

Austria

This report describes the structure of the national higher education system in Austria, focusing on the institutional types as defined by national categories. It builds on the Eurydice Report on the national higher education system but complements it with quantitative information on the role of higher education institution (HEI) types in national systems, based on data derived from the European Tertiary Education Register (<http://www.eter-project.eu>) for the period 2011-2019.

Types of Higher Education Institutions

According to Eurydice¹, the Austrian higher education system comprises 4 types of HEIs, 22 Public Universities, 21 Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), 16 Private Universities², and 14 University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*).

- Public Universities in Austria are entities under public law which have their own legal personality. The Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research has the legal supervision in legal affairs and is responsible for strategic planning in teaching and research. The performance of each university (including the offer of study programmes) and its budget are negotiated every three years between the university and the Federal Minister and laid down in performance agreements.
- Universities of Applied Sciences have been offering degree programmes aiming to equip students with vocational oriented qualifications since 1994/95. There are bachelor's and master's degree programmes, which include practical training and are offered as full-time or part-time courses. The main goals of universities of applied sciences are i) to ensure practice-oriented training at university level, ii) to communicate the skills needed for the respective occupational field, and iii) to promote permeability of the education system and flexibility of graduates.
- Private Universities³ are entitled to award academic degrees to graduates of the degree programmes they offer (bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees), and this also includes the same academic titles as awarded at public universities. As external quality assurance procedures institutional accreditation and programme accreditation are carried out.

¹ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/types-higher-education-institutions-1_en

² The number of 15 Private Universities for 2019 in ETER differs from the figure in Eurydice (16), due to the establishment of a new institution and differing cutoff dates.

³ From 2021 onwards, according to a new legislative act (*Privathochschulgesetz, PrivHG*), the Private University sector will be referred to as Private Higher Education Institutions and complemented by Private Colleges. Following the Board Decision from 18 March 2022, a new Private College will be established.

- University Colleges of Teacher Education offer bachelor's and master's degree programmes to obtain teaching credentials for the elementary (from 2018/19 on), primary and secondary sectors and offer continuing training programmes for all occupational fields related to pedagogy.

Main institutional characteristics. Legal status and the right to award a PhD

Public Universities (*Öffentliche Universität*) are public institutions and all have the right to award PhDs. In total, about 31% of all Austrian HEIs are Public Universities and equivalent institutions. Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschule*) and University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*) account combined for almost 49% of all Austrian HEIs, however, they do not award PhDs. Private Universities (*Privatuniversität*) account for the remaining 20% of all HEIs and only just over half of them are awarding PhDs.

Table 1 below provides a quantitative overview of the main institutional characteristics by HEI type. Public Universities (*Öffentliche Universität*) are public institutions and all have the right to award PhDs. In total, about 31% of all Austrian HEIs are Public Universities and equivalent institutions. Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschule*) and University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*) account combined for almost 49% of all Austrian HEIs, however, they do not award PhDs. Private Universities (*Privatuniversität*) account for the remaining 20% of all HEIs and only just over half of them are awarding PhDs.

Table 1. Institutional type and legal status by HEI type, 2019

Category		N	Public	Private	Private government- dependent	PhD awarding
Private University	Privatuniversität	15	0	15	0	8
Public University	Öffentliche Universität	22	22	0	0	22
University College of Teacher Education	Pädagogische Hochschule	14	9	0	5	0
University of Applied Sciences	Fachhochschule	21	1	0	20	0
Total		72	32	20	20	30

Note: Numbers reflect inclusion in ETER

Institutional history. Older and younger institutional types

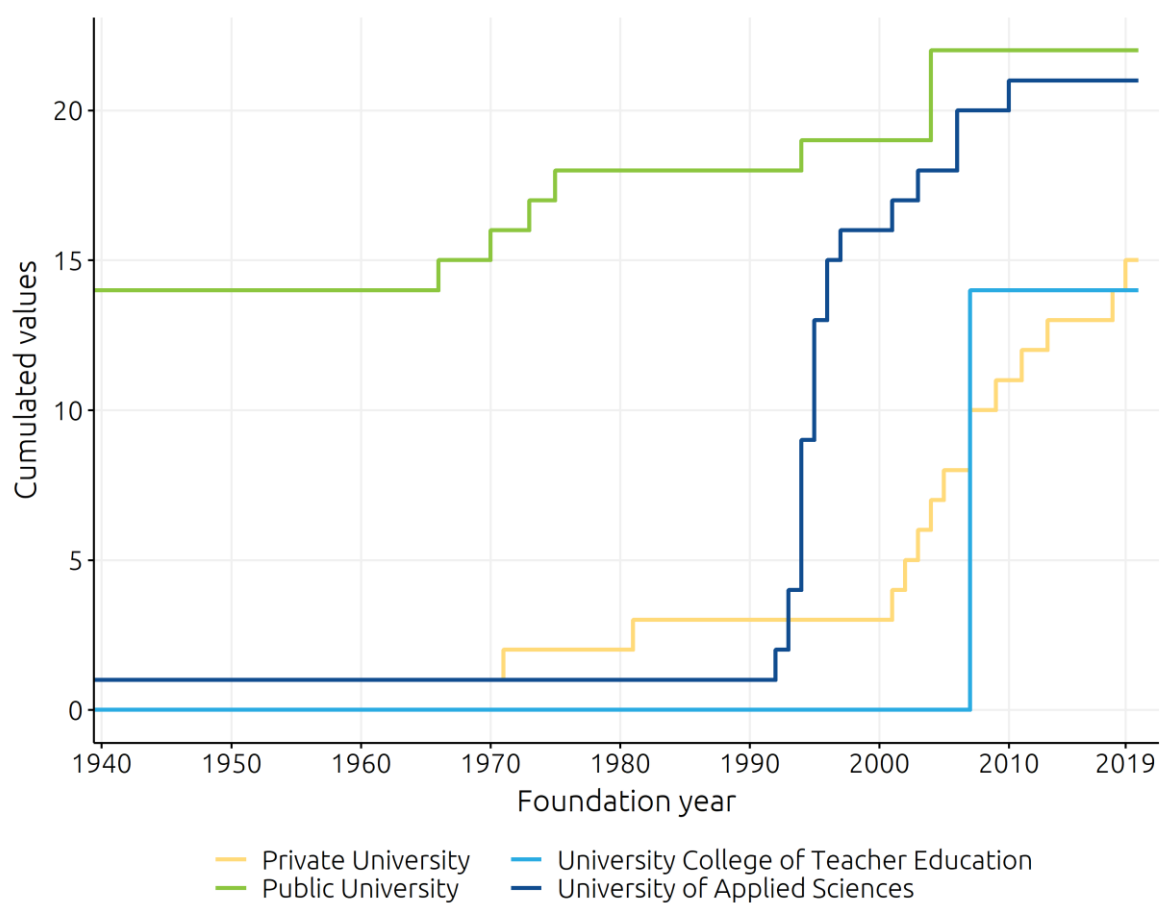
Data on the HEI foundation year provide information on the history of Austria's higher education and its evolution over time.

Figure 1 shows that, despite ancient historical roots, the expansion of the system in terms of the number of HEIs is relatively recent, and began only in the early 1970s. While the University of Vienna, the oldest Austrian

University, dates back to 1365, only 13 HEIs were founded before the 20th century, including 12 Public Universities and 1 University of Applied Sciences. Overall, however, Austrian HEIs are much younger; only 16 of the HEIs were founded before World War II.

The figure shows three distinct patterns of expansion. First, the number (and size) of Public Universities has been slowly increased over the recent half-century – 8 of the Austrian Public Universities were founded after 1965. The second wave of expansion was initiated with the formal creation of Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschulen) in 1992: while one of them pre-dated that decision, their formal recognition as a HEI type started a new expansion process, which continues until today – more than two thirds of the Universities of Applied Sciences were founded in the 1990s. The third wave of expansion of HEIs started in the new millennium with the rise of the Private Universities, a process that is still ongoing. The 4 HEIs in ETER founded after 2010, are all Private Universities. An important contribution to HEI expansion in Austria is the assignment of tertiary institution status to the University Colleges of Teacher Education (Pädagogische Hochschulen) in 2006, adding 14 existing institutions formally to the HEI sector.

Figure 1. Foundation year of HEIs by type



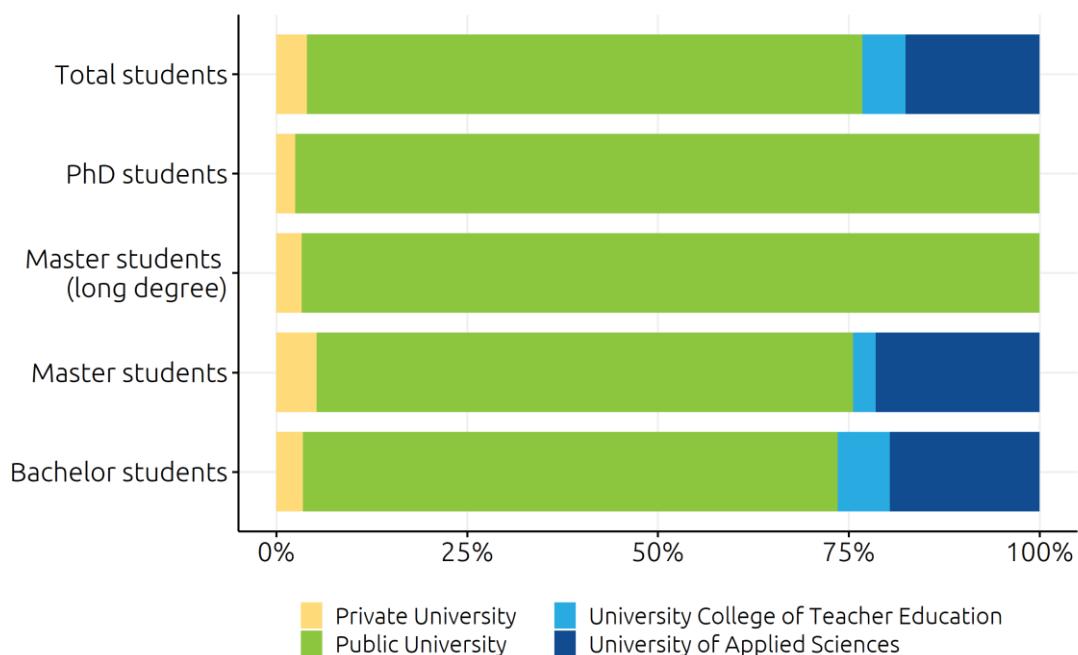
How are students distributed?

In contrast to the number of institutions, in terms of the total number of students enrolled, Public Universities account for almost 73% of all students, and Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) for almost 18%. The other institutional types play a relatively minor role in the aggregate (see Figure 2). While Private Universities account for 21% of the Austrian HEI sector in ETER, these enrol only about 4% of the students and therefore play a limited role in the national higher education system.

According to different institutional mandates, we also observe systematic differences between educational levels: Universities of Applied Sciences account for 20% of the bachelor students and 21% of the master students, while doctorates and long master's degrees (without an intermediate bachelor's degree) are within the remit of Public Universities, with almost 98% and 97% of the student enrolments.

This pattern closely matches the policy intention to focus Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) on shorter professional curricula; however, their role has become important also in master education.

Figure 2. Students by level and type of HEI, 2019



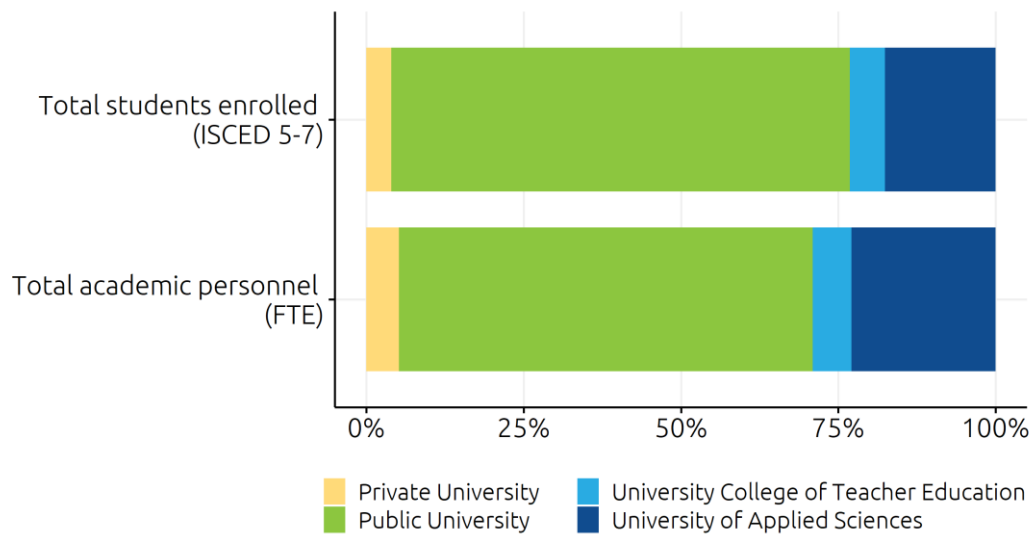
Note: Total students include ISCED 5-7

Academic personnel and financial resources

As illustrated by Figure 3, in the year 2019, Public Universities account for almost 73% of students enrolled and almost 66% of the academic personnel of the whole HEI system, i.e., substantially less than their share of students (data on revenues only available for Public Universities in Austria). Compared with this situation, the other three sectors have higher shares of academic personnel as compared with the shares of enrolled students. Private universities comprise a share of 4% of enrolled students, while their share of academic

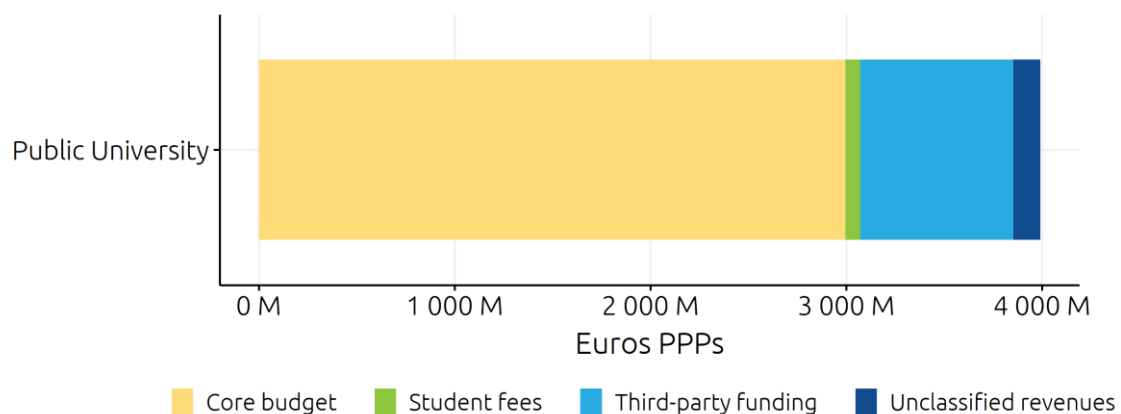
personnel is over 5% in Austria. University Colleges of Teacher Education incorporate more than 5% of enrolled students and over 6% of the academic personnel. The Universities of Applied Sciences, comprising 18% of the enrolled students and almost 23% of the academic personnel, exhibit the highest share of teachers vs. students in all Austrian HEIs.

Figure 3. Academic personnel and total students enrolled by type of HEI, 2019



Data on financial resources are only available for Public Universities in Austria (see Figure 4). The internal distribution of these funds shows the major share of 77% coming from the core budget and an already remarkable share of third party funding (18%). Student fees play a minor role (1.7%), leaving 3.2% to unclassified revenues.

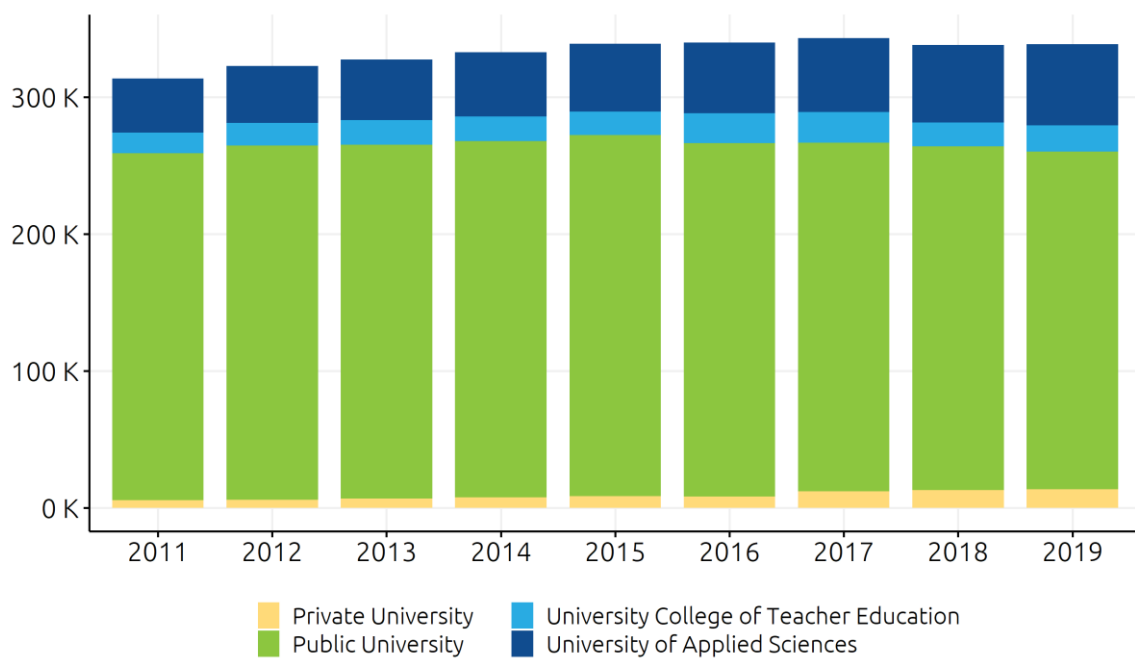
Figure 4. Composition of resources. Public Universities (Öffentliche Universität)



Changing roles over time

When observed through the lens of the number of students, data show a pattern of overall stability with the number of enrolled students increasing slightly from 2011 to 2017, showing a maximum of about 339,000 students, and with a minor decrease from there to 338,000 students in 2019. The overall development is characterised by the fact that Universities of Applied Sciences and Private Universities show considerable growth in student numbers. Universities of Applied Sciences increased the number of students enrolled from 39,000 in 2011 to over 59,000 in 2019. Private Universities grew from 5,500 students to more than 13,500 students in 2019. On the other hand, the dominant sector of Public Universities in Austria saw a decrease from 263,000 students in 2015 to 247,000 students enrolled in 2019. The University Colleges of Teacher Education more or less exhibit a stable development with 19,000 enrolled students in 2019.

Figure 5. Share of students enrolled by institutional type





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