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# Country report

Guidelines for reporting

Austria

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# Institutional case studies

In Austria there is no distance learning university. This is based on a political decision of the 80ies taking into account the small size of the country and its higher education sector. Instead, a co-operation with the German FernUniversität in Hagen has been initiated. In 1992 Johannes Kepler University of Linz (JKU, <http://www.jku.at>) took over the agenda of co-operation with FernUniversität in Hagen. Therefore JKU and the Karl Franzens University of Graz (KFU, <https://www.uni-graz.at/en>), based on the criteria of this interview guide, were selected for the institutional interviews.

## Mainstream degree education

### Examples of good practice at the course level

Description of best practices found (one paragraph each)

Pay attention to course design: e. g. How was the course conceived? Flipped classroom? Learning activity-chain? Video-lectures as an alternative for traditional lectures? Digitalisation of content?

The role of online learning in this blend. What were the benefits in the blend? Can you evaluate the adoption or maturity level of what you have seen?

*Can you find some patterns in these good practice examples?*

The results of the interviews show a variety of good practice examples, carried out at the Karl Franzens University of Graz (KFU) as well as at the Johannes Kepler University of Linz (JKU):

Massive Open Online Courses:

Together with Graz University of Technology KFU has actively established MOOCs in Austria. Both universities originated the first and only Austrian platform for MOOCs called iMooX. At iMooX KFU offers free online courses on a variety of topics. Some MOOCs can be credited against ordinary (elective) courses. Detailed information can be found in the section "OER and MOOCs".

Podcasts:

At the course level both KFU and JKU have already produced some podcasts. Especially in courses that are enrolled by only a few students or in courses that cover repeatable processes, it is questionable to engage a highly qualified and paid expert each semester. For example, "Introduction to the use of microscopes" or "Introduction to Kurrent", an old form of German-language handwriting, are candidates for being offered as podcasts that are developed once and then can be requested by the students anytime.

Streaming of lectures and video on demand:

Partially, streaming of lectures and video on demand are offered by KFU. At the moment only a few courses are done this way. Some lecturers agree to live broadcast a lecture, but they do not want to record it as a video on demand for later use. This is the reason why there are more live broadcasts than records.

At JKU streaming of lectures and video on demand are used comprehensively within the Multimedia Diploma in Legal Studies (link see below). These videos on demand remain available within a term of

2 weeks only to ensure study progress. Within the Multimedia Studies Service in the Social Sciences different formats of e-learning are applied, streaming and videos on demand are included.

E-examinations:

Since 2011 the deanship of the Faculty of Law of KFU has promoted the switchover from traditional handwritten examinations to e-examinations. In the term 2015/16 24 different courses are examined this way. In total over 10.000 examinations have been done electronically so far. This value will increase in future terms. The e-examinations take place on-campus and not off-campus. They facilitate administrations of large-scale examinations. Besides courses on law, business administration and chemistry entrance examinations of the teacher training program also are done this way.

### Examples of good practice at the curriculum/program level

Description of best practices found (one paragraph each) of innovations for an entire curriculum throughout most of the courses, e. g. focusing on course design, on assessment, a flipped classroom model, etc.

What were the benefits of the online part?

Integration of aspects of distance learning in degree programs – Teacher Training Program for Secondary Level General Education (<https://wissenschaft.bmwf.gv.at/bmwf/wissenschaft-hochschulen/universitaeten/paedagoginnenbildung-neu>):

In Austria the teacher training program has been reorganized. The process on the unification of teacher education started in 2013. Four regional clusters of universities have been formed that offer a joint teacher training program.

KFU is part of the cluster “South-East” which encompasses institutions of higher education of 3 federal states. The same is true for JKU, which is part of the cluster “Centre of Austria”.

Modules must be studied at different member institutions of the cluster. However, smaller higher education institutions are not able to offer each and every module. For this purpose (more) distance education is needed.

This will particularly concern the master’s degree program which will be available beginning in 2019. The graduates of the bachelor’s degree will head onto school teaching and besides that they have to do the master’s degree. Distance education therefore is a good opportunity or even a requirement. Here, the target group is more homogeneous and the program a new one which makes it easier to implement new modes of teaching and learning too.

Multimedia Diploma in Legal Studies (JKU, <http://www.linzer.rechtsstudien.at/de/2/196/197.html>):

JKU is the first Austrian university to offer a unique distance learning law degree program free of time and location constraints and based on e-learning principles. The professors use all kinds of media (picture, sound, writing, and graphics) for imparting knowledge. The study material is available electronically on DVD’s and printed in scripts. The students receive the study material for each examination subject from “media suitcases”. They work with DVD’s off-line and they can choose extensively between electronic and printed material. The courses, which support the discussions and the exercises (study groups, exercises, examination preparation courses, seminars) take place online on the internet. The professor holds his lecture with several students in Linz in a studio, cameras transmit via the internet (“streaming”). The whole of Austria is the lecture hall. Worldwide, wherever

there is access to the internet, students take part in the discussions, the professor observes the comments and questions on a chat monitor.

Multimedia Studies Service in the Social Sciences (JKU, <http://www.jku.at/content/e262/e242/e2721/>):

It was incorporated into Business studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Economics and Business at JKU and has been designed to allow professionals, students with children and students who have other social responsibilities the opportunity to complete part of their studies by distance learning. It is based on a blended learning approach which means the program consists of a combination of elements from both the multi-media distance learning program and on-site courses. Though it is intended to cover the whole Business studies, it actually only covers a considerable part of it. Part of the missing courses can be covered by respective modules of the FernUniversität in Hagen.

Extra occupational bachelor's program in Fundamentals of Theology (KFU, <https://studien.uni-graz.at/en/degree-programmes/studium-grundlagen-theologischer-wissenschaft/fundamentals-of-theology-bachelors-programme>):

In the term 2018/19 KFU offers the bachelor's program in Fundamentals of Theology mainly via distance education. The university notes, that persons who are in a wider sense active in the catholic-theological fields are interested in this study mode. Hence, it must be manageable for a broad target group with professional background. This is only possible by increasing the proportion of distance education. The lecturers are being trained in distance learning. In parallel, the content is being prepared for blended learning. It is an exciting pilot for KFU that will determine its further development of such programs.

Integration of aspects of distance learning in continuing education:

Continuing education is seen as a promising field for the implementation of distance learning aspects as the target group consists of people whose access to university is restricted by their professional activities. Currently, KFU reflects on implementing aspects of distance education in continuing education to meet the educational needs together with partners from outside (businesses, other institutions).

Besides this field of application, the Centre for Continuing Education of KFU organizes the so called "Monday Academy". It is a series of lectures presented in a popular scientific way. The lectures take place in an auditorium of KFU. The lectures are transmitted to participating partner locations. According to the motto "education for all", the records of the lectures are available in an online video library.

JKU too is considering transferring continuous professional development via these new modes, but this still is part of the strategy development.

## Examples of systemic Institution-wide strategies

Did you find examples of institution-wide strategies, e. g. for blended education, for MOOCs, online continuing education for part-time students? Which are the institutional objectives? Or was it just the implantation of a technological infrastructure, or learning environment? Can you describe the role of the leadership in these cases? Eventually also organisational aspects?

Developments at JKU:

At JKU there is no e-learning strategy yet. There have been a centralized buying-in approach and several bottom-up approaches, that follow their own different paths:

- Center for Distance Studies Austria (buying-in approach, <http://www.fernstudien.at>): For the past 25 years and in close cooperation with the FernUniversität (FU) in Hagen, the Center for Distance Studies Austria at JKU has offered FU's recognized academic degrees. Whereas on-site studies are principally characterized by f2f-lectures, distance teaching focuses on course materials designed to support didactic learning and from virtual instruction supported by virtual learning platforms. The following components are essential: course materials, virtual studies area, learning platform Moodle, on-site and online classes, supplementary courses in study centres in Austria, examinations (both written and oral, the latter by video- or web conferencing).
- Multimedia Diploma in Legal Studies (see above at the curriculum level). It was a strategic approach at the beginning of the new century to give the Faculty of Law kind of a USP among the different Austrian law study offers.
- Multimedia Studies Service in the Social Sciences (see above also at the curriculum level). This is a blended learning approach at the faculty level, which also includes counselling and training of teachers.

An institution-wide e-learning strategy is now elaborated at JKU. Because digitalization means more than simply transferring conventional lectures into electronic conserves. The type of knowledge transfer has to change. This still is a huge research field. JKU has developments in the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, but it still lacks remarkable developments in the Faculty of Natural and Technical Sciences. There are developments, e. g. in the fields of Business Informatics and Virtual Anatomy (Medicine). Here, JKU co-operates with research institutions from Austria. New programs like the one of Medicine make innovations in teaching easier than in programs rolled out for a long time already.

The goal is to align those different bottom-up approaches to a more synergetic co-operation, both in technical and didactical terms. A major result should be one organizational unit that combines these efforts. Another major result should be a joint umbrella brand "E-Learning by JKU".

New target groups can be addressed by new modes of teaching and learning, in particular people working in part- or full-time. This has implications for indicators like exams activity due to the special life circumstances of these students.

JKU invests in technical infrastructure. There are investments that foster online and blended learning via internal calls for funds two times a year.

The long-term goal of JKU should be that each study program can be studied in a flexible / online way too. A lot of working people within the whole lot of students make such a strategy more appropriate. It is equally important to have new formats for courses and lectures, e. g. inverted classrooms where students are prepared for the lecture in advance.

Developments at KFU:

In 2014, KFU developed an e-learning strategy (<https://akademie.uni-graz.at/de/die-akademie/e-learning-strategie>) for the period from 2015 to 2018 under the coordination of the Academy for New Media and Knowledge Transfer (<https://akademie.uni-graz.at/en/>). The strategy was approved by

the Rectorate in December 2014. It contains concrete measures. Some measures have already been implemented, other measures like the development of an OER strategy are still open due to time and resource restrictions.

Exemplary measures in 2015:

- Establishment of a working group to coordinate and advise the implementation of the e-learning strategy
- Development of a concept about e-tutoring
- Intensification of information about the services of the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer

Exemplary measures in accordance with the Performance Agreement of KFU (description see in the section “Governmental case study”) negotiated with the ministry for 2016-2018:

- Training of e-tutors
- Establishing iMooX as a leading MOOC platform in Austria
- Development of recommendations about e-learning and law
- Centralization of further training opportunities in the area of new modes of teaching and learning
- Development of an OER strategy

Exemplary perspective measures after 2018:

- Continuous further development of e-learning activities by carrying out evaluations
- Establishment of an e-learning professorship
- Accountability of e-learning activities on personal career development

At KFU, e-learning is already offered in various forms. Blended learning, online teaching events and e-assessments can be mentioned. The learning management system Moodle as well as the e-assessment software Perception play a central role. The organizational units UNI-IT as well as the Academy for New Media and Knowledge Transfer support the developments in the field e-learning and are mentioned in the e-learning strategy. The UNI-IT supports it from a technological infrastructure point of view. The Academy for New Media and Knowledge Transfer, which is part of the Vice Rectorate for Studies and Teaching, supports it from a didactical point of view. It is an inter-university and inter-faculty service partner that is concerned with all aspects of e-learning.

The e-learning strategy paper mentions the “E-Learning Champion”, which is a prize for projects and initiatives in the field of new media at KFU. It is meant to inspire and enrich future studies and teaching through media-based activities. With the further development of e-learning at KFU an improvement of the teaching quality is striven for.

The extra occupational bachelor’s program in Fundamentals of Theology starting in the term 2018/19 will be offered to a large extent via distance learning. The idea originated from the Faculty of Catholic Theology itself and is supported by the Rectorate and the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer.

When there was an institution-wide strategy, e. g. blended learning, can you estimate how many courses were affected (10%, 20%, 30% or many more)?

Is there an ambition to create the University of the Future by new modes of teaching and learning in the university?

Currently, there is no reasonable estimate possible.

At both universities e-learning is already offered in various forms as mentioned above. By the implementation of new modes of teaching and learning an improvement of the teaching quality is striven for. However, the universities will remain traditional ones. There is no vision to establish a single mode distance learning university. Rather, new modes of teaching and learning should enrich studies for certain target groups and certain areas. It should be an incremental process as described below.

Reasons could be the needs of certain target groups. At the level of continuing education, the addressees mostly are people with time and regional restrictions, e. g. professionals. Probably, the master's degree programs will be more affected than the bachelor's degree programs. Capacity arguments could also be a reason to offer courses via e-learning.

## Examples of incremental institutional strategies

These are partial innovation steps with new modes of teaching and learning, that don't have an effect on the entire institution, more local initiatives, initiated by staff or a program director, but not promoted by the leadership.

Where the universities you have visited more examples of incremental change rather than of systemic change?

Both universities rather operate on that level. In the short till medium run bottom-up approaches are accompanied by centralized support structures (as e. g. the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer of KFU, see above). On the other hand, certain study fields, but not necessarily programs as a whole, are targeted for more flexible study arrangements.

The bottom-up strategy of implementing an extra occupational bachelor's program in Fundamentals of Theology, e. g. at KFU, as well as the implementation of the Teacher Training Program for Secondary Level General Education – both described above – can be seen as examples of incremental institutional strategies. The university incorporates the need to integrate aspects of distance learning in order to cope with the demands of the target groups.

## Staff development

Did you find good examples of Continuous Professional Development initiatives in the institutions?

Both universities have their approaches to enhance teaching personnel's ability for new modes of teaching and learning.

Staff development at JKU:

The E-Learning Office of JKU supports the use of computers and new media for teaching and learning and assists in the implementation of web-based surveys, particularly for the purpose of quality assurance in teaching (evaluations).

Duties and Responsibilities of the E-Learning Office

- Support, distribute, reflect and improve modern processes of learning and teaching
- Qualitative and quantitative evaluation of teaching as part of a comprehensive quality management
- Service and use of the learning platform Moodle

Services of the E-Learning Office

- E-Learning support services for instructors and students: using tools, assistance with technical difficulties, taking suggestions for improvement.
- Using e-Learning support tools, such as wikis, mind maps and web conferencing
- Supporting media production and distribution, such as class recordings as podcasts or screencasts, video streaming, renting recording equipment
- Surveys (online surveys) including e-mail distribution
- Computer aided assessment to create examinations, services range from test scanning to automated grading



- Adapting tools for specific applications such as student assessment testing, knowledge surveys, social surveys
- Project support, for example, the learning platform for the Multimedia Diploma in Legal Studies and supporting multimedia services for studies in Social Sciences, Economics and Business.
- Continuing education classes for instructors, such as topics regarding Moodle, screen casting, animations, e-learning course certificates.

To improve teaching and learning at JKU its management plans to establish a university didactical centre. A starting point may be the School of Education, which is focussed on the teachers' education for the primary and secondary level.

Staff development at KFU:

At KFU the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer is an inter-university and inter-faculty service partner and is part of the Vice Rectorate for Studies and Teaching. It promotes and supports lecturers to implement e-learning in their courses.

Objectives and strategic orientation of the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer include:

- Internal service facility to assist teachers and students with the application of educational concepts and technologies in order to increase the use of new media in teaching and learning
- Development of quality enhancing concepts and models for educational technologies which are first tested and subsequently made available as products and services
- Development and consolidation of efforts regarding educational strategies in the area of new media in close cooperation with the advisory board and members of the academy
- Combining and expanding existing networks and partnerships in order to ensure an efficient exchange of knowledge and experience within the university as well as with other educational institutions, regional authorities and the private sector

Key services of the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer include:

- Workshops and consulting services for teachers in the area of (educational) technology
- Testing of innovative tools and concepts concerning their potential to improve the quality of university teaching
- Developing and providing media-didactic models, guidelines and tools for quality management (<http://mdm.uni-graz.at>) - also lecturers of other higher education institutions are invited to share their best practices and experiences
- Recording of lectures/events and the production of podcasts, which are then integrated into media platforms such as "Podcast Portal" and "iTunes U"
- Providing a platform for e-portfolios and holding workshops for creating skills portfolios
- Chairing of working groups to discuss current issues in the area of new media
- Documentation and dissemination of research and study results for effective knowledge transfer

At KFU new staff members have to complete a start-up program which also includes information about didactics in higher education and e-learning.

As mentioned above already, lecturers of KFU can apply for a university internal prize, called “E-Learning Champion”. The prize winners and their respective work shall act as examples of best practices.

KFU is the host of a regional continuing education program for university teachers, called “eDidactics”. It focusses on the usage of new modes of teaching and learning and comprises all 9 Styrian higher education institutions. The courses are based on ECTS.

## Shared resources

Did you see OERs re-used? Did you see OER produced?

At the moment there is no active usage of open educational resources at both universities. KFU is part of the project “Open Education Austria” (<http://openeducation.at/en>). Detailed information can be found in the section “OER and MOOCs”.

## Institutional evaluation and research?

Did you see institutions, investigating innovations in their institution? Did you get the reports?

Both universities do have research focused on new modes of teaching and learning, but mostly not on a centralized level, but rather in different research units.

JKU based research on these topics is decentralized and driven by individual research fields, e. g. there is the Institute for Digital Business / Dept. for Digital Education, the School of Education with its research branch and the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology.

In the context of the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer KFU offers workshops and consulting services in the area of (educational) technology, a collection of media-didactic models, guidelines and tools, as well as an e-portfolio platform. One of the key services of the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer is the documentation and dissemination of research and study results for effective knowledge transfer. Further research takes place at the Institute of Pedagogy and Educational Science. Additionally, KFU provides a Centre for Teaching Competence which is an inter-faculty facility.

## Barriers

What kinds of barriers for innovation were mentioned in your interviews by the institutions? How were they overcome, if they were?

Both universities try to tackle different barriers to innovation, among them are:

Motivation and value of teaching:

New modes of teaching and learning don't work if people are not willing to engage themselves. There can be financial incentives and/or steps to foster one's academic career. The scientific career, at least in Austria, is strongly linked to research-related agendas. This may be a barrier for the implementation of innovative teaching and studying methods. At the moment, at KFU there are no monetary incentives for the implementation of new modes of teaching and learning. However, prizes

are awarded for outstanding achievements in the field of higher educational didactics, as mentioned above, the “E-Learning Champion”.

Legal issues and personal rights:

Legal issues are seen as one of the biggest barriers. There are still copyright questions. What happens when a lecturer uses graphics or pictures and the lecture is being recorded and published by a student or the lecturer himself/herself? What happens when individual statements from the lecture suddenly appear on Youtube and are torn out of context? The copyright law is comprehensive and lecturers need to be trained accordingly. Additionally, there are also questions with respect to personal rights. What happens when lecturers deny streaming or recording their lectures, or both?

Lack of study-legal frameworks and question of costs:

There is a lack of study-legal frameworks. The study law describes a standard student who starts to study at the age of 18-21 and who can complete 30 ECTS per term. It is essential that the ministry defines certain target groups of students, e. g. professionals that follow a different funding in the respective programs, Performance Agreements or University Place (-related) Funding. Then the universities should implement the corresponding programs instead of or in addition to the traditional ones.

The question of costs arises quickly. There must be a critical mass of people who use such offers. There is legal limbo about the question whether universities can take money for specific e-learning offers that produce extra-costs at least in the beginning. If the ministry is not willing to pay for these initial costs, then the university should be enabled to pass the costs on to students.

Media competence:

Higher education didactics faces new challenges regarding media competence. Media competence is an important issue now and in the future. It concerns both lecturers and students. How do the students acquire media competence? Should it be trained explicitly in university lectures? Otherwise, the question is how is it possible to integrate topics like media competence in university lectures without explicitly treating it in a preparatory manner?

Security of e-examinations in distance learning settings:

At the moment, there are no distance e-examinations. Several questions arise, e. g. the location, precautions to be undergone, content suitable for e-exams.

## Open and flexible distance education

### The organisation of online and distance education

Describe the organisation of online distance education in the universities you visited, if they had special arrangements for distance education.

For JKU please refer to “Systemic institution-wide strategies”:

- Center for Distance Studies Austria

- Multimedia Diploma in Legal Studies
- Multimedia Studies Service in the Social Sciences
- Teacher Training Program for Secondary Level General Education
- Continuous professional development (to be developed further)

For KFU please refer to “Systemic institution-wide strategies”:

- Monday Academy
- Teacher Training Program for Secondary Level General Education
- Extra occupational bachelor’s program in Fundamentals of Theology
- Continuous professional development (to be developed further)

## OER and MOOCs

Describe the development of organisation of MOOCs.

MOOCs:

At JKU several bottom-up approaches but no overview and no strategic perspective so far have been developed. For example, MOOCs of others institutions are used in lectures in Business Administration.

The potential for the future is that new target groups all over the world could be addressed and attracted to JKU by MOOCs, e. g. to do technical studies.

But there have been certain developments at KFU with regard to MOOCs.

Founded in December 2013 by KFU and the Graz University of Technology, iMooX (<https://www.imoox.at>) is the first and only Austrian MOOC platform. It is based on project funding of the regional government of Styria. This early engagement in MOOCs was seen as a chance to experiment with new modes of teaching and learning and to gain experience. On iMooX free online courses are offered on a variety of topics. All iMooX learning materials are based on the Creative Commons license that allows for free (re)use of the material. With regard to the iMooX platform, the Graz University of Technology mainly delivers technical know-how and technical resources whereas KFU is in charge of generating content-related ideas, the preparation of online materials and it takes care of handling with contents. Partially, corresponding to the course, students gain ECTS by completing a MOOC through taking part in an examination. The engagement with MOOCs offers a good playground to experiment, to gain experience and to identify the scope of resources, opportunities and barriers that may arise.

Excursus: The criteria and guiding principles for a quality ensured usage of MOOCs ([http://uniko.ac.at/modules/download.php?key=6436\\_DE\\_O&cs=1F12](http://uniko.ac.at/modules/download.php?key=6436_DE_O&cs=1F12)) which was published by the Austrian Universities’ Conference (called “UNIKO”, <http://uniko.ac.at/index.php?lang=EN>) in the year 2014, served as a basis. It includes how MOOCs count against courses and the conditions that are necessary to accept examinations within MOOCs as equal with those within traditional courses. KFU made significant contributions to this position paper. UNIKO handles the internal coordination of the 21 public Austrian universities, represents them in national and international organisations and is the public voice of the universities.

OER:

KFU believes that OER will be a big topic in future. Thus, the university contributes to the project “Open Education Austria”, which is a collaborative initiative among Austrian universities to develop a national infrastructure for creating, discovering and sharing open educational resources. Open Education Austria was launched in June 2016 with the support of the Ministry of Science, Research and Economics (called “BMWFW”) grant for higher education. The expected completion date is December 2018. The mission of the project is to boost the overall quality of teaching and learning in Austria’s classrooms, as well as expand access to best practice research and training within the expert community. The goal of this project is to design OER which can be used in the admissions processes for the life sciences & STEM fields, but which are also useful for teaching.

In May 2017, the university acted as a host for the first Austrian OER festival, which addresses questions and challenges regarding Open Educational Resources. On the side of further trainings, the Academy for New Media and Knowledge Transfer of KFU organized an introductory course about OER and its creation and usage in April 2017. Furthermore, a MOOC about OER is offered at the iMooX platform.

## The future of online distance education

How do institutions see the future of distance education (degree education, continuing education, open education)?

Expectations of JKU:

The long-term perspective of JKU is a comprehensive dual mode system in which the students can choose flexibly which way to pursue their studies. This should be a goal at a university with a high percentage of part- or full-time working students. New formats for courses and lectures, e. g. inverted classrooms, will not only support such target groups but also improve the quality of university teaching as a whole.

Expectations of KFU:

For KFU f2f contact with fellow students and university lecturers at the university itself remains important. The integration of aspects of distance learning is dependent on the courses and their disciplines as well as on the supply and demand. Master’s degree programs and continuous education will be more affected by the implementation of new modes of teaching and learning than bachelor’s degree programs. In the medium term, more attention has to be drawn to incentives.

## International education

### International courses, curricula

Describe good examples of international online/blended courses/ seminars/curricula.

Both universities have staff, teacher and student mobility within the framework of Erasmus+. In this program students study at foreign universities and therefore get international education. On the other hand, there are “incoming” students, that take part in Austrian university lectures. But there is no kind of “virtual Erasmus” so far that would enable people to study international modules online or via distance learning. A special form of participation in a kind of virtual Erasmus are the approx. 300 students of JKU taking courses from the FernUniversität in Hagen within their JKU degree program.

For the future, both universities consider the integration of online or blended courses from other international universities in their respective curricula. However, it will be a supplement and not a substitute. Nevertheless, "Real" Erasmus will remain a major mobility program for students. In addition to that both universities intensify their efforts to make (more of) their lectures available in English. As an example, JKU's Master's Degree in Computer Science is taught in English completely.

## Online/blended mobility

Describe examples of online/blended mobility.

Examples of online/blended mobility do not exist at KFU. As mentioned above, one could "detect" a form of online/blended participation in the kind of virtual Erasmus between JKU and FU Hagen.

## Relationship with governmental policy

Describe the expectations, suggestions institutions mentioned regarding governmental policy.

Through UNIKO the universities exchange with current governmental policy the topics of online/blended teaching and learning. Additionally, individual meetings at the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy take place. The Forum New Media in Austria (FNMA, <http://www.fnm-austria.at>) is in regular consultation with the government too. The Policy Committee on Teaching (Forum Lehre, based on UNIKO) is the lobbying organisation for the Austrian universities. Its activities consist of identifying strategic important themes of Austrian and European higher education teaching and learning policies, discuss them within the rectorates, formulate common positions and communicate them to the stakeholders (European and national authorities, stakeholder organisations, universities and industry).

The government invests in the continuous innovation of higher education. Structural Funds for University Space (called "Hochschulraum-Strukturmittel"), Performance Agreements (called "Leistungsvereinbarung") and project-related funds like the Innovation Foundation for Education (called "Innovationsstiftung für Bildung", <https://innovationsstiftung-bildung.at>) of about € 50 Mio can be mentioned. Regional politics are an important factor regarding funding too.

The study law principally allows the implementation of new modes of teaching and learning. So far, online/blended students/courses are not particularly mentioned in the Performance Agreements. E-learning is just an overall goal but is not quantified (with regard to financing and key figures). This is a topic which is currently discussed within the frame of University Place Funding (called "Studienplatzfinanzierung"). The amount of study places that can be approved is defined in the Performance Agreements. Regarding the restraints of study place approvals, the consideration of e-learning seems to be important. The study law is based on a standard student, a person that can complete 30 ECTS in the semester. This is not reflected in a program enhanced with distance learning where the students' achievements in ECTS usually are well below this number.

Both universities raise concerns about the legal opportunities to collect tuition fees for special programs like distance learning offers. But funding is an important requirement to implement new modes of teaching and learning as initial costs are high. For example, JKU is the first Austrian university to offer a unique distance learning degree program, called Multimedia Diploma in Legal

Studies. This program requires the purchase of a media-suitcase to be permitted to the program's online offers. Students of JKU's traditional offer of law studies usually don't have to pay similar fees.

On behalf of the government the only request is that universities should offer more e-learning. From the viewpoint of KFU, this requirement is too general. The government should be more specific on that point. If e. g. the government wants more study offers for working people then an Austrian-wide strategy for extra-occupational studies needs to be elaborated and appropriate framework conditions must be built, legally as well as financially.

In addition to that, "inclusion" is an imperative of the Bologna process. Therefore, different target groups like e. g. working people have to be addressed by the universities. New modes of teaching and learning can help to foster this inclusion.

## Students' experiences

What is the attitude of students regarding blended/online learning?

At JKU, especially within the Multimedia Diploma in Legal Studies, the students appreciate the flexibility by using new modes of teaching and learning. The blended learning approach which is fostered by the Multimedia Studies Service in the Social Sciences shows growing numbers of enrolments too.

Basically, there is a positive attitude with regard to e-learning among the students of KFU. For the majority of students, it is already a self-evident component of their life. It is very appreciated that learning contents can be retrieved regardless of location and time. Concerning MOOCs the feedback was consistently positive. MOOCs focus on special topics and are primarily attended by interested students as the participation is voluntary. For example, KFU carried out a MOOC about European integration. Within a traditional f2f-lecture it would not have been possible to invite prominent personalities and politicians. Various people were interviewed and videos as well as interactive elements were integrated. The knowledge acquisition in the MOOC was seen to be livelier than in the traditional f2f-lecture.

However, students also appreciate the direct contact with professors and lecturers at the university. There is concern that this direct contact gets lost when the amount of distance teaching increases. When KFU introduced MOOCs, there were also fears that the university would only want to make money with it later on. Therefore, the university must be transparent on the goals of using MOOCs. Universities have a responsibility to train the students in safer use of digital contents, issues like copyright, fake news, the "transparent student", media competence and ethical values in general.

How do they see the university developing in the future?

Asking students that are organized in the Austrian Students' Association, called "ÖH", there is a wide variety of expectations among the students on how university offers should work, but there are no strategic proposals or wishes from the students directed to the open and distance learning field in particular. Students rather operate on very individual week-to-week considerations about their study progress, e. g. to change lecture dates, to block lectures. The services offered often are appreciated and are taken for granted. They ask whether it is doable and whether content can be accessed accordingly. E. g. with respect to the new, regionally diverse, teacher training program mentioned above, representatives of the Austrian Students' Association express concern about the compatibility of study and work.

## Other key findings

Did you make key observations, transferable to other institutions? Your comments.

### **Reaching target groups by the implementation of various forms of e-learning**

As already mentioned, there is no Austrian distance learning university, except for the co-operation between JKU and the German FernUniversität in Hagen via JKU's Center for Distance Studies Austria. Traditional Austrian universities like JKU and KFU deal with e-learning for some time. Various forms are offered at both universities at the course level as well as at the curriculum/program level. Mostly, blended learning approaches have been implemented, especially to address target groups whose access to university is restricted by their professional activities or social responsibilities. Master's degree programs as well as continuing education are seen as a promising field. Currently, higher education institutions in Austria need to co-operate to offer the new joint teacher training program within their cluster. It must be ensured that the modules can be studied at different member institutions. Here, the implementation of distance education is a necessity, because smaller institution cannot provide each and every module. This is also particularly relevant for the master's degree, as it has to be studied besides school teaching. With respect to MOOCs and OERs, KFU has already gained more experience than JKU.

### **Strategic integration of new modes of teaching and learning**

Not at least because of the ongoing process of digitalisation, new modes of teaching and learning get more significance in higher education. While JKU now elaborates its institution-wide e-learning strategy, KFU has already developed a strategy paper for the period 2015 to 2018. In the course of new program developments e-learning can be realized easier than in long time existing programs in which structures and habits are more difficult to change.

### **Importance of staff development and incentives**

Bottom-up approaches as well as institution-wide strategies are accompanied by centralized support structures. Staff development is an important factor, from a technological, a media competence as well as a didactical point of view. Legal issues like privacy and copyright are main topics too. At the university, the scientific career is strongly linked to research-related agendas. Therefore, incentives need to be established to promote high-quality teaching and learning.

### **Remaining mainly traditional universities**

Regarding the future, both universities will implement e-learning to enrich their courses and programs. However, in the near to medium-term future they will remain traditional ones that provide f2f contact with fellow students and university lecturers at the university.

## Your best experience

Did you do some outstanding observations with great value/transferability to other institutions?

### **Nation-wide staff development**



At the moment, there is no nation-wide continuing education program for university teachers with respect to new modes of teaching and learning. Rather, universities have their own staff development programs and projects. However, in the region of Styria 9 higher education institutions have joined forces by implementing “eDidactics”, a regional continuing education program that focuses on the usage of new modes of teaching and learning in higher education. KFU acts as a host. This initiative could work as a model for a nation-wide program.

### **E-learning strategy**

Having mainly traditional universities in Austria, it is characteristic that both interviewed universities are engaged in the development or implementation of an e-learning strategy. The integration of new modes of teaching and learning from a systemic and strategic point of view seems to gain more importance.

### **Flexible dual mode system**

At JKU the diploma degree program in law is offered in two ways. Students can study the traditional program, alternatively they can enrol in the distance learning law degree program, called “Multimedia Diploma in Legal Studies”. The latter is almost free of time and location constraints through the implementation of e-learning principles. Students even can switch between the two modes.

# Governmental case studies

As an introduction to the interview Dr. Pichl told us that he recently had a talk on distance studies with the head of the Austrian Universities' Conference (called "UNIKO", <http://uniko.ac.at/index.php?lang=EN>). In spite of JKU as "hub" for the FernUniversität two thirds of the students of German distance learning offers are from Austria. The topic "distance studies" wasn't part of the discussion of higher education policy for a longer time. Where is it now? Does it change itself? For we (as the Center for Distance Studies) are in the midst of a completely changing scenery (of higher education), with regard to didactics, resources, procedure, etc. The challenges will be high ones. Along with professionalization of university research there is (a need for) professionalization on (or a business case for) teaching and learning too. This field has its own dynamics. The subject has been dealt with marginally only so far, regarding aspects of respect, recognition, validity for a university career, professionalization of procedures, student interaction a. s. o. Part of this development is due to the fundamental decision of the 80ies that Austria was considered to be too small to implement its own distance learning university, as mentioned above.

## Policy development, framework building

Describe the main interview results with the Ministry on policies, objectives, strategy plans and policy frameworks (total: 1-2 pages)

Conferences, seminars or other events:

The government organises or supports conferences, seminars or other events, among other activities in the following way:

- A chain of events called „Dialogue for University Teaching“ (<https://oead.at/en/events/detail/2017/04/25/dialog-zur-hochschulischen-lehre-kick-off/>):

These are events of 3hrs' duration, organised by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BWF) and the Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (OeAD). They have in mind/focus to establish a platform, in which teaching personnel that are engaged with the continuous development of quality teaching can meet and exchange each other. So far 4 events are planned:

- The status/importance of teaching
- The setting of incentives for university didactics
- Competency-based examination
- Digitalisation of and research-based teaching

These are events with reference to European norms and dimensions.

- The „Ars Docendi“ prize (<https://wissenschaft.bmwf.gv.at/index.php?id=3398>):

This is a prize that the ministry developed as a federal prize for excellence in teaching. It is conferred since 2014. Actually (in 2017) there are the following categories:

- Digital teaching and learning elements in connection with traditional mediation forms
- Personality-based and creativity fostering approaches in lecturing and student-support

- Research-based teaching
- Innovative teaching models in case of high student numbers and big group numbers
- Implementation of concepts of internationalising (of) lectures

Policy for innovation in higher education:

The policy for innovation in higher education, involving new modes of teaching and learning, is based upon the following considerations:

Considering data mining and analysis the main and most regular data and reports are those on the social situation of the students. Usually every 3 years they are updated. The last report went through the Austrian parliament in 2016. Based on this report there are special reports highlighting specific questions like:

- How are the students proceeding/making progress in their studies?
- How are students doing that are mobile?
- Specific other target groups?

As instrument on policy-level one should mention the recommendations of the UNIKO on improving the quality of teaching at university level. The referring document has been published in Dec. 2014 ([http://www.hochschulplan.at/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Bericht-der-HSK-zur-Verbesserung-der-Qualit%C3%A4t-hochschulischer-Lehre\\_20151.pdf](http://www.hochschulplan.at/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Bericht-der-HSK-zur-Verbesserung-der-Qualit%C3%A4t-hochschulischer-Lehre_20151.pdf)). A working group targeted at the quality of teaching elaborated recommendations in that field. Among other topics the following ones should be mentioned:

- Incentives for the continuous development of teaching concepts and teachers themselves,
- Students-centred teaching,
- Teaching and learning organisation, etc.

It's the most prominent policy paper that the ministry is offering here. The basis of the elaboration of the paper was broad, reaching from students' representatives to all kinds of universities (be it private or public ones, or ordinary universities and that of applied sciences).

Another instrument, that fits well into the policy area, is the „Atlas of Good Teaching“ (<http://www.gutelehre.at>). The monitoring of the newest teaching and learning methods cannot claim to be comprehensive but it nevertheless offers a sample of good or best practices in different categories of innovative ways of teaching and learning. There are opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences. Updates are done by the ministry, by the institutions and by teachers themselves. Exchange on this takes place via the UNIKO where both the ministry and the different institutions are represented. See [http://hochschulplan.at/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Universit%C3%A4t-%C3%96sterreich-2025\\_WR-2009.pdf](http://hochschulplan.at/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Universit%C3%A4t-%C3%96sterreich-2025_WR-2009.pdf) for further reference.

In 2016 an event was organised by the ministry that was called „Digital University“. The name was chosen because digitalisation requires the necessary changes and challenges ahead. The awareness of top level management in higher education institutions is still rather low. There is a gap in the perception between some experts in the field and the management of universities (both normal ones and that of applied sciences) that this huge challenge is not only a future one but already a present one, concerning all kinds of departments in the referring institutions and in their teaching affairs in particular.

The ministry has offered funding for:

- the structural development of universities (including IT-structure),
- contributions for the teaching subject within the education of teachers for the primary and secondary schools
- projects to develop MOOCs and OERs, micro-learning, mobile learning

About 35 million Euro out of 100 million have been parked or spent for teaching related issues with the Structural Funds for University Space program (called "Hochschulraum-Strukturmittel", [http://unicontrolling.bmfwf.gv.at/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=158](http://unicontrolling.bmfwf.gv.at/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=158)).

There is need for the Teacher Training Program for Secondary Level General Education, especially for the master program, because those people will be working already after having finished their Bachelor of Education. Both the bachelor and the master of education programs are offered by networks of universities, pedagogical universities, organised in clusters and thus having students to bridge distances of several hundreds of kilometres both physically and virtually.

Thus, innovative forms of teaching and learning emerge. These programs therefore do not only include new qualities with regard to content but with regard to new ways of transmission/transfer to the students as well.

Main centres for research and innovation and governmental funding of R&I:

Research on university development(s) isn't institutionalised or centralised in Austria. Recently there is kind of a crystallization process in which this strand is grasped again. There have been and there are several developments on an institutional level or even based on individuals.

Then there is the research on education as a whole. Rather in very specific fields, e. g. at Danube University, in the field of Lifelong Learning. Then there is the University of Klagenfurt with its research cluster on education. At KFU you have the research focus on Learning, Education and Knowledge. The University of Vienna focuses on educational psychology. But the ministry now works on research on university development.

The ministry does not offer specific medium or larger research and innovation programs for the higher education sector. But it does this in the framework of general support/funding for research.

### Specific regulations concerning ICT-based modes of teaching and learning

Describe plans concerning regulations online/blended learning, if there are.

Challenges still to be met with regard to the recognition of online/blended learning regarding quality assurance, accreditation, certification and degree awarding issues:

From a legal point of view there are no hurdles. The legal framework provides all opportunities. The UG 2002 (General Framework Law on Austrian Universities) invites universities to develop blended learning for specific student target groups. Developing such programs is rather a question of how to do it in the framework of an ordinary university whereas universities of applied sciences do have a different legal framework. There is no differentiation between student cohorts. There is kind of a standard student with a standard curriculum and study duration. But this standard does no longer reflect the reality among the students of nowadays universities. We now know that – statistically

spoken – only every tenth or eleventh student is studying full-time. From a legal point of view the full-time student still is the standard for a research-based and -driven university.

Germany and other countries do this in a more distinct way. This is a certain burden that we carry. There is the idea of 3 years for a bachelor, two years for a master degree. Particularly long-lasting (kind of part-time) studies in Austria certainly aren't the international level benchmark. On the other hand, students' that work 40 hours a week do their studies in this environment. But Austria's study offers do not reflect or anticipate, i. e. adapt to these realities. They don't do this for legal but rather for structural reasons, e. g. lack of financial and personal resources.

It also is a matter of organisation and attitude of academic institutions to questions or recognition of professional (teaching and learning) experiences. The legal framework allows for recognition of professional/practical experience and furthermore for validation of non- or informal learning. In Austria – as a matter of fact – we do have a strict division of academic and entrepreneurial training sites. This is particularly interesting because we do have the dual mode educational system for young people (school and professional training between 15 and 18 years), a system which Austria is acknowledged for internationally.

The problem for not adequately integrating part-time students is that the Austrian system still has its orientation on a student that at least achieves 16 ECTS per study year which is quite a low level of achievement taking into account how many ECTS have to be done for a bachelor (180). There is a broad variety of students' behaviour. But as a minimum 16 ECTS are the base of funding regulations (specific Structural Funds for University Space and the current ordinary university funding via the Performance Agreements, <https://wissenschaft.bmwf.gv.at/bmwf/wissenschaft-hochschulen/universitaeten/nachhaltigkeit-neu/leistungsvereinbarungen-mit-den-universitaeten/>).

To change the study behaviour, the whole culture of a country must change. There are a couple of reasons why students should study faster, especially those aged 18 to 21 years, e. g. career and life income perspectives. An institution on its own cannot adapt to such heterogeneous study behaviour. In Germany there is the legal status of a "part-time student". But only 4 to 5 % of the students are registered as such. In fact, many more students are part-time students, i. e. working to a certain amount of hours besides their studies. Thus, the legal status isn't the solution itself. And introducing the part-time status in Austria would cause severe problems of changing between part- and full-time, particularly when scholarships have to be paid.

Accreditation is the task of the "Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria" (called "AQ Austria", <https://www.aq.ac.at/en/>). Every 7 years those audits have to be made. The awareness on quality assurance has just started. This has to do with the professionalization of teaching that has just begun in the last years, considering teaching as its own business field. Other countries have done a much better job and made much more progress there. Austria has to catch up a lot, by doing more of learning analytics, student support and analysis.

Taking into account the academic freedom of teaching and research, how can universities manage to implement cohesive programs of new modes of teaching and learning? It's a matter of university/institute management and mission statement. If there are general rules on certain topics then the individual academic freedom won't be hurt.

Online and blended learning offers have to be validated and examined for quality at university level too. The quality level must correspond to traditional f2f-lectures. Methods and standards have to be developed in the whole system (or institution). Quality assurance is a key task to protect these offers from accusations of minor quality.

The academic basis of certain studies has to be determined by values like student-teacher-ratios, the percentage of habilitated personnel. Each university must be based on certain competencies.

Describe funding rules: general regulations, specific incentives, project funding, institutional performance rules,... Was this discussed in the interviews?

Actually, there are still the Structural Funds for University Space. In the period for 2016-18 these funds have amounted to a total of € 100 Mio, 35 Mio. thereof for "Teaching and Learning". This was or is a very concise initiative.

Furthermore, there is a separate large comprehensive chapter of "Teaching" within the Performance Agreements. There the core teaching processes of universities are described and calculated. Besides quality issues there are the claims that universities have to take measures to continuously educate their teaching personnel with regard to didactics. They have to make sure that newly appointed researchers and teachers have to bring with them the necessary qualifications for teaching too.

Performance Agreements therefore are an instrument to improve teaching and learning. It's part of the negotiation process between the ministry and the different universities. It depends on the ministry's expectations and the development of the single university.

At the European level there is the consideration that a level of 20 % e-learning within a curriculum could lead to a bonus in the Performance Agreements, because there is a focus on the "digitalisation of universities". This is a very valuable and straight consideration. Therefore, in the next period of Performance Agreements due 2019-2021 there will be a focus on digitalisation.

With reference to the research area a lot has been done for Open Access and Open Data, e. g. the provision of saving/disk space, e-infrastructures, repositories and the like. With reference to the field of teaching, there is less progress. While there is a regional initiative between higher education institutions in Styria, called "eDidactics" (<http://edidactics.at>), a nationwide accepted continuing education system for university teaching still is not in place. But the study of the Forum New Media in Austria (FNMA) on the e-learning development in Austria's higher education sector is a good reference to proceed further.

The financing of Open Access and Open Data already took place in the last two periods of Performance Agreements and, part of it, via the Structural Funds for University Space.

There will be additional funding via the Innovation Foundation for Education, provided this fall. Its endowment will be € 50 Mio. and is targeted to universities too. Different categories of "Edutech" shall nurture new modes of teaching and learning then. The intention is, according to State Secretary for Education, Harald Mahrer, to make 'Education Technology made in Austria' a global brand.

Beginning in 2019 there will be a new financing model based on University Place Funding (study place per student). There e-learning isn't a calculator in itself because the financing formulas for teaching on the one hand and research on the other hand are working themselves. There are rather two extra focuses on these issues, first the "Digitalisation" and the other being the "Social Dimension". Blended and e-learning both tackle those issues very well. Therefore, incentives will be set there.

## Role of intermediate organisations

Some countries have intermediate organisations, agencies, supporting institutions, delivering support and advice to institutions. Did you see such organisations during the interviews?

What is their role? Experience? Vision? (total: 1-2 pages)

The government supports intermediate organisations. With regard to digitalisation two of them are in the main focus of the ministry:

- 1) the Forum New Media in Austria (FNMA, more at the teaching level, <http://www.fnm-austria.at>)
- 2) the Open Access Network Austria (OANA, more at the research level, [www.oana.at/en/](http://www.oana.at/en/))

Then there is the Austrian Libraries' consortium which could get a more important role in the ongoing process of digitalisation.

But the main intermediate players for now are FNMA and OANA. The latter combines the ministry, the universities, the Science Fund, called FWF. It has to deal with issues of marketing research, research globally and online.

Considering issues like coordinating course development for online/blended higher education, this would exceed FNMA's capacities. With respect to accommodating repositories (e. g. for OERs, MOOCs), university libraries or the Austrian libraries' consortium itself could eventually step in.

Taking into account training teaching staff or monitoring developments in institutions, etc. the FNMA or the universities can or should take the lead step. But there is the need to have a framework and certificates or even degrees that are mutually recognised. The initiative called "Certificate (in) e-learning" so far could not transform this in a valid currency among higher education institutions and teachers.

Coming back to (repositories of) MOOCs, OERS and the like there is the question how individual studies can be organised. There was the issue of "studium irregulare" (Latin), where you could compose your studies from content of different studies of one university or even of several universities and get a valid degree afterwards. But then the question is, who gives the grades or degrees. Accreditation and/or long university tradition should give the norms of studies and ensure their quality. Then there is the problem with individualised educational patterns or programs. Who validates the programs (esp. that of other institutions)? What is the norm, from the ordinary universities' side or that of universities of applied sciences, e. g. professional relevance or "fitness" of studies.

With regard to OERs (and MOOCs) we'd need kind of a standardisation for how to deposit OERs in centralized repositories, be it via the FNMA or the Libraries' Consortium. Of the kind that all universities deposit them by the same standards.

FNMA has published several valuable contributions and recommendations on OERs (<http://www.fnm-austria.at/publikationen>).

Continuing education with reference to new modes of teaching and learning should be recognised throughout Austria (or even more: throughout Europe/the world). The goal must be that universities themselves intensify these continuing education efforts. Several universities do have their own activities and projects (e. g. Graz, Krems). But a network or a platform is necessary to get the mutual recognition. Maybe the FNMA could be the right platform. eDidactics from Styria might be such a common-sense platform, but it has become a regional standard so far.

The e-learning report ([http://www.fnm-austria.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/Studie/E-Learning-Studie\\_2016.pdf](http://www.fnm-austria.at/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Studie/E-Learning-Studie_2016.pdf)) by the FNMA is on the table, but there still is no regular monitoring of all kinds of related activities. But this needs regular and active bi-directional feedback.

The government has just finalized and passed the "Digital Roadmap", a strategical approach to the vast field of "digitalisation". Intermediate organisations like the FNMA and the OANA support this.

Excursus FNMA:

FNMA, a non-profit institution, in principle, is an umbrella organisation. Its members are all universities, including some pedagogical ones and most universities of applied sciences. The members' delegates to the FNMA do have an ambassador function back to their host institutions. FNMA is financed uniquely by its respective members. There is a presidium and an executive head, the president. Then there are the projects, that are coordinated and/or initiated by FNMA. There even businesses can participate. The number of members is rising.

FNMA is interested in nationwide developments, at different levels:

- The governmental level: FNMA counsels the ministry, e. g. with reflection to the Performance Agreements. Therefore, FNMA did an e-learning study for Austria (published in 2014, in German only). It does the same by drawing up a framework for OER activities.
- The institutional level (i. e. the universities, the pedagogical ones and the ones of applied sciences): Actually, there is work done to establish a kind of repository and recommendations on production and use of recorded lectures/videos. 10 universities participate in this project.

Feedback processes between FNMA, its stakeholders and the government occur at a consultations' and recommendations' basis, e. g. the recommendations for OER activities (to be elaborated further this year), e. g. the consultations on intellectual-property-right, where the FNMA has amassed considerable information and competency. And Open Access is another topic.

To give initiatives more backing FNMA tries to get powerful partners like the UNIKO. FNMA holds its presidium meetings at their member universities to keep to these institutions and their actual scenery with reference to new modes of teaching and learning and to present its own activities and keep them engaged in the FNMA.

Quantitative and qualitative impacts of FNMA are reflected in publications on intellectual property rights, other publications like the "Magazine" and the "Journal for University Development". The latter being among the 50 top journals in the German-speaking area. Ministry, UNIKO and the like contact FNMA on a regular basis, thus they value its advice. The project on "Recorded Sessions and Videos" has an impact on its own on several universities. An initiative on e-books shows considerable interest among the target group.

Barriers seen by the FNMA:

- still insufficient legal support, e. g. the term distance learning only is mentioned in a fraction of universities' statutes.
- a lack of recognition of e-learning activities for the advancement of the academic career.
- Digitalisation and more diverse student target groups challenge university teaching.
- Autonomous universities need to develop internal or institutional target agreements on e-learning in spite of the constitutionally manifested freedom of teaching and research. Until now Austrian universities do have very different statutes with regard to e-learning.

## Open and flexible off campus education/distance education

Describe main interview results.

Vision of the ministry on developments in distance education:



- Open and flexible degree education for adults
- Online/blended continuing education, short higher education programs
- Open education, MOOCs

Your comments  
(total: 1-2 pages)

Government framework for online and distance education, participation rate of adults in higher education (25 plus, <https://wissenschaft.bmwf.gv.at/bmwf/studium>), aspects of accessibility, scalability, flexibility and quality in this area:

Austria does in fact have two different student groups (within a student population of about 280.000).

- between 18 and 24 years old, approx. 60 %
- 25 years old and beyond, approx. 40 %

The percentage of the latter is quite a challenge for institutions whose norm student both in mind and in the real organisation of the studies rather takes into account the former type of student.

The real picture is that the students' population gets more and more heterogeneous. The tracking of the students' progress is difficult for universities as long as free access to studies is still guaranteed. And it's still not in the main focus of universities while still carrying the load of 80 % of the students. It will take 20 to 30 years to change that ratio considerably.

There are 3 main strategy issues ahead:

1) There is the part-time study offer of universities of applied sciences for working people wanting to study after an initial professional/working phase. This offer is (the corresponding universities are) more decentralized, so people might be able to do this besides their work.

2) The other opportunities are university continuing education and master programs. There is the Danube University of Krems, specialized in continuing education and there are others.

Both 1) and 2) reflect on people having worked already or still working and studying besides working.

3) The third option could be the universities of applied sciences themselves, because they mainly address people that have worked already and want to improve their skills.

At the ordinary universities' level, as mentioned above, the main focus still is on/with the norm students of 18 to 24.

But nevertheless meanwhile some very interesting developments took place. The University of Vienna, e. g., transformed very expensive laboratory situations and experiments in virtual ones (e. g. study program of chemistry). And then a student does not necessarily have to go to university, if he is able to do the virtual situations, e. g. via virtual glasses.

Such developments have a lot to do with leadership, transformation, continuing education and the like. These discussions have begun or are on the way at universities, though often not in a structured process.

The ministry's approach to MOOCs and OERs:

Developments of MOOCs and OERs are not funded in a separate way but rather within funding of structural developments of/at universities and within Performance Agreements (valid for 3-year-periods, e. g. the one now finalised for 2016 to 2018). In Germany there is a distinct approach, more focused on MOOCs and OERs.

Continuous professional development (CPD), skills development:

Via the Structural Funds for University Space the universities of Graz and Krems do have a project targeted at continuous education. There a structure at admin level was implemented to foster continuous education for university (mainly teaching) staff. Furthermore the level of university management itself is targeted.

Reflecting didactical competencies there still is lack of/ a need to establish competency. Several individual (institutional-level) research areas may already exist. There is no comprehensive picture of the scenery so far. The ministry does not give orders on that. But digitalisation is not an end in itself, rather should it be used for continuous education and the development of competencies of the universities' teaching personnel.

SLPs = Short Learning Programs

Short-Cycle or Short-Learning Programs are an important issue for general education itself, not only for continuous education. There is no tradition in Austria so far. Countries that are comparable to Austria in size and challenges deal with these programs too.

Modularisation of and SLPs are important steps to academisation of the society. It might simply be easier for students to adapt their work load to their study load and vice versa. The question is how deep shall the granularity of the courses/programs be. It's a very interesting question, taking into account the social dimension and the manageability of studies.

Legal barriers

This is rather a question of culture, there shouldn't be any more legal hurdles. For informal in relation to formal learning there are (almost) no commonly accepted standards. But several ministries work on that (lead by the Ministry of Education). The National and the European Framework on Qualifications may help there.

## Visions for the future

Interview results with the ministry on strategic developments and the role of online, blended education on main campuses.

Interview results on the role of distance education, incl. continuing education and open education.

Ways to support or enforce the modernisation agenda (of the EU)

On the one hand there is the problem of a kind of "European fatigue". This means that Austrian institutions of the higher education sector do fall apart of the European trends or leading Universities more than e. g. 20 to 30 years ago.

The ministry has to disseminate and give feedback between the European Universities policy and the national one. The European Commission has done a lot of consultation for the "Modernisation Agenda 2020" ([http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en)), targeting the awareness of institutions, the labour market, the (prospective) students themselves. Internationalisation itself and even Bologna face more critical feedback than 2 decades ago.

Universities are still lagging behind in going international, i. e. offering bachelor courses (at least in English). At the Master and PhD level such progress is much more significant.

But there is more rhetoric than action to the field.

Main strands to foster the modernisation agenda could be:

- 1) Internationalisation and mobility (at all levels).
- 2) Fostering co-operation between universities in Europa
- 3) Fostering practical relevance

There is a considerable need for catch up the Austrian higher education sector. As long as 80 % of the students' study at conventional universities practical relevance stays a problem.

## Barriers

What are the main barriers to accelerate the modernisation agenda in the eyes of the ministry?

The general situation in Europe – as mentioned above, the "European fatigue" – slows down the innovation and internationalisation process.

But then there are positive aspects too, e. g. peer-learning-activities that take place all over Europe. This is a very good format.

And, in addition to that the building of alliances via programs like Erasmus+ fosters these developments.

These developments relate to former formats like "e-Twinning", making co-operation over borders more easy.

## Report on main strategic documents/actions on innovation by online/blended learning, MOOCs

If strategic documents are available and the government is undertaking actions:

- Evidence of the government's desire to enhance use of ICT in higher education
- Which was the rationale for expanded use of ICT?
- Did the government undertake direct actions to increase educational innovation in the country

(total: 3-5 pages)

Digitalisation as the most frequented expression of our time is an imperative not only for the economy but for education as a whole and higher education in particular. This is the rationale for expanded use of ICT in Austria (as in most other countries too).

The "Digital Roadmap" for Austria highlights this move of society as a whole to digitalisation too.

It comprises 12 guiding principles for the digitalisation process, two of them touching the education sector: Digital education should begin very soon (i. e. in primary school), the second one urges Science and Research to be a catalyst for digital change.

This roadmap on education is fostered by the "Innovation Funding for Education", which is open to all kinds of educational suppliers, universities included.

To integrate this development into higher education therefore must be the goal for the government/ministry too. It does this having developed several strands:

Teaching competence is the focus, aligned with awareness measures for university management to see university teaching and learning as a second business field besides research. Events like the

“Dialogue for University Teaching” and the “Ars Docendi” prize for Excellence in University Teaching should strengthen this point.

Several other instruments, obligatory and motivational ones, are targeted towards the improvement of learning, e. g. an „Atlas of Good Teaching“ (online) is established to monitor good and best practices in innovative learning.

A paper on recommendations of the Austrian UNIKO on improving the quality of teaching at university level is a main focus of the ministry. Additional recommendations of the FNMA add to the list of issues considered favourable for new modes of teaching and learning.

The financial instruments of Performance Agreements, contractually agreed upon by the ministry on the one hand and by the respective institutions on the other hand. These agreements are based on three-year-funding appointments and shape the single institutions’ budget decisively. Quality issues like the recurrent education of teachers, including innovative modes of teaching, shall be a focus there too.

Structural Funds for University Space add up to make technical and constructional adaptation of campuses or single buildings more fit to meet the challenge of digitalisation and thus of new modes of teaching and learning.

Events like the “Digital University” (held in 2016) shall lift the awareness at the management level of universities. This is necessary to fill the “gap” between the pioneers in the field of innovative learning and the strategic level of universities. As shown above most of the developments in this field were bottom up. Strategic e-learning concepts that do more than to administrate existing initiatives have to be developed further still.

To support the structural development of universities with regard to digitalisation the ministry has placed Structural Funds for University Space.

A new model of university budgeting shall be implemented in 2019, called University Place Funding. This concept, already realized within the universities of applied sciences, shall limit access to the universities further (enrolment limits in certain programs already exist) while enabling them to cope with the teaching of large numbers of students in a reasonable, qualitative way. While there are key figures that will address student numbers and teaching requirements via a certain ratio (besides research) there shall be extra categories for “digitalisation” and, of course, “social inclusion”. Both of them relate to specific programs and their target groups. Both channels are fuelled by the European Commission via the modernization agenda and the strategic framework for “Education and Training 2020”.

See the “Additional Documents and Links”-list (CPL-Austria\_AdditionalDocuments.docx).

## Your expert comments

What are your key findings? Trends you see?

Your comments on governmental policies and how they influence institutional policies and practice.

As the ministry pointed out, research on the issues of new modes of teaching and learning rather is happening on an institutional or even on the level of institutes/departments or individual members of universities. This research is not centralised anywhere in Austria so far. But a crystallization

process is on the way. The FNMA could play a major role to get the strands together by raising awareness among the member institutions to deliver their most recent research regarding new modes of teaching and learning.

From the ministry's view there are no legal hurdles with regard to the implementation of new modes of teaching and learning, neither on the certificate nor on the degree level. Higher education institutions see it a bit different.

The main barrier seems to be the copyright issue. There, institutional arrangements should take place, at least in some cases these problems seem to be solved, e. g. in the "Multimedia Diploma in Legal Studies" of JKU and others as well. FNMA does considerable counselling on e-learning and law issues. Additionally, staff training should incorporate advice on legal issues.

Another hurdle is seen by the institutions: A student that has to accomplish at least 16 ECTS per year which is rather a low level but on which university funding is bound (via the Performance Agreements). 16 ECTS may be a workload that working people can fulfil but if they don't, the financing might be less and the motivation for those universities to do e-learning even more so. On the other hand, more flexible programs for part- and full-time students might facilitate the progress of those students too, reaching the goal of at least 16 ECTS. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to elaborate new key figures for financing the particular programs that service specific target groups, as mentioned below.

Intermediate organisations have their role between ministry and institutional (i. e. university level) in promoting new modes of teaching and learning. Two of them play a particularly important role, the one being the Forum of New Media in Austria (FNMA) and the other being the Open Access Network of Austria (OANA). While the former is more concentrated on the teaching/learning issues, the latter is more concentrated on the research field.

In Austria now there are about 280.000 students doing their studies, among them about 115.000 that are 25 or older. A considerable part of them are already working part- or full-time. Universities of all kinds therefore face a huge challenge to serve these students adequately, taking into account the ongoing digitalisation not only in university but in everyday life. Austria's traditional universities were established as research-driven universities but now they have to manage a load of 80 % of the students (of 280.000) mainly on their campuses. The universities of applied sciences do have study place restrictions whereas the ordinary universities still don't have. There are of course, already several admittance restrictions among certain study programs, e. g. medicine.

The ministry therefore plans to implement a "Study Place Funding", beginning in 2019. E-learning there isn't a calculator in itself but it shall be part of the efforts considering the "Digitalisation" and the "Social Dimension", which is a European "imperative".