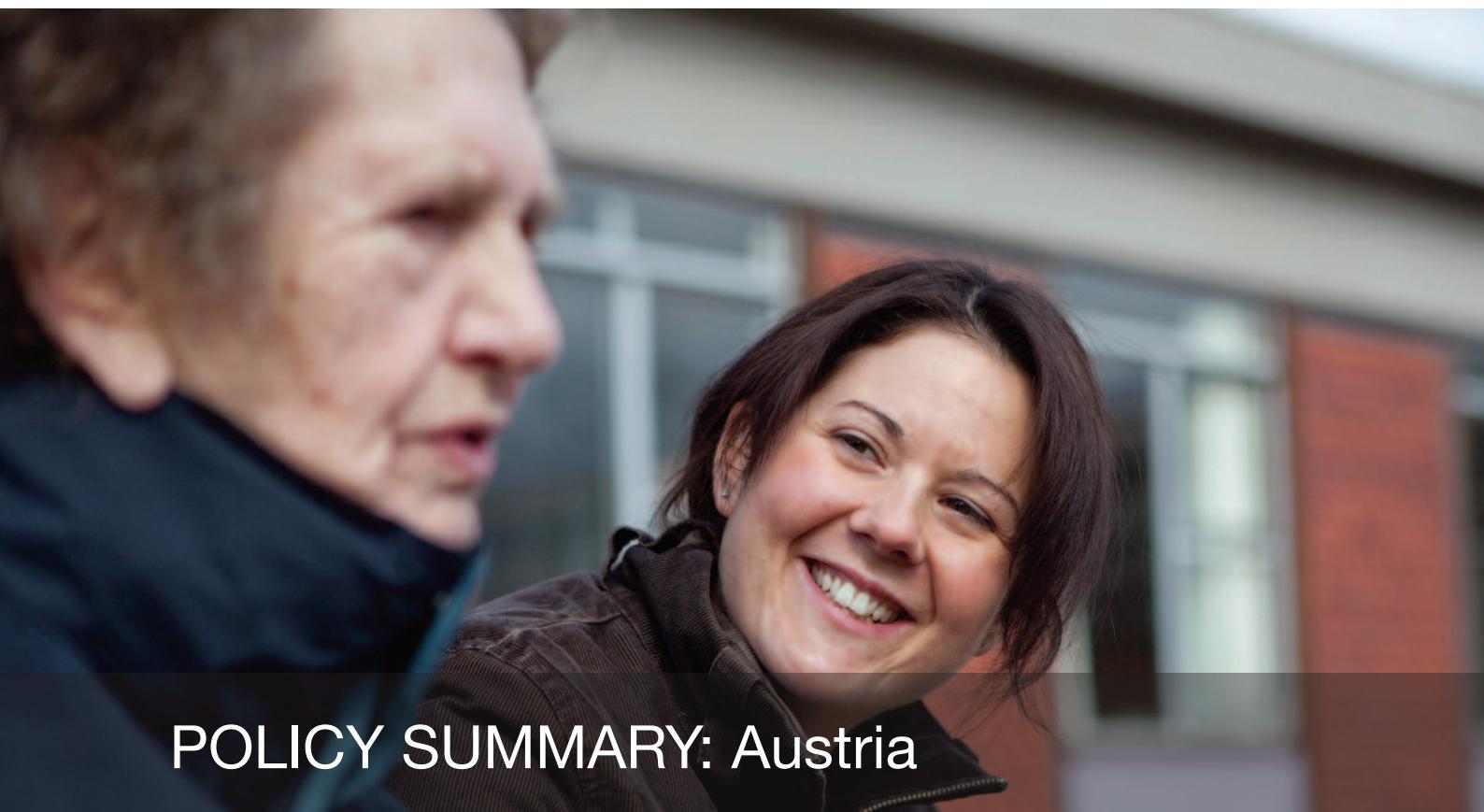


Quality and cost-effectiveness in long-term care and dependency prevention



POLICY SUMMARY: Austria

Introducing a voluntary quality certification system in LTC

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Policy theme	Innovative care models/technologies to improve outcomes for people with LTC needs
Design and implementation level	National design, national implementation
Policy objective	To spread quality management and improve quality assurance in LTC, in particular, in care homes
Start date – End date	2012 (following a pilot phase 2010–2012)

Aims

To establish a third-party certification procedure for all care homes that have introduced one or other of the accredited quality management systems (EFQM, ISO, E-Qalín) and promote quality management through certification.

Implementation

During a pilot phase (2010-2012), NQZ auditors were trained. They were recruited from 'peers', i.e. care home managers with skills in quality management, and auditors from classic quality management systems (ISO, EFQM). A number of care homes volunteered to go through the procedure of certification, based on an audit of self-assessed criteria of structures and procedures, and related performance indicators showing individual results.

Following an amendment of the Austrian 'Senior's Law' the NQZ organization was established to roll out the system across all care homes in Austria. However, only a small number of care homes have chosen to get (re-)certified. There are discussions to extend the NQZ to home care providers and further attempts to extend coverage.

Target Group

All residential care and nursing homes in Austria

Eligibility criteria

Only care homes with an accredited quality management system may apply for certification

Resources

The NQZ organization (administration, auditors, training) is funded by the Austrian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection; individual certifications of care homes are co-funded by regional governments.

Auditors are trained, selected and paid by the NQZ organization, which has only a few employed staff.

Performance assessment and monitoring	The NQZ is supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. There are regular meetings of auditors to further improve the procedure.	A research project is currently assessing the results and impact.
Evidence of success (outcomes, quality, satisfaction, awareness)	Too early to judge. However, only a few care homes have applied (about 60). As these 'pioneers' are quite well motivated most of them have been assessed positively, but more awareness-raising measures will have to be developed.	
Transferability/uniqueness	The voluntary character of the NQZ is relatively distinctive (although underpinned by the quality assurance visits by regional authorities, which continue). A similar system could be implemented in other countries.	The question is if care homes with a classic quality management system (ISO, EFQM) will 'buy in', as these systems also offer an external audit and system-related certification.
Is this an emergent practice? (degree of innovation)	Yes, the innovation consists in the specific adaptation of the certificate (criteria, performance indicators) to LTC facilities, rather than providing just a certification of the quality management system (as in ISO and EFQM).	
Sustainability	Targeting and regulating eligibility criteria may contribute to the sustainability of benefit schemes.	
Academic literature on this action	No specific studies available for Austria.	
Documents	Website of the NQZ Organization (German only): www.nqz-austria.at/	