



## National summary sheets on education systems in Europe and ongoing reforms

2007 Edition



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## 1. Education population and language of instruction

In the academic year 2004/05, approximately 57 % of the population under the age of 30 were in education, and there were 848 000 young people of compulsory education age. The language of instruction is predominantly German but, in regions with a linguistic minority, instruction at primary schools is divided between German and Slovenian, respectively Hungarian or Croatian in bilingual institutions.

## 2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

In the academic year 2004/05, about 88 % of students attended state-funded education establishments. Private institutions accounted for the remaining 12 %.

Responsibilities for legislation and its implementation are divided between the federation (*Bund*) and the *Länder* (where it is executed by the *Länder* parliaments and the *Ämter der Landesregierungen*).

In specific matters enumerated in the Constitution, the federation sets the framework, while detailed legislation is implemented by the *Länder* parliaments (*Landtage*).

The Federation has overwhelming responsibility for the education system, including virtually all areas of school organisation, the organisation of school instruction, private schools as well as the remuneration and retirement law governing education staff.

As regards administration, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for primary, secondary and non-university tertiary education as well as for *Fachhochschulen* and universities. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour has responsibility for in-company apprenticeship training. The *Länder* are mainly responsible for the provision of public-sector compulsory education. They support the local communities in establishing and maintaining these schools via school construction funds that are administered by the *Länder*. The *Länder* have sole responsibility for crèches and kindergartens. Schools enjoy some autonomy in budgetary management and, up to a point, are free to adapt the curriculum to local needs. Province school inspectors in each of the nine Austrian *Länder* (assisted by district school inspectors for compulsory schools, and subject inspectors for the intermediate and upper secondary levels) are responsible for inspections.

The 2002 *Universitätsgesetz* (University Act) transformed universities from federal institutions to public law entities which are no longer under federal administration. Federal funding consists of 3-year global budgets based on public-service agreements; universities are free to tap other sources of funding by virtue of their full legal capacity. Territorial entities and private legal entities may operate *Fachhochschulen*. At present, *Fachhochschule* study programmes are mainly funded by the federal government in line with authorised study places.

### 3. Pre-primary education

<i>Krippe</i>	0-3 years
Kindergarten	3-6 years

Up to the age of 3, children may attend a crèche (*Krippe*), if available. They may attend a kindergarten, when they are aged between 3 and 6. The training programmes for kindergarten teachers have been aligned to take account of the growing number of children under the age of three who attend kindergarten. The provision of these facilities and decisions regarding fees are the responsibility of the *Länder* or private institutions (providers). In 2005/06, 66.3 % of all three-year-olds, 89.8 % of all four-year-olds and 91.9 % of all five-year-olds attended pre-compulsory education.

### 4. Compulsory education

#### (i) Phases

<i>Volksschule</i> or <i>Grundschule</i> – primary education	6-10 years of age
Lower secondary education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Volksschule</i> (upper primary level)</li> <li>• <i>Hauptschule</i> (secondary general school)</li> <li>• <i>Allgemein bildende höhere Schule</i> (secondary academic school – lower level)</li> </ul>	10-14 years of age
Grade 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Polytechnische Schule</i> (pre-vocational school)</li> <li>• Or any other upper secondary school</li> </ul>	From 14 years of age

Education is compulsory for nine years and starts at the age of 6.

*Sonderschule* (special school; 6-15 years of age): described in section 7.

#### (ii) Admissions criteria

Primary school pupils must have attained six years of age by 1 September in the year of admission. Children who have not yet attained the age of compulsory schooling and will be aged six by 1 March of the next following calendar year may be admitted earlier, if they are sufficiently mature and have the required social skills for attending school.

Transfer to lower secondary schooling requires successful completion of grade four of primary school. Admission to *Allgemein bildende höhere Schule* depends on achievement or is conditional on an admission test. With the exception of education in private schools, compulsory schooling is free of charge.

#### (iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year comprises 180 days (5 days a week) and lasts, according to a staggered schedule depending on the *Land*, from the first or second Monday in September to the Saturday between 28 June and 4 July, or between 5 July and 11 July.

Schools open five or six days a week.

The number of lessons per week ranges from 20 (primary school) to 35 (in secondary higher technical and vocational colleges). A lesson lasts 50 minutes. The minimum number of hours taught each year is around

630 for children aged 7, 750 for those aged 10, 870 at lower secondary, and 960 at the upper secondary level.

#### (iv) Class size/student grouping

The maximum class size is 30, while the minimum is 10 in primary school and 20 in secondary general school (*Hauptschule*) and the pre-vocational school. Pupils are grouped by age, but there is some grouping by ability in German, mathematics and modern foreign language at secondary level (secondary general school and pre-vocational school). At pre-vocational schools, pupils may be grouped in these subjects also by interest (or subject areas). As a rule, primary school pupils are taught by one teacher in all subjects except for religion and crafts; in secondary education, instruction is provided by subject teachers.

#### (v) Curriculum control and content

On the basis of proposals drafted by curricular task forces, the Ministry for Education, Science and Culture establishes a curricular framework in a consultation process that includes district and province educational bodies and organisations of teacher representatives.

The Ministry also approves textbooks. Schools are free to make their choice and enjoy some freedom to adapt the curriculum to the local context. Primary school compulsory subjects include religion, early science, German, reading, writing, mathematics, music, arts, textile/technical work, exercise and sports, modern foreign language, and road safety (without grading).

As of the school year 2003/04 onwards, a 'modern foreign language' has been taught on a mandatory basis at all primary schools starting in grade 1. At lower secondary level, pupils continue these subjects, plus science and technical subjects.

A special committee composed of teachers and parents (and, at secondary intermediate and higher level, students also) exercises an advisory and decision-making function in defined matters that are laid down in law.

#### (vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

There is no formal external testing during compulsory education. Teacher-generated assessment is based on classroom participation and oral, written, practical and graphical work. Primary school pupils have to sit for written exams (school tests) in German and mathematics in grade 4.

As a rule, progression to the next higher form depends on achievement in all subjects (with exceptions at primary school level or unsatisfactory achievement in only one subject).

Pupils receive reports at the end of each term and at the end of the academic year.

In German and mathematics, pupils may attend instruction in the next lower or next higher form, if this is more appropriate for their individual learning situation.

## 5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

### (i) Types of education

Upper secondary education	Age
• <i>Allgemein bildende höhere Schule</i> (secondary academic school – upper level)	14*-18
• <i>Polytechnische Schule</i> (pre-vocational school)	14*-15
• <i>Berufsbildende mittlere Schule</i> (technical and vocational school)	14+*
• <i>Berufsbildende höhere Schule</i> (technical and vocational college)	14*-19
• <i>Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik/Sozialpädagogik</i> (schools for the training of kindergarten teachers and non-teaching education staff)	14*-19
• <i>Berufsbildende Pflichtschule</i> (part-time vocational school)	15+
Post-secondary education <i>Kolleg</i>	18-20

\* Although students start courses at these schools at the age of 14, compulsory education ends when they are 15.

### (ii) Admissions criteria

After grade eight, students may opt for one of the many different courses in either the general or technical and vocational education (TVE) sector offered at secondary level II. Transfer requires successful completion of grade eight and is also based on achievement.

Candidates failing to meet the achievement criteria must undergo admission testing.

Pupils without a leaving certificate after grade eight may attend a pre-vocational school. The aim is to convey the best possible support and skills for transfer to vocational training later on (dual system of training) or a higher-level school. Transferring back from secondary higher general or technical and vocational school to a pre-vocational school is possible only until 31 December of the current school year.

For some training routes at secondary higher technical and vocational schools or colleges, or colleges for kindergarten teachers and non-teaching education staff, candidates must prove their physical or artistic aptitudes as well as social and communication skills.

After completion of nine years of compulsory schooling, pupils may enter into an apprenticeship contract with an employer, minors require parental consent. Apprentices at the same time become pupils of a compulsory part-time vocational school.

### (iii) Curriculum control and content

Curricula at this level of education depend on the course chosen, although German, mathematics and a modern foreign language are part of the general mandatory syllabus.

At pre-vocational schools, the emphasis lies on vocational orientation and basic vocational training in specialist areas according to widely scoped occupational fields such as technical-commercial occupations, commerce-clerical occupations, as well as service – industry and tourism.

TVE schools and colleges offer a wide variety of courses and special emphases. Consultation with the social partners is important, as curricula also include technical theory and practical instruction.

Teachers are free to select methods. The curricula emphasise student-centred learning, project work, cross-curricular activities and the opportunity to acquire key skills.

Also in this area, textbooks and other materials are selected by the school.

#### (iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Students who pass the examination at the end of an *Allgemein bildende höhere Schule* receive a matriculation certificate (*Reifeprüfungszeugnis*).

Apprentices receive a certificate on completion of their part-time course at school.

They may sit for an end-of-apprenticeship examination

The *Lehrabschlussprüfungszeugnis* gives access to certain trades, foreman or master craftsman courses, professional diploma examinations and courses for 'working adults', as well as to the *Berufsreifeprüfung* and the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (access to higher education).

Students on courses lasting 1-2 years receive pre-vocational training certificates.

Students at 3-4-year TVE schools take a leaving examination (written/practical and oral). The certificate entitles them to exercise certain regulated occupations or trades and provides access to upgrading or to the *Berufsreifeprüfung* examination.

Students of 5-year higher-level TVE courses may take the *Reife- und Diplomprüfung*, which includes written/practical and oral parts, and leads to double qualifications comprising general higher education access and professional qualifications for immediate entry into employment at middle management level (EU diploma-level recognition).

Students of post-secondary courses (e.g. *Kollegs*) take a *Diplomprüfung* which is evidence of the acquisition of professional qualifications.

## 6. Higher education

### (i) Structure

Higher education is offered at:

- Public universities including the arts universities;
- *Fachhochschulen* (institutes of technical/vocational higher education);
- the *Krems University of Continuing Education* (Danube University Krems);
- Private universities (after accreditation);
- *Pädagogische Akademien* and *Berufspädagogische Akademien* (general and vocational teacher training colleges) (as of October 2007 *Pädagogische Hochschulen*, Universities of Education);
- *Akademien für gehobene technisch-medizinische Dienste und Hebammenakademien* (colleges for higher-level medico-technical professions and midwifery colleges);
- Moreover, there are a number of educational institutions which offer university-type courses.

### (ii) Access

Applicants to university (and to the *Akademien*) must have the *Reifeprüfungszeugnis* (or a *Reife- und Diplomprüfungszeugnis*) from a secondary higher school, or alternatively a *Berufsreifeprüfungszeugnis* or *Studienberechtigungsprüfungszeugnis* for the particular course of study. Depending on the course chosen, they may have to sit for supplementary examinations.

In 2005, there was a major change in the access requirements. Admission testing was introduced for those study programmes which are affected by eight *numerus clausus* – study programmes in Germany.

This measure will last until 2007 and allows the restriction of access to university studies, mainly for medical study programmes.

At the teacher-training colleges for vocational schools, the *Reifeprüfung* may be replaced by a *Meisterprüfung* (master craftsman examination), (the *Reifeprüfung* is generally required to access the future Universities of Education).

All applicants to universities of art and music have to pass an entrance examination. Candidates for a *Fachhochschule*, which normally requires an entrance exam, may either have a *Reifeprüfungszeugnis* or equivalent, or relevant vocational qualifications as well as additional examinations, as the case may be.

The general tuition fees for university programmes amount to EUR 363.36 per term for students from Austria and other EU – and EEA – countries, and to EUR 727.27 for other foreign students (exemption and reimbursement regulations apply to students from developing countries or to students in mobility programmes). An amount of EUR 363.36 may be collected for *Fachhochschule* study programmes.

### (iii) Qualifications

Students at teacher-training study programmes at *Pädagogische und Berufspädagogische Akademien* graduate as *Diplompädagogin/Diplompädagoge*. The teacher-training study programmes at the future Universities of Education will lead to graduation as Bachelor of Education.

Students at colleges for higher-level medico-technical professions graduate as follows:

- *Physiotherapeutin/Physiotherapeut*
- *Biomedizinische Analytikerin/Biomedizinischer Analytiker*
- *Radiologietechnologin/Radiologietechnologe*
- *Diätologin/Diätologe*
- *Ergotherapeutin/Ergotherapeut*
- *Logopädin/Logopäde*
- *Orthoptistin/Orthoptist*

Studies at midwifery colleges lead to graduation as a 'midwife'.

As of the academic year 2006/07, training for higher-level medico-technical professions and midwives is also offered at *Fachhochschulen* in the form of bachelor study programmes.

University studies end with the following degrees:

Regular programmes

- Diploma (after 8-12 terms)
- Bachelor (6-8 terms)
- Master (2-4 terms after the bachelor)
- Doctor (4 terms after the master or diploma degree)
- University programmes ending with an international master degree, e.g. Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- University programmes ending with the designation of *akademischer ....* (at least 60 ECTS).

*Fachhochschule* programmes end with a diploma degree, since 2002 also with a bachelor and master degree similar to the classification for the universities. *Fachhochschule* graduates are allowed to enter doctoral programmes at universities.

## 7. Special needs

Pupils with special educational needs may be educated either in special schools or in inclusive settings in primary and lower secondary schools. Parents have the right to choose the kind of schooling they prefer for their child. Special curricula and/or adapted mainstream curricula are applied in response to pupils' individual needs. During the school year 2002/03, more than 50 % of all pupils with special educational needs attended integration classes.

### Compulsory education

<i>Sonderschule</i> (special school): General special school consists of levels I and II and of an upper cycle. Specialised branches for physically disabled children, for children with linguistic disabilities, for hearing impaired, deaf, visually impaired, blind, severely disabled and maladjusted children. Pupils may attend special school during the entire period of compulsory schooling	6-15 years of age
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To be admitted to a special school, a pupil's special educational needs must be determined by way of official decree.

### Class size/student grouping

The maximum class size is as follows:

- special school for blind, deaf and severely disabled pupils: 8;
- special school for visually impaired, hearing impaired pupils and remedial schools: 10;
- others: 15.

### Curricular control and content

Pupils are taught according to the curricula of primary school or secondary general school or of the lower cycle of secondary academic school, if they are generally able to attain the objectives of instruction without being overtaxed. In all other cases, the curriculum of a special school geared to their disability is to be applied. There are special curricula for general special schools (for performance impaired pupils or pupils with learning difficulties), for the special schools for blind children, the special schools for deaf children, and the special schools for severely disabled children.

### Assessment, progression and qualifications

Pupils with special educational needs at general schools are entitled to transfer to the next higher form if this provides better opportunities for the pupil's overall development; the class conference decides on such transfers.

In the absence of pertaining statutory provisions, inclusive settings during the last (ninth) year of compulsory schooling are currently provided in pilot projects only.

Specific programmes for the transition period between school and the labour market are funded by the Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection and implemented in co-operation with schools.

### Vocational training options for disabled or disadvantaged young persons

The Vocational Training Act was amended in the summer of 2003, adopting the 'integrative vocational training' model. This amendment created a basis for young people with disabilities or at a disadvantage



for better employment opportunities. Ever since, the number of young persons in integrative vocational training has risen steadily.

In addition, the 'Apprenticeship without Barriers' campaign was launched to inform the public, companies, as well as the young people affected and their parents about the opportunities of integrative vocational training. This media campaign moreover aims at raising awareness and understanding of the public at large for encouraging even more companies to accept apprentices for integrative vocational training.

## 8. Teachers

Kindergarten teachers complete five years of training from the age of 14 onwards or a two-year post-secondary course.

Primary and lower secondary school teachers must have completed a three-years course at a teacher training college (as of October 2007 *Pädagogische Hochschulen*, Universities of Education).

Teachers at an *Allgemein bildende höhere Schule* must complete a university study programme of at least 4.5 years leading to a degree.

Depending on their subject area, teachers for the TVE sector are trained either at universities or at vocational teacher training colleges (as of 2007 at Universities of Education). A relevant professional background and experience is required for teaching technical theory and practice at TVE schools and colleges.

Primary school teachers do not specialise, whereas lower and upper secondary school teachers specialise in two subjects (at TVE schools and colleges, they may also specialise in a group of subjects or a subject area).

Teachers are employed by the federation or the *Länder* (civil servants).

Teachers at colleges for higher-level medico-technical professions and midwifery colleges are trained in specialist courses (following general training).

## 9. Current reforms and priorities

### 1. Reforms in primary, lower and upper secondary education

#### Afternoon childcare

80 000 pupils have enrolled for afternoon childcare as per the autumn of 2006. This is more than 10 % of a total of 760 000 pupils for whom afternoon childcare arrangements are available.

Every child in need of afternoon care should have a right to attend. Providing afternoon childcare to meet the given needs is an important task to be jointly fulfilled by the federation, the *Länder*, and the local authorities.

10 hours of afternoon childcare are allocated for 15 children each by the federation to the *Länder* at compulsory school level. Afternoon childcare groups may be set up across classes, years or different schools.

In early 2006, the schools informed the parents about afternoon childcare programmes and identified existing needs. In the school year 2006/07, afternoon childcare will be offered wherever needed, whilst respecting parental freedom of choice.

**Five-day week**

As of the autumn of 2006, Saturdays at schools catering to the 6-14 age bracket will be free. Pupils should not work on more days of the week than their parents and will now have more time to spend together with their families.

**Early language learning**

Allocation of 1 964 teaching posts as of the school year 2006/07 for a swift integration in primary school. The existing 1 600 posts will be stepped up by an additional 330. Children at primary school who do not know German can now be taught up to 11 hours per week in small groups.

Learning German even earlier is better still. This is why the federal government sponsors language learning courses at municipal and local nursery schools and has invested a total of EUR 640 000.

In recent months, 8 000 children benefited from language-learning courses that are to ensure a good start of their school careers.

**Expanding support for specially gifted pupils**

'Dispensation provisions' (premature admission to primary school) and the possibility to skip a class (even at the primary/secondary transition) will take better account of the needs of highly gifted pupils. Reflecting their specific talents and skills, children should be able to terminate their school careers earlier.

**Upgrading of class heads**

Class heads have an important role to play in terms of furthering and assisting talented as well as underachieving pupils. This includes the early detection of strengths and weaknesses to make sure that children and adolescents can be supported in the best possible manner through accompanying educational measures. They are also responsible for effectively implementing the early warning system in cooperation with the school partners (parents, pupils), ensuring the target and needs-driven use of remedial instruction, coordinating the educational and recreational activities during afternoon childcare, assuring high-quality teaching, and participating in evaluation. As of autumn 2006, class heads at compulsory school level will receive an additional EUR 70 per month as a performance-linked remuneration for these activities.

**Schools now starting on Monday in the first school week**

Instruction guarantee: No more than 2.5 % of all classes may be cancelled

Monday and Tuesday in the first school week are days of familiarisation. In order to ensure that classes start on the Wednesday of that week in line with the timetable, examination resits may be held on Thursday and Friday of the last week of the main holidays as of autumn 2006/07. The final dates will be determined by the school partner forums.

**Blocking of teaching units**

According to an amendment to the School Periods Act (*Schulzeitgesetz*), teaching units may now be blocked. Classes can therefore be organised more flexibly and modern teaching methods such as project work or interdisciplinary instruction can be used.

**2. Higher Education Reforms****University reform**

The 1999 amendment to the *Universitäts-Studiengesetz* (University Education Act) introduced the three-tier system of universities studies, excluding teacher training, human medicine and dental medicine studies, which are only offered as diploma programmes. In the mid-range, diploma studies will generally be replaced by Bachelor and Master study programmes. In the winter term 2006, 211 Bachelor and 277 Master study programmes existed alongside 179 diploma study programmes.

The 2002 *Universitätsgesetz* (Universities Act) gave full legal status to the universities as of 1 January 2004. Newly recruited university staff is now employed under private law contracts. Universities are funded via a global budget which is set up for three-year periods based on public service agreements which define the services to be rendered by the Federal Ministry and the university by way of negotiation. The first public service agreements between the universities and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture will be concluded in the autumn of 2006. The first period for public-service agreements is 2007 to 2009. After that time, every university must submit an annual performance report on the state of implementation of the public service agreement as well as an intellectual capital report. Budget reporting is done via the financial statements based on a commercial system of accounting. 20 % of all university budget allocations are formula-linked. This formula covers indicators on teaching, research and development, on the development of the arts as well as on social objectives.

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE ( <a href="http://www.eurydice.org">http://www.eurydice.org</a> )
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