

# AUSTRIA

## ECEC Workforce Profile

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## 1. ECEC governance

The Republic of Austria is a federal republic and each of the nine autonomous states or provinces is responsible for legislation and implementation relating both to early childhood education and care for 0- to 6-year olds, organised in age-integrated (0-6) or age-separated (0-3, 3-6) settings, as well as to outside-school-hours provision for school-age children.

Within the framework of these federal structures, responsibility for early childhood education and care is located at three different levels: federal government, regional state governments and municipalities. At the *federal level* the Federal Ministry for Family and Youth Affairs is responsible for legislation regarding child and youth welfare services, including family day care, and for state subsidies for families and child care. The Federal Ministry for Education is responsible for the professional education/training of specialist pedagogical staff and for specifying the curricular content of early childhood education institutions. The *regional state governments* issue their own legislation and are responsible for the implementation of the framework regulations and for supporting the municipalities in the building of early childhood and out-of-school provision. The *municipalities* are responsible for establishing, maintaining and operating kindergartens and infant-toddler centres (Eurydice 2016).

Since September 2010, all children who have reached their fifth birthday by 31st August are obliged to attend a centre-based ECEC setting for at least 16 to 20 hours per week from September until June, excluding school holidays.

## 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

Regulations across the country stipulate that one core practitioner with a formal qualification as a Kindergarten Pedagogue should be assigned to each group of children. This professional qualification (see also *Section 3.1*) can be acquired at one of the 29 vocational colleges (*berufsbildende höhere Schulen*) or through a nationally regulated post-secondary course affiliated to one of the colleges. Following the renaming from 'College for Kindergarten Pedagogues' to 'College for Early Childhood Pedagogues', the terms early childhood pedagogy (*Elementarpädagogik*) and Early Childhood Pedagogue (*Elementarpädagogin*) are increasingly in everyday use.

Depending on the federal state, a Pedagogical Assistant may also be required to work in the kindergarten group on a half-time basis (one person for two groups) or in a full-day position.

According to the European Union Directive 2013/55/EU on the recognition of professional qualifications (Bundesministerium für Bildung 2016a), the two final years (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades) of higher vocational schools/colleges and also the two-year post-secondary *Kolleg* courses in early childhood pedagogy are recognised as short-cycle tertiary education and thus classified at ISCED (2011) level 5.

*Table 1* provides a summary of the staff who work on a regular basis with children in centre-based settings. The core practitioners (i.e. persons with group or centre responsibility) are additionally categorised according to one of five professional profiles adapted from the original SEEPRO study (see *Box 1* at the end of this section).

Table 1

## Austria: Staff in centre-based ECEC settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level <sup>1</sup>
<p><i>Kindergartenpädagogin / Elementarpädagogin</i> <b>Kindergarten Pedagogue / Early Childhood Pedagogue</b></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	All forms of ECEC settings 1 to 6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	1–6 years	<p>5 years vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy (<i>Bildungsanstalt für Elementarpädagogik - BAfEP</i>)</p> <p><i>Awards:</i> University entrance requirement and occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>School leaving certificate (university entrance requirement) plus 2 years post-secondary professional course at a college (<i>Kolleg</i>) for early childhood pedagogy</p> <p><i>Award:</i> Occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy</p> <p>ECTS points: n/a<sup>2</sup> EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5</p>
<p><i>Kindergarten- und Hortpädagogin</i> <b>Kindergarten and After-School (Hort) Pedagogue</b></p> <p><i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>	All kinds of ECEC settings and after-school provision ( <i>Horte</i> ) for school-age children 1–14 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility	1–14 years	<p>5 years vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy with a supplementary qualification in after-school (<i>Hort</i>) pedagogy</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>5 years vocational college specialising in social pedagogy</p> <p><i>Awards:</i> University entrance requirement and occupational certificate in early childhood and <i>Hort</i> pedagogy</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>General university entrance requirement and occupational certificate in social pedagogy</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>2 years post-secondary professional course at <i>Kolleg</i> specialising in early childhood and <i>Hort</i> pedagogy</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Vocational college specialising in social pedagogy</p> <p><i>Award:</i> Occupational certificate in early childhood and <i>Hort</i> pedagogy</p>

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO 2012, 2014.<sup>2</sup> n/a = not applicable.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age-range	Main position/s	Main age-range focus of IPS	Minimum qualification requirement and ECTS points/EQF level/ISCED level <sup>1</sup>
				gogy, or occupational certificate in social pedagogy  ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5
<i>Sonderkindergartenpädagogin und Frühförderungsfachkraft</i> <b>Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogue and Early Intervention Specialist</b>  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (with specialism in special needs pedagogy)	All forms of ECEC settings 1–6 years  Special needs education settings 1–6 years	Core practitioner with group responsibility  Individual work with children	1–6 years	4 semesters post-secondary professional course for 'Inclusive Early Childhood Pedagogy' at a vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy <i>Award:</i> Occupational certificate for inclusive early childhood pedagogy  ECTS points: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2013-F: 0112 ISCED 2011: 5
As from 2018: <i>Pädagogische Assistentin</i> <b>Pedagogical Assistant</b>	All forms of ECEC settings 1–6 years	Supporting the core practitioner	1–6 years	3 years intermediate vocational school  Since this qualification has not yet been implemented there is as yet no official ISCED classification. However, following similar kinds of vocational education/training, a classification in the ISCED 3 category is expected.

#### Box 1

**SEEPRO professional profile categories for core practitioners** (adapted from Oberhumer, P., I. Schreyer, and M.J. Neuman 2010)

- *Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- *Pre-primary Education Professional* (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- *Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional* (focus on pre-primary and primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- *Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional* (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- *Social Care/Health Care Professional* (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

## 2.2 Structural composition of the ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

In 2013/14, a total of 53,520 persons were employed in childcare settings. 30,224 persons (56.5%) were in possession of a specialist qualification (mostly Kindergarten and *Hort* Peda-

gogues or early childhood educators. The annual data compilation does not differentiate between those with a 5-year education/training and those with a 2-year post-secondary qualification in early childhood pedagogy. In both cases, the qualification award is classified at ISCED level 5 (see *Section 2.1*). 23,296 persons (43.5%) did not possess a relevant qualification; 3,526 persons (11.6% of core practitioners) had acquired a supplementary qualification (Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogues and therapeutic specialists); 1,056 persons (2% of the workforce) are males. The data on male staff in the statistics on childcare provision are not collated according to the specific area of work (e.g. kindergarten, infant-toddler centre). There are no validated data available for persons with a background of migration.

Table 2

**Austria: Structural composition of the workforce in ECEC centres, 2014**

Staff categories	Proportion of workforce overall
Staff with a relevant higher education degree	No national data available
Staff with a relevant post-secondary (short-cycle tertiary) qualification <i>including: Staff with supplementary qualification and specialist support staff</i>	56.5%
Staff with other, non-specialist or low-level qualification (Pedagogical Assistants, Helpers/Cleaners...)	43.5%
Male staff (no differentiation according to qualification)	2%
Staff with a migration background	No national data available

**Source:** Statistik Austria 2014 and own calculations.

### 3. Initial professional studies (IPS)

#### 3.1 Initial qualifying routes

The qualification for core practitioners in ECEC settings in Austria is regulated nationwide through federal-level legislation in the 'Federal Law on the Employment Requirements for Kindergarten Personnel' (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich 2016, BGBl. 406/1968). This specifies the specific entry requirements and qualification award for initial professional studies taking place at *Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik*, BAKiP) according to a nationwide common curriculum. In 2016, during the course of legislation reforming the organisation of the education system and the curricular framework for IPS, these institutions were renamed *Bildungsanstalten für Elementarpädagogik*, BAfEP ('Educational institutions for early childhood pedagogy') (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich 2017b, BGBl. II Nr. 204/2016 v. 27.7.2016).

At the end of the eighth grade in school, pupils in Austria can choose between two continuing school pathways: either the general upper secondary education track (AHS/Gymnasium) or the vocational upper secondary track; this is where the vocational colleges<sup>3</sup> for early childhood pedagogy are located.

Initial professional studies for core practitioners working in infant-toddler centres, kindergartens, after-school provision and in settings for children with special educational needs is the exclusive responsibility of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy.

The current reform does not demand a structural change in the required qualification level for entry into the profession; it is the result on the one hand of political demands for a more specific focus on working with children below the age of 3 years within the BAfEP-IPS curriculum for kindergarten pedagogues, and on the other hand of European developments requiring compe-

<sup>3</sup> *Note by the translator:* Strictly speaking, the term in German is 'vocational school'. However, in the international context this can be misleading and we have therefore chosen the term 'vocational college' for *Bildungsanstalt*.

tency and outcomes oriented curricula. Both aspects influenced the revision of the IPS curriculum.

Altogether there are 29 vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy across the country. These are either public institutions (16) or privately run (13), the latter predominantly organised by the Catholic Church. All vocational colleges work according to the same federal-level *BAfEP*-IPS syllabus.

The general entry requirement for attending an upper secondary school/college is successful completion of the 8th school grade. Studies at this type of school are of five years' duration and conclude with the double qualification of university entrance certificate and occupational certificate. The qualification award provides both the chance of entering a higher education study programme or of practising one of the regulated professions immediately on completion of IPS.

For admission to the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy a so-called 'aptitude test' is also required. Basic aptitude is examined both for initial professional studies and the occupation in the areas of 'musical potential, creative abilities, physical robustness and communicative ability'.

The EU Directive 2013/55/EU on the recognition of professional qualifications (issued in January 2014) has had an interesting influence on the upper secondary schools in Austria. According to the 2011 ISCED classifications, the 4th and 5th grades (i.e. the two final grades in the vocational colleges/schools) are now placed at ISCED level 5 (*short-cycle tertiary education*). This level is conceptualised for a wide range of post-secondary qualifications which provide the award holders with professional knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in the context of a practical and occupation oriented approach. According to Article 13 of the Directive, Austrian vocational college awards will now be recognised in those European Union member states which plan to have an IPS model for the relevant occupation at level 'e' (post-secondary education/training of at least 4 years' duration) (Europäisches Parlament und Rat der Europäischen Union 2013).

Table 3

**Austria: Kindergartenpädagogin / Elementarpädagogin**

<b>Title in German:</b> Kindergartenpädagogin/Elementarpädagogin <b>Profile:</b> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<p><i>Route 1:</i>  <b>Entry requirements:</b> Successful completion of the 8<sup>th</sup> school grade <b>plus</b> aptitude test (music, creativity, sport, communication)  <b>Professional studies:</b> 5 years vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy  <b>Awards:</b> School-leaving certificate (general university entrance requirement) and occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy)  <b>ECTS points:</b> n/a  <b>EQF/NQF level:</b> 5  <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0112  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 5  <b>Main workplaces:</b> All ECEC settings for 1- to 6-year olds</p> <p><i>Route 2:</i>  <b>Entry requirements:</b> Successfully completed upper secondary school-leaving examination or an entrance examination or occupational examination and an aptitude test  <b>Professional studies:</b> 2 years (part-time: max. 3 years) post-secondary professional studies (<i>Kolleg</i> specialising in early childhood pedagogy)  <b>Awards:</b> Occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy  <b>ECTS points:</b> n/a  <b>EQF/NQF Level:</b> 5  <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0112  <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 5  <b>Main workplaces:</b> All ECEC settings for 1- to 6-year olds</p>

Table 4

**Austria: Kindergarten and Hort Pedagogue**

<b>Title in German: Kindergarten- und Hortpädagogin</b> <b>Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> Successful completion of the 8th school grade <i>plus</i> successfully passed aptitude test (music, creativity, sport, communication) <b>Professional studies:</b> 5 years vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy with a supplementary qualification in after-school ( <i>Hort</i> ) pedagogy <b>Awards:</b> School-leaving certificate (general university entrance requirement) and occupational certificate in early childhood and after-school pedagogy <b>ECTS points:</b> n/a <b>EQF/NQF level:</b> 5 <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0112 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 5 <b>Main workplaces:</b> all ECEC settings for 1- to 6-year olds; after-school provision for school-age children (6-14 years)

Table 5

**Austria: Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogue and Early Intervention Specialist**

<b>Title in German: Sonderkindergartenpädagogin und Frühförderungsfachkraft</b> <b>Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional (with specialism in special needs pedagogy)</b>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> School-leaving certificate (general university entrance requirement) and occupational certificate in early childhood pedagogy <b>Professional studies:</b> 4 semesters (part-time: 6 semesters) post-secondary professional studies in inclusive early childhood pedagogy at a vocational college specialising in early childhood pedagogy <b>Awards:</b> Occupational certificate in inclusive early childhood pedagogy and early intervention <b>ECTS points:</b> n/a <b>EQF/NQF Level:</b> 5 <b>ISCED 2013-F:</b> 0112 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> 5 <b>Main workplaces:</b> all ECEC settings and special needs settings for 1- to 6-year olds

### 3.2 Competencies and curricula in IPS programmes

Following a recent amendment to the Schools Education Act (Bundeskanzleramt 2017a, BGBl. I Nr. 117/2008), ‘educational standards’ (i.e. specified learning outcomes relating to the curricular content at each level of the education system) were adopted in schools legislation in Austria. For vocational schools field-oriented and practical learning is foregrounded, where knowledge acquisition and cognitive abilities/skills are related to real-life contexts and occupational worlds. Educational standards in Austria are formulated as norm standards (intermediate level) and differentiate between general and professional competencies (BIFIE 2017a).

According to the Federal Law Gazette II Nr. 204/2016 from 27.07.2016 (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich 2017b), the updated curriculum for the vocational colleges specialising in early childhood pedagogy (which came into force in September 2016) allows for two basic competence profiles: (1) the qualification as Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogue (children aged 1–6 years) and (2) as an option after completion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of the vocational college course, the supplementary qualification as *Hort* Pedagogue (children aged 1–14 years). An additional option for specialising in work with under 3-year olds which was added to the curriculum in 2004 has now been replaced by mandatory college-based and field-based course units with a focus on early childhood education and care for under 3-year olds.



## Kindergarten Pedagogue – Hort Pedagogue

**Competencies:** According to §2 of the Schools Organisation Act (SchOG), vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy have “the task of transmitting to pupils the necessary professional attitude and the related professional knowledge and professional ability required to carry out upbringing and educational tasks in kindergartens as early childhood pedagogy institutions for children from the first year of life up to school entry and to guide them to university entrance qualifications. In accordance with §78, para.1, pupils may also be qualified to work as educators in after-school childcare provision (*Horte*)“ (Bundeskanzleramt 2017a).

The curriculum comprises a comprehensive catalogue of competencies; accordingly, it is expected that initial professional studies convey general, occupation-related, social and personal competencies such as the following:

“Certificate holders are in a position to:

- address the question of the meaning of life and to deal with ethical and social values as well as with the religious dimension,
- be sensitive and open towards philosophical, existential and religious questions, particularly those of the children (and young people) in their care,
- act in a socially responsible, respectful and appreciative manner,
- handle culturally, gender and diversity relevant aspects of upbringing and education sensitively,
- be ready for innovations, flexibility and mobility,
- apply a broad spectrum of communication forms (verbal and non-verbal),
- guide and supervise working and learning contexts in which non-predictable situations occur,
- examine and further develop both their own abilities and those of other persons, particularly of the children (and young people) in their care,
- communicate correctly in speaking and writing both in the language of instruction and in everyday life and, according to the requirements of the situation, also in a foreign language,
- participate in creating culture and in cultural life,
- analyse everyday and professional issues with the help of mathematical procedures, retrieve data and present them in a systematic way; acquire, interpret and present findings with the use of contemporary computer-based information technology,
- address in a critical manner current and relevant societal issues on the basis of a thorough knowledge in the areas of science, technology and entrepreneurship education, as well as knowledge in the arts and social science disciplines,
- review political processes at the national, European and international levels and be sensitive for democratic processes and peaceful cohabitation under consideration of interculturality and diversity, the environment and ecological sustainability, ,
- use their comprehensive and networked (pedagogical) knowledge in a reflective way in the context of practical experiences in their work and in their personal life situation,
- implement their knowledge of occupation-related legislation, particularly in the areas of safety, liability, hygiene, equipment, first aid, traffic education and (sexual) violence, in a manner appropriate to the situation,
- handle conflicts in a problem-solving and self-controlled way and avoid violence,
- act in a self-critical and cooperative way in teamwork,
- implement lifelong learning as an immanent component of their own life and career planning and promote appropriate attitudes and competencies in the children and young people under their guidance,
- handle physical and health-related aspects of education and upbringing in a sensitive way,
- handle the area of tension between normative standards and the individual development of learners,
- base their actions on the foundations of ‘scientific evidence’ and ‘reflective tacit knowledge’,
- plan educational processes appropriately on the basis of an inclusive attitude towards children’s individual developmental needs,

- implement a diverse repertoire of situation-appropriate didactic approaches which include various ways of working, communication and presentation,
- initiate situation-appropriate educational partnerships in their professional work and use them in a responsible way,
- assess and select centre-based childcare settings under consideration of ecological and economical aspects, using modern technological media and methods of quality management (quality development and quality assurance)“ (Bundeskanzleramt 2017b, BGBl. Nr. 204/2016, appendix 1, 4).

**Curricular areas and pedagogic-didactic approaches:** The curriculum subjects ‘pedagogy’, ‘didactics’ and ‘practice’ are the main occupation-related subjects through which the core competencies needed for independent and autonomous professional work are transmitted. The curriculum is conceptualised as a spiral model of learning, during which core content is handled and repeated during the five years of initial professional studies in increasing detail and growing complexity.

A particular characteristic of the Austrian approach to IPS for work in ECEC settings is the emphasis placed on the creative arts and on movement education. Subject teaching in ‘visual arts education’, ‘handicraft education’, ‘textile design’, ‘music education’, ‘voice training and elocution’ and ‘playing the guitar’ (or piano), ‘rhythm and music education’ and ‘movement education’ takes place throughout the five years and includes both general and occupation-related content and competencies.

Beyond these occupation-related areas, general subjects required for completion of the school-leaving examination (university entrance qualification) are also included, such as ‘German’, ‘English’, ‘history, social and political studies’, ‘geography and economics’, ‘applied mathematics’, ‘physics’, ‘chemistry’, ‘biology and ecology’.

Didactic principles specified in the curriculum include learning outcome orientation, systematic and networked competence building, cooperation and coordination between all tutors in a specific grade in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation of the teaching process as a requirement for interdisciplinary thinking and understanding, maintaining an optimal transfer between theory and practice and connecting the content with the real-life situations of the learners.

It is difficult to weight the various curricular areas since, for example, the creative arts and movement education include both general education and occupation-related content. Also, subjects such as German (e.g. including children’s literature), English (e.g. including specialist terminology) and mathematics (e.g. with examples related to the occupational field) contribute to the professional goals of the IPS programme.

Table 6

**Austria: Initial professional studies curriculum - programme for Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogues** (estimated weightings\*)

Distribution of main curricular areas in the IPS programme at a vocational college for early childhood pedagogy ( <i>Bildungsanstalt für Elementarpädagogik</i> ) 5-year programme (without supplementary course for prospective <i>Hort</i> Pedagogues)	Proportion of total hours
<b>General education studies (excluding religion)</b> German (including elocution, children’s literature) English History, social studies, political education Geography and economics Applied mathematics Physics Chemistry Biology and ecology (including physiological foundations, health, nutrition) Applied sciences Nutrition with hands-on practice Basics of computer science	<b>40 %</b>

Distribution of main curricular areas in the IPS programme at a vocational college for early childhood pedagogy ( <i>Bildungsanstalt für Elementarpädagogik</i> ) 5-year programme (without supplementary course for prospective <i>Hort</i> Pedagogues)	Proportion of total hours
<b>Theoretical and field-based studies</b> Pedagogy (including psychology and philosophy) Inclusive pedagogy Didactics Practice (15%) Organisation, management and legislation (including scientific work) Communication practice and group dynamics	<b>33 %</b>
<b>Creative arts and sport</b> Visual arts education Handicraft education Textile design Music education, voice training, elocution Instrumental studies Music and movement Movement education and sport	<b>27 %</b>

\*own calculations

### 3.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

A further route for entry into the profession and one that is becoming increasingly popular is the qualification pathway at one of the 20 Colleges (*Kolleg*) for Early Childhood Pedagogy across the country. These colleges are usually established in one of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy. An updating of the syllabus and change of name took place in 2017.

The post-secondary programme of studies at a *Kolleg* takes four semesters to complete; a part-time option is also available over an extended period of six semesters. It ends with an occupational certificate award which provides the same professional entitlements as the vocational college award.

Qualified Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogues have the possibility of enrolling at one of the 'Courses in inclusive early childhood pedagogy' which are offered in seven locations in Austria as a specialisation for working with young children (0-6 years) with special educational needs. These courses take four semesters to complete (or six semesters on a part-time basis) and can also be established at one of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy. The course ends with a diploma award in inclusive early childhood pedagogy. A reform of the curriculum is currently expected.

Arising from the acute staff shortages in some regions of the country (particularly in Vienna), four vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy are to offer as a pilot model a three-year course for prospective **Pedagogical Assistants** for supporting the work of core practitioners. It is intended to integrate these qualification pathways into the regular school system as 'Vocational Schools for Pedagogical Assistants'. A three-year follow-up course is also planned which will open up the possibility of gaining a general university entrance qualification and the occupational award in early childhood pedagogy. Entry requirements are successful completion of the 8<sup>th</sup> school grade and of an aptitude test.

The professional field of early childhood pedagogy offers few possibilities for career progression. A qualified Kindergarten Pedagogue may take on a post as Centre Head without any additional formal qualification, although in all federal provinces relevant CPD courses are offered which prospective lead staff are expected to attend. Being accepted for a post at one of the 'seminar kindergartens' attached to all vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy is considered to be a promotion. Seminar kindergartens are a legally defined component of the *Bildungsanstalten für Elementarpädagogik* and are operated according to college hours. Their main function is to provide a workplace setting for Early Childhood Pedagogue trainees.

There are few 'lateral entrants' into the early childhood field. Most are qualified pedagogical staff who previously worked in after-school settings. For other cases, it is in principle possible to qualify through examinations for external candidates at one of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy. However, since the amount of supervision needed to support such individual external candidates is very high, very few vocational colleges provide this option.

### 3.4 Current reforms, trends and debates

Raising the formal level of IPS for Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogues to a higher education degree has been an ongoing focus of professional and political debates for several years now. However, in the context of the recently implemented reform of the IPS for teachers of all school types, early childhood pedagogy was unfortunately excluded. Despite this, a number of initiatives have been launched by individual universities and higher education institutions; however, with one exception, these do not confer a professional qualification. According to the federal constitution, this continues to be the responsibility of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy.

#### **Examples of higher education developments in Austria**

**Coblenz University of Applied Sciences:** The only IPS programme at higher education level for Early Childhood Pedagogues has been implemented by KIWI (Children in Vienna, a private providers of ECEC and after-school settings) in cooperation with Coblenz University of Applied Sciences (in Germany) in the form of a dual distance learning study programme. A mandatory requirement for acceptance to this study programme is having a post in an ECEC setting. These posts are provided by KIWI, which is thus qualifying its own personnel.

*Duration:* 7 semesters, 210 ECTS points; *Award:* Bachelor of Arts in Education and Upbringing and – for Germany – State-recognised Social Pedagogue B.A. (Hochschule Koblenz 2017a, 2017b).

**University of Salzburg:** University study programme in early childhood pedagogy

*Duration:* 6 semesters, 120 ECTS points; *Award:* Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education (St. Virgil Salzburg 2017).

**University of Applied Sciences - Campus Vienna:** Part-time Bachelor's degree course for qualified Kindergarten Pedagogues with work experience and experience as a Centre Head; focus on an advanced qualification for leadership posts

*Duration:* 6 semesters, 180 ECTS points; *Award:* Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences (BA) (FH Campus Wien 2017).

Further developments and initiatives towards an academisation of initial professional studies for educational work with 0- to 6-year olds are the establishment of academic expert groups and of specialist chairs at individual universities:

**Early Childhood Pedagogy Section in the ÖFEB:** The 'Austrian Society for Research and Development in Education' (*Österreichische Gesellschaft für Forschung und Entwicklung im Bildungswesen*, ÖFEB) is a non-partisan, nationwide and non-profit association for research, development and teaching in the educational sciences. In 2012, the most recent Section to be established was the 'Early Childhood Pedagogy Section'; membership numbers have increased within a period of four years from 22 to 106 (ÖFEB 2016).

**Chair in Early Childhood Pedagogy at the University of Graz:** The first Chair in Early Childhood Pedagogy in Austria was established in 2010 at the University of Graz (Institut für Erziehungs- und Bildungswissenschaft 2017).

**Endowed Chair in Early Childhood Pedagogy at the University of Innsbruck:** In 2013, an Endowed Chair in Early Childhood Pedagogy was established at the University of Innsbruck in cooperation with the University of Education in Bregenz (Universität Innsbruck 2017).

#### 4. Workplace-based learning in the IPS of core practitioners

Workplace-based learning in ECEC settings is an integrative component of the *BAfEP-IPS* for Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogues. The length and focus of field-based practice are specified in the federal-level curriculum and are therefore mandatory across the country. They make up 15% of the entire programme of studies.

In accordance with the curriculum syllabus, workplace-based learning takes place throughout the five years of basic education/training, with the level of demand increasing each year. According to the Europass guidance<sup>4</sup>, this component accounts for 490 hours plus an additional eight weeks of practical experience. The field-based hours take place either on a specified day of the week or as a block period. The eight weekly block periods are distributed across the five-year course of studies.

Competence specifications are set out in the federal-level syllabus for each of the five years. Trainees are prepared for the demands of workplace-based learning during specific practice-oriented curriculum units. The vocational colleges formulate the requirements as concrete work tasks which the trainees are expected to prepare and evaluate in written assignments. The ECEC settings are informed about these requirements and are expected to support the trainees in acquiring the specified competencies. Tutors from the vocational colleges visit and advise trainees in the workplace location. They thus have direct contact and exchange of information with the mentoring staff in the ECEC settings who contribute to the assessment of the trainees.

*Box 2*

**Details on the length of practicum periods in the Europass guidance** (adapted)

**Kindergarten and Hort pedagogy:** approx. 490 hours of day-long practicum periods in kindergartens and approx. 140 hours of day-long practica in after-school settings (*Horte*) plus an additional eight week-long practicum periods.

**Kindergarten pedagogy with earliest years (*Früherziehung*) supplement:** approx. 490 hours of day-long practicum periods in kindergartens, approx. 100 hours of day-long practica in settings for under 3-year olds plus an additional eight week-long practicum.

**College (*Kolleg*) for Early Childhood/Kindergarten Pedagogy:** approx. 360 hours of day-long practica plus an additional seven week-long practicum.

**Course in inclusive education and early intervention:** beyond the 240 hours of mandatory day-long practica, eight week-long practicum periods totalling 240 hours throughout the course.

Competence areas are set out for each subject in the curriculum for vocational colleges in early childhood pedagogy. Step by step these are expected to lead to the competencies needed to work independently after completion of the *BAfEP-IPS* programme.

For the subject area 'Practice', the competence specifications are described as, e.g.:

- Orientation towards values and norms,
- Self-management and professional socialisation,
- Communication and language,
- Organisation of developmental and educational processes.

<sup>4</sup> Europass is a free service provided by the EU which presents the acquired competencies in five documents (CV, Language Passport, Mobility, Certificate Supplement and Diploma Supplement) in a uniform way (Europass Österreich 2017).

Individual assessment sheets are developed by the *BAfEP* institutions in alignment with the specific requirements of the curriculum. These are completed by the mentoring staff responsible for the trainees and, together with their personal notes, form the basis of the assessment of the trainee.

Unlike the situation of trainee mentoring in the field of primary education, no specific qualification is required in the case of personnel who support prospective Early Childhood and *Hort* Pedagogues in ECEC and after-school settings. However, depending on the region, many core practitioners do possess a mentoring qualification. Courses in mentoring are offered by the Universities of Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) which qualify for the guidance of trainee teachers during their school practicum, and Kindergarten Pedagogues may also attend these courses. Through a mixed-methods approach of knowledge transmission, analysis and reflection, work shadowing and practical sessions as well as work on case studies from the student's own field of practice, the aim is to build a reflexive and inquiry-based attitude towards one's own educational work and the mentoring of trainees.

Tutors who teach didactics and support the trainees during their practica are qualified Kindergarten or *Hort* Pedagogues with work experience. As preparation for this tutoring role, a specific course is provided by the Ministry of Education which is concluded with an in-service qualifying examination. Since workplace-based learning and the related guidance of trainees is part of the initial professional studies programme, this post is firmly anchored in the staffing contingent of the vocational colleges for early childhood pedagogy and is remunerated.

Supporting the trainees in ECEC settings and after-school provision takes place within the regular working hours of the staff with this responsibility. The IPS institution which allocates the trainees remunerates the staff members with a mentoring role.

## 5. Continuing professional development

The requirements and provision of continuing professional development activities and programmes vary considerably in the legislation of the nine federal states and range from 20 hours (two or three days) of mandatory CPD during working hours up to a maximum of five days during the holiday period. Requirements for support staff (assistants) are regulated individually by their employer.

There are no uniform regulations for covering the costs of participation in CPD. However, numerous course offers are made by regional state CPD centres which are either free of charge or require only a very small enrolment fee. The main providers of CPD are, for example, the CPD centres in the states of Carinthia, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria and Tyrol, which coordinate closely and have written a joint working paper on aspects of quality in CPD; they also provide a considerable amount of information online (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Fort- und Weiterbildungsstellen der Länder* 2013).

Since September 2016, a resolution passed by the **Tyrol** regional government assigned the 'Tyrol University of Education' (*Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol*) the responsibility of providing and organising continuing professional development activities for Early Childhood Pedagogues and Pedagogical Assistants in early childhood education settings (*Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol* 2017).

The state of **Upper Austria** has established a comprehensive online platform for information and CPD for the early childhood sector (*Land Oberösterreich* 2017).

A large private provider agency in **Vienna** (*KIWI - Kinder in Wien*) offers a comprehensive CPD programme for its employees (*Kinder in Wien* 2017).



Regulations about the requirements and recognition of CPD participation vary both at the regional government level and the provider level. In most regions, CPD participation is granted for between three and four days per year and is considered to be part of regular working hours. There are considerable variations at the regional government level in terms of recognition of CPD course participation, for example when applying for a post of responsibility.

Professional requirements for taking on a post as Centre Head of a kindergarten, infant-toddler centre or an after-school setting are regulated by federal-level legislation.

The possibilities for attending a professionally relevant advanced course at higher education institutions and universities are described in *Section 3.4* (current reforms).

Participation in advanced courses is voluntary and is not generally funded. However, students may under certain circumstances be eligible for a stipendium from the Study Grant Authority, a federal-level authority affiliated to the Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Economics (Studienbeihilfenbehörde 2015).

## 6. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to ECEC staffing

### Curriculum reform - vocational colleges of early childhood pedagogy

A focus on provision for the under-threes was already part of the government programme for the period 2008–2013, due among other things to the implementation of the Barcelona Targets (EC 13978/08). The political demand that all Austrian Kindergarten Pedagogues should acquire the necessary competencies for working professionally with under 3-year olds during their initial professional studies, as well as the European stipulation of developing competence and outcomes oriented curricula, subsequently led to a curricular reform in 2016 in which both these aspects were included.

### Pilot projects on the fostering of comprehensive language skills in the early years sector

According to the Ministerial Council Decision adopted on 4th December 2012, children with special needs in terms of language development must be provided with special tuition. In May 2013, a multi-level programme for language support was issued, developed by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the State Secretariat for Integration and numerous field experts (Bundesministerium für Bildung 2016b).

Pilot projects have been set up by all regional governments with the aim of developing programmes of comprehensive language support which reflect the specific regional and local contexts. A particular emphasis is placed on language support during the transition from kindergarten to school.

A formative evaluation of the pilot projects is being conducted by the Federal Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and Development in the Austrian School System - BIFIE (Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation und Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens 2017b; Bruneforth et al. 2016).

### Reform project 'A NEW school start' (*Schulstart NEU*)

In September 2014, 35 networking projects with a focus on Kindergarten – Primary School were set up. The project phase ended in 2016 and a nationwide implementation was due to start in the school year 2016/2017 (Bundesministerium für Bildung 2015; Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen 2015).

Goals of the reform project include:

- Improved cooperation between kindergarten and school,

- Improved flow of information between kindergarten and school,
- A child-appropriate assessment of school readiness and support needs,
- Planning the final year in kindergarten and the first two years in primary school as a coordinated unit,
- Language assessment tests in kindergarten and school as a basis for individual support.

As a support measure for the reform, a document on ‘Guidance for language support during the transition from kindergarten to primary school’ was developed by the Charlotte Bühler Institute. The Charlotte Bühler Institute had already provided a ‘Curriculum unit on language support in early childhood education settings’, as a complementary measure to the ‘Nationwide curricular framework for early childhood education settings’ (Charlotte Bühler Institut 2009a, 2009b, 2014).

## 7. Recent country-specific research relating to ECEC professionalisation and staffing issues

### Impact of male Kindergarten Pedagogues on children in everyday ECEC activities

**Source:** Aigner, J.C., L. Burkhardt, J. Huber, G. Poscheschnik, and B. Traxl 2013 (see *References* for full details).

**Background:** The study was conducted by the Institute for Psychosocial Intervention and Communication Research at the Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck and commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Employment, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK).

**Aims:** The study looks at the question as to whether men and women pedagogues in kindergartens have potentially different impacts on children and have develop different relationships with them, not just in the case of intentional pedagogical measures and relationships but ‘without even noticing it’. The idea is to reveal attributions which happen unconsciously and the subsequent relationships which develop in the complex interchange of interactions between child and educator and educator and child.

**Procedure:** Participants in the study were 164 children and 22 pedagogues from five kindergartens with all-female staff and five kindergartens with mixed male and female teams, as well as 206 parents. Video observations of the pedagogues and children were made during everyday routines; staff and parents completed a questionnaire, and projective tests were carried out with a selective sample of children. Alongside questions about life satisfaction, education and work situation, survey participants were asked about their perception of similarities and differences in the ways female and male staff interact with children.

**Results:** “No significant preferences for either the one or the other gender’ (112) could be found to relate to the gender of the professional staff. However, it could be demonstrated that there is a tendency for female staff to interact more frequently with girls and male staff more frequently with boys.

### Childcare Study Vienna: Settling-in phase of toddlers in childcare centres

**Source:** Fürstaller, M., A. Funder, and W. Datler 2012/2013 (see *References* for full details).

**Aims:** The project aimed to support toddlers and their parents during the settling-phase in the best possible way. The researchers worked with groups of parents and pedagogues.

**Procedure:** In the context of the ‘Vienna Nursery Study’ (*Wiener Kinderkrippenstudie*), settling-in procedures of over 100 under 3-year old children were examined who were enrolled in four ECEC settings: one Vienna city kindergarten, two self-governed children’s groups and one church-affiliated kindergarten. The aim was to determine which factors are relevant in contrib-



uting to a successful start for the child in the ECEC setting during the transition period from the primarily inner-familial care situation. Research procedures included the evaluation of written notes made by the pedagogues, together with interviews with them and with the parents.

**Results:** The findings of the study resulted, e.g. in recommendations regarding staff qualifications and in the development of location-related programmes for the settling-in of very young children in infant-toddler centres and kindergartens, such as the Vienna project WIKO (*Wiener Projekt zur Entwicklung von standortbezogenen Konzepten der Eingewöhnung von Kleinkindern in die Kinderkrippe*).

## 8. General workforce issues

### 8.1 Remuneration

Staff remuneration in the early childhood sector is either regulated in one of the state Public Sector Employment Laws (Burgenland, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Styria, Tyrol, Vienna) or directly in the state Child Care Laws (Carinthia, Salzburg, Vorarlberg). For Centre Heads, in most states supplements are envisaged based on the basic salary and the number of groups for which they are responsible. Supplements for Special Needs Kindergarten Pedagogues are budgeted for in most federal provinces.

Starting salaries and maximum salaries for Early Childhood Pedagogues vary from province to province. According to a recent salary compass provided by the Employment Market Service, Kindergarten Pedagogues earn an average monthly starting salary of between 1,920€ and 2,130€ compared with 2,120€ – 2,360€ for Primary School Teachers (Arbeitsmarktservice 2017).

This means that career beginners are placed significantly above the minimum subsistence level, which is currently 1,163€ per month; nevertheless, it is not easy to meet the costs of living, particularly for single parents.

### 8.2 Full-time and part-time employment

According to Statistik Austria (2014), staff in ECEC settings work an average of 33 hours per week. Staff in a full-time position work a 40-hour week.

47% of staff work part time up to 30 hours per week, 53% are employed between 30 and 40 hours per week. 'Other staff' in ECEC settings (e.g. helpers, cooks, cleaning staff) are more likely to be employed on a part-time basis – on average for 27 hours per week.

### 8.3 Staff support measures in the workplace

Measures to support staff and for quality assurance are not regulated in a specific way at the state level, but are negotiated individually at the provider and setting level.

### 8.4 Non-contact time

The time for direct pedagogical work for staff in childcare settings is legislated by the regional governments and ranges from no regulated time at all for planning, team work, etc. up to ten hours per week. It is up to the provider to regulate non-contact time at a more favourable level than legislation specifies.

### 8.5 Staff shortages and staff recruitment

Strategies for staff recruitment are the responsibility of the provider and take place either at the provider level or at the state level.

A study conducted by the Austrian Institute for Family Research (Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung) on demographic developments (2016) shows that the population total of children aged 0 to 5 years will increase by approximately 8% over the coming ten years. The participation rates of 0- to 2-year old children have more than doubled during the past ten years and it is predicted that this trend will continue.

Based on an assumed middle-level rate of population growth, it is estimated that an additional 36,650 places in ECEC settings will need to be provided by 2020.

These figures demand appropriate political strategies and policy measures – both in terms of expanding the number of places and regarding the recruitment of staff.

## 9. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

A particular challenge in Austria is the implementation of **initial professional study programmes for Early Childhood Pedagogues in the higher education sector** and, accordingly, the establishment of specialist chairs at universities as well as commissioned research regarding the further development of the early childhood pedagogy sector.

A further hindrance for a country-wide approach towards coordinated developments and implementation measures is the federal system and the exclusive responsibility of the regional governments for the early childhood sector. It would be beneficial to move **responsibility for the early childhood sector to the federal level**. A first step in this direction would be the establishment of a department or at least a specialist unit for early childhood education at federal ministerial level.

For strategies to improve the working conditions for specialist and assistant staff, **uniform trade union support** would be expedient. However, there is no strong union representation for this personnel branch since the pedagogues – if at all – are organised in diverse union groupings related to their specific employer.

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