



ÖQZ 24 care and quality certificate for placement agencies

Austria

	<p>Summary</p> <p>Placement agencies providing 24-hour care support are encouraged to obtain the Austrian Quality Certificate for 24-hour care (ÖQZ 24) to demonstrate that they meet higher quality standards beyond the legal requirements, a voluntary measure awarded by the Ministry of Social Affairs. ⁱ It helps to attract more clients and discourage undeclared work in the health care sector.</p>
<p>Title of the practice in original language</p>	<p>Österreichisches Qualitätszertifikat – ÖQZ 24</p>
<p>Name(s) of authorities/bodies/organisations involved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (<i>Bundesministerium Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz</i>) ▶ Austrian Chamber of Commerce (<i>Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKO</i>) ▶ Association for the promotion of quality in the care of the elderly (<i>Verein zur Förderung der Qualität in der Betreuung älterer Menschen</i>)
<p>Sectors</p>	<p>Health and social work</p>
<p>Target groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Placement agencies (directly targeted); ▶ Care workers, and service users/clients and their relatives (indirectly targeted).
<p>Purpose of measure</p>	<p>Legitimising undeclared work</p>

	<p>Aims and objectives</p> <p>The aim of the measure is to strengthen the situation of people in need of 24-hour care and their families. The certification process is based on guidelines which define the requirements for obtaining the ÖQZ 24 quality certificate and which are developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs with the participation of the Chamber of Commerce and relevant stakeholders.ⁱⁱ These requirements help to prevent undeclared work.</p>
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Background context

- ▶ In 2007 the legal framework for quality assurance in 24-hour care was created. There was a need to improve: (i) the quality of care services provided; and (ii) the level of financial support for the provision of 24-hour care services. The government established a corresponding funding model with a subsidy of EUR 550 per month for people in need of care who have one caregiver or EUR 1 100 for two caregivers, per month.ⁱⁱⁱ
- ▶ This financial measure was introduced to provide support for persons in need of care and enable them to be cared for at home for as long as possible, provide social security protection for carers providing care in the home, and help tackle the high levels of undeclared work in the domestic care sector and thereby provide incentives for legal employment;
- ▶ Subsequently, in 2019 a voluntary, Austrian-wide uniform Quality Certificate for 24-hour care (ÖQZ 24) was introduced by the Ministry of Social Affairs for placement/employment agencies providing support to persons in need of 24-hour care;^{iv}
- ▶ The certification process (carried out by an external body) requires the placement agency to demonstrate that they meet higher quality standards – beyond the legal requirements. This means that their services comply with the guidelines of the Ministry of Social Affairs (developed in conjunction with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce and other welfare agencies), and indicates that the agency is on track to improve its services further;
- ▶ The first award of the Austrian Quality Certificate for Placement Agencies in 24-Hour Care (ÖQZ 24) took place in October 2019 at the Ministry of Social Affairs, with 15 certifications in total awarded in 2019. There are currently 41 agencies (out of a total 100 active placement agencies) with ÖQZ 24 certification.^v

Key objectives of the measure

General Objective:

- ▶ To improve the quality standards of placement agencies that provide 24-hour care services to ensure a stable care situation for the users, their families, and caregivers in cooperation with the placement agencies.
- ▶ To encourage an increase in the quantity of 24-hour care providers;
- ▶ To offer social security protection to carers operating in the sector and reduce undeclared work.




Main activities

- ▶ The 24-hour care quality certificate for placement agencies is an Austrian-wide quality certificate, obtained on a voluntary basis. It is based on the "Guidelines for the preparation and implementation of the certification according to the Austrian quality certificate for placement agencies in 24-hour care (ÖQZ-24)", developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs together with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce and the welfare agencies;
- ▶ The guidelines focus on providing a successful and stable care situation for the users, relatives, and caregivers in cooperation with the placement agencies;
- ▶ The certification process^{vi} involves five phases:
 - ▷ Application: the placement agency prepares for the certification and quality assurance;
 - ▷ Pre-Audit: the agency submits the relevant documents to the Ministry of Social Affairs (i.e., a quality report, internal audit report, etc). The certification team examines the material and draws up a certification plan;
 - ▷ On-site inspection: an external certifier carries out an inspection of the placement agency and two clients are randomly selected for an interview, based on certain criteria. During the inspection the information provided by the agency is checked to establish if it corresponds to the actual circumstances and whether the framework conditions for the caregivers are as contractually agreed;
 - ▷ Drawing up the certification report: this includes a summary of the certification outcome, a report including recommendations for action and, if necessary, quality management measures, as well as a percentage mark, indicating the degree of compliance with the certification standards;
 - ▷ The agency receives the ÖQZ 24 quality certificate which is valid for three years. After one and a half years there is an interim review.

Funding/organisational resources

- ▶ The measure is funded by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.

	<p>Outcomes</p> <p>The measure helps to legitimise 24-hour domestic care services by putting in place a transparent certification process for placement agencies based on requirements that help to prevent undeclared work. Moreover, clear framework conditions for the caregivers are defined, providing quality assurance by qualified health and nursing staff. The measure also provides information regarding the 24-hour live-in assistance for the persons in need of care and facilitates the contract between the carer and household.</p>
<p>Achievement of objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ During 2019 the first 15 certifications were awarded to placement agency applicants; ▶ There are currently 41 ÖQZ 24-certified placement agencies; ▶ The number of self-employed caregivers rose from approximately 49 000 in 2018 to approximately 59 000 in 2020.
<p>Lessons learnt and success factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The certification measure helps to reassure clients that contracts and services from certified placement agencies are guaranteed; ▶ Certified placement agencies also provide caregivers with the reassurance that clear framework conditions are defined; ▶ Quality assurance of the 24-hour care provided is ensured via assessments undertaken by qualified health and nursing staff from the start of care and at least once a quarter. This ensures that the nursing tasks and requirements (in addition to the care requirements) are assessed and implemented by nursing professionals in accordance with the law.
<p>Transferability</p>	<p>To implement a similar measure, political support is paramount. Supporting legislation and adequate resources are also essential.</p>

<p>Further information</p>	
<p>Contact</p>	<p>Contact: Kontakt - Österreichische Qualitätszertifikat für Vermittlungsagenturen in der 24-Stunden-Betreuung (oegz.at)</p>
<p>Useful sources and resources</p>	<p>Information on 24-hour care support, Ministry of Social Affairs website</p> <p>https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Pflege/24-Stunden-Betreuung.html</p>



Austrian Quality Certificate for Placement Agencies in 24-Hour care website

<https://oeqz.at/das-oeqz-24/>

ⁱ [ÖQZ Falzflyer Hochformat 6seitig Druckversion.pdf \(oeqz.at\)](#)

ⁱⁱ [ÖQZ24: The quality certificate for 24-hour care \(sozialministerium.at\)](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ To qualify for the subsidy, caregivers do not have to be placed by a placement agency, but there must be a professional relationship;

- Employed caregivers: EUR 550 (for one caregiver) or EUR 1 100 (for two) per month
- Self-employed caregivers: EUR 275 (for one caregiver) or EUR 550 (for two) per month.

^{iv} [Certified placement agencies - Austrian quality certificate for placement agencies in 24-hour care \(oeqz.at\)](#)

^v According to the WKO there are about 900 agencies in Austria, of which about 100 are active. Currently 41 agencies (of these 100 active agencies) have been awarded the ÖQZ certificate.

^{vi} [The ÖQZ-24 - Austrian Quality Certificate for Placement Agencies in 24-Hour Care \(oeqz.at\)](#)