

## 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 2011-2020.

### Types of Higher Education Institutions

According to Eurydice<sup>1</sup>, the Austrian higher education system comprises 4 types of HEIs, 22 Public Universities<sup>2</sup>, 21 Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), 16 Private Universities, 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 Universities<sup>3</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup><https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/austria/types-higher-education-institutions> (Last update: 4 October 2022)

<sup>2</sup> 22 Public Universities according to Universitätsgesetz 2002

<sup>3</sup> 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

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 30% 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 48% of all Austrian HEIs, however, they do not award PhDs. Private Universities (*Privatuniversität*) account for the remaining 22% of all HEIs and only just over half of them are awarding PhDs.

Table 1. Institutional type and legal status by HEI type, 2020

Category		N	Public	Private	Private government-dependent	PhD awarding
Private university	Privatuniversität	16	0	16	0	9
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		73	32	16	25	31

## Institutional history. Older and younger institutional types

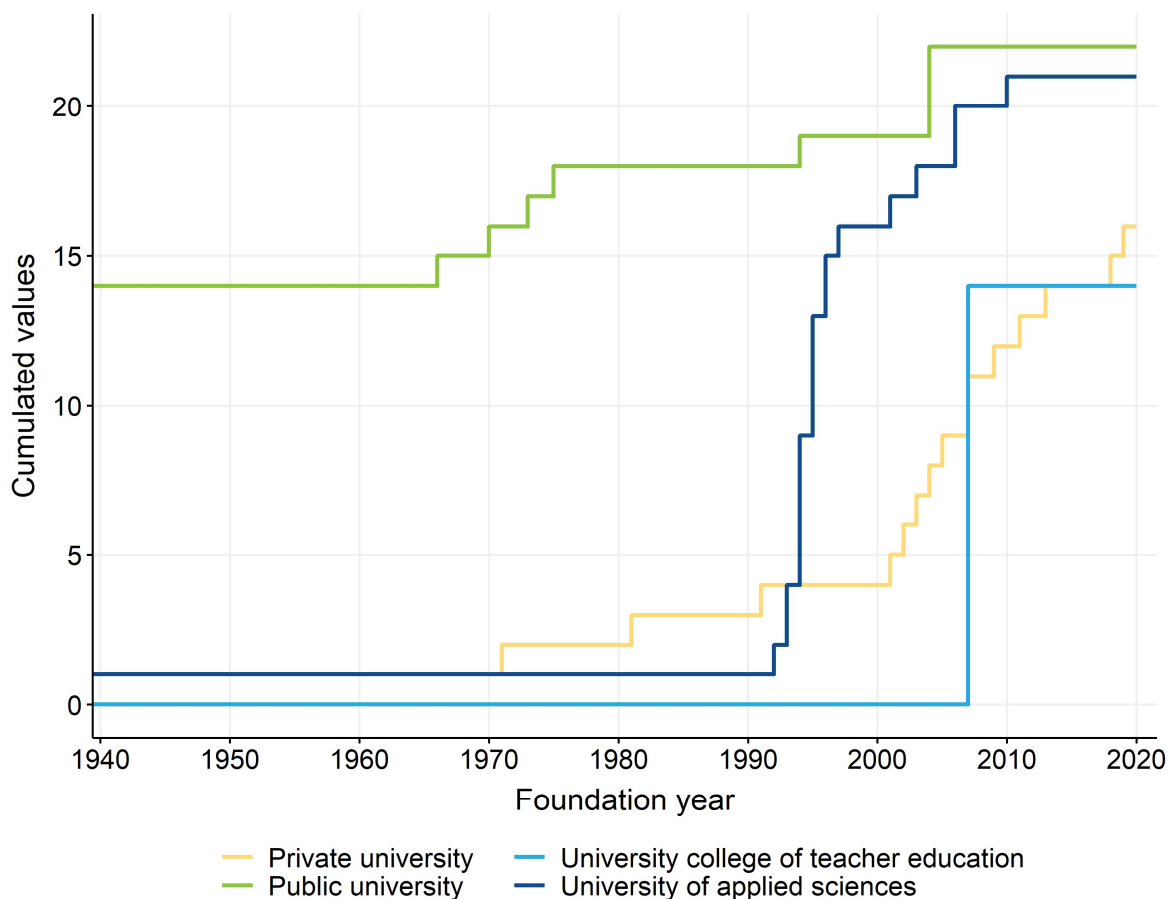
Data on the HEI foundation year provide information on the history of Austria's higher education and its evolution over time.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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



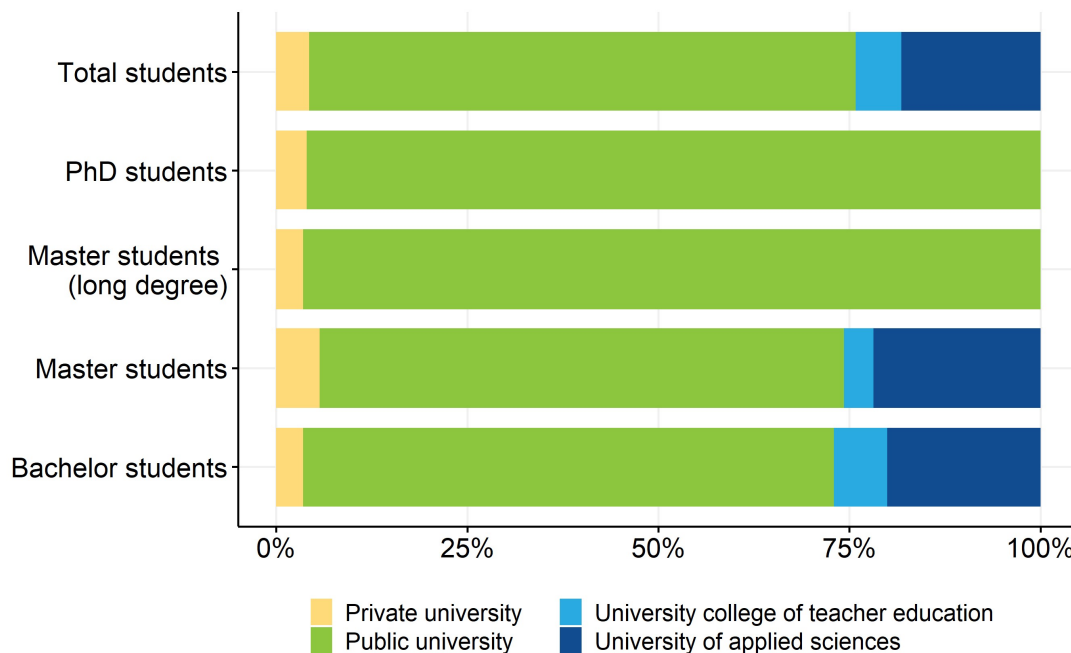
## Students

In contrast to the number of institutions, in terms of the total number of students enrolled, Public Universities account for 72% of all students, and Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) for 18%. The other institutional types play a relatively minor role in the aggregate (see Figure 2). While Private Universities account for 22% of the Austrian HEI institutions 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 22% 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 97% and 96% 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, 2020



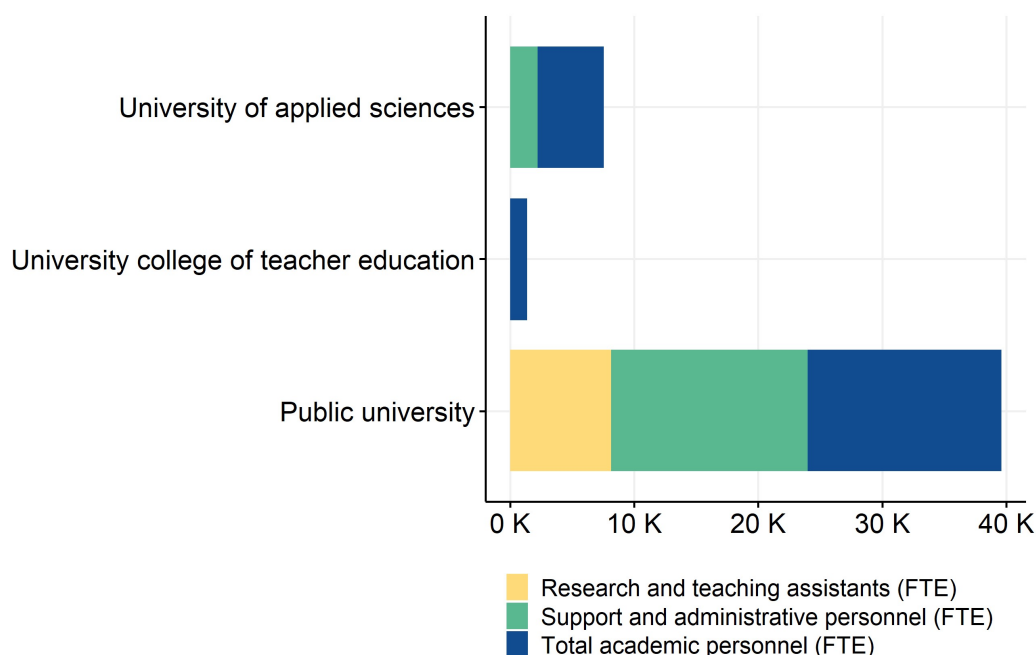
Note: Total students include ISCED 5-7

## Personnel

People are a core resource for HEIs, as their competences are essential for teaching, undertaking research and producing scientific output. In that respect, ETER provides a rich set of data moving beyond the information available in EUROSTAT, which allows to analyse the composition of personnel by type of HEI and characteristics such as gender, nationality, educational field and, from 2020 onwards, levels of seniority.

As shown by Figure 3, there are major differences between Austrian HEIs in size, as measured by total personnel in full time equivalents (FTE), and in the personnel composition. Public universities are by far the largest institutions, with an average size of 1,800 FTE, and accounting for 78% of total HEI personnel (FTE) in Austria. Universities of Applied Sciences employ another 15%. In terms of personnel composition, Private Universities (not displayed) and Universities of Applied Sciences exhibit a similar structure, with 75% and 71% total academic personnel respectively, and 25% as well as 29% support and administrative personnel. In comparison, Public Universities have a substantial share of support and administrative personnel (40%), and also employ research and teaching assistants (RTAs) which amount to 21% of total personnel. This reflects the fact that PhD students are often supporting research and teaching activities and that PhD awarding institutions are mainly Public Universities.

Figure 3. Personnel (FTE) by category and type of HEI, 2020



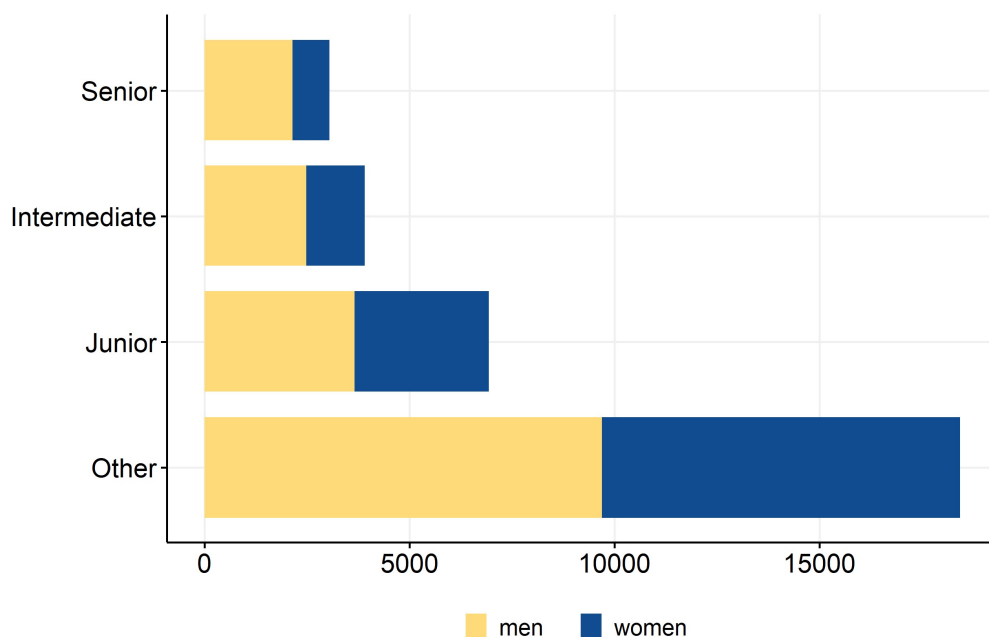
*Note: Some persons are simultaneously employed as academic and non-academic personnel, therefore academic and non-academic staff don't add up to the total amount of personnel*

Since the data collection 2020, ETER also includes information on academic staff seniority level based on a classification jointly developed by OECD and EUROSTAT<sup>4</sup>. Combined with information on gender, this information allows measuring two critical issues, i.e. career prospects of academic staff and the so-called leaky pipeline, i.e. the fact that the share of female academic staff decreases systematically with seniority levels.

As for Austria, comparable data on staff seniority and gender is available only for Public Universities and University Colleges of Teacher Education (Figure 4). Data combining these two sectors shows that the major share of academic personnel (57%) is "other academic personnel", with a reasonable gender balance between women (47%) and men. Junior academic personnel amounts to 21% of the academic staff, still with similar share of women and men. At the level of intermediate academic personnel, the leaky pipeline begins to take effect, and the share of females drops already to 36%. Of the senior academic personnel, which account for only 9% of all academic staff, only 29% are women.

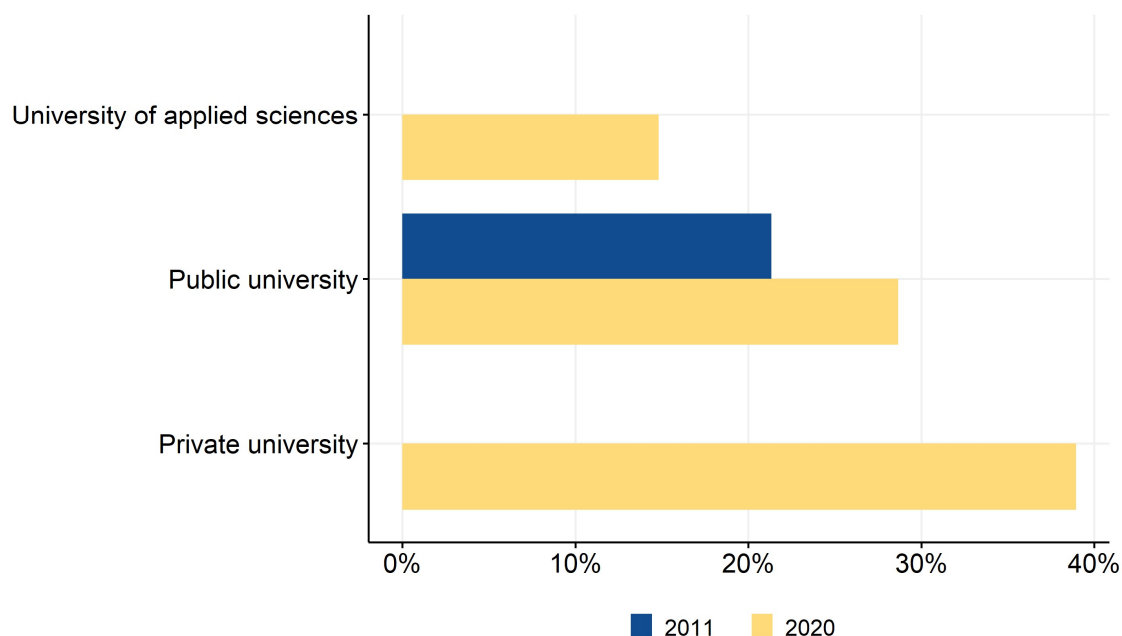
<sup>4</sup> OECD (2022), Education at a Glance, Paris, pp. 412-413.

Figure 4. Academic personnel by seniority level and gender (HC), 2020



Note: Only Public Universities and University Colleges of Teacher Education included

Figure 5. Share of foreign academic personnel (HC) by type of HEI, 2011 and 2020



Note: Data for Universities of Applied Sciences and Private Universities missing for 2011

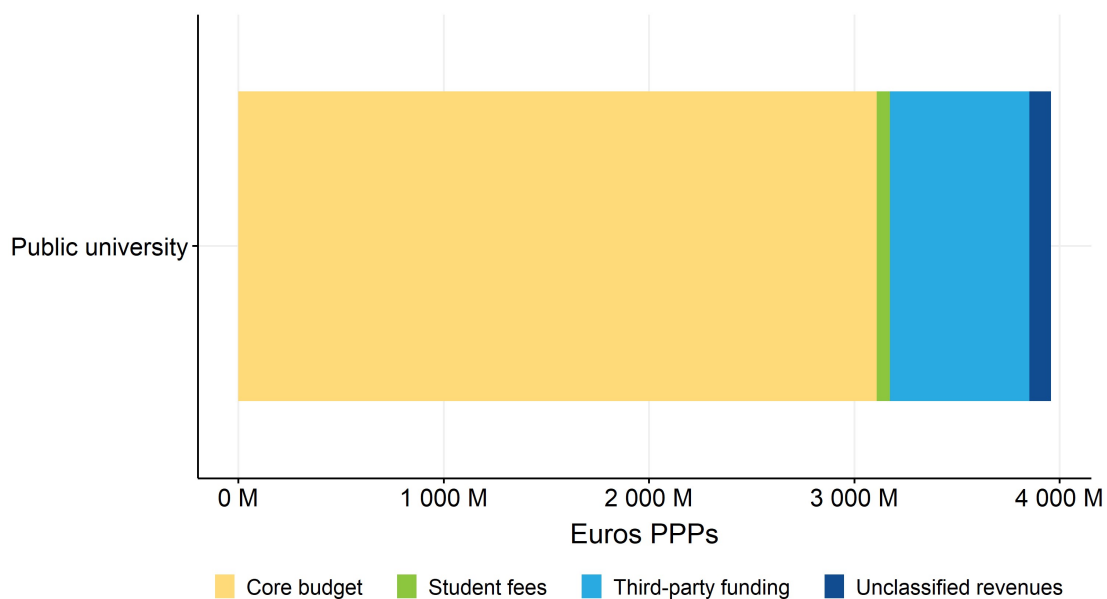
A final important dimension is internationality since it is generally considered as beneficial for the quality of research and education. In ETER, this is measured by the share of academic personnel not having the

citizenship of the country ('foreigners'). As shown by Figure 5, Austrian higher education is characterized by a relatively high level of internationality with 25% of foreign academic personnel in 2020 (whereby no data is available for University Colleges of Teacher Education). Private Universities (not displayed) are the most internationally oriented in Austria in terms of employment, showing 39% foreign academic personnel. Public Universities follow up in terms of internationality with 29% foreign academic personnel, whereby a significant increase over the last ten years can also be observed. Comparatively lower is the share of foreign academic personnel with the Universities of Applied Sciences, with 15% in 2020.

## Financial resources

Data on financial resources are only available for Public Universities in Austria (Figure 6). The internal distribution of these funds shows the major share of 79% coming from the core budget and an already remarkable share of third party funding (17%). Student fees play a minor role (2%), leaving 3% to unclassified revenues.

Figure 6. Composition of resources. Public Universities (Öffentliche Universität) 2020

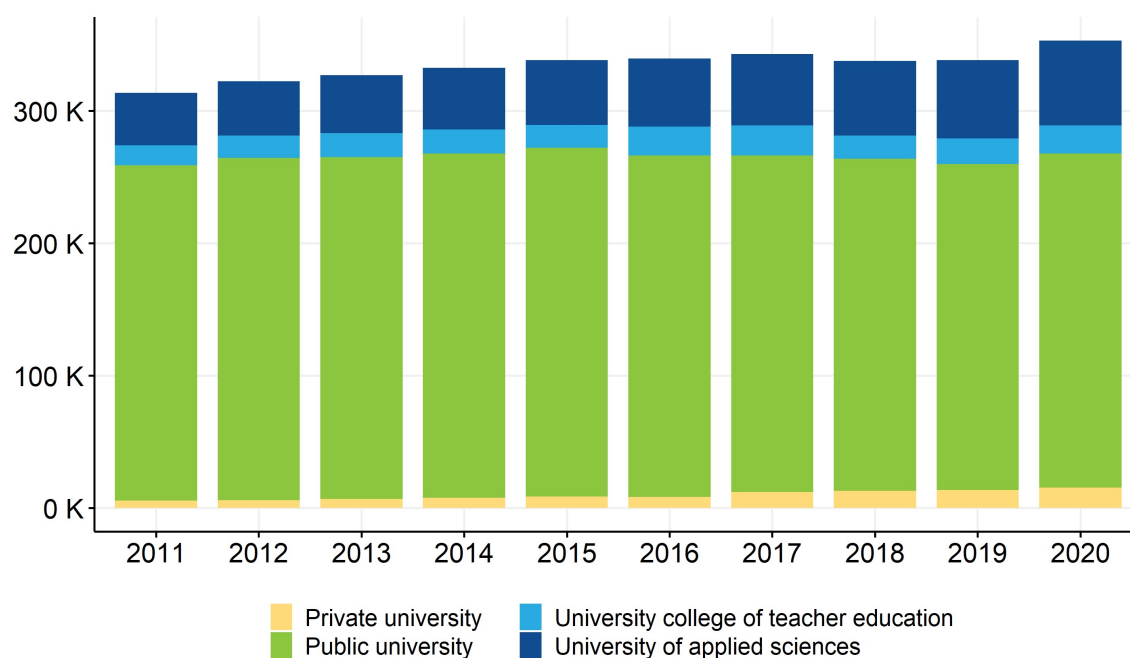




## Changing roles over time

When observed through the lens of the number of students, we observe a pattern of gentle growth in the Austrian HEI system, with the number of enrolled students increasing by 13% from 2011 to 2020. Showing an intermediary high of about 339,000 students in 2017, a minor temporary reduction in 2018, the number of enrolled students significantly increases to 353,000 - the maximum through the observed decade. 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 64,000 in 2020. Private Universities trebled from 5,500 students to more than 15,000 students in 2020. 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.

Figure 7. Students enrolled by type of HEI, 2011-2020



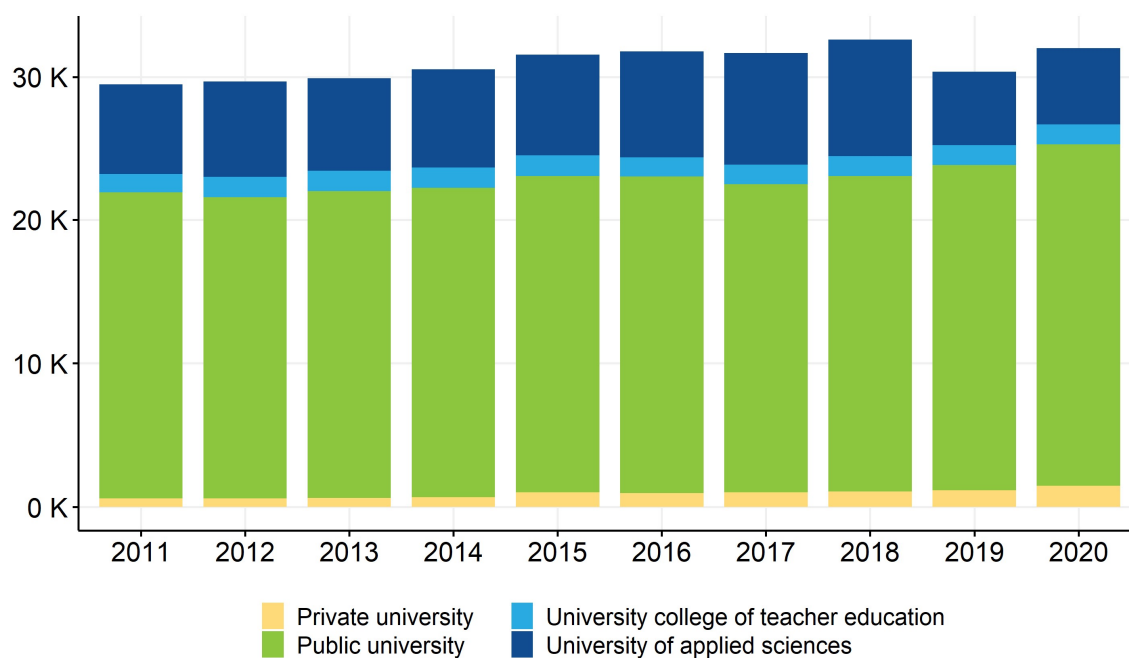
The overall Austrian university development plans foresaw that the expansion of Universities of Applied Sciences should lead to a long-term relief of the university system. The observed developments do indeed correspond to this. This slight decline in Public Universities' student enrolment, however, seems to be reversed with the latest observation, as shown by the remarkable increase by 3% to 253,000 students in 2020. The University Colleges of Teacher Education exhibit a slight and stable growth throughout the decade, reaching 21,000 enrolled students in 2020. Summing up the recent annual change, student enrolment has increased in every single sub-sector the Austrian HEI system.

As shown by

Figure 8, with an increase of 9% from 2011 to 2020, the number of academic personnel (FTE) in Austrian HEIs followed the increase in the number of students, although it did not fully keep pace. Reflecting the continuing rapid growth of the Private Universities sector in this decade, also academic personnel numbers grew by 250% here. In Public Universities, the growth in academic personnel was by 11% (representing 2,400 FTE) from 2011 to 2020, while University Colleges of Teacher Education grew by 8%. Universities of Applied Sciences increased the number of academic personnel by 30% until 2018, following the strong growth in enrolled student<sup>5</sup>.

In university planning and the funding of public universities, improving the student-to-faculty ratio, especially in highly demanded fields of study, is a central aspect. The Higher Education Plan 2030<sup>6</sup>, published in 2022, consistently aims for sustainable improvement of the student-to-faculty ratio. The greatest need for action continues to be in the realm of public universities. Specifically, within the framework of the Performance Agreements 2019-2021, it was explicitly agreed to fill nearly 360 new professorships and equivalent positions at the universities.

Figure 8. Academic personnel (FTE) by type of HEI, 2011-2020



*Note: to keep consistency, the figure includes teaching and research assistants, which are excluded in the official statistics from 2017 onwards.*

<sup>5</sup> The break in this development in 2019, where the number of academic personnel is reduced by 36% from the previous year was caused by the availability of more accurate data on academic personnel at Universities of Applied Sciences allowing to replace estimated FTE conversion factors by observed ones and does

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Hochschulgovernance/Steuerungsinstrumente/hochschulplan.html>



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