

SLOVENE

The Slovene language in education in Austria

3rd Edition



Regional Dossier series

The Slovene language
in education in Austria

3rd Edition

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Foreword

background

Regional and minority languages are languages that differ from the official state language. The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning uses the following definition for these languages, as stated in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML):

Regional and minority languages are languages traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population; they are different from the official language(s) of that state, and they include neither dialects of the official language(s) of the state nor the languages of migrants.

The Mercator European Research Centre aims to acquire, apply, and circulate knowledge about these regional and minority languages in education. An important means to achieve this goal is the Regional Dossier series: documents that provide the most essential features of the education system of regions with a lesser-used regional or minority language.

aim

The aim of the Regional Dossier series is to provide concise descriptions of minority languages in education, mainly in Europe but also in other parts of the world. Aspects that are addressed include features of the education system, recent educational policies, main actors, legal arrangements, and support structures, as well as quantitative aspects such as the number of schools, teachers, and pupils, and financial investments. Because of this fixed structure, the dossiers in the series are easy to compare.

target group

The dossiers serve several purposes and are relevant for policymakers, researchers, teachers, students, and journalists who wish to explore developments in minority language schooling in Europe. They can also serve as a first orientation towards further research, or function as a source of ideas for improving educational provisions.

link with Eurydice

The format of the Regional Dossiers follows the format of Eurydice – the information network on education in Europe – in order to link the regional descriptions with those of national

education systems. Eurydice provides information on the administration and structure of national education systems in the member states of the European Union.

contents

Every Regional Dossier begins with an introduction about the region in question, followed by six chapters that each deal with a specific level of the education system (e.g. primary education). Chapters 8 and 9 cover the main lines of research into education of the minority language under discussion, and the prospects for the minority language in general and in education in particular, respectively. Chapter 10 provides a summary of statistics. Lists of (legal) references and useful addresses regarding the minority language are given at the end of the dossier.



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Regional Dossier series

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Ursula Doleschal
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Summary

Slovene and its status in education in Austria

In a defined area of Southern Carinthia, Austria, Slovene is protected as a minority language. Despite being an officially recognised minority language, the official use of Slovene is limited to few domains. In the 2001 census, 12,554 Austrian citizens reported that they use Slovene in everyday life. Although pre-school education is not part of the Austrian education system, bilingual nursery schools are funded by the province. Bilingual primary and lower secondary education are granted by law in the southern part of Carinthia; this is executed as bilingual teaching in primary school and as language teaching in lower secondary school. There are two bilingual upper secondary schools, and one with Slovene as the language of instruction. At the tertiary level, Slovene can be studied at the universities of Klagenfurt, Graz, and Vienna. Teacher education is provided by the university college of teacher training Carinthia and the universities of Klagenfurt, Graz, and Vienna. Outside the legally defined territory, Slovene can be offered as a subject at every educational level. The overall number of pupils and students studying (in) Slovene, however, is low.

Slovene in educational research

Research on bilingual education and education in Slovene is mostly conducted by the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec (Department of Education and Department of Slavonic Studies), the University College for Teacher Education Carinthia, and sometimes by teacher education students in Graz and Vienna, and at Slovenian universities. The teaching and perception of teaching of Slovene have been investigated using interviews; however, there has been little classroom research. Such studies have consistently highlighted similar issues of bilingual education in Carinthia, indicating that hardly any improvements have been made.

Prospects for Slovene in Austria

Since the public use of Slovene is generally not accepted by the majority population, securing its continuous autochthonous existence will be challenging. Slovene is nowadays learned and regarded mostly as a second or foreign language, which negatively impacts use. Measures have, however, been taken to improve education in Slovene, and increasingly more children without knowledge of the language are being enrolled in bilingual schools and nurseries, which safeguards the existence of Slovene as a minority language and promotes multilingualism and a tolerant attitude towards other languages. Nevertheless, only by raising the prestige of Slovene as a vernacular language in Austria could other measures be successful.

Zbirka regionalnih dosjejev

Slovenski jezik v avstrijskem izobraževalnem sistemu

3. izdaja

Ursula Doleschal
Univerza v Celovcu

Povzetek

Slovenščina in njen status v izobraževanju v Avstriji

Na nekaterih območjih južne Koroške v Avstriji je slovenščina uradno priznana in zakonsko zaščitena kot manjšinski jezik, a kljub temu je njena uradna raba omejena na nekaj področij. Pri popisu prebivalstva leta 2001 je 12.554 avstrijskih državljanov navedlo, da v vsakdanjem življenju uporabljajo slovenščino. Čeprav predšolska vzgoja ni del avstrijskega izobraževalnega sistema, dvojezične vrtce financira dežela Koroška. Dvojezično osnovno- in nižje srednješolsko izobraževanje je na južnem delu Koroške zagotovljeno z zakonom; izvaja se kot dvojezični pouk v osnovni šoli in kot jezikovni pouk v nižji srednji šoli. Zakonsko sta opredeljeni tudi dve dvojezični višji srednji šoli in ena s slovenščino kot ucnim jezikom. Na terciarni ravni je slovenščino mogoče študirati na univerzah v Celovcu, Gradcu in na Dunaju. Za izobraževanje učiteljev skrbijo Pedagoška visoka šola na Koroškem ter univerze v Celovcu, Gradcu in na Dunaju. Zunaj zakonsko opredeljenega ozemlja se lahko slovenščina kot predmet ponuja na vseh stopnjah izobraževanja, vendar je skupno število dijakov in študentov, ki se učijo slovenščino oziroma v slovenščini, majhno.

Slovenščina v pedagoškem raziskovanju

Raziskave o dvojezični vzgoji in izobraževanju v slovenščini večinoma izvajata Univerza v Celovcu (Oddelek za pedagogiko in Oddelek za slavistiko) in Pedagoška visoka šola na Koroškem, včasih pa tudi študenti pedagoških smeri v Gradcu in na Dunaju ter na univerzah v Sloveniji. Pri raziskovanju poučevanja in dojemanja poučevanja slovenščine raziskovalci v glavnem uporabljajo metodo intervjuja, malo pa je raziskav, ki jih opravijo v razredu. Rezultati opravljenih študij vseskozi kažejo, da težave z dvojezičnim šolstvom na Koroškem obstajajo in da do bistvenih izboljšav ni prišlo.

Možnosti za slovenščino v Avstriji

Ker večinsko prebivalstvo na splošno ne sprejema rabe slovenščine v javnosti, bo zagotavljanje njenega trajnega avtohtonega obstoja zahtevno. Slovenščina se danes uči/poučuje in obravnava predvsem kot drugi ali tuji jezik, kar negativno vpliva na njeno rabo. Nekateri ukrepi za izboljšanje izobraževanja v slovenščini so sicer bili sprejeti, tako da se vse več otrok brez predhodnega znanja slovenskega jezika vpisuje v dvojezične šole in vrtce, kar zagotavlja obstoj slovenščine kot manjšinskega jezika ter krepi večjezičnost in strpen odnos do drugih jezikov. Dodatni ukrepi pa bi lahko bili uspešni le, če bi se povečal ugled slovenščine kot občevalnega jezika v Avstriji.

Die slowenische Sprache im österreichischen Bildungswesen

3. Auflage

Ursula Doleschal
Universität Klagenfurt

Zusammenfassung

Slowenisch und sein Status im Bildungswesen in Österreich

In einem festgelegten Gebiet in Südkärnten, Österreich, ist das Slowenische als Minderheitensprache geschützt. Obwohl es sich um eine offiziell anerkannte Minderheitensprache handelt, ist der offizielle Gebrauch des Slowenischen auf wenige Bereiche beschränkt. Bei der Volkszählung 2001 gaben 12 554 österreichische Staatsbürger*innen an, Slowenisch im Alltag zu verwenden. Obwohl die Vorschulerziehung nicht Teil des österreichischen Bildungssystems ist, werden zweisprachige Kindergärten vom Land finanziert. Der zweisprachige Unterricht in der Primar- und Sekundarstufe I ist im südlichen Teil Kärntens gesetzlich verankert; er wird als zweisprachiger Unterricht in der Grundschule und als Sprachunterricht in der Sekundarstufe I durchgeführt. Es gibt zwei zweisprachige höhere Schulen und eine Schule mit Slowenisch als Unterrichtssprache, welche ebenfalls gesetzlich verankert sind. Auf der tertiären Ebene kann Slowenisch an den Universitäten Klagenfurt, Graz und Wien studiert werden. Die Lehrer*innenausbildung wird von der Pädagogischen Hochschule Kärnten und den Universitäten Klagenfurt, Graz und Wien angeboten. Außerhalb des gesetzlich festgelegten Gebietes kann Slowenisch als Unterrichtsfach in allen Schulstufen angeboten werden. Die Gesamtzahl der Schüler*innen und Studierenden, die (in) Slowenisch lernen, ist jedoch gering.

Slowenisch in der Bildungsforschung

Forschungen zum zweisprachigen Unterricht und zum Slowenischunterricht werden vor allem an der Universität Klagenfurt/Celovec (Institut für Erziehungswissenschaften und Bildungsforschung und Institut für Slawistik), an der Pädagogischen Hochschule Kärnten, teilweise auch von Lehramtsstudierenden in Graz und Wien sowie an slowenischen Universitäten durchgeführt. Der Slowenischunterricht und die Wahrnehmung des Slowenischunterrichts wurden anhand von Interviews untersucht; es gibt jedoch nur wenige Studien über Interaktionen im Klassenraum. Die Untersuchungen zeigen beständig ähnliche Probleme des zweisprachigen Unterrichts in Kärnten auf, was darauf hindeutet, dass es kaum Verbesserungen gegeben hat.

Perspektiven für das Slowenische in Österreich

Da der öffentliche Gebrauch des Slowenischen von der Mehrheitsgesellschaft im Allgemeinen nicht akzeptiert wird, wird es schwierig sein, den Fortbestand der autochthonen Sprache zu sichern. Heutzutage wird Slowenisch meist als Zweit- oder Fremdsprache erlernt und angesehen,

was sich negativ auf seine Verwendung auswirkt. Es wurden jedoch Maßnahmen zur Verbesserung des Slowenischunterrichts ergriffen, und immer mehr Kinder ohne Sprachkenntnisse werden in zweisprachigen Schulen und Kindergärten eingeschult, was die Existenz des Slowenischen als Minderheitensprache sichert und die Mehrsprachigkeit und eine tolerante Haltung gegenüber anderen Sprachen fördert. Doch nur durch die Aufwertung des Slowenischen als Umgangssprache in Österreich können weitere Maßnahmen erfolgreich sein.



List of Abbreviations

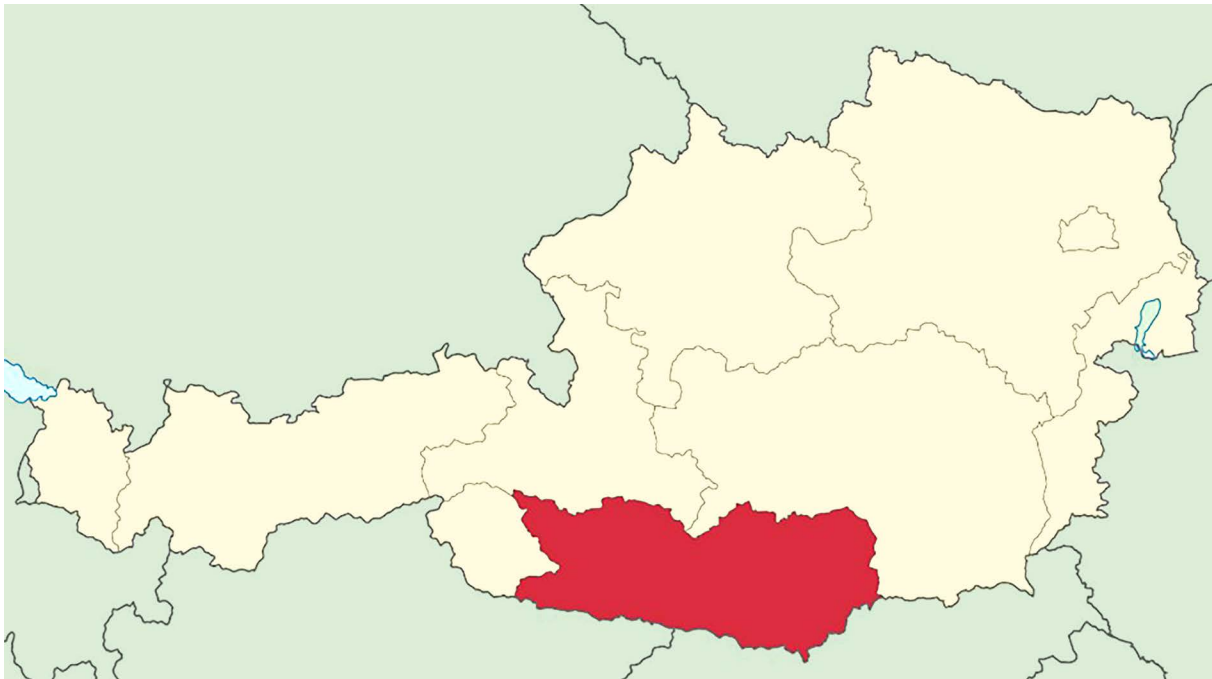
AHS	Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule (Academic secondary school)
BAfEP	Bundes-Bildungsanstalt und Kolleg für Elementarpädagogik (Federal Training Institute for Early Childhood Education)
BMBWF	Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
MS	Mittelschule (Middle school)

1 Introduction

language

The Slovene language belongs to the South Slavic language group. It was the official language of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia in former Yugoslavia and has been the state language of independent Slovenia since 1991. Since Slovenia joined the European Union (EU) in 2004, Slovene has been one of the official languages of the EU. The language has been used in writing since the 16th century (with the rise of Protestantism, leading to the translation of the Bible and, among other texts, the creation of a first grammar). Modern Slovene has been standardised from the 19th century onwards.

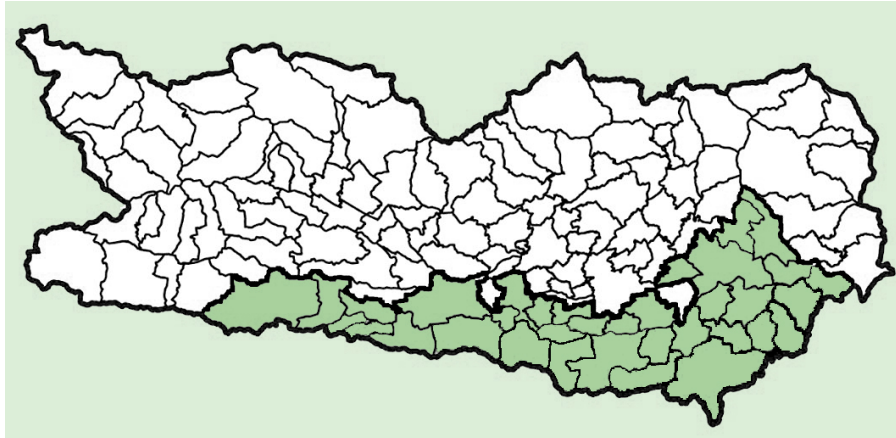
Figure 1 The federal province of Carinthia in Austria.



Note. From Lencer (2011).

Slovene is also spoken in the southern part of two Austrian federal provinces, namely Carinthia and Styria, where Slavic tribes settled in the 7th century. In the 9th century, the area became part of the Frankish empire, and, subsequently, the Germanisation of the Slavic population started, which is continuing to the present day, turning Slovene into a minority language in a bilingual area. This Regional Dossier focuses on the Austrian federal province of Carinthia (see [Figure 1](#)), where the vast majority of the Slovene-speaking minority in Austria lives.

Figure 2 Map of the bilingual German-Slovene area (in green) of Carinthia, Austria.



Note. From Gugganij (2006).

The Slovene language in general has an unusually large number of dialects, with pronounced differences on the phonological and lexical levels. Sociolinguistic factors have prevented the evolution of a single, common, colloquial variety of Slovene, which could be used as a functional means of communication throughout the bilingual area in Carinthia (see [Figure 2](#) for bilingual area).

population

Until World War I, around one third of the population of Carinthia spoke Slovene. This percentage changed continually and rapidly during the 20th century. Sociolinguistic research has made clear that the language shift from Slovene to German, which took place in Carinthia, occurred with surprising speed (Österreichische Rektorenkonferenz, 1989; OGM, 2022, p. 24).

The first official census in Austria under the Second Republic was carried out in 1951. Until 2001, the censuses covered current language use, making the figures from subsequent years comparable. In 1951, approximately 42,000 Carinthians declared that they were Slovene speakers (Bogataj, 2008, p. 352). This figure dropped steadily and rapidly to a low of just under 17,000 in 1981, a trend that proceeded to stabilise between 1981 and 1991. According to the 1991 census, 14,850 people (2.79% of the population of Carinthia) spoke Slovene. Ten years later, this number had decreased by approximately 10%; in the 2001 census, 12,554 Austrian citizens reported that they use the Slovene language in everyday life (Bauer, 2003; Bogataj, 2008, p. 352; Bundeskanzleramt, 2021, p. 4). There are no more recent data on the number of speakers available because, since 2011, the census has been register-based and no longer collects language use data. Unofficial estimates, however, suggest that in the 1990s, more than 35,000 people were able to speak a local dialect and/or standard Slovene but preferred not to declare themselves officially as speakers, and approximately 60,000 reported being able to understand a local dialect and/or standard Slovene (Busch, 2001, pp. 119–120; Priestly, 2000, p. 228, 2014, p. 26; Reiterer, 1996, p. 150; Zupančič, 1999, p. 225).

A survey conducted by the provincial government in 2013 in the border region revealed that about 27% of the population can communicate in Slovene at least in everyday situations, with around 15% being able to do so fluently (Landesschulrat für Kärnten, 2014, p. 15). A more recent survey (OGM, 2022, p. 17) showed, however, that the traditional Slovene-speaking municipalities have seen a considerable decrease in population over the past 20 years as a result of the ongoing migration of young people to urban centres such as Klagenfurt/Celovec, Graz, or Vienna, which are not part of the bilingual territory according to Austrian (post-war) legislation and, therefore, not subject to the Minority Education Act for Carinthia from 1959 (Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten, 1959).

The Slovene-speaking community is probably without exception bilingual, whereas only very few people with German as their first language are able to use Slovene. The relationship between the two languages differs greatly from speaker to speaker. In the younger generation, German is usually the stronger language. During the second half of the 20th century, there was considerable migration of Slovene-speaking people towards the regional capital Klagenfurt/Celovec, and to Graz and Vienna.

language status

Language rights for Slovenes in Carinthia are guaranteed in a general way by several (partly historical) provisions in the constitution of the Republic of Austria, which are as follows: Article 19 of the Constitutional Law (Staatsgrundgesetz, 1867); Article 68 of the State Treaty of Saint Germain (Staatsvertrag von Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1919); Article 8 of the Federal Constitutional Law (Bundesverfassungsgesetz, 1930); Article 7 of the State Treaty of Vienna from 15 May 1955 (Staatsvertrag betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich, 1955); and Article 1 of the Minority Education Act for Carinthia from 1959 (Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten, 1959; see also Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2018, pp. 8–18).

Minority rights in Austria are also guaranteed by several European treaties. Austria signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe, 1992) on 5 November 1992 and ratified it on 10 May 2001, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, 1994) was signed on 1 February 1995 and ratified on 31 March 1998. Both these documents guarantee some basic linguistic rights, which are in line with existing legislation and not intended to bring changes to the status of the Slovene language, although such changes have been constantly claimed by the representatives of the minority (see Bundeskanzleramt, 2015, pp. 163–184).

Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitutional Law (Bundesverfassungsgesetz, 1930) directly articulates the protection of “language and culture, [and the] continued existence and preservation of the ethnic groups”. For the present state of affairs, the most important of the aforementioned laws is Article 7 of the State Treaty from 1955 (Staatsvertrag betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich, 1955) in which the ethnic group of the Slovenes in Carinthia and Styria is mentioned, as well as their right

to press, schooling, and topographical signs in – and official use of – their own language on territorial principles.

Article 7 of the State Treaty of Vienna (Staatsvertrag betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich, 1955) forms the basis of both the Minority Education Act for Carinthia from 1959 (Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten, 1959) and the Provincial Minority Schools Implementation Act from 1959 (Minderheitenschulwesen-Ausführungsgesetz, 1959), as well as the Ethnic Groups Act from 1976 (amended in 2011; Bundesgesetz über die Rechtsstellung der Volksgruppen in Österreich, 1976) in their current versions. While the former laws pertain to language in (primary and secondary) education, the latter focuses on official language use with the authorities and in court as well as on topographical signs. These laws guarantee and regulate the use of Slovene solely in the province of Carinthia, while Slovene-speaking people in Styria (or other parts of Austria) are not protected, even though they are mentioned in Article 7 of the State Treaty (1955). This issue has been pointed out regularly and complained about in the monitoring process of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages since 2003. However, this has not resulted in any legislative changes as the Austrian state persists with the territorial principle.

The interpretation of Article 7 of the State Treaty of Vienna (1955) has been the bone of contention between stakeholders (representatives of the ethnic group, politicians, ordinary citizens, etc.) of different sides and orientations right from the beginning. There was no consensus on how high the percentage of the Slovene population had to be to view an area as “mixed”. The most prominent topic has been the bilingual topographical signs. Such signs were first put up in 1972 and immediately torn down violently by opponents of the use of the Slovene language in public. The subsequent Ethnic Groups Act from 1976 (Bundesgesetz über die Rechtsstellung der Volksgruppen in Österreich, 1976) decreed the municipalities where Slovene should function as an official language along with German and where bilingual signs should be put up (i.e. where Slovenes accounted for at least 25% of the population). However, the law was put into practice very reluctantly, eventually leading to a new interpretation by the Austrian Constitutional Court in 2001 that declared that bilingual topographic signs had to be put up in all municipalities where the Slovene minority makes up more than 10% of the population. The ruling was, however, not observed as the political parties in Carinthia refused to fulfil it. After year-long negotiations, quarrels, and proposals, the Ethnic Groups Act was amended in 2011. The percentage finally agreed upon was 17.5% based on the 2001 census. These municipalities are enumerated in the appendices of the Ethnic Groups Act (in constitutional law since 2011; see Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2018, pp. 11–17).

Although Slovene has the status of an officially recognised minority language, the official use of Slovene is restricted to very few spheres, and it is difficult to know exactly when and where the language can be used. In some municipalities, it is an official language in administrative procedures; in others, it can only be used in court. This goes some way to explaining the fact that there is a diglossic functional division between German and Slovene. Altogether, the contexts in which the Slovene language can be used officially have been

reduced in number, owing to the privatisation of formerly state-run services such as the post office and banks in the 1990s (Hainscho, 2008). At the same time, the absence of any coordinated language planning and policy in Austria often leaves questions of language use and planning to party politics. An example was the amendment of the Provincial Constitution of Carinthia from 2017 (Kärntner Landesverfassung, 2017), where the original idea to mention the Slovenian ethnic group resulted in fixing German as the *Landessprache*, that is, the “language of the federal province”, as “compensation” after a conflict between the conservative Austrian People’s Party (German: *Österreichische Volkspartei*) and the Social Democratic Party of Austria (German: *Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*). Although the constitution explains that German is “the language of legislation and execution”, “regardless of the legal rights of the minority” (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2018, pp. 18–19), this step is symbolic and strengthens the position of German compared to Slovene. It must be pointed out, however, that at the same time, the duty to report on the situation of the minority annually was also introduced in Article 69a of this amendment.

Even where Slovene is spoken as a first language during primary language socialisation, German is simultaneously present in the mass media and the social environment. There are two weekly newspapers written in Slovene, namely *Novice* (News) and *Nedelja* (Sunday; published by the Catholic church), and a radio frequency as a cooperation between the private radio station *Radio AGORA* and the state broadcasting station *ORF* (German: *Österreichischer Rundfunk*; Austrian Broadcasting Corporation). Under this contract, ORF provides 8 hours of radio broadcasting, while Radio AGORA provides the remaining 16 hours. Between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., the language of this radio is Slovene, and during the evening and night, the radio programme is multilingual, also including Slovene contributions. Since 2012, this frequency can also be received in the autochthonous regions of Styria and is provided 24 hours a day on the internet. On Austrian state television, Slovenes have one 30-minute programme, *Dober dan, Koroška* (Good day, Carinthia), per week on Sundays.

status of language education

The minority school system dates back to the times of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. At that time, in the south of Carinthia, almost everybody spoke Slovene and had to learn German in school. Prior to the Imperial School Act from 1869 (Reichsvolksschulgesetz, 1869), which permitted the population of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to use their own language in education, the Roman-Catholic church was the main provider of education and ran 28 schools in southern Carinthia. Subsequently, in 1891, the so-called “*utraquist*” schools were established, where lessons in Slovene as the first language of the pupils were taught only in the first three grades of primary school, with the aim of enabling pupils to follow lessons in the German language as soon as possible. School was considered as a means of homogenising the heterogeneous population. The Austrian school system was based on the German language and all other languages were considered merely auxiliary.

In 1938, Austria was annexed to the Third Reich. Minority schools were abolished and minorities severely persecuted. Throughout the Hitler regime, many members of the Slovene-

speaking community were sent to concentration camps and the Slovene language was forbidden in public use and suppressed. One of the consequences of this was that Slovene then became a symbol of resistance. Following the end of World War II, under the guise of the Allied Forces, a policy granting minority rights was adopted, but, due to German nationalist pressure, it was never fully implemented.

In 1945, lessons in minority languages were taken up again and a new school system was introduced. The School Language Ordinance (*Schulsprachenverordnung*) of 1945 (*Verordnung über die Neugestaltung der zweisprachigen Volksschulen im südlichen Gebiet Kärntens*, 1945) defined the area in which bilingual education was organised until 1958. Minority language teaching was compulsory at 107 schools throughout the bilingual area and all subjects in primary schools were to be taught simultaneously in both languages – German and Slovene. All pupils were supposed to learn both languages at school. However, even during this period, German was the language of instruction from year four onwards, while Slovene was to be taught as a (compulsory) subject. Nevertheless, this was the only period in the history of the Austrian minority school system when a minority language had some regional relevance for the majority population as well.

In 1958, due to German nationalist pressure, this limited concession was retracted; compulsory bilingual schooling was abolished, and parents were required to declare whether they wanted their children to learn Slovene at school or not. Even though minority rights were granted by the Minority Education Act for Carinthia from 1959 (*Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten*, 1959) on a territorial principle, a new personal declaration principle was introduced. Pressure was exerted on parents to remove their children from bilingual schooling. Consequently, after 1958, only about 20% of the children in the region attended bilingual lessons in primary schools. In subsequent years, this number continued to fall, but since the 1980s, there has been a steady rise in the percentage of pupils attending bilingual schools, reaching 45.5% in 2021 (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2021, p. 19).

In 1988, after long discussions, an amendment to the Minority Education Act for Carinthia (1959) was passed. This legislation provided for separate bilingual and monolingual classes at the primary level if the number of children seeking bilingual education was sufficient. It stipulated that in primary classes with both German and Slovene sections, in so far as possible, pupils were to be taught the German part of bilingual teaching together. As part of the 8 June 1988 amendment to the Minority Education Act, team-teaching was introduced in bilingual schools. This cooperative teaching involving two teachers (see *Teacher training*) was at one time considered unique in this particular form within the Austrian education system. This provided for separate bilingual and monolingual classes at the primary level while retaining access to bilingual education for non-Slovene speakers if the parents opted for it. New curricula were also issued for primary schools with German and Slovene as languages of instruction, which emphasised the didactics of bilingual teaching and the importance of intercultural learning.

Another positive development was the decision by the Constitutional Court in 1989 to make bilingual primary education possible outside the territory covered by the Minority Educa-

tion Act for Carinthia (1959) when there is a “sustained need” (i.e. when there is continuous enrolment in such classes). This resulted in the establishment of a public bilingual primary school and a private confessional primary school run by the Hermagoras Brotherhood in Klagenfurt/Celovec. However, since this law pertains explicitly to the Province of Carinthia, it is not possible to file a claim for education in Slovene in another Austrian province, such as in Vienna, where, according to the census of 2001, 1,412 Austrian citizens declared that they use Slovene on a daily basis (compared to 12,554 in Carinthia; Bauer, 2003; Statistik Austria, 2021a; see also Busch, 2001; Zupančič, 1999). On 9 March 2000, a further decision made by the constitutional court meant that bilingual teaching was extended to year four. An amendment was then passed guaranteeing that from the school year 2001/02, pupils registered for bilingual teaching are to be taught all subjects in both languages to more or less the same extent.

A fundamental school reform, affecting all schools, has been providing for the autonomy of schools since 1993 (Bildungsreformgesetz, 2017; Bundesgesetz, mit dem das Schulunterrichtsgesetz geändert wird, 1993; see also Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung [BMBWF], n.d.-a). This reform is considered to have had the most impact as it allows schools to develop their own school profiles and establish areas of emphasis relating to the specific location of the school. The curricula at the secondary level now consist of core and extension areas. This policy aims at giving schools a wider degree of autonomy.

In 2012, a further reform of the Austrian education system affected minority schooling. New middle schools (German: *Neue Mittelschulen*) and the standardised competence-oriented central maturity exam (German: *Standardisierte kompetenzorientierte Reifeprüfung*) were introduced by ordinance with standardised exams in German, mathematics, foreign languages, Latin, and also Slovene (Verordnung der Bundesministerin für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur über die Reifeprüfung in den allgemein bildenden höheren Schulen, 2012; Verordnung der Bundesministerin für Bildung über die abschließenden Prüfungen in den berufsbildenden mittleren und höheren Schulen, 2012). The curriculum for bilingual new middle schools (referred to as “middle schools” since 2020) was reformed in the sense of competence orientation, and allowed, among other things, that 2 of the 4 hours of Slovene could be used for CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) lessons. In 2016, competence orientation was put into practice in primary schools with the release of the competence descriptions for the fourth grade and the regional language portfolio *Kajpataj* (What else). Competence descriptions for the eighth grade as well as the regional language portfolio *RePort* were also introduced for the lower secondary level in 2016.

education system

The cornerstone of Austria’s education system was the General School Regulations decreed by Empress Maria Theresia in 1774 (General-Schulverordnung, 1774). As early as the 19th century, it seemed that in Austria, general schools, vocational schools, and teacher training colleges had reached an advanced stage of development. In 1869, 8-year compulsory education was introduced.

Compulsory schooling in modern-day Austria lasts for 9 years. It starts for children at the age of six and ends at the age of 15. Pre-school education is not part of the education system. However, in 2008, a compulsory nursery school year was introduced (see *Education system in Austria*; www.bildungssystem.at/en). Primary education lasts for 4 years (from age 6 to 10 years). Secondary education is divided into lower secondary level, which lasts for 4 years, and upper secondary level, which lasts for 4 or 5 years. At lower secondary level, there are the following two options: *Mittelschule* (middle school; MS) and *allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (AHS; academic secondary school). Allgemeinbildende höhere Schulen are divided into *Gymnasium* (general), *Realgymnasium* (science-based), and *Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium* (economics and life skills), which cover both the lower and upper secondary levels.

The first division into separately organised school types occurs at the lower level of secondary education. About 60% of all primary school leavers attend MS, and approximately 38% go to AHS (BMBWF, 2021a, p. 45). Middle school covers grades 5 to 8 (10- to 14-year-olds), and provides general education that prepares pupils for employment and for the transition to intermediate and higher secondary schools. Academic secondary school comprises 4 years at the lower level (10- to 14-year-olds) and 4 years at the upper level (14- to 18-year-olds). Vocational secondary education starts at grade 9 and lasts for 5 years. All streams of upper secondary education lead to the *Reifeprüfung/Matura* (final examination), which gives access to higher education. A number of upper secondary schools also lead towards qualification at a vocational level, in addition to the Matura exam.

Middle school (*Mittelschule*) was introduced in 2012 as *Neue Mittelschule* (new middle school) and renamed “middle school” in 2020 as a step towards a unified school type at the lower secondary level, to eventually replace academic secondary school – which has, however, not yet taken place because of strong political resistance. Middle schools are designed to enable an individualised teaching programme and pupils are free to focus on a special field of interest, such as sport or languages. Therefore, the introduction of the MS type was also a chance for Slovene to gain a more prominent position in secondary education (see Mischkulnig, 2019; Volavšek-Kurasch, 2021).

private and public

In Austria, public (state) schools have always played a much more important role than private schools. The Austrian state guarantees children general access to public schools regardless of birthplace, origins, gender, race, status, class, language, or religion (i.e. any child must be admitted; see Art. 14(6) of Bundesverfassungsgesetz, 1930). In contrast, private schools may select pupils according to religion, language, or gender, although this is rarely applied. Churches or special interest groups run the majority of private schools. Some private schools teach the official curriculum and some have their own curriculum. Public primary and middle schools are maintained by the respective municipalities, and AHS and colleges for higher vocational education are maintained by the state.

There is one private bilingual primary school in Carinthia located in Klagenfurt/Celovec and one private vocational bilingual school (upper secondary level) located in St. Peter im Rosental/Šentpeter na Rožu; both are private confessional schools. At these schools, the official curriculum is taught. The schools are subsidised by the State (teaching staff salaries, other expenses, etc.) and parents pay a monthly school fee. The amount of support given to private schools mainly depends on who runs them. Those managed by an officially recognised church can claim to have their teaching staff paid by the State.

bilingual education forms

Education in Slovene is integrated into the Austrian education system. The State Treaty of Vienna (Staatsvertrag betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich, 1955) provides the legal basis for bilingual upbringing and education within the area covered by the Minority Education Act for Carinthia (1959).

The Minority Education Act for Carinthia (1959) provides for the following different types of schools in Article I § 12 and § 24 and Article II to fulfil Article 7 of the State Treaty (1955):

1. primary and middle schools (previously *Hauptschule*, now known as (*Neue*) *Mittelschule*) with Slovene as the language of instruction;
2. bilingual Slovene-German primary schools;
3. bilingual classes in German-language primary schools;
4. bilingual sections in German-language classes in primary schools;
5. sections with Slovene as the language of instruction in German-language MS;
6. one AHS (Gymnasium) with Slovene as the language of instruction;
7. a bilingual vocational business school for grades 9–13; and
8. middle and higher vocational schools.

All types except for type 1 have been realised. Type 5 means, despite its definition, 4 hours of the Slovene language as a subject per week.

As previously stated, minority schooling is based on territorial principles (see *language status* and *status of language education*). Outside of the area covered by the Minority Education Act for Carinthia (1959), it is also possible to organise bilingual education where there is a “sustained need” for bilingual teaching, but only in Carinthia. This means that Slovene can be offered as an obligatory or an optional subject, an optional additional subject, or as a compulsory subject at every primary school and MS as well as at AHS – if there is sufficient demand, if there are suitably qualified teachers, and if the necessary quota of teaching hours is available. It is also possible to set up primary schools, primary school classes, and (within one class) primary school sections with German and Slovene as the languages of instruction.

The curriculum at primary schools where both German and Slovene are used as the languages of instruction provides for the same educational objectives as the curriculum at

all other Austrian primary schools, completed by intercultural learning. True bilingualism is aspired to taking the pupils' linguistic starting position into consideration.

At MS, Slovene can be taught as a compulsory subject in accordance with the Minority Education Act (1959; teaching of the first language). In this case, Slovene is on a par with German as a subject. It is, however, not the language of instruction. With the reform of 2012, which introduced new middle schools (referred to as middle schools since 2020), 2 hours weekly of immersive teaching in Slovene (CLIL) are also possible instead of language teaching. It is up to individual schools to select one of these options.

Slovene can also be taught as a foreign language. Pupils can choose Slovene or another language as an alternative compulsory subject or as a free elective subject at MS.

administration

The responsibility for schools and universities is borne by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (German: *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung*; BMBWF). The Federation has exclusive responsibility for basic legislation at all levels, except for nursery schools (kindergarten) over which the provinces have jurisdiction. The BMBWF determines the planning of education at all levels by national educational plans and financial measures.

The organisation, quality management, and monitoring of primary and secondary education is carried out by provincial educational directorates (German: *Bildungsdirektionen*), which are defined as competence centres by law (Bundesgesetz über die Einrichtung von Bildungsdirektionen in den Ländern, 2017) and are directly subordinate to the minister of education. Educational directorates are also responsible for minority education in Slovene (Bildungsdirektion Kärnten – www.bildung-ktn.gv.at/Minderheitenschulwesen.html).

inspection

Austria has a long tradition of school inspection, which was reorganised as a quality management system in 2019. There are, besides subject inspectors for religion, music, art, and sport, two inspectors who are responsible for the minority school system. The inspector for compulsory minority schooling supervises bilingual schooling from the first to the eighth grade, and at the secondary level, the subject inspector for Slovene is at the same time responsible for bilingual higher and vocational education. The inspectors are further responsible for the teaching of Slovene as a subject at all other schools in Carinthia (i.e. the development and quality assurance of education, counselling, conflict management, control of headteachers, and educational planning).

support structure

The University College of Teacher Education Carinthia (Pädagogische Hochschule Kärnten) in Klagenfurt/Celovec is responsible for in-service training for teachers, but also provides support for bilingual teachers, teachers of Slovene, and team teachers, in the form of further education. Slovene language classes have been on offer for a number of years. Teachers wishing to obtain the necessary additional qualification to become bilingual teachers can also do so at the University College of Teacher Education Carinthia by following a special training course (lasting 8 semesters and consisting of 60 ECTS credits). As part of the further education programme available for bilingual teachers, different events are organised at various schools throughout the bilingual territory. These normally take the form of afternoon seminars. Further seminars are also organised in Slovenia and other Austrian provinces and are often held on a cross-border basis, with both language and/or subject teachers from neighbouring Slovenia participating in the seminars. One of the challenges nowadays is obtaining the necessary numbers of participants for carrying out the offered courses.

2 Pre-school education

target group

Nursery school (German: *Kindergarten*) is the traditional form of pre-school (elementary) education for children aged 3 to 6 years in Austria. Nursery school is optional, except for the last year before primary school; attending nursery school is obligatory for 20 hours per week from 1 September after a child's fifth birthday. Parents usually have to pay for nursery school and children attend at their parents' discretion, with the exception of the aforementioned obligatory attendance period (The Austrian Education System, [n.d.-a](#)).

structure

The majority of nursery schools in Austria are public and maintained by the municipalities, provinces, or the federation (72.5% according to Statistik Austria, [2021b](#)). There are, however, striking regional differences in terms of the degree of nursery school provision. For example, the number of private nursery schools in Carinthia is higher than in other provinces, amounting to 47.7% of all nursery schools in Carinthia, according to Statistik Austria ([2021b](#)). Contributions from the federal provinces to the cost of running of a nursery school vary considerably. However, all nursery schools that meet the conditions of the agreement between the Federation and the provinces about elementary pedagogy for the years 2022/23 to 2026/27 (Vereinbarung gemäß Art. 15a B-VG zwischen dem Bund und den Ländern über die Elementarpädagogik für die Kindergartenjahre 2022/23 bis 2026/27, [2022](#)) receive some federal funding to guarantee the possibility of obligatory attendance.

In some cases, nursery schools do not charge fees, but the majority of municipalities charge an attendance fee based on a graded scheme that takes into consideration net family income and permanent residence. Private nursery schools charge varying fees. The opening hours of nursery schools vary between full-day and half-day service, usually opening before 7 a.m. and closing at about 7 p.m. at the latest (Statistik Austria, [2021b](#)). Parents are free to pick up their children at any time, except during the obligatory year.

legislation

Nursery schools are subject to provincial laws. Anyone wishing to open a nursery school can do so provided that they comply with the educational mandate of the respective provincial nursery school act. Besides that, there is a legal agreement between the federal and provincial authorities (Vereinbarung gemäß Art. 15a B-VG zwischen dem Bund und den Ländern über die Elementarpädagogik für die Kindergartenjahre 2022/23 bis 2026/27, [2022](#)) that

regulates the aforementioned obligatory year of nursery school and defines what constitutes “adequate elementary educational facilities/institutions”, namely such that further the children’s linguistic development of the educational language German (BMBWF, 2021b). As a result of a demand by the Carinthian government to the Ministry of Education that a provision for Slovene as a language of instruction be made (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2022, p. 17), the promotion of multilingualism and the languages of ethnic groups has been included as an objective in Art. 2 (8)(b) of the legal agreement between the federal and provincial authorities (Vereinbarung gemäß Art. 15a B-VG zwischen dem Bund und den Ländern über die Elementarpädagogik für die Kindergartenjahre 2022/23 bis 2026/27, 2022).

The Carinthian Nursery Funds Act (Kärntner Kindergartenfondsgesetz, 2001) has been in force since 2001. The aim of this Act is to promote private bilingual or multilingual nurseries in the bilingual area of Carinthia. The Carinthian Law for Child Education and Care (Kärntner Kinderbildungs- und Betreuungsgesetz, 2011; last amended by LGBl. Nr. 52/2017) permits the establishment of public and private bilingual nursery schools. All nursery schools that conform to the legal provisions receive equal funding from the province. A part of the costs for nursery school teachers who are qualified for bilingual education by taking the Matura exam in Slovene is covered by federal funding (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2018, p. 22, 2019, p. 19).

The education of nursery school teachers is provided by the federal authorities. Nursery school teachers are either educated at colleges for higher vocational education at upper secondary level or at special training colleges at post-secondary level (BMBWF, 2021a, pp. 38–39, 48–49). The latter involves a 2-year training course. There is, however, no special training for bilingual nursery school teachers. They may attend language courses during their education and take the Matura exam in Slovene at the Federal Training Institute for Early Childhood Education (Bundes-Bildungsanstalt und Kolleg für Elementarpädagogik; BAfEP) in Klagenfurt/Celovec, but this does not result in a specialised diploma. There are endeavours to upgrade this education, which are supported by the province. The BAfEP has proposed changes to its curriculum that would include Slovene as a subject in the timetable plus an additional training course “Bilingual Elementary Education” to the BMBWF, which oversees the regulation of curricula (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2020, p. 28, 2022, pp. 25–26).

language use

In bilingual nursery schools, children learn to use Slovene and German in a playful way by, for instance, communicating with their instructors and through songs and games. The Carinthian Nursery Funds Act (2001) stipulates that nursery schools should develop concepts for bilingual education that have to be based on at least either a phase-model (e.g. one day – one language) or a person-model of language use (e.g. one person – one language). Both languages must be used equally. Children are, however, generally free in their language choice.

All bilingual nursery schools have their own concepts for bilingual education, but it is at present difficult to determine the extent to which these concepts are carried out in practice since there are no publications on the topic. A working group consisting of members of the provincial government, the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec, the association of bilingual and multilingual nursery schools, and the educational directorate was established in 2018, with the aim of examining, maintaining, and developing language competence in elementary pedagogy and enhancing the collaboration of nursery and primary schools. In 2020, a cooperative research project with the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec was conducted to enhance language awareness in nursery school teachers (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2020, p. 24, 2021, p. 16). A pedagogical framework concept for bilingual nursery schools was published by the Carinthian government in 2022 (Gombos, 2022).

A special form of language use was carried out in the trilateral project *Drei Hände – tre mani – tri roke* (Three hands), which was conducted by Georg Gombos between 2006 and 2011. In this cross-border project, nursery school teachers from Austria, Italy, and Slovenia participated in an exchange for two days a week and interacted in their own language with the children of the respective countries. This project was also extended to primary school (see Gombos et al., 2011), but could not be maintained due to lack of financing.

teaching materials

From the 1990s onwards, several teaching materials have been developed by nursery school teachers, especially for the bilingual nursery schools in Carinthia, which can also be used by parents. There are altogether five such textbooks, which contain nursery rhymes, songs, and other language related activities that are each accompanied by a didactic instruction (Hudl-Kunčič et al., 2003; Kolter & Stefaner-Weiss, 2005; Kolter & Stefaner-Weiss, 2009; Rovšek, 1996; Rovšek & Masopust, 2001). These materials were published by two Carinthian-Slovenian pedagogical associations and are original publications. One of them (Hudl-Kunčič et al., 2003), which also contains a pedagogical concept for the bilingual nursery school, is a result of an EU project. There is also an informative brochure for parents that explains the purpose and benefits of bilingual nursery schools (Ogorevc-Feinig, 2001).

These publications can be purchased in bookshops. Picture books and book packages can be borrowed from the Slovene study library in Klagenfurt/Celovec. Although there seems to be sufficient teaching materials, it must be noted that the latest one was published more than 10 years ago, in 2009.

statistics

In the school year 2020/21, there were 26 bilingual nursery schools in Carinthia, with a total of 46 groups covering 1,049 children; three of these nursery schools are in Klagenfurt/Celovec. Of these 26 schools, 11 were private or parish nursery schools (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2021, p. 16).

3 Primary education

target group

Primary education in Austria is for children aged 6 to 10 years (The Austrian Education System, [n.d.-b](#)).

structure

Primary education covers four years (grades 1 to 4) and is provided at primary schools (German/Slovene: *Volksschule/Ijudska šola*). Primary schools also offer an optional pre-primary year (*Vorschulstufe*) to those 6-year-olds who are not yet ready for the first grade and will thus have to spend 5 years in primary school. Bilingual Slovene-German primary education is available in legally defined communities for all children whose legal guardians enrol them (Minderheitenschulwesen-Ausführungsgesetz, [1959](#); see also appendix of this act).

The four classes of primary education in Austria are structured based on age. The average maximum number of pupils per class is 25. In bilingual schools, the maximum number of pupils per class is 20 and the minimum is seven. If the number of pupils in each year is too small, several years may be combined into one class.

If there are at least nine pupils enrolled in bilingual education and nine in monolingual German education (i.e. 18 altogether), separate classes are opened. If, however, the number of pupils enrolled in either bilingual or monolingual education is below nine, no parallel classes are offered, but a mixed class is established. A team teacher comes into the class for 10–14 hours per week and teaches one group in German while the other teacher teaches the group enrolled in bilingual schooling in Slovene. Pupils enrolled in bilingual education whose Slovene is insufficient are to be offered additional remedial teaching in Slovene if there are at least three such children.

Teachers are class teachers and usually spend the 4 years with the same class of children. Since the school year 2003/04, the timetable for primary school (years 1 to 4) has left the school with the option of deciding on the number of hours taught per week within a certain margin (20–23 or 22–25 hours).

Lessons are normally taught in the morning. It is, however, also possible for individual schools to provide a full day of school. This can either be offered with lessons in the morning and educational supervision in the afternoon or as an integrated programme of lessons, study hours, and recreational phases. In 2019/20, 38 bilingual primary schools offered full day

school with supervision in the afternoon; however, only 13 of these schools provided bilingual supervision (Bildungsdirektion für Kärnten, 2019, p. 131), reaching 19.5% of children enrolled in bilingual primary education (OGM, 2022, p. 37). There were also six bilingual after school care centres, caring for a total of 180 children, in 2019/20, two of them in Klagenfurt/Celovec (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2021, p. 16).

In the area of compulsory education, the State provides the framework laws and the province is responsible for the executive laws. The educational objective of primary school is to provide all pupils with a basic, balanced education for their social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development, with the aim of producing responsible members of society and democratic citizens. The general primary school curriculum also applies to bilingual schools and comprises the classical subject canon: mathematics, music, drawing, handicraft, physical education, local history, geography, biology, religious education, and German. From the first grade onwards, a modern foreign language (mostly English, but also French, Italian, Croatian, Slovak, Slovene, Czech, or Hungarian) is taught in an integrated way during the first 2 years and as a separate subject in grades 3 and 4.

The curriculum for bilingual schools is adapted to the specific situation in the bilingual area by regulation of the Minister of Education. It contains the subject German-Slovene Reading/Writing and emphasises the worth of bilingualism as well as that of intercultural understanding and communication. The subject Foreign Language is instead an optional course. German-Slovene Reading/Writing is assessed as one subject until fourth grade, when German reading receives a separate mark. An amendment to the Federal Minority Education Act for Carinthia (Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten, 1959) in 2021 decreed the separation of the two languages, since teachers usually give precedence to the achievements in German when deciding on a mark.

legislation

The legal basis of minority schooling is constituted by federal laws. The constitution of the Republic of Austria (more precisely Article 7 of the State Treaty of Vienna of 1955; Staatsvertrag betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich, 1955) mentions the “right to primary education in [the minority’s] language” and the “right to a proportional number of secondary schools”. Primary education is guaranteed in those communities that are explicitly mentioned in §10 of the Federal Minority Education Act for Carinthia (Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten, 1959) and in the appendix to the Provincial Minority Schools Implementation Act from 1959 (Minderheitenschulwesen-Ausführungsgesetz, 1959). To exercise this right, children have to be enrolled by their legal guardians. Pupils enrolled in bilingual classes are to be taught all subjects in both languages to more or less the same extent. The curriculum is also regulated by federal law. The provincial government maintains the primary schools and primary school teachers; thus, there is also a provincial Law for minority schooling, which elaborates this part of the execution of the federal law and enumerates the municipalities where bilingual education is foreseen (Minderheitenschulwesen-Ausführungsgesetz, 1959).

language use

In bilingual schools, Slovene is part of the core curriculum. In monolingual German classes, Slovene can also be taught as an additional practical exercise for 2 hours a week without any assessment. In bilingual classes, German and Slovene are to be used to the same extent as languages of instruction in all subjects.

Theoretically, using both German and Slovene to the same extent as languages of instruction is well-founded, but in reality, the quality of bilingual education depends on several factors, such as the individual teachers, the parents, the pupils and their command of Slovene, and the attitude of the environment (i.e. the extent to which Slovene is accepted in the family, neighbourhood, municipality, etc.). Since the 1980s, the number of pupils with poor or no knowledge of Slovene (i.e. from German-speaking families) enrolled in bilingual education has steadily increased. Parents are often afraid that their children may not learn enough basic knowledge if teachers place too much emphasis on Slovene. Teachers therefore tend to use more German than Slovene (Ogris, 2014, pp. 141–150). Moreover, the way in which the alternation between the two languages is organised is usually decided by the teachers; however, for a long time, they did not receive any special training for this during their teacher training. Only recently have the regional school authorities started to encourage the use of bilingual educational models (Sandrieser, 2010, 2013) and the curriculum has been adapted (in 2015). Twenty-five percent of the bilingual primary schools had adopted such models by 2020 (S. Sandrieser, inspector for minority schooling, personal communication, June 2020). Since the 1990s, the private school in Klagenfurt/Celovec has been using a one-day-one-language model, and the public school in Klagenfurt/Celovec a one person–one language model, in which German and Slovene alternate on a weekly basis as the language of instruction, combined with a switch of teachers. In the majority of the schools, bilingual education is, however, provided in a more unsystematic manner, that is, teachers usually repeat what they say in one language in the other or units in one language or the other, without regularity.

teaching materials

One of the traditional teaching materials is the magazine *Mladi rod* (Young generation), which was founded in 1951 by a group of teachers to provide reading material for bilingual education. It has since continued to appear every second month with, among others, work sheets and stories, and is now available online (www.mladirod.at). Textbooks and other teaching materials have been developed as well as translated and adapted from sources from Slovenia on the initiative of individual bilingual teachers and groups of teachers. The Slovene publishing houses in Carinthia print these books.

To be permitted for use in schools, textbooks must be certified by the BMBWF. The list of certified textbooks and materials for primary schools comprises 31 titles (as of 2020) for the subjects Slovene, mathematics, drawing, music, general knowledge, and religious

education. In contrast to teaching materials in German, there are no e-books in Slovene (www.schulbuchaktion.at/schulbuchlisten.html). The development of teaching materials is now carried out officially by the University College of Teacher Education Carinthia under the guidance of the educational directorate. New materials are developed in accordance with the curriculum and the competence descriptions, also considering heterogeneity. One of these projects is the portal Sloviklik.at, which was relaunched in 2019 with help from the Carinthian government, the educational directorate, and the BMBWF.

statistics

According to the Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung (2022), 57 primary schools in Carinthia offer bilingual education, two of which are in Klagenfurt/Celovec (“sustained need”, see [Chapter 1](#)). Since the enactment of bilingual education in 1958, 36 primary schools, often located in small villages where Slovene is used as a vernacular language, have been closed due to a lack of pupils and children redirected to nearby larger schools, where German is the dominant language.

In the school year 2021/22, 1,956 out of 4,157 pupils attended bilingual classes. This figure corresponds to 47.05% of the pupils in the official bilingual area (see [Figure 2](#)). In 1987/88, this figure was only 19.46%, which from then on steadily grew. In the school year 2021/22, 181 pupils were enrolled in bilingual education at the two Klagenfurt/Celovec primary schools (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2022).

4 Secondary education

target group

Secondary education in Austria is split into two levels. Children aged 10–15 years attend the lower secondary level, which comprises grades 5–8, either at MS (*Mittelschule*, formerly general school or *Hauptschule*, and new middle school [*Neue Mittelschule*]) or at the lower level of academic secondary school (Gymnasium). The upper level of secondary education starts with ninth grade and lasts 4–5 years, depending on the school type (academic secondary school or college for higher vocational education; see [Chapter 5](#) on vocational education). Secondary education is intended for children aged between 10 and 18–19 years, and attendance is compulsory until the age of 15 (see [The Austrian Education System, n.d.-c, n.d.-d](#)).

structure

To be admitted to MS, pupils must have successfully completed the fourth grade of primary school. Pupils who want to attend academic secondary school (AHS) must have been rated either “good” or “very good” in the subjects German, reading, writing, and mathematics, or they must have been evaluated as highly likely to meet the requirements of the AHS by the primary school committee. Pupils who do not meet these standards also have the possibility of sitting an entrance exam.

The lower level of secondary education consists of MS (*Mittelschule*) and academic secondary school–lower level (*AHS-Unterstufe*). About 38% of all primary school leavers in Austria attend AHS, while about 60% go to MS (BMBWF, [2021b](#), p. 45).

Middle school covers grades 5 to 8 (10- to 14-year-olds). Its task is to enable pupils, in accordance with their interests, inclinations, talents, and abilities, to either continue their education or move to pre-vocational school and working life. The aim of MS is to develop the individual potentials and talents of the pupils and thus contribute to providing equal opportunities in education.

Middle schools specialise in linguistic-humanistic-arts, science-mathematics, economic-life studies, or music-creative, and can set further autonomous priorities. Moreover, they often offer full-day care arrangements (BMBWF, [2021a](#), pp. 17–18). From the sixth grade onwards, pupils are differentiated according to their achievements in German, mathematics, and foreign language(s) and assigned either to the standard academic secondary school educational objectives or the standard educational objectives. Pupils can be assigned to the other level at any time during the education process (BMBWF, [2020](#), p. 9). Having successfully

completed MS, pupils may attend a pre-vocational school, an AHS (upper cycle), a school for intermediate vocational education, or a college for higher vocational education, depending on the educational objectives they achieved (BMBWF, 2021a, p. 19).

Academic secondary school consists of 4 years at the lower level (10- to 14-year-olds) and 4 years at the upper level (14- to 18-year-olds). The lower level of AHS provides a comprehensive and in-depth general education and prepares pupils for the upper level, which in turn prepares them for university and ends with the upper secondary diploma exam (*Matura*). Academic secondary schools and their teachers belong to Federal Administration.

The curricula of MS and the lower level of AHS are practically identical. There is an approved number of hours per subject, but it is possible for schools, following a set of prescribed guidelines, to organise their timetables autonomously and develop a profile of their own. In the lower circle, there are the following three types of AHS: *Gymnasium*, which focuses on languages, humanities, and the arts, including Latin; *Realgymnasium*, which focuses on natural sciences and mathematics; and *Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium*, which focuses on economics and life skills.

The upper level of secondary education shows a high degree of differentiation. The following school types are provided: pre-vocational school (grades 9–10); upper level of academic secondary school (grades 9–12), which comprises the same three school types as years three and four at the lower level; part-time compulsory vocational school (grades 10–13); schools for intermediate vocational education (grades 9–12); and colleges for higher vocational education (grades 9–13; see Chapter 5 on vocational education).

Around 32% of middle school graduates choose a pre-vocational school or apprenticeship and part-time vocational school. Approximately 8.5% of middle school graduates and 61% of lower academic school graduates move to the upper level of AHS. Fifty-one percent of middle school graduates and 35% of lower-level AHS graduates attend an intermediate secondary vocational school or a college for higher vocational education.

On average, about 32% of pupils at upper secondary level choose pre-vocational school or an apprenticeship and part-time vocational school, 26% choose AHS, and about 43% attend an intermediate secondary vocational school or a college for higher vocational education (Statistik Austria, 2021c).

legislation

The legal basis of minority schooling is constituted by federal laws. The constitution of the Republic of Austria (more precisely Article 7 of the State Treaty of 1955; Staatsvertrag betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich, 1955) mentions the “right to a proportional number of secondary schools”. Education in the minority language at the lower secondary level is guaranteed in those communities that are explicitly mentioned in Section 10 of the Federal Minority Education Act for Carin-

thia (Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten, 1959) and in the appendix to the Provincial Minority Schools Implementation Act (Minderheitenschulwesen-Ausführungsgesetz, 1959). These laws also provide for one AHS with Slovene as the language of instruction and bilingual colleges for higher vocational education. To be able to exercise this right, children have to be enrolled by their legal guardians.

Since the reform of the middle school curriculum in 2012, Slovene as an obligatory subject has been integrated into the regular timetable of the curriculum and so no longer competes with English, where previously a choice had to be made. Pupils enrolled in bilingual education have 4 hours of Slovene a week during regular teaching hours, along with German and English, whereas before this change, choosing Slovene implied that English was not an obligatory subject. Moreover, Slovene lessons were usually offered before or after regular school hours.

The framework curricula of both MS and AHS explicitly include Slovene as one of the foreign languages that may be taught as an elective or alternative compulsory subject anywhere in Austria. Since 1993, several reforms providing for the autonomy of schools have paved the way for the introduction of initiatives such as the “Kugy Class”, which is described in the following section on language use.

language use

The use and (visual) presence of Slovene in schools depends on various factors, such as the type of school, the type of subject, the proficiency of pupils, and the situation of the individual school.

In MS, the language of instruction is generally German, and Slovene is taught as a compulsory (4 hours a week) or elective subject (2–3 hours a week). If the minimum number of five pupils necessary for creating a separate group is not reached, all enrolled pupils are taught together. This often means that pupils from different ages have to be taught within one group. Moreover, Slovene as a compulsory and elective subject may be taught together in one group. In any case, the language proficiency of pupils in the same class or group differs significantly; there are first-language speakers from Slovenia and from Carinthia along with pupils who acquired Slovene in elementary (e.g. nursery schools) and/or primary education as well as pupils without any prior knowledge of the language. If at least 10 pupils are enrolled in compulsory Slovene lessons, two groups may be formed based on proficiency; however, this is seldom the case. During Slovene lessons, teachers try to speak mostly Slovene and use German only for reasons of comprehensibility. Pupils use either German or Slovene, depending on their background and proficiency, when communicating among one another and with the teachers. Since the reform of 2012, schools may use 2 of the 4 compulsory hours of Slovene for CLIL education (Content and Language Integrated Learning). This is usually carried out in the form of team teaching during subject lessons (e.g. music, sport, geography, or biology) or used for educational projects, which are then taught completely in Slovene.

In the bilingual area, there is one AHS in Völkermarkt/Velikovec, where Slovene is taught as a free elective from fifth grade and/or as an alternative compulsory subject (approx. 3 hours a week) from seventh grade onwards. It has the status of a foreign language. The degree of heterogeneity is the same as in MS.

As provided by law (see [legislation](#)), there is one AHS in Klagenfurt/Celovec (i.e. outside the official bilingual area), which was founded in 1957, where Slovene is the medium of instruction – the Bundesgymnasium/Bundesrealgymnasium für Slowenen (Zvezna gimnazija/Zvezna realna gimnazija za Slovence; AHS for Slovenes). In the school year 2021/22, 543 pupils were being taught (at both the lower and upper secondary levels) by 70 teachers of various subjects. Enrolments have constantly risen since the foundation of the school. Pupils attending this school can choose between the following two basic orientations: one includes Latin (Gymnasium) and the other focuses on geometry and mathematics (Realgymnasium), or they can attend the so-called “Kugy Class”, a project enabled by school autonomy, in which pupils are taught in Slovene, German, and Italian and come from Slovenia, Austria, and Italy. This model of multilingual teaching has been practised since 2000 and evaluated several times as very successful (Larcher & Vospernik, 2013; Urbinc, 2002, 2015). The basic language of instruction is Slovene. Besides Slovene, the German, Italian, and later English languages are used in CLIL in different subjects for 1 hour per week and sometimes with the help of language assistants. The four languages are also taught as subjects. The language proficiency of pupils is diverse, too, but it is easier to level, as Slovene is the basic language of instruction for all pupils and there are many possibilities for scaffolding.

teaching materials

The situation of teaching materials for secondary education is rather diverse (www.schulbuchaktion.at/schulbuchlisten.html). While there is a number of certified textbooks in Slovene for various subjects taught at AHS (altogether 72 titles as of 2020 that have been developed mostly by teachers of the Zvezna gimnazija za Slovence), the situation is unsatisfactory regarding MS, with only 11 titles for music, religious education, and the Slovene language, especially in terms of heterogeneity. Middle school teachers therefore make use of various sources, such as *Mladi rod* (www.mladirod.at), to create their own worksheets that meet the different levels of proficiency of the pupils. The same is true for the AHS in Völkermarkt/Velikovec with Slovene as an alternative compulsory subject.

The development of teaching materials for secondary education is now carried out officially by the University College for Teacher Education Carinthia under the guidance of the educational directorate. New materials are developed in accordance with the curriculum and the competence descriptions, also considering heterogeneity. One of these projects is the portal Sloviklik.at, which was relaunched in 2019 with help from the Carinthian government, the educational directorate, and the BMBWF.

statistics

In the school year 2021/22, 302 (9.28%) of the pupils in the bilingual area attended Slovene language classes in general secondary education (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2022, p. 21), which means a considerable increase in percentage over time (e.g. 6.55% in 1990/91; Bildungsdirektion für Kärnten, 2019, p. 163). If the number of pupils enrolled in bilingual classes in primary schools are compared with those enrolled in secondary schools, there is, however, a pronounced decrease – only about 40% of the former continue to learn Slovene at middle school or AHS. In 2020/21, 215 pupils were enrolled in Slovene classes in the fifth grade; 89 took Slovene as a subject at MS and 52 in fifth grade of AHS. The AHS for Slovenes was attended by 74 pupils in fifth grade (total enrolment across all eight grades was 543 in 2021/22). While enrolment numbers in MS have risen during the last decade, they have decreased for Slovene as an elective subject in most AHS (Bundeskanzleramt, 2015, p. 104), and a number of schools no longer offered the subject in the school year 2020/21 (as can be deduced from their homepages).

5 Vocational education

target group

Vocational education starts at the upper secondary level and is intended for students aged 14 to 19 years and above (The Austrian Education System, [n.d.-d](#)).

structure

Young people who have completed the compulsory 9 years of schooling, for example by attending a polytechnic school, can conclude an apprenticeship agreement with an instructing employer (business) or a traineeship host (training institution), and thus enter the dual educational system with apprentice training and vocational school. Those who have successfully completed the eighth grade (lower secondary level) can also choose to go to a school for intermediate vocational education, which lasts 1–4 years, or to a college of higher vocational education, which lasts 5 years and concludes with the *Matura* examination or *Diplomprüfung* examination (diploma examination, A-Level).

The vocational training and education sector in Austria is highly diversified. There are many different types of vocational schools and colleges, some of which extend to the post-secondary level and could also be subsumed under adult education. Firstly, there is the dual system of apprenticeship and vocational school. Vocational school attendance is obligatory during the apprenticeship, that is, for between 2 and 4 years, making up about 25% of the total education time. The apprenticeship is concluded by successful completion of vocational school and by passing a practical exam set by an independent examination commission. Apprentices also have the opportunity to attend preparatory courses for the Higher Education Entrance Examination free of charge during their apprenticeship. The final exam can be taken at 19 years of age. At present, around 200 occupations and trades are covered by the apprenticeship scheme (BMBWF, [2020](#), p. 32).

Secondly, there are schools for intermediate vocational education (*Berufsbildende mittlere Schule*), which last 1–4 years. The 3-year schools for intermediate vocational education are assigned to level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (Bundesgesetz über den Nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen [NQR-Gesetz], [2016](#)).

Lastly, there are colleges for higher vocational education (*Berufsbildende höhere Schule*), which last for 5 years and deliver higher vocational training as well as a broad general education. The diploma entitles alumni to study at universities, universities of applied sciences, and university colleges of teacher education, and also permits employment in legally regulated professions. Colleges for higher vocational education are assigned to level 5 of the National Qualifications Framework.

Schools for intermediate vocational education as well as colleges for higher vocational education offer programmes for a variety of professional fields, such as elementary education, nursing, social professions, technical and commercial professions, informatics, hotel administration and tourism, forestry, agriculture, home economics, art and design, and fashion.

legislation

The legal basis of minority schooling is constituted by federal laws. The constitution of the Republic of Austria (more precisely Article 7 of the State Treaty of 1955; Staatsvertrag betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich, 1955) mentions the “right to a proportional number of secondary schools”. The Minority Education Act for Carinthia (Minderheiten-Schulgesetz für Kärnten, 1959) provides for one bilingual college for higher vocational education (commerce). In 2021, an amendment to the Minority Education Act for Carinthia was made to Article II by appending Section 6 that provides for the possibility to found further bilingual schools for intermediate vocational education and bilingual colleges of higher vocational education.

language use

German is generally the language of instruction in vocational education. Some schools offer Slovene as a subject, such as at the BAfEP in Klagenfurt/Celovec and the College for Commerce (*Bundes-Handelsakademie*) in Völkermarkt/Velikovec. There is, however, no such offer at polytechnic and vocational schools (Bundeskanzleramt, 2015, p. 103–107).

As provided by law, there are three bilingual schools: one private 1-year school for intermediate education in St. Peter/Šentpeter and two colleges of higher vocational education – a private one in St. Peter/Šentpeter (founded in 1989 within an institution going back to 1908), which is run by the Catholic church and focuses on occupations in Service Industry Management, and a state-run one in Klagenfurt/Celovec (founded in 1990) as a college for commerce. At these schools, both languages are again used to a more or less equal extent. A considerable number of pupils from Slovenia attend both these schools.

teaching materials

There are certified textbooks in Slovene for commercial subjects, such as business administration, taught at higher colleges of commerce that have been developed mostly by teachers from the same school, as well as textbooks for languages, biology, and religious education, and dictionaries (23 titles in total as of 2020). For the other school types, there are only textbooks for the Slovene language, religious education, and music, and dictionaries on the list of certified teaching materials (www.schulbuchaktion.at/schulbuchlisten.html).

The development of teaching materials is now carried out officially by the University College for Teacher Education Carinthia under the guidance of the educational directorate. New materials are developed in accordance with the curriculum and the competence descriptions, also considering heterogeneity.

statistics

When the bilingual college of higher vocational education in Klagenfurt/Celovec was first set up in 1990/91, there were 27 enrolments for the first year. In the school year 2021/22, the school had a total enrolment of 218 pupils. The College of Higher Vocational Education in St. Peter/Šentpeter and the 1-year School for Intermediate Vocational Education together had 143 pupils in 2021/22. At the other colleges of higher vocational education, 578 pupils took Slovene as an alternative compulsory or as a free elective subject (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2022, p. 22).

6 Higher education

structure

In Austria, higher education is organised in four sectors, which are regulated by different federal laws (The Austrian Education System, [n.d.-e](#)). As of the academic year 2022/23, there were 22 public universities, 21 universities of applied sciences, 14 university colleges of teacher education, and 18 private universities educating more than 390,000 students. The majority of students choose public universities. Austria signed the Bologna Process in 1999, and, in the early 2000s, it switched to bachelor's, master's, and PhD programmes for most fields of study (BMBWF, [n.d.-c](#)).

legislation

Higher education is regulated by federal laws, such as the Universities Act 2002 (Bundesgesetz über die Organisation der Universitäten und ihre Studien, [2002](#)) for public universities, the Universities of Applied Sciences Act 1993 (Bundesgesetz über Fachhochschulen, [1993](#)), the University Colleges Act 2005 (Bundesgesetz über die Organisation der Pädagogischen Hochschulen und ihre Studien, [2005](#)), and the Private Universities Act 2011 (Bundesgesetz über Privatuniversitäten, [2011](#)) for private universities. These laws are framework laws, and the universities are free to choose fields of study. As for the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe, [1992](#)), Austria has accepted the commitment according to Article 8(1)(e)(iii), that is, "to encourage and/or allow the provision of university or other forms of higher education in regional or minority languages or of facilities for the study of these languages as university or higher education subjects".

language use

At Austrian universities and university colleges, as well as at the universities of applied sciences, the language of instruction is generally German, with the exception of particular courses and programmes in other languages (mostly English). Within the Slovene language programmes offered at university level – philology, teaching certificate, and interpretation and translation – the vast majority of courses are Slovene-taught, although general courses offered to students other than exclusively students of Slovene are held in German.

Slovene can be studied as a subject at three public universities in Austria, namely Klagenfurt/Celovec, Graz, and Vienna. At these universities, students can specialise in Slovene philology, interpretation and translation, or teacher training for secondary schools. Since the reform of teacher education in 2013, teacher training has been carried out in cooper-

ation between universities and university colleges of teacher education (Bundesrahmengesetz zur Einführung einer neuen Ausbildung für Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen [Federal Framework Law on the Introduction of a New Training for Pedagogues], 2013). At some of the *Fachhochschulen* (specialist subject universities of applied sciences), Slovene can also be chosen as an optional foreign language. At the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec, a series of Slovene language courses starting at beginners' level are also offered for students studying at other departments (*Slowenisch für Studierende aller Studienrichtungen* [Slovene for students of all fields of study], *Slowenisch für Angewandte Kulturwissenschaft* [Slovene for Applied Cultural Studies], and *Slowenische Wirtschaftssprache* [Slovenian business language]), and can be accredited as free elective subjects (i.e. the choice is completely free and can be changed from year to year) or compulsory elective subjects (i.e. subjects that have to be chosen from a list specified in the curriculum). Interest for these courses has, however, steadily decreased from about 2015 onwards.

teacher training

Teacher training has undergone substantial reforms since 2008. The former pedagogical academies were integrated into the Bologna system as university colleges of teacher education by 2008 and enabled to bestow academic degrees. In 2013, the Federal Framework Law Introducing a New Training for Teachers (Bundesrahmengesetz zur Einführung einer neuen Ausbildung für Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen, 2013) was passed, starting an essential re-orientation of the training of teachers at all school levels in Austria, except for nursery schools.

The reform aimed, among other things, to integrate and harmonise the training offered at university colleges of teacher education and universities, which has led to a cooperation among these educational institutions. Before the reform, primary and middle school teachers were trained at university colleges of teacher education (pedagogical academies before 2008), while teachers for AHS studied at university. Primary school teachers are now trained at university colleges of teacher education and the preparation for secondary school teachers is carried out in cooperation between universities and university colleges of teacher education. Teacher training entails 4 years of study to receive a bachelor's degree, plus 1–2 years for a master's degree. Students for the secondary level have to choose two specialisations, such as Slovene and mathematics.

pre-school training

Nursery school teachers are trained at BAfEP in Klagenfurt/Celovec – either for 5 years when entering after eighth grade or for 3 years when entering after Matura. The third possibility is a 3-year course for nursery school assistants starting after eighth grade. There is no special training course for bilingual nursery school teachers, but Slovene can be taken as a free elective subject. Students who enrol in Slovene courses have the possibility of following a traineeship at a nursery school in Slovenia by means of Erasmus+. There are endeavours

by the Carinthian government to alter the curriculum of nursery school education to make a special course for bilingual nursery school teachers possible (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2022, pp. 25–26).

primary training

Teachers for the pre-primary year and primary school study at university colleges of teacher education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*). Following the 2013 reform, the training programme lasts eight semesters for obtaining the bachelor's degree (240 ECTS credits) and an additional two semesters for the master's degree (60 ECTS credits), and is taught in German. To qualify for teaching bilingual classes at primary schools in Carinthia, students must obtain additional qualifications for bilingual teaching and Slovene language teaching by completing a 60 ECTS-credit programme at the University College for Teacher Education in Klagenfurt/Celovec. This programme lasts eight semesters and is taught almost exclusively in Slovene, besides the subjects intended for future team teachers who have to complete part of this course (18 ECTS credits), but are not obliged to learn Slovene. Teachers who are already employed can also enrol in this programme. To be admitted, students must be proficient in Slovene at level B2 of the CEFR and reach C1 after five semesters. The aim is to improve linguistic competence and provide the appropriate professional training, focusing on theories of language acquisition and learning as well as on literacy, contemporary methods of bilingual teaching and intercultural education, and the history of minority education in Carinthia, along with language courses and practical training in school.

secondary training

Secondary school teachers train at universities and university colleges of teacher education in cooperation. Students must obtain a bachelor's degree (240 ECTS credits and at least eight semesters), which enables them to teach at MS and AHS or colleges of higher vocational education, and can opt to follow a master's degree (at least 90 ECTS credits and three semesters), which is a prerequisite for obtaining tenure. Students have to choose two subjects. Slovene can be studied in Graz, Vienna, and Klagenfurt/Celovec. It should be noted that there is no special language training for all other subjects, which are taught in German. Therefore, the University College of Teacher Education Carinthia now offers an additional 60 ECTS-credit course for teaching in bilingual middle schools. Students as well as teachers who are already employed can enrol in this course. They must be proficient in Slovene at level B2 of the CEFR and reach C1 after five semesters. The aim is to improve linguistic competence and provide the appropriate professional training, focusing on theories of language acquisition and learning as well as on literacy, contemporary methods of bilingual teaching and intercultural education, and the history of minority education in Carinthia, along with language courses and practical training in school. There is, however, no such training for teachers at AHS and colleges of higher vocational education.

in-service training

Training for in-service teachers is completed on a voluntary basis. University colleges of teacher education organise in-service training for all teachers at all types of schools (primary and secondary). The University College of Teacher Education in Klagenfurt/Celovec offers special courses for teachers working in Slovene in accordance with the department of minority schooling of the educational directorate for Carinthia. Moreover, the AHS for Slovenians and the two bilingual colleges of higher vocational education organise courses for their teachers. Cross-border exchange with teachers from Slovenia is also encouraged through seminars and workshops regularly organised by the Ministry of Education of Slovenia according to bilateral treaties.

statistics

On average, eight students per year enrol in the programme for bilingual teaching and Slovene language teaching in primary school at the University College of Teacher Education in Klagenfurt/Celovec. In the academic year 2020/21, a total of 32 students were thus enrolled. The 2-year-programme for team teachers is taken by 20–25 students every year (M. Angerer-Pitschko, personal communication, September 25, 2021). The course for MS had only one enrolment in 2020/21. Moreover, the University College for Teacher Education Carinthia offers 10 to 15 in-service training courses for bilingual and Slovene teachers every year.

Approximately 25 students were enrolled in teacher training for Slovene at the secondary level at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec and the University College of Teacher Education Carinthia in the academic year 2020/21. Twenty-eight students were enrolled in a bachelor's degree and four in a master's degree in Slovene philology at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec in 2020/21 (numbers for the universities of Vienna and Graz could not be obtained).

The Slovene courses for all students at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec were attended by 28 (level 1), 9 (level 2), 7 (level 3), and 5 (level 4) students in the academic year 2020/21. The courses for Slovene economic language at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec were attended by a total of 12 students in the winter term of the academic year 2022/23. Before then, these courses as well as the Slovene courses at the Carinthian University of Applied Sciences had not had any enrolments for the previous 3 to 4 years. Numbers for other Austrian universities are not easily available, but Slovene courses are offered in Graz and Vienna by several universities.

7 Adult education

structure and language courses

Adult education in Austria is carried out by a variety of organisations and is fully or partially financed by the state, provinces, municipalities, and other institutions (see The Austrian Education System, [n.d.-f](#)). The national Adult Education Promotion Act 1973 (Bundesgesetz vom 21. März 1973 über die Förderung der Erwachsenenbildung und des Volksbüchereiwesens aus Bundesmitteln, 1973) defines which organisations are entitled to receive financial aid from the state, but the law does not specify the level of support. Financial resources are available in almost all provinces for individuals taking part in adult education, and these are provided in the form of subsidies for course fees. The national government's responsibilities for adult education are split between a number of ministries, depending on the form of adult education in question. General adult education, schools for working people, and adult education at universities or universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education are, however, the responsibility of the BMBWF. Universities offer a range of fee-paying training courses for employed people, among them language courses. Some of them receive financial support, others have to maintain themselves. Professional associations, interest groups, and religious denominations show firm commitment to adult education and are considerably active at this level. Nevertheless, there is a general lack of coordination in this field of education, both on an organisational and a financial level. Heilinger (2006) provides an overview of adult education.

Adult education in Slovene is left to the voluntary sector. There is a range of organisations and institutions (predominantly church institutions) offering adult education courses at different levels, which are not aimed at formal qualification. Activities in this field arranged by Slovene organisations and by the Church have a long tradition. As secondary education in Slovene was only introduced in the second half of the 20th century, these courses were for a long time the only possibility of further education in Slovene. According to the needs and interests of their members, Slovene cultural associations organise lectures, courses, seminars, and workshops on different topics (e.g. culture, agriculture, literature, health, and foreign languages), where Slovene is frequently a medium of instruction. Some of these cultural organisations have also built their own infrastructures to host such courses and cultural activities. The two central Slovene cultural organisations, *Slovenska prosvetna zveza* (SPZ; Slovenian Enlightenment Association; www.spz.slo.at) and *Krščanska kulturna zveza* (KKZ; Christian Cultural Association; www.kkz.at), organise adult education courses on a regional level. Both organisations also run Slovene language classes.

The Catholic Church runs a special Slovene adult education centre, *Dom prosvete / Bildungshaus Sodalitas* (education centre; www.sodalitas.at), which offers a wide range of courses, from topics related to church life, arts and handicrafts, or counselling to scientific lectures on

topics such as contemporary history and literature, as well as Slovene and other language courses. The educational activities on offer are organised either internally by the centre itself or externally by other organisations, or in cooperation. The latter is, for example, the case with a 1-year bilingual training course for nursery school assistants and childminders that leads to the diploma *Diplomirte/r Kleinkinderzieher/-in* (certified early childhood educator). One of the main guiding principles behind this particular centre is to contribute to the preservation of the Slovene language and identity in Carinthia through educational activities in the Slovene language. However, on average, only about one third of the educational activities organised in the centre are held in the Slovene language.

Although the social structure within the Slovene community in Carinthia underwent fundamental changes in the second half of the 20th century, there is still a comparatively high percentage of the Slovenian population working in agriculture; the adult education organisation *Kmečka izobraževalna skupnost* (Rural Educational Community) has specialised in courses related to this field. The *Slovenska gospodarska zveza* (Slovenian economic association) offers courses for business people and entrepreneurs.

As economic relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Carinthia have become closer since 1990, the demand for Slovene language courses for the German-speaking population has increased. These courses are organised by the aforementioned organisations on the one hand, and, on the other hand, by a number of Austrian adult education centres and associations. However, most of these courses lead only up to the CEFR level B1. The University of Klagenfurt/Celovec offers Slovene language courses at all levels, which are, however, reserved for registered students and cannot officially be attended by the general public.

Until the 1990s, hardly any teaching materials for the Slovene language in adult education were available, and teachers had to rely on their own initiative. Since that time, books and manuals for teachers in adult classes using modern communicative methods of language learning have been produced in Slovenia and partly in Carinthia. Nevertheless, teachers have to adapt these materials for the specific situation in Carinthia as the original target group were learners from outside the bilingual area in Carinthia.

language use

Regarding language use in adult education, it is interesting to look at the two main providers. The Catholic educational institute *Katoliška akcija/Katholische Aktion* (Catholic Action) offers lectures and courses in Slovene, in German, and bilingual ones. Monolingual Slovene courses were in the minority (between 12% and 25%), bilingual ones amounted to about 25%, and monolingual German ones to 40%–50% in October/November 2021. The situation of Dom prosvete is similar; about a third of the events are in Slovene (D. Sturm, referent for education at the Dom prosvete, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

statistics

Given the unclear situation in adult education, it is difficult to provide a statistical overview. The aforementioned bilingual training course for nursery school assistants had 10–11 participants in 2017/18, 2019/20, and 2020/21. The Slovene language courses offered by Dom prosvete reached five to eight participants each in 2018. Eight courses were offered, but only four (from beginners to conversation) were carried out (D. Sturm, referent for education at Dom prosvete, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

The Slovene language courses offered by a language centre run by the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec reached a total of 10 to 44 enrolments each year between 2001 and 2019 (in comparison, Italian courses had between 28 and 206 enrolments per year; A. Pirker, director of the language centre, personal communication, September 22, 2021).

8 Educational research

Educational research is conducted mainly in the form of academic theses and small projects, most often with the help of interviews; empirical results are rarely published. There is almost no research in the classroom or involving pupils, and practically no research on language proficiency using testing methods. The few studies of this kind are theses from Slovenian universities. Research on bilingual education and education in Slovene is mostly conducted by the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec (Department of Education and Department of Slavonic Studies) and the University College for Teacher Education Carinthia, and sometimes by teacher education students in Graz and Vienna, and at Slovenian universities.

One stream of research concerns the history of education in Slovene in Carinthia with a focus on the 20th century (e.g. Domej, 2009, 2019). A comprehensive example is the book by Feinig (published in 2008 and based on her dissertation), in which she gives a critical insight into the different periods of teaching Slovene in Carinthian schools, starting with Protestantism in the 16th century and ending at the beginning of the 21st century. As a conclusion, Feinig proposes changes to the status quo of education in Slovene, which she considers unsatisfactory for various reasons, especially in relation to legal and organisational conditions. Another, different, perspective on the history of bilingual education between 1945 and 2006 is taken by Wakounig (2008) who uses a deconstructionist approach based on interviews and written documents. Wakounig argues that bilingual education in Carinthia has been ethnicised and stigmatised by both the majority and the minority, instead of using this institution to further bilingualism of both the minority and the majority and mutual understanding in the region.

Another direction is the investigation of the current situation in schools. In the early 2000s, a large-scale evaluation study was carried out (Hieden & Abl, 2005), which had the aim of improving didactics and teaching materials in the framework of the EU project “Förderung von Minderheitensprachen im mehrsprachigen Raum in der LehrerInnenbildung” (Promotion of minority languages in multilingual areas in teacher education; COMENIUS 2.1, 112607-CP1-2003-1-AT-COMENIUS-C21), covering bilingual education in Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and Italy. This study mainly contained expert opinions, best practice reports, literature reviews, and didactic materials. Nevertheless, a comprehensive investigation of practices in 10 Carinthian bilingual primary schools was also conducted with the help of a questionnaire, regarding the experiences and attitudes of teachers, parents, and children (Blassnig & Mayring, 2005). Overall, this evaluation study revealed positive results regarding the satisfaction with learning Slovene in primary schools. However, the published results do not give insights into teaching practices or the communicative ability of the pupils and stand in sharp contrast with other investigations.

Ogris (2014) has presented one of the most thorough studies of bilingual primary education in Carinthia so far. The study involved interviews with teachers and parents about their motivations, expectations, and experiences to draw a picture of the practice of bilingual education in school and to determine the status of Slovene. Ogris found that German is generally seen as the more important language by parents and teachers and that both (German-speaking) parents' expectations and the prevailing social, legal, and organisational conditions in (e.g. the institution of team teaching) and beyond school hinder the attainment of good results in Slovene and the level of bilingualism foreseen by law. Similar results were revealed by Volavšek-Kurasch (2021) in her dissertation on new middle schools. She interviewed 15 teachers about their teaching conditions and found that despite the new curriculum and the possibility to carry out two out of four Slovene lessons in the form of CLIL, Slovene remains marginalised and in competition with other subjects, and teachers are left to their own devices with regard to teaching materials and heterogeneous classes.

An evaluation study of the private Hermagoras School showed, however, that good results are possible for children with different first languages if a bilingual teaching model is adhered to and multilingualism is consistently present in the school (Mossakowski et al., 2010). This is one of the rare studies of teaching practices in that besides interviews and workshops with teachers, parents, and children and the study of the schoolscape, lessons were observed, recorded, and analysed. The project revealed that the Hermagoras School uses its bilingual teaching model consistently and is fully bilingual (and even multilingual) in all respects (e.g. the schoolscape, the language alternation day by day, tolerance of different languages, and writing assignments; see Doleschal, 2018; Doleschal & Robatsch, 2015; Purkarthofer, 2016; Rieger, 2021). Good results are also attested for the Kugy-classes of the Slovene grammar school (Busch et al., 2020; Urbinc, 2015).

Nursery schools have been the focus of several theses and evaluation projects (see, e.g., Gombos et al., 2011; Gombos, 2019).

The third direction is the evaluation of curricula, conducted through interviews with students. The University College for Teacher Education Carinthia conducted an evaluation study of the curriculum for bilingual teacher and team teacher training, which led to changes in the curriculum, particularly regarding the need of language courses (Angerer-Pitschko et al., 2010, 2011, 2012). At the time of writing this dossier (2023), another evaluation of the study focus "Multilingualism and intercultural education in the Alps-Adriatic region" was being conducted.

Currently (2023), the quality of linguistic input is the topic of an evaluation in bilingual nursery schools on the basis of a cooperation agreement between the provincial government and the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec. Other projects are concerned with the development of a textbook concept for primary school with a special focus on language structures and of assessment tools for the linguistic development of bilingual pupils.

Overall, research has shown the potential and problems of bilingual education in Carinthia for years, repeating comparable results over time. This indicates, however, that no thorough improvements have been made.

9 Prospects

The greatest challenge for the future of Slovene in Austria remains the growing heterogeneous composition of bilingual and Slovene classes on the one hand, and the steady decline of the number of minority members on the other, as well as the overall low number of pupils and students, which prevent the implementation of ability grouping at all levels of education, including university.

After an upswing of language learning after 1990, the interest in acquiring the neighbouring language has declined since about 2010. At the same time, owing to a change in political climate and power balance, overdue measures have been taken, which may nevertheless come too late to secure the continuous autochthonous existence of Slovene, but do improve the situation on the whole. The amelioration of education in Slovene seems to respond to the growing enrolment of pupils without prior knowledge of Slovene in bilingual education, which shifts the burden of responsibility for language preservation to the education system and goes increasingly into the direction of foreign albeit second language learning. This not only safeguards the existence of Slovene as a regional language, but it also enhances multilingualism and a tolerant attitude towards other languages.

However, these efforts do not support the vitality of Slovene as an autochthonous language; the local dialects in particular cannot survive if the language is passed on predominantly by formal instruction. To revitalise Slovene in Austria, a prestige policy would have to be implemented, securing the presence of Slovene (along with the other autochthonous languages of Austria) in public, not only locally, but also in the whole of Austria. As the committee of ministers of the Council of Europe has recommended to Austria several times, it would be necessary to “adopt a structured policy for the protection and promotion of all minority languages, especially in Vienna, and create favourable conditions for their use in public life” and “include in the general curricula an adequate presentation of the history and the culture which is reflected by the regional or minority languages in Austria” (Committee of Ministers, 2018), to raise awareness among young people and thus create a positive attitude towards minority languages. Such a policy could include expanding the right to bilingual education outside the defined bilingual area in Carinthia.

Only by raising the prestige of Slovene as a vernacular language in Austria could other measures be successful. Such measures were proposed by the working group Bildung und Sprache (Education and language), among others, in 2011, and could include teaching the neighbouring language (Slovene) as a compulsory subject from primary school to the end of the upper secondary level. Moreover, Slovene should be included either as subject or language of instruction in vocational schools for apprentices where it is so far totally lacking. Middle schools should provide bilingual teaching, as foreseen as one possibility by the Minority Education Act (1959). The possibilities of intercultural pedagogy should also be

exploited by, for example, organising pupil exchanges or joint projects and presentations with partner schools (see AG 1 Bildung und Sprache, 2011, pp. 20–21).

In sum, Slovene has a firm place in the education system of Austrian Carinthia, which offers a chance for language learning and multilingualism. At the same time, however, the education system does not fulfil its original role of maintaining and fostering the linguistic minority.

10 Summary of statistics

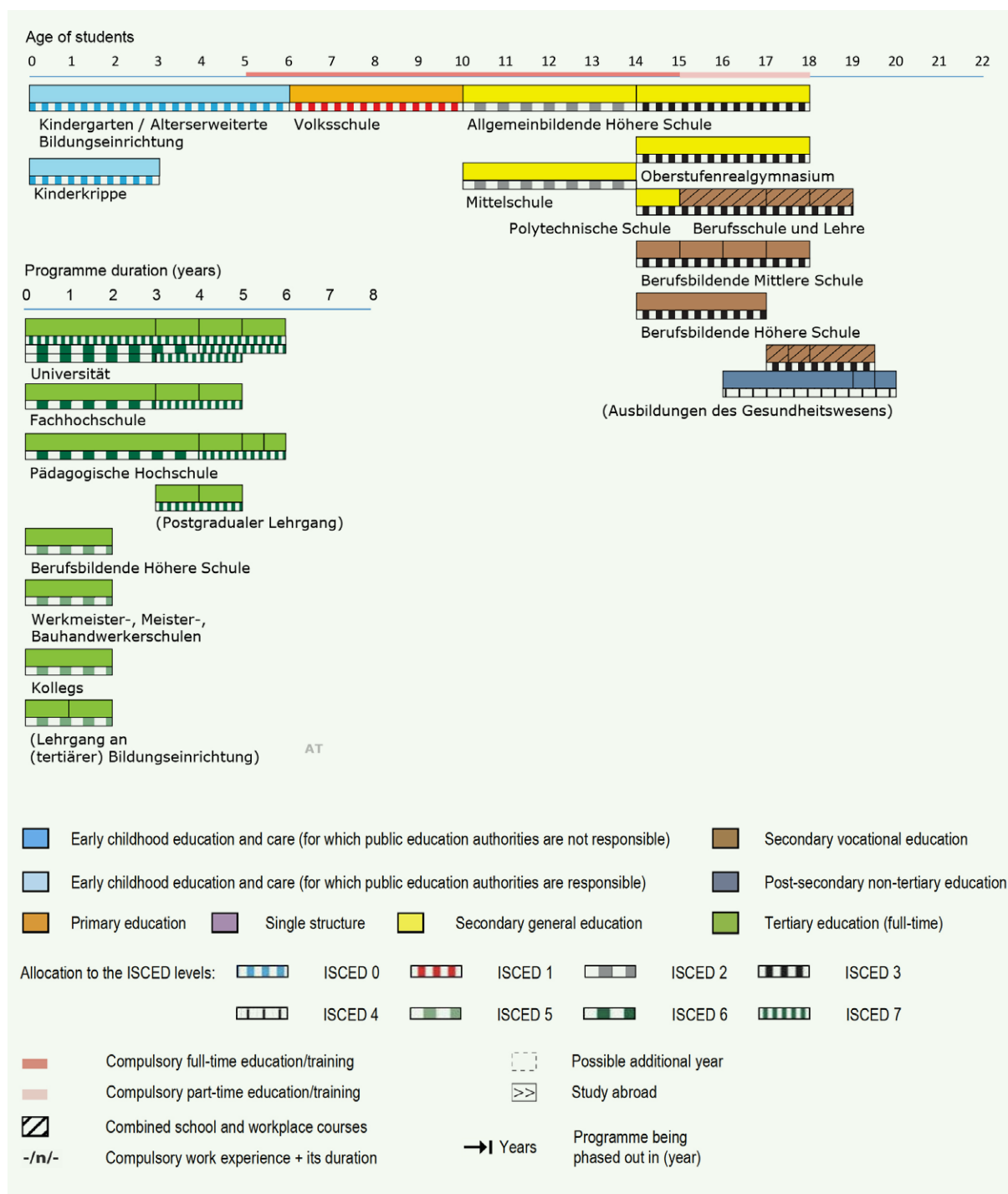
Table 1 Overview of school types, higher education courses/programmes, and number of schools and students in Carinthia, Austria (academic years 2020/21 or 2021/22).

Educational level	School type / Course or programme	Number of schools	Number of students
Pre-school education	Bilingual nursery schools	26 (11 of which were private or parish-run; 3 in Klagenfurt)	1,049 (in 49 groups; 2021/22)
Primary education	Bilingual primary schools	57 (2 in Klagenfurt)	1,956 out of 4,157 enrolled in bilingual education (2021/22) 181 enrolled in Klagenfurt (2021/22)
Secondary education	Middle schools in the bilingual area of Carinthia	---	302 attended Slovene language classes (2021/22)
	Academic secondary school for Slovenes	---	74 in fifth grade, 543 enrolled in total (2021/22)
Vocational education	Bilingual college of higher vocational education in Klagenfurt/Celovec	---	218 (2021/22)
	The College of Higher Vocational Education in St. Peter/Šentpeter and the 1-year School for Intermediate Vocational Education	---	144 (2021/22)
Higher education	Bilingual teaching and Slovene language teaching in primary education at the University College of Teacher Education in Klagenfurt/Celovec	---	32 (2020/21)

Teacher training for Slovene (secondary education) at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec and the University College of Teacher Education Carinthia	---	25 (2020/21)
Course for middle schools at the University College of Teacher Education in Klagenfurt/Celovec	---	1 (2020/21)
Slovene courses for all students at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec	---	28 (level 1), 9 (level 2), 7 (level 3), and 5 (level 4) students in 2020/21
Slovene philology at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec in 2020/21	---	BA degree – 28 (2020/21) MA degree – 4 (2020/21)

Note. Data for pre-school education from Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung (2021), for primary, secondary, and vocational education from Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung (2022), and for higher education from M. Angerer-Pitschko (personal communication, September 25, 2021) and U. Doleschal (University of Klagenfurt).

Education system in Austria



Note. *Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen* offer education programmes lasting 5 years: the first three years are classified as ISCED level 3 while the last two years belong to ISCED level 5. ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education. From European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, & Eurydice (2022).

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W: [www.ktn.gv.at/Verwaltung/Amt-der-Kaerntner-Landesregierung/Abteilung-1/Volksgruppen_Menschenrechte/Volksgruppenbüro](http://www.ktn.gv.at/Verwaltung/Amt-der-Kaerntner-Landesregierung/Abteilung-1/Volksgruppen_Menschenrechte/Volksgruppenbuero)

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W: www.nedelja.at

Družba sv. Mohorja | Hermagoras

Hermagoras Society (Publishing House)

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T: + 43 (0) 463 56515

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Dušnopastirski urad | Slowenisches Seelsorgeamt

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Krščanska kulturna zveza | Christlicher Kulturverband

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Mlada Enotna Lista

A youth organisation run by the *Enotna Lista* (the political party of the Carinthian Slovenes)

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Narodni svet koroških Slovencev | Rat der Kärntner Slowenen

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Novice | Slowenische Wochenzeitung Novice

Slovenian weekly newspaper Novice

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ORF-Slovenski spored | ORF-Slowenisches Programm

ORF-Slovenian Programme

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Radio Agora | Slowenisches Privatrado Radio Agora

Slovenian Private Radio Agora

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Slovenska študijska knjižnica | Slowenische Studienbibliothek

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1010 Wien, Hanuschgasse 3, Stiege 4, 1. Stock, Top 1046

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Zveza slovenskih organizacij | Zentralverband slowenischer Organisationen

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About this Regional Dossier

author biography

Ursula Doleschal, PhD, is full professor of Slavic linguistics and head of the writing centre at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. Doleschal studied general and Slavic linguistics at the University of Vienna, where she also defended her PhD in 1994. Her research interests include multilingualism, language and gender, academic writing, and the morphology of Slavic languages. Her publications are on several Slavic languages as well as on German and Italian. She is also vice-president of the Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliches Schreiben (GEWISS) and the Austrian representative on the international committee of Slavists. Doleschal updated this Regional Dossier in 2023 based on the first and second editions.

previous editions

The first (1997) and second (2005) editions of this Regional Dossier were written by Brigitta Busch.

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Contact information of the authors of Regional Dossiers can be found in the Mercator Database of Experts (www.mercator-research.eu/en/network/database-of-experts/).



Other websites on minority languages

Mercator European Research Centre

www.mercator-research.eu

Homepage of the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. The website contains the Regional Dossier series, a database of experts, a bibliography, information on current activities, and many links to relevant websites.

Mercator Network

www.mercator-network.eu

General site of the Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres. It gives information about the network and leads you to the homepages of the network partners.

European Commission

www.ec.europa.eu/languages

The website of the European Commission gives information about the EU's support for language diversity.

Council of Europe

www.conventions.coe.int

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995). European Treaty Series 148 and 157, Strasbourg.

Eurydice

www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice

Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The site provides information on all European education systems and education policies.

European Parliament Committee – supporting analyses database

www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/home

In this database, you will find research papers produced by the European Parliament's research service. A study for the CULT Committee, conducted by the Mercator European Research Centre, was published in 2017: *Minority Languages and Education: Best Practices and Pitfalls*.

NPLD

www.npld.eu

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) is a European-wide network working in the field of language policy & planning for Constitutional, Regional and Small-State Languages (CRSS) across Europe.

FUEN

www.fuen.org

The Federal Union of European Nationalities is the umbrella organisation of the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups in Europe and represents the interests of European minorities at the regional, national, and European levels.

ELEN

www.elen.ngo

The European Language Equality Network (ELEN) is a non-governmental organisation that has as its goal the promotion and protection of European lesser-used (i.e. regional, minority, endangered, indigenous, co-official, and smaller national) languages, to work towards linguistic equality for these languages, and multilingualism, under the broader framework of human rights, and to be a voice for the speakers of these languages at all levels.



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contact

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