

# Community Nursing in Austria

## A New Model for Regional (Health) Care

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# Austria's Health and Long-Term Care System – Background and Challenges

Demographic change:  
ageing population →  
rising demands

Increase of  
multimorbidity, intensity  
of care

Staff shortage  
nursing and (health) care  
professions

Social health insurance  
system with broad  
coverage and universal  
access

strong focus on hospital-  
based care

weak coordination  
between sectors; lack of  
orientation within the  
system

Shared responsibilities and  
regional disparities in access  
to care

Highly reliant on family  
caregivers

Bachner et al. 2024; Griebler et al. 2022, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection 2019; Juraszovich et al. 2023; OECD 2023a & 2023b; Global Observatory of Long-Term Care, retrieved from <https://goltc.org/system-profile/austria/>; Statistik Austria 2024

# Austria's Health and Long-Term Care System – Structures and Developments

- Fragmentation between primary care, hospitals, long-term care, and social support
- LTC is separated from primary care; organized at the regional level; shared responsibility
- Mobile services: mobile and outpatient support and nursing services to enable care at home
  - long-standing tradition of home-based care
  - provided through mobile care teams/units, assistance with daily living activities, personal hygiene, medication support (and 24-hour care)
  - provided by different professions
- Efforts to strengthen primary care and to shift more services into the outpatient sector and community settings (“digital before outpatient before inpatient care”); e.g.:
  - Enhancing primary care
  - Piloting Community Nursing

Bachner et al. 2024; Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection n.d.; Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection 2019; OECD 2023a & 2023b; Global Observatory of Long-Term Care, retrieved from <https://goltc.org/system-profile/austria/>

# Community Nursing in Austria as an answer

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# Community Health Nursing VS. Community Nursing community-based VS. community-oriented care?

- imprecise use of terms;
- Differences in target group → scope of service → intervention radius
- Similarity: activity that is organized and takes place locally



## community-based care

- Focus: centres providing direct health services to individuals within a community
- Approach: delivers care where people live, work or gather (home health visits, mobile care services etc);
  - Synonyms: home care, mobile and outpatient services, mobile health units community care
- Goal: to improve access to healthcare

Community  
Nursing  
(pilot-  
projects)  
→

## community-oriented care

- Focus: health promotion, prevention and community development
- Approach: with the community (needs, strategies etc)
- Goal: to empower communities and enhance overall well-being

# Community Nursing in Austria – Pilot Projects 2022-2024

**Community nurses** as central contact persons in the community, promoting and preventing the health of individuals, families, and communities, e.g. through preventive home visits

- Pilot Projects from 2022-2024; funded by the European Union (NextGeneration EU)
  - 2025: Continuation of CN within the competence of the provinces with different approaches
- Registered nurses (DGKP), with at least two years of professional experience, offer local and low-threshold support
- **Target group:**
  - older people living (not yet) in the need of care, informal caregivers
  - the community as a communal setting
- **Aims:**
  - Promote healthy ageing, health promotion and health literacy
  - Delaying/avoiding the need for care
  - Supporting family caregivers

# Theoretical Framework

## Theoretical frameworks

- WHO: Summary of CHN Interventions
- Minnesota Department of Health: Public Health Intervention Wheel (PHIW)

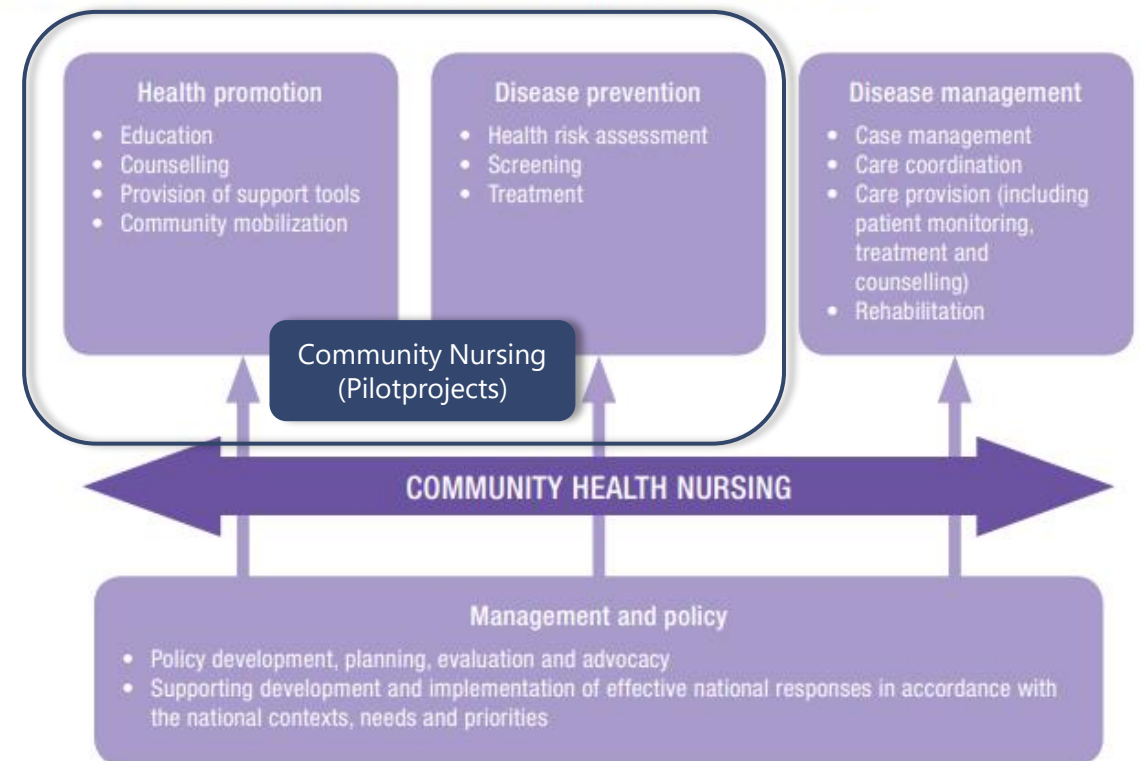
## WHO – Summary of CHN Interventions

- **Health Promotion**
- **Disease Prevention**
- Disease Management
- Management and Policy

The Health and Nursing Care Act (GuKG) a legal framework; defines the maximum scope of practice; enabling an autonomous role

## Enhancing the role of community health nursing for universal health coverage (WHO)

Figure 1. Summary of community health nursing interventions in PHC systems

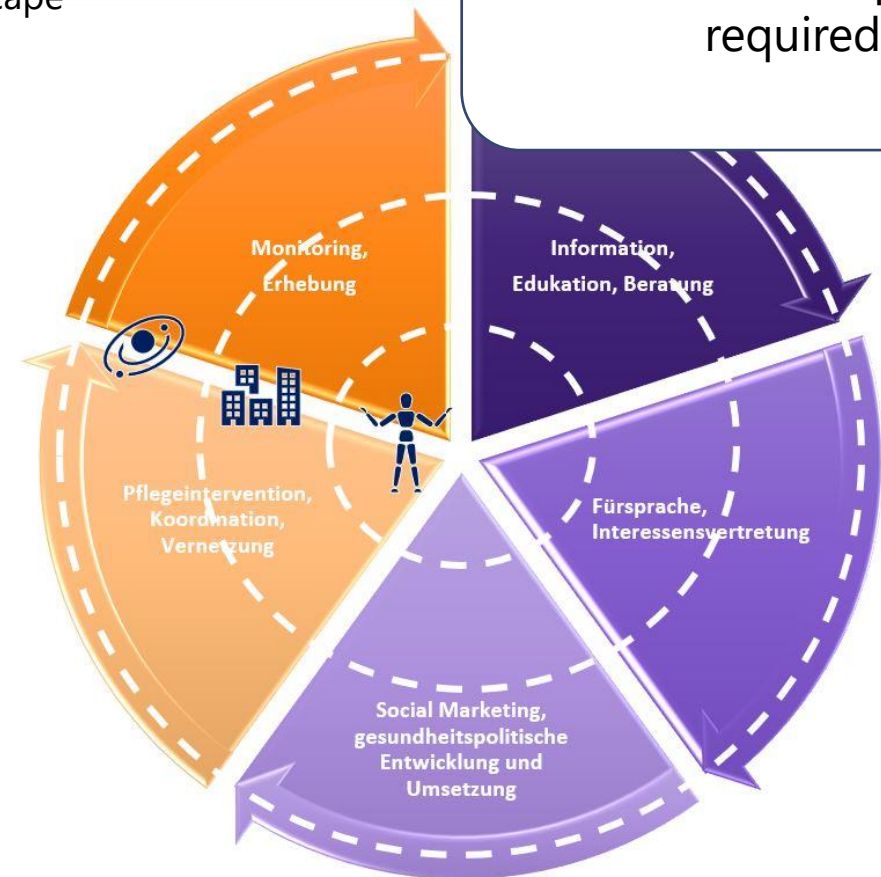
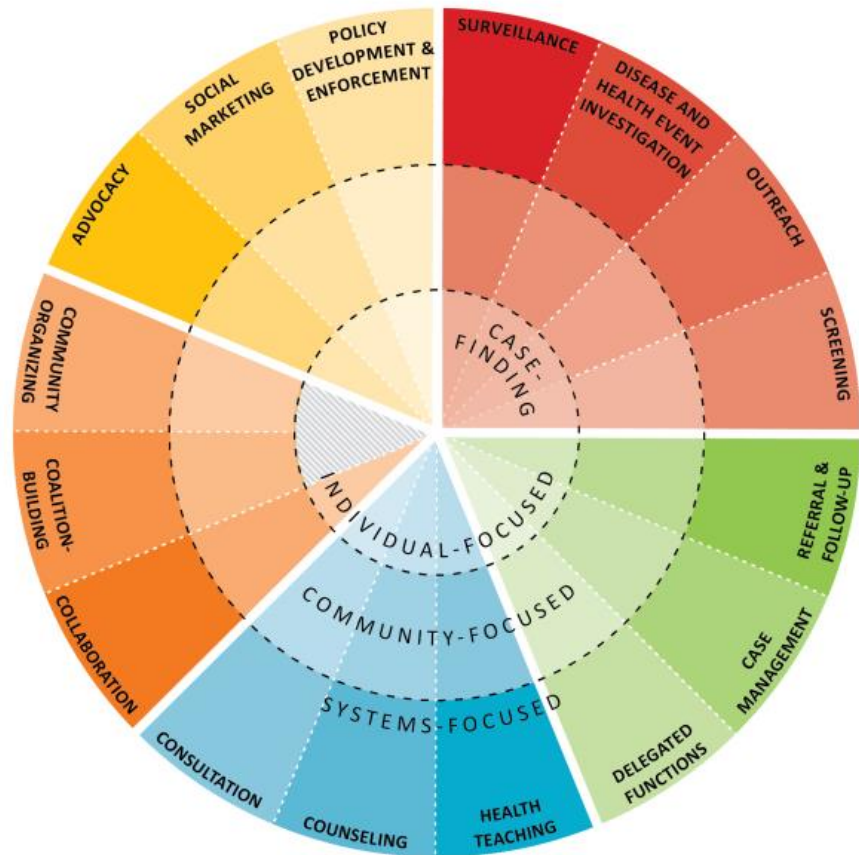


WHO 2017



# What do Community Nurses do?

- **PHIW (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019)**
  - 17 interventions (population-focused interventions)
  - 3 levels, 5 colored sectors
- reviewed and adapted to the Austrian legal, structural, and service landscape



...was part of the pilot;  
further development  
required



# Task profile of community nurses

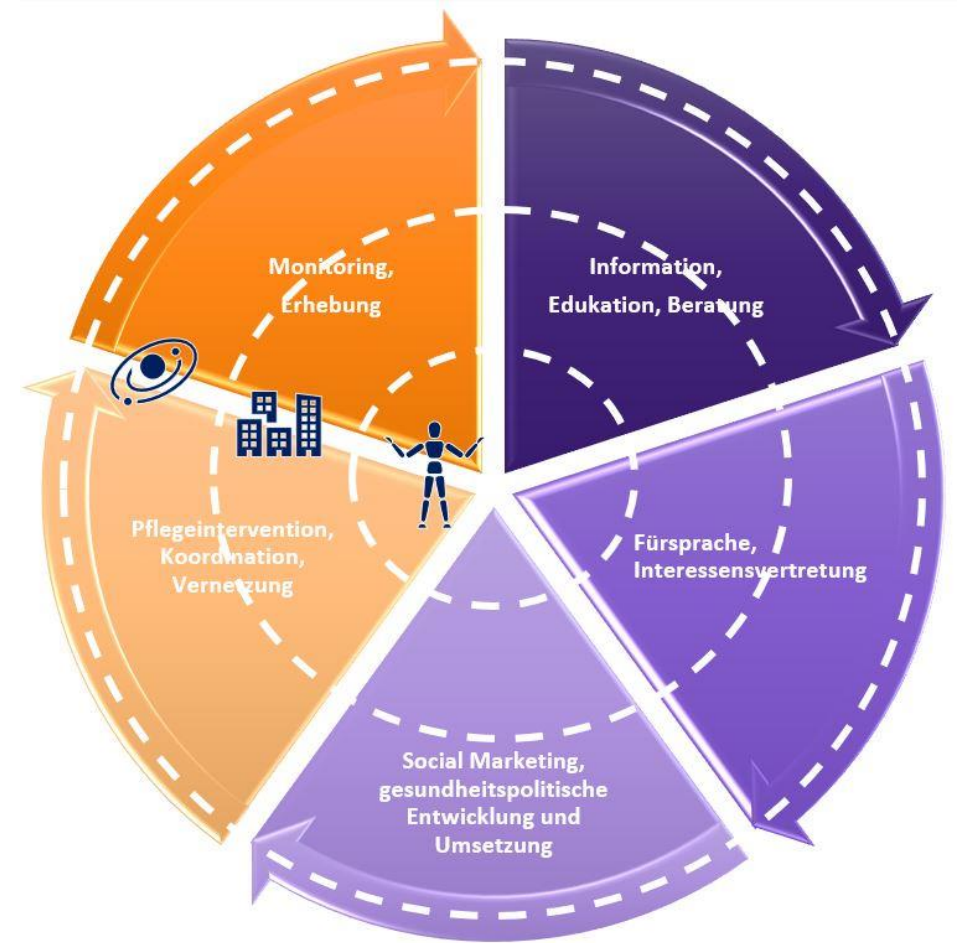
Adapted Public Health Intervention Wheel (PHIW)

## 3 levels

1. Individual
2. Groups / communities
3. System

## 5 wedges

- Survey and monitoring
- Interventions, education and counselling
- Advocacy and representation of interests
- Coordination and networking
- Social marketing



# Evaluation Highlights (2022–2024)

## **Methods**

- Mixed-methods design: qualitative & quantitative
- Formative & summative approach
- based on program theory and logic model

The evaluation was conducted by the university of applied sciences in Carinthia and IARA (Institute for Applied Research on Ageing)

## **Outcomes: target population**

- ↑ quality of life and well-being; ↑ self-help and self-care abilities
- ↑ self reported health status of individuals, families, groups
- ↑ stay in one's own home
- ↓ loneliness
- ↓ contacts with GP; ↑ use of services such as home care, physiotherapy and speech therapy (short-term)

## **Outcomes: nurses**

- ↑ attractiveness of job
- ↑ stay in nursing field
- further training required

Pichler et al. (2024). *Evaluation Community Nursing Österreich: Endbericht*. Fachhochschule Kärnten.

[https://cn-oesterreich.at/system/files/inline-files/EvalCN\\_Endbericht\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://cn-oesterreich.at/system/files/inline-files/EvalCN_Endbericht_final_0.pdf) [Retrieved May 14 2025]

# Outlook and open questions

- Community Nursing remains a promising but not yet secured service in Austria
- Several provinces are developing follow-up structures and regional models (Eberle et al. 2025)
  - Uncertainty due to temporary funding and unclear long-term financing
- Economic concerns and limited municipal budgets pose barriers to continuation
- Evaluation recommendations are available (Pichler et al. 2024)
  - Sustainable expansion requires role clarity, long-term financing, and national coordination
  - Further efforts needed to define the role, responsibilities, and system integration of CN

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COMMUNITY NURSING

NAH FÜR DICH.  
**DA FÜR DICH**

A stylized orange heart icon composed of two overlapping loops, positioned to the right of the main text.

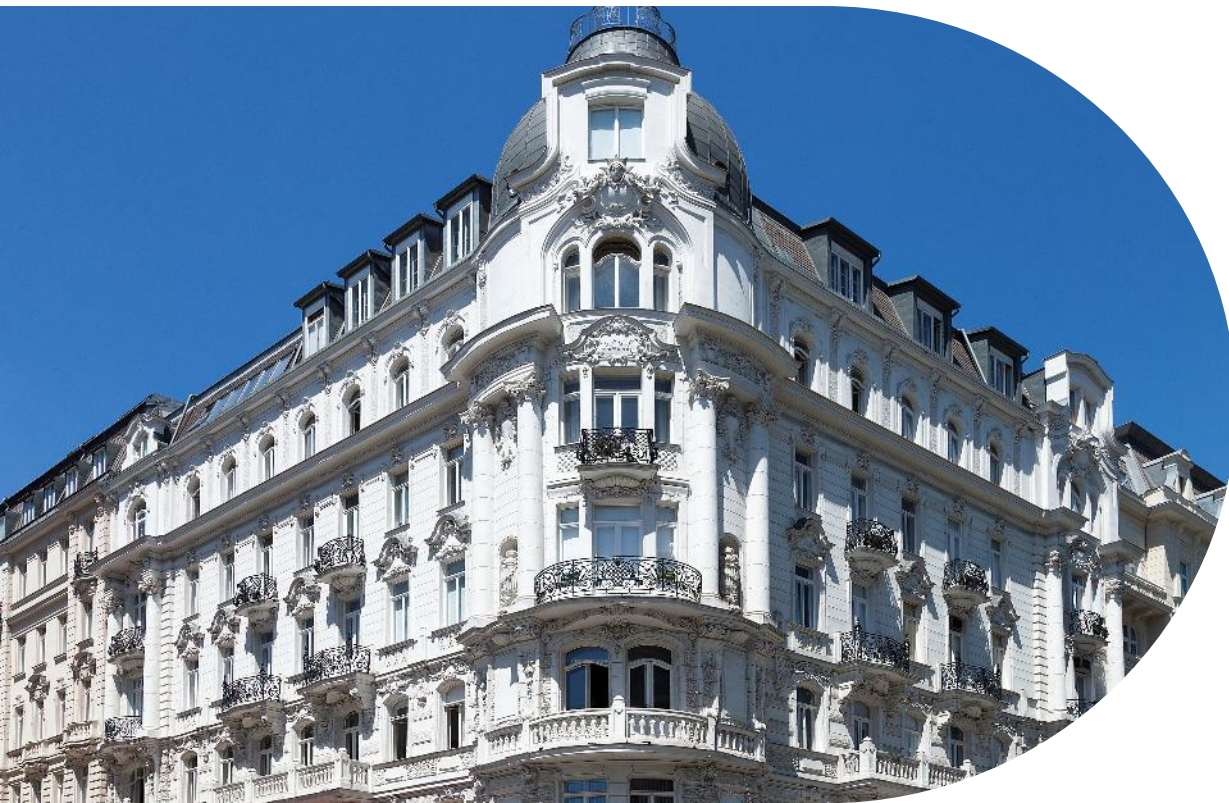
Finanziert von der  
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NextGenerationEU



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