

# Increasing attractiveness of nursing professions through updating vocational training

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 AUSTRIA

## Timeline



**ID number 29840**

## Background

Healthcare and nursing training in Austria is structured in three stages and differs according to the length of training and the associated competence levels:

- (a) stage 1: one-year training course for nursing assistance at schools and in training courses;
- (b) stage 2: two-year training for specialised nursing assistance at schools and in training courses;
- (c) stage 3: three-year training for a diploma in health and nursing care through a bachelor degree at a university of applied sciences.

A minimum age of 17 years is generally required to start nursing training. The prerequisite for the bachelor degree in nursing is the entitlement to study.

These general conditions make the transition from compulsory school after the eighth school year difficult. Due to the age difference between completion of compulsory schooling and entry into nursing training, at least 2 years of transition offers are necessary. At the same time, training in nursing assistance and nursing specialist assistance has an image problem.

## Objectives

The objectives of the measure are to make nursing training more attractive:

- (a) through a direct transition from compulsory schooling to nursing training;
- (b) by upgrading the qualifications, in particular by linking them to a university entrance degree (Matura) at VET colleges and thus to unrestricted eligibility to study.

## Description

In 2019, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), together with

education providers from the field of socio-professional schools, developed school trials for nursing training that will follow on directly from compulsory schooling (after completion of the eighth school year).

Two types of school-based training programmes were developed for this purpose:

- (a) a five-year training course at secondary VET colleges for social care and nursing. This combines training as a nursing assistant or nursing specialist assistant (depending on the focus) with a matriculation and diploma examination and thus full entitlement to study. The training also enables a shortening of the bachelor degree course to become a qualified health and nursing specialist;
- (b) a three-year training course at VET schools for social professions with specialisation in health and care. This serves as preparation for further training in nursing and enables a reduction of the duration of training in nursing assistance, nursing specialist assistance or social care, which are accessible only from the age of 17 onwards.

Both the three-year programme and the five-year programme include compulsory work-based learning.

Graduates of the new training tracks are expected to cover about 18% of the additional demand for nursing staff from 2023 onwards.

### 2019 Design

In 2019, the curricula for the new nursing training courses were developed.

### 2020 Pilot

In September 2020, the new school training programmes were piloted at 10 locations across Austria at the start of the 2020/21 academic year. The initial launch was for both the middle (four locations) and the higher (6 locations) qualification levels. A total of 300 training places were planned for the 2020/21 school year. The five-year training course is offered exclusively at private schools.

### 2021 Pilot

The piloting of the new training programmes continued. The offer of the higher qualification level was expanded to 10 locations in 2021.

### 2022 Pilot

In 2022, the piloting of the new training programmes continued and the offer of the higher qualification level was expanded to 12. The locations for the intermediate qualification level were also further expanded. The two school experiments are to be transferred to the regular school system from the school year 2023/24.

The draft ordinance to transfer the programmes to the regular school system was submitted for review at the beginning of 2023 including a slight change of the name of the five-year programme into VET colleges for nursing and social care.

### 2023 Implementation

Starting with the school year 2023/24, the two school experiments were transferred to the regular school system.

In addition to the school-based training, apprenticeships in nursing assistance were introduced: A three-year apprenticeship in nursing assistance and a four-year apprenticeship in specialised nursing assistance. This first cohort started in four *Länder* (Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Tyrol, Vorarlberg) in the winter semester 2023/24. These qualifications also provide access to the three-year training for a diploma in health and nursing care at an university of applied sciences.

In 2023, part one of a nursing reform brought changes to the education and training of nursing professions. The recognition of training acquired abroad was significantly simplified, accelerated and less bureaucratic. A conditional legal entitlement to further training in professional life was created, making it possible to complete further and/or competence-enhancing training during working hours. Financial support in form of a monthly training contribution or a nursing scholarship was introduced.

### **2024 Implementation**

In 2024, part two of the nursing reform included a few more adaptations. Access to the shortened diploma training programme for nursing assistants was simplified to improve the permeability and access to further qualifications in health and nursing care. Furthermore, it was made easier for people who acquired their diploma in health and nursing care at a college for higher vocational education (before those programmes were taken over by universities of applied sciences) to obtain a bachelor's degree and subsequently attend a master's programme.

### **2025 Implementation**

In autumn 2025 the new training programme 'Nursing Starters' was launched in Vienna. Young people are now able to begin nursing training at the age of 15. This gives young people who are subject to training obligation up to the age of 18 in particular the opportunity to pursue vocational training in nursing. The training lasts three years and concludes with the professional qualification as a nursing assistance. Since autumn 2025, this programme is also offered in the federal province Upper Austria.

According to apprenticeship statistics, 129 apprentices were trained in nursing assistance and 23 apprentices in specialised nursing assistance by the end of 2024.

Since 2025, there have been training companies offering apprenticeships in nursing assistance in all federal states [Länder]. Apprenticeships in specialised nursing assistance are currently offered in five of the nine federal states.

## **Bodies responsible**

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Education (BMB)
- Federal Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism (BMWET)
- Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO)

## **Target group**

### **Learners**

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

### **Entities providing VET**

VET providers (all kinds)

## **Thematic categories**

### **Modernising VET offer and delivery**

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

### **Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation**

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

## Subsystem

IVET

## Further reading

[Information from the BMB on the new nursing training](#)

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[Nursing Starters \(in German only\)](#)

### “ ... ” Cite as

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