



# Austria

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## Principles and general objectives of education

According to the School Organization Act of 25 July 1962 “it shall be the task of the Austrian school to foster the development of the talents and potential abilities of young persons in accordance with ethical, religious and social values and the appreciation of that which is true, good, and beautiful, by giving them an education corresponding to their respective stages of development and their respective courses of study. It shall give young people the knowledge and skills required for their future lives and occupations and train them to acquire knowledge on their own initiative.

“Young people shall be trained to become healthy, capable, conscientious and responsible members of society and citizens of the democratic and federal Republic of Austria. They shall be encouraged to develop an independent judgment and social understanding, to be open-minded to the philosophy and political thinking of others, they shall be enabled to participate in the economic and cultural life of Austria, of Europe, and of the world, and to make their contribution, in love of freedom and peace, to the common tasks of mankind.” (Section 2).

Section 4 provides that “entry into every school shall be common to all, without discrimination as to birth, gender, race, social background, class, language, or religion.”

## Current educational priorities and concerns

In 1995 a fundamental school reform was started. It provided for autonomy of schools, giving them the possibility to develop their own specific school profiles and to establish areas of emphasis. In 1999 a new curriculum was introduced for the lower level of academic secondary school and general secondary school, which consists of core and extension areas. A new curriculum for the upper level has been developed as well, being implemented starting from 2004/05. (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2004).

In 1996, the legal basis for the further integration of special needs children into the mainstream system was introduced. Since the beginning of the school year 1997/98, integrated teaching has also been possible at general secondary schools, as well as at the lower level of academic secondary schools. Furthermore, the margin of school autonomous decision-making was enhanced by the latest amendment to the School Periods Act, entitling the bodies of pupils and parental co-determination (school-community committee, school forum) to give Saturdays off, provided that the number of weekly periods as laid down by the various curricula is kept.

The Universities Act of 2002 has been the basis of a profound reform of the university sector. The Act, which became fully effective in January 2004, establishes



a completely new framework for public universities. Although they remain institutions of public law, universities are no longer part of public administration, but are autonomous legal entities with full contractual capability. The federal authorities do not have any influence on decisions within universities, except for their competence to review whether these decisions are in accordance with the law. The internal structure of universities (faculties, departments etc.), except for the level of university management (university council, senate, rector), are no longer determined by federal legislation, but are decided upon by each institution itself within a given framework. Decisions concerning staffing and the introduction of new study programmes are now the sole responsibility of universities, with the rector being the head of the university staff and the senate deciding upon curricula. (*National report of Austria within the framework of the Bologna process, 2004-2005*). The Universities Act of 2002 also provides the comprehensive legal framework for the implementation of the three-cycle degree structure in accordance with the Bologna process. Furthermore, teacher training colleges are being re-organized as teacher training universities (*Pädagogischen Hochschulen*) in accordance with the Teacher Education Act of 2005.

Within the framework of the National Lifelong Learning (LLL) Strategy until 2010, the top priority is increased individual support in the primary school sector and at secondary level I; the expansion of pre-school education; and further improvement of integration measures in these areas. Being a cross-curricular subject, ICT plays a key role: Overall, the ICT strategy is seen as a driving force for development processes, innovations and quality enhancement in all areas of the education system. The goal consists in integrating ICT and new media in educational policy developments (e.g. individual support, educational standards), as well as teaching comprehensive digital competences, thus guaranteeing universal access to education. In the process of establishing a coherent strategy, the following three challenges, in particular, must be overcome: (i) different responsibilities of the federal government, provincial governments and municipalities in individual segments of the education sector due to prevailing federal structures; new coordination structures and the establishment of new mechanisms of strategic cooperation are required; (ii) the tension between LLL as an overarching approach for the education sector as a whole and specific priorities within the adult and further education and training sector; (iii) increased strategic coordination of financing flows at federal level: due to different legal provisions and ministerial competences, new strategic coordination and efficiency enhancement instruments at the federal level need to be identified. (Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture, 2007).

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The Austrian school system reorganization began with the Acts passed in 1962. The first area to be regulated by an amendment to the **Federal Constitutional Act** of 18 July 1962, was the competency of federal and provincial authorities in the field of education and schooling (legislation and execution), thus establishing a basis for the 1962 school acts. This amendment defined the term 'statutory school-maintaining authority' as a federal or provincial agency or, with regard to compulsory schools, the local communities. Schools established and maintained by the statutory school-maintaining authority are public schools; they are universally accessible. Schools which are not public schools are private schools; they are accredited under the



provisions of the Private Schools Act. The 1962 amendment also provided the basis for the organization of the federal school authorities in the provinces and districts; these school authorities are termed provincial school boards and district school boards, respectively. According to the Constitution, all universities and universities of arts are public institutions. Academic freedoms—the freedom of research and teaching, as well as the freedom of artistic expression—are guaranteed as constitutional rights. Until 2002 federal laws regulated the affairs of universities and universities of arts, as higher education institutions were under the federal jurisdiction.

Under the **Federal School Inspection Act**, school administration and school inspection are carried out on behalf of the federal authorities by the Federal Ministry of Education (as the supreme authority), its subordinate provincial schools boards, and the district school boards responsible to the provincial school boards.

The **Compulsory Schooling Act** regulates compulsory general schooling between the ages of 6 and 15 years and compulsory vocational schooling which completes the training of apprentices in business and industry by part-time instruction at compulsory vocational schools (dual system of vocational training). Compulsory general schooling may be completed not only by attending a school, but also by receiving equivalent instruction.

The **Private Schools Act** regulates the establishment and operation of private schools and private student boarding houses, accreditation of private schools, subsidies to private schools, inspection of private schools, and administrative competencies. The **Vocational Training Act** (and subsequent amendments) regulates the vocational education and training sector.

The **School Organization Act** is the core of the 1962 school acts, containing for the first time an all-encompassing enumeration and systematic regulation of most types of schools. The **School Periods Act** of 1985 contains regulations concerning the school year, the instructional year, school days, holidays and vacations, lessons (periods) and breaks.

For the further development of the school system, two acts in the field of social policy must also be considered of major importance. The **Studies Promotion Act** of 1969 and the **Student Grants Act** of 1983 give students the legal right to study grants and talent scholarships (university and other post-secondary courses) or to school grants and boarding grants (secondary schools); social need and academic success as the prerequisites for such grants are defined, as well as their types and amounts, and questions of procedure. The internal rather than external organization of school instruction is the subject of the provisions of the **School Instruction Act**. This act applies to the types of school listed in the School Organization Act, with a few exceptions. An amendment passed in 1977 extended its coverage to the federal schools of agriculture and forestry.

The **Universities of the Arts Organization Act** of 1970 sets the legal framework for these institutions. The more detailed organizational structures of these institutions are regulated by a set of legal provisions. The Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna is a unique case, as it is regulated by a specific law, the **Academy Organization Act** of 1988.



The University Studies Act of 1997 established the general framework for university studies defining the general prerequisites for admission; content structure and organization; the types and details of examinations; the degree programmes; the minimum required duration of study; and academic degrees and titles. Curricular commissions at the individual universities are responsible for the detailed articulation of the content of degree programmes: the number and type of required and elective courses; subject distribution requirements; prerequisites; course sequences; types of examinations, etc. On 1 September 1999 an amendment to the University Studies Act came into force, creating the legal basis for the introduction of the bachelor's degree as the first university degree followed by master's degree studies. The **Academies Study Act** of 25 June 1999 defines the overall framework for the establishment of a system of initial and in-service training for all teachers (teacher training colleges). Teacher training colleges are being re-organized as teacher training universities (*Pädagogischen Hochschulen*) in accordance with the **Teacher Education Act** of 2005. The new **Universities Act** of 2002 provides the comprehensive legal framework for the implementation of the Bologna process.

As mentioned, the Universities Act of 2002, which became fully effective in January 2004, establishes a completely new framework for public universities. Although they remain institutions of public law, universities are no longer part of public administration, but are autonomous legal entities with full contractual capability. The federal authorities do not have any influence on decisions within universities, except for their competence to review whether these decisions are in accordance with the law. The internal structure of universities (faculties, departments etc.), except for the level of university management (university council, senate, rector), are no longer determined by federal legislation, but are decided upon by each institution itself within a given framework. Decisions concerning staffing and the introduction of new study programmes are now the sole responsibility of universities, with the rector being the head of the university staff and the senate deciding upon curricula. (*National report of Austria within the framework of the Bologna process, 2004-2005*). A 2006 amendment to the Universities Act created the legal basis for introducing doctoral degree programmes lasting three years (180 credits).

The **Universities of the Arts Studies Act** of 1983 established the framework for academic programmes at the universities of the arts. The Act established the principles and objectives that guide academic programmes, different types of degree programmes and categories of students, the organization of studies, the examination system, the number of degree programmes offered, and the procedures for determining the form and content of individual curricula. Commissions at the respective institutions are responsible for the articulation of the curricula of degree programmes.

The *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) sector was established in 1993 by the **Fachhochschul Studies Act**, which marked the end of the traditional monopoly of the federal government in establishing and funding tertiary institutions. The Act has been amended in 2002 in order to introduce two-cycle degree programmes in accordance with the Bologna process. The Act has been further amended in 2006.



The **University Accreditation Act** was adopted in 1999. It establishes the tasks and responsibilities of the Austrian Accreditation Council, an autonomous public authority subject to ministerial supervision, and provides a legal framework for the accreditation of private universities.

The Basic Law on the Universal Rights of Citizens of 1867 stipulates that teaching, research, and practice of the arts shall be free and that “everyone shall be free in choosing his occupation and in obtaining the necessary education and training how and where he wants” (Article 18). According to Section 5 of Article 17, the federal government has the right to direct, manage and supervise the school and education system.

Compulsory schooling lasts nine years. It extends to all children permanently residing in Austria regardless of their nationality. Compulsory school age starts on the 1st of September following the child’s sixth birthday. Parents are obliged to register their child at the competent school—in most cases the school nearest to the place of residence—and to make sure the child attends on a regular basis. Particular attention is given to children in need of special care. The right to education and the principle of equal educational opportunities are ensured by specific measures. An extensive system of educational counselling has been created in the country. All pupils receive the suitable and necessary textbooks free of charge and they have a legal title to free travel to and from school. In both cases, small deductibles apply.

Children may defer their (compulsory) enrolment in the first grade of primary education if they do not demonstrate the necessary maturity for school. Such deferral may be pronounced *ex officio* or upon application by the children’s parents. Children thus deferred from school attendance must or may (depending on how far away they live from the nearest pre-school institution) fulfil their first year of compulsory schooling at the pre-school stage (pre-school group/class).

## **Administration and management of the education system**

Decisions concerning innovations and/or reforms of the school system are taken by the Federal Parliament. Among the various federal ministries, the education and training system is under the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (until 2000, the Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs). Following a recent re-organization of the federal ministries, as of 1 March 2007 the ministry has been renamed as the **Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture**. Full or partial competencies for certain areas or marginal zones of the educational system lie with the Federal Chancellor’s Office and with the ministries of: Finance, Environment, Youth and Family Affairs, Agriculture and Forestry, as well as Economic Affairs.

The Federation has exclusive responsibility for legislation and implementation with regard to the entire system of general secondary schooling, intermediate and upper technical and vocational education and training for kindergarten teaching and non-teaching staff, and with regard to the conditions of service and staff representation rights of teachers at these schools. The Federation is responsible for legislation, and the nine individual provinces (*Länder*) are responsible for



implementation with regard to the conditions of service and staff representation rights of teachers at public sector schools of compulsory education. The Federation is responsible for basic legislation, and the provinces are responsible for issuing and implementing laws with regard to the organizational structure of federal education authorities in the provinces and the external organization of public sector schools of compulsory education. External organization includes the development, construction, maintenance and approval of schools, but also the establishment of pupil numbers per class and teaching periods. All basic legislation has a framework character and is expressed through implementing laws promulgated by the *Landtage*, the legislative bodies at province level. The provinces are responsible for legislation and implementation as, for example, with regard to nursery schools (kindergartens).

Separate federal bodies have been established wherever the Federation is responsible for implementation. These are: District School Boards at the level of political 'districts'; Provincial School Boards at the level of the provinces; and the Federal Ministry of Education for the entire territory. The District and Provincial School Boards are the federal school authorities in the provinces. The system of administration is characterized by a two-tier hierarchy. Provincial School Boards have designated jurisdiction in matters referred to a District School Board, while the Federal Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs deals with cases referred to Provincial School Boards in the first instance.

**Provincial School Boards** are directed by the Provincial Governor (as chairman of the Provincial School Board); for all practical purposes he/she is assisted in the fulfilment of his/her duties by an Executive Chairman. The central body within a Provincial School Board is the **Collegiate Council**, made up of voting members and members with consultative status. It is one of the major tasks of the Collegiate Council to submit proposals for the appointment of teachers and head teachers at intermediate and upper secondary schools. Collegiate Councils also issue general directives on existing laws and ordinances (e.g. curricula) and submit expert opinions on draft laws and regulations.

**District School Boards** are headed by the District Governor. The Collegiate Councils at district level are structured and set up on the same basis as those at provincial level. The Collegiate Council at district level issues general directives and submits expert opinions on draft laws and regulations, for example with regard to curricula.

The implementation of matters falling under the responsibility of the individual provinces is carried out by executive authorities at provincial level, i.e. the **Offices of the Provincial Government**. Their most important task is the maintenance of public sector schools of general compulsory education and the appointment of teachers and head teachers at these schools. However, in all those matters not set down in law the District and Provincial School Boards have to be consulted. As established by law, school representatives (heads, teachers, teachers' conferences, examination boards, parents' and pupils' representative bodies) retain some essential decision-taking powers (school autonomy).

Moreover, federal ministries, provincial governments and the federal school authorities in the provinces are given an opportunity to comment on bills and



proposed ordinances before their adoption. In addition, in each case the relevant stakeholders are also contacted, including employers' and employees' organizations, teachers' organizations (particularly in school matters), parents' associations and young people's associations.

The **Austrian Accreditation Council** is an autonomous public authority subject to ministerial supervision. The Council is responsible for the accreditation of private higher education institutions or of study programmes at already accredited private universities. In addition, it monitors the private university sector and the maintenance of general standards.

The **Universities of Applied Sciences Council** (*Fachhochschulrat*) is an independent public authority subject to ministerial supervision, and carries out the accreditation of universities of applied sciences and/or their programmes. Its functions include accreditation, advice to the ministry, the promotion of the quality of teaching and learning, innovation and further education, as well as the monitoring of the *Fachhochschulen* sector.

After the approval of its statutes in late 2003, the **Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance** (AQA) started its operations in spring 2004. The AQA is a joint initiative of the Rectors' Conference, the Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (FHK), the Association of Private Universities, the Austrian Students Union (OH) and the Federal Ministry of Education. The Agency is responsible for quality assurance and the evaluation of public and private universities, universities of applied sciences and (in the future) teacher training colleges. The Agency's functions include the development of evaluation standards and procedures, the coordination of the evaluation process of study programmes and institutions as well as the certification of institutional quality assurance processes. The AQA assists all higher education institutions, i.e. universities, universities of applied sciences and teacher training universities (based on the Teacher Education Act of 2005), in creating their quality management systems.

Advisory bodies have been set up and attached to the Federal Ministry of Education, mainly to advise the Federal Minister. Following a referendum in the spring of 1969, a **School Reform Commission** was established. The Commission has been discussing a reform of the entire system of educational aims, contents, structures, and methods. It is composed of members delegated by the political parties represented in the National Council, the provincial school boards, the lobbies, as well as university professors of education.

The **Centre for School Development** of the Federal Ministry of Education is mainly responsible for: providing scientific support and counselling on issues such as school development and planning for innovation; analysis of research findings (at both national and international level); evaluation of innovation and pilot projects having an impact on national education policies; planning and organizing studies on relevant issues for educational policies; international cooperation on school and quality development; development activities on minority schooling, integration of special needs pupils into mainstream schools, instruction of children with a non-German mother tongue, and intercultural learning.



The **Advisory Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training** consists of representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education; the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs (responsible for the company part of dual-system training); the Federal Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (responsible for labour-market policy); representatives of the Austrian Chamber of Labour, the Austrian Trade Union Congress, the Federal Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Austrian Industrials, the Austrian Federal Youth Ring (head organization of Austrian youth associations), as well as the vocational school teachers' section of the Austrian Trade Union Congress.

In addition, two advisory boards within the Federal Ministry of Education provide advice to the Minister: the **Parents' Advisory Board** (since 1958) and the **Federal Pupils' Representation** (since 1971), comprised of provincial school speakers, representatives of schools directly subordinate to the Ministry, and representatives of youth organizations. The provincial school boards also have parents' and pupils' advisory boards.

There are also expert commissions for the approbation of instructional media. Each means of instruction for which approbation is necessary and requested by the author, editor, publisher or producer, has to be referred to the competent expert commission(s). Instructional media for which approbation has been obtained can be used at schools. In the case where other media are used, the teacher bears the responsibility for their suitability.

In the field of adult education, the **Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions** has existed since 1972, including the most important non-profit adult education providers. As a permanent institution, it represents adult education vis-à-vis the federal government, the other sectors of education, the Austrian Radio and Television (ORF), etc.

Legal instances for **school inspection** are, in most cases, the district school boards, the provincial school boards, and—as the supreme instance—the Federal Ministry of Education. There are provincial school inspectors for the various types of school. Provincial school inspectors for the compulsory general schools have district school inspectors as subordinates; for the compulsory vocational schools their subordinates are compulsory vocational school inspectors. Provincial school inspectors for medium- and upper-level secondary colleges are often assisted by inspectors or experts for the various subjects.

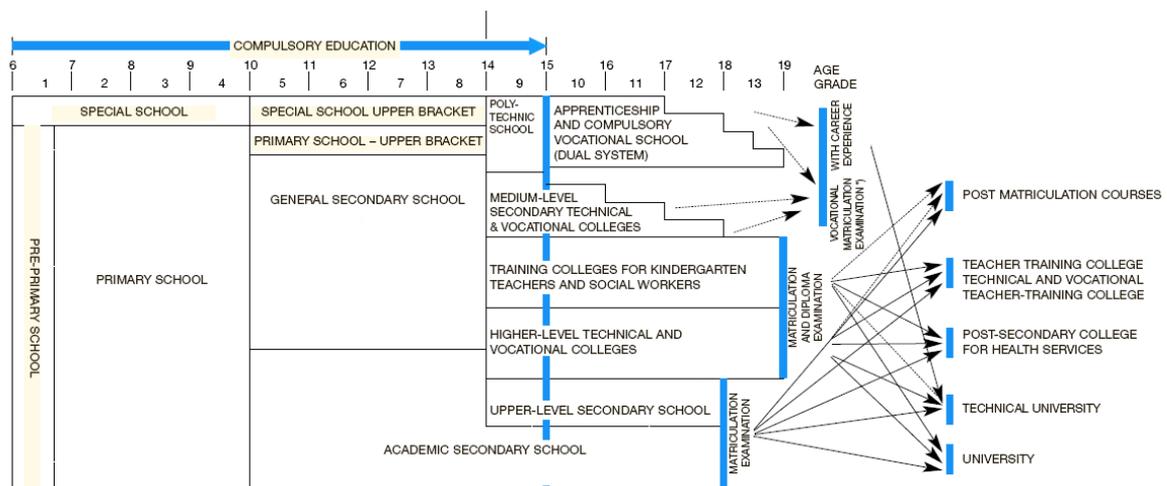
At secondary schools, **school community committees** exist, in which parents, teachers, and pupils are represented. They have a decision-making capacity in school questions, including: the planning of school events; the carrying out of parents consultations days; school regulations; events in connection with career counselling; as well as health care. The school community committee also has a decision-making capacity in defining the extent of pupils co-determination. In this connection, the rights of parents and pupils are fairly extensive. Thus, parents not only have the duty, but also the right of supporting instructional and educational work. Pupils representatives have a right to information and co-determination: in the selection of instruction media; in the organization of instruction; and— from the ninth grade onward—when school expulsion of a pupil is involved.

At primary schools, general secondary schools (*Hauptschulen*) and special schools, **class forums** have been established, including the class teacher and the parents. Essentially, this class forum has the rights of a school community committee, insofar as class problems are concerned. With regard to problems concerning several classes or the entire school a **school forum** is responsible.

The variety of the educational offerings and the increasing diversification of educational programmes require in-depth and efficient counselling. At all schools throughout the country (except primary schools), approximately 2,500 **pupils' counsellors** and **educational advisors** provide counselling services. They are full-time teachers, partially exempted from teaching in order to be able to concentrate on counselling activities. They receive continuous in-service training by the Federal Ministry of Education.

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Austria: structure of the education system



Most educational qualifications can also be obtained at schools for part-time students and by means of external examinations.

\*) By passing the vocational matriculation examination, graduates of the dual system and those who have attended medium-level secondary technical and vocational college for at least three years qualify for admission to universities, technical universities, post-secondary colleges and post matriculation courses.

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2006.

### Pre-school education

Nursery school (kindergarten) is the traditional form of pre-primary education for children aged 3 to 6. However, it does not form part of the education system. Nursery education is optional and children attend at their parents' initiative. Children up to 3 years of age may attend a crèche if available.

### Primary education

Primary education is compulsory for all children aged 6. It covers four years and generally is provided at the primary (elementary) school (*Grundschule*). Children with special education needs either attend special schools, which are run in parallel to the



primary school system, or are integrated into mainstream primary schools. The upper cycle of primary education (Grades V to VIII, corresponding to lower secondary education) is provided at the *Volksschule*, although is still offered in a few locations.

## Secondary education

Secondary education is provided at different types of schools. The general secondary school (*Hauptschule*) covers Grades V-VIII (lower secondary education) and offers further general education; in the last two years 'career orientation' classes prepare students for work. Students with an appropriate level of achievement can transfer to the academic secondary school; otherwise they enter medium-level or higher-level technical and vocational education colleges, or enrol in the one-year polytechnic school (sometimes including a voluntary tenth grade). The academic secondary school (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule–AHS*) comprises a four-year lower level (*AHS–Unterstufe*, ages 10-14) and a four-year upper level (*AHS–Oberstufe*, ages 14-18), culminating in the matriculation examination. The first two years (Forms I and II) are common for all students. The third and the fourth years (Forms III and IV) are divided into three types: *Gymnasium* (focus on languages), *Realgymnasium* (focus on mathematics, science, descriptive geometry and handicraft), and *Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium* (focus on chemistry, biology, psychology, home economics and nutrition and handicraft). In Forms V-VIII, in addition to the three types of gymnasium there is also a separate upper-level type of gymnasium (*Oberstufenrealgymnasium*). Students having completed Grade VIII can also enter: (i) training colleges for kindergarten teachers and social workers, which offer five-year programmes culminating in the matriculation and diploma examination; (ii) medium-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges offer programmes lasting one to four years; students completing three- and four-year programmes sit the vocational matriculation examination; (iii) higher-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges offer five-year programmes leading to the matriculation and diploma examination.

The polytechnic school (*Polytechnische Schule*) offer basic vocational training to students having completed Grade VIII and wishing to learn an occupation (one-year programme, sometimes including a voluntary tenth year). Vocational training is provided to a considerable extent through the apprenticeship training scheme (*dual system*: training in business or industry, combined with theoretical instruction at the compulsory vocational school). A wide range of training programmes in different occupations and trades are offered under the apprenticeship scheme, lasting between two and four years (three years being the average duration). Apprentices attend compulsory vocational school by age groups on at least one day of the week, or in blocks (*course design*) covering at least eight weeks per year. At the end of the apprenticeship training, students sit the vocational matriculation examination.

The higher education system comprises: post-secondary training institutions (mainly medical and technical colleges offering two-year programmes as well as agricultural and military colleges), teacher training colleges (offering three-year programmes and being re-organized as teacher training universities, i.e. *Pädagogischen Hochschulen*), public and private universities, and universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*). Traditionally, university courses leading to a diploma degree (*Magister/Magistra - Mag.; Diplom-Ingenieur/Diplom-Ingenieurin -*



*Dipl.-Ing.* or *DI*; or *Dipl.-Tierarzt/Dipl.-Tierärztin*) are divided into two or three stages, each one ending with a diploma examination. Students having obtained a diploma degree are admitted to doctoral courses in their specialized, or a related, field of studies. Holders of a diploma degree are also entitled to enter postgraduate professional studies. Most traditional programmes last eight to eleven semesters (four to five and a half academic years). Doctoral courses take at least another two to four semesters to complete. The minimum duration of programmes in the field of medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry, is twelve semesters (long-cycle structure). The structure of the programmes in the field of art and music is similar to those at universities, lasting four to eight years. The duration of diploma degree programmes at the universities of applied sciences is usually four years. Within the framework of the implementation of the three-cycle degree structure of the Bologna process, higher education institutions (universities, universities of applied sciences, and in the future teacher training universities) started to offer bachelor's degree (lasting three to four years) and master's degree (lasting one to two years) programmes; doctoral degree programmes will take at least three years to complete. At the end of 2006, about 42% of university programmes and 77% of programmes offered at universities of applied sciences were organized around the bachelor's-master's degree structure.

Depending on the respective province, the school year in Austria starts on the first or second Monday in September and ends on the Friday between 27 June and 3 July, or 4 and 10 July. On average, a school year consists of 180 instructional days (about 215 school days per year on the basis of a six-day week). Headmasters must see to it that the total number of teaching periods per week units established for the curriculum is evenly spread over the days of the week.

## The financing of education

Compulsory education schools (primary and general secondary schools, special schools, pre-vocational 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, vocational schools are maintained by the provinces. The largest share comes from the federal budget. Most federal expenditures on education are funded by the Federal Ministry of Education. Other ministries also contribute to investments in the education sector, such as the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour (school maintenance and construction of new schools).

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 federal government in the process of fiscal adjustment. In the case of compulsory vocational school teachers, this refund is granted only up to 50%. Middle and upper-level secondary schools/colleges are established and maintained by the federal government, which bears the full cost, including teachers' salaries.



Public compulsory education schools 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. Intermediate and upper secondary schools are established and maintained by the federal government, which bears the full cost, including teachers' salaries.

The universities remain largely state-funded. As of 2007, universities receive 80% of their overall budget on the basis of three-year performance contracts between the federal government and each individual institution. The rest will be allocated to universities according to a set of indicators. All public funding is disbursed in lump sums. The University Centre for Continuing Education in Krems is funded from federal contributions and funds provided by the Province of Lower Austria (building, operating cost for the building), as well as from tuition fees.

Universities of applied sciences may be operated by the federal government and by any other corporate body under public or private law. The federal government funds private-law providers according to a standard costing system; 90% of the standard costs are borne by the federal government. Depending on the orientation of a particular programme, a certain amount is granted per study place and study year by the federal government. Investments for buildings and other infrastructure are funded by the providing entities from other sources (the provinces, local communities, sponsors).

According to national data, in 2001 public spending on education amounted to approximately 12.3 billion of euros or 5.8% of the total gross domestic product. In 2002, federal funds allocated to pre-tertiary education, tertiary education and scientific research accounted for 13.7% of the total federal budget.

According to Eurostat, the total public expenditure on education represented 5.45% of GDP in 2004.

## **The educational process**

The Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture promulgates curricula on the basis of the School Organization Act. All curricula provide for areas of school autonomy, which schools can but are not required to use. The Ministry endorses textbook lists for every subject. While there is no ban on selecting non-listed textbooks, these will not be made available free of charge. The preparatory work for curricular development has been entrusted to teachers' working groups set up for virtually all subjects. Within the framework of lists approved by the Ministry, textbooks are selected by Teachers' Conferences which are established by law and which, together with the school head and school partnership bodies, comprise the decision-making bodies within a school.

Starting from the school year 1993/94, the 14th amendment to the School Organization Act empowered schools to issue their own curricular regulations autonomously by a two-thirds vote of the School Committee or the School Forum.



The former consists of teachers', pupils' and parents' representatives, while in the latter, which is established in compulsory schools, only teachers and parents are involved. General secondary schools and academic secondary schools dispose of a number of lessons that can be used on the basis of local decisions. Provisions governing school autonomy at pre-vocational schools enable a flexible response to the vocational interests of pupils and the respective demands of the particular region.

## Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education includes all measures to promote the full development of the personality of a child from birth to school age. With regard to pre-primary education in the family, the aim is to maintain the child's family context (e.g., by the legally guaranteed right of working mothers/fathers to a subsidized leave of absence). A wide variety of activities for the promotion of parents' educational capabilities is undertaken, both under the auspices of institutions of adult education and by the competent provincial and federal authorities.

With regard to the facilities for complementing education in the family, there are crèches for children up to 3 years of age. Kindergartens are for the 3- to 6-year-olds, although they increasingly admit children who have not yet reached 3 years of age. The nursery school system is entrusted to the provinces in both legislative and executive matters. There are nine different Provincial Nursery School Acts (identical in their essential points) which correspond to the number of Austrian provinces. In general, kindergarten (nursery school) aims to: support and complement education within the family (special emphasis is placed on cooperation with parents or guardians); promote the individual development of children through appropriate measures as well as social interaction of peers; impart an elementary religious and moral education; and 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 appropriate methods of early childhood education" and "by excluding any form of school-like instruction".

Nursery schooling, which rests on parental initiative and is voluntary, focuses on whole development of the child's personality. To reach this objective, kindergartens are run in small, generally co-educational groups, taking individual styles and approaches into account and providing a systematic offer of different games and materials. First and foremost, a child at nursery school should have the chance of gaining experience through appropriate playing activities without the pressure of time or achievement. Model approaches are often applied to integrate children with special needs into mainstream groups.

There are public kindergartens (established and maintained by the federal government, the provinces, or the municipalities) and private kindergartens. Some of the private kindergartens are self-administered by non-teaching supervisory staff and parents as autonomous groups. About one half of the kindergartens are operated by public providers (mainly the municipalities). Nursery schooling is either full-day or half-day.

Staff and operational costs are generally borne by the maintaining body. The contributions made by the provinces to the cost of establishing and operating a



kindergarten vary considerably; this is in particular true of private kindergartens. Private kindergartens which are run by associations, churches or religious orders will receive grants towards meeting the cost of staff and overheads upon certain conditions, either on a discretionary basis, or according to a fixed percentage rate in accordance with the applicable Nursery School Act. Private kindergartens run by other entities than the above-mentioned generally do not receive any financial support. Monthly fees also vary greatly. Some kindergartens do not charge any fees at all, while many communities will collect a kindergarten attendance fee according to a graded scheme adjusted to net family income. Private kindergartens, similarly, charge varying amounts.

Children who have not yet attained school maturity may complete the first year of compulsory education at pre-school classes or groups. Depending on the number of children, the pre-school stage will be run as a class or a group. Pre-primary classes are run with more than ten children (twenty weekly units); less than ten children form a pre-school group (8-10 weekly units). Pre-school classes and groups form an independent part of primary schools and do not belong to the kindergarten system. The curriculum of these classes/groups includes a number of compulsory subjects. Children have to attend instruction but are not graded at the end of the year, and receive only an attendance certificate. Compulsory subjects include: religious instruction, reading, writing, speaking, the environment, arithmetic, music and singing, artistic education, physical education, and road safety.

In 2003/04, there were 753 crèches with 13,141 children and 3,546 caregivers; the number of kindergartens was 4,892 with 210,848 children and 26,782 staff members. In 2005/06, 66.3 % of all 3-year-olds, 89.8% of all 4-year-olds and 91.9% of all 5-year-olds attended pre-compulsory education.

## Primary education

Primary education should lay the basis for a successful learning experience in secondary education. On the basis of pupils' individual backgrounds, the primary school (*Grundschule*) is expected to: arouse and nurture the eagerness to learn, and the skills, interests and talents; strengthen and develop pupils' faith in their own achievement; strengthen or build social competences (responsible behaviour, cooperation, adjustment, development and acceptance of rules and norms; sense of criticism); improve language skills (communication, expression); develop elementary knowledge, skills, insights and attitudes with a view to the acquisition of the 'three Rs' (including the use of modern communication and information technologies in a child-appropriate manner), of sound environmental behaviour and understanding, and a general development of artistic, manual and physical skills; contribute towards the formation of appropriate attitudes towards learning and working (perseverance, meticulousness, exactness, helpfulness, considerateness); promote the transition from the play-oriented forms of learning in pre-school education to a purposeful, independent and achievement-based learning process.

Classes are co-educational. Every primary school grade corresponds to one class (pupil numbers permitting). If the number of pupils in each grade is too small, several grades may be combined in one class. Pre-school classes are often accommodated in a primary school, which can be located in the same building or one



that is adjacent to a secondary general school, depending on the local situation. The teaching-learning process is carried out by the class teacher (excepting religious instruction and partly technical and/or textile work). The upper cycle of primary school, covering four years (Grades V-VIII, corresponding to lower secondary education), is offered at the *Volksschule* in a few locations and only in sparsely populated regions (particularly in Tyrol). Admission to Grade V and attendance in Grades V-VIII is allowed provided that attendance at a general secondary school does not appear feasible (owing to the school's distance from the pupil's home). Since the upper cycle of primary school is available in extremely few places, no separate curriculum was introduced for it; rather, it is governed by the curriculum of general secondary school.

The primary school curriculum consists of a framework to be filled in by the teacher's pedagogical work, rather than a codification of educational subject matter and content in a fixed amount and a precisely defined sequence. While this permits the application of a nationwide curriculum, limited shifts of subject matter and additional content based on local conditions are also possible. Thus the number of weekly periods assigned to individual compulsory subjects may be determined by the provincial school board (depending on local conditions), within the limits given in the distribution of class periods. Moreover, there is the possibility of offering optional subjects and optional exercises, which are intended to cater to individual talents and preferences. There is a general framework for the total number of weekly lessons in the different grades. Within that framework, the weekly lessons per year may be increased or lowered by no more than one weekly period in the individual compulsory subjects and in the compulsory exercise 'modern foreign language', yet no more than by two weekly lessons altogether. It is not permitted to cancel any subject for a year.

The weekly lesson timetable for primary school (in 2001 and 2007) is shown below:

### Primary education: weekly lesson timetable (2001)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2
Local history, geography, biology	3	3	3	3
German language (reading & writing)	7	7	–	–
German language (reading)	–	–	7	7
Mathematics	4	4	4	4
Music	1	1	1	1
Drawing	1	1	–	–
Drawing, writing	–	–	2	2
Handicraft	1	1	2	2
Physical education	2	2	3	3
<i>Compulsory practical exercises:</i>				
Modern foreign language	A	A	1	1
Road safety education	B	B	B	B
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>

*Source:* Federal Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes. A = thirty-two lessons per year to be planned without modifying the total number of weekly periods (teaching a modern foreign language in Grade I became compulsory in 2003). B = ten lessons per year to be planned without modifying the total number of weekly periods.

### Primary education: weekly lesson timetable (2007)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
Religion	2	2	2	2
Local history, geography, biology (*)	3	3	3	3
German language, 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 education	3	3	2	2
<i>Compulsory exercises:</i>				
Modern foreign language	A	A	1	1
Road safety education	B	B	B	B
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>20-23</b>	<b>20-23</b>	<b>22-25</b>	<b>22-25</b>
Remedial instruction (**)	1	1	1	1

*Source:* Federal Ministry of Education, 2007. (\*) *Sachunterricht* (\*\*) Offered as interdisciplinary area depending on the needs of the class and the year; remedial classes may be added or be an integral part of instruction. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes. A = thirty-two lessons per year (English, French, Italian, Croatian, Slovak, Slovene, Czech or Hungarian) integrated into the different teaching subjects without modifying the total number of weekly periods. B = ten lessons per year within the framework of the total number of weekly periods available.



Although the contents taught at the primary school are divided into different subjects, a strict division of contents by learning subjects should be avoided for all practical purposes. As classroom instruction is to be based on the experiences, interests and needs of children, learning approaches are situational and interdisciplinary. Moreover, the school has many educational tasks to accomplish for which an interdisciplinary approach must be applied. These ‘didactic principles’ are: health education, reading, media education, music and arts education, political education (including education for peace), intercultural learning, sex education, speech, environmental education, road safety, and economics (including consumer behaviour), education for gender equality.

Schools for minorities or specific ethnic groups exist in the federal provinces of Burgenland (Croatian and Hungarian) and Carinthia (Slovenian). This means that, at these schools, elementary instruction is, as a rule, offered in two languages. In Carinthia, children are taught on the basis of the registration principle, i.e. parents have the possibility of registering their children for bilingual instruction. Children whose mother tongue is not German receive remedial instruction (mainly in the German language), either separately or as part of classroom instruction. In addition, auxiliary instruction of a general nature is given to pupils needing remedial training in German or mathematics. In 1993, a first step towards the integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools. The parents of children who are in need of special education are entitled to choose between instruction at a special school or at a primary school that meets the necessary framework requirements for integrated teaching. Classes with children in need of special education have less pupils and are provided with additional teaching staff for at least several days a week. The competences to legislate on this matter in detail lie with the provinces.

The first two years of primary education are considered as one unit. All first-graders are entitled to pass on to the second grade, regardless of their assessment in the annual report. As a general rule, pupils are entitled to pass the next grade if they have been assessed in all compulsory subjects and were never rated ‘insufficient’ (however, the law establishes the possibility of passing to the next grade in certain cases with one ‘insufficient’ rating). Pupils who are not entitled to pass to the next grade may repeat the grade in which they failed, provided that the maximum number of years of compulsory schooling (ten years) is not exceeded. In the course of the fourth grade, either towards the end of the first term or at the beginning of the second term of the school year, parents or guardians are provided further educational career recommendations for their child, based on his/her interests and past achievements. Successful completion of the fourth grade is a prerequisite for admission to general secondary school.

In order to be admitted to an academic secondary school, pupils must have been rated “very good” or “good” in German, reading and mathematics. However, this is not necessary if the school conference states that, in spite of a grade of “satisfactory” in these compulsory subjects, and judging from other achievements, the child will be able to meet the requirements of academic secondary school. Children failing to meet these requirements may be registered for an admission test by their parents or guardian (within a period of two weeks) with the school head of an academic secondary school. The above aptitude requirements will be waived if the admission test is successfully completed. This admission test covers the subject matter



in the fourth grade of primary school on a slightly more difficult level. It comprises both a written and an oral test. This admission test may not be repeated within the same school year.

In 1999/2000, there were 3,389 primary schools (including pre-primary education offered to 7,168 children in 673 pre-primary classes and groups) with 393,460 pupils enrolled. The number of teachers (including heads, full-time and part-time staff) was 33,903. The pupil-teacher ratio was 11.6:1 and the average number of pupils per class was 19.8. According to Statistics Austria, in 2004/05 there were 3,324 primary schools with 364,900 pupils enrolled. The total number of teachers was 31,726 (of whom 28,547 were women).

## Secondary education

As mentioned, secondary education is provided at different types of schools. The general secondary school (*Hauptschule*) covers Grades V-VIII (lower secondary education) and offers further general education; in the last two years 'career orientation' classes prepare students for work. Students with an appropriate level of achievement can transfer to the academic secondary school; otherwise they enter medium-level or higher-level technical and vocational education colleges, or enrol in the one-year polytechnic school (sometimes including a voluntary tenth grade). The academic secondary school (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule–AHS*) comprises a four-year lower level (*AHS–Unterstufe*, ages 10-14) and a four-year upper level (*AHS–Oberstufe*, ages 14-18), culminating in the matriculation examination. The first two years (Forms I and II) are common for all students. The third and the fourth years (Forms III and IV) are divided into three types: *Gymnasium* (focus on languages), *Realgymnasium* (focus on mathematics, science, descriptive geometry and handicraft), and *Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium* (focus on chemistry, biology, psychology, home economics and nutrition and handicraft). In Forms V-VIII, in addition to the three types of gymnasium there is also a separate upper-level type of gymnasium (*Oberstufenrealgymnasium*). Students having completed Grade VIII can also enter: (i) training colleges for kindergarten teachers and social workers, which offer five-year programmes culminating in the matriculation and diploma examination; (ii) medium-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges offer programmes lasting one to four years; students completing three- and four-year programmes sit the vocational matriculation examination; (iii) higher-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges offer five-year programmes leading to the matriculation and diploma examination.

General secondary schools are integrated in the respective communities, which results in a high degree of flexibility in adjusting to the different requirements of pupils (depending on the region, individual interests and talents, etc.). This flexibility has been enhanced by the introduction of school autonomy. General secondary school classes are organized as follows: (i) students are allocated to one of three ability groups in German, mathematics and modern foreign language after an observation period (of generally eight to ten weeks); the educational requirements and aims in the top ability group are congruent with those of academic secondary school; within one ability group pupils generally have approximately the same level of ability, although the possibility of internal differentiation exists; (ii) in all other subjects there is mixed ability teaching within established classes; (iii) students may be transferred to the next

higher or next lower ability group; (iv) compulsory preparative/remedial instruction is offered to pupils being upgraded to a higher group or facing downgrading; (v) students with good achievements in general secondary school may directly transfer to academic secondary school.

Completion of Grade VIII gives access to higher-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges. Some of these institutions, however, also require: entrance examinations, sometimes differing according to the type of the student's school of origin; transitional classes attendance; or aptitude tests (even though there is a growing tendency to abolish such tests). Grade VIII graduates may also pursue their education in a pre-vocational year offered by polytechnic schools or at compulsory vocational schools. In Austria, 100% of all students complete the compulsory education cycle, no matter in which school type. Approximately 99% of students opt for further educational training after completion of compulsory schooling.

The tables below show the weekly lesson timetable for the *Hauptschule* and the lower level of gymnasium (2001 and 2007):

**General secondary school (*Hauptschule*): weekly lesson timetable (2001)**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each year			
	I	II	III	IV
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2
German language	5	4	4	4
Modern foreign language	4	4	3	3
History and social studies	–	2	2	2
Geography and economics	2	2	2	2
Mathematics	4	4	4	4
Geometry	–	–	1	1.5
Biology, environmental education	2	2	2	2
Physics and chemistry	–	2	2	4
Music	2	2	2	1
Drawing, writing	2	2	2	2
Elementary technical work (*)	2	2	1.5	2
Textile work (*)	2	2	1.5	2
Nutrition and home economics	–	–	1.5	1.5
Physical education	4	4	3	3
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>

*Source:* Federal Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes. (\*) Alternative compulsory subject.

**General secondary school (*Hauptschule*): weekly lesson timetable (2007)**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each year			
	V	VI	VII	VIII
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2
German language	5	4	4	4
Modern foreign language (English)	4	4	3	3
History and social studies	–	2	2	2
Geography and economics	2	1	2	2
Mathematics	4	4	4	4
Geometric drawing	–	–	–	2
Biology, environmental science	2	2	1	2
Chemistry	–	–	–	2
Physics	–	1	2	2
Music	2	2	1	1
Arts	2	2	2	1
Technical work/Textile work (*)	2	1	2	2
Nutrition and home economics	–	1.5	1.5	–
Physical education	4	3	3	3
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>32</b>

*Source:* Federal Ministry of Education, 2007. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes. (\*) Alternative compulsory subject. In Forms III and IV 32 lessons of vocational orientation are integrated into compulsory subjects.

**Academic secondary school (gymnasium, lower level): weekly lesson timetable (2001)**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each year			
	I	II	III	IV
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2
German language	5	4	4	4
Modern foreign language	4	4	3	3
Latin	–	–	4	5
History and social studies	–	2	2	2
Geography and economics	2	2	2	2
Mathematics	4	4	3	3
Biology, environmental education	2	2	2	2
Chemistry	–	–	–	2
Physics	–	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2	1
Arts	2	2	2	2
Handicraft	2	2	–	–
Physical education	4	4	4	3
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>

*Source:* Federal Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes.

## Academic secondary school (gymnasium, lower level): weekly lesson timetable (2007)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each year			
	V	VI	VII	VIII
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2
German language	4	4	4	4
Modern foreign language	4	4	4 (3, 3)	3
Latin	–	–	4 (–, –)	3 (–, –)
History and social studies	–	2	2	2
Geography and economics	2	1	2 (2, 3)	2
Mathematics (*)	4	4	3 (4, 3)	3 (5, 3)
Biology, environmental education	2	2	1 (2, 1)	2
Chemistry	–	–	– (–, 2)	2
Physics	–	1	2	2
Music	2	2	2	1
Arts	2	2	2	2
Technology/Textile work (**)	2	2	– (2, 2)	– (2, 3)
Physical education	4	4	3	3
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31 (30,31)</b>	<b>31 (32,31)</b>

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, 2007. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes.

Note: Within the brackets, the first figure refers to the gymnasium emphasizing mathematics and science, the second refers to the gymnasium emphasizing economics.

(\*) Including geometry for the *Realgymnasium*; (\*\*) alternative compulsory subject.

In 2004/05 there were 1,170 general secondary schools with 269,418 students enrolled. The number of teaching staff was 32,264. The pupils/teacher ratio was 8:1 and the average number of pupils per class was 23.2.

The academic secondary school (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule–AHS*) comprises two four-year levels (lower and upper level), culminating in the matriculation examination (*Reifeprüfung*). Students having passed this examination obtain a matriculation examination certificate (*Reifeprüfungszeugnis*) and are called *Maturanten* (higher-level secondary school graduates). The matriculation examination certificate gives access to universities, higher technical colleges and academies (students may be required to sit additional examinations in some subjects) as well as to the civil service. The school-leaving examination is organized as follows: several equivalent examination options; requirement of seven partial examinations (some written, some oral) in at least four different subject areas; compulsory written examinations in German, a foreign language and mathematics; and compulsory oral examination in a modern foreign language.

Admission to the first year of AHS requires the successful completion of the fourth grade of primary school normally with “very good” or “good” marks in German, reading and mathematics, or an entrance examination. Admission from a general secondary school requires a yearly report showing “excellent achievement” or the remark that in the subsequent year at *Hauptschule* the student would be eligible to attend the top achievement group in German, modern languages and mathematics. “Satisfactory” is the minimum requirement for other required subjects, or an entrance examination.



The curricula of the first two years at lower level are common for all AHS types. In the third and the fourth year, the *Gymnasium* offers Latin or alternatively a second modern language; the *Realgymnasium* offers geometric drawing, more mathematics, physics; technical or textile handicrafts; and the *Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium* offers more chemistry, technical or textile handicrafts. At the upper level (Years 5 to 8) the *Gymnasium* offers: Latin (continuation of lower level Latin or commencement of a shortened course); starting in the fifth year, Greek or a second modern language (start or continuation with third year). The *Realgymnasium* offers: more mathematics; starting in the fifth form, Latin (Latin studies started in the lower level of *Gymnasium* may be continued) or a second modern language; in addition, descriptive geometry or more biology and environmental science, chemistry, physics. The *Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium* (home-economics type) offers: starting in the fifth form, a second modern language or Latin, and in addition: home economics and nutrition, more geography and economics, psychology and philosophy (including practical courses). The separate upper-level type of gymnasium (*Oberstufenrealgymnasium*) offers: starting in the fifth form, a second modern language or Latin, and in addition: instrumental music or fine arts and handicraft, or descriptive geometry and more mathematics or more biology and environmental science, chemistry, physics (and mathematics). For all types of gymnasia: in the sixth (seventh) to eighth form, alternative required subjects must be chosen for six (*Gymnasium*, *Oberstufenrealgymnasium*), eight (*Realgymnasium*) or ten (*wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium*) periods a week. The number of periods may be changed autonomously by each school (from a minimum of four to a maximum of ten periods).

The tables below show the weekly lesson timetables for some upper-level types of gymnasium:

**Academic secondary school (gymnasium, upper level): weekly lesson timetable (2007)**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each year			
	IX	X	XI	XII
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2
German language	3	3	3	3
Modern foreign language	3	3	3	3
Latin	3	3	3	3
Greek/Modern foreign language (*)	3	3	3	3
History/social studies/civic education	1	2	2	2
Geography and economics	2	1	2	2
Mathematics	3	3	3	3
Biology, environmental education	2	2	–	2
Chemistry	–	–	2	2
Physics	–	3	2	2
Psychology and Philosophy	–	–	2	2
Informatics	2	–	–	–
Music	2	1	} 2(*)	2(*)
Arts	2	1		
Physical education	3	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>
Compulsory electives (**)			6	

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, 2007. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes. (\*) Alternative compulsory subject. (\*\*) A total of six periods to be distributed in Forms X-XII.

**Academic secondary school (upper level of gymnasium emphasizing economics): weekly lesson timetable (2007)**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each year			
	IX	X	XI	XII
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2
German language	3	3	3	3
Modern foreign language	3	3	3	3
Second modern foreign language/Latin (*)	3	3	3	3
History/social studies/civic education	1	2	2	2
Geography and economics	2	1	3	3
Mathematics	3	3	3	3
Biology, environmental education	2	3	–	2
Chemistry	–	–	2	2
Physics	–	3	2	2
Home economics and nutrition (theoretical)				
Psychology and Philosophy (including internship)	–	1	2	2
Informatics	2	–	–	–
Music	2	1	} 2(*)	2(*)
Arts	2	1		
Physical education	3	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Compulsory electives (**)</b>			<b>10</b>	

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, 2007. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes. (\*) Alternative compulsory subject. (\*\*) A total of ten periods to be distributed in Forms X-XII.

**Academic secondary school (upper level of gymnasium emphasizing mathematics and science): weekly lesson timetable (2007)**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each year			
	IX	X	XI	XII
Religious instruction	2	2	2	2
German language	3	3	3	3
Modern foreign language	3	3	3	3
Second modern foreign language/Latin (*)	3	3	3	3
History/social studies/civic education	1	2	2	2
Geography and economics	2	1	2	2
Mathematics	4	4	3	3
Biology, environmental education	2	3	-/2	2
Chemistry	-	-	3	2/3
Physics	2	3	2	2/3
Descriptive geometry	-	-	2/-	2/-
Psychology and Philosophy	-	-	2	2
Informatics	2	-	-	-
Music	2	1	} 2(*)	2(*)
Arts	2	1		
Physical education	3	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>
Compulsory electives (**)			8	

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, 2007. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes. (\*) Alternative compulsory subject. (\*\*) A total of eight periods to be distributed in Forms X-XII.

In 2002/03 there were 327 academic secondary schools (lower and upper levels) with 189,753 students enrolled. The number of teaching staff was 19,690. The pupils/teacher ratio was 9.6:1 and the average number of pupils per class was 24.3.

The polytechnic school (*Polytechnische Schule*, PTS) offers basic vocational training to students having completed Grade VIII and wishing to learn an occupation (one-year programme, sometimes including a voluntary tenth year). In addition to general education students receive practical and career-related training in a variety of occupations, including construction, commerce, services and tourism. The curriculum also allows for a broad spectrum of voluntary interest- and performance-oriented subjects, special interest groups and remedial courses. A network of polytechnic schools is maintained throughout the country, and depending on local circumstances they are either run as independent schools or in organizational units together with academic secondary schools. In 2004/05, there were 276 PTS with 21,482 students enrolled.

Vocational training is provided to a considerable extent through the apprenticeship training scheme (*dual system*: training in business or industry, combined with theoretical instruction at the compulsory vocational school). A wide range of training programmes in different occupations and trades are offered under the apprenticeship scheme, lasting between two and four years (three years being the



average duration). Apprentices attend compulsory vocational school by age groups on at least one day of the week, or in blocks (*course design*) covering at least eight weeks per year. At the end of the apprenticeship training, students sit the vocational matriculation examination. In 2002/03 there were 176 part-time vocational schools and the total enrolment was 130,597 students.

There are several types of medium-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges, offering programmes lasting one to four years in a variety of fields, including: industry, trade and crafts (mostly four-year courses); business and administration (three-year courses); computer science (three-year courses); food and beverage industry (three-year courses); preparatory vocational qualification courses (lasting one or two years) for careers in social services, health, nutrition, business and tourism; etc. After completing at least a three-year programme, students can take additional courses (three years) to pass the matriculation and diploma exam. There are also special types of technical post-matriculation courses for graduates of some four-year programmes. In 2002/03 there were 439 medium-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges with 50,567 students enrolled.

Higher-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges offer five-year advanced vocational training programmes, culminating in the matriculation and diploma examination. This entitles successful students to admission to university (additional tests may be required for some courses of study), to tertiary-level colleges (students who have completed higher level technical and vocational colleges may receive credit for this, thereby shortening their courses by up to two semesters), and academies. Completion of occupational training courses also entitles students to admission to the various trades (and to practice regulated trades independently) as stipulated by the Trades Act. In each case, the regulations on occupational qualifications specify the examinations that must be taken and the duration of specialized vocational activities that must be completed. Once they have worked in their field for three years, graduates of most higher-level secondary industrial, agricultural and forestry colleges may apply to relevant federal ministries for authorization to use the professional title of *Ingenieur*. In 2003/04 there were 331 higher-level secondary technical and vocational education colleges with 137,115 students enrolled.

### **Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

Quality assurance within the school system is increasingly based on internal evaluation measures on part of the individual schools combined with external school inspection measures. Current developments in the area of school evaluation concentrate on the introduction of compulsory 'school programmes' which are to outline individual schools' objectives and plans for action. In addition to the meta-evaluation of school programmes and self-evaluation measures instigated by the school inspectorate, regional efforts directed towards quality assurance include the drafting of regional education plans and the establishment of an independent authority.

Different ideas and expectations are connected with the terms 'quality development' and 'quality control'. For this reason, the Federal Minister of Education initiated the project Quality in School (QIS) in September 1996. It aimed at



developing a framework programme for systematic quality development at schools, as well as, in the longer term, the creation of a quality-oriented comprehensive model for school development and school administration.

By means of this project, the Federal Ministry of Education wants to encourage and support schools in critically appraising, monitoring and further developing their own quality. The joint and systematic study of quality issues by the school partners is to become an integral part of school culture in the future. QIS defines a broad framework which is to embrace as many of the on-going initiatives in the field of school development (at regional and school level) as possible. This development focuses on the school development programme, which includes the school's mission statement and defines specific aims and measures to be taken in the different quality areas. The school development programme is an agreement for a defined period of time which has internal and external effect: as guidance for educational action and as information for the general public, as a planning instrument and as a yardstick by which to measure school development.

The school inspectorate primarily works at the level of the administrative districts and the provinces. There is no central and permanently established school inspectorate operated by the Federal Ministry for Education. School inspectors look into the quality of teaching and the implementation of administrative tasks. As a general rule, the school head and the teachers visited should be previously informed about an intended school inspection, without however thwarting the purpose of the exercise. For this reason, a decision on whether or not to give preliminary notice of a visit of a school inspector will be taken on a case-by-case basis. The school inspection ends with a meeting of the inspectors and the inspected teachers, which the school head may attend. This meeting is mainly advisory in nature. Not only should the detected shortcomings be emphasised, but also encouraging aspects. In addition to guidance provided by the school inspection officials, the educational work at Austria's schools is scientifically monitored and evaluated by the Centre for School Development with departments in Vienna, Graz and Klagenfurt. The Centre has been evaluating national development projects which aim at creating new concepts for mathematics/natural science instruction. Furthermore, it has been working on integrated quality assurance strategies for the school sector, and on the development and assessment of national educational standards.

Primary schools as well as secondary stages I and II schools participated in the international comparative study 'Third International Mathematics and Science Study' (TIMSS) of the IEA (1995). Austria's results for secondary level II were rather poor (at primary level and secondary level I the country ranked in the upper third in terms of results achieved). After a first analysis it was decided to adopt measures to improve the situation. Austria's results in the 2003 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) study generated a heated educational policy debate.

## Higher education

The higher education system comprises: post-secondary training institutions (mainly medical and technical colleges offering two-year programmes as well as agricultural and military colleges), teacher training colleges (offering three-year programmes and being re-organized as teacher training universities, i.e. *Pädagogischen Hochschulen*),



public and private universities, and universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*).

Traditionally, university courses leading to a diploma degree (*Magister/Magistra - Mag.*; *Diplom-Ingenieur/Diplom-Ingenieurin - Dipl.-Ing.* or *DI*; or *Dipl.-Tierarzt/Dipl.-Tierärztin*) are divided into two or three stages, each one ending with a diploma examination. Students having obtained a diploma degree are admitted to doctoral courses in their specialized, or a related, field of studies. Holders of a diploma degree are also entitled to enter postgraduate professional studies. Most traditional programmes last eight to eleven semesters (four to five and a half academic years). Doctoral courses take at least another two to four semesters to complete. The minimum duration of programmes in the field of medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry, is twelve semesters (long-cycle structure). The structure of the programmes in the field of art and music is similar to those at universities, lasting four to eight years. The duration of diploma degree programmes at the universities of applied sciences is usually four years. Long-cycle programmes in medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry programmes last six years. Students are assessed by oral or written examinations for lecture courses. Final examinations are taken before a board of examiners. Diploma papers and doctoral theses are also considered for assessment.

On 1 September 1999 an amendment to the University Studies Act came into force, creating the legal basis for the introduction of the bachelor's degree as the first university degree followed by master's degree studies. Within the framework of the implementation of the three-cycle degree structure of the Bologna process, higher education institutions (universities, universities of applied sciences, and in the future teacher training universities) started to offer bachelor's degree (lasting three to four years) and master's degree (lasting one to two years) programmes; doctoral degree programmes will take at least three years to complete. At the end of 2006, about 42% of university programmes and 77% of programmes offered at universities of applied sciences were organized according to the bachelor's-master's degree structure. In 2004/05, universities offered a total of 351 study programmes, many of which at several locations.

Teacher training programmes at universities are defined as diploma studies. They culminate in graduation with an academic degree (*Magister/Magistra*) after nine semesters (four and a half years), passing two diploma examinations and with the acceptance of a diploma paper. Studies are to convey a scientific grounding for work as a teacher, in particular for instruction in generally two subjects at academic secondary schools. Graduation with a *Magister* diploma from a university teacher training programme does not entitle candidates to be appointed as teachers. Prior to service, graduates have to successfully complete a year of practice at school and complementary courses.

The matriculation examination certificate obtained from a higher-level secondary school is required for admission to all degree programmes at universities and for most non-degree programmes. The certificate entitles holders to enrol in university studies of their choice without any further limitation of access. For some courses, additional examinations have to be taken in subjects which are relevant for the study course in question; in some cases, applicants must demonstrate their artistic talents, practical skills, or physical aptitude. Since 2005, a new rule has been in force



regarding admissions. Admissions procedures were introduced for eight study programmes which are affected by the German *numerus clausus* restrictions. This new procedure applies until 2007 and allows universities to control the influx of students. Degree courses in medicine are particularly affected.

The 2002 Universities Act and introduced new mechanisms of supervision and cooperation in the universities sector (e.g. performance agreements, performance reports, intellectual capital reports, evaluation, global budgets including formula-based budget shares etc.). As far as evaluation is concerned, the Act obliges universities to set up their own quality management systems. Therefore, it is primarily the universities' responsibility to establish institutional mechanisms and structures which safeguard and promote teaching as well as research quality. Other fundamental principles laid down in the 2002 Universities Act are: freedom of scholarship and teaching, diversity of academic and art theory, methods and doctrines, student co-determination (particularly with respect to studies, teaching quality assurance and the use of university fees), national and international mobility for students, gender equality, equal opportunities for all, and special attention to the needs of the disabled.

The *Fachhochschule* Council determines the specific objectives of evaluation instruments, methodological principles and areas of evaluation, and how evaluation results are to be managed. In order to ensure uniform national standards with respect to evaluation methods and the comparability of evaluation reports, the Council published its most recent guidelines in 2005. Programmes, which are provided by various (mostly private) organizations, have to be formally accredited.

The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) was founded in 2003 as a non-profit association and started its activities in 2004. Its members are the Austrian Conference of Rectors, the Austrian National Union of Students, the Austrian Conference of *Fachhochschule* institutions, the Federal Ministry of Education, as well as a representative of the private universities. A scientific advisory council of international experts has been established in addition to the standard bodies. The general university-related tasks of the AQA are: the development of internationally comparable standards and of evaluation and quality assurance procedures; the coordination of external evaluations in teaching, research, development and the development of the arts, as well as administration and organization; the development and certification of quality assurance processes; information, counselling, further education and networking. The agency is also engaged in thematic evaluations, programme evaluations, and the evaluation of quality management processes at universities. Since 2004, the AQA has been administering the evaluation of the *Fachhochschule* sector.

Private universities have a high degree of autonomy regarding internal organization, recruiting and establishing new study programmes. The accreditation and supervision carried out by the Austrian Accreditation Council guarantees that the institutions meet internationally compatible quality standards. The accreditation process for private universities starts with an application for accreditation as a private university being submitted by an educational institution. After a formal examination of the documents, a member of the Accreditation Council is designated who will have primary responsibility for accompanying the procedure and visits the institution together with the experts. One of the evaluating experts will generally come from



abroad. The experts draft an opinion on the visit which is submitted to the institution for comment as part of their right to be heard. These documents, together with the comment by the educational institution, serve as a basis for decision-making by the Accreditation Council.

In 2006, the higher education network comprised: 22 public universities, including three medical universities, six universities of the arts and music, and the University of Continuing Education in Krems, which is governed by a separate legal framework; ten private higher education institutions (universities); 18 universities of applied sciences; and 27 teacher training colleges. A new institution, the Institute of Science and Technology–Austria (ISTA), mainly concentrating on research and PhD programmes was established in 2006. In 2005/06, the total enrolment below the doctoral level was as follows: 167,897 students at public universities; 25,727 students at universities of applied sciences; and 3,120 students at private universities. The total number of students enrolled in doctoral studies at universities was about 17,000. The total enrolment at teacher training colleges was 14,138 students. (*National report of Austria within the framework of the Bologna process, 2007*).

## Special education

Special schools at the primary level give remedial instruction to physically and/or mentally disabled children in a way adapted to their handicaps, so as to give them, if possible, an education corresponding to that of primary school. Entrance of a child into a special school is decided by the district school board, either on application of the parents, the head of the school, or the board's own motion. Before taking such a decision, the district school board must obtain the expert opinion of the head of the special school in question and, if necessary, of a school doctor or public health officer. An appeal from the decision of the district school board goes to the provincial school board, which may also order the submission of a psycho-pedagogical expert opinion.

Eleven different types of special schools corresponding to the different handicaps cater to the needs of disabled children. If a child is physically or mentally disabled to such a degree that he or she is unable to follow even special school instruction, he or she is exempted from compulsory general schooling. Children in need of special education may be integrated in mainstream primary education upon a request by their parents, provided that adequate framework criteria are met. The ultimate decision thereon lies with the district school board. Depending on the degree of their handicaps, children who need special education in a integrated educational environment follow the special school curricula, either in total or in combination with the primary school curricula.

In the academic year 1994/95, there were 517 special schools in Austria with attached special school classes. A total of 2,516 special school classes catered to 18,672 pupils.

The general-purpose special school and the special school for deaf-mute, blind, and seriously disabled children have special curricula. At special schools for physically handicapped, hard-of-hearing and visually handicapped children, the curricula of primary school or that of a different type of special school apply,



depending on the age and educability of the pupils. This is also true of the special hospital school with the restriction that the distribution of weekly class periods contained therein is replaced by weekly class periods in each subject. This is determined by the school head, on the basis of the expert opinion of the physician in charge of treatment and taking into account the pupils' state of health.

The Centres of Special Education are special schools which have the task of providing and coordinating measures in the field of special education in other types of school, thus making it possible that children in need of special education may also be taught at general schools in the best possible way. Upon the application of the district school board, the provincial school board has to designate certain special schools as Centres of Special Education.

In consideration of the social integration principle, pupils with special educational needs have to receive schooling according to the educational objectives of special schools, geared towards meeting educational objectives of general secondary schools and academic secondary schools, depending on pupils' abilities.

In 2002/03, there were 389 special schools with 13,466 pupils enrolled. A total of 6,455 pupils were integrated into 1,581 primary schools. There were 7,978 students integrated into 864 general secondary schools and 474 students integrated into 102 polytechnic schools.

## **Private education**

Around 90% of all students attend public schools. Under the Basic State Law, anyone has the right to set up a private school. There are private schools at all educational levels. The Private School Act distinguishes between two groups of private schools, i.e. schools which have a statutory counterpart in the public sector (following the national curriculum), and schools which do not have a statutory counterpart in the public sector. The Act regulates the establishment and operation of private schools, accreditation, subsidies, inspection, and administrative competencies. The large majority of private schools are co-educational. It is, however, possible to select pupils according to religion, belief or native language. The share of private schools in the various areas of the school system varies widely. Authorities maintaining private schools are mainly the Roman Catholic Church, provinces, towns, private associations, and hospital-maintaining authorities.

Schools maintained by one of the officially recognized churches are legally entitled to as many teaching posts as they need to meet the curricular requirements. The student/teacher ratio of comparable public schools in the region is used as a benchmark criterion. Teachers are seconded to a private school; they do not enter into any employment relationship with the providing institution, but remain civil servants (federal or provincial). Denominational private schools may refuse to accept a teacher without stating any reasons and apply for his/her substitution. The Private School Act does not provide for operating subsidies, grants for the maintenance of school buildings or for the procurement of furniture.



Waldorf schools are officially recognized schools and enjoy public-law status. They are comprehensive schools covering twelve grades, and are politically and denominationally independent. Socially, they are autonomous, self-governed institutions run by parents, teachers and other stakeholders. Communication and cooperation between teachers and parents is strengthened through regular meetings, joint school parties and events organized by parents.

## Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

Apart from small deductibles, textbooks and transportation are provided free of charge. Medium- and higher-level secondary colleges do not charge tuition fees.

In recent years there have been numerous developments concerning the new information and communication technologies (ICT). Schools are not only increasingly equipped with high-quality computers, but they are also provided with Internet access and integrated in various networks. ICT was also included in the primary school curriculum. A separate ICT training programme for prospective teachers was introduced at universities. An increasing number of teachers already receive extensive in-service training in IT skills. There is also the possibility of using the Internet for downloading additional materials and exercises supplementing the textbooks featured in the School Textbook Programme.

The optimum, sustainable and widespread use of modern ICT in education, science and culture is supported and promoted by the comprehensive initiative *eFit Austria*. This initiative offers a platform, which is continuously developed, for numerous activities and projects. An education portal has been set up, offering a modern learning, education and orientation system. It represents an all-Austrian education network and supports many e-learning communities. It is also an interdisciplinary portal for education websites and sub-portals. (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2004).

According to OECD (PISA database), in 2003 the average number of pupils (aged 15 years) per computer in public-sector schools was 6.9.

## Adult and non-formal education

In general, activities referred to as 'adult education' or 'continuing vocational training' are mainly defined in terms of the age of learners and previous education, these being the factors which distinguish them from initial training activities. As a rule, participants in vocational training programmes for 'adults' are aged 20 or older. Furthermore, adult education and initial vocational training are usually provided by different types of institutions: initial vocational training is normally under the responsibility of the federation and the provinces, whereas many adult (further) training initiatives are organized by companies, private providers or non-profit institutions. There are two main forms of adult education, defined in terms of certification: training courses leading to publicly recognized degrees or diplomas, which may be equivalent to secondary school or higher education certificates; and courses which do not fulfil these criteria. The non-degree university programmes for continuing education have a special status as they lead to publicly recognized



certificates which are not awarded within the initial training system. Some institutions are maintained by the state, others by non-profit organizations or private providers. The University of Continuing Education in Krems specializes in postgraduate further education and training.

Adults who are already employed or have concluded their vocational training have the possibility of obtaining relevant educational qualifications as part-time students taking evening classes. Part-time students can choose between academic secondary schools and higher-level secondary technical and vocational colleges, consolidation courses, specialized post-matriculation courses and post-secondary colleges. Universities and higher education institutions also offer further education courses.

Academic and vocational courses and programmes are offered by adult education institutes sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education, such as colleges of further education, vocational colleges, denominational organizations and a number of other regional non-profit adult education institutions. One of the main purposes of adult education is to allow learners to gain further qualifications by attending classes in the form of 'second-chance' education. Adult education institutions offer to learners the opportunity of attending courses in preparation for the matriculation examination, the school-leaving certificate, the university entrance examination or the vocational matriculation examination; in some instances examinations may be taken in stages.

Non-profit providers have traditionally played the most important role in general adult education and continuing vocational training. The main providers are represented in the Austrian Conference of Adult Education Institutions. Adult Education Centres are the most traditional establishments of adult education in Austria. The Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres, with its centre for research on political and adult education, is the umbrella organization of nine related province associations (with legal personality), which are maintained by different authorities. In 2005, there were 293 Adult Education Centres in the country. The Forum of Catholic Adult Education in Austria comprises more than 60 institutions with different foci, operating learning centres for adults and larger specialized study centres.

Adult education is funded by public resources from the Federation, the provinces and municipalities as well as resources from providers of adult education (chambers of commerce, chambers of labour, the Association of Trade Unions, industrial association, and churches). The individual bodies themselves determine the amount of their financial contributions. The Federal Ministry of Education subsidizes adult education associations and institutions directly. It supports expenditure for personnel and materials as well as individual projects. Second-chance education is financed by support from the Federation, the resources of the organizing authorities and by relatively high contributions from participants. Second-chance education for working adults is provided free of charge in public schools.

## Teaching staff

Kindergarten teachers are either trained at upper secondary level training colleges (five-year programme) or at teacher training colleges (two-year programme). Traditionally, general compulsory school, pre-vocational school and special school teachers are trained at teacher training colleges (*Pädagogische Akademien*). The programme lasts at least six semesters (three years) and ends with a teaching qualification examination. Teachers of colleges for apprentices, as well as teachers of vocational practice and some other areas at secondary technical and vocational education colleges, are trained at technical and vocational teacher training colleges. The training can either be organized as in-service courses in the form of a block release system or as full-time pre-service training courses. Admission requirements are as follows: master craftsman qualifications (entitlement to exercise the particular craft or trade) or leaving certificate from an upper secondary college plus several years of professional experience. There are also colleges for the training of teachers of religion and for non-teaching supervisory staff.

Academic secondary schools teachers are trained at universities or colleges of arts and music. They are federal employees, either under a private-law contract or under a public-law contract (tenured service). Part-time employment is possible, but not the rule. Teacher training programmes at universities are defined as diploma studies. They culminate in graduation with an academic degree (*Magister/Magistra*) after nine semesters (four and a half years), passing two diploma examinations and with the acceptance of a diploma paper. Studies are to convey a scientific grounding for work as a teacher, in particular for instruction in generally two subjects at academic secondary schools. Graduation with a *Magister* diploma from a university teacher training programme does not entitle candidates to be appointed as teachers. Prior to service, graduates have to successfully complete a year of practice at school and complementary courses.

Teachers of vocational theory at technical and vocational education colleges need to have completed university studies in their respective subjects and have four years of professional experience. They receive pedagogical instruction in a course designed for newly entering teachers by the in-service teacher training colleges. These colleges are organized in four departments catering to teachers at: elementary and general secondary schools; vocational colleges for apprentices; academic secondary schools; medium- and higher-level technical and vocational colleges.

The Academies Study Act of 25 June 1999 defined the overall framework for the establishment of a system of initial and in-service training for all teachers (teacher training colleges). As early as autumn 1999, the study commissions of the various colleges started to reorganize their study plans according to the Act as diploma studies, which guarantees that all graduates having completed the first training stage at one of these colleges are awarded the diploma degree of 'certified pedagogue' (*Diplompädagoge, Diplompädagogin*, abbreviated *Dipl.-Päd.*). Teacher training colleges are being re-organized as teacher training universities (*Pädagogischen Hochschulen*) in accordance with the Teacher Education Act of 2005. They will offer three-year bachelor's degree programmes starting from 2007/08.

Kindergarten teachers' legal and contractual status, as well as their salary, depends on the type of employer. They may have civil-service status or be employed on the basis of a private-law contract. They are evaluated by kindergarten inspectors of the respective provinces. General compulsory school teachers are employed by the provinces either under a private-law contract or under a public-law contract (tenured service). Part-time employment is possible in some cases. Teachers at academic secondary schools, medium- and higher-level technical and vocational education colleges are usually federal employees. Since early 2004, when the Universities Act of 2002 came into force, newly recruited university staff members have been employed under private-law employment contracts (following collective agreements).

For federal-employed teachers the compulsory teaching load is 20 hours per week. Province-employed teachers at general education compulsory schools are governed by an annual working time regime as a comparable public servant in general administration. To meet the teaching load, 720 to 792 annual hours (20 to 22 weekly units) must be taught in the course of a school year; 600 to 660 hours are spent on planning and follow-up work after classes; the remaining 330 to 470 hours to meet the annual standard are used to participate in conferences, stay in contact with parents or guardians, administrative work, and possibly taking part in school events (e.g. sports weeks).

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 ranges from three to five days per year. In-service training activities are organized by: those units within the province governments' further-education departments responsible for kindergarten teachers; kindergarten providers (e.g. charitable organizations, municipalities, dioceses); or the Pedagogic Institute and its branches in the nine provinces. As a rule, further-training activities are financed by the institutions offering them. Contributory fees may be charged. The Pedagogic Institutes have the following responsibilities: in-service teacher training (INSET) activities to update knowledge and skills; further-training activities with specific curricula and examinations providing additional qualifications; in-service courses for newly recruited teachers; courses within the framework of the one-year teaching practice for teachers of general education subjects; educational research. There are also specialized institutions for the further training of teachers of religion and for teachers at agriculture and forestry colleges. In addition, a number of other institutions offer in-service training activities, including universities, teacher associations, political parties, churches and social partners.

Since 2001, all teachers under the Province Teacher Service Code are obliged to attend 15 hours of INSET activities per year. The programmes are usually designed for specific target groups (teachers of one school type or of one specific subject), but sometimes interdisciplinary seminars are offered that are open to all teachers. For some courses, special admission criteria (restricted number of participants) may apply. INSET activities focus on the following areas: technical theory in the relevant field; teaching methodology (general, related to a subject matter); school law and organization; teacher development, school development, autonomy. An increasing number of courses are devoted to topics such as school management, quality assurance, environmental protection, ICT, internationalization, foreign languages, integration of children with special educational needs and multicultural education.



## Educational research and information

Austria's accession to the European Union (EU) coincided with concrete measures on the part of the EU to develop a specifically European information system. Over and above the common database with OECD and UNESCO it is necessary to develop an efficient information system if joint priorities and goals are to be achieved (making up of qualification deficits in the population, transition from school to working life, foreign languages, etc.). Also, in this field, Austria is represented and participating in the respective EU bodies and programmes. Since the beginning of 1994, Austria has been participating in the EU Education Information Network (EURYDICE), which has a European unit in Brussels and a national unit in each member state.

The Centre for School Development operates at the interface between university-level research, educational policy, the school administration and practitioners, acts as a service provider to the educational administration and schools, and carries out its own research and development projects in education.

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## Web resources

Accreditation Council: <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.at/> [In German and English. Last checked: September 2007.]

Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres: <http://www.vhs.or.at/> [In German; information is also available in English. Last checked: September 2007.]



Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance: <http://www.aqa.ac.at/> [In German and English. Last checked: September 2007.]

Centre for School Development: <http://www.zse1.at/> [In German. Last checked: September 2007.]

Council of the Universities of Applied Sciences: <http://www.fhr.ac.at/> [In German and English. Last checked: September 2007.]

Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture: <http://www.bmukk.gv.at/> [In German; information is also available in English and French. Last checked: September 2007.]

Knowledge-Base Adult Education Website: <http://www.adulteducation.at/> [In German; information also available in English. Last checked: September 2007.]

Quality in Schools Website: <http://www.qis.at/> [In German; some information in English. Last checked: September 2007.]

Technical and Vocational Education Schools and Colleges in Austria: <http://www.berufsbildendeschulen.at/> [Mainly in German; some information in English. Last checked: September 2007.]

EURYBASE, the information database on education systems in Europe: <http://www.eurydice.org/> [In several languages.]

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*