

# **TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR INCLUSION**

**Policy Mapping Grid: Austria**



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Further information about the Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion (TPL4I) activities is available on the [TPL4I web area](#).

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## SECTION 1: WIDER POLICY CONTEXT

### Wider policy context

In line with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2008, Austria is committed to promoting the implementation of an inclusive school system.

Among other things, the UNCRPD served as a model for the National Action Plan Disability 2012–2020 (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection [BMASK], 2012). This, in turn, formed the basis for ‘Binding Guidelines for the Nationwide Implementation of Inclusive Model Regions’ (Federal Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs [BMBF], 2015, p. 2) with the goal of improving the pedagogical quality and support at mainstream schools so that facilities that are no longer needed can be removed from the system. Educational barriers are to be reduced and educational equity is to be established with regard to the differences between disability, language and gender. This explicit commitment to the implementation of an inclusive school system with recourse to a broad understanding of inclusion is also expressed in the School Quality General Education (SQA) (Raditsch & Bundeszentrum für inklusive Bildung und Sonderpädagogik, 2015; Schratz et al., 2015). This describes the transformation to an inclusive school as an essential task of school leadership.

Finally, the Austrian Higher Education Act as amended formulates in accordance with section 42(10) that curricula must take account of the objectives of Article 24 of the UNCRPD. In accordance with the Annex to section 74a(1)(4), the development of profession-oriented competences – such as general and specific pedagogical competences, subject-related and didactic, inclusive, intercultural, inter-religious and social competences, diversity and gender competences – has to be considered. (National Education Report 2018)



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## SECTION 2: VISION AND MAIN PRINCIPLES OF TPL4I POLICY

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### 2.1 Policy vision

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Policy priorities	Findings
2.1.1 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers (i.e. student teachers, beginning teachers, experienced teachers, teacher educators) can access career-long professional learning opportunities regarding the principles of inclusive education	2.1.1.1 The current laws reference groups based on differences in language, ethnicity, talent, gender, etc. Disability is one of several categories of difference, though it is no longer given preferential treatment. Discrimination is not the preferred topic of policy at the moment.
2.1.2 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers receive education regarding their role and collaboration in and contribution to inclusive education	–



Policy priorities	Findings
2.1.3 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers receive education regarding their pedagogical responsibility to promote the interaction, learning, participation and collaboration of all learners	–

#### Evaluative comments for 'Policy vision'

There is no preferential treatment, but the extent to which inclusive education is implemented depends on the attitude of individual leaders.

## 2.2 Main principles

Policy priorities	Findings
2.2.1 Teachers' professional learning is defined in policy as a prerequisite for inclusive education	<p>As stated by the Austrian <a href="#">Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research</a>:</p> <p><i>Austria's university colleges of teacher education provide scientifically based vocational continuing education and training in all areas of teaching, specifically for teachers. There are 14 university colleges of teacher education in total at which it is currently possible to take teacher training courses, with the option to focus on and specialise in different areas. ...</i></p> <p><b>University colleges of teacher education remits</b></p> <p><b>Vocational education and training programmes</b></p> <p><i>Primary level course</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p><i>Secondary level academic education course in cooperation with universities</i></p> <p><i>Secondary level vocational education course</i></p> <p>Continuing education and training opportunities</p> <p><i>Continuing education and training opportunities in all teaching profession fields.</i></p> <p>As referenced on the <a href="#">Austrian Education System website</a>:</p> <p><i>The minimum length of study for a teacher training degree [at a university college of teacher education] amounts to at least 4 years (bachelor's degree) plus 1–1.5 years (master's degree). The teaching certificate for the corresponding teaching qualification is earned upon successful completion of the whole degree. ... The basic structure of the bachelor's and master's degrees is standardised. Training takes place according to age-group (primary or secondary) and not according to school type.</i></p> <p>There is no separate programme for special teacher education, as inclusive education is an important aspect in all above-mentioned courses. However, students of primary teacher education (TE) may choose 'Inclusive Pedagogy' as a major field of study from the fifth semester on. Students of secondary TE may do so from the first semester on. The objective is to avoid exclusion of learners with special needs and to provide all teachers with the competences needed for teaching in a comprehensive school environment.</p> <p>Further training can be provided by the university colleges of teacher education, in-school, regionally or supra-regionally. Teachers can attend further training for free. It is funded by the federal government and the provinces.</p> <p><b>Teacher education reform 2013</b></p> <p>The Federal Framework Act on the Introduction of New Training for Teachers (FLG I No. 124/2013) came into force in July 2013. The Federal Framework Law on the Introduction of</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>New Training for Teachers stated that inclusive education should be included in the new training for all teachers. According to the specifications of the Act on the Organisation of University Colleges for Teacher Education (Hochschulgesetz), inclusive education has to be offered as a main focus for primary school education and as a specialisation in general secondary education at all university colleges for teacher education and on all initial teacher training degrees which are jointly established with universities. The Act on the Organisation of University Colleges for Teacher Education lays down that curricula have to observe the objectives of Article 24 of the UNCRPD. Furthermore, a particular emphasis on the needs of people with disabilities as defined by the Federal Disability Equality Act is a guiding principle in the Act on the Organisation of University Colleges for Teacher Education.</p> <p>For further information, see Eurydice, National Education Systems, Austria, <a href="#">National Reforms in Higher Education</a>.</p>
<p>2.2.2 Policy states that the principles and practice of inclusive education should be part of initial teacher education</p>	<p>2.2.2.1            ‘The reform of teacher education mentions inclusion as mandatory content in the curriculum for all student teachers.’ (European Agency, Country information for Austria, <a href="#">Legislation and policy</a>)</p> <p>2.2.2.2  <i>Students enrolled in teacher training programmes for primary level are obliged to select at least one special focus (e.g. inclusive teaching, social pedagogy, early childhood education, multilingualism, or focus on a specialist educational area).</i> (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Austria, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</p> <p>2.2.2.3            ‘Teachers of secondary-level general education choose two fields of study or one field of study and one specialisation (e.g. inclusive teaching, social pedagogy; multilingualism, media</p>





Policy priorities	Findings
	education).’ (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Austria, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a> )
2.2.3 Policy states that beginning teachers should receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	2.2.3.1 Teacher training reform still aims to prepare all teachers for inclusive education. However, training is often no longer compatible with the reality of education policy and its implementation in schools.
2.2.4 Policy ensures that experienced teachers receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	2.2.4.1 Teachers can receive training at teacher education colleges to specialise in inclusive education. Special education theories and concepts are part of the specialisation, focusing on inclusive education. 2.2.4.2 <i>The training programmes for teachers provided across provinces are in-service programmes to convey methodical and special educational competences (for example, for learners with hearing disabilities or learners who are deaf and learners with physical, visual or behavioural disabilities).</i> <i>During further training, the teacher education colleges provide regional and supra-regional seminars and courses with different disability-related or topical focuses. (European Agency, Country information for Austria, <a href="#">Teacher education for inclusive education</a>)</i> 2.2.4.3 The reform of teacher education at Pädagogische Hochschulen and universities provide a university education at levels:



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p><b>Level 1: Inclusive pedagogical competences</b></p> <p>General education needs: Individualisation and differentiation as an inherent characteristic of teaching.</p> <p><i>Basic for all students in the bachelor's programme (BA), regardless of the age level chosen (primary level/secondary level)</i></p> <p><b>Level 2: Special educational competences</b></p> <p>Special educational needs: Additives offers and measures in terms of prevention and intervention.</p> <p><i>Specialisation Inclusive Pedagogy (BA Primary Level) Specialisation Inclusive Pedagogy in the position of a second subject (BA Secondary Level)</i></p> <p><b>Level 3: Special educational competences</b></p> <p>Special educational needs (physical, psychological, cognitive and sensory impairment)</p> <p><i>Categorical Specialisation (Master level (MA) primary level, MA secondary level)</i></p> <p>With regard to the first level, the 'Expert Group on Inclusive Education' (BMUKK, 2014) recommends that at least 6 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System credits (ECTS-AP) should be explicitly taken into account in the basics of educational science and at least 12 ECTS-AP in didactics at primary level and at least 6 ECTS-AP per subject for the acquisition of inclusion-related competencies at secondary level.</p> <p>In addition, it was recommended that members of the Quality Assurance Council and the Ministry of Education take into account interdisciplinary competences such as interreligious competence, gender competence and linguistic competence in the manual for the preparation of curricula (<a href="#">Braunsteiner, Schnider &amp; Zahalka, 2014</a>).</p> <p>At the second level, the bachelor's programme at primary level should have a focus of 60 to 80 ECTS. Inclusive pedagogy is to be offered as a focal point in any case (§ 38 Paragraph 2 of the</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>Higher Education Act 2005 as amended). This deepens the basics of inclusive education and at the same time ensures the focused ability to act in one of the diversity areas, such as disability, multilingualism, inter-/transculturality or (highly) gifted students. Due to the requirements of the occupational field, each provider must always have a focus on inclusive education with a focus on disability (<a href="#">Braunsteiner, Schnider &amp; Zahalka, 2014</a>). At the secondary level of general education, the specialisation Inclusive Pedagogy can be chosen instead of a second subject.</p> <p>At the third level, there is categorical deepening in relation to special educational needs (SEN), for example in the support area of hearing or social-emotional development. This is to take place at the primary level in subsequent Master's studies to the extent of 90 ECTS-AP and at the secondary level of general education to the extent of 120 ECTS-AP.</p>
2.2.5 Policy states that specialist teachers and other professionals (e.g. speech and language therapists, multilingual education teachers and other professionals who work in schools) receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	2.2.5.1 This also depends on individual curricula. Some universities focus on the theory and findings of special education and places them in the context of inclusive education.



Policy priorities	Findings
2.2.6 Policy states that teacher educators working in university education departments or pedagogical institutes should be trained and committed to the inclusive education agenda in their courses, as understood in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy	–

### Evaluative comments for ‘Main principles’

One of the main problems in Austria’s policy is the normative claim of inclusive education. There are no obligations and no guidelines for monitoring. Inclusion also only plays an implicit role in the new government programme.

The following are excerpts from the government programme 2020 ([Educational package](#)):

*Resources for “schools with special challenges”*

*In a pilot programme, 100 “schools with special challenges” are to receive additional staff and money. In addition, the government wants to “increase the number of administrative and psychosocial support staff such as school social workers or psychologists in line with needs” and to support schools and teachers in preventing violence, for example by improving the legal handling of assaults and pedagogical care concepts for pupils who are prepared to use violence (keyword “time-out” phases). For pupils aged ten and over, there should be nationwide prevention instruction by specially trained police officers.*



#### *Modern curricula and stricter controls*

*The government programme also announces a modernisation of the curricula. In addition to the mandatory mastery of basic skills, topics such as climate change, economic education or political education, including civics, are emphasized.*

#### *Clear school-readiness criteria for all*

*The new school-readiness screening is a developmental diagnostic tool which will, for the first time, accurately determine the skills that are relevant for school-age children to attend mainstream schools throughout Austria. It provides parents with greater reassurance that their child will start school on the same terms as their peers. It will be implemented at the start of the 2021/22 academic year.*

#### *Individual competence and potential measurement (iKPM)*

*iKPM is used on the one hand to diagnose pupils' competences and development, and on the other for school quality management and the Ministry of Education to monitor performance and develop the education system. It represents an enhancement of the existing education standard audit (BIST audits) and informal competence measurement (IKM) tools and will in future supersede and/or replace these. Staged implementation from the start of the 2021/22 academic year.*



## SECTION 3: GOALS AND CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT FOR TPL4I POLICY

### 3.1 Goals

Policy priorities	Findings
3.1.1 Policy states that all teachers should have qualifications that reflect an inclusive education agenda	3.1.1.1 Regarding early childhood education: <i>Intercultural learning, diversity and inclusive teaching and also the areas of operational/occupational field organisation and management are part of the curricula and educational objectives of the early childhood education teaching establishments.</i> (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Austria, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a> )
3.1.2 Policy states competence areas for inclusive education for all teachers working at different levels of education (e.g. professional development of all teachers to facilitate their involvement in co-teaching, planning together, developing differentiated materials collaboratively, etc.)	–



Policy priorities	Findings
3.1.3 Policy states that all teachers' professional learning opportunities consider teacher competences for inclusive education	–
3.1.4 There is a formal strategy for promoting dialogue between ministries, regional/local authorities/municipalities and teacher educators to agree on the requirements of teachers' professional development opportunities for inclusion	<p>3.1.4.1</p> <p>The provision and co-ordination of support measures for learners with special educational and other support needs in general schools is newly regulated by the <i>Bildungsdirektionen</i> (Federal Ministry of Education).</p> <p>The core tasks of the Department of Inclusion, Diversity and Special Education are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provision of expertise in case management for inclusion, diversity and special education;</li><li>• participation in the development of evidence-based decision bases for the departmental management in the education region (regional education monitoring);</li><li>• support for the regional implementation of educational policy reform projects with a focus on the department and relevant cross-cutting issues in inclusion, diversity and special education;</li><li>• support for schools and contact persons for cluster and school management in all questions of inclusion, diversity and special education. (See <a href="#">New regulations for the Department of Inclusion, Diversity and Special Education</a>)</li></ul>



Policy priorities	Findings
3.1.5 There is a mechanism to ensure that all professional learning opportunities available to teachers are aligned with national- and local-level policy goals for an understanding of inclusive education	–
3.1.6 There are strategies to ensure that local-level professional opportunities for teachers are flexible/adaptable to local school contexts and school development plans for inclusive education	–
3.1.7 There is a medium- and long-term review strategy for teachers' professional learning opportunities to ensure they meet system requirements for an inclusive education system	–

**Evaluative comments for 'Goals'**

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## 3.2 Continuum of support

Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.2.1 There is a strategy to ensure a continuum of diverse professional learning opportunities for inclusive education – for pre-service, beginning and experienced teachers, as well as teacher educators and support teachers – across all levels where teachers work</p>	<p>3.2.1.1</p> <p><i>Continuing professional development events are primarily offered by university colleges of teacher education (PHs). Information on nationwide offers is published on the website of the Education Ministry. ... The specific design of the continuing professional development offers is the responsibility of the respective PHs themselves. However, in the form of decrees, the Education Ministry defines the essential framework conditions:</i></p> <p><i>The <a href="#">‘Decree on Continuing Professional Development of Teachers at University Colleges of Teacher Education’</a> (from 2007) regulates the basic tasks of continuing professional development (CPD), in addition the organisation and scheduling of CPD courses and also the quality assurance and quality development in this area.</i></p> <p><i>The decree <a href="#">‘Quality of Continuing Professional Development of Teachers at University Colleges of Teacher Education’</a> (from 2011) defines quality standards for CPD.</i></p> <p><i>With the decree <a href="#">‘Focuses in the Area of Continuing Professional Development from 2014 – 2018 at University Colleges of Teacher Education’</a> (from 2014) longer-term focuses in CPD are set out. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Austria, <a href="#">Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p> <p>3.2.1.2</p> <p>There is no special focus on inclusive education.</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
3.2.2 There are strategies for developing leadership competences (e.g. school leadership or learning support leadership roles) for inclusive education in all relevant professional learning opportunities	–
3.2.3 There are mechanisms to support schools/higher education institutions to develop strategic plans for teachers' professional learning in inclusive education	–
3.2.4 There are strategies to support effective collaboration and joint work between schools and higher education institutions/universities	–

**Evaluative comments for 'Continuum of support'**

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## SECTION 4: CAPACITY BUILDING, FUNDING AND MONITORING OF TPL4I POLICY

### 4.1 Capacity building

Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.1 There are strategies to increase the capacity of all schools/higher education institutions to support all teachers to engage in professional learning activities on inclusive education	–
4.1.2 There is a mechanism to facilitate dialogue between all teachers/leaders/other stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of inclusive education as an approach that ensures high-quality learning opportunities for all	<p>4.1.2.1</p> <p><b>Core Tasks of the Department of Inclusion, Diversity and Special Education (FIDS)</b></p> <p>Against the background of the objective of autonomous schools and the establishment of educational regions, the central tasks of the FIDS department are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provision of expertise in case management for inclusion, diversity and special education;</li><li>• participation in the development of evidence-based decision bases for the departmental management in the education region (regional education monitoring);</li><li>• support for the regional implementation of educational policy reform projects with a focus on the department and relevant cross-cutting issues in inclusion, diversity and special education;</li></ul>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• support for schools and contact persons for cluster and school management in all questions of inclusion, diversity and special education.</li></ul> <p>This makes things easier for head teachers, parents and guardians, because all contact persons for questions regarding the provision and co-ordination of educational support are now anchored in a regional competence centre, and access to professional support is facilitated.</p> <p>The various functions of the Directorate of Education have been filled step by step since 1 September 2018. However, the contact persons for special needs education and other support in the respective federal state are available from the first day of school. They provide information, advice and concrete support. (See <a href="#">New regulations for the Department of Inclusion, Diversity and Special Education</a>)</p> <p>4.1.2.2</p> <p><i>Special Education Centres have the task of providing and co-ordinating all special needs education measures to ensure through inclusive education that learners with SEN can be educated in mainstream schools in the best possible way. These tasks include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>the issuing of expert opinions to identify SEN (special needs opinion);</i></li><li>• <i>co-operation with regional compulsory education schools, other Special Education Centres, school authorities, the district school inspector, the special school inspector, regional non-school institutions, etc.;</i></li><li>• <i>supporting inclusive education through educational and organisational counselling, assistance for establishing teacher teams;</i></li><li>• <i>information for parents, public relations, experience exchange and further training;</i></li><li>• <i>administration.</i> (European Agency, Country information for Austria, <a href="#">Systems of support and specialist provision</a>)</li></ul>



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.3 There is guidance on how teachers working in mainstream school settings/higher education institutions can understand and enact inclusive education	–
4.1.4 There are guidelines that support all teachers to collaborate to support all learners	–
4.1.5 There are guidelines on how methods of quality assessment, school evaluation, inspections and other accountability measures contribute to planning/identifying priority areas of professional learning activities for inclusive education	4.1.5.1 <i>The guidelines for monitoring inclusive quality (2016) offer standards for inclusive classroom practice, teaching and school development.</i> (European Agency, Country information for Austria, <a href="#">Legislation and policy</a> )  The Ministry is currently updating this information.
4.1.6 There are strategies to support schools/higher education institutions to build strong leadership teams that are aware of the inclusive education agenda	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.7 There are incentives stated in policy for all teachers to engage in professional learning activities for inclusive education	–
4.1.8 There are strategies stated in policy to develop the role of specialist teachers as a resource for mainstream schools	4.1.8.1 The school management is responsible for appointing specially-trained teachers for the benefit of all learners in the school. This is regulated by law in the area of school autonomy.
4.1.9 There are strategies to promote professional learning for inclusion in teachers' common competence areas (e.g. experienced teachers and specialist teachers are expected to engage in professional learning activities that promote inclusive education pedagogies, such as co-teaching)	–
4.1.10 There are competences for professional learning in inclusive education for all teachers	–



### Evaluative comments for 'Capacity building'

Teacher education continues to focus on inclusive education. The topic is rather secondary at schools and in administration. An in-service induction phase is currently being considered for the restructuring of teacher training, and in some aspects is already at a pilot stage.

## 4.2 Funding

Policy priorities	Findings
4.2.1 There are financial incentives to encourage all schools/higher education institutions to develop policy and action plans for teachers' professional learning for inclusion	–
4.2.2 There are mechanisms for systematic data collection on expenditure on teachers' professional learning that informs cost-effectiveness issues	–
4.2.3 There are flexible resourcing mechanisms that foster teachers' professional learning at school level	4.2.3.1 In principle, there are internal school training courses. In addition, schools with poor results on standard tests are given targeted support.



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### Evaluative comments for 'Funding'

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## 4.3 Monitoring

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Policy priorities	Findings
4.3.1 There is a comprehensive accountability framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of teachers' professional learning for inclusion activities	–
4.3.2 Monitoring mechanisms ensure that inequalities in access to professional learning opportunities at regional or organisational levels are addressed	–





Policy priorities	Findings
4.3.3 There are mechanisms to support schools/teacher education departments/higher education institutions to have ownership of review and improvement processes in relation to teachers' professional learning	–
4.3.4 There are mechanisms to share and analyse data to inform improvement processes in relation to teachers' professional learning at national and local level	–
4.3.5 There is data available on whether teachers are engaged in professional learning that is relevant to the level of education they teach	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.3.6 There are mechanisms to ensure that teachers' professional learning contributes to improving inclusive education practice at school level/the level of a teacher education department or higher education institution	–

**Evaluative comments for 'Monitoring'**

Monitoring is not intended. However, individual schools achieve good results and voluntarily take further developmental steps.