, there was no limited access to study programmes at Austrian universities for Austrian nationals, citizens of the European Union or European Economic Area, as well as for members of certain other groups. A change in admission requirements has been in force since 2005. Admissions procedures were introduced for certain study programmes that are affected by the German *numerus clausus* restrictions. A Safeguard Clause was introduced for degree programmes in medicine. This procedure allows universities to control the influx of students. EU proceedings initiated against Austria for infringement of the principle of equality of treatment due to this procedure have been suspended for five years (until 2012).

### **6.2.2 Students' contributions and financial support**

Students who are Austrian nationals, citizens of EU or EEA member states or Swiss citizens have to pay EUR 363.36 for their tuition each semester. For other students tuition fees are EUR 726.72.

Many students are either exempt from paying tuition ('tuition free period'), or they may apply for a tuition waiver. During the tuition free period, no fees are prescribed. The duration for which no tuition is paid is considered separately for the individual programmes and corresponds to the standard duration of the programme which consists of the applicable curriculum plus two semesters of tolerance.

If students want to attend *Universitätslehrgänge* (continuing education courses), they will have to pay a separate fee, the amount of which will be determined by the Senate depending on the actual cost of running the specific programme.

No fees have to be paid for preparatory courses.

A number of direct and indirect aids are granted to students from the public purse. Indirect aids are granted irrespective of social neediness and account for the largest share of government aids. The indirect aids include family allowance, insurance cover under parents' health insurance or self-insurance, statutory accident insurance, and tax breaks granted to parents whose children study in the tertiary sector.

Direct aids granted under the *Studienförderungsgesetz* (Student Support Act) are means-tested and linked to academic performance. Social neediness is defined on the basis of student earnings and/or the earnings of those liable for their support. There are also special support measures such as the study subsidy to pay for tuition fees, travel allowance, assistance for studies abroad, and others.

Eligible are students who are

- Austrian citizens or nationals of an EU or EEA country who meet certain requirements;
- third-country nationals who were granted a long-term residence permit; and
- stateless persons who together with at least one parent were liable to pay income tax and had their main life interest in Austria for a period of at least five years;
- Convention refugees who study at an Austrian university, *Fachhochschule* or other tertiary education institution.

Eligibility for study allowances is tied to two major criteria, i.e. social neediness and successful academic performance.

Students with special needs receive higher amounts of support for a longer period of time.

In addition, universities receive funds from the Federal Ministry of Science and Research, which will be distributed, as performance-related grants and research grants, to particularly successful students.

### 6.2.3 Organisation of the academic year

The academic year begins on 1 October and ends on 30 September of the following year; it is made up of a winter semester, a summer semester and a period of time without classes. Detailed rules and regulations in this respect are put into effect by the Senate of the individual university.

At universities it is the students that determine how many classes per semester they attend and how many examinations they sit.

### 6.2.4 Assessment, progression and certification

The decision on whether any student's participation in class work has been successful rests with the person running the class. Study success is determined on the basis of examinations and academic papers (diploma dissertation, master dissertation and doctoral dissertation), and art master's or diploma submissions.

The rules and regulations governing examinations and tests in the individual curricula have to be laid down by the responsible collegial bodies. The 2002 Universities Act does not contain any regulations specifying the purpose of examinations, or the methods used in them, or the way in which examinations are to be administered. Consequently, universities have comparatively great freedom in deciding these matters.

In addition to the bachelor, diploma and master examinations, at least two pieces of class coursework for the bachelor's degree, a diploma dissertation or a master dissertation have to be submitted.

For a doctorate, the main demonstration of academic achievement is the doctoral dissertation, studies ending with an oral examination.

The law prescribes only a minimum time for the completion of studies. For bachelor's studies, this means at least six semesters (180 ECTS points) for all fields of study, and for the following master's study programmes, four semesters (at least 120 ECTS points). There is a guaranteed master's programme for each bachelor programme. Doctoral programmes usually serve for training scholars and scientists and are partly organised in an interdisciplinary way. The 2002 Universities Act initially envisaged, in addition to the usual doctoral programme (120 ECTS points minimum), a separate Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD), which requires at least 240 ECTS points. An amendment finally introduced a doctoral programme lasting at least three years, which must be implemented by all universities as of 2009/10.

In principle, students are not automatically entitled to start a profession upon completion of their studies. If statutes require a professional qualification as a prerequisite for starting an academic

profession the student must, with the exception of veterinary medicine, dental medicine and music therapy, complete a post-doctoral training course (e.g. for working as a doctor, teacher at higher level secondary schools, judge, etc.). Degree programmes, i.e. diploma, bachelor, master and doctoral studies, offer preparatory training in the sciences qualifying to work in a professional capacity that requires a familiarity with scholarly principles and a knowledge of the arts.

### 6.2.5 Guidance and counselling

#### Counselling and information for students at universities

The Federal Ministry of Science and Research and the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture are primarily responsible for counselling activities and provide information, advice and guidance on possible training and study courses following school education.

Under the key2success campaign (since the school year 2005/06), support measures at school have been intensified and additional aids for self-reflection and decision-making have been made available via the Internet. <http://key2success.schulpsychologie.at>

Furthermore universities organise information days for interested students. The ministry's studies information service publishes a number of information brochures. There are also several websites, which, like the information brochures, basically serve to provide information on study options and professions, such as:

<http://www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at/deutsch/jobchancen/jobchancen.asp?sid=1028482059>  
[www.studienwahl.at](http://www.studienwahl.at)

Annual job, education and training fairs (BeSt) are held at various educational locations. <http://www.bestinfo.at>

Further support for potential students who need to make a decision regarding their future profession and education is also available from Austria's *Arbeitsmarktservice* facilities (labour market service), <http://www.ams.or.at> as well as from the various chambers, professional associations and interest groups.

The *österreichische Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaft* (Austrian Students' Union), the statutory student body, also provides educational guidance at universities and *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences).

The curricula for bachelor and diploma programmes at universities provide for an orientation phase in the first (and second) semester. This phase covers lecture courses in introductory subjects which are highly characteristic of the study programme selected; moreover, guidance events must be staged to provide counselling in the preparatory phase. At the beginning of their studies, students must be informed of their rights and receive information on the curriculum, the qualification profile, the number of students in that particular study course, the statistics on successful completion, employment statistics, etc. Moreover, tutorials for beginners are to be set up to assist students in coping with the academic, organisational and social challenges of the first year of studies.

#### Psychological counselling service for students

A socio-psychological service run by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research, the psychological counselling service serves students and potential students who are offered psychological and psychotherapeutic support. The efforts mainly concentrate on helping students to take matters into their own hands in order to improve their competences to cope with their studies, their choice of course and their living situation. The services are tailored to the needs of the clients and their willingness to cooperate, and are free of charge and confidential.

**Pilot project 'Studienchecker' (study check)**

This project was jointly initiated by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and the Federal Ministry of Science and Research at pilot schools in Vienna, Tyrol and Styria in the autumn of 2008. By assisting pupils/students early on in their decision-making on training or studies, the drop-out rate at institutions of tertiary education should be reduced. Students should learn to assess their talents and interests and be provided with an orientation aid.

**Measures to help transition from university to work**

In principle, students are not automatically entitled to start a profession upon completion of their studies. Most universities and higher education institutions have set up special career centres to inform and advise their graduates on entering professional life.

*Fachhochschulen* degree programmes are university-level programmes which are designed to provide professional training on the basis of scholarship and science. For bachelor' and diploma programmes, a traineeship is a relevant part of the study programme.

**Inclusion in university and on the labour market**

Within the framework of a general survey examining the social backgrounds of Austrian students in the year 2006, a special study on the social situation of students with health impairments was commissioned. The study has shown that particularly students who suffer from health impairments which are not legally 'recognised' (i.e. mainly students with chronic illnesses) find it difficult to cope with the present learning conditions. As far as students with legally recognised impairments are concerned (i.e. students whose certified degree of disability is at least 50 %), improvements are suggested in the following areas: information services, organisational set-up of studies (including more flexibility in course attendance and alternative modes of examination), online study offer, increased accessibility of buildings/lecture halls and other personal needs.

The Federal Social Welfare Offices (*Bundessozialamt*) of Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland, and the European Social Fund support a project called ABAK <http://www.abak.at> which promotes the integration of disabled students and graduates into the labour market.

**6.2.6 Academic staff**

There is no initial training programme specifically designed for teachers in higher education; instead, they train by doing their work. Universities are under the obligation to ensure continuing in-service vocational training for all university teachers. Prospective art and academic staff at universities must have the necessary initial qualifications for the duties they are to perform.

The 2001 amendment to the Service Code for universities abolished public-law service contracts for new university teachers.

The collective agreement for universities, which came into force on 1 October 2009 and applies equally to all state universities, forms the basis for employment law.

It structures the academic university career as follows: the first step following the award of the master or diploma degree is a position as university assistant for a limited duration of four to six years.

Before this contract expires, employer and employee have to assess whether there is an option for a further academic career at the respective university. If adequate positions have been established in the university's structure plan, there is a possibility to apply for a 'career position', which is a post-doc position as an assistant professor with a maximum duration of six years.

Employment in this position requires a 'qualification agreement' to be drafted with the employer. It lays down what academic achievements need to be reached within a period of up to six years, for example

a habilitation and a teaching qualification or a certain publication requirement. At the end of the set period, it is verified whether the targets have been met.

If the qualification agreement has been met, employment status is converted to a permanent position as associate professor. In parallel, applications for a position as university professor may be submitted as in the past, requiring an appointment procedure.

University professors have a part-time or full-time service agreement for a limited or unlimited period with the university. They are appointed by the rector following an appointment procedure. Authorisations to teach (*venia docendi*) are awarded upon the signing of the employment contract.

There are also positions for 'system maintainers'. Depending on the discipline, they are known as 'senior scientists' or 'senior artists'. This category comprises language teachers, music teachers, laboratory managers and chief residents, who do not strive for a traditional academics/scientific career. Receiving a negative evaluation twice is a ground for dismissal at all stages of the career system.

The award of the authorisation to teach (*venia docendi*) by the rector's office does not signify the beginning of an employment relationship, nor does it constitute a change in an existing employment contract with the university.

### **6.3 Fachhochschulen (Universities of applied sciences)**

#### **6.3.1 Admission**

Access is not limited to people who have a higher education entrance qualification; rather, universities of applied sciences are also open to person who have obtained vocational qualifications, although such applicants must acquire additional qualifications before beginning their studies.

*Fachhochschule* degree programmes welcome anyone that meets the admission requirements provided there are sufficient study places. If not, students will be selected by means of entrance examinations.

#### **6.3.2 Students' contributions and financial support**

Providers of university of applied sciences degree programmes or the universities of applied sciences themselves are entitled to charge tuition fees amounting to 363.36 euro per semester; even though they are not compelled to do so. (Student support, see Section 6.2.2).

#### **6.3.3 Organisation of the academic year**

In principle, the academic year is the same for all universities (see Section 6.2.3), although details are decided by the providers of the individual universities of applied sciences.

#### **6.3.4 Assessment, progression and certification**

There is no central administration for the examination system at universities of applied sciences, the rules on exams are defined at the discretion of *Fachhochschulrat* (Universities of Applied Sciences Council) and accredited by the same body.

Many *Fachhochschule* master and diploma programmes end with a diploma examination, which consists of a diploma paper and an oral examination before an examining board. For bachelor programmes at universities of applied sciences, the final examination comprises individual written papers done as classwork and an examination by an examining board.



*Fachhochschule* degree programmes are completed with an academic degree. Depending on the respective course taken, the degrees awarded to graduates are bachelor, master and 'Dipl.-Ing'. Graduates may opt to follow a doctorate course at a university.

### 6.3.5 Guidance and counselling

See Section 6.2.5.

### 6.3.6 Academic staff

Teaching, as well as applied research and development work, is carried out by an academic teaching staff with the necessary scientific, practical and pedagogical qualifications.

When an application is made for the recognition of a new programme, at least four people must be responsible for developing the programme, two of whom must be qualified as university professors or have an equivalent qualification. If permission is granted to establish the new programme, at least four people of the team responsible for developing the programme must act as teachers in the programme. These four people must again include two academics with a habilitation or similar qualification and two more who have to produce evidence of having worked in a vocational field relevant to the programme.

## 6.4 *Pädagogische Hochschulen* (University colleges of teacher education)

### 6.4.1 Admission

Training courses at university colleges of teacher education target upper secondary school graduates having passed the matriculation examination, although admission will also be granted on the basis of having passed the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (university entrance examination) or *Berufsreifepprüfung* (matriculation examination for external students). Candidates must meet specific requirements in order to be admitted to a university college of teacher education.

Additional admission requirements, such as vocational qualifications and relevant vocational experience, apply to teachers of the subject area 'technology and trades' at part-time compulsory vocational schools.

### 6.4.2 Students' contributions and financial support

At present only those students who exceed the statutory duration of studies by more than two semesters per stage of the study programme have to pay tuition fees. All other students at university colleges of teacher education do not pay any fees.

### 6.4.3 Organisation of the academic year

The academic year begins on 1 October and ends on 30 September of the following year (see section 36, *Hochschulgesetz 2005*, Federal Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education).

### 6.4.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Training at university colleges of teacher education is offered on the basis of curricula and examination rules that conform to the Bologna process and is completed by the award of the academic degree 'Bachelor of Education' (BEd) (according to section 38, *Hochschulgesetz 2005*, Federal Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education).



#### **6.4.5 Guidance and counselling**

Educational counselling is provided as part of general career counselling at secondary higher schools. (See Section 4.1.5)

#### **6.4.6 Academic staff**

Teachers, as a rule, must have successfully completed a teacher education course and must have a good teaching record. In addition to this, teachers in the humanities (science of teaching and education, school law, psychology and sociology of teaching) must have a respective doctorate, while teachers concerned with the didactics and scientific aspects of other subjects must have successfully completed a relevant diploma study.

## 7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The highly propagated call for lifelong learning is reflected by a growing interest in continuing education. The broad and diverse range of courses from providers in adult and continuing education, in turn, corresponds to the growing demand.

### 7.1 Policy and legislative framework

Adult education in Austria is not governed by the federal government under the constitution, but is rather the responsibility of the provinces and municipalities. Each province has its own way of fulfilling this responsibility (making resources available, organisation, etc.). Owing to the above constitutional situation, the national *Erwachsenenbildungs-Förderungsgesetz* ('EB-FG', Adult Education Promotion Act) is, so to speak, a voluntary commitment on the part of the federal government which does not affect the competences of the provinces. Under the EB-FG financial support must be provided, but the act does not specify the level of such support. Financial resources are available in almost all provinces to support individuals' taking part in adult education and are provided in the form of subsidies for course fees.

By contrast, the responsibility for adult education with regard to schools and institutions of higher education (for example schools for working people, *Universitätslehrgänge* [continuing education courses], *FH-Studiengänge* [university of applied sciences degree programmes] for working people) clearly lies with the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and is subject to the applicable statutory provisions. There are special forms of both *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schulen* (AHS, academic secondary schools) and *Berufsbildende mittlere und höhere Schulen* (BMHS, medium and higher level technical and vocational schools) for working people ('SchOG', School Organisation Act, 'SchUG-B', School Organisation Act for Working Adults). The Universities Act of 2002 gives universities considerable autonomy with regard to adult education.

The statutory basis for labour market-related training is provided by the *Arbeitsmarktservicegesetz* (Labour Market Service Act) and the *Arbeitsmarktförderungsgesetz* (Labour Market Promotion Act). The *Arbeitsmarktverwaltung* (AMV, Labour Market Administration) has been set up as a public service provider.

### 7.2 Distribution of responsibilities

The federal government's responsibilities for adult education are split between a number of ministries. General adult education and schools for working people are the responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture. Adult education at universities and universities of applied sciences are the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research, unless some aspects fall under university autonomy.

Responsibility for in-company initial and further training as well as labour-market related training by the *Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich* (AMS, Labour Market Service) lies with the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, which is also responsible for older and disabled people.

In general, in addition to public federal, provincial and municipal bodies, interest groups and religious denominations also show a firm commitment to adult education.

### 7.3 Financing

Public expenditure on general adult education and vocational training for adults is considerable and rising. Thus, in the period between 1995 and 1999, federal and provincial spending showed a nominal increase from around 214 million euro to over 281 million euro, with more than 50 % of the amount

spent allocated to schools for working people. In 2004 total public spending (federal government, provinces and municipalities) on continuing education was 297 million euro.

In the adult education sector and for *Universitätslehrgänge* (continuing education courses at universities), which are classified as further education, students traditionally have had to pay fees. All private and non-profit providers also charge specific tuition fees. Course costs can be paid for by individual participants, companies, the Labour Market Service or public bodies, depending on the type and purpose of training.

## 7.4 Programmes and providers

Though there are many variations concerning organisation, legal status and providers, the main areas of adult learning in Austria can be identified as follows:

- in-service staff training organised by companies (provided in-house, by parent or production companies, by adult education institutions and other external providers, or through informal on-the-job training);
- continuing vocational and career-related training (offered by education institutions);
- skill-upgrading and employment promotion activities organised by the *Arbeitsmarktservice* (Labour Market Service) as instruments of an active labour market policy;
- general adult education (offered e.g. by adult education centres) and political education;
- second-chance education (earning education certificates at a later point in life).

(This order implies no ranking.)

There are two forms of adult education, each having different aims: the first form involves activities designed to provide a written record of progress in the form of a legally recognised certificate (whose curriculum corresponds to that of a school or higher education certificate), while the second involves activities geared towards acquiring general or specialist knowledge without a final examination leading to a certificate.

In 1997, the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (BRP, matriculation examination for external students) was introduced as another option, for which, amongst other things, preparatory courses (subject to tuition fees) are offered by non-profit adult education institutions (sometimes also authorised to hold examinations in individual subjects). So far, including the academic year 2007/08, more than 17 000 people have passed this examination. In the winter semester 2008/09, more than 12,000 people prepared for the individual sections of the *Berufsreifeprüfung* in courses held at *Volkshochschulen* (adult education centres), *Berufsförderungsinstitute* (Vocational Training Institutes), *Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitute* (Economic Promotion Institutes) and other institutions.

### Non-profit providers

Outside the area of company-based training, non-profit providers have traditionally played the most important role in general adult education and continuing vocational training in Austria. The history and structure of these providers reflect Austrian politics, religion and associations. Together, the major providers of adult education, which are described below, form KEBÖ, the Austrian conference of adult education institutions.

Having existed for more than a hundred years, the *Volkshochschulen* (adult education centres) are the most traditional establishments of adult education in Austria. The *Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen* (Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres) with its *Pädagogische Arbeits- und Forschungsstelle* (centre for research on political and adult education) is the umbrella

organisation of nine related province associations, which are maintained by different authorities. All in all, there were 272 *Volkshochschulen* in Austria in 2007 according to KEBÖ statistics.

The *Forum Katholischer Erwachsenenbildung* (Forum of Catholic Adult Education in Austria) comprises more than 60 institutions with different focuses.

The *Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke* (Austrian association of *Bildungswerke*) unites two related organisations, namely the *Verband Österreichischer Volksbildungswerke* (Association for community education) and the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelischer Bildungswerke* (Association of Protestant learning centres), as well as some extraordinary members.

The federal *Berufsförderungsinstitut Österreich* (BFI, Austrian Vocational Training Institute) and its related branches in the various provinces are adult education institutions run by the Chambers of Labour and the Austrian Trade Union Federation.

The *Verband Österreichischer Gewerkschaftlicher Bildung* (Association of Austrian Trade Union Education) is an organisation which has been established by the Chambers of Labour and the trade unions

The *Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitute der Wirtschaftskammer Österreich* (WIFI, Economic Promotion Institutes) are service centres of the Austrian Economic Chambers which exist in all provinces. WIFIs are the providers of continuing vocational training with the highest number of students in Austria.

The *Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft Österreich* (Federal Austrian Society for the Study of Political Economy) and its associated societies in the various provinces are educational institutions which mainly cater to members of the business community.

The *Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut* (LFI, Rural Further Education Centre) is a rural adult education institution operating throughout Austria.

In a broader sense, public libraries in Austria are also fundamental institutions of adult education.

### **Schools for working people**

In Austria, all school grades not completed in secondary stages I and II, as well as during apprenticeship training, may be made up for and completed as part of adult education. Exams are mainly taken in *Berufsbildende höhere Schule* (BHS, higher level technical and vocational schools) for working people (more than 3,000 completions per year).

### **Universities and Fachhochschulen (Universities of Applied Sciences)**

Universities offer both postgraduate studies for university graduates as well as *Universitätslehrgänge* (continuing education programmes) for a wider range of people.

The Universities Act of 2002 gave Austrian universities considerable autonomy, also with regard to the continuing education programmes offered by them. The University for Continuing Education in Krems (*Donau-Universität Krems*) only offers continuing education programmes in the form of *Universitätslehrgänge* and at present provides more than one third of the continuing education offer by Austrian universities. In 1991, the University of Linz established a centre for distance learning, which cooperates with the correspondence university of Hagen (Germany) and is a member of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU). Within this context, EuroStudyCenters have been created in Vienna and Linz, which also cooperate with the Open University.

*Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences), the first of which were established in 1994, are also becoming increasingly important in adult education. About 34 per cent of the students beginning their studies in the winter semester 2007/08 were over 25 years old (as compared to slightly less than 11 percent at universities); additionally, a survey conducted by the *Fachhochschulrat* (Council of

Universities of Applied Sciences) showed that in the academic year 2007/08 31 per cent of students at universities of applied sciences attended courses for working people.

In addition to public universities also private universities have been established in accordance with the Accreditation Act of 1999, some of them offering postgraduate programmes. In the winter semester 2007/08 Austria had a total of 11 such private universities with almost 4 200 students.

Non-university educational institutions, e.g. non-profit adult education bodies, may also offer university-level programmes if they fulfil special criteria.

### **Objectives**

In adult education, general education and vocational training for adults have different objectives, even though they often tend to overlap.

However, adult education almost invariably focuses on ensuring that citizens are qualified, in the best way possible, to cope with the tasks facing them in their private lives, in society, as well as in working life.

### **Admission requirements**

Admission requirements in adult education are largely determined by the respective sector involved, and more specifically by the qualification to be attained. There are no formal admission requirements in non-profit adult education.

### **Organisation of time and venue**

Adult education in Austria has traditionally been offered in the evening or in blocks at weekends. People very rarely stop working to attend courses, an exception being educational leave, which was amended in 1998 and 2008.

### **Curriculum and Certificates**

Most training programmes provided by non-profit or profit-oriented adult education institutions are based on curricula designed by the provider in question or on international standards (e.g. foreign languages or IT).

Schools for working people have the same curricula as standard schools attended by young people aged 14 to around 20 (compare Chapter 4).

## **7.5 Quality assurance**

Quality assurance in the entire education system including adult education has been a major issue in Austria for a number of years, and various approaches have been developed. They range from relying on general international quality assurance standards, specific criteria or procedures used by individual provinces or providers, to the evaluation of courses on the basis of questionnaires handed out to participants, or self-assessment procedures for trainers and training providers.

Many training providers have already undergone quality testing on the basis of various standards (ISO, EFQM, EQW etc.). Other institutions have developed their own quality assurance measures, e.g. the Manual for Quality Development at Austria's *Volkshochschulen* (adult education centres).

In 2004 the *Österreichische Qualitätssicherungsagentur* – AQA (Austrian Quality Assurance Agency), a service institution for quality assurance and evaluation at universities and *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences), was established. (Compare Section 1.4)

In 2008, a working group of experts from the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, the provincial governments as well as the KEBÖ (Austrian conference of adult education institutions) was

set up, charged with developing a comprehensive quality development model for implementing an Austrian quality seal for adult education.

Since the beginning of 2007 the *Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich* (wba, Academy for Continuing Education and Training) has ensured that professional standards are maintained by training staff and, thus, quality in adult education and training is guaranteed. (See Section 7.7)

The launch of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) is expected to provide an impetus in adult education. The aim is to systematically credit non-formally and formally acquired skills towards a certain qualification. Within the consultation process (January to June 2008), issues regarding part qualifications and proof of skills were discussed. A generally envisaged higher degree of permeability between the educational sectors should also reveal substantial potential for adult education.

## 7.6 Guidance and counselling

A considerable number of institutions in Austria offer educational counselling specifically for adults, although integrated centres very often provide information for both young people and adults.

Educational information and counselling for adults is provided by public institutions, the social partners, the large adult education institutions and the Labour Market Service, as well as by federal provinces.

Better access to adult education and training for all through more information and higher motivation has been achieved by expanding information and counselling services, and with the information portal [www.erwachsenenbildung.at](http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at), as well as by redesigning the Austrian National Award for Adult Education in 2008, which is now awarded annually in four different categories.

## 7.7 Teachers and trainers

In Austria, teachers working in adult education tend to have undergone different forms of preparatory training, depending particularly on the type of provider they work for. As regards education at public schools and universities the general requirements for entrance to the teaching profession apply (compare Chapter 6). In both non-profit and commercial adult education, experts from companies and freelancing professionals may also work as teachers, with permanent staff in the respective institution being mainly concerned with administrative work.

According to KEBÖ statistics of 2007 (Conference of Adult Education Providers in Austria – *Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs*) a total of 5 133 employees of its members worked full-time, 1 500 of whom in teaching in 2006/07. Another 51 626 persons worked part-time in the KEBÖ institutions. If unpaid volunteers are added the total number of persons working in adult education and training was almost 84 000.

The programmes of all major adult education providers, of the *Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung St. Wolfgang* (BIfEB, Federal Institute for Adult Education), as well as some universities and other institutions, feature didactically oriented training programmes for trainers and associate lecturers. The Institute acts as an education and training institute for adult education trainers across institutions, and is also a platform for networking and new development in the qualification and professionalization of adult education staff.

This also applies to the *Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich* (wba, CVET Academy). The Academy, which has existed since 1 February 2007, has served to make an essential contribution to increasing and assuring the qualifications and quality of trainers in adult education. The CVET Academy (<http://www.wba.or.at/>) offers people active in adult education (teachers, education managers, counsellors, librarians) the possibility to have credits awarded and obtain a widely recognised professional or practical certificate and diploma (2 levels, a total of 60 ECTS points). Competences

already acquired formally and non-formally or informally are recognised in a special recognition procedure, and any competences adult educators are lacking can then be acquired at different educational establishments. The idea is that following the successful completion of wba courses, candidates have access to different educational career options at university whereby credit will be given for competences acquired through wba and thus reducing the length of study at university. wba was developed jointly by leading associations in adult education organised under KEBÖ and major academic/scientific institutions. wba is maintained by the *Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung St. Wolfgang* (Federal Institute for Adult Education).

For the future, substantial improvements are also expected to come from the institutional upgrading of the former *Pädagogischen Akademien* (teacher training academies) to *Pädagogischen Hochschulen* (teacher training colleges), which may also provide courses for adult education teachers.



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