



Country Context Report & Situation Analysis

Project Result 1 - Country context analysis: availability and infrastructure of informal learning space

**University for Continuing Education Krems
Austria**

Sonja Brachtl, Christina Ipser, Filiz Keser Aschenberger, Gregor Radinger

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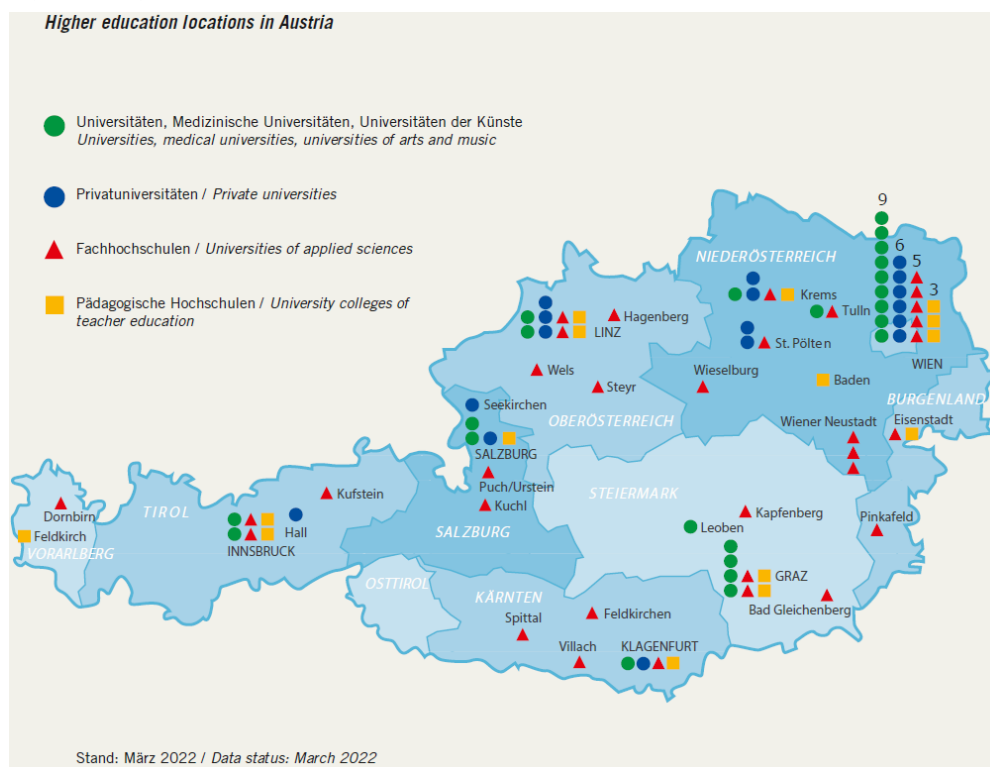
Introduction

This report presents the findings of the research collected data on (technologically enhanced) informal and non-conventional learning environments regarding: a) “State of the art” in Austria: existing networks, stakeholder communities, previous projects, tools, guidance material etc. addressing and dealing with informal and non-conventional learning spaces b) Spatial characteristics, availability, accessibility, equipment and infrastructure of informal and non-conventional learning spaces provided by the University for Continuing Education Krems c) Awareness and existing strategies of university administration and public authorities to promote inclusive and supportive technologically enhanced informal and non-conventional learning environments and to mitigate existing inequalities. Following part sheds light on the country context in Austria concerning higher education system and inclusive and informal learning spaces. It is followed by the description of University for Continuing Education Krems in terms of physical characteristics of the campus with special attention to informal learning spaces and the last part presents the findings of the focus group interviews conducted with the key stakeholders of the university.

Higher Education Institutions in Austria

Austrian higher education system is comprised of four sectors: public universities, universities of applied sciences, private universities, and university colleges of teacher education. These institutions vary according to their legal basis and funding models, as well as the subjects they offer. There are 22 public universities, 21 universities of applied sciences, 17 private universities and 14 university colleges of teacher education. Figure 1 presents the locations and the types of higher education institutions in Austria.

Figure 1: Higher Education Locations in Austria



Source: BMBWF (2022). *Science in Austria/2022 Statistics*, p. 9

Higher Education Students in Austria

In total, over 390.000 students are registered to study in these four different institutions (BMBWF, 2022a). Table 1 presents the numbers according to different higher education sectors and different study programmes. Majority of the students in Austria are enrolled in 22 public universities.

Table 1: Number of students according to higher education sector and study programmes (2021)

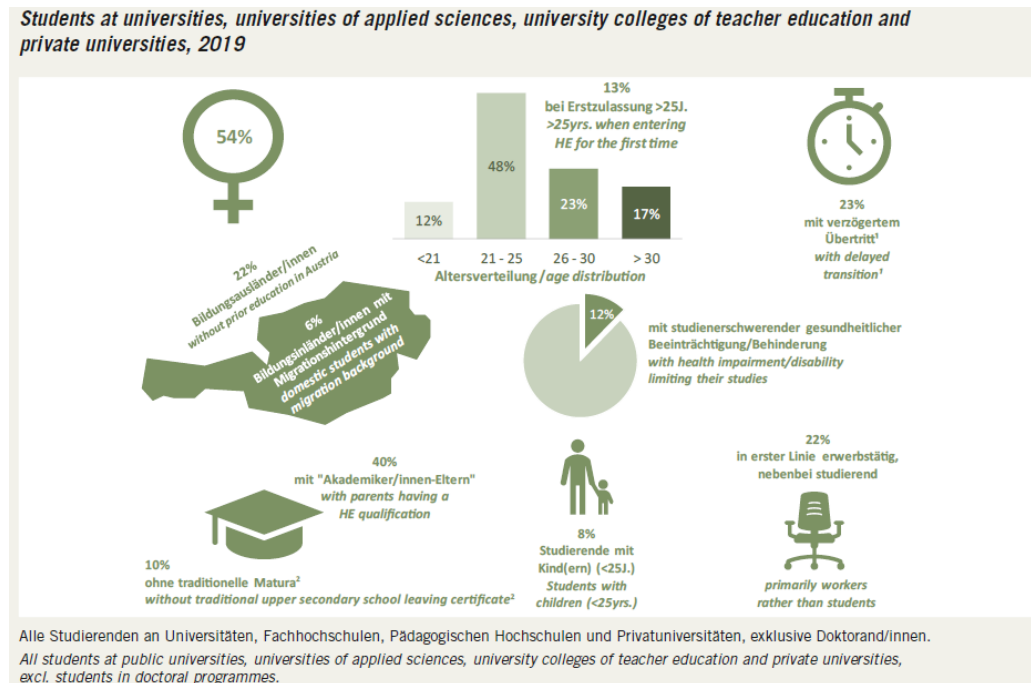
| <i>Universities, universities of applied sciences, private universities, university colleges of teacher education</i> | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Studienart / Programme level | Gesamt Total | Universitäten Universities | Fachhochschulen Universities of applied sciences | Privatusiversitäten Private universities | Pädagogische Hochschulen University colleges of teacher education |
| Diplomstudium / Diploma programme | 41.859 | 40.426 | - | 1.433 | - |
| Bachelorstudium / Bachelor programme | 234.878 | 169.521 | 42.380 | 7.551 | 15.426 |
| Masterstudium / Master programme | 98.176 | 73.475 | 17.293 | 4.174 | 3.234 |
| Doktoratsstudium / Doctoral programme | 21.399 | 20.594 | - | 805 | - |
| Insgesamt / Total | 396.311 | 304.015 | 59.673 | 13.963 | 18.660 |

Source: BMBWF (2022). *Science in Austria/2022 Statistics*, p. 13

Students' characteristics indicate that 54% of the students are female, and only 6% of the students have a migration background. This can be attributed to the selective system of formal Austrian education system. System cannot provide equal opportunities for students with migration background for accessing the higher education. Austrian students have an older age compared to other systems, 13% of the students who enter the higher education system for the first time are older than 25 years old. In relation to these, 23% of the

students' transit to the higher education system with delay. Twenty-two percentage of the students are primarily workers rather than students, and 8% of the students who are younger than 25 years have children. The rate of international students is 22%.

Figure 2: Characteristics of Students in Austrian Higher Education System



Source: BMBWF (2022). *Science in Austria/2022 Statistics*, p. 15

Inclusion in Higher Education in Austria

Austria has taken measures for creating an inclusive and egalitarian higher education system. The government's programme for 2013-2018 stipulated, that measures were to be devised "to support the compatibility of work and study and to provide non-traditional access to the entire higher education sector". The 2016-2021 "Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities" (BMBWF, 2015) aims in its system goal 8, to "support a cultural shift towards social inclusion, gender equality and diversity in universities", and the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMBWF) made provision in its "Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences" through to 2017/2018 to address a number of aspects of the social dimension (BMBWF, 2017).

One of these measures is the National Disability Action Plan 2012-2020, (BMASK, 2012). It formulates the concrete measures to implement the UN Disability Rights Convention. In the chapter on education, the National Action Plan focuses exclusively on the situation at universities and mentions the regulations for students with disabilities laid down in the Universities Act (UG, 2002), the Institute for Integrated Studies located at the University of Linz and the ombudsman's office for students at the BMBWF as concrete support services. Concrete objectives of the National Action Plan for Higher Education are:

- The inclusion of students with disabilities is to be increasingly addressed as an educational policy objective within the framework of the performance agreements with the universities and the discussions accompanying their implementation.

- Awareness of the inclusion of disabled students is to be created.
- An expansion of training for sign language interpreters and sign language teachers will be sought.

The National Action Plan includes five actions for higher education:

- Creating awareness of inclusion in the context of performance agreement negotiations.
- Continuation of the pilot project "Studying successfully without hearing" at the Vienna University of Technology and securing the institutes "Integrated Studying".
- Discussions within the framework of the negotiations on the performance agreements with the universities on the possible increase in training opportunities for sign language interpreters and sign language teachers.
- Networking of existing support services and
- Study "Social situation of students with health problems at universities and universities of applied sciences". (Wroblewski et al., 2020)

In addition to this action plan, university law also regulates the issues related to disability and inclusivity concerning the disabilities.

In addition to disability, since 2015, universities have developed an Equality Plan, which must address issues concerning discrimination, diversity, inclusion, equal treatment. In the report "Inclusive universities: Services for students with disabilities and health impairments - Supplemental study to the 2019 Student Social Survey" (Wroblewski et al., 2020) inclusivity is identified mainly in terms of disability and illnesses. However, the "National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education" (BMWF, 2017) prepared by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research addresses a wider group of students who are identified as "underrepresented groups" and "groups with specific needs".

Underrepresented groups are listed as:

- Students whose parents do not have higher education entrance qualifications or who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds (currently around 40%).
- Underrepresentation of women or men in particular degree programmes (e.g. women in technical studies, men in veterinary medicine studies)
- Students from particular regions/federal states
- Students with migrant backgrounds (with an Austrian entrance qualification)
- Students with a disability and/or chronic illness

Groups with specific needs include:

- Students with young children or other care responsibilities
- Students with a disability and/or chronic illness
- Students with delayed entry to higher education (i.e. at least two years since leaving school or "second chance" education)
- Students in employment

The "National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education" focuses on three main dimensions with action lines under them:

- I. More inclusive access
 - Action line 1: Improve quality and accessibility of information materials
 - Action line 2: Outreach activities and diversity-sensitive course guidance
 - Action line 3: Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal competencies
- II. Avoid drop-out and improve academic success
 - Action line 4: Ease entry into higher education
 - Action line 5: Structures of study programmes and quality of teaching
 - Action line 6: Increase compatibility of studies with other areas of life
- III. Create basic parameters and optimise the regulation of higher education policy
Target dimensions and quantitative goals through to 2025
 - Action line 7: System-related issues in higher education systems
 - Action line 8: Integrate the social dimension into strategic planning for higher education and create appropriate governance structures
 - Action line 9: Further develop Student Support Schemes

This strategy is an important document to set the stage and rules for providing support for disadvantaged groups to higher education at the system level, however, the statistics indicate that there is still a long way to reach the goals mentioned in all these action plans. Moreover, none of these action plans and reports refer to physical learning environment and higher education space.

Building Infrastructure of Public Austrian Universities

Different Austrian higher education institutions are located in and using different physical settings and arrangements: some institutions are based on a campus structure, and some are scattered in different buildings around in the city. Table 2 indicates the space used by the public universities in Austria (m²) and shows that there have been small increments in the space used by the universities.

Table 2: Usable Space at Public Universities in Austria in m² (2022-2021)

| Universität | 2021 | 2020 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Universität Wien | 388.222 | 365.519 |
| Universität Graz | 158.129 | 156.441 |
| Universität Innsbruck | 207.806 | 209.553 |
| Medizinische Universität Wien | 81.996 | 70.653 |
| Medizinische Universität Graz | 53.951 | 58.174 |
| Medizinische Universität Innsbruck | 42.619 | 39.715 |
| Universität Salzburg | 117.010 | 119.413 |
| Technische Universität Wien | 207.749 | 214.689 |
| Technische Universität Graz | 168.074 | 172.062 |
| Montanuniversität Leoben | 48.630 | 48.653 |
| Universität für Bodenkultur Wien | 103.555 | 102.108 |
| Veterinärmedizinische Universität Wien | 98.818 | 95.315 |
| Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien | 81.460 | 81.460 |
| Universität Linz | 143.787 | 118.007 |
| Universität Klagenfurt | 36.079 | 35.983 |
| Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien | 36.784 | 35.275 |
| Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien | 44.108 | 44.577 |
| Universität Mozarteum Salzburg | 29.335 | 29.260 |
| Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Graz | 24.846 | 24.538 |
| Universität für künstlerische und industrielle Gestaltung Linz | 27.156 | 27.121 |
| Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien | 33.875 | 32.222 |
| Universität für Weiterbildung Krems | 20.995 | 20.880 |
| Gesamt | 2.154.981 | 2.101.619 |

Source: University Statistics 2022 (<https://unidata.gv.at/Pages/auswertungen.aspx>)

The provision of building infrastructure for public universities in Austria is financed by the federal government. According to the Universities Act (UG, 2002), the universities' real estate projects are to be agreed between the university and the responsible Federal Ministry. Since 2018 the procedure for the implementation of university real estate projects has been regulated by a "Regulation of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research" (Uni-ImmoV, 2018), which stipulates an overall construction development plan (in German: Bauleitplan) as a central planning instrument for the real estate management of all public Austrian universities with the exception of the University for Continuing Education Krems (BMBWF, 2021b). Based on an agreement between the Austrian federal government and the province of Lower Austria (15a Vereinbarung, 1994), the building infrastructure for the University for Continuing Education Krems is provided by the province of Lower Austria.

According to the Federal Disability Equality Act (BGStG, 2006), which has been in force in Austria since 2006, structural barriers (e.g. due to steps or insufficient door widths) can constitute discrimination for persons with disabilities with regard to equal access to publicly available services. Basic principles of barrier-free design are anchored in the Austrian building law by the OIB Guideline 4: Safety in use and accessibility (Österreichisches Institut für Bautechnik, 2019) and thus also apply to all educational buildings.

Standards and guidelines for the barrier-free design of the built environment in general are defined and specified in the national standard ÖNORM B 1600: Accessible built environment – design principles (2017). The represented design principles include structural measures, furnishings, and equipment as well as markings that are required to enable people with disabilities or temporary mobility or sensory impairments to use buildings and facilities safely and largely without further assistance. Additional requirements regarding the construction, furnishing and equipping of barrier-free educational facilities are specified in ÖNORM B 1602: Accessible educational institutions – Planning principles (Austrian Standards, 2013).

Situation on National (Regional) Level in Austria

This chapter presents mainly the results of the desk search and results of stakeholder focus groups. It provides information on:

- a) “State of the art” in the project countries and regions: existing networks, stakeholder communities, previous projects, tools, guidance material etc. addressing and dealing with informal and non-conventional learning spaces
- c) Awareness and existing strategies of university administrations and public authorities to promote inclusive and supportive technologically enhanced informal and non-conventional learning environments and to mitigate existing inequalities.

Key Stakeholders on National (Regional) Level

Provision, Management and Design of Learning Spaces in Higher Education

We identify the public bodies and relevant networks and stakeholder communities involved in provision, design, and management of learning spaces in higher education in Austria.

Public Bodies

Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft (BIG- Austrian Federal Real Estate Company)

About 90% of the building infrastructure used by the Austrian public universities (1,9 million m² usable space) are owned and managed by the Universities Division of the Austrian Federal Real Estate Company (Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft m.b.H), which is wholly owned by the Republic of Austria and acts as project developer and landlord for the public universities, supporting them in matters of space and infrastructural resource management. (BIG Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft: Unternehmensbereiche, 2022)

FM-Plus Facility Management GmbH

Among the public Austrian Universities, the University of Continuing Education Krems (UWK) holds a specific position, not only in terms of its focus on academic continuing education, but also regarding the financing and provision of the building infrastructure. The building infrastructure used by the UWK is provided and managed by the FM-Plus Facility Management GmbH, which is wholly owned by the province of Lower Austria and serves to provide the building infrastructure for scientific and cultural institutions in Lower Austria (FM-Plus, 2022). The financing for the provision of infrastructure for the UWK is provided by the province of Lower Austria, based on an agreement between the province and the federal government of Austria (15a Vereinbarung, 2019).

Networks and Stakeholder Communities

Österreichisches Institut für Schul- und Sportstättenbau (ÖISS)

The Austrian Institute for School and Sports Facility Construction (ÖISS) is a federal foundation, acting as a competence centre for planning, construction, and operation of educational and sports facilities in Austria. Its contributions include the development of general design principles (anchored in ÖISS guidelines or incorporated into national standards), the consultation and assessment of individual projects, and the information of the professional public. In addition to its thematic focus of the design of sports facilities, the ÖISS is the main Austrian competence centre and contact point for the design, construction, and operation of educational facilities from kindergarten to university in Austria.

Promoting and Supporting of Inclusivity in Higher Education

Next sub-chapter describes the main responsible public bodies and most relevant key stakeholders in Austria regarding inclusion and inclusivity in higher education.

Public bodies

ÖH - Austrian National Union of Students

The Austrian National Union of Students' federal body of Representatives is the legal representative of all students to the competent ministries. It acts as students' political representation but also provides several counselling and support services on national level as well as through the local representations (ÖH offices) at the different education institutions. The working units of the ÖH include among others the office for social policy, which aims to support students in difficult social situations, the office for inclusive education, which offers a counselling service with focus on accessibility and inclusion in higher education, an office for foreign students, and a queer office, which sees itself as a contact point for queer people and their supporters.

Consulting Board for Inclusive Education and Special Needs Education

A Consulting Board for Inclusive Education and Special Needs Education was established in 2021 in the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, which advises the Minister with analyses, proposals, and recommendations in decisions on the further development and strengthening of an inclusive education and science system in Austria.

The consulting board's strategy paper states that an inclusive education system ranges from elementary education through primary and secondary levels to tertiary education and includes adult education. According to the strategy paper at the level of higher education, inclusive education requires that students with special needs or disabilities can study and participate in university life in a self-determined way. With regard to building infrastructure, the mentioned strategic fields of action in the strategy paper include the consistent implementation of legally prescribed measures relating to barrier-free design. (BMBWF, 2021a)

Counselling and Service Offers at Higher Education Institutions

Almost all Austrian public universities, most universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education in Austria provide counselling and service offers for students with disabilities, chronic illnesses or health impairments. Contact points are either disabilities representatives (in German: Behindertenbeauftragte), equal opportunities

working parties or separate departments dealing with the topic of studying with disabilities. (BMBWF, 2022b)

Networks

Uniability

The association Uniability was founded in 1996 and is a working group of disabilities representatives, affected persons and others whose aim it is to improve the study and working conditions at all Austrian higher education institutions for affected persons. Its fields of activity include information, counselling and study support for people with disabilities, exchange of experience, representation of interests, professional advice on building design and technical equipment, research on the situation of disabled and chronically ill people as well as public relations work. (Uniability, 2022)

Engaging with Informal and Non-conventional Learning Spaces

Our desk search has shown that there are a few research and interest groups in Austria that deal with informal or non-conventional learning spaces as part of their engagement with educational spaces in general, but without a specific focus on the topic area of informal learning spaces and without a focus on higher education. We would like to highlight the following two:

Research Team »Arbeitsraum Bildung«

The research team "Arbeitsraum Bildung" (English: "Education Workspace") was formed in 2015 at Technical University Vienna (TU Wien) and consists of researchers from the fields of architecture and spatial planning who have been working on the topic of space in formal and informal educational landscapes for several years. They develop different approaches and complementary topics and tools for spatial systems of educational landscapes, with a focus on elementary, primary and secondary education levels. (Forschungsteam »Arbeitsraum Bildung«, TU Wien, 2022)

ARGE Bildungshäuser Österreich (ARGE BHÖ)

The "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bildungshäuser Österreich" (English: Association of Education Houses Austria) is an independent, non-profit association whose members are institutions of adult education in different sponsorships (dioceses, chambers, provinces, religious orders, associations). From 2021 to 2022, it coordinated the Erasmus+ project "Educational buildings of the future - needs-oriented learning space concepts in adult education", whose main goal is to analyse modern learning space concepts and new learning spaces, such as "third places" (co-working, makerspaces, fab labs or repair cafes) to derive potential fields of development for adult education. (ARGE Bildungshäuser Österreich, 2022)

State of the Art: Informal and Non-conventional Learning Spaces in Austria

Projects and Good Practice Examples

A total of three selected good practice examples of informal and inclusive learning spaces from Austria are listed below.

Example 1: Open Learning Center Graz – Space for education

The Open Learning Center Graz (OLC), founded in 2013 by Caritas Styria in cooperation with BFI Tyrol and Diakonie-Flüchtlingsdienst Vienna, is a learning space that can be used almost all day and without prior registration. People with disadvantaged living conditions have the



opportunity to learn on their own or in groups in a self-directed way. In addition to PC workstations, internet access, learning materials and e-learning offers, the room also provides support from voluntary learning guides. The target group is people with a migration and refugee background of all ages who are looking for support on their way to higher qualification. Characteristics of spatial features are openness, coziness, friendly atmosphere, bright rooms, plants, sofa as well as the location in a "hot spot district" with a high migrant rate and the accommodation in the Caritas social center together with various other migrant/refugee projects. (Ruth Unger, 2019)

Example 2: Use of residual space as learning space - University of Graz

The redesign of interstitial spaces at the University of Graz is the goal of an experimental project at the Institute for Educational and Visual Sciences at the University. Previously unused spatial resources are to be adapted to the different needs of learners, be able to be used multifunctionally and convey a feeling of being welcome. By means of minor structural implants and interventions, places for sustainable knowledge development are generated instead of empty corridors and niches. Students use the new room arrangements primarily for group work; individual learning is preferred at home. (Portenkirchner, 2019)

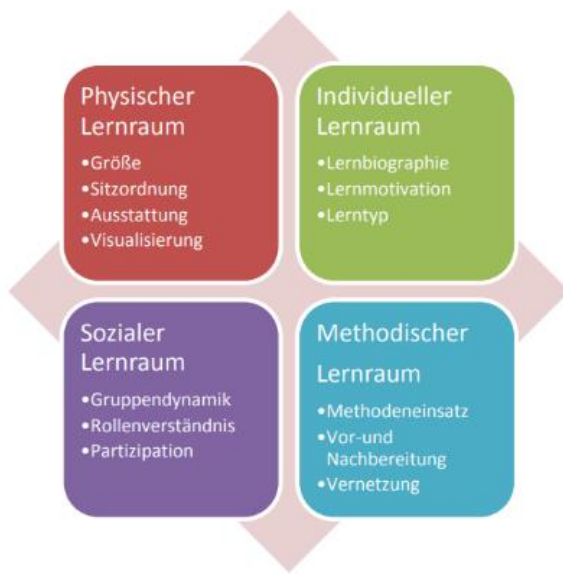
Example 3: roomTUlearn - space resource management, Vienna University of Technology

Centrally managed learning spaces at Vienna University of Technology are available for students to participate in distance learning events, for example if this is not possible at home or the commuting time between courses is too long, or simply if they need a quiet place to work. Students who want to use room infrastructures with stable WLAN for quiet work can do so in certain teaching rooms subject to availability. Other technical equipment such as laptops, documents, etc. must be provided by the students themselves. (TU Wien, 2022)

Tools and Guidance Material

In a training on the topic of designing learning spaces at the "Verband Österreichischer Gewerkschaftlicher Bildung" (Association of Austrian Trade Union Education) Margret Steixner uses a four-dimensional system model for the consideration of learning spaces (Figure 3), which goes beyond spatial characteristics. The physical characteristics are defined by geometric size, seating arrangement, equipment, and visualisation. The individual learning space is determined by learning biographies, learning motivation, and learning types, the social learning space by group dynamics, role understanding and participation. For the methodological learning space, the use of methods, preparation and follow-up, and networking are important. (Steixner, 2014, p. 6)

Figure 3: Four Dimensions of Learning Space



Source: Steixner (2014). p. 6

The extent to which architectures of learning can function as spaces for informal learning is controversial (Hermann, 2015). Concrete recommendations regarding accessibility and equipment of inclusive spaces are offered, for example, by the Office for Accessibility and Inclusive Education of the Austrian Student Union (ÖH). The organisation is committed to the empowerment of students who are hindered in their self-determination by universities. A non-binding guide “Leitfaden für barrierefreie Veranstaltungen der ÖH Bundesvertretung” is intended to facilitate the planning of events with regard to accessibility. (Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft, 2022)

Scientific Publications

Our search has indicated that there is a scarcity of research in learning environments in higher education in Austria. We could not come up with studies focusing on physical learning environments at the higher education institutions in the context of Austria, although some scientific research and publications exist for “learning space and environment in adult education” compiled an issue of the journal erwachsenenbildung.at (see Gruber & Schmid, 2019). In this issue edited by Gruber and Schmid (2019) one article discusses the learning space in a higher education setting. The study by Portenkirchner (2019) presents the results of a project aiming to design the unused interstitial spaces of an institute at the University Graz in such a way that they could be adapted to the different needs of the learners, to be used multifunctionally and can convey a feeling of being welcome. It describes the initial situation, implementation and results of the project and provides insight into the evaluation of the satisfaction, usage habits and acceptance of the newly designed learning and meeting spaces.

Inclusivity is more researched and the most comprehensive and recent study that covers all Austrian higher education context is the “Inclusive universities Services for students with disabilities and health impairments - supplementary study to the student social survey 2019” by Wroblewski and her colleagues, published in 2020 and supported by the Ministry of

Education, Science and Research. This report identifies clearly that students who are underrepresented and can be defined as “vulnerable groups” have a lower chance of completing their studies, such as older students who follow a non-traditional study path. The study also showed that 44% of all students live in their own household, a quarter in a shared apartment, 20% with parents or other relatives, and 11% in a dormitory.

Analysis: Informal Learning Spaces & Inclusion

Austrian higher education system is quite fragmented with different types of institutions and providers. Unfortunately, as it is clearly visible from the statistics, the system cannot provide equal opportunities for vulnerable groups as migrants and disabled individuals. On the other hand, ministry has been bringing the issue of inclusivity to the agenda and have had some attempts to bring a legal and practical framework for promoting and improving inclusivity and diversity in Austrian higher education system through certain action plans and regulations, e.g., the National Disability Action Plan 2012-2020, (BMASK, 2012), the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities” (BMWFW, 2015) and the “National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education” (BMWFW, 2017). Moreover, recently each university has to prepare an “Equality Plan” to develop strategies and measures to ensure inclusivity and diversity at the higher education institutions. The discourse on inclusivity has also moved from “disability” to a wider range of issues that require attention such as “underrepresented groups” citing women in certain programmes, students with migration background, students from a lower socio-economic background, and also students with children and students who are working. These are important political and institutional improvements to promote inclusivity and accessibility to higher education, however, these attempts are all quite recent improvements and the impact that they have created has not been observed yet. Statistics, therefore, still draw a negative picture concerning inclusivity of higher education system in Austria.

Physical infrastructure and learning spaces in the public Austrian higher education is provided, built, and governed by the ministry and a central body. It is legally regulated that the physical infrastructure has to be constructed to guarantee physical accessibility for disabled persons in the Federal Disability Equality Act (BGStG, 2006) and also with the guidelines from expert associations. However, the informal learning spaces in higher education institutions in Austria is a theme that emerged neither in the policy documents, nor in the stakeholder analysis and research. Thus, it is important to address the issue not only for practice but also at the policy level, starting from planning the physical infrastructure to building and management.

Our stakeholder analysis yielded a small circle of groups that are involved in physical learning spaces and inclusivity and accessibility, comprised mainly from public institutions. Stakeholders concerned with inclusivity and diversity in higher education are better organised and represented than those concerned with learning spaces.. Thus, there exists higher number of projects and initiations concerning inclusivity and diversity rather than learning spaces. A few examples of best practices concerning learning spaces focus on the other types of learning settings rather than higher education.

In conclusion, it is clear that a substantial amount of work is required on increasing awareness about the role of learning spaces (formal and informal) and promoting inclusive and supportive technologically enhanced informal and non-conventional learning environments or to mitigate existing inequalities, not only at the policy level, but also at the practice and academic level.

Situation on Institutional Level at the University for Continuing Education Krems

Institutional Context

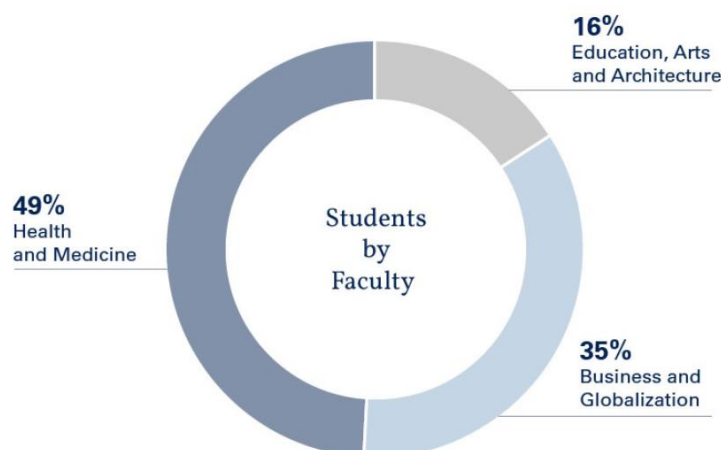
General Information

The study was conducted at the University for Continuing Education Krems (UWK), Austria, which specialises in academic continuing education. It focusses solely on postgraduate education and, consequently, has a different student body compared with traditional higher-education institutions. Currently, about 8000 students are enrolled in the university's more than 200 study programmes. The average age of students is about 40 years, but the range of age groups is highly diverse: 19.4% of students are over 50 years and 2% are over 60 years of age. The majority of the students at the University for Continuing Education Krems are employed while studying, with several years of work experience and, in most cases, management and leadership experience. Students have diverse educational backgrounds that can be divided into three broad groups: students with a higher education degree achieved in prior studies; students with a formal higher-education entrance qualification but no prior studies; and students without a formal higher-education entrance qualifications but equivalent qualifications achieved via non-formal or informal learning (Humer et al., 2019).

Figure 4: Students at UWK according to faculties they are registered to

Female students: 54%

Students from foreign countries: 26%



Source: UWK 2022 (www.donau-uni.ac.at)

The University for Continuing Education Krems offers master's degree, certificate and expertise programmes as well as PhD in three faculties: Faculty of Business and Globalisation, Faculty of Health and Medicine, and Faculty of Education, Arts and Architecture. Each faculty is comprised of departments, and research and teaching centres. Study programmes offered by the University for Continuing Education Krems is specially designed to meet the requirements of adult students. It gives students the opportunity to complete academic continuing education alongside their careers, thereby acquiring competencies for professional and personal ongoing development. It does not require regular and physical attendance at the university during the study period like traditional universities. Blended learning, flipped classrooms and modular and flexible course structure allow students to visit the university on demand.

Physical Infrastructure and Learning Spaces

The Campus Krems and its Infrastructure

The University for Continuing Education Krems (Danube University Krems) is located on the site of a former tobacco factory in the northwest part of the Lower Austrian city of Krems, which has a population of about 25.000. The campus covers an area of about 34,000 m² and is shared by three higher education institutions: the University for Continuing Education Krems (UWK), the IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems (IMC) and the Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences (KL). It is located at the foot of vineyards, which are typical for the Wachau region, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Figure 5: View of the Campus Krems from the neighbouring vineyards



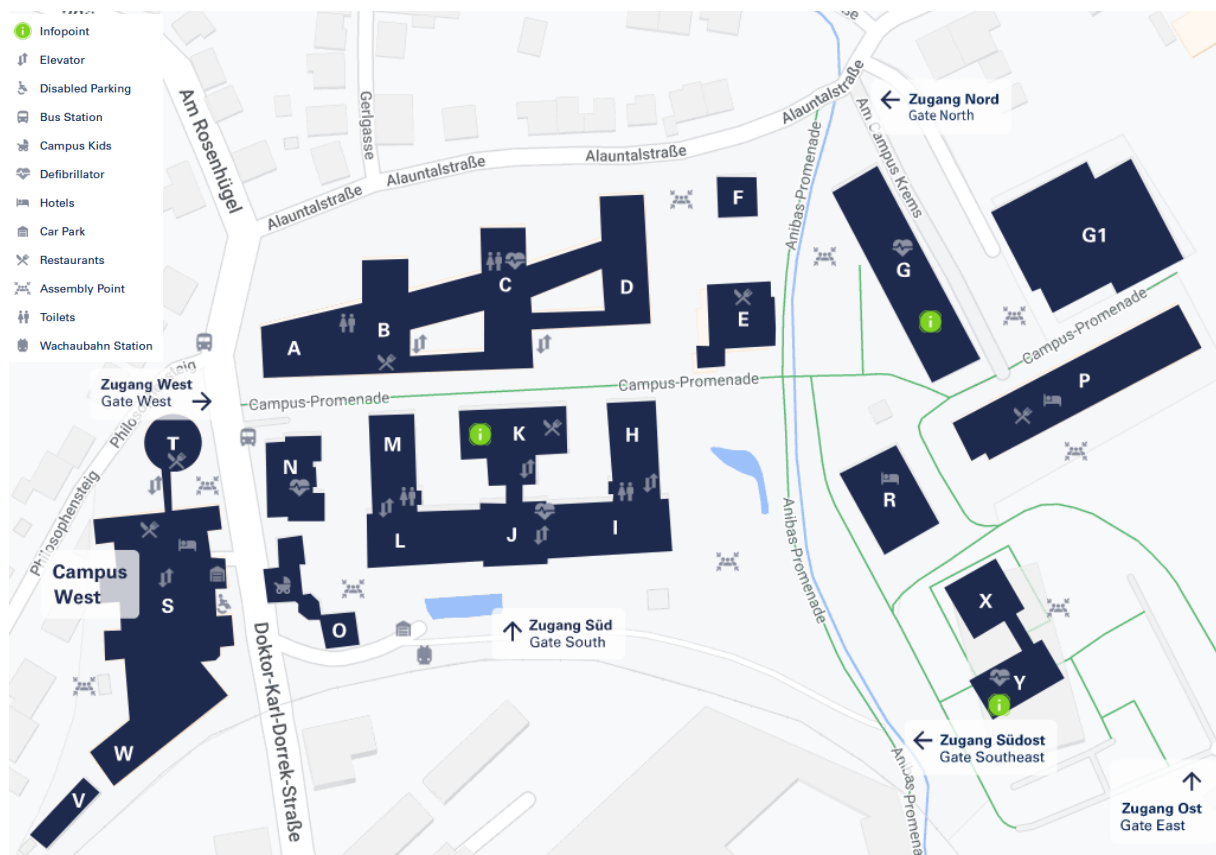
Photo credit: Hurnaus, H. (2011).

The listed historic main building of the University for Continuing Education Krems was built as a tobacco factory at the beginning of the 20th century and converted into an educational building in 1995. From 2002 to 2003, the central wing of the building was renovated and

extended. In 2005, several new buildings with modern design, dominated by glass, steel and aluminium, were added in the north and east of the campus, which provide space not only for the UWK but also for some departments of the IMC.

The buildings in the central campus area house technically equipped seminar rooms, office spaces, a library, catering areas, an auditorium (Audimax) and research infrastructure, as the Biotech Laboratory Centre, the Light Laboratory and the Core Facility for research. Further office and seminar room areas are located on Campus West, which also houses a hotel and several parking decks, which can be used by UWK students and staff. In the southeast part of the campus, next to the main building of the KL and a students' hostel, another new building is currently under construction, which will be used by all three campus universities.

Figure 6: Campus map of the Campus Krems as displayed on the website of the University for Continuing Education Krems



Source: UWK 2022 (<https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/en/university/campus-krems/campus-map.html>)

In the south, directly adjacent to the campus, there is a station of the Wachau railway. Since scheduled services on this line were discontinued in 2010, the campus is connected to the city centre and main station of Krems by bus lines with stops to the north and west of the campus.

The campus itself can be accessed by foot from various directions and offers greenspaces, rest areas and art installations, of which mosaic tile carpets in the central campus outdoor space and the so-called Loop are the most prominent, the Loop also serving as a distinctive mark of the UWK.

Figure 7: Art installations at the campus Krems: The Loop (left) and mosaic tile carpets at the central campus outdoor space (right).



Photo credit left: Zehndorfer, M. (2006). Uni-Campus – Altbau

Photo credit right: www.sticklerfotografie.at. (2006). Uni-Campus – Campus_neu

Formal and informal learning spaces

The formal learning spaces at the UWK consist mainly of around 40 seminar rooms with movable furniture (tables and chairs) for 24 to 50 people, which corresponds to the typical group size of students in the offered courses. Each seminar room is equipped with a beamer or large screen, internet connection and W-Lan, floor sockets, flipchart stands, magnetic boards and a water dispenser. In the course of the pandemic, almost all seminar rooms were further equipped with a touch screen control interface, a presentation laptop, ceiling-mounted room microphones, loudspeakers and an additional large mobile screen to enable teaching in hybrid mode.

Figure 8: Typical seminar room in the historic building (left) and the new building (right)



Photo credit: Skokanitsch, W. (2022). Imagefotos – Lehrsituationen – Studierende Seminarraum

The most important informal learning spaces at UWK are the library with a number of work and reading desks for individual learning activities, as well as the ÖH-Lounge, which was implemented and provided by the students' union at the UWK and can be used for collaborative learning activities, group work and informal exchange. In addition, there are a couple of seating arrangements and acoustic booths in corridors and halls scattered around the campus, which can be used as informal learning spaces.

Figure 9: Informal learning spaces at the UWK, reading desks at the library (left) and the ÖH-Lounge (right)



Photo credit left: Skokanitsch, W. (2017). Imagefotos – Bibliothek

Photo credit right: Ipser, C. (2019).

Provision and Management of the Infrastructure

The majority of the infrastructure used by the UWK is provided and managed by the FM-Plus Facility Management GmbH, which is wholly owned by the province of Lower Austria and serves to provide the building infrastructure for scientific and cultural institutions in Lower Austria.

The services provided by FM-Plus involve the renting, management and operation of the building infrastructure for the UWK, including facility services such as cleaning, maintenance and operational management. The financing for the provision of infrastructure is provided by the province of Lower Austria, based on an agreement between the province and the federal government of Austria.

Space management, equipment and furnishing are financed by the university and managed by the universities division of infrastructure and the facility management unit.

Accessible Studying at UWK

On its website, the UWK offers information on the topic of accessible studying, including contact points, support and funding opportunities, but also information regarding accessibility of buildings, rooms and equipment. (University for Continuing Education Krems, 2022)

Stakeholder Focus Groups and Interviews

Methodology

In this part of our project, we followed a qualitative data collection procedure based on interviews/focus groups with the stakeholders. Stakeholders could include persons involved in providing, managing, operating and supporting learning spaces from university

administration (e.g., facility management, technical support, students' contact points, study coordinators, department heads, librarians, student representative councils /unions, etc.), as well as from public authorities and other key stakeholder groups.

Focus groups or single interviews aimed to investigate two main issues regarding the informal learning spaces in our campus:

- **spatial characteristics, availability, accessibility, equipment, and infrastructure of informal and non-conventional learning spaces** provided by the institutions in the consortium and in the university surrounding, as well as
- **awareness, perception, and existing strategies** within the involved stakeholders to promote inclusive and supportive technologically enhanced informal and non-conventional learning environments, as well as established approaches to mitigate existing inequalities.

Interview guidelines were developed by UWK as the work package (PR1) coordinator in English, and they were revised two times following the suggestions and comments of the project partners in a participatory process. Final guidelines including interview questions and some instructions concerning the interview process were translated into German and adapted to our campus situation (See Appendix B). Following themes were the main issues discussed during the interviews:

- Spatial characteristics of the informal learning environment at the university
- availability, accessibility, usability, equipment, and infrastructure of informal and non-conventional learning spaces
- awareness and perception related to inclusivity (problems, challenges, measurements taken)
- Role of digitalization in using learning spaces
- Future perspectives and plans

We aimed for conducting one focus group with at least 3-5 stakeholders or individual interviews with 3-5 stakeholders.

Data was transcribed and analysed according to guidelines developed by the UWK in cooperation with the partners (See Appendix C).

Implementation

We contacted the stakeholders through e-mails and telephone and invited them to our focus group interview or alternative to individual interviews. One focus group interview was conducted in June 2022 in a face-to-face setting with eight participants (six female and two male) from the university administration and from the office of the Austrian National Union of Students at the UWK. In addition, four individual interviews were conducted in July and August 2022 with one female and three male interviewees. Two of the interviews were conducted in person and two in an online setting, as no face-to-face appointments could be arranged. All focus group participants and two of the interview partners are familiar with the UWK campus situation. Two other persons were chosen as interview participants because of their institutional background which gives them good insights into the situation and development regarding building infrastructure at Austrian universities. The affiliation and areas of responsibility of all interviewees are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Focus Group and Interview Participants

| Participants | Institution | Department / Division | Tasks / Responsibilities |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| Participant 1 | UWK – University for Continuing Education Krems | Students' Service Center | Student's consulting and support |
| Participant 2 | UWK – University for Continuing Education Krems | Division of Infrastructure | Organisation, coordination and project handling |
| Participant 3 | UWK – University for Continuing Education Krems | Division of Infrastructure, Facility management | Facility management, occupational safety |
| Participant 4 | UWK – University for Continuing Education Krems | Division of Infrastructure, Facility management | Facility management, space management |
| Participant 5 | UWK – University for Continuing Education Krems | Division of Infrastructure, Library | Library services and university archives |
| Participant 6 | UWK – University for Continuing Education Krems | Division of Digitalisation, Teaching Innovation and Digital Competence Development | Teaching development and evaluation |
| Participant 7 | UWK – University for Continuing Education Krems | Rectorate | Educational affairs, academic continuing education and digital transformation |
| Participant 8 | ÖH - Austrian National Union of Students | Office of the Students' Union at UWK | Students' representation and counselling |
| Participant 9 | ÖH - Austrian National Union of Students | Office of the Students' Union at UWK | Students' representation and counselling |
| Participant 10 | FM-Plus – Facility Management for Science and Culture in Lower Austria | Head Office, University Campuses | Real estate and facility management |
| Participant 11 | BIG – Federal Real Estate Company | Business Unit Universities | Project development |
| Participant 12 | ÖISS – Austrian Institute for School and Sports Facility Construction | Educational Buildings | Consulting, information and development of standards and guidelines |

In order to guarantee anonymity, the references in the following results chapter refer to the pseudonyms used in the transcriptions, whereby focus group participants are indicated by the abbreviation FG (for focus group) and interview participants by the abbreviation SI (for single interview).

Results

Informal Learning Spaces at the UWK

Several indoor, but also outdoor spaces and locations on campus were identified by stakeholders as informal learning spaces that are specifically provided as such or used by

students for individual or collaborative learning activities. A list of the most important identified places can be found in Table 4.

Table 4: Important informal learning spaces at University for Continuing Education Krems (UWK) as identified by stakeholders

| Location, Building | Label | Notes / Description | Indoor | Outdoor | Off campus | Focused learning | Collaborative learning |
|--------------------|--|--|--------|---------|------------|------------------|------------------------|
| K | ÖH Lounge | Freely accessible working area for students, furnished with bar tables, seating areas and acoustic elements. | x | | | x | x |
| C | Library space | Individual reading and working places are distributed throughout the library | x | | | x | |
| C | First floor reading room in the library | Separate reading room on the first floor of the library, former computer lab, accessible from the library and from the foyer | x | | | x | |
| C | Seating group in the foyer of the library | Acoustic booths with tables and benches in the foyer of the library | x | | | x | x |
| C | Audiovisual booths in the library | Small chambers in which two people can sit at a time, originally intended for the use of audiovisual media but sometimes used for group-work by students | x | | | | x |
| C, D, K, J | Corridors and halls in old and new university building | Some corridors and halls of the university buildings are equipped with furniture (e.g. metal tables, seating with side tables, standing height tables) and used by students for individual learning activities or groupwork, sometimes with flipcharts | x | | | x | x |
| W | Seating group in the staircase at Campus West | Acoustic booths with tables and benches in the hall of the staircase at campus west | x | | | | x |
| J | The wooden deck in front of the loop | only a very small area is shaded (half a meter to four meters depending on the time of day), many people find it too hot there, in spring, autumn it is somewhat better | | x | | | x |
| D | Mosaic tile carpets | Art installation (on the ground) in the central campus outdoor area, the "carpets" are used by students to sit on the floor | | x | | | x |
| P | Park around the Kolpinghaus | Park around the students' hotel with beautiful places and a terrace at the front | | x | (x) | | x |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|---|---|---|---|-----|---|---|
| C | Outdoor space in front of the library | This area is shady | | x | | | x |
| E | Outdoor space next to the “Kesselhaus” | There is seating or students sit in the grass | | x | (x) | | x |
| B, C, D | Outdoor space under the connecting bridges | During breaks, people often discuss things there, there is smoking, coffee storage, ashtrays and protection from the weather | | x | | | x |
| B, C, D | Benches along the campus promenade | Preferably used in spring | | x | | x | |
| B, K | Mensa Café Virginier and Mensa Restaurant (canteen) | Cafe and restaurant operated by the Mensa GmbH with indoor and outdoor areas, the use of the indoor areas is limited by opening hours | X | x | | x | x |
| T, S, E | Cafés and restaurants on campus and near the campus | Privately operated restaurants, cafés and bars on campus and near the campus | X | x | x | x | x |
| G | Outdoor area at the IMC | Outdoor area around the buildings of the neighboring university of applied sciences | | x | x | | x |
| G | IMC Lounge | Generous students’ lounge of the neighboring university of applied sciences with workplaces and seating areas | X | | | x | X |
| J | The loop | Outdoor space in front of the main entrance, dominated by a huge art installation | | x | | | x |

Characteristics of Informal Learning Spaces at the UWK

Spatial Structure of Informal Learning Spaces

The interviewees mentioned general characteristics of existing informal learning spaces at the UWK campus, which will be described in more detail in the following sections. Regarding **indoor informal learning spaces**, it was discussed that foyers and large corridor areas, which are not only transit spaces, are frequently used as informal learning spaces, although the interviewees also mentioned that their use is somewhat limited, as they also have to meet fire safety requirements and there are recurring conflicts due to occurring noise disturbance in adjoining offices or seminar rooms. It was noted that most existing informal learning spaces on campus were not specifically created and provided by the university as informal learning spaces, but rather existing residual spaces were made usable as informal learning spaces, e.g. with seating located within corridors and foyers. Exceptions are specifically provided spaces in the library area, which are predominantly for focused learning activities, and the ÖH Lounge, which was initiated and co-financed by the students’ union (ÖH) at the UWK and assessed by focus group participants as suitable for both focused and collaborative learning activities:

"[It] wasn't created by the university as a whole to create informal learning space for students, but the ÖH created it to send a signal: we care about our students [...]" (SI2, 2022, ln. 56)

Informal Outdoor Learning Spaces

The interviewees also mentioned several **outdoor spaces** on campus which they identified as informal learning spaces, either because they had observed students using these places or because they consider these places as suitable for individual or collaborative learning activities, although it was also discussed that outdoor spaces cannot be used all year depending on weather conditions. It was reported that the outdoor area is often used by students for different activities in spring and autumn, when it does not rain.

Outdoor learning spaces were assessed to have a great value especially when Wi-Fi connection is possible. Similar to most of the identified informal learning spaces indoors it was assumed by the interviewees that the outdoor area on campus was not created with the aim of establishing informal learning spaces. In this context, the mosaic tile carpets in the central campus outdoor area were mentioned, which were presumably not created primarily for sitting on it but as an artwork.

For the use of outdoor space, participants considered weather protection particularly important, suitable places for learning activities should be shaded as well as protected from the wind.

The following places were mentioned as positive examples at UWK:

- *The green space in front of the library*: it is shaded and often used by students for group work.
- *The outdoor area of the Mensa*: the terrace area has no direct sun in the afternoons and the tables and the chairs from the restaurant can be used during non-opening hours.

Outdoor areas that are not shaded and where it gets too hot on sunny days are named as insufficient. Furthermore, areas that are not protected from the wind.

The following places were mentioned as negative examples at UWK:

- *Pool by the Loop*: under the Loop there is only a very small area that is shaded, this gets smaller from four meters to half a meter depending on the time of day; for most people it is too hot there for studying or chatting, which is not much better in spring or autumn
- *Furniture in front of the IMC*: this area is used by IMC students, but rather not for group work, as it gets very hot there
- *"Tree-benches" in front of the IMC*: this area is not protected from the wind and on windy days it is very draughty there
- *Benches along the campus promenade*: these tend to be used for shorter periods e.g. for eating, but rather not as a potential learning space as it is not shaded; however, in spring it is pleasant to sit there

Basic Needs (Food and Hygiene)

All interview partners agreed that the immediate availability of catering and sanitary facilities is an essential point for the usage of informal learning spaces. The availability and accessibility of **sanitary facilities** within the buildings was generally assessed as good.

Regarding **food and drinks** there are coffee machines available at the ÖH Lounge and in the new building in the C wing. In Campus West, near the seminar rooms, a coffee machine and two water dispensers are also available, which can be accessed 24 hours a day with a student card. There are also snack automats available, which are filled with durable items such as sweets and salty snacks. In addition to the Mensa restaurant and the Café Virginier which are operated by the Mensa GmbH, there are privately operated restaurants, cafés and bars on campus and in the immediate vicinity, such as the 2Stein and the Filmbar.

One issue that was raised several times during the focus group discussion was the limited food supply on campus due to the lack of local suppliers and limited opening hours of restaurants and cafes. Participants reported that the supply is problematic especially on weekends, although courses often take place on weekends and especially Erasmus students want to use the campus also on weekends for learning activities.

It was reported that the problem regarding the supply on campus is mainly related to the difficult predictability of demand, which is caused by the special modular study mode and was intensified by online teaching and home office during the Corona pandemic.

"Quite a problematic story for the Mensa has always been that we could never tell how many people we would have on campus." (FG6, 2022, ln. 587)

The interview partners mentioned that there have been several requests from students for a place where they can heat up (e.g. with a microwave), refrigerate and consume self-prepared food. This applies especially to students with less financial means, e.g. international students from countries with lower wage levels. When setting up a public kitchen for the students, however, issues of liability and hygiene must be taken into account.

Equipment and Furnishing

Technology was perceived as an important supporting element for learning activities by the interviewees, including screens, HDMI ports and internet connection. The availability of analogue **equipment for collaborative tasks** like flipcharts and flipchart pens was also discussed. The availability and accessibility of Wi-Fi was identified as a key element for the usability of learning spaces. According to the interviewees, a continuous and stable internet coverage inside the buildings on the UWK campus should be guaranteed, while coverage outside was rated in need to be improved. This estimation was confirmed with regard to the overall situation at all Austrian universities:

"It cannot be confirmed that every corner of each university is already supplied with WLAN. However, it is on everyone's focus, on everyone's radar." (SI3, 2022, ln. 48)

The focus group discussed different aspects and requirements, which **furnishing** of informal learning spaces should fulfil. Possibilities for retreating into focused individual learning or for group work were mentioned several times as necessary framework conditions for learning activities, in some cases the lack of these was addressed. One participant mentioned that large rooms should be structured and subdivided, not necessarily with walls, since this could also be done with furniture, e.g. a high sofa or acoustic furniture.

As examples of the type/design of furniture for informal learning spaces, the following were mentioned:

- large tables and comfortable armchairs,
- comfortable wooden, stone or steel furniture,
- furthermore, the WLAN should also work in the outdoor spaces.

In order to consciously create informal learning spaces, the room should be designed in a differentiated way, and it should be considered which seating furniture and which internet connection can be purchased, possibly a screen could also be provided.

The ÖH Lounge was mentioned as a positive example at the UWK campus, for which furniture was purchased according to ergonomic aspects. The ÖH has thereby set an example that it cares for the students and creates space for group work.

It was mentioned here that the furniture should have a certain flexibility to be put together in different settings.

Indoor Environmental Quality

Regarding indoor environmental quality, **indoor air quality** was seen as very important within educational spaces in general. Thus, it is essential that the rooms are sufficiently ventilated.

Good **acoustics** are considered important especially in larger rooms which different groups of students may want to use for collaborative learning activities. As a positive example at the UWK acoustic furniture and acoustic booths with tables and benches were mentioned, e.g. in the ÖH Lounge and in the foyer of the library, which were bought especially to improve the acoustics and for sound insulation.

Some areas at the UWK campus were mentioned as negative examples, where the use of space for informal learning activities is limited by poor acoustic conditions:

- *Reading area within the library:* since the entrance area with the information desk and the reading room are not separated, this repeatedly leads to noise disturbances in the reading area.
- *Outdoor space in front of the entrance at Campus West:* the access was restricted after neighbouring residents complained about noise disturbance.
- *Corridors and halls in the old and new building:* there are recurring conflicts, when students use these for group work or for taking phone calls, due to occurring noise disturbance in adjoining offices or seminar rooms.
- *Middle section of the old building:* on each floor there is a foyer with artwork, posters or information boards. There are also a few areas with seating furniture, but staff in the adjoining offices are highly sensitive to people talking there as it is very loud and reverberant.

Good **lighting conditions** were mentioned as important for informal learning spaces, although the requirements strongly depend on the respective rooms and how they are used. Protection from glare and direct sunlight was addressed for both indoor and outdoor spaces. The green space in front of the library was given as an example of positive lighting conditions outside, as it is shaded and often used for group work. Inside, the negative example given was that the blinds in the library, which cannot be controlled by the students or library staff

themselves (they need to contact the facility management and ask to have them adjusted), which means that especially during summertime some reading places can only be used to a limited extent or are very uncomfortable. Regarding **temperature** it was mentioned that in general areas, which are getting too hot in summer are used less by the students.

Design Quality and Attractiveness

Design quality and attractiveness of informal learning spaces at the UWK were discussed especially in connection with opportunities for **privacy and retreat**, as well as **protection from distraction and disturbance** and an **atmosphere of well-being and comfort**. A possible discomfort due to a lack of privacy and visual protection in some of the existing informal learning spaces was discussed:

"I would find it very disturbing that the stream of visitors has to pass through. It's just a walkway and [...] you still notice it when you're sitting inside, and people walk by. [...] you sit in the display. (FG5, 2022, ln. 870-872)

It was mentioned that it would be important to have niches and areas for retreat in large indoor spaces, but also outdoors. The lack of niches and visually protected areas in the campus outdoor area was associated with a reduced quality of stay:

"The entire outdoor area of the campus is designed so plainly that you can't find a place where you feel comfortable, where you say: I'm going to stand under a tree, or towards a tree, where somehow a sense of space is created. [...] You move around in the area and never have the feeling that you want to settle down, that it's a bit cosy. [...] Everything is so slick that you rush through the campus and then you're already out in the back again." (FG6, 2022, ln. 856-863)

The use of corridors and halls with high foot traffic as informal learning spaces was considered problematic by several participants due to the resulting distraction and disturbance:

"I think that if you want to study with concentration [...] you want to have peace and quiet and not have someone constantly walking by where you are distracted." (SI4, 2022, ln. 109)

Furthermore, it was also mentioned that informal learning spaces should be inviting to motivate students to visit and to use them.

Usability of Informal Learning Spaces

Thematised Aspects of Inclusivity

Regarding inclusivity, the interview partners distinguished between students with **special needs due to physical impairments** or due to **private obligations such as childcare** and **international students** (e.g. Erasmus exchange students) whose possibilities and requirements can differ from those of typical UWK students, e.g. due to their financial possibilities but also because they are on campus for the whole semester and not only for blocked attendance phases, which is the typical study mode for most of the non-traditional part-time students at the UWK.

Online and hybrid teaching and learning offers were seen as a great chance for inclusivity by the participants. If courses are offered in hybrid mode, students can decide whether they

want to come to campus or even participate if they do not have the possibility to come to campus due to physical impairments or spatial distances.

"I believe that hybrid formats will have a very inclusive effect on our teaching offers [...] because it increases the flexibility, i.e. there are no more travelling times, which should not be underestimated. I can also react much more spontaneously when I have problems, when I am responsible for people, care or children, and I can possibly also look at the content asynchronously and this flexibility is a great opportunity for a much more inclusive teaching offer." (SI2, 2022, In 110 - 112).

The interview partners stated that students with physical impairments will choose their courses according to their individual needs, their choice therefore often falls on distance learning. The question arose in which way online and hybrid teaching and learning formats could work for hearing and visually impaired students. One of the interview partners mentioned that this even works better than analogue:

"It works better, because they have their individual digital and technologically enhanced learning environment, e.g. when they want to tune in they put the signal acoustically directly to the hearing aid. You can hardly offer such high spatial accessibility." (FG6, 2022, In. 956)

Since the UWK is a university for continuing education, there is an above-average proportion of students with childcare obligations. The following examples were given regarding particular needs of this students' group:

- *Retreat areas for students with infants or toddlers:* during the focus group it was discussed that there is a lack of suitable retreat areas at the UWK for students with infants or toddlers, e.g. for breastfeeding and changing nappies.
- *Childcare on campus:* although according to the participants there might be a need campus the existing university kindergarten (Campus Kids) is only available for staff and not for students due to its limited capacity.

Flexibility

Regarding flexibility, it was pointed out that hybridity will make teaching and learning more flexible in general. One interviewee described increasing flexibility as a general trend in society, which also impacts teaching and learning.

Regarding informal learning spaces different possible approaches were described to enable flexibility: either **through flexible, movable furniture** or by **providing different settings** of informal learning spaces that can be accessed and used in a flexible way and don't have to be rearranged for different activities. This can be areas with places and furniture suitable for groupwork and with bunks or niches that are acoustically shielded, where focused individual work can be done without disturbance. At the same time, it should be possible to adapt to ever-changing needs, and the extent to which this is possible depends on the location and the equipment of these areas.

Circulation and Length of Use

The interviewees were not able to provide specific information regarding circulation and duration of use of informal learning spaces. However, the length of stay and use of informal learning spaces was repeatedly linked to their attractiveness and "atmosphere".

"... it's not so inviting that you sit there for a long time." (SI1, 2022, In. 28)
"... because of the coffee house feeling [...] people like to stay longer there." (SI1, 2022, In. 32)

One interview partner gave an example from a school building at an educational campus in Vienna. Here it turned out that the length of stay depends on the equipment of the areas and thus can be controlled to a certain level.

Accessibility and Barrier Free Design

Focus group and interview participants reported that great efforts have been made in the recent years to ensure a high level of **physical accessibility and barrier free design** in higher education buildings in Austria in general as well as on the campus of the UKW, which is also regulated by existing legal requirements:

"To give a specific example, there must not be any higher education building where a wheelchair user cannot get in." (SI3, 2022, In. 60)

Measures to improve accessibility on the campus in general included a tactile guidance system, wheelchair-accessible entrances to buildings and seminar rooms, disabled toilets, mobile support systems for people with impaired hearing and additional safety measures in the event of evacuation. At the same time, during the focus group discussion, several situations on campus were identified and described where barrier-free access, especially to informal learning spaces, is difficult or does not work properly:

- *Self-opening doors at the main entrance* were described as not completely barrier-free. When they are locked students can open it with their key button, but the door opens so briefly that it is very difficult to get in with a wheelchair.
- *Self-closing doors* at the foyer of the library require a lot of force to open and are difficult to pass even with a trolley or a larger package in hand.
- For the *entrance to the library's reading room on the 1st floor* wheelchair users would have to take the lift outside of the building to get onto the balustrade, where the door into the building may not open. Once they are inside the building again the glass door to the reading room might be too narrow for wheelchairs to pass.
- *Existing glass walls* might be problematic if they are not marked sufficiently, since visually impaired people could run into them and get injured.
- For the *outdoor space* it was noted that any place which cannot be reached by a paved path is also not barrier-free, as grass or cobblestones or steep paths are not accessible for wheelchair users.

The complexity of the topic of accessible studying and barrier free design was addressed several times. It was pointed out that different physical or mental impairments can lead to very different special needs and that it is not possible to respond to all of them in advance:

"There is no such thing as the 'standard impaired' or disabled person. One has a wheelchair, the other is blind, the other is hearing impaired or limited in mobility or suffers from social anxiety. [...] accessibility is thus a very huge and indefinable topic." (FG1, 2022, In 682)

It was emphasised that it was necessary and sensible to create a certain degree of accessibility and above that to react with individual solutions to the specific needs of affected persons.

Regarding **administrative accessibility** at the UWK **opening hours** and **access authorisation** were discussed as the two main topics. Limited accessibility due to limited opening hours was mentioned e.g. for the spacious indoor area of the Mensa restaurant, which is locked except during lunchtime and thus cannot be used by students for individual or collaborative learning activities. The reason given was that the operating company feared that there would be littering, and that the furniture could be displaced or removed. The spatial design also plays a role here, as the food serving area, which for hygienic reasons should not be entered by external persons, cannot be separated from the rest of the room.

Regarding access authorisation it was mentioned that generally accessible building areas on campus have long opening hours and are freely accessible even on weekends. Students have access to these areas with their student's card even outside opening hours, which means that some informal learning spaces, sanitary facilities, vending machines and water dispensers are available for them all around the clock. The ÖH lounge was mentioned as an example, which is also frequently used on weekends for learning activities, especially by international students.

One interviewee mentioned the WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business) as an example, which specifically provides different informal learning spaces that are accessible for students with their student cards and can be used completely on their own.

Comfort

With regard to comfort, the focus group participants agreed that UWK students generally have high expectations and wish for a comfortable studying environment, since most of them study part-time while working and want to perceive the presence phases on campus as "quality-time":

"Students say: I sacrifice two years of my holiday. I sacrifice the time I can be with my children, with my wife, with my friends, with parents, whatever. I have to cut back a bit at work, I can't have a career now... That means, when I'm here, I expect to feel comfortable. These students spend two years of their life - all their holidays, all their time off, everything. So, they just want to have this feel-good atmosphere." (FG1, 2022, In 992)

Regarding comfort in informal learning spaces at UWK, it was mentioned that consideration should be given to how spaces can be designed more consciously to create a pleasant atmosphere. In this context aspects of indoor environmental quality and the need for **privacy and retreat**, as well as **protection from distraction and disturbance** were discussed (see also the chapters Indoor Environmental Quality and Design Quality and Attractiveness). For example, similar objects as the acoustic booths in the foyer of the library could be used on all levels to make the space much more usable and to structure open areas.

The students' lounge at IMC was mentioned as an example of a comfortable informal learning space, which offers the following:

- seating groups with monitors, where group work is also possible,
- connections for laptops

- monitors for group work
- individual study places
- long opening hours

Regarding comfort in the outdoor space at the UWK campus it was suggested to consider how it could be used even more actively and consciously.

Assessment of Capacities

Due to the special format of the attendance phases of typical courses offered at the UWK (face-to-face courses are usually held from morning to evening in blocks over several days or a week) the need for informal learning spaces on campus was generally not considered to be very high but rather of relevance for certain student groups:

"Since there are no standing times in between courses, it is not so important to provide informal learning spaces. At the end of the day, students go to their hotel room, to a winery or home. However, Erasmus students probably have a very high demand for spaces where they can withdraw and study together." (SI2, 2022, In 62)

It was reported that there are a lot of requests from Erasmus students or international students to use the ÖH Lounge for learning activities, especially in autumn and winter, when the outdoor area cannot be used. It was assumed that this is related to their living situation, since they often stay in shared flats without the required retreat area, or the necessary technical equipment, or too far from campus to go home for breaks between classes.

"We are receiving a lot of requests whether they can enter our meeting room, because the ÖH lounge is often used for group work and always full during normal operation times..." (FG8, 2022, In. 737)

One interviewee mentioned that capacity is also a quite subjective issue of the respective universities:

"No university will say that it already has enough of everything. There are always good to really good ideas about what all could be needed." (SI3, 2022, In. 56)

Problems and Challenges from Users' Perspective

Most frequently mentioned problems or challenges from students' perspective with respect to the use of informal learning spaces at the UWK campus relate to a **lack of information** or communication **about availability, administrative accessibility and the authorisation of use**. In the focus group it was mentioned several times that students often do not know that their student card is also a key card which would allow them to access to buildings and infrastructure on campus 24 hours a day:

"You can actually always get in with the student card, but they don't know it's a key card." (FG6, 2022, In. 543)

Since there are three different higher education institutions on the campus, there is neither a general overview of existing informal learning spaces available for students, nor an information about who is officially authorized to use which spatial resources:

"Those of our students who know about it can use the students' lounge at the IMC, because no one will say anything against it..." (FG6, 2022, In. 335)

A lack of information or unclear and difficult to access information was also mentioned several times in connection with opening hours (especially of catering areas) and the availability of existing informal learning spaces on campus:

"They have changed their opening hours again and again and you don't know if they are open or not, that's difficult." (SI4, 2022, In. 67)

"If students ask, they will probably get an answer. The question is: Do all lecturers know what opportunities are available on campus?" (SI4, 2022, In. 151)

In addition, the following possible problems and challenges for students were mentioned by the interview partners:

- *User conflicts*: which could occur if too few informal spaces are available. Some students could take over more of these spaces and as a result other students cannot find a suitable place for their learning activities.
- *Group work in hybrid teaching formats*: students are forced to use the IT connection for collaborative tasks, so even if they are on campus, they still have to sit in front of their laptops.
- *Internet connection in the library*: While enrolled students can connect via eduroam, guest users like seminar participants often have problems connecting to the wireless network.
- *Copying and printing facilities*: Especially international students would need the possibility for printing documents or to copy documents. However, there are not enough of these facilities on campus and the copy shop has limited opening hours.

Challenges for Management and Administration

Financial limitations were mentioned several times as a barrier for the provision of informal learning spaces. As formal learning spaces, such as seminar rooms or laboratories, as well as office space for staff are prioritised, there is often no budget left over for the provision and equipment of informal learning spaces.

"At the end of the day, there's a line somewhere where you say now the money's gone and now ... we've done this, but we couldn't do that." (SI4, 2022, In. 295)

One interviewee mentioned that sometimes the difficulty also arises from the fact that budget cannot be shifted between different categories. If, for example, there is money left from the budget for construction, it isn't possible to purchase furniture with it.

The following problems and challenges at the UWK were mentioned from a **management perspective**:

- *High variation in the number of students and staff on campus*: Due to modular study format and irregular presence times of most offered courses at the UWK, the number of students and staff on campus can vary a lot and is difficult to predict. The increase in online and hybrid formats since the Corona pandemic further intensified this challenge, making the efficient use and management of available space resources more difficult.
- *Deficient booking system*: Inadequate or incorrect information in the room booking system makes the efficient use and provision of spatial resources difficult. In some cases, there would be enough free space in the building where students could work

by themselves, but it is not clear if the seminar rooms are occupied, as according to the booking system they are fully booked, but in real they seem to be unused.

- *Provision of catering and spatial infrastructure for food consumption:* The fact that the number of people present on campus is often not predictable also affects the provision of food, as the quantities purchased can vary greatly from day to day. Some students would also like to bring their own food and would wish for a possibility to heat it up and a place where they can consume it. On the part of the administration, however, there are major concerns regarding hygiene and safety and the associated expenses.
- *Informing lecturers about formal and informal learning spaces:* Many lecturers at the UWK, who are often externals, have little information about the available spatial infrastructure and equipment. It was mentioned, that if they had a better insight into the available resources, they could orient their didactic concepts accordingly.
- *Coping with the existing conditions and adaptation to the actual needs:* Interviewees mentioned that the limits of what is feasible are always reached with regard to technology, additional electricity, cabling. They suggested it should be found out which of these offers are taken up by the students and how existing conditions could be optimised step by step.

The following points were raised as general challenges regarding **regulatory aspects** of informal learning spaces in higher education:

- *Maintenance and control of informal learning spaces:* Especially for universities, which are very open to the public, it was suggested, that a certain degree of monitoring and social control can play an important role for the maintenance of informal learning spaces. However, students should not get the feeling that they are observed all the time. Furthermore, it should be also considered, to what extent students from other universities are allowed to use the provided spaces.
- *Regulatory control in the case of conflicts of use:* a certain amount of control should be there, but it should not be too over-regulated, as this would mean that it would no longer be informal, and the spontaneity would be lost.

From a technical perspective, **fire safety aspects** were mentioned as a frequent challenge for the provision of informal learning spaces, e.g., if existing residual areas are used as informal learning spaces or through the necessary securing of fire engine access routes in the outdoor space.

Although the UWK, like many Austrian universities, uses a listed historic building, aspects of monument protection were not perceived as a barrier for the provision of informal learning spaces.

Awareness and Strategies on Informal Learning Spaces

No specific strategies related to **well-being and informal learning spaces** were mentioned in the focus groups and interviews, and no explicit link was made between the availability and design of learning spaces and student well-being. However, a wide range of requirements for informal learning spaces and their qualities were described in detail by the participants (see chapters Characteristics of Informal Learning Spaces at the UWK and Usability of Informal Learning Spaces).

With regard to the **provision of informal learning spaces**, it was discussed whether desk sharing concepts for staff members could free up space for the provision of informal learning spaces. In this context, it was also suggested whether rooms and areas for different activities could be provided to be used by both students and staff although concerns were expressed that this would lead to strong opposition from the staff.

The **use of formal learning spaces** as informal learning spaces, e.g., by making unused seminar rooms available to students for learning activities outside of lectures, was discussed as an option for the future. Among other things, security concerns and a conflict of objectives between an open house policy and freely accessible seminar rooms were mentioned:

“The issue is that we always try to make an open house as UWK. On the other hand, of course, the seminar rooms are locked. Maybe you could think about generally closing the buildings from the outside, the students have an access card, and you can say ok, the student, or the student group, can also book a seminar room.” (SI4, 2022, In. 177)

The interviewees also discussed what implications this would have regarding administration, e.g. the need for an adequate room booking system, as well as the design and equipment of the seminar rooms:

“Then, for me, the learning room and the seminar room no longer have a school atmosphere, where I put in desks, but it has a lounge character.” (FG6, 2022, In. 987)

Pandemic and Digitalisation

Expected Impact of the Pandemic on Learning and Teaching

Regarding **the role of digitalisation in the use of learning spaces** all interviewees agree that there will not be a switch back to the way learning and teaching was before the pandemic. They also emphasised that informal learning spaces will be important in the future, especially for networking and the personal exchange of students:

“Digitisation will remain a major issue. The informal places at the university are nevertheless incredibly important so that students can network with each other there.” (SI1, 2022, In time 27:00)

It was mentioned that the **design of hybrid formats** will be an important topic in the future. The questions were raised how hybrid learning and teaching offers can be designed in a way that participation feels as natural as possible, how this can be realised without long preparations or technical problems, and how technology can be used so that it looks and feels good.

In the interviews, it was also mentioned that the students' willingness to travel is no longer as high as it used to be. Those students who have to travel far to the campus or people with disabilities prefer to attend courses online. It is assumed that this has ecological and partly cost-related reasons (hotel has to be paid, time with family is reduced). It is expected that students will want to decide for themselves whether they come to the university or attend courses from home.

The interviewees believe that the desire and **need for spatial flexibility** has increased. In this context, the desire for multifunctional rooms is expected to increase as well. In the future,

seminar rooms must be designed in such a way that they can be used more easily for group work, and it is also easy for lecturers to hold an online seminar or hybrid courses.

In this context, the flexible use of the spatial infrastructure was also addressed, for example with topics such as the rental of lecture halls for social and cultural events, and the idea of an “open university”:

“That’s my hypothesis how a successful campus of the future can be designed, as an area for encounter, you can use some of the spaces in a hybrid way, you can make them smaller or larger, they are open, inspiring, and thus can lead to innovation and bring society together. A very open space [...] where you feel invited to use this space, where you always have transitions from public spaces to semi-public spaces, which can be used by students or by the university [...] that also plays an important role in informal learning and enables a transdisciplinary research process.” (SI2, 2022, ln. 82)

Use of Informal Learning Spaces in the Future

With regard to the use of informal learning spaces in the future, the following expectations, visions and ideas were expressed by the focus group participants and interview partners:

- *Need for physical learning spaces will remain:* Even though digital learning will increase face-to-face networking will still be important. The need of physical places for learning together and to be able to work digitally will increase. Power connections and WIFI should be always available. If there are also retreat areas there, the university could then also be used more as a daily place to stay. It might be necessary to increase the quality and area of spaces for collaborative activities.
- *Informal learning spaces for group work:* Informal learning spaces could be used much more for group work activities, also during lectures and courses, which might also help to free spatial resources, since no extra rooms for breakout sessions will have to be booked. Students can find their inspiring corners in informal learning spaces.
- *Flexible use of rooms:* Rooms should be able to be used flexibly and hybrid. People should be able to connect online when they are not on site. The spaces should support to face-to-face meetings and lead to innovation.
- *The ideal learning environment* would be one where there are sufficient informal learning spaces around a classic seminar room where students can connect in a hybrid way. For example: boxes of two, four, six could be placed along corridors for students and teachers to use individually. These boxes should include a screen as standard, with a camera for working in small groups.
- *Increased use of laboratories also for research after lectures:* The need for laboratories can increase, which are not only used in the context of a lecture but in which research is also carried out afterwards.
- *Fewer large lecture halls will be needed:* the current large lecture halls (such as an Audimax) will remain, the rest will probably be converted for other use or considered differently in new buildings.
- *In renovations and new building projects, a proportion of informal learning spaces will be further expanded,* namely both in the quality of a meeting room and in the quality of a laboratory.

- *Learning spaces will be designed to create a more informal atmosphere:* so that they can be used for lectures, for group work but also in an informal context, suitable for follow-up phases. Therefore, learning or seminar rooms might have more of a lounge character instead of a school character.
- *Feel-good zones could be created:* like a lounge with a coffee machine, water dispenser, maybe even a fridge, with several seminar rooms arranged around this zone.
- *Learning at different locations:* courses might take place in different cities and countries and students will meet anywhere to participate in online or hybrid courses.
- *Face-to-face time will be used more for informal exchange* and interaction while focused and collaborative learning activities will move more to the virtual space with synchronous and asynchronous online teaching and learning offers.

Conclusion

In our desk search on policy documents, stakeholder networks and best practices, and data collected through interviews and focus groups with stakeholders related to the provision, administration and management of learning spaces at the University for Continuing Education Krems, it became evident that, informal learning spaces and their role in students' learning and well-being have not received much attention so far in the Austrian higher education system and at the University for Continuing Education Krems. Especially the stakeholder interviews underlined the low number of indoor and outdoor informal learning spaces, which can be used without limitations and that pertain to students' needs and their well-being, especially for different types of activities and tasks. No consideration was given to plan and design spaces to cater basic needs such as food. This emerged as an issue concerning limited food alternatives with short opening hours and lack of a common kitchen for students where they can warm up their meals and eat and meet with other students. Lack of required furniture and equipment open to student usage is another limitation on usage of informal learning spaces. Inclusivity is regarded as an important issue for the campus planning and administration, yet there still seem to be some existing barriers concerning physical and administrative accessibility of informal learning spaces on campus.

On the other hand, the non-regular physical presence of the mainly non-traditional UWK students on campus due to the nature of their studies is one of the issues that make the planning and design of spaces and the catering of needs such as food supply challenging, compared to traditional higher education studies. Thus, the generalization of our case is quite limited due to these structural differences.

Last but not least, it is important to underline that while inclusivity has been gaining more attention at the policy discourse and practice, the role of informal learning spaces, especially due to Covid-19 Pandemic and accelerated digitalization processes at higher education studies, has started to capture attention as well. Hybrid learning formats bring on new conceptualizations of learning spaces and our analysis yielded that awareness is raising concerning planning these hybrid and inclusive spaces.

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Appendix A – Websites and Links

Key Stakeholders in Austria

Provision, Management and Design of Learning Spaces in Higher Education

- Austrian Federal Real Estate Company (Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft - BIG)
<https://www.big.at/>
- FM-Plus Facility Management GmbH
<https://www.fmplus-noe.at/>
- Austrian Institute for School and Sports Facility Construction (Österreichisches Institut für Schul- und Sportstättenbau - ÖISS)
<https://www.oeiss.org/>

Promoting and Supporting of Inclusivity in Higher Education

- Austrian National Union of Students (Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft - ÖH)
<https://www.oeh.ac.at/>
- Consulting Board for Inclusive Education and Special Needs Education of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)
https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulsystem/sa/sp/cb_inklusion.html
- Information page “studying with disabilities” of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) including a list of counselling and service offers at Austrian higher education institutions
<https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Studium/Studieren-mit-Behinderung.html>
- Uniability - Association aiming to improve study and working conditions at higher education institutions for disabled and chronically ill people in Austria
<https://www.uniability.org/>

Engaging with Informal and Non-conventional Learning Spaces

- Research Team Education Workspace (Arbeitsraum Bildung) at the Technical University Vienna
<https://arbeitsraumbildung.at/>
- Association of Education Houses Austria (ARGE Bildungshäuser Österreich – ARGE BHÖ), project “Educational buildings of the future - needs-oriented learning space concepts in adult education”
<https://www.arge-bildungshaeuser.at/aktivitaeten/erasmus-projekte/bildungshaeuser-der-zukunft/>

Informal and Non-conventional Learning Spaces in Austria

Projects and Good Practice Examples

- Open Learning Center Graz (OLC)
<https://erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/ausgabe-35-36/12846-warum-ist-dieser-lern-raum-nur-so-offenc.php>
<https://www.caritas-steiermark.at/hilfe-angebote/flucht-integration/bildungsarbeit/open-learning-center>

- Use of residual space as learning space - University of Graz
<https://erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/ausgabe-35-36/12844-lernraeume-schaffen-wo-kein-platz-ist.php>
- roomTUlearn: seminar rooms at the Technical University Vienna as learning spaces for students for participation in distance learning or as a quiet workplace
<https://www.tuwien.at/studium/lehren-an-der-tuw/zentrales-lehr-und-lernraummanagement/lernraeume>

Tools and Guidance Material

- Seminar Documentation: "Designing Learning Spaces" held by Margret Steixner at the "Verband Österreichischer Gewerkschaftlicher Bildung" in 2015
<https://blog.refak.at/seminardokumentation-lernraeume-gestalten-2/>
- Guidelines for barrier-free events from the office for inclusive education of the Austrian National Union of Students
<https://www.oeh.ac.at/en/referate/office-barrier-free-education>

Scientific Publications

- Gruber, E., & Schmid, K. (Eds.). (2019). *Magazin erwachsenenbildung.at: Vol. 35/36 Lern-und Bildungsräume*. <https://erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/ausgabe-35-36/>



Leitfaden für Fokusgruppeninterviews mit Stakeholdern

**Projektergebnis 1 - Analyse des Länderkontextes:
Verfügbarkeit und Infrastruktur von informellen Lernräumen**

Version: Mai 2022, DE

Leitfaden für die Befragung von Stakeholdern: Neue Ansätze für inklusive informelle Lernräume

Bitte übermitteln Sie den Teilnehmenden vor dem Fokusgruppen-Interview das „Informationsblatt“ zur Studie und die „Einverständniserklärung zur Teilnahme“.

Checkliste für Face-to-Face-Fokusgruppen / Interviews:

- Interview-Leitfaden
- Geräte für Audioaufnahmen
- Einverständniserklärungen (für jede/n TeilnehmerIn)
- Hintergrundfragen (für jede/n TeilnehmerIn)
- Campusplan (mit Hintergrundfragen *oder separat*)
- Buntstifte und/oder Aufkleber zum Markieren von Orten auf dem Campusplan

Checkliste für Online-Fokusgruppen / Interviews:

- Interview-Leitfaden
- Mural Board mit Campusplan und Hintergrundfragen
- Bitten Sie die TeilnehmerInnen, Ihnen die unterschriebene Einverständniserklärung, vor dem Interview, zu schicken.

ALTERNATIVE: Die Einverständniserklärung kann zu Beginn des Gesprächs auf Tonband aufgenommen und transkribiert werden (dabei werden keine Unterschriften gesammelt und gespeichert)!

Sammeln Sie zu Beginn bitte die unterschriebene Einverständniserklärung ein bzw. übermitteln Sie den Teilnehmenden die Einverständniserklärung zur Durchsicht und Signatur im Vorfeld.

Einleitung (5 Min.):

Liebe TeilnehmerInnen,

Vielen Dank, dass Sie sich bereit erklärt haben, an der Umfrage teilzunehmen und sich die Zeit genommen haben, über Ihre Erkenntnisse und Ihre Sichtweise zu diesem Thema zu sprechen. Mit dieser Fokusgruppe (diesem Interview) möchten wir mehr über die informellen Lernräume und deren Nutzung auf Ihrem Campus und in dessen Umgebung erfahren. Unter informellen Lernräumen verstehen wir Orte, die von den Studierenden unabhängig und selbstorganisiert für verschiedene (individuelle oder gemeinschaftliche) Lernaktivitäten außerhalb der Präsenzlehre gewählt werden. Dabei handelt es sich in der Regel um Orte außerhalb von Seminarräumen und Hörsälen, wie z. B. Studierendenlounges, Foyers und Flure, Bibliotheksräume, Cafés oder Plätze im Freien. In dieser Fokusgruppe wollen wir über die folgenden Punkte diskutieren und mehr dazu erfahren:

- Räumliche Merkmale, Verfügbarkeit, Zugänglichkeit, Ausstattung und Infrastruktur von informellen und nicht-konventionellen Lernräumen, die von Ihrer Institution in der Umgebung der Universität zur Verfügung gestellt werden, sowie
- Ihre Ansichten über inklusive und technologisch unterstützte informelle und nicht-konventionelle Lernumgebungen, sowie Ihre Strategien und bestehende Ansätze zur Minderung vorhandener Ungleichheiten zwischen den Studierenden.

Unser Gespräch wird 60 bis 90 Minuten dauern. Zum Schutz Ihrer Privatsphäre möchten wir Sie auf die folgenden Punkte hinweisen, die auch in der Einverständniserklärung angeführt sind:

- 1) Diese Sitzung wird auf Tonband aufgezeichnet und die Aufzeichnungen werden gemäß den europäischen Datenschutzbestimmungen streng vertraulich behandelt.
- 2) Ihr richtiger Name wird nicht verwendet, stattdessen werden wir Pseudonyme benutzen.
- 3) Nur das Projektteam wird Zugang zu den Aufnahmen haben.
- 4) Sie können das Gespräch jederzeit abbrechen.

Ihre Teilnahme ist für unsere Forschung sehr wertvoll. Wenn Sie weitere Fragen zu unserer Forschung oder zum Ablauf der Fokusgruppen (Interviews) haben, zögern Sie bitte nicht, diese zu stellen.

Audioaufnahme starten

Fragen:

Hintergrund (10 Min.): Wenn Sie die Fokusgruppe/das Interview persönlich durchführen, verteilen Sie den Campusplan und die folgenden Hintergrundfragen. Wenn Sie die Interviews online durchführen, teilen Sie den Link zum Mural Board mit dem Campusplan und den folgenden Hintergrundfragen.

1. Bitte geben Sie uns einen Einblick zu Ihrer Person:

- a) Was ist Ihre Position?
- b) In welcher Abteilung sind Sie tätig?
- c) Was sind Ihre Aufgaben und Verantwortlichkeiten?

Informelle Lernräume (30 Min.): In diesem Teil unserer Diskussion werden wir die räumlichen Merkmale, die Verfügbarkeit, die Zugänglichkeit, die Ausstattung und die Infrastruktur von informellen und nicht-konventionellen Lernräumen untersuchen, die von Ihrer Institution am Campus und in der Umgebung der Universität bereitgestellt werden. Bitte markieren Sie die am häufigsten genutzten/auffälligsten informellen Lernorte auf dem Plan mit den Aufklebern.

2. Welche Art von informellen Lernräumen gibt es am Campus und in der Umgebung, die für Studierende zur Verfügung stehen?

3. Was sind die Merkmale dieser Räume in Bezug auf

- a) Licht, Akustik, Temperatur, Belüftung,
- b) Möblierung (Farbe/Material/Nutzung), technische Infrastruktur (einschließlich W-LAN, Steckdosen, etc.),
- c) Zugang zu Nahrungsmitteln und Getränken sowie zu Hygiene (sanitäre Infrastruktur, Sauberkeit, etc.)?

4. Wie werden diese Räume von Studierenden genutzt? Welche Räume werden für konzentrierte Lernaktivitäten genutzt? Welche Räume werden für kollaborative (gemeinschaftliche/gruppenbezogene) Lernaktivitäten genutzt?

(Hinweis: Hier können die TeilnehmerInnen aufgefordert werden, diese Orte mit verschiedenen Farben auf dem Plan oder im Mural Board zu markieren)

5. Im folgenden Teil möchten wir Ihre Meinung in Bezug auf die Nutzbarkeit der informellen Lernräume an Ihrem Campus in Bezug auf *Kapazität, Komfort, Zugänglichkeit, Nutzungsdauern, Adaptierbarkeit, Diversität und Flexibilität* erfahren:
- a) Gibt es Anforderungen (verwaltungstechnische, finanzielle, regulatorische) für die Nutzung dieser Orte?
 - b) Reicht die Kapazität für die Anzahl der Studierenden aus?
 - c) Sind diese Orte komfortabel und förderlich für das Wohlbefinden und das Lernen der Studierenden?
 - d) Wie zugänglich sind diese Orte in Bezug auf Barrierefreiheit und die administrative Zugänglichkeit? Sind Sie der Meinung, dass alle Studierenden die gleichen Chancen haben, diese Räume zu erreichen und zu nutzen? Wenn nein, warum nicht?
 - e) Wie flexibel und anpassungsfähig sind diese informellen Lernorte?
 - f) Wie hoch ist die durchschnittliche Aufenthaltsdauer/Nutzung innerhalb eines Tages in diesen informellen Lernräumen?
6. Wir sind an Ihrer Meinung bezüglich möglicher Schwierigkeiten oder Herausforderungen in Bezug auf die genannten informellen Lernräume interessiert, und zwar sowohl aus der Perspektive des Managements, der Finanzierung und der Verwaltung als auch aus Sicht der Studierenden.
- a) Welche Probleme oder Herausforderungen sind Ihnen in Bezug auf Regelungen und Vorschriften, sowie in Bezug auf das Management dieser informellen Lernräume bekannt?
 - b) Welche Probleme oder Herausforderungen sind Ihnen in Bezug auf finanzielle und administrative Fragen bekannt?
 - c) Welche Probleme und Herausforderungen sind Ihnen aus der Sicht der Studierenden bekannt?

Strategien zur Steigerung der Attraktivität, der Nutzung und des Zugangs zu diesen Orten (30 Min.): Im nächsten Teil unserer Diskussion möchten wir Ihre Perspektiven zu inklusiven und technologisch unterstützenden informellen und nicht-konventionellen Lernumgebungen sowie Ihre Strategien und etablierten Ansätze zur Minderung bestehender Ungleichheiten unter Studierenden erfahren. Wir möchten ebenfalls über zukünftige Pläne sprechen.

7. Gibt es bereits Strategien zur Steigerung der Attraktivität, der Nutzung und des Zugangs zu diesen Orten?
- a) Wenn ja, welche sind das? Können Sie uns mehr über diese Strategien erzählen?
 - b) Wenn nein, haben Sie Pläne, die Zugänglichkeit, die Nutzung und den Komfort zu verbessern, um das Lernen und das Wohlbefinden der Studierenden zu fördern?

8. Während der Pandemie fanden viele Kurse und Lernaktivitäten online statt. Wir haben gesehen, dass die Digitalisierung Veränderungen für die Zukunft des formellen und informellen Lernens mit sich bringt. Welche Erwartungen und Präferenzen haben Sie im Hinblick auf die Zeit nach der Pandemie und die fortschreitende Digitalisierung in Bezug auf die Nutzung von informellen Lernräumen?
- a) Erwarten Sie, dass Lernen und Lehren wie vor der Pandemie ablaufen wird? Welche Veränderungen erwarten Sie?
 - b) Wahrscheinlich werden auch in Zukunft mehr Kurse online abgehalten werden. Das bedeutet, dass Seminarräume weniger genutzt werden. Denken Sie, dass Seminarräume für informelle Lernaktivitäten genutzt werden könnten?
 - c) Wie lauten Ihre Zukunftsprognosen (Visionen) in Bezug auf informelle Lernräume, insbesondere auf dem Campus (veränderte Bedeutung, verstärkte / andere Nutzung durch Studierende usw.)?
9. Gibt es noch etwas, das Sie hinzufügen möchten?

Abschluss (5 Min.): Vielen Dank für Ihre Zeit und Ihren Beitrag zu unserer Studie. Es war eine bereichernde Diskussion. Wenn Sie die Transkriptionen einsehen möchten, stellen wir sie Ihnen gerne zur Verfügung. Bei Interesse lassen wir Ihnen auch gerne den Abschlussbericht zukommen.

Audioaufnahme beenden