

## 10.3 Support to youth work

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### Policy legal framework

The extracurricular child and youth work is to provide facilities and services that are conducive to the socialisation of young people. It therefore focuses primarily on their interests and needs. At the same time, extracurricular child and youth work claims to **empower young people to self-determination and to motivate them to shape society**. By discovering their own abilities, as well as their own limits, young people are given the chance to develop their own life perspectives. **Building relationships** - be it with other children or young people or with people working in extracurricular child and youth work - develops personal communication skills and strengthens social skills. By allowing children and young people to **experience different opinions and interests**, different cultural orientations and religious beliefs, the basis for a reflected treatment of such differences is created. This strengthens the basis for solidarity with one another. Through participation in projects of youth work and in community activities of youth participation, children and young people **experience creative power and themselves as publicly effective**. The experience that one's own opinion counts and that everyone can contribute to the success of a project is a central basis for political participation and thus for shaping society. **Reflective learning** is made possible by the fact that children and young people discuss and re-think their current experiences together with other young people and adults and then transfer these experiences into their own lifeworld. In this way, extracurricular child and youth work provides **life-like learning experiences that, unlike formal education, are not graded**. According to the National Youth Council, 'non-formal education is an organised process in which young people have the opportunity to acquire knowledge as well as to develop skills of many kinds.'

Extracurricular child and youth work organisations have a '**double mandate**': on the one hand, they are tasked with representing the diverse expectations and **needs of young people** in public and towards politics; on the other hand, they should address the concerns and **expectations of the institutions** and the sponsoring bodies, who may differ.

A differentiation of extracurricular child and youth work can be made according to their respective **form of organisation**. These organisations reflect the whole range of public and civil society actors. They **range from private associations and NGOs to municipal institutions as well as nationally and internationally active institutions**

. Differentiation can also be made based on activity. The structures of extracurricular child and youth work are **extremely diverse**, and there is **hardly any field of action or topic that is not covered**. The offers and activities have the claim to fulfil the diversity of the adolescent worlds. In Austria, **non-profit associations, self-governing youth clubs and social organisations** act as providers of child and youth work. The municipalities and confessional or party political institutions can also assume this role. A large number of Austrian sports and cultural associations, social organisations and public emergency services have their own youth groups or corresponding departments and are therefore involved in child and youth work. Non-exhaustive lists of Youth work organisations in Austria (in German) are provided by the [Jugendportal](#) and the [Bundesjugendvertretung](#).

The following section describes the **forms of Austrian child and youth work**. Essentially, there are three areas: the **associative** child and youth work, the youth **information** and the **open** child and youth work. After describing the respective area, the principles of action and the objectives, the target groups and the thematic orientations are described. Methods, offers and networking activities, as well as an overview of the structure and qualification of the employees, complete the overview.

## **Associative child and youth work**

In the public debate on extracurricular child and youth work, most people first think of associative child and youth work. For the most part, the organisations that provide child and youth work in Austria have **existed for several decades and cover a very broad spectrum**. Their goals and ideological backgrounds range from confessional, cultural and ecological to party political. Most affiliated child and youth organisations not only provide **age-appropriate services for children, adolescents and young adults**, but also act as **socio-political actors and publicly campaign for the diverse concerns of children and young people**, for example with their own campaigns and events. Child and youth organisations provide an important learning place for social participation, especially for those young people who are involved in the respective organisation. The **voluntary commitment** of largely young people is an important basis and therefore central to the child and youth organisations. With its offers and activities, the associations' child and youth work reaches around 1.5 million young people up to the age of 30 ([Federal Chancellery, 2019](#)).

### ***Objectives***

Associated child and youth organisations pursue a **holistic and participatory educational approach** and see themselves as a **space for social development in which young people can discover and develop their talents**. They take the concerns and interests of young people seriously and support them in the development of personal skills. Above all, professional child and youth organisations are also **important places of learning for understanding democracy and participation** in which children and adolescents can experience self-efficacy.

### ***Offers and methods***

The services and methods available in the association's child and youth work are as **diverse** as the organisations themselves. They **convey a great variety of skills and knowledge**. Starting with the so-called soft skills up to technical and organisational skills, young people are supported in their personal development and their civic engagement. A systematic collection and presentation is not feasible due to the diversity of organisations at this point. A presentation that deals with the characteristics and priorities of each organisation can be found in the publication provided by the Austrian Youth Council ([Kinder- und Jugendorganisationen in Österreich](#)).

### ***Networking***

The networking and cooperation of associated child and youth Organisations takes place **at different levels**: horizontally between the organisations and vertically between the associations and other youth-related institutions. The [Austrian Youth Council](#) ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#)), in which most of the Austrian child and youth organisations are members, offers a variety of opportunities for networking and cooperation. In addition, many organisations are connected internationally via **European or worldwide associations**.

### ***Qualification***

As part of **internal education and training, numerous seminars, courses, workshops and training courses** are held and attended by thousands of volunteers and multipliers. These **non-formal educational offers** make a significant contribution to quality assurance in association with child and youth work. A detailed overview on the education and training measures in the field of association children and youth organisations can be found in the publication "[Hier geht'slang! Navigationshilfe Kinder- und Jugendorganisationen](#)" (National Youth Council).

Funded by the [Section of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) (formerly: Ministry for Families and Youth) and the Youth Departments of the Federal States, [aufZAQ](#) (word-play with the idiom 'to be on the ball') offers **certification to basic and further education and training courses** for people active in youth work and accompanying fields. The project runs since 2013, so far 34 training courses have been certified. Between 2015 and 2017, the aufZAQ **Competence Framework for Youth Work** has been developed. It outlines how people active in youth work act competently and covers open youth work and the work of children's and youth associations. In Austria, the aufZAQ Competence Framework is regarded as the binding standard for trainings of youth workers.

### ***Youth information***

Youth information **empowers young people to make their own decisions based on knowledge of their options** and thus to act autonomously by providing them with **up-to-date, relevant and comprehensible information**. By preparing information in a youth-

friendly way, young people are thus supported in actively participating in society. General youth information is not limited to specific topics, but **offers young people a first point of contact for all questions**. This **'one-stop-shop' principle** avoids stigmatisation and increases the **low-threshold** nature of the service. All questions are allowed and are either answered directly or referred to experts. The [Austrian Youth Information Centres \(Jugendinfos\)](#) offer **target group-oriented information counselling** on all youth-related topics for young people between 12 and 26 years of age.

## ***Objectives***

- **Orientation** - in a time of information overload, needs-oriented support in selecting offers and alternatives that fit the respective life situation has become a central task of youth information.
- **Autonomy** - through relevant information, young people are empowered to make their own decisions based on knowledge of their options.
- **Promoting participation and initiative** among young people - knowledge of one's own rights and obligations is one of the basic prerequisites for active participation in society.
- **Information literacy** - the critical and competent handling of information requires a wide range of skills and is more important than ever in times of fake news. Youth information helps young people to develop their information competence.

## ***Offers and methods***

The **total of 28 offices** ([Jugendinfostellen](#)) **throughout all federal provinces** offer a **nationwide service for young people between the ages of 12 and 26**. They handle about 160,000 enquiries a year on all topics relevant to young people: education and work, opportunities abroad, housing for young people, youth protection and leisure activities. The statistics show that most enquiries are made in the areas of education and employment as well as (voluntary) work and living in Europe. In addition, the **online services** of the Youth Infos are used by about 1.5 million visitors every year. The Federal Network of Austrian Youth Info runs the Youth Portal ([Jugendportal](#)) and the provincial Youth Information Centers run their own information websites, all organisations make use of social media to increase the reach of their services.

## ***Networking***

The **Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres** ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichische Jugendinfos](#)) as a national association of youth information centres in Austria has existed since 2004. Its main tasks include the national and international networking of Austrian youth information centres, the **coordination of national youth information projects and activities**, the **production of information products** and pedagogical materials, the

organisation of further training & quality assurance measures, the implementation of further development measures in the field of youth information, the national and international **representation of the Austrian Youth Information Services**, and acting as a contact person for partners and media.

## **Open child and youth work**

Open child and youth work **takes place in youth centres, youth clubs, youth cafés** and other facilities, but also in **public spaces** - such as parks, railway stations or public squares. It moves between **social work, educational work, cultural work and health promotion** and is an important **place of socialisation** for young people in Austria. It is now well established as a professional field of action in all Austrian provinces and an indispensable part of contemporary municipal and regional youth policy. Open child and youth work **creates offers free from consumerism and commercial goals**. The responsibility for open child and youth work lies primarily with the federal provinces and the local municipalities, which jointly finance the facilities and services.

### ***Objectives***

Open youth work aims to **accompany and support young people on their way to adult independence and maturity**. The low-threshold and voluntary access to its services shall favour the **acquisition of educational content** that is important for everyday action and social skills. Open Youth Work thus strives to make a significant contribution to **social integration and participation**, especially for educationally and socially disadvantaged young people.

### ***Offers and methods***

Open youth work offers a wide range of **professionally differentiated and tested services** as well as **innovative concepts** and measures for the development of the community.

### ***Networking***

The '**nationwide network Open Youth Work**' ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit, bOJA](#)), founded in 2009, represents the field of action of Open Youth Work in Austria. It acts as a competence, service and networking centre for Open Youth Work, as a platform for knowledge and information exchange as well as an expert centre for quality development in the field of Open Youth Work. bOJA works closely together with the umbrella organisations and provincial networks of Open Youth Work.

### ***Qualification***

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## **Funding**

The funding of child and youth work activities and offers is provided through **own funds** (own contributions of honorary employees, funds contributed or material assets), through **self-financing** (income from events and activities, membership fees, donations and sponsorship services) and through **outside financing** (subsidies of the public sector or the carrier such as churches and parties). In Austria, **municipalities, states, and the federal government are by far the most important sponsors** of extracurricular child and youth work. An **overall amount of public funding in youth work is not available** as the initiatives can come from different resources of different ministries, federal state funding, Youth in Action and the ESF.

### **Youth Promotion (national level)**

The financial support of youth organisations, youth initiatives, associations and youth projects is an important instrument of the youth policy of the [Section of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#). In accordance with the **Federal Youth Promotion Act** ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)), the work of nationwide youth organisations and associations receives its financial support.

### **Funding options**

Financial support is provided based on the **Federal Youth Promotion Act** ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)) as well as within the framework of the EU program **ERASMUS + and the European Solidarity Corps**.

The **Federal Youth Promotion Act** ([Bundes-Jugendförderungsgesetz](#)) regulates the financial support of extracurricular youth education and youth work by the Federal Chancellery. According to its § 5 and the [representation by the Federal Chancellery](#) applications can be submitted for

- basic funding
- projects of child and youth work (project funding)
- special concerns of child and youth work

The funding applicant must **detail the project to be supported or the association structure** to be supported (project presentation, type of project, time frame, location, co-organisier, etc.)



and submit a financing plan showing the total costs, own resources, co-financing by the federal states and/or other (public) funding bodies, as well as the amount and purpose of the funding requested to the Federal Chancellery. All required forms and further information can be found on the [Website](#) of the Federal Chancellery.

## Youth Promotion (Provincial and local level)

According to the Federal Constitution, responsibility for extracurricular child and youth work rests with the federal states. In addition to funding for organisations operating nationwide and for projects of nationwide importance, **the funding of the federal states and the municipalities is of crucial importance**: they enable the provision of a nationwide offer for all young people in Austria.

In line with the Federal Youth Promotion Act, financial support is aimed at measures of the extracurricular youth work, in particular to promote the development of mental, psychological, physical, social, political, religious and ethical competences of children and adolescents.

The **communities (local level)** play an important part as well. Besides the provincial government, they are the biggest **funders of children and youth work and can finance organisations themselves** or engage independent associations for that purpose.

## European level: ERASMUS+ and European Solidarity Corps

For the implementation of the programmes in Austria, the [Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#) has commissioned [Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation \(OeAD\)](#). Funded by the Ministry, it promotes the projects, runs the respective [Website](#) and disburses the grants.

## Cooperation

All major youth organisations are part of the [Austrian National Youth Council \(Bundesjugendvertretung, BJV\)](#), that is the official and legally established representative body of children and youth in Austria. Together with its member organisations the National Youth Council is a strong **voice for the diverse interests and ideas of young people**. Regarding youth issues, the BJV has the status of a **social partner**. This means that the BJV takes part in political negotiations on behalf of young people. In Austria, the EU Youth Dialogue is located at the BJV.

**Cooperation with public services** to the benefit of young people happens on multiple levels, for instance in **cooperation with cultural institutions and educational facilities**, through information about the labour market, traineeships and other educational offers provided in cooperation with the **labour market service** and other institutions taking political action on the labour market, through job fairs or try-out days for young people in cooperation with **local companies**, by accompanying young people to court hearings, in the form of **joint workshops with the police** on such topics as violence, cyber-crime, self-defence, etc. The more strongly

child and youth work is based on their social environments, the more important regional and interdisciplinary partners become.

## Development Group Youth Strategy

Since its beginning, the development of the **Austrian youth strategy** has been accompanied by a **working group**. The Youth Strategy Development Group meets monthly, discusses priorities and draws up proposals for action. Youth work is an integral part of the Strategy.

The development group includes:

- [National Youth Council](#) ([Bundesjugendvertretung](#), BJV)
- National Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres ([Bundesnetzwerk Österreichischer Jugendinfos](#), BÖJI)
- Nationwide network Open Youth Work ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit](#), bOJA)
- [Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation](#) (OeAD): National Agency Erasmus+
- the National Correspondent at the European Youth Research Network
- [Section of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#)
- Competence Centre Youth (Federal Chancellery)

All these stakeholders are also part of the National Working Group of the EU Youth Dialogue and the **Children's Rights Board**. These organisations are invited to most networks, boards, and development groups in the field.

## The Austria-wide symposium of open youth work ([bOJA-Fachtagung](#))

The bOJA symposium has become an important meeting point of numerous youth workers from all over Austria. The **unique conference** takes place every year, in a different federal state and on changing relevant topics. The three-day event is an opportunity to **network, socialize, discuss and engage** in an exchange of practitioners and experts from science and politics. A mix of input lectures, discussions, workshops and individual practical project presentations in the context of playgrounds and/or world cafés is brought to the participants.

The nationwide symposium is a cooperation of the nationwide network Open Youth Work ([bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit](#), bOJA), the [Section of Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#), the respective federal state and the National Agency ERASMUS+.