

10.1 General context

Historical developments

Youth organisations and youth representation

Associated youth work first started at the **beginning of the 20th century**. It was viewed as a **supplement to the family** and set itself the task of guaranteeing children and adolescents a fertile environment for **growing up with values** (e.g. religious, environmental, party political). Associations - such as the Catholic youth or the Boy Scouts - critically viewed the unfavourable living conditions of the urban (then so-called proletarian) youth as a threat to traditional values. Their approaches to extracurricular youth work were **organised in national and/or international networks** and essentially based on the **voluntary engagement of adults** (of then bourgeois classes).

The **Austrian Federal Youth Ring** (Österreichische Bundesjugendring, ÖBJR) was founded on 5 December 1953 by seven youth organisations (Catholic Youth, Catholic Young, Socialist Youth, Union Youth, Boy Scouts, Protestant Youth, Austrian Youth Movement) and is the predecessor organisation of the Austrian National Youth Council ([Bundjugendvertretung](#), BJV). In addition to the **opportunity for youth to speak with a single voice in order to have more political weight** with regard to youth issues, the ban of many youth organisations during the Second World War was a decisive motivation for establishing **an umbrella organisation for youth organisations**. The goal of the Federal Youth Council was to represent the interests of children and young people and their organisations, as well as to **develop common positions as a platform for young people** from different ideological, religious and social convictions. After 47 years of advocacy, the *Bundesjugendring* passed its business and tasks to the **National Youth Council** in 2001 with the installation of the Federal Youth Representation Act, which legally established a stronger position of involvement for youth organisations in politics. The agendas of the BJV are carried out by the Association of Austrian Child and Youth Representatives (ÖJV). The National Youth Council is a member of the European Youth Forum. Its main focuses include: Education, Training, Employment, Social Security, Ecology, Participation, Political Education, Diversity, Anti-racism, Anti-Fascism, Gender Equality and Children and Youth Rights. According to the **Federal Youth Representation Act**, the decision-making body is a bureau which comprises the youth organisations of the parties represented in parliament, the two largest religious youth organisations, and two other affiliated youth organisations as well as the national pupils' representation, the Austrian Students Union ([Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft](#), ÖH) and the Austrian Union Youth ([Österreichische Gewerkschaftsjugend](#), ÖGJ). Since the law also stipulates that an association can lead the tasks of the Federal Youth Representation, the **Association Austrian Child and Youth Representation** ([Österreichische Kinder- und Jugendvertretung](#), ÖJV) was founded, whose operative organ - the board - is democratically elected by the member organisations. The

Executive Board consists of the four chairpersons (chair team) and a maximum of eight further members of the Executive Board, who are elected every two years and manage the current affairs of the National Youth Council. The gender balanced chair team represents the BJV externally.

Open youth work

In the 1960s, **young people themselves became active and initiated alternative meeting places**. In this time, the first open youth initiatives and open youth houses were established. The core theme was **self-organization and leaving the regulated, schooled and predominantly pedagogically oriented institutional youth work** in schools and associations. Autonomy is a top priority and is the main driving force behind the emergence of **open youth houses**. According to their self-conception, the autonomous youth houses were constituted as a non-pedagogic space. Neither professional standards nor full-time staff in significant numbers were part of this concept. Most of the facilities were largely **based on the voluntary work of adolescents and young adults**, who often alternated roles and functions which lead to a high fluctuation of functionaries. Many youth initiatives, self-organised clubs and centres viewed themselves as an **alternative to social currents** and were characterised by a widespread rejection of the establishment and the bourgeois norms. In the following decades, **self-organisation was replaced or supplemented by pedagogically guided participation**. Socio-cultural animation and **experiential education** are moving into the field of action. Open youth work was slowly professionalised and increasingly incorporated in the areas of social pedagogy and social work. Since then, open youth work has undergone **gradual professionalisation** and continues to evolve.

The first **youth streetwork project** in Austria was developed and conducted in the late 1970s and led to the installation of youth streetwork offers in the Austrian cities and also in rural areas. Since **outreach work is mainly focussing on people in need or facing problems**, the approach developed further and the form of **Mobile Youth work** emerged. Today Mobile Youth Work is defined as one major form of Open Youth Work besides location based / stationary Open Youth work. **Most youth centres or open youth work institutions were founded by associations** and are today mainly funded by the municipalities and co-funded by the respective federal state.

The **low-threshold and voluntary access to open youth work** offers favors the acquisition of **educational content** that is important for everyday action and social skills. Open youth work makes a significant contribution to **social integration and participation for all young people**, but especially those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Open youth work also offers a broad range of professionally differentiated and tested offers as well as **innovative concepts for the development of municipalities** regarding the needs of youth.

The **Austrian Centre of Competence for Open Youth Work bOJA ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit](#))** was founded in 2009 and builds on a long tradition of networking of youth workers. bOJA **represents the field of action** of open youth work in Austria and sees itself as a competence centre for open youth work, as a **service and networking office**, as a **platform for knowledge and information exchange**

and as a specialist body for **quality development** in open youth work. bOJA works closely together with the umbrella organisations and nationwide networks of open youth work in the federal states, which are part of bOJA's managing board, as well as with other relevant stakeholders in the field of youth work on all levels. On the European level, bOJA is member of ECYC (European Confederation of Youth Clubs) and POYWE (Professional Open Youth Work in Europe).

Youth Information

In 1973, the first Vienna Youth Information Centre was opened by the Youth Welfare Office of the City of Vienna. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, there was a growing **trend for information institutions to be increasingly transformed into 'counselling and therapy facilities'**. This eventually led to a **tendency that behaves acyclically to the rest of Europe**.

While hundreds of information centres were opened in Western Europe between 1982 and 1987, the already **existing centres were closed in Austria until the mid-1980s**. In 1985, a **mobile youth information was founded** by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Family, Youth and Consumer Protection and the Youth Service Centre of the Province of Upper Austria was opened. In 1987, the information centre of "Youth in Vienna" (Jugend in Wien) was installed in the Vienna City Hall. Furthermore, a first meeting of the existing youth information centres in Austria (Graz, Kirchdorf, Linz, Salzburg, Vienna) took place this year. The **1990s** were characterised by the **development, exchange of experience and further development**. At the end of this decade, **almost all Austrian federal states had a youth information service**. Lower Austria followed in 2001. The **nationwide networking** led to several **study trips to leading countries** such as France and Italy as well as to the first joint projects such as publications and a unified telephone number. In 1993, the **working group (ARGE) youth info leaders** was founded. From then on, the ARGE met twice a year to ensure exchange and networking between the youth information centres of the federal states. In 1999, the **first editions of the Austria-wide information products** 'internships, work camps, au pairs abroad' and 'holidays and part-time job search' were published as joint publications of the ARGE. In 2001, the first **quality assurance conference** of all Austrian Youth Information leaders took place and the first 1st course 'Youth Information' was co-organized by the ARGE Austrian Youth Information and the Ministry of Youth. In 2004, the association "*jugendinfo.cc-ARGE Österreichische Jugendinfos*" was founded. This was the predecessor organisation of the current **National Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres**.

National definition or understanding of Youth Work

Extracurricular child and youth work is a **field of socialization and social action that involves extensive extracurricular activities, offers and spheres of work by, for and with children and young people based on voluntary participation**. These are primarily pedagogically conceptualised and organised, public and not commercial. Related **non-formal and informal learning processes** are a central component. Out-of-school child and youth work provides

learning, experience and experience spaces at local, regional, national, European and international level, **connects young people and contributes to their personal development and social integration**. Extracurricular child and youth work organisations, platforms and initiatives can act as a **lobby for the interests of young people**. The three main forms of extracurricular child and youth work in Austria are the associative child and youth work, open youth work as well as the youth information. Extracurricular youth work includes **all qualified and planned recreational and social education programs and activities aimed at promoting and strengthening young people**. It is required for the offers to comply with the principles of voluntariness, openness, living environment orientation, participation and equal rights as well as being set without commercial interests.

Federal Act on Youth Promotion

On 1 January 2001, **Federal Act on the Promotion of Education and Upbringing outside of schools and the Promotion of Youth Work** ([Bundesgesetz über die Förderung der außerschulischen Jugendberziehung und Jugendarbeit](#)) came into effect. The aim of this law is the financial support of measures for the education and upbringing of young people and of youth work outside the school sector, particularly to promote the development of the intellectual, psychological, physical, social, political, religious and ethnic competencies of children and young people. The federal law applies to young people up to the age of 30.

Principles of youth work

The law **defines such youth work offers as worthy of support**, which stem from youth organisations, youth initiatives, youth groups and open youth work bodies, which in particularly orientate themselves towards the following **principles**:

- Attending to matters of **concern for and the interests of young people**
- **Co-determination and participation** of young people in all areas of life
- **Responsibility, independence** and the promotion of **democracy**
- Promotion of **innovative processes and projects**
- **Personal development** and the physical, emotional and intellectual development of young people
- Promotion of young people's **tolerance, communication and peaceful coexistence** as well as the promotion of mutual understanding in the domestic and international fields
- **Support of education** which promotes communities and is **human-rights oriented**
- **Political- and citizenship education** as well as **religious- and ethics-related education** for young people

- Development of the **social commitment** of young people
- Promotion of
 - **lifestyle- and health-related** education
 - **vocational- and career-related** education
 - **generation-related** education
 - development of the **creative powers** of young people, in order to facilitate their active participation in cultural life
 - **equality of the sexes** and
 - integration of **people with disabilities**