



## National Overview “Learning and Guidance in Austria ULLL”

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### 1. Methodology

This report was compiled from the perspective of the authors with the purpose of contextualising the Austrian case studies, to serve as a basis for analysing constraints and barriers as required under work package WP 4, and to contextualise recommendations.

### 2. Facts and figures on ULLL

*What is understood by “ULLL” in Austria?*

Austrian universities are required by law to include Continuing Education in their performance objectives: “continuing education, particularly post-graduate training” and “education through science and humanities” (Austrian Universities Act 2002 – UG 2002, fully implemented on 1 January 2004) allowing explicitly – in order to provide financial and organisational support – cooperation with other legal entities. There is a clear legislative distinction between “regular” degree programmes (Bachelor, Master programmes, and PhD studies) and university continuing education (UCE). Both strands have their own institutional regulations based on the UG 2002.

The provision of University Continuing Education encompasses a wide range of activities such as workshops, seminars, summer schools, courses, degree courses and other programmes (legal designation: “Universitätslehrgänge”). These activities are flexible, innovative, and in many cases interdisciplinary; some are credit-bearing, some are non-credited. They are generally offered on a part-time basis. The UG 2002, which gave the Austrian universities full autonomy, allows each institution to define in its statutes the basic conditions under which UCE is offered. (Previously, all credited formats of UCE had to be submitted to the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for approval.). In general, UCE in Austria has to be self-financed and/or externally sponsored. Some activities, such as open public lectures or programmes particularly designed for socially disadvantaged groups, are financed by the universities themselves (including participants’ fees) and by public funds/sponsoring.

Consequently, making use of the autonomy, Austrian Universities have established different models of management structures for UCE, ranging from central administrative departments mandated to support UCE across the university to decentralised departments/centres focusing on UCE. There is a close link to the management level of the universities, mostly through the vice-rectors. In 1996, a network of universities represented by professionals involved in developing UCE at universities was established – the Austrian University Continuing Education



and Staff Development Network (AUCEN), offering its own definition of UCE. More recently, UCE has been replaced by the term “University Lifelong Learning” when using English.

The “European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning” is widely known in Austria and also a reference document for further development. The Charter was used in the negotiations of performance agreements between the Ministry of Science and Research and the individual universities (for the funding period 2010-2012), clearly communicating that it is up to the universities as autonomous institutions to develop their own profile in ULLL, and last but not least, acknowledging the budgetary restrictions the universities are currently facing. In general, the universities used the Charter to reflect upon their own strategy, provision and further development in that area.

In 2011, the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning was officially launched. It includes explicitly University Lifelong Learning and Learning in Later Life at university level. Moreover, universities are required to provide extra occupational Master’s Programmes and to engage in Community Education projects.

Regarding the scope of development of provision, no data is available regarding the number of public lectures, non-credit bearing short courses, etc. which can also be seen as “Lifelong Learning” activities provided by universities. The final version of the OECD Report on Adult Learning in Austria stated in the year 2004 that the activities of Austrian Universities in the field of adult education and continuing education respectively are “so far very small” and that “it seems unlikely that, given the preoccupation with the Bologna changes, they will substantially increase their participation in traditional adult education” (OECD 2004). This statement does not seem to be in line with the appraisal of the authors of the underlying background report who expected, according to “the 2002 University Act, which harmonises the organisation and study legislation, the study system (Bologna Process) and the autonomy of the universities concerning study organisation, increasing activities” of the Austrian universities in Continuing Education and Training (Schlögl / Schneeberger 2003, p. 42). The pilot projects organised at Austrian universities to improve access particularly for employed people and people with care obligations (through e-learning, evening and/or weekend classes) are explicitly mentioned. In fact, the number of enrolments in university courses (Universitätslehrgänge) at public Universities in Austria rose from 6,946 in the year 2000 to 15,299 in the year 2010 (AQA 2012, p. 17). In the winter term 2010, the university courses in Austria numbered 877 (BMWF 2011, p. 22).

### *How is “Learning and Guidance in ULLL” defined in Austria?*

The Austrian Universities Act 2002 does not specify any learning and guidance in the area of ULLL. It is, however, good practice in UCE (as in adult education provision in Austria in general) to offer information, guidance and counselling beforehand and during the programme. Furthermore, it can be deducted from the Austrian Universities Act 2002 that also UCE programmes should respect the general policy on guidance and counselling as expressed in the law.



In general, there is a debate that guidance and counselling should have more attention in the university sector to help avoid drop-outs in the regular university degree programmes as well as in adult learning.

### **3. The legal context for the thematic practice on Learning and Guidance**

There is no specific legal context at national level in Austria for Learning and Guidance in ULLL.

### **4. The current implementation of this legal framework**

Although there is no specific legal context at national level in Austria for Learning and Guidance in ULLL, participants in ULLL can, in principle, also benefit from the services provided for regular students such as the student counselling services or career centres for graduates; however, the authors doubt that these are widely used. It is more the new networks (informal or formal Alumni networks) created through the UCE programmes which are used for further networking and info brokerage.

It should also be mentioned here that, in recent years, there has been a process of professionalization which is reflected in the founding of relevant networks in almost all Austrian provinces which offer educational guidance and counselling in the field of adult education (<http://erwachsenenbildung.at/bildungsinfo/orientierung/bildungsberatung.php>) such as Bildungsnetzwerk Steiermark [Educational Guidance Network Styria: <http://www.bildungsnetzwerk-stmk.at>; <http://www.bildungsberatung-stmk.at>].

There are also continuing professional development programmes in this field such as “Bildungs- und Berufsberatung: Lehrgang universitären Charakters” (duration 2 years; part-time) provided by bifeb – Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung St. Wolfgang [Federal Institute of Adult Education: <http://www.bifeb.at/index.php?id=206> ].

### **5. The legal framework for the thematic research on Learning and Guidance**

There is no specific legal framework for research on Learning and Guidance in Austria.

### **6. The current implementation of this legal framework**

See above

### **7. Practical links between Research and Practice on the theme. How is it applied?**

An online platform for Adult Education in Austria, funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Culture, is: <http://erwachsenenbildung.at>  
It includes concrete information services not only for adult learners seeking an educational offer



and general advice, but also for those professionals working in guidance and counseling, who can also subscribe to a newsletter. Since 2007, the online journal “Magazin erwachsenbildung.at”, which addresses both research and practice, is published three times a year. The 2010 edition was explicitly dedicated to the theme “Guidance and Competences”.



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