



# Children's Offices A to Z

BMWF<sup>a</sup>

Austrian Federal Ministry of Science  
and Research



## A for Added Value

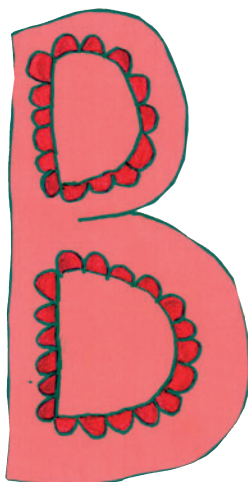
The initiatives implemented by the Children's Offices to make Austria's universities more family-friendly represent an important contribution to "Added Value" on the road towards achieving better work-life balance.

of women and parents in university life. Recommendations included conducting regular surveys to establish the real size of the need for university childcare, and the setting up of "Contact Points for Child Care Issues" at the universities. Thanks to funding from the European Social Fund and the BMWF, "Contact Points" (Children's Offices) were set up at the universities of Graz, Salzburg, Vienna, Linz and Klagenfurt by 2006. All the Children's Offices initially funded under this programme were later taken over by their respective universities when project funding ended. All universities have their own official "Plans for the Advancement of Women". These now also provide for career support after maternity/paternity leave and for more flexible work schedules. In addition, members of staff are appointed with special responsibility for childcare issues.

Initially the Children's Offices - some of which have changed their names over the last few years to reflect a wider range of functions - concentrated on providing flexible hourly daycare. However their field of responsibility has gradually expanded. Today many universities all over Austria offer a wide range of support options to make it easier to combine family responsibilities with studying or a university career. These services are anchored in the universities' regular programmes, as is their obligation to promote outreach knowledge transfer to children. All of these are now included in the Performance Agreements drawn up between the Ministry of Science and the individual universities.

## B for Beginnings

It all began in 1998/99 when the Austrian Ministry of Science issued the "White Paper on the Advancement of Women in Science". The White Paper addressed the problems of reconciling the demands of family responsibilities with pursuing a scientific or academic career, and called for strategies to be formulated to counter these difficulties. The project Childcare at Universities subsequently launched by the Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF) and a task group with representatives from all the Austrian universities then started developing ideas for improving the situation. Their efforts resulted in the drawing up of a whole catalogue of measures to promote the position



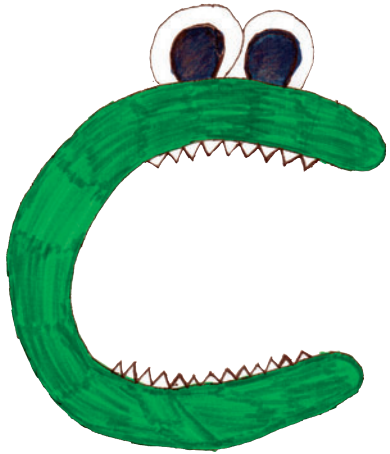
## C for Care

A core function of the Children's Offices is to offer child-care for the children of students and university employees, thereby supplying essential support for combining family life with academic studies and university careers. Options range from hourly daycare to vacation programmes and

year-round childcare. The age groups catered for vary between universities. Some of the child-care models on offer are listed under V for Variety.

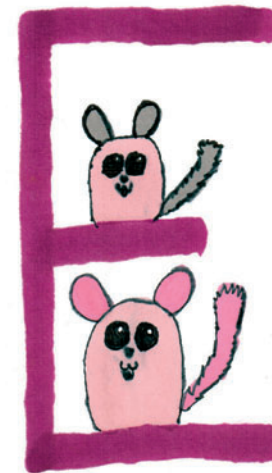
A top priority today is the need to offer flexibility and support to university staff and students who have to provide special care for dependents of all ages. This is becoming a hot topic and big efforts are being made to offer much more assistance than in

the past. This represents one of today's biggest challenges for Austria's universities as they strive to become increasingly family-friendly.



## D for Discrimination

The need to care for children or relatives can negatively impact the careers of both students and university employees. This amounts to discrimination. It is imperative to keep this from happening and to make sure that everyone has the same opportunities regardless of whether or not they have dependents in need of care.



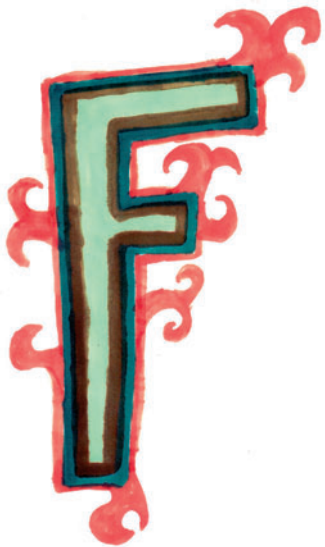
## E for Equal Opportunities

Access to education must be guaranteed for everybody. A variety of knowledge transfer initiatives makes it possible to appeal to children and teenagers from diverse social backgrounds. Outreach science education aims to make knowledge gained at universities universally available.

## F for Family-friendly

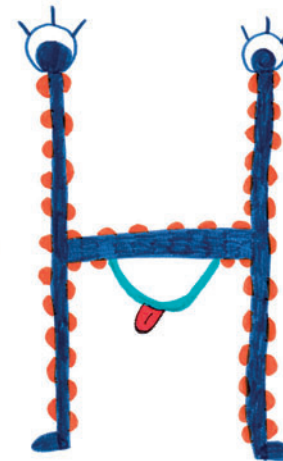
Austrian universities are increasingly implementing models designed to make working and studying more compatible with family responsibilities. They thus offer parents a better framework for combining family and studying/careers.

They do this for many reasons, not least to be more attractive as employers. There is a call for demand-oriented day-care provision, more flexible work schedules, and measures to promote career advancement during and after maternity/paternity leave. Support measures are specially important in the case of new appointments - the Dual Career Couples model, which works well in other countries, is now increasingly being used in Austria. The ongoing discourse at universities as to how to reconcile family responsibilities with studying and university careers is furthered by measures taken to raise general awareness of the issues.



## G for Generations

An increasingly important concern is to make it easier to support family members of all ages who are in need of care. This should be facilitated by developing new inter-generational forms of cooperation. The development of new kinds of service offerings should help the generations live together with mutual respect and support.



## H for Holidays

For many parents working full-time, finding daycare for their children during holidays when schools and kindergartens are closed requires an enormous amount of organizational effort. The wide range of vacation programmes organized for children in the school vacations reflects the diversity of Austria's universities. Holiday programmes and special events laid on for children aged from 0 to 16 include arts and sports programmes as well as themed knowledge transfer weeks. Vacation programmes can be an ideal opportunity to combine science education and daycare, as can be seen in the very popular Children's University organized in the holidays at Vienna University and

other universities, and the advent workshops for 3-8 year olds (TU Vienna). The TU Vienna and “fForte WIT – Women in Technology” organize a techNIKE all-day workshop for girls aged 10 and older. For several years the University of Graz has been organizing a six-week summer programme for 3-10 year olds in cooperation with the Austrian National Student Union, an initiative which has met with an enthusiastic response from both children and parents.

*“Thank you for three amazing weeks full of activities and adventures. I especially enjoyed putting up tents and the campfires.” “Our son was very, very happy. He even wanted to go to kindergarten on Sundays...”*

In the Summer JuniorUni at the University of Graz, children aged between 9 and 15 can experience university life for four weeks. The all-day activities combine knowledge transfer with sports and fun. At the Graz University of Technology the kids were able to fly using a flight simulator and they spent a week programming robots.



## I for International

Universities are places where teaching and learning take place in a multicultural setting with an international orientation. The resulting mix of nationalities, languages and cultures is both challenging and enriching. The Children's Offices offer support to staff, researchers and students from other countries to make it easier to combine family life with the

demands of studying or working at an Austrian university. A special responsibility is to meet the childcare needs of parents on short-stay visits to Austria for a sabbatical or an exchange. Childcare facilities become especially important when regular social networks of friends and family are far away. Flexible support models are essential over a wide range of scenarios: a visiting Chinese scientist looking for temporary kindergarten places for her two children, a single-parent Erasmus student from Greece, a doctoral student from Poland here in Austria with his family, or a US guest professor staying for a month and in need of a school place for a 12-year-old son. In all these cases the Children's Offices offer unbureaucratic assistance in finding childcare solutions.

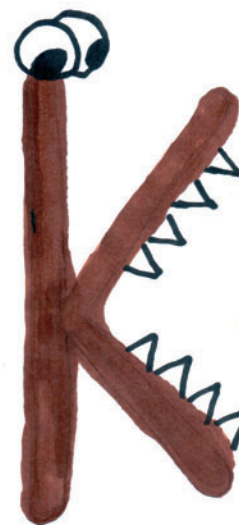
**unikid** – the online platform for parents at Austrian universities - is fully available in English and compiles information on financial and legal questions specifically for students and researchers from other countries. *“My husband and I were both in the middle of our studies when we became parents. As a German he wasn't yet permanently based in Vienna. We spent most of our time together in Rome. We were overjoyed at becoming parents and felt confident that children would not interfere with our flexibility, at least not in the first few years. We paid for our living expenses though grants (even when were abroad), through specially commissioned freelance research projects, and translation work. Thanks to scholarships we spent a year in Rome with our young daughter while writing our dissertations, often going on trips, which were sometimes work-related. We went back to Rome with both our children during my second maternity leave, spending half a year in Italy partially funded by a scholarship for studying abroad.”* Barbara Z., Archeologist, 2 children



## J for Junior Students

Austrian universities implement many outreach knowledge-transfer schemes for children and young people. One focus is career orientation, in particular reducing inhibition thresholds for teenagers choosing a future field of study, another is promoting gifted school students. Options on offer include workshops, activity days, internships, mentoring programmes, and research-learning cooperation schemes. 15-year-old Nuria

became a maths student for a day thanks to her study buddy Paul (19), a student of mathematics. She is enthusiastic about her experience: *"The meeting was great! It was good not to have to go to the university on my own. It was great to have a really nice person with me who is not much older than me and really knows his way around. It was really good to be able to ask about everything. Attending my first real lecture was a plunge in at the deep end but I'm very glad to have been able to do this before I start university for real."* Her study buddy Paul adds: *"A buddy system like the one organized by the science club run by Vienna University's Children's Office would definitely have made my own transition to university easier."* Bernhard Weingartner, a scientist at the TU Vienna, uses his Physikmobil bike to bring physics to the people. He does physics experiments to demonstrate the laws of physics using the simplest everyday objects. Through interactive experiments science is brought to life even for people who have never previously been in contact with theoretical physics. Here everybody can do experiments and discuss the results afterward. The Physikmobil tours all over Vienna, stopping in parks and at outdoor swimming pools and other public spaces.



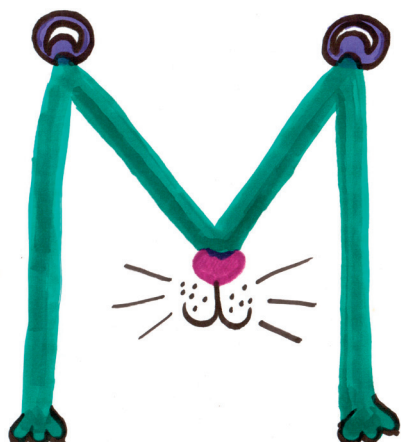
## K for Knowledge Transfer

The aim of knowledge transfer initiatives is to make the knowledge worked on at universities accessible to all children and teenagers in Austria. Young people can be confronted with research and science from early on through age-appropriate formats which also let them explore the arts in their own way. Specific interests shown by the "junior students" can be encouraged and aptitudes promoted. Through a special programme of research-education cooperations between universities and schools, pupils can actively engage in research projects alongside scientists. It is not only the young people who benefit by gaining first experience of scientific methods of working. The researchers also come to their work differently and often develop new perspectives and research questions, sometimes unexpectedly so.

## L for Links (please see the last page)

[www.unikid.at](http://www.unikid.at) - the online platform with information for everybody interested in children's issues and universities.





## M for Meeting Place for Kids

Child-friendly universities focus on making it easier to combine family responsibilities with a university career or studying. They also prioritize outreach knowledge-transfer activities for children with their natural interest in experimentation and discovery. Promoting and deepening this interest is the objective of various knowledge-transfer initiatives

like the children's universities, scientist days, media projects and many more. The children then function as multipliers and communicate their new knowledge to their families and friends. Interested parents and educators are also welcome to participate. Activities are offered at various times during the semester and during vacation periods. Another key responsibility in enhancing family and work/study compatibility is making flexible childcare available to all university students and staff. Various customized childcare models are in place to meet the varied demands encountered.

## N for Network

The inter-university "Network for Work-Life Compatibility and Knowledge Transfer for Children and Teenagers" is constantly engaged in developing visions, ideas and concepts. An exchange of ideas between representatives of all Austrian universities takes place regularly at workshops, conferences and conventions both nationally and internationally.

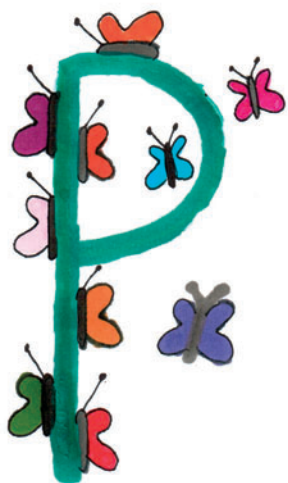


## O for Organization

Many Austrian universities have introduced measures to improve study/work and family life compatibility as well as knowledge transfer activities for children as a fixed part of their pro-grammes. The diversity of these initiatives is mirrored in the different organizational structures and titles of the various offices and projects involved. All of these activities contribute

to institutional change at Austria's universities. Parents report that childcare activities along with opening university doors to children and teenagers as part of the outreach

programmes has done a lot to change the atmosphere at universities. Researchers also note that interacting with children allows them to approach their own teaching and research in new ways. The children's curiosity inspires the scientists and academics - in this way the universities themselves develop as a result of the special offerings made for children. As organizational researcher Ada Pellert aptly puts it: the children's universities are an "incubator of change".



### P for Pioneer Work

The first Children's Offices were set up in 2001. From the start they have been doing pioneer work both in making it easier to combine having a family with studying or a university career, and also in the outreach field of knowledge transfer to children. Ever since then childcare models developed in line with real-world demand have been facilitating scientific and artistic work at Austrian universities. For example, the University of Art and Design Linz and the University of Linz make everyday life

for students and staff easier by offering childcare on an hourly basis. Today there is new momentum in the discussion on the issue of providing support for family members in need of care. Innovative developments in university-based knowledge transfer are finding Europe-wide recognition and imitation. In one initiative at the University of Linz, children can come visit their parents at their workplace and actively experiment in the research institutions as part of the "Visit

Mom and Dad at Work Day". At the TU Vienna, "little scientists" (pre-schoolers) can visit some of the research institutes, take part in fun experiments and ask as many questions as they please. Educational cooperations between schools and universities all over Austria constitute an important link with children and teenagers, the future scientists. The models developed in Austria are regarded as European showcase projects. For example, the Vienna University Children's Office has been named as a European Best Practice Model by the European Social Fund.

### Q for Quality

Universities are the biggest educational institutions in Austria and see themselves as modern employers. At the same time students and staff must meet all kinds of exacting demands. The decision

to study or work while raising a family is a decision to opt for a way of life which requires a lot of organizational talent, but is also a life with many positive aspects. Childcare competes with studying, career pressures, housekeeping, and other demands of everyday life. Parents and childcare facilities must be capable of flexible time management in order to meet the requirements of the varying time schedules needed for studying while also providing for regular fixed routines. Childcare solutions





depend on a number of factors, such as the family situation, financial resources and local childcare provision. Establishing appropriate parameters is the only way to assure the compatibility of family and student or work life while upholding the universities' high quality standards. The universities demand flexibility from all students and staff, who in turn require care facilities which facilitate this, e.g. by providing flexible childcare and/or kindergartens with longer hours or weekend opening.

## R for Role Models

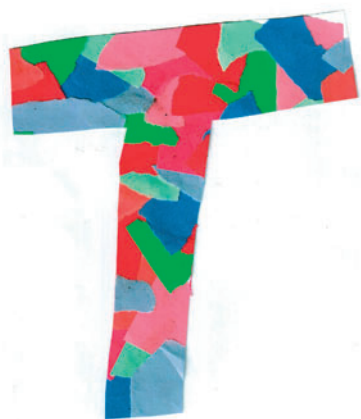
One of the goals of outreach knowledge-transfer initiatives is to break away from outmoded social stereotypes by showing young people new role models for scientists and academics – who are often parents themselves, and find themselves having to juggle the claims of family and work. The experiences these “parent-scientists” have had with barriers and their reports on finding workable solutions can make them role models for (future) students and young researchers, advocating a work-life concept in which family and scientific careers are not mutually exclusive. Positive role models have been documented in the brochure “Images of Parents – Parents Do Science!” and in the exhibition of the same name which was organized by the Children's Office of Vienna University. All in all the universities present themselves as open institutions where young people with diverse interests can find a place.



## S for Services

In addition to their regular childcare facilities, Austrian universities also offer the following services and more:

- Assistance in finding childcare places
- Babysitter pools
- Conference childcare
- Counselling and information on compatibility issues
- Courses for kids (and parents)
- Design of premises with child-friendly layout
- Events for parents and children
- Financial aid
- Internet platform
- JuniorUni & Children's Universities
- Maternity/ paternity leave management and support on re-entry to the workplace (e.g. Forum for Parents and Kids)
- Organization of congresses, conferences and workshops
- Parents' workspace (childcare combined with computer workstations)
- Vacation daycare
- Vouchers for childcare



## T for Trends

Austrian universities are having to position themselves to meet international competition. Family-friendly policies are becoming more important in this context. Many (future) students, researchers, and staff make a university's policies a central criterion when deciding where to work or study. Thanks to its commitment to unikid, the University of Graz has

been awarded the title of "Family-friendly Enterprise". The Children's Offices, whose names have changed over the past few years to reflect their wider mandate (changing their names from Contact Points to Children's Offices, unikid, unicare etc.) initially concentrated on providing hourly daycare, but their field of activity has gradually expanded. Today universities all over Austria offer a wide range of support options to make university careers and studying more compatible with family life. These services are anchored in the universities regular programmes, as are outreach initiatives to promote knowledge transfer to children. These services are now listed in the Performance agreements drawn up between the Ministry of Science and the individual universities.

## U for unikid

[www.unikid.at](http://www.unikid.at) is an Austria-wide information platform for parents in the university system. It has up-to-date information on financial, legal and pedagogical questions and encourages

communication between parents. It also provides an overview of the measures in place to improve the compatibility of family and university careers/academic studies offered by the different universities, and offers information about university outreach activities for children and young people.



## V for Variety

Austrian universities offer a wide range of childcare facilities, which vary from university to university depending on local conditions and by federal state. Options include:

- Crèches (0 - 3 years)
- Toddlers' groups (1.5 - 3 years)
- Children's groups (1.5 - 6 years)
- Kindergartens (3 - 6 years)
- Mixed-age kindergartens (1 - 6 years)
- Independent daycare professionals
- Flexible daycare (demand-oriented hourly childcare in a facility)
- Holiday daycare
- Daycare workshops (e. g. themed workshops for Advent, Easter)
- Workplace kindergartens





## W for What Parents Are Saying

Students, administrative personnel, artists, or academics – parents at Austria's universities have widely varying needs in everyday university life.

*"The TU Kindergarten was set up shortly after I had my third child and for the first time I had the chance to have my daughter attend a university kindergarten. The long opening hours every day, even during the holidays, allow for very flexible working hours in my job. Ever since the daily trip to work and to kindergarten have been one and the same I am able to save even more time every morning. Interdisciplinary work and networking between the parents can sometimes even get going in the kindergarten coatroom... On top of that the kindergarten is a sure sign that the TU has accepted children as a central part of staff members' lives."*

Anne K., Chemist, 3 children

## X + Y (as in Variables)

Austrian universities had 53,068 staff and 299,435 students as of winter semester 2012. For many, family responsibilities include both childcare and care of relatives. The national Student Social Survey of 2011 indicates that 9% of all students have children. About half of all student parents questioned find existing childcare provision adequate, while around 47% with children under 15 (i.e. some 9,350 students in total) say that they would need additional support. The biggest demand is for flexibly available daily and hourly childcare - around 4,830 students would be in need of this. Surveys of student demand for childcare at individual universities often come up with different results, influenced



by availability of childcare provision in the various federal states and also the demands of the different study disciplines. A student census at the University of Linz in 2008/09 showed the number of students with child-care responsibilities to be more than twice as high as shown in the

national Student Social Survey. In 2012 staff at the TU Vienna had care responsibilities for a total of 815 children under the age of 14. In 2012 University of Vienna staff had the care of 3,200 under-14s, while 20.35% of TU Graz staff had childcare responsibilities for this age group.



## Z for Zooming in on Goal

The Ministry of Science and Research (BMWf) and the Austrian universities have a duty to ensure that family responsibilities do not impede studies or careers. Universities are already taking important steps towards attaining this goal.

Even though it is women who are typically more involved in com-

bining family and work life, the discourse on compatibility should not be exclusively restricted to women.

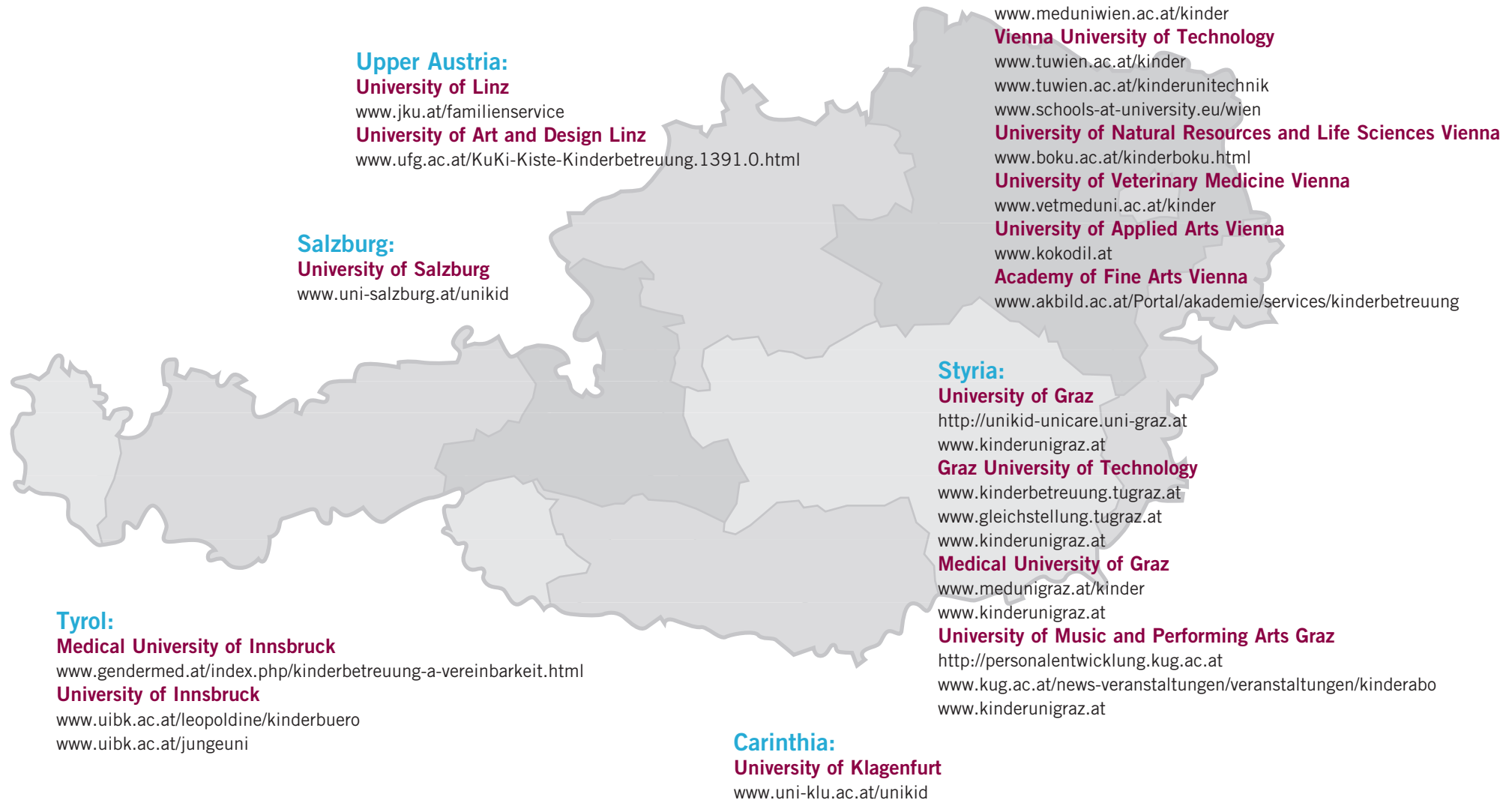
Measures to improve the compatibility of academic studies/university careers and family life are part of staff development programmes at Austrian universities. Some universities have formulated compatibility of career or academic studies with family responsibilities as an explicit performance target in the context of their Performance Agreements drawn up with the BMWf and practically all of the others have developed proposals for improving compatibility for inclusion in their Performance Agreements. Compatibility of career or academic studies and family is the focus of the “University and Family Audit” of the Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth. Audited universities certified as “family-friendly” are, to date, the universities of Graz, Klagenfurt and Linz, the medical universities of Vienna and Graz, and the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna. In the course of the audit, the certified universities define relevant fields of action such as:

the organization of academic studies, research and teaching, working hours, job location and workplace organization, qualification and leadership, career hiatus management, health and employability, family services, and childcare provision. The universities certified in the audit employ structured and sustainable measures to further the compatibility of career, academic studies and family. The “University and Family Audit” was developed by the “Familie & Beruf GmbH” in cooperation with the universities of Graz, Klagenfurt, Linz, the VetMed Vienna and the TU Vienna. The audit procedure was devised especially for Austrian universities and is constantly being reviewed.

Austrian universities are also being called on to develop creative and sustainable formats to attract children and young people from all social backgrounds to engage in studying, research and experimenting from an early age. By actively integrating children and teenagers, research projects receive new inputs and scientists see their educational mandate in a different light. Through knowledge transfer young people become multipliers in disseminating the latest research results by communicating these to their family and friends.

# BM.W.F<sup>a</sup>

Austrian Federal Ministry of Science  
and Research



## Lower Austria:

**University for Continuing Education Krems**

[www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/service/kinder](http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/service/kinder)

## Upper Austria:

**University of Linz**

[www.jku.at/familienservice](http://www.jku.at/familienservice)

**University of Art and Design Linz**

[www.ufg.ac.at/KuKi-Kiste-Kinderbetreuung.1391.0.html](http://www.ufg.ac.at/KuKi-Kiste-Kinderbetreuung.1391.0.html)

## Salzburg:

**University of Salzburg**

[www.uni-salzburg.at/unikid](http://www.uni-salzburg.at/unikid)

## Tyrol:

**Medical University of Innsbruck**

[www.gendermed.at/index.php/kinderbetreuung-a-vereinbarkeit.html](http://www.gendermed.at/index.php/kinderbetreuung-a-vereinbarkeit.html)

**University of Innsbruck**

[www.uibk.ac.at/leopoldine/kinderbuero](http://www.uibk.ac.at/leopoldine/kinderbuero)

[www.uibk.ac.at/jungeuni](http://www.uibk.ac.at/jungeuni)

## Vienna:

**University of Vienna**

<http://kinder.univie.ac.at>

[www.kinderuni.at](http://www.kinderuni.at)

**Medical University of Vienna**

[www.meduniwien.ac.at/kinder](http://www.meduniwien.ac.at/kinder)

**Vienna University of Technology**

[www.tuwien.ac.at/kinder](http://www.tuwien.ac.at/kinder)

[www.tuwien.ac.at/kinderunitechnik](http://www.tuwien.ac.at/kinderunitechnik)

[www.schools-at-university.eu/wien](http://www.schools-at-university.eu/wien)

**University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna**

[www.boku.ac.at/kinderboku.html](http://www.boku.ac.at/kinderboku.html)

**University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna**

[www.vetmeduni.ac.at/kinder](http://www.vetmeduni.ac.at/kinder)

**University of Applied Arts Vienna**

[www.kokodil.at](http://www.kokodil.at)

**Academy of Fine Arts Vienna**

[www.akbild.ac.at/Portal/akademie/services/kinderbetreuung](http://www.akbild.ac.at/Portal/akademie/services/kinderbetreuung)

## Styria:

**University of Graz**

<http://unikid-unicare.uni-graz.at>

[www.kinderunigraz.at](http://www.kinderunigraz.at)

**Graz University of Technology**

[www.kinderbetreuung.tugraz.at](http://www.kinderbetreuung.tugraz.at)

[www.gleichstellung.tugraz.at](http://www.gleichstellung.tugraz.at)

[www.kinderunigraz.at](http://www.kinderunigraz.at)

**Medical University of Graz**

[www.medunigraz.at/kinder](http://www.medunigraz.at/kinder)

[www.kinderunigraz.at](http://www.kinderunigraz.at)

**University of Music and Performing Arts Graz**

<http://personalentwicklung.kug.ac.at>

[www.kug.ac.at/news-veranstaltungen/veranstaltungen/kinderabo](http://www.kug.ac.at/news-veranstaltungen/veranstaltungen/kinderabo)

[www.kinderunigraz.at](http://www.kinderunigraz.at)

## Carinthia:

**University of Klagenfurt**

[www.uni-klu.ac.at/unikid](http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/unikid)



*Lorenz Khol with his son Ferdinand (4):*  
“My wife and I both work at the **University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna**. There is an on-campus crèche and nursery run by the parents which receives a lot of support from the university in terms of finance and personnel. We really appreciate this childcare facility and the flexibility it allows us, and we are also really pleased with the quality of childcare provided!”

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