

## 4.6 Access to quality services

### On this page

1. [Housing](#)
  2. [Social services](#)
  3. [Health care](#)
  4. [Financial services](#)
  5. [Quality assurance](#)
- 

## Housing

In general, housing falls under the **responsibility of the nine Federal Provinces**. Throughout Austria, a wide range of assistance offers has been established - housing subsidies, housing and dormitory grants, student dormitories, and emergency shelters.

### Provincial Housing Departments

Housing subsidies are a matter of the provincial governments. As an example, in Vienna the [Vienna Housing Department \(Stadt Wien – Wohnen\)](#) is responsible for any housing related issue. It is responsible for subsidising several thousand new apartments each year. **Housing subsidies are provided to people with low income**. Additional housing subsidies are provided to households with children and young people. The Viennese Housing Service ( [Wiener Wohnen](#)) **manages around 220,000 flats** as well as 5,000 pubs and over 47,000 garage and parking spaces. Therefore, today every fourth Viennese person lives in a municipal flats.. Among others, it provides and informs on residential homes and shared flats for young people, homes for students, barrier-free housing, housing for refugees and migrants as well as for mothers and children, homeless people, mentally ill people, for social integration and for people in difficult housing situations. In Vienna, housing has been seen as a public task for more than eight decades.

### **Dormitory and Commuting Grant for pupils, apprentices and trainees ( [Heim- und Fahrtkostenbeihilfe](#))**

If pupils attend schools away from their main residence and stay at a secondary residence during the week, e.g. in boarding school, home **commuting grants may be applied for to cover the travel from the main residence to the secondary residence**. The grant is also available for apprentices who undergo training away from their main residence and stay at a

secondary residence during the week, e.g. at or near the training location. The home commuting grant amounts from EUR 19 to EUR 58 per month, depending on the distance between the main and the secondary residence.

Apart from this travel allowance, pupils who can't find a suitable school place at their place of residence receive a **dormitory allowance**. The amount is calculated from a basic amount of € 1,380, from which the reasonable maintenance payment of the parents or legal guardians as well as the pupil's income (if any) are deducted. The basic amount is increased if one of the conditions specified in the **Pupils Allowance Act** ([Schülerbeihilfengesetz](#)) is met.

## **Student Dormitories**

**In all university cities**, a number of student dormitories ([Studentenheime](#)) are built and administered by various associations, foundations, and public corporations. They provide students with affordable living space. The legal basis is provided by the **Act on student dormitories** ([Studentenheimgesetz](#)). The Austrian Student Union (Österreichische HochschülerInnenschaft), the statutory representation of students' interests, runs a [list of non-profit student dormitories](#) throughout the country. Students may apply for a moderately priced apartment through such NPOs. Apartments including furniture can be rented for one year, the contract may then be extended for as long as sufficient academic success is achieved. Students are required to show adequate study progress at the university (freshmen are exempt), as well as their income situation and/or that of their parents.

## **The Austrian Young Workers Movement(Österreichische JungArbeiterBewegung, ÖJAB)**

ÖJAB is a generation-con-necting youth organisation, independent of any political party or religious obligation. As a non-profit organisation, it offers 4,700 places to stay for students, pupils, apprentices, young workers, senior citizens and refugees in a total of 30 ÖJAB-houses nationwide, thus making it one of the largest residency organisations in Austria. At present, almost 4 200 young people, 470 senior citizens and 70 refugees are accommodated in 24 student hostels and youth residences, in three senior citizens' residences and nursing homes, in two intergenerational residencies and in an intercultural hostel. Some ÖJAB projects are funded by the ESF.

## **Viennese Youth Houses ([Wiener Jungwohnhäuser](#))**

The **City of Vienna** offers a place to live to **young people under the age of 30, who are working or training in Vienna**. Accommodation types include single bedrooms, 1-room studios and 2-room-studios. The living places are ready-to-move-in, affordable and include sports and leisure facilities.

## **Support for young people in housing emergencies ([Unterstützung von Jugendlichen in Wohnungs-Notfällen](#))**

If the parents (legal guardians) do not agree to the young person moving out, the **young person can apply for support at the competent district court from the age of 14**. The reasons for the desire to move out must be explained, accepted are reasons such as violence in the family and neglect. Before taking this step, **young people can seek support from the Office of the Ombudsmen for Children and Young People** ([Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaften](#)) and/or **child and youth welfare services** ([Kinder- und Jugendhilfe](#)), or in an acute crisis situation (e.g. violence) the police or an intervention centre. If a young person is kicked out of home by the parents, although this is not legally allowed for persons under 18 years of age, they are to immediately contact the competent child and youth welfare agency (formerly: youth welfare agency or youth welfare office). The Federal Working Group on Assistance for the Homeless ([Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe](#), BAWO) also provides **emergency shelters for young people**.

## Social services

### Social Security System

The welfare state aims to offer social protection to everyone. The social safety net ensures medical care, rehabilitation and security in old age and in emergencies.

**Social insurance** covers health insurance, accident insurance, pension insurance and unemployment insurance. It takes the form of compulsory insurance, with benefits granted upon the fulfilment of the conditions for entitlement and its main financing deriving from contributions.

**Public assistance** covers family benefits, child benefit, care benefit, maternity benefit, etc. It constitutes a non-contributory state support for families and other persons, benefits are granted upon the fulfilment of certain legal provisions. The assistance is financed by general taxation.

**Social welfare** covers disability benefits, retirement and care homes, monetary assistance, etc. It forms the non-contributory 'last resort' element of the social security system, which provides a means-tested minimum income in cases of need or emergency and is financed by general taxation.

The **Viennese Chamber of Labour** ([Arbeiterkammer Wien](#)), a social partner, attests that the promotion of families and children is an important instrument of social policy, which aims to reduce or avoid poverty and serves to equalise the burden between households with and without children. Family support in Austria takes various forms and accounts for around 3% of GDP. Most of the expenditure is made in form of cash benefits, other for kindergartens, school books or free public transport.

### Publicly financed schools and universities

Austria has a system of **tuition free public schools and universities**. According to [Statistik Austria](#), a total of 1,135,519 pupils were enrolled in schools in Austria in the school year

2019/20 - 327.250 in Federal schools, 117.943 in schools of the provinces, 572.515 in schools of the municipalities, and 1.202 in schools managed by several municipalities (the remaining were enrolled in schools of churches and religious communities, social partners, and private entities).

## **Free Use of Public Transport for pupils, apprentices and trainees ([Schülerfreifahrt](#))**

Two requirements must be fulfilled for **schoolchildren to receive public transport free of charge for the travel from their residence to school**: family allowance must be received for the child and the school must be state-run or have public status. Free use of public transport is only be granted for travels to domestic schools or schools close to the border. The application form and confirmation of school attendance has to be filed with the regional transport board or company or the regional centre of linked transport systems. The contribution towards costs per pupil and school year is a sum of €19.60.

**Apprentices and trainees** undergoing recognised training and eligible for family allowance may also avail themselves of free transport from home to the training location and back. This also applies to trainees in an apprenticeship foundation or young people who have to do pre-apprenticeship training. The form filled in also has to include confirmation of the apprenticeship on the part of the employer and must be filed with the transport provider at the beginning of each year of apprenticeship.

Pupils, apprentices and participants in a voluntary social year can also **upgrade their permit to a network-wide ticket**, as long as their residence or their school/place of apprenticeship are located within the transportation network of the provincial Verkehrsverbund. This requires a **low increase in price** for the ticket (between 60 and 102 Euros in total).

## **Free School Books ([Schulbuchaktion](#))**

**School books are provided to pupils free of charge.** This gives all pupils equal access to education and contributes to relieving the financial burden of parents. All regularly enrolled pupils who attend school in Austria or are undergoing compulsory education in Austria, as well as all non-regularly enrolled pupils preparing for an assessment, are entitled to free school books.

School books are **procured by the school via school-book orders, distributed at the beginning of the school year and then owned by the pupils.** Schools have to adhere to a ceiling on spending per pupil depending on the type of school, which is usually sufficient to buy the basic books required. There are separate spending limits for religious books, pre-school, special schools, for bilingual tuition and tuition in the mother tongue, as well as for pupils whose mother tongue is not German ('German as a second language'). Schools order school books and other teaching aids within the limits of the total budget available (school book limit per pupil x number of pupils) from school book lists. By re-using school books, schools can order fewer books, thus being able to save money which can be used for 'self-selected teaching aids'

in an amount of up to 15% of the school book budget ceiling. With the computerised ordering system based on the Internet application 'School books online', a trail-blazing instrument of e-government (electronic administration) was put in place - it was conferred an award for innovation in public administration by the European Union.

For some school books, there is **supplementary material on the internet and e-books**, allowing for the use of digital teaching aids ("e-learning"). Moreover, there are 'self-selected teaching aids' (CD-ROMs, tapes for language tuition, learning games and other printed and audio-visual teaching aids), therapeutic teaching aids for pupils with disabilities and school books for vision-impaired and blind pupils.

## Health care

### The Austrian Health Care System

Health care in Austria is characterised by the cooperation of a large number of actors. Competencies in the health care sector are generally regulated by law. The main actors with regard to health at federal level are the Austrian Parliament (which consists of the National Council and the Federal Council), the **Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection** ([Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz](#)), the **social security institutions** ([Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger](#)) and advocacy groups (**social partners**: employers' and employees' representatives, as well as professional associations). Further details on health care governance in Austria are depicted in [Chapter 7.2](#).

As far as legislation and its enforcement are concerned, the Federal Government plays a central role. However, **many competencies are delegated to the provinces or to the social security institutions**. [The Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#) prepares laws, is responsible for the protection of public health as well as the overall health policy and functions as a facilitator between the different players in the health care system, and also as a decision maker and supervisory authority. The Federal Government is in charge of defining the legislation for out-patient care (physicians in individual practices). Responsibility for in-patient care (provided in hospitals) is shared between the federal and the provincial level: the Federal Government lays down the legislative framework whilst the provinces are in charge of defining legislation on enforcement as well as ensuring implementation. All regulations regarding pharmaceuticals, pharmacies and medical devices as well health professions (for example education of physicians) and structural policy are the responsibility of the Federal Government.

### Social health care measures promoting equality

In accordance with the government programme measures were taken for 'health equality and fairness' for children and young people, such as corrective dentistry for children and young people as a service paid for by the health insurance funds (started in 2015).

## **Child and Youth Health Strategy**

In November 2012, the former Federal Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs published a **Child and Youth Health Strategy** ([Kinder und Jugend Gesundheitsstrategie](#)). The strategy encompasses five thematic fields, which are further subdivided into specific aims.

### **Thematic field 1: Societal framework**

- Goal 1: Raise awareness for the particular needs of children and adolescents
- Goal 2: Raise awareness for the cross-policy responsibility for health ('Health in All Policies')

### **Thematic field 2: Healthy start in life**

- Goal 3: Lay the foundation for a good start during pregnancy and birth
- Goal 4: Laying the foundation for long-term health in early childhood

### **Theme 3: Healthy development**

- Goal 5: Strengthening the life skills of children and adolescents
- Goal 6: Using education positively as a central factor influencing health
- Goal 7: Enabling and promoting physical activity among children and adolescents
- Goal 8: Promoting healthy eating among children and adolescents

### **Theme 4: Health equality**

- Goal 9: Promoting health equity for the socially disadvantaged
- Goal 10: Promoting health equity for health disadvantaged children and adolescents
- Goal 11: Improving early identification and targeted support for children and adolescents

### **Theme 5: Care for sick children and adolescents in specific settings**

- Goal 12: Optimising outpatient primary care and improve it at off-peak times and weekends
- Goal 13: Strengthening pediatric competence in emergency care
- Goal 14: Making hospital care more child-friendly

- Goal 15: Improving care in selected areas (child and adolescent psychiatry, psychosomatics, neuro-pediatrics, social pediatrics)
- Goal 16: Improving integrated care for 'modern morbidity'
- Goal 17: Adapting neonatal care to changing demographics
- Goal 18: Improving rehabilitation services for children and adolescents
- Goal 19: Ensuring pediatric care and expanding pediatric hospice work and palliative care
- Goal 20: Improving the availability of medicines for children

The department child and youth health in section III of the Ministry of health is responsible to further develop and supervise this strategy and acts as a coordinator. It is **supported by a cross-sectorial committee** consisting of representatives of several ministries, the provinces, the social insurance, the national youth council and relevant stakeholders (Austrian society of child and youth medical science, Austrian league for child and youth health and the umbrella organisation of open youth work). The aim of the committee is to promote cross-sectoral cooperation regarding child and youth health. The task of the department is to conduct and coordinate the activities at the Ministry of Health and to monitor the measures of the strategy regularly.

## **Promotion of equal opportunities for health disadvantaged children and young people**

Children and young people with health disadvantages such as disabilities, chronic diseases, and (temporary) development disorders are facing a row of additional disadvantages triggered by their health problems. They need **special promotion regarding these health impairments as well as enhanced support for social inclusion**. The Child and Youth Health Strategy formulates sub-aims concerning social services (increased family allowance, enhanced access to social services).

### **Measures**

- **Additional daycare structures** for children and young people with **disabilities**.
- **Integration of children and young people that need support**: installation of a modern school infrastructure including special supplies for additional integration classes, classes for children with special needs and basal classes for high maintenance children and young people (Vienna).
- Further development of **socio paediatric centres for diagnostics** and promotion of chronically ill children and young people, as well as children with developmental disorders
- **Early diagnosis of defective hearing** (promotion, therapy and guidance in Styria).

## **Action Plans on Nutrition and Physical Activity**

An **Austrian Nutrition Action Plan** ([Nationaler Aktionsplan Ernährung](#)) was developed in 2013. It features health promotion and disease prevention, thus making the healthcare system youth-friendly. The primary goals are to **reduce malnutrition, overnutrition and undernutrition** and to reverse the trend of rising overweight and obesity rates. It aims for the healthy choice to become the easier choice. The Action Plan is regularly revised to ensure timeliness and a quality-assured approach. Its **focus is on infants, children, adolescents, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers** as well as on the further development of tools for information dissemination and empowerment.

The former Federal Ministry of Sports and Defence developed the **Austrian Action Plan on Physical Activity** ([Nationaler Aktionsplan Bewegung](#)). It aims to promote physical activity for all young people through targeted information, expand youth-oriented physical activity offer, implement measures in school sports, provide infrastructure and physical activity spaces, increase mobility, and positively influence working environments.

## **Austrian Health Targets**

Youth affairs are furthermore promoted throughout the [10 Austrian Health Targets](#). They were developed with the aim of **prolonging the healthy years of life** of everyone living in Austria in the coming 20 years (until 2032), irrespective of their level of education, income or personal living condition. The Targets have been formulated as follows:

1. Providing **health-promoting living and working conditions** for all population groups through cooperation of all societal and political areas
2. Promoting **fair and equal opportunities in health**, irrespective of gender, socio-economic group, ethnic origin and age
3. Enhancing **health literacy** in the population
4. **Securing sustainable natural resources** such as air, water and soil and healthy environments for future generations
5. **Strengthening social cohesion** as a health enhancer
6. **Ensuring conditions** under which children and **young people can grow up as healthy** as possible
7. Providing access to a **healthy diet** for all
8. Promoting **healthy, safe exercise and activity** in everyday life through appropriate environments
9. Promoting **psychosocial health** in all population groups
10. Secure **sustainable and efficient health care services** of high quality for all

**Health education:** [feel-ok.at](https://feel-ok.at)

Health education **promotes health literacy**, which helps to strengthen self-determined health-promoting behaviour of young people. For this purpose, the **website [feel-ok.at](http://feel-ok.at)** (in German) has been established as an **online center for youth targeted health education**. feel-ok is a **network** consisting of numerous institutions in Switzerland, Austria and Germany. The Website is largely funded by public means. A wide range of patrons and implementation partners throughout Austria ensures that the content is of high quality, target-group oriented, successfully promoted, and conform with Austrian law. The Website offers texts, games, tests as well as teaching materials for educators. The implementation partners promote the website through workshops for multipliers (e.g. pedagogues, schools, employees of extracurricular youth work) and for young people directly as well as through PR measures such as posters and flyers. The topics depicted on the Website include: alcohol, cannabis, climate, eating problems, fitness and sport, gambling, health, intoxication, noise, nutrition, online world, self-confidence, sex and love, smoking, stress, suicidal thoughts, violence, work, and youth rights.

## **Network health competence in professional extracurricular youthwork**

BÖJI (Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Centres) and bOJA (**[bundesweites Netzwerk Offene Jugendarbeit](#)**) have developed and published a **Code of Practice and Guidelines** (**[Leitfaden - Gesundheitskompetenz in der Jugendarbeit](#)**) for health competence in youth work.

## **Further measures to promote the Health and Well-being of young people**

A broad range of further measures taken to promote the health and well-being of young people in Austria is depicted in **[Chapter 7](#)**.

## **Financial services**

### **Family benefits: The Family Burden Equalisation Fund ([Familienlastenausgleichsfonds](#))**

In order to **mitigate the economic burdens which arise from the upbringing**, looking after and providing for children, a series of benefits are disbursed by the **Family Burden Equalisation Fund** (**[Familienlastenausgleichsfonds](#)**, FLAF). The Fund is the most important instruments of family support in Austria and was established by the Family Burden Equalisation Law (**[Familienlastenausgleichsgesetz](#)** 1967). The affairs of the Family Burden Equalisation Fund are among the tasks of the **[Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#)** (formerly: **Federal Ministry of Youth**). The fund is administered by the **[Federal Ministry of Finance](#)**.

In 2018, **around €7.1 billion was spent by the FLAF, almost half of which (€3.5 billion or 49.6%) was used to finance family allowances**. One third (€2.3 billion or 33.0%) was allocated to other cash and non-cash benefits, such as advances on maintenance payments, family counselling, family hardship compensation, family hospice hardship compensation, travel

allowances and free rides for schoolchildren and apprentices, and the school book campaign or transfers. The remaining 1.2 billion euros (17.4%) were spent on childcare allowance (incl. birth allowances, mother-child pass bonus and infant allowance). Since 1980, the total budget of the Family Burden Equalisation Fund has more than tripled from (the equivalent of) € 2.1 billion to € 7.1 billion in 2018.

In addition to family benefits from the FLAF, there are also **measures that serve to promote families through tax savings**. In total, this resulted in indirect support of around 550 million euros in 2015. This corresponded to a level of 7.9% of the resources from the FLAF. Of this amount, 210 million euros (38.2%) went to the single-earner deduction and 120 million euros (21.8%) to the single-parent deduction. 110 million euros (20.0%) each were claimed for tax purposes through the child allowance and the deductibility of childcare costs (source: BMF figures).

Statistik Austria provides statistics on family benefits in Austria ([Familienleistungen](#)).

## Family allowance

**Parents** are entitled to [family allowance](#) ([Familienbeihilfe](#)) **irrespective of the amount of their income** if the centre of their vital interests lies in Austria (permanent residence). On the basis of an explicit legal order, the mother is primarily entitled to claim. Minor children are entitled to family allowance until they reach the age of 18 without having to fulfil any other additional requirements. If a child is severely **disabled**, an **increase supplement** to the general family allowance is granted. After reaching the age of majority, family allowance can be received **for children who are being trained for a profession or educated in university until they reach the age of 24**. If children have done military, civilian or training service or have given birth to a child, the period of entitlement may be extended until the child reaches the age of 25.

**Family allowance is graduated** according to age and number of children. For children who permanently reside outside of Austria in the EU/EEA area or in Switzerland, an indexation to the national price level is performed. For children residing in Austria, the **family allowance per child and month amounts to:**

- from birth € 114
- from 3 years € 121.9
- from the age of 10 € 141.5
- from the age of 19 € 165.1

The total monthly amount of family allowance is increased by the **sibling scale** for each child, if it is granted

- for 2 children, by 7.1 euros for each child,

- for 3 children, by 17.4 euros for each child,
- for 4 children, by 26.5 euros for each child,
- for 5 children, 32 euros for each child,
- for 6 children, 35.7 euros for each child
- for 7 or more children, by 52 euros for each child.

The **supplement for a severely disabled child** is 155.9 euros per month.

Together with the family allowance, an **additional child deduction** is disbursed. It amounts to € 58.40 per child and does not have to be applied for separately. Moreover, each September an additional **school start allowance** of € 100 is paid for each child between the ages 6 and 15 without separate application.

## Financial support for students ([Studienbeihilfe](#))

Austrian students and those legally equal are entitled to receive [study allowance](#) (Studienbeihilfe). This grant is a key means to financially support students. As public universities are accessible tuition-free, the allowance aims to **cover students' living expenses** in order to enable them to pursue their studies irrespective of their economic situation. It aims at closing the gap between the financial support of parents (according to Austrian law parents must support children who seriously pursue an education) and the individual financial needs. The possible maximum study grant is dependent on the age of the student and other circumstances (place of residence of parents, self-support, childcare obligations, being orphaned). The maximum allowance is € 841 euros per month. **Two major criteria** need to be met in order for a student to receive this financial support:

- **financial and social needs** and
- the appropriate **study success**.

## Quality assurance

The [Department for Families and Youth at the Federal Chancellery](#) funds scientific studies and i.a. subsidises the Austrian [Institute for Family Research](#) ([Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung](#), ÖIF), which is affiliated with the University of Vienna, so as to facilitate surveys on issues relevant to family policy.