

## AUSTRIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PRESS OF THE DUALISM ERA

Eszter TÉGLÁS

**Abstract:** In the present paper, Austrian women's associations and associations will be reviewed in the spirit of women's emancipation. During this period, many women's societies, associations, foundations and clubs were established in the territory of the Monarchy, with a very wide range of goals. In my study, I present the main Austrian women's societies in the light of the Austrian pedagogical journals of the dualism era, in the period from 1889 to 1910. In the research, I looked for the answer to the question: how often and from what perspective did the journalists and educational specialists of the time write about the necessity and usefulness of women's associations in the various pedagogical magazines? What concerned writers, teachers, and readers in relation to the activities of women's associations at the time? In the course of the research, I examined 3177 coded units of four types of Austrian educational newspapers from the era of dualism (Österreichische Lehrerinnen-Zeitung; Der Lehrerinnen-Wart and its successors: Neuzeit, Frauenleben, Neues Frauenleben; Frauen-Werke; Mittheilungen des Vereines der Lehrerinnen und Erzieherinnen in Österreich) and processed it using the method of semantic content analysis, including naming analysis.

**Keywords:** dualism, Austrian women's education, women's history, gender, semantic content analysis

### 1. Introduction

In the foreground of the paper, the Austrian women's societies and associations will be reviewed in the context of women's emancipation. As a result of the women's movements, women living in different arenas of social life tried to achieve their charitable and educational aspirations by joining together and founding associations. The purpose of the associations was to bring together women in all countries, thereby promoting their well-being. During this period, many women's societies, associations, foundations and clubs were established in the territory of the Monarchy, with a very wide range of goals. In my study, I will present the main Austrian women's societies in the light of the Austrian pedagogical periodicals of the dualism era, in the period from 1889 to 1910. During the research, I looked for the answer to the question: how often and from what perspective did the journalists and educational specialists of the time write about the necessity and usefulness of women's associations in the various pedagogical magazines? What concerned writers, teachers, and readers in relation to the activities of women's associations at the time? In the course of the research, I examined 3177 coded units of four types of Austrian educational newspapers from the era of dualism (Österreichische Lehrerinnen-Zeitung; Der Lehrerinnen-Wart and its successors: Neuzeit, Frauenleben, Neues Frauenleben; Frauen-Werke; Mittheilungen des Vereines der Lehrerinnen und Erzieherinnen in Österreich) and processed it using the method of semantic content analysis, including naming analysis. (Figure 1.)

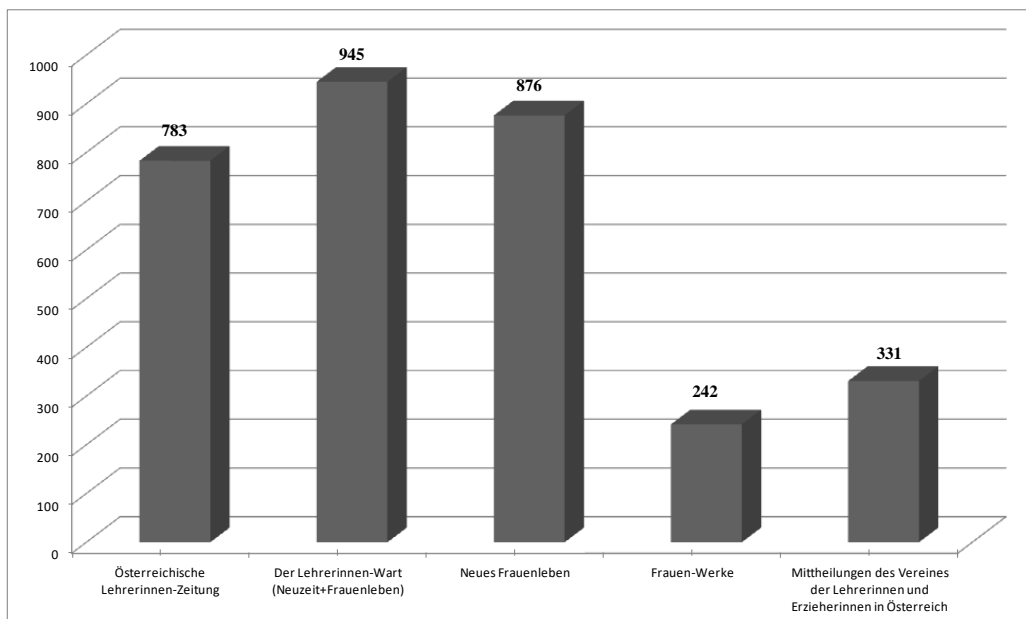


Figure 1.: Distribution of all coded element numbers - association within the category system

Based on the categories I pre-defined, such as Verein (association); Plenarversammlung (plenary meeting); Frauenverein (women's association); Lehrerinnenverein (association of female teachers). I measured the frequency of occurrence of the contents to be studied in order to understand and explain the connections. (Figure 2-3.)

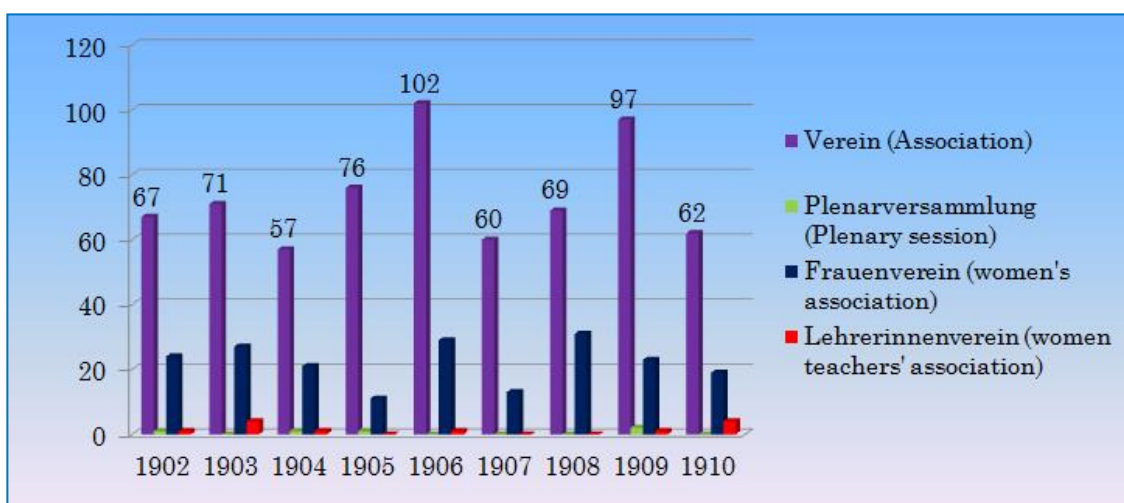


Figure 2.: Neues Frauenleben Element numbers of association category systems until 1902-1910

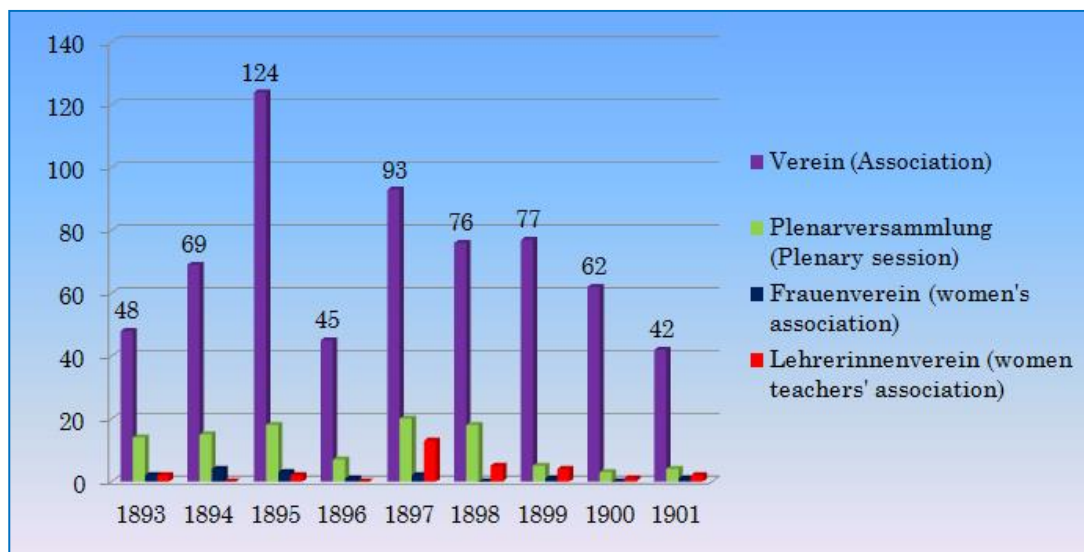


Figure 3.: Österreichische Lehrerinnen-Zeitung Element numbers of association category systems until 1893-1901.

Summing up the examined period, it can be observed that many articles were written specifically about the establishment of women's associations and the presentation of their activities. According to the journalists of the time, these associations not only made it possible for women to play a role in public life, but also performed a very decisive, multifaceted function in order to promote the attitude of society towards women. The history of women's education has become the focus of interest especially thanks to the social history, micro and mentality history, and gender research of the past decades. In Hungary, there is currently quite little Hungarian-language literature on the exploration of the Austrian press during the dualism era using the method of content analysis, so the research is particularly important in terms of its theoretical and practical relevance, the results of which can also be used in the fields of women's education, women's history and gender research.

## 2. Austrian women's associations

As a result of the women's movements, women living in different arenas of social life began to join together and form communities, at first this type of association was made for charity and school purposes, but they did not stop there. When the results of the community commitment showed themselves, associations were founded. It taught women to jointly define goals and make demands that benefit all women. America was the first country where the first associations were established. Germany joined the American and Canadian Women's Federation as the third country, followed by other countries. In almost 11 years, this kind of "union" covered the entire world. The goal of the associations was to bring together women in all countries, thereby promoting their well-being. During this period, many women's societies, associations, foundations and clubs were established in the territory of the Monarchy, with a very wide range of goals. These associations not only made it possible for women to play a role in public life, but also performed a very decisive, multifaceted function in order to promote the attitude of society towards women. The associations had members, the members paid membership fees, and the association ensured its income by organizing lectures and publishing newspapers. In several cases, these foundations organized training for girls, women, and teachers, founded schools and high schools, held plenary sessions, submitted petitions, helped organize demonstrations, and represented women's interests with various women's protection measures. The members are completely independent, one thing is obligatory only for them, namely "What you don't want to be done to you, don't do to others!" From the detail of the following article, it is clear how much staffing data each women's association could have. The Seeking Women's Association had 771 members, 94 extraordinary members and held 16 different schools and trainings

with 1,666 students. Among the Viennese women's associations, the "Searching Women's Association" was the first in terms of efficiency. It had 771 actual and 94 extraordinary members. It maintained 16 different schools and courses, which mainly served women's earning activities. A total of 1,666 female students attended the association's schools. They had to maintain the school themselves, but despite the high fees, all facilities were oversubscribed. Admission was by appointment and could last up to 2 years. There was not enough funding to create additional schools: "243 girls are educated free of charge, 289 receive a partial exemption from tuition, 21 receive a scholarship, 4 are placed in a foundation position and there are 30 additional vacancies (association, savings bank...)" (DLW, 1889.) Later in 1901, according to the decision of the administrative court, the scholarships that until then could have only be used by male students since then was available to high school female students (ÖLZ, 1990).

According to the feminist view of the time, it would have been a useful, beneficial and noble task if as many girls from richer families as possible had become members of an organization or association, since many girls in the higher social strata got sick due to boredom and dissatisfaction. The favorable living conditions made it unnecessary for them to choose a profession. Their lives consisted of choosing clothes, socializing, reading, and some art practiced in a dilettante manner. These were attractive activities for a while and then became boring, leading to dissatisfaction and in some cases melancholy. A useless, aimless life was the reason for their ill-being. What could have a woman done in those times to feel useful? Servants did everything, it was neither suitable nor necessary for well-to-do girls to look for a profession. If this unnecessary force/energy was not bound by marriage and its duties, it led to illness. Daughters of wealthy families could make themselves useful in the field of charity. The daily increasing poverty, especially in the big cities, showed how much charity associations and organizations were needed. Unemployed girls wasted much time, money and energy aimlessly on trifles, while their work in this field would have been a blessing. Thanks to women's greater freedom, all girls could in that period go out without shame and work on solving social issues (e.g. by embracing children): "*One of humanity's noblest tasks is to reduce poverty and misery*" (Walter, M, 1895).

Some Viennese associations were established for women in the researched period. The Verein für Erweiterte Frauenbildung (Association for the Extension of Women's Education) was founded in 1888 with the aim of establishing a humane high school for girls. Magdolna Rébai describes how, encouraged by the success of the Monarchia's first girls' high school, the association started to found its own school. Two years after the establishment of the Czech-language institution of the Minerva association, in 1892, the Gymnasialschule für Mädchen (later Gymnasiale für Mädchenschule) opened its doors, which was also the world's first German-speaking girls' high school. The reason behind the unusual name is that the institution could not take the name gymnasium (Rébay, 2009).

Over the years, attention to the mission of the Association gained more and more ground among the society, which is proven by nothing better than the fact that the number of its members had increased year by year. The association's annual reports show that in the first year they started the work with 211 members, their annual income was 2328 fl. 13 kr., in the report of the year 1891 they counted 286 people and 1238 fl. 03 kr. with income. In the years following the establishment of the girls' high school, the income of the Association increased significantly compared to previous years. In the 1893/1894 report, they already count 8368 fl. 58 kr. on income, of which the girls' high school's income is 6,254 fl. 50 kr. and this year too, an increase in the number of members of the association can be observed, as it has risen to 308 people.

This increasing trend can also be observed continuously in the following years, e.g. by the year 1905/1906, the number of members doubled, i.e. it rose to 628 people (JVF, 1888-1905).

In the annual reports, among other things, we can get to know the list of members of the Association. Therese Blaschke about the Association for the Extension of Women's Education: In October 1888, an association was founded in Vienna with the aim of achieving advanced women's education and making more and more occupations accessible to women. Another goal is to create a girls' high school, which would also include a dormitory, in order to make the institution accessible to those who do not live in Vienna. The question arose as to whether the curriculum should be changed in accordance with

the education of women, but since they want to ensure that girls can go to university, the opinion prevailed that the curriculum should not be changed, because the opponents could get involved by saying that, with a modified curriculum, girls would have not received the appropriate basic education. Thus, the girls' high school to be established by the association will be completely analogous to a boys' high school. The implementation would be made from the contributions of the members, but they are also hoping for a more significant state support. However, the association hopes that in Austria the girls will have the opportunity to study at university and use the acquired knowledge in practice. The prejudices and difficulties that the association has to face are great (Blaschke, 1889).

In the various pedagogical journals, articles about the newly formed associations and the goals of their formation appeared one after another, thus drawing the attention of the ladies readers to the possibilities that affect them. The Austrian Office Women's Aid Association and the Working Women's Training Association, as their names indicate, primarily tried to provide assistance to the working class. On January 27, the Aid Association of Austrian Clerks was founded, the purpose of which was to promote and support the spiritual and material interests of clerks. (Helping those in need, holding lectures, meetings, creating an association library) (ÖLZ, 1896).

The "Working Women's Training Association" was founded in Vienna on June 29, 1889, with extremely lively participation. Its purpose was to promote the spiritual and material interests of the members: Teaching, giving lectures, creating a library, holding debates, organizing events. An article was published in the pedagogical magazine *Der Lehrerinnen-Wart*, in which it is described that the Working Women's Training Association is advocating a reduction in working hours for women, as it happened that one woman spent up to 16 hours at work. The interest is shown by the fact that the newly formed association already had nearly 100 members. Women were also waking up and realizing how important upliftment was to them, because the well-being of the growing youth was also in their hands. The training of working women was primarily an economic issue: "You have to stand up for shorter working hours so that you have more time to raise your children. To the 11-hour working day permitted by Austrian legislators, if we add housework and childcare, a woman's working day consists of 15-16 hours or more. The speaker encourages the participants that knowledge is power and to seize every opportunity that this association offers to improve their knowledge. The courses and lectures will start in autumn" (DLW, 1889). In view of the high unemployment rate among women, the Working Women's Association in Vienna determinedly tried to find a solution to facilitate the employment of women who want to work. The Association advocated the mapping of the labor market in terms of supply and demand and attempted to help employers and employees find each other. The Association would charge a service fee for the role of "job broker". Elna Fensmark describes the relevant ideas in the magazine *Frauenleben* from 1901 as follows: "The Working Women's Association (primarily for more educated women) would unite those looking for work and those offering work, and thus a cycle would be created. Both employers and job seekers would give a small amount for the service provided to them, so that the organization/association does not have, but can sustain itself. It would be free only for women in need. In order to bring supply and demand together, the management of the association would also publish an advertising newspaper. The outstanding importance of a rational, comprehensive job advertisement, which does not only serve private speculation, should be generally recognized. Job placement is important for everyone, especially women. Apart from factory jobs, they work in occupations where only 1-2 women are employed. Visiting such workplaces is very time-consuming, and success depends on chance. Finding a job is painful and dangerous for women. Nor do they have organizations that would take over job placement (Fensmark, 1901). Another important activity of the association would be information. Not only about vacancies, but also about further training opportunities. Another two goals were to cooperate with other associations and to carry out housing mediation (Fensmark, 1901).

Helene Littmann published an article in April 1895 as a call for the creation of more associations. It was a call to form an association for the well-being/health of "housekeepers" (they were the support of the housewives, sociable women, readers, kindergarten teachers etc.). In their letters to the editors, many people complained about the dark sides of their profession and asked for the formation of such a union, because their pay conditions were often unfavorable, and their jobs were insecure. Several

ladies from measuring circles started to show interest in the idea. A union would have helped both housewives and household workers (Littmann, 1895).

The Association of Austrian Women Teachers and Educators was founded on May 30, 1870 – initially as a club of women teachers, with 74 members in the first year – with the aim of promoting the position of women and female teachers in politics, in the field of their profession, in relation to women's education, to “pave the way for the future generation of teachers”. It had an advocacy role, which allowed the issue of female teaching staff to become prominent alongside the “oppressive” male teaching staff. The Association performed many useful functions. One year after their establishment, they founded the female teachers' choir, which operated for several decades, with their participation raising the standard of various holidays, forums, and association events. In 1872, a gymnastics course was started for girls, thus promoting the healthy physical development of the ladies. On December 1, 1879, it continued to function as the “Teachers' and Nurses' Home” under the direction of Luise von Stahl-Almásy. From that year, the number of members of the association increased continuously, by 1883 it had 600 members, and in 1885 it had 800 members (600 female teachers and 200 educators) (Schwarz, 1895). In 1893, the *Journal of Austrian Teachers* was founded in order to inform the teaching staff as widely as possible and to maintain closer contact with the members. Association news was also continuously published in this paper, the column was entitled Vereinsnachrichten (Association News).

### 3. The main activities of the associations – organizing and holding lectures

The Association of Female Teachers and Educators in Austria held a plenary session on February 25, 1893, where Thadäus Devidé, among others, gave a lecture entitled: *Märchen und Kindesseele*, i.e. “*Fairy Tales and the Child's Soul*”. He attributed pedagogical importance to fairy tales. He said that the world of fairy tales is close to the child's soul. Fairytale heroes act as role models for children, with whom they can even identify. These stories move and enliven the imagination of the little ones. During his presentation, Thadäus Devidé mentioned the works of two story writers, Henriette Devidé and Richard Leander,<sup>1</sup> as examples, which he warmly recommended to the audience (Schewitz, 1893).

In 1894, dr. Ludwig Karell gave a lecture on women's work at the Association of Austrian Women Teachers and Educators. He believed that the time had passed when women's struggle for their rights was called emancipation. Here and there in one occupational group there were some people who could have not get used to the idea of seeing women as full enjoyers of human rights. Karell cited as an example that Bebel, in his book *Woman and Socialism*, says of these people that they are the philistines of the male and female sexes, who cannot figure it out from the narrow circle of prejudices. These are the eccentrics who can be found everywhere there is semi-darkness and cry out in fright when a ray of light shines into their comfortable darkness. According to Karell, the female sex makes up half of humanity. Nature created them as mothers, nurses, educators, and women, and their influence is the greatest over the human race. The more freedom and rights they enjoy, the more complete their education will be, the more recognized their position will be, the nobler and freer will be the nation to which they belong and vice versa. The measure of the cultural life of the people is the situation of women and its treatment. Women are present in all professions, it is no longer possible to talk about women's and men's work (Ludwig, 1894).

The speaker then presented the lives of famous women in the field of natural sciences they prevailed in earlier centuries. At the April meeting of the Widened Women's Education Association, Dr. jur. Mr. Julius Ofner's presentation was given, entitled *The Social Struggle for Women's Employment*. Some took a stand against women's work, while women on the other side (primarily the educated middle class) strived to expand women's work areas. According to Dr. Ofner, spending 12-16 hours a day in

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<sup>1</sup> Richard von Volkmann(17/08/1830-28/11/1889) was a famous surgeon of the 19th century, but also wrote works of fiction and fairy tales under the pseudonym "Richard Leander". His famous works e.g.: Das kleine bucklige Mädchen, Das ungerathene Taufelchen, Der kleine Vogel, Die Traumbuche, Eine Kindergeschichte



the factory has a harmful effect on health. This is also why factory workers live shorter lives. Women's factory work also has a harmful effect on the younger generation. When it was introduced that women could not go back to work for 6 weeks after giving birth, the number of children surviving the first year of life rose from 62 to 75%. That is why workers and women are urged to reduce factory work. Banning women's work is an interference with personal freedom, but the state should undertake a time limit in order to protect women, so that women have time to rest without the risk of being fired (DLW, 1889).

#### 4. Women's protection measures and demands of associations

In the following, examples will be used to show what practical measures were taken by various associations and unions in relation to women's protection. Viennese working women's claims were included in a resolution (e.g. in 1901). They believed that it was necessary to switch to a maximum 8-hour work week for occupations that are hazardous to health. The 36-hour Sunday rest must not be postponed any longer. In order to protect the future generation, the protection of those with children should be postponed from 4 weeks to 6, and the night work of working women in commerce, handicrafts, and home industry should be abolished by eliminating the current exceptions. In shops dealing with sales, women should be required by law to be able to sit down. The employment of young people and women in dangerous factories should be stopped or allowed only under certain conditions. Compliance with the rules could be achieved with supervisors and female delegates. They demanded the introduction of insurance, widow and orphan benefits. It should be guaranteed that women can be elected as sitting members of labor courts (Frauenleben, 1901). "They demanded the exclusion of women from the postal workers' association. The request was followed by a heated debate, but it was finally accepted. They were afraid of the vulnerability of women" (Frauenleben, 1901). The individual trade unions not only took labor protection measures, but in many cases strove to promote and reform women's education. In 1894, two years before, the Association for the Support of Women's Education submitted a petition to make all college and university courses accessible to women. They also created a library in which, thanks to book donations, 1,000 volumes were available in that year (entertaining, educational, scientific works) (ÖLZ, 1895).

The association also strived to establish a teacher's home. A petition revealed that the female teachers' efforts to establish further training schools for girls reflected the will of the people. The Lower Austrian General Women's Training Association had been established and maintained such facilities in Krems, Waldhofen and Harland, but there were further demands and inquiries from the public. In particular, health, patient and child care knowledge taught by practicing doctors, household knowledge and pedagogy taught by suitable female teachers. Such schools were of social importance to women's role (occupation) as housewives and mothers. In a contemporary article from 1901, it is described how the introduction of cooking schools is particularly valuable for the lower classes of society (ÖLZ, 1894).

In connection with the submission of the petition, it was again shown how much the upright, aspiring woman, since she had no political power, was not valued. That is why it was difficult to find a firm representative for their case. Thus, there was little hope that the school committee's proposals would be amended (Knesche, 1894).

The Rudolfiner Association was established to expand women's health knowledge and, in addition, to acquire a health profession. According to several contemporary views, there was hardly any occupation more suitable for women than nursing. The "Rudolfiner Association" created the country's first real nursing school, where students could learn nursing skills partly in theory and partly in practice. In 1895, an article written by Anna Grefe was published in the magazine Frauenleben, which revealed that students could enter the service of the association as nurses after one year of training. They could get their "nursing diploma" after another year, the Red Cross nurse after two years. In the event of war, the Red Cross nurses were obliged to take care of the wounded. Admission conditions: the applicant must be between 20 and 40 years old, must submit their school certificates, a medical fitness certificate, a moral certificate, and proof of previous employment. If these papers were in order, they would be hired for a trial period of one month, at the end of which they would have to declare whether they really want to devote themselves to this occupation. From the 2nd month students

receive a salary and mandatory work clothes in addition to full board. After the first year, if they pass the exam, they would receive double their previous salary as nurses. After another year, they could decide whether to leave the institution or complete another year of service and become a Red Cross nurse. The facility was careful not to overload the students. A hard activity was always followed by a relaxing one. They took care of the food and a bright, friendly apartment shared by 4 sisters. The meal took place in a common dining room. Books and magazines were always at their disposal and they could study outside in the garden in good weather. The nursing home could also be called a model institution. It did not create the feeling of a hospital in the patients recovering there either. Patients could also find everything they needed there (Grefe, 1895). Nurses in the country were still not valued as much as they deserved. Prejudices kept women away from this profession, even though it would also offer a good earning opportunity, because it was not yet saturated. The first signs of change had already appeared. In Brno, the women's association announced its first course for children's nurses. Girls from different social classes could learn how to take care of sick children in practice, regardless of whether they wanted to do it or needed it in their family. The courses lasted 2 months, at the end of which they had to take an exam. The minimum age for admission was 18 years (Frauenleben, 1901).

### 5. The General Austrian Women's Association

In February 1895 was published an article in the newspaper *Osztrák Tanítónők*, in which it can be read that the General Austrian Women's Association took legal protection measures following the German example with the help of lawyers, in the framework of which those who turn to the organization with their complaints are heard and, if necessary, provided with legal remedies. The initiative succeeded in winning over many lawyers. “There are 2 hours available every Friday to approach them with their complaint” (ÖLZ, 1895).



Figure 4: Building of the Austrian Teachers' and Educators' Association, source: *Unsere Vereinhaus. Österreichische Lehrerinnen-Zeitung*, (1899): 7(14) 1.

Donations were also accepted for the legal protection institution. The Women's Association submitted a petition in relation to the fact that women who had studied medicine abroad could also practice in their home country and, in order to ensure that those who had graduated and acquired the necessary knowledge for admission, did not have to go far from home, to allow them to become regular students, as well as to “allow them participation in university preparatory courses in secondary schools” (Knesche, 1896). In the given era, the wider a social problem affected the female gender, the Women's Association wanted to devote more attention to remedying the existing situation, not sparing time, money and energy in countless cases.



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### **Author**

**Eszter Téglás**, University of Pécs (Hungary). E-mail: [teglas.eszter@tolna.gov.hu](mailto:teglas.eszter@tolna.gov.hu)