



Ombudsstelle
für Studierende
hochschulombudsmann.at
hochschulombudsfrau.at

Looking Back: **Pioneering Past** Austria / Europe

Josef Leidenfrost
Austrian Student Ombudsman



Austria 1997

Monocausal Reason: **Money**

- meeting Maastricht Criteria in 1996 requested budget cuts, also in HE, increased pressure on social support funds, student protests, coincidentally deregulation of study laws
- → 1997 *Studierendenanwaltschaft* (Student Advocate) for information, complaints, for “cooling down”

Austria 2001: **Money Again**

- on the eve before reintroducing tuition fees
- ***Studierendenanwaltschaft NEU***: Tasks
 - competent treatment of complaints about maladministration and shortcomings in matters concerning studies
 - regular reports on inquiries and on steps and measures taken
 - implementation of an institutionalized communication with representatives of relevant organizations and groups



Austria 2011/2012: Enshrined in Law

Higher Education Quality Assurance Act, Section 8, Student Ombudsman

§ 31.

(1) An office that is not bound by any instructions and provides ombuds services, information, and other services for students at higher education institutions shall be established at the Federal Ministry of Science and Research. Hereinafter students also mean persons interested in beginning a degree programme as well as former students.

(2)

The student ombudsman shall provide information and services in the area of higher education on the topics and cases it is concerned with. For this matter, it shall collaborate with the student representatives and shall periodically organise events for the purpose of sharing information with institutions that deal with matters relevant to students.

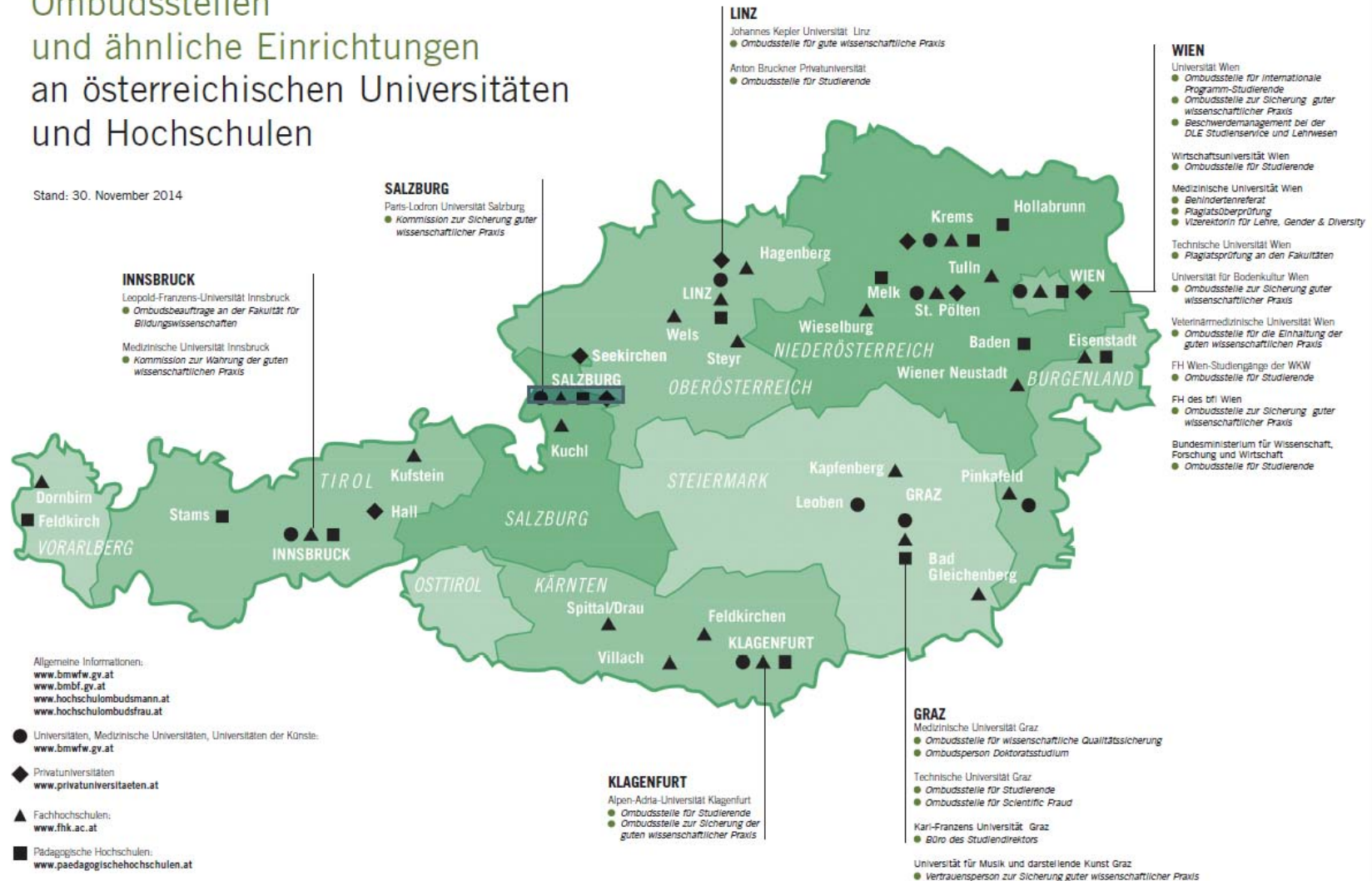
(3)

Each student shall have the right to turn to the student ombudsman for information and advice on matters related to degree programmes, teaching, examinations, services, and administration at higher education institutions. Each such inquiry shall be dealt with by the student ombudsman. The student and the educational institution shall be informed about the results as well as, if applicable, any measures taken.



Ombudsstellen und ähnliche Einrichtungen an österreichischen Universitäten und Hochschulen

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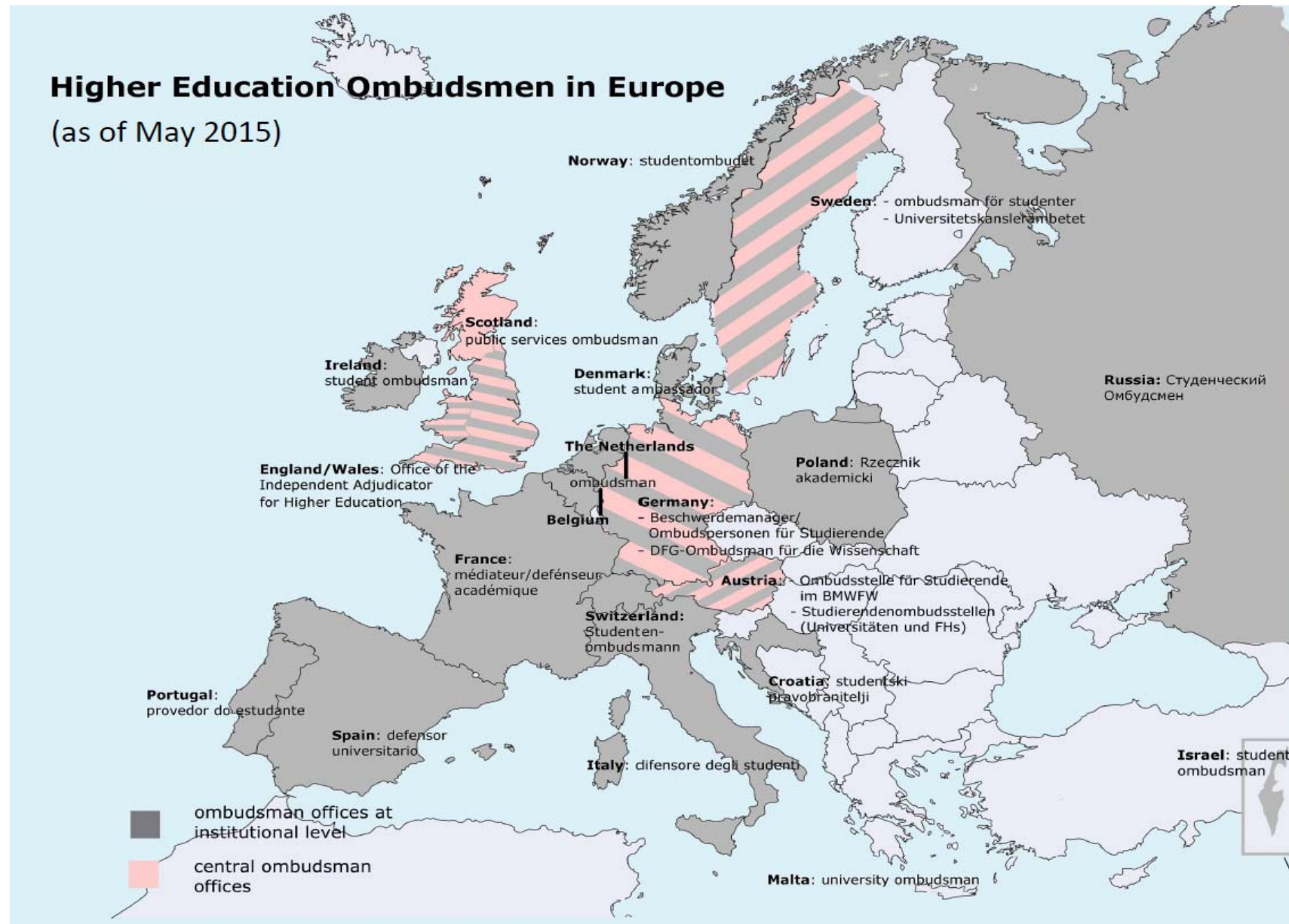
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Central / Decentral

- ombudsman **at the ministry** (under the Higher Education Quality Assurance Act)
- ombudspersons **on the local level**, four public universities, one private university, one university of applied sciences

Higher Education Ombudsmen in Europe

(as of May 2015)





Objectives

- assist students in individual cases (with structural, inter-personal conflicts) and help them and solve the cases (hopefully)
- give recommendations to the “mighty“
- issue public reports (*regulator WITH teeth*)

HE Ombudsmen in Europe 1

- mid/late 1980s Spain (“voluntarily”)
- 1993 Malta, **by the law**
- mid/late 1990s The Netherlands, Belgium
- 1997 Austria
- late 1990s Germany (for safeguarding good scientific practice)
- 2001 Spain compulsory, **by the law**
- 2004 England and Wales, **by the law**
- 2007 Croatia, **by the law**
- 2011/12 Austria, **enshrined in law**

HE Ombudsmen in Europe 2

- different tasks (students, employees, everybody)
- different structures (central, decentral, institutional / faculty / departmental levels...)
- different (legal) bases
- different reporting systems
- **in common: helping individuals, (hopefully) improving the system**



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Innsbruck Descriptors 1

To help us further promote the figure and the role of the university ombudsman in Europe (and elsewhere) and raise his visibility you are cordially invited to contribute to the final formulation of the **“Innsbruck Descriptors”**.

The **“Innsbruck Descriptors”** are the descriptors for ombuds institutions in higher education in Europe (with special references to ombudsmen, ombudswomen and ombudspersons elsewhere)

presented and first to be discussed here at the 12th ENOHE Annual Conference 2015 in Innsbruck.