Date: 08 October 2026

1. General Information

Acronym of the national network:	AUCEN
Full Name of the National Network:	Austrian University Continuing Education and Staff Development Network (German registered name: AUCEN – Netzwerk für universitäre Weiterbildung und Personalentwicklung in Österreich)
Country:	Austria
Year of Establishment:	2005 (officially registered non-profit association since October 2005; predecessor network active since 2002)
Official Website:	https://www.aucen.ac.at

2. Contact details

Representative of the National Network

Title (Prof./Dr./Mr./Ms.):	Ms.
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Last Name:	Paulus
Position:	Head of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Unit (BOKU University Vienna) | AUCEN Delegate to EUCEN | EUCEN Steering Committee Member
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End date of the mandate	31 December 2028 (AUCEN delegate mandate period 2026–2028; Delegate to EUCEN since 2014)

3. Background

Please provide a brief description of your network (maximum 200–300 words), including:

- Date of establishment
- Founding purpose
- Membership structure (e.g., number and type of member institutions)
- Key milestones or achievements
- Governance structure (if relevant)

AUCEN (Austrian University Continuing Education and Staff Development Network) was initiated in the early 2000s and formally registered as an independent non-profit association in October 2005. Its founding purpose is to provide a nationwide collaborative platform for Austrian public universities to advance, professionalize, and strategically position University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and human resources/staff development.

Today, AUCEN connects 21 Austrian public universities, encompassing virtually the entire public higher education sector in Austria. Membership is institutional, uniting university leadership, academic directors, continuing education managers, and staff development specialists across diverse disciplinary profiles (comprehensive, technical, medical, arts, and specialized universities).

Key milestones and achievements include actively shaping national continuing education legal reforms under the Austrian Universities Act (UG); co-developing national recommendations on quality assurance and recognition of Micro-Credentials; anchoring ULLL qualification pathways within the Austrian Qualifications Framework (NQF levels 5–8); sustaining bi-annual national network conferences for over two decades (now in its 59th edition); and maintaining deep international integration through ongoing EUCEN delegation and European board membership.

Governance: AUCEN is governed by a General Assembly of university delegates and an elected Executive Board (currently led by Univ.-Prof. Dr. Peter Schlögl, University of Klagenfurt, as President/Speaker, and Mag. Kerstin Käfer, University of Graz, as Vice-President, for the 2026–2028 mandate; and other board members: Mag. Petra Aigner, M.Sc., TU Vienna; Univ.-Prof. Priv.-Doz. Dr. Henriette Löffler-Stastka, Medical University of Vienna; Jakob Freudenthaler, BA MA, Johannes Kepler University Linz and Mag. Dagny Schreiner, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna). Operative coordination is supported by a dedicated Central Office at the University of Klagenfurt. Substantive work is driven by two permanent specialist working groups: Continuing Education (AG Weiterbildung) and Staff Development (AG Personalentwicklung).

4. Focus

Please describe the main objectives and areas of activity of your National Network. Your response may include:

- Core mission and strategic goals
- Main areas of work (e.g., accreditation, policy advocacy, coordination, training, research, etc.)

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- National and/or international collaborations
- Services provided to members
- Current priorities

Core Mission and Strategic Goals: AUCEN's core mission is to establish University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) and staff development as an equal, indispensable pillar within Austrian universities alongside initial degree programmes and academic research. The network advocates for flexible, high-quality, and socially inclusive lifelong learning pathways that bridge academic excellence with professional practice and labour market needs.

Main Areas of Work:

- **Policy Advocacy & Governance:** Engaging in structured dialogue with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), the Austrian Universities Conference (uniko), and social partners to shape the future of Lifelong Learning and Continuing education
- **Quality Assurance & Accreditation:** Embedding ULLL firmly within national higher education QA frameworks (AQ Austria, periodic audits) while advancing agile, fit-for-purpose review mechanisms tailored to modular continuing education and professional degree programmes (such as Bachelor and Master Professional).
- **Peer Exchange & Professionalization:** Organizing bi-annual national conferences, thematic symposia, and practical workshops on emerging didactic, organizational, and managerial challenges.
- **Innovation & Capacity Building:** Developing guidelines and facilitating cross-institutional knowledge transfer on digitalization, micro-credentials, and educational technologies in adult education.

National and International Collaborations: Nationally, AUCEN cooperates closely with Austrian ministries (BMBWF), agencies (OeAD, AQ Austria), and higher education alliances. Internationally, AUCEN is an active national network member of EUCEN (European University Continuing Education Network), maintains regular exchange with DGWF (German Association for University Continuing and Distance Education), and actively contributes to European University Alliances and EU-funded initiatives (such as MESHE).

Services Provided to Members:

- Bi-annual national conferences rotating across Austrian member universities.
- Two permanent specialist working groups (Continuing Education and Staff Development) enabling sustained peer learning.
- Timely policy briefings, legal monitoring, and collective representation on legislative developments.
- Dissemination of European good practices, project outcomes, and international funding opportunities.

Current Priorities:

- Institutional implementation and quality assurance of Micro-Credentials and flexible modular curricula across Austrian universities.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) in continuing education – addressing administrative adoption, conversational AI tutoring, ethical guidelines, and curriculum development.

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- Re- and Upskilling for green and digital transitions (aligned with the European Sustainability Competence Framework, GreenComp).
- Advocating for equitable, sustainable public funding mechanisms that reflect the distinctive cost and delivery structures required by adult and professional learners.

5. Key Activities (Optional)

Please list up to 5 major ongoing or recent initiatives, projects, or programmes.

1. National Micro-Credentials Implementation & Quality Assurance Framework: Coordinating nationwide inter-university exchange on the administrative and academic implementation of the Austrian federal recommendations on Micro-Credentials, modular container curricula, digital credentials (EDCI), and seamless stackability into formal degree programmes (Bachelor/Master Professional).

2. Artificial Intelligence in Continuing Education & Staff Training: Leading network-wide expert exchanges and practical workshops on the strategic, pedagogical, and ethical integration of Generative AI and AI-supported tutoring in adult education, as well as institutional AI guidelines for university staff and learners.

3. Re- and Upskilling for Green and Digital Jobs (GreenComp Integration): A specialized working group initiative addressing green skills and sustainability competences in continuing education, aligning university offerings with the European Sustainability Competence Framework (GreenComp) and enhancing validation of prior learning.

4. Bi-annual National AUCEN Conferences & Permanent Specialist Committees: Continuous organization of two-day national network meetings twice per year (e.g., 57th Meeting in Krems on European Alliances and MCs; 58th Meeting in Vienna on AI and the World of Work; 59th Meeting in Graz), anchored by continuous work in the Continuing Education and Staff Development working groups.

5. Active European Networking & EU Project Collaboration (EUCEN): Continuous contribution to European ULLL policy development through EUCEN (annual conferences, Policy Talks in Brussels, Autumn Seminars, and National Networks consultations), as well as active dissemination and learner engagement for EU-funded initiatives such as MESHE (Erasmus+).

6. Additional Information (Optional)

Any other relevant information you wish to share (publications, annual events, statistics, strategic plans, etc.).

- **Publications & Policy Papers:** AUCEN regularly publishes thematic working papers, position statements on draft legislation (Universities Act amendments, Higher Education Plan 2030), and documentation reports on key topics (e.g., Microcredentials, Validation/RPL, Reskilling).

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- **Rotating Bi-annual Event Format:** AUCEN meetings take place every Spring and Autumn, hosted in turn by different member universities across Austria (Vienna, Krems, Graz, Salzburg, Linz, Klagenfurt, Innsbruck), combining formal General Assembly delegate meetings with open thematic workshops.
- **Network Scale & National Reach:** Connecting 21 public universities, AUCEN represents over 150 continuing education directors, program coordinators, and staff developers, directly addressing an audience of tens of thousands of continuing education students and university employees across Austria.

7. National Network's social media pages (Optional)

- **Official Website:** https://www.aucen.ac.at
- **Professional Networking & Communication:** AUCEN activities, conferences, and position papers are actively communicated through member university institutional channels, university continuing education units, and delegate profiles on LinkedIn, as well as dedicated mailing lists across all 21 Austrian public universities.
- **EUCEN Dissemination:** AUCEN features a standing agenda item on EUCEN activities at every national meeting and actively disseminates EUCEN publications, position papers, and events throughout the Austrian higher education community.

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